

Cheney District Fisheries

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Cheney District Update

Dust off your fishing gear; hot spring angling will be here soon.

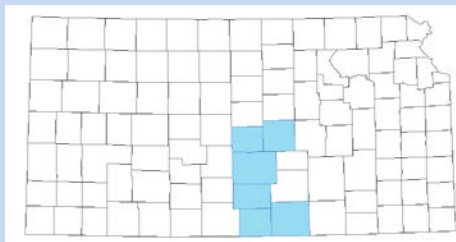
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With spring approaching quickly, it's time to think about making plans for the first few fishing outings of the season. According to fall sampling data, fishing in the Cheney District should be exciting in 2011.

Fishing at Cheney Reservoir was good in 2010; however, the July flooding really threw a wrench in summer and fall fishing. Hopefully the weather cooperates and the fishing patterns stabilize in 2011, as sampling data indicates that it should be a good year for walleye and wiper fishing. Cheney will be among the best walleye lakes in the state and anglers should expect to catch large numbers of 18"-20" walleye. If you were lucky enough to get in on the excellent walleye fishing at Cheney last spring and early summer, you have an idea of what to expect again this year, except those sublegal fish from last year have grown and some walleyes should be pushing 21". *Continued on Page 2*



2011 should be another great year for walleye fishing at Cheney



What does a fisheries biologist do during the winter!!!???????

Although the stocking and sampling are done for the year, winter is when the real work starts.

Soon after the nets are put away and the boat is winterized, the most important time of a fisheries biologist's year begins. For starters, information about every fish sampled throughout the fall needs to be entered into a database and subsequently analyzed. Additionally, many biologists conduct analyses using information gathered from the scales of fish, which can tell you how old a fish is, how fast it's growing, and even what proportion of the fish in a lake die during a given year. This information is then synthesized into detailed management reports that are written for each lake sampled that year. Careful consideration is given to the trends at each lake to decide whether changes are needed in the way we stock and regulate the fishery.

Winter is a popular time to improve aquatic habitat, as brushpiles and other structures can be more easily constructed on the ice, rather than clumsily loaded into and pushed over the side of a boat. Also, winter is pretty much the only time sampling slows down enough for us to fix all the things that have broken or worn out during the year, including nets, boat motors, and fish feeders. Since no sampling duties are undertaken in the winter, it is a good time for meetings where we get together with community lake cooperators, public stakeholders, as well as other natural resource professionals. Of course, just as in any other job, we have paperwork, emails, and phone calls to take care of, as well as providing technical service, educational programs, and advice to hunters, ice fisherman, and school groups.

In a nutshell, that's what we do to keep busy during the months when we're off the water. By the time walleye squeezin' season starts in late March, believe me, just like you, we're ready to get out on the water. See you out there!

The wiper population also looks very good, and all sizes of wipers (some up to 10 lb.) should be caught in 2011. The white bass population looks to be staging a comeback with a good spawn in 2010. Some big white bass approaching 18 inches were sampled this fall and good numbers of new recruits indicate that white bass fishing will improve in the next couple years. The white perch have made it tough on the crappie at Cheney, but once the weather warms this spring, try crappie fishing in protected areas near rip-rap, especially off the rock fishing piers like the ones at Fish Cove and Red Bluffs. Finally, anglers should expect to catch some decent white perch in 2011. Fall netting samples indicate that the historically-stunted white perch population contains good numbers of 10-to-12-inch fish. Anglers are encouraged to take these white perch home, not only to keep this nuisance species' numbers in check, but this size of white perch can be quite tasty.

The upcoming year should again be excellent for largemouth bass fishing at McPherson State Fishing Lake (SFL). Not only does the lake contain a high density of bass, but McPherson has great numbers of 15- to 20-inch largemouth with many fish exceeding 5 or 6 pounds. The lake has a wide range of habitats that will hold bass such as rip-rap piers, dense mats of aquatic vegetation, deep- and shallow-water brush piles, and steep drop-offs. McPherson SFL will also be good again for channel catfish. Catfish approaching 10 pounds were netted this fall, and the 15-inch minimum and 2/day creel limit has increased the average size of channel catfish at the lake. In a recent creel survey, the average channel catfish harvested at McPherson weighed over 3 pounds!



A good example of the healthy largemouth bass available at McPherson SFL in 2011. Good water quality, habitat, and abundant forage have produced a quality largemouth bass fishery.

In 2011, Kingman SFL will provide excellent northern pike fishing. Pike can be specifically targeted with spoons and spinners, or caught as an unexpected bonus while bass fishing. These toothy critters get active right after ice out and should be biting before anything else, so don't be afraid to get out to Kingman as soon as the ice melts and we get a warm day. The crappie population at Kingman got hit pretty hard by harvest last year, but some keeper fish will still be caught this spring. Channel catfish will also be good this year at Kingman. Hit shallow, windblown shores right after ice-out as catfish will be in the warmer water feeding on shad and other fish that died during the winter. Anglers should be aware of the increasing numbers of white perch at the lake and remember that it is against the law to be in possession of live white perch as it is one of our most unwanted aquatic nuisance species.

One of the biggest surprises of 2011 will be the crappie fishing at Hargis Creek Lake in Wellington. Although it is a small, shallow, and turbid lake, the fall crappie sample was outstanding as tremendous numbers of 10- to 12-inch crappies were sampled. A few saugeye were also sampled at Hargis Creek, so crappie anglers may catch a few bonus saugeye this spring as well.

Another good bet for crappie in the Cheney District will be Anthony City Lake. Anthony has good densities of keeper-sized crappie with a few 13-inch-plus fish mixed in. Also, if you like to eat pan-sized channel catfish, Anthony is a good option. During the summer months, 800 channel catfish that average one pound each are stocked into the lake monthly. Anglers do well catfishing around the fish feeders on the east side of the lake.

Wellington City Lake will provide anglers with excellent saugeye and wiper fishing this year. In standardized netting this fall, Wellington had the highest catch rates of wipers out of any lake in the state. Most wipers are in the 15-inch size range, but wipers up to 25 inches were sampled. Wellington also has excellent numbers of saugeye. Try fishing around the old dam during late-March and early-April to get a chance at some big spawning females. Most saugeye at Wellington are under the 18-inch minimum length limit, but some keepers were seen this fall during netting, the biggest was a 24-inch, 5-pound monster!

Northern Pike study to take place at Kingman SFL

Biologists hope to learn more about one of Kansas' most unique fisheries.

Northern pike were once stocked throughout Kansas, but warm water and several habitat limitations eliminated all public pike populations except for the one at Kingman SFL. Dense vegetation, shallow water, and cool-water springs that feed the lake enable pike to reproduce and thrive at the lake. Starting early this spring, when the northern pike at Kingman SFL begin their spawning congregations in the shallows of the lake, KDWP biologists will begin a project to learn more about one of the most unique northern pike populations in North America.

Although they have been established in the lake for years, sampling northern pike by conventional means has been difficult due to the sensitive nature of the species. During fall test netting, the water is still relatively warm and overnight gill net sets can lead to excessive mortality of this cool water fish. Using a different approach of setting trap nets in locations used by staging and spawning northern pike, biologists hope to collect and tag enough individuals to learn more about their reproduction, growth, and mortality. Additionally, in conjunction with a creel survey being conducted at Kingman SFL in 2011, biologists hope to learn more about angler exploitation of pike, which will help fisheries managers improve the fishery and maximize its potential.

If you catch a pike at Kingman, look closely for a small plastic tag placed behind the dorsal fin. Each tag will have a unique number as well as a phone number that you can use to report your catch.



Keep an eye out for tags like this one that will be placed behind the dorsal fins of northern pike at Kingman SFL this year.

Report unethical sportsmen

Operation game thief provides a simple option to report wildlife violations.

Whether you see anglers keeping foul-hooked walleye on the dam this spring at Cheney or putting sublegal channel catfish on a stringer at McPherson SFL, remember that unscrupulous anglers are essentially stealing from everyone who follow the rules. Fishing and hunting regulations are important management tools, and public compliance with these regulations is essential to providing balanced fisheries and quality hunting opportunities. Since game wardens can't be everywhere at once, help them out by programming the toll-free number for Operation Game Thief (1-877-426-3843) into your cell phone, so whenever you witness a game violation, a KDWP Natural Resource Officer is just a phone call away. A list of county-specific NRO phone numbers are also shown on page 29 of the [2011 fishing regulations summary](#).

I'm sure cabin fever has been hitting anglers hard lately. Soon enough though, you'll be able to get out and scratch that itch by casting for walleyes or saugeye, catching a mess of crappie, or just getting the boat out for the first time this year. Near the end of March through mid-April, walleye spawning projects at Cedar Bluff, Milford, and Hillsdale Reservoirs will keep fisheries biologists busy. Before you know it, the largemouth bass will be spawning and bass sampling will be underway. If you see KDWP staff out and about, feel free to ask us any questions you have; that's why we're here!

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