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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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FARM PONDS GET INCREASING ATTENTION FROM FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

A one-acre fish pond--well-managed, properly fertilized, adequately fished--will yield an annual harvest averaging 200 pounds of fish each year and provide 400 hours of good fishing, says the Fish and Wildlife Service. In the United States, there are more than a million and a half farm ponds of varying sizes but averaging an acre apiece. 100,000 more ponds are being made each year through soil conservation and water storage projects.

In 24 States laws and policies prohibit stocking of farm ponds with fish produced in the State hatcheries. The Fish and Wildlife Service has been called upon to fill that gap and each year provides more than 30,000,000 fish, mainly warm water species, for approximately 28,000 noncommercial ponds in 42 States.

Many of these are multipurpose ponds created as part of the Federal Soil Conservation and Watershed Protection program. The fact that the Federal Government and many States furnish the appropriate kind and number of fish for stocking, plus the knowledge that information on the development and management of ponds is readily available, has greatly stimulated the pond construction program.

Interest in farm ponds is steadily increasing. The idea, which "took hold" first in the southeastern States where almost half the ponds are located, has spread to other sections of the country where topography and climate make these small fishing areas practical. They have a direct value in providing family fishing at the same time they relieve fishing pressure on natural fishing areas.

Ponds smaller than a half acre rarely furnish good fishing, but ponds of from one to three acres are ideal for the average family and friends. Larger fishing ponds require more management, effort and expense; however, they do produce a bigger crop of harvestable fish. These large ponds should be opened to public fishing because the quality of the sport is generally improved, never harmed, by heavy recreational fishing. Intensive cropping is an asset in the management of successful fish ponds.

To produce gratifying fishing, a farm pond must be well constructed on a favorable site, properly stocked, and must receive continuing management. Small fishing ponds should be stocked only with hatchery fish of the species, sizes, and numbers recommended for the area by State or Federal biologists. Promiscuous introduction of wild fish, either before or after stocking with the approved hatchery fish, is a common cause of poor fishing.

In 1954 the Fish and Wildlife Service planted 32,800,000 fish in 28,000 ponds of 42 States and the District of Columbia. More than half of the ponds are in the southeastern States but on one southwestern State, Texas, approximately 4,000 farm ponds were stocked with fish produced at Federal hatcheries.

During the same calendar year the Fish and Wildlife Service distributed a total of 46,000,000 eggs and 164,000,000 fish varying from fry to catchable size. Of these, 58,000,000 were fry and fingerlings of warm-water species distributed to farm ponds and nearly 1,200 lakes and reservoirs.