

Rough River Lake: Shoreline Stabilization & Fish Habitat

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In early September, a collaborative effort between Rough River Lake and the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR) fisheries focused on stabilizing eroding shorelines and restoring aquatic habitats. The team hydroseeded portions of the shoreline using a Shoreline Stabilization mix from Round Stone Seed and Flex Terra Medium from Caudill Seed. This effort aimed to establish water-tolerant, erosion-resistant vegetation along areas typically at the water's edge. With Rough River Lake's summer pool reduced by 5 feet, the team hoped the dry conditions would allow the vegetation to take root and help stabilize the banks.

At the same time, the team deployed 14 reef balls and more than 200 donated Christmas trees into the lake. These reef balls, part of an ongoing habitat restoration initiative started in 2020, help stabilize shorelines while providing habitat for aquatic species. The reef ball structures have been adapted over time, incorporating gas pipes to create better depth ranges for habitat. Annual rebuilding and refreshing of the reef balls ensure their continued effectiveness as the wooden components decay.

In addition to these efforts, large cedar brush piles sourced from a local farmer were placed in the reservoir to provide additional habitat for fish. Seven piles were strategically dropped in waters deeper than 20 feet, ensuring they would remain effective throughout winter pool. Over the past two years, the Rough River Lake staff have also planted more than 900 trees, including cyprus, sycamore, cottonwood, black willow, sweet gum, willow oak, and eastern red cedar, along vulnerable shorelines to help combat erosion. These trees' root systems are expected to stabilize the soil as they mature, further preventing shoreline degradation.

As the lake nears its 60th year, these combined efforts aim to restore critical aquatic habitats and enhance shoreline stability. The team plans to continue these projects,

including more reef ball deployments and additional tree plantings, to support the health of the lake's ecosystem and ensure a sustainable future for the fishery.

