

Ellsworth District Fisheries Newsletter

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District Newsletter Aims to Keep Anglers More Informed

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks has another program to keep you more informed about what is happening on the fishing scene: a *district newsletter*.

In addition to the KDWP web site

www.kdwp.ksoutdoors.com, newspaper articles, public meetings, Fishing Information Nights, printed literature, radio and TV spots, and contact in person or by phone, the new district newsletter is just another way to keep you informed about fisheries management activities, management concerns, and the many opportunities available to Kansas anglers. The plan is to start out with two newsletters per year, one in the spring and one in the fall. More may be added if time allows and other important information surfaces at other times of the year.

The Ellsworth district includes five counties in northcentral Kansas: Russell, Lincoln, Ellsworth, Ottawa, and Saline. Included in those counties are two reservoirs: Wilson and Kanopolis; two state fishing lakes: Ottawa (Bennington) and Saline; three CFAP lakes: Lakewood and Indian Rock in Salina and Holyrood City Lake; and 14 FISH properties - one in Russell County, one in Ellsworth County, two in Saline County, two in Ottawa County, and eight in Lincoln County.

Get your friends, get your family
... and FISH KANSAS!



Wilson Lake Fishing Forecast for 2011

Wilson Lake had a very good year in 2010. The lake stayed full all year and anglers, had pretty good fishing success.

The walleye fishing was fair in the spring and early summer, it really picked up in August, and anglers caught a lot of fish all through the fall. The better striper anglers caught some big fish early, including several in the 40-pound range, as well as the new state record which weighed 44 pounds. Fishing seemed to be tough during the summer and fall, but the icefishing angler's slayed the stripers through the ice in January and early February.

Black bass anglers found the bass fishing pretty darned good for both smallmouth and largemouth bass, and I predict a lot more bass tournaments on Wilson in 2011. There were some really nice channel catfish taken out of the lake, and the creel survey we ran last year confirmed that. I had mixed reviews from white perch anglers. Most indicated that they did not have a lot of problems with smaller perch pestering them all the time, and the icefishing anglers did not find a lot of white perch under the ice. But, my nets showed that there are plenty of these pesky little critters out there.

Fall netting efforts collected good numbers of fish, and the following table gives a little netting history for the lake. The numbers are total numbers of those species caught each year from 2000 through 2010. You might want to refer to these numbers when you are reading this forecast to see how the numbers change from year to year. We did change out netting strategy last fall with new core panel gill nets and trap nets set in random locations instead of the standard locations of years past. This does not make our numbers for this year quite as comparable as in years past, but they are similar.

(See chart on page 2)

Wilson Reservoir Species	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Walleye	142	235	322	274	372	249	308	487	272	178	110
White Bass	111	189	173	107	119	140	227	209	72	52	97
Striped Bass	73	90	92	139	94	80	148	113	248	91	74
Channel Catfish	94	10	46	96	63	43	59	49	51	40	76
SM Bass	169	142	106	229	53	100	167	54	27	97	95
LM Bass	117	77	49	33	NS	202	111	76	NS	136	156
White Perch	590	630	270	325	617	230	138	262	207	368	508
Totals	1296	1464	1060	1203	1323	1044	1158	1250	909	962	1116

Total numbers of fish collected yearly in the fall with gill nets from Wilson Reservoir.

Walleye – Good. Walleye numbers continue to be quite high in the lake, and 86 percent of the fish taken in the fall nets were over the 15-inch minimum length limit. The overall catch numbers were down from last year because the new core panel gill nets just did not seem to catch the bigger end of the fish. The walleye were shallow during the fall netting, and we caught good numbers of large walleye in our trap nets especially in the upper end. We did catch 11 young-of-the-year fish this year, which indicates a fairly strong year class coming on. After that huge year class in 2007, we have now had a couple of years of limited recruitment which likely means a little tougher fishing in the next few years.

I do want to make a quick comment about walleye stocking, which seems to be a hot topic amongst anglers who fish Wilson. We had not stocked walleye in this lake since 2001. All the good fishing in the last eight or nine years has been due to natural recruitment. Since we stopped stocking, the walleye here have done great on their own, and I expect them to continue to do so. We had the second strongest natural year class in 2007 in the history of the lake. Granted, we have seen a decline in natural recruitment in 2008 and 2009 and perhaps again in 2010. It is not uncommon for recruitment to be reduced following such a strong year class.

Also, with the filling of the lake in 2008, we had a big spawn of white perch which probably has had some affect on the walleye, competing for food with the baby walleye, as well as eating some of them. We are now seeing the white perch numbers decline as the spawning conditions return to normal and predation continues to work on them.

We stocked some walleye this past spring as our hatchery system had a surplus of both walleye fry and fingerlings. Since they we going to flush those excess walleye down the drain, I requested the extras for Wilson, and we stocked 1 million fry and 51,223 fingerlings in April. If we happen to have excess walleye in the future, I will put them in Wilson rather than flushing them, but I do not plan to stock the lake on a yearly basis since I am convinced that the walleye here can do the job on their own. If we see a significant decline in recruitment over a significant period of time, we will reconsider stocking at that time.

A real positive this year was that we continued to catch more fish weighing up to 5 pounds than we have for a number of years. Anglers harvested 15,179 walleye averaging 2.13 pounds each from the lake from March thru October according to the creel survey. It was a pretty good walleye fishing year. Wilson Reservoir continues to have a **15-inch minimum length limit** on walleye despite some rumors that go around yearly. As a biologist, I see no need for an 18-inch limit here since the walleye grow a little slower than in most other Kansas reservoirs. Wilson is ranked No. 1 in the state as far as walleye density as compared to other reservoirs in the state.



STRIPED BASS - Excellent. Numbers of stripers remain high, and the body condition was good last fall. I had heard that some were catching real skinny fish early in the fall, but we only saw one really skinny fish during all of our netting. Fall and winter anglers reported fish in good condition, too. We still have a lot of those 4- to 8-pounders, but bigger fish are showing up every year. Fish in the teens are fairly common, and that occasional 20- or 30-pounder really gets lots of attention! And of course, the state record fell last spring, and Paul Bahr says he is planning to up that record again in the near future. We are stocking stripers heavily as a predator on the white perch and so far, they have been doing a pretty good job! Wilson is the No. 1 striped bass reservoir in the state and should provide lots of exciting striped bass angling in 2011!

SMALLMOUTH BASS/LARGEMOUTH BASS – Good Numbers got a real boost with the increased water levels, the increase in aquatic vegetation, and the abundance of small bluegill around the shoreline. Smallmouth used to outnumber largemouth by a wide margin, but we have seen a tremendous increase in largemouth numbers this past couple of years. Currently, Wilson is No. 2 in SMB density and No. 3 in LMB density compared to other reservoirs in the state. All black bass are available in a wide variety of sizes with fair numbers over the 15-inch legal limit. The vegetation in the coves, creeks, and around the exposed shoreline is now flooded and bass really like that substrate for spawning, nursery habitat, and shoreline cover.

CHANNEL CATFISH – Good Channel catfish are plenty abundant in Wilson, and blue catfish numbers are coming on. There are all size ranges, and the larger fish look like fat footballs. Wilson now ranks No. 4 in catfish density when compared to other reservoirs in the state. There are a few flatheads showing up every year so don't be surprised if you tie into one of them too. We have been stocking blue catfish for four years now (to provide another predator on white perch and they eat zebra mussels, too) but because of the 35-inch minimum length limit, those catfish will not be available for harvest for several years. Anglers have reported catching a few of these blues occasionally, and we caught eight in our nets this past fall. Floatline fishing will again be allowed on Wilson during daylight hours from July 15 through September 15 under the third year of the pilot program.

WHITE BASS – Fair White bass numbers rebounded last fall in our sample. I was kind of expecting that because anglers were reporting catching some really nice whites. Numbers certainly are down from the early years of Wilson. There is a diversity of sizes with some up into the 3-pound-plus range. We continue to see some small whites coming on, so they are spawning successfully but the numbers of smaller fish never seem to be very high. The white perch have certainly taken up a portion of the niche that the white bass used to occupy. Wilson is currently No. 13 among reservoirs in white bass density.

WHITE PERCH – Good White perch numbers showed a moderate increase this year, but that was expected. The average size of the fish declined some due to the strong 2008 year class. We knew that they would respond to the increase in water levels, and that did happen. The quality of the fish remains good and anglers continue to be pleased with the size and number of fish big enough to fillet they catch. Keep plenty of worms on hand for next summer, as I am sure there will be plenty to pester you walleye anglers. **Remember, keep all you catch so we can reduce numbers as much as possible.** The white perch is an Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) on the prohibited species list, which means they must be dead if you keep them in your possession for consumption or if you keep them for bait or any other reason. Cut the small ones in half and feed the other fish if you don't want to keep them – do not throw any live white perch back!

CRAPPIE – Fair Crappie numbers remain low; Wilson is just not a crappie lake. There is a fair size distribution at the current time with some of the crappie ranging up to 2 pounds. Black crappies prefer the clearer waters on the lower end of the lake, and white crappies are mostly found in the upper end. Crappie are scattered all over the lake but just not in any big concentrations. The few crappies harvested during the creel survey period last year averaged almost 1 pound each.



Special Projects for 2011 – We continue to stock all the stripers that we can get our hands on, and we continue to request blue catfish as an additional predator on the white perch. We caught 10 blue cats in 2009 that ranged from 14.3 inches to 15.6 inches and averaged just a shade less than 1 pound each. This year we caught eight blues that ranged from 16.2 inches to 19.3 inches and averaged 1.41 pounds each. Anglers reported catching some blues and the creel survey documented a catch of 125 fish that were released. Those reported to the creel clerk averaged 4.87 pounds so there were some bigger blue catfish caught. We did get our blue cats we requested for stocking in the fall and we stocked 9,032 fish. One of these days, we hope to get enough blues in the lake that they can find each other and start reproducing on their own, then we can stop stocking them.

We may try to beef up some brushpiles in the spring if time and manpower allow. We are ordering a new habitat barge this winter, and the Hays Bass Club has offered some free manpower if we can get schedules and the weather to work.

It was late fall 2009 when the dreaded zebra mussel showed up in our lake. That was not the news we wanted to hear! As most could tell by midsummer of last year, they are very well established and are showing up on just about everything in the water. They will likely continue to increase for several years before the numbers peak and they crash back to an lower level. Continue to be diligent to **CLEAN, DRAIN, AND DRY** every time you pull out of the lake!!!!

Preventing the spread of Aquatic Nuisance Species



STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!

Please remember:

CLEAN • DRAIN • DRY

Boats and Equipment

www.kdwp.state.ks.us



Kanopolis Lake – Fishing Forecast For 2011

Lake conditions going into 2011 are looking good if we don't go into a real dry spell. The lake stayed full last year, and most of you anglers had a pretty good fishing year. The full lake level and plenty of water coming down the river has created some great habitat and spawning conditions. We put in some additional habitat last summer by beefing up most of the brushpiles, so things are looking real good for the fishes and the fishermen.

Netting results were very encouraging in the fall of 2010. We had fantastic weather for netting although the water stayed pretty warm throughout October.

We were able to set our gill nets and trap nets in just about the ideal locations that we try to find every year. We started a little different netting scheme this past fall where we picked random locations for our nets instead of setting in the standard locations. I was surprised how scattered the fish were as we caught fish in just about every location. Let's take a look at each fish species by species and see what we have to look forward to in 2011.

Rainbow Trout and Brown Trout - Excellent This has become a very popular stream trout fishery and receives intense pressure at times. The seep stream below the reservoir is normally stocked six times from October through March with 1,400 trout that average one-half pound. We stocked some smaller brown trout in late October, and our supplier from Nebraska is promising some large browns in the later part of the trout season. The new pools backed up behind the five new grade control structures/engineered rock riffles were very popular and the new lunker structures have been important fishing locations this past season. Read more about the Seep Stream and Trout project in another article in this publication.



WHITE BASS – Excellent The white bass catch rates have cycled up and down over the past 10 years, but this year's sample numbers were higher than the overall average. The diversity of the adult population indicates a wide size range of fish available to anglers. The fish have been in good to excellent body condition the past couple of years. The high water the past few years was obviously good for white bass growth and recruitment. Our shoreline seining in August showed high numbers of young-of-the-year (YOY) white bass so another strong year class is developing. Currently, this white bass population is high in quality and ranks No. 1 in the state in white bass density, as compared to all the other reservoirs. Anglers harvested 15,422 white bass in 2009 that averaged slightly over a pound each. This was the highest harvest recorded since the 1993 creel survey and 16.5 percent of anglers preferred to fish for white bass.



SAUGEYE – Good, Fair for Walleye Saugeye were stocked in 1996 for the first time and each year since. Saugeye recruitment had been excellent the first four years, but recruitment from 2000 to 2002 was not adequate to maintain good year classes, as indicated by declining catch rates. Better recruitment occurred in 2003 and 2004. Catch rates have fluctuated mildly the past five years, but this year's catch was well above any catch since saugeye were stocked. Anglers harvested 6,867 saugeye/walleye in 2009 according to creel survey data, nearly two per acre and averaging 2.12 pounds each. The diversity in sizes has improved the past couple of years, and the presence of sub-stock sized saugeye this year indicates strong 2009 and 2010 year classes coming on. There has been a slight increase in the numbers of walleye in the samples over the past few years due to the stocking of excess hatchery fry and perhaps some natural recruitment. The body condition of all sizes of fish this year was good to excellent. These species will continue to be popular in angler creels as 52.4 percent of 2009 anglers preferred to catch these great eating fish. Kanopolis is also No. 1 in saugeye density among Kansas reservoirs.



WIPERS – Fair Wipers have been requested yearly and stocked periodically to provide an additional trophy fish in the lake.

Fingerlings have been requested the last 12 years and fish were stocked 10 of those years. Recruitment has been documented with good to high numbers of YOY wipers in seine hauls each summer and trap nets in the fall. However, recruitment of these fish through their first winter does not appear to be all that successful in some years.

The numbers of wipers in gill nets rebounded this year with lots of smaller wipers in the sample. We caught a variety of sizes of wipers, and they were all in excellent body condition – they had lots of shad to eat. We don't seem to have a wiper fishery like Milford or Cedar Bluff, but you can still catch wipers here if you work at it. Anglers harvested 602 wipers in 2009 that averaged 3.51 pounds each. We collected 100 YOY wipers per seine haul in August during our shoreline seining sample. We are No. 3 in Kansas in wiper density.



CHANNEL CATFISH – Good Channel catfish are available in a wide range of sizes although most of what we catch every fall is under 2 pounds. Larger fish are there but they just don't seem to show up in our nets. Anglers have been chumming catfish over the humps off the south shore with good success, and the creel survey showed that anglers harvested 7,435 channels averaging 2.13 pounds and released another 2,469. Slightly over 23 percent of the anglers fishing Kanopolis in 2009 expressed a preference in fishing for channel catfish.

The supply of flatheads is also good with some that provide a trophy aspect. They catch some really nice ones in the outlet during high releases but there are not too many who fish for them on the main lake. Shad sides and gizzards or cut bait are good bets for cool water channel catfish and worms and dip baits are hard to beat in the summer months. Fresh cut shad seems to be a good bet in the fall on windblown shorelines. Flatheads like something alive or fresh dead – not any of that stinky stuff! Floatline fishing will be allowed again on this reservoir this summer.



Kanopolis Reservoir Species	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
White bass	95	114	323	246	386	419	220	291	76	716	398
Saugeye	179	106	63	121	101	54	41	69	39	60	209
Wipers	33	13	43	32	69	34	38	24	6	45	70
Channel Catfish	41	21	25	12	14	78	53	47	41	27	54
White Crappie	190	1863	261	446	106	75	55	321	526	544	464
Totals	538	2117	715	857	676	660	407	752	688	1392	1195

Total numbers of fish collected in the fall in gill nets from Kanopolis Reservoir.

WHITE CRAPPIE – FAIR The crappie situation here at Kanopolis is a bit puzzling right now. We had seen good crappie recruitment in 2007 and 2008 but it appeared to be limited in 2009 when most of the fish we caught were above 6 inches. This year only 84 of the 464 fish were above that 6-inch mark, and most of the fish were young-of-the-year. So we have another strong year class coming on but it looks like it will be several more years before that boom in the crappie fishing will occur that I was predicting last year. Most of the adults in the lake right now are in the 8- to 11-inch size range, but they are fat and have plenty of shad to eat. Try the deep brushpiles and along the edges of the river channel in the off season and around the docks or any flooded shoreline vegetation during the spawn. Small jigs are the favored bait if you don't want to use a live minnow under a bobber. Angler harvest of crappie in 2009 was slightly higher than in 2004 and 1999 but the average size of the fish was just slightly under one-half pound. It was surprising that only 4.1 percent of 2009 anglers were actively seeking crappie.

Other Species – Last fall we had tons of shad in the lake, and they were mostly 4 to 5 inches long – just right for feeding the bigger game fish but a bit big for the smaller wipers, white bass, and crappie. We saw quite a few bigmouth buffalo in our 4-inch nets and we will be checking to see if the commercial fisherman might want to come back and take a few hundred thousand pounds of those out of the lake again.



Special Projects from 2010 – Many of you may remember that we ran a creel survey on the trout/seep stream below the dam from October 2008 thru April 2009. That creel survey was to evaluate the use of the stream since we put in the new engineered rock riffles/grade control structures during the summer of 2008. We hired a creel clerk to count and interview trout anglers to see how many anglers we had and how many trout they caught.

We also ran a creel survey on the reservoir itself during the 2009 fishing year – from March thru October. Our creel clerks counted and interviewed anglers and looked at the fish that they had harvested. The fishing was quite good on the lake and you anglers hauled a lot of fish out of Kanopolis.

We did our habitat work at Kanopolis this past summer beefing up most of the major brushpiles with cedar trees that the Corp of Engineers had cut down in their parks. You will find more brush in the normal places to catch fish out of or get snagged in!!

We did some major work on the seep stream below the reservoir this past summer to enhance the trout situation there. Read about that project in the trout article.

Kanopolis is a popular fishing and camping spot for many Kansans. We work hard to keep the fishing good and let's all hope Mother Nature helps us out as well. Lets all be very thankful for what we have here and work together to keep this lake as one of the best fishing lakes in the state of Kansas. If you have questions about the fishing you can call me at the office or stop by if you can catch me in. We will continue to update the fishing reports weekly and try to keep everyone informed of the fishing that is taking place.

See you at or on the lake!



2010 Creel Survey Results at Wilson Reservoir

From March through October of 2010, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks surveyed anglers at the lake to collect information on their fishing outings. Some of you may have provided information to the creel clerk about your fishing trips. Hopefully all anglers will find this information interesting.

A table with some of the creel information follows. I am including data for seven other creel years so you can compare this year with other years and see how some of the numbers fluctuate from year to year. The creel clerks count anglers during their four-hour creel periods that are scheduled randomly throughout the season. They also interview anglers to see how long they fish, what they catch, what they throw back, where they are from, and get a feel for how they rate their fishing trip. They measure and count the fish harvested and enter all the data into a small hand-held computer. Each month they bring their computer to the office and download all the information onto my desktop computer. That information is then sent electronically to our Emporia Research Office where our creel guru Susan Baker runs it all through her big fancy computer. She then beams the data back to the biologists so that we can use it to better manage our lakes and reservoirs and to share it with you, the angling public.

The creel clerk counted 4,609 anglers fishing – 434 from shore and 4,275 from boats. When you expand all the numbers, that equates to 31,727 anglers on the lake March through October. He interviewed 495 anglers of those anglers and found that the average trip length for all anglers was 3.35 hours. Boat anglers averaged about 3.75 hours per trip while shore anglers spent just over 2.4 hours per trip on the average. Anglers harvested a total of 38,483 fish during the eight-month creel season. They released 49,732 fish. Walleye numbered highest in angler harvest and release – 15,179 taken and 6,835 released. White perch ranked No. 2 in harvest with 9,740 taken and a whopping 14,099 returned.

Channel catfish came in at No. 3 in harvest at 6,525, averaging 3.52 pounds each. White bass came in at No. 4 and stripers followed. As you can see, not many crappies were taken, but they averaged almost a pound apiece.

Bass harvest was minimal – 391 smallmouth and 119 largemouth. Anglers did release 13,560 smallmouth and 8,094 largemouth, so you can see that black bass fishing here is pretty much a catch and release affair. You can do the math, but I'll make it easy on you – the walleye averaged 2.13 pounds each, white bass 1.42 pounds apiece, and stripers 6.43 pounds each.

The clerk asked each interviewed angler what species they preferred – what they were fishing for. Walleye won hands down – 50 percent of the anglers were fishing for walleye. Channel catfish came in second at 20.1 percent with largemouth bass next at 8.4 percent. Next came those who were fishing for stripers – 7.9 percent and then white bass anglers at 4.4 percent. About 4.1 percent of the anglers expressed a preference for white perch.

Anglers were asked to rate their fishing trips by number - 1 being the worst, 5 being the best. The overall average was 2.31 for the season with the month of August garnering the highest rating of 2.67. Angler age and sex fell out like this – 10.13 percent males under 16, 3.92 percent females under 16, 67.78 percent males of license age, 14.44 percent females of license age, 3.44 percent males 65 and over, .29 percent females 65 and over. Anglers came mainly from Kansas but four other states were represented – California, Colorado, Nebraska, and Texas. It is interesting that we do not get anyone from Oklahoma or Missouri coming to fish at Wilson. Great Bend, Hoisington, Russell, Hays, and Salina made up the bulk of anglers from Kansas with a few of the smaller towns close to the lake rating fairly high too.

Just a quick look at (*Creel Survey History, page 9*), this year as compared to years past. There were only two years when more walleye were harvested – 2001 and 1986. I was pleased with the walleye harvest, which lasted pretty much throughout the entire season.



Our walleye are doing great and although the natural recruitment has not been the best since 2007, we still have one of the best walleye fishing lakes in the state. White bass harvest was way down as compared to other years, but we all expected that. The average size of the white bass is really good, and they were nice and fat this past fall. It was not a great striper year on Wilson, but the average size of the fish was way up and there were some BIG fish caught this year.

I have been here going on 17 years now, and stripers seem to be pretty finicky. Some years they really bite and other years they are tough. I don't have the answers on what makes them bite!

I was pleased with the white perch harvest, but the average size of the fish really dropped off this year. We saw 14,099 returned – I hope a good number of those were returned DEAD. We are encouraging anglers to not release any small white perch alive – please squish them or cut them in half before you return them so that they feed the other fish and help us thin that population down.

We will not likely run another creel here at Wilson for about three to five years, depending on any special projects that might come along. This current information will allow us to better evaluate our fishery here and will enter into any management decisions that we make in the future. Again, you're fishing license dollars at work.

WILSON RESERVIOR - CREEL SURVEY HISTORY

YEAR	1986	1995	1996	1997	1998	2001	2006	2010
DURATION	M-O	M-O	M-O	M-O	M-O	M-O	M-O	M-O
# INTERVIEWS	1877	765	834	530	246	1090	991	495
# ANGLERS	44327	51516	43479	30276	38308	36567	23791	31727
HOURS EFFORT	140661	136386	117792	83997	105836	142054	80741	112518
HOURS/ACRE	15.6	15.2	13.1	9.33	11.76	15.78	8.98	12.5
HARVEST								
NUMBER	66041	56699	62762	27721	34078	48117	27582	38483
#/HR	0.47	0.41	0.53	0.33	0.32	0.34	0.34	0.34
POUNDS	114115	91732	44468	44438	55988	100588	39600	80103
LBS/HR	0.81	0.67	0.38	0.53	0.53	0.71	0.49	0.71
# WALLEYE	15600	6309	2221	678	150	16986	9526	15179
LBS WALLEYE	24000	17632	8300	2820	893	40424	16859	32331
# WHITE BASS	45000	40276	41112	15186	22585	10681	3787	2876
LBS WHITE BASS	70000	53746	50707	17956	33511	13244	4052	4084
# CRAPPIE	582	2810	11542	5083	5717	874	261	875
LBS CRAPPIE	257	1369	4134	3307	3106	798	182	854
# STRIPERS	3000	314	717	2560	1015	4358	1424	2415
LBS STRIPERS	15300	1479	2441	12052	4837	27928	5440	15522
# CHANNEL CATS						3370	4374	6525
LBS C CATS						6841	8179	22968
# WHITE PERCH						10056	7733	9740
LBS WHITE PERCH						4525	4021	2824

Kanopolis Seep/Trout Stream Enhancement Took a Big Step Forward in 2010

Many of the folks around Kanopolis have been hearing talk the past couple of years about some of the improvements/enhancements taking place at the trout stream that lies right behind the dam of the reservoir. The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks and the US Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) have been making improvements on the stream to enhance the fish habitat and spread out the angling pressure over a broader area.

The seep stream/Sand Creek is a constantly flowing stream that runs seepage water flowing from underneath the dam. The toe drains of the dam gather seepage water and channel it to the stream through a series of lateral pipes. This water comes out of the ground at a constant temperature between 55 and 60 degrees, making the stream cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter. Unfortunately that water also comes out of the ground with no dissolved oxygen so it has to flow a ways to be aerated. It makes for an ideal location for winter trout stocking, and we have been stocking trout there since 1986.

Initially stocking was accomplished just on the lower , or south, end of the stream. The large pool backed up by the small concrete dam or weir was the initial stocking location. As more trout became available, we began to stock pooled water that was primarily backed up by the beaver further up the stream. Beaver activity has been prevalent on the stream for many years. The only problem was that the beaver did not always put the dams where we wanted them. They also did not always build them high enough or sturdy enough to weather the occasional flood.

Then in May of 2007, we got the BIG flood, and it washed out every bit of beaver activity. During the summer of 2008, we built five grade control structures/engineered rock riffles (fancy name for check dams). They backed up a lot of water and provided some nice trout fishing water and helped spread the fishing pressure. These riffle/pool areas have been very popular and have attracted anglers from all over the state. In the summer of 2009, we planted some trees and placed in some floating half log structures.

Starting on January 1, 2010, we designated an Artificial Lure Only section between high line poles No. 9 through No. 16. This will be a permanent situation from this point on. In this portion, which involves only two of the five pools that we made in 2008, no bait fishing will be allowed. Anglers can use flies, spinners, jigs, panfish tubes, plastics, crankbaits, or any other lure type. Bait fishing anglers can use bait in all other portions of the stream except between poles No. 9 through No. 16. Artificial lure anglers can also fish anywhere along the stream, including the area between poles No. 9 through No. 16. This was done to provide a little more quality fishing in the designated area for those who prefer to cast lures to the trout.

Further improvements took place during May through July 2010. Due to some mitigation funds becoming available, we repaired eight of the highly eroding areas of the east bank along the stream. The banks were graded back at a 3-to-1 slope and rock riprap was placed at the base to prevent further erosion. The slopes and all the haul roads were reseeded and 360 feet of lunger boxes were included in five of the existing pools to provide an undercut bank effect and overhead cover for the trout. These lunger boxes were made out of concrete so that they would last a long time and withstand the occasional flood event. We planted more river birch and oak trees, along with some willows and buttonbush in the riprap to stabilize that habitat, and placed a few large boulders into the pools to provide some additional in-stream habitat.

In addition, the USACE improved the parking area on the northeast end of the stream and installed a restroom at that location. A new restroom was also installed in the outlet area for angler convenience. This entire project was a cooperative effort between a number of state and federal agencies including KDWP, USACE, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, and the Kansas Water Office. The heavy equipment and labor was provided by KDWP's Engineering Section.

We hope these improvements will allow the stream to stay cooler during the summer months, and that we can provide a year-round trout fishery. Some small brown trout were stocked in October 2010 and some larger browns will be stocked in January, February, and March of this year. We will be watching the trout throughout next summer and hopefully there will be summer survival of more trout this summer. It will take a few years for the trees that were planted to have a positive shading effect on the stream, and a lot will depend on how hot of a summer we have.

This fall, anglers have enjoyed the new seep stream look and have been catching trout from the additional habitat. The Kanopolis seep stream is one of the premier stream trout fishing locations in the state and should provide many hours of angling pleasure for those who like to pursue the wily trout.

Fishing Regulations for 2011

As we get ready for the fishing season, it might be good to remind anglers of regulations that might involve them. Fishing regulations change a bit every year, and sometimes it is difficult to keep up on all the new stuff. Some of the rules and regulations have been on the books for a long time, and some of those things have changed recently.

Lets first talk about some of the regulations that are on the books that some folks might not be aware of. One thing new this year that is intended to get more youth participation is a Resident Youth Multi-year License. A multi-year resident youth hunting and/or fishing license is valid from the time purchased until age 21. Since youngsters are required to have a fishing or hunting license once they turn 16, this license will be good from age 16 through the end of the year they turn 21. The one-time purchase price of a multi-year fish or hunting license is \$42.50. A combination multi-year hunting/fishing license is \$72.50. . The regular price for an annual fishing or hunting license is \$20.50, so young anglers or hunters can save more than \$100 if they buy a multi-year fishing or hunting license and more than \$150 if they buy the multi-year combination license. . That is a real deal for the kids! Of course, we still have the lifetime licenses - \$442.50 for each or \$882.50 for the combination.

How many of you readers out there know that you can legally fish with three poles in Kansas? That is if you have a Three Pole Permit. The Three Pole Permit costs \$6.50 in addition to your fishing license and is good for a calendar year. There are also 24-hour fishing licenses available for both residents and nonresidents and five-day fishing licenses for nonresidents. There is also a Floatline Fishing Permit at \$2.50, which is necessary to floatline fish in designated reservoirs during daylight hours from July 15 through September 15.

Want to fish for trout – then you will need a Trout Permit at \$12.50. These are required of anyone 16 years and older. Youngsters under 16 can fish for trout without a permit but they can only keep two trout per day rather than the normal limit of five per day. If you want to fish/snag for paddlefish, that permit costs \$12.50.

Handfishing for catfish has been illegal since way back in the early 1900's in Kansas. Well, we have had a legal handfishing season for several years now and the regulation has been relaxed even more this year.

Handfishing, for flathead catfish only, is legal from sunrise to sunset, June 15 through August 31 on the entire length of the Arkansas River in Kansas, all federal reservoirs from beyond 150 yards of the dam to the upper end of the federal property, and on the Kansas River from its origin downstream to its confluence with the Missouri River. A special permit (\$27.50) is required in addition to a regular fishing license. If you are tough, you might want to try this type of fishing!!!

I know, some of you might be thinking that we are trying to nickel and dime you to death. The specialty permits mentioned above are all needed to help pay for those special programs, and we know there will not be a huge amount of hand fishermen, float line anglers, or paddlefish anglers. It is a user pay system, and we need to keep a handle on how many folks are participating in each of the different types of fishing.

Speaking of different kinds of fishing, what about bowfishing? There are a few archers out there who like the challenge of taking fish with a bow and arrow. All they need is a regular fishing license, arrows with barbed heads, and each arrow must be attached by a line to the bow. Crossbows are now legal for bowfishing. And another recent development allows bowfishing anglers to take blue, channel or flathead catfish along with any nonsport fish.

And, speaking of licenses, where are licenses required? I get questions every year about farm ponds – Do you need a license to fish a private pond? A license is required for fishing on many private lands, including the following:

- Any private impoundment that has a stream or river going into and/or out of it, whether the stream is intermittent or not:
- A private impoundment that is owned or operated by more than one person or group, in which case the owner or operator or member of the group would be exempt from the license requirement while fishing in the portion if the impoundment they own:
- Guests of landowners or operators fishing on streams and rivers on land solely owned or operated: and
- Any impoundment stocked by the state within the last 10 years.

These rules apply to watershed ponds and any man-made impoundment or any stream or river.

Every year the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks puts out the Kansas Fishing Regulations Summary, which is the brochure that all anglers need if they want to check on the current regulations or see if there is anything new for that year.

You can pick up a copy of this summary at just about any sporting goods store, most anyplace that you buy your licenses, or at any Wildlife and Parks offices. You can also access the regulations on line at the KDWP website! The 2011 regulation summary is available now.

Floatline fishing, or jug fishing, has not been allowed in Kansas until just recently, and the season runs from July 15 through September 15 during daylight hours, only on Hillsdale, Council Grove, Tuttle Creek, Kanopolis, John Redmond, Toronto, Wilson, and Pomona reservoirs. You are allowed eight floatlines OR eight setlines OR one trotline but you cannot use all three at the same time. You can fish with your normal rod and reels while fishing with any one of the above methods.

Now, let's talk about BAIT FISH. Bait fish are defined as any fish in the minnow family, sucker family, top minnows or killifish family, shad family, sunfish family excluding black basses and crappie which may only be used if legally harvested by hook and line. No bait fish may exceed 12 inches except gizzard shad. Bait fish may be taken for noncommercial purposes by the following methods: seine not larger than 15 feet long and 4 feet deep, with mesh no larger than ¼ inch (not allowed on department owned waters); fish trap with mesh no larger than ¼ inch and throat not larger than 1 inch in diameter; fishing line; or a dip or cast net with mesh no larger than 3/8 inch. Bait fish may be taken statewide and a fishing license is required.

PROHIBITED SPECIES or perhaps those called Aquatic Nuisance Species that are illegal to possess alive include: walking catfish, silver carp, bighead carp, black carp, snakehead fish, round goby, white perch, and fertile (diploid) grass carp.

To take this a step further, LEGAL FISH BAIT includes artificial lures, baitfish as defined above, prepared bait, vegetable materials, artificial bait, worms, salamanders, frogs, and crawfish. **Fish taken from one department managed water shall not be released or used for bait in another department managed water – that means it is illegal. It is illegal to clip the fins, tag, or otherwise mark fish if they are to be released after catch.**

There may be some more stringent regulations in the future on the use of live bait. I am on the KDWP Regulations Committee and we are currently discussing these bait fish regulations. The problem is that most of the anglers out there do not know their fish very well, especially the new Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) that have recently arrived in Kansas.

There are still quite a few anglers here at Wilson who cannot tell a white perch from a white bass – especially when they are small. The young or baby silver and bighead carp look very much like small gizzard shad – even some biologists have trouble telling them apart.

The white perch and Asian carp are expanding their ranges in Kansas – the white perch are now in the river systems above and below Wilson, Cheney, and El Dorado reservoirs. That means they will be scattered all up and down the Kansas River system as well as the Arkansas River system. The Asian carp are rapidly populating the Missouri and Kansas River systems, which could potentially put them right below all of our major reservoirs in the northern half of the state in a few years. If bait collectors are not able to identify these small fish and take them from the river to use in a nearby lake or reservoir, we could see contamination fairly easily. The committee is struggling with this issue right now – deciding what to do for the year 2012.

This is some scary stuff if you sit back and think about it. Concerns include how restrictive can we be and what impact new regulations will have. We certainly need to educate the anglers about some of the possibilities. The same goes for ANS like zebra mussels. We don't know if we will be able to stop zebra mussels from getting into every lake in the state without a mandatory inspection program at every boat ramp, which will cost lots and lots of money.

We can talk about voluntary compliance, but it only takes one person – legally or illegally – intentionally or unintentionally – to contaminate a lake with any of the above critters. The law regarding - **Fish taken from one department managed water shall not be released or used for bait in another department managed water or It is illegal to release any fish into public waters unless caught from that water** – has been on the books for years, and I hear every year of guys going to Cheyenne Bottoms or Lakewood in Salina to get shad to fish for strippers here at Wilson. I also know that almost every time we renovate a lake or have a lake that goes dry, and then fills up, crappie end up in the lake even though we do not stock crappie. No, they do not come in on ducks feet!

There are a few other regulations that are often overlooked or many anglers are unaware of. **All fish caught from a boat shall have the head, body, and tail fin left attached while in possession on the water.** This regulation came about a number of years ago when anglers were filleting fish in their boats and putting the fillets in a cooler then continuing to catch more than their limit of fish – primarily walleye. Every year I hear of folks fishing from a boat, going to shore to clean fish and put the fillets in a cooler in the vehicle, then go back out to catch more fish. I've heard about trout anglers at Kanopolis whocatch their limit of five fish, head to the vehicle or home to drop off their fish, then head back to catch another limit. These folks are extremely hard to catch unless there is someone watching them the entire time.

Chumming or baiting to attract fish is legal in most public waters in Kansas. Some city or county lakes may prohibit chumming. Basically fish feeders that we put in some lakes are a form of chumming. Some anglers feel that this practice could make some anglers too efficient and reduce catfish populations in some lakes. To date, creel surveys and fish sampling in lakes where chumming is popular have not been able to document any negative affects on catfish populations.

Here is a job description for a fisheries biologist in Kansas if there might be some youngsters interested in becoming one.

FISHERIES BIOLOGIST

KS DEPT. OF WILDLIFE AND PARKS

Job Description

In charge of fisheries management in a district, 20 biologists statewide. Districts range from about four counties with six lakes to 28 counties and 26 lakes. Biologists make management decisions for lakes, ponds, and streams – basic job is to make fishing better for anglers. Includes things like habitat work, sampling fish populations, stocking fish, feeding fish, water quality, aquatic vegetation control, suggesting rules and regulations, public relations, and aquatic education.

Annual Salary

Starting salary for a new biologist is around \$19.23 an hour, \$3173 a month, and \$38,000 a year. Over time can work up to \$25.00 an hour, \$4200 a month, \$50,000 a year. (You'd better not plan to get rich being a biologist but job satisfaction is a BIG plus.)

Skills Needed

Must be in good physical condition and must like to work outside, rain or shine. Should be able to swim well or at least not be afraid of water. Farm type skills important – driving a tractor, large trucks, pulling trailers, and mechanical ability. Must be computer literate, write and spell well, and public speaking skills are important. Operating a boat and motor important as well as backing a boat trailer. Of course must have a driver's license.

Educational Requirements

Must have a four-year college degree in fisheries or wildlife biology or a related biology curriculum. A masters degree is a plus in this day and age. In high school you need to take all the biology, chemistry, math, and English courses that you can, as you will have to have two semesters of English Comp, three semesters of chemistry, and math up to Calculus 1 in college. Jobs in this field are few and far between, and you need to get as much practical experience as you can, working as a summer aide for the department. Also, working in the biology departments at school will be a big plus.

Sample of Job Duties

Fish sampling at all times of the year with seines, gill nets, trap nets, electrofishing boats, backpack shockers, and various other types of equipment. Analyze and tabulate data collected. Conduct research projects and write reports on those and yearly Progress Reports and Management Plans for each lake. Provide weekly fishing reports and fishing forecasts on the agency web page and write periodic news releases for newspapers and radio. Conduct numerous fishing clinics for youngsters and put on a variety of programs yearly relating to aquatic education and fishing information. Assist other divisions with things like spotlight deer surveys, walk-in hunting property surveys, boating checks, wildlife violation investigation, stream surveys, endangered species work, etc. Job includes more paperwork than most would like, but that is a necessary evil of the job. Investigating and tabulating fish kills is one of the least fun parts of the job.

