



Southeast Idaho has no shortage of year-round fishing opportunities. There are many reservoirs in this part of the state and countless streams and creeks perfect for dunking a worm or wetting a fly. However, with busy work schedules intermingled with everything from a child's soccer games to weekend chores, it can be hard for anyone to find time to fish. And, if you are 12 years old, with a little free time after school one day, how do you get yourself from Pocatello to Devil's Creek or the Upper Portneuf?

That's where a community fishing pond comes in. Designed to be easily accessible, easy to fish without need of a boat or float tube, and located within a population center, community fishing ponds provide a unique open space experience different from that of a traditional park. There is still room for play, picnicking, and exploration, but the main attraction is the excitement of reeling in a feisty fish.

Developing a community fishery has been and still is a very high priority for the Pocatello Fish and Game office. In fact, an article printed by Dave Langston in last Friday's outdoors section of the Idaho State Journal where he mentioned the need for a local urban fishery reminded me that it may be time to update southeast Idaho on the status of the Community Fishing Pond planned for Pocatello.

Site Selection. Fish and Game has evaluated a total of 5 sites for a community fishery within Pocatello, and selected the Edson Fichter Nature Area located in south Pocatello off Cheyenne Avenue because it has a number of advantages: 1) Fish and Game owns the land; 2) the site is located in close proximity to a school and residential community, receiving 37,466 visitors in 2007 and 47,093 visitors in 2008; 3) it is connected to the Portneuf Greenway; 4) it has an established point of diversion for water; and 5) some infrastructure is in place already, including parking and some utilities.

Design Concept. Fish and Game is planning a 3-acre pond that will have a maximum depth of about 15 feet. The pond will be maintained with a mix of surface water and groundwater, and to maximize water conservation, the pond will be lined. Fish species to be planted include rainbow trout, bluegill, and bass.

Local landscape architect, Bill Jackson of Jackson Land Design, PC, donated his services to develop the concept master plan for the community fishing pond with input from representatives from the Fish and Game office.

Site amenities will include fishing docks and piers, perimeter trails with benches, and some additional native landscaping to enhance and beautify the natural setting. Fill from the pond excavation will be used to build a berm along the property boundary to visually screen and muffle sounds from the nearby railroad. Site design will also comply with Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

"I have seen urban fishing ponds work in other communities from large to small, and the result has always been the same. They are highly valued by the community, providing a recreational opportunity that is not only fun but connects people to city's green spaces in a unique way," says Bill Jackson.

Funding. Fish and Game has received a federal grant for \$100,000 to be used on the Edson Fichter Community Fishing Pond project. Those funds should cover most of the excavation; however, we do not have enough funds to purchase and install the liner necessary to conserve water. Purchase and installation of the liner is estimated to be about \$75,000.

Fish and Game appreciates the donated services of Jackson Land Design, PC; however, we are still seeking other community partners to help fund the remaining costs to develop the fishery, mainly the pond liner.

Schedule: Currently, we are completing the necessary water right changes in order to acquire water to fill and maintain the pond. Assuming we can raise the necessary remaining funds and complete the water rights changes in a timely manner, we hope to begin excavation at the site in 2010.

For local residents, the Community Fishing Pond at the Edson Fichter Nature Area will mean something a little different than the other year round fisheries here in southeast Idaho-- it will provide a truly local fishing opportunity where someone with a little time on their hands can do some fishing without leaving town.

Imagine squeezing in some fishing fun on your lunch hour or taking a child to catch rainbow trout after school. Imagine neighborhood kids riding their bikes to a local fishing pond where they can dangle their bare feet off of docks while baiting hooks with worms and marshmallows.

Our imaginations at Fish and Game have run wild with ideas for fishing clinics, Free Fishing Day events, and aquatic education activities. Other fishing events planned for the new community fishery include scheduled fishing days during the summer where anglers can fish at the pond without need of a fishing license. These will be Fish and Game sponsored events with fishing equipment available at the site for those who need it, along with fishing instruction and assistance to those new to the sport. Adding a community fishery in 2010 will be the best "fish story" of the year.

"Our goal is to provide a great fishing experience for families, kids and first-time anglers" says David Teuscher, regional fisheries manager with Fish and Game's southeast regional office. "What a unique way to connect people to the resource, and it can happen right in our own backyards."

For more information about the plans for the Community Pond at the Edson Fichter Nature Area, please contact David Teuscher with Fish and Game at 232-4703. Or, you can e-mail him at David.Teuscher@idfg.idaho.gov.

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