

Learn to use your water wisely at Expo

Dan Vogler has never pretended to be politically correct. Truth be told, he'd rather skinny-dip in a lake of snapping turtles than be accused of political tiptoeing.

And Vogler won't tip-toe around any questions during his Ag Expo fish and pond management informational sessions, set for 10:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. each day of Expo.

It's not that Vogler will invite political discussion. He'll be there to help people accomplish their goals in pond and fish management, no matter what they are.

"People manage ponds for very different reasons," he said. "Some people just want water, and they want it to look ideal, and they don't care if there are fish in it or not. Others, who want a recreational spot to swim in, would just as soon kill all the fish rather than have them nibble on their kids' toes. And then there are those who want to manage their water with fish in mind. Our goal is to help people manage their water so they can have whatever they want."

Mostly, Vogler said, he'll answer questions while at Expo.



The pond at the Expo grounds serves to illustrate aeration and other practices to help maintain water bodies for various purposes.

"When I do a presentation, I'll talk for 15 or 20 minutes and use the rest of the time for questions," he said. "That way I don't have to talk in vague generalities. There are Extension bulletins for that. Every pond is different, so you can't say that a formula

that works for one pond works for another. People who retail products will say their formula will always work, but I don't believe in managing water that way any more than a corn farmer can say a certain formula will always work."

One formula that the world needs, however, seems to be out of range in Michigan. The fact that the state that holds 20 percent of the world's fresh water has some of the fewest fish farms just doesn't make sense, Vogler said.

"The bottom line is that our region, pretty much exclusively, has plenty of water," he said. "We have so much water that it runs out of the ground, so why can't we have development zones to examine the nature of the water resource, then establish aquaculture in those zones? A thriving aquaculture industry could be good for both people and industry, and it could help us rebuild our economy. It could be a billion-dollar industry, and the only thing holding us back is paranoia."

Such ideas, of course, are better left for a longer story, or discussion at the pond set up at the Expo grounds. One certainty, however, is that Expo visitors will learn what they can do to manage their water if they visit with Vogler at Expo.

MSU also has a wonderful resource for water management. It houses the home of the North Central Regional Aquaculture Center. Call (517) 353-1962.

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