

# Partners raise fish, fill ponds for anglers

By **CLAY BARBOUR**

Staff Writer

WINNABOW — While most fishermen try everything within their power to take fish out of ponds, Kevin Patterson and Rick Stuckman spend their days putting fish back in.

The two men, both 24, own and operate Southeast Pond Stocking, a company that specializes in stocking ponds with everything from largemouth bass to blue gill bream.

## BUSINESS PROFILE

**KEVIN PATTERSON**  
**RICK STUCKMAN**  
Firm: Southeast Pond Stocking  
Employees: 2  
Established: Jan. 1998

On a 30-acre aquaculture farm in Brunswick County, the two men raise channel catfish, largemouth bass, blue gill bream and yellow perch.

They also raise grass carp, which isn't much of a game fish, but they are

good for filtering ponds.

The company is currently restocking a Boiling Spring Lakes pond, a job they were offered after residents complained about the poor state of fishing there. Mr. Patterson and Mr. Stuckman receive the fingerlings — baby fish — from brood stock farmers and raise them until they are big enough to transport to a pond.

"Food-fish farming wasn't reasonable, given that it would cost so much to feed them," Mr. Patterson said. "We knew to start with we needed something with low overhead. And we knew there was niche for game fish in the area."

Fish farmed for food are kept longer to fatten them up. Game fish are released much smaller, and as such cost less to raise.

Southeast started in 1998 after Mr. Patterson and Mr. Stuckman both graduated from Brunswick Community College's aquaculture program. Both men also graduated from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington with degrees in marine biology.

"We always knew that we wanted to do something outside, in the water," Mr. Stuckman said. "We weren't going to do a job that required a tie."

The company is fairly new, and Mr. Patterson said he couldn't say what their revenues for the year have been.

"We're doing O.K. but most of our money has gone back into the business," Mr. Stuckman said. "We figure we'll make about \$150,000 next year."

As well as stocking ponds, Southeast can also clean the pond and teach the owner how to keep it clean.

"We like to be able to provide complete service," Mr. Stuckman said. "We can treat the pond for whatever is wrong, restock it and put grass carp in it so the same problem doesn't come back next year."

They also have their sights set on expanding to provide food fish in next the couple of years.

"We're growing," Mr. Patterson said. "The industry is growing. If you had said the word aquaculture 10 years ago, no one would have known what you meant. Now, it's really catching on."



Staff photos / JAMIE MONCR

**Kevin Patterson and Rick Stuckman (right) started their business after graduating from Brunswick Community College's aquaculture program.**

