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Florida Bass Conservation Center

The Florida Bass Conservation Center (FBCC) modernized the state's primary freshwater fish production hatchery by completely renovating the original facility that was built in Sumter County in 1965. This state-of-the-art freshwater fish hatchery and research facility is dedicated to conservation of the unique Florida largemouth bass and other freshwater sportfishes. It will also act as a focal point to facilitate effective statewide management of Florida's vast aquatic resources and strive to become a nationally recognized bass research center.

Climate-controlled rearing facilities allow fish production at the most opportune time thus enhancing growth and survival. FBCC will follow a strict genetics protocol to ensure future stocking efforts are of optimum benefit to anglers and to protect the genetic purity of native Florida largemouth, Suwannee and shoal basses. Water recycling will greatly enhance environmental friendliness, and indoor production and early rearing of fish will be more economically efficient than older hatchery designs.

Incorporated in the plan is a comprehensive library and publicly accessible internet-based data, which will include angler success and bass growth rate data for various lakes, so managers can more efficiently conserve and enhance these fisheries and anglers can more effectively plan successful fishing trips. Facilities are also available to host visiting scientists to conduct cutting-edge research.

Currently, there is an overlook for watching fish production activities, and self-guided exhibits. However, Phase II construction depends on private sector funding and would feature a complete visitor's center with public fishing and interpretive trails to complement indoor exhibits - making it a true tourist destination.

For more information, or to make a contribution to the future of the FBCC, visit MyFWC.com/Fishing/FBCC

FAST FACTS

- * 39,000 square feet under roof, with offices, a library, conference room, crew locker and exhibit area with 1,700-gallon aquaria.
 - * Formal conference room for large meetings (>50 seat).
 - * Labs: wet (zooplankton), pathology (necropsy) and bacteriological.
 - * Office space for visiting scientists & hospitality quarters.
 - * Fish transfer pavilion for holding pond-harvest fish, with 14 concrete holding raceways.
 - * Process water plant: recycles 6,000 gallons per minute, 90% of total use.
 - * 6 - 80 foot concrete raceways (13,000 gallons each; 2 chill recycle)
 - * 14 - 30 foot fiberglass raceways (2,000 gallons each) for fry rearing & largemouth bass feed training.
 - * 30 channel catfish fry/fingerling troughs
 - (100 gallons each, with automatic feeders).
 - * 6 portable incubation racks (144 jars), two independent water systems (heated and chilled).
 - * 12 research recycle tanks (heated and chilled).
 - * 2 - 500-gallon research environmental chambers (out-of-phase spawning research, etc.).
 - * Artemia culture facilities.
 - * Largemouth bass tagging stations.
 - * Water processing featuring: 4 - 7-foot diameter sand filters; 40-micron filtration (drum screens); Ozone/CO₂ strips; O₂ injection; and Ultraviolet sterilization.
 - * Refrigerated food storage.
 - * Separate maintenance shop.
 - * Diesel power back up for 6 days at full capacity.
 - * 46 ponds, of 66 total, will be refurbished with new customized Kansas kettles.
- * Typical stockings pre-2006: 1.3 million fish/year, valued at \$1.6 million.
- * Proposed stockings for 2008 and beyond: 4.3 million fish/year, valued at \$12.6* million.

*Annual value of fish to be stocked based on Department of Environmental Protection replacement figures.