

Leavenworth Elites Bass Club, The Leavenworth Bass Club, Fort Leavenworth Rod and Gun Club partner with Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks and the Friends of Reservoirs to improve fish habitat in local Kansas lakes.

The Leavenworth Elites bass club working through the Kansas Bass Nation applied for and received a financial grant for \$1000 from the Friends of Reservoirs for a fish habitat improvement project at Banner Creek Reservoir near Holton, KS. Partnering with The Leavenworth Bass Club, a Missouri Bass Nation affiliated club, the clubs coordinated with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks and Banner Creek to plan an artificial habitat emplacement project for the spring of 2018. Simultaneously, the Fort Leavenworth Rod and Gun Club began a Christmas tree collection project in the winter of 2017 for habitat improvement in Smith and Merritt Lakes on Fort Leavenworth, KS. Several of the club members belong to all three organizations so collaborative planning began in the fall of 2017 with Eric Verburg, the conservation chairman for The Leavenworth Bass Club, leading the Banner Creek project and Larry Stoafer, the fishing coordinator for the Fort Leavenworth Rod and Gun Club leading the Merritt and Smith Lake Projects.

The Friends of Reservoirs grant was specifically dedicated to purchasing Mossback artificial fish habitat for Banner Creek Reservoir. Banner Creek is a 535 acre man-made impoundment located just outside of Holton Kansas and hosts a wide selection of fish species that are appealing to local anglers. Of these, the largemouth and smallmouth bass as well as black crappie receive a lot of fishing pressure, as common in most small public fisheries. According to Nick Cramer, the Perry District Fisheries Biologist for Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, bass and crappie populations had begun to falter in recently due to the deterioration of natural habitat over the last 20 years since the impoundment was created. Unlike cedar trees or other natural habitat that deteriorate over time, artificial habitat like the Mossback artificial fish habitat will provide habitat for many years and improve angling opportunities for future generations.

Eric Verburg coordinated with all stake holders and volunteers, supervising the emplacement on 10 March 2018. Volunteers from the Leavenworth Elites Bass Club, the Leavenworth Bass Club, and the Fort Leavenworth Rod and Gun Club assembled the Mossback fish habitat and used their boats to transport the habitat to its final resting place in the lake. The habitat was placed close to channel swing banks and areas that were lacking natural habitat. The locations of the newly added structure were all marked by coordinates obtained with global positioning devices and sent to John Kennedy, the Banner Creek Reservoir Biologist, for him to share with the public.

The Smith and Merritt Lake habitat project emplacement was conducted on the following day, 11 March 2018. Merritt and Smith Lakes are approximately 10 surface acres combined on Fort Leavenworth, KS. Both lakes are open to the public and stocked annually by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. The lakes are well over 100 years old and recently went through some maintenance and excavating that required them both to be drained for several months during 2014-2015. Since then there has been several fish stockings and habitat emplacements. Most recently, in 2016 eight Georgia Cubes and over 150 PVC trees were emplaced in the lakes by members of the above mentioned clubs. Neil Bass, the Fort Leavenworth natural resource specialist stated “the lakes are in excellent condition with great populations of blue gill, bream, and channel catfish. The excavating of sediment, habitat projects, regular stocking, and feeding program has made Smith and Merritt lakes world class fisheries”. According to Larry Noell

the Fort Leavenworth Rod and Gun Club president “these lakes are ideal places for young anglers and families to enjoy the outdoors with easy bank access and great fish populations”. The Fort Leavenworth Rod and Gun Club has hosted two Kids Fishing Derbies on these lakes each year for over 40 years with over 300 kids attending annually. The recent results of those derbies demonstrate that the lakes are the best they have ever been.

Larry Stoafer coordinated with all stake holders and volunteers for the Merritt and Smith Lake project. Over 100 Christmas trees were collected over the winter from residents in the local area. Cinder blocks for weighting the habitat were donated by volunteers and provided by the Fort Leavenworth installation. Volunteers wired the trees together to create 45 brush piles, weighted them with concrete, provided boats and emplaced the structure in both lakes. According to Larry Noell “maintaining these great fisheries for future generations is our utmost duty and responsibility.”

At the conclusion of the project the clubs were so very thankful for all their members’ volunteer efforts, and are also very appreciative of the Friends of Reservoirs for providing them the means to purchase the Mossback fish habitat. The club members are hopeful that their efforts will improve the fishery at Banner Creek, and help maintain Merritt and Smith Lakes for future generations. Robert Greene, the president of the Leavenworth Bass Club stated “The Leavenworth Bass Club has a long history of volunteering for conservation projects. Partnering with Kansas Bass Nation, The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, the Leavenworth Elites Bass Club, and the Fort Leavenworth Rod and Gun Club has allowed us to leverage financial resources and manpower that we may not otherwise could have managed on our own. I'm very proud of the Leavenworth Bass Club member's dedication to preserving our natural resources.”

The Fort Leavenworth Rod and Gun Club located on Fort Leavenworth Kansas is the largest and most active Rod and Gun Club in all of the Department of Defense with over 400 members annually. They sponsor hunting and fishing events for their adult members, along with numerous special hunting and fishing events for youth. The club has a heritage of conservation and education programs. In addition the club routinely works with state and federal hunting, fishing, and conservation stakeholders.

The Leavenworth Bass Club located in Leavenworth Kansas is one of the largest bass clubs in the Midwest with over 45 active members annually. Their mission is to promote public awareness of bass fishing as a major sport as well as to offer state conservation departments their organized moral, political, and physical support. The club also promotes full adherence to all regulations, conservation codes and water standards.

The Leavenworth Elites Bass Club is also located in Leavenworth Kansas and is one of the most active clubs in the Kansas Bass Nation attending state meetings, participating in state run tournaments, and routinely qualifying members for the BASS Nation Central Regional Championships.

















