

## Midwest Breezes



### Fishing at the Farms Jeff VerCautren, Rich Harvest Farms

Over the years Rich Harvest Farms has had more to offer than just golf. We have promoted a catch and release fishing program with our membership. There are over 20 poles and five tackle boxes available to them. At any time the membership can take this supplied fishing gear and a cart and fish any number of the waterways at Rich Harvest Farms. There are three lake bodies and a series of creeks, with coves and lagoons that run through the farm. The creeks are rock base with over 90% of the shoreline covered with native vegetation. There are two water falls that help control the level of the water throughout the creeks. We have 50 yards of man-made beach to add to the atmosphere. The timing of fishing is never a problem. There is a lot of acreage to be fished even if there are golfers out on the course.

Rich Harvest Farms offers a number of fish. For the past ten years we have been stocking the waterways with Large Mouth Bass, Small Mouth Bass, Walleye and Rainbow Trout. There are also Catfish, Musky, Blue Gill, Crappie, Grass Carp, and, supposedly, a Northern on the farm.

Our goal is to be a good steward for the waterways and at the same time add another benefit for our membership. This program has been well received by everyone involved. Members are bringing out family and friends just to fish. We have had members bring out large groups to have picnics along the beach where they can just sit, relax, and enjoy the scenery or grab a pole and throw a couple of lines in the water. There is such a great stock that everyone catches fish and has a great time.

While most of the membership's time at Rich Harvest Farms is spent on the golf course, this program has also allowed the members to see the farm in a different way. When they fish, they stroll through our native grasses along the waterways and see all the wildlife that these areas attract. They can relax and fish while hearing the water run through the rock beds of the creek, or over the waterfalls. This fishing program just shows that the natural and native setting can be beautiful too. It shows members that there is more than just keeping a well-maintained golf course, that we should all become stewards of the environment first. The feedback has been great. There seems to be a

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*Rich Harvest Farms goes beyond golf. A young fisherman proudly displays his catch.*

better understanding of why we leave areas native, why we have structure in the waterways, and why everything does not have to be closely mowed turf.

This program has not been difficult to maintain. We spend a little time and money on restocking the feeder minnows and fish for the waterways each year. The fish have all been supplied by Richmond Fisheries. We update and restock the tackle once a year. On our end, there is very little time throughout the year that we spend on this program.

The only problem with having sporting fish in the waterways has been that it is more difficult to control the algae and invasive vegetation in the ponds. We are limited in the control measures and their frequency that we can use to control the algae. We find ourselves pulling the algae off by hand rather than applying chemicals. When we do feel the need for a chemical application we have limited the chemical usage to Cutrine, Hydrothol, Reward, and pond dye.

All in all, this has been an exciting and beneficial program out at Rich Harvest Farms. We are glad that so many of the members take advantage of this resource. The feedback we get for this program is great. Hope a few of you can establish a program like this at your club. I know we have enjoyed it.



A Walleye caught, but released on a line at Rich Harvest Farms.



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