

2012

SOUTH CAROLINA BASS FEDERATION

CONSERVATION

MISSION STATEMENT

The SOUTH CAROLINA B.A.S.S. FEDERATION Conservation program works a "top down" to "bottom up" approach in dealing with six key, fundamental issues vital to the future health of the state's aquatic resources. From local bass clubs, youth clubs as well as the general public, where B.A.S.S. works cooperatively with government agencies to develop sound management policy, the protection and enhancement of aquatic resources will remain a top priority. Focus on education and mobilizing people to get involved in conservation. Complacency is our biggest enemy in protecting our aquatic resources. More people must get involved to move the needle in a positive direction.

Habitat

Simply put, habitat is disappearing at an alarming rate. And without habitat the future of recreational angling and a vital link to the aquatic food chain will be lost. The issues are complex: erosion, sedimentation and reservoir aging. Yet, there is hope and B.A.S.S. Conservation has taken a leadership role in federal government's National Fish Habitat Initiative. At the national level, B.A.S.S. is proactively involved with federal and state government to enact laws to end the losses while making room for habitat restoration and growth. The habitat agenda is pushed up from the local level through the grass-roots network of B.A.S.S. Federation clubs.

Aquatic nuisance species

An aquarium owner dumps unwanted fish and plants into the local river, no harm intended. A freighter from overseas pumps ballast water into the Great Lakes, unknowingly setting free harmful fish and organisms. Both scenarios are very real and threaten to destroy or imperil the balance of aquatic ecosystems the size of the Great Lakes, Mississippi River and beyond. As the problem spreads, B.A.S.S. Conservation has joined a growing coalition of concerned policy makers, government agencies and scientists to regulate importation of exotics and stop their illegal introduction to the nation's waters. These sorts of things happen right here in South Carolina.

Aquatic vegetation management

Hydrilla and milfoil are unjustly perceived by many sportsmen as ideal habitat for fish and waterfowl. In moderate quantities the plants indeed provide habitat, however when overabundant they become a nuisance to other water users, from boaters to lakeshore homeowners and even

municipal drinking water suppliers. B.A.S.S. Conservation advocates and facilitates mediation between all user groups while encouraging stakeholders to establish diverse native plant communities. Ideally, striking the balance will benefit ecosystems and users alike.

Angler access

A fishing trip begins with a place to launch the boat or shoreline to cast a line. Yet access to public waterways has suffered. And finding a boat ramp is the least of the problems. Demands on water supplies, restrictive fishery management regulations on fishing seasons, and horsepower limitations merely scratch the surface of why anglers can't rightfully gain access to public waters. Through a grass-roots approach with bass clubs affiliated with the B.A.S.S. Federation, angler and boater rights are being heard. The cause is ongoing, with the Federation and B.A.S.S. Conservation collectively uniting to open more access areas through improvement and construction programs at public access areas nationwide.

Fish health

At the first outbreak of the Largemouth Bass Virus, B.A.S.S. Conservation adopted a leadership role to face the issue. The result is an annual summit attended by leading researchers, state fishery biologists and anglers to exchange developments and implement plans of action. B.A.S.S. and its coalition continue making strides to deal with LMBV while identifying other diseases or health problems, among those outbreaks of harmful algae and bacteria that can spark significant fish kills. B.A.S.S. Conservation is an active participant in American Fisheries Society committees and other professional associations whose interests focus on fishery health.

Tournament fish care

Early on, B.A.S.S. recognized that bass are a renewable resource and concurrently, developed the catch-and-release ethic that is standard with tournaments. B.A.S.S. Conservation continues raising the bar on the practice by supporting scientific research studies focusing on care of tournament-caught bass. The latest practices and improvements are rolled out through the B.A.S.S. Federation while educating anglers about how to better handle fish they intend to release. B.A.S.S. Conservation extends its outreach to the general angling public to ensure a positive perception of bass fishing and tournament angling.