



## Project Pond: Pond Businesses and Maintenance Issues

**Read more ways to earn money from your farm pond; learn about pond security and maintenance, too.**

(From Project Pond, by Rick Gush, page 3 of 3)

### Provide Picnic and Swimming Areas for a Fee

Farm ponds look quite inviting on a hot summer day, and pond owners can often take advantage of this by opening the pond for swimming during the hot months. Rafts for teenagers to gather on, lessons for the younger set, and swimming lanes for the exercise conscious all help to draw customers. Sunbathing is always popular, and a few enterprising pond operators have installed rope pulley systems that drag water skiers around a part of the lake.

The beauty of the pond setting can be easily leveraged to create a commercial picnic spot. Often rented out for group events, such locations can also benefit by operating concessions stands and offering group activity areas such as horseshoe pits, ping-pong tables, volleyball courts, bandstands, dance floors and informal theaters.

### Set Up a Boat Rental Business

There is really very little in this world more enjoyable than tooling around in a boat. Creative pond owners have a world of diverse opportunities with which to amuse and attract potential customers.

Fishing boats, paddleboats, sail boats, sailing schools, water-safety schools, glass-bottomed boats, houseboats, kayaks and canoes, windsurfing, and romantic rowboat rentals are just some of the many different types of boat operations that could conceivably be added to a farm pond's business.

For owners interested in expanding their pond business to include public recreation, legal liabilities and insurance premiums are big considerations.

### Tips for Pond Maintenance

Pond maintenance varies from one pond to the next, and may include vigorous weed removal or adding alum to flocculate and clear up muddy water.

Some pond owners have problems with turtles eating their fish and manage an active turtle-trapping program. Many pond owners cull their fish populations frequently, catching and releasing the prize specimens, but taking out the undersized fish so the big guys will have more food and space to grow even larger.

The single most important management task is maintaining an aeration system. Although fountains that spray water into the air might look nice, they are in fact much less efficient as oxygenating devices than bubblers placed on the pond bottom.

Pond water that is well aerated is much more active chemically, and has the capacity to cleanse itself of toxic materials that result from animal waste accumulation and dead plant material degradation. In general, aerator bubblers are best positioned in the deepest part of the pond, and just one bubbler may suffice for a half-acre pond. **Farm Pond Security** Here are some tips to help you keep your pond protected and secure. **Dam Height** - The legal height of dams is always regulated. Homeowners cannot build 30-foot high dirt dams, because those dams would just be too dangerous. Before starting construction, it is absolutely imperative to find out what the dam construction regulations are in your area.

**Drownings** - Unfortunately, farm ponds contribute to accidental drownings. Children are the most frequent victims of the majority of farm-pond drownings, but inebriated young adults are common victims as well. All farm ponds used for swimming should have a prominent rescue post with a life preserver.

**Water Quality** - Not all farm ponds are suitable for swimming. If the water is cloudy, has a foul odor or excess algae, it may contain infectious agents or be somehow contaminated. Ponds used for swimming should be analyzed for bacteria and other contaminants during the swimming season.

**Winter Safety** - Winter drowning victims may fall through thin ice and be unable to pull themselves to safety. Hypothermia can be a problem for anyone who falls into a winter pond, and should be treated quickly.



Unwanted Visitors - Farm ponds are sometimes trouble magnets because they are so attractive to unwanted visitors. Well-fenced and posted ponds, with resident owners who patrol frequently, are less likely to have trouble, vandalism and trash problems.

#### Troubleshooting Pond Problems

As much as it might seem that ponds are made by simply building a dam, in reality they aren't so easy to build. Ponds are complex ecosystems, so leaks, algae plagues and stunted fish are common among amateur pond builders. Hiring a professional pond builder is definitely the best way to ensure a satisfactory result.

One of the most frequent pond problems starts with the arrival of a few Canadian geese. These majestic looking birds instantly make a new pond look more natural and lived in.

Unfortunately, the geese often return again and again, and as their population increases, so does the incredible mess they cause. A dozen geese will each produce a pound and a half of droppings every day. That's almost a half-ton of smelly sticky material deposited along the shoreline of your new pond every year. As cute as these geese are, smart pond owners will let their dogs chase them away.

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