



Committee on Natural Resources U.S. House of Representatives

Chairman Doc Hastings

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Witnesses Agree on the Importance of a Robust National Fish Hatchery System

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs held an oversight hearing entitled *"National Fish Hatchery System: Strategic Hatchery and Workforce Planning Report."* This hearing examined the importance of the National Fish Hatchery System and the negative effects that the recommendations, in the Strategic Hatchery and Workforce Planning Report, would have on American jobs and the economy.

"From its high in 1940, the number of federal hatcheries has declined from 136 to nearly 70 today. These facilities, which average more than 70 years of age, produce and distribute 140 million fish and 120 million fish eggs with a value of over \$5 billion each year. In 2011, recreational anglers took 69 million trips, they caught 345 million fish, supported 364,000 jobs and the recreational fishing industry contributed over \$70 billion to our economy," [said Subcommittee Chairman John Fleming \(LA-04\)](#). "The self-fulfilling report that indicates that even if funding is increased by five percent, recreational propagation programs will be terminated and Service employees will be re-assigned primarily from Southeast Region 4. I intend to try to find out why the Service targeted hatcheries that produce recreational species."

Witnesses at the hearing testified on the importance of the National Fish Hatchery System and the recreational fishing industry that contributes over \$70 billion to America's economy.

[Congressman Phil Roe \(TN-01\)](#) spoke on positive economic impact of the Erwin Fish Hatchery in his district that could be negatively affected by the recommendations in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's planning report. Roe said he was *"troubled"* that this fishery could be closed in 2015. *"The Erwin fish hatchery and resulting trout stocking account for nearly 3,500 jobs and \$89.6 million in wage and salary income across the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Southeast Region."* Roe added, *"Fishing benefits a whole host of businesses and provides tourism dollars to many regions, so closure of fish hatcheries would be devastating to the economy in Tennessee and throughout the Southeast Region."*

[Congressman Doug Collins \(GA-09\)](#) was *"more than surprised"* when he learned that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was thinking of closing the Chattahoochee National Forest

Fish Hatchery, which is located in his district. Collins then underscored the economic importance of this hatchery in surrounding local communities. *“It is beloved by the community, it shows great return on investment, and it is an economic engine of this rural part of Georgia. This hatchery is a major source of revenue for Suches, and Northeast Georgia in general, having generated just over \$30 million of total economic output on just a \$747,000 investment. Talk about bang for your buck, this hatchery delivers.”*

[Congressman Rick Crawford’s \(AR-01\)](#) district hosts two of the largest mitigation hatcheries in the United States, the Norfolk and the Greers Ferry National Fish Hatcheries. Crawford said that from these two hatcheries, *“There is \$150 million in annual economic output, and over 1,700 jobs at stake.”* Even with the positive economic impact of these hatcheries, Crawford stated that he was *“truly astonished that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is even considering taking resources from the mitigation hatchery program”* when the net cost of these hatcheries to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is *“approaching nothing.”*

[Diane Parks, Deputy Chief of Operations and Regulatory for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](#), stressed the need for the Corps and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife to work together to meet any mitigation commitments. *“Since 2010, the Corps has worked closely with the Service to produce and release approximately 32 million fish into 45 different receiving waters impacted by Corps dams.”* Parks added, *“The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014 includes \$4,700,000 to be transferred to the Service for production of mitigation fish for the Corps, which will meet the 100 percent mitigation this fiscal year. Even under constrained fiscal times, the Corps looks forward to continued coordination and collaboration with the Service in meeting our mitigation commitments.”*

[Ed Carter, Executive Director of the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency and representing the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies](#), echoed his concerns about fishery closures stating he is *“very concerned about the potential divestiture of a major portion of the National Fish Hatchery program, and is concerned about the perceived retreat from sport fisheries partnerships with state agencies needing federal hatcheries support. Major hatchery closures will seriously disrupt ongoing federal -state cooperative fishery management programs, local economies, and the system of funding Sport Fish conservation itself.”*

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