

## Fishing for an Analogy to Global Warming

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That our beloved Wilson Lake once harbored some of the biggest Largemouth Bass in the state is indisputable. The giant that I caught when I was only sixteen held the state record for five years, before being beaten out by half an ounce by one caught up north. That the lake's fishery has greatly

declined in recent years is disputed by few, and certainly not by any of us anglers who now drive forty or fifty miles to more productive waters. It's a sad state of affairs, especially for me, who grew on its shore.

Some folk say that we're just seeing the down-tick of a natural cycle. Largemouths are pretty high on the food chain, eating frogs and crawdads and smaller fish. Any sort of unfavorable weather conditions could reduce the supply of food, which in turn would cause a decline in the Largemouth population. Other folk blame the industry that has sprung up on the west shore, and especially one particular factory that is said to be dumping salt into the lake. (I would have thought that sort of thing wouldn't be allowed these days, and makes me think some sort of political wheeling and dealing is going on). Tests say that the water is a bit saltier than when I was a kid, but whether the salt has affected the fish is hotly debated. Some environmentalists say that increased salinity affects the juvenile Largemouths, stunting their growth. County officials point out that experiments made on fish in tanks are too simplistic; they fail to account for the checks and balances of a real lake, such as the effect of the salt on predator-prey relationships. Personally, I don't know about that, except that I'll grant that the Loudmouth is one hell of a tough fish.

One thing does concern me, though. Lake Wilson doesn't have much of an outflow. Its level is always below the spillway of the dam, so the old creek below is fed by just a little seepage. Isn't the salt just going to build up and up? I ran this idea by my friend Catherine, who teaches chemistry at Paulson High. She said, "Yes, if most of the inflow just evaporates, then the salinity of the lake will rise until the salt leaving through that trickle of an outflow balances the amount put in by the factory". "And how high will it rise?", I asked. After a little bit of scratching in her notebook she said, "To about the saltiness of the sea, but don't worry, it will take thirty years, and who knows, by then someone may do something to stop the dumping of salt".

Well, Loudmouth Bass are not salt water fish. It saddens me to think that my grandkids might not be fishing for them, as I once did, on the shores of Wilson Lake.