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American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Benefits Fish Habitat in Wisconsin Lakes

Fish in northern Wisconsin's Eau Claire Chain of Lakes will soon find new homes in the form of trees, or large woody habitat, thanks to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The Act includes \$2 million to fund fish habitat projects across the nation under the guidance of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan (Action Plan). The Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership, in cooperation with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, submitted the large woody habitat project to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which oversees the Action Plan. The partnership is working to conserve fish habitat in naturally formed lakes in eight Midwestern states.

In the early 1900s logging in northern Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin led to a decrease in large woody habitat around lakeshore areas. More recently, shoreline development has caused a reduction in large woody habitat as landowners removed fallen trees from their shorelines. To replace this important habitat type, contractors will place and anchor whole trees along the shoreline of willing lakeshore owners. Trees used in the project will come from upland areas that were harvested using forestry best management practices or from local road-widening projects. Near-shore trees will be preserved to provide for future fish habitat.

"Along the shoreline it's a desert around many lakes," said Eric Engbretson of Engbretson Underwater Photo in Florence, WI. "As an underwater photographer, I visit lakes that have ample trees in the water because that is where the fish are. I am excited about this work and look forward to taking photos of fish using this new habitat."

Large woody habitat in near-shore areas of lakes is important to healthy ecological lake systems. Many species, both aquatic and terrestrial, utilize these tree falls for at least one part of their life cycle including use as spawning, ambush and protection habitats. Past land use has left a woody habitat deficit requiring active management to replace it.

For more information on the Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership, please contact Pat Rivers at (218)327-4306 or visit www.MidwestGlacialLakes.org



Large woody habitat for Bony Lake, WI.



Smallmouth bass using large woody habitat.

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Editor's note: for high resolution images, please contact Pat Rivers.

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