

Pittsburg District Fisheries Newsletter

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Written By:

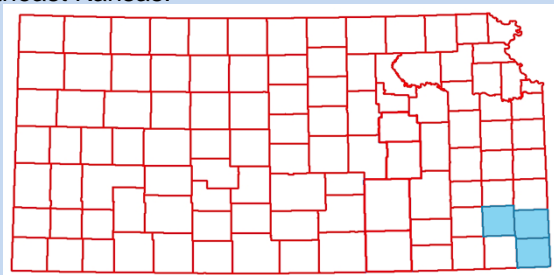
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When Will the Rain End?

What a difference a year makes. At this time last summer, we were in a prolonged and severe drought. Some small ponds had dried up, and water levels had dropped in some impoundments to the point that boat ramps were no longer functional. Fish kills, especially in smaller ponds, were common. We were praying for rain. As I write this newsletter, we are now hoping for a break from the constant downpours that have continued for weeks. Nearly all of our ponds and lakes are full and overflowing. We have recorded over 36 inches of rain for the year already! Seems like one extreme or the other.

Even though water levels have recently been high, and flooding has been common, some anglers have been enjoying some very good success. Channel catfish have remained active around feeders, and some trophy fish have been caught at points where heavy runoff enters impoundments. Flathead fishing on the Neosho River was outstanding this summer.

Cooler weather is fast approaching, and fall is a great time to get out and fish. I hope you are ready to get out and enjoy the many opportunities we have here in southeast Kansas.



David Jenkins, manager of the Mined Land Wildlife Area, proudly displays his stringer of flatheads caught by rod and reel on the Neosho River this summer. The largest fish weighed 40 pounds.



2013 Spring Bass Sampling Results

Five lakes in the Pittsburg district were sampled by electro-fishing in 2013. Electro-fishing is a tool used by fisheries biologists to sample fish. Fish are stunned by a controlled electrical field, then netted, weighed, measured, and returned to the water. Catch rates, length distributions, and body condition are closely monitored. Data from these samplings are used to make recommendations for future length and creel limit regulations, as well as to inform anglers where the best fishing can be expected through KDWPT's annual spring *Fishing Forecast*. The catch rates reported here are for stock-size bass, or those fish 8 inches and larger.

Bone Creek Lake – A total of 288 largemouth bass were collected at Bone Creek this spring for a catch rate of 96 fish/hour. This is the highest catch rate ever recorded, surpassing the previous high of 73 fish/hour in 2008. The five-year average catch rate from 2008 to 2012 is 55 fish/hour. There are plenty of quality bass present to satisfy anglers.



Seth Gollhofer, KDWPT seasonal fisheries worker, shows off a big bass collected by electro-fishing at Chanute City Lake this spring.



Bone Creek Lake is a 540 acre timber-filled, clear-water lake known for its largemouth bass fishery. This spring the bass electro-fishing catch rate was higher than ever before.

Water transparency at the time of the 2013 sampling was **only** 5.5 feet. In most previous samplings, the transparency has exceeded 10 feet. Last year it was 13.5. Bass don't like to move in too shallow when the water is so clear, so the increased catch rate this year may have been partly due to more favorable conditions for fish to be in shallow, rather than more fish actually being present. Our electro-fishing equipment is only effective in depths of ten feet or less. Anglers should also generally fish deeper at Bone Creek to be effective.

The quality of the fishery at Bone Creek remains good. Thirty-seven percent of the catch were fifteen-inches or larger, and 2.2 percent were eighteen-inches or larger. Body condition of all size groups remained good.

Chanute City Lake – Largemouth bass numbers continued their dramatic increase at Chanute City Lake from a record low catch of 29 fish/hour in 2009 to a 2013 catch-rate of 120 fish/hour. Bass numbers dropped off significantly in 2006. The four-year average catch rate from 2006 to 2009 is only 39.5 fish/hour. In contrast, the average stock catch rate from 1999-2005 is 102 fish/hour. Although not verified, it is thought largemouth bass virus may have been the cause of this rapid decline.

Get your friends, get your family
... and FISH KANSAS!



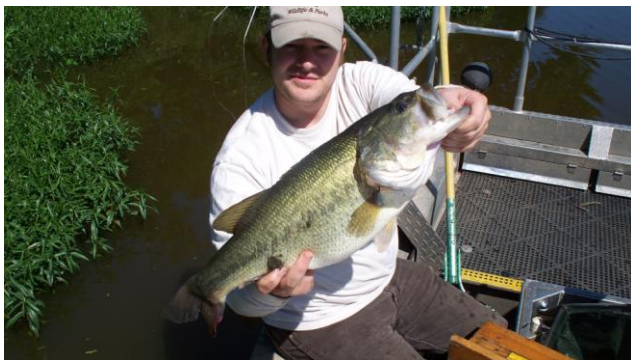
Chanute City Lake electro-fishing results... continued

The length distribution of the 2013 Chanute City Lake bass sample declined in quality, but the fishery remains in good shape. Fifty-three percent of the catch were 12 inches or larger. Twenty-two percent of the catch were 15 inches or larger. Although bass numbers have increased greatly, body condition of all size groups has remained excellent.

Crawford State Lake - Largemouth bass numbers at Crawford State Lake remain low. The May 16, 2013 bass electro-fishing catch rate of 36 fish/hour is slightly improved, but still well below the lake management objective minimum of 75 eight-inch plus fish/hour. Stock catch rates the past five years have averaged only 36 fish/hour. The low bass numbers since 2004 can be explained by the discovery of largemouth bass virus in June 2007. Bass numbers have yet to completely rebound.

Although bass density is low, the quality of the bass fishery remains very good. The percentage of quality-size fish (12-inch-plus) remained high in 2013, with 74 percent of the catch twelve-inches or larger. The population continues to have a very high percentage of preferred-size fish, as 51 percent of the catch were 15 inches or larger.

Neosho State Fishing Lake - Bass numbers at Neosho State Lake are very good. A total of 187 bass were collected by electro-fishing in the 2013 sampling. The catch rate increased to 117 fish/hour, up from the 99 fish/hour last year. The lake management objective is to maintain the catch rate near 100 stock-size fish/hour. The average catch rate from 2009-2012 is 112 fish/hour.



Bryan Sorenson, Neosho State Lake manager, displays a 6.8 pound bass collected by electro-fishing. Neosho State Lake supports an abundant bass population, and catching bass there should not be a problem.

Maintaining a substantial bass population is imperative to exert the predation necessary to control abundant shad and sunfish populations at Neosho State Lake. An 18-inch minimum length limit was implemented in 1999 to promote and maintain adequate predation. If catch rates were to remain well above management objectives and body condition declined substantially, bass numbers would need to be reduced by changing the length limit.

The quality of the 2013 sample was acceptable. Forty-six percent of the catch were 12 inches or larger. Density of 15 inch and larger fish declined slightly from last year to 13.8 percent. Body condition of all size groups can be classified as good.

Thayer City Lake



Thayer City Lake is a beautiful 30-acre lake surrounded by oak-hickory woodland. The 2013 bass sampling showed a healthy bass population as well as some very nice redear sunfish.

Bass density at Thayer City Lake remains good. A total of 157 largemouth bass were collected in the May 15, 2013 electro-fishing sample for a catch rate of 73.5 fish/hour. This catch nears the lake objective of 75-125 stock bass/hour. Catch per unit effort has averaged 91.2 fish/hour in the four samplings since 2005. Bass are the primary predator in the lake, and a high bass density is desirable to control numerous shad, crappie and sunfish.

The length distribution of the 2013 catch was improved over the previous 2011 sampling. More quality-size fish (12-inch-plus) were sampled. Forty-five percent of the catch were 12 inches or larger. The percentage of the catch over 15 inches in length was again good at 20 percent. Three fish over 18 inches were collected. The 12- to 15-inch fish were in fair body condition, while the larger fish were in good or very good condition.

Saugeye Stocked in Bone Creek Lake

Saugeye, a hybrid produced by crossing male sauger with female walleye, were stocked in Bone Creek for the first time when the Farlington Fish Hatchery stocked 17,129 saugeye fingerlings on May 23, 2013. Walleye have been stocked in the past, but a viable population has not been established. More than ten walleye fingerling stockings have been made since 1997. Flushing losses through the outlet structure are known to be a contributing factor in the inability to establish a significant fishery. Walleye catches in the stilling basin below the outlet are not uncommon.

Saugeye are known to be less vulnerable to flushing losses. Sizeable populations have been established in high flow-through lakes, and saugeye have been shown to sometimes be effective in controlling crappie overpopulation. Chanute City Lake and Crawford State Lake, both high flow-through lakes, have been able to develop decent saugeye populations, when past walleye stockings were unsuccessful. Chanute and Crawford were initially stocked with saugeye in 2006.

With this in mind, walleye are being replaced by saugeye in an attempt to bolster predation and provide another sport fishery at Bone Creek Lake.



Jim Bussone, Conservation Officer in Crawford and Cherokee counties, displays two saugeye sampled at Crawford State Lake last fall. Saugeye have been stocked at Crawford State Lake since 2006, but were stocked in Bone Creek for the first time in 2013.

Great News for Boating Anglers ... Much Lower Taxes in 2014



Boating is big business in Kansas. There were 97,672 registered boats in Kansas in 2012. Spending related to recreational boating exceeded \$382 million dollars.

Thanks to passage of Senate Bill 83 by the Kansas legislature last April, property taxes on boats will be drastically reduced beginning in 2014. The new law will tax boats at 11.5 percent assessed value in 2014, and 5 percent in 2015 and thereafter. Watercraft are currently taxed at a whopping 30 percent of assessed value.

KDWPT, as well as individual counties, have lost thousands of dollars in revenue because many boat owners now opt to register their boats in Oklahoma or Missouri, where property tax rates are much lower.

Kansas counties will soon be benefiting from increased revenue as more boats are registered here. KDWPT will benefit from selling more boat registrations, which are currently \$30 for three years. Registration fee revenue is used to fund boater education programs, boat access facilities, and recreational boating programs. It is hoped that that this new tax reduction law will also benefit marine dealerships as more people may decide to buy a new boat or upgrade their current boat.

SEK Nature Center Now Operated by KDWPT

In June, KDWPT assumed operation of the Southeast Kansas Nature Center (SEKNC) under a lease agreement with the city of Galena. The center is in Schermerhorn Park south of the city. KDWPT will lease the center and 10.1 acres of the park for \$1.00 annually for a term of two years, with an option to renew for two additional years.

KDWPT will manage the center, care for exhibits, maintain nature trails, and offer education programs. The city of Galena will continue to own and manage the park (including Schermerhorn Cave and the park area along Shoal Creek), as well as maintain the center.

Jennifer Rader has been hired as center director. The SEK Nature Center is located 1-mile south of Galena on Main Street (K-26). Phone 620-783-5207. Hours are Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m.- 4 p.m. and Sunday 1 p.m.- 4 p.m.



The SEK Nature Center lies adjacent to Shoal Creek Wildlife Area. This small 32-acre wildlife area offers shotgun and archery hunting, as well as a 1/4-mile stretch of Shoal Creek for anglers.



The Southeast Kansas Nature Center sits on a hilltop in picturesque Schermerhorn Park, overlooking Shoal Creek.

New Angler Instructor Course to be Held at Schermerhorn Park

A new course designed to certify anglers to teach fishing techniques in Kansas will be held Aug. 31st from 9 am to 12 pm at Schermerhorn Park, 7693 SE 77th Terrace, Galena. The course, which will be held just outside the SEK Nature Center, is part of a new educational program designed to enlist qualified volunteer instructors to teach fishing techniques throughout the state.

Although the class is not a requirement to teach, those in attendance will be given valuable information about working with children, sample curriculums, and tips for preparing a class or clinic. Other subjects covered in the class will include current fishing rules and regulations, species identification, fishing ethics, equipment, knot-tying, casting, fish habitat, aquatic nuisance species, and conservation.

All classes are open to the public at no cost, however pre-registration is required. To register for the Aug. 31 class, visit fishingsfuture.org, click on "upcoming events", and "Kansas Angler Training Program".

"This program is a great way for any angler to expand their outdoor skills, become more active, and enjoy Kansas' many parks and waterways," said Fishing's Future local coordinator Kevin Reich.

For more information, including how to become an Angler Education instructor, contact Reich at kevin.reich@fishingsfuture.org, or by phone at 785-577-6921.

Hatchery Manager Retiring After 37 1/2 Years

Randy Nelson, Farlington hatchery manager, is set to retire on Oct. 1, 2013. Randy is a Salina native and K-State grad who has been responsible for rearing and stocking hundreds of millions of sport fish into public waters of the state. He is also KDWPT's point man who coordinates fish trades and acquisitions from state and federal hatcheries throughout the mid-west. Kansas anglers have benefited greatly over the years from Randy's knowledge and efforts. We all owe Randy a debt of gratitudehe will be missed.

Randy and two other full-time employees, Dan Mosier II and Tim Ellis, operate the Farlington Fish Hatchery producing: channel catfish, blue catfish, largemouth bass, redear sunfish, hybrid sunfish, striped bass, striped bass hybrids, walleye, sauger, saugeye, and grass carp..

In addition to the hatchery, the Farlington staff also oversee production of channel catfish at Woodson Rearing Pond, located about 65 miles west at Woodson State Fishing Lake near Toronto.

Hatchery tours are available by prior arrangement by calling 620-362-4166. April and June are the best times to find a variety of fish in the fish house. Most fish are reared in ponds and are not readily viewable.



The Farlington Fish Hatchery, one of four Kansas hatcheries, is located just below Crawford State Lake. The hatchery consists of 30 earthen ponds covering 32 surface acres.



Randy Nelson has a wealth of fish culture knowledge and routinely contacts wildlife agencies throughout the mid-west coordinating fish trades and acquisitions. He has reared and stocked hundreds of millions of sport fish during his long career.

Upcoming Fishing Derbies

Sunday Aug. 18, 10 a.m.-12 noon, Arma Homecoming Derby, Hookie Park in Arma. Contact David Robinson at 620-249-4144 or Arma City Hall at 620-347-4125.

Sunday Sept.1, 6 - 8 p.m, Little Balkans Fishing Derby, Lakeside Park, Pittsburg. Contact Sara at Pittsburg Parks & Recreation, 620-231-8310.



500 pounds of channel catfish averaging 3/4-pound each are stocked in Lakeside just prior to the Little Balkans fishing derby. Why not take a kid or two fishing?

