

Lakes Committee Gets Approval on Revitalization

The Lakes Committee recently proposed three items to the Board of Directors to help return Long Lake and Camp Lake back to the fisherman's paradise that it once was. The Lakes Committee focused their Board recommendations on three items proposed by the State of Tennessee Department of Agriculture ("State".) The State has several specialists who focus on lake and fishery management. These same specialists have come to



Long Branch Lakes on several occasions in past years shocking and surveying Long Lake and Camp Lake. Their focus is on the quality of the fishery and the health and ratios of each lake's fish population. This same group recently came to shock and survey War Eagle Lake. The Lakes committee chose these experts because of their vast experience in lake and pond management coupled with our desire to return the lakes of Long Branch to their full potential as an excellent fishery.

The committee chose to focus on Long Lake as a primarily trophy bass lake and Camp Lake as a quality fishery. Both of these terms are explained below. We will manage these two

lakes separately.

The three recommendations we will be implementing in Long Lake and Camp Lake are:

1. Control nuisance animals having a negative impact on the lakes and fisheries.
2. Lime Long Lake in 2022 - This will require the Lake Committee to spread lime around Long Lake to stimulate growth of phytoplankton, a necessary start to the fish food chain.
3. Set creel and slot sizes for Camp Lake and Long Lake to improve fish growth rates

New signs will be posted on Long Lake and Camp Lake to address creel limits and slot sizes for bluegill and bass. the rules will be different for each lake; be sure to read the signs. These sizes limits and creel limits will be adjusted periodically to enhance the fishing experience for property owners and their guests.

The Trophy Bass Basics (Long Lake)

One of the biggest trade-offs when managing for *trophy* bass is that angling catch rates often go down. Florida bass genetics have some influence here; however, the biggest factor is that the bass have easy access to optimal sized natural food, primarily bluegill. In a *trophy* system, the fish expend very little energy in catching their next meal. This means that the lake needs an abundance of bluegill and a reduced amount of smaller bass. This maximizes their (larger bass) weight gain. Trophy lakes have the waters fertilized (limed) to enhance fish growth since limed waters hold more micro-organisms further helping feed the fish. The water should be a lime green color once it is in balance. Water clarity should be less than 24 inches. In trophy lakes, bass are less prone to be fooled into pursuing a fast moving, artificial lure since there is an abundance of food. One way to counter this is to use larger artificial baits fished with a slower retrieve. However, inexperienced anglers often consider this type of bass lake as unsatisfactory since fewer bass are caught. In these lakes, the fishermen leave the bluegill while smaller bass are removed. No trophy bass are removed



since they are genetically critical to insuring the production and growth of future trophy bass.

Quality Bass Management is different (Camp Lake)

A *quality* fishery is managed differently. The goal is to produce a fishery where anglers can easily catch numerous fat, healthy bass measuring 12-20 inches. A *quality* management plan does not necessarily mean you have to give up all hope of catching a wall-hanger. In fact, these fisheries still produce some larger trophy bass. Under a *quality* bass management program, it is still important to harvest undersized bass. However, we establish the “maximum harvest length” at a smaller size. Limits for removal of bluegill and bass are set as well as slot limit sizes for bass.



Quality bass fishing is more enjoyable to all skill levels of anglers. The novice angler has a better chance of catching more bass but the chance of catching a trophy bass goes down. It is also more practical from a financial standpoint as it reduces costs involved with superior genetics, increased harvest using electrofishing equipment, and supplemental forage stocking.

On Culling Bass

Selective harvesting is essential for good bass-bluegill fishing. The goal is to maintain a balance of small, medium and large sizes of bass and bluegill. When all sizes of bass and

bluegill are present, bass have enough to eat. This balanced bass population keeps the bluegill population managed so they too have enough food.

Bass and bluegill swallow their food whole. If a food item is too big, they cannot eat it. If it is small, it takes too much work to capture. Because of this, a good fishing pond needs a balanced mixture of small, medium and large bass and bluegill.

To ensure there will be enough food of the right size for both bass and bluegill, the pond owner must harvest the right number and size of bass. The 12-inch and under bass must not be allowed to become too numerous, or they will eat too many small bluegill, leaving nothing for the next generation of bass. The 12- to 18-inch bass must all be returned to the pond, to ensure there will be replacements for the 18-inch or larger bass. The pond owner has some flexibility in choosing how to harvest the 18-inch and larger bass. He can harvest them lightly and have a fairly large number of big bass or more heavily to try reducing competition for food and produce trophy bass. Returning every small, medium and large bass to the pond is a mistake made by many pond owners. This “catch and release” of all sizes causes the bass to run low on bluegill and become skinny.

The Lakes Committee will evaluate Long Lake and Camp Lake annually to determine and adjust slot limits and creel limits thus improving current fishing conditions.

Don't forget to take a kid fishing....after all, we are all kids!