

Rend Lake's Fisheries Habitat Improvement Program

In 2016, Rend Lake applied for and was awarded one of nine Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership national grants with 5 other Corps of Engineers applicants. The **Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership** is a national partnership established to promote and facilitate the conservation of habitat for fish and other aquatic species in reservoir systems through collaborative actions.

As Rend Lake was built, most of the trees in the 19,000 acres lake basin were bulldozed, piled, and burned, leaving a barren future lake bottom, devoid of any useable fish habitat structure. Placing commercial fish attractors into this reservoir will provide valuable artificial structure. This structure will provide much needed cover for smaller sport fish. As these structures age they will be rapidly colonized by periphyton which will both provide and attract a variety of food items for these smaller fish. As these smaller fish begin to utilize these structures they will attract and hold a variety of larger sport fish. These concentrations of adult sport fish will provide excellent fishing.



Though this project will not completely solve the lack of habitat in an area the size of Rend Lake, it will establish areas with high quality habitat which will last 50 years and make them easy for the anglers to locate. Along with this, the improved quality of the fishing experience will bring more fishermen and more tourism dollars, thus helping the local area and visitors to a better quality of life.

The \$10,000 grant has provided funds to purchase the materials to construct and place 150 porcupine balls and 700 spider blocks, 200 more structures than originally expected, in grouped locations to create 28 new habitat areas in presently barren areas. Half of these structures will be located to improve high-use shoreline fishing areas, including some areas already designed for universal accessibility and some additional areas to be developed.

To build and place this many structures takes a herculean effort of a large team of volunteers and professionals. As we approach the half-way mark in the assembly of the 850 structures, over 365 volunteer hours' worth over \$8,800 have been donated. Volunteers from local high school FFA chapters and the region's Boy Scout troops have spent their time after school and on weekends to help us complete a decade's worth of work in a year. As an example, our partner in our Deer Hunt for Persons with Disabilities, the Sesser-Valier Outdoorsman Club, has already donated 136 hours towards constructing these habitat structures.



A program which was estimated to garner approximately \$25,000 benefit to the public has generated over \$43,500 after only three months. Furthermore, it has been the catalyst for additional projects and partnerships.

Rend Lake Grant Statistics

Contributions:

To date, Clear Wave Communication has donated over 6,000 feet of 1 ¼ hose worth \$3,000 that would have possibly ended up in a land fill.

Volunteers:

Sesser/Valier Outdoorsman Club: This group also helps to put on the Rend Lake Deer Hunt for persons with Disabilities (3 miles away)

Benton FFA/Ag students (3 miles away)

Marion High School FFA/Ag students (25 miles away)

Christopher IL Boy Scout Troop (5 miles away)

Benton, IL Boy Scout Kayden Beadle (assisted in our second and largest drop day so far)

Leveraged Benefit:

For the grant, we requested:

1. Amount Requested: \$10,000
2. Amount of in-kind contributions: \$14,828
Federal In-kind = \$2,032
Non-Federal in-kind = \$12,796
3. The grant money will be used to purchase the supplies to build 150 porcupine balls and 500 spider blocks.

Almost 3 months into the grant work period and about halfway done constructing the structures, we have realized over \$43,500 worth of benefit to the public. In addition, with the extra donated supplies and a well-researched spending plan which netted additional savings, we are now able to make 150 porcupine balls and 700 spider blocks, which is 200 additional structures than expected. This will result in 28 new locations with structure in every major cove on each side of the lake covering ¾ of the lake shoreline.

1. 365.50 volunteer hours' worth \$8,841.12.
2. Partner investments and donations worth \$4,043.18