

# Ellsworth District Fisheries



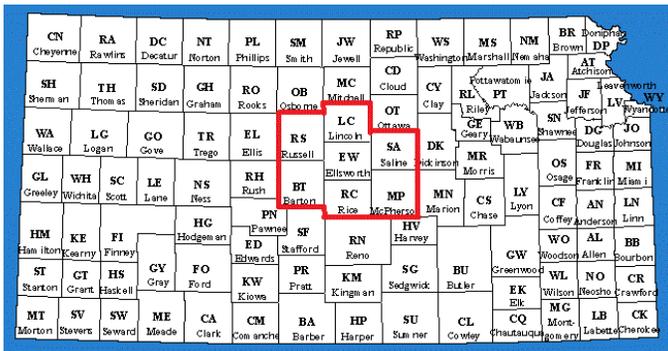
Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism Fisheries Division

Fall 2017

## District Information

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 Wilson Area Office  
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### Counties and Reservoirs



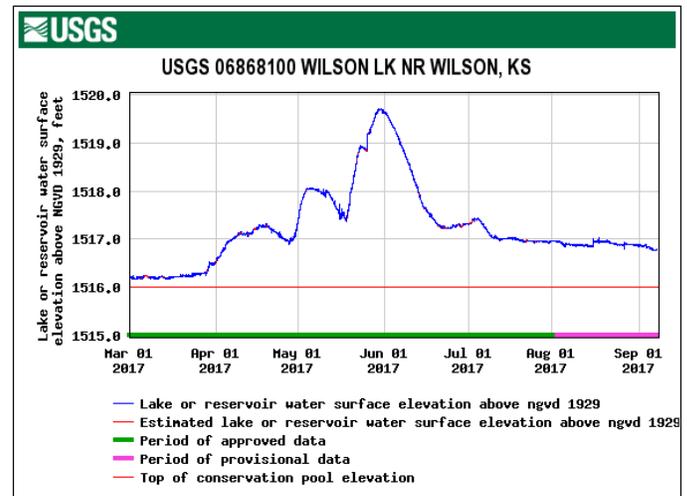
Russell	<b>Wilson Reservoir - 9000 acres</b>
Lincoln	Only leased F.I.S.H. properties
Saline	Saline State Lake (LOW)
	Lakewood Lake - Salina – 6 acres
Barton	Indian Rock Lake – Salina – 1 acre
	Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area
	Stone Lake – Great Bend - 40 acres
	Veteran’s Lake – Great Bend - 13 acres
Ellsworth	<b>Kanopolis Reservoir - 3550 acres</b>
	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.*



## Summer Weather Conditions

**Wilson Reservoir** – The reservoir finally filled to conservation pool one year ago, (Sept 6, 2016), and remained full this spring and summer. The current elevation is 0.7 feet above conservation pool. There are still hundreds of acres of flooded reed grass that have provided refuge for gizzard shad, sunfishes, and juveniles of many species of sport fish. Black bass, blue catfish, and walleye have taken advantage of this abundant forage within the reed grass all summer. Because of this, some fish have been rather difficult for anglers to catch. Nonetheless, the future looks good for Wilson Reservoir sport fish.

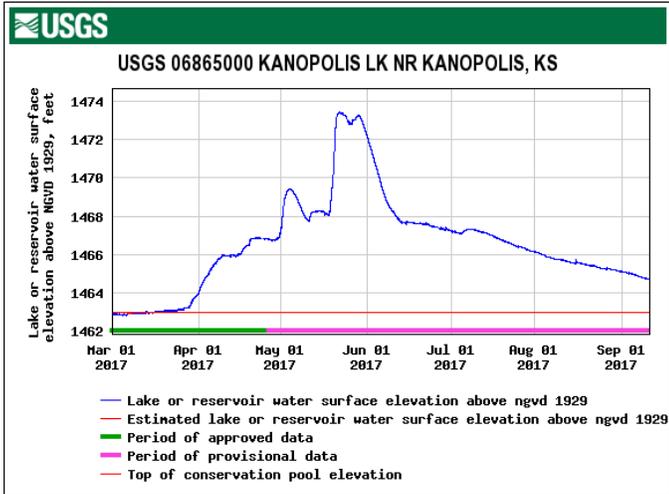


[http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ks/nwis/uv/?site\\_no=06868100&PARAMeter\\_cd=62614,62615,00054](http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ks/nwis/uv/?site_no=06868100&PARAMeter_cd=62614,62615,00054)



*A May sunrise showing the newly flooded vegetation in Wilson Reservoir.*

**Kanopolis Reservoir** – The mean lake elevation has risen every year since 2013: 1459.4, 1464.8, 1464.9, 1465.2 in 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016, respectively. The reservoir experienced its second year in a row with dramatic rises in elevation. The lake elevation soared over 10 feet high in late May. Consecutive years of high flows through the reservoir might have negative effects on the fish populations; therefore, monitoring the status of these fish this fall will be critical.



[http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ks/nwis/uv?site\\_no=06865000](http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ks/nwis/uv?site_no=06865000)

## Spring Largemouth Bass Samples



KDWPT uses electrofishing boats to sample largemouth bass populations throughout Kansas public lakes. The boat works by putting electricity through the water for a short distance to temporarily stun the fish. Stunned fish will come to the surface for easy collection. Random samples are collected throughout the lake. Fish are measured, weighed, and released unharmed. Remember, these are samples and not indicative of every largemouth bass in the lake. This method of sampling does, however allow us to gain an understanding of how the population is changing from year to year. This allows us to monitor the population and implement appropriate management actions to achieve the best populations for our angling constituents.

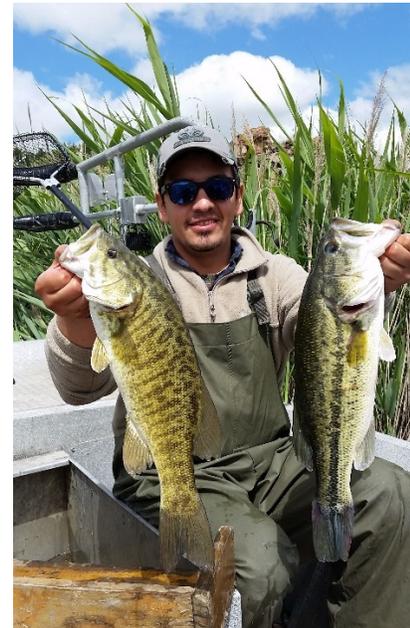
## Wilson Reservoir

The Wilson Reservoir largemouth bass population has begun its ascent! A full reservoir with flooded reed grass and terrestrial vegetation is a general recipe for improved black bass populations and we're witnessing it at Wilson Reservoir. Improved numbers are due to an improved and efficient electrofishing boat but also an improvement in the numbers of small, young fish in the population. These fish should grow fast and provide some great angling next spring and summer.

*Note: A different amount of electrofishing effort was used at Wilson in 2017 (2016 = 3.8 hours; 2017 = 5.8 hours); therefore, a conversion was used to correct the 2017 sample.*

	2015 sample	2016 sample
Total fish	13	74
% of 8-inch fish	17%	54%
% of 12-inch fish	17%	16%
% of 15-inch fish	66%	30%
% of 20-inch fish	0	0

*Improved sampling efficiency and water levels have quickly improved the largemouth bass population at Wilson Reservoir. The population is dominated by 8- to 12-inch fish.*



*Ernesto Flores with a largemouth bass and smallmouth bass collected in the 2017 sample at Wilson Reservoir.*

## Kanopolis Reservoir

It appears the recent stocking of early-spawned bass has had an impact on the population. Our numbers have improved at Kanopolis and a lot of them (44 percent) are less than 12 inches long. We collected genetic tissue samples from all these fish and will soon know if they were a result of last year's fingerling stocking or not. We

are still a distance away from providing a respectable largemouth bass population but any movement of the needle in the right direction is promising.

*Note: A different amount of electrofishing effort was used at Kanopolis in 2017 (2016 = 2.7 hours; 2017 = 3.1 hours); therefore, a conversion was used to correct the 2017 sample.*

	2016 Sample	2017 Sample
Total fish	3	29
% of 8-inch fish	33%	44%
% of 12-inch fish	33%	37%
% of 15-inch fish	33%	19%

As mentioned, we are currently undergoing efforts to improve the largemouth bass fishery at Kanopolis Reservoir. We stocked 60,000 more early-spawned largemouth bass into the reservoir in 2017, representing the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of stocking. We have slated 1 more year of stocking in 2018 along with more habitat improvements.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smDb9LRdBSQ&feature=youtu.be>



*A small sample of earlier spawned largemouth bass fingerlings stocked into Kanopolis Reservoir in early June, 2017. Nearly 60,000 were stocked.*



*Ernesto Flores with a largemouth bass sampled at Kanopolis Reservoir in 2017.*

## McPherson State Lake

The largemouth bass population at McPherson State Lake continues to be one of the best in the state. Nonetheless, their bellies are usually full which can make them difficult for anglers to catch at times. Our 2017 sample was, again, similar to the previous years in terms of length group proportions but we did see a slight increase in numbers.

*Note: A different amount of electrofishing effort was used at McPherson in 2017 (2016 = 1.8 hours; 2017 = 1.5 hours); therefore, a conversion was used to correct the 2016 sample.*

	2016 Sample	2017 Sample
Total fish	150	193
% of 8-inch fish	20%	25.5%
% of 12-inch fish	32%	25%
% of 15-inch fish	48%	47.5%
% of 20-inch fish	<1%	>2%



*Jason Black holding (above) and measuring (below) a 21-inch-plus largemouth bass during electrofishing at McPherson State Lake in early May, 2017.*

## Great Bend – Stone Lake

Stone Lake, located in southern Great Bend is a nearly 30-acre sand pit that provides good sport fishing opportunities for largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, wipers, channel catfish, flathead catfish, and bluegill. Shoreline access is limited and covered with cattails. While these cattails limit shoreline access they provide quality nursery habitat for bluegill and juvenile largemouth bass. Nonetheless, these cattails have been sprayed and are not as thick as they have been and there are plenty of places to bank fish on the north side and a boat ramp for boat anglers. The smallmouth bass population isn't overly abundant but there are some quality fish to be caught. The population of largemouth bass has improved dramatically, but is partly due to the use of a more efficient electrofishing boat. The population is healthy and full of potential.

*Note: A different amount of electrofishing effort was used at Stone Lake in 2017 (2016 = 1.2 hours; 2017 = 1.0 hours); therefore, a conversion was used to correct the 2016 sample.*

	2016 Sample	2017 Sample
Total fish	55	129
% of 8-inch fish	40%	61%
% of 12-inch fish	50%	25%
% of 15-inch fish	8%	14%
% of 20-inch fish	2%	0%

*The heaviest largemouth bass collected at Stone Lake in both 2016 and 2017 weighed 4.5 pounds (see picture below).*



*Tommy Berger with a 4.5-pound largemouth bass collected at Stone Lake in 2017.*

## Great Bend – Veteran's Lake

Veteran's Lake, located on the NW corner of McKinley and 17<sup>th</sup> Street is a 13-acre community lake. Veteran's Lake has been plagued with blue-green algae over the years but due to recent aluminum sulfate treatments the water quality has improved and fish management has resumed. Due to recent fish kills, the largemouth bass population has been non-existent. The city stocked 100, 9-inch bass in 2016. We collected nearly 50 of these in our 2017 sample. Their growth seems to be good and we're happy to report that Veteran's Lake has a reasonable bass fishery again! Only 1 older fish was sampled and it weighed 5.2 lbs.!

	2017 Sample
Total fish	50
% of 8" fish	93.5%
% of 12" fish	4.5%
% of 15" fish	0%
% of 20" fish	2%



*Tommy Berger with the one fish collected at Veteran's Lake that measured over 13 inches. This fish was 20 inches long and weighed 5.2 pounds.*

## ***Black Kettle State Lake***

This 8-acre state fishing lake is located on the southern edge of McPherson County just east of Moundridge off I-135. It is a shallow lake that includes a boat ramp on the south side. The lake contains a good largemouth bass population consisting of many fish from 2-4 pounds and is stocked annually with channel catfish. Black Kettle was not sampled in 2017 but results from 2016 indicate a reasonable bass fishery with 38% of the population larger than 15”.

	2016 Sample
Total fish	34
% of juveniles	29%
% of 8-inch fish	12%
% of 12-inch fish	15%
% of 15-inch fish	38%
% of 20-inch fish	6%

## ***Holyrood City Lake***

Holyrood City Lake is located 10 miles N of Holyrood, KS or approximately 7 miles SSE of Wilson, KS. The lake was renovated throughout the 2000s but never filled with enough water to begin stocking fish until 2014. The lake filled in 2017 and now provides quality bluegill, largemouth bass, and channel catfish angling opportunities.

	2017 Sample
Total fish	79
% of 8-inch fish	57.5%
% of 12-inch fish	34.5%
% of 15-inch fish	8%
% of 20-inch fish	0%

*The Holyrood City Lake 2017 largemouth bass sample yield mostly young fish as the fish were first stocked in 2013-2014.*



*Tommie Berger and Riggs Walter showing off two largemouth bass sampled at Holyrood City Lake in May, 2017.*

## ***Sterling City Lake***

Sterling City Lake is a 9-acre community lake located within the City of Sterling in Rice County. An algae bloom-induced fish kill in 2013 mostly eliminated the largemouth bass population within the lake. Subsequent stocking of bass and forage has these fish extremely healthy and growing well.

*Note: A different amount of electrofishing effort was used at Sterling City Lake in 2017 (2016 = 0.8 hours; 2017 = 0.7 hours); therefore, a conversion was used to correct the 2016 sample.*

	2016 Sample	2017 Sample
Total fish	58	98
% of 8-inch fish	84%	33%
% of 12-inch fish	16%	54%
% of 15-inch fish	0%	13%
% of 20-inch fish	0%	0%

*The largemouth bass population at Sterling City Lake is growing. The 2017 sample indicates that most fish are now greater than 12 inches and some are now above the statewide length limit of 15 inches.*

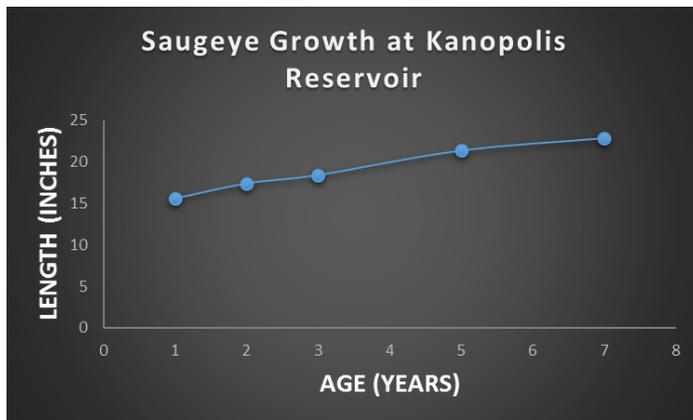
*Wesley Sowards and Ernesto Flores with two plump largemouth Bass sampled at Sterling City Lake in May, 2017.*



## OTHER PROJECTS

### *Saugeye Growth at Kanopolis*

We collected age and growth information from 52 saugeye at Kanopolis Reservoir in 2016. These fish are growing fast. They typically reach 15 inches after their first year and 18 inches by their third year. This rapid growth is typical of walleye and saugeye populations in Kansas reservoirs.



### *Striper Stocking at Wilson Reservoir*



The Milford Hatchery holds Striper broodstock at their facility. These adults are used to produce both stripers and hybrid striped bass (wipers) for statewide stockings in several of our public reservoirs. These fish generally produce very well until 10 or more years of age. Once their egg production begins to drop they need to be

culled out for younger fish. This is the circle of life. Well, fortunately, the fish culled this past summer got one more shot to stretch their fins. Nearly a dozen stripers weighing from 10 – 37 lbs. were stocked into Wilson Reservoir and one can be seen swimming in the aquarium at the Salina Mall. These bruisers can provide a great deal of excitement for Wilson striper anglers. One fish nearly 30 pounds was caught this year and very well might have been one of these stocked fish!



*A new fish hauling box used by the biologists at the Milford Hatchery*



*Ernesto Flores and I struggling with a 30-lb. striper.*

Remember, stripers cannot reproduce naturally within Wilson Reservoir. The population is sustained only by our stocking program. They do not naturally reproduce in many man-made reservoirs; however, they have reproduced successfully in some very large western U.S. impoundments.

## Blue Catfish Identification Project

Bryan Sowards & Allison Hullinger (FHSU)

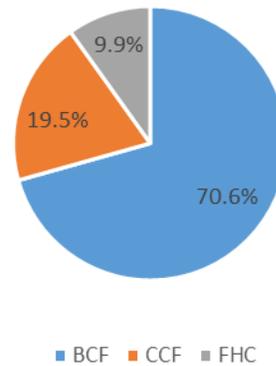
You have heard me speak of the popularity of blue catfish in previous newsletters. They are growing in popularity in our Kansas reservoirs. Some of these populations are beginning to reproduce on their own, which helps put population growth into hyper drive. These fish will be a common sight around the state in years to come. Due to their natural history and overall size, they are managed differently than other catfish species. The intent of these stockings was to provide a trophy fishing opportunity. Some surveys have defined a “trophy” blue cat as one that exceeds 37 inches in length. However you define it, this is a species stocked with the full intent of allowing them to reach their size potential. Again, these fish are managed differently. Some reservoirs have 35-inch length limits, protective slot limits, and/or only 5/day creel limits while the potential take of channel catfish, and even flathead catfish, is much more liberal. We are still learning what it will take to reach and maintain a trophy blue catfish fishery.

Because this species is managed differently than other catfish, it is important for anglers to identify them correctly. We sought to determine, or quantify, how well anglers in the Wilson Lake community could identify different catfish species. In cooperation with Knothead’s Bait Shop, we brought live catfish into the bait shop in controlled tanks. These fish were collected in Wilson Reservoir and later returned, unharmed.



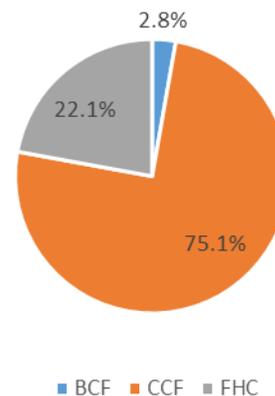
We presented everyone that would participate with either a blue or channel catfish. These fish ranged from 19-27 inches in length. This is a common range of sizes for both blue and channel catfish at Wilson Reservoir. We surveyed 85 individuals with an average fishing experience level of 27 years. Overall, folks did well. However, we should be able to do much better.

## Blue Catfish Identified as...



Blue catfish (BCF) were correctly identified 71% of the time but misidentified as channel catfish (CCF) nearly 20% of the time. Flathead catfish (FHC) were not even presented to the public but, regardless, were a common misidentification.

## Channel Catfish Identified as...

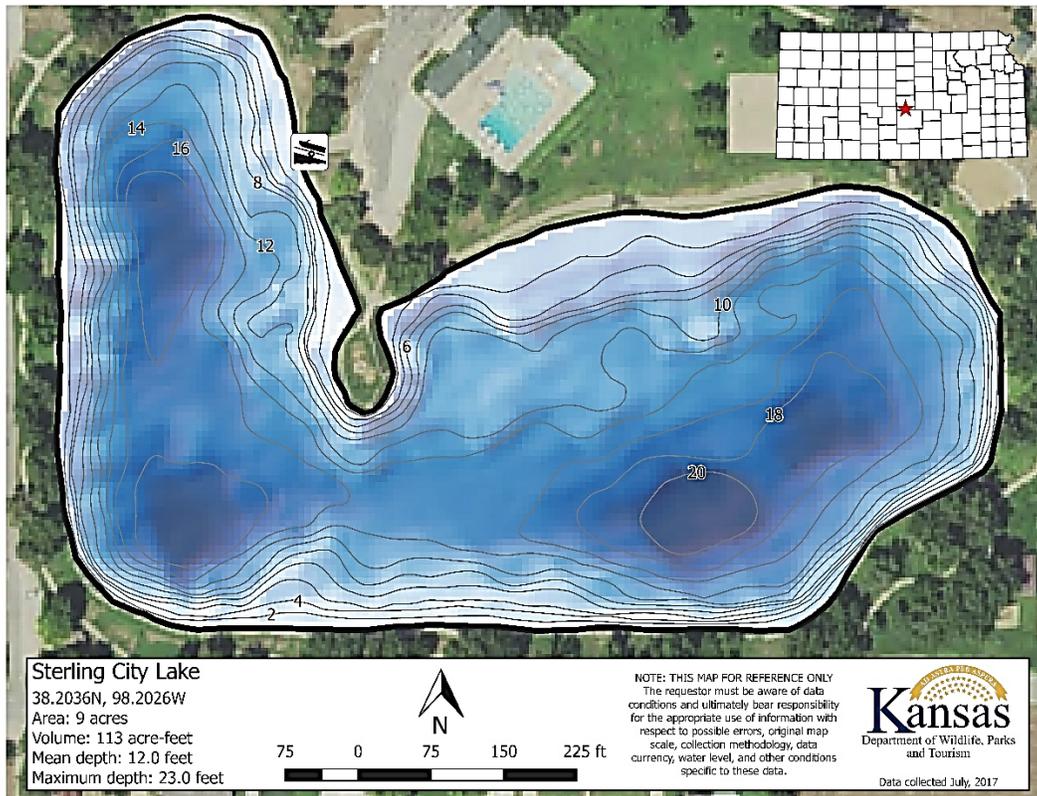


Channel catfish were misidentified less often. They were most often misidentified as flathead catfish rather than blue catfish. That was interesting.

This rate of misidentification might be negligible, and it might not. If folks who harvest catfish often fall within the group that has difficulties with identification, then consequences to the population could be more serious. I have this information and will compile it for a future edition. [Please click here and do your part in knowing what you catch.](#)

**THANK YOU TO SUE GRAHAM & KNOTHEAD'S BAITSHOP & ALL THE FOLKS THAT WILLINGLY PARTICIPATED!!!**

## New Lake Maps!



Would you be interested in acquiring lake bathymetric maps like the one seen here for Sterling City Lake? These maps provide detailed images of lake bottom contours that could help you target areas that might hold more fish. These maps are created using over-the-counter fish finders with advanced sonar technology. Every state and community fishing lake in the Ellsworth District has been mapped! Click [HERE](#) to get yours today!

## Newsletter Subscription

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