



File Code: 1950

Date: June 26, 2014

Dear Friends:

Bear Creek and Storm Creek Lakes on the St. Francis National Forest are popular destinations for anglers. Both are stocked with largemouth bass, bluegill, red-ear sunfish, blue and channel catfish. Storm Creek Lake is also stocked with hybrid striped bass and black crappie. Conditions supporting these sport fisheries are relatively good, but in some areas, cover structure is lacking.

Cover structure is an important component of fisheries habitat. It improves production of fish and forage organisms by increasing habitat diversity, concentrating fish for harvest by anglers, and providing spawning habitat (Bassett 1994)<sup>1</sup>. We are proposing that woody debris or man-made cover structures be added to these lakes and would like to know what your thoughts are regarding any issues, concerns, or opportunities that may be related to this proposal.

Please note that neither private lands nor the rights of private land owners will be affected.

### ***Why is this project being proposed?***

Improving fisheries habitat responds to direction in the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan):

Forest Wide Standard FW41: *Install fish cover structures in lakes and ponds where natural cover is inadequate* (Forest Plan page 3-6).

Forest Wide Objective OBJ.16: *Increase the amount of fish structures in large lakes by 100 acres the first decade* (Forest Plan page 2-13).

Forest Wide Priority: *Provide for an optimal, sustained yield of sport fish populations through structural and non-structural habitat improvements* (Forest Plan page 2-12).

### ***Where is the proposed project area?***

Bear Creek Lake is approximately 625 acres in size. It is located near the community of Marianna, AR in Lee County. Storm Creek Lake is a 425 acre impoundment located near the community of Helena-West Helena, AR in Phillips County. Proposed activities may be implemented within the lake basins or along their shorelines as shown on the attached vicinity maps.

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<sup>1</sup> Bassett, C. E. (1994). Use and evaluation of fish habitat structures in lakes of the eastern United States by the USDA Forest Service. *Bulletin of Marine Science*, 55(2-3), 2-3.



### ***What are we proposing?***

For each lake, trees will be submerged, brush or man-made structures will be installed in various locations and trees will be hinged along the lake shores and allowed to fall into the lakes. Implementation is tentatively planned to begin in the summer of 2014. This proposal has been designed to comply with the requirements of the Forest Plan as well as all federal, state and local laws.

### ***Alternatives currently being considered***

The only alternative to the Proposed Action currently being considered for this project is the No Action Alternative in which no fish cover structures will be added to either lake.

### ***Anticipated level of analysis***

The Forest Service has made a preliminary determination that 1) the Proposed Action falls within the following category of actions listed in regulations at 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 220.6 that are excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement, and 2) there are no extraordinary circumstances that would preclude use of this category.

FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30, § 32.2 (7) (ii): “*Modification or maintenance of stream or lake aquatic habitat improvement structures using native materials or normal practices. (ii) adding brush to lake fish beds*” [36 CFR 220.6(e)(7)]

My decision will not be subject to administrative review; however, before I make a decision on whether or not to approve this action, I want to invite you to comment on it. I am particularly interested in hearing from you if you have any concerns or information related to this proposal that I should consider.

I will consider all comments that I receive including those submitted anonymously, but only those who provide contact information will be notified of my decision. Please note that all comments received, including the names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this project and will be available for public inspection.

### ***How to comment***

Comments need to be within the scope of the Proposed Action, have a direct relationship to the Proposed Action, and include supporting reasons for me to consider. Please send written comments to me, Deputy District Ranger Mary Maercklein by July 28, 2014 at the St. Francis Ranger District, 2955 Highway 44, Marianna, AR 72360. Written comments may also be submitted via facsimile (870) 295-3382 or may be hand-delivered at our office between 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday excluding holidays. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc, .docx) to [comments-southern-ozark-stfrancis-stfrancis@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-southern-ozark-stfrancis-stfrancis@fs.fed.us). Please state “*Fish Structure Project*” in the subject line when providing electronic comments.

***If you have questions***

If you have questions relating to this proposal or want more information about it, please contact District Wildlife Biologist Jessica Hawkins at (870) 269-3228 extension 3233 or me at (870) 295-5278.

Thank you for your interest in the management of the St. Francis Ranger District.

Sincerely,

*/s/ Mary Maercklein*

MARY MAERCKLEIN

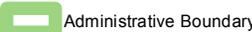
Deputy District Ranger, Sylamore-St. Francis Ranger District

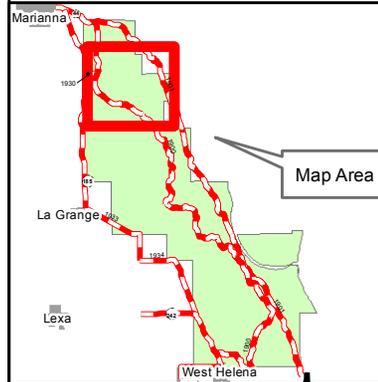
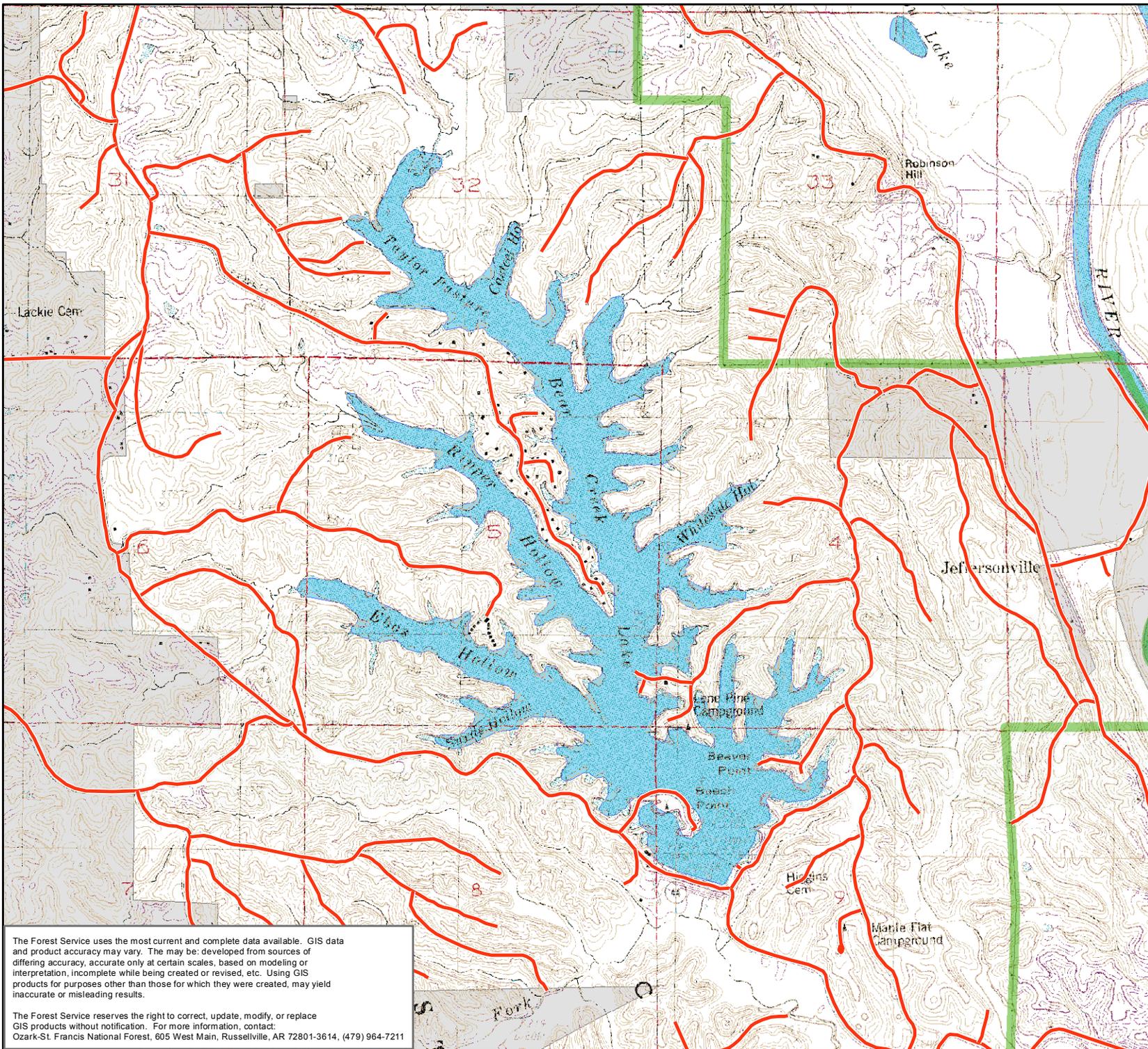
Attachments (2 maps)

# Bear Creek Lake Fish Cover Structure Project

Ozark - St. Francis National Forests  
Phillips and Lee Counties, Arkansas

## Legend

-  Road
-  Administrative Boundary
-  Bear Creek Lake - 496 acres
-  Private Land
-  City Limits



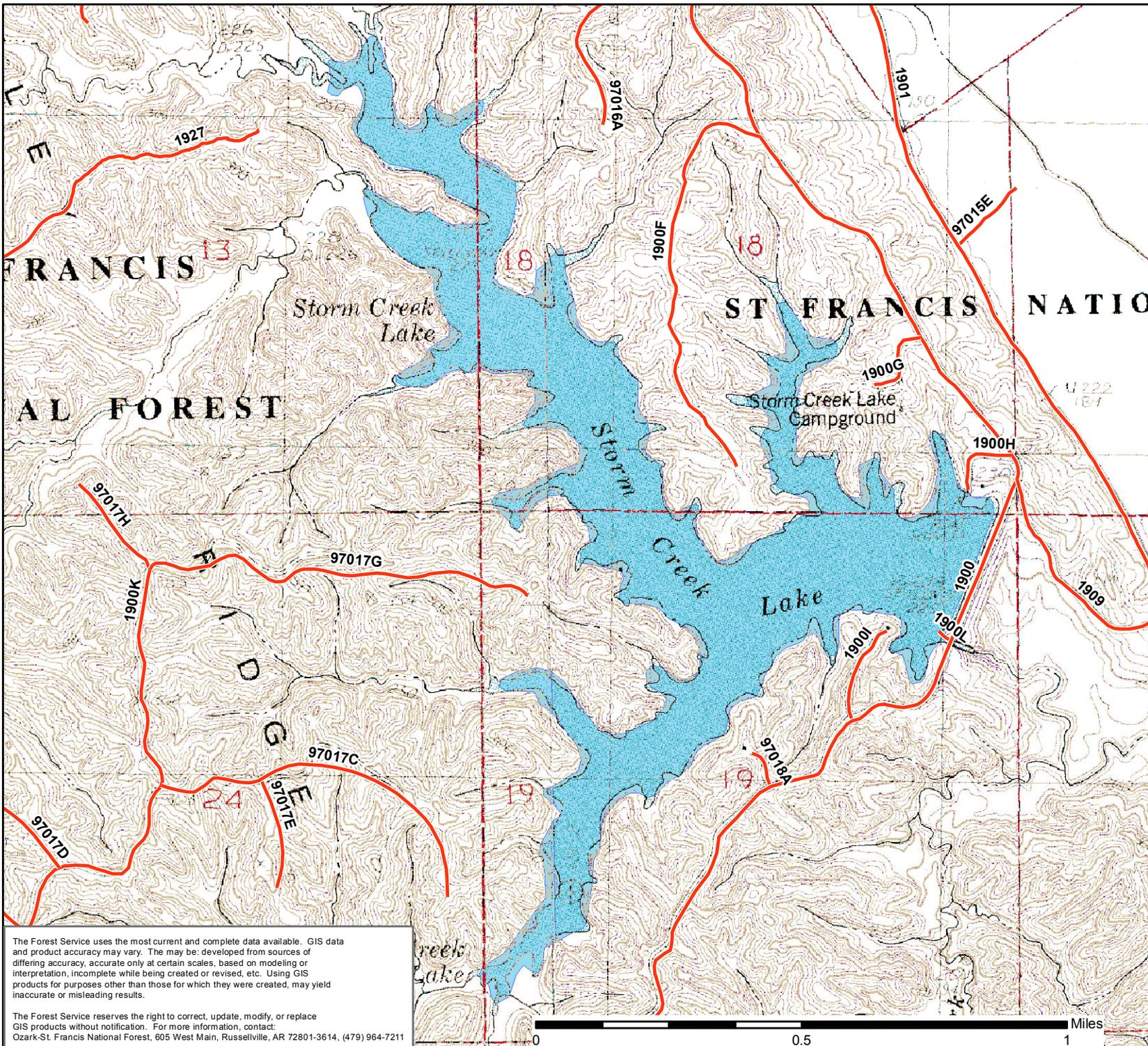
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The Forest Service reserves the right to correct, update, modify, or replace GIS products without notification. For more information, contact:  
Ozark-St. Francis National Forest, 605 West Main, Russellville, AR 72801-3614, (479) 964-7211



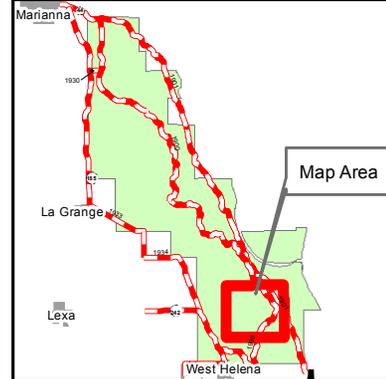
# Storm Creek Lake Fish Cover Structure Project

Ozark - St. Francis National Forests  
Phillips and Lee Counties, Arkansas



## Legend

-  Road
-  Administrative Boundary
-  Storm Creek Lake - 281 acres
-  Private Land
-  City Limits



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