

Quarterly News Letter

Winter 2007



Holiday Greetings!

I hope you all have gotten a chance to enjoy your properties and/or lakes this fall. I appreciate those of you who invited me to hunt on your property; I had a really nice time in October. I never get tired of sitting in the woods or visiting with enthusiastic land owners.

I wanted to remind you all this quarter about harvest. Taking fish and game from your property is as important as the time and money you spend developing quality habitat. In private lakes one of the biggest population problems is lack of harvest of largemouth bass, bream and catfish. This can be true with white-tail deer also, but harvest is usually directed at one sex more than the other, and does are generally not harvested in numbers they should be. Uplands and lakes have a Carrying Capacity. The carrying capacity is best expressed in a lake as Biomass. Simply put, an acre of water, depending on the habitat, can only support so much poundage of fish. For example, if an acre supports 200 lbs of largemouth bass, that can be in the form of 400, 1/2 pounders, or 20, 10 pounders, or somewhere in between? Harvest removes some individuals to allow the remaining individuals a less restrictive forage base and promotes growth in body weight and length in fish and with whitetail deer also antlers. All large bass in a lake are female. Males rarely reach the three pound mark. There is a carrying capacity, and then there is a carrying capacity to obtain quality animals. Most want the second scenario, so harvest is required! With Largemouth bass we want the females to get to quality size and with deer we want the bucks to get to quality status which means body weight first, then the antlers follow. With largemouth bass harvesting the middle size 13-16 inches; with bream harvesting the largest, oldest individuals; with catfish the three pounders make the best table fair; and with deer any females and the oldest, mature bucks are harvested. The point here is: Harvest is a very necessary tool to obtain quality in your fish and deer populations once you get them established! Don't neglect it!

I also wanted to touch base on the use of well water to maintain lake levels. This is OK, but must be done properly to avoid any fish stress and/or minor or catastrophic fish kills. With the extensive drought situation in Florida, Georgia and Alabama using well water has become the norm recently to keep water levels in fishing lakes from getting too low. Well water has no oxygen in it when taken out of the ground and also may be very basic (lacking acidity, high pH) which can be stressful or even lethal to fish like too acidic water if the pH is too low. Lake pH above 10 and below 5 causes stress and can eventually kill fish. The stress can cause poor spawning success, poor survival of young fish and/or poor growth. Adding well water slowly to the lake is acceptable, and sending it through a fountain or an aerator prior to it entering the lake is even better. If you use lake water for farm irrigation, do not replace the lake water with well water at an equal or faster rate, because that will expedite the potentially bad situation. As I have in the past, I suggest you designate certain lakes on the property for quality fishing, and the remaining lakes for irrigation and/or livestock watering. This will help alleviate the

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majority of problems and spare some expense and frustration of having to start all over with a lake that was killed out prematurely. Low water situations are just as healthy for a lake as a flood. Both serve a purpose in the life of an aquatic ecosystem, but are detrimental if experienced too frequently or not frequently enough.

Here are just a few reminders to address this winter on your lakes:

1. Stop fertilizing when water temperatures get below 60°F. Restart your fertilization program late next winter or early spring when water temperatures get back above that temperature.
2. FYI = Largemouth bass usually spawn when water temperatures reach approximately 68° F in the late winter early spring
3. FYI = Tilapia become stressed and begin to die off when water temperatures drop to about 55° F
4. Reduce fish feeding to once-a-day, during the warmest part of the day, or stop feeding all together for the winter. If you have a new lake, or recently stocked bream, minnows or catfish, I suggest feeding throughout the winter unless water temperatures get below 55 ° F, then stop all together. Switching to sinking fish feed and feeding in 4-6 feet deep water also helps insure consumption during colder months.
5. If you are going to plant aquatic vegetation, plant just before the growing season. That way the plants are not in the water for long before they begin taking root. Only use native desirable species; no exotic or invasive plants!

I have found a reputable hatchery to stock lakes in Georgia and North Florida. The Clark Buford Bait Company is a top notch operation, and I will be getting all my fish from them when delivery time and location is feasible for them. Mike Buford and Dick Fine have been in the fish business for several years, and I look forward to working with them for many more in the future. Although the name insinuates BAIT only, they get a ready supply of quality largemouth bass, bream, channel catfish, and of course threadfin shad, golden shiners and fathead minnows. I visited their facilities in Cordele, Georgia in October and I was very impressed at their facilities and integrity as business men.

I would also like to let you know that Westervelt Wildlife Services has asked me to work with some of their clients with aquatic resource issues and some future lake projects on their properties. I want to thank Dave Edwards for inviting me to work with him, his staff and landowners. I also visited their office in Tuscaloosa, Alabama in October, and they are a high quality group. I look forward to helping out where I can and greatly appreciative of the opportunities.

I want to thank all my clients who took a chance on me in my first year of business! I know going with someone new at something is risky, and I appreciate the opportunity to earn your confidence. As I have said, "I am a new company, with a lot of year's experience!"

I appreciate those who have helped me organize, promote and referred me to potential clients. I appreciate those who assisted me with some of the field work and provided input for various issues. When I started this venture it didn't take long to get

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confirmation of who my real friends were, and I was pleasantly surprised at how many I have!

I will be in Florida and Georgia working the first two weeks in January. There is water chemistry to be monitored, plants to plant, and landowners to meet with and plan for the 2008 year. I will be contacting you a little farther out to accommodate the Holiday Rush to set up site visits and meetings. If you want me to order or bring fertilizer, feeders (parts), aeration (parts), etc. please contact me ASAP so I can make all the necessary arrangements.

Have a Merry Christmas and a Safe & Happy New Year!

Scott G. Brown

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