

Region 3 District Fisheries

Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism, Fisheries Division
Dodge City District Newsletter

Winter 2014

Channel Catfish Harvest at Meade Fish Hatchery

Overall, the channel catfish is probably the most sought after species of fish in Kansas. Every year, hundreds of thousands of channel catfish are stocked throughout Kansas. Early in October, we spent a couple of days helping Jason Vajnar, Meade Fish Hatchery (MEFR) Manager and Aaron Andrews, MEFR biologist, with the annual harvest and distribution of channel catfish in southwest Kansas. There are three other fish hatcheries in Kansas and each one was represented by sending employees and equipment to help get this task completed. Channel catfish averaging about 2.5 fish per pound were stocked in the waters throughout southwest Kansas. When it is all said and done, the final number of fish stocked each year is usually somewhere around 45,000 fish.

As you can tell from the photo below, this is a very labor-intensive operation requiring a significant amount of manpower! Jason and Aaron begin the dewatering process a couple of days in advance of the harvest. When the rest of us show up, water levels are pretty much as pictured below. A large seine is then used to crowd the fish near the drain of the pond where they are scooped into a large net. A WONDERFUL addition to the MEFR equipment inventory added several years ago was the boom truck pictured. For many years, the channel catfish were put into baskets and carried up the dike of the pond to be weighed. After getting a weight, usually in the 50- to 60-pound range, the fish were then carried and lifted to the back of the truck. Now the boom truck is rigged with a scale and is capable of easily lifting 3000-400 pounds in a single load. Sure does save on a sore back and tired legs!



In addition to manpower, several different vehicles are required to transport the fish. We will generally have approximately 10 vehicles, ranging in size from a pickup with a small box holding 200 fish up to a two-ton diesel capable of holding more than 4,000 fish. Before any of this happens, Jason will have a listing of how many fish are going where and who is going to deliver the fish. A typical data sheet with stocking numbers and locations looks similar to this:

DATE	LOCATION	VEHICLE/UNIT	NUMBER
7-Oct	LIBERAL- ARKALON	MEFH PICKUPS(2) LOWELL'S PICKUP	4,087
7-Oct	MEADE SFL	MEFH 2-TON	3,000
7-Oct	CLARK SFL	MEFH 2-TON	4,000
7-Oct	DODGE CITY - LAKE CHARLES DODGE CITY - GOLF COURSE	PICKUP	200 200

The week prior to the harvest, Jason and Andrew sample each pond several times so that when all the troops arrive, we have a pretty good idea what size the fish are so we know how many pounds of fish to load on each truck.

Electrofishing for Largemouth Bass in the Spring.

The largemouth bass is one of the more popular sportfish species in Kansas. Even though it is winter, spring is just around the corner and that brings to mind the schedule of work for the upcoming year. After the walleye spawning operation is over, the next order of business is monitoring largemouth bass populations throughout the State. The standard sampling method for evaluating largemouth bass populations in the spring is electrofishing.

Largemouth bass spawn after reaching a size of about 10 inches, usually at one or two years of age. Spawning occurs during spring when water temperatures reach 60-70° F, usually in mid-May here in southwest Kansas. The male bass makes a large saucer-shaped nest on the bottom in shallow water by fanning an area free of debris with its tail. The female deposits eggs in the nest, and the male fertilizes them. The male protects the eggs from predation and maintains good water quality by fanning with its tail. If the male bass is removed, the eggs will die. The eggs are guarded until they hatch and the young are large enough to swim and find food. This takes about 1-2 weeks.

Craig Johnson is a KDWPT fisheries biologist from El Dorado who loves his technology! Last spring, he completed a video titled “Spring Bass Sampling.” This video was produced with GoPro footage taken while sampling bass in the El Dorado District last spring. Click on this YouTube link, <http://youtu.be/R1jK9YZJYuI> to enjoy this “behind the scenes” view of the springtime efforts of Fisheries Division staff. Information gained through electrofishing is used by fish managers to help make decisions regarding any changes in length and/or creel limits, ensuring adequate numbers of fish of preferred sizes are available to anglers.

Kansas Issues Revised Fish Consumption Advisories

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) and the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) have issued fish consumption advisories for 2015. The advisories identify types of fish or other aquatic animals that should be eaten in limited quantities or, in some cases, avoided altogether because of contamination.

We are fortunate that in southwest Kansas we generally do not have to worry about the worst of these types of issues. However, there are warnings that are applicable to the entire state. The types of fish to be aware of consuming are as follows;

Bottom-feeding fish: buffalos, carp, carpsuckers, catfishes (except flathead catfish), sturgeons, and suckers.

Predatory fish: black basses, crappies, drum, flathead catfish, perches, sunfish, white bass, wiper, striper, walleye, saugeye, and sauger.

Shellfish: mussels, clams, and crayfish.

Definitions of population groups are

- 1) General Population: Men and women 18 years of age or older.
- 2) Sensitive Populations: Women who are pregnant, may become pregnant, or are nursing and children age 17 or younger.

Meal size (before cooking):

Adults and Children age 13 and older = 8 ounces

Children age 6 to 12 = 4 ounces

Children younger than 6 = 2 ounces

Advisories that are applicable statewide are as follows:

The following consumption restriction guidelines because of mercury in fish:

1. **Sensitive Populations** should restrict consumption of all types of locally caught fish, from waters or species of fish not specifically covered by an advisory to one meal per week because of mercury.
2. Largemouth, smallmouth, and spotted bass (black basses):
 - A. **Sensitive Populations** should restrict consumption of these species to one meal per month because of mercury.
 - B. **General Public** should restrict consumption of these species to one meal per week because of mercury.

These are waterbody specific advisories for all consumers

KANSAS RECOMMENDS NOT EATING SPECIFIED FISH OF AQUATIC LIFE FROM THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS:

The Kansas River from Lawrence (below Bowersock Dam) downstream to Eudora at the confluence of the Wakarusa River (Douglas and Leavenworth counties); bottom-feeding fish because of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

The Spring River from the confluence of Center Creek to the Kansas/Oklahoma border (Cherokee County); shellfish because of lead and cadmium.

Shoal Creek from the Missouri/Kansas border to Empire Lake (Cherokee County); shellfish because of lead and cadmium.

Cow Creek in Hutchinson and downstream to the confluence with the Arkansas River (Reno County); bottom-feeding fish because of PCBs.

The Arkansas River from the Lincoln Street dam in Wichita downstream to the confluence with Cowskin Creek near Belle Plaine (Sedgwick and Sumner counties); bottom-feeding fish because of PCBs.

Antioch Park Lake South in Antioch Park, Overland Park (Johnson County); all fish because of the pesticides dieldrin, heptachlor epoxide, chlordane, and dichlorophenyltrichloroethanes (DDTs).

Kansas recommends restricting consumption of bottom-feeding fish to one meal per month from the following location because of PCBs:

1. **The Little Arkansas River** from the Main Street Bridge immediately west of Valley Center to the confluence with the Arkansas River in Wichita (Sedgwick County).

General advice for eating locally caught fish in Kansas

1. Sensitive populations should consider restricting their total mercury intake for both supermarket fish and locally caught species. Concerned parents and other persons may wish to consult with a physician about eating fish and mercury exposure.
2. Mercury exposure can be reduced by limiting the consumption of large predatory fish. Larger/older fish of all types are more likely to have higher concentrations of mercury.
3. Avoid the consumption of fish parts other than fillets, especially when eating bottom-feeding fish. Fatty internal organs tend to accumulate higher levels of fat-soluble contaminants such as chlordane and PCBs than fillets.
4. Consumers can reduce their ingestion of fat-soluble contaminants such as chlordane and PCBs by trimming fat from fillets, and cooking in a manner in which fat drips away from the fillet.
5. In waterbodies where watches or warnings related to harmful algae blooms have been applied, fish should be consumed in moderation and care taken to only consume skinless fillets. Avoid cutting into internal organs and rinse fillets with clean water prior to cooking or freezing.

Additional Internet resources and general advice regarding the benefits as well as the risks associated with eating locally caught fish from Kansas waters is also available from KDHE, KDWPT, EPA, FDA, and the American Heart Association

To view the advisories online and for information about KDHE's Fish Tissue Contaminant Monitoring Program please visit our website at:http://www.kdheks.gov/befs/fish_tissue_monitoring.htm

For information about harmful algal blooms, including current watches and warnings, visit this KDHE website: <http://www.kdheks.gov/algae-illness/index.htm>

For information about fishing in Kansas including licensing, regulations, fishing reports and fishing forecasts please visit the KDWPT fishing website: <http://ksoutdoors.com/Fishing>

For general information about mercury in fish, national advisories, and advisories in other states please visit this EPA website:<http://water.epa.gov/scitech/swguidance/fishshellfish/fishadvisories/general.cfm>

For information about sensitive populations and mercury in fish please visit this FDA website: <http://www.fda.gov/food/resourcesforyou/consumers/ucm110591.htm>

For information about the health benefits vs. the risks of including fish in your diet please visit this American Heart Association website:http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/NutritionCenter/Fish-101_UCM_305986_Article.jsp

For technical information regarding the EPA risk assessment methods used to determine advisory consumption limits please visit:<http://water.epa.gov/scitech/swguidance/fishshellfish/techguidance/>

Rainbow Trout Program

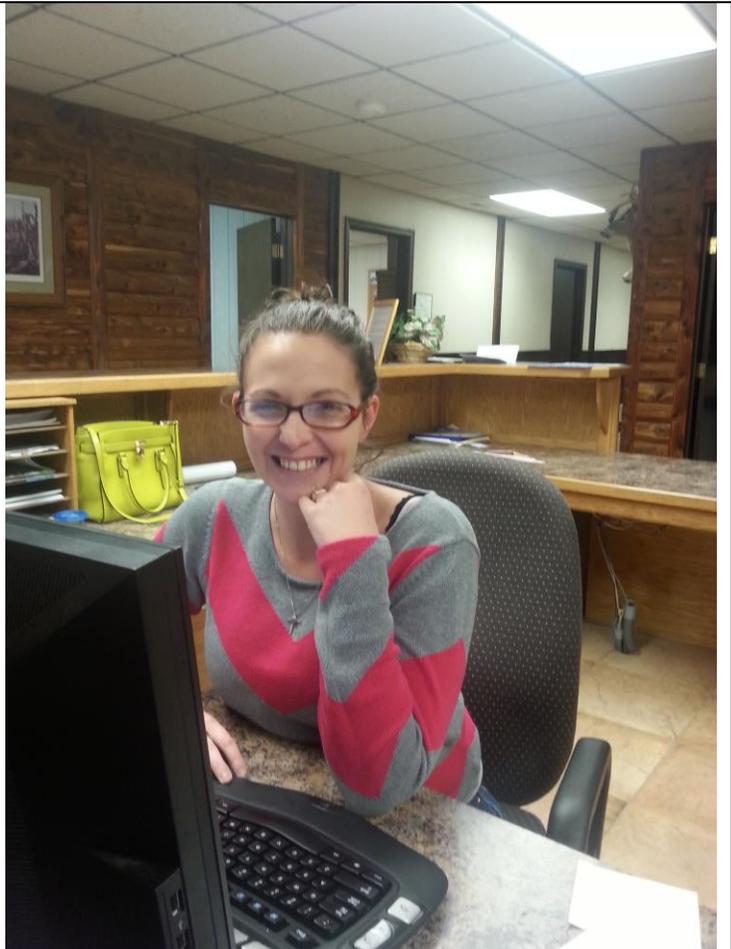
In November, there was a significant loss of trout from the vendor who had the current state contract. They worked hard to correct the problem and come up with fish for Kansas. We know that trout anglers look forward to these fish every year and we want to do everything we can to keep fish in the water. At this time, the contract has been cancelled and we have initiated the process to allow other vendors to supply trout.

Trout stocking will resume, but not all designated trout waters in southwest Kansas will receive stockings before January 1.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to Hayley Wells. Hayley has joined Karen Steele in the Region 3 office and is the senior administrative assistant.

Hayley was raised in southwest Kansas in the town of Copeland. She now calls Dodge City home, where she lives with her husband Jake, 10-year-old son Trace, and 7-year-old daughter Taryn. Hayley enjoys fishing with her family and cooking anything her family brings home from their hunt. She is looking forward to learning even more about Kansas and sharing it with others.

Please say “hi” to both Hayley and Karen next time you stop by the office. We couldn’t do it without them!



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