

Perry District Fisheries Newsletter

Fall 2019

A whole lot of water!

Special points of interest:

- Floods and Fish
- Fishing Reports

This year has definitely been one to remember or forget, depending on your personality. We have seen a lot of water across Kansas and that definitely doesn't exclude Perry Reservoir. Earlier this spring the reservoir rose to levels never seen before when it surpassed the record from 1993 and came within inches of trickling over the emergency spillway. This year isn't just the highest Perry has ever reached but that high water has also stuck around A LOT longer than in any previous years. When I sat down at the beginning of September and crunched these numbers, Perry Reservoir had

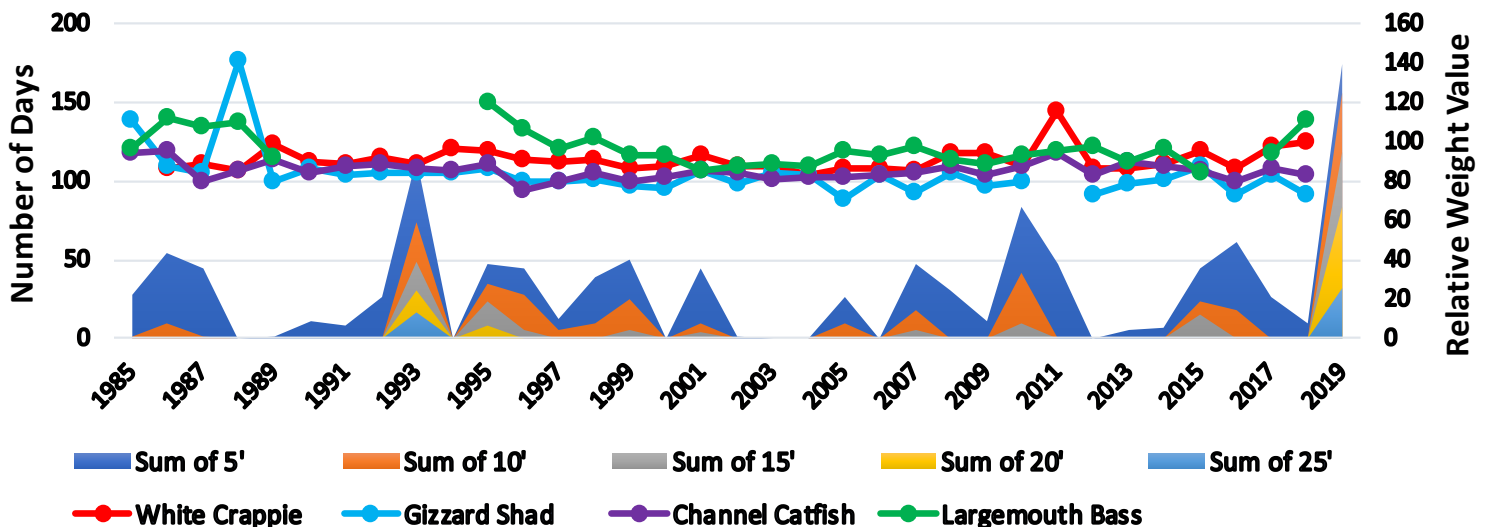
been at least 5 feet high 175 of the 252 days so far in 2019! But we all know it was higher than that. We have been at least 10' high for 157 days, 15' for 119, 20' for 83 days, and 25' high for 32 days! How does that compare to past years? It's shaping up to make 1993 look like a walk in the park as far as Perry Reservoir goes. You can check it out below.

Now that you've glanced down to the graph you might have noticed the other lines. The lines are the relative weight values for three species of fish that anglers pursue in Perry and Gizzard Shad, the primary

prey source. Relative weight is essentially how fat or skinny the fish is. We generally want this value to range from 80-105. So what does this have to do with the high water?

We would like to think that high water means availability of more nutrients, which in turn leads to more food and shelter for Gizzard Shad which then leads to fuller bellies for our favorite game fish that feast upon this shad smorgasbord. But that doesn't appear to be the case, at least our data doesn't show it. Our relative weight values for three species have stayed relatively constant throughout the past 30 years. But does all this high water help with recruitment? Take a look on the next page to find out.

Fish Condition by Reservoir Elevation



More rain and more water

High water usually results in flooded vegetation and flooded vegetation provides excellent refuge for young of the year fish. This should lead to higher numbers of fish further down the road due to the higher chance of survival that refugia provides. So we can look at our catch of sub-stock sized fish, or small, young fish and how that compares to how high Perry Reservoir has been all year.

Largemouth Bass and Channel Catfish don't really show any boost in numbers, at least our samples don't show it. However, White Crappie do show a little bit of a boost in some high-water years. There doesn't appear to be any sort of trend though to definitely say that high water equals better crappie fishing. Something about 1986

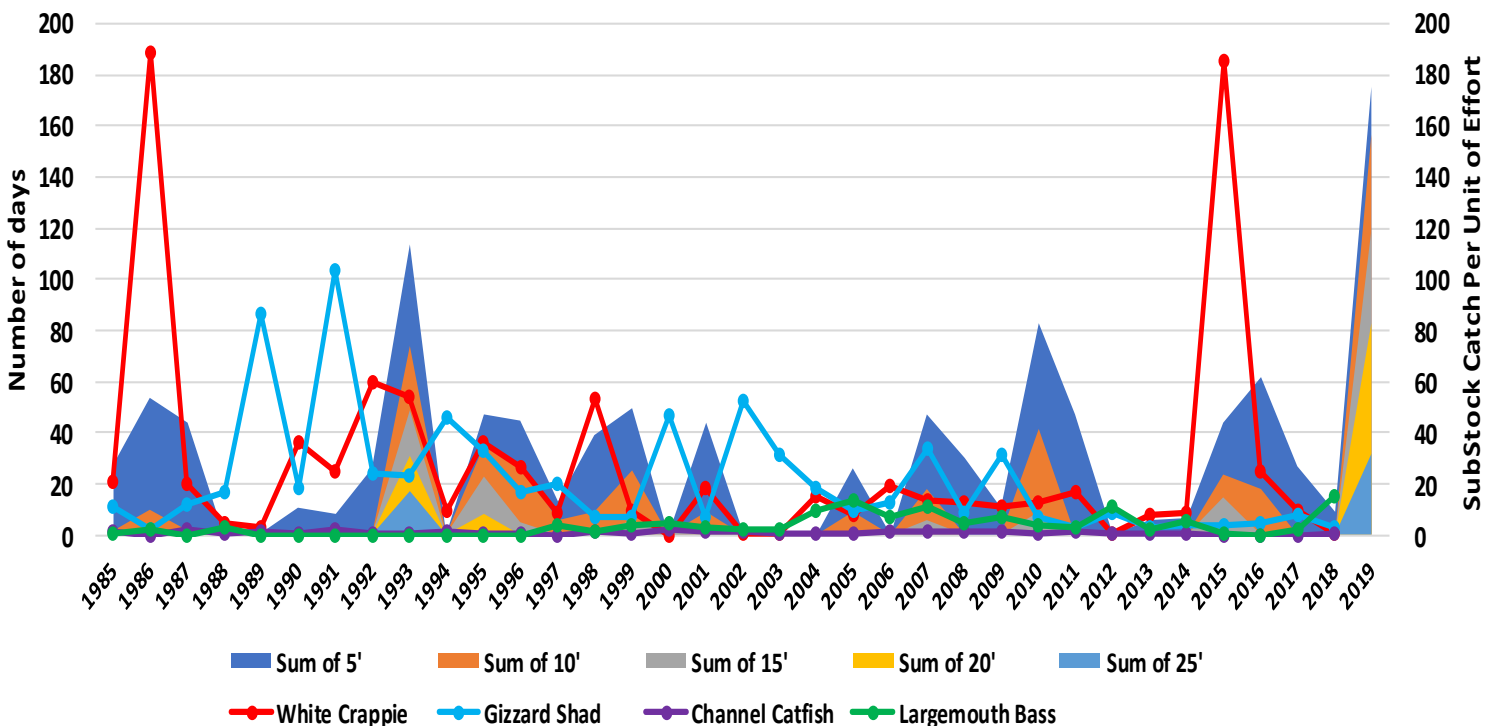
and 2015 really produced the right conditions for White Crappie. So, I looked back at the data, thinking that maybe it was the time of year that these lake level increases occurred but I did not find anything that set those years apart from any other years. It was likely a combination of numerous different factors (e.g., day length, water temperature, type of habitat inundated).

Gizzard Shad also didn't really break into any trend like I thought they and the other fish groups might. It almost appears the opposite of what I hypothesized. Some of the best Gizzard Shad years come in normal water years with out much elevation change. This could perhaps be a result of reduced outflows during those years creating better condi-

tions for plankton to grow. Gizzard Shad are filter feeders and feed upon these plankton. If more are available more offspring would be able to survive and recruit to our sampling gears.

When I originally sat down and came up with the idea for this article I had the belief that it would be a giant hype piece for fishing on Perry Reservoir in the coming years; demonstrating that we will be having some phenomenal fishing in the next couple of years as a result of the prolonged high water. But that doesn't appear to be the case, at least that isn't what past years have shown. Everything I have looked at doesn't really show any sort of trend to be able to make an educated guess as to how the fishing will be next year.

SubStock Catch per Unit of Effort by Reservoir Elevation



What does it all mean?

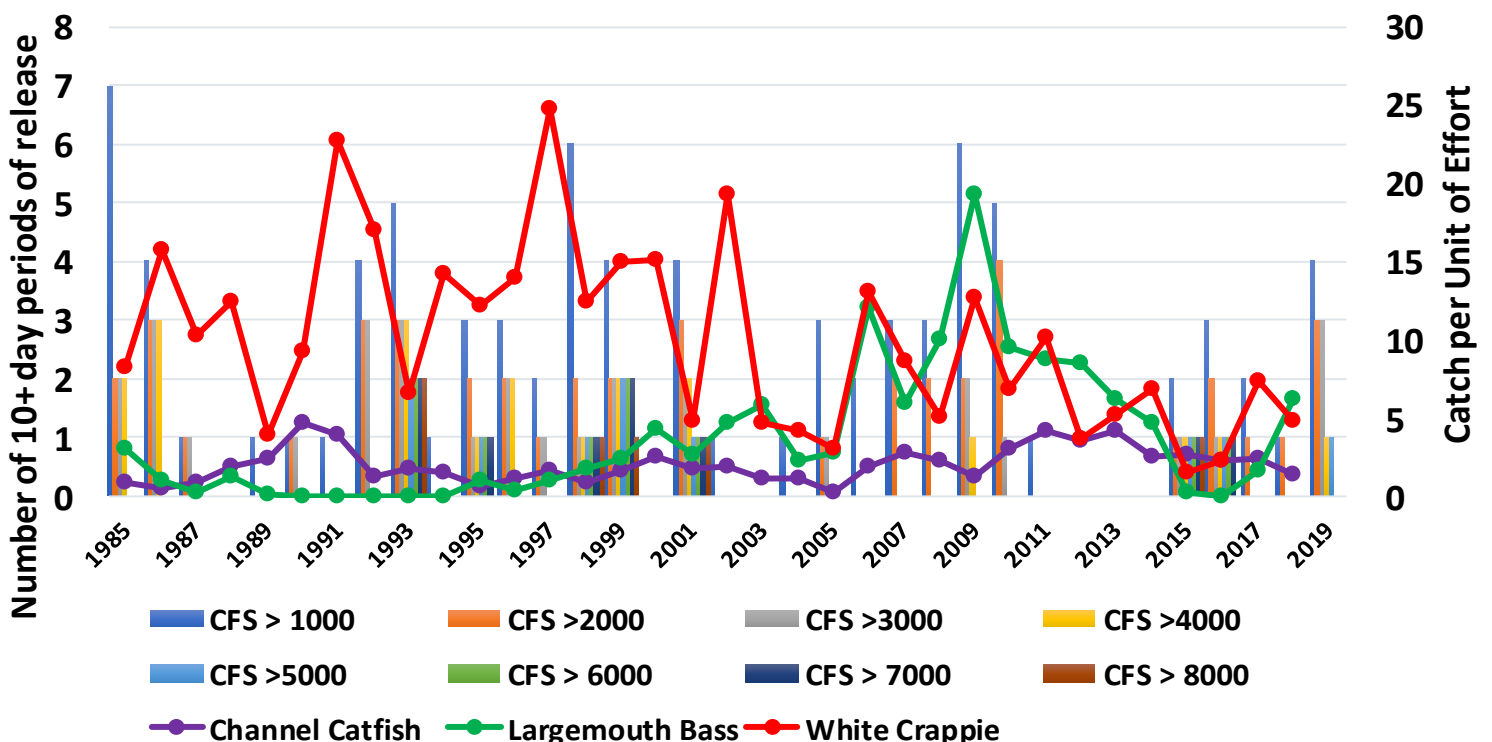
Another thought that we have regarding high water is that when they do start releasing that we have a lot of fish go through the tubes. Below I have a graph of the catch rates of keeper sized White Crappie, Largemouth Bass, and Channel Catfish with information on the number periods of 10 or more days of water releases. Looking at the graph you can see decreases in crappie CPUE during high release years of 1993, 2001, and 2015. So there is some merit there with lower CPUEs during high release years but we also see some decreases on years with little or no releases (1989,2003, 2012).

Largemouth Bass don't really show much of a trend that validates the "through-the-tubes" theory but instead provide a little evidence it doesn't matter. CPUE values actually begin gradually increasing between 1996 and 2009 despite a handful of high-release years mixed in before dropping back down after a period of 4 years with no releases.

As I've rambled on the past few pages, you've likely come to the conclusion that he hasn't really told us anything! The truth is floods are a strange thing and each one acts a little bit differently. There are a

handful of other factors that could affect the fish along with the floods. What we do know is that the high water this year was higher than any other year and has stuck around a lot longer than any other year. If our anecdotal wisdom comes through for us, the fishing in the coming years will be just terrific but if all of this past data holds true, Perry will keep moving along just like it has been. Which is just fine! I don't think many people would be complaining about being able to finally get back on Perry and catching a limit of 10 inch or larger crappie or reeling in a nice 5 lb. bass off all the new deadfalls along the

Catch per Unit of Effort Compared to Extended Release



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We're on the web!

www.ksoutdoors.com

Special points of interest:

- High water and high hopes
- Fishing Reports

Fishing Reports: Help Me Help You



Have you ever caught a mess of Crappie and thought to yourself, "Man, I wish I could share this experience with someone else." or "The fishing is just too good right now to keep a secret." Perhaps you had some thoughts more along the lines of, "The fishing here just plain stunk today, I hope nobody else has plans of coming out here."

Those of you who frequent the fishing report pages on www.ksoutdoors.com may have noticed that some of the fishing reports leave something to be desired. If you have some information that you would like to contribute to make the reports better, give your biologist a call. We rely on the anglers to provide us with information from each waterbody about what is or isn't biting.

Despite the popularity of social media, the fishing reports section on the website is still one of the most widely travelled portions of the website. In an attempt to provide a better product, I am asking for your help in providing the information for area lakes. Just give me a call and talk fishing. I'm not going to give your secret spot away, I won't even ask for it! I'm just asking that you help your fellow angler out.

You could be providing information that helps a dad give his little boy or girl the opportunity to catch their first fish or help a teenage boy stay out of trouble.

If you're still reluctant to pass along your information, that's fine, you're entitled to that. Just keep in mind, it takes more than you think to completely fish out a population and length and creel limits are in place for a reason and backed by hours and hours of sampling and research.