

FOR OUR EYES ONLY

The Steuben County Lakes Council is concerned about your privacy and safety. Our mailing list is (and will remain) completely confidential. Our mailing list is not for sale and the information that it contains is not given out. You, your family, and your property are important to the Steuben County Lakes Council, Inc.

ADDRESS CHANGES

We are diligently working on our data base to make sure we have current lake addresses and current mailing addresses of those who prefer receiving mail other than at the lake. Please keep us informed of any changes that need to be made. If you are a "Snow Bird" and have a different winter address, please advise us of this address and the times this should be used. We want to be sure to reach you with any mailings we may have. To make a change, please send a note in the mail or call the office (260-665-1730). Thank you for your help.

Bobber Watchin' is a summer publication of the Steuben County Lakes Council, Inc., 207 South Wayne Street, Suite B, Angola, IN 46703.

Telephone (260-665-1730)

E-mail sclksnc1@loc1.net

Web Site www.LakesCouncil.org

Note: If you see the letter 'M' on the mailing label below, you have paid your 2002 Membership Donation. If the 'M' is not there, please consider sending your contribution soon.

S•C•L•C STEUBEN COUNTY LAKES COUNCIL

207 South Wayne Street, Suite B
Angola, IN 46703

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Are we addressing you correctly?
Would you like to be added to or removed from our mailing list? If so, please call (260) 665-1730

Bobber Watchin'

Steuben County Lakes Council, Inc.

207 South Wayne Street, Suite B

Angola, IN 46703 Phone (260) 665-1730

E-mail sclksnc1@loc1.net
Volume#14

Web www.LakesCouncil.org
Summer 2002

S•C•L•C



**STEUBEN
COUNTY
LAKES
COUNCIL**

QUALITY OF LIFE

By Don Reitz, President S.C.L.C., Inc.

Why do you live in Steuben County? If you are reading this, the lakes are probably a big reason. But it's more than just the lakes. It's also friendly people, small town charm, a great YMCA, farm markets, and a state park with an award-winning inn. It's superb environmental quality, beautiful nature preserves, nearness to a variety of interesting cities, and Tri-State University.

In other words, you live here because of the high quality of life. 'High quality of life' isn't something you can define exactly but you know it when you've got it, and Steuben County has a quality of life about which other communities can only dream.

Which brings us to the problem: Our community naturally attracts visitors and new residents. In turn, growth in population puts pressure on the qualities, which attracted us in the first place. The small town charm that is so appealing is tough to maintain in the face of the characterless strip commercialization spurred by growth. More importantly for Lakes Council members, the quality of our lakes and streams becomes harder to maintain as more and more people are attracted to, and use, these natural amenities.

So the community's very attractiveness is responsible for the growth that threatens that attractiveness. How do we solve this problem? Can we accommodate growth, and at the same time protect the health of our waterways and maintain our traditional quality of life?

Yes, but it takes planning. Steuben County is growing twice as fast as the state as a whole. No county in the region comes even close to our rate of growth. Maintaining our quality of life in the face of rapid population expansion won't happen by accident. The water quality of our lakes and

streams won't remain high on its own. It will take a concerted effort on the part of local officials and interested residents to plan for growth and to accommodate it on our terms.

Good planning is important for protecting our lakes and for maintaining our traditionally high quality of life. It's important enough that the Lakes Council is part of the planning process. The board of directors is currently reviewing the land use trends in the county, especially those in lake areas, and is working with the county-sponsored consensus committee (the Lakes Council sits on the committee as well) on incorporating Lakes Council recommendations into a new county comprehensive planning program.

We see this as an opportunity to inform our appointed and elected officials on the membership's views concerning maintaining good water quality in our lakes, protecting environmentally valuable areas, and promoting responsible development and growth. The Lakes Council is a credible forum of advocacy for our lakes and related concerns because of you—our active membership.

If you want to participate in this, or other, Lakes Council activities, come to a board meeting and tell us about it (first Saturday of each month, 8:30 a.m., Sunset Inn, Crooked Lake). If you have an opinion on a lake issue, call the office and let us know what you think (665-1730). Or if you want to serve on one of our numerous committees, send me an email and let me know (donreitz@loc1.net).

We're in this together, and together we will keep Steuben County a great place to live and visit.

E-MAIL — WE HAVE IT!

The Lakes Council has E-Mail!

Our address is:

sc1ksenc1@loc1.net

If you would like to send us your E-Mail address, we will enter it into our address book. We will NOT share your address with others without your permission.



WEB SITE — WE HAVE IT!

The Lakes Council has a Web Site!

You may find it at: www.LakesCouncil.org

We hope it will be useful to you as we provide you



MEMBERSHIP NOTES



Yes, we all rush around doing everyday 'stuff'. But 'stuff' is a part of our lives. The everyday tasks must be dealt with so we can have time for the special moments we cherish. In all of the hustle and bustle of living it is possible to forget or neglect, unintentionally, little details like—did I remember to send in my SCLC membership this year? In an effort to save you from having to search through your records, we have placed an "M" on your mailing label if your 2002 membership was paid. If you do not find that telltale "M" on your address label, perhaps you will consider filling out the membership application on this page and returning it to us along with your contribution.

What is the Steuben County Lakes Council, Inc.? The SCLC is people. It is people who have completed thirty years of volunteer service, dedicated to the protection of the lakes and streams of Steuben County. Many of you volunteer your time to help us with water quality issues. Those of you not able to actively share your time in this effort may contribute to our work financially. Help us pull on the oars in one way or another. It is an upstream journey. Help us continue upstream for another thirty years!

2002 MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION

Name _____ Name of the Lake _____

Business Name (For Affiliate Membership) _____

Address of Lake Property _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Mailing Address _____ Preferred Mailing address if different than lake address.

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Are any of these addresses or phone numbers new? _____

Individual Membership \$12.50 _____

Business/Professional Affiliate Membership \$20.00 _____

Special Donation _____

Memorial Scholarship Donation _____

Total Amount Enclosed (donations are tax deductible) _____

Make check payable to S.C.L.C.
 Mail to: Steuben County Lakes Council, Inc.
 207 South Wayne Street, Suite B
 Angola, IN 46703



SCRIBBLINGS FROM SUE

By Sue Myers

The Steuben County Lakes Council, Inc. has been fortunate over the years to have people volunteer to help with the water quality testing in the lakes of this county. We recently felt the need to recruit new people to help in this area. Many answered our call for help.

On April 11th at Tri-State University at 7:00 p.m. thirty-five new volunteers came together to learn from Pete Hippensteel how to test our lakes for water quality. What an exciting evening to see the friendships formed among men and women interested in the future of our beautiful waters. They did not know one another at 7:00 p.m. but left by 10:00 p.m. with the same purpose—friends working together for a good cause.

These people will be practicing their new skills on eighteen different lakes. They will reserve testing kits that are held at the Soil and Water Conservation District Office. The Council will fund the testing by paying for all chemicals used for this work. Reports will be turned into the Council Office and sent on to the Wood-Land-Lakes R.C. & D where the information will be included in other testing data.

We realize not all those who have taken the class will feel competent to do the testing on their own. But they have gained a basic knowledge of the importance of this testing and a respect for the volunteers who dedicate time to help in this way.

The Lakes Council also made an effort to involve our youth in learning about water quality and protecting our environment. On June 13th at 1:00 p.m., middle school and high school age youths met at Tri-State University. Pete Hippensteel planned an afternoon of learning on a local lake with the students, the goal being to reach out to young people who will carry on our work in the future.

Another group of folks gather three times each year in my home to help with the bulk mailing to approximately 7,500 property owners in Steuben County. The work of folding letters, stuffing envelopes, scotch taping, labeling, sorting, rubber banding, organizing in mailing trays, etc. goes on throughout the day. These folks come from a number of different lakes, which gives an opportunity to share news, concerns, gossip, and jokes. Music is provided (the faster the music, the faster they work) and sometimes they even burst into song. Snacks and pop keep appearing at their tables to ward off their threats to strike! These are the "Lakeside Mailers" and what a tremendous help they are to the Lakes Council.

These are examples of people giving of their time and energy to preserve the quality of life here in Steuben County. We are beginning our 31st year of service by continuing to involve local people in the cause. Thanks go to all of these volunteers!

A CORDIAL INVITATION TO THE PUBLIC

**STEBEN COUNTY
LAKES COUNCIL, INC.
INVITES YOU**

TO THE ANNUAL MEETING

➤ **WHEN—SATURDAY, AUGUST 3**

➤ **WHERE—LAKE JAMES
CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY
1800 WEST 275 NORTH**

➤ **TIME—8:30 A.M.**

➤ **LAND USE & OUR WATERS**

**COME AND SHARE YOUR
CONCERNS
DONUTS & COFFEE**

*Please join us in this timely discussion. Everyone is welcome!
These waters are important to all in the county!*

JUST MINOR DAMAGE

Pete Hippensteel, Vice President Technical, S.C.L.C.

A few years ago I was shopping for a small truck to meet my transportation needs. The used truck salesman said that the truck that I was looking at had only a few minor problems. A scraped fender, a cracked mirror, a couple of dings on the door from parking lot incidents, the paint was faded, and a fuel gauge that did not work were the most obvious problems. Although individually these conditions are minor to the operation of a truck, the total affect was that this truck was not a quality vehicle.

In my thirty years of working with the Steuben County Lakes Council, I have seen many blemishes inflicted upon our lakes. Each little incident does not at first notice seem to have a significant negative effect on our beautiful natural lakes. But their cumulative affects can have the same total impact on the integrity of natural lakes as the several minor problems had on the value of the above-mentioned truck.

Each year a few piers get longer. Some have become permanently placed across wetlands. These structures fragment the use of the shoreline and the value of the wetlands. Other shorelines are fringed with many floats. I realize some are necessary. But most are being used to alert inconsiderate high-speed boaters who should know that they are not to be speeding in these areas within 200 feet of shore for the safety of everybody. But do natural lakes have orange, white or red floats bobbing around everywhere? They remind me of construction zones along our highways. Just one more indicator of how we are urbanizing our lakes. I always perceived our natural lakes to be a get away from urban congestion. I guess that I am being proven wrong!

I see leaves being raked into the lake or adjacent wetlands each fall. It is these decomposing organic materials that contribute to the patches of white foam floating on the surface of the lake we see after strong wind and wave action each spring. Also they contribute increased nutrients that promote alga blooms and excessive aquatic weed growth.

Each new year there is an increase in numbers and types of watercraft with some getting bigger and faster but the lakes stay the same size. These powerful boats resuspend more sediment and nutrients as well as destroying wetland vegetation to the point that some lakes are considering implementing non-boating areas within their lake to protect certain critical wetland habitat and reduce shoreline erosion.

As we fertilize our yards are we sure that none of these nutrients are entering the lake to help increase the growth of algae and rooted vegetation that then requires some type of herbicide treatment to keep your beach areas suitable for swimming and boating? The same type of consequence is true of those who insist on feeding the ducks and geese and then complain about high bacteria counts in our swimming areas or bird droppings in our yards.

Continued on page 5

THANKS

BUSINESS & PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATES 2002

A & B Construction, Inc.	Gay's Hop-N-Schnopp	Panache Salon, Inc.
Acres, Inc.	Gen's Hallmark	Pappas Furs, Inc.
American Express Financial Advisors	Goodale Abstract Co., Inc.	Print Shop
Anderson, Connie	Hakes & Robrock Builders	Putnam Friedrich Appraisal Group
Angola Area Chamber of Commerce	Hamilton House	RE/MAX Tri-State Realty, Inc.
Angola Lumber Co., Inc.	Hamilton Lake Association, Inc.	Rockwell, Joyce A., D.D.S.
Angola Sears	Hamilton Lake Marine, Inc.	Rose and Son Towing, Inc.
Aquatic Enhancement, Inc.	Home Park	S & S Oil Company, Inc.
Aquatic Management, Inc.	Hanna Bros.	Sabin Northside, Inc.
Aquatic Weed Control	Hawkins, Pamela, Attorney at Law	Scheumann, Gary, D.D.S.
Bayview Realty	Heller Well Drilling, Inc.	Sea Dwellers and Friends
B & C Associates P.C.	High Hope Camp	Sheehan's Imperial Estates
Becker Design Build, Inc.	Hi-Vue Campground	Mobile Home Park
Benson, Craig T., Attorney at Law	Hollywood Landing	Silver Lake Mobile Home Park
Bradley Overhead Door, Inc.	Indiana Marine Products, Inc.	Smith, Dale Q., C.P.A.
Brown, Dean A., Attorney at Law	Jacob Insurance Service	Snow Lake Cottagers Association
Cap's Mobile Home Park, Inc.	Jilek, Sr. Michael F., Attorney at Law	Special Cutting Tools
Captain's Cabin	Jimmerson Woods	Stanley Steamer
Centennial Wireless	Cooperative Inc.	Steuben County Community Foundation
Circle Park, LLC	Korte Bros., Inc.	Steuben County REMC
City of Angola	Lake Gage & Lime Lake Association	Steuben County Tourism Bureau, Inc.
Clay's Restaurants, Inc.	Lake George Regional Sewer District	Steuben Lakes Regional Waste District
Cleveland Homes	Lake James Christian Assembly	Sunset Inn
Commonwealth	Lake James Lutheran Chapel	The Boat House, Inc.
Biomonitoring, Inc.	Lake Pleasant Cottage Owners Association	The First National Bank of Fremont
Core Communications	Larry's Lock & Safe Service, Inc.	The Herald-Republican
Croxton & Roe Ins. Svc., Inc.	Liberty Saw Technology	The Pier Place
CST Enterprises, LLC	Manapogo Park	Then and Now Antique Mall, Inc.
Custom Concrete by Steury, Inc.	Meijer, Inc.	Timber's Casual Dining
Dennis Spidel Custom Homes, Inc.	Midas Muffler	Tom' Donuts
Dickmeyer & Associates	Mutton Rental Center	Tri-State Chiropractic Clinic
Dry Dock Marine Center	NAPA Auto Parts	Waggoner's R.V. Park
D.T.W. Enterprises, Inc.	National Company, Inc.	Wayside Furniture, Inc.
Duch, Ronald V., D.D.S.	Nauta Lease Correct Craft, Inc.	Wenzel Metal Spinning, Inc.
Four Seasons Design & Remodeling, Inc.	Northeast Indiana Solid Waste Management District	Whisper Bay Condominium Owner's Association
Franz Nursery Inc.	Oliver Sales Co., Inc.	Whitmore, John M., Attorney at Law
Freeman Jewelers, Inc.		Willits, David, D.D.S.
Fremont Chamber of Commerce		Wunrow, Don N., C.P.A.
Fremont Wire Company		Yoder Body Shop
Frog Heaven, Inc.		

WHEN IN DOUBT—LEAVE IT OUT

Northeast Indiana Solid Waste Management District
Lana Young, Education Coordinator

Do you sometimes wonder what you can recycle at our drop-off locations?

Listed below are those items acceptable:

- **Aluminum** – Soft Drink and beer cans, aluminum foil, pie or dinner trays
- **Cardboard** – Corrugated boxboard in which cases of grocery items, appliances and other products may be packaged.
- **Chipboard** – Food cartons, shoeboxes, tissue boxes, tablet backs, etc.
- **Newsprint** – Newspapers, telephone books with the covers removed and other newsprint publications.
- **Plastics** – Milk, water, and juice jugs, soft drink bottles, colored detergent bottles. **ONLY** those with a **1** or **2** on bottom of container. **No boat cover plastics please.**
- **Tin** – Fruit, vegetable, and other food cans.
- **Magazines** – Glossy magazine and catalogs.
- **Glass** – Colored or clear **bottles** or **jars** used as containers for food or drink.
- **Household batteries** – Standard, rechargeable, and button. **No car batteries please.**

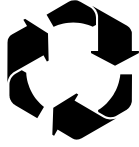
Please help us continue to provide recycling services to the Lakes area by following these recycling guidelines. For questions call 1-800-777-5462.

REMEMBER

WHEN IN DOUBT—LEAVE IT OUT



**RESPECT
THE EARTH
...RECYCLE!**



Over the years several exotic species have found their way into your Steuben County lakes, most likely by human transport. Purple loosestrife, zebra mussels, and cylindro (toxic blue green algae) are current examples. What problem species will be next? And who among us will be the culprit?

Are we willing to accept each of the above examples of minor damage to our lakes? I think not. This multitude of little things is producing unacceptable cumulative affects on our natural lakes. If we don't start making more environmentally friendly decisions, Steuben County may become known for its 101 unnatural lakes in the near future! The Steuben Lakes Council is continuing to work to be sure that the previous statement does not become a reality. Please help by preventing even one incident of minor damage to lakes because the cumulative consequences will be devastating.

BEGINNING OUR 31ST YEAR

By Sue Myers

What's happening? If you are into 'lists', here you go! This is happening!

- ✓ We provided water quality educational materials to first and second grade students in the county.
- ✓ We will provide environmental conservation materials to fourth grade students in the fall.
- ✓ We awarded sweatshirts and certificates to three students for environmental projects at the regional science fair.
- ✓ We supported a two-day field study for 7th grade students in the county with a \$500.00 contribution.
- ✓ We held a water quality testing training class for adults in April.
- ✓ We held a water quality and environmental study class for middle and high school age youth in June.
- ✓ We provided a \$1,200.00 scholarship for a student at Tri-State University in the field of environmental studies.
- ✓ We contributed \$500.00 to the county dive team (SCURRT) for their fund drive for a rescue boat.
- ✓ We contributed \$2,000.00 to Steuben County Wastewatchers for their efforts against a dumpsite near Hamilton Lake.
- ✓ We had representatives at many county government meetings.
- ✓ We are studying land use as it affects our waters.
- ✓ We are mailing out the 'Bobber Watchin'' to over 7,300 property

NEW SEWER PLANS ADVANCING

Submitted by Tim Frederick – Superintendent
Steuben Lakes Regional Waste District

The sewer project has moved a step closer to reality with the passage of the Sewer Rate Ordinance, on April 18, 2002.

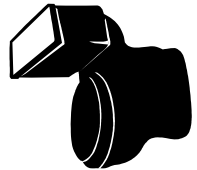
The total of the capital and connection charges for new customers will be \$2,775.00. If the application to connect to the Sanitary Sewer is filed within 90 days of start of construction of the Proposed Sewer Project, the customer is entitled to a 10% discount on the \$2,775.00. This reduces the total charges to \$2,497.50. Payment can be made in lump sum at time of application or 12 equal monthly installments. However, if a monthly payment is not made, then a 10% penalty is applied to that monthly installment only. The single-family residential monthly fee of \$55.00 will be charged when the system is operational and ready for connections. The Sewer Rate Ordinance 2002-03 is available for inspection at our office for all interested parties.

The United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development does have a loan and grant program available for the low-income homeowners. The RD contact person is Mary Henry. Her office is located in Albion, Indiana; the telephone number is 260-636-7682 extension 4. Some of the basic Rural Development guidelines for Steuben County low-income homeowners are:

- 1 Person annual income \$19,600.00
- 2 Person annual income \$22,400.00
- 3 Person annual income \$25,200.00

The Steuben Lakes Regional Waste District does not administer this program; so for more information please contact Mary Henry.

Owners of empty lots or parcels of real estate that intend to build and wish to be a part of the Proposed Sewer Project need to send a signed and dated letter requesting the connection to the Proposed Sanitary Sewer. The letter requesting connection needs to be received before our consulting engineer completes the final plans and specifications. The Board will consider new connections, but only as long as funds are available in the Project Funding. This does not mean that a request outside this time frame will be denied; it just means the costs of certain items will not be a part of the Funding provided by Rural Development.



Continued on page 7

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION CHALLENGE

Submitted by Lorna Leaders, Program/Communications Officer



For 10 years the Steuben County Community Foundation has been at the heart of a community where generosity, charity, and belief in one's neighbors have been strongly manifest. The natural tendency for people here—and across the country—is to give to specific causes in which they have a personal interest. Yet, often today's most pressing needs are unexpected. Who could have predicted decades ago that Steuben County would need to support the efforts to keep our water pure?

Because of our donors, it has been possible for the Foundation to help solve local problems and enhance the quality of life of those living in Steuben County, whether for the summer or year round. For example, grants have been awarded to help Pokagon State Park purchase an all-terrain motorized wheelchair so that everyone can enjoy the park to its fullest, and for many years the Foundation has been a major sponsor of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic's 4th of July Pops Concert at Pokagon. Grants have been awarded to protect our natural resources. For example, a grant to help the Clear Lake Township Land Conservancy purchase land that provides a 4-acre "green space" to protect inlet water flowing into Clear Lake and provide a nature preserve. In addition, a grant for the Fish Creek Trail project links Gnagy Park to Ball Lake via a walkway and nature preserve in Hamilton. Also, at the Douglas Woods Nature Preserve, the Nature Conservancy planted over 15,000 seedlings; all were native hardwoods.

In response to a challenge by Lilly Endowment, the Foundation has established the "Spirit of Community" Fund. Lilly will match \$1 for \$1 up to \$2 million in discretionary (also known as "unrestricted") giving. All gifts to the Spirit of Community Fund will be matched, thus doubling the size of all gifts—large and small. This is a general fund, and it is a perpetual fund. The earnings are plowed back into the community in the form of grants to support activities such as preserving our natural resources, feeding the needy and deepening our children's understanding of art and culture.

This is an opportunity for all of us to come together for the health and welfare of our families, friends and neighbors. All gifts you make this year to the Foundation will be doubled in strength, and they are tax deductible. Both your gift and the match will be invested in perpetuity, each year adding to the amount the Foundation can award to worthy charities, programs and projects. For more information, contact the Foundation at 260-665-6656 or stop in our office at 207 S Wayne, Suite A (the old jail), Angola.

STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS

Many aquatic invaders have entered the United States through the discharge of ballast water from international freighters and by other means. Examples of these unwanted invaders would be the round goby, the zebra mussel, the sea lamprey, and purple loosestrife. These species reproduce and spread quickly. They can reduce game fish populations, ruin boat engines and industrial water intake systems, make lakes and rivers unusable for boaters and swimmers, and reduce property values.

Most of these aquatic invasive species are quiet hitchhikers that are spread by people unknowingly—people like you and me. As we go about our recreational activities—fishing, boating, diving, hunting—these invaders hitch rides and are carried by us to pristine lakes and rivers. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has unveiled a new national program called “Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers!” They list some simple steps to help us avoid carrying these problem species with us as we move our boats about between lakes and streams. Whenever we leave a body of water we can help by taking the following precautions:

- ✓ Remove visible mud, plants, fish or animals before transporting equipment.
- ✓ Eliminate water from equipment before moving it.
- ✓ Clean and dry anything that was in contact with water (boats, trailers, equipment, clothing—even pets).
- ✓ Never release plants, fish or animals into a body of water unless they were found there.

You and I care about our waters. We want to keep them clean and free of these harmful invaders. Who better to tackle this task of protecting our waters? If we all follow these simple steps—steps which are cost free and only involve a few extra minutes of our time—we can prevent further damage to our environment. Let's all join this campaign to **“STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!”**



The Engineering Plans are nearly ready to be submitted to Indiana Department of Environmental Management and the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development. These plans will be reviewed by both organizations, which should take about 60 days. When IDEM and RD approve these plans, our Board of Trustees will then authorize these final engineering plans to be advertised for bid. If all of the other necessary steps are completed after the bids are accepted then construction is projected to start sometime toward the end of 2002.

Should anyone have any questions, comments, or would like to view the plans, they may stop at our office located at 2795 N 200 W, Angola, IN 46703. Or call us at 260-833-4844.

IN MEMORY

The Steuben County Lakes Council, Inc. is people—people who have a common interest in protecting the lakes and streams of Steuben County. Two of these people who had been dedicated to the preservation of these waters and worked with our Board for many years are now lost to us.

Richard “Dick” Reed, from Crooked Lake, died in January of this year. Dick served as President of our organization in 1995 and was on the Advisory Board for many years, often times helping with zoning issues. He was actively serving on a policy committee at the time of his death. He is greatly missed.

William “Bill” Thomson, from Lake James, died in April of this year. Bill was president of the Lake James Association for some time. He participated in our Board meetings as a representative of Lake James and his opinions were well respected.

The families of both these gentlemen designated the Council as the recipient of memorials. All donations given in their memory are being placed in our scholarship fund where they will always remain. The interest from this fund is used for a scholarship for a Steuben County student at Tri-State University studying in the field of environmental concerns. What a fine way to honor these wonderful men.

FISH HARVEST & BASS POPULATION SURVEYS

Survey Summary submitted by Neil D. Ledet, Fisheries Biologist

In 2000, fisheries biologists from the Indiana Division of Fish and Wildlife (IDFW) conducted bass population estimates and an angler creel survey at the five lakes known as the Lake James Chain. These lakes include James, Jimmerson, Snow, Big Otter and Little Otter. Together they encompass 1,953 acres of open water and an additional 146 acres of wetlands.

During late April and May 2000, fisheries biologists using nighttime DC electro fishing, captured, marked, and released 9,782 largemouth bass at the Lake James Chain. A total of 11,083 bass were handled which included 1,301 recaptures. The largemouth bass population in the chain was estimated at 33,517 fish. The population of stock size largemouth bass, those eight inches in length or longer, was estimated at 25,735 fish. Bass population estimates were also determined for each lake in the chain. Due to their small size and location, Big and Little Otter Lakes were combined and treated as one lake. The estimated number of stock size largemouth bass per acre was nine in Lake James, 17 in Jimmerson Lake, 21 in Snow Lake and 24 in the Otter Lakes. In addition, 481 smallmouth bass were collected at Lake James resulting in an estimate of 1,669 fish. Very few smallmouth bass were collected from any of the other lakes.

A 12-inch minimum size limit was placed on largemouth bass by the IDFW in 1990. The minimum length limit was increased to 14 inches in the fall of 1998. Prior to imposition of the 12-inch size limit, base-line information on largemouth bass populations was collected by conducting population estimates at 13 large and 21 medium size natural lakes. Lakes in the Lake James Chain were not part of the base-line study. Comparisons, based on average bass population estimates obtained from the 34 study lakes, indicate the number of stock size bass per acre in Lakes James, Jimmerson, Snow and the Otters have increased 5%, 50%, 88% and 106% respectively. One of the objectives for implementing the 12-inch minimum size limit was to increase over-all bass numbers. It appears this has been accomplished, at least in the medium size lakes. Other factors, such as the huge increase in catch and release bass fishing have undoubtedly contributed as well. The 14-inch minimum length limit on the Lake James Chain bass populations needs to be in effect several more years before its impact, if any, can be determined.

An angler creel survey was also conducted at the Lake James Chain. Three creel clerks interviewed anglers five days per week from May 5 through October 31, 2000. The main objectives of this survey were to estimate total fishing pressure, fish harvest, fishing pressure by tournament anglers and the number of bass caught and released.

During the five month creel survey period, anglers fished a total of 66,771 hours on the Lake James Chain, 34 hours per acre. Statewide, fishing pressure less than 50 hours per acre is considered low. Fishing pressure ranged from 10,789 hours on the Otters to 23,006 hours on Jimmerson Lake. Fishing pressure by lake was 19 hours per acre at James, 33 hours per acre at Snow, 53 hours per acre at Jimmerson and 103 hours per acre at the Otters.

A total of 46,062 fish were harvested. Bluegill (38,392), redear (2,886) and black crappie (2,167) dominated the harvest. Only 570 largemouth bass and 47 smallmouth bass were harvested. An additional 25,663 largemouth bass and 1,291 small

mouth bass were caught and released.

In addition to what they caught, and how long they fished, anglers were asked what they were fishing for, where they lived, if they had used one of the state-owned access sites that day, and to rate the quality of fishing at the Lake James Chain. Largemouth bass (43%) was the species most sought by anglers followed by bluegill (19%). Anglers from 37 Indiana counties fished on the Lake James Chain during the survey. Lake James Chain residents were the most represented at 24%, followed by Steuben County residents at 21% and Allen County residents at 19%. Out-of-state anglers comprised 15% of the fishing parties interviewed with Ohio leading at 9%. Of the total angler parties interviewed, 30% had used one of the state-owned ramps that day. In response to fishing quality, nearly 50% of all anglers indicated that fishing had stayed the same, 27% felt it improved and 23% said it had declined.

Thirty bass tournaments were held on the Lake James Chain in 2000. Seventy percent of these were organized by Indiana clubs, 23% by Ohio clubs and 7% by Michigan clubs. Only two tournaments were conducted by non-residents when there was a *closed season* on bass fishing in their state. Nine of the 30 tournaments had more than 15 registered boats.

A total of 1,069 bass tournament anglers fished approximately 8,680 hours, which represented 13% of the total fishing pressure. The average number of boats and bass anglers per tournament was 19 and 37 respectively. Tournament anglers weighed-in a total of 750 legal size bass, an average of 25 per tournament. The average number of bass allowed per tournament boat was six even though 10 could have legally been possessed. Tournament anglers had a catch rate of 0.78 bass per hour while non-tournament anglers fishing specifically for bass caught bass at a slightly higher rate; 0.82 per hour.

Non-tournament anglers were asked whether they thought tournament fishing had any affect on fishing and whether tournament fishing affects the Lake James Chain any other way. Only 20% of non-tournament anglers indicated that tournaments had an affect on fishing and 18% felt it affected the chain in other ways. Numerous reasons were given by anglers for why they felt tournament fishing affected fishing on the chain. The most popular reason given (27%) was that bass numbers were hurt by catching them off spawning beds. The second most common response (24%) was that bass numbers were hurt by not releasing them back into the same lake where they were caught. The number one reason given for how tournaments affect the lakes in other ways was increased boat congestion (22%) followed by discourteous or unsafe boat operations including boat speed (17%).

The Lake James Chain provides good sport fishing opportunities dominated by bluegill and largemouth bass. The harvest of bass is relatively small while bass catch and release is significant. Total fishing pressure on the chain is considered low. However, pressure on the Otters is approaching the high range. Bass tournaments on the chain are popular, but overall, they only comprised 13% of the fishing pressure. The Lake James Chain attracts the smaller, local club tournaments compared to the larger events documented at Lake Wawasee. The majority of anglers do not believe tournaments hurt fishing or affect the lakes. Based on the average number of bass present in the study lakes prior to implementing the 12-inch minimum size limit, the number of bass in the chain has increased. Note: You can view or print the entire 81-page report by going to the IDNR web page. www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild/notes/notes.htm