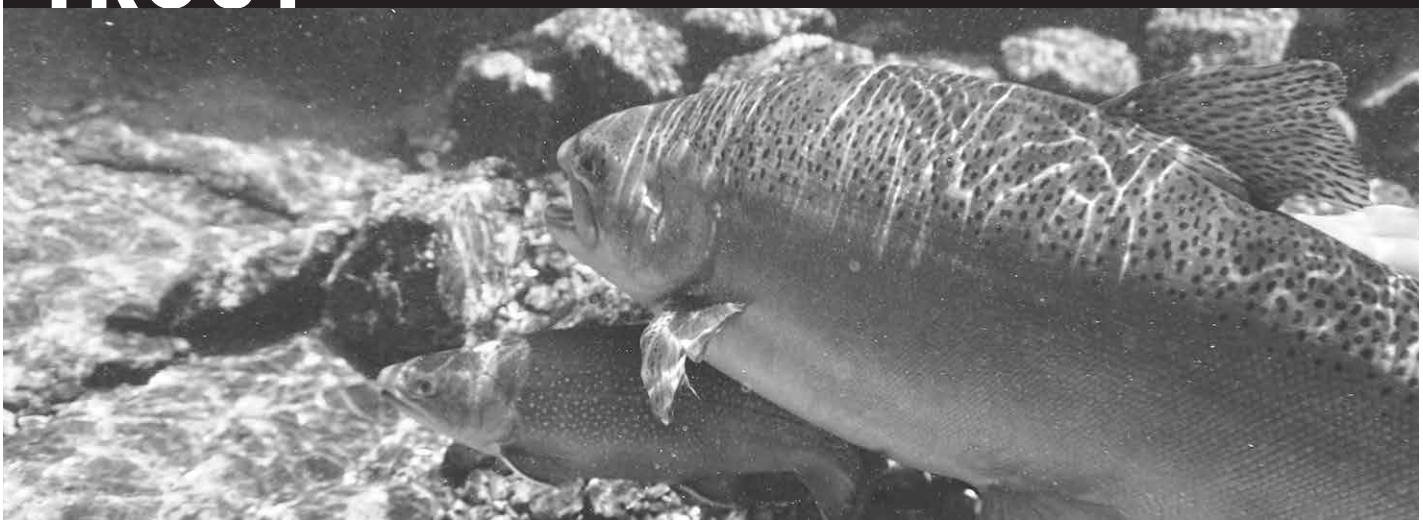
TROUT Raising Hatchery Trout



The trout raising process begins each year by collecting eggs and milt from adult trout. Rainbow and golden trout become ready to spawn starting around the middle of August and will be spawned weekly for the following eight to 10 weeks. Brown trout typically spawn in September and brook trout in October.

DNR spawns both two- and three-year-old trout which usually weigh around 3 pounds and 4-8 pounds, respectively. Prior to handling, an anesthetic is added to the water to reduce fish stress and make the trout easier to handle. Both the eggs and milt are extracted and mixed to produce fertilized eggs, which are then placed in incubating trays with a continuous flow of fresh spring waters. The eggs typically hatch in about three weeks, depending on water temperatures.

Just prior to hatching, the eggs are placed in troughs on a hatching tray, which holds the eggs just off the bottom, allowing the hatching fry to fall through a screen onto the tank bottom. The young fry will remain on the bottom of the trough for the next couple weeks of development before they start swimming freely in the water column. Once they absorb the yolk and become able to swim, the young fish are ready to start feeding.

These small trout will remain indoors through winter and well into the following spring. Hatchery staff must keep their tanks clean, provide feed multiple times per day, and watch for any signs of abnormal behavior or mortality that could indicated an illness. If the young fish contract an illness, hatchery staff must act quickly and take biological security measures to prevent further disease transmission.

In late spring, these fish are moved to outdoor raceways, where more space is available and growth can continue. The outside raceways become available upon completion of spring trout stocking. The raceways must be cleaned and disinfected prior to the small trout being released into this larger growing area. The trout remain in these outdoor raceways for the next eight to 12 months, before being stocked in streams and lakes throughout West Virginia.

Bowden Hatchery near Elkins is undergoing major renovations to increase production by 50 percent.

Historical Comparison (1979-2019)

Year	Number of Streams Stocked	Miles of Stream Stocked	Number of Lakes Stocked	Acres of Lakes Stocked
1979	147	752	30	171
2019	153	867	74	1,170

Trout hatchery production is a year-around process. The DNR has staff members residing at each of the hatchery facilities who remain on seven days a week, 24-hour-a-day watch in case any issues arise that could jeopardize the trout. The DNR hatchery system typically produces 700,000 to 850,000 pounds of trout each year for stocking, with the variability due to water flows and drought conditions. During stocking season, hatchery personnel will stop as many as 40 times to stock fish on a single stream. Because trout stocking occurs in over 200 streams and lakes throughout the state, hatchery staff will make over 15,000 stops each year!