

CELEBRATE SPRING'S ARRIVAL AT THE PEQUEST TROUT HATCHERY OPEN HOUSE

The New Jersey DEP's Division of Fish and Wildlife will hold its annual Open House at the Pequest Trout Hatchery and Natural Resource Education Center on Saturday, April 2 and Sunday, April 3 from 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. daily. Admission is always free, as is parking.

The Open House is held the week before the start of New Jersey's Opening Day of Trout Season and gives visitors the opportunity to see how hundreds of thousands of brook, brown and rainbow trout are raised for stocking at favorite fishing spots throughout the state. More than 570,000 trout raised at Pequest will be stocked during the spring, with at least 180,000 available for anglers by Opening Day.

Back by popular demand as a feature attraction at this year's Open House is the Hog Trough. This gigantic mobile fishing tank holds thousands of gallons of water and will be loaded with monster trout and warmwater game fish from the Pequest and Hackettstown hatcheries. The youngster with the closest weight estimate of Bubba Trout will take home a donated trout rod and reel combo. Professional fishing demonstrations in the Trough are scheduled throughout the day. Visitors will see casting methods, learn effective fishing techniques and see how various lures work in the water. This is a fascinating exhibit for all ages, anglers and non-anglers alike!

Kids between the ages of 8 and 16 are in for a special treat of catch and release trout fishing a week before the season opens in the Fishing Education Pond. Trout in the Education Pond average several pounds and lunker trout weighing five pounds or more are not uncommon. The "Kiddie Fishing Tank" will provide plenty of trout fishing excitement as well, for kids under 8. Fish and Wildlife staff, Wildlife Conservation Corps volunteers and volunteers from Trout Unlimited will assist young anglers, and all fishing equipment and bait will be provided.

Beginner archery and shotgun ranges will be set up in the fields near the hatchery for those wanting to try their hand at one of the shooting sports. Bows, crossbows, firearms and ammunition will be provided. Certified Hunter Education Instructors will be on hand to provide instruction and to ensure a safe and enjoyable shooting experience. For archers with their own equipment, a 15-target 3-D course will be set up in the woods adjacent to the parking areas.

Inside the Natural Resource Education Center, representatives from various conservation organizations will be on hand to answer questions about how they are helping to conserve our natural resources. There will also be ongoing fly tying demonstrations, as well as wildlife artists, carvers and taxidermists.

Outside the main building, a Fishermen's Flea Market will be in full swing offering some good deals on both new and used equipment, lures, gear and so much more! New anglers looking for start up equipment as well as anglers looking to stock up on fishing supplies or upgrade fishing equipment will definitely want to check out the Flea Market deals.

Food can be purchased from vendors at the Open House or visitors are welcome to bring their own lunch to enjoy at one of the 3 picnic areas located on the 5,000 acre Pequest Wildlife Management Area.

The Open House is a great way for people of all ages to celebrate spring's arrival. Families, friends, scout troops, church groups, fishing clubs and anyone else who enjoys the outdoors are encouraged to spend a day in beautiful Warren County at this event.

For more information call 908-637-4125 or visit <http://www.njfishandwildlife.com/peqoh.htm> on the division's website.

The Pequest Trout Hatchery and Natural Resource Education Center is located 9 miles west of Hackettstown on Route 46 in Warren County.