

# MILFORD DISTRICT FISHERIES NEWSLETTER

**KDWPT**

**Fisheries Division**

**Fall 2019**

Written By:

Brett Miller, District Fisheries Biologist  
Kansas Dept. of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism  
1782 10<sup>th</sup> Road  
Clay Center, Kansas 67432  
(785) 461-5095  
[brett.miller@ks.gov](mailto:brett.miller@ks.gov)



## **High Water in 2019 Impacts Much of Kansas**

Constant precipitation throughout 2019 has caused flooding over many parts of Kansas. Inflows brought Milford Reservoir to near 30' above normal conservation pool. This year was the second highest water levels ever recorded behind the flooding of 1993 where Milford Reservoir rose 37' above normal conservation pool. The constant flooding has caused lakes to rise to near record levels causing campground and marina closures and flooded fields. While this excess water has had a significant impact on humans, fish and wildlife have also been impacted. The thought of high water in lakes and reservoirs may not sound beneficial, but some species can benefit from this.

Previous studies have indicated that crappie recruitment has benefited from high water levels and low discharge. In lakes and reservoirs, higher lake levels tend to flood terrestrial vegetation which can create more habitat for larval fish. Along with

creating more habitat, high water levels can create more surface acres which can cause the fish to spread out into the newly flooded areas surrounding the reservoir. This may create difficulty for anglers in finding their target species compared to normal conditions.



While flood events may have some positive impacts on fish populations, they do tend to have some negative effects as well. The term “entrainment” is thrown out a lot in fisheries jargon and is commonly referred to fish moving through a dam. When dams release excess water from reservoirs, there is really no way of preventing fish from moving through the dam. Previous studies have indicated that millions of young fish can pass through a dam in just a few short months. This may not be the case for every dam and reservoir. For example, discharge from Milford Reservoir may not be the same as many of our other reservoirs in Kansas. However, increased releases from Milford have allowed fish to move through the dam and end up in the spillway creating fishing opportunities for walleye, catfish, white bass, and wipers.



**How Much Do Fish Move During High Water Events?**

Blue catfish are known to be the most migratory of the catfish species. In Milford Reservoir, blue catfish are known to move towards the northern end in the early spring months to feed on dead gizzard shad from the previous winter. While some of these fish do enter the Republican River, inflows may restrict how far up river these fish may travel. The high inflows from the Republican River created an opportunity for the blue catfish to travel a considerable distance. Currently, KDWPT is conducting a tagging project on Milford Reservoir to help biologists to determine population estimates, growth, etc. Two tagged fish traveled 60 river miles north of Milford where they were caught by anglers near Clyde, KS. Similarly, fish can move downstream just as easy with the constant outflows from the dam. On August 13, 2019, KDWPT was informed that four tagged blue catfish were caught in the spillway below the dam on the same day. This information can guide biologists to how much blue catfish can move in Milford Reservoir during high water events.



**New Habitat Locations**

With constant high water putting a damper on some of plans for the reservoirs this year, we shifted focus on habitat improvements in some of the smaller waters in the district. Georgia cubes were deployed at Geary State Fishing Lake (6) and Herington Reservoir (18). We do plan on adding about twenty more Georgia cubes to Milford Reservoir once the reservoir is at conservation pool again.



Geary State Fishing Lake GA Cube locations		
Set of 3	N 38°53.937'	W 96°51.515'
Set of 3	N 38°54.099'	W 96°51.788'
Herington Reservoir GA Cube locations		
Set of 3	N 38°39.621'	W 97°00.291'
Set of 3	N 38°39.492'	W 97°00.412'
Set of 3	N 38°39.678'	W 97°00.260'
Set of 3	N 38°39.748'	W 97°00.681'
Set of 3	N 38°39.242'	W 97°00.605'
Set of 3	N 38°39.668'	W 97°00.761'

We recently acquired some new artificial habitat that we are hoping to utilize in Kansas waters. Fishiding is a company in Illinois that specializes in creating artificial fish habitat from reclaimed materials. This habitat could be a good addition to the Georgia cubes in our waters. Below are some pictures from fishiding.com that shows what different types of habitats they produce. Once we deploy this habitat, we will be curious to see how fish and anglers respond to the new structure.





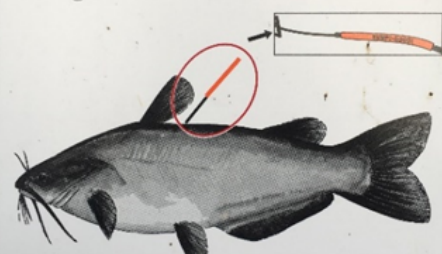
### My Final Thoughts

While high water has plagued much of the state, anglers are still finding ways to fish these reservoirs. I suggest using caution when fishing these reservoirs in their current state, but do utilize them as well. I have heard from anglers that it took some time to relocate fish in the higher water, but fish can still be caught. I hope everyone continues to enjoy the outdoor opportunities that Kansas works hard to provide with the fall quickly approaching. Also, keep an eye out for tagged blue catfish on Milford Reservoir! If you want more information please feel free to visit our website at <http://ksoutdoors.com/>. Have fun and good fishing!



**ATTENTION ANGLERS**

To better understand blue catfish populations in Kansas, a tagging study is being conducted by Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism. Tagged fish will have a tag inserted near the dorsal fin. If you catch one of these tagged catfish, there is a reward for reporting the tag.



If you catch a tagged blue catfish, please contact the KDWPT Emporia Research Office at 620-342-0658. Please note the length of your fish and the five-digit tag number. Your reward will be mailed to you after KDWPT processes your tag return.