

# Anglers to Help with Steelhead Collection for Mad River Fish Hatchery

January 16, 2015

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) trained 21 anglers at Mad River Fish Hatchery this week to aid in the collection of wild-origin steelhead from the Mad River. These anglers, called Mad River Steelhead Stewards, have volunteered their time to help the hatchery meet its annual production goals. The Stewards will begin collecting fish next week and the program is expected to run until at least the end of February.

CDFW's Hatchery and Genetic Management Plan (HGMP) for the Mad River Fish Hatchery requires more wild steelhead be used during spawning operations so that the genetic makeup of hatchery steelhead is closer to that of the Mad River wild steelhead. The hatchery's genetic management goal is to utilize 50-67 percent wild-origin steelhead in breeding program. Last year, the number of wild-origin fish available was insufficient and resulted in the rearing of only 40,000 steelhead smolts. Historically, the hatchery has released approximately 150,000 steelhead smolts annually.

"We are looking for new and innovative ways to increase the wild-origin segment of our hatchery steelhead spawning population," said Philip Bairrington, a senior environmental scientist with CDFW's Anadromous Fisheries Resource Assessment and Monitoring Program, and one of the lead scientists involved in development of the Mad River Fish Hatchery's HGMP. "Last year we tried seining, but that effort didn't produce enough wild-origin steelhead broodstock for the hatchery's needs. Our hope is that the participation of trained volunteer anglers — many of whom have been fishing this river for years, and are extremely successful — will greatly increase our chances of meeting our goals."

Hatchery staff taught the volunteers how to distinguish between wild-origin and hatchery steelhead and how to keep the handling of the fish to a minimum. Upon the capture of a wild adult steelhead, the Stewards will call hatchery personnel or CDFW fisheries staff, who will determine if the fish will be released or processed.

Though a volunteer angling program of this scope has never been implemented in California, similar programs have been in place in Oregon for some time.

Each volunteer Steward signed a three-month agreement. Stewards are expected to follow all sport fishing regulations and will carry their CDFW authorization at all times while fishing. If the program is successful, CDFW may recruit additional volunteers in the future.

## **Media Contacts:**

Philip Bairrington, CDFW Northern Region Fisheries Program, (707) 825-4859

Harry Morse, CDFW Communications, (208) 220-1169

For a video clip of Mad River Hatchery operations last year go to <http://youtu.be/cN58zXtTSqs>.