

Opossum Lake dam reconstruction to begin

Popular Cumberland County water could offer fishing once again by summer 2012.

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Opossum Lake, a popular destination for anglers near Carlisle, could be ready for fishing once again by summer 2012.

The 59-acre lake has stood empty since 2008, a state achieved by gradual draining that began in fall 2005 after Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission staff found evidence that the circa-1962, earthen dam was eroding

and could be undermined.

The exposed lake bed was allowed to dry out and settle until last November, when Performance Construction and Hoffman Excavation began removal of the old spillway and prepare the site for a new, larger spillway and an upgraded earthen dam.

That work — the first phase of a \$3.38 million project — has been completed and additional work will now wait for improved weather conditions in the spring.

According to Eric Levis, spokesman for the commission, spillway construction and dam reconstruction is

expected to be completed by fall and the lake will be allowed to refill naturally.

And then the commission will begin to rebuild the fishery in the lake.

Levis said, "At this point, [the commission] is not planning to stock the lake in 2012, but will pursue a multi-year approach to reestablishing the fishery."

"I think we'll be outlining a fish restoration plan at our April meeting."

However, he cautioned, "Clearly it's not going to be full of fish immediately. It's going to take a while to re-establish that fishery."

The restoration of the lake



PA FISH & BOAT COMMISSION

The old spillway at Opossum Lake in Cumberland County is removed to make way for a new, larger device and an upgraded dam.

as the focal point of an overall recreation area of about 275 acres that draws visitors for outdoor recreational ac-

tivities beyond fishing has attracted a range of partners since the dam problem was discovered.

Anglers plan protest of river restrictions

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat commissioners can expect to hear from tournament anglers about proposed regulation changes governing smallmouth bass fishing in the Susquehanna River at their meeting Jan. 24-25 at commission headquarters in Harrisburg.

At their meeting in October, commissioners approved proposed regulation changes that would place catch and release regulations on smallies on large stretches of the



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river and its tributary, the Juniata River.

They can't formally approve the changes until their meeting in April — their next regular quarterly meeting

after a 90-day public comment period — but, pending that vote, Executive Director John Arway last October signed a temporary emergency order that put the regulation changes into plan on Jan. 1.

For now, and for the future if approved in April, catch and release will formally govern bass fishing in the Susquehanna River, from the inflatable fabric dam at Sunbury downriver 98 miles to the Holtwood Dam in York County.

The same regulations will govern the Juniata River, from the Route 75 bridge at Port Royal downriver 32 miles to the mouth of the river at Duncannon.

And, that's not a welcome catch for tournament anglers, according to Bob Herman, president of Capital City Bas-smasters, a Harrisburg tournament group.

"Tournament fishermen from across the state will be there in force, hoping to have the new regulation looked at again," he said.

"There are so many other things that affect the fish more than tournament fishing. The biggest thing should be to ban fishing during the spawn season. You can find fishermen, guides and everyday fisherman, setting on these beds fishing."

"We need to protect these areas totally."

The public portion of the meeting gets under way at 10:15 a.m. Jan. 24 and again at 8 a.m. Jan. 25, with a slate of committee meetings.