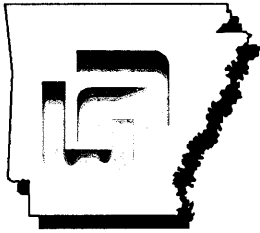


# Cooperative Extension Service



## Fee Fishing – An Additional Source of Income

University of Arkansas, United States Department of Agriculture, and County Governments Cooperating

Larry W. Dorman  
Extension Fisheries  
Specialist

### Introduction

Fee fishing (paylake) operations are expanding into many states including Arkansas. With increasing fishing pressure and declining catch, public waters are no longer providing the sportsperson the opportunity for angling pleasure. Fee fishing can fill this niche, and be profitable for the successful entrepreneur. However, poor location, planning, design or management can doom a fee fishing enterprise from the start.

### Permit Requirements and Liability

Permits from governmental regulatory agencies as well as liability insurance must be obtained before construction of the facility begins.

1. Contact the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) for site evaluation and wetlands determination. If the site does not violate Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (meaning the site is not a wetland), then a permit is issued and construction can begin.
2. Secure a Commercial Fish Farm Permit from the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, #2 Resource Drive, Little Rock, AR 72205. The permit is \$25 and must be renewed annually.
3. Consult an attorney concerning liability requirements.

### Population Requirements

Research reveals the following aspects concerning successful fee fishing operations:

1. The operation should be located within a 30 mile radius of a population center of at least 150,000. The central Arkansas area and West Memphis (Memphis) are two prime locations in Arkansas.
2. Fee fishing is seasonal. The primary season runs from April to October, with Memorial Day to Labor Day being the prime period.

### Physical and Management Requirements

1. The pond should be less than 3 acres in size and more than one pond may be needed. A rectangular-shaped pond allows a larger shoreline to water ratio and seems to work best by affording more levee for fishing. Shade as well as facilities for the handicapped must be available.
2. Amenities such as fishing poles, bait and tackle, soft drinks, milk, sandwich meats and other items must be available. Fresh fish should be available for purchase. Clean restrooms are a must.



3. There should be only one entrance to the fee fishing facility. The traffic should be funneled through the concession area to the pond. A fence is needed around the entire operation to prevent theft and vandalism.
4. If you plan to grow your own fish, raise them in separate grow out ponds, then harvest and stock the fish in the fee fishing pond(s). It is better to stock small batches of fish (500 to 1000 pounds) at frequent intervals, twice weekly, than to stock large quantities of fish (2,500 or more pounds) monthly. Size of fish stocked should be in the 1 to 1.5 pound range, with a few larger fish.
5. Charge fees on a per person and/or a per pound basis. An entrance fee helps reduce loitering by individuals who do not intend to purchase fish. Many fee fishing operators charge a per pound fee to dress the fish.
6. **Alcohol should not be allowed on the premises. This will ruin the business faster than anything.**

## Advertisement and Promotions

1. The most successful advertising tool is by word of mouth. Satisfied customers tell their friends. Road signs and ads in shopper's guides are also used.
2. Offer night fishing and group rates to the elderly, youth organizations and church groups. You may want to award prizes for the largest fish, most fish or for catching a special marked fish when groups are fishing. Your imagination is the limit concerning promotions.
3. Repeat customers are essential to a successful fee fishing enterprise. Remember what you sell is yourself.

## Conclusion

Fee fishing is here to stay. When managed correctly, fee fishing provides an excellent entertainment opportunity for the public, as well as a good investment for the entrepreneur.

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