



## DECISION MEMO

**Fish Cover Structure Project  
Region 8, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture  
St. Francis Ranger District, Ozark-St. Francis National Forests  
Bear Creek Lake, Lee County, AR  
Storm Creek Lake, Phillips County, AR**

### **Background**

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.

The St. Francis Ranger District has proposed adding woody debris or man-made cover structures to these lakes to improve fisheries habitat conditions.

### **Decision**

I have decided to approve this action. Specifically, the following activities may be implemented in Bear Creek Lake and Storm Creek Lake:

- Trees, brush or man-made cover structures may be submerged or placed in various locations within the lake basins.
- Trees along the lakes' shores may be hinged and allowed to fall into the lakes.
  - Trees on recreation residence use areas or the Mississippi River State Park's Bear Creek Campground, Lone Pine Campground, and Beaver Point Day Use Area will not be hinged into the lakes.

### **Categorical Exclusion from Documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement:**

I find these actions fall within the following category of actions listed in Chapter 30, Section 32.2 of FSH 1909.15; it is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement:

**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)]

Before reaching my decision, I considered the following resource conditions listed in FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30 Section 31.2 and determined there are no associated extraordinary circumstances that would have a significant effect on the human environment or result in a significant individual or cumulative environmental effect if the modifications are authorized.

- *Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat or Forest Service sensitive species;*
- *Flood plains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds;*
- *Congressionally designated areas such as wilderness, wilderness study areas or national recreation areas;*
- *Inventoried Roadless Areas;*
- *Research Natural Areas;*
- *Native American religious or cultural sites, and*
- *Other archaeological sites, historic properties and/or areas*

### **Public Involvement**

On June 26, 2014 letters describing the proposal and requesting comment by July 28, 2014 were mailed to Native American tribes associated with the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests, federal and state agencies, local government representatives and non-government organizations that have asked to be notified when any projects are proposed on the St. Francis National Forest and to recreation residence permit holders.

A copy of the public scoping letter was also posted on the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests' website: [Ozark-St. Francis National Forests - Planning](#).

Twelve responses were received by July 28, 2014. Nine of the responses were supportive of the proposal; the remaining three responses did not raise opposition to the project or identify any information that would affect my decision. One response supporting the proposal was received on July 29, 2014.

### **Findings Required by Other Laws**

The actions of this project have been designed to comply with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations and are consistent with the standards and guidelines of the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan as required by the National Forest Management Act.

### **Appeal Opportunities**

This decision is not subject to appeal.

## **Implementation**

Implementation of this decision may begin immediately.

## **Contact Person**

For additional information concerning this decision contact District Wildlife Biologist Jessica Hawkins at (870) 269-3228 extension 3233, [jmhawkins@fs.fed.us](mailto:jmhawkins@fs.fed.us) or me, Deputy District Ranger Mary Maercklein at (870) 295-5278 extension 5244, [mmaercklein@fs.fed.us](mailto:mmaercklein@fs.fed.us).

*/s/ Mary Maercklein*

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Mary Maercklein  
Deputy District Ranger  
Sylamore-St. Francis Ranger District

July 31, 2014

Date

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