**Frequently Asked Questions**

1. **When is the best time to see salmon at the hatchery?**

Salmon can be seen at this hatchery at the middle of October through the middle of December. The greatest number of salmon in the river peaks in mid-November.

1. **When is the best time to see the hatchery take salmon eggs?**

The Mokelumne River Hatchery usually begins to take salmon eggs in mid-October and continues to take eggs until mid-December. For dates and times, please call our office at (209)759-3383.

1. **Does the Mokelumne River Hatchery raise Rainbow Trout?**

Our hatchery does raise Rainbow Trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss)*; we raise an anadromous form of rainbow trout called Steelhead Trout. Steelhead trout are a subspecies of rainbow trout that migrates out to the ocean and spawns in rivers, similar to Chinook salmon.

1. **Why is a hatchery necessary? Don’t the fish spawn naturally?**

Salmon and steelhead do spawn naturally in the Mokelumne River, but because there is very little spawning habitat for the fish - due to the building of the Camanche Dam - the hatchery has to compensate for the lost habitat by producing fish. There is not enough spawning habitat to support a flourishing population of salmon, therefore, the hatchery is used to insure salmon numbers do not fall to jeopardizing numbers.

1. **Why do the fish have to climb up the ladder?**

The fish ladder is designed to allow salmon and steelhead to move upstream to the hatchery where they are kept in a holding tank before they are artificially spawned. The reason why salmon and steelhead climb the ladder is because they instinctively follow flowing water.

1. **How can you tell the difference between a male and female salmon?**

It is easy to tell the difference between males and females once they return to river. Male salmon will have a long, hooked jaw, a humped back, and usually are brighter in color then the females while females will not have these same characteristics.

1. **What are the white spots on the adult salmon?**

A naturally occurring freshwater fungus that attacks the skin of the salmon causes the white spots found on some salmon. Steelhead can have these same spots, but when they return to the ocean after spawning, the fungus dies due to the saltwater and the steelhead heals.

1. **Why does the hatchery kill the salmon before taking their eggs?**

In their natural life cycle, both male and female salmon die shortly after spawning. At hatcheries, the salmon are killed first to make work easier and safer for hatchery employees.

1. **Why doesn’t the hatchery kill the steelhead when taking their eggs?**

Since steelhead trout have the ability to spawn multiple times before dying, the hatchery does not kill the steelhead. Instead, the hatchery takes their eggs by inserting a hypodermic needle and blowing air into the belly of the steelhead, which forces the eggs out through the vent.

**10. What happens to the dead fish after the hatchery takes the eggs?**

The fish are given away to non-profit organizations or San Joaquin County to feed the hungry.

