



# EarthWatch Rhode Island



**Topic: Rhode Island Fish Hatcheries**

**Air Date: September 17, 2006**

## **Introduction**

Rhode Islanders and tourists looking for freshwater fishing opportunities don't have far to go. The state has hundreds of ponds, streams and lakes that provide a wide variety of freshwater game fish including Largemouth and Smallmouth bass, Black crappie, sunfish, Northern Pike, and domestic salmon. About 25,000 recreational fishing licenses are issued to Rhode Island residents every year by DEM, as well as close to 16,000 trout stamps, and more than 20,000 anglers turn out for opening day of the fishing season yearly. The popularity of freshwater fishing contributes significantly to the state's economy with freshwater anglers spending approximately \$13 Million<sup>1</sup> annually on items such as fishing equipment, bait, boats, fuel and other associated expenditures.

From an economic view, more is better. However, from the perspective of the resource, more anglers means fewer fish to go around. At popular fishing holes, fish are harvested at a high rate, and popular species have to be augmented by fisheries managers. That's why the Department of Environmental Management's Division of Fish & Wildlife raises fish to supplement natural populations.

## **Fish Hatcheries in Rhode Island**

The Department raises approximately 180,000 brown, brook and rainbow trout annually as well as Largemouth and Smallmouth bass, Atlantic salmon, and golden shiners at four fish hatcheries in Rhode Island. A fish hatchery is a facility that provides a favorable environment for hatching and developing fish eggs by maintaining proper water temperatures, oxygen levels, pH levels, and nutritional needs of developing fry, fingerlings, and adults.



**Fishermen enjoy a catch at Barber Pond in South Kingstown where some fish unloading is done by the hatchery.**

---

<sup>1</sup> 2001 Nation Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, US Fish & Wildlife Service, February 2003.

The recently renovated Lafayette hatchery, where trout are raised, is one of the hatcheries managed by DEM. Raising trout is a two-year process. It begins with staff placing eggs from fish raised at the hatchery into incubators, where they hatch in about 50 days. The fry are then placed in inside tanks and fed almost constantly for about three months, until they reach a length of four inches. They are then transferred to outside raceways until they are fully grown, which is generally about the age of 26 months but can be as early as 18 months. In the fall the two-year olds are stocked into selected RI waters prior to opening day of trout season. Some of the waters receive additional stockings in the Spring and Fall. There is also a very popular winter-ice fishing season in Rhode Island.

Certain fish may be raised in hatcheries for environmental conservation. Sometimes human activity can make it impossible for a fish to breed or can cause them to disappear from a body of water altogether. Some hatcheries can also be used to farm fish for human consumption. Farm raised fish contain lower levels of contaminants such as mercury and PCB's, which are hazardous to human health.

The four trout hatcheries in Rhode Island are:

- Lafayette Trout Hatchery, 424 Hatchery Rd., N. Kingstown
- Perryville Trout Hatchery, 2426 Post Rd., Wakefield
- Carolina Trout Hatchery, 13 Old Richmond Townhouse Rd., Carolina
- Arcadia Warmwater Hatchery, Box 75 RR#1, Arcadia Rd., Hope Valley

All four hatcheries offer educational opportunities for the public. To learn more about the hatchery program, visit the Fish & Wildlife page on the DEM website.

**Interviews:**

- Christine Dudley, Supervising Freshwater Fisheries Biologist (photo at right)
- Peter Angelone, Principal Biologist/Hatcheries Manager
- Al Ball, President, Trout Unlimited

