

# Pittsburg District Fisheries Newsletter

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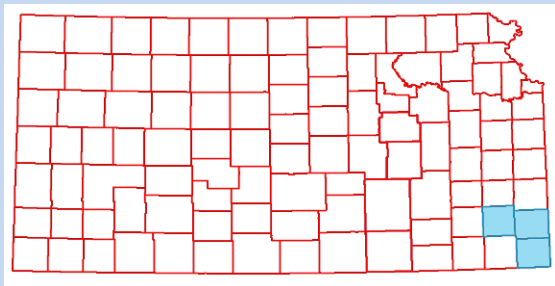
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## Cooler Temperatures Coming Soon - Fishing Success Will Improve

Summer has dragged on, and I'm growing tired of the summer heat. I'm especially tired of mowing grass. With consistent rain throughout the summer, one must mow every week without fail. But cooler weather is fast approaching, and with it comes dormant grass and fish becoming more active and hungry as water temperatures cool to their preferred range.

Fall is a great time to get out and fish. A creel survey on the Mined Land Wildlife Area years ago showed angler catch rates for bass in October were comparable to those in spring. And in the fall, campsites are easy to get, the weather is usually cool and nice, and the fishing can be very good. Rainbow trout stockings in Unit No. 30 of the Mined Land Wildlife Area resume in October. I hope you are ready to get out and enjoy the many opportunities we have here in southeast Kansas.



*The Mined Land Wildlife Area trout lake in Unit No. 30 will be stocked with rainbows starting in mid-October. This will mark the 27th year trout have been stocked in this unique 60-foot deep lake dug by Big Brutus.*

Since my last newsletter, I've been busy with kids' fishing clinics and derbies, fish sampling, assisting landowners with recommendations on pond stockings and vegetation control, working with KDHE's Surface Mining Section on reclamation projects on the Mined Land Wildlife Area, assisting with hunter education, attending various training sessions, and the never ending maintenance of equipment. I've been filling and maintaining fish feeders at Crawford State Fishing Lake this year. This is a chore I enjoy, as I get away from the computer and on the lake one afternoon every week or so. Channel catfish have remained active around feeders, and it is rewarding to sometimes see dozens of 2- to 5-pound catfish swarming after feed at your feet.

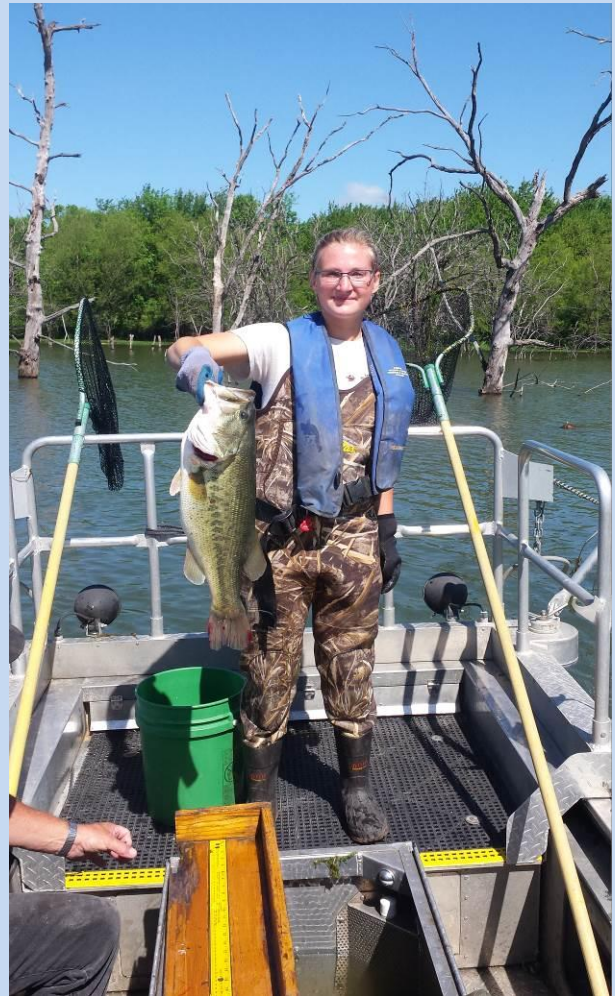


## 2016 Spring Largemouth Bass Sampling Results

Five lakes in the Pittsburg district were sampled by electro-fishing in 2016. Also sampled were Bourbon State Fishing Lake and both Pleasanton city lakes in the Mound City district. Catch rates, length distributions, and body condition from these samplings are closely monitored in order to make the best recommendations for length and creel limit regulations, fish stockings, as well as to inform anglers where the best fishing can be expected through KDWPT's annual fishing forecast. The following are summaries of my spring sampling results. The stock catch rate reported throughout is simply the catch rate for bass 8-inches and larger.

**Bone Creek Lake** – The bass fishery at Bone Creek continues to be one of the best around. A total of 214 largemouth bass were collected by electrofishing at Bone Creek Lake on May 10, 2016. The resulting stock catch rate of 63 fish/hour is slightly improved over the 58 fish/hour last year, but well below the near record highs of 94 and 96 fish/hour recorded in 2013 and 2014. Bass catch rates had shown a steady increase from 39 fish/hour in 2010 to a peak in 2013. The five-year mean stock catch rate from 2012 to 2016 is 74 fish/hour. The catch of 8- to 12-inch fish was very low in 2016. Only 9 percent of the stock catch fell within this length group. This is well below the 40 to 60 percent objective. The low numbers of stock-size fish resulted in a record high catch rate for 15-inch and larger fish. A whopping 61 percent of the stock catch were 15 inches or larger. The five-year mean (2011 – 2015) for 15-inch-plus bass is 34 percent, slightly above the 20 percent to 30 percent objective. Body condition of all size groups remained good. The largest bass sampled at Bone Creek was the largest bass sampled all spring, weighing in at 6.9 pounds.

**Chanute City Lake** – The bass fishery at Chanute City Lake remains good despite a decline in electro-fishing catch rates since 2013. The May 4, 2016 electro-fishing stock catch rate of 67 fish/hour is the lowest since the 60 fish/hour recorded in 2010. A near record high 121 fish/hour was recorded in 2013. The lake management objective is to maintain a minimum stock catch rate of 75 fish/hour. The five-year mean stock catch rate from 2011–2015 is 99 fish/hour. The length distribution of the bass sample remained good. Fifteen- to 18-inch fish again exceeded management objectives with 26 percent of the stock catch falling into this size group.



*KDWPT biologist Sydney Hale displays the 6.9-pound bass collected at Bone Creek Lake. This fish was the largest of the hundreds of bass weighed and measured from eight lakes this spring.*

The quality of the Chanute bass fishery has historically been good. In the four preceding years, 15- to 18-inch fish comprised an average 28 percent of the catch. Four fish over 18-inches were caught in 2016, the largest weighing 6.2 pounds. Body condition of all size groups remains excellent. Chanute City Lake has an abundance of bass forage in the form of shad and small crappie, and even when bass density has been relatively high, body condition of all size groups has remained excellent.





**Crawford State Fishing Lake** - Largemouth bass numbers at Crawford State Fishing Lake (CRSFL) remain low. The May 12, 2016 bass electrofishing catch rate of only 29.4 stock fish/hour is relatively unchanged from the 28.8 fish/hour last year and the 27.9 fish/hour in 2014. Bass numbers at CRSFL have been very low since 2004. The initial cause of the bass density decline was verified as largemouth bass virus in June 2007. The mean stock catch rate from 2005-2015 is only 30.8 fish/hour. In contrast, the highest catch rate ever recorded was 118.8 fish/hour in 2002. It was hoped that largemouth numbers would steadily improve following the bass virus epidemic, but they have failed to increase to the 50-75 stock fish/hour objective. Spotted bass are also common at CRSFL, and the 2016 stock catch of 16.2 spotted bass/hour raises the total black bass catch rate to 45.6 fish/hour. The quality of the largemouth fishery remains good. The percentage of quality-size fish (12-inch-plus) remained very high in 2016, as 80 percent of the catch fell into this group. The population continues to have a very high percentage of preferred-size (15-inch-plus) fish, as 36.7 percent of the stock catch were preferred-size fish. Body condition of all size groups was very good.



*Crawford State Fishing Lake has a marina and several floating fishing docks for the shoreline angler.*

**Neosho State Fishing Lake** - A total of 172 bass were collected by electro-fishing in the May 26, 2016 sampling. The catch rate for stock-size fish (8-inch-plus) increased slightly to 110 fish/hour. This is near the lake management objective to maintain the catch rate near 100 stock-size fish/hour. The mean stock catch rate in the four previous years (2012-2015) is 102 fish/hour. Maintaining a substantial bass population is imperative to exert the predation necessary to control abundant shad and sunfish populations at Neosho



*Neosho State Lake is a family friendly lake with good shoreline access, nice picnic and primitive camp sites, and even a shelter house.*

State Fishing Lake. An 18-inch minimum length limit was implemented in 1999 to promote and maintain adequate predation. The quality of the 2016 sample was good. Sixty-four percent of the bass were quality-size fish (12-inch or larger). This is near the nine-year high quality-size catch of 67 recorded last year. Twenty-five percent of the catch was 15-inches or larger, falling within the 10 percent to 40 percent objective. Two fish over 18 inches were collected, the largest weighing 4.6 pounds. Body condition of all size groups was good.

**Thayer City Lake (new)** – A total of 187 largemouth bass were collected in the May 2016 sample for a stock catch rate of 113 fish/hour. This catch rate is high, but well below the record high 255 fish/hour in 2012. The mean stock catch rate the previous four samples (2008 – 2014) is 108 fish/hour. Bass are the primary predator at Thayer City Lake, so it is very important to keep numbers high to control abundant populations of bluegill, redear and shad. The 2016 stock catch rate of 113 falls within the lake management objective 75 to 125 fish/hour.

The quality of the 2016 bass sample improved greatly over the previous two samples. The percentage of bass 12 inches or larger increased to 56.9 percent, well above the paltry 9.5 percent in 2012 and the 17.4 percent in 2014. The overall length distribution of the sample was very good, with catch rates in all three size groups falling within management objectives. With the decline in bass numbers since the record high catch in 2012 comes improvement in body condition. Body condition of all size groups improved from fair/poor in 2014 to fair/good in 2016.

## Success! Two CFAP Grants Approved - Angler Access Developments Coming Soon

2016 was a banner year for obtaining grants through KDWP's Community Fisheries Assistance Program (CFAP). Two grant applications were submitted in the Pittsburg district prior to the June 1 deadline, and both were approved.

The City of Pittsburg was awarded a grant to construct a handicapped accessible fishing dock at Lakeside Park in Pittsburg. The 4-acre lake at Lakeside Park was built in 1920. It has a sidewalk along the shoreline, but no areas accessible for users with disabilities. The park is home to Pittsburg Parks and Recreation O.K. Kids' Day, the Little Balkans Fishing Derby, and several fishing clinics for school kids. There are numerous public and private activities held throughout the year at Lakeside Park.

The \$29,300 project will include construction of a 25-foot by 12-foot concrete fishing area located where the duck house, sidewalks and electrical box is now located. The dilapidated duck house and fence will be removed. A 30-foot by 30-foot parking area with an accessible parking stall and another stall for a maintenance vehicle will be built on the east side of the restroom building. A 225-foot by 6-foot sidewalk will lead from the parking area to the shoreline fishing area. The City will provide \$11,670 (40 percent) of the total cost. Labor and the use of City equipment for the project will be used as a significant part of the City's match.



*Lakeside Park is a favorite fishing spot for kids and their families. Two fishing derbies and several fishing clinics for schools are held at the lake every year.*



*An additional benefit of the Lakeside Park project is the dilapidated duck house, broken concrete and unsightly fence will be removed. Hopefully problems created by too many ducks and geese will improve.*

Pittsburg's Parks superintendent Toby Book stated in the grant application, "This project will be constructed so that there will be more opportunities in the future to expand accessibility. The fishing area along with parking and connecting sidewalks will greatly enhance fishing opportunities for those with special needs."

The City of Thayer was also awarded a CFAP grant for fiscal year 2017. This \$40,000 project includes a handicapped accessible floating dock, shelter house, restroom, expanded parking, and an earthen fishing pier at their 45-acre "new" lake. The City will provide \$10,400 (26 percent) toward the project. Again, labor and equipment will provide part of the matching funds.

Construction of Thayer's 45-acre "new" lake was completed in June 1984. The City purchased all the property surrounding the lake in 1990, and a \$5,722 grant was obtained through KDWP for developing public access facilities, including a 2/3-mile gravel access road, two parking areas, a 100-foot cement handicapped accessible fishing pier, and two regulation signs. In October 2012, the City was awarded a CFAP grant to construct a new boat ramp, parking area, courtesy dock, fishing dock, and entrance sign at the old Thayer City Lake. These welcomed improvements were completed in spring of 2014. Funding of this FY17 grant continues the City's strong commitment to the fishing and boating public.







*John Dean, Thayer City administrator, looks toward beautiful Thayer City Lake from the site of the new 16-foot by 30-foot shelter house. The project will also include a unisex restroom, a handicapped accessible floating fishing dock, an expanded 100-foot by 50-foot parking lot, an earthen fishing pier, and an entrance sign.*

The CFAP grant program is made available to nearly 240 community lakes statewide for development projects that benefit anglers and boaters. Cooperators are required to pay a minimum of 25 percent of development costs. Applications for these funds is competitive and is based on needs and benefits of the project, participation in CFAP, and the amount contributed toward the project by the applicant. Approximately \$225,000 is available statewide annually.



*In addition to the Pittsburg and Thayer grants approved for fiscal year 2017, Public Wholesale Water Supply District No. 11 installed five new fish feeders on Bone Creek Lake this spring that they obtained through a CFAP grant last year.*

## **Mined Land Area Unit No. 11 Opener a Success**

KDWPT reopened Unit No. 11 of the Mined Land Wildlife Area to fishing on Saturday, April 9, 2016. Unit No. 11 had been closed to fishing for several years due to a \$184,233 reclamation project funded through Kansas Department of Health and Environment's Surface Mining Section. Benefits of the project included safer interior roadways, a new improved parking area, native grass plantings for wildlife, improved angler access, and improved fish habitat created by placing brush that was removed along roadways during the project.

In addition to the physical improvements, a channel catfish feeding program was implemented from May through September each year during the closure. As seen in the photo below, the feeding program resulted in some impressive results. Strip-mined lakes are capable of producing some big catfish. The current 36-pound state record channel catfish was caught from a public Mined Land Wildlife Area lake.



*These lucky anglers display their impressive catch of trophy channel catfish caught from Unit No. 11 several days after the weekend opener. I'll bet this fishing trip was one these youngsters won't soon forget.*

## Eagle Scout Project to Improve Fishing Success at Crawford State Fishing Lake

Brayden Garner, a Boy Scout with Troop No. 84 in Girard, has proposed an Eagle Scout project to increase angler success at Crawford State Fishing Lake through placement of ten PVC habitat structures within casting distance of fishing docks utilized by shoreline anglers.

Crawford State Fishing Lake is a 150-acre lake located 9 miles north of Girard on Highway 7. The lake was constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps on Drywood Creek in the early 1930s. Unlike lakes constructed today, all the timber and fish-holding structure was cleared from the lake basin at the time of construction. With steep, rocky shorelines and many privately owned homes surrounding the lake, shoreline anglers have very limited access. Providing habitat to concentrate sport-fish within casting distance of the few shoreline access sites is a high priority. The lake is heavily used by anglers who enjoy fishing for channel catfish, largemouth and spotted bass, crappie, flathead catfish, saugeye, wipers, bluegill and redear.

In 2015 KDWPT fisheries staff launched a new program to increase the amount of fish-attracting structures in Kansas lakes. Traditionally, biologists have used cut trees to create brush piles to attract and hold fish, providing angling hotspots. However, attaching concrete blocks to trees can be labor intensive and time consuming and the trees don't last very long once submerged in the water. The new



*Cost-effective, easy to place, and proven in other states, the new habitat structures not only last more than three times longer than natural brush piles, but they also have been shown to hold as many fish as the natural counterpart without affecting water quality.*



*The Kansas BASS Nation has been working with KDWPT to place fish habitat in local waters to increase fishing success. KBN members volunteered their time, trucks, and boats to help assemble and place 300 cubes in Kansas reservoirs in 2015.*

specially-designed PVC structures are in the shape of a cube 3 feet tall, 4 feet wide, and 4 feet deep. Cost-effective, easy to place, and proven in other states, the new structures not only last more than three times longer than natural brush piles, but they also have been shown to hold as many fish as the natural counterpart without affecting water quality. KDWPT's goal is to produce and place 300 of these PVC cubes each year. The structures will immediately attract fish for angler harvest.

Known as "Georgia Cubes," the structures were originally designed by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Stacking more than 50 feet of corrugated pipe on the PVC frame, Georgia DNR staff have been able to create optimum surface area to attract fish while still maintaining an open design. They have also found that the structures quickly accumulate periphyton, a complex mix of algae, fungi, and bacteria, which further attracts insects and fish – an ideal result for both fisheries staff and anglers.

Kansas license fees and federal funds from the Sport Fish Restoration Program have financed the components used to assemble the cubes. In this project, the habitat structures will be assembled at the Crawford State Park shop. Placement of the cubes will be with my assistance. In an effort to make sure that cube locations are available to all kinds of anglers, a file is available with GPS locations of attractors (natural and artificial) at the KDWPT website, [www.ksoutdoors.com](http://www.ksoutdoors.com). GPS locations of the Crawford State Lake structures will be added the website.