



FishKS Newsletter

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Certified Instructor Program Receives Award!

The instructor program is vital to the public as a resource for fishing education AND to the department as a source of in-kind match for a federal grant. This summer, it was just placed on equal footing as fisheries management in the area of the conservation!

Kansas is a member of the Midwest Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (MAFWA). MAFWA honors projects and programs at their yearly conference. In 2019, we submitted the "Kansas Certified Angler Instructor Program" for consideration of the "Excellence in Conservation Award." Our education-related submission was selected for this award!

With less people fishing and passing on the tradition, state agencies need to become more

active in recruiting new anglers. Volunteers are a great way to accomplish this goal. As an added bonus, the in-kind dollars they generate mean there is no financial sacrifice to fisheries management when funding our aquatic education programs!

Not only is this a great honor for our staff and volunteers, but it also recognizes the importance of fishing education to both the future of the sport AND the ability of agencies to manage and promote the resource.



Secretary Brad Loveless presenting award at the August commission meeting.



2019 Program Stats and Review

- * 26 New Instructors
- * 200+ Events
- * Over 2700 volunteer hours



One new program this year was a "locavore" event at the Old Town Farmer's Market in Wichita. Locavore is used to describe

individuals wanting to find local sources of food such as wild game and local farmed meats. We fried up farm-raised channel catfish to promote the Urban Catfish Stocking Program.

The mobile aquarium had a new location at the 2019 Kansas State Fair. We were in a garage across from the Domestic Arts building. Visitors and staff appreciated the shelter from the elements, including several rainstorms, and the additional booths and displays. Although they couldn't express it, the fish appeared to enjoy being



out of the sun as they were much more active than previous years.

David Breth and Jeff Conley (Fisheries Program Specialist) demonstrated fishing cleaning for multiple species including carp at Mother Earth News Fair in Topeka. This was the first time we attempted this demo and will look to incorporate more at future events.

Raise 'em Right! Culture Section

Kansas boasts one of the most diverse and respected fish culture systems in the nation. Even more remarkable, they achieve mind-blowing numbers with just four hatcheries - Meade, Pratt, Milford and Farlington - each managed for both specialized and statewide species production.

The **Pratt Fish Hatchery** opened in 1905 with just seven ponds. Eighty-three additional ponds were added by 1913, making it the largest fish hatchery in the United States at the time. Today, it still has 87 production ponds, the indoor fish house, and two concrete raceways. The system is gravity fed using the Ninnescah River as the primary source of fresh water.

Many species are reared at this facility, but it is most famous for channel catfish production. These fish are raised from eggs, kept in the ponds for over a year until they reach 10+ inches and scheduled for stocking in early fall. These larger sizes help them survive in many state lakes where largemouth bass and other large predators have higher densities than other locations.



The above picture shows staff collecting fish from a pond via a "kettle." The fish collect in these structures when the pond is drained. Many call them "Kansas Kettles" as they were first used in our state!

Drone photo of ponds looking to the east.



Catfish eggs stick together in a giant mass and will hatch in about a week.



The **Meade Fish Hatchery** was constructed in the 1930's by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The original Adobe buildings used by the corps are still functional. It shares its location with Meade State Lake and uses artesian wells and pumps to operate.

Meade is home to the Early Spawn Bass Propagation building. Brooders are brought inside in February and sorted by male and female. Staff adjust the temperature and amount of daylight, incrementally, until they fool the bass into thinking it is time to spawn. This process gives these fish a 4-6 week head start on wild bass, increasing their survival chances at many larger reservoirs.



Inside the bass building, raceways are used for holding bass during the spawning efforts.



When new brooders arrive at the facility, staff insert a tube into their "vent" to determine sex with the presence of sperm or eggs. The fish are then tagged with a unique number and recorded as male or female for future use.

The **Farlington Fish Hatchery** is located below the Crawford State Fishing Lake dam. Although construction started in 1939, it wasn't completed until after World War II ended. Presently, the facility has 30 fish production ponds. In addition to the hatchery, the Farlington staff oversee production of channel catfish at the Woodson Rearing Pond, located at Woodson State Fishing Lake.

Recently, the Kansas Aquatic Biodiversity Center (KABC) was constructed on the hatchery, which included a specialized pond and building. This partnership between KDWP and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, is intended to provide production capabilities for non-game aquatic species including minnow species and mussels. The first project tackled by Farlington staff was rearing Alligator Snapping turtles to evaluate survivability in historically native areas.



Smallmouth Bass have become a popular game fish in our reservoirs. Farlington has increased production in recent years to meet stocking demands.



Drone photo of the new KABC pond and building



Harvest time at the Woodson Rearing Pond. Flooding in 2017 damaged the state lake and pond but repairs were completed in 2019 and rearing efforts will resume in 2020.

The **Milford Fish Hatchery** was completed in 1985 and is located below the dam of Kansas' largest lake, Milford Reservoir. It is the first to be designed as an "intensive" system where hands on production for all species starts from egg hatching in containers with grow out taking place almost exclusively in tanks and raceways instead of ponds. This allows staff to raise more fish per volume and monitor fish health daily. The 24 raceways are each 100 feet long, eight feet wide, and four feet deep with a capacity of 18,000 gallons of water. A recent re-tooling project used inside space to increase the state's ability to raise intermediate and advanced walleye through vigorous larviculture techniques with Meade Hatchery.

Just like the others, Milford can raise all species of fish but two unique species are "created at this facility - Wiper and Saugeye. Wipers are produced by fertilizing the eggs from stripers housed on site with white bass sperm. Saugeyes are produced by fertilizing eggs from walleye with sauger sperm. In both cases, the offspring can grow almost as large as the maternal parent but tolerate the temperature and turbidity of Kansas waters thanks to the traits from the paternal parent.



One of the bigger striped females used for striper and wiper production.



Layout of the raceways with the lake dam in the background



Jars of fertilized walleye eggs. Water flows through the jars to remove waste and keep them oxygenated.

Instructor Spotlight - Greg Schott & Improving Lives Through Fishing



Greg shows off a nice crappie similar to those many of his participants catch during their outings.

Those passionate about fishing understand there is more to the sport than just time spent waiting on a bite. However, it can be lost at many fishing clinics by the goal of catching a fish or anxiety of keeping kids focused on safety. One instructor, Greg Schott, found a way to use fishing as a foundation for learning life skills. "Improving Lives Through Fishing (ILTF)" was born more out of opportunity than design.

Greg became a certified angler instructor with FishKS in 2016. He went on to become a "Master Angler" with Fishing's Future (FF) and start his own chapter in Mulvane. Using the resources available to him from KDWPT and FF, he organizes and conducts dozens of events every year; all on his own time as a volunteer.

Greg never misses a chance to promote fishing and share what

he does, and can do, for communities and families. Those efforts paid off when a case worker involved with ComCare, started a partnership with his FF Chapter - a mentoring program with fishing at the core.

Greg sets up a fishing day with one or more youth or adults and their case workers and teaches them how to become self-sufficient anglers. He sometimes spends two or three days a week with these groups. Many are learning how to cope with a mental health diagnosis, a learning or behavior disability, personal trauma, or recent release from criminal detention. The time at the pond is more than just fishing whether they realize it or not. Sure, they receive hands-on instruction in knot-tying, fishing handling, and even fish cleaning but patience, problem solving, socialization

and more are the underlining life skills they will use to succeed in society. Both Greg and the case workers notice significant differences in both personality and behavior from their mentor program.

Greg's dedication is evident in conversations with him and the volunteer hours he contributes. Like many of our instructors, he never asks for anything for himself and tries to provide the best experience for his groups by buying bait and passing on collected equipment for them to take home. As a certified instructor, he is positively impacting the sport for all anglers, not just those he works with during the week. He would like to expand his reach in this effort as more groups contact him about getting involved. If you want to join him in his efforts or donate fishing supplies, please contact David Breth at 620-672-5911.

Effects of Prolonged Flooding in 2019

Below is an excerpt from the article titled 'Gear Up For Fantastic Fall Fishing' originally published as a new release August 28, 2019.

Kansas anglers are likely to experience fantastic fishing this fall and winter after what could only be described as a rough spring and summer.

"A lot of fish that would have been harvested earlier in the year weren't, so they're still out there," said Doug Nygren, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) Fisheries Division director. "The high water and flooded vegetation also helped produce some tremendous year-classes of fish, and we can usually expect great things

after high water."

The inundated cover provided freshly-hatched fish a place to escape predators and grow and those young-of-year sport fish that thrived should result in legendary year-classes of fish down the road. In addition, the conditions helped produce big numbers of gizzard shad, the preferred food for most Kansas sport fish. Already, anglers report catching heavier-than-usual wipers, catfish and white bass.

Some anglers worry that releases after high water may flush open-water sport fish species -- like walleye, saugeye, white bass and wipers -- through the outlet tubes. Still, Nygren said there are positives. Catfish anglers have

had a fantastic year catching channel, blue and flathead catfish from outlets and rivers. And while water was being released, shore-bound anglers, who might not normally have a chance to catch walleye, saugeye and wipers, have enjoyed great success.

This would also be a great time to buy a five-year fishing license at the discounted price that saves residents \$35. That one purchase will keep you fishing through what should be fantastic angling years in Kansas.

"We're in a pretty great situation," said Nygren. "There are going to be some big year classes from this year of high water. **Our future looks pretty bright.**"

56.7lb flathead caught in Arkansas River in downtown Wichita during high summer flows



One of many healthy wipers thanks to abundant shad!



In-Depth: The Cost of a Fishing License, Kansas VS Missouri

In sports, the rivalry between Kansas and Missouri is often called the “Border War.” Fans root for their respective teams these contests and proudly tout their players as the “best.” In contrast, Kansas anglers, although still proud of the resources within their home state, often wonder why Missouri anglers seem to pay less for “better.” Opinions on the matter are subjective so this article will focus on the numbers to compare the two.

One of the most common questions our agency receives involves the cost of a resident fishing license in Kansas and Missouri. The debate as to why Missouri is “cheaper” was loudest in 2016 when fishing and hunting licenses were increased in Kansas for the first time since 2002.

The simplest answer to the cost discrepancy is the Missouri Department of Conservation receives a dedicated state sales tax percentage. This collected tax is used to supplement their

license sales revenue to fund their department’s salaries, operations, facilities, and programs. Most notably, this tax means that Missouri decided everyone would contribute to managing fish, wildlife, and public lands.

Missouri reported in their fiscal year 2017 a tax revenue for conservation of \$117 million and an additional \$33 million in license and permit sales (mdc.mo.gov). In Kansas, we annually generate roughly \$32 million in license sales and receive no additional revenue from sales or any other tax.

Those numbers can seem daunting so let’s break it down to the angler level. In Missouri, a resident angler can purchase a fishing license for \$12.00 and pays 0.125% in sales tax to conservation in the state. If a licensed angler in Missouri pays sales tax on \$12,800 for goods and services, this results in \$16 going to conservation. When you add the two figures, this angler paid \$28 to the department. In Kansas,

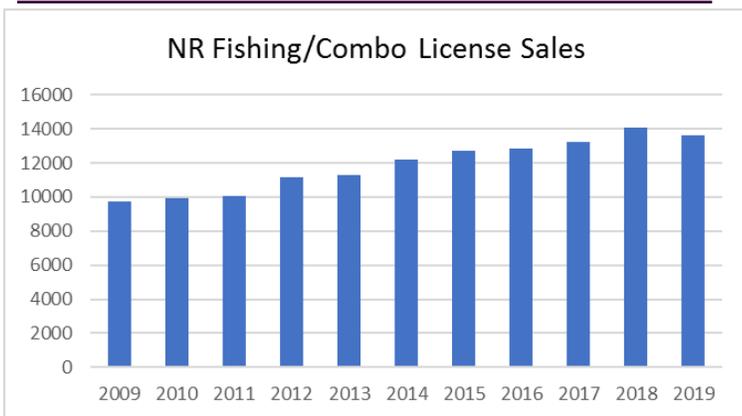
resident anglers pay \$27.50 for an annual license.

Of course, the math regarding taxes is inherently tricky and in the big picture, is not necessarily important when determining costs to the angler as the tax collected is not additive to the state sales tax. What is important is how much money the department generates. This controls their ability to operate and provide the funds for access, stocking, culture, research, education and more. Without the sales tax, Missouri’s annual revenues would be similar to Kansas but with a larger population to serve and larger water resource to manage. MO license fees would have to be higher than current levels to generate more revenue to fund their programs.

This article is not suggesting collecting tax revenue is better or worse than relying solely on license sales. It is simply providing additional information on the license price debate.

Did you know?
The inflation rate from 2002-2016 increased more than 30%.

Non-resident Fishing License Sales Increasing



Although fishing participation in Kansas has been declining, a notable increase has been seen recently in the number of non-resident license sales. Some Kansans may argue this is bad for locals, however, there are more public fishing acres in the state and more fish are stocked by our hatcheries and private producers than ever before. In addition, these travelers not only bring economic benefits directly to the communities they fish near, but also to the state as they count as KS licensed anglers increasing our share of the Sport Fish Restoration Fund!

The exact cause of the increase is not known at this time. However, our walleye and trophy blue catfish fisheries might be a big factor.

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We need
your events!

In 2019, over 200 events were reported to us by staff and volunteers. In future editions, we would like to put together a list of upcoming large events open to the public in hopes to increase participation and volunteer involvement. If you are involved with a fishing event in 2020, please submit the details to me via email (david.breth@ks.gov).

Thank you for reading!

— David Breth
Sportfishing Education Coordinator

Heroes on the Water - Paddle.Fish.Heal - Jane Welch

Modern life is full of hassles, deadlines, frustrations and demands. For many, stress is so commonplace it is a way of life. Everyone has their own way of dealing with stress – playing video games or sports, taking walks or going for a run, spending time with friends or other activities.



A small non-profit group, the **Kansas Chapter of Heroes on the Water**, has made it their mission to help Veterans and First Responders deal with their stress by providing them a day of kayaking and fishing. The chapter provides free of charge everything the participants and their families need to enjoy the day and relax: fishing license, gear, bait, kayaks, life jackets, food and drinks, etc.

“Our goal is to provide a family-based activity that family members of all ages can enjoy and their only expense for the day is getting to the lake,” said Jay Clark, chapter coordinator.

The group partnered with Fishing’s Future (FF) in 2015 and that partnership has worked out well for both organizations. FF provided all of the fishing gear for the Kansas Chapter, along with the group fishing license, and the Kansas Chapter reciprocates by teaching classes for FF. The chapter is run by a core group of unpaid volunteers. Their backgrounds are varied, but

they all agree – they are doing it to help veterans and first responders.



“What we love most about our events is when the veterans and first responders bring their families with them,” said Janet Kristinat, chapter volunteer. “The younger kids are always apprehensive about getting in the kayak but once they get out on the water and realize how much fun it is, the smiles on their faces tell the story.”

“The Kansas Chapter survives completely on donations and 100% of what is donated goes directly back into the chapter so that we can continue to provide these services to our veterans and first responders,” Clark said.

“Our motto is Paddle Fish Heal but for our group it is our mission,” said Clark. “We have seen the healing powers of kayaking and fishing. The stress just seems to evaporate and is carried away by the water.”



For more information on the Kansas Chapter of Heroes on the Water visit their Facebook page (www.facebook.com/HOWKansasChapter) or e-mail kansaschapter@heroesonthewater.org

New Regulation Updates for 2020

- ◆ *Free Fishing Days - June 6 and 7*
- ◆ *Restrictions on the movement of baitfish has been expanded to include Crayfish, Leeches, Salamanders, Frogs and Mussels.*
- ◆ *Float materials for trotlines shall be constructed only from plastic, wood, or foam and shall be a closed-cell construction.*
- ◆ *Several daily harvest and creel limits were updated. For a full list, please review the 2020 Fishing Regulations Summary.*
 - ◆ *Wilson Reservoir: 32-40” protected slot for blue catfish with a limit of 2/day but no more than 1 per day 40” or larger*
 - ◆ *Marion Reservoir: 21” minimum on walleye*
 - ◆ *Mined Land Wildlife Area: remove the 20” minimum length limit and 1/day creel limit on brown trout*

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