

# Quarterly News Letter

## Spring 2011



It is hard to believe that Southern Sportsman Aquatics & Land Management has been open for business for four years. I started with one client, Mr. Phillip Connell owner of the Good Hope Plantation in Lakeland, Georgia and we have evolved into a business with a variety of clients that I never imagined could be better than right now in such a short period of time. It has been nothing less than a joy since I started working with private lake and land owners and/or managers, and conducting research on our current research projects. We have truly been blessed with all our family, friends and clients promoting our company and referring us to more and more people wanting to hire us. Without you we would have never made it, and for that we thank you all! The time has gone by faster than I ever imagined, which must mean I am having fun!

I would like to acknowledge and welcome our first landowner to our Lunker Club. This past January I delivered the commemorative plaque to Mr. Ken Hall and Ken Hall Jr. owners of Hall Farms near Sylvester, Georgia. A family friend of the Halls, Mr. Darin Smith, caught and released the 12 pound 14 once largemouth bass in the spring of 2010 from one of the three lakes we manage on Hall Farms. The Halls were one of our fist clients that came to us looking for guidance with lake management in the fall of 2007 and took a chance on a brand new company few people knew little about. They have made vast improvements to their lakes and have become conscious of how intense agricultural practices can co-exist with quality fishing lakes. I wouldn't be surprised their next species for a Lunker Club Award is a redear sunfish or bluegill from one of their other lakes.



Mr. Ken Hall (left) and Ken Hall Jr. of Hall Farms are the first recipients of a Southern Sportsman Aquatics & Land Management Lunker Club Award!



The first Lunker Award designed by the biologist at Southern Sportsman Aquatics & Land Management



Mr. Darin Smith with his 12 lbs 14 oz largemouth bass caught and released from the East Lake on Hall Farms!

We want to remind everyone of the Southern Sportsman Aquatics & Land Management Lunker Fish Club & Bruiser Buck Club. A commemorative plaque will be presented to landowners who experience an exceptional fish being caught from their waterbodies or a whitetail deer harvested from their land that we manage on a regular basis. The landowner need not be the successful angler or hunter, but we do need a quality photo, name of angler or hunter, date and time caught or harvested, total length, girth and weight of the fish or antler measurements of the deer. The categories for fish are bluegill, redear sunfish, black crappie, channel or blue catfish and largemouth bass. The size categories are as follows: largemouth bass  $\geq 25$ " or 10 lbs, channel or blue catfish  $\geq 33$ " or 20 lbs, bluegill  $\geq 10$ " or 0.75 lbs, redear sunfish  $\geq 11$ " or 1.0 lbs and black crappie  $\geq 14$ " or 2.0 lbs. Whitetail deer qualify if the antlers scores  $\geq 140$  inches. Plaques will be presented to qualifying land owners during quarterly site visits. We hope this gets you fired up as much as it does us, so make sure you let us know when an exceptional fish or deer is caught or harvested on your property that we manage.

## Aquatics

This quarter I want to talk about aquascaping. The same principal used in landscaping around your home can be performed around and in lakes and ponds. As you know we are big on developing habitat for fish and maintaining good water quality. We feel beside good water quality, habitat is the next most important puzzle piece to develop a quality aquatic ecosystem that requires less maintenance and can provide both aesthetics and quality fishing for many years.

If you have a new waterbody the canvas is blank and fairly easy to paint. If you want to improve an existing waterbody, identifying current vegetation and prioritizing them from most desirable to least desirable is required. You also know of our dislike for exotic plant

species, but on rare occasions we leave it, only because it is the only habitat in the lake, but as soon as desirable plant species begin to fill in, exotics need to be treated with herbicides or mechanically removed. Exotic plants tend to be a problem in that they grow in excess and require more maintenance (equates to money) to keep in check. Not to say there are not native species that does the same (i.e. cattails).

There are three types of plants we mainly deal with- upper shoreline (usually on dry ground, but can tolerate being near or in water for various periods of time), emergent (part of the plant is underwater and part is above the water, but can usually tolerate short dry or being submerged short periods) and submerged (the entire plant remains below the surface and can rarely survive any time being on dry land and exposed). All can contribute to fish and wildlife habitat, reduce erosion and improve water quality. In some situations we may recommend a combination of all three types or possibly one or two types depending on the water body and management objectives. Planting submerged vegetation is pretty rare unless part of the waterbody is desired to attract waterfowl and then it might be employed. And we will never prescribe any floating species, like used in a goldfish pond in the garden, which is where many exotic plant species got their start in this country from water garden and aquarium industry plants.

Do not get your plants and just start planting anywhere, using any method, in any depth of water. Planning it out will allow for greater plant survival and a better layout to reduce having to go back later and cut or spray something that was planted in a spot reserved for a boat ramp, swimming hole, dock or beach. Knowing the requirements of each plant is necessary. How deep of water does it thrive in? What is the deepest water it can tolerate for how long or how long can it survive on dry land? How much light is required, some aquatic plants like full sun, while others require a lot of shade otherwise they grow slow or die. What is the pH of the water, some plant species like low pH (acidic) and others higher (basic) similar to agricultural crops. Some species like soft water, others do better in hard. Some species require flow, while others become uprooted or perish in flow. Think about planting multiple species together as you work your way up the bank, like tall plants behind short plants, or vice versa depending on from where you are looking at them, water depth requirements of each species, or where you want which habitat? Do not plant tall plants or short trees between the house and the lake, to obstruct a view. Never plant woody trees or shrubs on the dam or spillway, as they will compromise their integrity and can cause leaks, or partial or complete failure over time.

A very important observation is what water level is the lake currently at, at planting time - flood, drought or average? If in a flood condition, you need to plant some emergent plants as far out as possible, maybe even underwater, but yet are still receiving light under water, so when normal water levels return the plant is in proper water depth and the top is above water level, as it should be. If it is drought and you place some emergent plants under water that need to be above, when water levels rise, they could get shaded out if the water is green or tannin stained and all the plants will perish.

Plants can be purchased from a few nurseries that specialize in aquatic plants and can either be shipped or picked up. If picking up plants yourself make sure they are wet and covered during transport to prevent drying or death by wind. Once arriving at the site park in shade or uncover in sunlight and keep moist so they don't get cooked. Collecting plants from donor sites on your property or a neighbor's is a possibility, but please check with your state

Fish & Game or Agriculture departments before you do so, because each state's rules are different. Also, make sure you know what you are planting; some plants can look very similar, but have extremely different outcomes. I have seen many people miss identify torpedograss (which is an evasive exotic grass looking plant) for Maidencane, a native aquatic grass looking species that needs a lot less work to keep in check than its exotic cousin. It is best to have a professional identify the plant species if a donor site on your property is available to make sure you are not moving a problem.

Planting woody species prior to the growing season (winter) and soft tissue species after the growing season begins (spring) is advised. For soft tissue plants the earlier the better once a freeze is no longer possible, so they have an entire growing season to establish good roots prior to the next winter. Some plants can be planted with a posthole digger, some with a small shovel, some with a forked stick, and we have even used a Dibble bar for planting emergent plants in sandy soil, which is normally used to plant pine trees. Examine the plant species and root system (is it potted or bare root?) and come up with the best planting tool and method to prevent plant damage during the planting process and for quickness if a large area is being planted.

Throughout the southeast, including east Texas we recommend using a document put together by Florida Department of Environmental Protection Titled: [Plants for Lakefront Revegetation](#) to identify desirable plant species for your lake or pond. It discusses the soil type, the amount of water and sunlight required for each species, and how far apart each plant should be planted to maximize plant survival and expedite growth. Other sources of information can be viewed at your particular state's County Extension Office, Agriculture Department, Fish and Game Department and Plant Society web sites. Also the [University of Florida](#) and [Texas A & M University](#) web sites are considered some of the best in the country for aquatic vegetation information, regarding both native and non-native (exotic) plant species.

Once planted, give it some time. Various species will grow at different rates. To reduce costs we usually plant at a much lower density than recommended and allow it to gradually fill in. If you plant so you have an instant filled in vegetated area, it will cost several times more in plants and labor than sparsely planting and allowing Mother Nature to do the rest. Also, you may find out for some reason certain plants didn't do well, or one species completely died-off, despite you doing everything right. We have had turtles come behind us and eat the plantings, if there are a lot of grass carp present they can consume some plantings depending on species, water depth and other available food, but the most surprising to us was we once had deer or a single deer, find our pickerel weed around a lake and literally walked the entire shoreline in a few nights and ate over 500 plantings we put in. We didn't see that one coming, but that deer sure loved those tender leaves and didn't mind getting its feet wet to do it! If once planted this type of activity is observed fencing areas off with temporary material until it becomes established and can overcome grazing, might be necessary. Even if you have never observed a beaver in the lake, it is safer and cheaper to add trunk guards to the newly planted trees apposed to buying more trees later because of depredation.

## **Uplands**

The 2011 Quality Deer Management Association's (QDMA) Whitetail Report recently came out. It is "An annual report on the status of white-tailed deer, the foundation of the

hunting industry in North America.” It contains lots of interesting facts regarding white-tailed deer in all regions of the country. This 96 page document is packed with information regarding the white-tailed deer including harvest trends, license sales, regulations, antlers, nutrition, carrying capacity and predators (coyotes in particular). It also includes management strategies including buck and doe harvest guideline options, habitat, and my favorite – to cull, not to cull or which one to cull? It also goes over aging deer on the hoof. It is very interesting information and fairly easy to understand. Since they already wrote it there is no need for me to rewrite it, to view or download a copy of the document off the internet go to: <http://www.qdma.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Whitetail-Report-2011-low-res.pdf>

## **Upcoming Events**

The National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) Convention is scheduled for Feb. 16 to Feb. 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011 at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center in Nashville, Tennessee. More information can be viewed at: [http://www.nwtf.org/special\\_events/convention.html](http://www.nwtf.org/special_events/convention.html)

We encourage all our clients to participate in the upcoming Westervelt Continental Style Tower Pheasant Shoot being held March 1<sup>st</sup> in Aliceville, Alabama with proceeds going to Alabama’s Hunters Feeding the Hungry Program. The hounds and I will once again be involved this year. There is a morning and afternoon hunt, with all attendees (40 during each session) getting treated to a home cooked meal at Noon, either after your morning hunt or before your afternoon hunt. If interested in participating or sponsoring contact Dave Edwards of Westervelt Wildlife Services (205) 562-5443 to get involved either as a participant or an event sponsor.

The Ducks Unlimited (DU) National Convention is in Quebec City, Canada May 25 – 29<sup>th</sup>, 2011. More information can be viewed at: <http://www.ducks.org/events/National-Convention>.

Mossy Oak has teamed up with Bass Pro Shops and Ram Trucks to host the first Land & Wildlife Expo in Nashville, Tennessee August 12-14<sup>th</sup>, 2011. This will be conducted at the same time and place as the Quality Deer Management Association’s (QDMA) National Convention. Last year’s Land & Wildlife Expo was cancelled due to flooding. Steve Lopez and I will be attending this year and manning our booth in the aquatics section of the conference center at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center. If you attend, please come by and chat for awhile about lake and land management, we would like to see some familiar faces. More information can be viewed at: <http://www.landandwildlifeexpo.com/index.html>

I encourage newsletter feedback and suggested topics (really, I am starting to run out of new material), upcoming events that readers may be interested in attending (need four months in advance) and don’t forget about the Lunker Fish and Bruiser Buck programs. Any of our clients with fish or game pictures please submit to me via E-Mail and we can include them in the Quarterly News Letter and/or add them to the “Photos” page of the company web site or Blog. Also, if you are inclined to write a short paragraph to be published on the “Testimonials” page of our web site, please do so, as I am always updating it and would like to have more of those up from our satisfied customers. All previous Quarterly News Letters and links of interest can be found at: <http://www.southernsportsmanaquaticsandland.com>.

If you are pleased with the services and products you receive from Southern Sportsman Aquatics & Land Management, please tell your friends and associates about us. The best compliment you can give us is a referral. We are always looking for additional clients from Texas to Florida. We have had an enormous increase in electrofishing requests for this year, and are almost completely filled up for electrofishing this spring and already requests for fall 2011 are coming in. If you know of someone who is considering having a lake evaluation done, they need to contact us immediately so we can try and fit them into our schedule, otherwise it will be fall 2011 or spring 2012 before we can get to them.

If you want us to order or bring feeders (parts), aeration/fountain (parts), pond fertilizer during spring site visits please contact us immediately so we can make all the necessary arrangements to get things ordered and on the schedule. We have considerably less free time in spring and fall to perform these types of tasks. Anyone needing fish ordered, please contact us ASAP, as we will order and get you on the stocking list at the hatcheries.

***Scott G. Brown, Owner***