

El Dorado District Fisheries

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KDWPT Fisheries Division Newsletter

Summer 2016

Recent District Happenings

It has been a fast summer this year and August is already upon us. Fishing has been good for the most part except during the extremely hot days when few anglers care to venture out. The state fishing lakes have been producing good catches of channel catfish. Marion and El Dorado reservoirs continue to provide dog days action with good catches of wipers.

As a reminder to those that may have missed it, the El Dorado District boundaries were modified during early 2015, which resulted in the removal of some water bodies and the addition of others. The "old" El Dorado District was made up of Cowley, Butler, Chase, and Morris counties. The redistricting process moved Morris County (Council Grove Reservoir) northward into the Milford District. Redistricting added Marion (Marion Reservoir) and Sumner counties in to the "new" El Dorado District. The five counties that now comprise the El Dorado District are Sumner, Cowley, Butler, Chase, and Marion. New district waters include Wellington City Lake and Hargis Creek Lake in Sumner County and Marion Reservoir and Marion County Lake in Marion County. I've been enjoying learning some new water and meeting new anglers.

There's still some summer left and fishing will get better as September and October approach. White bass and wiper action will remain strong, walleye action will improve, and crappie are nearly always available. Plan a trip to get on the water soon! The fish are waiting! Go to FishKs.org to find a lake near you.



El Dorado Blues

The El Dorado reservoir blue catfish population continues to improve. First stocked in 2004, this slow growing species is doing well in the 8,000-acre Kansas impoundment. Anglers continue to catch blues throughout most of the year.



A new limit on blue catfish became effective on January 1, 2016. Formerly protected by a 35-inch minimum length limit, blue catfish are now managed with a 25- to 35-inch protective slot limit. The 5/day creel limit remains and no more than two blue catfish can be 35 inches or longer. This is the first time a protective slot limit has been used on Kansas blue catfish. The objectives of the new limit is to allow harvest of the smaller sized fish, protect fish capable of spawning and allow limited harvest of trophy sized fish. Many dedicated blue catfish anglers prefer to harvest fish less than 10 pounds for the table while releasing larger fish.

The effects of the new limit on the blue catfish population will be monitored through continued fish sampling efforts. As the population continues to mature and harvest pressure changes, future regulation modifications may be needed.

Anglers at El Dorado were happy to learn that the abundant blues 25 inches and under are legal for harvest. Blue catfish are excellent table fair, preferred by many over channel catfish.

Marion Reservoir Receives Walleye Stockings in 2016

Walleye are a very popular sportfish in Kansas. Most of the state's walleye waters are maintained through regular supplemental stockings. However, a small number of lakes have proved capable of supporting self-sustaining walleye populations. Instead of requiring regular stockings of walleye these lakes, through natural recruitment, produce walleye population densities high enough to create acceptable walleye angling opportunities. Cedar Bluff, Wilson, and Marion reservoirs are examples of Kansas waters that have historically not needed walleye stockings to maintain good walleye populations.

Walleye were last stocked in Marion reservoir during 1993 when approximately 6.5 million walleye fry were stocked. Walleye numbers remained good throughout the 1990s and mid-2000s. There has been a gradual decline in density of adult walleye in the lake since the mid-90s and in recent years anglers have been expressing concerns that there are too few walleye.



Walleye fry inside a transport bag prior to stocking

The lake received 4.5 million walleye fry on three separate stocking days in 2016. The first day was March 31 and the last was April 6. The success of this stocking will be followed through fish sampling efforts.

The objective of the stockings is to provide a boost to the current adult population density in order to restore a higher natural recruitment level produced within the lake. Future sampling and angler input will be needed to evaluate the success of the newly stocked fish. If all goes well, anglers will be seeing more walleye bending their rods at Marion reservoir in the not too distant future.

Fish Feeding Programs Continue at SFLs

Fish feeders remain in operation at Cowley, Butler, and Chase state fishing lakes. The feeders concentrate fish and increase catch rates, providing for an enhanced angler experience. Feed is dispensed multiple times a day, usually morning, mid-day, and evening.

Each year the feeders are put back in to service during mid- to late-May and continue to operate through September. The goal is to keep the feeders in operation continuously throughout the feeding season, but occasionally the feeders may run out of food or experience mechanical failures.

Successful anglers utilize a wide variety of methods and baits to pull fish from around the feeders. Prepared stink baits or punch baits work well as do worms, grasshoppers when available, fresh cut bait, or liver. Some anglers prefer to fish on the bottom while others prefer to use floats to suspend their bait above the bottom.

All three SFLs have a 15-inch minimum length limit on channel catfish. Cowley and Chase have 5/day creel limits while Butler has a 2/day creel limit.

To see a video of Kansas fish feeders and underwater action of fish feeding, check out the following YouTube video <https://youtu.be/6UweiG6IFcU>.



20 pound channel catfish Butler SFL

Bass Stocking at El Dorado

Over 61,000 largemouth bass were stocked in to El Dorado reservoir during June. These fish were "Phase II" fish and were produced through the early-spawn bass project that has been operating at the Meade State Fish Hatchery since 2009. For a short video on the project check out <https://youtu.be/smDb9LRdBSQ> . Early bass can be stocked as fry, Phase I, Phase II, or Intermediates. Several ongoing studies are evaluating the contribution the stockings of different sized fish have upon the bass population within a lake. Phase I fish are around 1.5 inches. Phase II are approximately 2.5 inches and the Intermediates are 7 to 9 inches long when stocked later in the year.



Phase II largemouth bass being stocked in to El Dorado Reservoir

The broodfish used to produce the early spawns have been genetically mapped. This enables biologists to trace an individual stocked fish back to its parents through DNA analysis. This makes it possible to identify the fish in a population that have resulted from stockings vs. those produced by natural spawns. The last stocking of early spawn largemouth bass at El Dorado took place in 2012. Fin clips were collected from largemouth bass collected during the May 2016 electrofishing sample. Lab results will indicate what impact the 2012 stocking has had on the adult bass population at the lake. Additional samples will be taken in the coming years to track the 2016 stocking.

Stocking conditions were very good this year with an abundance of shoreline vegetation in the form of water willow. Lake elevation has been above normal pool since the bass were stocked providing excellent habitat for small fish. Hopefully in a few years anglers will have more bass to pursue at El Dorado.

PVC "Cube" Fish Habitat Project Continues in 2016

The KDWPT Fisheries Division continues to produce "cubes" made from PVC and corrugated pipe to increase available habitat in state waters. Lakes within the El Dorado Fisheries District that have received cubes to date include El Dorado Reservoir, Marion Reservoir, Butler SFL, and Chase SFL. GPS coordinates for cubes placed across the state can be found [HERE](#). The data file is to be used with Google Earth so you must have Google Earth installed on your device for the KMZ data file to be of use.

A video on cube installation can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/ed-S7ky4cXI> .



Kansas Walleye Production Program Part II Video Available

If you have ever wondered how the Fisheries Division produces walleye for stocking throughout the state check out the Kansas Walleye Production Program video at https://youtu.be/IBLeeAXui_g . An earlier video showing collection of the wild walleye broodfish can be found at <https://youtu.be/GpyleTf12p0> .





Largemouth Bass at Butler SFL 2016



Walleye at El Dorado Reservoir 2016



El Dorado Sunset May 2016

If you have missed a copy of any of the fisheries newsletters, archived newsletters from fisheries districts across the state can be found [HERE](#).

Last Cast!

It's been a busy year this year! The fisheries biologist's field seasons begin with the walleye spawn (unless you want to count wintertime fish habitat construction and then the field season NEVER ends!) and run through mid-November and fall test netting. May brings spring electrofishing for black bass. Blue catfish are sampled via electrofishing in July. Gizzard shad are sampled in August. Channel catfish hoop net sampling occurs in July and August. Nighttime electrofishing for young-of-the-year walleye occurs late September through October. Zebra mussel veliger sampling from May through October. Whew! There's a lot going on around the state in the Fisheries Division! Don't forget to check out the newsletters from other districts to get detailed information on programs and projects from across the state. See the link on the bottom left of this page for past newsletters.

I've seen a lot of anglers while traveling the District this summer. It hasn't been uncommon to see several trucks and trailers in the parking lots at Cowley, Butler, and Chase SFLs during the week along with good numbers of bank anglers. Although we've had a couple of really hot spells the lakes remain full and fishing has been good. With the approaching cooler temperatures, fishing will get better! We have had good shad production in both El Dorado and Marion reservoirs this year, so there should be plenty of food for sportfish this year. Most fish species will be chasing shad the rest of the year and later summer through fall is a great time to catch hungry sportfish using baits that resemble young of the year shad. Grab some slab spoons, a couple of jigs, and your favorite crank baits and hit the water! There are some GREAT fish waiting to be caught!

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!

Fish On!

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