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Perry District Fisheries Newsletter

Spring 2021

Atchison State Fishing Lake Renovation



Special points of interest:

- Atchison State Fishing Lake Renovation
- Sauger
- What's in a name?
- The Great Kansas Fishing Derby

Last Fall, the water level at Atchison State Fishing Lake was drawn down in order to complete necessary renovations on a portion of the lake. Like many man-made impoundments, as Atchison SFL has aged it has filled in with sediment. An area where this is especially obvious, and concerning is the southwestern cove that contains the boat ramp. The draw-down that started last fall was done to allow Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism's Public Lands division to use heavy equipment to remove sediment from that cove.

During this process a sediment retention pond is also being dug out just across the road to slow down this process in the future. This pond will be designed to capture sediment before it enters the lake and will allow Public Lands Staff to simply drain the smaller pond to clean out sediment in the future instead of drawing the whole lake down. On top of catching sediment, it is hoped to turn this smaller pond into a kids fishing pond, stocked with Largemouth Bass, Bluegills, and Channel Catfish. This pond will be closed to fishing unless fishing with a minor and will

be strictly catch and release.

A third benefit of the drawdown is the creation and enhancement of fish habitat in the lake. Already this winter Public Lands staff have created trenches, stump piles, and other sorts of attractive looking fish hiding places. But there is more work to be done! Later this spring, and perhaps this fall, more habitat will be constructed or placed in the lake, focusing on the northern shore.

During all of this work, the lake is still open to fishing however it is not possible to launch a boat. The work should be completed sometime this year and the lake refilled naturally and ready to roll by spring of 2022.

Sauger Squeezin'



In Kansas, the waters that contain Sauger are few and at least two of them have a restrictive 18 inch minimum length limit in place. Those that are familiar with Sauger know that it would take a big fish to get over 18 inches. That length limit is in place for good reason though: to protect an important broodstock source.

As many of you are aware, there are crews of biologists out collecting Walleye eggs from reservoirs in Kansas each spring. But did you know that about a week before they are all out, there is also one crew in the state that is out collecting Sauger broodstock right here in Northeast Kansas?

Perry Reservoir is the primary source of Sauger eggs and milt in the state of Kansas. Right around the begin-

ning of March each year we set out gill nets in areas where the Sauger are known to congregate. We aim to collect about 150 males and 50-75 females. Fish are held in tanks at the state park for a few days before being transported to Milford Fish Hatchery where they can be held with less stress on the fish.

Now, you might be asking why so much effort goes in to producing a fish that is stocked in only a handful of water and doesn't reach a large size. Have you heard of Saugeye? The recipe to make the hybrid Saugeye, which are stocked in numerous waters across the state, involves mixing the eggs of a Walleye with the milt, or sperm, from Sauger.

At the hatchery, the same crew that collected the fish also collect milt from the

male Sauger by holding the fish upside down and applying gentle pressure on the stomach, slowly moving from the pelvic fins towards the vent. Sauger are not prolific producers and it is common for only a drop the size of pea to be extruded with each stroke. This precious milt is then sucked through a vacuum hose and into a chilled vial. It is later moved from that vial into other vials where it is mixed with an extender, which preserves its viability until it is used later that day or the next.

Each year those 150 Sauger males are used to fertilize roughly 25 million eggs, most of which are Walleye eggs used to make Saugeye but some Sauger are also produced and at the end of the season, both the brooders and the newly hatched Sauger fry are returned to Perry Reservoir.



What is in a name?

I like to joke that fish people were not very clever when coming up with the names of fish. What is the difference between two bass? Well, one has a large mouth and the other a small mouth. What should we call this sunfish? How about Bluegill, or Redear, or Orangespotted? I do not know for certain if it was laziness that lead early ichthyologists to these simple names and I guess I'm not prepared to suggest any alternatives.

Perhaps they were simply making it easy on all of us to identify our catch? It is pretty easy to figure out the common name of most fishes based simply off of some of

their physical characteristics. The largest word above is Shiner, some shiner species in Kansas include the Bigeye, Bigmouth, Blacknose, Blacktail, Redfin, Spotfin, and Spottail, among others. Care to take a guess how to tell those species apart from the other shiners?

Maybe they knew that we would be less likely to name a good handful of the 140+ fishes of Kansas if they had named the fish after themselves? Instead of a Smallmouth Bass it could've been named Lacepede's Bass. But he described both Largemouth and Smallmouth; that would be confusing. This is more common in birds but is still done in fish, however the

homage is frequently found in their scientific names. The Brassy Minnow *Hybognathus hankinsoni* is named after scientist T.L. Hankinson and Smallmouth Bass *Micropterus dolomieu* is named after a mineralist, Deodat de Dolomieu, who was the friend of Bernard Germain de Lacepede who described the fish.

Scientific names are another rabbit hole we could go down. *Micropterus* is the genus for our Black Bass species and translates to small fin. The specimen used to describe and name the fish actually had an injury which led Lacepede to think the fish had a smaller dorsal fin.

- PARTICIPATING LOCATION -



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MAY 1 - JULY 31, 2021

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