

# Perry District Fisheries Newsletter

Spring 2017

## Special points of interest:

- Red water?
- New kid on the block
- New habitat permits at Perry Reservoir
- Catch and Release: fact or farce?
- Perry Reservoir Creel Survey Summary

## What was up with Leavenworth State Fishing Lake?

Leavenworth State Fishing Lake is a 160-acre impoundment located in western Leavenworth County just north of Tonganoxie. Just a short drive north on Highway 16 leads you to the turn-off for this reservoir. After passing a few houses and fields, you see the sign for Leavenworth SFL and wildlife area; the road is suddenly engulfed on both sides by trees. The road starts snaking its way through this small forest and begins to remind you of a western mountain destination. A small hairpin turn points you towards another road; through it you start to see some water. Based on your scenic drive in, you

start to picture the crystal clear waters of the mountain scene. You pull up to the first fishing jetty to your right and look out to see that pristine water covered with a red film. HUH?!? Slamming on the brakes you stop the car and rub your eyes, "What is going on here, the lake is RED!?"



This is no trick, your eyes are not going bad, the lake really was red. It was caused by a special type algae called euglena. This critter is special because it photosynthesizes just like any other plant or algae but when sunlight gets scarce (like in late fall/winter) it switches its eating habits and begins preying upon other algae.

During years with high nitrogen runoff from surrounding fields, euglena can really take off and that is exactly what we saw this past fall. The heavy rains from spring and summer washed loads of nitrogen and organic matter into the impoundment, which caused the algae population to take off. As the algae dies off, it rises to the surface and you see the red blooms all around the lake.

KDHE has informed us that it poses no threat to humans and people may use the lake for all of their normal recreational activities.



## There is a new sheriff biologist in town



My name is Nick Kramer, and I am your new district fisheries biologist. I am very excited for the opportunity to work on all of the amazing impoundments and fisheries that are present in this corner of the state.

I grew up in southwest Iowa, fishing farm ponds every chance I could and really fell in love with fish and fishing. This passion eventually led me to Iowa State University where I earned my bachelor's degree in Animal Ecology, specializing in Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences. I worked numerous internships with the Iowa DNR

working a lot with aquatic invasive species and a summer's worth of time on the Mississippi River near the Quad Cities.

This experience introduced me to some folks from Missouri who eventually hired me to work with Pallid Sturgeon on the Mississippi River near Cape Girardeau, MO. After a year of trot-lining and trawling for sturgeon, I was talked into getting my master's degree. I was able to work with Paddlefish and evaluated the exploitation rate of this unique species in the Mississippi River. After successfully defending my

thesis this past summer, I interviewed for this position and was hired.

Again, I am looking forward to working on all of these impoundments and interacting with the anglers who fish them. If any of you want to swap fish stories or voice a concern about a lake, just give me a call or shoot me an email. I'm looking forward to hearing from you and working for you and your angling benefit.

See you on the water!

## Restructuring the Habitat Program on Perry Reservoir

With the changing of the guard there is usually some information lost in the transition. In this instance, the information lost is the roll call sheet for anglers who are allowed to place habitat on Perry Reservoir, so we are starting fresh. **IF YOU HAVE NOT CONTACTED ME, YOUR HABITAT PERMIT IS VOID!** If you want to place brushpiles on Perry Reservoir, give me a call or send me an email and I will issue a new permit. These will be a little different than previously and will have a little different rules.

There are five general rules for placing habitat with regard to materials, placement depth and location, and weighing down your new habitat. Those are all essentially the same from years past.

Now for the changes. Each permit will now last for only two years; this is to allow me to better monitor who is placing habitat over a period of time and have you check in with me every once in a while to make sure you're following the rules.

The second change involves reporting the locations of your brushpiles to



me. If you create a new brush pile or add to an existing one, let me know. I need to be able to provide a map to the Corps if they ask for it. The coordinates will also be published on the fishing report, with permission of course.

So, if you want to place habitat in Perry Reservoir, get a hold of me and I'll send you a new permit.

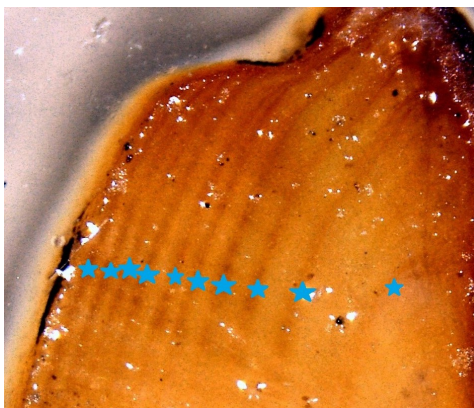
## \*Catch and Release: “A fisherman’s folly - Sometimes”

As I mentioned earlier, I grew up fishing farm ponds. I targeted Largemouth Bass almost exclusively, and as a result practiced catch and release religiously. I subscribed to Bassmaster Magazine, North American Fisherman, Fur, Fish, and Game, etc., and read most of the articles. Harvesting a bass was a sin in my eyes and because of that, I never kept a single one. It wasn't until I was 22 that I ate my first bass, and it was only because one had died. I'm sure many of you also have the same opinion about harvesting bass from your farm ponds like the ponds I had opportunity to fish. While many of our sources of outdoor education (i.e., magazines, tv, internet.) preach about the importance of catch and release. It can often lead to more issues than it prevents in ponds and in small lakes with high bass recruitment.

Have you ever fished a pond that has a bunch of little bass and no matter what you do they won't grow? You're likely experiencing what is called carrying capacity, which is simply how much of something the pond can hold. This is not so much a number limit, but more of a weight limit. Imagine your pond as a 10x10 box with 100 spaces. Your fish are

swimming in these spaces, some, like your bass, are larger than others and take up four spaces, others, like Bluegill, are smaller and only take up one space. If you are not harvesting any bass, they continue to reproduce and eventually you will reach your maximum amount of good sized (four space) fish. Then they will start stunting themselves because they will continue reproducing. You will notice that the size will start decreasing, first to three spaces and then to two. And who wants to catch a small fish?

Recently a former colleague sent me an email containing this picture:



It is a picture of an otolith (inner ear structure) used to age a Largemouth Bass in a farm pond he manages. This particular fish is 10 years old,

as you can tell from the lines and the stars. The kicker here is that the fish was only 12 1/2 inches! A study out of Arkansas found Largemouth Bass reaching 12 inches in two to three years and by age seven would be over 20 inches. Now, growth does vary a little throughout a fish's range but not that much! This is a real-world example of fish reaching this carrying capacity and becoming stunted.

What can you do about it? Take home some bass every once in a while. I'm not suggesting that you go crazy, or else you won't have enough bass to control your Bluegills, just keep a few here or there. Hopefully you won't even notice any changes to your pond.

Catch and release can be a great conservation tool if used correctly. Just like this title, C&R may need an asterisk to signify that sometimes it's okay to keep a few. If it wasn't, then we wouldn't have possession limits on Largemouth Bass, would we?

Pond management can be a confusing puzzle to solve and if you have any questions about your private ponds, feel free to give me a call. I'll be more than happy to give you some advice.

## Brittle naiad found in area impoundments

While doing our fall netting on Leavenworth SFL and Banner Creek Reservoir, I found a few pieces of brittle naiad. This is an aquatic plant that is considered a nuisance because of its tendency to crowd out our more desirable native plants. It grows in clusters resembling underwater bushes and usually does not begin appearing until June of each year. It differs from the native slender naiad in that it has many teeth-like serrations on each leaf. This plant can reproduce through traditional seed methods but it more commonly spreads through fragmentation. It is called brittle because each whorl of leaves can easily break off and sprout a new cluster of plants. This is why it is very important to check over your boat and fishing gear before moving to a new water body to prevent its spread. We should all make it a part of our routine to clean, drain, dry, and inspect our watercraft after every use.





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### **Special points of interest:**

- Red Water?
- New kid on the block
- New habitat permit agreement on Perry
- Catch and Release: A fisherman's folly

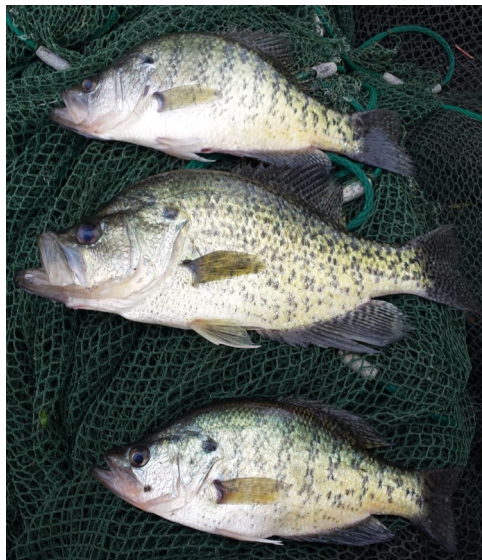
## **Perry Reservoir Creel Survey Summary**

This past year, some of you may have come across Jacob and Jared, our creel clerks. They worked very hard surveying anglers and counting boats last summer in order to gather important information regarding harvest of fish at Perry Reservoir. I'll go over a bit of the more interesting information here.

These creel surveys do not sample every single angler who visits the lake but only the anglers in a certain zone during a certain period of time. So, when I refer to anglers, keep in mind that it is really interviewed anglers.

With that being said, 92.65% of anglers visiting Perry were males mostly aged 16-64. Anglers came from all over, with Kansas, obviously, being the most popular state. Breaking it down by county, Jefferson and Shawnee counties had the highest percentage of trips to the lake with

33.68% and 26.68%, respectively. The rest of the top five counties includes Leavenworth (9.29%), Douglas (8.18%), Johnson (5.47%). The top neighboring states by percent visits are Missouri (2.22%), Iowa, Oklahoma, Colorado, and Nebraska (>1% each). So, the bulk of fishing pressure on Perry is local.



Anglers traveling to Perry Reservoir experienced a 78.43% success rate of harvesting at least one fish of any species. Anglers targeting one of the crappie species had about a 37.62% success rate and Channel Catfish coming in second with a 26.25% success rate.

Interviewed anglers caught a total of 6,023 crappie between March and October, most of which were White Crappie. About half were harvested and half were released. Eighty-one of the released fish were of legal length, and 28 of the harvested fish were below the length limit.

The second most caught fish was Channel Catfish. People casting a line at Perry managed to catch 2,856 Channel Catfish; releasing 698 and harvesting 2,158. The majority of harvested fish occurred between 14 and 22 inches.

Best of luck to you in 2017, hopefully you all find some good fish!