

Pittsburg District Fisheries Newsletter

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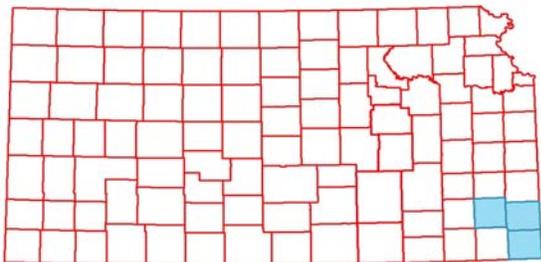
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It's Time To Go Fishin'

It has been a long winter, and area waters are finally warming up. White bass are making their spawning run up Spring River, providing good fishing at the low-water dam at Baxter Springs; heavy spring rains will hopefully create great opportunities in many lakes and ponds where runoff enters, and food is flushed to big catfish laying in wait; when water temperatures approach 60 degrees, crappie will move into shallower water to spawn, making them easy to find and catch; paddlefish may soon be running up the Neosho River from Grand Lake, creating great opportunities for snagging at Chetopa. I hope you are ready to get out and enjoy the many opportunities we have here in southeast Kansas.

Since the fall newsletter, I have been very busy with fish samplings; professional meetings; maintenance work on boats, trailers and sampling equipment; and completing management reports and stocking requests. We have just finished the walleye egg collection project, with an objective of collecting over 106 million eggs from Perry, Hillsdale, Cedar Bluff, and Milford reservoirs. We will soon stock walleye at the Mined Land Wildlife Area, and saugeye fingerlings at Crawford State Lake and Chanute City Lake as a result of these efforts.



Fish Samplings Used to Predict Fishing Prospects

To monitor the health of fisheries and help anglers find the best places to fish, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) fisheries biologists spend much of each fall sampling lakes throughout the state. In October and early November, gill nets and trap nets are used to sample all sportfish. Biologists then weigh and measure each fish and record this information, taking care to get the fish back in the water quickly. Catch rates, length frequencies, and body condition are closely monitored.



Biologists sample, weigh and measure thousands of fish each fall to determine management needs and inform anglers of the best fishing prospects.

Data from fall samplings are used for next year's stocking requests, recommendations for future length and creel limit regulations, and informing the public of the best angling opportunities.

2013 Pittsburg District Fishing Forecast

In general, the smaller, shallower ponds and pits will warm up first. Fish will be active and spawning in these impoundments a week or two before the fish in larger, deep lakes and reservoirs. Shallow lakes like Neosho State Lake and Bourbon County Lake (Hiattville) will provide good fishing before deeper lakes like Crawford. It's time to get after it. It's time to go fishing! Here's a look at some 2012 sampling results and the prospects for 2013.

Bone Creek Lake – This 540-acre, clear, timber-filled lake is best known for its bass fishing. Three eight-month-long creel surveys have shown that over half the anglers fishing Bone Creek are seeking bass. The quality of the fishery is quite good, with 26 percent of the 2012 electrofishing sample comprised of fish over 15 inches in length. With water clarity sometimes exceeding 10 feet, anglers must fish deeper here than in most area lakes for consistent success. The bass fishing should again be very good.

Black crappie are abundant at Bone Creek, and fishing should be good. Lots of 8- to 11-inch fish are available, but 12-inch and larger fish are not uncommon. A few wall hangers are usually taken every year. There is no length limit on crappie, and the daily creel limit is 20 fish per day.



Bass are the most preferred fish at Bone Creek Lake, and fish like this are not uncommon.



Bone Creek Lake is a 540 acre, clear-water impoundment full of standing timber.

With four fish feeders to concentrate fish in shoreline accessible areas, the channel catfish fishing should again be good. The fall 2012 gill net catch showed many quality fish are available, as 78 percent of the catch were 16 inches or larger. Twenty-four percent of the fish were preferred-size (24 inches or longer) fish. Overall numbers are improved, as 13,505 catfish were stocked in October 2011. The 2012 gill net catch rate improved to six fish per net, and catfish numbers are adequate for good success.

The quality of the bluegill and redear fishery is very good, and is overlooked by most anglers. The frame net sampling produced a catch of 31 redear per, net night. The average catch rate the previous four years was 23 fish per net. The percentage of quality-size redear remained good, as 32 percent of the catch were 7 inches or larger. Two percent of the catch were 9-inches or larger.

Crawford State Lake - Crawford State Lake (CRSL) is the deepest state lake in the state, with an average depth of 23 feet. Built in the mid-1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps, this relatively clear water, 150-acre lake gives visitors a touch of the Ozarks, as it is surrounded by oak/hickory forest and limestone outcroppings. It is operated as a state park, so it has many amenities. These include campsites with electric and water, shelter houses, playgrounds, four rental cabins, floating fishing piers; four fish feeders; hiking and biking trails; and even a restaurant.

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



Crawford State Lake fishing prospects... continued

Crappie fishing at CRSL is rated only fair. Both whites and blacks are present, with small whites dominating. One can expect to catch many 8- to 10-inch fish before catching an occasional 10-inch plus fish. Seventy-seven percent of the fish sampled last fall were in the 8- to 10-inch size range. Only 13 percent were 10 inches or larger.

You can again expect good fishing for channel catfish at CRSL. Five thousand fish 10 to 12 inches in length are stocked annually, and four fish feeders located near shoreline access points concentrate fish in the general area for improved angler success. In the fall 2012 netting, 28 percent of the channel catfish caught were 16 inches or larger.

The largemouth bass fishing at CRSL is improved over recent years, but is still rated only fair. The quality of the fishery is quite good, as 42 percent of the spring 2012 electro-fishing catch was 15 inches or larger. Catch rates, however, remain below management objectives. The catch rate for 8-inch and larger bass declined to 32 fish per hour in 2012, breaking a pattern of steady improvement from the record low 12 fish per hour recorded in 2007. We would like to see a catch rate of at least 75 fish per hour. The road to recovery from the first ever case of largemouth bass virus recorded in Kansas is slow, but sure.



Crawford State Lake has many amenities for anglers. One can even tour the Farlington Fish Hatchery, one of four KDWPT fish hatcheries statewide.

After bass numbers declined greatly due to largemouth bass virus, another predator was badly needed to control abundant populations of shad, crappie, bluegill, carp, and other sunfish. Saugeye were first stocked in 2006, and although numbers are not high, it is not uncommon for bass and crappie anglers to catch an occasional saugeye. The initial stocking is most abundant, with those fish now 22 to 24 inches in length. The largest saugeye sampled last October weighed 5.2 pounds.



Annual channel catfish stockings and a feeding program at Neosho State Lake have resulted in good numbers of catfish like this beauty.

Neosho State Fishing Lake - NOSL is a 92-acre, shallow and productive impoundment located about 10 miles northeast of Parsons. It is a great place for family fishing as it has very good shoreline access. Numerous fishing piers, picnic and camping sites, and even a shelter house provide very nice outdoor opportunities.

NOSL supports a very good channel catfish fishery. Annual stockings of 4,600 fish help maintain good numbers. Three fish feeders keep fish growing well and help hold fish nearby, where anglers can more easily find them and have good success. The fall 2012 netting verified a quality fishery, as catch rates fell within management objectives and 60 percent of the gill net catch were 16 inches or larger. Fifteen percent of the catch were over 24 inches. Look for good channel catfish fishing at NOSL in 2012. NOSL has a 15-inch minimum length limit with a daily creel limit of 5 fish.

Very good numbers of bass are available at NOSL. 2012 spring electro-fishing resulted in a catch of 99 fish per hour, right on the 100 fish per hour objective. Even though numbers are high, the quality of the fishery is acceptable. Eleven percent of the catch were 15 inches or larger.

Bluegill and redear fishing should be good. Lots of quality-sized, 6- to 8-inch fish are available. Sixty-six percent of the October frame net catch fell within this size group. Fish larger than 8 inches were few and far between, though. Redear are slightly bigger than bluegill, and are present in good numbers. One can really have a ball catching bluegill and redear on light tackle when they are on their spawning beds in May and June.

Another sunfish that provides something a little unique is the warmouth. Standard samplings at NOSL have produced more big warmouth than in any other

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Neosho State Lake fishing prospects... continued

lake in the Pittsburg district. Don't be surprised to catch some of these beautiful sunfish while fishing for bluegill and redear.

You should expect good crappie fishing at NOSL in 2012. Both blacks and whites are present, and a very abundant crop of 8- to 10-inch fish are available. Fall catch rates were high, as the frame net catch was 79 crappie per net. Larger fish may be a little harder to come by than in years past, as only 12 percent of the white crappie catch were fish 10 inches and larger.

Mined Land Wildlife Area – A product of past coal mining, the Mined Land Wildlife Area (MLWA) is a 16,000 acre public wildlife area like no other in the state. It is comprised of 46 tracts, or sections of land, in Crawford, Cherokee and Labette counties. There are 1,500 acres of water scattered throughout the area, offering many fishing opportunities.

There are hundreds of small lakes ranging in size from 50 acres to a fraction of an acre. There are deep lakes, shallow lakes, and many in between. If the fish aren't biting in one, there are plenty more places where they might be.

Bass are the most highly preferred fish on the MLWA. With hundreds of small lakes all supporting bass populations, there is ample opportunity for some fish to survive to trophy size. The best places to find bigger bass are in the out-of-the-way lakes that don't get heavy fishing pressure. A small boat getting to a remote site, or a long walk to an overlooked lake are likely spots for lunker fish. MLWA lakes with flooded timber are also likely candidates for bigger bass. Constructing dams that raise water levels into shoreline timber has created some excellent bass habitat. Flooded timber lakes can be found in Areas 3,5,6,8,20,22,24,27,31, and 42.



The water level is about 4 feet low, but this photo illustrates the excellent bass habitat in MLWA #24 when water levels are normal, and adjacent timber is flooded.



Large redear sunfish like this are available at Neosho State Lake, as well as Bone Creek, Thayer City Lakes, Crawford State Lake, and the Mined Land Wildlife Area.

Although there are shoreline access sites at boat ramps and other areas, a small boat is a necessity to get to many places. In some areas we have connected isolated lakes to facilitate boat access.

Channel catfish fishing is good throughout the MLWA. All the larger lakes are annually stocked. Channel catfish do quite well in some lakes, as the current state record 36.5-pound fish was caught on the MLWA. One tip to improve your success is don't fish too deep throughout the summer months. Most large, deep lakes stratify, and there is no oxygen in deeper water. You'll have better luck fishing at the shallower ends or along shoreline vegetation in water 15 feet deep or less.

Crappie are present in most MLWA lakes. The larger lakes around West Mineral, dug by Big Brutus, are the best crappie producers. With many lakes lacking submerged trees and structure, even a lone tree or brush pile can concentrate fish. There are quality-sized fish available, but don't expect high numbers. MLWA lakes simply don't produce the pounds of fish that shallower water bodies with fertile soils can.

The 28-acre trout lake in MLWA #30 provides a unique opportunity. This 60-foot deep lake does not typically stratify, and trout can survive year-round. This allows some fish to grow to trophy size. Bi-weekly stockings of 935 rainbows from mid-October through May ensure good success. In addition, brown trout have been stocked to improve the quality of the fishery, and hopefully, will someday provide a trophy fishery. Trout can be caught at any depth during the winter months. In summer, fishing is slower, and fish will remain in 20 to 45 feet of water. The limit on rainbows is 5 fish per day with no size limit. There is a 20-inch minimum size limit on browns with a one fish per day

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MLWA fishing prospects... continued

creel limit. There are two rental cabins at the trout lake, each sleeping up to six people.

Orville-Kent Restitution Monies Making Kids Happy

In March 2011 KDWPT accepted a \$7,000 settlement from Orville-Kent Food Company in Baxter Springs as part of a penalty for overloading the city's wastewater treatment system with millions of gallons of industrial wastewater. The wastewater caused pollution along a 22-mile-long section of the Spring River in southeast Kansas and Oklahoma. The company was ordered to spend at least \$32,500 on a project to stock fish in or near the watershed of the Spring River. A sum of \$25,500 was awarded to the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, where a majority of the pollution occurred. The money in Oklahoma was used for paddlefish stockings in Grand Lake.

KDWPT has utilized its funding to stock catchable size channel catfish in small community lakes within the Spring River drainage just prior to major kids fishing events. Local youth, as well as older anglers, have been greatly benefiting ever since.

To date, 2,000 pounds of fish have been stocked preceding five fishing derbies in Pittsburg and Arma. The derbies have included the Pittsburg 4th of July Derby at Lincoln Park, the Arma Homecoming Derby, and the Little Balkans Derby at Lakeside Park in Pittsburg. The average weight of these fish is 0.75 pounds, so over 2,650 fish have been stocked. Two thirds of the money has now been spent. Stockings will continue in 2013.



Kids are enjoying much improved success at local fishing events because of the monies received through the Orville-Kent pollution settlement.



Thayer City Lake, a beautiful 30-acre lake surrounded by oak-hickory forest, will soon have a new boat ramp and other improvements.

City of Thayer Awarded CFAP Grant

The city of Thayer has recently been awarded a Community Fisheries Assistance Program (CFAP) grant to construct a new boat ramp, parking area, courtesy dock, floating fishing dock, and an entrance sign at their 30-acre "old" lake. A boat ramp is sorely needed as boaters must now launch from an unimproved area off the county road at the spillway area.

Total cost of the project is \$33,000, of which \$24,420 will be paid by KDWPT. The city will provide labor and equipment to complete much of the work.

The CFAP grant program is made available to nearly 240 community lakes statewide for development projects that benefit anglers and boaters. Cooperators are required to pay a minimum of 25 percent of development costs. Applications for these funds is competitive and is based on needs and benefits of the project, participation in CFAP, and the amount contributed toward the project by the applicant. Approximately \$225,000 is available statewide annually.

