

Cheney District Fisheries

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Cheney District Update

It has been a dry, windy spring in South-Central Kansas, but the fishing season is in full swing.

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Although wind has limited the number of days that boat anglers have been able to fish big water this spring, the diverse angling opportunities in the Cheney District have kept anglers busy.

During late March and April, walleye fishing off the dam at Cheney was hit and miss. Some anglers caught over a hundred walleyes over a period of a few days while others struck out due to inconsistent weather patterns and high winds. Walleye fishing is currently at its peak at Cheney as fish are being caught lakewide on points and flats from both boat and shore. In mid-summer, young-of-the-year gizzard shad and other forage fish will grow to sizes that can be utilized by walleyes and fishing will generally slow down a bit. Now is the time to get out and enjoy the high densities of walleyes that Cheney has to offer.



A 26-inch wiper caught in the Ninnescah River above Cheney Lake during late May.

During late May, a slight rise in the Ninnescah River above Cheney triggered an incredible wiper run that resulted in some hot fishing. Although the run only lasted a few days, wading anglers caught countless wipers, some approaching 30 inches. Wipers have dispersed back into the lake and are hitting on live baits and lures near submerged islands and points. Another notable occurrence at Cheney this spring was the solid fishing before and during the crappie spawn. In recent years, invasive white perch have decimated the crappie population and made the spring tradition of crappie fishing somewhat irrelevant at Cheney. Since white perch numbers have decreased in recent years, the crappie have made a comeback and many happy crappie anglers harvested good numbers of 10- to 13-inch crappies, with some anglers catching slabs up to 16 inches!

Fishing has also been exciting at both Wellington City Lake and Wellington Hargis Creek Lake this spring. Last fall's netting results showed a tremendous crappie population at Hargis Creek that many anglers took advantage of this spring. Crappie to 14 inches were also caught at Wellington City Lake, where the wiper and saugeye fishing is currently excellent. Drifting drop-offs with live bait or fishing jig-and-crawlers in shallow water during the evening seem to be good tactics for saugeye at Wellington. Be sure to have a good hold on your rod though, as big wipers will take similar baits at any time!Continued on page 2

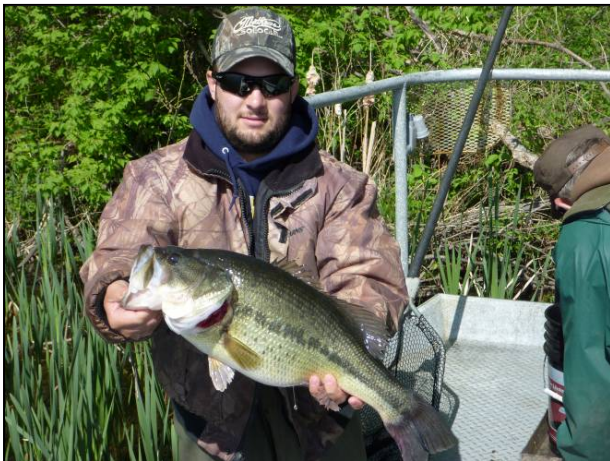


Wellington City Lake is one of the best saugeye lakes in Kansas.



Cheney District Update continued...

If you are looking for largemouth bass this summer, the two best bets around are McPherson State Fishing Lake and Kingman State Fishing Lake. During recent bass sampling at McPherson SFL, bass up to 7 pounds were sampled, and one out of every seven bass was over 18 inches. Kingman SFL also produced some trophy largemouth bass (some reports of 8 pound bass!) early this spring. Fishing off the jetties and around sunken trees was good, although dense vegetation is now the preferred habitat of bass. Bring weedless lures to Kingman and don't forget steel leaders as toothy northern pike can break lines and quickly decimate the tackle box of an unprepared bass angler.



A seven-pound bass sampled from McPherson SFL this spring.

Speaking of northern pike, summer can actually be one of the best times to target them at Kingman SFL. Three springs in the northeast end of the lake keep the water cool enough to carry over the cool-water species during the hot Kansas summer. Any lure that resembles fish will be good for pike. Favorites of die-hard pike anglers are rattle traps and #5 Mepps spinners.

Finally, the tradition of summer channel catfishing will be strong in the district this year. Good spots for big channel catfish are Cheney Reservoir, McPherson SFL, and Kingman SFL. If you want to catch good eating-sized channel cats, hit up Carey Park and Dillon Nature Center in Hutchinson or Anthony City Lake, which are stocked monthly with keeper-sized fish. Feeders at Cheney, McPherson, Kingman, and Anthony will attract catfish, although fish can definitely be caught away from feeders as big channel catfish are generally predators and live near woody or rocky structure.

Wanna go fishin' for millions??

This summer, KDWP is cooperating with Cabelas in a promotion that could net Kansas anglers a number of prizes and possibly millions of dollars. Approximately 60 lakes across the country, including eight in Kansas, have been chosen for the promotion in which fish have been marked with individually-numbered tags that could be worth \$2.2 million in cash and prizes.

While fishing at Cheney and the seven other Kansas lakes in the contest, be on the lookout for yellow tags inserted near the dorsal fin on walleye and black bass. To be eligible for prizes, anglers must be registered for the contest and catch the prize-winning fish before July 14. As of mid-June, four prize-winning fish have been caught at Cheney already!

For more information about the promotion, please visit the [contest website](#) or view this [video](#) produced by KDWP. Good luck, we'd love to see some Kansas anglers win the prizes!

New Kansas Fisherman Blog

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks is sponsoring a new blog in which Clay Dixon, who used to fish professional tournaments, attempts to catch a legal-sized fish at every public water in KDWP Region 4. Along his quest, he will post his results, tips, pictures, and videos to the blog in the attempt to help you the next time you hit the water.

So far, Clay has been working his way through some of the urban lakes in Wichita and will eventually hit up the State Fishing Lakes in the Cheney district and will end the year on the federal reservoirs in the region, which will include Cheney, El Dorado, and Marion Reservoirs. Clay does most of his fishing from either shore or a float tube, with equipment that every day anglers have and can afford. The blog is aimed to help everyday anglers become better fishermen.

Clay's blog will provide some new fishing tips and techniques, as well as highlight some lakes that you may not be familiar with or even knew existed. Follow Clay's quest on his blog, which can be found at <http://ks-fisherman.blogspot.com/>.

Northern Pike study continuing at Kingman SFL

Biologists seeking information on tagged pike.

In the spring edition of this newsletter, I previewed plans for a project aimed at learning more about the only self-sustaining pike fishery in Kansas. Shortly after ice-out in late February and early March, biologists set trap nets and captured and tagged 110 northern pike, the biggest being a 37-inch, 13-pound fish. Using a mark-recapture study design, we estimated the adult northern pike population at around 330 northern pike, which equals two to three northern pike per acre in Kingman SFL, which is a relatively low density compared to other pike populations. As such, it is crucial that anglers remember the 30-inch minimum length limit on pike as they are an important predator of the invasive white perch at the lake.

Age and growth information was also analyzed from northern pike scale samples. This information indicated that pike grow very quickly in Kingman SFL, but do not live longer than eight to ten years. Additionally, female pike grow substantially faster than male pike, and very few male pike will grow fast enough to reach the 30-inch length limit. Also, data suggested that pike are producing stable year-classes of young each year, which is a positive finding in light of the extreme conditions the Kingman SFL pike experience on the far southern fringe of their range.

If you catch a tagged pike at Kingman, measure the fish if possible, and look closely at the small plastic tag placed behind the dorsal fin. Each tag will have a unique number as well as a phone number that you can use to report your catch. Reporting your catch will help KDWP manage and maximize this unique fishery.



A northern pike caught and tagged at Kingman SFL this spring. Note the small yellow tag near the dorsal fin of the fish.

Noodlin' season begins June 15

A unique fishing opportunity has been expanded this summer

Kansas' hand fishing season has been extended this year to the entire length of the Arkansas River in Kansas, all federal reservoirs from beyond 150 yards of the dam to the upper end of federal property, and the Kansas River from its origin to its confluence with the Missouri River. Although hand fishing is now allowed in federal reservoirs, no man-made object such as barrels, bathtubs, and boxes may be used to attract fish. Noodlers are required to obtain a special hand fishing permit (\$27.50).

Only flathead catfish may be taken, with legal hours ranging from sunrise to sunset. Anyone handfishing may not use hooks, snorkeling or scuba gear, or any man-made device other than a stringer, which may only be used after the fish is caught by hand and is above the surface of the water.



Big flatheads like this one are common in Cheney Lake as well as the Arkansas River.

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