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New Mexico B.A.S.S. Nation teams with the Navajo Nation to make a difference

July 26, 2017

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Earl Conway (<https://www.bassmaster.com/anglers/earl-conway>)

Morgan Lake is the only power plant lake open to public fishing in New Mexico. When the other lakes are too cold to fish, hundreds of bass anglers flock to this small impoundment where you can successfully burn a buzzbait in a snowstorm. Efforts to improve water quality and fish habitat have started showing significant increase in natural reproduction and recruitment. The lake used to be totally dependent on fish stocking but now anglers are routinely catching juvenile bass even though the lake has not been stocked since 2010.

Under the leadership of David Herrera, New Mexico High School Bass Nation, Four Corners Bassmasters, Southwest Colorado Bassmasters, Bailey's Welding, and the Navajo Department of Fish and Wildlife, the partnership completed the habitat project on January 22, 2017.

Beginning with a gift from MossBack Fish Habitats and a grant from SHIMANO, area anglers, other sponsors and agencies completed boat ramp repairs and fish habitat placement along with some major water quality improvements by the power plant operator.

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The lake was created to provide cooling water to the San Juan Power Plant located on the Navajo Nation near Waterflow New Mexico. Excavated from a sand and sandstone mesa, it is void of natural structure. Cover is limited to spiny naiad grass that grows sporadically in shallow water around the lake. In addition to the artificial habitat, Home Depot donated approximately 80 Christmas Trees.



(<https://www.bassmaster.com/system/files/morgan5.jpg>)



(<https://www.bassmaster.com/system/files/morgan4.jpg>)

Navajo Department of Fish and Wildlife biologists directed the placement of the trees and habitat structures to provide maximum benefit to the fishery without detriment to the water intake into the power plant.

Four Corners Bassmasters have completed several Morgan Lake habitat projects in past years as well as improvements around the lake, including graveling the parking area, building a new dock and placing structures in the lake. Power plant operators have improved the water quality to the extent that the fish species in the lake are spawning and much of the spawn is surviving to repopulate the lake. For the past several years, local anglers reported catching numerous juvenile bass in the 6-8 inch range and assumed that they were stocked fish. But the lake had not been stocked since 2010 although the Navajo Department of Game and Fish plan to resume stocking this year.

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One of the challenges is getting heavy equipment out to this remote lake. One local hero, Billy Bailey owner of Bailey's Welding provided a track hoe to clean out the launch ramp. Over the years silt and rocks from collapsed banks had made launching boats hazardous. All anglers using the lake owe a debt of gratitude to Billy for his generous donation of time and equipment to benefit us all.

John Richardson completed the dock repairs. He made it possible to replace the tires protecting boats as they dock.

We want to thank all the individuals who assisted with the project and give a special thanks to Deb O'Neal and Micky Ahrens for obtaining the Christmas Tree donation and transporting the trees to the lake as well as to John Richardson for providing the welding equipment and materials he used to repair the dock as well as Jay Salisbury, Clayton Herrera and Jack Phelps for providing the barge and boats to place the trees and structures in the lake.

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Ed Roberts

These guys don't have a lot of lakes to fish in for Bass

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