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With the beginning of 2008, pond owners should take a moment to evaluate the condition of the pond and their management strategy to meet their recreational fishing goals. The central theme of any successful management plan is record keeping. A little extra care in record keeping will help the pond perform closer to your expectations.

Record keeping should be simplified to make it easier on the manager. Something as simple as a mailbox with a weather resistant notebook and pencil at the pond side will suffice. Having record keeping materials near the pond will help remind anglers and managers alike to record their actions each time they visit the pond.

Included in a pond's records should be water quality data including pH, alkalinity, and hardness. Additionally, feeding rates, fertilization, stocking events, and harvesting events should be recorded. This information will allow a pond owner to track the performance of a pond. If the pond's performance begins to decline, updated and complete records will assist the owner or expert in determining the cause.

Records not only include data measurements such as numbers stocked, or fish caught on a given day, but should include the observations of the pond owner/manager. You know your pond better than anyone does, and your observations of changes in and around the

pond are a key resource we use to answer your questions. Some examples of the types of observations that should be recorded include rapid changes in color or odor of water, changes in vegetation at waters edge, heavy rain events, etc. A good rule of thumb is if it goes into, or comes out of your pond, write it down.

No two ponds react exactly the same way. By having a detailed history of a pond, an owner/manager can make better decisions concerning pond treatment, stocking, harvesting, and fertilization.

For additional questions or information, contact P.J. Waters, Auburn University Marine Extension and Research Center, 438-5690.