

Dodge City District Fisheries Newsletter

Kansas Department of Wildlife & Parks Fisheries Division

Summer 2015

Recruiting New Anglers in Dodge City

For many years, most of us have been aware that one of the greatest threats to the future of hunting and fishing is the difficulty of recruiting younger folks into the lifestyle. With so many activities competing for their time and attention, encouraging kids to make time for the outdoors is often a difficult task. One man in Dodge City may have come up with a good blueprint to turn the tide and to recruit/retain new outdoors fans.

For four years, Dave Foster, head football coach and physical education instructor at Dodge City High School (DCHS) had a vision to develop a pond on the DCHS campus. On August 23, that dream became a reality when DCHS hosted Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism (KDWPT) employees and Fishing's Future master angler instructor Phil Taunton for the dedication of Demon Lake. KDWPT has provided nearly \$120,000 in grant funding over a three-year period to develop a public catch and release fishing pond. Following the dedication, all DCHS physical education teachers, Dave Foster, Krystle Gaswick, Kyle Culwell, Mark Sandbo, Kristen Goertzen, Debbi Conrardy, and Dennis Hamilton, went through the Fishing's Future course to become angler instructors. Four DCHS students - Justin Schowengerdt, Junior Calderon, Hunter Flax, and Clay Carpenter completed the Junior Ambassador Angler Instructors.



With the addition of the Fishing's Future program, all DCHS students will now receive instruction in lifetime outdoor activities, including hunter education and bowhunter education. Last year, almost 600 kids went through hunter education! Students will also be able to join and participate in the [Demon Outdoor Club](#), which has organized deer hunts for kids, as well as other activities. Last year members participated in the National Archery in Schools program and became Kansas State Champions this year! Here is a YouTube video of them competing at the state tournament:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPWM2rd8U0o>

All of this gives a large number of kids exposure to the great opportunities available for them to enjoy the outdoors. It is something that is vital to the future of hunting, trapping and fishing.

New Type of Habitat Going into Lakes in Kansas

Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) fisheries staff has launched a new program to increase the amount of fish-attracting structures in Kansas lakes. Traditionally, biologists have used cut trees to create brush piles to attract and hold fish, providing angling hotspots. However, attaching concrete blocks to trees can be labor intensive and time consuming and the trees don't last very long once submerged in the water. The new specially-designed PVC structures are in the shape of a cubes three feet tall, four feet wide, and four feet deep. These synthetic structures are forty-eight cubic feet and can last more than 10 years. Cost-effective, easy to place and proven in other states, the new structures not only last more than three times longer than natural brush piles, but they also have been shown to hold as many fish as the natural counterpart without affecting water quality.



Game Warden Tanner Dixson assisting with placing habitat structures in Clark SFL.

Known as “Georgia Cubes,” the structures were originally designed by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Stacking more than 50 feet of corrugated pipe on the PVC frame, Georgia DNR staff has been able to create optimum surface area to attract fish while still maintaining an open design. They have also found that the structures quickly accumulate periphyton, a complex mix of algae, fungi, and bacteria, which further attracts insects and fish – an ideal result for both fisheries staff and anglers.

To see how these structures are constructed, follow this link to a video by Doug Nygren KDWPT Fisheries Division Chief: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wveI9444eas> , showing the first round of construction of these structures.

In 2015, 25 structures were placed in three waters in southwest Kansas. Ten structures each were placed in Clark State Fishing Lake (SFL) and HorseThief Reservoir and five structures were placed in the spillway cove at Meade SFL. These structures should immediately attract fish for angler harvest, but the overall goal is to accumulate enough structures to improve fish populations.



Ten of the habitat cubes were placed in HorseThief Reservoir.

Craig Johnson, fish biologist and video guru, made the following video showing how the structures are placed into the water: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ed-S7ky4cXI>

Thanks to the involvement and commitment of Kansas B.A.S.S. Nation (KBN) clubs, KDWPT staff will have assistance in constructing and placing these cubes in select Kansas waters.

“These cubes will not only provide habitat for adult fish of all species, but also provide critical nursery habitat,” said Jeff Nolte, Conservation Director for KBN. “We at KBN are very excited and encouraged by the fisheries staff’s commitment to improving Kansas fisheries in general. We have had a great relationship with KDWPT in the past and this cooperative effort bodes well for a continued relationship that will benefit all fisheries, not just bass.”

HORSETHIEF RESERVOIR IS FULL!

Heavy rains this past May allowed the floodgates on the HorseThief Reservoir dam to be opened for the first time. Torrential rains, up to 10 inches in several locations in the watershed, pushed the lake level up some 13 feet in about 36 hours and the lake was finally full.

Construction finished in September 2009 on the 7,200-foot long dam to create the reservoir. That fall and during the spring of 2010, the watershed received enough rain to fill the lake around 70 percent, but the lake’s water level had been on the decline since then. Here is a link to KSN news showing Horsethief in late May of this year: <http://ksn.com/2015/05/29/horsethief-reservoir-fills-after-rainfall/> .



Damage on the road on the west end of HorseThief Reservoir from high water flow.

Fisheries management activities at HorseThief had been based on a reservoir that was approximately 1/3 full. Since filling, it has been somewhat of a scramble to try and get more fish to stock. In the photo below, Pratt Hatchery staff release some larger channel catfish into the reservoir in June.



Heather Mihm, Horsethief Reservoir, gets a bird's eye view of channel catfish stocking!

Additional requests for largemouth bass, walleye and more channel catfish have been submitted.