

Elk City District Fisheries

Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism

Winter 2015/2016

Supplemental Habitat in Area Lakes

Maintaining and improving fish habitat is a constant battle for nearly all fisheries managers. Over time, reservoirs age and habitat quality degrades. There are numerous methods to improve habitat quality, and among the most popular is addition of supplemental habitat structures. These structures are multi-functional and can provide cover for juvenile fish, ambush points for predatory fish, suitable spawning locations, and aggregate fish to increase angler success. We built two types of artificial structures to augment available habitat: Habitat trees and Georgia cubes. Both types should provide excellent angling opportunities and hold fish

year round. It was difficult to choose locations for these structures, but we tried our best to consider both the fish and the angler when we placed them. We placed Georgia cubes in 6 to 16 feet of water in clusters near underwater saddles and ridges. These locations

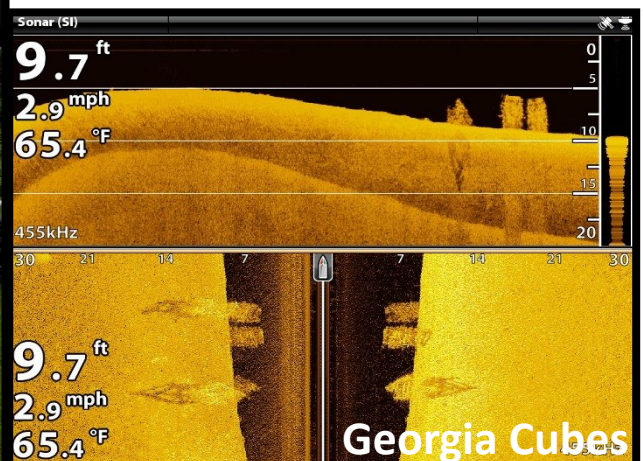
(Continued on page 9)



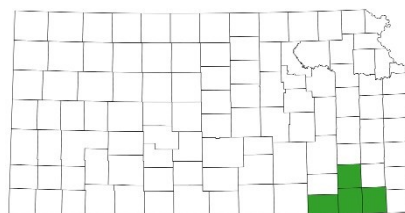
Habitat Trees



Georgia Cubes



Georgia Cubes

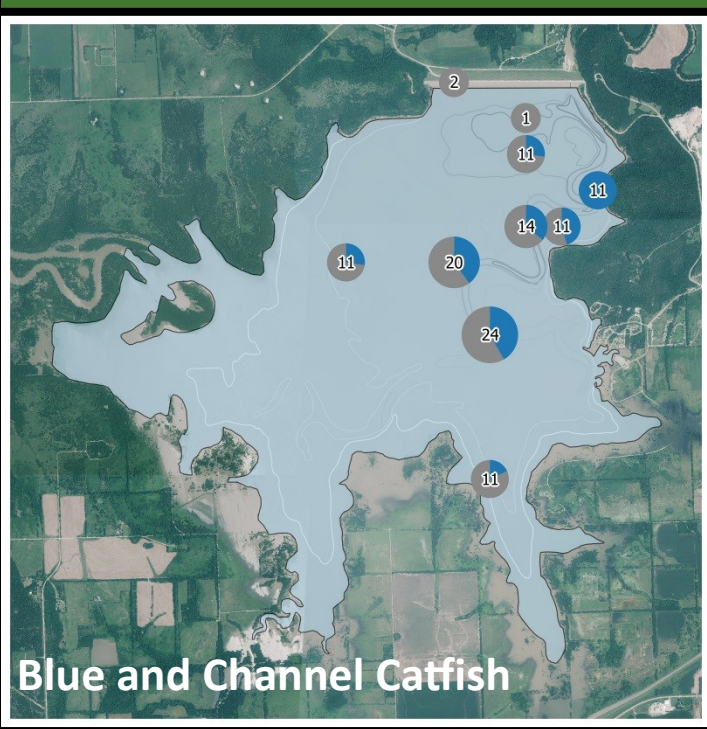
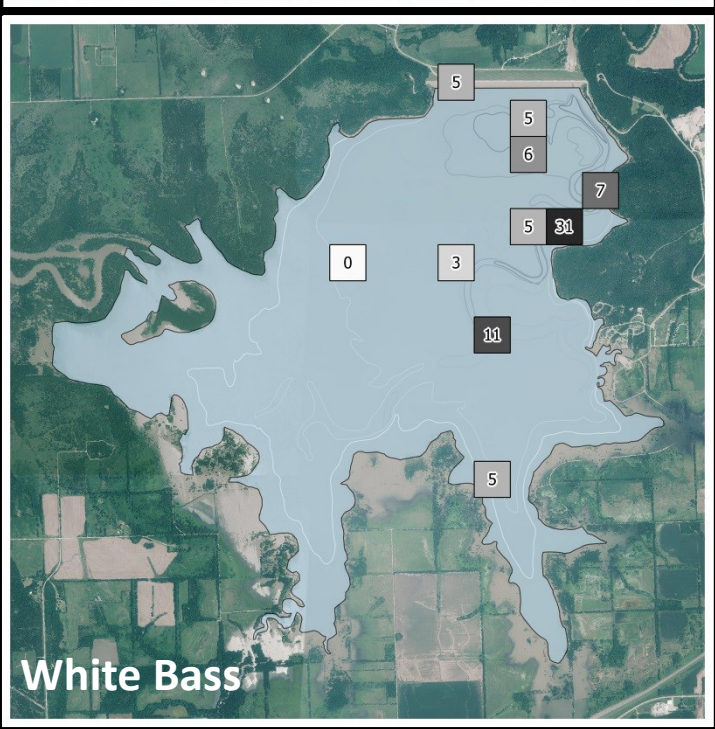
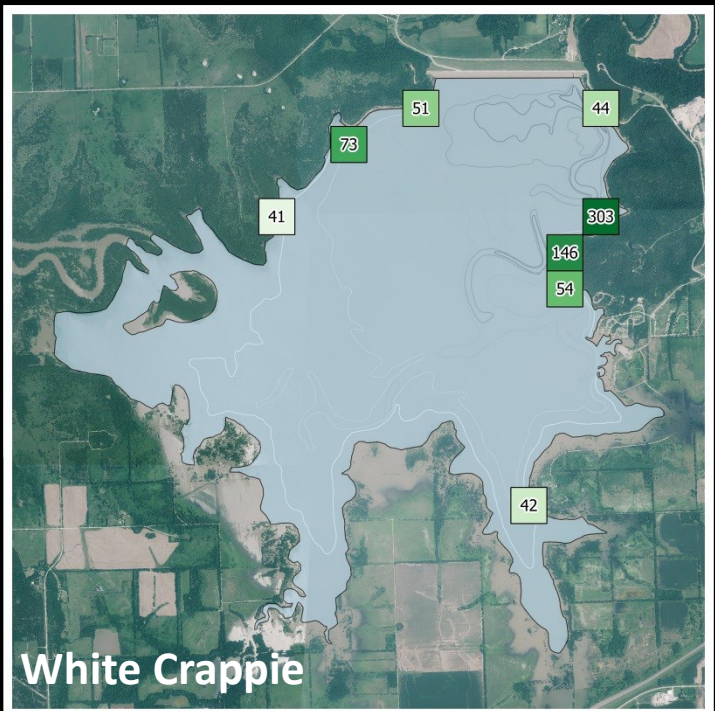


Elk City Reservoir

Elk City Reservoir is popular among anglers for channel catfish, white bass, and especially crappie. Our fall samples indicated that there was a good hatch of white crappie this year. This isn't surprising given the unusually high water levels that persisted through much of the summer (see page 8). Lots of submerged vegetation usually translates to lots of habitat and food for fish production. The top right figure shows where we set trap nets in 2015 and how many white crappie we sampled in each.

White bass support a seasonal fishery when they spawn in spring, but fishing can be good throughout the year. The figure on the bottom right shows where we set gill nets in 2015 and how many white bass we sampled in each.

The bottom left figure shows where we set gill nets in 2015, number of catfish sampled in each, and proportion of blue catfish (blue) and channel catfish (gray) in each sample. Channel catfish are abundant and blue catfish are well on their way to supporting a fishery. Please note that we will have a 35" minimum length limit on blue catfish while a naturally sustaining population becomes established



Elk City Reservoir Fishing Regulations
Blue catfish: 35" minimum length limit, 5/day
Channel catfish: no length limit, 10/day
White crappie: no length limit, 50/day
White bass: no length limit, no creel limit

Big Hill Reservoir

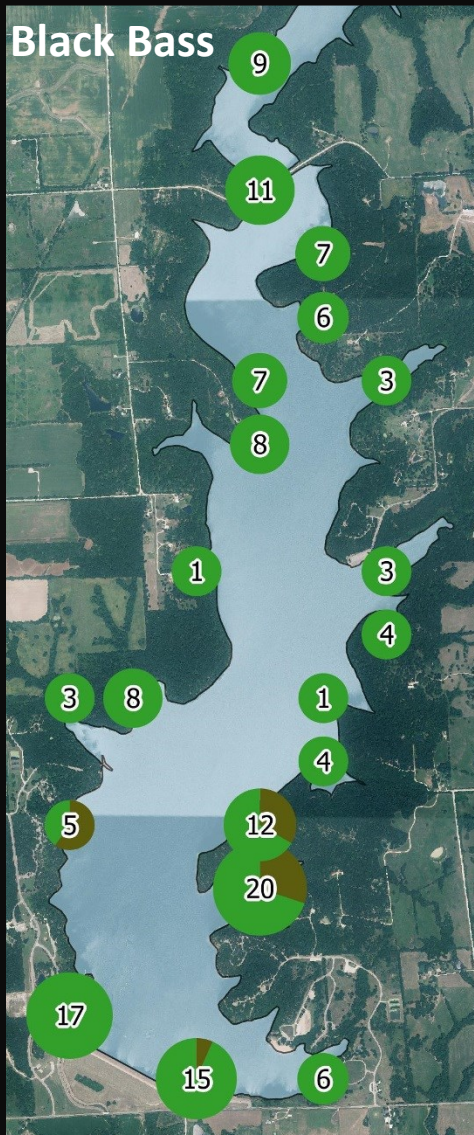
It's business as usual for fish populations in Big Hill. We completed the third year of smallmouth bass stockings in 2015 and will continue to monitor the population. The left figure shows electrofishing stations from May, 2015, total number of black bass sampled at each, and proportion of those that were largemouth bass (green) and smallmouth bass (bronze). It's no surprise that smallmouth prefer rocky areas near the dam.

Channel catfish are abundant in Big Hill and provide excellent angling opportunities for anglers with access to a boat. Set lines off the many submerged trees and drift fishing open flats are among the more successful techniques year round. The middle figure shows how many we sampled in each gill net in 2015.

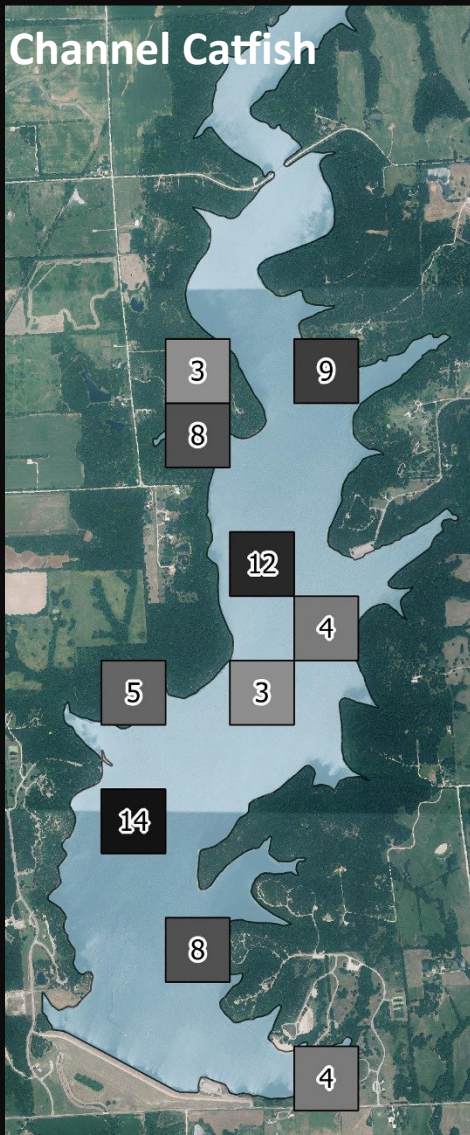
White crappie continue to be prolific at Big Hill. We saw a lot of fish from 9 to 11" and saw some larger ones as well. The figure on the right shows how many we sampled in each trap net in 2015.

Big Hill Reservoir Fishing Regulations
Channel catfish: no length limit, 10/day
Largemouth bass: 21" minimum length limit, 5/day
Smallmouth bass: 18" minimum length limit, 5/day
Walleye: 18" minimum length limit, 5/day
White crappie: no length limit, 50/day
White bass: no length limit, no creel limit

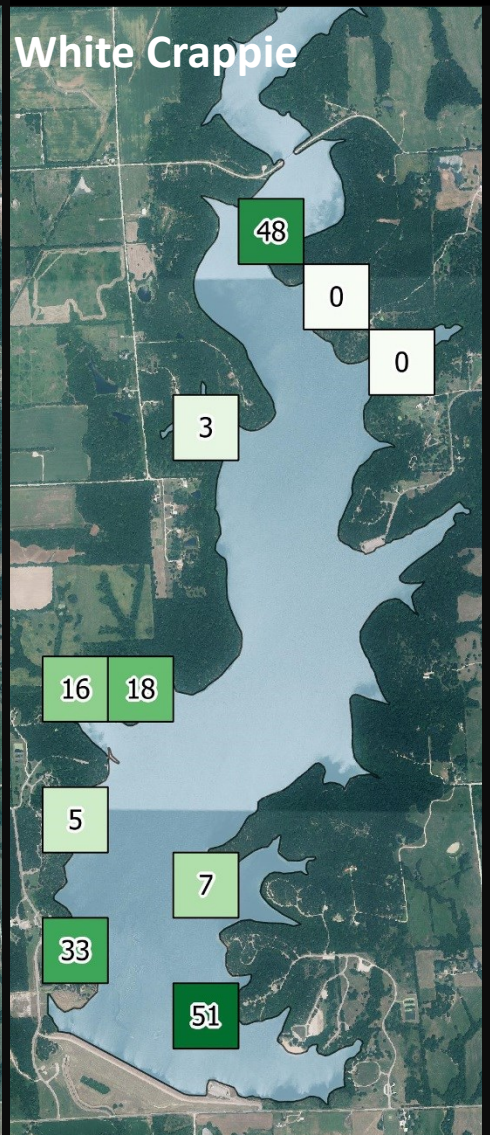
Black Bass



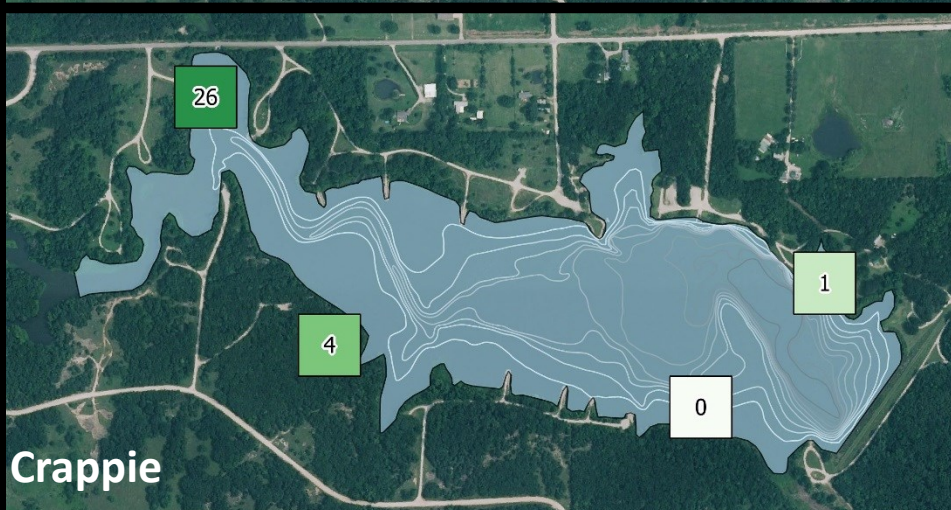
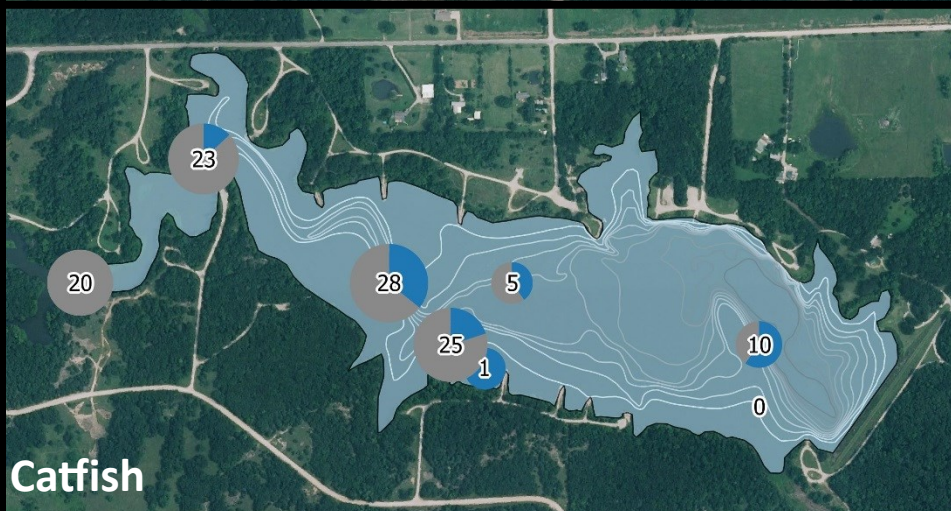
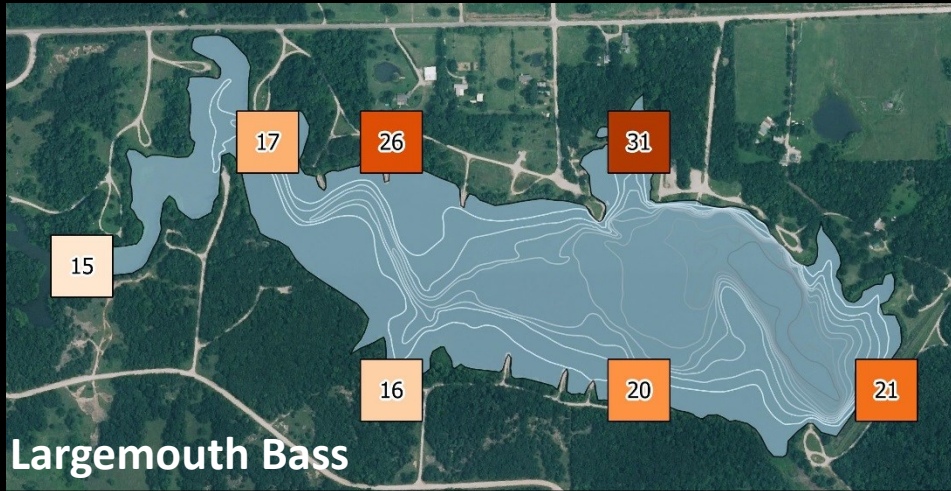
Channel Catfish



White Crappie



Montgomery State Fishing Lake



Montgomery State Fishing Lake is an excellent place to wet a line. The lake has abundant shoreline access and excellent fishing opportunities for several species.

Largemouth bass continue to thrive at Montgomery. However, the density of fish under 13" remains high. This is good for anglers that want to catch a lot of fish, but it means that not many are getting big. Please consider harvesting bass under 13" next time you are out there. The top map shows where we electrofished in May, 2015, and how many bass we caught at each location.

Hybrid catfish are doing great in Montgomery, but anglers don't seem to be catching many. Try to target them like you would blue catfish: cut shad or cut carp might be good baits to try. The middle figure shows where we set hoop nets this summer, how many catfish were in each, and proportion that was channel catfish (gray) and hybrid catfish (blue).

The crappie population remains pretty consistent. There is a mix of black crappie and white crappie that contribute to a popular spring fishery. We hope that recently placed PVC tree habitats will help anglers catch fish year round.

Montgomery State Lake Fishing Regulations

Channel catfish/Hybrid catfish: 15" minimum length limit, 5/day

Largemouth bass: 13-18" protected slot length limit, 5/day

White crappie: no length limit, 50/day

Wilson State Fishing Lake



Wilson State Fishing Lake harbors both largemouth bass and spotted bass. While the largemouth bass fishing is nothing to scoff at, the spotted bass fishing is some of the best in the state. The above map shows where we electrofished this spring, how many black bass we sampled at each location, and the proportion of black bass that were largemouth (green) and spotted (gray). In addition to abundant populations, anglers can also find big fish for both species. The state record spotted bass is 4.44 pounds and there isn't a doubt in my mind that a bigger one swims in Wilson.

We continue to see quality channel catfish and hybrid catfish in Wilson State Fishing Lake. However, numbers of hybrids seem lower than they should given heavy stockings the last three years. The figure above shows how many catfish we caught in each hoop net this summer. Proportion of channel catfish (gray) and hybrid catfish (blue) in each net are also displayed. We just finished our three-year stocking plan and need to determine if we want to stick with it for a few more years. Please shoot me an email or give me a call to tell me what you think.

Crappie in Wilson State Fishing Lake continue to primarily support a popular spring fishery. The figure above shows how many crappie we sampled from each trap net in 2015. It can be tough to find schools in summer and winter, but if you do, fishing can be fast and furious. Start looking in the main channel and expand out from



Wilson State Lake Fishing Regulations
Channel catfish/Hybrid catfish: 15" minimum length limit, 5/day
Largemouth bass: 15" minimum length limit, 5/day
Spotted bass: 15" minimum length limit, 5/day
White crappie: no length limit, 50/day

Edna City Lake

Those of you unfamiliar with Edna City Lake (2.5 miles SW of Edna) are missing out on a beautiful lake. Edna City Lake is 11 acres, crystal clear, and supports some high-quality fish populations. We've known all along that largemouth bass fishing can be excellent in the lake, but the channel catfish provided quite a surprise this fall. We didn't sample a ton of them in our gill nets, but the ones we saw were big. A good example is the 21 pounder pictured here. Edna is on the list to receive a heavy channel catfish stocking in 2016 so I anticipate that angling for these big whiskey fish will continue to be good in the years to come.



Lake Tanko - Cherryvale City Lake

What do you think of when you think of Lake Tanko? Do you think of good crappie fishing? Lots of largemouth bass? Big channel catfish? If you don't, you should. Like many city lakes, Tanko is characterized by shallow, turbid water that is well suited for growing fish fast. This common phenomenon can be attributed to increased nutrients in the water. Elements such as nitrogen and phosphorus start the food chain by providing nutrients for phytoplankton and zooplankton. These plankton then feed small fish, that in turn, feed big fish. When this food chain is balanced, as appears to be the case at Tanko, fish tend to grow pretty quickly.



Find the current fishing regulations [HERE](#)

Find the current fishing forecast [HERE](#)

Find current fishing reports [HERE](#)

Big Paddlefish Just Downstream in OK

We recently had an opportunity to help Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation sample paddlefish on Kaw Reservoir (22 miles SSE of Arkansas City). This population is of special interest to us for a couple reasons. First, we stocked nearly 40,000 paddlefish in Kaw from 1991-1994 in hopes that a population would establish and mature fish would conduct spawning migrations upstream into Kansas to

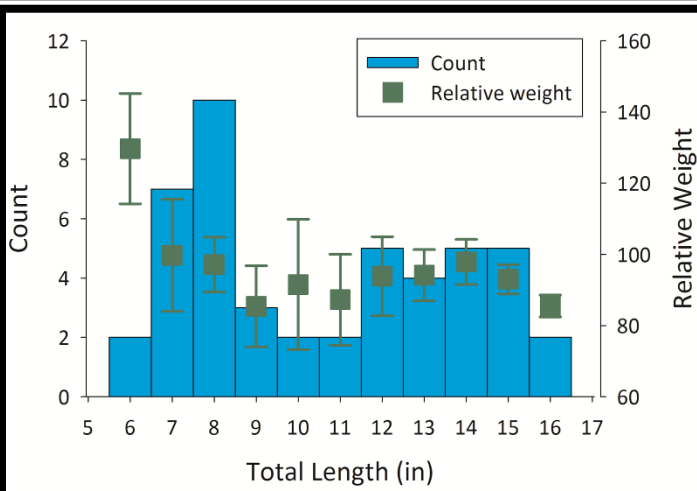


create fisheries. Second, the plan worked...almost. Kaw Reservoir is now home to a remarkable, and self sustaining, paddlefish population. Unfortunately, habitat alterations have limited upstream connectivity and make it difficult for migrating fish to travel into Kansas. As we continue to mitigate aquatic habitat fragmentation (check out our Lincoln Street Dam fish ladder project in Wichita), we hope that these prehistoric giants will consistently travel into the Kansas portion of the Arkansas River.

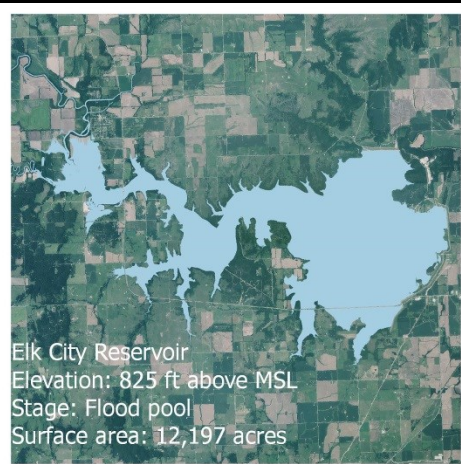
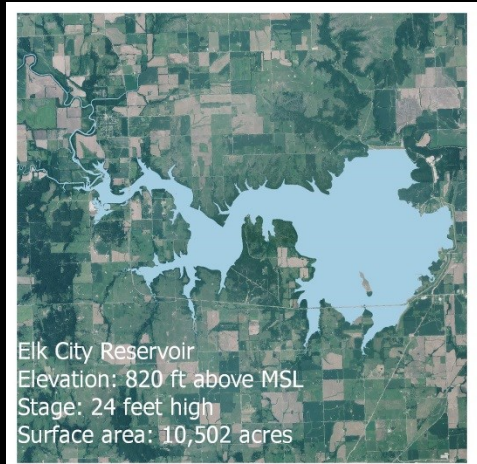
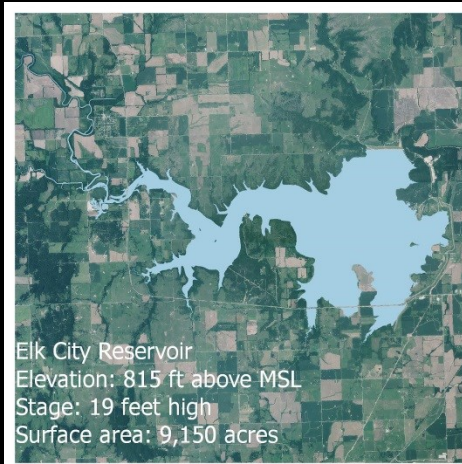
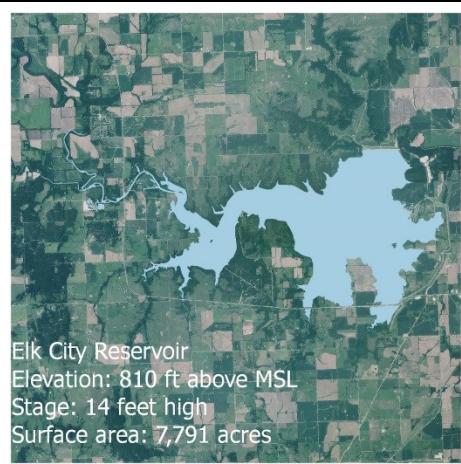
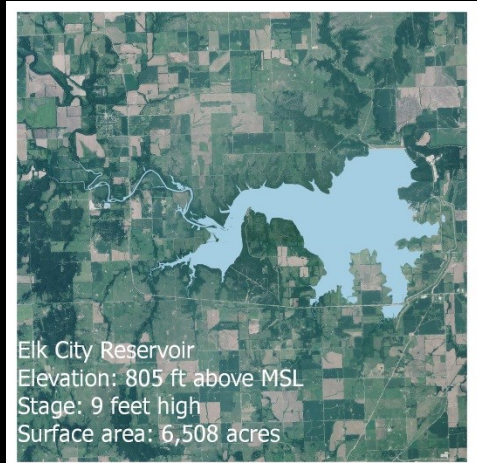
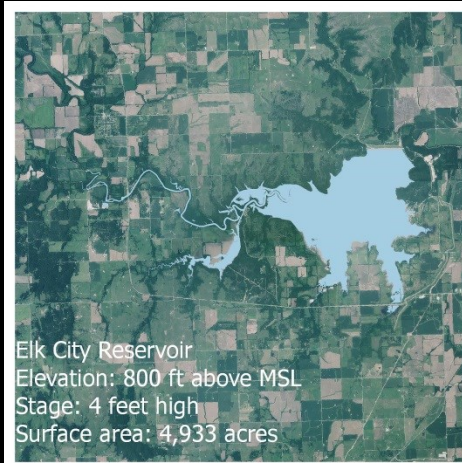
Elk City Blue Catfish

As many of you know, we are in the middle of trying to establish a blue catfish population in Elk City Reservoir. We stocked 45,000 6-8 inch fish in October, 2014 and again in 2015. We have one

more year with the heavy stocking rate and then we plan on monitoring the population to look at growth rates, body condition, and evidence of reproduction. The graph below shows number and body condition of fish we sampled in 2015 gill nets. We are very pleased with what we are seeing so far and have confidence that the population will create excellent angling opportunities for many years to come.



2015 Elk City Flood



The 2015 Elk City flood was a pretty big event. The novelty wasn't that the reservoir got so high (crested at 820.65 ft), it was how long the reservoir held excess water. Elk City was at least 10 feet high from May 21, 2015 to July 7, 2015. That was a span of 50 days. Typically the reservoir gets high and then rapid drawdowns get it back to conservation elevation (796 ft) within a week. However, flood conditions downstream in Oklahoma did not allow rapid drawdown this year. Fortunately for the fish, sustained high water during late spring and early summer is a really good thing.

Put yourself in the shoes (fins?) of a crappie for a minute. It's early May and you just hatched. You're about as long as the width of a fingernail in a huge lake without anywhere to hide. Then it starts raining, and keeps raining, and keeps raining. In a few days, the lake has risen nearly 10 feet. Suddenly there are many places to hide and plenty of zooplankton to eat. For the first 50 days of your life, you get protection and a functionally endless supply of food. It's not hard to grow quickly in those situations. After 50 days, crappie have grown to nearly two inches long and are no longer as vulnerable to predation and in a better position to survive their first winter. This results in a good crop of fish going into the next growing season and hopefully excellent angling for the next few years. Keep an eye out for this year's fish in 2016!

Supplemental Habitat in Area Lakes

were selected primarily to benefit largemouth bass although other species will certainly benefit. For 2016, we have requested 10 Georgia cubes for Parsons City Lake, 6 for Sedan-Old, and 6 for Sedan-New. Habitat trees were constructed with crappie and crappie anglers in mind. As such, we placed them around dedicated fishing docks at Montgomery State Fishing Lake. If these are popular among anglers, we will look at expanding to other area reservoirs.

Please let us know what you're catching off these structures as we continue to improve habitat. Any information that you, the angler, can provide will be greatly appreciated.

ELK CITY RESERVOIR

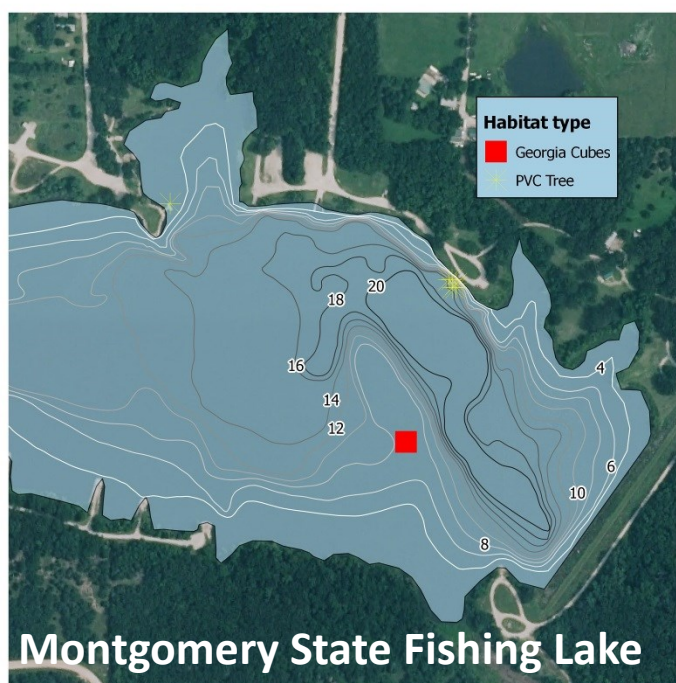
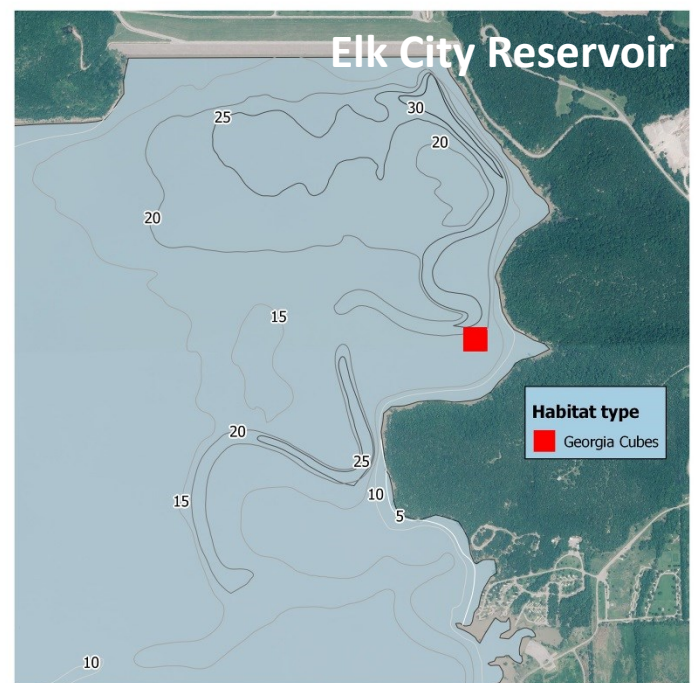
11 Georgia Cubes at 37.26575, -95.77932
4 Georgia Cubes seasonally in State Park Cove

MONTGOMERY STATE FISHING LAKE

6 Georgia Cubes at 37.16237, -95.68882
1 Habitat Tree on West fishing dock
5 Habitat Trees on East fishing dock

WILSON STATE FISHING LAKE

6 Georgia Cubes at 37.69780, -95.67415



Trout Angling Opportunities

When folks think of trout fishing, they typically picture a picturesque stream with mountains peeking above the horizon. However, you don't have to go to Colorado to get a trout fix, you can catch rainbow trout much closer to home. In the Elk City District, there are winter trout fishing opportunities in two reservoirs: Cherryvale City Lake (Lake Tanko) and Coffeyville-LeClere.

Cherryvale City Lake is enrolled in KDWPT's winter fishing opportunity program. In short, we provide them two trout stockings per year: 250 in late November/early December and an additional 250 in early January. About half of these fish will be around 12 inches and the other half around 14 inches. Both a Kansas fishing license and a Kansas trout permit are required to fish for trout at Cherryvale City Lake. Daily creel limit is five trout and there is no minimum length limit.

Coffeyville-LeClere's trout fishery is funded by the City of Coffeyville. A Kansas fishing license is required but a Kansas trout permit is not. Contact the City of Coffeyville for more information.

If you know someone who would like to subscribe to the newsletter, they can do so [HERE](#). If you would like to unsubscribe, please send your info to [CONTACT US](#) with "unsubscribe to Independence District Fisheries newsletter" and we'll get you taken off of the list. If you have any questions or comments feel free to send them in.

Ben Neely
District Fisheries Biologist
Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism
5089 CR 2925
Independence, KS 67301
ben.neely@ksoutdoors.com
620-331-6820

All articles are copyright of Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism and cannot be copied or distributed without permission from KDWPT

Bathymetric Maps Available

We have been working to create bathymetric maps for each of the reservoirs in the Elk City District. We have completed maps for the following impoundments and they can be found either clicking the links below or navigating to the appropriate reservoir's page on the [KDWPT WEBSITE](#). In 2016, we hope to complete bathymetric maps for Big Hill Reservoir, Parsons City Lake, and Coffeyville-LeClere.

[Montgomery State Lake](#)

[Wilson State Lake](#)

[Elk City Reservoir](#)

[Edna City Lake](#)

[Altamont City Lakes](#)

[Cherryvale City Lake](#)

[Sedan City Lake—South](#)

[Sedan City Lake—North](#)