Habitat Improvement Ups Your Chance of Landing the Big One

Catching a fish sometimes isn’t as simple as dropping your line in the water. The aquatic habitat has to be suitable for popular game fish to find shelter, food and spawning grounds. “Fish Attractors” utilize recycled Christmas trees and other brush to create underwater diversity. Habitat enhancement in major South Carolina freshwater bodies has been an ongoing effort to provide improved fish habitat and fishing opportunities.

Habitat improvement takes place from the shoreline out to deeper waters marked by buoys. Long-term enhancement along the shoreline includes live plantings, which can help reduce erosion and create a natural habitat. More fish-friendly improvements include gravel and rocks to create spawning grounds.

Funding from a Natural Resource Damage Assessment is supporting a large scale habitat enhancement project at Lake Hartwell. Many of the techniques mentioned above were used at Lake Hartwell. The first site, a cove adjacent to the Cherry Farm at Clemson University, was completed in 2015. Twelve additional sites are currently being evaluated for the next phase of the project.

A recent joint project between the Santee Cooper Public Service Authority, Santee Cooper Promotions Board and the Department of Natural Resources brings new freshwater artificial reefs to Lake Moultrie and Lake Marion. Concrete structures were donated by Concrete Pipe & Precast of North Charleston and General Pre Cast manufacturing Company of Moncks Corner. The concrete fish attractors differ from the brush piles, which are typically used in the lakes, in that they will provide more diverse and long lasting habitat. Each site is marked with a buoy and will provide better fishing opportunities for anglers not familiar with the lakes.

To find out more information and view maps of habitat restoration visit: https://www.dnr.sc.gov/fish/fishattract/fishattract.html

State Lake Enhancements Underway

Like many small ponds and lakes, SCDNR’s State Lakes need to be drained periodically and restocked in order to produce good fishing. This process, referred to as renovation, involves draining the lake, removing any fish left in the lake, adding wood structures and gravel spawning areas to the lake bottom and is finalized by refilling and restocking. The process takes two years to complete. This lake renovation process was just completed at Lake Hartwell in Union County and the lake reopened on July 1, 2015. Sunrise Lake in Lancaster County, in order to begin the renovation process, is scheduled to reopen in January 2019.

Background Photo Shoreline placement of gravel is used to create suitable spawning substrate (at Lake Hartwell in 2014)