



One of 10 pickup trucks full of large rocks added to the main lake in April as part of the habitat restoration weekend.



Piles of cedar branches and hardwood stumps wait to be bundled together and sunk in the main lake to provide habitat for fish and other wildlife.

Harvesting Fish

Catch & Release has been a benefit to the quality of fish and fishing in many larger and heavily fished public lakes. But this simple philosophy actually hurts the health and productivity of smaller, lightly fished, private lakes and ponds where there is often a surplus of 8 to 12 inch bass.

A largemouth bass should gain 3 to 4 inches per year and could live for up to 16 years. When a lake contains an overabundance of fish of the same length there simply isn't enough food to go around as they all key in on the same size forage.

Studies have shown that in order for a large-mouth bass to gain 1 pound it must eat 10 pounds of forage fish.

We are fortunate to have a very healthy bluegill population in our lake as well as a strong crayfish presence. But with so many mouths to feed the fish just can't get enough to eat once they grow to a certain size. The ones you catch are, quite literally, starving.

To catch bigger, healthier, bass tomorrow—start keeping all bass you catch under 15” today. Everything except bluegill that is. Big bluegill sure taste good—but they are the lifeblood of the lake—food factories, to put it crudely.

Don't think you could keep enough to make a difference? Consider this...

That one 9 inch bass you just took back to the cabin immediately freed up, for other fish to eat, the 8 pounds of baitfish it was going to consume this year. That's like putting a pound of catchable weight back into the lake. Harvest a 13 inch bass and you may have just prevented a mature fish from spawning in the spring. On average 5 offspring will survive to age 4, meaning....

You just put almost 5 pounds of catchable weight back in the lake by keeping 1 fish!



LAKE HABITAT RESTORATION INITIATIVE

“Don't tell fish stories where the people know you; but particularly, don't tell them where they know the fish.”

~Mark Twain

What is “Habitat”



Habitat is what a plant or animal needs to reproduce, live, grow, thrive, congregate, or just plain loaf about. The type of habitat a lake or pond requires depends on the goal for that particular

body of water. At Aspenhof the main lake is a focal point of the community. It provides fishing, swimming, boating, and most importantly—a place to gather with friends and family in the splendor of nature’s landscape.

The lake has accommodated most of these goals flawlessly over the last several decades. But if its inhabitants could speak, they’d tell you life has not been so rosy beneath the water’s surface.

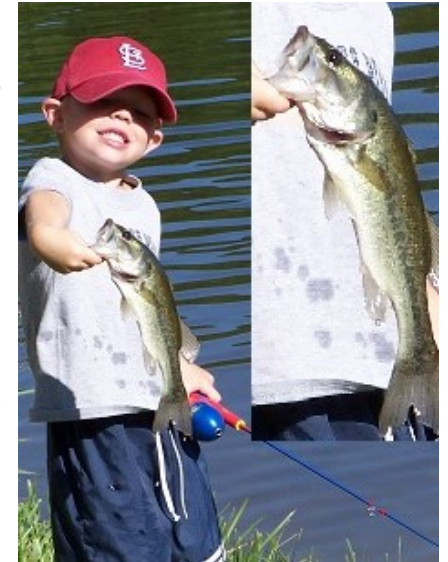
Our goal is to introduce habitat to a relatively barren environment for the benefit of our wildlife while at the same time preserving the beauty, safety, and overall usability of the lake for everyone.

Thus far, we have introduced a great deal of natural structure at varying depths around the lake. This includes cedar trees, hardwood stumps, boulders, and even a very large pea gravel bed to facilitate bluegill spawning.

A great deal of effort was made to ensure that no eye-sores or swimming hazards were created in the process.

Monitoring Fish Health

The addition of habit and the thinning of an over-crowded fish population are the first steps toward a healthier fishing lake. Studies have shown this to be true and thus, in theory, we understand that what we’ve put in to motion will work. But fishermen want to feel the proof pulling hard on the end of their line. We, too, prefer measurable gains. Fisheries biologists across the globe have standardized on a universal method of monitoring fish health known as “Relative Weight”. In the underwater world a fishes health is directly proportionate to their weight relative to their length (if only that were true up here!). Scientists have developed a set of values indicating the ideal weight for a fish of a particular species of a given length. If a fish is proportionate to this scale then it is deemed healthy. To light for it’s length—not so healthy; Overweight—very healthy. The majority of the largemouth bass at Aspenhof somewhat resemble the one pictured to the right, caught in the Summer of 2005. Measuring just above the average length for it’s species—the food supply has run out and its relative weight is extremely low.



Beginning with the Fishing Derby in 2013, samples of fish, of all species and sizes, will be weighed and measured. The results will be stored in a database for ongoing analysis. Fish will be sampled continually throughout the next several years. Fish with a low relative weight will be harvested while a percentage of healthy fish will be tagged and released. The long-term goal of the study is to evaluate the impact of the habit introduced as well as the result of harvesting large numbers of fish (see back of this pamphlet). If we are successful the data will show us a growing number of sampled fish that begin to approach and even surpass the relative weight of the tagged fish.

If you happen to catch a fish with a yellow numbered tag protruding from its back, please release immediately. It



would be ideal if we could get measurements from all anglers, but the method used to measure the fish is standardized and done on the exact same equipment each time in order to preserve the integrity of the data being stored. Of course, feel free to record the # and call Jim Reddy, anyway—he loves to talk fishing.

Jim “The Lakes Guy” Reddy walks from cabin #98 to the main lake to fish - often several times a day.

Contact him to talk anything lakes related - but be prepared for a fish story or two.

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