

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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FISH AND WILDLIFE HABITAT AND POPULATION IMPROVEMENTS AT WESTERN DAMS AND RESERVOIRS ASSESSED IN NEW INTERIOR DEPARTMENT REPORT

The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has investigated the success of 286 habitat and population improvement measures it recommended at 90 western dam and reservoir projects in a new report designed to be a useful planning document for construction agencies.

The Western Reservoir and Stream Habitat Improvements Handbook, a product of the Service's Western Energy and Land Use Team, assesses dams (including diversion dams), reservoirs, and canals in 19 Western States.

After identifying the major habitat improvement measures used at the dam and reservoir projects by construction agencies, success was measured by how well these measures accomplished their intended purpose.

For example, in new reservoirs with limited bottom cover, brush shelters have been found to attract fish, especially sunfish, bass, and crappie. Brush shelters are built from tree trunks and brush and are anchored to the reservoir bottom. They are usually marked on the surface so that fishermen can locate them.

Another useful habitat improvement consists of small nesting islands in reservoirs. These are important sanctuaries for nesting waterfowl and shorebirds. In many areas, hay and nest enclosures are supplied on the islands. Where they are used, nesting islands usually result in increased production of various wildlife species.

Another objective of this study is to present the information in terms that engineers can understand so that it will have maximum usefulness for construction agencies. All habitat improvement measures are accompanied by engineering drawings, cost/output data, and evaluations of their intended purposes, inherent limitations, past performance, and actual applications.

Single copies of the Western Reservoir and Stream Habitat Improvements Handbook are available from the Publications Request Clerk, Western Energy and Land Use Team, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2625 Redwing Road, Fort Collins, Colorado 80526 (specify report # FWS/OBS-78/56).