



# Woodson District Fisheries News

Spring 2018

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## Woodson State Fishing Lake Renovation



As you can see from the previous picture Woodson State Lake is dry. Construction has begun on the spillway and should be completed by early summer. Now is the time to come out and take pictures of the dry lake bed and make note of all of the available habitat structures and drop-offs that will be excellent fishing spots when the lake fills back up. The dry winter weather has been really helpful for us to do some habitat work around the lake. I have been able to create some nice looking habitat in the lakebed that consists of artificial structures (Georgia Cubes) and brush. I have placed 45 new Georgia Cube fish attractors in the lake, and I have also went back to the

old cube locations and rearranged the cubes to create better fish attractions by stacking the cubes in big clusters and placing them in ideal areas such as drop-offs or rocky points. I have also placed many cubes around the fishing piers on the east side of the lake to hopefully improve shoreline angling opportunities in the future.



John Johnson, Public Lands manager at Woodson State Lake, has been very helpful by using his skid-steer and tree saw to cut down trees near the lake creating better shoreline access and also utilizing those trees to create brush piles in the lake. Using his equipment to cut down and pile trees has saved a lot of time and manpower compared to doing the same thing by chainsaw. We are currently still working on getting more habitat into the lake, but when we are done, I will GPS everything and redo the habitat map I created a few years ago. The GPS coordinates will be available on our website at

<http://ksoutdoors.com/KDWPT-Info/Locations/Hunting-Fishing->

[Atlas/Fishing-Atlas/GPS-KML-Information-Files](http://ksoutdoors.com/KDWPT-Info/Locations/Hunting-Fishing-Atlas/Fishing-Atlas/GPS-KML-Information-Files). The construction is supposed to be completed in April, but we all know how construction deadlines go, so I'm hoping for completion at least by May or June so we can start holding back water and refilling the lake. We will start restocking fish when there is a suitable amount of water, and of course, good fishing will take some years to develop.



# 2018 Fishing Forecast



## Black Bass

Anglers should expect fishing opportunities for bass similar to last year at most lakes in my district. Pretty much all of the lakes in my district have good to great populations of largemouth bass. However, one lake stands out for numbers of fish over 18 inches and the best opportunity for anglers to catch a fish over 6 pounds. Garnett Cedar Valley Reservoir offers that opportunity. Over the last few years we have seen an increase in bass numbers at this lake. These fish are growing fast because of the ample forage of stunted crappie and gizzard shad. Experienced anglers should have no problem catching several bass over 5 pounds. The biggest bass we sampled last year weighed in at 8.5 pounds!

If you are a bass angler, I'm sure you have fished for smallmouth bass at Coffey County. This is the only lake in my district that offers excellent smallmouth fishing. We are continuing to see high numbers of smallies show up in the exit creel survey anglers take before leaving the lake. In May and June it is not uncommon to see people catching over 50 smallmouth in a day! Size wise, these fish may not measure up to some of the other reservoirs around the state but that is something anglers sacrifice when they want to fish quantity not quality. Regardless, fish over 18 inches are caught often, but fish 12 to 17 inches are more common. We are starting to see the largemouth bass population creep up at Coffey County, as well. Since the vegetation has come on strong, the number of largemouth bass showing up in the exit creel are increasing. Last year, a largemouth over 10 pounds was reported.



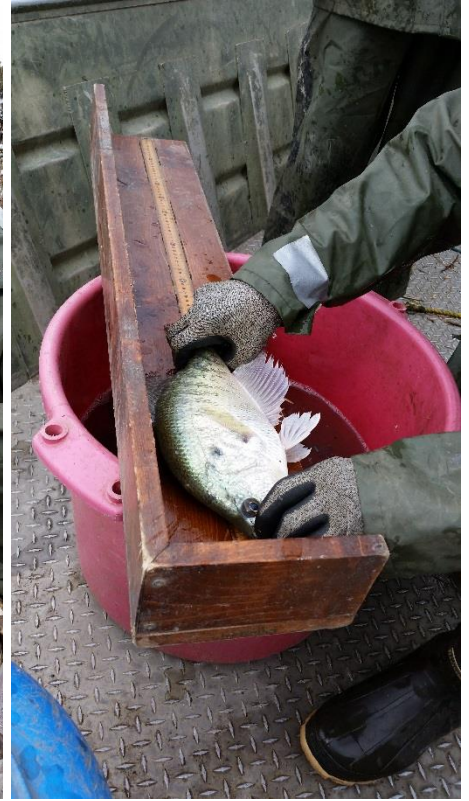
## Crappie

John Redmond crappie numbers are down this year as far as stock length or larger fish. We did capture a five-year high of almost 1,700 crappie in the trap nets, but only 166 of these were 5 inches or larger. We went from 41 stock length or greater fish per net to 10 stock length or greater fish per net. These wild population swings are typical in impoundments like John Redmond that experience high flow through. I suspect many of the fish that were available in 2016 were flushed downstream in 2017 during the wet spring weather. If you like to look on the bright side, a plethora of young crappie were captured in the trap nets which should bode well for the population in the future.

The crappie population at Coffey County Lake may finally be slowly trending

upward. Our fall sampling efforts yielded about 13 stock length or greater fish/net. Now, I know this is not a jaw-dropping catch rate, but compared to the previous four years, it is almost four times higher. The high number of young-of-the-year fish sampled in 2015 have recruited to the population and it looks like they have definitely boosted the numbers. Overall I think the crappie fishing at Coffey County should be an improvement over the previous years, but probably not comparable to other large reservoirs with dense populations.

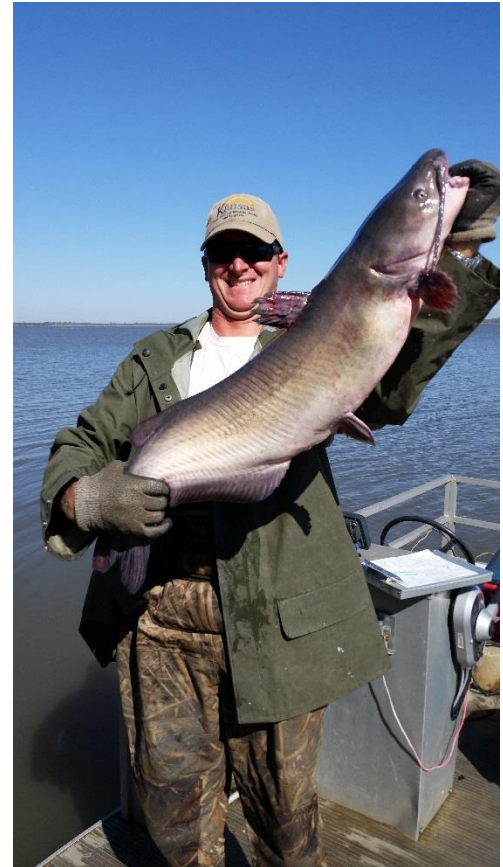
If you prefer smaller bodies of water for crappie, most of the waters in my district have more than adequate populations of crappie that will provide some nice opportunities for you. One lake did stand out to me this year as far as numbers of bigger crappie for the size of the lake: Lebo City Lake. We captured great numbers of fish over 10 inches and fish up to 15 inches were captured. This lake is only 70-80 acres in size, so it is unlikely that these fish will be around very long, given their susceptibility of harvest during spawning. Of course harvest does depend on pressure so if pressure this year is low, this population could be good for another year or so.



## Catfish

Anglers should expect fishing opportunities at their favorite catfish lakes to be similar to last year. My data for 2017 did not show any major changes in any of my lakes. Several large channel catfish were captured at John Redmond with the biggest weighing in at 23 pounds (pictured on the right), but this is no surprise to the local catfish anglers who enjoy this lake. Last year was the first year we electrofished at Redmond for blue catfish. We captured good numbers of young fish, but only caught two larger fish and both were around 23 pounds.

We increased the sampling effort for blue catfish this year at Coffey County Lake, and we ended up increasing our catch rate quite a bit. We captured 182 blue catfish during our electrofishing sample, of which, 8 fish were stock length (12-20 inches), 104 fish were quality length (20-30 inches), 27 fish were preferred length (30-35 inches), and 31 were of memorable length (35-45 inches). The number of preferred and memorable length fish was good to see because we haven't seen that many bigger fish show up in any previous sample even though we had a feeling they were present. I was really excited to see the number of sub-stock and stock length fish in the sample. Similar to the big fish, we just haven't seen good numbers of young fish in any sample and it was appearing that the population was having trouble with recruitment. Now it does seem like a good year class has been produced and should contribute to the population in five or six years.



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The fish pictured above only weighed 36 pounds, but just recently (early February 2018) a 62-pound blue catfish was caught by an angler, making it the new lake record.

## New Paddlefish Regulation



Paddlefish snagging season is just around the corner starting March 15 and running through May 15. But this year barbless hooks are **required** at all snagging locations. The use of barbless hooks should reduce the size and severity of hook wounds, which should allow fish that are not kept a better chance for survival. Remember catch and release is allowed at Burlington, Chetopa, and Iola but once the fish is attached to a stringer, it becomes part of the daily creel limit. A paddlefish permit is still required, but this year **anglers younger than 16** may fish with an adult's paddlefish snagging permit while accompanied by that adult with at least one unused carcass tag in possession. For the complete list of paddlefish regulations please refer to the 2018 fishing regulations book or online by clicking [HERE](#).