Managing Ponds For Better Fishing - Where Do We Go From Here?

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Or

What Do I Do When I Get Home?

What We Do Know:

- Texas is home to over 1,200,000 private impoundments covering over 500,000 surface acres
- Good fishing is a by-product of good fish populations
- The primary goal of a fisheries management program should be to “shorten the time between bites”
What We Do Know:

- 95% of 1,200,000+ Texas farm ponds are not managed at their potential
- Capable of producing 1000 pounds of catfish or 30-50 pounds of largemouth bass per surface acre per year
- Compatible with livestock watering and irrigation with proper management

Questions In Need Of Answers

- What are your goals?
- What are your resources?
- Are there limitations inherent to your resources that will inhibit reaching your goals?
- Can those limitations be overcome?

New Ponds

- Does the site have sufficient clay content?
- Does the site have sufficient watershed?
- Is the site considered to be a wetland?
Existing Ponds

- What most of us have to work with
- Already have fish populations present
- Probably constructed for purposes other than providing recreational fishing

Pond Size Is A Critical Consideration When Determining Management Direction!

Management “Stuff” That Applies To All Ponds
Water Quality

Determine Water Clarity

- Bass must see to eat! Can you see into the water 18” to 24” throughout most of the year?

- If not, is the lack of water clarity due to a "muddy" condition or a heavy algal bloom?

- However, remember that crystal clear water is infertile water—If you want “clear” water, build a swimming pool, not a fish pond!
**Should Your Pond Be Cleared?**

- Not necessarily!!

- Muddy ponds less than one acre in size that are managed for a single species on a pelleted feed do not require clearing.

- Muddy ponds one acre plus must be cleared if largemouth bass management is the goal.

**Clearing Muddy Ponds**

- Determine if colloidal clay is the culprit.

- Correct watershed erosion if present.

- Apply agricultural limestone based on tests.

- Clear the pond by adding a coagulant (gypsum or combination of alum and hydrated lime).

**pH = 6.5-9.0**

**Total Alkalinity > 20ppm**
Managing Small or Muddy Ponds

Are Predators or Competitors Present in Your Small Pond?
Farm Pond Renovation

- Apply Rotenone at water temperatures 70°F +
- Strive for even and complete coverage
- Use 1 gallon or 10 pounds of 5% Rotenone per acre foot of water
- Wait 2-3 weeks before restocking

Determination Of Acre-Feet

- Determine surface area in acres
- Determine average depth in feet
- Multiply surface area by average depth

An Acre-foot of Water Is:

- 1 surface acre 1 foot deep
- 43,560 cubic feet
- 326,000 gallons
How Do I Measure Depth?

- Guess!
- Depth finder
- Calibrated rope and anchor
- Calibrated pole

Measuring Pond Depth

- Take at least 2 perpendicular transects
- Begin at one bank with “zero” and end with “zero”
- The more transects and depth soundings taken, the better your depth estimate becomes
- Average depth is always LESS than you suspected before measuring!

Determining Volume in Acre-Feet

- Square or Rectangular Pond
  - Example: pond is 200’ x 350’ = 70,000 square feet
  - 70,000 ÷ 43,560 = 1.6 acres
  - Average depth = 3.2 feet
  - 1.6 acres x 3.2 feet = 5.1 acre-feet of water
Stock Catfish* or other species that accept a pelleted ration for ponds less than one acre in size

- Unfertilized pond—up to 100 per surface acre
- Fertilized pond—up to 200 per surface acre
- Daily feeding/feeder—up to 1000 per surface acre
- Occasional feeding—up to 300 per surface acre
*Consider stocking with fathead minnows

Advantages of using floating feed

- Allows culturist to observe fish
- Avoids feed waste
Supplementally Fed Fish Must Be Harvested To Prevent Overcrowding

Total Fish Weight Should Not Exceed 1000 Pounds Per Acre During The Warm Months
Bottom Line:
You Gotta Go Fishing!

END OF LESSON