

well to hauling and stocking procedures. Additionally, special rules apply to the sale of game fish, and certain game fish species, such as largemouth bass, may not be sold individually or by the pound. The tilapia or Nile perch would make an excellent hot weather fish, but this species can only be possessed in the state by special permit of the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission.

One problem with catfish fish-out ponds is that only about 60-70% of the fish are caught before fishing success drops off to less than a profitable margin. You must, therefore, have a market for those fish that will not bite the hook. These fish can be seined from the pond and placed into live tanks and sold to individuals that don't want to fish or to those that don't catch enough fish to meet their needs (Fig. 5). You must manage your inventory and keep the fish flowing through the operation as fast as possible. You may have to arrange for some restaurant outlets to market these fish. These fish won't turn much of a profit, and may even cause a net loss, but you must get rid of them in order to keep the best biting fish in large enough quantities in the ponds so that the fishermen are successful.

Dead fish should be collected from around the perimeter of the ponds each morning. Records of their weight should be kept, so that this loss can be recorded. Fishing with minnows should not be allowed in order to prevent disease organisms and parasites from entering the pond. Other baits can be allowed.

Spring (February-May) is usually the best sales period of the year in Florida because during this time people have the urge to fish and catfish are generally most willing to bite. Sales as high as 3000 pounds per week have been recorded during the spring at fish-out operations in Florida, most of which is sold on weekends. Fishing success and angler utilization slow down in the heat of the summer. An upswing in sales will occur in the autumn as temperatures begin to cool. Florida has an advantage over other states to the north in that catfish will often bite during the winter, especially if it is mild. Fish-out operations are generally open on weekends. Some are open seven days a week. Daylight hours are common, many remain open after dark especially on weekends.

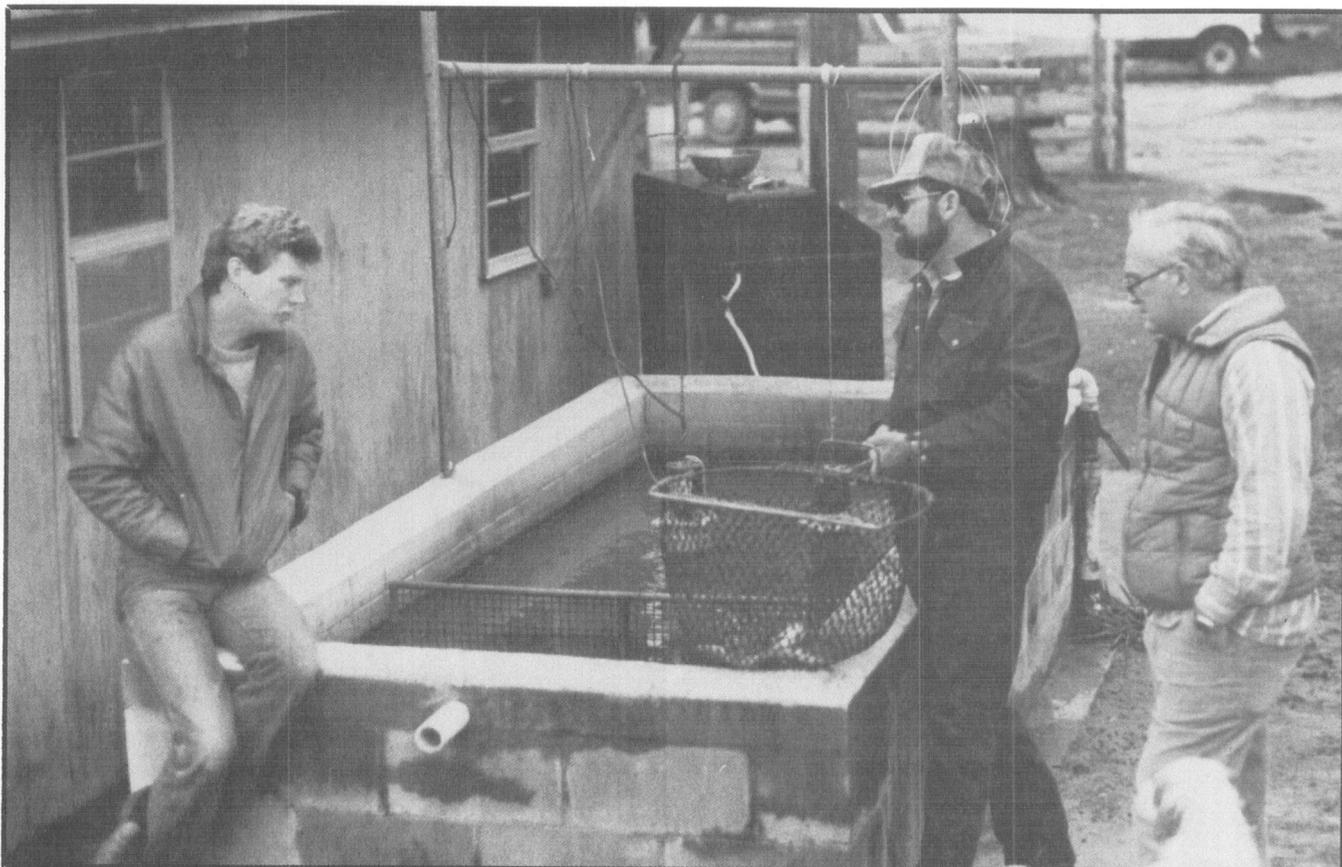


Figure 5. A live-tank should be maintained to supply live fish to anglers who don't catch enough fish from the ponds or to individuals who don't fish, but would like to purchase fresh fish for the dinner table.