

### Improving Fish Habitat

The Elk River Chain of Lakes Fish Shelters Project is an effort to **install natural fish shelters in the following five lakes in the Chain of Lakes:**

- ✓ Intermediate Lake
- ✓ Lake Bellaire
- ✓ Clam Lake
- ✓ Torch Lake
- ✓ Elk Lake

The project will begin in 2012 and run for five years. Effectiveness will be evaluated regularly and the approach may be modified as required. The project will be comprehensive and in the future may be expanded to include aquatic habitat improvement in shallow water.

### Project Intent

This project is intended to:

- Provide places where smaller forage fish will have protection from larger predators.
- Use all natural materials in keeping with DEQ/DNR regulations.
- Help to increase fish numbers & diversity in the Chain of Lakes.
- Provide better fishing on the Chain of Lakes by developing places where fish are likely to locate.
- Provide better opportunities for families to introduce their children to fishing.
- Compensate for the lack of important shallow water habitat which is absent from many lakes due to shoreline development.

- Provide enough quality locations to spread the fishing out around the Chain of Lakes.

### Current Considerations

Many of these lakes have areas devoid of rocks, woody debris and other natural habitat. While differences exist within the various lakes, it is reported that fishing is generally poor, and could improve with more habitat.

In the past, individuals have tried to do this on their own using unapproved materials. This project will use a consistent approach on all five lakes with lake-wide permits and DNR supported methods and natural materials like wood and tree stumps.

**Written approval from the riparian in front of whose property the structure will be placed is required before structures can be installed.**

### Project Goals and Timelines

- In 2012, start installing deep water shelters in 15 to 25 feet of water at several locations per lake to gain experience.
- Over the 5-year project, place deep water shelters at approximately 80 locations in these five lakes.
- In the future, we may pursue aquatic habitat improvement in shallow water, along shorelines or under docks, to increase spawning success and forage fish survival.
- Support property owners that wish to install shelters on their bottom land.

A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT BY THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS:



## Elk River Chain of Lakes Fishing is About to Get BETTER!



**Read on to learn about an exciting new project to take place on the Chain of Lakes.**

Learn even more at:

[www.gtbay.org](http://www.gtbay.org) or  
[www.watershedcouncil.org](http://www.watershedcouncil.org)

Stay informed. Email  
[steve.young@chartermi.net](mailto:steve.young@chartermi.net)  
to be placed on our email list.

## FAQs

- **Will these shelters be a hazard to boaters?** No, the shelters will be sunk in 15-25 feet of water, resulting in at least 10 feet of clear water over the shelters and will be secured according to Michigan Department of Natural Resources guidelines.
- **What kinds of fish are likely to benefit?** Primarily walleye, bass, perch and other pan fish. Smaller forage fish, crawfish and aquatic insects will also benefit by having more places that provide protection from predators.
- **Who is involved with this project?** A core group of volunteers and local non-profit organizations are leading early activities. As the project progresses, more volunteers will be needed. Experts from the DNR Fisheries Division are also involved.
- **Who is going to pay for it?** Lake Associations provided start up funding but more will be required. Grants will be applied for and requests will be made for donations from interested individuals and organizations.
- **Why add so many shelters?** We're trying to improve the entire chain, not just one lake. It is important to have enough locations spread out around the lakes so we don't concentrate the fishing in just a few places.
- **Is this going to result in greater numbers of fish in the Chain of Lakes?** We hope so. Deep water shelters concentrate fish but may not increase the number of fish in a lake. Shelters will improve fish habitat, and fisheries managers agree it is a good way to preserve the health of the lake. Studies also show that shallow water habitat is important to spawning success.
- **What is shallow water habitat?** In the past, property owners removed much of the natural woody debris, tree fall and lake vegetation along shorelines and around docks, reducing forage fish populations available to larger species of fish. In the future we may explore ways to improve aquatic habitat in shallow water to provide spawning areas and places for forage fish and crawfish.
- **Is there any oversight?** Yes, the process to install shelters requires approval from the DNR and a permit from the DEQ.
- **I'm interested, how can I help?** Volunteers are needed in all areas of this project: obtaining and transporting materials, building shelters, communicating about the project, and raising funds.  
  
Contact [steve.young@chartermi.net](mailto:steve.young@chartermi.net) for additional information.

## Fish Shelters Project Interest Form

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Lake \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

### Fish Shelters Location Sponsor

\_\_\_\_\_ I am interested in learning more about having my lake front property be selected as a possible site for the installation of fish shelters as may be permitted by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.

Location of sponsoring property \_\_\_\_\_

### Fish Shelters Workforce Volunteer

\_\_\_\_\_ I am interested in volunteering to help the Elk River Chain of Lakes Fish Shelters Project with materials, construction, and installation at permitted sites.

### Please Consider Donating to the Fish Shelters Project

\_\_\_\_\_ I am interested in making a tax deductible donation.

\_\_\_ \$25 – Helps purchase material.

\_\_\_ \$50 – Helps construct shelters.

\_\_\_ \$150 – Helps construct & place shelters at one lake location.

\_\_\_ Other Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail this form (and a check if you are making a donation) to The Watershed Center-Fish Shelters Project C/O The Watershed Center, 13272 S. West Bay Shore Dr. Traverse City, MI 49684**