and in the summer when water temperatures are high and water quality is often poor (see Florida Cooperative Extension Service Circular 715, "Management of Water Quality for Fish"). Generally, mortality is low in natural populations, such as in sportfish ponds, but can be a major problem when they are crowded as in aquaculture ponds. The cost of treating diseases is usually prohibitive in most private recreational ponds. The best rule of thumb is to let such disease outbreaks run their natural course.

Most fish have parasites, such as crustaceans, flukes, leeches, protozoans, roundworms, and tapeworms. Generally, these have little effect on the health of a fish. Little can be done to rid a pond of all parasites. Maintaining good water quality and preventing overcrowding of fish is the best way to keep a healthy fish population. If fish flesh is properly cooked, any parasites in the flesh pose no health hazard to humans who consume them.

Habitat Management

Muddy Water

Muddy water is not only undesirable aesthetically, but also from a fisheries management point of view. Muddy or turbid water reduces the ability of a pond to produce fish food (microscopic plants and animals) and the ability of sight-feeders such as largemouth bass, crappie, and sunshine bass (striped bass crossed with white bass hybrids) to effectively capture their prey. This can result in reduced growth rates for these predatory species and overpopulation of prey species such as bluegill and redear sunfish.

Water in newly constructed ponds is often muddy. This should clear up as the pond banks become vegetated. Several factors may cause ponds to remain muddy after their construction. These include erosion of soils within the watershed or of the pond banks by wave action, the presence of fine clays in suspension, activity by crayfish or certain fish, and livestock wading along the shoreline.