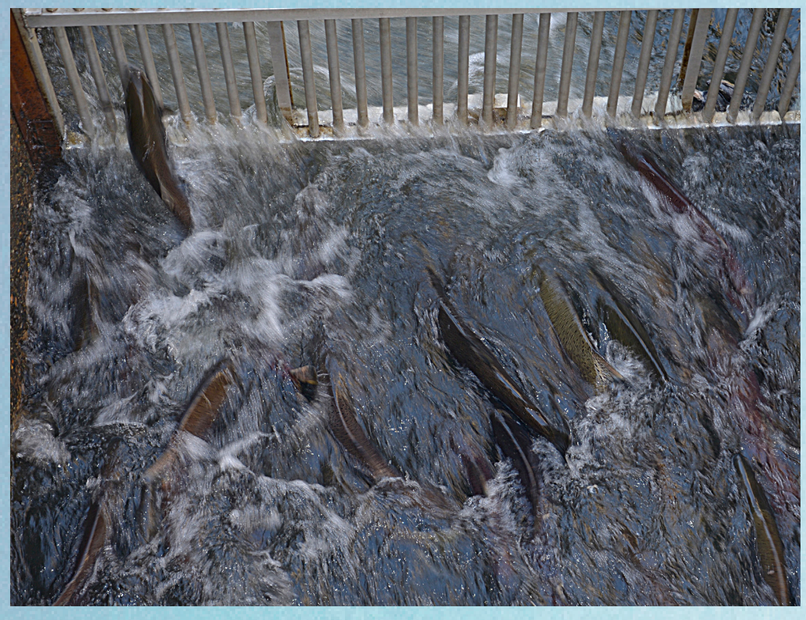
RECLAMATION
Managing Water in the West

Salmon Spawning at Nimbus Fish Hatchery

The Nimbus Fish Hatchery is operated for the Bureau of Reclamation by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. The hatchery was established to offset fish losses caused by Nimbus and Folsom dams that block fish from historic spawning habitat upstream The hatchery is located in Rancho Cordova, Calif, just off Highway 50 at Hazel Avenue.



Chinook salmon are shown at the fish rack or weir that stops their upstream migration and helps guide them to the fish ladder.

A lone Chinook salmon makes its way up the fish ladder at the Nimbus Fish Hatchery to a holding pond. In some years, more than 10,000 salmon will climb the 20 steps of the fish ladder.

From the holding pond, the fish are moved to a hydraulically operated basket which deposits them in an anesthetizing solution and then electrocutes them before workers remove the sperm or eggs.

The basket then lifts the fish to the sorting table where Fish and Wildlife Technicians Greg Ferguson and DJ Gervin separate the female from the male salmon.

Technician Andy Heape, Scientific Aide Brian Rodman and Seasonal Aide Anna Carley clean the fish before the sperm and eggs are removed.

After the fish are cleaned, Hatchery Manager Gary Novak removes the eggs from the females. The average salmon female has more than 5,000 eggs.

These incubater tanks hold thousands of salmon eggs to be fertilized.

This close-up view of the fish eggs shows black dots which are the eyes of the salmon.

The fertilized eggs grow into “fry” in “raceways” (concrete ponds) until they are ready to transition to the ocean at about 6 months old. The hatchery releases about 4 million Chinook salmon annually.