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Above: Gator donated by Atmos Energy Corporation. Right: Expired gas pipe will be formed into new fish habitat structures that will last for decades.

Atmos Energy Corporation facilitates fish habitat work

Over the past year Atmos Energy Corporation has been working with Kentucky Fish & Wildlife to make use of expired or scrap gas pipe.

Fisheries Division staff have been acquiring pipe of various sizes for the construction of fish attractors.

These attractors are made of polyethylene, will last indefinitely, and produce

fewer “hang-ups” for anglers.

Using synthetic materials when appropriate and available is more cost effective in the long run. Staff constructed a number of these gas pipe attractors already and placed them in several lakes across the state with more deployment planned for this winter.

Last month Atmos Energy Corporation came to KDFWR with an offer to

donate a used John Deere Gator to support ongoing habitat efforts.

They had been using the gator in the Owensboro area and it was due to be replaced with a newer model.

Northwestern Fisheries District staff accepted the generous donation and will be putting the newly acquired UTV to good use on habitat projects throughout the District.

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New Hires

David Bruce has been Special Detailed to the position of Engineering Division Director. He will continue in his position of Program Manager over the IT and KDSS sections.

David came to the Department in the Information Technology section on June 1, 1995. He was promoted to Database Analyst in 1997. David stayed in the IT section until his promotion to FW Program Manager November, 2009. His duties included serving as assistant director to the Administrative Services Director.

Please join us in congratulating David in his new role or offer your condolences whichever may apply.

Steve Landers joined the IT staff on Jan 1. Steve has 28 years of experience in Kentucky state government. He started his career at the Dept. of Information Systems (now COT) working as a programmer/analyst in support of the Cabinet for Human Resources.

Steve has spent a total of 15 years with the Legislative Research Commission where he helped to develop the first electronic desktop bill display system for the House and Senate chambers. Steve has also worked as a consultant with COT helping to develop the first comprehensive broadband availability map for the Commonwealth.

Steve and his wife Kathy have three children, Nathan, Chuck and Katie. Having grown up around the fire service, Steve has had nearly lifelong involvement with the Waddy Fire Department having been a certified firefighter, instructor and EMT. He is currently the Treasurer for the Fire Protection District.

In addition to volunteering and community engagement, Steve enjoys outdoor activities and reading. Steve earned an Associate of Arts Degree in Computer Programming from Watterson College in Louisville and a Bachelor of Arts in Psy-

chology from Kentucky State University.

Brent McCarty became Branch Manager and Salato Center Director January 1, after serving in the role for the last six months as "acting" manager.

McCarty's tenure with the agency has included working in the I & E Division's Information Center, as a field conservation educator, and as a Conservation Educator IV, supervising educational staff and interims at the Salato Center immediately prior to his promotion.

Brent has a strong background in not only wildlife education, but care of captive wildlife as well as training birds of prey for educational programming. He will oversee all functions of the center and work closely with the Fish and Wildlife Foundation to develop additional exhibits, and secure funding for those in the future.

The division is pleased to welcome Brent into his new capacity with the agency.



Fisheries Division Appreciations

Fisheries Division recognized two volunteer groups for their critical assistance with the Cave Run Lake Fish Habitat Project.

The U.S. Forest Service Job Corps out of Frenchburg have been key to building structures that were sunk into Cave Run Lake in 2014 and 2015.

Similarly, the Kentucky Department of Juvenile Justice Eastern Region assisted with the Cave Run Project in 2014 and 2015.

These staff and students also have been assisting with trout stockings since 2009.

The Kentucky Department of Juvenile Justice has brought staff and students from

the Morehead Girls Home, the Frenchburg and Ashland Boys Group Homes and the Woods Bend Youth Development Center.

We have been grateful for their assistance in the past and look forward to their assistance and this continued partnership in the future.

Wildcat Creek Boat Ramp – parking lot expansion and handicap fishing pier

In September of last year we told you about the expansion of the parking lot at Wildcat Creek Boat Ramp on Blood River (Kentucky Lake).

We were creating new fish habitat in the lake by using trees we removed while clearing land for the parking lot expansion.

The parking lot expansion was completed in November. It was increased from 35 parking slots to 70 truck and trailer slots and 10 car slots. In addition, a handicap fishing pier was constructed on the site.

That pier was recently completed, and dedicated to a local angler and supporter of Kentucky Fish and Wildlife kids fishing programs, Mr. Mark Bucy, who died last April of cancer.

The pier dedication helps us remember Bucy's contributions to the future of fishing. He loved to fish, but his legacy was his long support of youth fishing. He invested in the future of fishing by donating worms and supplies for kids fishing events in western Kentucky for many years.

Mark was the proprietor of Bucy Wholesale Bait in Murray, KY. He was unable to get out in a boat and fish as much in his last few years and became an advocate for more handicap accessible fishing locations along the shorelines of our lakes.

He beat the bushes to find local funding from the community of Murray to help pay for such a fishing pier. Although things did not come together for a pier to be built while he was still alive, shortly after his passing the possibility of TVA including such a pier into the Wildcat Creek Boat Ramp renovation became a reality.

We appreciate the efforts of TVA for funding the expansion of the Wildcat Creek Boat Ramp parking lot, and also in having this fishing pier constructed for those without a boat or needing handicap accessible accommodations.

Wildcat Creek Boating Access site is actually owned by TVA (Tennessee Valley Authority), though licensed to the Department for operation and maintenance.

A ribbon cutting and dedication

ceremony was held in December at the Wildcat Creek Boat Ramp. This event was attended by family and many friends of Mark, staff of TVA, local media, anglers, and some local government officials.



Paul Rister with Darlene Bucy and State Representative Kenny Imes. *Nicholas B. Morris (TVA) photo*



Wildcat Creek Boat Ramp parking lot. *Paul Rister photo*

Cedar Creek Lake drawdown continues

Cedar Creek Lake is being lowered 5-7 feet this winter to improve the large-mouth bass and bluegill populations and to reduce the abundant aquatic vegetation in the lake.

The drawdown began November 12, 2015 and the lake will remain at the lowered elevation through February 2016.

Lowering the water level in the lake will force the abundant small bluegill out of the existing vegetation along the shore and make them more vulnerable to predation by the bass.

The increased predation should thin out the overabundant bluegill, allowing the remaining bluegill to grow faster and reach a larger size.

The bass population will benefit by having more readily-available prey.

The drawdown also will expose and kill some of the abundant vegetation along the lake shore. In recent years, the vegetation has approached nuisance levels which ties up many of the lake's nutrients.

By killing out some of the vegetation, these tied-up nutrients will be released back into the system which should improve productivity.



Fisheries biologist Marcy Anderson opens the valve at Cedar Creek Lake.



Above: Lake shoreline adjacent to Old Highway 150 ramp.



Left: Courtesy dock at John Sims Ramp.

Hunter's Legacy Program continues new hunter recruitment

It was another great Fall for Hunter's Legacy.

For the third straight year the Hunter's Legacy program recruited new hunters by connecting with local state university clubs.

More than 54 participants from three universities hunted two weekends during early crossbow and muzzleloader seasons.

Twenty-eight of those were new or beginner hunters.

The universities were responsible to supply two things in order to participate in the program – mentors and new hunters. The statewide deer permit and hunting license was the only expense for the new hunters.

KDFWR provided the hunter education certification, crossbows, blinds, lunch, and a place to stay.

Conservation camps became the perfect background for that "deer camp" atmosphere that's so important to new adult hunters.

These hunts proved that new hunters were less interested in harvesting a deer than they were in gaining experience and knowledge from other hunters. For many of them, it's about trying it before you buy it.

However, the greatest strength of these hunts is that the mentors and new hunters established relationships and opportunities to hunt multiple times throughout the season. Once a student gets a taste of deer hunting, they usually ask their mentor to take them again. Many go on to harvest a deer later during gun season after they participate in the Legacy weekend.

One participant, Johanna Dart, is



a graduate student at Michigan State. She contacted KDFWR this past summer because she wanted to start a similar program at her school.

Johanna, who had never before hunted, was able to not only attend the hunt, but harvested her first deer with her mentor Katie Haymes, who is now with the Archery Trade Association.

Johanna learned about the participant

side as well as the administrative side of these weekends and successfully held her first Learn to Hunt event in Michigan just two weeks later.

Thanks to all the agency and conservation partners at Grayson Lake WMA, Camp Webb, Camp Currie, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Foundation for making the Legacy Hunts successful.

Reel Recovery at Otter Creek

By **Charlie Logsdon**

"I never had a problem that going fishing couldn't help."

I can still remember my dad saying this to me after I was out on my own. Unfortunately, I picture him telling me this as he sat on a river bank smoking, which would eventually give him terminal lung cancer.

However, the words ring true, and Reel Recovery is an organization that is helping men suffering or recovering from cancer to find peace, support, and healing through fly fishing.

Reel Recovery was founded in 2003 by fly fishermen who recognized the positive impact fly fishing had on their friend suffering from brain cancer. The organization provides fly fishing retreats for men impacted by cancer.

Here the men learn to fly fish, have the opportunity to share their stories, and to find support in their time of recovery and treatment. More information about Reel Recovery can be found at their website, reelrecovery.org.

For the last three years the Derby City Fly Fishers, a fly fishing club in the Louisville/Southern Indiana area, has had a fund raising tournament for Reel Recovery at the Otter Creek Outdoor Recreation Area operated by the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources.

This event, the Mystery Fly Tournament for Cancer Reel Recovery IND/KY, is to raise money to fund one of these retreats for men in the region.

The tournament is strictly "for fun" with the winning team receiving nothing but "bragging rights" and donated plaques.

The rules are simple: teams consist of two people that are randomly selected at the beginning of the day. The fly to be used is unknown until the start of the tournament (each person receives one fly, but



Fly fishers on Otter Creek during Mystery Fly Tournament 2015



The drawing of teams

"mulligan" flies can be purchased). Each person records his partner's catch in keeping with honesty and fairness.

Starting points on the stream are selected during the team member selection, but teams are not limited to staying in one area on the stream, and all teams start and end fishing at the same time (9am – 1pm).

Upon completion of fishing, all teams return to the starting point and have lunch, provided by the Derby City Fly Fishers, while the totals are counted.

This year's tournament was held on November 21 with a jig hare's ear nymph being the mystery fly. On Friday night the Derby City Fly Fishers rented four cabins in the Otter Creek campground.

A sumptuous meal was provided by club members and campfires ran long into the night.

Water conditions were far from perfect (two inches of rain on the Wednesday before) with high flow and still off color, but the important thing for all involved was to support Reel Recovery.

At the start of the day, 80 fly fishermen had registered to compete. A few that had registered early decided not to come due to the water conditions, but donated their entry fee anyway (would we expect anything else from sportspersons).

Trout were hard to come by, but at the end of the day the winning team had a catch of

three trout. The event raised more than \$9,000, enough to completely sponsor one of the retreats.

This is just another example of sportspersons stepping up to make a supportive, caring community.



2015 Mystery Fly Tournament Winners

Thomas takes bull elk to bring his Kentucky elk experiences full circle

In the winter of 2000, Eric Thomas was busy wrestling with his Eastern Kentucky University studies chasing a law enforcement degree. That was mostly by night.

By daylight, it was the life of a six-month seasonal wildlife technician – cutting management area trees for early grouse succession habitat, trapping Harlan County nuisance bears, and herding trapped Rocky Mountain elk out of cattle trailers and into their new Appalachian habitat.

It was the height of Kentucky's elk restoration effort. Department staff trapped elk in western states, tested each animal for a variety of diseases, then loaded them on tractor trailer cattle rigs and brought them to east Kentucky release sites.

Protected only by steel-toed boots and a hand-carried plywood shield with a hole sawed through so he could see, he was one of those who inched their way the length of the trailer through the packed-in elk, turned, and then began pushing the elk toward the door and a narrow, ramped chute that allowed only one animal's exit at a time.

"We'd get our backs to the wall and hold that plywood in front of us and side-step our way to the end," said Thomas. "Those elk would press up against us. And it would just take our breath away – all that weight and strength – but we made it. Then we'd have to push them to that chute. And they didn't want to go."

Today, Thomas is a 12-year veteran Seventh District conservation officer as-



Seventh District Conservation Officer Eric Thomas (left) took this 6x5 bull elk on the last day of the bull archery season. His hunting companion, KSP Trooper Blake Frasure, captured video of the hunt and helped him retrieve his trophy.

opportunities on video. "We had a lot of really great hunts," said Thomas. In fact, Thomas says recovery of the downed bull would have been nearly impossible without his friend's help.

He admits, however, that he told his friends that after the first of the year, as the season neared its end, filling his freezer with meat was going to be more important than antlers.

Thomas began his Kentucky Fish and Wild-

life career as a counselor at Camp Webb. He was there two seasons before joining Law Enforcement Division as a radio dispatcher. After two more years, he was selected as a conservation officer recruit and attended the 2004 academy.

signed to Floyd County. He brought his Kentucky elk experience full-circle earlier this month when he took a 6x5 bull on the last day of the archery season. He downed the bull with a 50-yard shot.

"I never dreamed all those years ago when we were pushing those elk out of those trailers that I would ever actually get a chance to hunt one of them," he said. "It was the experience of a lifetime."

He made the most of his opportunities throughout the season as well. "I passed up on a lot of shots," he said. "I probably could have tagged out a couple of dozen times, but I was waiting for the right bull."

His friend and avid hunter Blake Frasure, a Kentucky State Trooper, accompanied him and captured nearly all of those

life career as a counselor at Camp Webb. He was there two seasons before joining Law Enforcement Division as a radio dispatcher. After two more years, he was selected as a conservation officer recruit and attended the 2004 academy.

Kentucky conducted its first elk hunt in 2001, and Thomas says that despite entering the elk lottery nearly every year, it was the first time he's been drawn. But dozens in that time have benefitted from his knowledge. "In those early years we almost served as chaperones or guides for the hunters," he said. "We sure have helped a lot of hunters through the years."

"I consider myself extremely blessed to be doing this job and to have had all these fish and wildlife experiences over the years."



HEADQUARTERS WATERFOWL

Open water on Sportsman's Lake at Fish and Wildlife Headquarters beckoned waterfowl by the hundreds as subfreezing temperatures caused farm ponds all across Kentucky to freeze over. *Mindy Rose photos*

