

Millwood Lake boat lanes are now safer

By JOHN FOOKS
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Millwood Lake has always been relatively shallow, which often causes dangerous treks for fishermen on the lake.

Millwood covers approximately 30,000 acres, of which about 23,000 acres is submerged timber and stumps. The first boat "trails" were buoys marking the way through the deeper cuts. But with hard winds and lake pull fluctuations, the buoys were constantly pulled away from the trails, making navigation more a matter of luck than anything else.

The second attempt was orange PVC pipe placed along the trails. They, too, were less than stable and did not stand up to the elements.

"Maintenance costs of these 15 or so boat lanes throughout Millwood Lake to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was astronomical," said Mike Siefert, past president of the Back Lashers Bass Club ("Texarkana's only Christian Bass Club," he says). "The way they cut these lanes initially was to drop the lake three feet and cut the stumps, then raised the lake back up. But when they tried to mark them, nothing seemed to work."

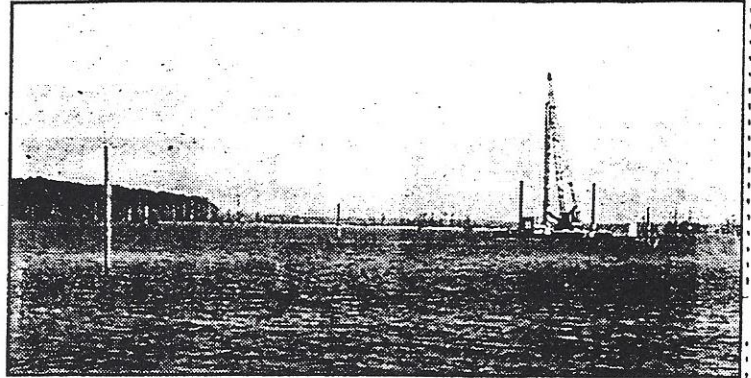
It wasn't until Siefert and Steve Spicer with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers put their heads together that a solution was found. Siefert used to fish on Caddo Lake a

few years ago and he remembered that boat lanes were marked there with fluorescent tape on telephone poles embedded in the lake bed down the center of the boat lanes. Siefert and Spicer put the numbers together and costs and decided that doing something similar on Millwood Lake was not only economically feasible, but it would tremendously improve safety and navigation on the lake for fishermen and weekend boaters, as well as the "boat tours" hosted by the Corps of Engineers.

The project started in 1999 with three phases of implementation. The Corps of Engineers contracted with a construction company to drive telephone poles with a pile driver barge eight feet into the bottom of the lake. The telephone poles line both sides of the trails, which were exactly in position with global satellite marking.

One idea that the duo came up with was giving "street names" to each of the trails, and putting up "street signs" at all the intersections.

"Everything is complete now except we haven't gotten all the trail signs up," Siefert said. "We've got about half up. We have named every trail with street names like 'Outlaw Trail' and 'Paraloma Trail' and 'Highline Trail.' It is so user-friendly that anybody from anywhere, even people who have never been on the lake



Submitted photo

Boat lanes at Millwood Lake now have "street signs" for safer boating.

before, can navigate their way safely without running into stumps. There's even plenty of room to pass boats in both directions."

Maintenance costs will also be much lower to the Corps of Engineers, Siefert said. There

is now a Website dedicated to the lake. The URL is: www.millwoodguideservice.com, which includes aerial photographs of the lake. There is also a map of the lake on the site, and viewers can zoom in and out on any quadrant of the lake.




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