Jeff Boxrucker, Coordinator August 10, 2017

Friend of Reservoirs

Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership

9321 E. State Highway 9  
Norman, OK 73026

Jeff and Executive Committee members,

It is with great enthusiasm that I support Lee Mitchell, with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Lake Shelbyville Fish Habitat committee, local municipalities, numerous business owners, and many individuals and angling groups in their CONTINUED efforts to secure funding to build additional fish habitat structures, purchase supplies to enhance survival of aquatic plants, and construct rock piles through FOR and RFHP grant funds! These efforts are necessary and “doable” to restore, and then maintain, 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 the benefits the economic health and quality of life for the entire area. The methods and products identified not only benefit local constituents, but continue to address most of the objectives of 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!

Due to the standard aging process, Lake Shelbyville which has been impounded for 48+ years, has lost a significant portion of its’ woody habitat to natural forces. Long-duration floods, on occasion in excess of 12’, have further stranded woody habitat in uplands resulting in addition habitat loss. These floods have made conditions difficult for aquatic macrophytes to establish without help. This lack of habitat and associate 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. Coach Bob Kerans came on to facilitate fund raising for obtaining matching grants. Between Chip’s and Bob Kearns’ “giving back” and “get-it-done” attitudes, Lee and myself have barely been able to keep up. We have organized the Lake Shelbyville Fish Habitat Alliance, held numerous meetings, organized supporting members of LSFHA, FOR, and RFHP, and as a result have built over 500+ cubes (Shelbyville and Georgia cubes) and 100+ artificial stumps and placed them in Lake Shelbyville. Public support has been great, we are collecting money, and we are heading in the right direction to improve fishing quality on the lake.

In addition, local Eagle Scout candidate, Dawson Boys, helped Lee organize and purchase materials to establish the start of a long-desired aquatic plant nursery. 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. We have had planting survive over the course of two years. Flooding in 2019 will test the utility of these species in being able to withstand harsh reservoir conditions and we have yet to re-evaluate previously successful plantings. We know that this effort, when successful, will provide long-term results in providing quality fish habitat, reducing erosion, and improving both water quality and aesthetics on the lake, again improving the quality of life for all species of concern, constituents, and residents. We are anticipating getting local schools involved in producing plants as well.

The Illinois Natural History Survey will incidentally, at no cost to the project, be conducting 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) nation-wide for this under-evaluated area of fisheries management practices. Preliminary results have been good. This information is likely be widely disseminated and published in renowned fisheries-science journals.

I know you are aware of the nation-wide interest in our new cube design, the Lake Shelbyville cube. Anglers are telling us that this design is so much more effective than the original Georgia cube that we should discontinue building Georgia cubes. We have observed angler catching fish off Shelbyville cubes within an hour of deployment and being covered with fish, as observed through sonar, within two days of deployment! In addition to the results of the INHS study, this testimony by anglers AND FISH is the ultimate test in providing effective fish attractor designs. We continue to devise ideas to expand and improve our design to be used in an even wider variety of lake depths.

The LSFHA first Annual Fish Habitat Banquet this past February was an overwhelming success! Not only did individuals and groups by tickets to fill the room to capacity, we raised $21,000 worth of profit in the process. These funds will be added to the FOR funds in continuing to improve the habitat in the lake.

I ask you, Friends of Reservoirs, and the Reservoir Fish Habitat Partnership to support their extraordinary efforts in continuing and expanding these worthwhile and necessary activities. This will benefit a wide community and the support we are receiving from a wide variety of sources indicates the importance of this project to the entire community!

Sincerely,

Michael J. Mounce,

Illinois Department of Natural Resources,

Reservoir Fisheries Manager for Lake Shelbyville