

Pittsburg District Fisheries Newsletter

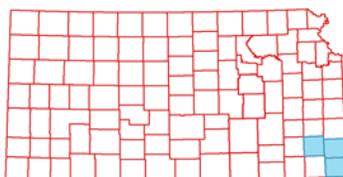
Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism

Spring 2021 2nd edition

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2021 Spring Update

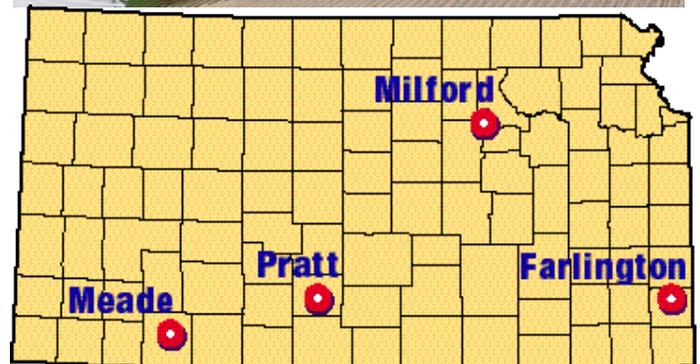
The Pittsburg District includes Cherokee, Crawford, and Neosho counties. Bone Creek, Crawford State Fishing Lake, and Neosho State Fishing Lake. You will find the fish stocking plans for 2021, regulation change proposals and explanations of why biologists use fish regulations, highlights from the Mined Land Wildlife Area Unit #45A habitat project, Bone Creek Largemouth Bass, and plans for “West Mineral Lake”.



2021 Fish Stocking Plan

Impoundment	Species	Quantity	Size	Month	Stocking Year
(FISH) CHEROKEE CO - OPLOTHNIK	Channel Catfish	100	10-12"	OCT	2021
(FISH) CHEROKEE CO OPLOTHNIK 2	Channel Catfish	200	10-12"	OCT	2021
(FISH) CRAWFORD CO - MICHAELS #4	Channel Catfish	150	10-12"	OCT	2021
(FISH) CRAWFORD CO-MICHAELS #1	Channel Catfish	350	10-12"	OCT	2021
Arma City Lake	Channel Catfish	50	10-12"	OCT	2021
Bone Creek Lake	Saugeye	500,000	FRY	MAY	2021
Bone Creek Lake	Largemouth Bass	13,500	2-3" advanced fingerlings	JUN	2021
Chanute City Lake	Channel Catfish	2,000	10-12"	OCT	2021
CHANUTE-HIGHLAND PARK POND	Channel Catfish	100	10-12"	OCT	2021
COLUMBUS VFW	Channel Catfish	100	10-12"	OCT	2021
CRAWFORD STATE FISHING LAKE	Wiper - W x S Bass	30,000	FRY	MAY	2021
CRAWFORD STATE FISHING LAKE	Wiper - W x S Bass	750	10-12"	SEP	2021
CRAWFORD STATE FISHING LAKE	Saugeye	7,500	2-3"	JUN	2021
CRAWFORD STATE FISHING LAKE	Saugeye	150,000	FRY	MAY	2021
CRAWFORD STATE FISHING LAKE	REDEAR SUNFISH	3,750	6"	JUN	2021
CRAWFORD STATE FISHING LAKE	Largemouth Bass	3,750	2-3" advanced fingerlings	JUN	2021
CRAWFORD STATE FISHING LAKE	Channel Catfish	3,750	10-12"	OCT	2021
FRONTANAC-LAKE #2	Channel Catfish	100	10-12"	OCT	2021
FRONTANAC-LAKE #3	Channel Catfish	50	10-12"	OCT	2021
FRONTENAC-LAKE #1	Channel Catfish	100	10-12"	OCT	2021
GREENBUSH EDUCATION CENTER	Channel Catfish	250	10-12"	OCT	2021
GREENBUSH EDUCATION CENTER #2	Channel Catfish	100	10-12"	OCT	2021
MINED LAND WA-CK/CR CO	Rainbow Trout	7,000	10-12", larger mixed in	MAR	2022
MINED LAND WA-CK/CR CO	Wiper - W x S Bass	1,530	10-12"	SEP	2021
MINED LAND WA-CK/CR CO	Saugeye	500,000	FRY	APR	2021
MINED LAND WA-CK/CR CO	REDEAR SUNFISH	5,000	ADULT	JUN	2021
MINED LAND WA-CK/CR CO	Channel Catfish	7,500	10-12"	OCT	2021
MULBERRY CITY LAKE	Channel Catfish	150	10-12"	OCT	2021
Neosho State Fishing Lake	Channel Catfish	2,300	10-12"	OCT	2021
NEOSHO WILDLIFE AREA POND	Channel Catfish	150	10-12"	OCT	2021
PITTSBURG-LAKESIDE PARK LAKE	BLUEGILL X GREEN SUNFISH	350	6"	JUN	2021
PITTSBURG-LAKESIDE PARK LAKE	Channel Catfish	100	10-12"	OCT	2021
PITTSBURG-UNIVERSITY POND	Channel Catfish	100	10-12"	OCT	2021
THAYER CITY LAKE	Channel Catfish	750	10-12"	OCT	2021
THAYER CITY LAKE (NEW)	Channel Catfish	500	10-12"	OCT	2021

As you can tell from above, a lot of effort is placed into stocking fish that are raised from our state fish hatcheries in the Pittsburg district. A total of 1,242,080 fish are requested to be stocked in 2021 in nearby waters from Pittsburg with the following totals for species: 18,950 channel catfish, 17,250 largemouth bass, 350 hybrid sunfish, 1,157,500 saugeye, and 32,280 wipers. Thank you to our hatchery biologists and KDWP staff who assist with the culture and stocking efforts!



Fish Regulations Explained

As Fisheries Management Biologists, our favorite time of the year is when we get out on the boat to set nets and electrofish to evaluate our fish populations. Some of you may have seen us out running nets, or electrofishing out on the water. Often times, you'll see a smile on our faces as it's our most treasured part of our job duties. We will count, measure, and weigh each fish that we sample. But, what does this information provide?

There are three main factors of a fishery that are critical to monitor and understand the fish population as a whole; growth, recruitment, and mortality. Often times, biologists refer to this as the "population dynamics". Many variables play into these three factors that make it a dynamic function on a year to year basis. *Growth* is the most obvious and refers to the time it takes to reach a certain size. This can be influenced on total forage available, angling pressure, and habitat (i.e., spawning, refuge, water quality, water quantity, zooplankton densities, algal densities.. to name JUST a few). *Recruitment* is a term that is used by biologists to reference the number of fish of a given species that are spawned in one year and survive to the following year. This references the true number of fish that survive to enter into a fishery. *Mortality* refers to the number of fish that die each year; this can be anywhere from a fish dying of old age, fishing mortality, or not surviving to a certain age. This is computed with age and growth information, mark-recapture models, and other statistical analyses based on sampling procedures.

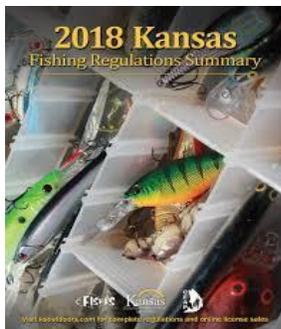
Fish sampling provides us with an avenue to be able to evaluate the number, or quantity, of fish in a water body. Some of the statistical indices used for this evaluation is PSD (Proportional Size Distribution), CPUE (Catch-Per-Unit-of-Effort), and we can break those two statistical samples into specific size categories to make sure we have quality fish for anglers to catch, as well as the up-and-coming year classes that will grow into those preferred size classes that anglers would like to catch. The data also provides us with the quality of the fishery, such as what percentage is in a sub-stock (young of the year fish spawned), and the condition of those fish that were sampled that we use the relative weight, W_r , to evaluate the health of the individual fishes that we collect. All of this allows for us to measure population dynamics of each species from each water body.

All of that information provide for us as biologists the ability to set regulations based on scientific principles and to make a fishery sustainable for harvest. Sure, it's fun to run nets and sample fish populations, but we also want to make the populations last for generations to come.

Regulations are not typically changed on a year to year basis. It often times comes in long term intervals when initial regulations are enacted as populations change to environmental conditions and fishing pressure. Regulations are not enacted after a single year of sampling, but rather a long term dataset that provides a snapshot of changes that the fish population has experienced in a five year dataset, for example.

I always keep a close eye on a single year of sampling and what changes I see from the previous year of sampling. But, often times, water temperature, habitat such as water level changes, and time of the sampling event that I am able to do often times plays a role in changes from a year-to-year basis. There is always a level of bias involved with fish sampling events, but our statistical analyses allow for us to correct for these levels of variation.

There's always a lot of thought and effort that goes into a biologist's recommendation on a change in regulation proposal. After all, our main priority is to protect and conserve the fish populations while also enhancing fishing opportunities for anglers for years to come. Fishing regulations allows for anglers to reap the benefits for years to come, rather than in a single year.



Fish Regulations Explained cont.

Protective Slot Limits:

Protective slot limits are oftentimes not properly explained of the function that the regulation serves. Sure, a lot of times, the majority of the population may fall into this range. However, this slot limit is ENTIRELY dependent on YOU, as the angler, to function properly. Why is that?

Protective slot limits, such as a 13-18" protected slot limit on Largemouth Bass, prohibit the harvest of fish that fall within a certain length range. The goal of which to shift harvest to underneath the slot limit where recruitment, there's that fancy word again, is high and harvest is needed underneath the slot limit to increase numbers of a fish species within and over the slot limit. The overarching goal is to protect the breeding population of a fish species. Fish reproduction and recruitment must be limited by harvest by you as the angler.

Recent research has indicated that protection of the spawning size classes of a fish species, such as blue catfish, is more valuable to sustaining a fishery rather than protection of trophy sized fish. The purpose we leave harvest open to larger size classes, rather than removing entirely, is that it will not impact the trophy potential of a fishery and the fishery can sustain a little bit of harvest of the larger individuals of a fish species. This is of course monitored closely through annual sampling efforts. Largemouth bass, on the other hand, is a tough species to manage with a protective slot limit given the nature of the "Catch and Release" mindset from bass anglers. This is of course not a bad thing, but in many instances, harvest is needed to maintain the high quality bass populations when recruitment is high and numbers of small bass underneath the protective slot limit are high. I always tell anglers and private pond owners to harvest the daily creel limit of bass more often than you think in systems where a slot limit is in place.

Many often wonder why protective slot limits aren't put in place for walleye in Kansas. This is quite simple. Walleye grow very fast in Kansas waters. For a protective slot limit to be effective, fish reproduction and fish recruitment must be consistent on a yearly basis and growth of young fish must be slow. Walleye reproduction is limited to a few large reservoirs in the state of Kansas and stocking maintains the walleye fishery in the majority of Kansas reservoirs. A slot limit would not be effective in managing the walleye population in Kansas for the following reasons: recruitment is limited in the majority of reservoirs in Kansas, growth of < 18" is very fast with walleye reaching this size in approximately 3 years (i.e., a general growth of walleye in Kansas), and harvest is high of any size of walleye up to 50% harvest mortality and higher overall mortality.

Minimum Length Limits:

Minimum length limits are put in place to protect more fish to grow to larger sizes.

My proposal, if enacted and passed by the commission for Bone Creek Lake in the Pittsburg district, will replace the 13-18" protective slot limit with an 18" minimum length limit in 2022. Recruitment has been fluctuating since 2013, albeit improved in the past three years with stocking efforts and better habitat conditions, but the large portion of the population is from 15-18 inches. This new regulation is proposed to protect the fish, rather than open up harvest beneath 13 inches where recruitment and numbers have not been consistent. It takes a largemouth bass four years to reach 15 inches in Bone Creek. This is higher growth than the average growth of largemouth bass in Kansas. However, the population needs consistent recruitment and higher numbers beneath 15 inches for a slot limit to be enacted again in the future.

Regulations are something that biologists put a lot of data, effort, and thought into before enacting such a measure. A length based regulation is a way to balance the "now" to produce quality and quantity of fish populations for fishing opportunity and the "generations" to sustain a fishery for future years and generations of anglers to enjoy.



Fish Regulation Proposals for PTG District

1.) Bone Creek Lake, Largemouth bass, 13-18" protected slot, 5 per day → 18" minimum, 5 per day

a. Bone Creek Lake in southeast Kansas is a popular recreational fishery and a destination impoundment for bass tournaments statewide. The Largemouth Bass fishery is a high quality population with sizes reaching up to 22" and 5 pounds, or higher. However, Bone Creek Lake was tested in 2018 for Largemouth Bass Virus (LMBV) and was positive. Since 2013, sampling data has resulted in a declining number of 15" and under largemouth bass indicating poor recruitment of smaller size classes warranting a regulation change.

b. The current regulation of a protected slot limit of 13-18" is a management tool to use when recruitment is high and the need for harvest of fish underneath the slot is warranted. Bone Creek does not exhibit high recruitment and a high density of Largemouth Bass below 13"; thus an 18" minimum length limit and a daily creel of 5 is recommended. Growth remains two years faster growth than the statewide average and the quality is maintained, but it is imperative to build a sustainable and consistent recruitment of Largemouth Bass. Therefore, in 2019, 200,000 bass fry were stocked. Anecdotal evidence from early bass tournaments held in 2021 indicate a higher catch rate of < 15" Largemouth Bass that is of hopes as a result of this surplus stocking. In addition to, 13,500 Phase II fingerlings will be stocked in 2021 to further bolster recruitment and population size.

2.) Bone Creek Lake, Saugeye**, 18" minimum, 2 per day → 18" minimum, 5 per day

a. Saugeye stockings were initiated in 2013 when walleye stockings were limited in success at Bone Creek Lake. Fingerlings were stocked until 2016 with low success when fry stockings were initiated. Fry stockings have been highly successful and has established a saugeye fishery at Bone Creek Lake that ranks 3rd in density in the 2021 fishing forecast. It is the recommended to allow for additional harvest to increase the daily creel limit from 2 to 5 saugeye per day.

b. ** Saugeye, Walleye, or Sauger in combination

3.) Mined Land Wildlife Area, Trout Season, Unit #30 "Trout Pit" Year Round → Nov. 1-April 15 (Type I)

a. Rainbow Trout are stocked in Unit #30 "Trout Pit" on an annual basis from November through March. Other species are present in the "Trout Pit" that provide anglers an additional fishing opportunity throughout the year. Currently, the "Trout Pit" requires a trout permit year round. Trout are likely to survive year round in this specific pit due to the water chemistry (i.e., water temperature of less than 55° and DO levels above 5.5 ppm). Anglers may reserve the two cabins available on the Trout Pit year round. To open up additional fishing opportunity for Largemouth Bass, for example, throughout the year without the trout permit requirement, it is recommended to move the Mined Land Wildlife Area Unit #30 Trout Pit to a Type 1, November 1 – April 15 trout permit requirement of all anglers (i.e., trout season) from the year round requirement pursuant to K.A.R. 115-18-12.

b. This would allow for all anglers to fish the "Trout Pit" from April 16-October 31 outside of the trout season without a trout permit. This is due to the unique nature of this pit that draws anglers to fish one of the unique pits on the area that is fed by underground springs, which is the deepest strip pit dug by Big Brutus on the Mined Land Wildlife Area. Largemouth Bass reach large sizes due to the forage available and water chemistry available drawing anglers throughout the entire year. Redear Sunfish and Bluegill are also present in quality sizes that can be caught outside of the trout season. Cabins are available that many families stay at during the summer months outside of the trout season. To increase R3 efforts on the Mined Land Wildlife Area, it is recommended to open up opportunity for all anglers outside of the trout season without a trout permit requirement. This would not change the current stocking effort of trout. Simply, this is to open up fishing opportunity outside of the trout season.

As a cabinet-level agency, KDWPT is administered by the Secretary of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism and is advised by a seven member Wildlife, Parks & Tourism Commission. All positions are appointed by the Governor with the Commissioners served staggered four year terms. Serving as a regulatory body for KDWPT, the Commission is a non-partisan board, made up of no more than four members of any one political party, advising the Secretary on planning and policy issues regarding administration of the Department. Fishing regulations approved by the Commission are administered by the Secretary based on recommendations of Division Director, Fisheries Regional Supervisors, Research Fisheries Biologists and District Fisheries Biologists.

These proposed recommendations will undergo discussions at commission meetings held in 2021. Please don't hesitate to contact me with comments, concerns, or questions about the above proposals by email at connor.ossowski@ks.gov, or contact your local commissioner. To find your local commissioner, you can go to the following website (<https://ksoutdoors.com/KDWPT-Info/Commission>).

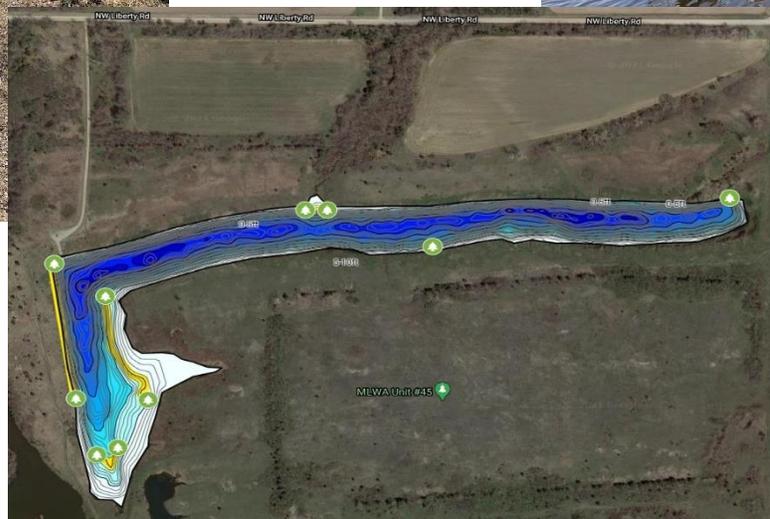
Mined Land Wildlife Area Unit #45A

Fish Habitat Enhancement Project

Over 250 cedar trees and Christmas trees were added to the Mined Land Wildlife Area on March 3rd and 4th, 2021 on Unit #45A (i.e., north strip pit on Unit #45) to benefit fish habitat and anglers of southeast Kansas! It took 9 hours of cutting with a skid steer by Logan Cares, Pheasants Forever & Quail Forever Habitat Specialist, 3.5 hours of placing the cedar trees on the habitat barge by Logan Cares, Pheasants Forever & Quail Forever Habitat Specialist, and 4 hours of sinking the trees by Connor Ossowski, District Fisheries Biologist. This has also improved the terrestrial habitat to wildlife on this unit by removing invasive cedar trees to allow for natives to reestablish on this section.

Nearly 150 Cedar trees and Christmas trees were placed along the shoreline on the west side of the strip pit to stabilize the shoreline from erosion and provide shoreline habitat for the fish population. Approximately 100 Trees were also placed along the slope of the pit in 6-12 ft of water to provide habitat and structure for the Largemouth Bass, Channel Catfish, White & Black Crappie, Bluegill, and Redear Sunfish that can be caught by anglers in this pit. This will benefit both the fish population by concentrating forage for predator fish species to be able to prey upon more efficiently and anglers to be able increase angler catch rates. Previously mined strip pits on the Mined Land Wildlife Area are limited in fish habitat; by placing cedar trees and other structure into the strip pits, this greatly enhances the potential to produce better fish populations for the future.

This would not have been possible without the collaboration of Law Enforcement, Public Lands, Wildlife, Pheasants Forever & Quail Forever Habitat Specialist, and Fisheries divisions of KDWPT. Special thanks to Logan Cares (PF & QF Habitat Specialist), Logan Martin (District Wildlife Biologist), Jim Bussone (Game Warden), John Jameson (Public Lands Seasonal Aide), Logan Meyer (Seasonal Fisheries Aide), and Bradey Drew (Public Lands Seasonal Aide). This will pay dividends to the fish population and anglers of Kansas for many years to come!



West Mineral Lake Plans

“West Mineral Lake” is located east of West Mineral on the Mined Land Wildlife Area Unit #45 (Pit B). The current fish populations that can be found in this specific lake on the area is comprised of white crappie, channel catfish, common carp, and other undesirable fish species for fishing opportunity. Albeit, a small percentage of white crappie that inhabit this pit are over 10 inches and caught by anglers.

The lake has an average depth of 2.42 feet. This is very shallow. The water control structure has had two additional feet of boards added to increase water levels by 2 feet in the early 2000s. Without these boards, the lake would have an average depth of 0.5 feet. Maximum depth is 11.69 and can be found in the north end as seen on the map below. The lake has experienced extreme sedimentation and outlook for a long term sustainable fishery is not good. However, channel catfish and white crappie will still be found in low numbers in the future.

KDWPT Public Lands staff would like to have this lake serve dual purposes for the area in 2021. As many of you that waterfowl hunt know, there’s limited wetlands in the state of Kansas for public access for hunting and bird watching purposes. To increase waterfowl hunting opportunity and to benefit terrestrial wildlife and aquatic wildlife, the lake will begin being drawn down in late May to expose the soil in the vast majority of the lake with the lake being as shallow as it is. Exposed soil will grow smartweed, as well as many other moist soil wetland vegetation, to benefit the waterfowl migration in the fall.

I will be setting nets to evaluate the current fishery beforehand in April to see what quality and quantity of crappie, channel catfish, and other fish populations that can be found in West Mineral Lake. The fish that are sampled will be transported and stocked in Unit #45 in the north pit (45A) and the east pit (45C). The shoreline on the east pit (45B) on Unit #45 will be mulched and mowed down to increase shoreline fishing opportunity that may be lost on West Mineral Lake. However, the lake being drawn down will not eliminate the fishery entirely. It can always be converted back into a fishery and restocked with a more desirable fish stocking regime for anglers.

I would like to ask for any comments, concerns, and explanations that you may have. You may contact me at the Mined Land Wildlife Area office at (620) 231-3173, or by email at connor.ossowski@ks.gov.



Project	MLWA 45B West Mineral Lake		
Mapped Area (ft ²)	1724765		
Bounding Area (ft)	1309.06	3444.88	
North	N037.17.514		
South	N037.16.946		
East	W094.54.745		
West	W094.55.015		
Max Depth (ft)	11.69		
Min Depth (ft)	0		
Average Depth (ft)	2.42		
Water volumes			
Total Water Volume (ft ³)	4172849		
Lower (ft)	Upper (ft)	Volume (ft Area (ft ²))	
	0	3	3335696 1698437
	3	6	750801 449286
	6	9	75930 47684
	9	12	10422 8407
Sediment volumes			
Total Sediment Volume (ft ³)	15983391		
Reference Depth (ft)	11.69		
Lower (ft)	Upper (ft)	Volume (ft Area (ft ²))	
	0	3	1838607 1275480
	3	6	4423502 1677082
	6	9	5098372 1716359
	9	12	4622911 1724755

Bone Creek Largemouth Bass

Bone Creek is a popular fishery for largemouth bass by the Thursday Night Bass Tournaments, a local tournament group, as well as many other bass tournaments in the state of Kansas. In 2020, I heard from many of the bass tournament anglers and local anglers that they've experienced declined catch rates of largemouth bass. It is true that Bone Creek Lake was tested and tested positive for Largemouth Bass Virus (LMBV) in 2018. However, in 2007, Crawford State Fishing Lake was tested and tested positive. It is of my opinion that Bone Creek has had LMBV prior to 2018 and is on the rebound from the initial impact. Of tournaments being held and from anglers fishing at Bone Creek in the late winter of 2021, I have already witnessed many largemouth bass being caught that are less than 15 inches and great catch rates of 5 fish bag limits that were weighed in. This is a great sign for years to come!

Many factors played into the role of a lower catch rate in 2020. The lake was 3 feet low for the vast majority of the year where the bass population was congregated to deeper depths. The lake also experienced heavy tournament pressure and research has shown that largemouth bass have a learning behavior to avoid lures after being caught. Bone Creek is 540 acres and a lot of the tournament research that has been conducted has been on larger reservoirs. Please practice best management practices for your bass tournaments by decreasing the time you have largemouth bass in livewells, an electrolyte (i.e., salt) solution in your livewell to decrease stress of the fish and hold your tournaments in the spring and fall months, rather than the heat of the summer. If tournaments are going to be held in the summer, I'd recommend a paper tournament to not stress the fish with higher than 75° water temperature.

Remember that the Tournament Black Bass Pass can be purchased and allowed to weigh your 5 fish for the tournament to be released after the weigh in is only good to use from September 1 through June 15. This does not include from June 16 through August 31 whereas the protective slot limit or minimum length limit must be practiced. This is not to deter anglers from having bass tournaments in the summer, but to protect the largemouth bass based on the regulation in place at the specific lake. More information can be found about the Tournament Black Bass Pass at the following link: <https://ksoutdoors.com/Fishing/Fishing-Regulations/Tournament-Black-Bass-Pass>

In 2019, I heard from many of the bass tournament anglers that they had witnessed schools of "shad" following their lures up in small waves of groups of fish. However, these ended up being schools of largemouth bass upon closer investigation. In 2019, I stocked ~200,000 surplus bass fry from the Meade State Fish Hatchery. These fish were stocked in April and benefited from a longer growing season versus the naturally spawned fish. Below is a picture of the top individual being one that was stocked in April and one that was naturally spawned. In 2021, I plan to stock 13,500 Phase 2 (advanced fingerlings) to bolster the 2021 year class that will have a better advantage than naturally spawned fish to be recruited to the fishery for future years.

Late winter and early spring can be an advantageous time to target largemouth bass in Kansas. Often times, this is one of the lowest fishing pressure times where the bass have not been targeted since the past fall, water temperatures are cool enough for the bass to inhabit all depths and warming shallows of the upper end of the lake. Chatterbaits, swimbaits, ned rigs, swim jigs, lipless crankbaits, and square bill crankbaits will be good bets to try this spring before the largemouth bass begin to spawn. Good luck and get out there to enjoy the largemouth bass treasure that we have in southeast Kansas in Bone Creek. I know I'll be out there enjoying a few days out of the office on the office!



Thank you to David Defebaugh for sharing photos of a few memorable largemouth bass caught at Bone Creek from this spring! As you can see, there's still just a few largemouth bass to catch at Bone Creek of quality length. I always enjoy seeing photos from anglers, so please don't hesitate to share your catch with me. Thanks again, David!

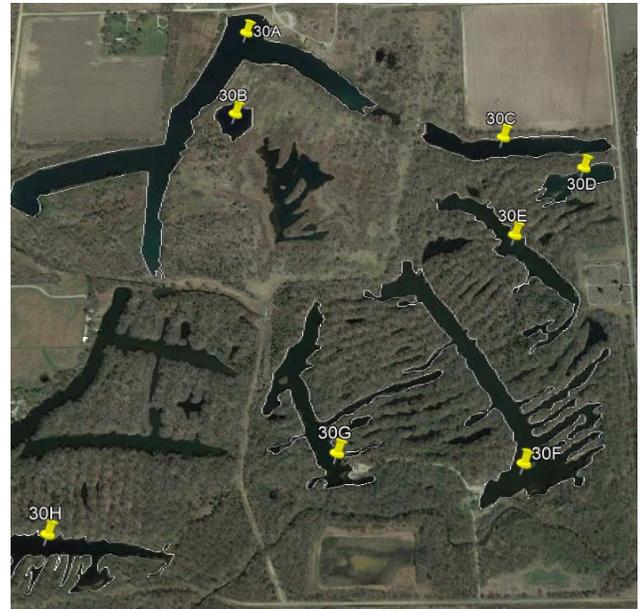
Two largemouth bass sampled in trap nets in 2019. It is of my opinion that the above is a result of the bass fry stocked in April and the below largemouth bass is a naturally spawned fish.

One Last Cast!

I've been busy prepping for spring sampling and trying to get out fishing as much as possible myself. I always love to leave the office just to return to the "office" at the lake. To the right is an 19.5" largemouth bass caught off the Mined Land Wildlife Area.



I've also tackled a new project over this winter by designating a letter for each pit on each unit to better fisheries management on the area, better communicate specific pits to each angler by providing them on which pits have crappie, stocked with channel catfish, etc., and to be able to improve our maps specifically for fishing. To the right is an example of a unit that will have pit designations.



Best of luck while you get out fishing this spring! I hope that this spring has more fish caught and less worry.

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