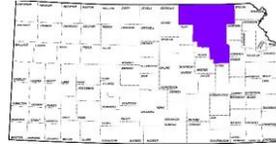


Tuttle Creek Fisheries Newsletter

Spring 2017



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Please update your contacts as all KDWPT personnel have new email addresses in 2017 with @ks.gov

Crappie Forecast for the Manhattan District

Spring is a great time of year for fishing and one of the most popular fish species for anglers this time of year is crappie. Spring is a good time to catch this tasty fish because they are up shallow looking to spawn. This makes them easy to pattern and lots of them can be put on a stringer by both boat and shore anglers.

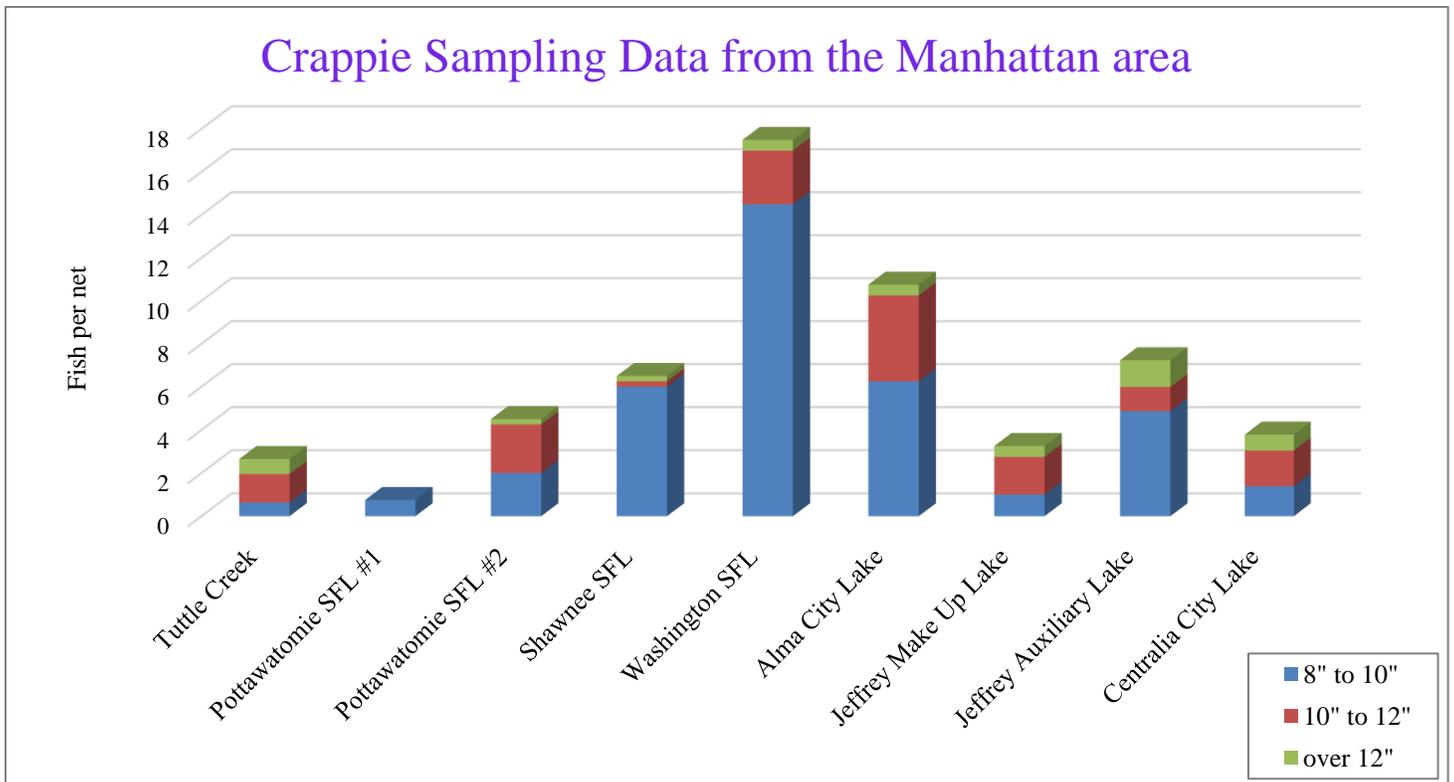
Crappie populations can have rather large fluctuations in both density and size characteristics over a short period of time. This is why I include my annual crappie sampling results in the spring newsletter, giving readers access to the most current crappie forecast when fishing starts to get hot.

On the next page is a graph with all the lakes that crappie were collected from in the Manhattan District in the fall of 2016. This graph is meant for easy comparison of crappie populations found at local lakes. Each bar represents how many crappie were collected per net for each length group. Lakes are in no particular order. Fish less than 8 inches were not included in the graph because crappie that size are not normally of interest to most anglers. These numbers will be slightly different from the 2017 Fishing Forecast pamphlet because white crappie and black crappie numbers have been put together for easier

use. The forecast data for other fish species or additional lakes throughout Kansas can be found at <http://ksoutdoors.com/Fishing/Fishing-Forecast>



White crappie on the left and black crappie on the right from Jeffrey Auxiliary Lake



Hopefully, this graph can be a helpful guide when looking for crappie fishing locations around the Manhattan area. However, more than just sampling results goes into determining a good fishing spot. For example, it is hard to compare sampling data alone to determine if it will be better fishing at 10,000-acre Tuttle Creek Reservoir or 24-acre Pottawatomie SFL #1, as there are so many other differences between these lakes. This graph can give you a quick idea of what each crappie population looks like at different lakes.

The sample numbers of crappie from last fall were below average at Tuttle Creek. However, the population contains some nice sized fish. The 2016 data had the highest percentage of the population over 10 inches seen in the last 30 years.

Of the four state fishing lakes that I sample, Pott#1 had the lowest number of crappie per net and indicates that crappie density is below the long-term average for the lake. Pott#2 data recorded higher than normal abundance with an improved percentage of bigger fish. Shawnee SFL is dominated by small fish that will hopefully grow into the larger length groups in the next couple of years. The crappie population

has seen some good improvements the last few years at Washington SFL as the fish have been having good growth due to improved habitat conditions at the lake.

The crappie fishery at Alma City Lake is currently offering good numbers of fish over 10 inches, but these fish are fairly skinny.

Of the two lakes on the Jeffrey Energy Center; one has an improving crappie population and the other is on the downfall. The good numbers of crappie at Make Up Lake have been dropping as there has not been a successful spawn in recent years to sustain the population. The 2016 sample at Auxiliary Lake produced the highest number of young fish ever recorded at the lake, which should lead to some really good fishing in the near future.

The crappie population has been quite dynamic at Centralia City Lake the last five years. The current fishery will offer decent fishing, but there are lots of little ones in the lake indicating the population is trending back to being overpopulated and stunted.

Good luck getting into the crappie this spring!

State Record Bass....?

Not many people on this planet can say they have caught a record breaking fish. It is pretty uncommon to see a new record set. In my nine years of having this job, I have verified two state records; one for fresh water drum and another for a bigmouth buffalo. Those were rather interesting stories. Unfortunately, this is not a story about someone that caught a new state record. However, this is the tail of an angler that missed it by the narrowest of margins and I could not believe how he reacted to it.

Last December I got a call on a Sunday evening from game warden Travis Schulte about a possible state record fish being caught. For a new record to be set, the fish must be weighed on certified scales and a fisheries biologist needs to verify the species. I contacted the angler to hear his story and get the process started on seeing if this fish would be a new record.

David Wardlow of Junction City had been fishing for bass at Pott#2 on that chilly afternoon when he hooked into a good one. He had caught enough big bass in his life that he knew he had something special by the time he finally got it landed.

David did not want to harm the fish, so he kept it swimming around on his line until a container could be brought to him to put the fish in for transport. He then had to find someone with a certified scale open on a Sunday afternoon that would allow a live fish to bounce around on it. David's smallmouth bass weighed in at 6.83 pounds. The current Kansas record for the species is 6.88 pounds. The Pott#2 fish missed it by less than an ounce or about nine pennies.

I know it is very unlikely that I will ever be so lucky to catch a record breaking fish. And I imagine if I missed hitting such a great milestone by less than the

weight of the lure I was using, then I would be quite disappointed with the outcome. I would probably be yelling at the air or kicking something hard. But not David Wardlow. He cheerfully drove that big smallmouth bass back to Pottawatomie SFL#2 and watched the fish swim away. "I know where she lives and maybe I will catch her again." Good luck David. Good luck and give me a call if you do.



David Wardlow and his oh so close smallmouth bass caught at Pottawatomie State Fishing Lake #2

What's New for 2017?

The statewide 15-inch minimum length limit for walleye, sauger and saugeye does not apply to rivers, streams and tailwaters. This change was made to allow anglers to harvest these fish once they migrate downstream out of a lake where they are being managed. Once they are in the river systems, they can have poor survival during conditions commonly seen in Kansas summers. So the idea is to allow people to keep them if they are out of a lake and may perish soon anyway. For the Manhattan area this means that any sized saugeye can be harvested at Rocky Ford, Tuttle Creek River Pond, or at the tubes below the dam. The 15-inch minimum length limit still applies for Tuttle Creek Reservoir from the dam upstream to the end of the wildlife area at Blue Rapids.

Pictures from sampling conducted in fall of 2016

Tuttle Creek Reservoir



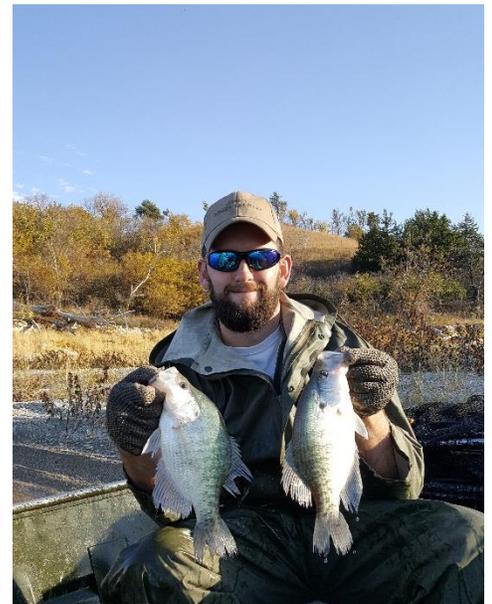
Record numbers of little saugeye.
Not many bigger ones though.



Below average numbers of
white bass but they are big.
Plenty of longnose gar.



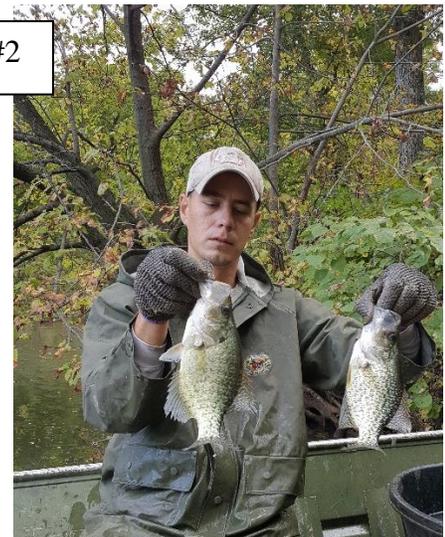
Seeing some big crappie and little crappie, but not many in between.



Pottawatomie State Fishing Lake #2



One of the nicer crappie we saw at
Alma City Lake.



Pictures from sampling conducted in fall of 2016

Jeffrey Make Up Lake: most of the crappie there are about this size.



Jeffrey Auxiliary Lake crappies and wiper. The lake also has great numbers of white bass over 12-inches.



Washington State Fishing Lake



Shawnee State Fishing Lake: most of the crappie are the size of the small one but we saw a few bigger ones.

Some fish from Centralia City Lake. Good saugeye this year, a few wiper and the fattest channel catfish I have ever seen!



A big Thank You to all the fish holders that helped me last fall: Alex, Ben, Bryon, Micah, and Megan!