

# Ellsworth District Fisheries



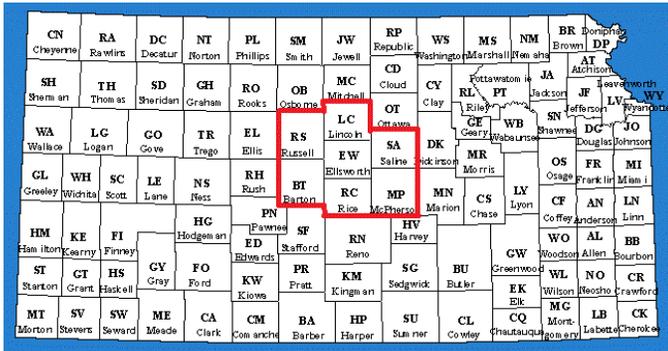
Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism Fisheries Division

Spring 2016

## District Information

Bryan Sowards – Fisheries Biologist  
 Wilson Area Office  
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 (785)658-2465

### Counties and Reservoirs



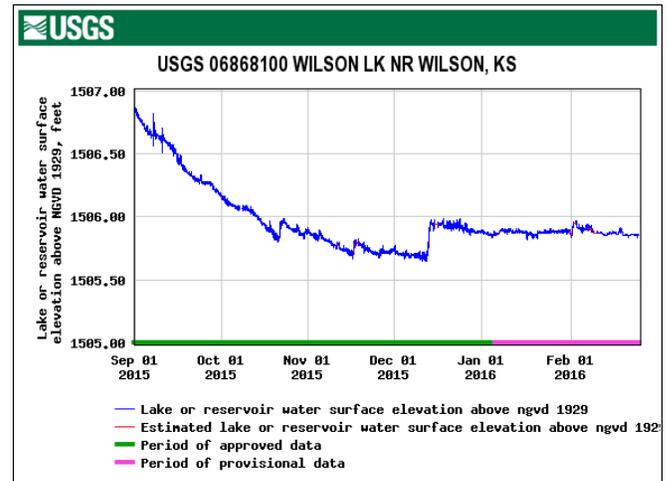
Russell	Wilson Reservoir - 9000 acres
Lincoln	Only leased F.I.S.H. properties
Saline	Saline State Lake (DRY) Lakewood Lake - Salina – 6 acres Indian Rock Lake - Salina (DRY)
Barton	Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area Stone Lake – Great Bend - 40 acres Veteran’s Lake – Great Bend - 13 acres
Ellsworth	Kanopolis Reservoir - 3550 acres Holyrood City Lake – 13 acres
Rice	Sterling City Lake - 10 acres
McPherson	McPherson State 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.*

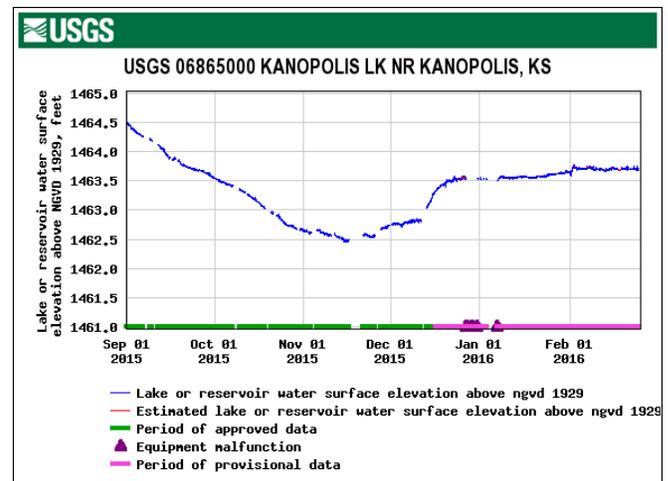


## Winter Weather Conditions

**Wilson Reservoir:** The much needed 2015 – 2016 winter precipitation failed us in this part of the world. Some snowfall in December brought Wilson Reservoir up nearly 5 inches but, unfortunately, that was mostly it for this winter. The reservoir’s conservation pool is 1,516 feet, therefore it remains 10.2 feet low. Spring rains will be critical.



**Kanopolis Reservoir:** The elevation for Kanopolis was much different. It remains stable. The reservoir’s conservation pool is 1,463 feet, therefore it is currently 7 inches high. If Smoky Hill River flows remain consistent the reservoir will be raised 4 feet in anticipation for the summer. These water level increases usually begin in mid-March.



# Fall Fish Sampling Guide

## Wilson Reservoir

Blue Catfish	2014 sample	2015 sample
Total fish in nets	13	11
% of 12" fish	0	9
% of 20" fish	100	91
% of 30" fish	0	0

*Still low catches and no fish greater than the 35-inch length limit; there won't be any keepers for another 2-4 years.*

Channel Catfish	2014 sample	2015 sample
Total fish in nets	121	81
% of 11" fish	24	31
% of 16" fish	68	64
% of 24" fish	8	5

*Less channel catfish but plenty of good fish.*

Largemouth Bass	2014 sample	2015 sample
Total fish electrofished	16	8
% of 8" fish	3	0
% of 12" fish	59	25
% of 15" fish	38	75

*Bass are aging with limited reproduction. Many 15" fish to be caught. Poor sampling conditions made it difficult to get a good sample.*

Smallmouth Bass	2014 sample	2015 sample
Total fish in nets	35	18
% of 7" fish	8	1
% of 11" fish	12	3
% of 14" fish	15	13
% of 17" fish	0	1

*Bass are aging with limited reproduction. Many 14-inch fish to be caught. Body condition is great.*

Stripers	2014 sample	2015 sample
Total fish in nets	82	86
% of 12" fish	13	23
% of 20" fish	87	77
% of 30" fish	0	0

*Consistent numbers but trophies are difficult to find. Stripers remain skinny in the summer time.*

Walleye	2014 sample	2015 sample
Total fish in nets	116	145
% of 10" fish	58	29
% of 15" fish	41	68
% of 20" fish	0	3
% of 25" fish	1	0

*Walleye catches improved and many fish above the length limit should provide good fishing this year.*

White Bass	2014 sample	2015 sample
Total fish in nets	79	74
% of 6" fish	18	5.5
% of 9" fish	0	0
% of 12" fish	29	5.5
% of 15" fish	53	88
% of 18" fish	0	1

*White Bass reproduction is suffering from the drought; most fish are large with 94.5 percent over 15"!!!*

White Perch	2014 sample	2015 sample
Total fish in nets	349	229
% of 5" fish	28	10
% of 8" fish	12	21
% of 10" fish	51	51
% of 12" fish	9	18

*White perch reproduction is limited due to the drought; most fish are large. White perch cannot be possessed alive.*



Wesley Sowards with stripers from Wilson.



Wesley Sowards with smallmouth bass from Wilson.

## Kanopolis Reservoir

Note: A different number of nets was used at Kanopolis in 2015 (2014 = 12 nets; 2015 = 21 nets); therefore, a conversion was used to estimate the 2015 sample.

Channel Catfish	2014 sample	2015 sample
Total fish in nets	73	59
% of 11" fish	40	19
% of 16" fish	60	81
% of 24" fish	0	0

While numbers are down there are plenty of quality fish.

White Crappie	2014 sample	2015 sample
Total fish in nets	9	29
% of 5" fish	0	2
% of 8" fish	56	72
% of 10" fish	33	26
% of 12" fish	11	0

Crappie are slightly smaller but more are there to be caught.

Saugeye	2014 sample	2015 sample
Total fish in nets	77	94
% of 9" fish	47	23
% of 14" fish	30	68
% of 18" fish	19	7
% of 22" fish	4	2

High harvest is stacking fish up right around the length limit; should be a great year for keepers.



Largest Saugeye collected at Kanopolis.

Wipers	2014 sample	2015 sample
Total fish in nets	52	49
% of 8" fish	15	53
% of 12" fish	60	19
% of 15" fish	25	28
% of 20" fish	0	0

A great year class is present; bodes well for the future. Four pounders aren't rare either.

White Bass	2014 sample	2015 sample
Total fish in nets	324	269
% of 6" fish	11	46
% of 9" fish	30	6
% of 12" fish	48	36
% of 15" fish	11	12

White bass reproduction has increased; this is the 3rd best reservoir in Kansas for fish over 9 inches.



The crew working nets at Kanopolis.

## McPherson State Lake

Note: A different number of nets was used at McPherson State Lake in 2015 (2014 = 3 nets; 2015 = 10 nets); therefore, a conversion was used to estimate the 2015 sample.

Bluegill	2014 sample	2015 sample
Total fish in nets	32	67
% of 3" fish	84	48
% of 6" fish	16	52
% of 8" fish	0	0

Six inch fish are common.

Channel Catfish	2014 sample	2015 sample
Total fish in nets	18	11
% of 11" fish	72	76
% of 16" fish	22	24
% of 24" fish	0	0
% of 28" fish	6	0

I have a feeling catfish are being harvested rapidly but provide some quality summer fun.

Largemouth Bass	2014 sample	2015 sample
Total fish electrofished	197	112
% of 8" fish	27	21
% of 12" fish	31	37
% of 15" fish	36	40
% of 20" fish	6	2

Great bass fishing at McPherson; numbers have dropped but it's likely due to different sampling gear that was used this year.

White Crappie	2014 sample	2015 sample
Total fish in nets	31	193
% of 5" fish	48	49
% of 8" fish	52	49
% of 10" fish	0	2
% of 12" fish	0	0

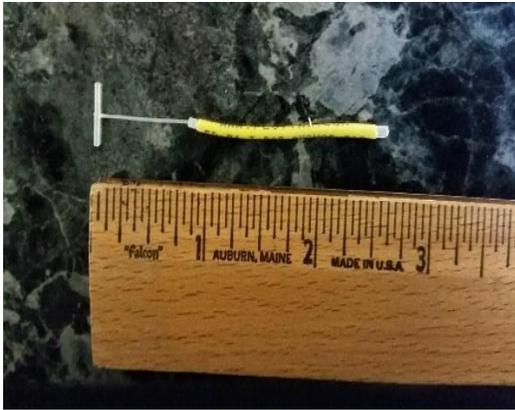
Fish are mostly small but 10-inch fish are present. Catch and eat all the small crappie you can manage!

# Trout Program

## Kanopolis Seep Stream

If you spent this winter fishing for trout below the dam at Kanopolis Reservoir you might have noticed Sue Graham walking around asking questions. She has been surveying folks to get a better idea of angler catch rates, harvest, and the popularity of the trout program out there. This information will guide our future trout stocking regime in the future.

**We are also doing a study on trout over-summer mortality and growth. If you catch any fish with a tag, please either release the fish or call me with the tag information. THANKS!**



*Type of fish tag used for trout.*

## Great Bend's Veteran's Memorial Park

Blue-green algae warnings have kept rainbow trout from being stocked in Vet's Lake for the past five years. Trout stockings were moved to Stone Lake in southern Great Bend. Fortunately, the city of Great Bend improved water quality at Vet's Lake by using ALUM; a necessary treatment in lakes with persistent water quality problems. Trout stockings have finally been moved back to Vet's Lake and anglers seem to be happy. Stone Lake will no longer be stocked with trout unless conditions deteriorate again at Vet's Lake.



*Trout stocking*

# Community Lake Restoration

## Sterling City Lake

The City of Sterling received a grant from the KDWPT to improve the shoreline around Sterling City Lake. The shoreline has continued to erode and the city proposed adding rip-rap rock to the shoreline to keep wave erosion at bay. The rock will also act as fish habitat for smaller fish. This lake is a beautiful community lake in downtown Sterling for those that want to catch largemouth bass, bluegill, and channel catfish while having amenities nearby, including a swimming pool. This popular grant program is only open for cooperators that allow free public fishing and receive KDWPT fish management practices.



*Sterling City Lake, Sterling, Kansas*



*Workers moving rock to Sterling (Photo by Taggart Wall)*



*Placing rock around the shoreline (Photo by Taggart Wall)*

## Aquatic Nuisance Species ID



Fishing is one of life's greatest pleasures. For most, it's a way of life worth conserving.

Unfortunately, aquatic invaders like zebra mussels, Asian carp, and white perch have invaded several Kansas lakes and rivers. These species harm our native fish, reduce recreational

opportunities, and cost Kansans millions of dollars each year. Zebra mussels and Asian carp disrupt food webs and alter habitat, causing significant damage to native fisheries, and white perch often stunt easily, leaving many small fish that can disrupt fishing and compete with native fish for resources. Some aquatic nuisance species are tiny, easy to overlook, and can live for days in water left in boat hulls, livewells and bait buckets. Other invaders, including fish diseases, can be spread by releasing live bait.

Guiding new anglers on proper bait disposal, as well as cleaning, draining, and drying all equipment every time is an important component. However, anglers should also be able to identify aquatic nuisance species and know what to do if they find an out-of-place species.

Angler reports of aquatic nuisance species locations are valuable, as anglers frequent lakes and streams on a regular basis, and will likely find a new infestation first. Knowing how to identify those species is critical to prevent the spread of aquatic nuisance species and to report new sightings. *Picture above: Small ANS can look very similar to native baitfish. From top to bottom: bighead carp, silver carp, grass carp, and gizzard shad. All except the gizzard shad have been introduced into Kansas.*

*JESSICA HOWELL – Former KDWPT Aquatic Nuisance Species Coordinator*

## How to Make for Better Tasting Catfish

If you won't eat catfish because you think they have a strong, fishy taste, what can I say? They're fish and have an oilier type of flesh than say walleye or crappie. And that alone will make them a bit stronger tasting. The secret that makes catfish, white bass, or even carp better tasting is to double filet the fish. Double filleting means simply lifting the knife up off the skin when separating the filet from the skin, thus

leaving some of the red, stronger-tasting oily flesh on the skin and free from the filet.

Eric Priest of Emporia takes the double filet method a step further. Once the fish is filleted from the bone and separated from the skin, he turns the filet over and trims any remaining red meat out. Any fat should also be discarded. The end result will be a better tasting fish



filet, whether it is catfish or one of the stronger tasting species having a red "blood" line.

"I don't keep flatheads that weigh over 7 pounds but I don't want to mislead you into thinking fish any bigger are not good to eat. That's far from the truth. Big ones are good. I personally choose to let big ones go because they are such a thrill to catch; a

pleasure every fisherman should experience at least once in their life. The main thing is, please don't waste, and use what you take."

Bill Brown of Lebo suggests filets should be immediately placed in ice water. "Place them in bags once they are rinsed clean along with a little ice water and a tablespoon of either red wine or malt vinegar. Seal, and be sure to squeeze all the air out before you freeze them. For immediately cooking and not freezing, place filet in vinegar of choice and let them sit for an hour or more." Bill's golden rule is to keep the filets below 40 degrees as much as possible.

To cook, he lets the filets drain in the refrigerator and then cuts into bite-size pieces. Pieces that are not being fried are kept in an aluminum pan sitting on top of ice. Bill likes to use peanut oil heated between 350 and 375 degrees. All fish he catches are prepared this way, except walleye doesn't need the vinegar.

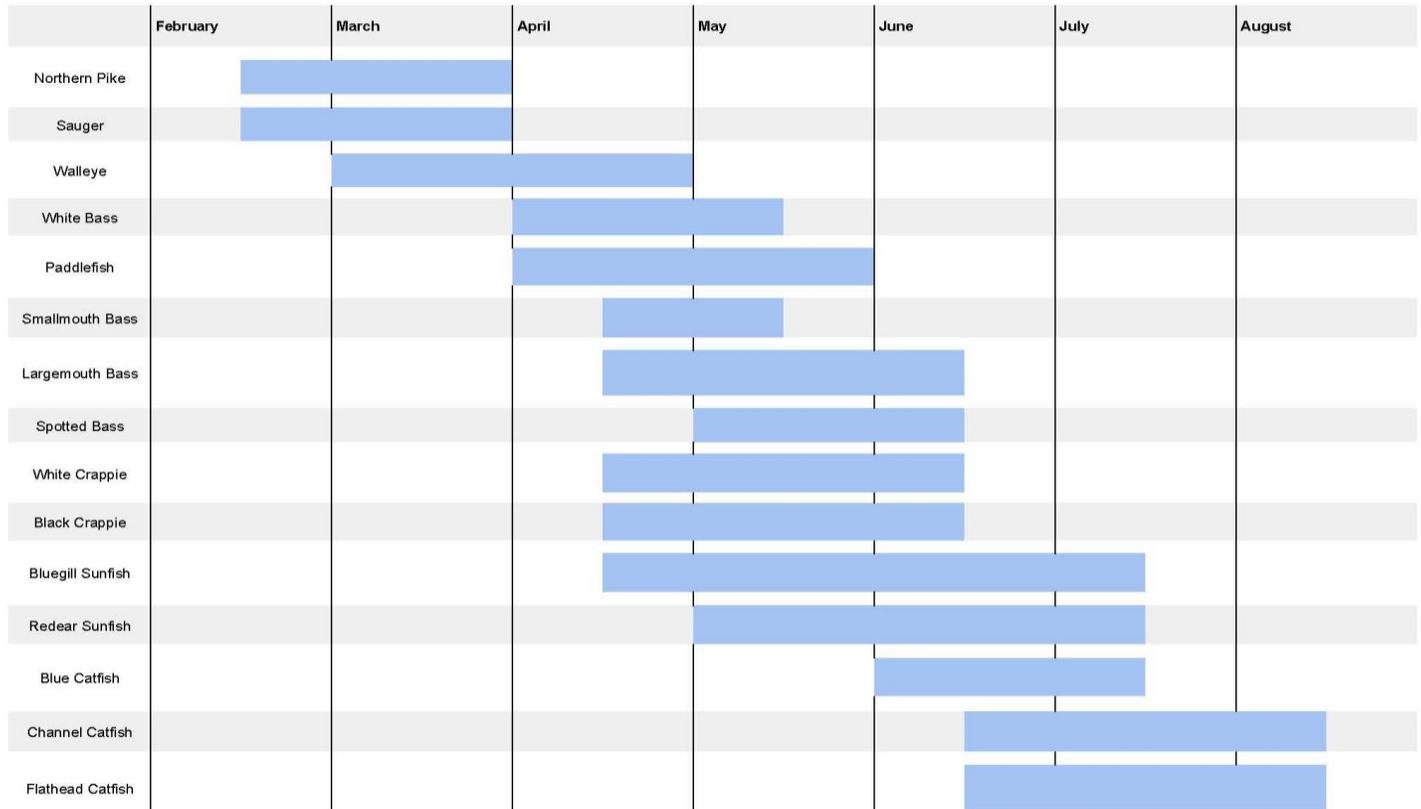
Simply dry filets after washing them off. Don't soak them in anything and smear a bit of yellow mustard on them. My coating of choice is a seasoned mix such as Zatarans. Enjoy! *Picture above: Eric Priest is all smiles cradling a personal best 76-pound flathead catfish he caught on a green sunfish and released back into the Cottonwood River.*

*PHIL TAUNTON – Angler Education Instructor*

# 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!



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