

# Cheney District Fisheries

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## Cheney District Update

*With spring fast approaching, anglers should expect some good action in 2010.*

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With the recent warming temperatures, anglers throughout Kansas are undoubtedly getting cabin fever in anticipation the upcoming open water fishing season. According to fall sampling data, fishing in the Cheney District should be exciting in 2010.

At Cheney Reservoir, the biggest and most utilized water body in the district, 2010 should be a banner year for walleye fishing. Cheney will be among the best walleye lakes in the state, and anglers should expect to catch large numbers of 15- to 20-inch walleye. Hopefully, with a good year-class of gizzard shad for forage, some of these walleyes from the exceptional 2008 year class will reach harvestable size in the fall of 2010. In the mean time, anglers shouldn't be discouraged because there are still plenty of keeper walleyes in Cheney that will be above the 21-inch minimum length limit. Wiper fishing should also be very good at Cheney in 2010. Over the last few years, wiper stockings have resulted in very consistent recruitment and some real lunkers should be caught again this year. Anglers are reminded to keep the 21-inch minimum length limit on wipers in mind as KDWP continues to utilize restrictive length limits on predators in an effort to battle white perch in Cheney Reservoir. White perch are every fisheries biologist's nightmare as they are prolific spawners that can out-compete desirable juvenile fish, decimate populations of forage fish, and even eat eggs of spawning sport fish.

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## Ice Fishing Success at Cheney

*The ice season was fast but furious out at Cheney this winter.*

The cold blast that swept through Kansas during the end of December and the beginning of January was almost unbearable for most people. For Kansas ice anglers; however, the cold wind was music to their ears. Here in the Cheney District, we generally don't get much ice, especially on Cheney Reservoir. So when there is adequate ice for safe fishing, the devoted ice anglers take full advantage of the opportunity. Although the weather was cold, the fishing was red hot for about two weeks. Many anglers had excellent success on nice wipers, big white bass, and even a few striped bass. Several wipers longer than 21 inches were taken and provided a rare meal of fresh fish in the dead of winter. Unfortunately for the ice fisherman, warm temperatures have deteriorated ice conditions and the ice fishing season has left as abruptly as it came. Check out this [link](#) for an informative ice fishing video filmed at Cheney Reservoir this winter.



*A happy ice angler shows off his keeper striped bass (left) and wiper (right) caught through the ice at Cheney Reservoir on January 15.*



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White perch numbers at Cheney increased slightly in 2009; however, their numbers are still well below the five-year average, indicating the high density of predators is keeping the white perch under control.

Finally, anglers should definitely not overlook the great channel catfish fishery at Cheney Reservoir. Currently, there are lots of channel cats in the 16- to 24-inch range that will make great table fare. There are also good numbers of big channel cats, and catches of 30-inch fish and larger will not be uncommon this year. Fish feeders will again be placed in Wenzel Cove and near the Red Bluffs boat ramp in an effort to attract fish and increase shore angler fishing success.

In some of the smaller lakes in the Cheney District, fishing opportunities should be good as well. At Kingman State Fishing Lake (SFL), one of the state's most unique fisheries, good numbers of northern pike should be caught this year. Kingman SFL has the only self-sustaining northern pike fishery in Kansas as spring seeps keep the lake cool enough to allow pike to survive through the summer months. Pike at Kingman SFL are caught year-round and anglers have good success on pike immediately after ice-out. Kingman SFL also has some lunker largemouth bass and a decent crappie fishery. Also, while at Kingman SFL, don't overlook the small ponds on Byron Walker Wildlife Area that hold some nice channel catfish, bluegill, and largemouth bass.

If you are looking for largemouth bass fishing, scenic McPherson State Fishing Lake will be a good choice in 2010. McPherson SFL has a high density of largemouth bass and there are good numbers of 15- to 20-inch fish. Recently, a 13- to 18-inch protected slot limit has been enacted to encourage the harvest of small bass (under 13 inches), which will hopefully decrease competition and increase growth rates. Fishing for channel catfish at McPherson SFL should be good again this year. Try fishing around the feeders or look for submerged structure using cut bait or other natural and prepared baits. Catfish exceeding 10 pounds are common, so be ready for a fight! Another exciting opportunity at McPherson SFL in the next few years will come from recent stockings of saugeye that will hopefully reduce the number of overabundant crappie. In recent years, crappies have been stunted and saugeye have proven to be an excellent management tool used to control overabundant panfish populations in Kansas.

## Aquatic Nuisance Species

*Another reminder of the danger of our aquatic invasives*

As another fishing and boating season draws near in the Cheney District, boaters and anglers are again reminded to be aware of some of the biggest threats to the future of our waters, aquatic nuisance species (ANS). The most relevant ANS in the Cheney District are [zebra mussels](#) and [white perch](#). Zebra mussels are tiny mollusks that alter aquatic food webs and water chemistry, decimate native mussel populations, and clog industrial infrastructure such as water intake pipes. Many water bodies in Kansas currently have zebra mussels, but the only lake in the Cheney District with a zebra mussel infestation is Cheney Reservoir. The other high-profile ANS in the Cheney District is white perch, which are present in Cheney Reservoir, Kingman SFL, Kingman Hoover Pond, and Hutchinson Carey Park Pond. All ANS are illegal to possess alive; however, DEAD white perch do make good cut bait for catfish. White perch look very similar to white bass, so please take a look at the [Temperate Bass ID Poster](#) for identification tips. KDWP strongly encourages anglers and boaters to understand and practice techniques used to prevent the spread of zebra mussels and all ANS. Please visit KDWP's [aquatic nuisance species webpage](#) for more information.



*A white perch sampled from Cheney Reservoir. White perch are characterized by connected spiny and soft dorsal fins (not connected in white bass). Also, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> anal fin spines of white perch are the same length; whereas, all three anal spines on white bass are all different lengths.*

# Kingman SFL Pike

*The exclusive Kansas northern pike fishery*

As mentioned earlier in the newsletter, Kingman State Fishing Lake is one of the most unique fisheries in the state, as it is the only publicly-owned water with a self-sustaining northern pike population in all of Kansas. Most Kansas anglers have probably never fished for pike except on trips to more northern latitudes; however, the gear for a successful pike fishing trip is probably already in your tackle box. Northern pike are voracious predators that will eat most anything that swims, so try any lure that you would use for bass fishing, such as spinner baits, swim baits, or crank baits. Other traditional pike lures include flashy spoons, Mepps spinners, or large stickbaits. One piece of tackle a pike angler might want to invest in is a sturdy steel or titanium leader. These leaders prevent break-offs as pike have many sharp teeth that can easily snap monofilament line. Pike are one of the first fish to be active in the spring, as they spawn shortly after ice-out. Right before and right after the spawn are some of the best times to catch pike, because they are feverishly eating to store and recuperate energy needed for the spawn. During this time, the water may still be very cold and the fish may be a bit sluggish, so try slow presentations with lures or use natural baits, which may be as simple as a dead minnow or store-bought smelt fished below a float.



*Not all pike fishing tactics are overly complicated. These two nice pike caught were right after ice out using dead smelt fished below a bobber in less than five feet of water.*

Pike can be excellent table fare when baked or fried, but because they have “Y-bones”, which are fine bones that protrude upward from the rib cage, pike can be difficult to clean. This [link](#) shows a useful video on how to quickly fillet a northern pike. If you fillet a pike in a more traditional way, pickling pike meat is a popular and delicious way to prepare the fish. Pickling softens the Y-bones and makes them unnoticeable to the palate. A quick internet search should turn up hundreds of pickled pike recipes, so try a variety and fine-tune your own favorite recipe. The time for some great pike fishing is nearing, so get out and try to catch some of those toothy critters! Anglers should keep in mind the 30-inch minimum length limit and 2-per-day creel limit on pike at Kingman SFL.

I hope you found the first edition of the Cheney District Fisheries Newsletter informative and you are able to get out and get in on some good fishing. Soon, spring will be keeping us fish biologists busy. Walleye spawning projects are usually the first field tasks of the year, and collection of walleye brood stock should start in mid-March. After that, it’s time to fill fish feeders and start electrofishing to sample largemouth bass populations.

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