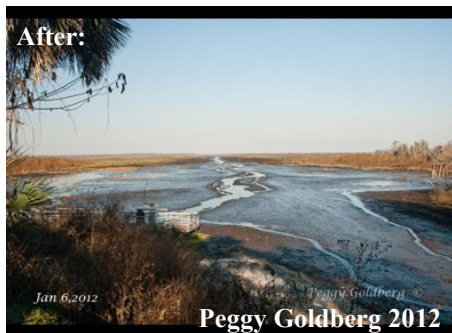


## Five Fishing Spots that are threatened by bad water policies—and how sportsmen and women can make a difference

### No water, no fish: Orange Lake, FL

**Why the lake is a great place to fish:** Central Florida's Orange Lake is known nationally by fishermen for its trophy size bass. It receives inflow from Newnan's Lake through River Styx and from Lochloosa Lake through Cross Creek. Orange Lake's largemouth bass are generally caught in the Lake's deeper spatterdock, emergent grasses and hydrilla.



**What's threatening it:** Drought conditions caused Orange Lake water levels to drop by nearly 9 feet over several years, dropping 2 feet in late 2011 alone. Water diversion and development may also be contributing to the drop in lake levels. The drop reportedly forced several bass tournaments to move to Lake Hernando. Low lake levels impact fishing access and fish alike. Low lake levels lead to fish kills due to warmer water, reduced oxygen, and increased algal blooms.

**What would fix the problem:** Limiting water diversions and sediment and phosphorus pollution affecting Orange Lake and the Orange Creek Basin will help maintain water levels and water quality and protect Orange Lake's valuable fishing and outdoor recreation economy.

### Fish prefer clean water: Illinois River

**Why the river is a great place to fish:** This spring-fed river in northern Oklahoma brings about 400,000 visitors and \$15 million in direct economic benefits to the region each year. The upper section is a designated Scenic River popular with floaters, and is home to many native species of bass with spring runs of white bass. Lake Tenkiller supports year-round bass fishing. The river below Tenkiller Dam is a designated trout stream. The state record rainbow trout was caught in the cold tail-water of the dam. State record striped bass have been caught in the lower Illinois River.



"In the good years, Orange Lake is a thriving 13,000-acre haven famous for its large-mouth bass and excellent duck hunting. But this isn't a good year. Spotty rainfall has triggered an epic drawdown, reducing the lake size by more than half and putting a financial squeeze on bait shops, restaurants and fish camps that depend on the business that anglers and hunters bring to the area." – Joe Callahan, Reporter, Gainesville.com 12/22/2011.

**What's threatening it:** Water quality in Lake Tenkiller and the Illinois River in Oklahoma is threatened by increasing phosphorus, sediment, and bacteria pollution from human populations, confined animal feeding operations, and soil erosion associated with intensive agriculture and development. These pollutants to the river and its many tributaries trigger algal blooms in streams and lakes; degrade spawning, nursery, and foraging conditions for native fish, including game fish and their food sources; and generally reduce the quality of the fish and the fishing experience. They also impair drinking water quality and raise the cost of drinking water treatment. Ultimately, these pollutants collect in Lake Tenkiller, threatening an important ecological and economic resource for the region.



Oklahoma Scenic Rivers

**What would fix the problem:** The key is to reduce the phosphorus pollution entering the streams in the Basin from sewage treatment plants and from phosphorus-rich poultry litter, sediment, and agricultural run-off. Oklahoma set a firm water quality limit on phosphorus pollution from sewage treatment plants to scenic rivers, and has been working with Arkansas to reduce the pollution from these plants in both states. Poultry operators have taken steps to export most of the poultry waste to cropland outside of the basin. Reducing soil erosion to area streams would also reduce threats to the Illinois River fishery.

### Algal Blooms are bad for fish: Grand Lake, OK

**Why the lake is a great place to fish:** Grand Lake of the Cherokees, located on the Grand (Neosho) River in northeastern Oklahoma, is known for great bass fishing and is the site of the 2013 Bassmaster Classic. Grand Lake tourism generates nearly \$94 million annually and 1,500 jobs in the 4-county area.



J.L. Tunnell/OutdoorsOK

Lake from poor sewage treatment – this time leaking septic tanks. Lakeside landowners and businesses should work with local, state, and federal water quality officials to upgrade sewage treatment systems. They should also work with poultry producers to encourage the export of phosphorus-rich poultry litter from the watershed. Reducing soil erosion to the lake and feeder streams would also reduce threats to the Grand Lake fishery.

**What's threatening it:** Leaking septic tanks and phosphorus-rich poultry waste threaten Grand Lake's water quality and contributed to its 2011 harmful algal bloom. The outbreak of toxic blue-green algae triggered official warnings to boaters and swimmers to avoid contact with contaminated areas. The algal bloom peaked in July 2011, threatening lakeside businesses at the height of the summer tourist season.

**What would fix the problem:** The key is to reduce the phosphorus pollution entering Grand



OK Tourism & Rec

## Working together for great fishing: Table Rock Lake, MO:

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**Why the lake is a great place to fish:** Table Rock Lake is known for its high quality bass fishing, producing “hefty stringers of bass, laced with lunkers” according to its local chamber of commerce. The fishery is supported by good spawning habitat and an abundant food chain. The great fishing, in turn, supports 15 commercial marinas. Table Rock Lake is located on the White River which rises as a spring in Northwest Arkansas, flows through Missouri and Arkansas, and eventually empties into the Mississippi River. The White River, due to its clarity and cool temperatures is well known as an excellent trout stream.

**What’s threatening it:** Table Rock Lake is threatened by phosphorus and nitrogen pollution from the conversion of fields, forests, and wetlands to residential and commercial development. Expanding populations relying on leaking septic systems and increased polluted run-off from impervious surfaces load the White River and other tributaries with sediment and nutrient pollution. So do the increasing number of poultry confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs) in the watershed. This nutrient pollution can lead to algal blooms that reduce water clarity and dissolved oxygen necessary to support the lake’s fish, food chain, and quality fishing.



“At Table Rock Lake there’s a great partnership between business, non-profit organizations, and the local community. This is a case where the community asked for enhanced regulation to control phosphorous limits and improved water quality.” – Scott Pauley, Missouri bass fishing pro

**Working together to fix the problem:** Local watershed organizations, fishing and other outdoor recreation businesses, county health departments, and state and federal water resource managers are partnering to reduce the nutrient pollution entering Table Rock Lake and its tributaries. Local watershed groups are monitoring the lake’s water quality to inform tighter water quality limits on nutrient pollution. They are working with Missouri water quality officials to channel state revolving funds to help individuals upgrade failing septic systems. Local watershed groups and agricultural groups are beginning to work together to encourage agricultural best management practices (BMPs) that limit nutrient pollution and improve water quality.

### Anglers can make a difference: Speak out for wetland, stream and water quality protections to ensure the future of sport fishing.

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Intact wetlands, headwaters, small streams, pools, and riparian habitat provide the key ingredients for a robust recreational fishery: adequate water levels and flow, spawning and nursery habitat, abundant and available food, good foraging conditions, and clean, oxygenated water.

- Speak out in support of state and federal wetland, stream, and water quality measures that protect fish habitat and limit lake and stream pollution.
- Speak out in support of Farm Bill conservation compliance protections for wetlands, grasslands, and healthy soils.

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#### For more information please contact:

Jan Goldman-Carter, National Wildlife Federation, 202-797-6894, [goldmancarterj@nwf.org](mailto:goldmancarterj@nwf.org)

Scott Kovarovics, Izaak Walton League of America, 301-548-0150 x 223, [skovarovics@iwla.org](mailto:skovarovics@iwla.org)

Steve Kline, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, 202-639-8727, [skline@trcp.org](mailto:skline@trcp.org)

Steve Moyer, Trout Unlimited, 703-284-9406, [smoyer@tu.org](mailto:smoyer@tu.org)

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