

El Dorado District Fisheries

Volume 13, Issue 1

KDWPT Fisheries Division Newsletter

Spring 2021

Recent District Happenings

2021 is off to a good start in the El Dorado District. Both reservoirs provided some very good late winter crappie action and even a little bit of ice fishing action during the cold snap.

Lake levels are looking good across the district with lakes at or just below normal levels. El Dorado ran some water during late March when the lake level increased to one foot above conversation pool. Marion has been a little low all winter, sitting currently at 0.5 feet low, and hasn't had any releases. The three State Fishing Lakes are all near normal pool elevations providing good boat launching and shoreline access.

The Marion Reservoir fish habitat project continued again in 2021. This year we had assistance from a group of volunteers from the Kansas Walleye Association. This increase in equipment and manpower added greatly to the efficiency of the project. Anglers have been utilizing the habitat that has been placed historically and future habitat efforts will increase angling opportunities and angler success.

The El Dorado Reservoir walleye egg collection project resumed in 2021 after being cancelled due to Covid-19 in 2020. We've already stocked 4.1 million walleye fry in 2021 and should be receiving the requested walleye fingerlings in the coming weeks.

The crappie spawn was really heating up until this most recent cold spell. Crappie action should pick up quickly once the warmer weather returns!

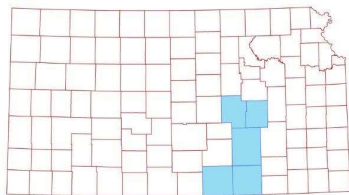
El Dorado Walleye Egg Collection Project Resumes in 2021

The 2021 project began on March 25 and ran through April 3. High winds were common this year during the project and kept Fisheries staff on their toes. Eggs were collected a total of 9 days throughout the operation.

The walleye eggs collected through the El Dorado project are shipped unfertilized to the Milford Fish Hatchery. Biologists use sperm collected from Perry Reservoir sauger broodfish to fertilize the walleye eggs. This intentional hybridization produces the saugeye which is stocked across the state in waters where walleye do not perform as well.

This year 19,238,100 walleye eggs were collected from El Dorado. In addition to providing fertilized walleye eggs, Hillsdale Reservoir also chipped in 4,368,950 unfertilized walleye for saugeye production. The egg collection goal for saugeye production was met and netting operations were ended. Cedar Bluff Reservoir and Kirwin Reservoir were also walleye egg collection sites during 2021.

Eggs are hatched at the Pratt and Milford hatcheries. Walleye, saugeye, and sauger resulting from the egg collection efforts are stocked into Kansas waters providing improved angling opportunities.



The El Dorado Fisheries District covers Sumner, Cowley, Butler, Chase, and Marion counties.



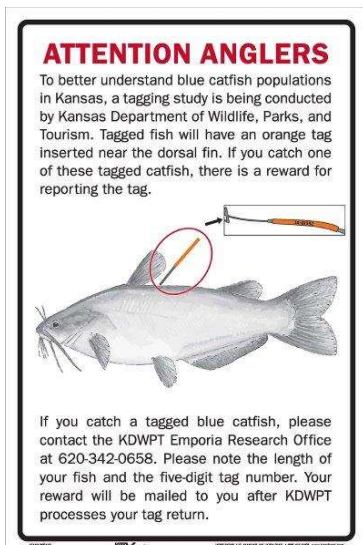
El Dorado Blue Catfish Tagging

Blue catfish tagged at El Dorado last year are still being caught by anglers. Anglers are asked to please continue to call in any tags that they encounter. Tags will appear as a small yellow vinyl tube beneath the fish's dorsal fin. Each tag will display an ID number unique to that fish and a phone number to call to report the catch, (620) 342-0658. Biologists hope to gain information about the area's blue catfish population size, entrainment through the dam, and the fish's susceptibility to harvest.

Success of this project is dependent on anglers reporting the tagged fish they capture. Information needed during the call will be the length of the fish, date, tag number, and whether the fish was kept or released. Anglers who report their tagged catch will receive an award as compensation for their participation.

Anglers should note that tagged blue catfish that are not legal for harvest must be returned to the water immediately after recording the tag information. If the tagged catfish is legal for harvest, anglers may keep or release the fish. Because part of this study is to evaluate harvest patterns, biologists encourage anglers not to let the presence of a tag influence their decision to keep or release the fish.

If you find a tagged blue catfish on the end of your line, please take the time to call it in. Data collected from these fish are invaluable to fisheries biologists and will only improve angling success in the future.



Crappie Spawn 2021

The El Dorado District has several lakes with good crappie populations. The two district reservoirs, El Dorado and Marion, both offer quality white crappie opportunities. The 2021 [Fishing Forecast](#) ranks Marion #2 and El Dorado #7 in the reservoirs category. Lakes are ranked on density of fish >8 inches (Density rating). Availability of larger fish can be found in the Fishing Forecast under the Preferred (>10") and Lunker (>12") rankings. Angler catch this year is reflecting the data contained in the 2021 Fishing Forecast as Marion crappie anglers have been catching more fish per outing consisting of 8 to 12 inch fish while El Dorado anglers have been catching fewer crappie per outing but of larger sizes in the 12 to 15+ inch size range.

Other district lakes with good crappie populations include Chase SFL, Marion County Lake, Winfield City Lake, and Wellington City Lake.

The spawn was just beginning to take off when a cold front rolled in and backed the fish away from the banks. Boat anglers have still been catching fish in water 10 to 14 feet deep, but bank angler success dropped sharply as the fish moved to deeper water. Some stable and warmer weather will bring increased crappie action as the spawn continues.

If you're wanting to get in on the crappie spawn, it's time to hit the lakes! Since the fish are close to shore, spawn fishing doesn't require a lot of fancy fishing gear. Necessities basically include a rod and reel and some jigs! Other simple tackle would be a small float/bobber, small Aberdeen hooks, and some minnows. Working a jig under a float is a great way to locate active near shore crappie. A lively minnow under a float is a hard to beat combo.



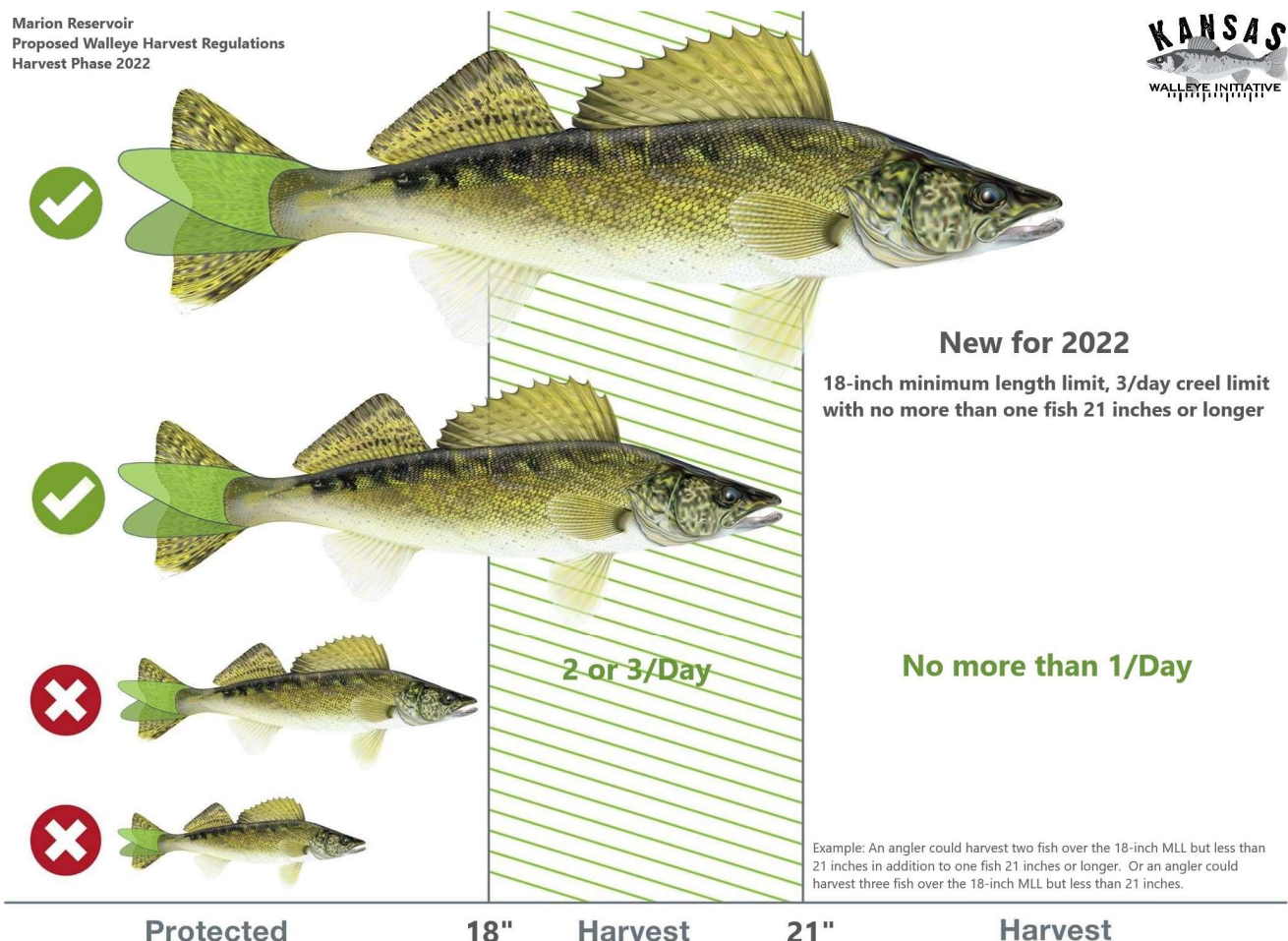
Marion Reservoir

Four Year Walleye Harvest Regulations Pilot Study Continues

A four-year pilot study to improve walleye fishing opportunities at Marion Reservoir began on January 1, 2020. The study proposes the use of alternating walleye harvest regulations to improve walleye fishing opportunities at the lake. The lake's walleye population had been managed for 27 years with an 18-inch minimum length limit and a 5/day creel limit. Marion is a unique Kansas walleye fishery in that it has been historically capable of sustaining a fishable population through natural recruitment. However, walleye density had begun to decline over the past several years leading to angler concerns. Objectives of the pilot study are to increase walleye broodfish density to improve natural recruitment production levels, increase density of catchable walleye to increase catch rates, and increase size of walleye available for harvest. The alternating harvest regulations are contained within a two-year Grow Phase followed by a two-year Harvest Phase. The first Grow Phase began on January 1, 2020 and included a 21-inch minimum length limit to provide increased protection. The 5/day creel limit was retained for this Grow Phase. The Harvest Phase is scheduled to begin on January 1, 2022. The 21-inch minimum length limit will be relaxed to allow increased harvest of Marion walleye that had been protected during the previous two years under the Grow Phase. The proposed 2022 Harvest Phase walleye regulations are as follows: 18-inch minimum length limit, 3/day creel with no more than one fish 21 inches or longer.

This proposed change to the Marion Reservoir walleye harvest regulations, as well as all other 2022 statewide fish regulation changes, will be discussed at upcoming [KDWPT Commission Meetings](#). Participation by the angling public in the Commission meetings is welcomed and encouraged.

Marion Reservoir
Proposed Walleye Harvest Regulations
Harvest Phase 2022





Sunrise over El Dorado Reservoir



Marion Reservoir fish habitat project

Last Cast!

If you haven't already seen it, the [KDWPT Fisheries Division](#) has a Facebook page where a wide variety of Kansas fish/fishing related material is posted.

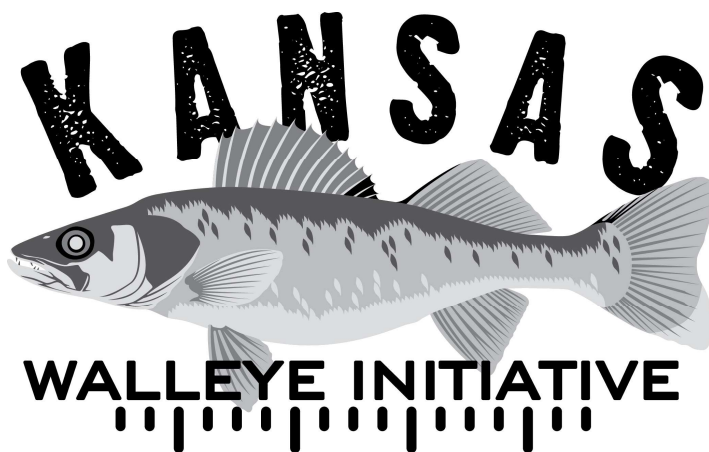
Hopefully by the time this newsletter hits your inbox the weather will have improved and in turn kicked up the fishing action. Fish are ALWAYS biting for those willing to work for it! Grab the family and hit a lake for a day of fishing. If you're looking for a place to go, you can check out the [Where To Fish](#) page on the KDWPT website for all the details.

District Fisheries Biologists from across the state have been writing newsletters to keep anglers up to date on local projects, sampling results, and status of fish populations. You can find all published newsletters online at <https://ksoutdoors.com/KDWPT-Info/News/Newsletters>. You can also find the online map to Kansas public fishing areas and placed fish habitat structures at <http://www.ksoutdoors.com/fishhabitatmap>.

As always, if you know someone who might like to subscribe to the newsletter, they can do so [HERE](#). If you would like to unsubscribe, please send your info to [Contact Us](#) with "unsubscribe El Dorado District Fisheries newsletter" and we'll get you taken off the list. If you have any questions or comments or story ideas feel free to send them in!

Fish On!

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