

El Dorado District Fisheries

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KDWPT Fisheries Section

Spring 2012

El Dorado District Update

Winter is winding down, and warmer temperatures will soon be upon us. Overall, it has been a rather mild winter, which allowed for open-water fishing most of the season, thrilling boat anglers but depressing ice fishermen. The big lakes in the district, El Dorado and Council Grove reservoirs, produced some good fishing for crappie and white bass during the cold-water period for those willing to brave the temperatures. The El Dorado trout area has been popular this year, especially since ice cover hasn't been a problem. Anglers have been very pleased with the size of the trout this year as there have been some BIG trout in the stockings! If you have been considering trying out trout fishing in Kansas, now is the time. We still have two more scheduled stockings of trout for the spring 2012 season. The El Dorado trout stream is protected from cold winter winds, and fishing can be very enjoyable even when the weather isn't cooperating.

Water temperatures will begin to increase during the next month bringing the walleye spawn, white bass runs, crappie spawn, and largemouth bass spawn. Now is a good time for reel maintenance and line changing (or inspection if you are using superlines) to make sure your equipment is in top condition. When the fish are biting, you won't want to be wasting time fighting your equipment!

Fishing prospects are looking good for the El Dorado District in 2012. A number of the lakes are still low from the droughty conditions, but most saw some elevation increases throughout the winter. See the article in this newsletter for the 2012 fishing outlook.

Fish and Wildlife Management: Where the Money Comes From

2012 marks 75th anniversary of landmark legislation that brought wildlife back from the brink

PRATT — Hunters and anglers pay for wildlife management in Kansas. If you've heard that before, you were probably talking to an employee of the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT). There is a popular myth, probably because KDWPT is a state agency, that general taxes pay for its programs. Actually, State General Funds make up less than 7 percent of the agency's budget, and that money is dedicated to state park programs and administration. The bulk of KDWPT's budget is derived from the sale of licenses and permits, and the rest of the budget used for wildlife and fisheries management comes from federal funding — a self-imposed excise tax on hunting and fishing equipment lobbied for by hunters and anglers themselves.

This funding can be traced back to the beginning of modern wildlife management. In 1900, wildlife populations in the U.S. were dwindling to dangerously low numbers, and some species were near extinction. Wildlife management, while desired, wasn't funded by Congress or the states. And even though there were Kansas laws on the books designed to protect game populations, there wasn't funding to pay for enforcement.

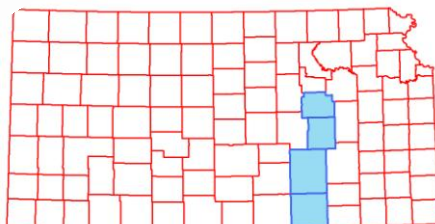
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Get your friends, get your family
... and FISH KANSAS!

FISHKS



Where the Money Comes From—cont.' from page 1

In the 1930s, hunters and the hunting and shooting industry urged Congress to act before it was too late for many wildlife species. Congress acted by extending the life of a 10 percent tax on ammunition and firearms used for sport hunting and earmarked the funds to be distributed to the states for wildlife restoration. On Sept. 2, 1937, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, now called the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act (P-R) after its principal sponsors, Sen. Key Pittman of Nevada and Rep. A. Willis Robertson of Virginia.

The money, which is distributed to the states based on the number of hunting licenses they sell, pays for wildlife-related programs on a 75-25-percent match. State license and permit fees make up the states' 25 percent. Since P-R was signed into law, more than \$6 billion in excise taxes has been sent to the states.

How is the money spent? Nationwide, more than 62 percent is used to buy, develop, maintain, and operate wildlife management areas. Four million acres have been purchased, and nearly 40 million acres have been managed for wildlife under agreements with private landowners. Twenty-six percent of the funding is used for surveys and research, two efforts extremely important to the evolution of modern wildlife management programs. But it's accurately called the Wildlife Restoration Act. Since it was signed, historical wildlife population comebacks have been witnessed again and again.

Great comeback stories abound. In 1900, numbers of white-tailed deer, wild turkey, and pronghorn, once abundant, had dwindled dramatically in North America, and all three species were extirpated from Kansas. Today, whitetails and wild turkeys provide great hunting statewide, and a strong, huntable population of pronghorns — a species unique to the continent — thrives in western Kansas. Whooping cranes, while still endangered, have grown from fewer than 40 to more than 400. And the once endangered national symbol — the bald eagle — has recovered so dramatically that it has been removed from the endangered species list.

Following in the footsteps of Pittman and Robertson, Sen. Edwin Johnson of Colorado and Rep. John Dingell Sr. of Michigan sponsored the Sport fish Restoration Act in 1950. Commonly called the Dingell-Johnson, or D-J, Act, this legislation was modeled after the P-R Act, bringing revenue to sport fish conservation efforts from excise taxes on sport fishing equipment and import duties on fishing tackle, yachts, and pleasure craft, plus a portion of the gasoline fuel tax attributable to small

engines and motorboats. That money is distributed to the states based on fishing license sales and also requires a state 25-percent match. The funds are used for fisheries management programs and boat access.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) program (now considered two parts of a common program). Since they began, nearly \$14 billion has been generated and apportioned back to the states. Recipient fish and wildlife agencies have matched these program funds with more than \$3.4 billion. Grants to the states from the Sport Fish Restoration program can be used for fishery projects, boating access, and aquatic education. Money from the Wildlife Restoration Program is used for projects to restore, conserve, manage and enhance wild birds and mammals and their habitat, as well as projects that provide public use and access to wildlife resources, hunter education, and development and management of shooting ranges.

Through the WSFR, Kansas receives approximately \$15 million annually. Last year, WSFR funds helped the department purchase land at the Parsons Ammunitions Plant that will be managed for public hunting, and Fancy Creek Shooting Range at Tuttle Creek State Park was enhanced. Popular programs such as Walk-In Hunting Access, Fishing Impoundments and Stream Habitat, and Community Fisheries Assistance Program would not have been possible without WSFR.

WSFR leverages license and permit revenues and allows the department to provide direct benefits to wildlife, as well as anglers, hunters, and boaters. And while the programs funds are usually specific to game animals and sport fish, they benefit all wildlife and fish. Because so few of our wildlife species are hunted or fished, habitat enhancement efforts benefit many more nongame species.

If you enjoy wildlife in Kansas, you can thank hunters, anglers, and the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program. All of our wildlife resources and most of our outdoor recreation have benefitted from this far-reaching program that was started 75 years ago by some visionary people.



Fishing Outlook 2012

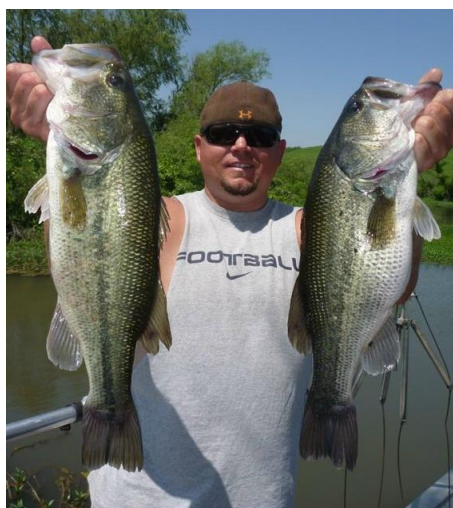
Despite drought conditions prevailing throughout 2011, the fishing outlook remains favorable for waters in the El Dorado District. Anglers will find fishing opportunities from bluegill to walleye and from smaller waters to large reservoirs. Don't keep the fish waiting! Plan a trip and hit the water -- there are fish to be caught and memories to be made!

[Butler State Fishing Lake](#): A 124-acre lake located 3 miles west and 1 mile north of Latham. Butler is mainly known for largemouth bass and channel catfish but also offers bluegill, redear sunfish, and limited crappie fishing

opportunities. During 2012, bass anglers will again be very pleased with the largemouth bass fishing. Butler ranks number one in the lakes category of the [KDWPT 2012 Fishing Forecast](#) for largemouth bass. The largest bass sampled during 2011 was 6.1 pounds, and anglers report catching fish even larger. The picture at the right shows a couple of bass sampled during spring electrofishing 2011. Anglers should expect great bass fishing opportunities at Butler this year. If you have never fished Butler, and you like to bass fish you need to plan a trip this spring. The channel catfish population remains in good shape, and anglers continue to catch quality channel catfish. Channel catfish are rated 'Good' for 2012. Channel cats weighing in the mid-teens are caught each year, and fish exceeding 20 pounds have been sampled in the past. Redear sunfish numbers have dropped in recent years and currently aren't providing much fishing action. Bluegill at Butler are numerous but size runs small, making great fishing action for kids. Crappie populations are also dense but again size runs small, so crappie earned a rating of "Poor" for 2012. Harvest of small crappie is encouraged, and the lake has no length limit and a daily creel of 50/day.



[Chase State Fishing Lake](#): Chase SFL is a very scenic 109-acre lake located 3 miles west of Cottonwood Falls. Water clarity is very good, and shoreline cover varies from steep rocky bluffs to shallow points to water willow covered shorelines. A variety of sport fish are present in Chase, offering many fishing opportunities. The lake contains both



largemouth and spotted bass. Both species are rated as "Good" for 2012. Chase doesn't have the bass density that Butler has, but anglers will have a good fishing experience with the chance at some larger-sized largemouth in 2012. The lake is rated "Good" for channel catfish this year. Three fish feeders are operated at the lake from May through September. During inflow periods, catch rates are good for channel cats at the upper end of the lake where the cats will concentrate. Fish in the 16- to 20-pound range are caught each year. Saugeye are rated as "Fair" as the population has dipped in recent years. Saugeye stockings continue, but flushing events may have caused downstream losses. White crappie are also rated as "Fair" for 2012. Density is similar to last year but size is down with few fish over 10-inches.

Anglers are encouraged to harvest the smaller crappies to help reduce the crappie population to allow for increased growth rates of remaining fish. Bluegill are rated as "Good". Chase does not contain many slab-sized bluegill, but the population offers fast action to keep young anglers interested. White bass are rated as "Fair." The white bass population is very cyclic in Chase, and few anglers pursue them. White bass have been most popular in the late summer and early fall months when they're caught chasing shad at the surface. Anglers are encouraged to harvest all white bass they catch.

[Cowley State Fishing Lake](#): An 84-acre lake located 13 miles east of Arkansas City, Cowley offers scenic views and productive fishing. Largemouth bass and channel catfish are the two most popular species, but redear sunfish draw the interest of some dedicated panfish anglers. Anglers can fish the upper ends with lots of submerged vegetation, or they can fish the mainlake areas with steep, chunk rock banks. Three fish feeders are operated from May through



September, concentrating channel catfish and bluegill for increased catch rates. Two of the three feeders are easily accessible from the fishing piers. Largemouth bass are rated "Good" with good numbers of fish from 13-16 inches and the chance at fish over 20 inches. Redear numbers are down, but size is up so the fish caught will be of better quality with fish over 11 inches available. Channel catfish are rated "Good" although anglers may notice a slight drop in overall size. There is still the chance at a large channel catfish with fish in the 20-pound range. Cowley contains

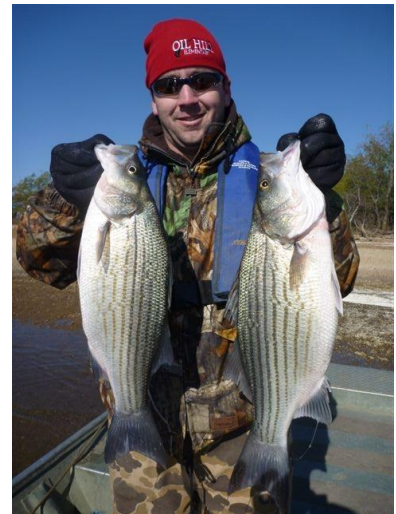
both black and white crappie with black crappie being the dominant species. Density is traditionally quite low, but fish size is acceptable with individuals in the 8.5- to 10.5-inch range. Black crappie are rated as "Fair" and white crappie as "Poor". White bass have appeared in recent years at Cowley State Fishing Lake, but they are unwelcome. Anglers are encouraged to harvest all white bass caught at Cowley. Bluegill are rated as "Good" in 2012. This population provides good angling action for young anglers, especially during the spawn when the bluegill are on the beds near shore and easily accessible to shoreline anglers.

[Council Grove Reservoir](#): Fishing should be quite productive at Council Grove in 2012! All species have received the rating of "Good" with the exception of saugeye, which received a rating of "Fair". Channel catfish anglers should expect continued success. Although Council Grove is included in the July 15 through September 15 jugfishing season, few anglers have participated. During fall test netting, channel catfish up to 27 inches were sampled. Saugeye are rated "Fair" in 2012, mainly due to the lack of angler success not because of a low density or undesirable size structure. Saugeye have proven to be quite elusive to lake anglers, but quality fish persist at the lake. Saugeye will normally inhabit much shallower water than their walleye cousins, and anglers typically fish underneath them. A good tip is to first look for saugeye in shallow water and work deeper. When water temperatures climb in to the mid-60s, saugeye are often found in water 5-8 feet deep, and they tend to go shallower as water



temperatures increase, often being found in water less than 3 feet deep. White bass numbers, although down slightly, should provide good fishing opportunities in 2012. Abundant gizzard shad provide for well-fed white bass and wiper. Wiper anglers should also be pleased this year as the wiper continue to grow. This species has done well in the lake but has yet to develop a dedicated following among lake anglers. Wiper exceeding the 18-inch minimum length limit are now common and provide some exciting rod-bending action. White crappie will continue to offer quality opportunities. Anglers fishing the winter months have done well, and limits of crappie were not uncommon (Council Grove has a crappie limit of 20/day). Crappie in the 10- to 12-inch range are common with larger fish available.

[El Dorado Reservoir](#): Anglers can expect good things from El Dorado this year. Wiper and white bass are both rated “Good”. Both species will be available in good numbers with very desirable sizes, and this combination usually produces happy fishermen! Approximately 24 percent of the wiper sampled exceeded 20 inches in length, and the fish were in good body condition, meaning they were getting plenty to eat. Of concern, is the lack of smaller (less than 12-inch fish) wiper. Wiper have been requested for stocking in 2012. White bass numbers are up over recent years and anglers will find most of the white bass in the 13.5- to 16-inch range and another size class in the 10- to 11-inch range, showing we’ve got some smaller whites coming up for future fishing. Black bass are rated as “Poor” this year. El Dorado contains three species of black bass including the largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, and spotted bass. Bass numbers have continued to decline over the years despite stocking programs and aquatic vegetation establishment programs. Persistent anglers can expect to catch bass by focusing on the varying preferred habitat types of the three species, but action will be slow at best and not meeting expectations of most Kansas bass anglers. Blue catfish numbers continue to increase as individual size increases as well. Fish sampling efforts during 2011 produced blue catfish up to 26 inches in length with many fish in the 13- to 18-inch range. The blues have progressed nicely since their introduction to the reservoir in 2004. The 2011 sample showed numbers of walleye to be down from the last couple of



years, but you wouldn't have guessed this by looking at angler success. The sample showed good size distribution with larger fish available over the 21-inch minimum length limit. As I write this newsletter, we are just a couple weeks out from the start of the walleye spawn when they will begin moving to the rocky shorelines so get those waders patched up now so you can keep dry while chasing those pig walleye! On the downside is zebra mussel density took a rapid upturn during 2011. Veliger densities rocketed up to 113 veligers per liter after three growing seasons of staying less than 10 veligers per liter. Shore colonization has increased and chances of cuts due to mussel shells are very high, so wear shoes if you are wading in the lake. White perch numbers also continuing to increase. Anglers using live bait in 2011 were consistently bothered with the bait stealing white perch. Most of the perch are in the 5- to 6-inch range, which are of little interest to anglers, unless you are putting kids in to the action!

The 2011 fall trap net sampling effort yielded the best catch of crappie that the lake has seen. Most of these fish are the result of the very productive 2010 year class and these fish are currently in the 6- to 8-inch range, but they are still good numbers of larger crappie that anglers seek. Anglers have caught crappie up to 15 inches over the winter months, but fish in the 11- to 13-inch range are more common. Anglers may have to sort through some smaller fish to find what they are looking for but these shorts should grow in to larger sizes quickly. Anglers that have been fishing through the winter months have done well at El Dorado. Crappie have been caught in the upper ends of the reservoir, such as the fish at the right, and also in the main lake areas. Fish have been found near breaks, channel edges, and brushpiles. Most wintertime crappie anglers use jigs exclusively, so they don't have to mess with minnows in the cold temperatures. The crappie haven't been very selective so far this year, but larger plastics have been working better than the smaller, more traditional wintertime crappie jigs. As the water begins to warm, the crappie will move from their overwintering areas and will start to move towards shallower water in preparation for the upcoming spawn. Warm water becomes very important to the crappie during early spring, so look for areas of the lake that warm the quickest. These areas include shallow coves, south facing shorelines, and the creeks feeding the reservoir. Keep an eye on the [fishing reports](#) on the KDWPT website for up to date fishing information and plan a trip to a lake near you!



Kansas Crappie Bonanza Video Available Online

KDWPT has recently released the free online video titled *Kansas Crappie Bonanza* to show anglers how to catch crappie throughout the year in the Sunflower State. Although this popular panfish is pursued most actively in springtime, crappie provide a great angling opportunity year-round, even through winter ice.

Both entertaining and educational, the 25-minute video shows basic fishing strategies for each season and provides ample advice and tips from crappie guides and fishing experts on how to catch crappie anytime. Although weather is incorporated into the different strategies, the video focuses on the fun of crappie fishing no matter what the weather.

Produced by outdoor videographer and photographer Gene Brehm, with assistance from the KDWPT Fisheries Section video committee, *Kansas Crappie Bonanza* will help all crappie anglers be more successful in pursuit of this abundant sport fish. The video is available to view free of charge on the [KDWPT website](#) or on [YouTube](#).

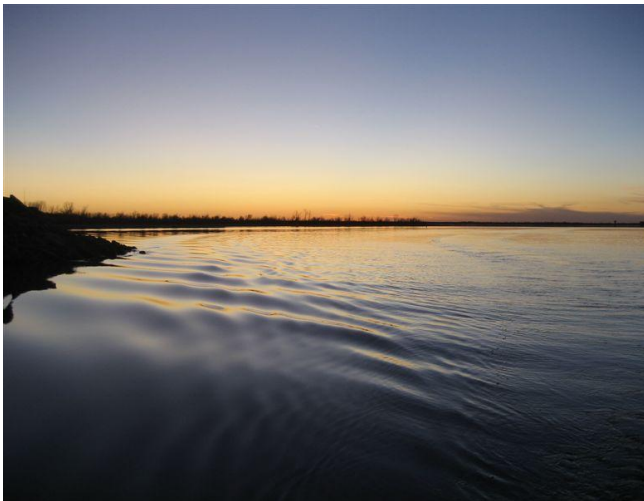




Male longear sunfish showing his breeding colors at Chase SFL



Fingerling walleye prior to stocking in El Dorado Reservoir 2011



February 2012 sunset over El Dorado Reservoir

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Last Cast!

Thanks for your continued interest in the El Dorado District Fisheries newsletter. I hope the newsletter provides you with some information to make your fishing trips more enjoyable. If you have any questions or comments or story ideas for upcoming newsletters feel free to send them in.

Be sure to check in on the [KDWPT website](#) on a regular basis. There is a large amount of fisheries related information available on the website as well as news releases, videos, fishing reports, blogs, and updates.

The 2012 Fishing Regulations Summary is available online [HERE](#). There are numerous changes for 2012 so you might want to take a look before heading out to your favorite lake.

Fisheries biologists across the state will soon be shifting gears from winter to spring projects. Mid-March brings the walleye spawn and fisheries staff will be collecting walleye eggs from reservoirs for walleye production in the hatcheries. Without these egg-taking operations, we would have no walleye to stock in Kansas waters. Some biologists will be starting creel surveys at select water bodies in March. Spring electrofishing sampling for largemouth bass will be in full swing during May. A myriad of other projects will keep the fish bios busy, making fishing better for you! Get out there and enjoy it! There are all kinds of fishing opportunities available whether you want to fish a one-acre pond or multi-thousand acre reservoir. Set a date, pick a lake, and GO! And take a kid fishing; they will have a blast!

As always, if you know someone who might like to subscribe to the newsletter, they can do so [HERE](#). If you would like to unsubscribe, please send your info to [Contact Us](#) with "unsubscribe El Dorado District Fisheries newsletter" and we'll get you taken off of the list.

Fish On!

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