

New beginnings

Mink, Somers reclamation gives lakes new lease

By Jerry L. Carter

Have you ever looked at something and said, "It is not worth saving, I might as well scrap everything and start over."

Well, that is exactly what The Association of Mink and Somers (TAMS) lakes did. The majority of the residents of the two lakes, located in eastern Corinna Township, voted that they no longer want to fish for carp and decided to do a lake reclamation and restock with more desirable game fish.

"Right now when people think of Mink and Somers Lakes they say they are slews, but that is okay. They can think that because once we get the reclamation and restocking completed, we don't want anyone to know about our secret," said Dan Hinrichs, president of

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TAMS.

A lake reclamation is when a lake is treated with a chemical to kill all of the

fish, especially the undesirable ones and new more desirable fish are restocked in their place.

"The problem with the lakes is that they have been taken over by carp," Hinrichs said. "I would say that approximately 75 to 90 percent of the fish in the lakes are carp."

The carps rooting through the bottom have had some adverse effects on the lakes.

"Our water clarity is only one to two feet because of the carp digging up the bottom," Hinrichs said.



TAMS is currently in the second stage

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of the reclamation and chemicals to kill the fish will be applied to the water this week.

"We are shooting for Monday, but if it is rainy we won't be able to apply the rotenone," Hinrichs said.

Rotenone is the chemical of choice when it comes to reclaiming lakes.

"Rotenone only effects fish," Hinrichs said. "It renders their gills useless and they suffocate."

The chemical only stays active for several weeks and after that period new fish can be introduced to the water.

TAMS is using a powdered version of rotenone on most of the lake and the chemical will be applied by boat, air boat and helicopter.

"The rotenone doesn't have any effect on people, but people shouldn't eat the reclaimed fish," Hinrichs said.

People don't know how long the fish have been dead and should not trust their freshness.



The first stage of the project was to make sure once the carp were reclaimed that they wouldn't return to the lake.

"Our lakes are unique," Hinrichs said. "We don't have any inlets and only one outlet."

TAMS had the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) install a computer drafted smooth-walled gradient velocity culvert.

"Many people have been skeptical of

the culvert, but it really works," Hinrichs said.

The culvert is put in at such an angle that water drains at such a speed that fish can't swim up it.

"It doesn't make a difference what level the water is," Hinrichs said. "The smooth walls of the culvert and the angle doesn't allow the carp to come up stream."

The culvert was installed in 1992 and with the last two years high water levels, the culvert has proven to work.

"Another nice thing about the culvert is that there is no maintenance," Hinrichs said. "There are no gates or traps to clean-up. It is free flowing."

Paul Diedrich, from the Montrose DNR fishery has been very active in the whole process, Hinrichs said.



Hinrichs and others have been working on getting the lake reclaimed since 1988.

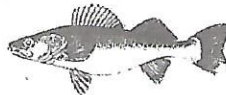
"I applied for the funding in 1988," Hinrichs said.

The application process was long and dragged out, but Hinrichs met with DNR officials at local and state levels to get the application approved.

"We really have an active lake association," Hinrichs said. "We were one of 17 lakes last year to have our watershed mapped and analyzed and we are active in trying to get our residents to upgrade their sewage systems."

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Once the reclamation is completed this week, game fish will be introduced to the lake by late November.

"The DNR will stock the lake with perch and baitfish in the end of November and next spring they will start stocking gamefish like, sunfish, northerns and bass" Hinrichs said.

To keep sunfish populations high, the DNR plans on stocking the lake with only male sunfish.

"I don't know how they can tell the difference between the males and the females, but it makes sense," Hinrichs said.

Fishing regulations on the lake for the first few years will be restricted.

"The first year or so we will only

have catch and release on the lake," Hinrichs said. "The following years will probably be modified in the number of fish you can take."

Hinrichs said instead of having a possession limit of 30 sunnies the modified limit might be something like five.



Once the reclamation and restocking is completed, the third, and final, step in the lake reclamation will be the installation of a portable aerator.

"The lake has completely frozen in the past a couple of times," Hinrichs said. "The aerator is basically some insurance to protect our investment."

Hinrichs is hoping that the aerator won't be necessary, because getting rid of the carp will increase the amount of useful vegetation in the lake and it will oxygenate itself.

Hinrichs also hopes that algae levels in the lake will be reduced, allowing more useful plants to grow.

"We are kind of a test lakes for many other watershed," Hinrichs said. "There are a lot of other lake associations watching us to see if a reclamation might benefit them."

An additional benefit to a lake reclamation may be the increase of property values to the 160 homes that border the lakes, Hinrichs said.

Hinrichs said that in the next couple weeks anyone who wants to help clean-up the dead fish are more than welcome at the lakes.