

How to Build an Approved Fish Habitat

The fish habitat described here has the following advantages:

- Cheap to make (assuming you can find some plastic drums)
- Easy to make
- Can be placed completely under docks so it does not interfere with swimming and boating
- Easily removable if necessary
- Will not decompose like other habitats since it is made of plastic and concrete.

1. Obtain 55 gallon **plastic** drums.
2. Decide where the fish habitat will go. The location of the fish habitat shall not interfere with boating and swimming, therefore under your dock may be the best location. Depending on the depth of water in the area, you need to decide whether the drums will be placed horizontally or vertically. The optimum depth is probably about 3-6 feet. If the dock you are putting it under is a floating dock, ensure there is enough clearance if the water level drops.
3. Using a hole saw, cut lots of holes in the drum, leaving about the bottom $\frac{1}{4}$ of the drum with no holes. I used a mixture of small (2"), medium (4") and large (6") holes. See picture below which shows the way they were configured under my dock. The one with the largest holes was placed in the deepest water.



4. Clean out whatever was previously in the drum as best as possible to avoid lake contamination. I took the drums to a self-service car wash to clean mine.

5. Pour about 50 lbs. of cement in each drum to ensure they sink. I recommend mixing it a little thin so it can be more easily poured through the holes. Let concrete harden.
6. Bring drums to the water near where they will be installed. Using rope (nylon or polypropylene rope that will not decay as easily) threaded through the holes, tie them together. Leave some space between barrels so the fish can swim between the drums (I did about 4"). This can be done in shallow water where you can see what you are doing and the whole thing can be moved after it is tied together. Tie ropes on the barrels that will be used to secure the habitat to dock support posts.
7. Move the habitat to its position and tie ropes to the dock posts. Trim ropes so that they will not be left as a hazard.

If you have any questions about how to do this, please contact Kevin Eastman at 894-5716 (lot 67). I can also occasionally get free concrete from my work. Please let me know if you have a source to get plastic drums.