

2012 State Updates

Alabama

State lakes

There are 23 state lakes (20 sites) in Alabama. Jack Turner, the state lakes supervisor, reported that usage has declined about 25% in his tenure, most of this in the last 7 or 8 years. The most common problem that affects angling success in many of the lakes is bass-crowding. Not only are bass growth rates low as a result, but recruitment of bluegill and crappie are usually low in these systems.

Historically, many of these lakes were drained and restocked every few years to maintain a productive population. However, this option has usually been overlooked as many of the drainage systems are in poor shape. This renovation would also leave the lake manager without an income for 1 to 2 years as they are hired on contract. The facilities around many of the lakes are beginning to degrade and require continuous maintenance, which greatly reduces the money and time that has been spent on major fish population changes. So, in attempt to improve some of these bass-crowded fisheries, several practices have been commonly used such as, bass removals via electrofishing, shoreline rotenone of juvenile bass, adding fish attractors to increase angling and efishing success, and most recently, the statewide bag limit on bass has been removed for some of these lakes.

With the increasing demand for facility improvement/maintenance, probably 90% of Jack's time and is spent coordinating that as well as dealing with lake manager issues rather than biological analysis and improvements. More and more of the biological work on the state lakes have been shifted to the district biologist. This has led to some progressive changes recently.

For example, the fish populations in 3 lakes in D4 (SE Alabama) are under renovation now for the first time in 30-40 years. These lakes are expected to be closed for 2 years from time of draining. However, the new fish populations should do well the first few years and attract more anglers. They should also be easier to keep in balance.

The supervision of five lakes have been either taken over by city governments or left open to the public. These decisions are being made on lakes that either have a vacancy in the lake manager position or ones that simply don't get enough use to warrant our full involvement. One lake is simply left open to the public with no fee and we are considering another one, however several issues such as grass maintenance, litter, vandalism, etc become a problem. We are discussing how the gate might could be opened closed by someone and possibly an honor-style payment system. If budget continues to decline, we may look harder at more lakes for this option, but hopefully not!

Other obstacles have been a tornados and an earth quake destructing facilities on two of our lakes this past year. Bibb Co. lake (100 acres) was directly hit by an F4 tornado last April and all facilities and

landscape around the lake was demolished. This lake was currently under renovation and was scheduled to open this summer, but likely will remain closed another year or two.

Lee Co Lake

The renovation of Lee Co Lake (130 ac) has been the most significant. It has been bass crowded for years with the population steadily decreasing for past 7 or 8 years. Corrective management has been intensive bass removals via e-fishing every year, as much as 22 lbs/ac one year. Total annual harvest (including anglers) has been 15 to 20 lbs/ac average each year. Two shoreline rotenone applications were conducted during consecutive summers to remove YOY bass. Bass creel limits were removed. All to no avail.

The decision to drain was expedited by the fear of expected additional work required by the new NPDES permitting that was expected to go in effect this past October. So, we drained in August and poisoned before this date. The lake has never been drained completely in its 40 years of existence.

We had the use of 4 to 6 department personnel and 2 bull dozers for about 4 weeks to work on the lake basin. Shoreline areas available to bank anglers were deepened 1 to 2 feet and 7 earthen piers constructed. Some of the spoil material was used to make underwater ridges and humps. The fish habitat in the bottom of the lake was greatly improved during this time, mostly by cutting large hardwood trees and dragging them with the bull dozers. Approximately 95 large hardwood trees were placed in bottom of lake. Existing fish attractors were pushed into more concentrated piles. Fishing piers and the drain tower were also renovated during this time. The gate valve closed smoothly and the lake is currently half full.

The decision was made to attempt to push the growth of the original stock of bass such that more bass anglers are attracted to the lake. Hopefully, this new interest in bass fishing at the lake will in turn lead to more angler bass harvest. The stocking recipe consisted of 1500 bream per acre and 75 bass per acre (20:1) and 1500 fathead minnows per acre. Fertilization will be more aggressive and span a longer period. Creel regulations will limit the harvest of original stock bass the first few years. Other efforts will be put in place to stimulate the interest in bass fishing and bass harvest. If a quality bass fishery is produced and a demand for this develops, we will discuss increasing the fee, possibly for just boat access.

Many of our state lakes are still managed with the same goal as they were 40 years ago, which is to provide food fish for local residents. To maintain popularity among our state lakes, we are going to need to do a better job adapting to the changing attitudes of today's angler. This is going to mean producing a more enjoyable fishing experience to the recreational angler. In most cases, this means more emphasis on quality bass. Maybe not for every lake, but we need to make this shift in some of them. Hopefully, Lee Co. Lake will be a good model to get started.

Pond Program

In attempt to lower salary costs, beginning March 1, 2010, Alabama DCNR went from 6 districts to 5. Alabama is still performing on-site technical assistance to pond owners. However, the increased size of each district and new district responsibilities (e.g. more stream work) has forced the pond technical assistance program to be offered in a more efficient manner. One approach was to reduce the number of frivolous pond checks. The idea of charging a fee for this service has been explored and found to have several potential drawbacks, thus is still under discussion. Therefore, district biologists have learned to be more effective at providing assistance over the phone and have had to use more discretion when deciding if a site visit is necessary. Biologists have also been given more flexibility as to when pond checks can be performed. Previously they were only conducted in the months of June and September. Now, we able to schedule pond checks anytime between these months with regard to our other responsibilities. Finally, we developed a carbon copy pond check sheet that allows us to provide the pond owner with his pond data and written recommendations at the pond bank. Our pond management handbook as well as detailed fact sheets describing various population conditions and management practices are also provided at the pond. This allows the pond owner to have the recommendations in hand and take action immediately and the biologist no longer needs to spend hours in the office writing letters with the recommendations.

ADCNR discontinued the pond stocking program in 2009.

In 2008, our department began the creation of a pond management video. The goal of this video was to enhance our current technical assistance program and how it is understood by pond owners. It will include every level of detail regarding pond management that is included in our pond book, fact sheets, and described during on-site pond checks. However, it will go a step further by showing the management practices in action. The video is expected to be approximately 3 hours long and will have chapters where the pond owner can navigate to a section of interest. The amount of time involved in order to write, film and produce a comprehensive video of this magnitude was underestimated. Scheduling certain seasonal shots proved the most difficult and our greatest limitation. Nearly all filming is complete. The film/production crew has had to place the project on hold several times in order to fulfill other necessary responsibilities. However, the production process is well underway and estimated to be complete this summer.

Arkansas

Catfish populations in 3 small lakes in Northwest Arkansas were sampled using tandem baited hoop nets to get information on relative abundance, length frequency, condition and growth. The data has not been analyzed yet, but will be by the end of March. These lakes will be sampled every year for several years to better manage channel catfish populations in these lakes.

PVC habitat was installed into two small impoundments in 2011. Approximately 300 PVC structures were placed in Lake Elmdale and 30 structures in Crystal Lake. Maps were produced that are going to be

given to bait shops and gas stations in local communities for anglers to use. Interactive maps have also been placed online at the Arkansas Game and Fish website.

An exploitation study on crappie in Lake Saracen began in November 2011. This is a cooperative project with the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB) and the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. A team from the UAPB collected and tagged 214 crappie during the month of November. The tagged fish are worth a reward from \$10 to \$100. At this date no tags have been returned.

Kentucky

KY Farm Pond Stocking Program:

Takes in roughly \$30,000/yr. Current rates; 0 – 1.4 acres = \$75; 1.5 – 2.9 acres = \$200; greater than 3 acres = \$200 per pond plus \$150 per additional acre over 3. Largemouth bass, bluegill and channel catfish are offered. 2011 had 180 requests for fish, a new low for the program. (Contact: Gerry Buynak 1-800-852-0942 ext 4526)

KY Technical Guidance Program

Biologists handle all possible inquiries via phone but make site visits accordingly. Aquatic vegetation and stunted bass are the most common problems. Biologists will identify nuisance vegetation and recommend treatment. Biologists also electrofish accessible ponds to verify fish population issues and recommend a course of action. Over 200 ponds are visited and over 1000 inquiries are handled via telephone, email or letter statewide. We are working on revisions to current KY Pond Management Guide to publish when current supply is exhausted.

KY FINS Program

In 2011, 34 lakes ranging from 1-29 acres in size were stocked multiple times with a total of 219,000 channel catfish and rainbow trout. All lakes in the FINS program have standardized regulations; 5 rainbow trout, 4 channel/blue catfish, 1 largemouth bass with a minimum size limit of 15", and 15 bluegill/other sunfish. Exploitation, creel surveys, hoop net sampling, and angler attitude surveys are ongoing. (Contact: Dane Balsman 1-800-852-0942 ext 4480)

Flathead Stocking Study

In 2007 the KDFWR stocked 417 flathead catfish that ranged in length from 8.4 to 36.0 inches in an attempt to reduce overabundant sunfish numbers and improve growth of sunfish and largemouth bass populations in AJ Jolly Lake. Again in 2009 the KDFWR stocked 308 flatheads that ranged from 3.0 to 25.4 inches. In 2011, a final stocking of 403 flatheads were stocked that ranged in length from 3.8 to 38.2 inches. Flatheads were obtained from GA DNR as part of their non-native flathead eradication program. The lake has abundant gizzard shad. The hypothesis of the project was that the stocking of a

top-level predator would reduce densities of abundant sunfish. Ultimately, this should help improve size structure and growth rates of sunfish and possibly other sport fish species including largemouth bass and channel catfish. Low pulse 15/pps DC electrofishing has failed to produce significant numbers of flathead catfish. Jug lines and trotlines have also been used to sample for flathead catfish (both illegal for recreational anglers on lakes <500 acres in KY). A no harvest regulation for flathead catfish was implemented in fall 2009. However, KDFWR is having trouble determining population size of native and stocked flathead catfish in the impoundment. No improvements have been observed to sunfish size classes or growth with very few fish exceeding 6". (Contact: Dane Balsman 1-800-852-0942 ext 4480)

LMB Removal Study

Largemouth bass were removed via intensive electrofishing from Beaver Lake. 897 LMB 8-15 inches were removed (35% population reduction). Spring data will tell how beneficial the removal was but fall data show a dramatic increase in fish >15" and a slight increase in relative weight for bass 12-15" and >15". (Contact: Jeff Crosby 1-800-852-0942 ext 4464)

Catfish Stocking Rates in Small Impoundments

Biologists continue evaluating stocking rates with the use of tandem hoop nets. Age and growth data are collected to assess the status of each population. At present stocking rates range from 10 – 100 fish/acre. Large variability has been noted in hoop net catch rates.

Research Studies: (Contact: 1-800-852-0942)

1. Redear and bluegill management in small impoundments (Dave Dreves ext 4469)
2. Channel catfish sampling and management in small impoundments (Chris Hickey ext 4467)
3. Trophy LMB development at a newly constructed small impoundment (Chris Hickey ext 4467)
4. Stocking of limited blue catfish as a bonus fishery in small impoundments (Chris Hickey ext 4467)
5. Stocking two different sizes of blue catfish in small impoundments (Chris Hickey ext 4467)
6. Supplemental bass stocking in small impoundments (Chris Hickey ext 4467)

KY Voluntary Public Access Program

The goal of this program is to promote and increase recreational fishing and boating opportunities in Kentucky. Private landowners who own farm ponds, lakes, boat ramps, or stream access can enroll in the program and receive a financial reimbursement from KDFWR to allow the public to access these areas. Landowners are not selling or giving up the rights to their land, but merely agreeing to allow the public access to these specific areas for the sole purpose of fishing and/or boating. So far the program has been very successful with 10 landowners enrolling 18 ponds in the program ranging in size from 0.5 to 32 acres. There are also 42 stream sites opening 18.27 miles on 27 different streams and 5 boat ramp/slide-in sites. (Contact: Kerry Prather 1-800-852-0942 ext 4457)

Other Issues

1. Renovation of old impoundments (One scheduled in 2012-2013).
2. Use of lands around state owned lakes (i.e. boat docks, etc.).

Louisiana

In Louisiana, technical advice to owners of ponds and small lakes is a part of the responsibility of the Inland Fish Division. Division biologists make several site visits assisting residents of the state on problems ranging from construction and stocking requirements, to harvest and disease identification. The biologists also answer numerous phone inquiries about various pond-related problems.

Aquatic vegetation has become a problem in most small impoundments. Biologists provide advice and technical assistance as well as aquatic plant identification assistance for pond owners on request. Inland Fish division also issues triploid grass carp permits to individuals that have aquatic vegetation problems. Approximately 328 permits were issued in the last year.

Louisiana has not provided fish to private pond owners since 1988. Private pond owners are given a fingerling producers list where they can purchase fish. Also, a pond management guide is offered to these individuals for helpful management ideas. This producer's list and pond management booklet is on our web site www.wlf.louisiana.gov.

The Office of Fisheries is currently in the process of developing a community fishing program for LDWF. Within this program, LDWF would identify potential opportunities to bring fishing access to municipal areas as well as suburban and rural communities. LDWF believes fishing should be a readily accessible activity to all Louisiana residents and that the development of community fishing opportunities significantly increases access to quality fishing. LDWF will only support community fishing opportunities that allow open access to the public, with particular attention to access typically in short supply; shoreline angling and accessibility to the handicapped. For the purposes of this program, a public waterbody is one that is no more restricted to the general public than to any other group or individual. The objectives of this program are as follows:

1. Increase the number of recreational fishing opportunities and participation in recreational fishing each year
2. Develop cooperative relationships with local government and community organizations to provide community fishing opportunities
3. Develop and/or maintain a fishery that will provide the opportunity to catch fish
4. Provide training and educational opportunities to teach children and adults how to fish and enjoy other related aspects of nature
5. Develop and increase anglers' and nonanglers' environmental awareness and conservation ethics in the community

The most recent community fisheries project is in the south central part of the state, Eunice City Lake Renovation Project. It is the objective of this renovation project to replace the existing fish population with desirable fish stocked at rates proven to produce a balanced, self-sustaining population; as well as revitalizing the facility to accommodate those seeking an outdoor recreational refuge within their community. This project will be completed by the end of 2012.

Species stocked in small ponds/lakes in Louisiana in 2011:

Florida Largemouth Bass	3,673
Channel Catfish	74
Bluegill	5,804

Oklahoma

Tulsa Urban Fishing Program

The system consists of 17 water bodies including 15 ponds ranging from 0.8 acres to 7.2 acres and two municipal water storage reservoirs of 238 and 431 acres. Ponds are highly variable in shape, depth (6 - 18 feet), shoreline vegetation, substrate, fish community, and angler use. Some ponds are utilized for urban storm water retention with little to no maintenance, whereas other ponds are highly maintained with aeration and seasonal put-and-take trout fishery.

Ponds were inventoried for fish by two methods- boat electrofishing and baited hoop nets. Two hoop net triplicates were deployed in each pond for 72 hours. Nets were baited with soy/cheese logs. Prior to removal of hoop nets, electrofishing was performed around the perimeter of the ponds via three, 5 minute units of effort. Pond fisheries were dominated by centrarchids. Sunfish species, crappie species, and largemouth bass were most abundant overall. Some ponds contained stunted crappie while others had high catch of quality largemouth bass. Few ponds contained channel catfish and black bullhead were more common but rarely abundant in the catch. The only pond that demonstrated abundant channel catfish is one that is frequently stocked by the City of Jenks for fishing clinics in cooperation with ODWC. Ponds demonstrating low abundance of channel catfish were recommended for stocking. Four ponds were stocked with 7" channel catfish in summer 2011. Additional ponds (inventoried in fall 2011) will be recommended for stocking in summer 2012.

Municipal water storage reservoirs were inventoried with Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) standardized sampling protocols. Each reservoir (one in fall 2010, one in fall 2011) was sampled with experimental floating shad nets and experimental gillnets. Reservoir fisheries primarily included gizzard shad, channel catfish, and white bass, in order of abundance. One reservoir was traditionally managed for walleye, but due to dewatering practices, these stockings were not continued.

Contact - Jason Schooley - ODWC Fisheries Biologist - (918) 299-2334

Close to Home Fishing Program (CTHFP)

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) oversees the CTHFP which has been running for 14 years. The ODWC cooperates with 16 municipalities which include nearly 50 water bodies statewide. The ponds range in size from a ½ acre to 60 acres. The City of Enid with 4 ponds was added to the program in 2011. Benefits of signing onto the program include, fish stockings, fish habitat improvement, technical assistance, weed control, law enforcement and preferred status for angler access improvement projects.

Tandem hoop nets surveys for channel catfish took place at Sutton, Choctaw, Edwards and NE Lions Park. Catch rates were low for all lakes and additional 10" fish will be requested. Electrofishing surveys were performed at 2 potential CTHFP ponds in OKC for baseline data. Crystal Lake, Mineral Wells and Highland Park sites were also shocked. Good numbers of catchable sized fish were seen at Crystal and Mineral Wells. The Highland Park pond was choked with filamentous alga and revealed a stunted bluegill sunfish population. Channel catfish and BG x GRN sunfish were stocked at many of the CTHFP sites. Rainbow trout were stocked at 4 of the ponds for winter time events. Requests for trout stockings at other CTHFP sites are pouring in. Local sponsors will need to purchase the trout.

Habitat activities included the construction and placement of 300 spider blocks at Crystal Lake and Highland Park ponds. Curd buoys were set out to mark the sites at each lake. Twenty fish feeders were maintained and 2 tons of Silver Cup fish feed was dispensed. Aeration systems at Dolese, Edwards Park, South Lakes Park and Little River Park were cleaned and made ready for the upcoming summer months. Cattails were mowed and sprayed at the NE Lions Park in Norman.

Contact - Keith Thomas - Fisheries Biologist (405) 325-7288

Stocking evaluation of grow-out channel catfish in Oklahoma's small impoundments

Nine Department owned lakes are being evaluated during a 3 year study. This is the 2nd year of the study using tandem hoop nets. An angler opinion survey ran in conjunction with the hoopnetting in 2011. Catch rates are variable. Adjustments to channel catfish stocking criteria have already been made. Experimental stocking rates will be monitored for 3 years in an attempt to improve size distribution and angler satisfaction. Stocking rates were adjusted based on growth data.

Contact - Chas Patterson - Fisheries Biologist - (405) 325-7288

Lake Elmer Renovation

Elmer is a 60 acre Department owned lake near Kingfisher. Lake was very shallow and experienced several minor fish kills over the years. Major fish kill occurred in summer of 2009. Lake was drained and left to dry out in 2010. Total lake renovation took place in 2011. One million cubic yards of silt was removed from the lake bed. Three thousand tons of donated concrete was placed on dam as rip-rap.

Several hundred spider blocks were installed. New docks are on order. Now all we need is some rain and lots of it!

Contact - Ty Harper – Fisheries Biologist – (580) 474-2668

South Carolina

The SCDNR currently maintains 17 public impoundments ranging in size from 5.0 to 300 acres. Historically, the level of management has varied significantly from lake to lake due to the fact a number of them are located on large watersheds which prevents or reduces the success of traditional management practices. Furthermore, recent budget reductions have resulted in changes in program priorities within the Fisheries Section, thus making it difficult to maintain or expand a number of management strategies on several of the impoundments. One notable example of a reduction in program activities was the discontinuation of the youth fishing rodeos that were held annually at a number of the state lakes.

Most of the lakes have been stocked with bluegill/redear, largemouth and channel catfish at some point and several have undergone renovation within the recent past. Rough fish populations remain a problem in a number of the impoundments as does poor water chemistry and nuisance aquatic vegetation. Standardized lake population sampling revealed that sunfish growth is much less than desirable in most impoundments. Routine management practices such as liming and fertilization are conducted on seven lakes, fish attractors are maintained in eight of the impoundments and amenities such as handicapped fishing piers and picnic sheds are present at nine of the sites. Recently, habitat development activities such as the placement of gravel beds for spawning sites were undertaken in several lakes. Those lakes deemed most manageable receive annual fish population monitoring via seining or electrofishing. Efforts to manipulate fish populations or otherwise address identified problems with a particular lake's fishery have included stocking augmentation, marginal rotenone and/or and harvest restrictions. A qualitative angler survey of fifteen of the agency maintained lakes revealed most anglers rated their fishing experience "fair" to "poor. Efforts are still underway to re-evaluate the sates lakes program to determine which water bodies provide the best potential for future adaptive management approaches.

Site specific activities

Lake Brown, a 100 acre impoundment in the southeastern part of the state, was stocked with adult threadfin shad in the fall for two consecutive years. This was done in hopes of establishing this species to boost what was determined to be an inadequate forage base for the lake's largemouth bass population. Initially, there were promising results from the introduction but monitoring showed the shad were virtually eliminated by the spring. It is strongly suspected that this was a result of heavy predation from a large population of cormorants that populated the lake shortly after the stockings. Plans are in 2012 to restock in the spring in hopes that the adult shad will reproduce before their numbers are diminished.

Gravel spawning beds were installed at Lake Johnson (40 ac) and Dargan's Pond (50 ac). The 10' x 50' "beds" were heavily utilized by both spawning bluegill and redear. This activity is scheduled to be expanded to other impoundments. Fish feeders previously installed here dramatically improved growth of the sunfish in these water bodies. Blueback herring have been introduced into Lake Johnson likely via "bait dumping" by the public. Their abundance will be monitored as to their potential impact on the game fish population.

Fish feeders will be installed at Star Fort (22 ac) and ponds at Draper WMA (5/7 ac) in 2012. Mountain Lakes (42 ac) was reopened after renovation and restocking. This was delayed 6 months to protect the 1st year LMB spawn.

The removal of overcrowded small LMB (185 lbs) will continue in his year from Lake Oliphant (40 ac). In addition, over 200 Christmas trees were installed in an effort to promote bream survival and the lake received a supplemental stocking of 3,000 3"-4" BLG . Electrofishing results from spring 2011 indicated an increase in the numbers of BLG collected but that LMB are remain crowded. Renovation may be required in the future.

Both, Lake Long (80 ac) and Jonesville Reservoir (25 ac) suffer from severe bass over crowding. Attempts to control their numbers have yet to prove successful. Renovation and restocking is scheduled in 2012. Channel catfish stockings will begin on a quarterly basis on four lakes which have previously not been stocked with this species.

Private Pond Management Program

The agency's level of technical assistance with respect to the management of private impoundments was reduced significantly some years ago due to reprioritization of the Fishery Section's activities. This was largely driven by budget and personnel constraints. On-site inspections of private waters were discontinued completely and technical guidance is now conducted via telephone, e-mail and a Pond Management Guide which is available on line or hard copy. Pond owners may continue to provide water samples and aquatic vegetation samples to the Regional offices for analysis or identification and remedial recommendations.

Additional information on SCDNR state lakes and private pond management is available to the public at: <http://www.dnr.sc.gov/>

Texas

There are thousands of impoundments in Texas of all sizes incorporated within the public and private sectors. Public water bodies range from a fraction of an acre to over 100,000 acres in this state; however, we will restrict this summary to bodies of water under 300 acres, which are considered small impoundments in Texas. These smaller impoundments are usually managed by local governments (cities, townships and counties) and mainly serve the purpose of flood control, water supply and recreation. Some reside within state parks and are great venues for those looking for an all-around outdoor package. State park ponds also provide free fishing opportunities under a free fishing initiative program within state parks. Anglers fishing from the bank within a state park are not required to possess a fishing license. This was designed to entice people to become involved in fishing while visiting state parks. Many of these small impoundments are focal points in small communities and serve as a great attraction for local residents. Others are spread throughout major metropolitan areas and serve as close-to-home opportunities for fishing and outdoor recreation. Texas Parks and Wildlife, in conjunction with these local management authorities manage these impoundments to provide fishing opportunities for everyone. For management purposes we have classified the small impoundments into several categories to define certain programs affiliated with these lakes.

Small Lakes

These are small impoundments between 75 and 300 acres, commonly constructed as water supply reservoirs for smaller cities or are nested within state parks. These reservoirs may have regulated access and more restrictions than larger reservoirs in order to preserve water quality and wildlife populations. When appropriate, TPWD will manage these small lakes similarly to large reservoirs by applying fishing regulations and conducting habitat and access projects to enhance fishing opportunities. Stockings may not be applied as rigorously as in smaller impoundments since the larger size and habitat availability will aid self-sustaining populations. In the past year district biologists have been involved with several projects on these small lakes. Projects such as fish attractor installations, native aquatic vegetation restoration, nuisance vegetation control for access and special research projects have taken place in these small lakes and will continue to host similar efforts in the future. As part of a project to provide all TPWD fish attractor locations around the state in our web site, some of these small lakes have been included as recommended fishing sites.

Community Fishing Lakes (CFL) Program

A CFL is defined as a public impoundment 75 acres or smaller located totally within an incorporated city limits or a public park, or any impoundment lying totally within the boundaries of a state park. Many CFL's are stocked annually with channel catfish and/or rainbow trout. Special fishing regulations apply to CFL's, which differ from statewide fishing regulations:

Gear restrictions

Fishing is by pole and line only. Anglers may use no more than two poles while fishing. Cast nets are prohibited.

Black bass

For largemouth and smallmouth bass, minimum length limit = 14 inches. No minimum length for Guadalupe or spotted bass. Daily bag limit is 5 fish for all four species in any combination.

White, striped and yellow bass

For striped and hybrid striped bass, minimum length limit = 18 inches and daily bag limit = 5 in any combination. For white bass, minimum length = 10 inches and daily bag is 25. There are no bag or size limits for yellow bass.

Carp

There is no minimum length limit or daily bag limit for common carp.

Catfish

For channel and blue catfish, there is no minimum length and combined daily bag limit = 5. For flathead catfish, minimum length = 18 inches and daily bag = 5.

Crappie

For white and black crappie, their hybrids and subspecies, minimum length limit = 10 inches. Daily bag limit = 25 in any combination.

Gar

For alligator gar, daily bag limit is 1 fish of any size. No bag limits on other species of gar.

Sunfish

There is no minimum length or daily bag limit on bluegill, redear, warmouth or other species of sunfish.

Trout

For rainbow and brown trout, their hybrids and subspecies, there is no minimum length and daily bag limit = 5 trout in any combination.

There are approximately 672 CFL's registered statewide, with new ones joining the program annually. With urban areas expanding, new parks and ponds increase local fishing opportunities, and become options for this program. While stocking and regulation have been the driving management action for this program, other management efforts have been applied at several locations. A brand new aeration system was installed at Bastrop State Park Pond in efforts to control lake stratification and prevent fish stress/kills during hot summer months. Extreme drought conditions this past year took a toll on many of these small ponds, with many nearly drying up. Several stockings had to be cancelled, reduced or postponed last year, but opportunities were taken to work on pond renovations (dredging excavation) and vegetation control with reduced water levels. Ponds that were able to receive stockings were host to many fishing outreach events and several participated in the winter rainbow trout stocking program, which is very popular throughout the state. Over 250,000 rainbow trout were scheduled to be stocked throughout the state in collaboration with local partners this winter.

A study to evaluate the 9-inch channel catfish stocking program at CFL's was completed this past year in a couple of panhandle lakes. The study revealed high variation in fish survival after stocking during separate trials, and creel surveys showed that most anglers were releasing their catch. Further evaluations were recommended to determine survival. The study is under revision for publication.

Neighborhood Fishin' (NF) Program

Neighborhood Fishin' has become a standard trademark of urban fishing in Texas. This successful program has developed thanks to generous funding from the Toyota Texas Bass Classic Foundation, which is going strong after 5 years of the prestigious Toyota Texas Bass Classic (TTBC) event. The TTBC has become an annual community event that has generated over \$1.2 million for the TPWD and the state of Texas. This event hosts the Professional Anglers Association (PPA) annual championship fishing tournament and is a leader in promoting conservation throughout the nation via this nationally televised

event. Proceeds from this event go to the foundation, which has been the driving force behind NF along with local government partners.

The program has expanded to 14 sites in major metropolitan statistical areas, with the recent addition of Southside Lions Park in San Antonio. With the program surpassing 10 years since its inception, last year TPWD began extensive evaluation of the program. In conjunction with our marketing department, \$26,962 were spent in promotional venues for the program last year. The purpose was to evaluate best marketing practices through angler response and participation in the program. An array of marketing strategies was applied, ranging from flyers and mail-outs to Billboards and TV commercials in large markets. Results varied by location; but overall, the recommendation was to use a mix of strategies, restraining to those that were economically efficient for the respective market and venue. Within these evaluations, a digital trail camera was used to monitor angler participation at one of the sites for an entire year. Data were used to determine angler participation and their trends. This information may be used to trigger future marketing strategies and allows managers to use a tool to monitor effort in small impoundments, which can be cost prohibitive when done by creel surveys. This study will be submitted for publication.

Overall, the program has been very successful and angler satisfaction was high, based on surveys conducted at our sites. More upcoming evaluations are planned to determine the direction of some original locations that might not be meeting set objectives for the program. The program is designed to expand, but with limited funding options, expansion has come slow. Replacing inactive locations with newer eager ones should generate further energy as we move forward. We are also looking into diverse funding options to continue our goal to expand to new cities.

Other

- TPWD has developed a new committee to develop a new category of CFL in urban areas designed to provide a more advanced quality fishing opportunity for those that wish to move on from the NF experience. These lakes will consist of larger CFL's that will be more intensively managed than traditional CFL's. These lakes will most likely have more restrictive bass regulations and may receive an array of management practices such as fertilization, aeration, and forage stockings. The goal is to create a quality urban fishery option not directed towards harvest, per say, but more towards recreation and enhancing sport fishing skills.
- The TPWD Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center (TFFC) in Athens, TX has a couple of nice ponds that host many annual fishing outreach events for the local community and visitors that frequent the facility from all over the nation.
- TPWD offers valuable small impoundments management information for the private sector in its web site at: http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/landwater/water/habitats/private_water/
- Information on all of TPWD fishing programs, please visit: <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fishboat/fish/>