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Independence Oaks County Park – North’s Upper Bushman Lake receives special catch-and-release-for-all-fish-species designation from Michigan DNR

OAKLAND COUNTY – Oakland County is home to thousands of lakes and rivers that residents use for boating, paddling and fishing. Among them are Upper Bushman Lake, a 32-acre lake in Independence Oaks County Park near Clarkston that has once again received a catch-and-release-for-all-fish-species designation from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

The designation means that anglers can catch fish, but must release them back into the lake to support the high-quality fishery.

Upper Bushman Lake is the first and only public access lake in southeast Michigan with the catch-and-release-only special designation and only one of only seven catch-and-release-for-all-fish-species lakes in Michigan.

“The lake has limited spawning habitat and had little to no fishing pressure historically, so without the designation order, Upper Bushman Lake could potentially be overharvested and that would eliminate the possibility to catch large fish in this beautiful, natural setting,” Interim Executive Officer Sue Wells said.

The lake is comprised of three connected smaller lakes. Located in the headwaters of the Clinton River, the lake is surrounded by wetlands. Abundant wildlife as well as thriving aquatic life and vegetation play an essential role in the region’s ecosystem.

Natural Resources Coordinator Sarah Cook-Maylen said Large-mouth Bass, Bluegill, Pumpkinseed, Rock Bass, Bullhead, Northern Pike and Crappie are plentiful in the lake.

“This special designation allows the lake to be used for recreational purposes while at the same time providing a unique management opportunity to protect and promote the fish community,” she said.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources evaluates the lake periodically and continues to make the catch-and-release-only designation a priority for Upper Bushman Lake. It first received the designation in 2011, after the property was purchased from a private owner and opened to the public.

The docks are located in the northern kettle of Upper Bushman Lake in approximately 15-19 feet of water. A 312-foot boardwalk connects to a 180-foot-long fishing dock on the north lake. Due to the extensive wetlands that surround the lake, the fishing dock is the only location that provides access for anglers looking to fish from shore. Park visitors can launch canoes, kayaks or other registered portable non-motorized boats; however, all watercraft must be carried along a 1,200-foot-long gravel trail from the 30-space parking lot located east of the northern lake. No vehicular boat launch is provided.

Anglers must have a fishing license and follow all Michigan Department of Natural Resources rules when fishing on the lake.

For more information, contact Natural Resources Coordinator Sarah Cook-Maylen by email at maylens@oakgov.com or call 248-343-1353.

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