

Notes
State of the Lake Meeting
Thursday, February 4, 2010
Sponsored by Wood County Industrial Commission

I took these notes for my husband (who could not attend) with no intention of ever sharing them with anyone else. I take full responsibility for any errors, all misspellings—I just spelled names phonetically, and incomplete information. If you notice errors, please let me know, and I will also take responsibility for checking it out and letting folks know the correct information.

Moderator?: Craig Bonds, Texas Parks and Wildlife

First presenter: Kevin Storey – Texas Parks and Wildlife (TPW) Fisheries (focused primarily on the wide mouth bass, the primary fish that draws fishers to the lake.) Bass represent 80 – 85% of effort.

TPW has had a strong commitment to Lake Fork fish management since 1986, sampling about twice a year. Many lakes sample intermittently, even less than once a year. They use GPS and sample all over the lake.

Collect data in two ways: sampling and interviews.

Sampling year: June 1 – May 31

Methodology for sampling: Create an electric field in shallow water at night. Fish are released, unharmed.

8" stock size: the group they follow.

16"-24" slot size

The fish population is stable.

Interview folks on 7 ramps, both public and private. Also since 1986.

Based on the information collected, TPW estimates that \$15.3 million is spent/annum by people coming to Fork to fish.

To date, 10 million bass have been stocked.

Next Presenter: Aaron /ju-bar/ TPW Fisheries – Lake Fork Trophy Bass Survey

Data collected from the fishers. Data for bass in two categories: 7+lb. and 24" or longer:

10,382 fish of 7+ lb. entered in the ledgers at the marinas, with 15% of those = 10 lb.+

Currently, 34 of the top 50 Texas bass have come from Lake Fork including the record.

Peak month: March; #2 month is April

Next presenter: Game Warden Update, Larry Hand, Supervisor out of Tyler

He introduced the wardens who are in this area. Several guys. (I am sorry; I was unable to get their names.)

Big problem: (I'm not sure if I got this quite right.) People putting in to Lake Fork whose boats and/or trailers have debris from other lakes. There were pictures. This is how bad things (such as pest plants and/or critters like those horrible zebra mussels) get introduced into the lake. DO NOT HESITATE to call them (1 800 792 GAME) to report folks who do this. Get the Texas number from the guilty boat and the license plate of the vehicle pulling the boat. They will ticket offenders. This is the only way to insure that people realize the seriousness of this problem and that it can have significant consequences to them –a big fine. It endangers the lake when this plant pollution occurs. Sometimes people do not realize they have that debris because they put in and pull out at night or in the early morning hours. The pictures demonstrated that this is a real problem.

There were suggestions from the audience about ways to make options available (such as power washers near ramps) to the hunters or fishers who need to wash their boats and trailers. It was pointed out by Officer Hand that most of this sort of debris is less likely to occur near ramps, and someone pointed out that hunters put in and come out of the little backwater coves where they are likely to find ducks. Some folks took exception to these observations.

Officer Hand also thanked and commended their law enforcement colleagues who have been helpful in meeting the multiple needs that often arise at one time, especially during big tournaments. For example, when there is a fatality on the lake or dangerous conditions, it often takes more than one agency to meet all needs in a timely fashion.

The game wardens also stay in close contact with the state legislators from the districts that Lake Fork is in. Got two names: Bryan Hughes and Dan Flynn.

He showed pictures of the different boats and kinds of boats they use to meet the multiplicity of needs that Texas Game Wardens address on a lake.

Presenter out of Jasper: TPW Plant Habitat: Plants that are a nuisance. Howard Elder (?), Inland Fisheries Division.

An integrated pest management approach is used to control pest plants. Only 3 guys handle the spraying for a very wide area of lakes, maybe going over the whole state? They spray using an integrated approach, spraying a contiguous area at a time, being careful to avoid damage to plants that are desirable. They do not spray until the plants are mature enough to get the biggest bang for the buck and do the greatest damage to the nuisance plants. They don't spray the sprouts; they spray them nearer maturity for increased effectiveness and greater kill.

#1 problem plant: Water hyacinth

50 seeds from EACH floret—that's a flower. Those seeds can sink into the soil under the water, and they can sprout up to 7 years later! They spray using EPA approved 2,4D (Amine?).

Trash from decomposing plants takes time to get saturated and then sink into the substrate. That trash is a good sign because it comes only from dead plants. The cold weather this winter has been good, and the water hyacinth population is decimated (at the moment) as a result of the winter cold. It will come back.

#2 plant problem and a big specter for future problems: giant salvinia – far worse than water hyacinth. Showed pictures of them.

#3 plant problem: alligator weed

Insect that has been brought in to attack alligator weed: the flea beetle. They buy them in Florida. Stock them several thousand at a time. The insects freeze, and TPW has to start over. It takes a while to get them established because their habitat temperature is 77 degrees to 80 degrees!

Spraying for alligator weed: around boat ramps, glyphosphate, .75 – 1.25 gal/acre. Requires 2 applications, 2 weeks apart.

A \$10,000 donation presentation was made from the Sportsmen's Association to TPW to use for spraying program. This year they have about \$80K to fight plants. It's enough for now.

Donations can be made to TPW with specific instructions for the use of the donation. If they don't use the money by a date the donor can specify, the money can be refunded to the donor.

Individuals or developments can do a treatment proposal. Bill Kirby at SRA can tell you how to go about getting that permit. You have to have an applicator's license which requires 3 courses: general, aquatic, plus law and regulations.

The big item: Water withdrawal from Lake Fork. Butch Choate, SRA.

SRA was established by the Texas legislature as a reclamation and conservation district. They must generate their own revenue.

SRA built and runs Lakes Tawakoni, Toledo Bend, and Fork.

They generate their income by selling water to municipalities. The costs for construction of the lakes were borne by cities that needed water to meet their future needs.

Contracts for sale of water from the lakes range from 70% to 80% of the dependable yield going to the contracting municipalities that paid the building costs for the lakes.

Lake Fork: 70% goes to Dallas, 30% to SRA. SRA sells to Longview and some other cities and towns.

Lake Fork dam was closed in 1980, and it was full in 1985, sooner than expected.

Dallas's Lake Fork pumping station is ready. The pipeline is full. The lake went down 1/16" as a result of the pipeline fill.

What is Dallas entitled to withdraw?

It's a formula:

Lake Fork capacity @ 403' = 675,000 acre feet = 220 billion gallons
= 188,860 gallons dependable annual yield

Dallas is entitled to 70% of that annual yield = 131,660 acre feet/year

During the last (very rainy) calendar year, 373,000 acre feet of water has been released downstream. That's 3 years of Dallas' maximum annual dependable yield. (Normal rainfall is 45"; last year we had 68" of rain.)

That is what Dallas is entitled to, and they can draw when they want, how they want.

Bottom line: If Dallas pulled the maximum draw – with no rainfall, it would drop the lake 5'; an additional 6½' drop would result from evaporation.

From May 1 – Nov. 1, the lake is maintained at 402.5 – 403.5

From Nov. 1 – May 1, the lake is maintained at 402'-403'

Top of the gates = 405'

Today (2/4/2010) = 403.6'

A very good thing: Lake Fork Water is Dallas' most expensive source of water. They draw the most from Sam Rayburn, their cheapest water.

Untrue myth: No water is pumped from Lake Fork into Lake Tawakoni.

There is a balancing reservoir between Terrell and Forney, and water is pumped from the source lake into the balancing lake and from there into the East Side treatment plant.

There is no current plan to do maintenance at Tawakoni, but at some point that will have to be done.

These notes were taken for personal use only and are being shared out of consideration for those who could not get into the room because of the size of the crowd. I make no claim of accuracy, and any reader may let me know about any perceived error. I will check it out personally and make any corrections that need to be made.

Respectfully submitted,

*Marti Busbee
February 9, 2010*