



GLEN ELDER DISTRICT FISHERIES NEWSLETTER

Volume 6, Issue 2

Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, & Tourism

Summer 2015

Drought...What Drought???

This year will definitely be one that we'll remember in this area for the ample amount of rain we have received and the amazing benefits that Mother Nature has bestowed on our crops, rivers, streams, lakes, and reservoirs.

While this year won't go down in the record books like 1993 (thank goodness) when Glen Elder Reservoir reached 1487.02 feet above sea level or 31.4 feet high, we have definitely had a near-ideal amount of moisture in the area and this has been fairly widespread in the northcentral part of the state. West and south of here are different stories where Wilson Reservoir is 8.8 feet low, Kirwin is 14.4 feet low, Norton is 16.1 feet down, Webster is 21.4 feet, and Cedar Bluff Reservoir is 23.5 feet below full pool.

Glen Elder traditionally has a fairly stable water level, although it does resemble its western Kansas cousins by suffering lowered water levels from time to time as a result of extended drought conditions. Glen Elder last reached conservation pool of 1455.6 on May 14, 2012, but declined to a low of 1452.4 on October 12th, a 4.2 foot decline in only 5 months. Water levels remained between 2 and 4 feet low for the next 3 years until a wet cycle that began in 2014, but really contributed in 2015, turned things around.

Steady rains in the watershed during May and early June set the stage for a small rise, but big rains in early August finally put the reservoir over the top as conservation pool was reached (and exceeded) on August 5th, 2015.

Lovewell Reservoir is an irrigation reservoir and traditionally suffers from annual drawdowns each summer as water is flushed from the reservoir to irrigate crops downstream. Most years, the reservoir elevation will reach 5-10 feet below conservation by the end of August. Fortunately, an inlet canal has been developed which can bring water in as needed and almost assure a full reservoir by the following spring.

2015 has been an anomaly of sorts, however, as the reservoir is only 0.7 feet low in mid-August because of the wet year we've seen. Based on our initial sampling this summer, this high water may already be providing fishery benefits with young walleye and crappie observed in our summer seining efforts. It is very early still, but things look like they are headed in the right direction!

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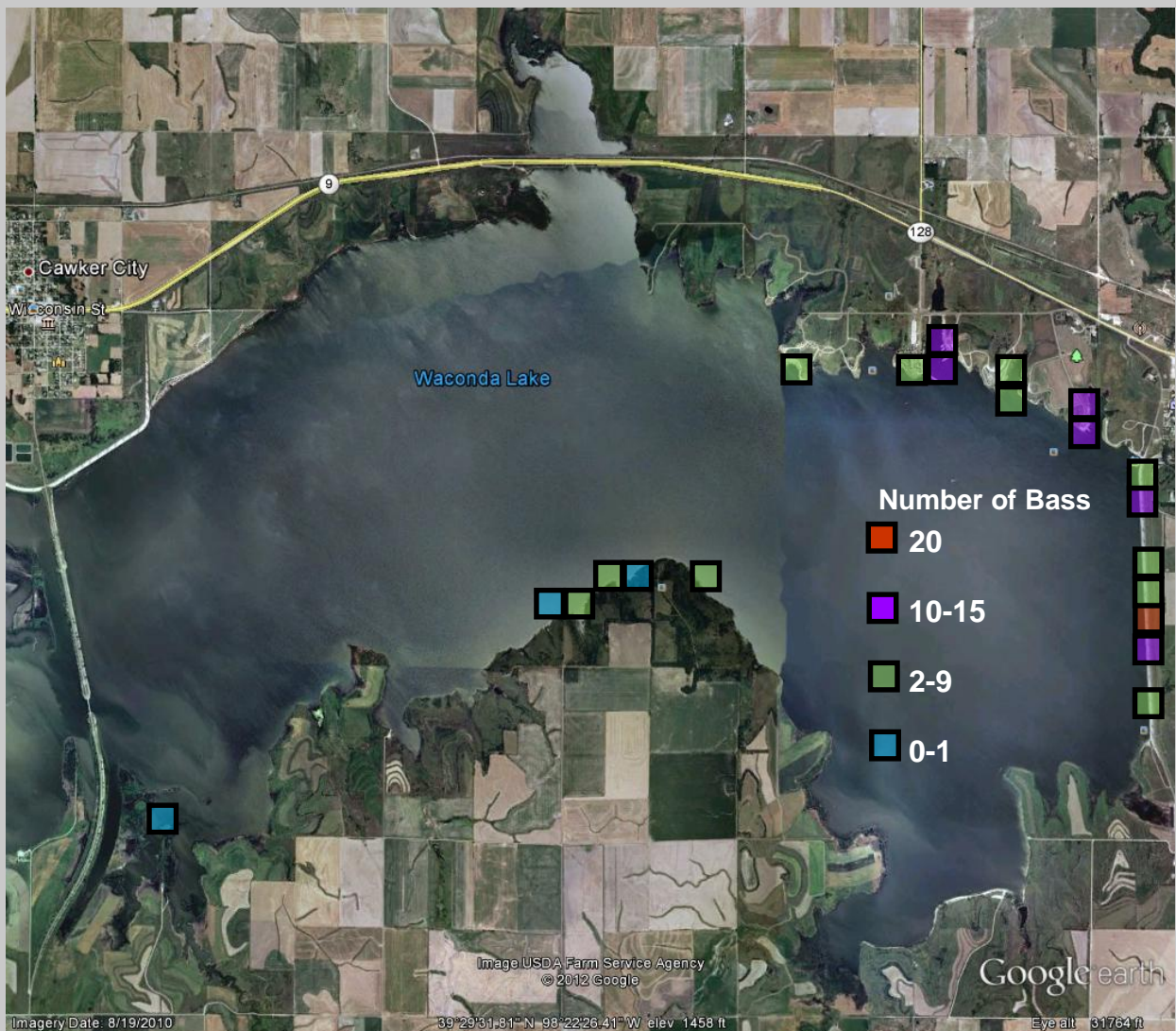
Emerson Lake in Jewell has been full most of 2015 thanks to consistent rains and a large watershed.



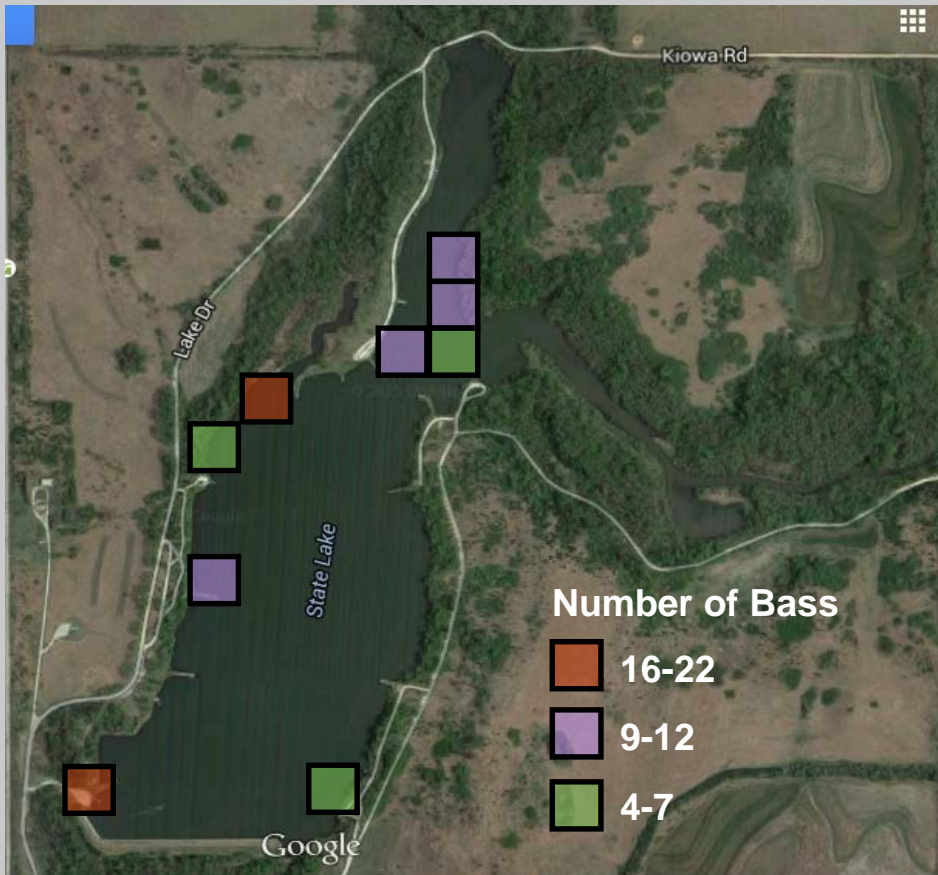
Rocky Pond, located in Belleville, is nearly full in August 2015 after going completely dry last year. The city is planning a large dredging effort to add more water storage to the lake.

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The Glen Elder bass sample consisted of 160 smallmouth bass, 9 largemouth bass, and 1 spotted bass when conducted in April and May 2015. The smallmouth bass density rating increased 9% compared with 2014, the preferred rating increased 4%, but the lunker rating declined 77%. Twenty-six percent of the fish were between 4 and 7 inches, 48% were 8 to 12 inches, 26% were 13-16 inches, and 1% were over 17 inches. The biggest fish weighed 3.2 pounds and anglers should expect another good black bass year in 2015. Smallmouth can be found along the dam, state park coves, and on the south bluffs. Largemouth bass are typically found in Osage Cove, Mill Creek, and the bluffs coves in low numbers, but good size.



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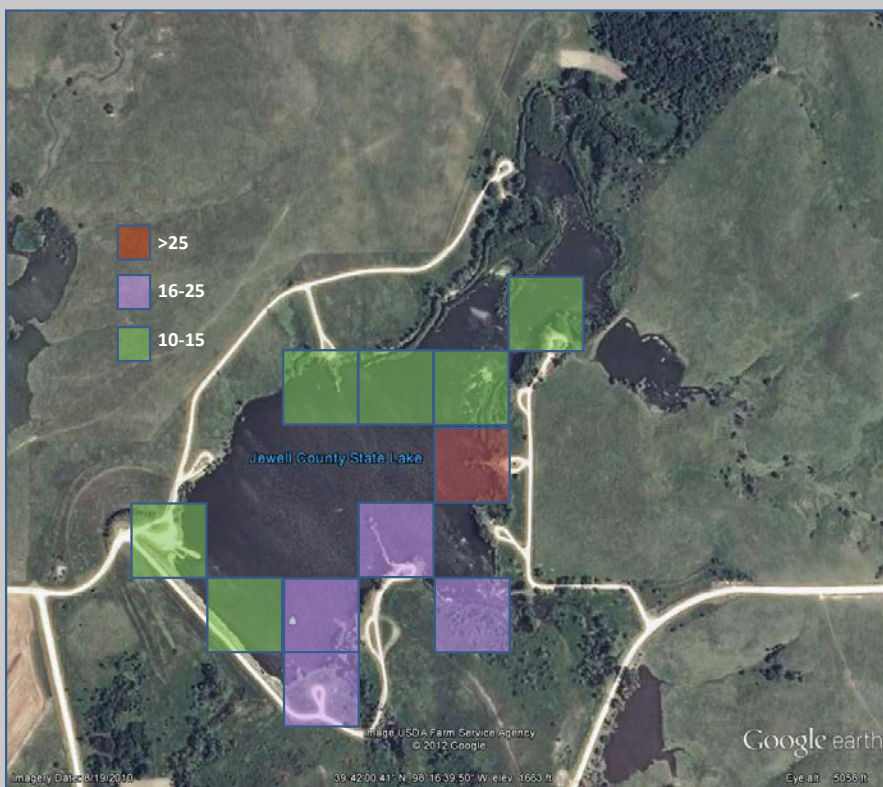


Ottawa State Fishing Lake was sampled in May and catch rates were much improved over the 2014 sample. In 1.5 hours of sampling, 94 large-mouth bass were collected for a catch rate of 57 fish over 9 inches per hour of sampling. This is a nice increase from the 2014 catch rate. The density rating increased from 18.5 in the 2014 sample to 49.0 in 2015. This large increase is due to recent growth and reproduction of bass into the population, and habitat characteristics at the time of sampling.

Preferred rating increased 393% while lunker rating remained at 0. Recruitment in recent years looks poor, however, as only six fish less than 9 inches were collected, representing 6% of the catch. Fish between 9 and 12 inches accounted for 6% of the catch while fish in the 13 to 18 inch range represented 76% of the population. No fish over 19 inches were collected and the biggest fish weighed 3.4 pounds and measured 18 inches. The fish were in excellent body condition and appear to be growing very well. Fishing prospects for 2016 look good with most of the fish between 13 and 17 inches, and weighing 1-3 pounds.

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At Jewell, 192 largemouth bass were collected during 1.8 hours of electrofishing for a catch rate of 67 fish over 9 inches per hour of sampling. This is a decrease from the 2014 catch rate of 122 per hour. The density rating decreased from 109.8 in the 2014 sample to 63.9 in 2015. This large decrease is due to the slot length limit allowing



some harvest of smaller bass in an effort to reduce overcrowding and stunting. Preferred rating increased 375% while lunker rating increased slightly. These fish continue to reproduce well with good numbers of fish between 6 and 8 inches accounting for 35% of the catch. Fish between 9 and 12 inches accounted for 6% of the catch while fish in the protected 13 to 18 inch slot length limit represented 56% of the population. Only one fish greater than the slot

limit was collected, a 22 inch fish that weighed 6 pounds. Fishing prospects for 2016 look very good with high amounts of catch and release and a small chance of catching some larger fish.

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Commercial Fisherman Back at Glen Elder

Some of you may remember that J.D. Bell, a commercial fisherman, worked at Glen Elder Reservoir between July 2004 and February 2008 with the goal of removing as much unwanted fish biomass as he could. During that time, J.D. successfully removed 1.25 MILLION pounds of non-sport fish. Bigmouth buffalo accounted for most of the catch (1.17 million pounds), followed by gar (33,000 pounds), carp (19,000 pounds), river carpsucker (19,000 pounds), drum (1,200 pounds), and gizzard shad (550 pounds).

His work concluded just before the big rains came on Memorial Day weekend 2008 and refilled the reservoir. The removal of over one million pounds of fish biomass, combined with the excellent habitat that developed as the reservoir refilled, led to some of the most outstanding crappie and walleye fishing that Glen Elder anglers have enjoyed in some time.

Since July, J.D. and his crew have been working hard west of the causeway where the highest concentrations of non-sport fish are. They typically pull a 4,000 foot seine through an area on either the South Fork or North Fork rivers with the primary target species of bigmouth buffalo. This time, however, J.D. has a market for common carp and gizzard shad and will be attempting to remove as many of those species as he can.



He has already removed 70,000 pounds in just over a month of fishing. The buffalo are collected and held in pens for several days until a semi can transport them to Brooklyn and Chinatown in New York City. The fish are kept alive throughout the journey and held in tanks where they sell for \$2.00-\$3.00/pound.

J.D. will continue fishing at Glen Elder and Lovewell as long as the catches stay high and the market remains strong. His work will benefit the sport fish in our reservoirs and improve the fishing for everyone.

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11th Annual Glen Elder Tournament Results

The Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism and the Waconda Lake Association hosted the 11th annual Youth Fishing Tournament at Waconda Lake on Saturday, June 6th, 2015. Approximately 150 young anglers boarded boats with a warm, breezy morning welcoming them on the water. By lunchtime, the wind was gusting 20-25 mph and temperatures had heated up, but the morning allowed for comfortable fishing for all involved.

The fishing was much better this year compared to last year's cold and very windy conditions and most were able to bring in at least a few with walleye, drum, wiper, and channel catfish leading the way. Of the 145 youth who fished on the 40 boats volunteered by local anglers and the 8 youth who fished off the bank, 133 (87%) were able to catch at least one fish. The total of 782 caught fish included 445 walleye, 158 drum, 66 wipers, 54 channel catfish, 31 white bass, 16 smallmouth bass, 5 flathead catfish, 3 gar, 2 bluegill, 1 crappie, and 1 striped bass.

We would like to extend a very special THANK YOU to all of the boat drivers and other volunteers who provided their time and equipment, the Waconda Lake Association for providing lunch and helping cover the cost of the t-shirts, and Wayne Miner who donated 150 dozen nightcrawlers.

Also, many thanks to the 83 sponsors who donated nearly \$4,000 in prizes. Because of their generosity each youth was able to take home a new fishing pole, t-shirt, goodie bag of tackle and gift certificates, and other prizes. Special thanks also to Connor Chance and the staff of the Glen Elder area office for assisting with the event. The winners are listed below.

MOST FISH

- Peyton Johnson (Fairfield, NE), 30 total caught

BIGGEST FISH

- Walleye: Austin Imler (Glensvil, NE), 21½ inches
- Crappie: Noah Gerstner (Beloit), 11 inches
- Channel Catfish: Eli Hahn (Cawker City), 27 inches
- White Bass: Cooper Duskie (Glen Elder), 16¼ inches
- Wiper: Cadyn Brummer (Randall), 25¾ inches

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- Smallmouth Bass: Cheyenne Mohler (Mankato), 16½ inches
- Drum: Preston Ostmeyer (Natoma), 22½ inches
- Bluegill: Hannah Starbuck (Beloit), 9 inches
- Flathead Catfish: Reilly Stevens (Pawnee Rock), 13 inches
- Gar: Caleb Hake (Cawker City), 41 inches

SMALLEST FISH

- Olivia Wright (Beloit), 4 inches (striped bass)

We plan on hosting this event again next year on June 4th so mark it on your calendars and look forward to another fun-filled day at Waconda Lake!



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District Realignment

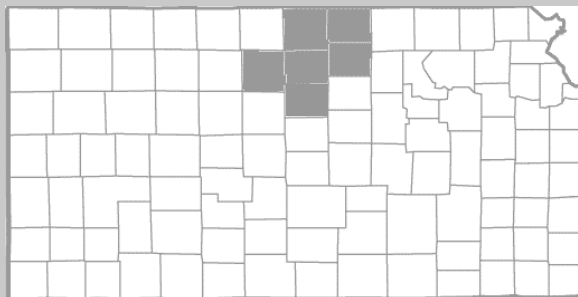
You may have already noticed while reading through this newsletter that the lakes and reservoirs mentioned are not the same as they have been the past several years.

KDWPT recently hired Bryan Sowards at the Wilson office to replace Tommie Berger who retired in September 2011. I had been filling in for Russell and Lincoln counties until a replacement was hired, and Bryan will now take over those 2 counties, in addition to his other counties.

At the same time, I picked up Ottawa and Cloud counties from another biologist and will now be responsible for managing Ottawa State Fishing Lake.

I really enjoyed my time working on Wilson Reservoir and think things are headed in the right direction there. It just needs some timely and well-placed rainfall!

If you have any pond or fisheries related questions for these two counties or any of my other district counties (Mitchell, Jewell, Osborne, Republic), don't hesitate to contact me. One of my favorite parts of the job is interacting with anglers and other members of the public!



I hope you enjoy the latest edition of the Glen Elder district newsletter. I will continue to provide information for Glen Elder and Lovewell Reservoirs, Jewell State Fishing Lake, Ottawa State Fishing Lake, Rocky Pond in Belleville, and Jewell City Lake.

Don't forget to check out the many FISH properties in the area as well. They can offer some great fishing.

If you know someone who would 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 to Glen Elder District Fisheries newsletter" and we'll get you taken off of the list. If you have any questions or comments feel free to send them in.

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