

Spring 2010



# Manhattan District Fisheries Newsletter

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## Tuttle Creek Reservoir - Results from Fall Netting

Every fall, fisheries biologist around the state head out to sample the water bodies in their district. They use trap nets and four different sizes of gill nets to catch a multitude of fish species. Lengths and weights of each fish are recorded before they are released. This data is used to assess the fish population for each place that is sampled. Biologists use this data for such things as evaluating special regulations, determine future stocking needs, and develop forecasts to keep anglers informed of fishing opportunities.

So what does the fall 2009 netting data tell us about the fish populations at Tuttle Creek Reservoir?

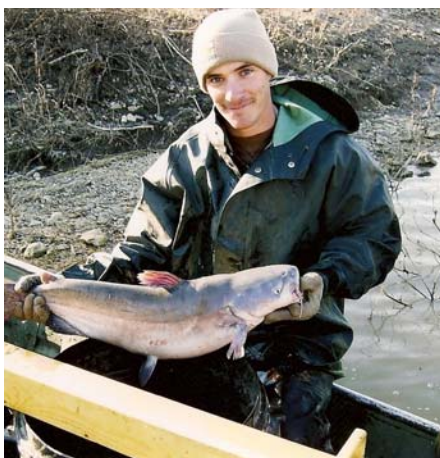
The numbers of channel catfish are holding steady at Tuttle Creek and 16% of the recently sampled channels were over 24 inches. Stocking attempts to establish blue catfish have been successful with the current population at moderate densities. They have been growing well at the Reservoir with 56% of the blues sampled last fall over 30 inches.

White bass numbers are down and are about 1/3 of the long term average. But the good news is that the white bass that are available have grown big. The gill net samples indicate that 27% of the white bass are between 15 and 18 inches. Furthermore, these white bass were very fat and healthy.

The number of saugeye sampled were also about 1/3 of the long term average. In addition, 81% of these saugeye were below 12 inches. What does this mean? That the 2009 saugeye stocking was very successful, but there will be few fish over the 15 inch minimum length limit this year. There should be good numbers of legal sized fish in 2011. Maintenance stockings are planned for the future and densities should continue to improve, if there are not unwanted high water releases from the Tuttle Creek Outlet. High release rates facilitate saugeye migration out of the Reservoir.

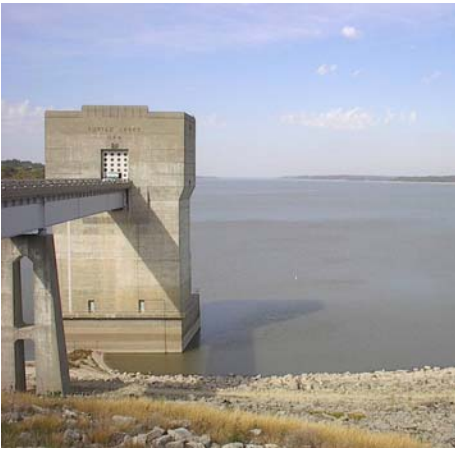
White crappie numbers have been depressed for several years now and the 2009 data shows a continuation of this trend. These low numbers are due to limited spawning success in recent years. The

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*Blue catfish from fall netting*

## Tuttle Creek Reservoir - Results from Fall Netting



*A view from the dam*

success of crappie spawning activity is highly dependent on stable water conditions during the spring. The last few years have had untimely water level rises during these crucial months. White crappie are very prolific and their numbers can increase quickly with good spawning conditions. Despite the low crappie densities, good spring harvest is still expected at Tuttle Creek Reservoir. Tuttle has a limited number of coves with good spawning habitat, so come spawning time, crappie will be concentrated in these locations. Anglers that find them, tend to do well.

Overall, fish numbers are down at Tuttle Creek. This is mostly due to some elevated water levels and high release rates in the recent history. Many fish species tend to migrate downstream out of the Reservoir when release rates are maintained at high rates. Tuttle Creek Reservoir has had exceptional fishing for many species in the past and we should see that again with a couple of years of good water conditions.

## Willow Lake - Manhattan's Trout Hotspot

Located in Tuttle Creek State Park, this 10 acre lake is popular with local anglers. Mainly because every year we stock a lot of rainbow trout in the lake. From October 15 through April 15 Willow Lake receives periodic stockings totaling 12,900 rainbow trout. Most of these stocked trout are around 10 to 12 inches, but in every shipment there are a few big trout mixed in. We have reports of several 5 to 7 pound trout harvested recently.

It is important to remember, these hatchery reared trout have been raised their whole lives on pellet fish food. This is why corn, marshmallows, or commercially produced trout baits work so well on the recently stocked fish.

In the summer of 2008, there were four rock piers added to the lake along the East shore. These piers, along with two docks on the North shore, have improved shoreline access to anglers.

The Lake has good numbers of crappie and largemouth bass, but no matter what you are fishing for, you need a trout permit to fish at Willow Lake from October 15 through April 15. Unless you are younger than 16, then you only need a trout permit if you want to harvest more than two trout. A vehicle permit is also required in the State Park.

Other local spots for rainbow trout are Moon Lake and Cameron Springs, located on Fort Riley Military Base.



*Rainbow trout stocking at Willow Lake*

## Feature Lake – Jeffrey Energy Center Auxiliary Lake

Located just seven miles North East of St. Marys is the Jeffrey Energy Center. This facility is important for providing electrical power to the area. But the interest here is about two lakes on the property open to public fishing.

The Make Up Lake is the smaller of the two at 125 acres. It tends to be a fertile environment with Kansas River water pumped into the SW corner of the dam. Auxiliary Lake is the larger of the two at 460 acres. It is a deep lake and tends to have water clarity over five feet. Both of the lakes primary use is for water supply to the power plant, so the lakes can have significant water level changes from day to day.

The remainder of this article will focus on the fish populations at Auxiliary Lake.

The big news about the Auxiliary Lake fishery this year is the white bass population. The recent samples showed a marked increase in white bass numbers at the lake. The fall 2009 netting data produced 109 white bass per net night, where as the previous six year average was 30 per net night. Not only did the fall sample produce over three times the normal numbers, but it also indicated the population had good numbers of harvestable size fish. 23% were 14 to 16 inches and another 19% were from 10 to 13 inches. We should see good white bass harvest at Auxiliary Lake this year.

Wipers were stocked at the lake in 2007 and in 2009. Both stockings had excellent recruitment and growth. This has resulted in a pretty good wiper population. The recent sample had 15 wipers per net night with 37% of the fish over 17 inches. The wiper population will offer good angling opportunities this year and will hopefully develop into a trophy fishery over time.

Auxiliary Lake is known for good walleye fishing. The population has had densities below the long term average for the past couple of years. Walleye numbers have been enhanced with stockings in 2006, 2008, and 2009. This has resulted in an improvement in the sample numbers to 17 per net night compared to 9 per net night for the ten year average. Unfortunately, only one fish was collected that was over the 18 inch length limit in the fall netting. The good news is that 49% of the walleye collected were 15 inches or longer. With continued good growth, there should be decent numbers of legal size for 2010 and in the years to come.

Smallmouth bass were stocked into Auxiliary Lake in 2003. They have been sampled at low numbers since 2006. But in 2009 an explosion in the population was documented during the spring electro fishing. The previous sample high was 6 fish compared to 74 fish in 2009. Smallmouth should continue to expand and establish themselves into the fishery.



*Jeffrey Energy Center Lakes*



*Stringer of White Bass and Wipers*



*Smallmouth Bass*