

Lake Minnewaska: Game Design Document

Overview

Gameplay Overview

Game Description

Lake Minnewaska is a third-person adventure game that follows Sosa, a small-town fisherman whose life takes a turn when his daughter, Rue, falls deathly ill.

Azure, Rue's imaginary friend, disrupts Sosa's fishing journey in his attempt to reconnect with his daughter before it is too late. Players will venture through Lake Minnewaska, where the lines between reality and imagination blur, and fish to complete Rue's Fishlist.

Genre

First Person Adventure

Target Audience

Fans of narrative-driven adventure games who enjoy collecting

Target Platform

PC (Win + Mac)

Parallel

Firewatch meets Fishing Simulator influenced by Hemingway's fisherman protagonist in *The Old Man and the Sea*

Player Goal

Players will take the role of Sosa, a lifelong angler with an ailing daughter named Rue. The player's goal is to catch all the fish that Rue wants to see from the lake, which she wrote down in a journal and gave to Sosa to keep on his boat.

Players will fish through a variety of fishing holes located in three different lake zones and learn what kind of fish there are to collect and how they relate to Sosa and Rue.

Experience Goal

Players will embark on a journey that explores themes of grief and face the daunting challenge of nature. But as they inch closer to survival, they'll experience a sense of hope and triumph when encountering the lake's obstacles.

Narrative Overview

At the start of the game, players are introduced to Sosa, who is on a quest to follow his memories with his daughter, Rue. Rue's writings in the journal begin to allude to her sickness and how her dad is reacting to

it. Players will not know of her death till the near end of the game when Sosa confronts the Azure, Rue's imaginary friend.

As Sosa fishes for his daughter, strange events happen: Sosa can hear Rue's voice on the radio, he catches strange, glowing fish, and Azure shakes the boat. By the end of the day, Sosa manages to catch the angry Azure, which leads to the realization that his actions will not bring his daughter back. After this realization, he comes to appreciate the time he spent with his daughter and decorates the entire cabin with memories of her.

Gameplay

Main Objective

To follow Rue's Fishlist and catch all the fish she recorded in Sosa's Journal.

Pillars

Immersive Storytelling

There will be a focus on cultivating an immersive narrative through the design and player actions. Players will not only be able to fish up trinkets to uncover more of the story, but major narrative moments are unveiled each time they move on to the new area. There is 3D text in the environment to further engage the character in this narrative-driven game.

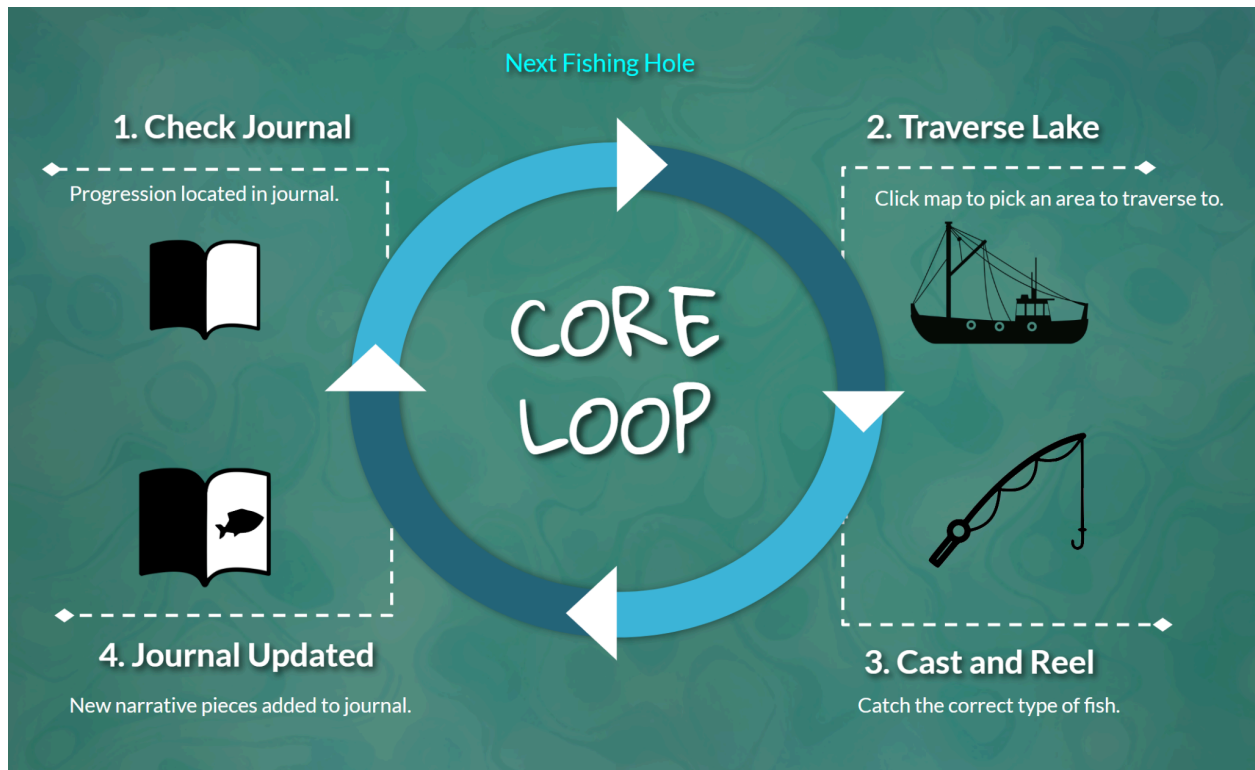
Compelling Fishing System

Through a classic fishing system coupled with a more complex bait/chum system, our ideal scenario As the main mechanic, the fishing system will be dynamic and engaging for the players. By introducing fish that scale with difficulty, players can interact with the system and feel accomplished when successfully catching a fish.

Encouraging Collecting

Various extra fish can be found within the lake that can be caught in addition to the key narrative ones. A separate index in the fish list will keep track of all the items caught. While these additional collections fill out the journal, they are also rewarded with a special voice line or interaction.

Game Progression



Overview

Game progression will be tracked through Rue's Fishlist in Sosa's journal. Each lake zone will have a section in the journal. While exploring the current lake zone, three pages will be available for the player to look through. Pages will include a drawing of a fish and a point of interest. Once the player catches the fish by casting their line at the specified POI, the journal will be updated with additional narrative in Rue's voice/handwriting.

Location Drawings

Each fishing hole will have a designated drawing in Rue's journal that depicts a specific area found there. Players must cast their rod in that specific location to catch the correct fish and progress.

Progression

When players catch the correct fish, the journal page for that fishing hole will be updated. Rue's handwriting will appear on the pages and introduce more elements of the narrative that relate to that location/the fish caught.

Azure's Final Battle

Overview

The final "battle" and conclusion of the story will occur in Lake Zone 3: Azure's home. Players will fight against Azure in her cave. She will have a larger stamina bar and be harder to catch compared to all the other previous fish.

Gameplay

At 100%, 50%, and 0% stamina, Sosa will exclaim dialogue relevant to Azure and fishing her. Azure will also hit the boat at 50% causing a screen shake and making it more difficult to follow her movements. A stretch goal will include a “fail” state, where if players pull in the wrong direction, Azure escapes. However, they will be able to start fishing again immediately.

In-Game GUI

Overview

Players will interact with the world through a 1st person perspective of the cabin. All items will be displayed in the cabin and can be clicked on to open their related menus/move to certain modes.

Interactable items will have a yellow outline. Also, icons will be used to guide players through fishing and navigating the game.



Icons

Journal – Shown when journal needs to be interacted with

Radio – Shown when radio has interaction

Map – Shown when map should be interacted with

Mouse Click – Shown to guide players how to fish and to throw back the fish

Mouse Movement – Shown to guide players how to **fight** the fish

QTE Mouse Press - Shown to tell the player to left click to hook the fish

Highlight

Yellow Highlight - Shows where the player need to interact with the next to progress the story

Map Icons

Boat - To show where the player currently is in the lake

Fish Specific - To show what fish can be caught at that fishing hole



Slider

Distance Reel - Shown when the fish is hooked on the right side of the screen to show how far the fish is from the boat

Text

3D Text (Large) - Shown somewhere in the environment when someone is speaking.

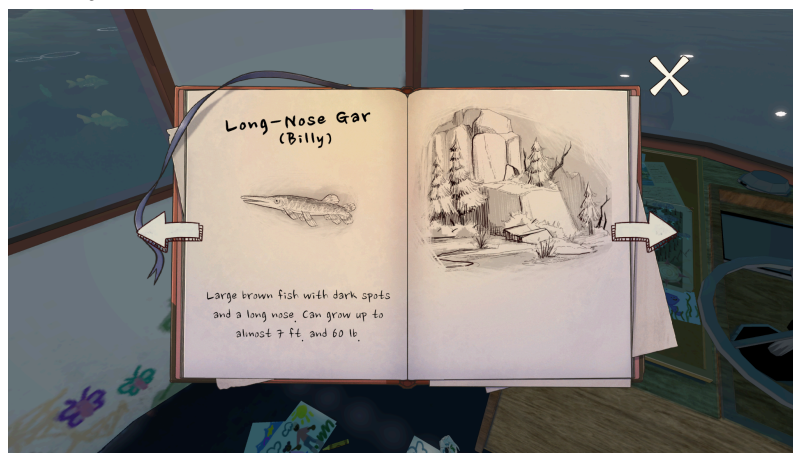
3D Text (Caption) - Shown below the point of interest when Sosa is talking

Progression Tracker

Journal - Shown to see which fish to catch and where the fish are in the environment

Arrows - Click to change pages

Back X - Click to exit the journal



Interact Manager

Caught Fish - Shown to depict that a fish has been caught clearly

Items

Radio – Left Click to listen to the message

Journal - Left click to open the journal and left click to change pages

Map – Left Click to open and Left Click to select next location

Mechanics

Lake Zone

Overview

Lake zones are distinct sections of the lake that players are allowed to fish in. The lake is divided into four separate lake zones, which each contain varying sizes of fish that players can catch. Within each lake zone, the players can fish at designated fishing holes that will be shown on the map in the cabin. The size and difficulty of fish increase with each lake zone. To complete each lake zone and move to the next, players must catch all the fish drawn in Rue's Fishlist in Sosa's Journal.



Player Objective

Find the locations Rue hints at in the journal and catch specific fish to unlock more elements of the story and progress to the next lake zone.

Fishing Holes

Within each lake zone, there are two fishing holes. Each fishing hole will have its own species, and players must cast their reel in the specific location drawn in Rue's journal to catch the correct fish.

Completion of Lake Zone

To move on to the next Lake Zone, players will have to catch each species of fish in their current Lake Zone in order to fill out the journal given to Sosa by Rue. Because each fishing hole has a different species of fish, this amounts to catching one fish in each fishing hole in order to move on to the next Lake Zone.

Fish

Fish Species

Each lake zone will be home to 6 different species of fish each. There will be a total of 13 different fish, including Azure. However, only 6 species, including Azure, are directly tied to the narrative. Catching these types of fish advances the narrative.

Fish Behavior

Once hooked, the fish will begin swimming rapidly and erratically to try to get away from the boat. Early in the game, fish won't put up much of a fight, which allows the player to simply reel them in and learn the basics of the fishing mechanic. But the fish gradually become more erratic in later stages of the game, swimming side to side, running away from the boat, or giving the line more slack.

Fishing

Overview

When the player stops the boat to catch a fish, the player can click to exit the boat cabin and enter fishing mode which allows them to cast a line, wait very briefly for a fish to bite, and then reel it in. Players can surmise the movements of the fish by seeing the line get more/less slack or tilt side to side, and the player can respond by tilting or reeling against the motion of the fish in order to gradually tire it out and reel it on board. Some fish fight back as the player reels in the fish closer to the boat. If the fish still has a lot of stamina, the fishing pole will bend severely to indicate to the player that the fish is still very strong, but as it gets tired, the fishing pole will have less and less bend in it.

Quick Time Event - Hook the Fish

The QTE feature is where players have to click and hook the fish. An icon pops up when a fish gets interested and is ready to hook. Once the player clicks, the fight begins.

Reeling Segments

Fish will fight back depending on their strength and stamina. After the player successfully tires out a fish, they can left click to reel. However, not all will go directly the boat. The hooked fish regains 25% of its stamina. A fish will stop to fight for its life between one and three times before the player can reel it in. During the segments, players must fight with the fishing mechanic to tire out the fish and reel it in.

Interact Manager - Fish is Caught

When the fish is finally reeled in, a screen pop-up is shown with the fish animating in the middle of the darkened UI canvas. This is to indicate that the fish is successfully caught.

Player Objective

To catch the specified fish and fill out Rue's Fishlist.

Player Controls

Left click to cast

Left click to reel when casted

(While fish is hooked) Move mouse left and right to fight the fish

Radio

Overview

During certain key points in the game/narrative, Rue's voice will come through the radio. Players will have to deliberately interact with the radio to receive these messages from Rue, but they will reveal more about Sosa's current state of mind. Between lake zones, players will be forced to interact with the radio for necessary narrative moments between Sosa and Rue.

Controls

Left Click on Radio in Cabin

Game Elements

Worldbuilding

Overview

The entire game will take place on a lake with players tasked with exploring each specific area to catch fish. Each designated area will be modeled after a different stage of grief.

Story

Act 1

The game opens with a fishing line in the water, which abruptly moves as a fish is pulled out of the lake. Here players are introduced to Sosa. He notes that Rue, his daughter, is ill and that he is fishing for her. Sosa is in denial of the severity of her illness. Sosa turns a page in the journal and finds Rue's drawing of Azure, introducing the inciting incident.

Act 2

As Sosa continues to fish for Rue, clues about Azure's existence begin to pop up. Momentarily harsh waves and a low grumble/mumble are just a couple examples of the spirit within the lake. Any interactions with Azure during this act will stress Sosa's emotional state of ANGER. Azure will act in ways that matches this, such as giving more dramatic and dangerous clues as to her existence.

Act 3

At this point, Sosa has been fishing for the majority of the day. He has caught all the fish in Rue's Fishlist except for Azure, and decided to go after her next. Sosa enters her cave and is able to reel her in after a brief battle, at which he comes to the realization that his actions will not bring Rue back. He realizes Azure back into the water and takes time to think of his relationship with Rue and appreciate the time he had with her.

Characters

Sosa

An African-American Angler with the goal to reconnect with his ailing daughter and catch all the fish in Rue's Fishlist. He is a distant father who feels guilty that he was not as close to his daughter as she wanted to be. He loves his daughter dearly but fails to verbally communicate his emotions towards his daughter, hence creating distance.

Rue

Sosa's daughter who died of illness at 8 years old. She was full of energy and did everything in her power to involve herself with her father: seeking out fishing journeys, scribbling in his journal and marking the boat. Her Fishlist is in Sosa's journal. She spoke about Azure, the lake spirit, and admits she has seen her around the lake. Her imagination allowed her to believe while Sosa's did not.

Azure

She is Rue's imaginary friend. A curious entity at the start that slowly grows more angry due to Sosa's actions. Azure knows Rue believes she exists and anticipates Sosa does not believe she roams the lake. Azure does not know Rue is dead.

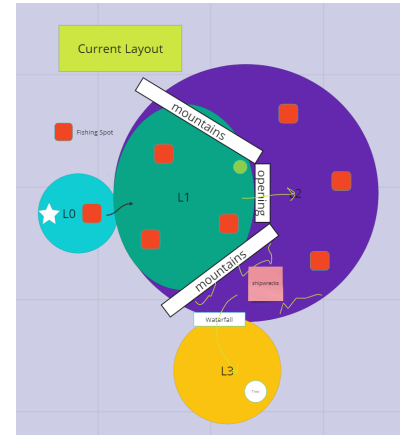
Lake Layout

Overview

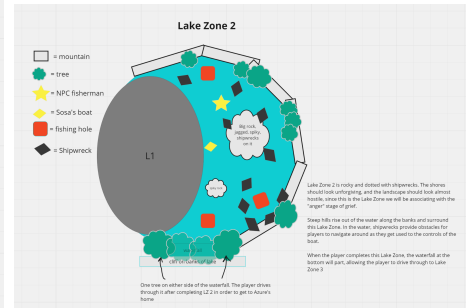
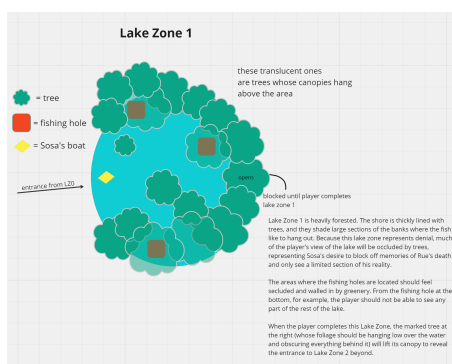
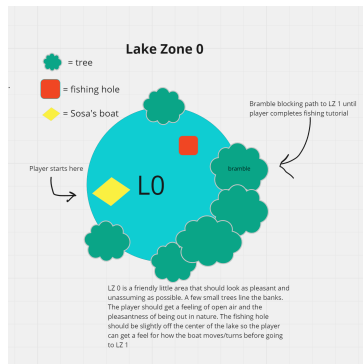
The lake will be sectioned into 4 separate areas with varying sizes and appearances. After the tutorial (L0), each following area will be inspired by a stage of grief: denial (L1), anger (L2), and acceptance (L3). Depression will resonate strongly in the last lake zone (L3).

Locations

Link to Miro:



https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVM_XMuFO=?moveToWidget=3458764565981144861&cot=14



Lake Zone 0

The first lake zone is the tutorial section. It will be a very small area with only one location for players to fish. To exit this lake zone, players must catch the bluegill, enter the cabin to open the journal and listen to the radio.

Lake Zone 1

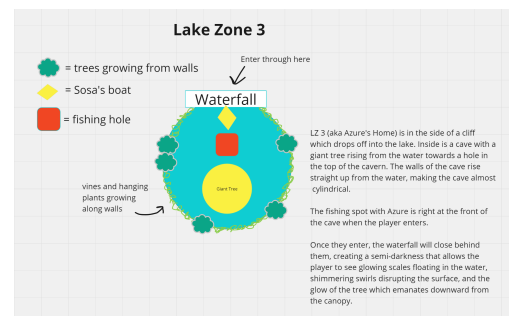
Representative of the “denial” stage of grief, this area will be very vast and open. Fog will surround the edges of the lake, near lake zone 2.

Lake Zone 2

This area will represent “anger” and will be filled with jagged rocks that players must avoid. Closer to Azure’s home, the water will be littered with older shipwrecks. This area will be darker in color/atmosphere. Sosa confronts Azure after catching the Lake Sturgeon.

Lake Zone 3

Azure’s home is the final lake zone players can explore. It will be a mystical, glowing cave with a large tree in the center. Entrance to the cave located on the side of a cliff/mountain on the edge of the lake. A waterfall obscures



the entrance but parts to reveal a small section of it. Small pieces of bioluminescent algae line the entrance. Inside the cave, Azure's tree is located in the center.

Sosa's Cabin

Players will find themselves primarily in the cabin of the boat. There will be multiple items, such as the radio, map, and steering wheel, to interact with and discover more about the world.

Assets

Music

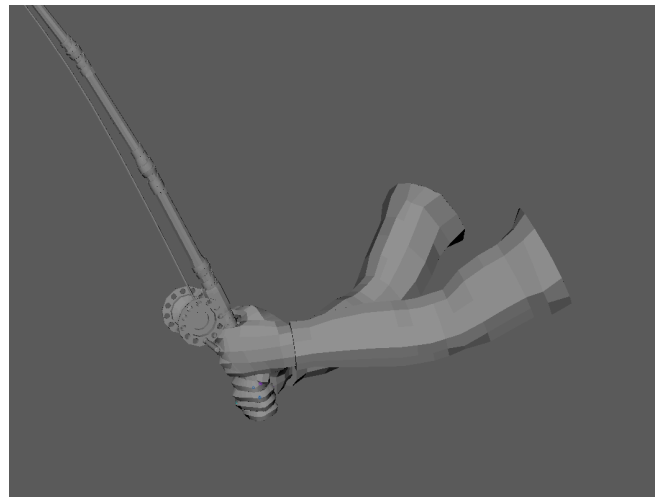
Focus on blues and bass guitar riffs that incorporate marimba and woodwind instruments. The last scene will incorporate a bit more of a Western feel for climatic anticipation. The music will come from the radio to make it more diegetic.

Sound Effects

Focused on sound effects from the lake, such as water splashing, waves, sound of insects. Also introduces effects for Sosa and his actions, like casting the line, reeling fish, and footsteps. The SFX will be diegetic meaning we will hear different sounds inside and outside the boat.

Character Models

Sosa



Azure

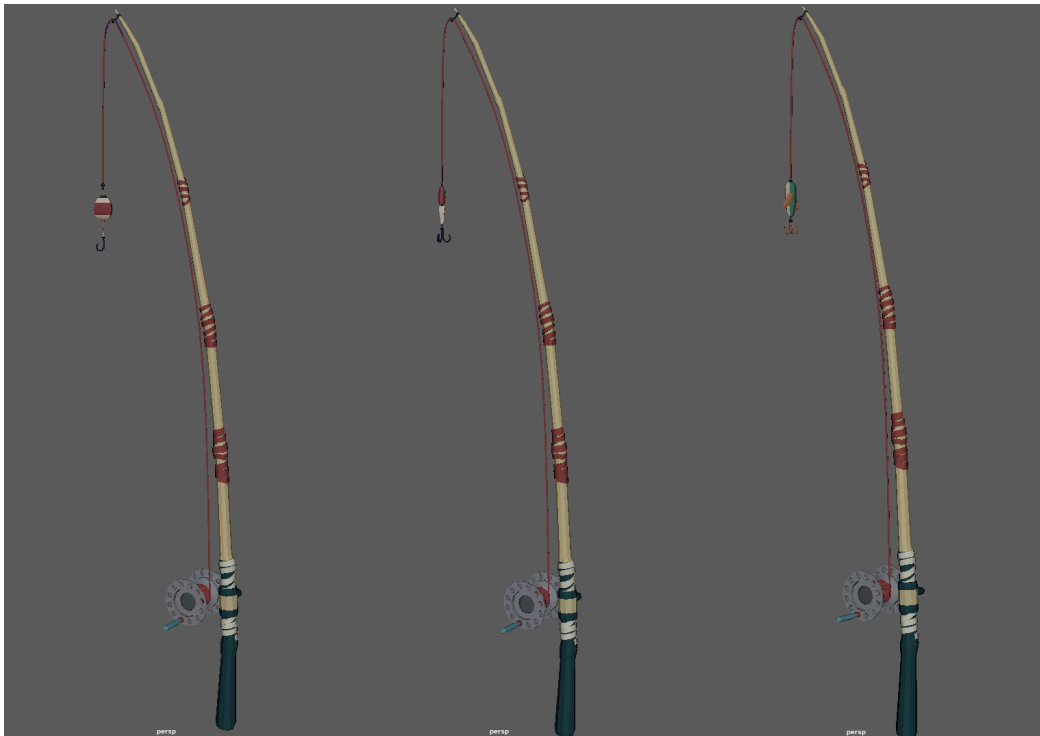


Rue

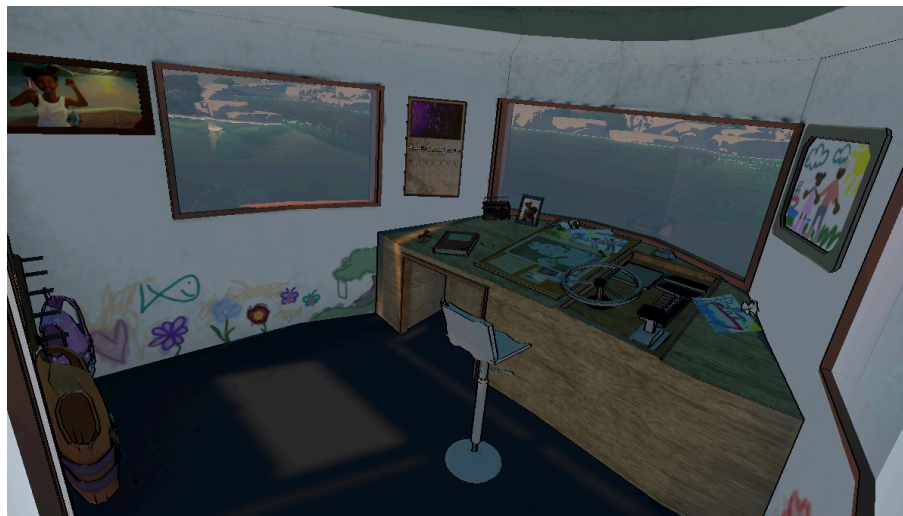


Environmental Models

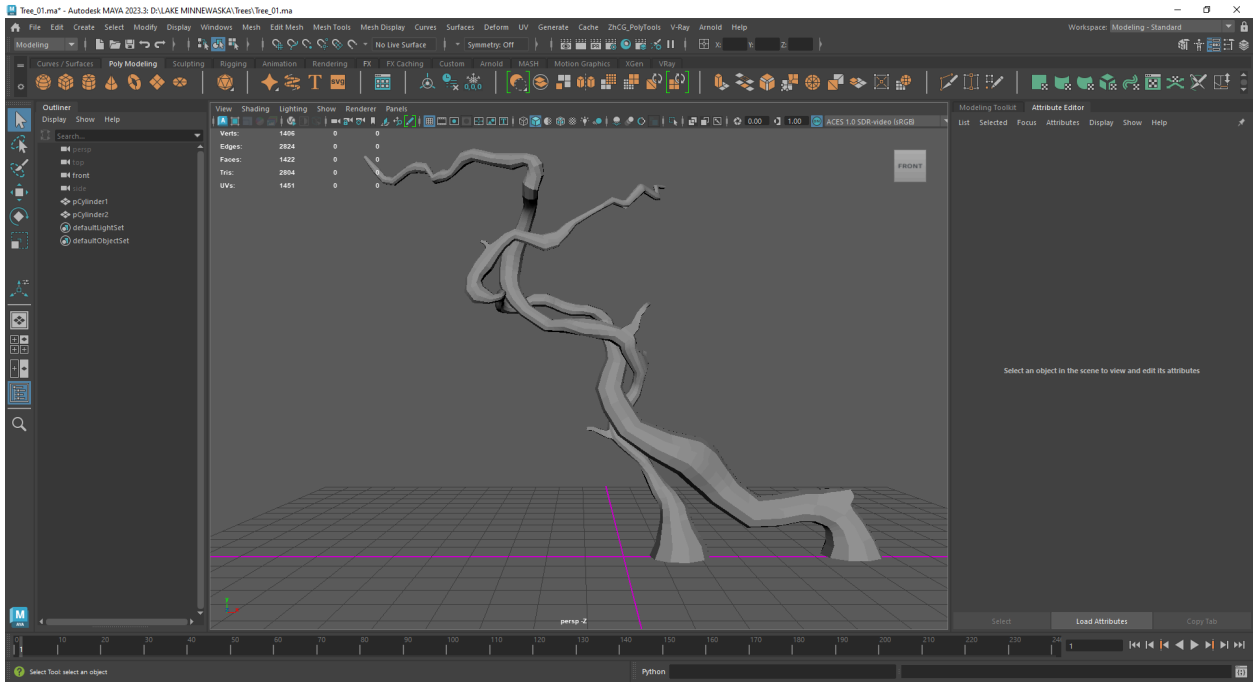
Fishing Rod



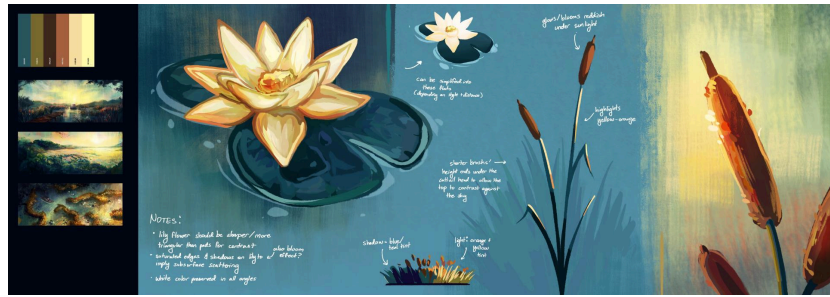
Boat



Trees



Plants and Lighting



Fish Species



Azure's Home

