

Lake Conroe Habitat Improvement Project Coalition

TEEA 2013 Winner: Civic/Community



Since its impoundment in the 1970s, Lake Conroe has been plagued by an invasion of exotic aquatic plant species. To control an early infestation of water hydrilla, more than 250,000 grass carp were introduced the following decade. While the carp caused total removal of hydrilla, they also greatly reduced native vegetation. Natural die-off of the carp eventually led to reinfestation of invasive plants. Organizations with a vested interest in the health of the reservoir began looking for a more holistic approach to not just invasive control but a balanced aquatic ecosystem. Beginning in 2006, core cooperators* teamed up with what easily amounts to a small army of organizations and their volunteers to manage invasive species while simultaneously expanding biodiversity through native plant introduction.

Organizers, including individual members of angler associations, worked to build consensus in the community for restoration projects. Anglers with local fishing clubs, as well as conservation groups became some of the biggest proponents of restoration efforts at Lake Conroe.

The first step at Lake Conroe was the construction of a native plant nursery below the dam for propagating founder colonies—native species resistant to grass carp that provide food and protection for juvenile fish species and are necessary to restore the native habitat. Since 2010, the groups have restored 5 miles of shoreline at Lake Conroe, contributing to an increase of fish and wildlife along the shoreline. Reefs designed to attract fish, which also prove to be fishing hot spots for anglers, have also been constructed to enhance current habitats and help stimulate higher fish production.

Through ongoing collaboration between public and private organizations, local businesses, community residents, and entities from every level of government, the health and biodiversity of Lake Conroe will continue to grow, allowing residents to enjoy its beauty now and for years to come.

*Core cooperators: Dock Line Magazine, Reservoir Fish Habitat Partnership, San Jacinto River Authority, Seven Coves Bass Club, Texas BASS Federation, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers Waterways Experiment Station and Lewisville Aquatic Ecosystem Research Facility