

Why a Hatchery?

Before the dams were built and the rivers were tamed...

Before the increasing human use of the streams and their water...

Salmon and steelhead returned from the ocean to the river of their birth, to renew the cycle of life. In the ocean, they found a rich source of food. In the cool running streams of the American River, they found a safe habitat for their young.

The completion of Nimbus Dam (1955) and Folsom Dam (1956) prevented salmon and steelhead from reaching most of their historic spawning areas. The Bureau of Reclamation, which operates the dams, built and funds the Nimbus Fish Hatchery to mitigate (make up for) the loss of spawning habitat and help maintain salmon and steelhead populations.

The California Department of Fish and Game operates the hatchery, annually producing 4,000,000 Chinook salmon and 430,000 steelhead trout.

About Us

Visiting Hours

The Hatchery is open 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily, weekends and holidays included (except Christmas Day). The access to the river and river trail is open from sunrise to sunset.

Fish Ladder

Water runs in the fish ladder when conditions are appropriate for egg-taking. It usually opens around the first week of November for salmon and flows until the steelhead season ends (March). The gate at the base of the ladder is often closed to prevent overcrowding. Exact times when the gate will be open are not announced.

Egg-taking

You may watch the egg-taking process through the viewing windows in the Visitor Center. Call the information number below for details.

Guided School Tours

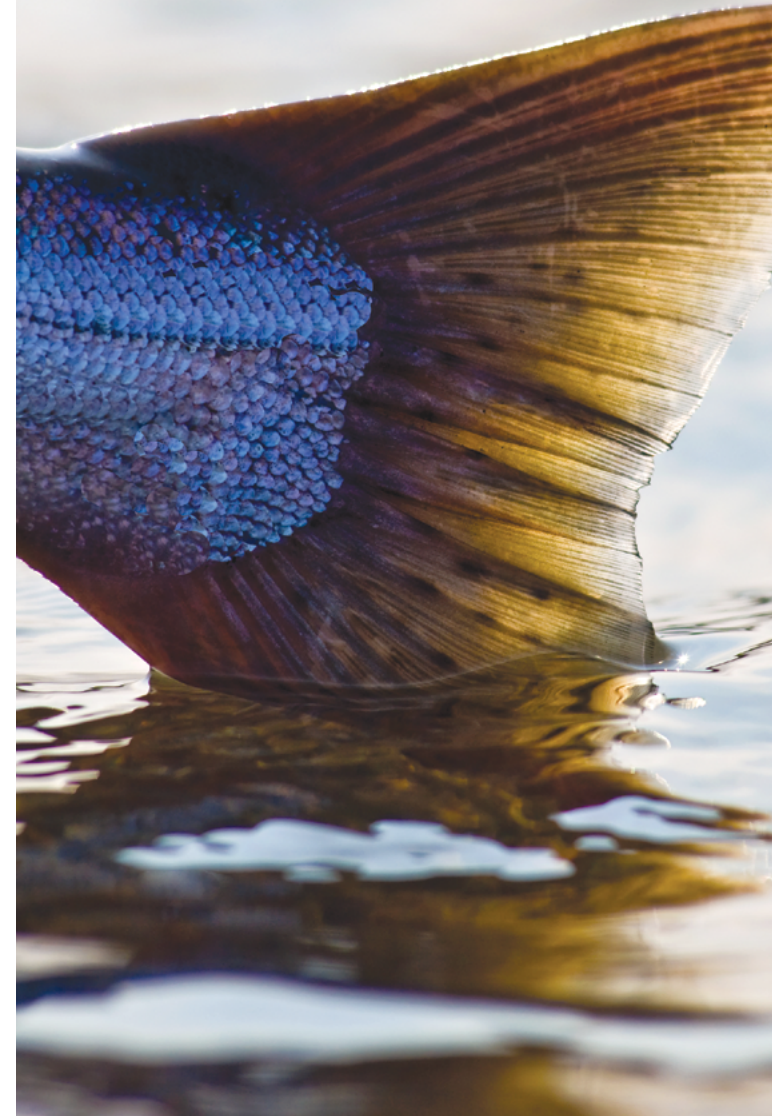
Guided school tours as well as self-guided tours are available all year. Call the information number below.

Naturalists and volunteers are on site to answer questions year round.

FOR INFORMATION: call 916-358-2884 or visit dfg.ca.gov/fish/hatcheries/nimbus/ or www.facebook.com/NimbusHatchery

A Visitor's Guide to the Nimbus Fish Hatchery

Chinook Salmon and Steelhead Trout



Welcome to Nimbus Fish Hatchery

No matter what time of year you visit, the Nimbus Fish Hatchery offers a glimpse into the unique world of salmon and steelhead.

Fall marks the return of powerful Chinook salmon and the opening of the fish ladder. Winter brings sleek steelhead trout. Throughout the year you can explore the exhibits of the Visitor Center, stroll the River Discovery Trail, or feed the young fish at Nimbus or the adjacent American River Trout Hatchery.

This is a working hatchery, so chances are that you will see the staff involved in some of the many tasks needed to raise four million salmon each year.

Enjoy!

Nimbus Fish Hatchery operated by
California Department of Fish and Game
Owned by Bureau of Reclamation



★ **VISTOR CENTER**

Enjoy learning about the biology of salmon, hatchery operations and river conservation through interactive exhibits in the Visitor Center. Watch egg-taking on the Spawning Deck through the viewing window. Salmon eggs are collected several times a week, usually in the morning (early-November through mid-December). Steelhead egg-taking occurs once a week (late-December through March).

● **WEIR**

This removable barrier prevents the salmon from swimming further upstream. Chinook salmon prefer to spawn in the main part of a river, and this barrier helps direct them into the hatchery. Steelhead are tributary spawners, actively seeking out smaller flows of water like the fish ladder. The weir is only in place during the salmon season.

● **RIVER DISCOVERY TRAIL**

This fully accessible 1/4 mile trail follows the edge of the American River and provides opportunities to watch the seasonal spawning of salmon and steelhead. Look for migrating and resident birds. Deer, river otter and coyote also call this area home. Most of the remaining spawning beds are located within the 8 river miles below this area. Water conservation and your responsible use of the river protect salmon, steelhead and a wide array of river wildlife.

● **AMERICAN RIVER TROUT HATCHERY**

This adjacent hatchery raises rainbow trout and kokanee salmon which are stocked in over 250 lakes and streams across northern and central California for recreational fishing. This hatchery is funded through the sales of fishing licenses and managed by the California Department of Fish and Game.

● **RACEWAYS**

Salmon grow in these ponds until they are ready to make the transition to ocean waters at about 6 months (4 to 5 inches long). Steelhead remain in the raceways for a year before they are released (8 to 10 inches long). The fish are then pumped into special tanker trucks and driven to their release sites. You can buy food to feed the fish for a quarter. The netting above protects them from fish-eating birds.

● **FISH LADDER**

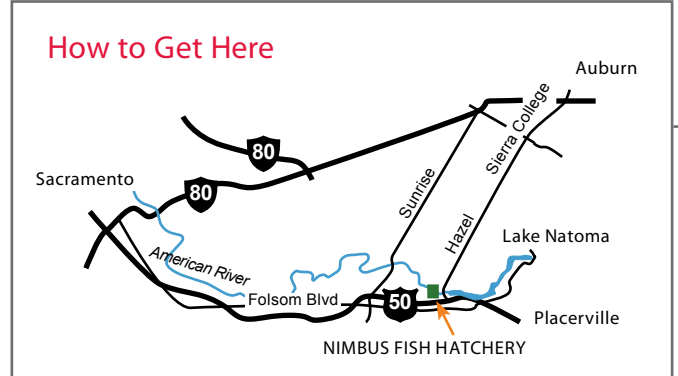
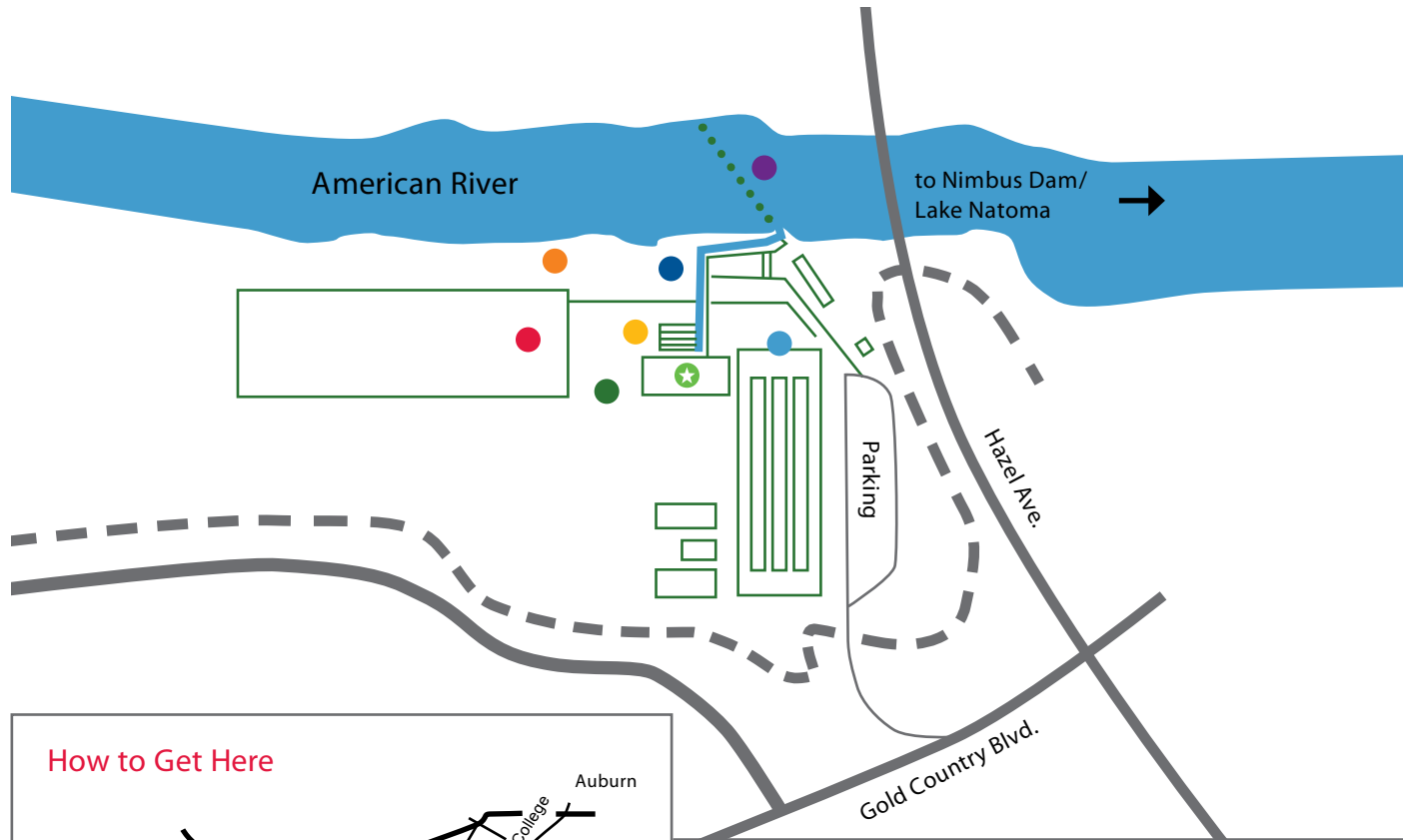
The instinct to swim upstream draws salmon and steelhead to the hatchery from the river by way of the fish ladder. Each step is a small jump for these powerful fish. Water flows in the ladder when conditions are right for spawning (usually early November through March). The gate at the ladder's base is often closed to prevent overcrowding in the holding pond. From the top of the stairs walk one step down; you are now standing at the high-water level of the February 1986 flood.

● **HOLDING PONDS**

At the top of the ladder, fish push through a one-way gate to enter the holding ponds which offer visitors up-close views of these spectacular fish. The crowder, a metal gate on wheels, is used to move the fish into the tranquilizing tank in the Spawning Deck. Salmon with immature eggs and sperm are returned to the ponds parallel to the building until they are ready.

● **SUPER SALMON PLAYSCAPE**

Designed especially for "small fry," this fully accessible play structure allows children to get up-close and personal with a salmon. Shade canopies and a river-themed bench make this a favorite spot for a rest or a picnic lunch.



Nimbus Fish Hatchery

BELOW LEFT TO RIGHT : FEMALE CHINOOK SALMON, MALE CHINOOK SALMON, FEMALE STEELHEAD, MALE STEELHEAD
Illustrations © Joseph R. Tomelleri

