

Dodge City District Fisheries

Kansas Department of Wildlife & Parks Fisheries Division

Spring 2021

Covid and fishing license sales

As mentioned in the fall 2020 newsletter, one thing it seems the Covid pandemic with all the shutdowns and quarantines has done is to reconnect folks with the outdoors. There have been various estimates of numbers, but generally it has been agreed on that in 2020, about 10 million people tried fishing for the first time in their lives. Because organized sports like softball & baseball were not played in 2020, one of the largest increases in participation was in the number of women and children that tried fishing for the first time.

The Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) conducted a license sale survey comparing January to August sales from 2019 and 2020. Kansas ranked 5th overall in percent increase! The Sport Fish Restoration fund is allocated to the states by land area and licensed anglers. For Kansas to receive a larger share of this funding, our licensed anglers need to make up a larger share of the total for the nation. The magnitude of the increase for 2020 could result in significantly more federal funding available for 2023, which is when the 2020 certification number is applicable.



Many new anglers simply want to just catch a fish, any fish! The photo above is my 23-month old granddaughter with her first ever bluegill, it was some fascinating stuff for her!

Bluegills and bullheads are both fish that are relatively simple to catch and great to get new anglers excited. The fat bullheads pictured to the left came from Jetmore City Lake last fall and I'm sure that new anglers would have a blast catching them!

The most basic way to start fishing is to use a cane pole or inexpensive rod and reel, a small hook baited with a worm, a split shot weight and a float/bobber. That's about all that is needed to make for a memorable day on the bank.



Where to Fish

Now that you have an idea how to get started fishing, you need a place to go right? A great starting point would be to go to <https://ksoutdoors.com/> and click on the Fishing tab. There you will find the following sources that can point you in the right direction.

2021 Fishing Atlas

The maps in this atlas pinpoint a variety of public fishing areas, as well as public lands across Kansas. Walk-In Fishing Access (WIFA) areas are privately-owned ponds or streams the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWP) has leased and opened to public fishing. WIFA sites are labeled by an abbreviated access period, size, and boating restriction for each location. Each map also shows all federal reservoirs, state fishing lakes, river access areas, and community lakes.

Complete Online Map

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FISH Web Map Appl

Click the link above for a searchable web map showing the 2021 Public Fishing Access locations. Click on individual tracts and points to display location information. Zoom to areas by city or county name with the search box and choose from various base map options.

ArcGIS App for Smartphones & Tablets

Use the free ArcGIS App to add public fishing locations to your mobile device (data signal required). Once the app is installed on your device, search the Maps for "KDWP FISH" and select the "KDWP: 2021 Fishing Access" map.

GPS Information & Files

Files and instructions for various location format options. Includes Garmin GPS, Google Earth/GE Mobile, and Point/Lat-Long .txt and .csv files.

A quick google search easily yields additional sources for fishing information at other locations in the Web such as: <https://www.takemefishing.org>, <https://www.kansasangler.com/> and countless others. You can specialize your search for bluegill, bullhead, catfish, or any of the many other species swimming in Kansas waters.

Bait Bucket Biology

After Kiowa State Fishing Lake was renovated in the mid 1980's, the following statement is from a news release that Tommie Berger put out on June 9th, 1986. **"in the past week, some local citizens have been attempting to "help" Fish and Game with their stocking program. But, this type of help is really not appreciated! One day, several dead wipers were found on the boat ramp, apparently a stocking attempt by someone unknown. Later that same day, Fish and Game employees working at the lake were asked if it was ok to stock some crappie into the lake.**

This type of action from anglers is often referred to as bait bucket biology. Due to the small sizes of many of our lakes, most of them will not support a diverse population of fish with many different species. These types of stockings by well-meaning anglers are not in the best interest of good fishing in the future.

Ford County Lake is ranked at the top of the heap for small lake largemouth bass fishing in the annual KDWPT fishing forecast for 2021. We had a good run with excellent fishing for largemouth bass, bluegill, and channel catfish at Ford County lake for about the last 4 years.



One of our retired game wardens reported in the spring of 2020 that a friend of his caught a large white crappie. It was hoped he was wrong but when the lake was sampled in the fall, several small white crappies (pictured above) were sampled.

This scenario has played out in public waters all over the country. Not only is it illegal to stock fish in public waters but soon after being introduced crappie often grow to dominate the pond or in the absence of predators, compete for food with the bluegill and end up stunting both species' growth.

The goal of sustained good fishing depends on an appropriate association of fish species. In the small lakes we have here in southwest Kansas, keeping the number of species in each lake as low as possible is important. This allows the species that are in the lake to grow larger as well as making the lake easier to manage.

It is quite common that crappie numbers will grow to dominate a small water body within a few years of their introduction. Crappie will generally outcompete other species in the system and the result is a stunted crappie population.

Another big worry from bait bucket biology is the introduction of rough fish and/or invasive species such as zebra mussels, Eurasian water milfoil, or even larval fish such as common or Asian carp. Whenever well-meaning anglers haul fish from one location to another, they are potentially transporting everything that's in the original water source.



Fisheries biologist are hired to make management decisions and stocking recommendations with the best interest of fish populations and fisherman in mind. Stockings are made that will most quickly develop fishable populations that will be of the most benefit to the angler. Please, leave fish stockings to fish biologists.

Spring 2021 Water levels in southwest Kansas

Overall, it was a dry fall and winter in southwest Kansas. The small amount of rain we have had so far this spring had been spotty. Water levels in some of our State fishing lakes and larger Community Lakes as of March 25, 2021 can be seen below. The numbers in parentheses are the surface acreage when the lakes are at full and at conservation pool.

State Fishing Lakes	Community Lakes
Barber State Fishing Lake – (51) - full	Coldwater City Lake – (250) – full
Clark State Fishing Lake – (337) – 6 feet 6 inches low	Jetmore City Lake – (110) – 2 feet low
Concannon State Fishing Lake – (50) – dry	Pratt County Lake – (51) – Full
Ford State Lake – (40) – 2 feet low	Larned City Pond – (2) - Full
Goodman State Lake – (40) acres – 6 feet low	HorseThief Reservoir – (450) – 2 foot low
Hain State Fishing Lake – (53) - 1 foot low	
Kiowa State Fishing Lake - 21 acres - full	
Meade State Lake – (80) - full	

