

Visitor Information

Visitors are welcome at Little Grassy Fish Hatchery. Educational tours are available. While tours are available throughout the year, the best time to visit is June through August. It is appreciated if large groups call ahead to schedule their tour. Visitors can typically see the spawning process for blue and channel catfish from early- to mid-June and can feed fish in the outdoor raceways from late-April until they are all stocked out, usually late- August or early September. The timing of these activities varies from year to year, so call ahead to see what is happening currently.

Visiting hours at Little Grassy Fish Hatchery are as follows:

April-September Hours:

8:30 AM – 3:30 PM Friday-Tuesday

8:30 AM – 2:00 PM Wednesday-Thursday

October-March Hours:

8:30 AM – 3:30 PM Monday-Friday

(Closed Saturday-Sunday)

Hatchery Office Phone: 618-529-4100

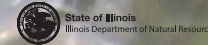
Website: <https://ifishillinois.org/programs/Hatcheries/LittleGrassy.html>

Little Grassy Fish Hatchery

1258 Hatchery Lane

Makanda, Illinois, 62958

Site Interpreter Contact Information
for scheduling mark.denzer@illinois.gov



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History

Established in 1959, Little Grassy Fish Hatchery continues its role as an important component of the Illinois Fish Hatchery System that is managed by the IDNR. The location of the hatchery was selected so that high quality water from nearby Little Grassy Lake could serve as the major water source for hatchery operations. The hatchery is 90 feet lower than the lake, which allows for gravity flow of the nearly 5,000 gallons of water per minute necessary to keep operations running during peak production. The original hatchery facility was a simple, small concrete block building and ten outdoor ponds.

To meet angler demand for increased numbers and additional species of sport fish, a major expansion and renovation of little Grassy Fish Hatchery began in 1979. The result was a 14,000 square foot hatchery building complete with offices, observation deck, visitor lobby, egg incubation room, and indoor rearing tanks. A total of 18 outdoor rearing and spawning raceways (long tanks that water flows through continuously during use) were constructed. The earthen ponds were reconfigured, resulting in 21 ponds totaling 19 acres of water. Indoor fish rearing facilities were also constructed, consisting of 20 start tanks, two large incubation racks capable of housing 120 incubation jars each, and 24 circular and other rearing tanks. A four-stage water treatment system was added to ensure proper treatment of water before discharge.

Fish Production

Little Grassy Fish Hatchery is primarily a warm-water fish hatchery and produces the following species:

- Black Crappie
- Largemouth Bass
- Redear Sunfish
- Bluegill
- Blue Catfish
- Channel Catfish

Little Grassy Fish Hatchery is tasked with producing and stocking these species in Illinois Department of Natural Resources managed water bodies both regionally and statewide. Channel Catfish production is the most "intensive" as it involves a more hands on spawning and rearing process than other species, and these fish are grown for over a year before they are stocked. Blue Catfish have a similar spawning process to Channel Catfish but are stocked out after their first summer growing season. Largemouth Bass, Bluegill, Redear Sunfish, and Black Crappie are produced primarily in ponds through "extensive" fish culture practices that involve much less inputs from hatchery staff.



The Importance of Fish Hatcheries

Fish hatcheries are an important component of maintaining quality fishing in Illinois. The Illinois fish hatchery system annually stocks more than 10 million fish at hundreds of sites across the State. In many water bodies, fish stockings are necessary due to poor fish reproduction or heavy fishing pressure. Fish stocking is especially important in lakes with poor habitat or in urban population centers. In these areas, fish stockings provide opportunities to a diverse group of people who may not otherwise have access to quality fishing.

