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Recycle Your Live Christmas Tree

JANUARY 02ND 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

Recycle Your Live Christmas Tree

Cape Girardeau, Missouri - Once the presents have been opened and the feast is eaten, there's one last gift you can give this Christmas season – to your local fish habitat. Christopher Kennedy, a Fisheries Regional Supervisor with the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), said this time of year brings an easy opportunity to give fish a place to hide from predators and thrive. Kennedy said the best thing to do with a live Christmas tree is to recycle it, by placing it at the bottom of a pond or lake.

Christmas trees provide brush and aquatic vegetation for pond and lake fish. Kennedy likens the addition of a dead tree to fish habitat to how humans furnish our homes. It gives fish resting areas, shade and escape cover.

“Small fish need vegetation and brush to help them hide from predators,” Kennedy said. “Additionally, predator fish like crappie and bass sometimes hide behind a limb to wait for an opportunity to grab its prey.”

Large trees and multiple trees make the best fish habitat, Kennedy said. He encourages neighbors to get together and combine efforts by recycling all their trees together in one lake. To place trees in a pond or lake, they'll need to be anchored with concrete blocks. Kennedy said to place small brush piles next to each other to create larger habitat. Water depth should also be considered. The best depth is 8 feet deep in the water, with the trees placed in a row, he said.

Other ways to recycle live Christmas trees include placing in a backyard to offer cover for

wildlife, or under bird feeders to provide nesting locations in the branches. Live Christmas trees can also be shredded or chipped for mulch.

For more ideas on how to help winter wildlife by developing habitat, go online to mdc.mo.gov.

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