

AGENDA ITEM NO. 10

Conservation and Enforcement Efforts at Bluewater Lake



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Bluewater Lake is an irrigation reservoir located northwest of Grants.



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- Dam was built by local area farmers.
- Property is mostly NM State Parks, with some BLM and State Land.
- 1948 agreement ensures conservation pool below 7,365 ft elevation



Fishery

- Historically, Bluewater was managed as a put-grow-take Rainbow trout and Channel catfish water.
- 2001-2002—Public concern was raised about the numbers of White suckers and Goldfish in lake.
- Management plan was drafted—Tiger muskie were selected as tool to reduce non-game fish and increase warm water angling opportunity.



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- 2003-2012—Approx. 350,000 Tiger muskie (fry-fingerlings) were stocked to control suckers and goldfish.
 - Tiger muskie grow rapidly, allowing for limited angling opportunity (limit of 1 fish at least 40" long)



- Tiger Muskie fishery has become extremely popular, resulting in increased visitation at Bluewater Lake State Park.

- Some concern by anglers that Tiger muskie are eating all the Rainbow trout in the lake.



Change in Management

- 2013-2014 surveys indicate that tiger Muskie are exceeding the carrying capacity. No Rainbow trout are captured.
- Tiger Muskie stocking is suspended, “catchable” Rainbow trout are stocked instead of smaller ones.



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Angler Surveys

- Creel surveys show that most anglers (over 65%) are targeting Tiger muskies.
- Most Tiger muskie anglers report high satisfaction, 1/3 of Rainbow trout anglers reported very low satisfaction.



Enforcement Efforts

- Bluewater is a high priority location during the summer. Patrols have been reduced somewhat for the past 2 years due to high numbers of bear incidents and vacant positions.
- Violation rates have remained constant (approximately 4%). Most citations were for Fishing without a License, followed by bag/size limit violations. This is consistent with other waters in the state.



Enforcement Efforts Continued

- **2012**
- 265 man hours
- 942 angler checks
- 43 citations
- During 2012, all districts were full to include two recruits

- **2013**
- 92 man hours
- 568 angler checks
- 5 citations
- During 2013, Grants and Gallup Districts were vacant, Belen District became vacant late in the year. Bear calls were at an all time high. Angler patrols were suppressed due to manpower issues and bears.

- **2014-thru July**
- 155 man hours
- 786 angler checks
- 20 citations
- During this period, the Grants, Gallup, and Belen districts are vacant. The entire supervisory district is being covered by a Sergeant and one district officer. We have utilized some special patrols to show a presence at the lake by pulling officers from other districts and job assignments.



- Low water levels have concentrated the fish and the anglers.

- We have received reports of anglers taking undersized Tiger muskie and/or finding dead Tiger muskie along the shore.



The advice for “Catch and Release” printed on p. 24 of the Fishing Rules and Information Book is what is passed on to anglers to reduce mortality rates for undersized Tiger muskie that are caught by anglers.



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Catch & Release Tips

Many New Mexico game fish have restricted bag and/or size limits which require immediate live release back to the water where taken. To ensure healthy release, follow these suggestions:

1. Land the fish quickly and don't play it to exhaustion.
2. Use a landing net whenever possible.
3. Keep the fish in the water.
4. Do not squeeze or grab any part of the fish. Wet your hands first if you must handle the fish.
5. Gently remove the hook (barbless hooks are easier).
6. If the hook is swallowed deeply, cut the leader. A fish's body fluids will dissolve the hook in a matter of days.
7. Let a tired fish recover. Hold it by the tail in the water with one hand and gently support it from below and just behind the head until it swims away.
8. Never toss or throw a fish back into the water.





Discussion and Questions



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