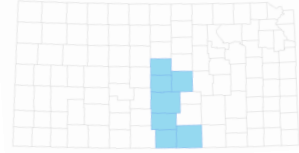


CHENEY DISTRICT FISHERIES

KANSAS DEPT. OF WIDLIFE, PARKS, AND TOURISM-FISHERES SECTION



Cheney District Update



Two 25-inch walleyes sampled at Cheney Reservoir. Cheney will be a premier destination for big walleyes in 2013.

Late-winter is one of my least favorite seasons in Kansas, as most hunting seasons have closed and fishing is in limbo due to cold water or unfavorable ice conditions. There is a light at the end of the tunnel though, and now is the time to start planning your 2013 angling season. Unless south-central Kansas receives some substantial rains, planning those fishing trips may be difficult due to low water levels. Currently, only one boat is marginally useable at Cheney Reservoir, and all boat ramps are closed at Kanopolis Reservoir and Wellington City Lake. As far as smaller lakes in the district, Kingman State Fishing Lake is slowly filling after the recent renovation, and Anthony City Lake is bone dry due to the drought.

As there is nothing we can do about the weather, we need to focus on the positives, which are plentiful when it comes to the fishing potential in 2013 in south-central Kansas. First, if anglers are able to get at them, the walleye and wiper populations at Cheney should be first-rate in 2013. Anglers enjoyed terrific late-summer and fall success in 2012, which should carry over into the spring. Walleye anglers should be happy to hear that in our fall samples, nearly 25% of fish were over 21". Many of those short fish we've been catching for the last couple years have finally reached keeper size. The wiper and white bass density at Cheney will be tremendous as well, although trophy potential will be down again this year. At Kanopolis, the fishing for saugeye should be second to none. Excellent year classes from 2010 and 2011 will provide anglers with great fishing, which should start shortly off the main lake points near the dam. Although the white bass density is relatively low compared to recent years at Kanopolis, good numbers of huge white bass were seen in fall netting, and lots of 15-17" white bass are available.

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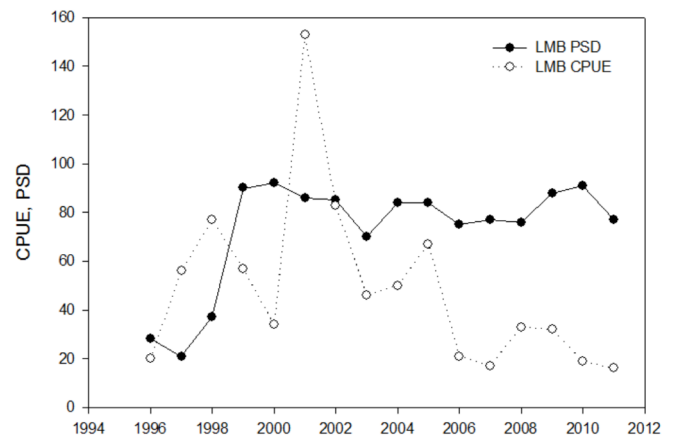
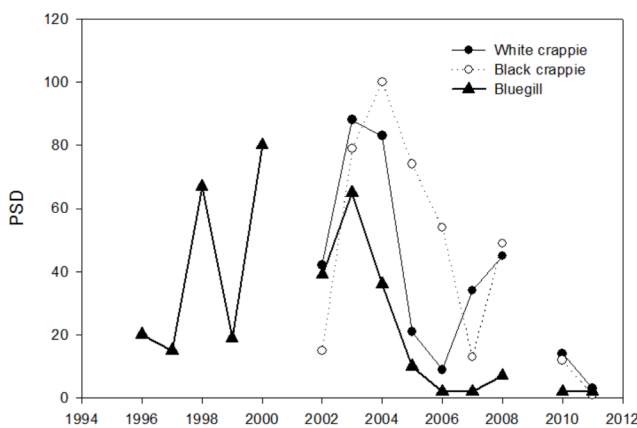
One district lake that has been relatively unaffected by the drought is McPherson SFL, which will again be one of the top largemouth bass lakes in the region. McPherson SFL is not only a great bass lake, it is annually one of the better lakes in the region for big channel cats. Finally, big crappies are usually one of the first things on anglers minds in the spring. Best bets for nice slabs this spring are Wellington Hargis Creek Lake and Wellington City Lake. Focus on rip rap and brush in these lakes for some hot early-season action.



Kingman State Fishing Lake Renovation

As many Cheney District anglers are aware, we were one fishin' hole short this fall. We made the decision to drain and renovate Kingman SFL in the fall of 2012. The decision had pros and cons, but the timing was right, and the fishery will be much better off heading into the future.

In recent years, the Kingman SFL sportfishery had declined to levels that were not meeting the needs and expectations of anglers. This was evident by a 63% decrease in angling trips overall angling use compared to 1999, which was four years after the previous renovation. Several factors led to the decline of the sportfishery, namely the introduction of the aquatic nuisance species (ANS) white perch, and proliferation of undesirable gizzard shad and common carp populations. In the graphs below, the vertical axes illustrate a couple important population characteristics biologists use to describe fish populations. Proportional size distribution (PSD) basically describes what percentage of fish in a population are a given size that generally represents recreational value. Bigger PSD values mean more fish in the sample are large, so high PSD values are desirable. In the graph on the right, catch per unit effort (CPUE) is also shown. This is a value that represents how many fish are sampled during a given period of standardized effort (i.e., number of bass captured per hour of electrofishing). In most cases, higher CPUE values are better. The numbers are unimportant in this case, but the take home message is that panfish (i.e., crappie and bluegill) size structure has dramatically decreased since the early to mid-2000s. The last two samples in 2010 and 2011 indicated a very poor panfish population that was not meeting the needs of anglers at KMSL. In the graph of largemouth bass population characteristics, size structure stayed consistent once the fishery had developed from the last renovation; however, CPUE has steadily declined since the early 2000's. Although isolating specific causes of these declines is difficult, competition from white perch, gizzard shad, and common carp undoubtedly played a large role.



The drought during the summer of 2012 gave us an unexpected advantage in regard to the renovation. Kingman SFL generally has a matrix of wetlands and sloughs upstream of the lake. In normal years, these locations hold water as well as undesirable fish. Due to the drought, these habitats were dry, thus eliminating the need for us to apply chemical these areas. This decreased the amount of money we had to spend on chemical, as well as increased the likelihood of eliminating all rough fish from the immediate lake basin.

Kingman State Fishing Lake Renovation

On August 13 and 14, we attempted to salvage sportfish for restocking efforts following the renovation, mainly targeting northern pike. We managed to catch and relocate about 50 large, adult northern pike and several big largemouth bass and crappie as well. After fish salvage efforts were no longer fruitful, we began draining the lake. All water leaving the lake had to be screened as we did not want to introduce numerous white perch into the South Fork of the Ninescah River. As the lake was already a couple feet low due to the drought, draining took less time than if it was full; however, water was still draining from the lake when the outlet structure was closed on the renovation day of September 21.

A chemical called rotenone was used to eradicate all remaining fish in Kingman SFL. The chemical degrades fairly quickly in the environment and is of no harm to humans or domestic livestock. After a period of detoxification and some refilling from the springs, about 5,700 largemouth bass (5-10") and 1,500 channel catfish (10-12") were restocked into the lake. These bass will provide biological control in case any small fish survived the renovation or have entered the lake from the watershed. In 2013, more largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, northern pike, and channel catfish will be stocked. These sportfish will grow quickly in the renovated lake with no competition from rough fish. There will be catchable-sized fish by late summer and into fall, although few will be keepers. While the lake was drained, the main boat ramp was extended and plans were made to armor the rest of the dam with rip rap as well as construct two additional fishing jetties. Hopefully these improvements will be made by the summer of 2013.



A nearly dry north end of Kingman SFL in late September, 2012. A small trickle of water was coming out of the spring in late summer, although the spring is putting out substantial flows this winter.

Although Kingman SFL has received little precipitation and minimal inflow from upstream, the spring at the north end of the lake has been flowing strongly, adding approximately 6 to 8 inches of lake elevation per month. If this trend holds true, the lake may be back to near normal level by late spring. Hopefully, in the mean time, we get some rain to help us out. I urge you to get out and try fishing at Kingman SFL in the next couple years once the newly stocked sport fish take hold. Finally, if we can learn a lesson from this renovation, keeping ANS out of our waters will go a long way in keeping our fisheries in balance and in good condition.

2013 Cheney District fishing forecast

If you are looking for my “best bets” in 2013, here are my recommendations:

Walleye and saugeye: For anglers wanting a meal of fresh walleye or saugeye and those looking to catch large numbers of fish, I would hit up Kanopolis and Wellington City Lake; however, for the potential at a 20”+ fish, I recommend Cheney Reservoir.

Crappie: Hit up the trees and rocks at Wellington City Lake. During the fall of 2012, some fish approaching 15” were caught. Also try Wellington Hargis Creek Lake. Anglers sometimes struggle to catch fish at Hargis, but trust me, the fish are there.

White bass and wipers: I would recommend Cheney Reservoir. Whites and wipers will be somewhat spread out in the spring, but hopefully in April or May we will get a good river run. Look for fish to concentrate in the fall off of Walleye Island, M&M Point, and off the handicapped-accessible fishing jetty. Kanopolis Reservoir will also be a good bet for big white bass. Wellington City Lake has a high density of wipers.

Channel catfish: You really can’t go wrong anywhere in the district for catfish. Cheney Reservoir and McPherson SFL will be good for big fish; whereas, Kanopolis, Wellington Hargis Creek will be tops for numbers. Don’t forget the spring and summer stockings of pound-sized fish in Hutchinson at Carey Park and the Dillon Nature Center.

Largemouth bass: McPherson is a no-brainer for bass numbers and size in the district. If you are just looking to catch some fish, there will be hungry and aggressive bass at Kingman SFL as 5,000 six to twelve-inch fish were stocked in the fall of 2012 after the renovation.

For a comprehensive statewide fishing forecast, check out this [LINK](#).



McPherson SFL creel survey

A creel survey will be conducted at McPherson SFL from March through October, 2013. A creel clerk has been hired to count and interview fisherman at the reservoir at random times. The clerk will be asking anglers various questions regarding their catch and may ask to measure any fish anglers have on their stringers. These data are used to estimate fishing pressure, harvest, and size of fish caught by anglers. This information will help us fine-tune our management and eventually make fishing better. If you are approached by a creel clerk this year, we would appreciate your cooperation with this important component of fisheries management. Thank you!



Closing comments

If you know someone who would 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 to Cheney District Fisheries newsletter” and we’ll get you taken off of the list. If you have any questions or comments feel free to send them in.

Good fishing,

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