

DRAFT
Fish Hatchery Operations

Description

Hatchery operations in the Central Valley augment the natural propagation of certain fish species. While increasing the size of fish populations, hatchery practices can contribute to the pressures on wild salmon and steelhead stocks by increasing competition, predation, and harvest rates on those species. Better spawning and rearing practices can be developed to improve the survival and return rate of hatchery stocks and hatchery capacity can be expanded to increase production from selected species. Changes in selection procedures for hatchery spawning can be implemented to reduce dilution of the gene pool in wild stocks.

This category includes the following actions:

- expand hatchery capacities,
- improve hatchery operations, and
- establish new captive breeding programs.

Purpose

Current fish hatchery operations, while boosting the populations of some fish species, may also contribute to dilution of the gene pool and increased disease rates in native stocks. In addition, they may contribute to pressures on wild stocks by increasing competition, predation, and harvest rates on those species. Changes in fish hatchery operations are intended to boost the effectiveness of existing hatchery operations while reducing the impacts of these operations on wild stocks.

Constraints

Increasing hatchery production may stimulate an increase in commercial fishing that could take a greater portion of natural production, decreasing spawning escapement. It may also result in increases in poaching in the Central Valley and coastal waters. Interbreeding hatchery and wild stocks may reduce natural genetic variations that protect populations against long-term changes in environmental conditions.

Linkages to Other CALFED Action Categories

Changes in fish hatchery operations will require coordination with harvest management actions.