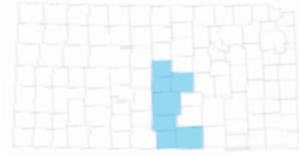


# CHENEY DISTRICT FISHERIES

KANSAS DEPT. OF WILDLIFE, PARKS, AND TOURISM-FISHERIES SECTION



## Cheney District Update



*Fishing for large wipers and walleyes has been excellent this year at Cheney. Some anglers have reported catching over 100 wipers per day, with many over the 21" minimum length limit.*



It seems like just yesterday we were chasing spawning walleyes; however, all of the sudden we are closing in on mid-summer and the usual hot, windy weather has finally arrived. The long, cool, and somewhat wet spring was just what south-central Kansas needed, although some reservoirs are still feeling the effects of the drought. Currently, Cheney Reservoir is around 4.75 feet low (up from eight feet low), while Kanopolis is still three feet below conservation pool and seven feet below normal summer operating pool. On a positive note, the east marina boat ramp at Cheney is in good shape, and a dredging project at Kanopolis has deepened the Langley boat ramp, which is now useable. Both ramps are still the only functional launches on each reservoir. Wellington City Lake has also caught some runoff, which increased the reservoir level to a point where all boating is allowed. Finally, Kingman State Fishing Lake is full after last fall's renovation and is providing some angling opportunities. Unfortunately, Anthony City Lake is still dry and isn't showing signs of filling any time soon.

Fishing started slowly this spring, but once things got going, there has been several tremendous bites that anglers have taken advantage of. One of the more surprising events this spring was the crappie fishing at Cheney Reservoir. For about three weeks starting around the second week of May, many anglers easily caught their limits of 50 crappie per day, with very few under the 10" minimum length limit. Crappie up to 17" and 18" were reported to the marina. At the same time, the white bass and wiper bite was hot on the dam. Wipers up to 26" were taken right along with the crappie. The good fishing at Cheney continues, as wiper and walleye fishing has been excellent. Anglers pulling crankbaits on shallow points have had tremendous luck, especially on legal wipers (larger than 21") with a few big walleye mixed in.

Saugeye anglers were also very happy to see the boat ramp dredging project at Kanopolis, as limits of five fish per day were common at the end of May. Fishing has since slowed a bit, but saugeye up to 20" have been a fairly common occurrence this spring.

At the smaller lakes in the district, angling for channel catfish and largemouth bass has been good, as stringers of BIG channel catfish have been taken at McPherson State Fishing Lake. There have been excellent largemouth bass reports at McPherson as well with many fish over 20" reported to the creel clerk.



## Spotlight on McPherson State Fishing Lake

McPherson State Fishing Lake (SFL) is a 46-acre impoundment on the Maxwell Wildlife Refuge north of Canton. Although the reservoir is fairly small in size, there is nothing small about the lake's ability to produce big fish. Good water quality, abundant structure, and good cover contribute to tremendous populations of largemouth bass and channel catfish. The panfish populations at McPherson SFL are challenged by a high abundance of gizzard shad, which competes for food resources with juvenile and adult bluegill, crappie, and redear sunfish. Although gizzard shad negatively affect panfish, they provide high-quality forage for excellent populations of largemouth bass and adult channel catfish.

Fisheries management at McPherson SFL has evolved over time in response to several challenges. First, concern regarding overharvest of channel catfish led managers to implement a 15" minimum length limit in 2000 and 2/day creel limit in 2007. Both regulations have improved the size structure of channel catfish to a point where the average channel catfish harvested in the 2009 creel survey was 3.3 lb, compared to 1.5 lb in 1997.



*Largemouth bass in excess of seven pounds have been sampled at McPherson SFL this year. A nine pound channel catfish was the biggest fish caught last fall in netting samples, although there are certainly bigger fish in the reservoir.*

Largemouth bass are also specially regulated at McPherson SFL. The density of bass is especially high and there has historically been concern over slow growth due to intraspecific competition between bass. As such, a 13-18" protected slot limit was enacted in 2009. The purpose of the slot limit is to reduce numbers of small fish in a system to increase overall growth, while still allowing harvest of a few trophy fish. The strategy appears to be working as the proportion of bass under 13" has decreased and the proportion above 20" has increased. Regardless, McPherson SFL is one of the premier largemouth bass destinations in central Kansas.

As mentioned before, the quality of panfish populations at McPherson SFL are generally below average. In an attempt to reduce numbers of stunted crappie, KDWP began stocking saugeye in 2009. Saugeye are used as a management tool in small impoundments and have been shown to reduce crappie numbers, thus increasing size structure. For several years, the stockings appeared unsuccessful; however, in 2012, a few were sampled in fall gill net surveys. Additionally, several saugeye have been caught this year by anglers. One boat that was surveyed by the creel clerk this spring had caught four in one day. The biggest saugeye caught to date was a 23.5" fish!

## Spotlight on McPherson State Fishing Lake

One troubling development at McPherson SFL in the last two years has been the emergence of fish species that were not stocked by KDWP and are likely the result of unauthorized stocking by the public. First, smallmouth bass began showing up in angler's creels last summer, and during our spring largemouth bass sample in May, we sampled two smallmouth. Smallmouth bass do not likely represent a direct threat to the fishery as they are generally out-competed by largemouth bass in small impoundments. However, most waters in the vicinity of McPherson SFL that contain smallmouth bass are infested with zebra mussels. As such, any water that may have come with the smallmouth bass from their lake of origin may have contained zebra mussel veligers which may have infested McPherson SFL. To date, no zebra mussels have been confirmed in McPherson SFL, but illegal stockings such as this one are a main vector of aquatic nuisance species. Also, several flathead catfish have shown up in angler creels as well as KDWP samples. Flathead catfish are voracious predators that can throw off the balance of a fish population, especially in small impoundments. Additionally, large flatheads tend to eat large meals, which could include big channel catfish or largemouth bass, as they both occupy similar habitats to flatheads. Regardless, flathead catfish are undesirable for small impoundments. ***It should be clear to all Kansas anglers that it is ILLEGAL to release any fish into public waters unless caught from that water.***



*Saugeye up to 23.5" have been taken at McPherson SFL this year. Fish from multiple year-classes have been sampled, indicating some level of success from several stockings. Hopefully, the saugeye flourish in the lake and control over-abundant crappie and gizzard shad. Although the majority of the crappie at McPherson SFL are under 8", several fish in the 14"-15" were collected during the spring electrofishing sample.*

*With assistance from the KDWP Elk City Fisheries Biologist, a topographic map was made of McPherson SFL this spring. Copies of the map can be downloaded from the KDWP website on the [McPherson SFL lake page](#).*



## New study begins at Cheney Reservoir

An exciting new study has recently begun at Cheney Reservoir to examine the impact of special management on the invasive white perch population. Beginning in the early 2000's, restrictive length and creel limits were enacted in an attempt to biologically control white perch, whose numbers had dramatically increased since their accidental introduction in the early 1990's. The project will examine the extent to which the predators in Cheney's fish community consume white perch. These data will allow managers to fine-tune fish populations to maximize predation on white perch.

Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism is teaming with the Biology Department at Fort Hays State University (FHSU) on the study. Sampling will also be conducted at El Dorado Reservoir, which was infested with white perch in 2009. Two graduate students from FHSU will be conducting the majority of the field and lab work examining food habits (what the fish are eating) in a couple different ways. First, stomach contents will be extracted from predators by essentially pumping their stomachs. Secondly, since different trophic levels of the food web consume different material, each prey and predator have unique chemical signatures in their tissues (basically, you are what you eat!). Using an analysis that examines a fish's chemical make-up, we can hopefully determine who is eating whom in the lake.

So, if you see a couple students out sampling on the lake, go ahead and ask them what the fish are eating ('cause they'll know!).



*White perch sampled from the stomachs of predators.*

*Photo courtesy of N. Gosch*

## Kingman SFL progress

Kingman SFL is making good progress after last fall's renovation. This spring, we conducted an electrofishing survey and are happy to report that no white perch or gizzard shad were seen in the lake. We also collected several largemouth bass that were stocked last fall, with the biggest fish measuring 14". Several large channel catfish that were stocked were also collected. In early May, 3,000 northern pike fingerlings were obtained from the North Platte Fish Hatchery in Nebraska (Thanks, Nebraska!) and stocked into the reservoir.



Kingman SFL is now completely full and the water is very clear in the absence of common carp and gizzard shad. Newly stocked game fish should be growing like crazy and should provide some angling potential this fall. Some more large channel catfish (4-6 lb) should also be stocked later in June.

## Closing comments

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Good fishing,

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