
North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

Regional Water Quality Control Board North Coast Region Staff Summary Report October 1-2, 2026

ITEM: 10

SUBJECT: Field Trip to Fall River Fish Hatchery

BOARD ACTION: This is an information item; no action will be taken by the Board

BACKGROUND:

Fall Creek Hatchery (Facility) is a mitigation hatchery operated by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) designed to support the recovery of Chinook and Coho salmon populations in the Klamath River basin¹ⁱ following the removal of Iron Gate Dam. The Facility is operated to mitigate the loss of fish habitat due to hydro-electric dams on the Klamath River. The Facility was constructed to simulate natural cold-water streams and is used to produce cold water fish species such as Chinook and Coho. Fresh water from Fall Creek is supplied as influent to the Facility by surface diversion from Fall Creek to maintain flows of up to 6.46 million gallons per day (MGD) ensuring the survival of fish populations and supporting ongoing restoration efforts following the removal of Iron Gate Dam.

The Facility discharges to Fall Creek at three points (Discharge Points 001, 002 and 003) in the Copco Lake Hydraulic Subarea within the Klamath River Hydrologic Unit. Discharge Point 001 is the primary point of discharge for the Facility and discharges wastewater from the settling pond. Discharge Point 001 consists of effluent that flows through the settling basin when cleaning activities and treatment are performed. Discharges from 002 and 003 are flow through lines that are used to release coho and chinook salmon to Fall Creek. Discharges from 002 and 003 are not altered chemically or physically before being released.

The North Coast Water Board adopted an individual National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for the Facility on April 6, 2023, before the Facility

¹ The Klamath River basin is 12,680 square miles in area. The Klamath River originates in southern Oregon and flows through northern California to meet the Pacific Ocean at Requa in Del Norte County, California. Forty-four percent of the watershed lies within the boundaries of Oregon, while the remaining 56% of the basin lies within the boundaries of California.

was constructed (R1-2023-0014). The Facility began discharging to Fall Creek on November 1, 2023. The NPDES Permit includes a compliance schedule to cease the discharge from the Facility ten years after first discharge from the Facility. The Facility must remain operational to effectively offset salmonid losses from the construction of the hydroelectric dams on the Klamath River.

The North Coast Water Board regulates three other CDFW-operated hatcheries (Coyote Valley Hatchery, Warm Springs Hatchery and Trinity River Hatchery) under *General Order R1-2021-0010 Waste Discharge Requirements for Cold Water Concentrated Aquatic Animal Production Facility Discharges to Inland Surface Waters, Enclosed Bays and Estuaries*. General Order R1-2021-0010 incorporates requirements from the Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region, including the Policy on Regulation of Fish Hatcheries, Fish Rearing Facilities, and Aquaculture Operations (Hatchery Policy).

One of the requirements included in the Hatchery Policy is a prohibition that states, “discharge of detectable levels of chemicals used for the treatment and control of disease, other than salt (NaCl), is prohibited. This provision on treatment of waste, is intended to prevent discharge of chemicals at levels that would cause toxicity, exceed water quality objectives, or otherwise impair beneficial uses”.

To comply with this prohibition, NPDES permits require hatchery operators to calculate the dilution of any drugs or chemicals in treated effluent based on the volume of water passing through the settling basin at the time of discharge. This ensures that chemical concentrations remain below detectable levels. All of the fish hatcheries in the North Coast Region maintain compliance with this requirement.

CDFW is organizing a tour of the Facility to allow Board Members opportunity to visit the newly constructed and operational mitigation hatchery. The purpose of this trip is to provide an overview of operations at the Facility and inform the Board on fishery recovery on the Klamath River.

RECOMMENDATION: N/A