



Woodson District Fisheries News

Spring 2019

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Woodson State Fishing Lake Update



A new year brings a new beginning to Woodson State Fishing Lake. The lake has been dry for over a year, but with the completion of the spillway project in late 2018 the time has come to close the valve and turn this lake back into a destination fishery. Plans are in place to restock the lake this year, and stocking efforts will begin hopefully early spring given water conditions are conducive for such efforts. Fish that are on the stocking list include largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, black crappie, walleye, and smallmouth bass. Fathead minnows and golden shiners will be stocked to provide forage. Since the lakebed was dry for a full growing season, an unbelievable amount of terrestrial vegetation covered the entire lakebed. The dominant species of vegetation was smartweed which reached heights of 7-8 feet. In addition to smartweed, willow and cottonwood saplings have grown throughout the lake and reached heights of 10-12 feet. Needless to say, this vegetation is going to provide some excellent early season habitat and provide optimal growing conditions for all species stocked. Before the vegetation was present, I spent countless hours working on habitat improvements for the lake and still have a few things to do before the lake fills. So far, I have placed upwards of 220 Georgia Cubes and around 100 brush piles in the lake. I plan to add some more cubes and potentially some more cedar tree brush piles before the lake is full. Channel catfish anglers will be happy to know that I plan to continue utilizing the fish feeders to primarily provide catfish “hotspots” and secondarily supplement their diet.

Recent habitat work pictures at Woodson State Fishing Lake.



2019 Fishing Forecast District Highlights



Crappie – My district has 3 lakes that rank in the top 20 for crappie. These lakes include Garnett Cedar Valley Reservoir (6th), Yates Center City Lake (15th), and Yates Center South Owl (17th). All three of these lakes have good densities of crappie and generally provide good angling. Garnett Cedar Valley has a high-density crappie population that consists of fish mostly in the 6-9” range but size classes have improved and large fish are available. Yates Center City Lake has good numbers of fish 9-12”. Yates Center South Owl has a slightly lower density of crappie than Yates Center City Lake, but it generally produces bigger fish. We did not sample John Redmond Reservoir for crappie in 2018 due to high water conditions, however, you should consider fishing it when the crappie spawn rolls around. Last spring anglers experienced some excellent crappie fishing early up in the creeks and then a few weeks later when the fish moved up on the dam.

Channel Catfish – This district has several lakes with good populations of channel catfish, but Garnett Cedar Creek Reservoir is ranked second among all state fishing lakes and community lakes. Cedar Creek has an excellent density of channel catfish with many fish in the 5-8 lb. range. Believe it or not John Redmond does not rank very high in the channel catfish category as far as density goes but it ranks first when it comes to fish over 28” which should not be a surprise to the anglers who fish John Redmond regularly. The largest fish sampled last fall weighed in at 17.6 lbs.

Blue Catfish – Wolf Creek remains near the top of the list of blue cat reservoirs with good numbers of fish over 30” and a fair number of fish over 35”. The largest fish sampled last fall was just under 36 lbs. John Redmond Reservoir is a lake that should be on your watch list over the next several years as we sampled good numbers of young blue catfish last fall and even saw a few nice adults. The largest fish sampled was 25 lbs.

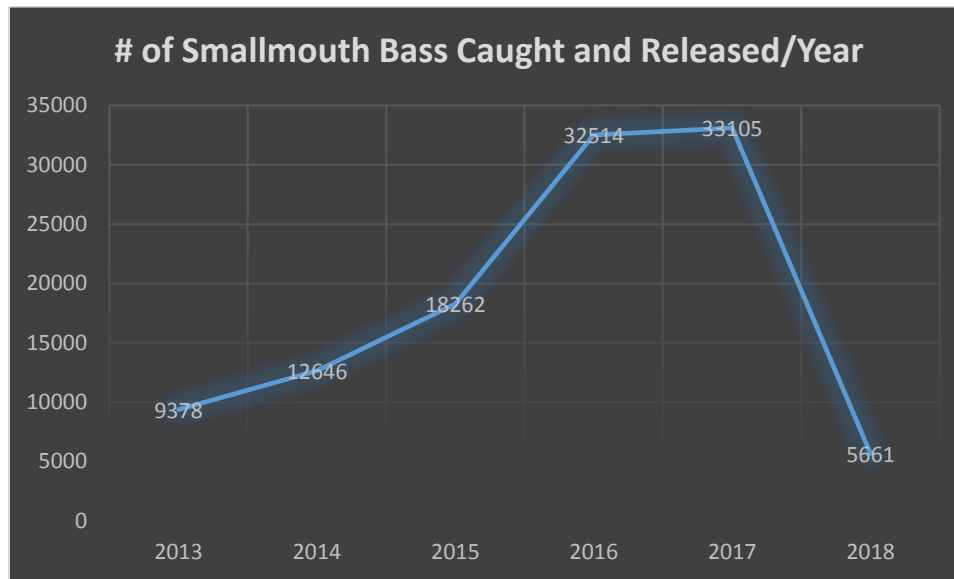




Largemouth Bass – This district has some great largemouth bass fishing opportunities. Four of my lakes rank in the top 20 for largemouth bass. Garnett Crystal Lake ranks 1st, Gridley City Lake 5th, Garnett North Lake 6th, and Yates Center City Lake 17th. These lakes have high density populations and should provide some good to excellent bass fishing. If big largemouth are what you seek, you should look no further than Garnett Cedar Creek Lake as it ranks in the top five for fish over 20”.



Wolf Creek Smallmouth Bass



Smallmouth bass fishing has been excellent that last few years at Wolf Creek, however, the recent exit creel survey may be indicating a population decline. According to data compiled from the exit creel survey, there has been a significant decline in smallmouth bass numbers from the previous years. In 2018, there were only 5,661 smallmouth bass caught and released compared to 2017 when just over 33,000 smallmouth bass were caught and released. There was a reduction of 5,414 hours of angling effort last year which no doubt contributed to some of the lower catch rates. But consider this, in 2015 there was approximately the same amount of angling effort spent as was in 2018 and there were 18,262 smallmouth bass caught and released. With that in mind, we should have seen more fish in 2018. Our spring electrofishing sample (conducted May 2018), did result in a lower catch rate of smallmouth bass than the previous year, but we saw similar percentages of fish in each size class as compared to previous years. From that sample, there was not a glaring problem with the population. What has caused such a drastic decline? Right now, I don't have a good answer. We could blame it on the abnormally hot spring and early summer and just move on. However, I don't feel like I would be doing my job if I did not investigate a little further. There is a good chance this is just a natural population decline, but there is also a chance this decline could be driven by a virus or disease. With that said, I plan to conduct some disease testing this Spring during our electrofishing survey, and hopefully we can rule some things out and figure out what is going on.

Paddlefish Regulations



The paddlefish snagging season is just around the corner and starts March 15 and runs through May 15. If the weather continues to be as wet as this winter has been, there may be some good snagging opportunities this Spring at the various locations in Eastern and Southeastern Kansas. There have been some new regulations regarding possession of paddlefish eggs passed and they go into effect this year. The regulations are as follows:

No person may possess paddlefish eggs attached to the egg membrane of more than one fish. No person may possess more than 3 pounds of processed paddlefish eggs or fresh paddlefish eggs removed from the membrane. No person shall ship into or out of, transport into or out of, have in possession with the intent to transport, or cause to be removed from this state any raw unprocessed paddlefish eggs, processed paddlefish eggs or frozen paddlefish eggs. A paddlefish carcass must have all entrails removed before it is transported from Kansas.

For the complete description of the paddlefish regulations please refer to page 10 of the 2019 Fishing Regulation booklet.