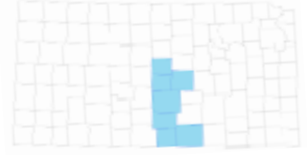


CHENEY DISTRICT FISHERIES

KANSAS DEPT. OF WILDLIFE, PARKS, AND TOURISM-FISHERIES SECTION



Cheney District Update



Angling started off hot in 2014. Fishing for big wipers and walleyes has been good at Cheney Reservoir. Look for fall bites to heat up any day at your local reservoirs.



Ever since I relocated to south central Kansas from eastern Nebraska five years ago, natives to the area have been telling me that I moved here during the hottest, driest, windiest, or generally worst summers in recent memory. Finally, the summer of 2014 has been more “normal,” with relatively mild temperatures, somewhat regular rainfall, and decent wind conditions. Similarly, the fishing this summer has been much more consistent than previous years.

Late spring and early summer are generally the best angling times in Kansas, and this year was no exception. For starters, walleye and wiper fishing at Cheney Reservoir was exceptional. Many anglers commented on daily catches of 20 to 50 walleyes per day, with limits of 21- to 25-inch fish followed by plenty of legal fish that were released after limits were made. Shortly after the walleye bite slowed in June, wiper fishing picked up. In the last few years, few wipers larger than 21 inches were caught; however, the wipers seemed to grow overnight, and many anglers had their tackle tested by 21- to 26-inch fish. Fishing at Cheney has slowed a bit over the last month or so, but catches of big white perch have really kept anglers busy. Those pesky nuisance species have finally grown up, and catches of 75-100 white perch over 10” inches have provided many anglers with lots of fillets. Since white perch are not to be returned alive to any Kansas water, they might as well provide a nice meal!

Spring and summer fishing was also good for saugeye at Kanopolis Reservoir and Wellington City Lake, although the dog days of summer have slowed those bites. With the water cooling quickly, those fish should be putting on the feed bag at any time. High-density largemouth bass and northern pike populations have also provided exciting fishing at Kingman State Fishing Lake this year.

Fall is one of my favorite times to fish. Cooler weather, fewer bugs, and less crowded reservoirs all contribute to a great experience. Cheney’s water temperature has decreased by 10 degrees in the last two weeks. The changing of the seasons triggers fish to eat and prepare for winter. Many Kansas fish put on most of their growth during the fall, so be sure to make plans to get out and give it a try. Keep updated on current KDWPT fishing reports, but feel free to go out and make your own report on your favorite reservoir. Good luck!

Five gallons worth of 10- to 12-inch white perch caught on a quick July trip to Cheney Reser-



Wanna try something new? How about floatline fishing?

A few years ago, KDWPT provided anglers with a new opportunity that is highly popular in neighboring states. Floatline fishing, otherwise known as jugging, is a fun, effective, and fundamentally different way to fish during the dog days of summer. Jugging consists of attaching a baited line to a device (jug) that freely floats in the water while fishing. This device can be drifted with the wind, or weighted to the bottom so the jug remains stationary. Many jug designs are available online and can be simple (i.e., float, line, hook, and sinker) or complex, with sliding weight mechanisms that can “flag” your jug when a fish bites it. When constructing or buying jugs, be sure you are aware of the regulations associated with the technique. Namely, the float must be constructed only of plastic, wood, or foam and shall be a “closed-cell” construction. “Closed cell” means that the float is a solid body incapable of containing water. This regulation is to prevent the transfer of aquatic nuisance species, such as zebra mussels. Also, jugs must be under immediate supervision (i.e., within sight) of the angler at all times and must be removed from the water when fishing ceases. The floatline season runs from July 15 through September 15. Currently, floatline fishing is allowed at Council Grove, Elk City, Fall River, Glen Elder, Hillsdale, John Redmond, Kanopolis, Lovewell, Tuttle Creek, Pomona, Toronto, and Wilson reservoirs. According to the regulations, each angler may set eight floatlines, which may have a maximum of two hooks apiece.

I had jugged for blue catfish in Oklahoma once, but had very limited success. However, I had never attempted jugging in Kansas, so I recently gave it a try at Kanopolis Reservoir. With some assistance from seasoned jugger Ben Neely (Elk City District fisheries biologist), we set out on an early September afternoon with high hopes. Armed with 16 jugs, and approximately 50 small pieces of cut carp, we set sixteen jugs near the humps on the south side of the reservoir adjacent to a large bend in the river channel. Within no time, we had one jug bobbing and weaving, indicating we had a fish. Unfortunately, this fish spit out the hook upon retrieval, but to our delight, we had other jugs bouncing immediately. The next jug we retrieved captured two nice channel catfish, one on each hook. We quickly unhooked and released the fish, and moved to the next jug, which had another double of a 21-inch and 18-inch channel catfish. For the next three hours, we kept busy retrieving the bobbing jugs, re-baiting, and moving to the next jug. In total, we caught and released 22 channel catfish varying from 15 to 22 inches.



The first of many doubles during the trip. Notice the stout main line of the jug. This heavy plastic line keeps tangles to a minimum.



A bobbing jug indicating a bite

Jugging, continued...

I learned several lessons from my first successful jugging trip. First, exercise patience when you see a bobbing jug. On our trip, if the moving jug was pulled to early after a bite, the fish most likely got off the hook. Checking the jugs every 30-45 minutes whether they were bobbing or not seemed to maximize catch. Good circle hooks also kept catfish from swallowing the hooks when fished for an extended period of time. Another lesson I learned was that bait with thick skin is a must. To avoid constantly re-baiting in warm water, use cut bait with the skin left on. I'm guessing chicken liver or shrimp would quickly degrade and fall off or be nibbled off by active fish. Another unexpected result was that location of jugs didn't seem to matter. We caught equal numbers of fish on flats, in the channel, and on drop-offs. I'm sure this pattern doesn't hold true in all situations, but everywhere we put jugs, we caught fish. Finally, the use of a heavy, plastic mainline really cuts down on tangles. Our jugs were composed of 30 feet of plastic trimmer line with two, 25-lb test monofilament leaders tied to the mainline. This seemed to work well for quick deployment, easy recovery, and fast storage.

Jugging proved to be a very effective way to catch channel catfish at Kanopolis Reservoir. It certainly provides a different experience from hook and line, trotline, or setline angling. The excitement of seeing the jugs being pulled around the reservoir by fish never got old. In the dog days of summer, when other methods of fishing might become less successful, give jugging a try at the nearest reservoir where floatline fishing is permitted.



Two of the catfish captured on floatlines at Kanopolis Reservoir this September. Jugging is a fun, effective way to catch catfish.

Blue catfish showing promise at Cheney Reservoir

About 10,000 blue catfish have been stocked into Cheney Reservoir annually since 2006; however, the success of these stockings has been relatively unknown. Periodic reports from anglers are received, and catches in standard gill net samples usually amount to around 10-20 fish each year. Generally, the best gear for collecting large numbers of blue catfish is a specialized kind of electrofishing, which is far different from the electrofishing technique used to capture other fishes like bass and walleye. This method effectively stuns blue catfish in water up to 40 feet deep, and is most effective in late summer. In previous years, very few blue catfish were sampled with this technique at Cheney Reservoir; however, during sampling this summer, large schools of over a hundred blue catfish were observed while electrofishing. These blue catfish varied from five inches to 20 pounds. Some anglers have even patterned blue catfish and have had success catching a few. Remember, as this fishery develops, blue catfish are protected by a 35-inch minimum length limit. Since blue and channel catfish look very similar, be sure of your catfish identification. For identification tips, visit this [link](#).



Sterling Lake being restocked after fish kill

Sterling City Lake experienced a fish kill this spring that decimated most of the fish community. Excessive nutrient accumulation led to a dense algae bloom that died, decomposed, and led to an oxygen deficit that lasted for days. Sampling after the kill indicated very few fish remaining in Sterling Lake. As such, restocking has begun this fall. In mid-September, 1,000 catfish (8 to 1 inches) were stocked, and in October, 5,000 bluegill (3 to 4 inches) will be restocked. These bluegill will spawn next year, and at that time, largemouth bass will be stocked into the resource-rich environment. With little competition, these game fish will thrive and likely provide anglers with opportunities in the fall of 2015. By then, bass will likely be approaching 10 inches, bluegill will push 6 inches, and channel catfish will be around 13 to 15 inches. While no one wants to see a devastating fish kill, these events sometimes provide an opportunity to “reset” the fishery, and eventually the fishing will improve in the years following a catastrophic event. For example, gizzard shad have historically thrived in Sterling Lake; however, shad usually negatively affect fish communities in small waters. Shad will quickly outgrow most predators and will compete with juvenile sport fish for food resources. This kill dramatically decreased shad abundance, which will benefit sport fish in the years to come. Additionally, several large grass carp died during the fish kill. Hopefully in the absence of these herbivores, beneficial vegetation will again grow in the lake and provide habitat for fish and macroinvertebrates.



Habitat improvements underway at Kingman SFL

If you have visited Kingman State Fishing Lake recently, you have probably noticed several changes to the area around the lake. Specifically, the entrance to the lake off of Highway 54 has been moved about a half-mile to the east. There is now a frontage road to the lake that runs parallel to Highway 54. Although this new entrance and construction may be a bit of an inconvenience, this construction project has provided an unexpected benefit to Kingman SFL, in that the rubble from the old highway has been made available to KDWP for habitat improvements at the lake. This concrete rip-rap has been piled below the dam and is awaiting placement by KDWP contractors. This material will be used to stabilize the portion of the dam that is currently unarmored. This stabilization will protect the dam from wave erosion, provide habitat for fish, and improve water quality. Hopefully there will be enough material to stabilize the entire length of the dam. Depending on budget constraints, this project will hopefully be completed this winter.

This map of Kingman SFL indicates where dam is currently stabilized (red line) and where dam stabilization will be added (yellow lines).



Closing comments

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Good fishing,

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