



## **Fort Pickett Ponds – 2002**

(Butterwood, Dearing, Floyd, Lewis, Twin Lake)

Five small impoundments on the Fort Pickett base were sampled in May 2001 to assess the warmwater fisheries in each. These ponds included: Butterwood Pond (9 acres), Dearing Pond (7 acres), Floyd Pond (4.5 acres), Lewis Pond (12 acres), and Twin Lake (19 acres). The ponds are owned by the Army National Guard MTC-Fort Pickett and managed by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. All are managed for largemouth bass and bluegill primarily. Some contain redear sunfish, black crappie, channel catfish and various other species. Channel catfish are currently stocked semi-annually in Lewis pond at a density of 50/acre.

The 2001 spring electroshocking survey revealed that three ponds; Butterwood, Dearing, and Lewis; are in various states of imbalance. Butterwood Pond has bass in high densities and exhibits a poor size structure with most bass below 14 inches. Bluegill are at desired densities but are still stunting possibly due to competition for food. A few larger redear sunfish (7-9 inches) were also sampled in Butterwood but the population density is very low. Dearing Pond has bass at average densities but size distribution is poor with no fish sampled over 12 inches. Bluegill density is extremely high and most fish are stockpiled below 6 inches. Bluegill harvest at Dearing is highly encouraged to help promote bass growth and to return the largemouth bass and bluegill back to a balanced state. Lewis pond is currently in the most drastic state of imbalance. Largemouth densities are low while bluegill numbers are much too high for a healthy predator-prey assemblage. The low density of bass in the system has allowed the bluegill population to increase to drastic levels. There are some big bass present at Lewis over 16 inches, but there is a large missing segment of the population from 10-15 inches. This pond has a history of fish kills and is also reported to be too fertile as the result of agricultural run-off. The best possible use for this pond is as a bluegill and catfish fishery; channel catfish are stocked to maintain this fishery.

Two of the Pickett ponds, Floyd and Twin Lake, do have bass and bluegill in desirable densities and sizes. Largemouth bass density at Floyd Pond is slightly lower than average for the Piedmont, but size distribution is very good with bass over 20 inches in the population. With adequate predators in the system, the bluegill population is also doing well with many fish sampled over 8 inches. Twin Lake was the best pond sampled at Fort Pickett in 2001. Largemouth densities are high, but the size distribution is excellent; fish over 22 inches and all size classes well represented. Bluegill densities are also very high but, like the largemouth bass population, are not stunted. Many quality bluegill were sampled at Twin Lake in 2001.

Limited numbers of black crappie were sampled in all five ponds. Crappie populations in small impoundment can often lead to stunted bluegill and could possibly be impacting the bass/bluegill balance at Lewis Pond where the crappie density was highest.

Habitat in the ponds varies somewhat, but most have aquatic vegetation present and many had fish attractors (sunken evergreen tree) added to improve the fisheries. All of the ponds except Twin Lake have gravel boat ramps with limited parking available.

Twin Lake has a paved boat ramp and also offers a picnic area for families to enjoy. Size limits on bass vary as follows:

<b>Impoundment</b>	<b>Size limit</b>	<b>Creel limit</b>
Butterwood Pond	20 inches	2 per day
Floyd Pond	20 inches	2 per day
Dearing Pond	14 inches	5 per day
Lewis Pond	14 inches	5 per day
Twin Lake	14 inches	5 per day

Other fishing regulations comply with statewide creel and size limits. In addition to a valid Virginia state fishing license, a Fort Pickett fishing permit is required for anyone to fish within the boundaries of the Fort Pickett military installation. A 35-hp boat motor restriction and 25-mph speed limit are also enforced on the Fort Pickett ponds. Fort Pickett is located just east of Blackstone on Route 46. For details on how to get to a particular impoundment refer to the Fort Pickett regulation booklet available at Bevells Hardware (434-292-7208) in Blackstone. Information is also available seasonally at the Fort Pickett game check station located at the west entrance off of Ridge Road.