

Clearing Muddy Ponds In East Texas

by

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1. Determine the cause of the muddy condition. If the watershed of the pond is eroded, there is no need to clear the pond until steps are taken to correct the watershed problems.

2. If there are no apparent watershed problems, set a white 5 gallon bucket full of water out on the bank and watch it for a few days. If the pond sample clears and the particles settle out on their own, then something physical is keeping the pond muddy-this could be lots of fish, wind action or cattle wading in the water. If it does not settle out on its own, then suspended clay particles are the cause. Proceed to #3.

3. If the water in the pond sample remains muddy after a few days, confirm that it is suspended clay by purchasing some alum (used to make pickles-available at any grocery store) and mix it into the 5 gallon bucket sample. If it is clay turbidity causing the problem, the water sample will clear in an additional day or so because of the alum. This is just a cheap way to confirm the cause is actually clay particles.

4. For acid soils counties, (East District 4 and all of District 5), test a water sample (pH AND total alkalinity). If agricultural lime is needed based on total alkalinity, lime the pond first. Sometimes this in itself will facilitate clearing, but if not it will certainly reduce the amount of gypsum or alum needed to clear the pond.

5. Refer to the **Clearing Muddy Ponds** fact sheet (<http://wildlife.tamu.edu> under publications) and **Controlling Clay Turbidity in Ponds** (#460 under water quality found at srac.tamu.edu). The first fact sheet will give you a procedure for estimating the amount of gypsum or alum necessary to facilitate clearing by setting up a series of jar tests. Again, counties with acid soils **must always** use hydrated lime if alum is applied (see fact sheet alum table). Hydrated lime is not necessary in harder water/more neutral pH soils. Soils/waters with high calcium contents may not respond well to gypsum. In those cases, alum will be necessary.

6. The pondowner should accurately measure the volume of water in the pond to be treated. This means surface area in acres and the average depth in feet in order to determine the acre-footage of water present. The jar tests provides estimates of material to add to the pond based on pounds per acre foot of water. A fact sheet on measuring ponds is also available from the srac.tamu.edu website.

7. It is important to remember that all ponds do not need to be cleared. Those managed primarily for bass do need to have about 12 to 15 inches of visibility throughout the year. HOWEVER, smaller ponds that are managed for catfish, particularly when the fish are being supplementally fed, do not have to be cleared. In fact, it is preferable to have a muddy pond for catfish production because you do not have weed problems and the fish will not taste muddy if they are on feed!



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