

Ellsworth District Fisheries



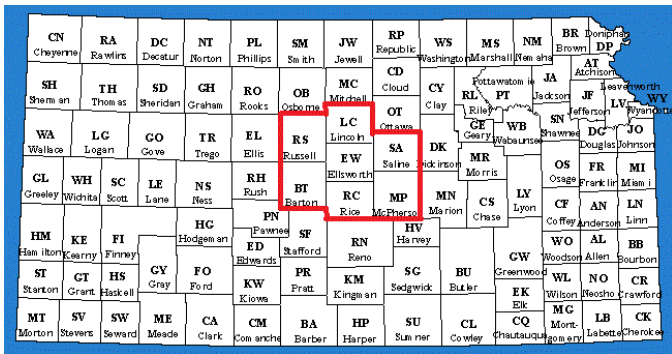
Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism Fisheries Division

Spring 2019

District Information

Bryan Sowards – Fisheries Biologist
 Wilson Area Office
 #3 State Park Rd. Sylvan Grove, KS 67481
 (785)658-2465

Counties and Reservoirs



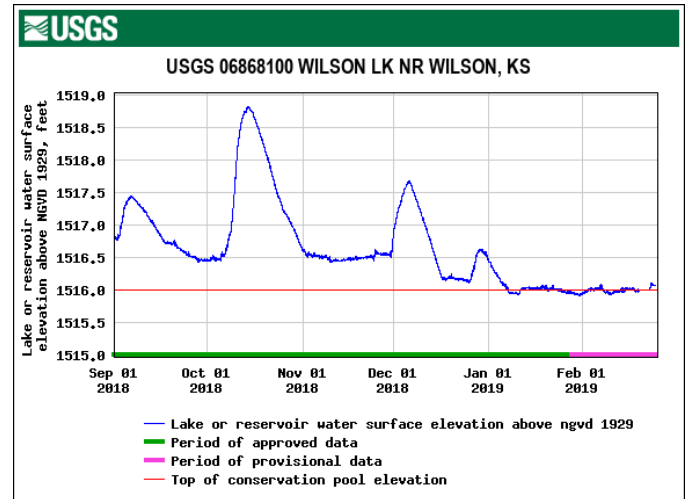
Russell	Wilson Reservoir – 9,000 acres
Lincoln	Only leased F.I.S.H. properties
Saline	Saline State Fishing Lake (DRY)
	Lakewood Lake - Salina – 6 acres
	Indian Rock Lake - Salina (DRY)
Barton	Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area
	Stone Lake – Great Bend - 40 acres
	Veteran’s Lake – Great Bend - 13 acres
Ellsworth	Kanopolis Reservoir – 3,550 acres
	Holyrood City Lake – 13 acres
Rice	Sterling City Lake - 10 acres
McPherson	McPherson State Fishing Lake - 47 acres
	Black Kettle State Lake – 8 acres
	Windom City Pond – 1 acre

Note: Keep in mind that there are various Arkansas River access points throughout the region and F.I.S.H. Program properties. The F.I.S.H. Program leases the angling rights from private landowners to allow you to fish their ponds. Get the latest Kansas Fishing Atlas for details.

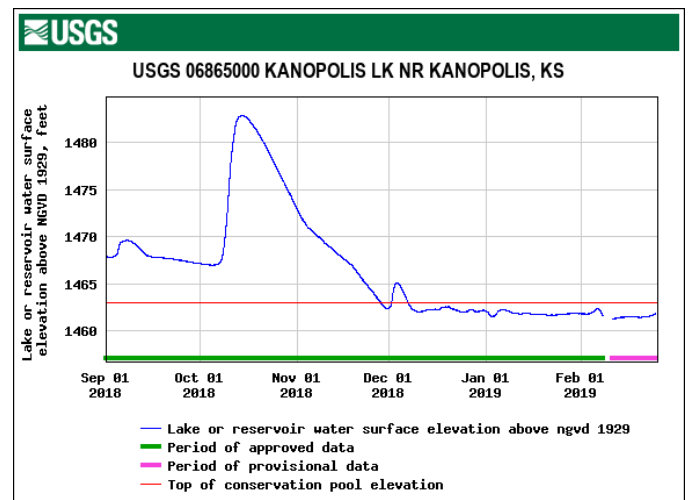


Winter Weather Conditions

Wilson Reservoir) The reservoir filled in September 2016 and has been above conservation pool (1,516.00') for 2.5 years. The last 6 months the lake has experienced several elevation rises due to an extremely wet September - March.



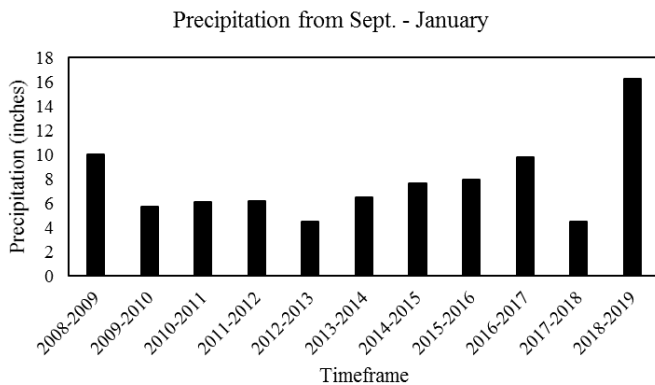
Kanopolis Reservoir) The heavy precipitation this fall brought the elevation soaring to 20 feet above conservation pool; the highest elevation since the flood of 1993. Since December, the reservoir has been below conservation pool due to outlet repairs by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Hopefully, the reservoir will begin to rise again this spring.





The south boat ramp at Kanopolis Reservoir in October 2018.

This Fall and Winter has been the wettest in recent history. The timeframes of September - January have experienced greater than 16 inches of precipitation, significantly higher than values for the previous 10 years (see below).



High inflows from winter precipitation should improve the reservoir's productivity this year. High inflows have washed in nutrients from the watershed and should lead to high abundance of plankton. Plankton is the base of the food chain necessary for juvenile fish to survive and grow.

Fall Fish Sampling Guide

Wilson Reservoir

Blue Catfish	2017 samples	2018 samples
Total fish	202	75
% of <20-inch fish	8	9
% of 20-inch fish	91	75
% of 30-inch fish	1	16

These catches are a combination of Blue Catfish caught from gill nets, electrofishing, and supplemental floatlines. Blue Catfish growth has improved. The proportion of the sample of fish greater than 30 inches has improved dramatically. The number of fish collected dropped due to changes in supplemental sampling design.



The author holding the largest Blue Catfish from the 2018 samples. It was collected using supplemental gill nets in 2018 and measured 35 inches and weighed 25 pounds.

Channel Catfish	2017 sample	2018 sample
Total fish in nets	107	168
% of 11-inch fish	6	18
% of 16-inch fish	90	72
% of 24-inch fish	4	9
% of 28-inch fish	0	1

Channel catfish numbers have improved and there's a higher proportion of both smaller catfish, indicating good recruitment, and larger catfish, greater than 24 inches.

Largemouth Bass	2017 sample	2018 sample
Total fish electrofished	114	240
% of 8-inch fish	54	26
% of 12-inch fish	16	45
% of 150-inch fish	30	28
% of 20-inch fish	0	1

Bass reproduction exploded when Wilson Lake refilled. Those young fish have grown extremely well and most fish hatched in 2016 will be over the legal size (15 inches) this spring. Largemouth bass stockings in 2016 seem to have aided in the quick recovery of the population.



Ernesto Flores displaying high quality largemouth bass collected with electrofishing in May 2018.

Smallmouth Bass	2017 sample	2018 sample
Total fish electrofished	77	102
% of 7-inch fish	18	14
% of 11-inch fish	35	18
% of 14-inch fish	37	45
% of 17-inch fish	10	23

This remains one of the top three Smallmouth Bass destinations in Kansas. There is potential for near state-record catches in 2019.



Ernesto Flores displaying a nearly 5-pound Smallmouth Bass collected by electrofishing in May 2018.

Stripers	2017 sample	2018 sample
Total fish in nets	60	78
% of 12-inch fish	11	6
% of 20-inch fish	87	89
% of 30-inch fish	2	5

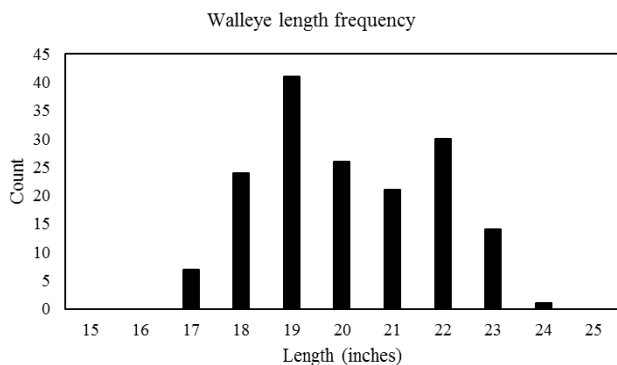
Striper growth seems to have improved and a greater percentage of fish over 30 inches were collected during fall samples.



Melissa Skelton with a striper caught during the 2018 Fall samples.

Walleye	2017 sample	2018 sample
Total fish in nets	146	167
% of 10-inch fish	1	0
% of 15-inch fish	73	43
% of 20-inch fish	26	57
% of 25-inch fish	0	0

Walleye are aging. Most of the sample consisted of fish greater than 20 inches and the smallest fish collected measured 17 inches. Wilson ranks No. 1 in the state for density of 20-inch Walleye. Reproduction, despite stocking Walleye in 2018, hasn't been successful. We will attempt to stock larger Walleye in 2019.



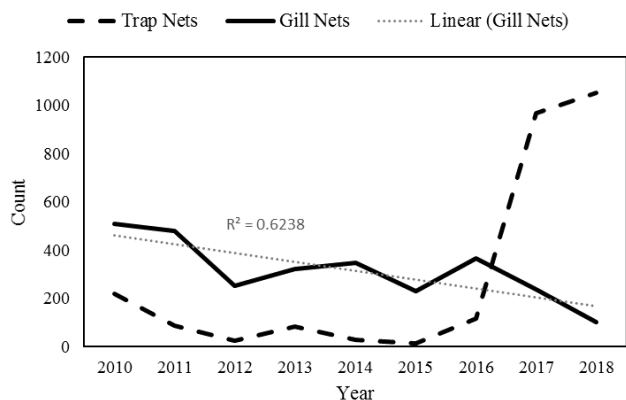
The number of Walleye collected during Fall sampling by inch group.

White Bass	2017 sample	2018 sample
Total fish in nets	89	64
% of 6-inch fish	1	6
% of 9-inch fish	11	3
% of 12-inch fish	74	75
% of 15-inch fish	14	14
% of 18-inch fish	0	0

Recruitment has improved a bit, but the population looks similar in 2018 compared to 2017.

White Perch	2017 sample	2018 sample
Total fish in nets	1,206	1,156
% of fish <5 inches	20	71
% of 5-inch fish	62	27
% of 8-inch fish	8	1
% of 10-inch fish	8	1
% of 12-inch fish	2	<1%

White perch numbers collected in trap nets and gill nets, combined, dramatically increased in 2017 and abundance remains very high. The abundance of White Perch less than 5 inches is alarming, and likely the result of productive water and an abundance of shoreline habitat (Common Reed Grass).



The number of White Perch collected in both trap nets and gill nets since 2010. It's obvious that the number of White Perch has exploded since the lake refilled in 2016, despite low catches in gill nets. The decrease in catch rates over time in gill nets is a direct result of fewer large White Perch, while the increase in trap net catches is a result of an extreme increase in small White Perch.

Kanopolis Reservoir

Blue Catfish	2017 sample	2018 sample
Total fish in nets	0	109
% of fish <12 inches	-	88
% of 12-inch fish	-	11
% of 20-inch fish	-	1
% of 30-inch fish	-	0

Blue catfish have been stocked since 2008 but have not become established. We stocked 30,000 blue catfish in 2017 but didn't sample them with low-frequency electrofishing. The 2018 sample was impressive, and almost entirely composed of fish that were stocked in 2017. If you're catfishing, you should notice a lot of 12- to 15-inch Blue Catfish if most of them stayed in the reservoir and didn't get washed downstream during the October flood.



Ernesto Flores displaying a 12-inch Blue Catfish collected at Kanopolis Reservoir in August 2018. This individual was 1.5 years old when we collected it.

Channel Catfish	2017 sample	2018 sample
Total fish in nets	117	87
% of 11-inch fish	33	40
% of 16-inch fish	67	57
% of 24-inch fish	0	3

Sample numbers dropped mostly due to poor sampling conditions. The reservoir was 7 feet high when we sampled it, making catches difficult for most species.

Largemouth Bass	2017 sample	2018 sample
Total fish in nets	33	55
% of 8-inch fish	44	22
% of 12-inch fish	37	52
% of 15-inch fish	19	26
% of 21-inch fish	0	0

Largemouth Bass have benefitted from stockings in 2016. These individuals are growing well.



Ryan Pinkall (left) and Ernesto Flores (right) displaying two Largemouth Bass collected at Kanopolis in May 2018.

Crappie	2017 sample	2018 sample
Total fish in nets	255	139
% of 5-inch fish	47	18
% of 8-inch fish	43	63
% of 10-inch fish	8	14
% of 12-inch fish	1	5

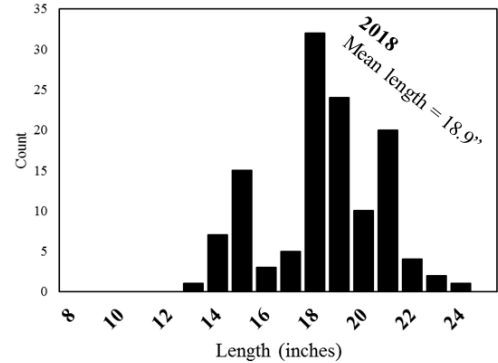
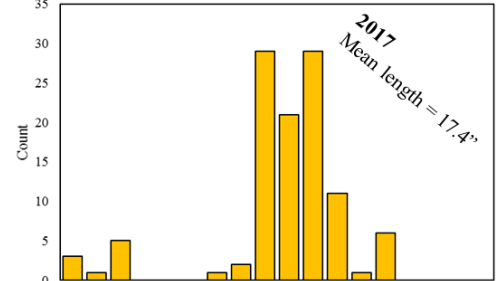
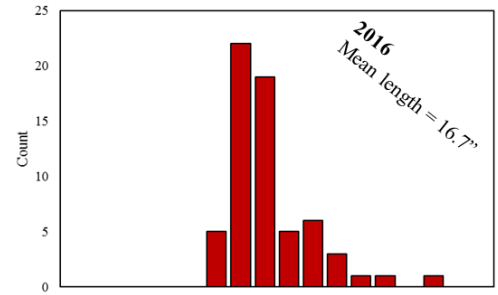
Crappie remain similar at Kanopolis, but we noted a greater percentage of fish larger than 10 inches in 2018 compared to 2017.

White Bass	2017 sample	2018 sample
Total fish in nets	171	221
% of 6-inch fish	2	28
% of 9-inch fish	8	45
% of 12-inch fish	73	22
% of 15-inch fish	17	5

White Bass numbers have increased slightly due to higher recruitment in 2018. There's a high abundance of fish from 6 to 9 inches. Fishing for White Bass should improve in 2019.

Saugeye	2017 sample	2018 sample
Total fish in nets	109	163
% of 9-inch fish	6	1
% of 14-inch fish	50	24
% of 18-inch fish	44	69
% of 22-inch fish	0	6

A new 18-inch minimum length limit began in 2017. Saugeye numbers and size structure improved immediately in 2017 and again in 2018. The 2018 sample indicates that 75% of the current population consists of Saugeye that are large enough to harvest (over the 18-inch minimum-length limit)!



Saugeye length frequency in 2016 (red), 2017 (yellow), and 2018 (black) samples. Note the shift to the right or overall improvement of size over time. Saugeye fishing should be great in 2019.



Ernesto Flores displaying a healthy Saugeye at Kanopolis.

McPherson State Lake

Bluegill	2017 sample	2018 sample
Total fish in nets	221	215
% of 3-inch fish	22	52
% of 6-inch fish	78	48
% of 8-inch fish	0	0

Six-inch fish are common.

Channel Catfish	2017 sample	2018 sample
Total fish in nets	51	40
% of 11-inch fish	65	32.5
% of 16-inch fish	35	62.5
% of 24-inch fish	0	5
% of 28-inch fish	0	0

The number of catfish larger than the 15-inch length limit is the highest it's been in years. Catfishing should be good at McPherson in 2019.

Largemouth Bass	2017 sample	2018 sample
Total fish electrofished	173	159
% of 8-inch fish	26	31
% of 12-inch fish	25	26
% of 15-inch fish	47	42
% of 20-inch fish	2	1

Great bass fishing at McPherson. This is a very stable population.



Crappie	2017 sample	2018 sample
Total fish in nets	300	371
% of 5-inch fish	48	33
% of 8-inch fish	48	61
% of 10-inch fish	3	6
% of 12-inch fish	1	0

The number of 8-inch crappie and above increased in the 2018 sample. Catch and eat all the small crappie you can manage!!!

Saugeye	2017 sample	2018 sample
Total fish in nets	20	28
% of 9-inch fish	0	36
% of 14-inch fish	10	29
% of 18-inch fish	50	14
% of 22-inch fish	40	21

The Saugeye minimum length limit is now 21 inches and only 2 can be kept per day. We stocked Saugeye in 2018 and it showed in the fall sample as 36% of the catch were Saugeye less than 14 inches.



Jason Black with a Saugeye collected at McPherson State Lake.

Parting Shot

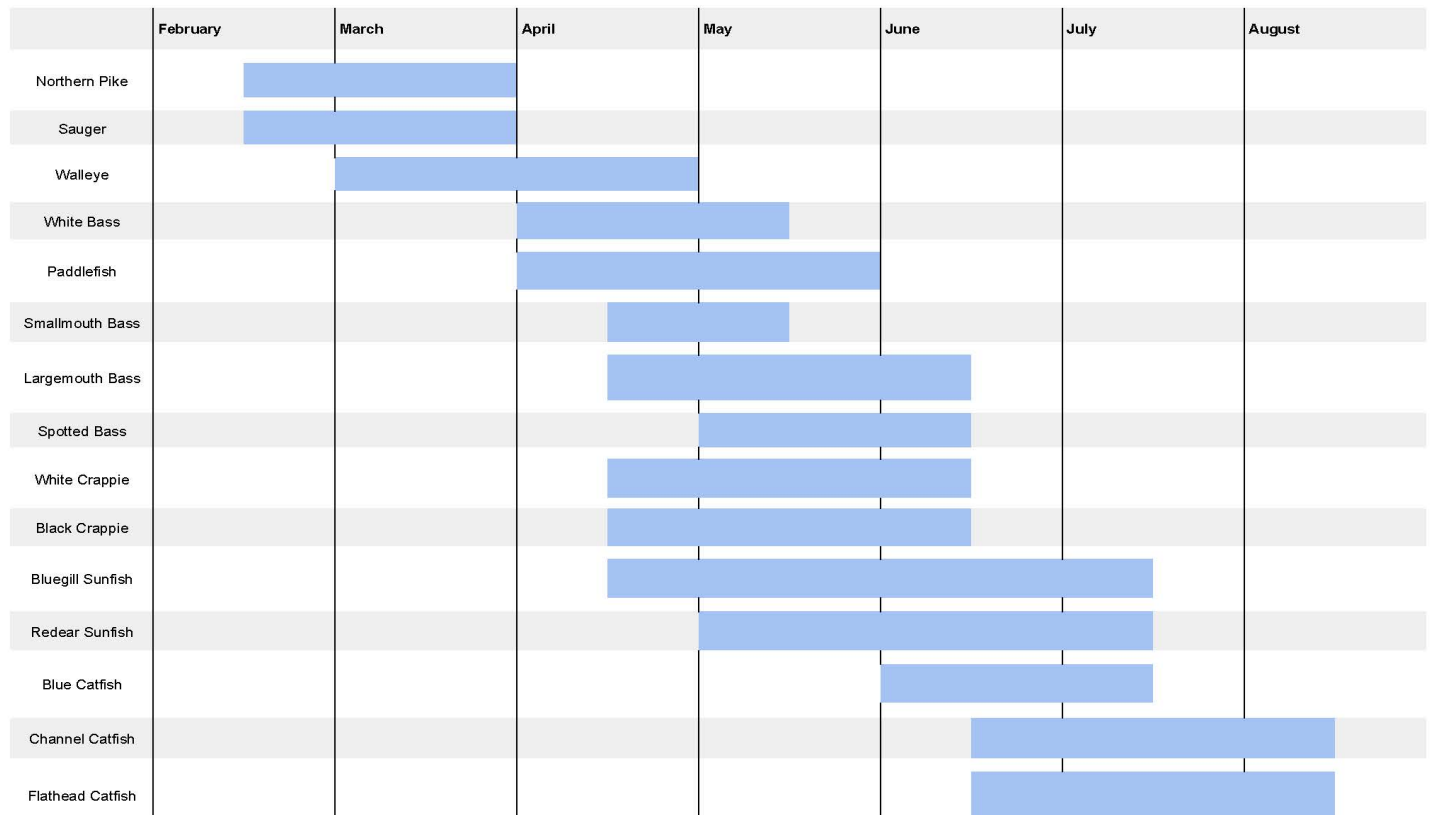


These bass were caught at a walk-in fishing pond (F.I.S.H. Property) in Lincoln County in June 2018. These properties can provide excellent fishing opportunities!

Spawning Schedules

Fish species spawn at varying times of the year. This is based on a species' physiology, water temperature, and the changing day length. Water levels and other abiotic conditions can also play a role. Cold-water species (Northern Pike, Walleye, etc.) typically spawn first, followed by black basses and crappies, and finally catfishes. This rough display (below) illustrates typical spawning times for popular Kansas sport fish. Remember, large females are typically more difficult to catch during the spawn for most fish species. Their energy and focus is on reproducing and not eating your bait. It's likely a better plan of action to target these fish as the spawn draws to a close and they begin feeding again.

Typical Fish Spawning Months in Kansas*



**Please note that fish spawning is dependent on water temperatures, day length and other factors, which can vary annually and by location. This information is meant to be a general guideline for anglers curious about the approximate spawning seasons, and not an exact representation of specific start and ending dates for fish spawning time in Kansas.*

Newsletter Subscription

If you know someone who might like to subscribe to the newsletter, they can do so by clicking [here](#). If you would like to unsubscribe, please send your info to [contact us](#) with “unsubscribe Ellsworth Fishing District newsletter” and we’ll get you taken off the list.

Go Fish Kansas!



Bryan Sowards
 District Fisheries Biologist
 Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism
 #3 State Park Rd.
 Sylvan Grove, KS 67481
 (785)658-2465

All articles are copyright of Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism and cannot be copied or distributed without permission from KDWP.