

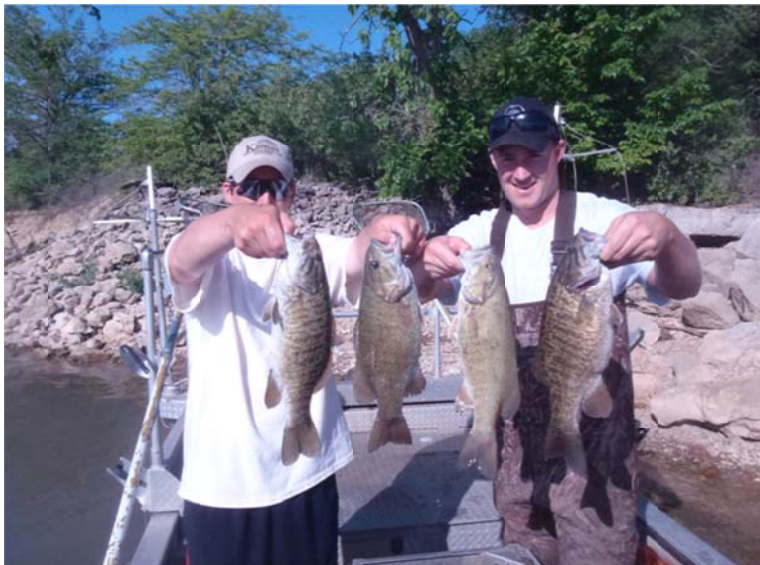
Lawrence District Newsletter – February 2013

By Richard Sanders, District Fisheries Biologist

Drought conditions continued over Kansas in 2012. Lack of runoff into our lakes resulted in low water levels, low nutrient flow and may have negatively affected food chains in many waters. Fisheries biologists spend considerable time sampling area lakes to assess performance of various fisheries management techniques and get a snapshot of each lake's fishery. Fishing forecast information below is based on 2012 sampling efforts.

CLINTON RESERVOIR

Numbers of white crappie sampled in 2012 were lower than those sampled in 2010 and 2011. Even though large fish were present (greater than 14 inches) a high percentage of crappie were less than 8 inches long. Improvement could happen rapidly, if gizzard shad production is sufficient this year to provide high-quality food. Crappie fishing should be fair. Channel catfish at Clinton have provided very good fisheries during the past decade, and the 2012 sampled showed that 2013 should be no different. Clinton ranked number two statewide for number of channel catfish 16-24 inches in length. Channel catfish angling should be good. White bass have been good for the past couple of years at Clinton, and 2013 should be another good year. Not as many 14-inch fish are present as last year, but high numbers of 12- to 15-inch fish, as well as about 11 percent over 15 inches should provide a high-quality fishery. For that reason, the white bass rating is good. Walleye catch was up in 2012 gill nets, and anglers had a good year catching fish throughout much of the summer. Sauger catch was up also, which may be the result of more consistent stockings during recent years. Walleye and sauger fishing should be fair. Largemouth bass electrofishing catch rate was up in 2012. Quality was good with over 32 percent of bass exceeding 15 inches. Clinton Reservoir will be a part of the Early Spawn Largemouth Bass Project in 2013. Largemouth bass will be spawned early at Meade Fish Hatchery allowing fingerlings to be stocked, which should be larger than any young of the year largemouth bass produced in the reservoir at that time, thus creating a competitive advantage for these early spawned bass. The hope is that stocked bass will be able to utilize available food sources better than naturally produced bass, resulting in better growth, size and survival. Enhancement of these factors should create stronger year classes of largemouth bass and produce a better fishery for this species. Largemouth bass angling is rated fair for 2013. Smallmouth bass were stocked 2008 through 2011 in an effort to reestablish this fishery. Each year's stocking produced a year class. Growth has been good, with 48 percent of smallmouth exceeding 14 inches in 2012 samples. Spawning success was documented in 2012, which will ultimately determine the success or failure of this fishery. Smallmouth bass should provide a fair fishery in 2013. Wiper were stocked 2003 through 2006 at Clinton to provide a pelagic trophy. Stockings were so successful that they were discontinued because catch rate satisfied the goal, until



2012. Some of the older wiper weigh 8 pounds or more. Even though numbers were down in 2012, fishing should still be fair for this species. Stockings that are planned for Clinton in 2013 include: largemouth bass, sauger, walleye, wiper, and blue catfish. An angler survey will be completed at Clinton this year (one was conducted in 2012). These surveys allow us to gather data, which can reveal harvest, fishing pressure, fish preference, residence of anglers, sizes of fish that anglers are willing to harvest, and how satisfied anglers are with their fishing experience. Jason Tarwater, Clinton Wildlife Area manager, donated about 60 cedar trees for fish habitat. These trees were placed into Clinton Reservoir March 14 with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' assistance. GPS coordinates (Datum = NAD 83, decimal degrees) of new structures are: N38.91331 W095.36826, N38.91461 W095.36439, N38.91774 W095.36337, N38.91639 W095.36828, N38.91999 W095.37294, and N38.91716 W095.37327.

MELVERN RESERVOIR

Lake levels declined and remained low throughout 2012. Zebra mussels were stranded as water levels receded. Evidently, Melvern provides excellent habitat for zebra mussels, as they had completely coated most hard substrates by mid-summer. Water clarities approached 6 feet on some summer days and during December, the Marina manager reported that he could see a sheet of paper on the lake bottom under his dock, at a depth of 21 feet. On one occasion during August, a family was observed snorkeling on the north end of the dam (very unusual for Kansas!). Crappie catch was outstanding in 2011, but in 2012 catch was down considerably along with size. Plenty of crappie less than 8 inches are present in the population. If conditions for growth improve, then the population could improve quickly. The crappie outlook for Melvern this year looks fair. Channel catfish catch rate was identical to 2011, which was good. Quality has improved as the percentage of 16- to 24-inch catfish increased from 14 percent in 2009 to 68 percent in 2012. Fishing for channel catfish should be good in 2012. White bass catch was down in 2012. About 75 percent of adult fish were 12-15 inches and 9 percent were over 15 inches. Angling for white bass should be fair in 2013. Three black bass species (i.e. smallmouth, spotted, and largemouth) are found at Melvern, with smallmouth bass being most abundant. Individually, none of the species has a great population, but combined they provide a fair fishery. Quality is good, with a large percentage over 14 inches. Walleye and sauger numbers were up in 2012, but they were still slightly below the objective. Most of the larger walleye were 15-20 inches long. Based on sampling, walleye fishing should be fair and sauger angling should be poor. About 17 percent of walleye sampled were marked, indicating that they came from the rearing pond operation. This is the program where fingerling walleye and fathead minnows are stocked into the rearing pond



below Melvern dam. Walleye feed on minnows and grow through the summer. Around the first Saturday in October, the pond is harvested and walleye intermediates are stocked into Melvern. This past year, 1,615 walleye were harvested from the pond. Several 20-pound-plus blue catfish were sampled at Melvern this past year, along with a good number of small ones.

Blue catfish have been stocked a number of times over the years, and 14,000 shorts were received in 2012. Blue catfish

stockings will be suspended due to presence of broodfish which should be able to produce young to perpetuate this species. Blue catfish angling should be fair.

Douglas SFL

Moderate numbers of black and white crappie were captured in trap nets at Douglas SFL. These fish did exhibit good quality as most measured 8-10 inches or 10-11 inches. The outlook for crappie is fair. Bluegill numbers were lower in 2012 than the previous three years. Size was good, as 56 percent were in the 6- to 8-inch length range. Redear sunfish catch rate was high in 2012 and size trended downward. The population still contains some quality, as 38 percent were 7-9 inches long. Fishing for this species should be good in 2013. Tremendous numbers of largemouth bass are present at Douglas SFL. However, size is not good, as most fish are around 10-13 inches. Angling for largemouth bass should be fair. Channel catfish numbers remained high and decent size characteristics were present, so this species is rated good.

Osage SFL

Black crappie numbers were moderate and size was good, with 32 percent over 10 inches. This species is rated fair. Bluegill catch rate was moderate and size OK, with 33 percent in the 6- to 8-inch size range. Fishing for bluegill should be fair. Low numbers of channel catfish have been sampled the past two years, even though stocking rate has been maintained. Most fish were in the 16- to 24-inch range. Angling for channel catfish should be fair. High numbers of largemouth bass were sampled in 2012. Size was not great, as most fish were less than 12 inches. A few big bass are present to provide an occasional trophy, but most folks are going to catch lots of small/intermediate bass. Angling for largemouth bass should be good.



Carbondale City Lake

Most bluegill sampled were less than 7 inches long, so quality was poor and should provide poor fishing in 2013. Carbondale has a very strong channel catfish population that has good numbers of fish and good size. This fishery is rated good. Few largemouth bass have been sampled over the years at this water. Size was OK, but just the lack of fish results in this fishery being rated poor. Very high numbers of white crappie are present at this lake. Surprisingly size structure is not too shabby, with

about 42 percent in the 8- to 10-inch range. Few fish are longer than 10 inches, but for anglers that are OK with smaller fish this lake can supply good numbers. Crappie fishing should be fair in 2013.

Lonestar Lake

The combination of black and white crappie produces a moderate-density fishery with good size characteristics, as most adult fish exceed 10 inches. This fishery is rated fair. High numbers of bluegill were sampled in 2012 and size has trended downward. As a result this fishery is rated fair. Moderate numbers of redear sunfish were captured in trap nets. Redear have increased along with the presence of more aquatic vegetation. Some real trophies are present with some fish over 10.5 inches. It appears that there are more fish in the pipeline, as juvenile fish were prevalent. Redear fishing should be fair in 2013. Low numbers of channel catfish were captured in 2012. Most of the larger fish were 16-24 inches in length. Due to low numbers sampled, the rating for catfish is fair. Largemouth bass catch rate was high, but quality continued to decline. Even with the decline, there are some good sized bass present (5 pounds). Overall, bass fishing should be good.



Lake Shawnee

Moderate numbers of black and white crappie were sampled at Shawnee. Even though crappies are not very abundant, they exhibit good size characteristics for a lake of this size. Most of the crappie sampled were 8-10 inches long, but about 15 percent were over 10 inches in length. High numbers of bluegill were captured in trap nets. Quality was good, as 45 percent were 6-8 inches long and a few exceeded 8 inches. Channel catfish numbers were slightly lower than the goal. Quality was good with 58 percent in the 16- to 24-inch range and 11 percent in the 24-to 28-inch size range. Tissue samples collected during the spring showed that largemouth bass virus (LMBV) was present. Presence of this virus could explain the great decline in the bass fishery that occurred from 2008 through 2011. Large bass suffer the greatest mortality from LMBV. Resistant members of the population serve to rebuild the fishery. Smallmouth bass catch rate was the second highest for the past five years, but was still low. Most sampled fish were 7-11 inches long. Walleye catch rate was low in 2012, as it has been the past several years. Fairly high numbers of white bass were present in 2012 gill nets. Most fish (42 percent) measured from 12-15 inches in length. Angling for white bass should be good. Moderate numbers of wiper were collected in 2012 samples. All fish were larger than 15 inches, and one giant greater than 25 inches long was observed. Wiper fishing at Shawnee should be fair in 2013.



More Fish Habitat Work

Douglas County personnel put some cedar tree brush piles in Lonestar Lake during November 2012. New and old locations are listed below.

Table 1. GPS Coordinates for Fish Habitat at Lonestar Lake

GPS-Lat	GPS-Long	Depth	Type	Date	Datum	Description
N38.83970	W095.38154	19	Brush	11/7/2006		
N38.83894	W095.38205	18	Brush	11/7/2006		
N38.83332	W095.38302	14	Brush	11/7/2006		
N38.83386	W095.38230	14	Brush	11/7/2006		
N38.83405	W095.38206	13.5	Brush	11/7/2006		
N38.83459	W095.38194	10	Brush	11/7/2006		
N38.83537	W095.38180	9.5	Brush	11/7/2006		
N38.83850	W095.38180	12	Brush	11/7/2006		
N38.83914	W095.37707	24	Brush	11/7/2006		
N38.83895	W095.37585	13	Brush	11/7/2006		
N38.83913	W095.37638	25	Brush	11/7/2012	NAD83	e of westmost dock swim cove
N38.83915	W095.37711	22.5	Brush	11/7/2012	NAD83	W of westmost dock swim cove
N38.83900	W095.37608	20	Brush	11/7/2012	NAD83	W of middle dock swim cove
N38.83907	W095.37604	18	Brush	11/7/2012	NAD83	E of middle cove swim cove
N38.83898	W095.37565	12.5	Brush	11/7/2012	NAD83	E of east dock swim cove
N38.83904	W095.37600	17	Brush	11/7/2012	NAD83	W of east dock swim cove
N38.83808	W095.38065	22-33	Brush	11/7/2012	NAD83	Between shop & across to other side
N38.83566	W095.37906	23-29	Brush	11/7/2012	NAD83	Point south of boat ramp shop
N38.83193	W095.38078	15	Brush	11/7/2012	NAD83	E bank s of redeal cove
N38.83213	W095.38094	19	Brush	11/7/2012	NAD83	E bank s of redeal cove
N38.83335	W095.38258	16	Brush	11/7/2012	NAD83	W side just before cabin cove