

S.O.S (Save Our Swanson)

What happens when a group of individuals decide to take back their lake? They form a grass roots organization and call their local RC&D for assistance!

Swanson Reservoir had become a minimal maintenance lake and the shores became overgrown with trees making it impossible for people to swim on the beaches, or fish or even water sports! No visitors means no tourism, and no tourism means no money spent locally. S.O.S decided to change that. They started cleaning up the lake themselves!

The SOS group began working with Nik Johanson, Swanson Lake Superintendent, to reclaim recreation areas at Swanson which have fallen into disrepair during the drought years and through ever decreasing state funding. In the fall, Frenchman-Cambridge Irrigation district donated several days use of their equipment to remove trees from beaches. In the spring, Hitchcock County schools brought over 100 junior and senior high students to the lake for a clean-up day. Then in the summer, the RC&D managed a 9 person AmeriCorps Team that worked on clearing beaches of Swanson Reservoir. The team of 5 women and 4 men from the ages of 18-24 worked for 5 weeks in temperatures exceeding 100 degrees to clear 29 acres of beaches of invasive trees, weeds and trash that took over during the drought years. The team, which came from all over the country, was impressed with the beauty of the area and the friendliness of the local people. The cleared beaches improved the access for 59,000 visitor days at Swanson Reservoir.



This picture shows what the team was up against. Most of the shoreline of Swanson Reservoir transitioned to this kind of thick vegetation during the drought years.

This is the AmeriCorps team that came from all over the country to clear the beaches of Swanson Reservoir. RC&D Coordinator Roger Stockton, the young man on the far right, managed the team and kept their chain saws sharp.

