

El Dorado District Fisheries

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KDWPT Fisheries Section

Spring 2013

El Dorado District Update

The calendar says "Spring" but Ol' Man Winter hasn't let go just yet. Below-freezing temperatures, 30-plus-mile-per-hour northwest winds, and a bad case of snow blindness are a few of the reminders that March in Kansas can include some very nasty weather. Despite the wintery weather, the walleye spawn has begun across Kansas, and anglers, as well as fisheries biologist are pursuing these fish. Anglers are seeking that fish of a lifetime as large females concentrate at night on shallow, rocky shorelines, which provide good access for shoreline anglers. Biologists are capturing male and female walleye for the Department's walleye egg collection effort, which produces all the walleye, sauger, and saugeye for stocking across the state.

Trout season is winding down for the spring season. The last trout stocking at the El Dorado trout area occurred March 21. Trout fishing has been hot most of the winter months and with trout stockings taking place on a weekly basis for the last three stockings, the end of the trout season is providing some great trout action. Trout season ends April 15. Trout permits purchased during the spring period are also good for the fall season, as well.

Although we've had a couple of recent snow storms, dry conditions and low lake levels remain in the El Dorado District. Some boat ramps are unusable, leaving some lakes without improved boat launching ramps. However, fish populations remain in good shape across the District.

Check out the rest of the newsletter for more fish info!

2013 Fishing Outlook

Fish sampling in waters within the El Dorado District during 2012 gives insight to what the fish populations will look like for anglers during the upcoming fishing season. This information on fish populations is included in the [Fishing Forecast](#), which also includes ratings from waters across the state.

El Dorado Reservoir

El Dorado is looking quite good for 2013. The lake ranked second in the state for walleye. A 2/day creel and 21-inch minimum length limit remains in place and increased numbers of larger fish have resulted. Anglers catch walleye from late February though mid-November. Popular walleye techniques include working spawning areas with crankbaits, drifting the flats with jig and crawler combos, and trolling crankbaits on breaks, humps, river channels, and old roads.

El Dorado blue catfish ranked third in the 2013 Fishing Forecast. This population continues to grow and larger individuals are seen each year. Blues up to 13.5 pounds have been seen during sampling. A 35-inch minimum length limit is in place so most blues will need to be released, but a few individuals will soon exceed this length limit.

El Dorado ranked last of the reservoirs for white crappie and rating of Fair has been given for 2013. Historically, the lake has produced quality fish but overall numbers have remained below the expectations of many crappie anglers. Quality-sized fish (those up to 15-plus inches) are available.

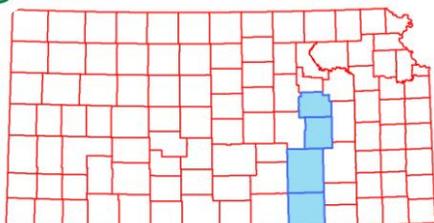
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Get your friends, get your family
... and FISH KANSAS!

FISHKS



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White bass numbers are down somewhat, and this population received a Fair rating for 2013. Two years of drought suppressed the white bass spawning runs resulting in fewer fish overall. Although white bass numbers are down anglers should be happy with the size of the fish they do catch.

El Dorado wiper, ranking 7th among the statewide reservoir results, continue to offer anglers some exciting fishing for BIG fish! This fish was first stocked in the reservoir in 2003 and has done well overall. Anglers find fast action as the wiper, along with white bass, feed at the surface on young of the year gizzard shad from early August through late October. Since the introductory stocking occurred ten years ago, we are beginning to see some trophy-sized wiper in the lake, which really adds to the excitement of fishing for this species.

Council Grove Reservoir

The highlight for Council Grove Reservoir this year will be the saugeye population. Ranking second in the state reservoir list, this lake holds some great saugeye both in overall numbers and also quality. Fall sampling showed increased numbers of saugeye with an average length of 19 inches. Fish over 25.5 inches were sampled with the heaviest fish weighing in at 6.9 pounds! Ninety-two percent of the 2012 gill net sampled saugeye exceeded the 15-inch minimum length limit. Anglers should expect great saugeye fishing during 2013. If you have ever considered chasing saugeye, then this would be a great year to head to Council Grove as there are great numbers and impressive sizes of fish. Putting a pattern together this year with abundant fish should help you find fish in future years as well.

White crappie are rated as Good this year. Size is up but overall numbers are down. The drought conditions of the last two years have resulted in reduced crappie production reducing the number of fish in the lake. Anglers experienced very good crappie fishing over the winter months with limits (20/day creel) of fish 12 inches and larger. The crappie spawn normally provides very good crappie fishing at the lake, but much of the shoreline cover is high and dry as the lake is 6.4 feet below normal pool. Anglers will have to seek out new spawning grounds unless we get some much needed inflow before the spawn arrives.

White bass and wiper both received a rating of Good for 2013. The white bass overall numbers are down with two seasons of less than average spawning success, however, size is up and these fish are nice and thick. Wiper, first introduced in 2008, continue to grow and fish exceed the 18-inch minimum length limit.

Anglers should expect good fishing for both the white bass and wiper whether they are vertically fishing jigs or casting to fish busting shad at the surface.

Council Grove has channel and flathead catfish. Channel catfish have been rated Good for this year. Flathead anglers find some nice sized fish in the upper ends of the lake but low water has displaced the fish in many of these locations. Drifting live or cutbait on the flats or the creeks during inflow events are great ways to catch some nice channels at Council Grove.

Butler State Fishing Lake

Fishing at Butler SFL can pretty much be summed up in two words: Bass and Cats.

The largemouth bass population continues to be strong with good numbers of large fish present. Butler SFL ranked third in the state for the lakes category. Like most lakes the water level is low and still dropping at Butler, which may hinder access to those using larger boats or those wanting to boat to the upper end.

The channel catfish population remains good at Butler SFL. Anglers continue to harvest fish weighing in the mid-teens. The lake has a 2/day creel limit and 15-inch minimum length limit. Two fish feeders operate from mid-May through September, which concentrates these fish for increased catch rates.

Chase State Fishing Lake

Bass fishing, including both largemouth bass and spotted bass, is rated as Fair. Numbers are down for both species of fish. Low water conditions have left the best shoreline cover above water level which displaces the fish and makes it more difficult for anglers to find them.

White crappie are rated Fair. Population density has been down for several years, which isn't always a bad thing, but size structure has trended toward smaller fish, as well. Most of the crappie are in the 8- to 10-inch length group and anglers should not feel bad about harvesting these fish. Lower crappie density in a lake like Chase SFL usually results in increased growth rates and increased individual size of remaining fish, providing improved crappie fishing in future years.

Channel catfish are rated as Good. Catfish anglers report good catches of fish with some fish weighing in the upper teens caught each year. Two fish feeders operate at the lake, both of which are accessible from the north shore fishing piers. Chase has a 5/day creel and 15-inch minimum length limit on channel catfish.

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Cowley State Fishing Lake

Electrofishing during 2012 showed increased catch rates for largemouth bass at the lake. The largest bass sampled weighed 5.3 pounds. Cowley SFL has good scenery, clear water, diverse fish cover, and fishing for multiple species. Some bass anglers like to fish the weedbeds in the eastern end of the lake while others prefer to fish the rocky points down by the dam. Largemouth bass received a rating of Good in the Fishing Forecast.

Channel catfish remain fairly stable, and fishing remains good at the lake. Three fish feeders operate from mid-May through September. Two of the feeders are accessible from the fishing piers on the north side of the lake. The lake also has a good population of flathead catfish. Cowley ranked 5th in the lakes category for flathead catfish.

Cowley ranked 4th in the statewide Fishing Forecast for black crappie in the lakes category. The lake received a rating of Fair as few anglers have consistently caught these fish outside of the spawning period. The deep, clear water with abundant cover in the form of weed beds and rocky areas make pinpointing the location of this species difficult. However, if you do find them some great fishing can be had.

Cowley also has good fishing for both bluegill and redear sunfish. The best times to fish for both of these species is during the spawn, which usually begins around the first part of May. These fish fan out nests that are easily visible in the clear water and fishing can be very good. The fish spawn in the shallower areas of the lake including the upper ends and along the areas between the fishing piers.



A couple of nice redear sunfish from Cowley SFL

KDWPT VIDEO FEATURES WALLEYE PRODUCTION PROCESS

Video takes viewers along on walleye egg-taking journey

PRATT – “Walleye For Tomorrow,” a 15-minute video produced by the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT), shows each step in the process of producing walleye for Kansas lakes. Populations of this popular sport fish in Kansas lakes depend on the artificial spawning program that produces millions of walleye for stocking each spring.

The full-length video, which has only recently been digitized and posted for viewing on KDWPT’s website, is a must-watch for any dedicated Kansas walleye angler.

The video can be seen at <http://ksoutdoors.com/Walleye-for-tomorrow>.

Article from [KDWPT News](#)

Walleye Egg Collection Efforts Underway

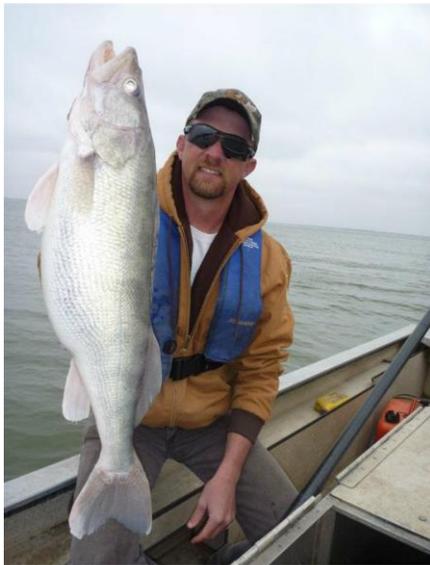
Fisheries biologists from across the state are currently working on the walleye egg collection program (see video in article above). Egg collection crews are working at four reservoirs including Cedar Bluff, Hillsdale, Milford, and Perry. The Cedar Bluff and Hillsdale operations will supply fertilized walleye eggs to the Pratt and Milford Hatcheries while the Milford and Perry crews will focus upon production of sauger and saugeye.

The collection goal for 2013 is 106 million eggs. This includes 90 million eggs for producing walleye, 14 million eggs for saugeye production, and 2 million eggs for producing sauger. The saugeye is a hybrid species resulting in the cross between a male sauger and female walleye. Fertilized walleye eggs are produced on site at Cedar Bluff and Hillsdale. Saugeye are produced with sauger milt from sauger collected at Perry and walleye eggs collected at Milford.

It is a lot of work for both fisheries staff and hatchery staff but the result is better fishing in Kansas lakes and reservoirs.



Nice saugeye from Council Grove Reservoir, November 2012



Nice female walleye from El Dorado, March 2012



Fishing brush for winter time crappie El Dorado, December 2012

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Last Cast!

Thanks for reading the Spring 2013 edition of the El Dorado District Fisheries newsletter.

El Dorado Reservoir is currently 4.7 feet low. We reached 6 feet low in early 2007 but the current low water is causing enough problems. Two of the state park ramps, the Area 1 boat ramp and the Boulder Bluff South ramp, are unusable. The wildlife area boat ramps may accommodate the launching of smaller boats but extreme caution should be used. New hazards are regularly appearing around the lake so if you haven't been out on the lake for several months go slow and be careful! The courtesy dock at the Shady Creek Marina ramp is becoming quite shallow and has only about 1.5 feet of water below it.

Council Grove Reservoir has four usable ramps thanks to the US Army Corps of Engineers. The COE had a large track hoe deepen the areas around three of the popular ramps to allow boats to launch at the reduced water level, at least for a while longer. We need RAIN!!

Despite the low water conditions, fish can be caught so pick a day and head to a lake near you.

As always, if you know someone who might 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 El Dorado District Fisheries newsletter" and we'll get you taken off of the list. If you have any questions or comments or story ideas feel free to send them in! Please reference the El Dorado District Fisheries newsletter in your comments.

Fish On!

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... and FISH KANSAS!

