

January 2000

**Timetable for Pond Owner Services provided by
Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries****

*by Russell A. Wright
Fisheries Extension Specialist*

**** Information provided by:**

Mike J. Newman

District VI Fisheries Supervisor

Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries

The Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources provides a variety of services for the private pond owner. These services include fish for stocking, pond balance checks, fish kill investigations, and weed control recommendations. Applications for these services must be submitted in a timely fashion to the appropriate district office. Some of these services are also provided by Alabama Cooperative Extension System personnel. Owners should be given the full variety of sources of technical assistance to help them better manage their ponds.

Fish for Stocking:

State hatcheries provide Florida largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides floridanus*), northern strain bluegill (*Lepomis macrochirus*), and redear sunfish (*Lepomis microlophus*) also known as shellcrackers for \$40 per acre. To qualify to receive fish to stock a pond, the owner must submit an application to the appropriate district office prior to 31 January of the year the fish are needed. The district biologist must then certify that the pond meets the minimum area requirement of at least surface acre for a fertilized and acre for an unfertilized pond. The pond must also be free of wild fish. The only fish that can be present in the pond at the time of stocking are mosquitofish (*Gambusia sp.*) commonly called topminnows or grass carp (*Ctenopharyngodon idella*). However, it is advisable to wait to stock the grass carp until the pond has been approved for stocking.

For qualifying ponds less than 20 surface acre, state hatchery technicians deliver about 800 bluegill, 200 redear sunfish and 100 largemouth bass fingerlings per acre to a location, usually a post office, in the county where the pond is located. The pond owner must meet the delivery and provide containers filled with pond water to transport the fish to the pond. For larger ponds, the technicians will deliver the fish to the pond. Bluegill and redear sunfish are stocked from November through March while largemouth bass are stocked the following late May or June. This split stocking permits the bluegills and redears to become established and

begin to reproduce providing food for the juvenile largemouth bass stocked the next spring. The state provides no other species for stocking in private ponds.

District biologists can recommend other than the standard rates and procedures for stocking under special circumstances. In unfertilized ponds the state stocks at half the rate of fertilized ponds at a cost of \$40/acre. Should the January 31 deadline be missed, the pond owner may purchase sunfish (bream) from a private hatchery. The state can then provide largemouth bass necessary for balanced stocking. For a bass only stocking, the sunfish must be stocked and an application in place before April 1. The cost for a bass only stocking is \$20/acre. Should the district biologist find that a pond has experienced recruitment failure (no young bass are produced or survive) of the largemouth bass and be in danger of becoming overcrowded with sunfish, the state can provide largemouth bass fingerlings for late summer remedial stocking.

Balance Checks:

State biologists will do seine checks of private ponds to determine if the fish populations are in balance (proper number and sizes of both sunfish and bass to generate good growth and fishing success). Biologists conduct pond checks in June and September. Applications for June balance checks must be made by May 31 and by August 31 for September checks. Results of these checks are summarized by the district biologist and recommendations are provided to the pond owner in writing.

Fish Kills, Water Quality, and Excess Vegetation Control:

Fisheries biologists will investigate unexplained fish kills in recreational fishing ponds. Pond owners should contact their district biologist immediately if fish are sick and begin dying in their pond. The district biologists will also provide advice and help with problems of poor water quality and vegetation control. These problems can be reported at any time during the year. Owners should seek help with these problems when they first arise and when they may be corrected easily.

Table 1. Pond Services provided by Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries

Service	Application Deadline
Fish for pond stocking	January 31
Bass only stocking (sunfish from a private hatchery)	April 1
June balance check	May 31
September balance check	August 31
Fish kill, weed control, water quality	not applicable

Table 2. Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries contact information

District	Office location	Tel. Number	District Biologist
1	Decatur	(256) 353-2634	Keith Floyd, Supervisor Chris Greene, Mgmt. Biologist
2	Eastaboga	(256) 831-6860	Dan Catchings, Supervisor Steve Smith, Mgmt. Biologist
3	Northport	(205) 339-5716	Jerry Moss, Supervisor Jay Haffner, Mgmt. Biologist
4	Montgomery	(334) 242-3628	Jim McHugh, Supervisor Joseph Jernigan, Mgmt. Biologist
5	Spanish Fort	(334) 626-5153	Bill Tucker, Supervisor Dave Armstrong, Mgmt. Biologist
6	Enterprise	(334) 347-9467	Mike Newman, Supervisor Ken Weathers, Mgmt. Biologist
Division of Wildlife and Fisheries website: www.dcnr.state.al.us/agfd/fishsec.html			