

# ***Quarterly News Letter*** ***Spring 2008***



I hope this finds everyone in good health, getting some work done and enjoying the short time off hunting before turkey season kicks in! Lake management's busiest time is the spring. Several things done now on and around lakes will make for less work and expense throughout the summer and fall, which leaves more time for you, friends, kids and grandkids to enjoy your waterbodies. This quarter I'm covering lake management techniques used in spring. These are reminders, educational items and things to think about on your property. Not all these apply to everyone, as you all have your own individual Management Strategy and Work Timeline created specifically for your lakes.

## ***Fertilization***

Now is the time fertilization should begin. Once water temperatures appear they will stay above 60° F two feet and less below the surface, apply 1 ½ to 2 times the recommended application rate of quick dissolving, specially formulated aquatic fertilizer. Algae blooms are beneficial to the fish populations by supplying the foundation for your food chain and also aides by shading out excessive submerged vegetation. If submerged vegetation is in excess and within four feet of the lake surface, a pesticide treatment will be required prior to fertilizing. Excess submerged vegetation will absorb the fertilizer before the water can turn green, and those plants will grow at an accelerated rate. If you are treating vegetation I recommend the normal rate of fertilizer application, as the dieing plants will also be adding nutrients to the water, and you do not want to over fertilize as that causes fish kills. Do not fertilize more than the recommended rates once an algae bloom appears. Also be aware of the surrounding property and what goes on there. This includes predicted heavy rains, turning on feeders, treating vegetation around and in the lake, fertilizing nearby crops and/or trees, etc., which all effect the amount of nutrients in your lake and directly effects how much algae grows (how green it is)!

## ***Supplemental Feeding***

Feeders should be turned on to dispense feed four times a day (twice morning/twice afternoon) during the warmest part of the day in spring and fall once surface water temperatures reach 60° F. During summer, feed should be dispensed during the coolest parts of the day (sunrise and sunset). If you have an established fish population, use regular-sized floating pellet feed. If you have newly stocked bream, catfish, or minnows dispense the smaller floating feed with higher protein content to accelerate growth rates and increase survival. Feeding duration should generally be 15-25 seconds (depending on feed size and feeder design). Only dispense enough feed so it is all consumed over a 10-15 minute period, as this helps eliminate waist.

## ***Stocking***

Stocking is best done when temperatures are cooler as compared to the heat of the summer. Always contact your hatchery or fish supplier a couple months in advance, so they know what you need and will have them when it is time. Do not over stock largemouth bass! This is one of the most common stocking mistakes for private

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landowners. They need to eat to grow, and if forage is not plentiful enough, they become stunted. I have already ordered your fish if I have prescribed and discussed with you.

## ***Transplanting trees and Aquatic Plants***

Any new plantings or transplanting around or in the lake is best done before summer. Aquatic plants do have a longer planting window to plant than terrestrial vegetation or trees. If transplanting yourself, make sure you know what you are moving! You do not want to transplant a non native or invasive species that will become a problem in the future. There are a few quality nurseries now that offer desirable aquatic plants that will be shipped to you door if you desire.

## ***Weed Control***

Vegetation control is best done in spring and fall. Spring is when most plants accelerate their growth, pesticides are most successful, and there is less chance of a Dissolved Oxygen related fish kill. Most aquatic pesticides do not kill fish; the dieing vegetation removes (decomposition) oxygen from the water, which is what actually kills fish.

## ***Aeration***

If you were contemplating installing an aeration system, the spring is the best time to install and turn it on. Waiting until the water column stratifies and turning it on usually causes a fish kill. In summer and winter, your lake is like a cake (stratified), with layers of different temperatures and amounts of DO. A natural water body in the summer and winter always has more DO in the water near the surface, and can be near zero at the bottom. This difference is considerably less in the spring and fall. Obviously the temperature near the surface is warmer in the summer than near the bottom, and reversed in the winter. If you turn a newly installed fountain or aeration system on it will quickly de-stratify the water column bringing the nearly zero DO water to the surface before it is oxygenated. Aeration allows fish to use the entire water column from top to bottom all-year long. Aeration also helps reduce ammonia and Carbon dioxide, which can both be detrimental to fish growth and even cause death if in too high amounts. Aeration cannot guarantee the prevention of DO fish kills, but it does greatly reduce the risk.

## ***Fish Population Evaluations (Electrofishing)***

Spring is also the best time to evaluate fish populations, especially if the Largemouth Bass population is to be evaluated. Spring generally allows the opportunity to observe some of the larger bass, as they get near shore before, during, and after spawning, which can equate to two months of time. This allows us greater opportunity to see if there is any trophy fish that may not have been witnessed with hook-and-line. Fall sampling is also good, as it can provide information on how the spawning success of many species was that year. Winter and summer are generally not good times, as winter generally does not give a good representation of the population as fish tend to be too deep for the electrofisher to work and summer sampling should be avoided, as hot temperatures can cause undue stress or even death to fish during and after sampling.

## ***Prepping Waterfowl Areas***

Whether you have flooded timber, moist soil management areas or flooded food plots – dewatering should take place now. Most tree species will die if water is not removed. Various species can tolerate various lengths of time being flooded, but all

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except a few will experience stress and/or die when water is left on them too long. If you rely on beavers to create the situation, now is the time to start breaking dams. Mast trees will produce small or no crops at all (which is why the ducks come) if left in water throughout the year. Moist soil management must have a germination period of no water to produce next fall's plants. Food plots need to be dry enough to plant in late summer for crops to be ready to flood in late fall. Wood duck boxes needed to be installed or cleaned out and replenished with 4 inches of nesting material in January, but if you have not - do it right away, as you may still get nesting activity this year.

I will be making my spring site visits in Florida, Georgia and Alabama April 1 – 12. I will call in Mid-March and set up your individual meeting times. Please have any potential new clients contact me ASAP so I can set up the work they desire, and they do not miss the spring work window. I hope you find these News Letters informative and your feed back is always welcome.

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