

# **Perry County Conservation District Serves as Collection Site for Christmas Trees**

**Submitted By Andrew Laswell**

Each year there are approximately 25-30 million trees sold in the United States. On average that is 500,000 to 600,000 per state (<http://www.realchristmastrees.org/dnn/Education/QuickTreeFacts.aspx>). Where do these trees end up after the holiday season? While many people will either burn them or have them chipped for mulch, there are better means of recycling these trees, as well as wreaths. This past January the Perry County Conservation District became a partner with the Army Corps of Engineers as a drop off and collection site for the tree recycling program. Through this partnership not only will the trees be recycled, but they will also be utilized as habitat for fish and other aquatic species.

For several years the Army Corps of Engineers and Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources have conducted Christmas tree collections across the state. At these sites live trees, wreaths and pallets have been collected. The Corps and the KDFWR have been using the collected trees to conserve our natural resources by introducing and improving habitat for the aquatic species in Kentucky's waterways. The conservation district became involved this year, because they had perfect facilities to organize a drop off site in relation to Buckhorn Lake which the habitat will be created in.

There were a total of 60 trees, 50 wreaths, and 40 pallets donated this year. Each of these will serve a separate purpose and placement in the lake. The plan is currently to initiate the setup of the fish habitat in March of this year. This will allow the habitat to be placed in the lake while that the lake is at winter pool and the mud flats are exposed. March is the optimal time to place habitat, because the water level will be raised soon and this allows the trees and other evergreen trees to still be fresh enough that the organisms which feed on the greenery to be able to utilize those resources.

What exactly utilizes these structures? Many species of fish will use these as refuge from predators. This includes smaller game fish such as crappie, bluegill and many species of baitfish. A direct result of having more of these fish hanging around the fresh structure is that many predatory fish will relocate to these areas to feed. This also serves as a safe spot for fry and young fish to survive and grow to maturity. All these events lead to a healthier fishery ecosystem. In addition to the biological impacts this has on the fishery it also has economic benefits to local communities as well. A healthy fishery is a great attraction to fisherman statewide due to the productivity and success that these anglers have at the body of water.



This photo shows one way that these materials are used in the creek arms of the Lake (photo courtesy US Army Corps of Engineers)

Overall, this partnership is going to have great impacts on Buckhorn Lake, as well as Perry County. Not only has the Perry County Conservation District played an integral role in conserving our natural

resources, but has also developed a plan to boost the economy in the future. Partnerships of this type are beneficial not only for today, but help for years down the road.