

FARM FISH PONDS

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A rapidly expanding interest in farm fish ponds among the farm and ranch families of Colorado is shown by the number of requests for farm pond information received by the Extension office of Colorado A & M College. Most of these requests concern problems of pond construction or management and are forwarded to the Cooperative Fishery Research Unit located on the campus. Since we are too newly established to provide answers to specific problems, this leaflet will direct the pond owners to excellent sources of information already available to them. Soon, we hope to have published material based upon Colorado conditions.

Construction of Farm Fish Ponds: A farm pond built on a proper site, correctly constructed and correctly managed yields a high return in food and recreation for the whole farm family. A desire for picnics and other family gatherings as well as fishing, boating, swimming and skating explain the upswing in popularity of farm ponds.

Productive farm fish ponds yielding a high return in food and recreation don't just happen; they are the result of carefully planned construction and management. It is important, therefore, that persons planning to construct a farm pond should know the sources of information and assistance that are available and make full use of them. A large number of bulletins by federal and state agencies may be obtained free upon request or for a very nominal sum. Farmer's bulletin No. 1983, Farm Fish Ponds for Food and Good Land Use, is excellent and highly recommended. It may be had upon request from the Extension Service office of Colorado A & M College or most

local Soil Conservation Offices. A list of other sources of information is appended. It should be pointed out that the information in most publications is general, and modifications in construction and management, to meet local conditions, may be required. Technicians of the U. S. Soil Conservation Service will assist in making the necessary soil surveys and in designing and planning the various construction features. Do not attempt to design and build your own pond. A pond built without technical assistance will usually develop serious troubles later on. In computing construction costs you should know that in some cases payment may be received from the Agricultural Conservation Program, administered by the Production and Marketing Administration, for building your pond. In the past, most pond builders in Colorado have been partially reimbursed. Check with your local Soil Conservation Service office for details.

Stocking: After the dam is complete and the pond has filled, fish must be obtained for stocking. Species to be stocked will vary with the location and the water supply. Trout are commonly recommended for ponds with generally cold water. In Colorado, ponds above 5,000 feet are usually cold enough for trout. Warm-water species yield more satisfactory results in ponds where higher temperatures occur. Several warm-water species are utilized but the most common for this region are black bass and bluegill sunfish. Among the trout, rainbow are usually the most satisfactory. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service attempts to fill requests with suitable species. Requests for fish may be sent through the Soil Conservation Service office or to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, P. O. Box 1306, Albuquerque, N. M. Fish from the Fish and Wildlife Service are free. Because the supply of fish from the Fish and Wildlife Service is limited, and delivery may be delayed, owners frequently purchase fish from private hatcheries. This is especially true of trout. A list of the private fish hatcheries in Colorado is appended. Do not address requests for fish to the Colorado Game and Fish Dept. It is prohibited by law from stocking fish

in private waters or from expending funds to assist in their management.

Problems of Management and Maintenance: Most management problems with farm fish ponds arise from mistakes in construction, stocking and/or harvesting. It is much easier to avoid mistakes than to correct problems. Follow carefully the directions of the engineers and fishery biologists of the Soil Conservation Service. The fish pond owner should consider his pond as similar to other productive areas of his farm. Then the values of proper pond management procedures are sensible and understandable. Careful selection of stock or seed, planned fertilization programs, and prompt and adequate harvesting are terms that the farmer is familiar with and can appreciate whether a fish pond or a field of corn is involved. The fish in the pond must be harvested. Failure to harvest the crop is one of the most common management errors and will result in undernourishment and fewer fish of desirable size. The amount and type of fertilizer as well as the dates and frequency of application vary greatly and must be determined for each area. Information can be supplied by the local office of the Soil Conservation Service. In instances where ponds fail to provide reasonably good fishing or to provide the expected yields in pounds of fish and the explanation is not apparent, the Soil Conservation Service may be able to supply a fishery biologist who will examine the pond, diagnose the difficulty and prescribe corrective measures.

The problems that arise in the maintenance of the pond itself are generally covered in the bulletins below, and the corrective measures which may be taken are described. Again for specific problems, the Soil Conservation Service in your district may be able to offer additional help or suggestions.

Caution: Avoid the introduction of additional species. "Weed" fish such as carp, chubs, and other undesirables, if introduced, will result in lower production of the more desirable species. Extreme fluctuation of water level is undesirable and should be avoided whenever possible. Fluctuations resulting in the drying of

much of the productive area of the pond bottom and the interruption of spawning activities reduces fish production and increases problems in management. In order to avoid winterkill, farm ponds in Colorado should have not less than 10 feet of water during the winter months.

Bulletins

Farm Fish Ponds for Food and Good Land Use. V. E. Davidson, U. S. Department of Agriculture. Farmers Bulletin No. 1983. (can be obtained from the Extension Office, Colorado A & M College or from most local offices of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service)

Farm Fish Ponds in West Virginia. R. Frank Dugan. West Virginia University Agricultural Experiment Station. Circular No. 84, April 1952. Morgan Town, West Virginia.

Management of Farm Fish Ponds. H. S. Swingle and E. V. Smith. Bulletin No. 254, 1942. Alabama Polytechnic Institute Agricultural Exp. Sta. Auburn, Alabama.

Construction of Farm Ponds. Fishery Leaflet No. 17. Information Office, Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of Interior, Washington 25, D. C.

Farm Fish Ponds and Their Management. Fishery Leaflet No. 27. Information Office, Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of Interior, Washington 25, D. C.

Artificial Propagation of Brook Trout and Rainbow Trout. Glen C. Leach. Fisheries Document No. 955, Superintendent of Documents, Washington 25, D. C. 25¢

Care and Diseases of Trout. H. S. Davis. Research Report No. 12. Superintendent of Documents, Washington 25, D. C. 25¢

A List of Private Fish Hatcheries in Colorado
Where Fish May Be Purchased

WARM WATER FISH

(Bass, bluegill, crappie, catfish)

Truman Evans
Route 1, Box 157
Loma, Colo.

E. S. Moore
Route 2
Montrose, Colo.

TROUT

Cline Bros. Trout Farm
North 26th Street
P. O. Box 733
Boulder

J. M. McMath
Spanish Peaks Trout Co.
No. 140
La Veta

Ray C. Johnson, Manager
Colorado Rainbow Trout Fisheries
Route 1, Box 65
Boulder

A. L. Pearsall & Son
Spring Creek Fish Hatchery
Monte Vista

Horace G. Frantz
Salida

W. Wallace Wright
Wright's Ranch
Creede

Gordon C. Hutchings
Trouthaven
Henderson

Billy Wills
Lake Cliff Ranch
Creede

Charles L. Kinney
Kinney Trout Farm
RFD 1
Henderson

Carol Wetherill
Del Norte

Bob & Charles Corey
Silver Springs Trout Farm
Montrose

Ted Dowell and Son
Rainbow Trout Farm
Hotchkiss

Joe McElroy, Jr.
Cottonwood Trout Farm
P. O. Box 243
Englewood