

Suwannee Lake Fish Management Area Restoration

Suwannee County, FL



Introduction

Since its creation in 1967, the Suwannee Lake Fish Management Area (FMA) has been managed for the public as a sportfish fishery by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). The 105-acre property located near Live Oak in rural Suwannee County includes a

63-acre manmade lake. Over time through a natural succession of intermittent droughts and invasive aquatic vegetation, the lake's reputation as a high-quality largemouth bass fishery has declined. The Suwannee Lake FMA was closed for restoration in 2013.

Objectives

- Restore Suwannee Lake to its status as a high-quality largemouth bass fishery
- Take appropriate measures to deal with the lake's degraded aquatic habitat
- Make Suwannee Lake one more reason why Florida is the Bass Fishing Capital of the World



Approach

Restoration of Suwannee Lake began in June 2013. The extensive project's many components include draining the lake, removing 60,000 cubic yards of organic material and creating habitat-enhancing features such as submerged log piles and irregular bottom contours. The project also includes efforts to improve angler access and plant native vegetation. Once the project's construction is completed in July 2014, Suwannee Lake will be refilled with water and restocked with bream and forage fish in fall 2014, followed by re-stocking Florida's strain of largemouth bass in spring 2015. The \$600,000 project was funded through a lake restoration appropriation from the Florida Legislature that was approved by the Governor. The FWC plans to continue coordinating with Suwannee County and local civic groups to explore further enhancements to the Suwannee Lake FMA such as improving roads and adding park facilities and hiking trails.



Benefits

Within a few years after its restoration, Suwannee Lake should be a productive fishery that once again contains high-quality trophy largemouth bass. The project is an example of how the Lake Restoration Program is essential to the FWC's efforts to manage, restore and enhance the health of Florida's lakes, rivers and wetland systems for the benefit of residents and visitors to the state. Florida has nearly 1 million freshwater anglers who are residents and 258,000 who are nonresidents. They support a \$1.7 billion freshwater fishing industry that provides 14,000 jobs, including important opportunities in rural areas such as Suwannee County. Learn more about Suwannee Lake by going to MyFWC.com/FreshwaterFishing, clicking on Sites and Forecasts and then Lakes and Rivers.

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