

El Dorado District Fisheries

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Spring 2018

Recent District Happenings

The calendar says springtime, but the weather seems to disagree. It's been a long winter. We are finally starting to see some hints of warmer weather and increased fish activity.

We had a successful walleye egg collection effort at El Dorado Reservoir again this year. It took only seven nights of nets to get the number of eggs required to meet hatchery production demands for 2018 fish stocking requests.

2018 marked the second year of a large-scale fish habitat project at Marion reservoir. About 250 cedar trees were placed in the lake during March. Piles built in 2017 were "freshened up" and some new pile locations were added.

The Fisheries Division completed walleye fry stocking at Marion reservoir on April 27 for a total of 4.4 million fry. We will also be stocking walleye fingerlings in the coming weeks. Walleye have been stocked each year since 2016 to increase population density of this very popular fish.

District waters will be sampled for black bass over the next several weeks. Largemouth, smallmouth, and spotted bass are sampled with an electrofishing boat. Lengths and weights of individual fish are collected and the fish are returned to the water. This annual data collection is used to monitor any changes in the population and management decisions are based upon the trend data.

2018 Reservoir Fishing Outlooks

The 2018 Reservoir Fishing Outlooks can be found on pages 2 and 3. These outlooks give a brief description of the popular fish species available at the reservoirs and what anglers can expect this year. For additional information on Kansas fish populations or to compare one lake's fish to another's check out the [2018 FISHING FORECAST](#) on the KDWPT website.

Marion Reservoir Fish Habitat

The GPS coordinates for brush piles and PVC habitat cubes can be found on the [Marion Reservoir Fishing Report Page](#). Single coordinates mark areas with multiple structures so keep a close eye on the sonar.



This fish habitat construction effort is planned to occur annually during the late winter months as weather and lake conditions allow.

We would appreciate any fishing reports, observations, and comments anglers are willing to share regarding the habitat structures marked with the provided coordinates. Are the PVC cubes producing more fish than the brush piles? Do bigger fish prefer one habitat type over the other? We can fine-tune our efforts to focus on the most productive structures. Send input to the contact info located at the end of the newsletter.



El Dorado Reservoir **2018 Fishing Outlook**

White crappie - Good Crappie numbers are looking very good for 2018 and are at the highest levels since 2011. Very productive spawns during 2015 and 2017 are providing the recent increased numbers of crappie within the reservoir. Size distribution shows improvement over last year with higher numbers of larger fish available to anglers in 2018. Anglers should expect quality crappie fishing in 2018 with larger fish in the 13 to 15+-inch range available. A 20/day crappie creel limit became effective January 1, 2018.

Walleye - Good Walleye numbers will be up in 2018 and are at the highest level since 2010. Percentage of 20- to 25-inch walleye is down from last year while percentage of 25- to 30-inch walleye is up. Numbers of walleye in the 10- to 15-inch range are the lowest seen in many years which may cause some problems in walleye availability in coming years. Walleye sampled during test netting in November 2017 had excellent body conditions showing they are getting plenty to eat. Walleye harvest regulations include a 21-inch minimum length limit and a 2/day creel limit.

White bass - Fair After several years of depressed numbers the white bass population has finally seen a slight increase in overall numbers. Fall test netting in 2017 yielded the highest white bass catch rate since 2012. Lack of timely spring inflows during the white bass spawn have negatively impacted production resulting in lower densities. Anglers should be pleased with the sizes of white bass available this year. Eighty percent (80%) of the white bass are longer than 12 inches and 18% are longer than 15 inches. El Dorado white bass remain long overdue for a productive spawn.

Wiper - Good 2018 may prove to be the best big fish year since wiper were introduced in 2003. Twenty-three percent (23%) of the wiper sampled during fall test netting exceeded the 21-inch minimum length limit and 31% were between 19 and 21 inches. Fish displayed the best body condition since 2010 equating to good, thick wiper. While wiper density is down from the last several years, the greatly increased quality of the available fish should make up for the decreased catch rate. Wipers harvest regulations include a 21-inch minimum length limit and a 2/day creel limit.

Channel catfish - Fair Channel catfish numbers obtained through fall test netting continue to be low and relatively stable at El Dorado. Catch rate has deviated only 0.5 fish per net over the last five years. Most (80%) of the sampled channel catfish were less than 17 inches with the remaining 20% being less than 24 inches. Despite the absence of large fish in the sampling nets anglers do report catches of larger channel catfish at El Dorado especially from the creeks during times of inflow.

Blue catfish - Good The blue catfish population continues to improve. The fall test netting effort produced the best catch of blues since the introductory stocking in 2004. Fish are getting bigger each year. The population is currently being managed with a 25- to 35-inch protective slot length limit and a 5/day creel limit with no more than two fish over 35 inches. Blue catfish between 25 and 35 inches must be immediately released. Blues larger than 35 inches are already being caught by anglers in 2018 and harvestable fish under 25 inches are common.

Black bass - Fair The lake contains three species of black bass: largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, and spotted bass. Skilled bass anglers continue to catch nice bass at El Dorado, but the casual angler may be disappointed in bass action at the lake. Smallmouth prefer the rockier areas of the reservoir while the largemouth prefer the vegetated coves, shallow timbered areas, and feeder creeks. The density of all three populations remains fairly stable from year to year.

Marion Reservoir **2018 Fishing Outlook**

White crappie - Good Overall crappie numbers are down a bit from 2017, but the improved size distribution should make up for it. The fall test netting sample conducted in November 2017 showed that 26% of the sampled crappie were between 10 and 12 inches and over 6% were between 12 and 15 inches. Fifty-three percent (53%) of the sampled crappie were between 8 and 10 inches and these fish will be growing in to more desirable sizes as 2018 progresses. A 20/day crappie creel limit became effective January 1, 2018.

Walleye - Good The fall test netting sample showed a much improved walleye population for 2018. The number of walleye sampled during November 2017 increased 377% over the previous year. In addition to increased numbers of walleye, anglers should also be pleased with the sizes of walleye available in 2018. Walleye sampling efforts showed that 57% were between 15 and 20 inches, 28% were between 20 and 25 inches, and 6% were between 25 and 30 inches. Sixty-five percent (65%) of the sampled walleye exceeded 18 inches. The largest walleye sampled was a 27-inch, 9.25-pound beauty! Walleye harvest regulations include an 18-inch minimum length limit and a 5/day creel limit.

White bass - Fair White bass numbers have increased to the highest level seen since 2014, but remain below average density for the lake. The numbers of white bass sampled during November 2017 increased 160% from the previous year. Younger fish were found indicating that the population is rebounding from very low numbers in 2016. Size distribution will be a bit on the small side for 2018 with 57% between 9 and 12 inches and 26% between 12 and 15 inches.

Wiper - Good Anglers have good to very good wiper fishing to look forward to in 2018. While overall numbers will be lower than the last three years, anglers will find greatly increased quality of wiper within the lake. The November 2017 sample showed that 50% of the wipers exceeded the 18-inch minimum length limit and good numbers of fish just under the length limit will grow to exceed the length limit by mid-2018. Wiper harvest regulations include an 18-inch minimum length limit and a 5/day creel limit.

Channel catfish – Good Channel catfish numbers are up for the 2018 season. Numbers of channel catfish increased 82% during the November 2017 sample. In addition to having more cats to fish for, the sizes are also improved. 85% of the sampled fish were between 16 and 24 inches and 11% were between 24 and 28 inches. Marion has historically been known as a good channel catfish lake and 2018 will be well above average.

Low Lake Levels Persist

Unusually dry conditions are resulting in low lake levels throughout the El Dorado District. El Dorado Reservoir is 4.4 feet below conservation pool and Marion Reservoir is 2.1 feet below conservation pool. The state fishing lakes and community lakes within the District are also below normal.

Low water levels are a double-edged sword. Timely drawdowns can be used to provide increased spring water storage, zebra mussel control, spawning substrate rejuvenation, concentrate baitfish for predator populations, and to encourage vegetation growth on exposed areas. Low water levels can negatively impact fishing opportunities, limit areas suitable to support fish, and limit access by leaving piers, docks, or boat ramps high and dry.

Many of the waters in the El Dorado District do not see huge variations in seasonal water levels like some Kansas waters do. A four-foot deviation in water level either above or below normal pool is considered a lot at any lakes within the District. By comparison, some Kansas reservoirs can see fluctuations of 25 feet or more.

Despite this lower fluctuation of seasonal water levels at El Dorado District lakes, anglers should still be aware of current lake levels while fishing and especially while boating.

Boat ramps are shorter during times of low water and may become unusable. Due to the popularity of power loading by Kansas boaters, drop-offs can form at the end of ramps as prop wash erodes the lake bottom from under the ramp. Boat owners should use caution when launching during low lake conditions.

As water levels decrease areas that are normally not an issue can become problem areas for boaters. Old roads, shallow points, flooded timber, and mud flats can change dramatically with just a couple feet of elevation change.

Boat slowly in areas you are not familiar or have not visited in a while. Observe signaling buoys and be mindful that unmarked hazards do exist.

Be safe, have fun, and Fish Kansas!



36-inch El Dorado blue catfish sampled during fall test netting Nov 2017

Last Cast!

Good fishing is getting ready to kick in to high gear. Water temperatures are climbing in to the high 50's and fish activity is increasing. Some very good catches of crappie have been reported from the reservoirs already. Walleye will be heading to the flats over the next couple of weeks as well.

Kansas has many great fishing opportunities to offer. You can learn more at FISHKS.ORG.

We are conducting a creel survey at El Dorado this year so please take the time to answer some questions from the creel clerks!

As always, if you know someone who might like to subscribe to the newsletter, they can do so [HERE](#). If you would like to unsubscribe, please send your info to [Contact Us](#) with "unsubscribe El Dorado District Fisheries newsletter" and we'll get you taken off the list. If you have any questions or comments or story ideas feel free to send them in!

Fish On!

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