

Dodge City District Fisheries

Kansas Department of Wildlife & Parks Fisheries Division

Spring 2019

Pratt County Lake

On Labor Day weekend last fall, Pratt County received more than 8 inches of rain in several areas, and severe flooding ensued. The Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWP) operations office in Pratt was closed due to portions of the lower level of the building having up to three inches of standing water. Officially, the Ninnescah River crested at 14.46 feet, 5.5 feet over flood stage and four and a half feet higher than the previous record at 11 feet.

Office space can usually be cleaned up and repaired with normal operations resuming relatively soon. Unfortunately, that is not the case for Pratt County Lake and Centennial Pond. As seen in the photo below, floodwaters caused major damage to the roadway around Pratt County Lake. The Ninnescah River runs on the north side of the lake with the road acting as a barrier separating the two. This is the outlet structure for the lake and in order to make repairs to not only this structure but also to the inlet structure, the lake will be drained. Plans are to pull the boards that keep the river high enough to supply water to the lake on April 1, 2019 and to open the drain on April 8, 2019.



The repairs will be completed in time to allow water to fill the lake by the fourth of July. At that time, restocking efforts will begin and the lake will be stocked with bluegill, largemouth bass, channel catfish, wipers and walleye.



Clark State Fishing Lake Spillway To Be Repaired

The Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) is undertaking a spillway repair project at Clark State Fishing Lake – a popular and scenic fishing spot in southwest Kansas. The lake is nestled in a rugged canyon along Bluff Creek in northwestern Clark County about 9 miles south of Kingsdown.

The \$1.6 million project was originally expected to begin in December 2018 and be completed by summer 2019. Due to higher-than-expected bids received in January 2019 and unforeseen circumstances leading to some delays, a second round of bid invitations was issued March 14, 2019, with bid closing set for April 10. If the new bids are in line with expectations and a contract can be awarded, the current timeline calls for the project to begin around the end of April. The scheduled duration is 180 days, depending on weather conditions and any unforeseen issues.

The original plan was to lower the water level about 20 feet, but engineers now plan to lower the lake only about 11 feet below normal conservation level, reducing the risk to the fishery while the project is underway. The lake will be kept at about 11 feet below normal conservation level.

The project requires lowering the lake level to relieve the hydraulic pressure of water in the soil pushing against the underside of the spillway floor and the side walls. In late fall 2018, KDWPT staff began dropping the lake level so it would be low enough for a contractor to begin work quickly after a contract was awarded.

The intent is to maintain the lake's prized fishery throughout the construction. The lake covers about 300 acres with a maximum depth of 36 feet deep when full. Staff will monitor the lake and modify management practices according to the duration of the drawdown, water depth and the runoff entering the lake after the repairs are complete.

Angler access will be impacted, and boat ramps will likely be unusable during the work. Shoreline access will be available. Once the project is complete, the lake will refill naturally, which will depend on runoff from the watershed and to a lesser extent, rainfall directly on the lake.

The project is necessary to repair parts of the spillway that have deteriorated or been damaged. There is some surface spalling and loose concrete, seepage through the side spillway walls and rebar and wire mesh is exposed. The concrete crib wall is failing – a lower section is missing, and there is bulging and settling. The project also includes maintenance work on the lower tower outlet gates, erosion repair at the outlet structure, cleaning sediment and brush out of the outlet channel, stabilizing banks on the west lake road and at the east abutment and replacing the low water crossing downstream of the spillway.

Once complete, the work will result in a repaired spillway as well as improved fishing opportunities in the future. Growth rates of larger sport fish should increase as fish are crowded during the drawdown, and vegetation that will grow on the exposed lakebed will provide optimal conditions for spawning, fish growth and improved water quality when the lake refills. Additional habitat enhancements include the addition of 130 "Georgia Cubes" – PVC pipe structures that provide cover for a variety of fish – as well as brush and rock piles. Boat ramps will be repaired and some of the rip-rapped fishing jetties will be enhanced, as well. KDWPT expects this project to ensure the future of this treasured lake and fishery, while providing needed repairs and enhancements.



Ford State Fishing Lake

In the last newsletter you may recall seeing photos of the drastic water level fluctuations at Ford State Fishing Lake. There have been some comparisons on social media of the upcoming construction at Clark SFL to the renovation of Ford in the early 1990s. I can assure you that the fishing at Ford SFL is as good now as it has ever been. Reports of anglers catching over 100 bass in an outing were common last fall. Fish stocked so far are largemouth bass, channel catfish, and bluegill.

The table below shows the number of fish that have been stocked into Ford SFL since 2016.

Species	Size	Number
Channel catfish	Intermediates (approx. 3/lb.)	16,505
Channel catfish	Adult (1 lb. or larger)	9,970
Bluegill	Adult	135
Bluegill	Fingerlings	32,301
Largemouth bass	Fry (12,400/lb.)	4,216
Largemouth bass	Intermediate (8.6/lb.)	400

Additional activities available at Ford SFL are picnicking, camping (primitive), a bike trail and general outdoor recreation. Picnic shelters with tables are available for group activities and are located within easy walking distance of the parking areas. A boat ramp is located on the northwest side of the lake.



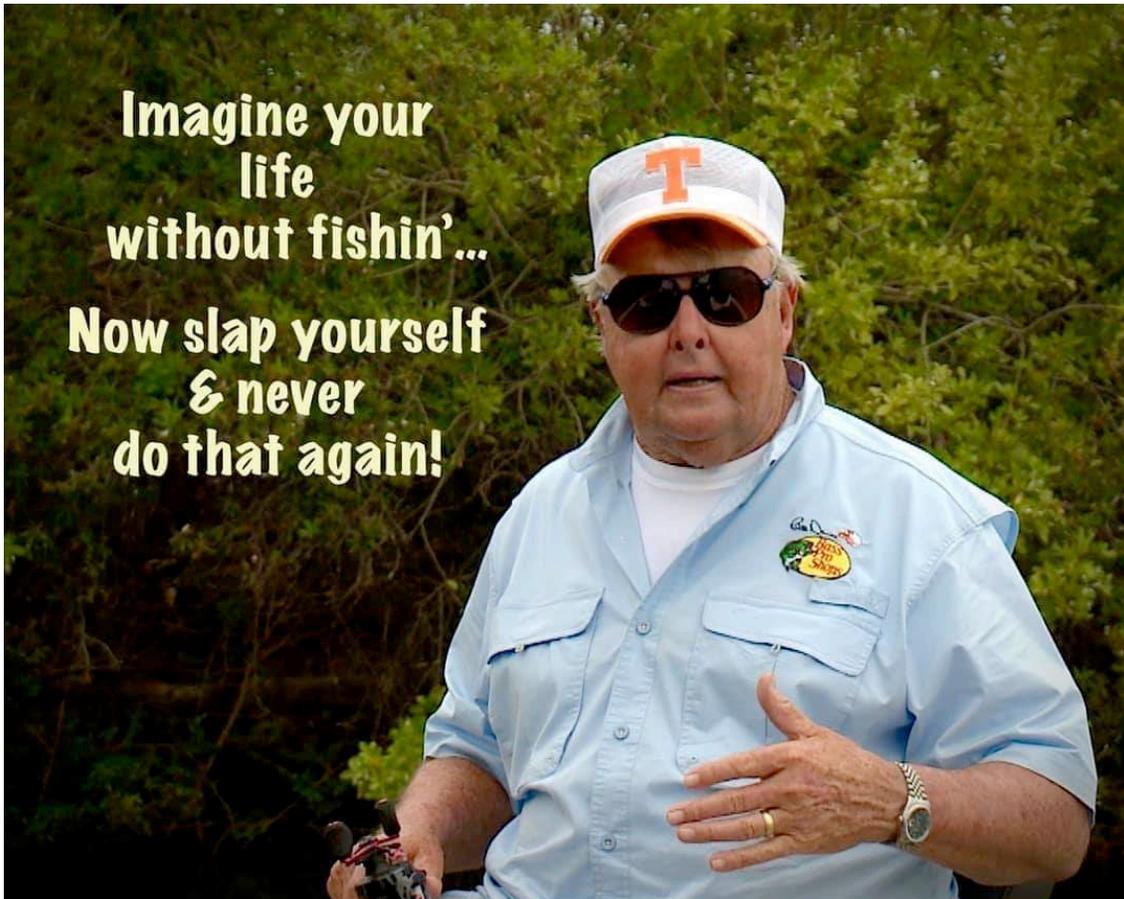
Spring 2018 Water levels in southwest Kansas

It has been wetter this winter than normal and water levels reflect that in southwest Kansas as we move into springtime. Water levels in some of our state fishing lakes and larger community lakes as of March 15, 2019, can be seen below. The numbers in parentheses are the surface acreage when the lakes are at full and at conservation pool.

State Fishing Lakes	Community Lakes
Barber State Fishing Lake – (51) - full	Coldwater City Lake – (250) – full
Clark State Fishing Lake – (337) – 11 feet low due to repair work	Jetmore City Lake – (110) – full
Concannon State Fishing Lake – (50) – dry	Pratt County Lake – (51) – full, soon to drain for repair work
Ford State Lake – (40) – full	Larned City Pond – (2) - full
Goodman State Lake – (40) acres – full	HorseThief Reservoir – (450) – full
Hain State Fishing Lake – (53) - full	
Kiowa State Fishing Lake – (21)- full	
Meade State Lake – (80) -1 foot low	



Bill Dance says:



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