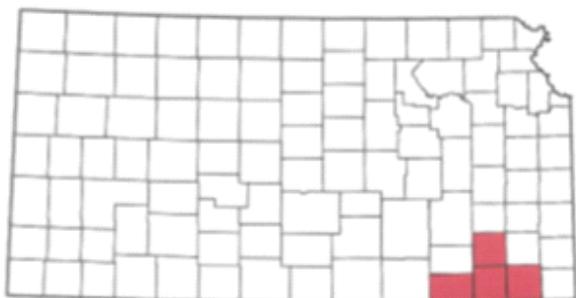


Independence District Fisheries

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Area Happenings

This past year has been a very busy one in the Independence Fisheries District. In the last newsletter I gave the updates on the two crappie projects that are currently being completed and gave a teaser on the flathead project that are yet to be completed (stay tuned for those). With the last newsletter filled with crappie info, this newsletter will get you prepared for spring fishing. This newsletter contains all the previous year's sampling information so you can plan this year's fishing trips. I will also include all the previous year's fish stocking information and give an update on the Lake Tanko renovation project.



Fish Stocking

In 2021, we were able to complete most of the fish stockings in the Independence Fisheries District. All the Saugeye and Walleye stockings consisted of newly hatched fish (fry). However, all of the Channel Catfish stockings were released as 1-year old (~10 inch) fish. This is the primary reason you may notice a large difference between number of fish per acre stocked between the species. Fry have a much lower chance of surviving that first year of life (1 in 1,000) when compared to nearly 100% survival of larger stocked Channel Catfish.

In total, we were able to stock 1 reservoir and 1 state fishing lake with Walleye, and 5 CFAP lakes with Saugeye. We were also able to stock 2 state fishing lakes, 5 CFAP lakes and the Elk City State Parks Kids Pond with Channel Catfish. Leclere Lake also received 2 stockings of Rainbow Trout.

Fish Stocking Continued...

Lake	Species	Number
Montgomery SFL	Channel Catfish	3,676
Wilson SFL	Channel Catfish	2,750
Elk City Kids Pond	Channel Catfish	101
LeClere	Channel Catfish	246
LeClere	Rainbow Trout	744
Altamont - East	Channel Catfish	578
Altamont - West	Channel Catfish	302
Neodesha City Lake	Channel Catfish	101
Bartlett City Lake	Channel Catfish	528
Big Hill Reservoir	Walleye	1,200,000
Wilson SFL	Walleye	110,000
Parsons City Lake	Saugeye	500,000
Sedan City Lake- North	Saugeye	55,000
Sedan City Lake- South	Saugeye	70,000
Altamont City Lake- East	Saugeye	23,000
Altamont City Lake-West	Saugeye	12,000

Above: Table of all fish stocked in the Independence Fisheries District in 2021.



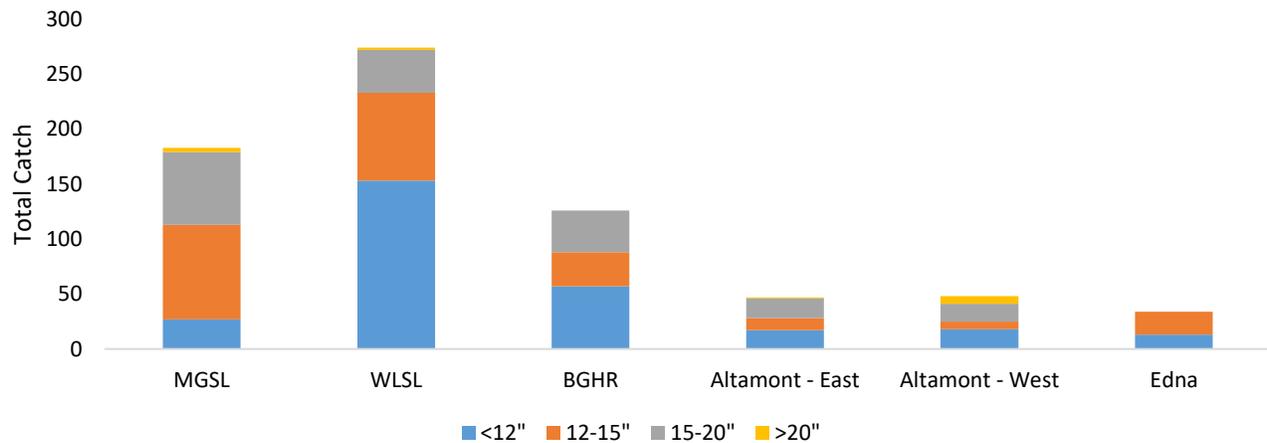
Above: 24-inch Saugeye from Parsons City Lake.



Above: Brad Myers from the City of Altamont holding a pair of Channel Catfish from Altamont City Lake – East.

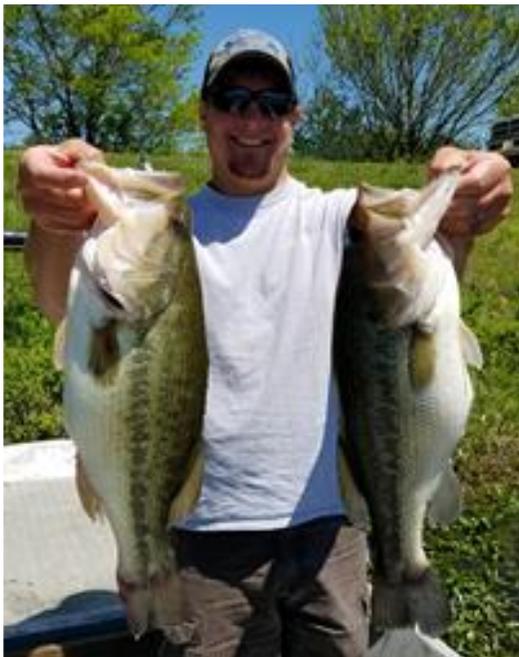
Largemouth Bass Sampling

2021 Largemouth Bass Electrofishing Data



Largemouth bass were sampled via electrofishing in May 2021. We would have liked to sample more water bodies last spring, however the rainy month made for fewer days to sample. Overall, the waterbodies we did sample had healthy populations of largemouth bass that should provide opportunities for all types of anglers.

In total, we also sampled 25 smallmouth bass in Big Hill Reservoir with lengths ranging from 4-18 inches in length. Spotted bass were sampled in Wilson State Fishing Lake that ranged in size from 10-16 inches, with a total of 31 fish sampled.



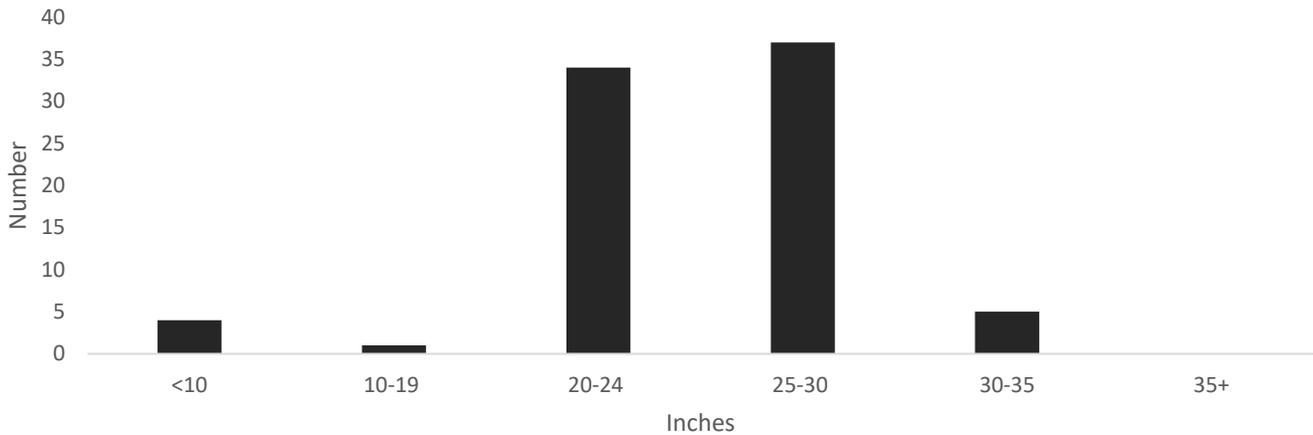
Above: A pair of 20-inch largemouth bass from Altamont West.



Above: A trio of smallmouth bass and a largemouth bass (on left) from Big Hill Reservoir. Held by Ryan Lies and myself.

Blue Catfish Sampling

2021 Blue Catfish



Blue catfish were sampled in July 2021 on Elk City Reservoir. In total, we collected 81 blue catfish, with a few getting close to the 35-inch minimum length limit. We also saw some small fish show up in our sample, suggesting we are getting some reproduction. Blue catfish will provide some high quality fishing opportunities for anglers in 2022.



Above: Danci with a 30-inch blue catfish from Elk City Reservoir.



Above: One of the small blue catfish sampled from Elk City Reservoir.

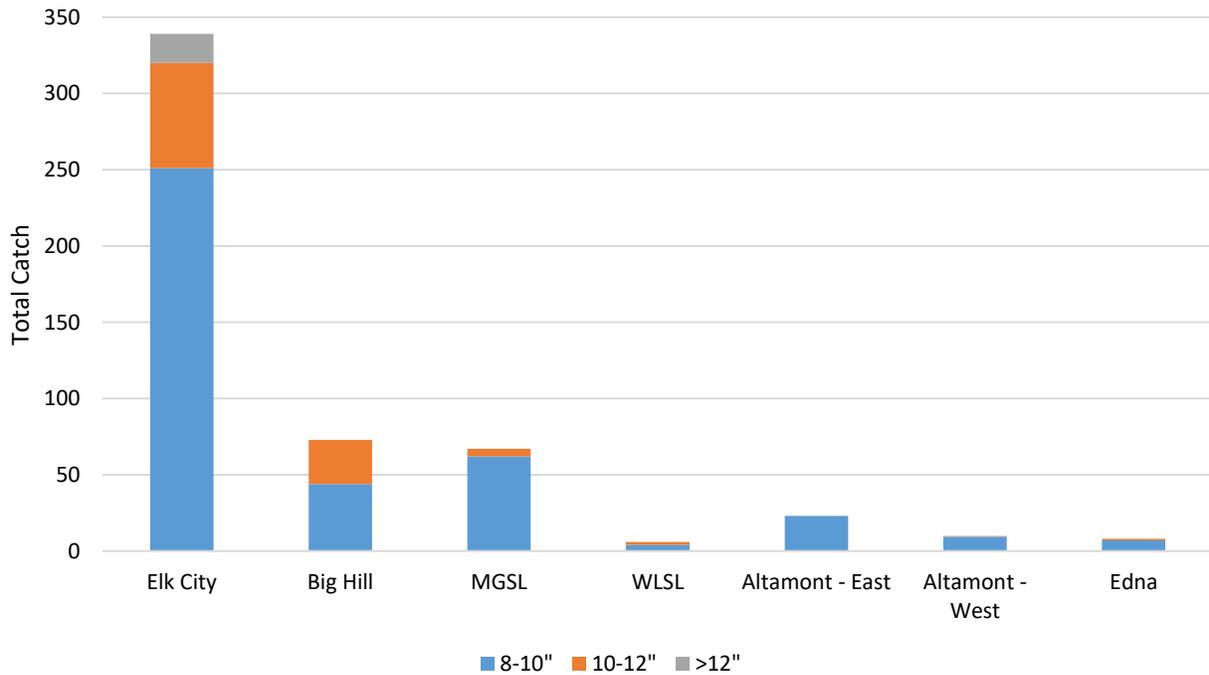


Above: Live-well full of sampled blue catfish from Elk City Reservoir.

Fishing Forecast

Crappie

2021 Fall Crappie Sampling



Fall sampling was variable for crappie catch rates among the lakes sampled. Remember the numbers above are total number caught, not a reflection of number of fish in the population. Since I set more nets in larger lakes than smaller lakes, the numbers reflect more fish captured in larger lakes than smaller ones. This does not mean you have a worse chance of catching crappie in either Altamont as you would Elk City. In fact, both Altamont City lakes and Edna provide great opportunities to capture crappie closer to home if you don't want to travel. Other lakes that provide great opportunities to catch crappie are WLSL and MGSL. However, if you are looking for larger fish, Elk City and Big Hill Reservoirs offer the best chance for fish greater than 12 inches.



Above: Danci with a nice White Crappie from Altamont City Lake – West.

Below: Grant and Chase from Missouri State University with a few big White Crappie from Parsons City Lake.



Above: Me with a 12-pound Channel Catfish from Altamont City Lake – West.

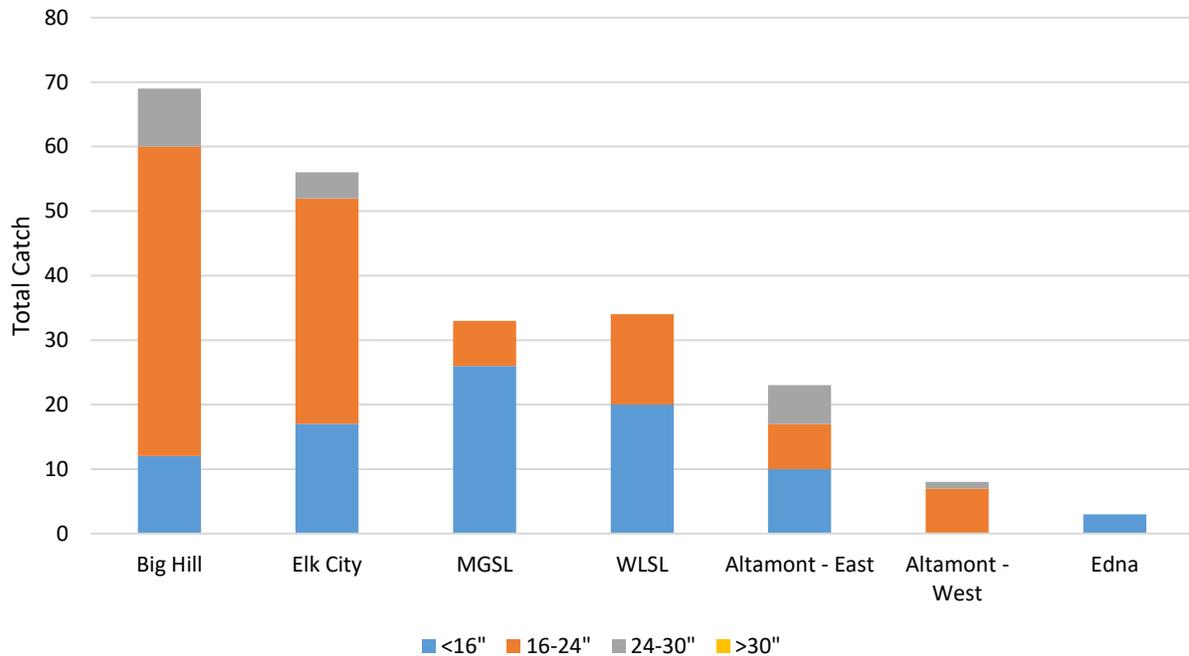


Above: Danci with a pair of nice Channel Catfish from Big Hill Reservoir.

Fishing Forecast Continued....

Channel Catfish

2021 Fall Sampling

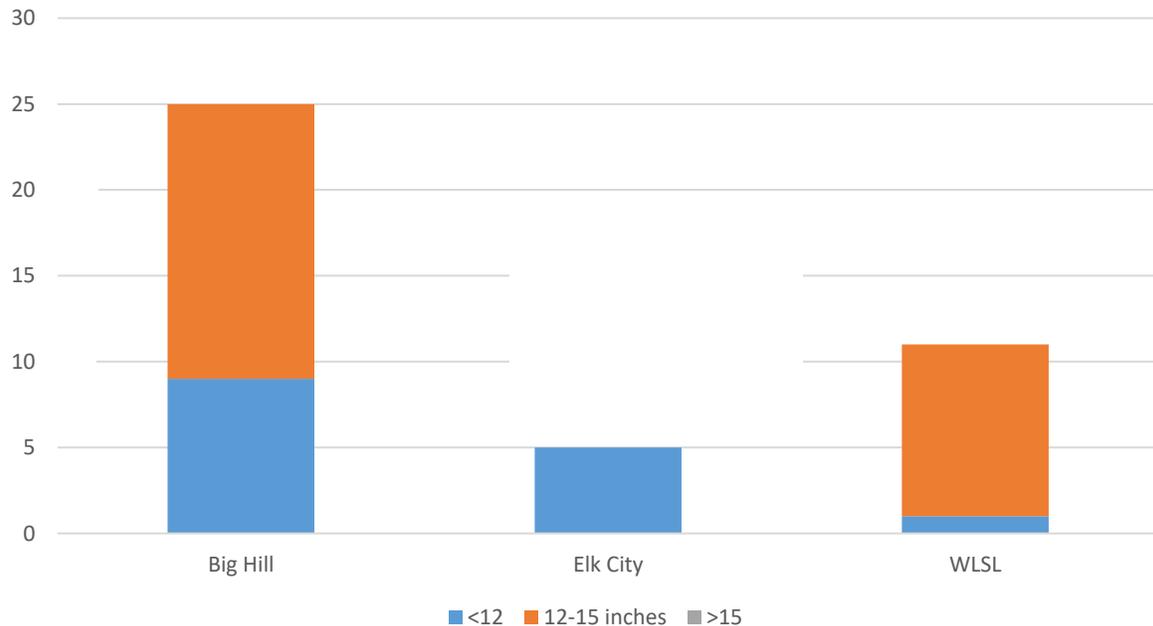


Fall sampling showed excellent numbers of Channel Catfish for anglers. In all waterbodies sampled there are good opportunities, depending on what you are looking for. If you are looking for a great place to take a kid fishing to catch a few fish to release or to clean for a fresh meal, I would look at going to MGSL, WLSL or Altamont – East. If you are looking for larger fish and still want a good chance at catching decent numbers, I would head to Big Hill or Elk City Reservoir. If big fish is what you want to target, I would head to either Altamont City Lake or Big Hill Reservoir. Edna City Lake has been stocked recently, but fish didn't show up in nets. Further evaluation and more stocking will occur in the near future to ensure a quality fishery, but I would not count out a quality day catfishing Edna City Lake.

Fishing Forecast Continued...

White Bass

2021 Fall Sampling



White Bass sampling showed good numbers of fish in Big Hill Reservoir. Not only were there high numbers of fish sampled in Big Hill, but there were larger individuals for anglers to target. Wilson State Fishing Lake also showed decent numbers of White Bass for anglers to catch this year. Elk City Reservoir is still rebounding from the fish kill we saw in the spring of 2020. I am hopeful that there are more than enough adult fish to spawn this spring and start to repopulate Elk City Reservoir with White Bass for the future.

Other Species

If you are searching for Walleye/Saugeye I would concentrate your efforts on Parsons City Lake, where there is an established population of keeper size fish. Big Hill has a small population of Walleye; however the majority are too small to harvest at the time being.

If Bluegill and Redear Sunfish are more what you are looking for, there are several options. Both MGSL and WLSL offer great populations of both species. Other CFAP lakes that offer great Bluegill and Redear Sunfish populations include Sedan City Lake – North, both Altamont City lakes and Parsons City Lake. Big Hill can also provide great panfishing opportunities for boat and shore anglers.

Lake Tanko Renovation

As many of you may know, Lake Tanko (Cherryvale City Lake) has had some vegetation problems in recent years. The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) teamed up with the City of Cherryvale to fix the problem as best we could. In recent years Lake Tanko has had major siltation problems, leading to very nutrient rich substrate. This muddy, nutrient-rich bottom was perfect for vegetation growth, which soon took over the entire lake. This vegetation led to many problems including difficulty fishing, fish kills and altogether not aesthetically pleasing to look at.

The City of Cherryvale contacted me a couple years ago to try to find a more permanent fix to the problems. Through the CFAP program the City of Cherryvale was able to get a \$40,000 grant from KDWP to conduct a partial renovation. To qualify for this grant, the city needed to have at least a 25% in-kind match for the grant to be awarded. The city went above and beyond the in-kind match by providing months of labor and heavy machinery operation to remove as much sediment as they could with the money awarded.

The hopes of this project were to remove enough sediment from the north side of the lake to reduce vegetation coverage. By removing sediment and making the water deeper, it should make angling more enjoyable and also look more appealing. Along with deepening the water to help with vegetation issues, the dewatering process should also help reduce vegetation coverage throughout the lake.

So what happens now? We are currently awaiting some rainfall to fill Lake Tanko back to full. Once the lake has enough water in it, fish will be stocked immediately. Many fish species will be stocked including Largemouth Bass, Bluegill, Redear Sunfish, Black Crappie and Channel Catfish. The city also plans on continuing the winter trout stocking program. Fish that will be stocked will be in a variety of sizes so that fishing is provided right away and also into the future.

I also want to put out a reminder that stocking fish in any public water is illegal. Our main concern is not the species that you are stocking, but what you are stocking unintentionally. There are many things that are in water that cannot be seen that could be devastating to the future of Lake Tanko. These include zebra mussels, EVEN MORE PROBLEMATIC VEGETATION and Largemouth Bass Virus (LMBV). LMBV is becoming more prevalent in Southeast Kansas and is in Big Hill Reservoir. This virus is detrimental to Largemouth Bass, and is carried by Bluegill, Redear Sunfish and crappie. The effects on these species is still unknown. Also, some fish species do not do well in smaller impoundments including White Crappie. They have a strong tendency to over-populate and result in a stunted population. If you care about the future of Lake Tanko, please do not stock any fish or dump any other lake water into the newly renovated lake.

Lake Tanko
Before



Lake Tanko

During



Lake Tanko

After



Lake Tanko

After

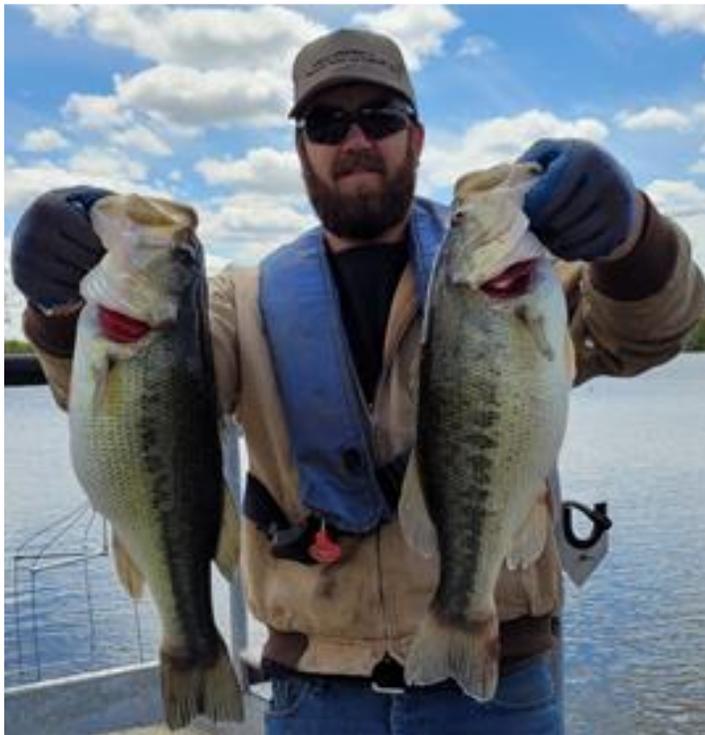




Above: Me with a 68-pound flathead catfish from Big Hill Reservoir.



Above: One of the tagged Channel Catfish in Montgomery State Fishing Lake for the Great Kansas Fishing Derby.



Above: Evan Orr with a pair of Largemouth Bass from Montgomery State Fishing Lake.



Above: Evan Orr with a nice flathead catfish from Wilson State Fishing Lake.



Above: Ryan Lies with two Elk City Blue Catfish.



Above: The Local Legend with one of the fishing derby tagged fish.

Below: My Daughter and Nephews with some nice Channel Catfish from MGSL.



Final Thoughts

Now that I have given you all the most recent fish survey/research information that I have, I hope it motivates you to get out there and go fishing. Whether you're a seasoned fisherman or want to try it out for the first time, spring can offer some of the best fishing from the bank or a boat. As always I will encourage everyone to take your kid or someone else's fishing this year, because no one has memories of their favorite day watching TV.

As always feel free to contact me with any further questions or comments regarding the information above or check our website at: <http://ksoutdoors.com/>. Maybe I will even run into you while on the job or enjoying a day of fishing myself this spring.

Happy Fishing!