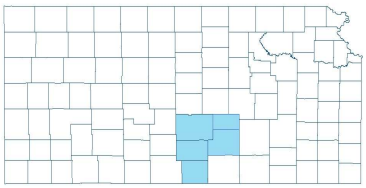
FALL 2021

CHENEY DISTRICT FISHERIES



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KANSAS WILDLIFE & PARKS

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FISHING PROGRAMS

Master Angler Award Program

Are you a Master Angler? Prove it! Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks has a program called the Master Angler Award Program. If you catch a fish in Kansas large enough to qualify, you will receive a Master Angler Award certificate! Sizes of each species as well as a certificate application form can be found here: https://ksoutdoors.com/Fishing/Special-Fishing-Programs-for-You/Master-Angler-Award-Program

Trout Program

Trout season runs from November 1st through April 15th. KDWP will stock certain urban waters with adult sized trout ready to be caught. For more information on the Trout program including stocking locations and stocking dates click here: https://ksoutdoors.com/Fishing/Special-Fishing-Programs-for-You/Trout-Fishing-Program

Remember that KDOT East, Vic's Lake, and Slough Creek are Type 1 trout waters and all anglers fishing those waters November 1st - April 15th must have a trout permit.

Urban Fishing Program

KDWP has created the Urban Stocking Program to provide local fishing opportunities. Adult sized Channel Catfish (3/4lb-3lbs) are stocked in many public waters in Reno and Sedgwick counties. These fish are harvestable size and ready to catch. For more information on stocking locations and dates click here: https://ksoutdoors.com/Fishing/Special-Fishing-Programs-for-You/Urban-Fishing-Program

SAMPLING OVERVIEW: Largemouth Bass

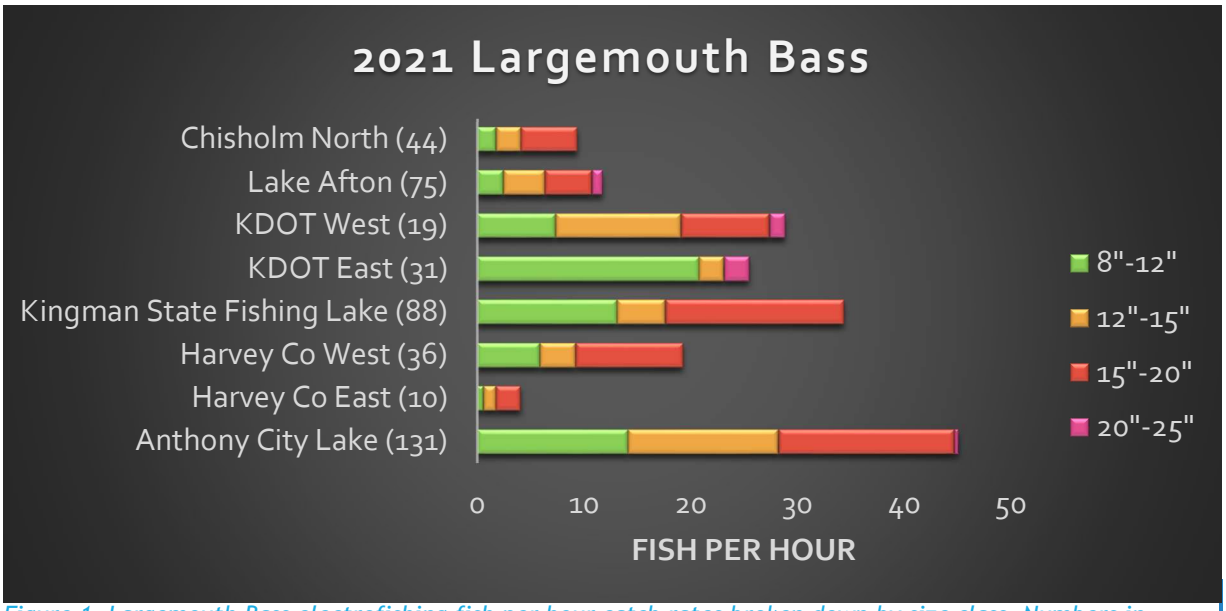


Figure 1. Largemouth Bass electrofishing fish per hour catch rates broken down by size class. Numbers in parenthesis represent the number of fish sampled at each lake.

Largemouth Bass Electrofishing

Largemouth Bass were sampled via electrofishing during May of 2021. Figure 1 shows the number of fish sampled per hour of electrofishing broken down into size classes. Keep in mind, this graph does not represent the abundance of Largemouth in each lake. The number listed after each lake is the number of Bass sampled that day. The results of the 2021 sample were similar to 2020 for most lakes. There were some differences seen in Bass over 20". This is expected as few fish over 20" are sampled each year, we simply may miss them the next year. Overall, the results were similar to 2020 with the exception that Anthony City Lake had the highest catch rates in 2021.

SAMPLING RESULTS: Largemouth Bass

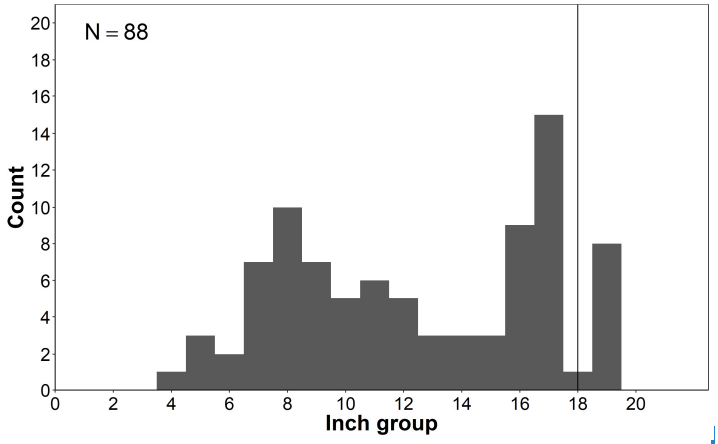
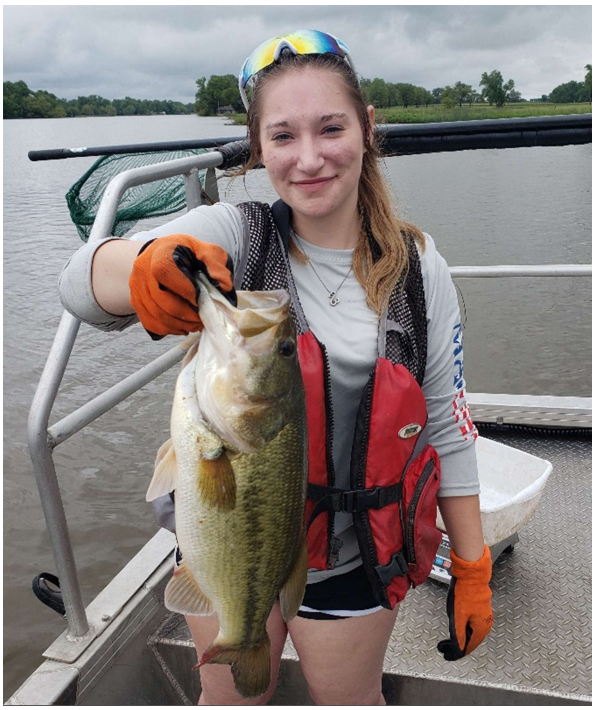


Figure 2. Length frequency histogram of Largemouth Bass sampled at Kingman State Fishing Lake via electrofishing in 2021. The vertical bar represents the 18"minimum length limit.

Kingman State Fishing Lake

Catch rates of Largemouth Bass at Kingman State Fishing Lake were similar for all size classes except for Bass in the Sub-stock class (<8"). More fish under 8" were sampled in 2020 than in 2021. In 2020, most of these Sub-stock fish were 5-7". It appears that this cohort grew to around 7-10". Samples in 2020 and 2021 showed signs of recruitment that had not been seen since the renovation. As long as these fish continue to grow, the numbers of more desirable fish should increase. The body condition of Bass in Kingman was good for all size classes. There was a handful of fish above 15" that were skinnier than desired. But overall, the population has a healthy length to weight ratio. The size structure seen in 2020 and 2021 was more balanced than previous years which is more desirable. However, a higher abundance would be ideal. Especially for fish over 20" Unfortunately, the productivity of the lake may be inhibiting numbers of Largemouth Bass. The water quality at Kingman State Fishing Lake has been very turbid in recent years. There are a variety of factors contributing to the turbidity. The increased turbidity, along with flooding, has significantly decreased the amount of vegetation in the lake. This decreases the amount of habitat for Bass to utilize. The turbidity also makes it more difficult for Bass to hunt as they often feed by sight. If these conditions remain the same, it is doubtful that the population can improve on its current condition. Efforts are being made to remove fish species that are contributing to the increased turbidity. However, more drastic measures may be needed to restore the lake to better conditions.

SAMPLING RESULTS: Largemouth Bass



Anthony City Lake

There was an overall increase in catch rate at Anthony City Lake. Most of this increase came from Bass in the 8”-12” range. There was also an adequate number of fish in the 15”-20” range. Very few Bass over 20” were sampled in 2021. However, that does not mean there are fewer large fish in the lake than before. Figure 3 shows a more balanced population than in the past. If this population continues to grow in size, the number of Bass over 18” should increase. Overall, the population had the best catch rates in the district and should be a good place to catch Bass in the future.

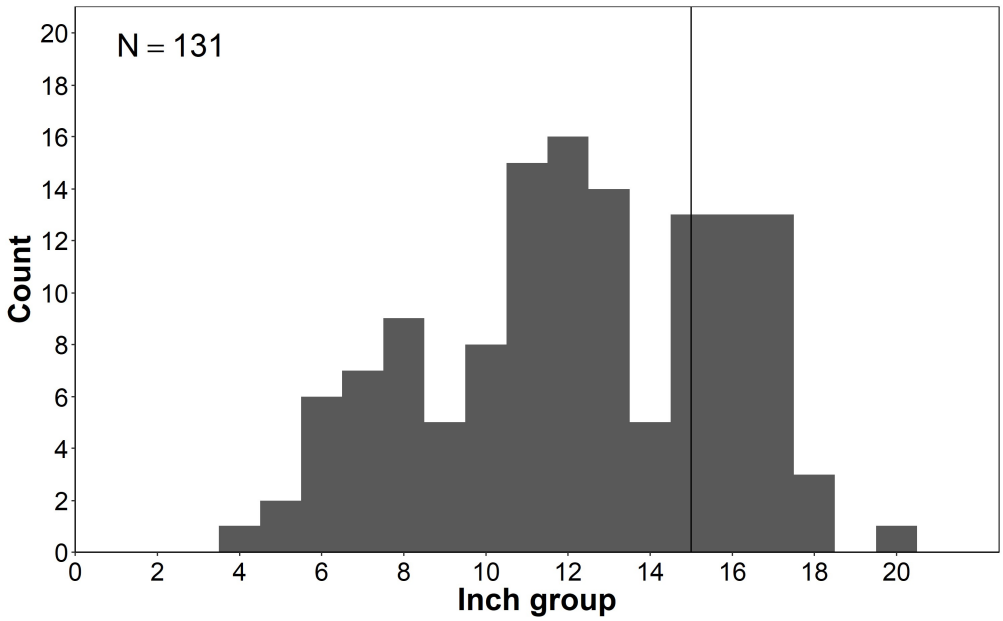


Figure 3. Length frequency histogram of Largemouth Bass sampled at Anthony City Lake via electrofishing in 2021. The vertical bar represents the 18”minimum length limit.

SAMPLING RESULTS: Largemouth Bass

Lake Afton

There was a significant increase of smaller(4-6") Largemouth sampled at Lake Afton in 2021 as seen in Figure 4. This increase of smaller fish is a good sign for the future of the fishery. There weren't many fish over 10" sampled. However, there were a couple of larger sampled, even one over 6lbs! Low numbers of Bass have been common at Lake Afton. The lake lacks suitable habitat which therefore limits recruitment. This new cohort of smaller fish is likely from 2019. The lake experienced high water which allowed access to more habitat. Increasing habitat may lead to more consistent recruitment otherwise, stocking may be necessary to enhance the population.

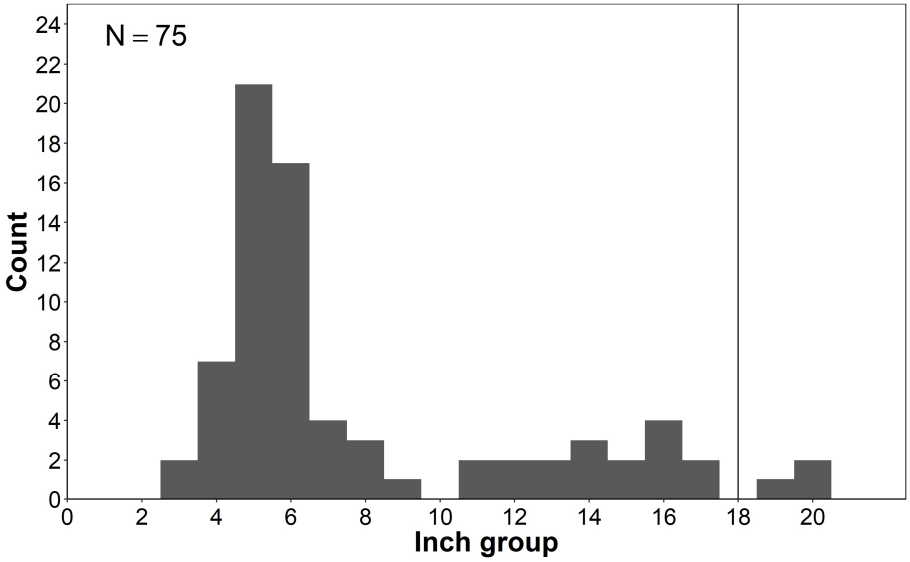
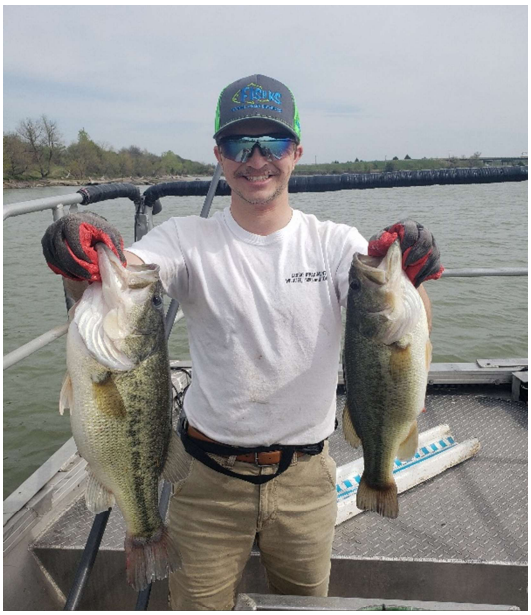


Figure 4. Length frequency histogram of Largemouth Bass sampled at Lake Afton via electrofishing in 2021. The vertical bar represents the 18"minimum length limit.

SAMPLING RESULTS: Largemouth Bass



KDOT West Lake

Only 19 Bass were sampled at the Wet lake in 2021. A few were over the 18" minimum length limit. The low numbers may be from competition from the increased Crappie population. There is plenty of woody habitat for Bass, yet recruitment is often low and inconsistent. The abundant habitat allows for many places for anglers to fish for Bass. "Less popular" areas may yield better results. Construction, when completed, should provide easier access on the Southeast side of the lake.

KDOT East Lake

Catch rates for Largemouth at the East lake dropped significantly from 2020 to 2021. Most of the fish sampled in 2021 were under 12". However, there were two that were over 20" pictured left. KDOT East lake is very popular given its location. Anglers looking to target Bass should try a variety of techniques as these fish have likely seen lots of lures.

SAMPLING RESULTS: Largemouth Bass

Harvey County East and West Lake

The Largemouth Bass population has at the East Lake has yet to recover from the 2019 flood as only 10 fish were sampled in 2021. More intensive stocking may be needed to get the population back to sustainable levels. Catch rates of Bass at the West lake were low in 2021 similar to 2020. Most fish were under the 18-inch minimum length limit. Numbers are low due to lack of habitat and frequent flooding. However, there are still catchable numbers of 15-inch fish.

Wichita- Chisholm North Lake

There was a slight increase in catch rates for Bass at Chisholm North. Most of the fish were smaller (4-8”) with a few over 18”. Structure is limited so finding fish may be challenging to anglers. Other abundant species such as Bluegill and Bullhead Catfish are likely limiting Largemouth production. Chisholm North was a lake where we saw a few fish over 5lbs in 2020 but none in 2021. Again, we likely just didn’t see the larger fish during sampling.

SAMPLING OVERVIEW: Sunfish

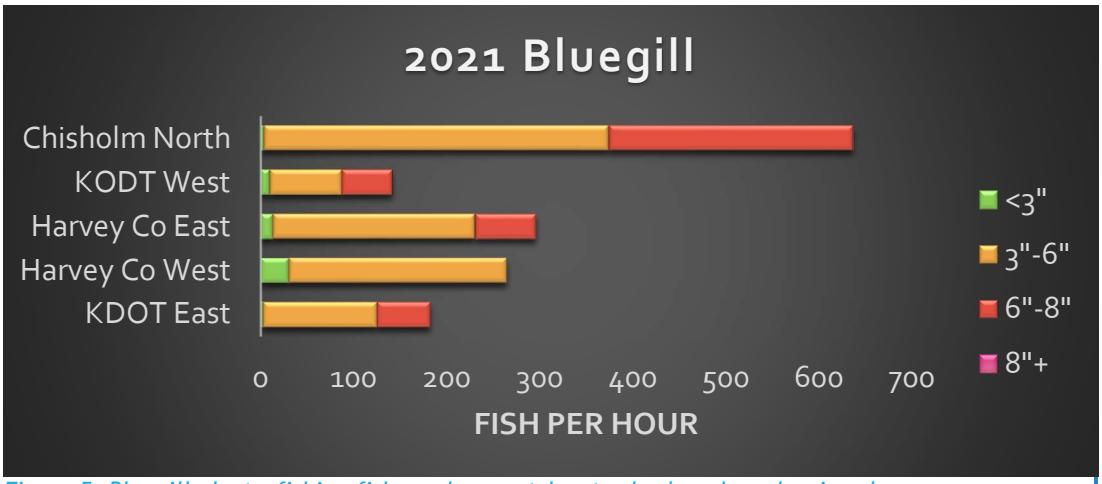
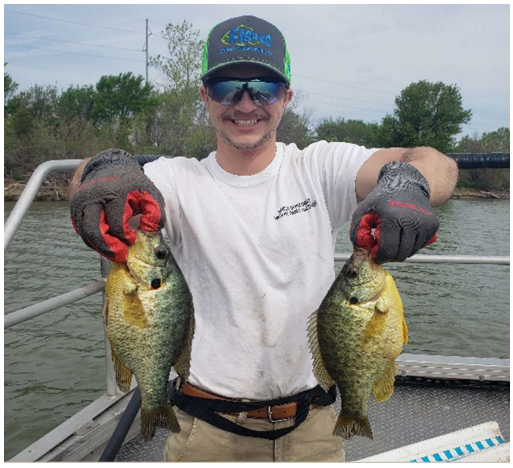


Figure 5. Bluegill electrofishing fish per hour catch rates broken down by size class.



Sunfish Summary

In the spring of 2021, we did some electrofishing for Sunfish. Figure 5 shows the results of electrofishing for Bluegill from five impoundments with the highest catch rates. The first thing that jumps out is that were no Bluegill over 8" sampled in any of the waters. Bluegill, and other species of sunfish, often play two roles in a fishery. One as forage for larger predators such as Largemouth Bass, and also as a sportfish for anglers. Most of the impoundments sampled had adequate numbers of Bluegill in the 3-6" range. Chisholm North Lake has the best population of Bluegill 6-8" for anglers to catch. Continued sampling may show that these Bluegill are growing and will provide better angling opportunities for the future. However, Bluegill populations tend to have stunted growth based on density and male competition. Therefore, the size structures of these populations may not experience much change in the near future. We did see some impressive sized (>10") Redear and hybrid Redear Sunfish in KDOT West lake. This gives is an angler's best opportunity to catch a large Sunfish in the Wichita area.

SAMPLING RESULTS: Blue Catfish

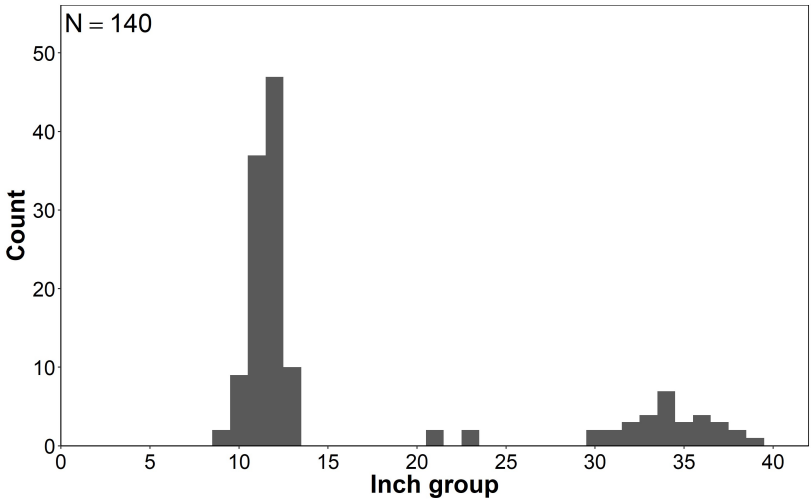


Figure 6. Length frequency histogram of Blue Catfish sampled at Cheney reservoir via electrofishing in 2021.

Cheney Reservoir

Electrofishing for Blue Catfish at Cheney saw higher catch rates in 2021 than any year prior. The increase in numbers was from fish 10”-13” in length shown in Figure 6. All other size classes had similar catch rates to previous years. We did see more fish over the 35” minimum length limit than previous samples. It is suspected that the large cohort of smaller fish is of the 2019-year class putting them at age 2 in 2021. Last year, we sampled some small Blue cats that were 8-10” in length. Assuming that these are the same cohort as the small Blues seen in 2021, then we would conclude that these fish only grew about 2-3” in one years’ time. A sub-sample of these smaller Blue cats were collected to determine their age. Results from the ageing process will not be completed until the end of the year. Assuming that this cohort is from 2019, it shows us how slow these fish grow and how long it may take for Blue Catfish to reach a desired size. It also shows how they responded to flood of 2019. Whether it was a factor of flow, increased habitat availability, or both. It seems to have resulted in a very strong year class. This strong year class provides us with hope that regulation changes allowing harvest of smaller Blue Catfish may be on the horizon. We will continue to monitor the growth and recruitment of this population to see if it can sustain harvest of smaller fish. We will also continue to evaluate the regulations to ensure the larger Blue Catfish are being protected.

Bonus Fish!

Northern Pike caught at Kingman State Fishing Lake while electrofishing for Largemouth Bass.

6lb Saugeye caught at Lake Afton while electrofishing for Largemouth Bass.

65lb Flathead Catfish caught at Cheney reservoir while sampling for Blue Catfish using electrofishing.

17lb Channel Catfish sampled with electrofishing at Cheney reservoir.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Kane Thimmesch and Alexis Martin my interns for their help with sampling as well as everything behind the scenes that made sampling possible. I would also like to thank Carson Cox, Chris Steffen, Craig Johnson, Doug Nygren, David Breth, Jake Wright, James Goff, Jeff Conley, and Lowell Aberson for their help with sampling this spring and summer.

Spread the word!

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Go rip some lip!

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