

## Friends of Clam Lake (FoCL) Fish Habitat Project

### ARE YOU INTERESTED?

Partnering with other members of the Elk River Chain of Lakes (ERCOL), Friends of Clam Lake is working towards establishing fish habitats/shelters in Clam Lake, as well as Intermediate Lake, Lake Bellaire, Torch Lake, Lake Skegemog and Elk Lake. IF YOU'RE INTERESTED in having one of these shelters installed on the lake bottom in front of your property, please contact us at [friendsofclamlake@charter.net](mailto:friendsofclamlake@charter.net). These habitats will be DNR and DEQ approved, installed at depths below 10 feet. They will not interfere with boating traffic or deter from your lake view.

Please read the information below for background and details on this project.

Many fishermen who were active in the Chain of Lakes in the '70s and '80s will recall that most lake associations placed fish shelters in area lakes to create fish habitats. The shelters were effective in attracting both fish and fishermen. It was a major volunteer effort on the part of many to build the structures, float them out and sink them. Some remnants still remain. In the '90s, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) discouraged the practice and the lake associations in northern Michigan complied. The MDNR has changed their position and in 2005 issued guidelines for Artificial Structures in Inland Lakes.

The Hubbard Lake Sportsman and Improvement Association has been installing fish shelters (with permits now required from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) at the rate of 50 per year for the last few years. Divers in Hubbard Lake have observed large schools of perch, bass, forage fish, walleye and northern pike in and around the fish shelters.

Recently the Lake Charlevoix Association received a MDEQ permit to install fish shelters. "Many parts of Lake Charlevoix are nearly devoid of the natural structure which is so important to fish spawning and survival. Our project aims to improve the overall health of the fishery in Lake Charlevoix and improve angler success."

In the last few weeks, fishermen from the Elk River Chain of Lakes (ERCOL) met to coordinate the preparation and submission of a joint permit application for the installation of fish shelters. The project initially seeks to deploy fish habitat structures at approximately a half dozen locations on each of six lakes in the ERCOL; Intermediate, Bellaire, Clam, Torch, Skegemog and Elk. Additional deployments as well as a shallow water program for near shore habitat improvement could be pursued after evaluation of the initial effort.

An ERCOL Steering Committee has been formed. The members are Steve Young (Intermediate Lake Association), Bob Bagley (Three Lakes Association), Adam Jankowski (Elk-Skegemog Lakes Association) and Larry Schwab (Friends of Clam Lake). The proposed permit holder for this project is The Watershed Center of Grand Traverse Bay (TWC). The TWC is the author of the EPA approved Grand Traverse Bay Watershed Protection Plan. One of its goals of the Plan is to enhance the recreational opportunities with an objective of maintaining sport fishing quality and fish habitat throughout the watershed. A target date of March 1, 2012 has been chosen for submitting a joint permit application to the MDEQ.

For the permit application to be approved, written permission from three riparian property owners are required for each shelter placement. As the ERCOL fishery committee identifies a potential site for shelter placement, they will contact the property owner in front of whose property the shelter is proposed to be located and the two adjacent property owners for their written permission to place the shelter at that site.

For additional information about this fish shelter project, please contact Friends of Clam Lake ([friendsofclamlake@charter.net](mailto:friendsofclamlake@charter.net)).