



Illinois Department of Natural Resources

One Natural Resources Way Springfield, Illinois 62702-1271
www.dnr.illinois.gov

JB Pritzker, Governor
Colleen Callahan, Director

Jeff Boxrucker, Coordinator
Friend of Reservoirs
Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership
9321 E. State Highway 9
Norman, OK 73026

February 15, 2022

Jeff and Executive Committee members,

It is with great enthusiasm that I support the Lake Shelbyville Fish Habitat Alliance, U.S. Army Corp. of Engineers, local municipalities, numerous business owners, and many individuals and angling groups in their continued efforts to secure funding to build additional fish habitat structures, conduct activities to establish aquatic vegetation, and control erosion in Lake Shelbyville, Illinois with assistance from FOR and RFHP grant funds! The goals laid out in the FY2023 grant application are necessary and attainable to maintain and restore the fishing quality that Lake Shelbyville is renowned for. Fishing is the most popular activity on the lake and not only benefits the fishermen and bait shops but benefits the economic health and quality of life for the entire region. The methods and products identified in this application not only benefit local constituents, but continue to address the majority of objectives outlined by the RFHP, addresses all of the Temperate Regional impairments that are also problematic on Lake Shelbyville, and are valuable to the priority fish species for the Temperate Region!

Lake Shelbyville, which turned 50 years old in 2020, has lost a vast majority of the woody habitat that was present when the reservoir was first impounded. 50-plus years of weathering and decay have left much of the reservoir barren of habitat relied upon by many species. Long-duration floods, on occasion in excess of 12', have further stranded woody habitat in uplands resulting in additional habitat loss. These floods have made conditions difficult for aquatic macrophytes to establish naturally. This lack of habitat, associated erosion, and reduced water quality are affecting the quality of the fishery significantly and efforts to replenish and develop habitat have not kept up with losses. Standard management practices help maintain the quality of the fishery, but the standard reduction in quality with reservoir age continues with rippling effects throughout the community and region.

Martin "Chip" Christensen, of Chip's Marine, has taken the bull by the horns in turning the tide of these losses. Bob Kerans came on to facilitate fund raising for obtaining matching grants. In coordination with Mike Mounce (recently retired from the IDNR-Fisheries Division) and staff from the Lake Shelbyville Project of the USACE, they formed the Lake Shelbyville Fish Habitat Alliance, have held numerous meetings, organized supporting members of LSFHA, FOR, and RFHP, and as a result have built over 1,400 artificial habitat structures and placed them in Lake Shelbyville. Public support has been unbelievable, demonstrated at every habitat build, placement, and particularly at the annual LSFHA banquet, where an average of \$20,000+ dollars has been raised, allowing the LSFHA to stretch the grants we have received from the RFHP even further!

In addition, local Eagle Scout candidate, Dawson Boys, helped USACE staff establish a long-desired aquatic plant nursery at the USACE Project Office. We have raised many 100s of multi-species pots of plants, including spatterdock,

American pondweed, wild celery, coontail, and leafy pondweed which have been introduced into the lake. High water events in recent years have set back efforts to establish long-term stands of aquatic vegetation, however we learn more each year and adapt as necessary. Most recently, we are planning to test the efficacy of artificial floating islands that are planted with a high density of emergent vegetation. We hope these islands will provide a flood-resistant platform that not only helps improve water quality and provide habitat but will provide long-term sources of seed that will grow when conditions are conducive. Planning is underway with local schools to have students assist in collecting, rearing, and planting these islands with locally sourced plants.

The Illinois Natural History Survey continues, at no cost to the project, to conduct research evaluating fish use of habitat structures, including those being used in Lake Shelbyville. This information will not only benefit LSFHA, local constituents, businesses and local residents, but allow for critical evaluation of habitat development and placement and contribute to best management practices (BMPs) for this under-evaluated area of fisheries management practices. Preliminary results are very promising, and we look forward to providing an update to the FOR at the annual meeting this fall!

I ask the Friends of Reservoirs and the Reservoir Fish Habitat Partnership to support this extraordinary collaboration of federal, state, local, and volunteer partners in their efforts to continue the important work they are accomplishing.

Sincerely,

James Garavaglia
Illinois Department of Natural Resources – Fisheries Division
Fisheries Biologist - District 10
Region 3 Reservoir Biologist (Acting)