



**By Russ Pankonin**

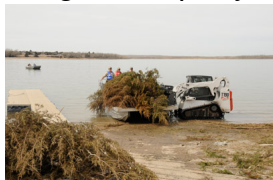
***The Imperial Republican***

Fish and anglers at Enders Lake will all benefit from a habitat improvement project completed last Wednesday, March 16.

The Game & Parks (G&P) Southwest District Fisheries Management Section sunk 170 cedar trees off a point on the east side of the lake in 20 to 30-foot deep water.

The trees will provide woody habitat not typically abundant in southwest Nebraska irrigation reservoirs, according to Jared Lorensen, a G&P fisheries biologist from North Platte.

He said they like to create woody habitat in each of the four southwest Nebraska reservoirs, doing a lake per year.



Trees were cut from the surrounding wildlife management area and pulled over to the area near the north boat ramp. There, workers from the fisheries, wildlife, park and law enforcement divisions fastened heavy weights to the trees.

On Wednesday morning G&P workers, accompanied by angler Rex Walgren of Wauneta, dropped the trees into position.

The trees were dropped in two separate piles off a point between Sunny Beach and the second boat dock below the camping area.

For fisherman with GPS units, the trees are located at coordinates N 40° 25.996' W 101° 31.539' and N 40° 25.835' W 101° 31.530'.

Walgren and the late Ted Grimm of Wauneta helped with a similar project completed in 2008 in Crappie Bay and Ike's Bay.

Walgren said a friend in the fisheries department asked him if he wanted to help again.

He estimated some of the trees stood at least 25 feet tall before being cut down. "It was all we could do to get some of them off the boat," he said.

They used two different boats to drop the trees—a 24' platform pontoon boat and a flat-bottom boat fitted with a platform.

Lorensen said the specialized pontoon boat was purchased a number of years ago through an Environmental Trust Fund Grant Project, partnering with the Southwest NE United Chamber of Commerce.

Lorensen said the trees will enhance fish habitat and congregate them in areas for anglers. However, the project won't necessarily increase fish population.

He said fish most likely to use the woody habitat include blue gills, crappie and largemouth bass.

The real benefit from the trees comes when the branches become covered with algae and moss. That attracts underwater insects and, in turn, fish.

**Quality fishing**

As a fisherman quite familiar with Enders Lake, Walgren expects a good fishing year at the lake.

He said the population of walleyes has increased significantly due to the stocking of walleye fry in recent years.

He said there are a number in the 13-14 inch range that are just getting bigger.

A walleye must be 15 inches long before it can be kept by an angler.