

THE BASS FEDERATION



BY DAVID HART

YOUTH ■

High-School Fishing Event a Hit

When Tim Mick asked a room full of high-schoolers to hold up a hand if they had ever fished, he was shocked to see only three or four arms pointing skyward.

"When you hear all this talk about how few kids are taking up fishing, that really drove it home for me," he said. "I had no idea."

Mick, youth director for the Virginia chapter of The Bass Federation, is doing his part to change that. It started when he conducted a fishing seminar at Douglas S. Freeman High School near Richmond, Va., last March as a way to introduce kids to the thrill of fishing and its role in conservation.

For seven class periods a day for a period of five days, individual classes took part in Mick's presentations. In all, he spoke to 255 boys and girls. It was sort of a test run for the new national program (see related story on TBF 2), but it was expanded to include more hands-on lessons where students tied knots, cast

rods and spent part of a day fishing at a local park. He also invited speakers, including a state fisheries biologist, a conservation police officer, a lure maker, and a Virginia TBF member who works at the school and collects lures.

"A fisheries biologist brought a shocking boat to the lake to give a demonstration of the work they do, and the kids got to spend some time fishing," Mick said. "A lot of kids actually caught fish, and they were really having a good time."

Despite their initial lack of knowledge about fishing, the students gave the seminar high marks. About 190 ratings sheets were filled out and returned to Mick, with the average score for all the presentations being 8.5 out of a possible 10.

"Even though these kids don't have much exposure to fishing, there is clearly an interest in it," Mick said. "These types of in-school programs can have a positive effect on our sport and our waters. I spoke to two gym teachers who expressed an interest in starting an in-school fishing club."



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In-School Program Ready for Distribution

After more than a year of hard work and fine-tuning, TBF National Youth Director Mark Gintert made his final presentation of the new national education program to the Federation's youth directors and presidents at the 2007 National Guard Junior World Championship.

Designed not only to generate interests in fishing and the outdoors, the program is meant to help serve as a catalyst for starting and running in-school clubs at the junior-high and high-school levels.

"The main goal of our in-school program is to get kids off the couch and back into the outdoors," Gintert said. "By getting boys and girls interested in fishing, they end up becoming advocates for clean water and a healthy environment later in life."

Schools can apply for the program and receive a 13-minute DVD featuring high-quality underwater footage provided by Glen Lau. The DVD also shows career options related to fishing, as well as how the lessons taught in school are vital to those careers. Schools that start a club will receive an instructional CD and workbooks.

"We want to show the students who see the presentation why science, English

and math are important outside the classroom," Gintert added.

He and Delaware Bass Federation Youth Director Fabian Rodriguez presented the DVD to seven classrooms of fourth- and fifth-graders at the Winning Water Festival, a daylong environmental event geared toward school-age children in Dover, Del., last May.



"It definitely created a good buzz among the kids," Rodriguez said. "I had a couple of teachers tell me they heard kids say good things about our presentation. I told the children about our youth program, and I covered the basics of how and where to fish and what to fish for."

The presentation is designed to fit inside a single class period to get students interested in starting their own club. Gintert's goal is to reach 2,000 schools the first year and ultimately expose as many as 1 million students to

the thrill of fishing by the end of the third year. He doesn't expect all of those children to develop strong and lasting connections to the outdoors, but there is no reason why some won't develop an interest in starting a club of their own.

But Gintert can't do it alone. That's where state youth directors and presidents will play a major role. He asked state officers and directors to help spread the word to regional directors and individual clubs about the program. They will then help locate a contact person within an individual school. Gintert is certain a large portion of the Federation's members have some connection to a school employee at some level, and most schools have people who like to fish and would be willing to sponsor in-school clubs.

"All we really need is some connection to the school's administration, whether a teacher, a parent that knows an administrator or anyone else with some connection to the school," Gintert said. "I'm convinced schools will be thrilled to allow Federation volunteers to bring the presentation to their students. It's fun, it doesn't take up a whole lot of time, and it serves as a positive way to get kids active."

Learn more by contacting Mark Gintert at mark@bassfederation.com.

NEWS ■

Troy Limmer Named TBF National Conservation Manager

After a lengthy search, TBF directors and officers hired Colorado Bass Federation State Conservation Director Troy Limmer as the new national conservation manager. Limmer brings a lifetime of management and marketing skills to the organization through his work as a general manager and marketing specialist at a Colorado Springs, Colo., heating and air-conditioning company.

"The Federation has numerous state conservation directors with strong backgrounds in science, including a fisheries biologist and environmental consultants," Limmer said. "So my job will be to serve as a facilitator – someone who will bring everyone together and see that we accomplish those goals that will help preserve our sport. I certainly plan to use the expertise we already have within the Federation because they are the best at what they do."



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NEWS CONTINUED ■

Limmer will be representing the Federation on national and local issues, and will help states work through conservation efforts on both local and state levels.

Also among his tasks will be filling conservation-director slots in states that don't have someone in that position. Without someone serving as a Federation spokesperson for each state's natural resources, state federations will have a much harder time bringing important issues to the public's attention and solving those issues.

Limmer also wants to create a network within the Federation to help state conservation directors communicate better. He is working on a booklet to help directors find available grants for important conservation projects. On a larger scale, he intends to address such issues as invasive species, public access and tournament fish care.

"The addition of Troy as our conservation director will help the Federation fulfill its vision, not just to promote the sport of bass fishing at the grassroots level, but as an organization that is truly dedicated to taking on the conservation challenges of all anglers," said David Simmons, FLW Outdoors TBF programs manager. "It's nice to know we have someone who wakes up every morning with conservation and the care of our natural resources first thing on his mind."

Limmer has been fishing since he was 5 years old and has been active in tournament fishing for 21 years. The 40-year-old Colorado resident also serves as tournament director for Springs Bassmasters and has lived and fished in New Jersey, Texas, South Dakota and Colorado. He and his wife, Bibiana, have been married for 17 years and have two boys, 12-year-old Taylor and 10-year-old Preston. Limmer can be reached at troy@bassfederation.com.

Tresspass Arrests Turn into National Movement

The arrest of five Louisiana anglers for trespassing while fishing on the Mississippi River has turned into a national issue after an amicus brief was filed with the Supreme Court of the United States in May 2008. The case evolved after the men were arrested in East Carroll Parrish, La., for fishing on Gassoway Lake, a Mississippi River oxbow in northeastern Louisiana.

At issue is the ownership of land and the water above it in areas within the historic high-water mark of public lakes and rivers. The men arrested entered the oxbow after high water created safe boat passage into the lake across what, at times of low water, is dry land owned by a large farm. Landowners surrounding the oxbow called local law-enforcement officials, and the anglers were arrested for trespassing.

The first arrests took place back in 1996, and additional arrests were made in 2001. The issue came to national attention over the past few years when one of the arrested men decided to fight the charges. The landowners claimed they own the lake, while lawyers representing the anglers, along with dozens of other interested parties, claimed the lake falls under the public domain during high-water periods.

In December 2007, a federal appellate court sided with the landowners who pressed charges, saying in its ruling that the river during normal high is subject to public use,

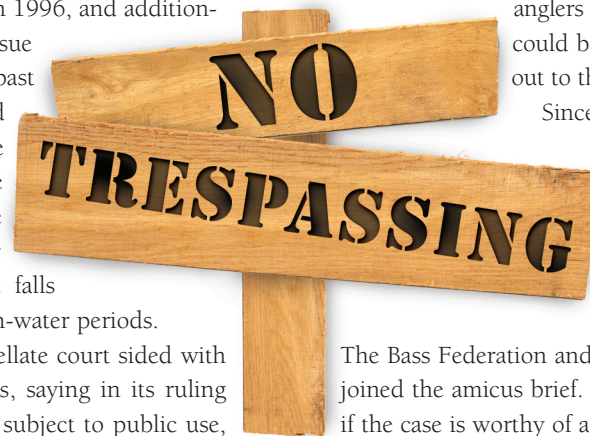
but only to navigation and not to fishing. Paul Hurd, a lawyer representing the anglers, said the ruling sets a dangerous precedent that could restrict access to public water throughout the country.

Gassoway is connected to the Mississippi River by a channel 100 feet wide and as deep as 20 to 30 feet during a typical spring when the river rises to normal levels.

"The fishermen entered this waterway from a public boat ramp that is used to access this waterway, the connected waterways and the Mississippi River directly," Hurd said. "This isn't about a couple of guys who got run out of private property or who were fishing on private property when the river was out of its banks. This is about the public use of all navigable waterways throughout the United States during normal flows. This could affect hunters, anglers and recreational boaters because it could be used to mean that landowners own out to the middle of the channel."

Since the initial arrests, a groundswell of support has poured forth from hunting, fishing and boating groups not only in Louisiana, but from all over the country. Forty local and national conservation groups from 25 states, including

The Bass Federation and the Louisiana Bass Federation, have joined the amicus brief. The Supreme Court will next decide if the case is worthy of a judicial review.



David Hart writes the TBF section of FLW Outdoors Magazine. To submit TBF club, youth, conservation or tournament news, e-mail him at hartfish@kinex.net.



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NEWS CONTINUED ■

Virginia Anglers Horse Around for a Good Cause

Five members of the Virginia Bass Federation took a day off from fishing to build a ramp for Heartland Horse Heroes, a therapeutic riding program located near Farmville, Va.

Larry Elliott, former conservation director for the VBF, his son Josh Elliott, Dave Menard, Richard Worsham and



Jeff Langford used their collective skills to build the ramp for the physically challenged to climb on top of horses.

Elliott, a builder from Powhatan, Va., is no stranger to volunteer work.

“Whenever someone asks to help out, I help out,” he said. “I tell my friends who come along that they’ll get paid, just not in this lifetime.”

Pennsylvania Club Adopts Lake

The members of Leggett’s Creek Bassmasters had so much fun creating better fish habitat the past four years that they signed on for another three years. The 30-member club placed a total of 10 nesting structures and 30 porcupine structures in Prompton Lake because the lake was in dire need of good habitat. Two larger lakes are located nearby, but Prompton was ripe for a little volunteer work, considering no one else had done anything there in the past.

Leggett’s Creek Bassmasters enrolled in the state’s Cooperative Habitat Improvement Program (CHIP) so they could take care of the lake with guidance from state fisheries experts.

“We fish this lake quite a bit, and we noticed that it was lacking quality habitat in many places,” said Fred Lewis Jr., conservation and tournament director for the club. “So I approached (Pennsylvania Bass Federation State Conservation Director) Bill Reichert, who put us in touch with Dave Houser. He coordinates the lake section of the CHIP program.”

The program has been in existence for about 20 years and has approximately 50 lakes enrolled. It’s been so successful Japanese government officials came to Pennsylvania to examine the agency’s methods of working with volunteer groups like Leggett’s Creek Bassmasters.

“They weren’t interested in the fish structure or even fisheries management,” said Houser, chief habitat manager for the lake section of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. “They were just impressed by the way we were able to coordinate our network of volunteers under the CHIP program. We also

had a group come down from Quebec to take a look at our habitat program and how we involve volunteers.”

Even with a strong corps of volunteer labor, these programs require a lot of money to be successful. The work Leggett’s Creek Bassmasters undertakes costs about \$1,000 to \$1,200 per year. Although state and federal grants kick in the majority of the total cost, the club still has to come up with the balance. To help pay for the efforts, the club holds three open pickerel tournaments each spring, which, like the club’s bass tournaments, are all catch-and-release.

“We hold them in May and early June on three different lakes before our bass season opens,” Lewis said. “It’s a way to get people fishing beforehand, and helps us pay for these projects.”

Lewis plans to approach the PFBC to see if a study can be conducted to determine if the club’s efforts have helped boost the fish population. He’s confident they have helped, but he’s not sure how much.

Most habitat work under the CHIP program isn’t necessarily designed just to boost fish numbers or to give anglers a specific

place to cast a lure. Instead, they are habitat enhancements that benefit the entire ecosystem of a lake and aid in studying the relationship between fish habitat and fish population. Most projects include the dumping of rock, concrete rubble or rough-cut lumber.

“Some anglers tell me they never catch fish off them, while others tell me they do really well,” Houser said. “I do know that a variety of aquatic life uses them, and that’s what we hope to accomplish.”

