



Burchell-Beech Creek WMA

IF YOU TOLD a Kentucky angler of a small lake with a respectable number of largemouth bass over 8 pounds, they would run over you trying to get there first.

Kentucky has such a lake in eastern Kentucky, located a few minutes away from Manchester. Tucked away in the mountains of Clay County in the Daniel Boone National Forest, the 1,241-acre Burchell-Beech Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA) surrounds 34-acre Bert T. Combs Lake.

"In 2009, we sampled Bert T. Combs Lake for largemouth bass," said John Williams, southeastern fishery biologist for the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources.

The results were eye popping. On that day, Williams and the crew in his fish shocking boat turned up four bass over 8 pounds and one bass over 9 pounds. The biggest fish weighed nearly 9 pounds.

Largemouth bass such as those would make any angler's head turn. "Bert Combs Lake has good numbers of catchable size bass – about 12 inches long – with a few trophies mixed in," Williams said. "It is the best of both worlds. You have a lot of smaller fish for action, along with trophy potential."

The large soft-plastic swimbaits that imitate trout would be a good choice for the

lake. These are the same kind of baits used by anglers in California and other Western states to catch the big bass.

Why would any angler want to toss a huge 9-inch bait in a lake as small as Bert T. Combs? "The bass," Williams explained, "feed on the trout we stock in there."

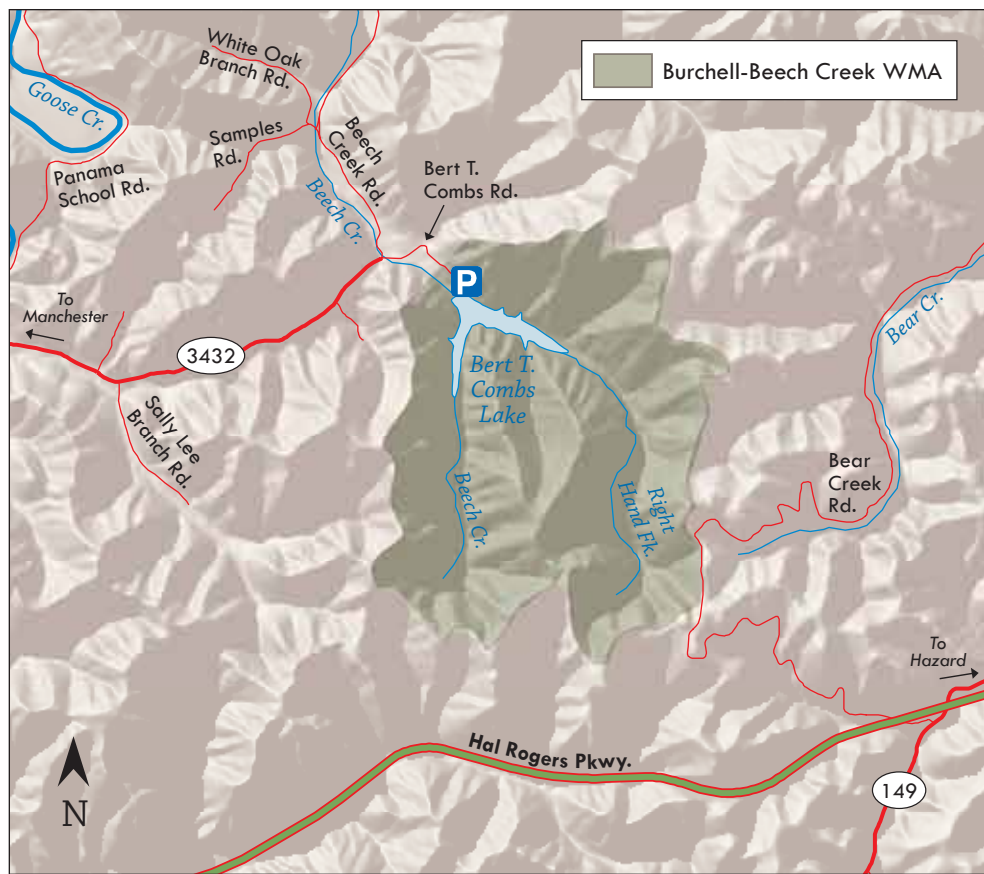
The lake also offers good fishing for trout and large bluegill. "The bluegills aren't super abundant, but the ones you catch are huge," Williams said. "The trout fishing is good right after we stock them, and then it falls off."

Internal combustion motors are not allowed on the lake. Boaters must stick to electric motors or just their muscles. Bert T. Combs Lake is an ideal place for a float tube, fishing kayak or a canoe. The lake has a ramp and parking area for boaters.

A hiking trail currently under construction will help improve bank access for anglers. "You can walk along the dam and fish and there is a good fishing pier there

now as well," Williams explained.

The WMA, which is heavily forested, is also open under statewide regulations for hunting. ■



ADRIENNE YANCY ILLUSTRATION

HOW TO GET THERE

From the Hal Rogers Parkway (Mountain Parkway), take Exit 20 to Manchester. Turn north onto U.S. 421. Travel approximately 1.1 miles, then turn right at the traffic light for Second Street. Turn left after crossing the bridge and travel Littleton Road (KY 3432) for approximately 3 miles. Turn right onto Bert Combs Road.

