

Is USFWS closing National Fish Hatcheries October 1st?

Federal budget cuts are threatening to close the 117-year-old D.C. Booth Historic National Fish Hatchery in Spearfish, a non-profit group that supports the hatchery said last week.

The hatchery is one of multiple fish hatcheries across the country targeted by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, which is prioritizing other programs over the National Fisheries Program, according to the Booth Society Inc. The USFWS has not confirmed that a decision to close the hatchery has been made.

Evenso, some officials say the USFWS plans to close many, if not all, of the nation's fish hatcheries on October 1, the beginning of the new federal fiscal year.

The federal government is planning to eliminate funding to nine Federal fish hatcheries in GA, TN, KY, UT, MO, ND, and AR, which will result in their closure. The closure of these hatcheries will have a lasting impact on local, State, and federal economies. These facilities also provide enormous ecological and social contributions to local and state communities. Nearly 7 million fish are stocked in waters across the country from only six of these hatcheries.

Planned hatchery closings

KENTUCKY- Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery

TENNESSEE- Dale Hollow and Erwin National Fish hatcheries

GEORGIA- Chattahoochee Forest National Fish Hatchery

ARKANSAS- Norfolk and Greers Ferry National Fish Hatcheries

MISSOURI-Neosho National Fish Hatchery

NORTH DAKOTA-Garrison Dam National Fish Hatchery

UTAH- Jones Hole National Fish Hatchery

The economic impact is tremendous - over 3,000 jobs created and a total economic output of nearly \$300 million dollars is generated by privately owned businesses selling food, lodging and supplies to trout fishermen. For every dollar spent on these fishery programs a return of \$67 dollars is generated in the private sector, and for each tax dollar spent producing trout, \$2.34 is returned to Washington in federal tax dollars generated from private business.

It is ironic that the USFWS is celebrating the 140th year of their fisheries program; the oldest program in the agency. They are celebrating this historic event by cutting the entire fisheries program by 12.4 million dollars. They are getting a 47.9 million dollar increase in their overall budget, but have chosen to spend that money on other programs and new programs, and scrap a program that brings revenue into the federal budget at a 2.3 to 1 ratio and supports over 3,000 jobs in the private sector!!!

For a number of years, the National Fish Hatchery System, a branch of the USFWS, has struggled with declining funding and annual increases in the costs. In addition to rising operating costs, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Directorate in Washington, D.C., has emphasized and prioritized other programs over those of the National Fisheries Program. As a result, the agency has made the decision to permanently shut down multiple fish hatcheries nationwide, including the D.C. Booth Historic National Fish Hatchery.

Contact your legislator now and ask them to see to it that our national fish hatcheries remain open