

# Ellsworth District Fisheries



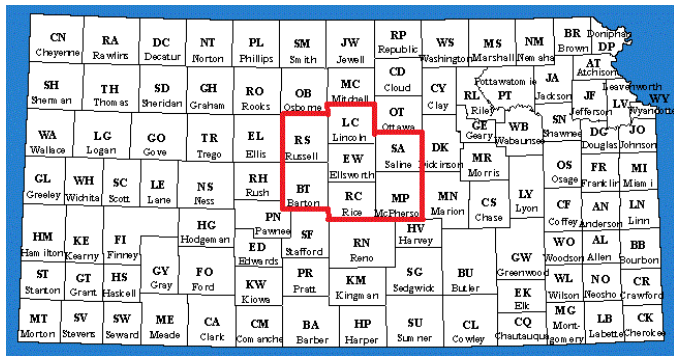
Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism Fisheries Division

Fall 2016

## District Information

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 Wilson Area Office  
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### Counties and Reservoirs

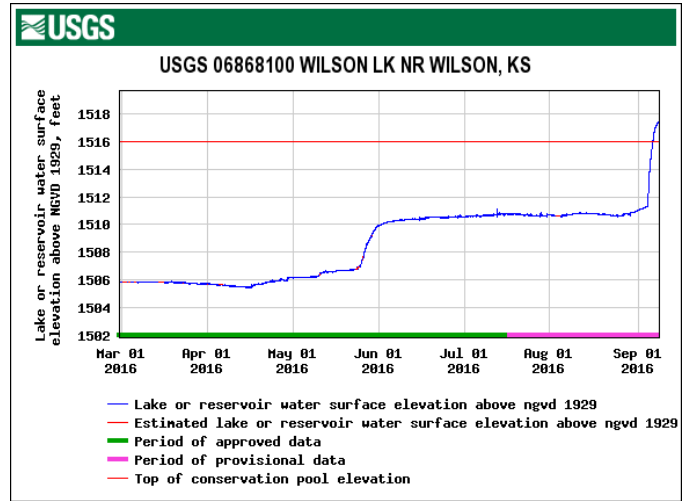


Russell	<b>Wilson Reservoir - 9000 acres</b>
Lincoln	Only leased F.I.S.H. properties
Saline	Saline State Lake (LOW)
	Lakewood Lake - Salina – 6 acres
	Indian Rock Lake – Salina – 1 acre
Barton	Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area
	Stone Lake – Great Bend - 40 acres
	Veteran’s Lake – Great Bend - 13 acres
Ellsworth	<b>Kanopolis Reservoir - 3550 acres</b>
	Holyrood City Lake – 13 acres
Rice	Sterling City Lake - 10 acres
McPherson	McPherson State Lake - 47 acres
	Black Kettle State Lake – 8 acres
	Windom City Pond – 1 acre

*Note: Keep in mind that there are various Arkansas River access points throughout the region and F.I.S.H. Program properties. The F.I.S.H. Program leases the angling rights from private landowners to allow you to fish their ponds. Get the latest Kansas Fishing Atlas for details.*



## Summer Weather Conditions



Wilson Reservoir would be at the top of its conservation pool when at an elevation of 1516 feet. The reservoir began the spring at a record of 10.5’ low but early spring rains throughout the upper Saline watershed rapidly supplemented Wilson with 5’ of much needed water.



*Paradise Creek near Paradise, KS flowing approximately 800 cubic feet/second in late May, 2016.*

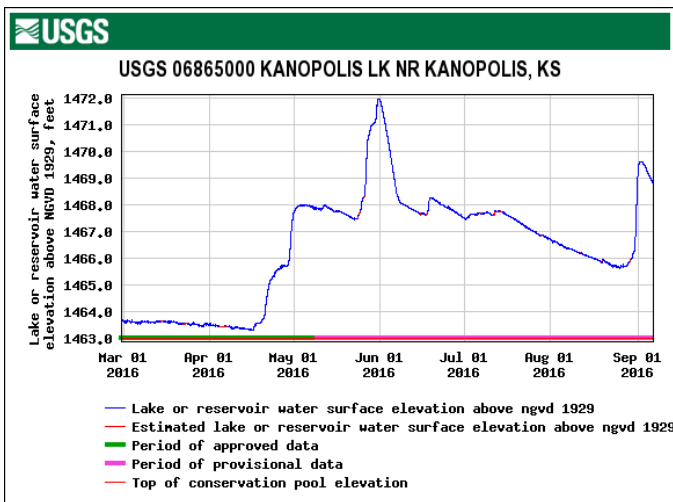
As of September 1<sup>st</sup> the lake was still 5’ below conservation pool but downpours in the early morning hours of September 4<sup>th</sup> have filled the lake with the remaining 5’ of water and is still rising! The lake has endured a record drought but is finally back to where it was 4 years ago. This rush of water will provide a boost of nutrients and new woody structure that has floated in with the flood. Water is now submerging hundreds of acres of phragmites grass and terrestrial vegetation necessary for production of black bass and other sunfish. Anecdotal observations suggest it was a good year for largemouth bass production and the return of the lake to

conservation pool should put fish production into hyperdrive. I'm hopeful good things are coming!



Saline River flowing 20,000 cubic feet/second north of Russell, Kansas on September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Notice the round bail flowing down the river with ease (courtesy of Allison Hullinger).

[http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ks/nwis/uv/?site\\_no=06868100&PARAMeter\\_cd=62614,62615,00054](http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ks/nwis/uv/?site_no=06868100&PARAMeter_cd=62614,62615,00054)



Kanopolis Reservoir would be at the top of its conservation pool when at an elevation of 1463 feet. The reservoir generally is raised 4' in elevation in preparation for the summer each year. Kanopolis began the spring just above conservation pool but heavy rains in the Smoky Hill Watershed quickly filled it past the 4' mark in June. It was 9' high for nearly 2 weeks in June and is recent rains have it nearly 6' high.

[http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ks/nwis/uv?site\\_no=06865000](http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ks/nwis/uv?site_no=06865000)

## Spring Largemouth Bass Samples



The KDWPT uses electrofishing boats to sample largemouth bass populations throughout Kansas public lakes. The boat works by putting electricity through the water for a short distance to temporarily stun the fish. Stunned fish will come to the surface for easy collection. Random samples are collected throughout the lake. Fish are measured, weighed, and released unharmed. Remember, these are samples and not indicative of every largemouth bass in the lake. This method of sampling does, however allow us to gain an understanding of how the population is changing from year to year. This allows us to monitor the population and implement appropriate management actions to achieve the best populations for our angling constituents.

### Wilson Reservoir

The Wilson Reservoir largemouth bass population has continued its downward trend. The numbers of adults in the population is still adequate for anglers but reproduction has been negatively affected by the drought for the last 4 years. The water level rise came after our spring sample. Therefore, we'll have to wait until next year to determine the effects this water level rise had on the population. I am definitely optimistic as historical water level rises have almost universally created spikes in largemouth bass abundance and angler catch rates (see Cedar Bluff Reservoir in the late 1990s and early 2000s). It might take a 2 – 4 years for improved catch rates but if this year's spawn is as good as I think it was we should be catching plenty of small bass this coming spring and summer!

Note: A different amount of electrofishing effort was used at Wilson in 2016 (2015 = 1.9 hours; 2016 = 3.8 hours); therefore, a conversion was used to correct the 2016 sample.

	2015 sample	2016 sample
Total fish	8	7
% of 8" fish	0	15%
% of 12" fish	25%	15%
% of 15" fish	75%	62%
% of 20" fish	0	0

The salt concentration of Wilson Reservoir continues to make the electrofishing samples unreliable for an adequate forecast. Numbers continue to drop. Low water levels are negatively affecting recruitment.



Ernesto Flores with one of the largemouth bass collected in the 2016 sample at Wilson Reservoir.

### **Kanopolis Reservoir**

The largemouth bass population at Kanopolis has been largely irrelevant since the late 1990s. This is the oldest reservoir in the state (dam completed immediately after WWII). Consequently, a lot of the qualities associated with an aging reservoir are apparent: siltation, eroded banks, lack of vegetative habitat. These characteristics create difficulties to producing a quality largemouth bass fishery.

	2015 Sample
Total fish	3
% of 8" fish	33%
% of 12" fish	33%
% of 15" fish	33%

We are currently undergoing efforts to improve the largemouth bass fishery at Kanopolis Reservoir. Until major improvements are made to the lake its Ellsworth District Fisheries

characteristics prohibit a world class fishery. However, by improving habitat, stocking fish that were artificially spawned at an earlier date (see link below), and researching predator/prey relationships it might be possible to develop a reasonable largemouth bass fishery at Kanopolis.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smDb9LRdBSQ&feature=youtu.be>



A small sample of earlier spawned largemouth bass fingerlings stocked into Kanopolis Reservoir in late May, 2016. Nearly 30,000 were stocked.



Lynn Davignon stocking largemouth bass fingerlings into Kanopolis in late May, 2016. Spring rains rose the water level at Kanopolis to 9' high which serendipitously provided an abundance of submerged vegetation critical for their survival.

### McPherson State Lake

The largemouth bass population at McPherson State Lake continues to be one of the best in the state. Nonetheless, their bellies are usually full which can make them difficult for anglers to catch at times. Our 2016 sample dropped slightly but the size distribution still looks identical.

*Note: A different amount of electrofishing effort was used at McPherson in 2016 (2015 = 1.3 hours; 2016 = 1.8 hours); therefore, a conversion was used to correct the 2016 sample.*

	2015 Sample	2016 Sample
Total fish	150	126
% of juveniles	25%	25%
% of 8" fish	16%	15%
% of 12" fish	27%	24%
% of 15" fish	30%	36%
% of 20" fish	<1%	<1%



*Jason Black holding a 21" largemouth bass during electrofishing at McPherson State Lake.*

### Great Bend – Stone Lake

Stone Lake, located in southern Great Bend is a nearly 30 acre sand pit that provides good sport fishing opportunities for largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, wipers, channel catfish, flathead catfish, and bluegill. Shoreline access is limited and covered with cattails. While these cattails limit shoreline access they provide quality nursery habitat for bluegill and juvenile largemouth bass. Nonetheless there is plenty of places to bank fish on the North side and a boat ramp for boat anglers. The smallmouth bass population isn't overly abundant but there are some quality fish to be caught.

	2015 Sample
Total fish	67
% of juveniles	25%
% of 8" fish	30%
% of 12" fish	37%
% of 15" fish	6%
% of 20" fish	2%

*The heaviest largemouth bass collected at Stone Lake in 2016 weighed 4.5 lbs (see picture below).*



*Left) A 4.5 lb. largemouth bass collected at Stone Lake in 2016. Right) A smallmouth bass collected at Stone Lake in 2016.*

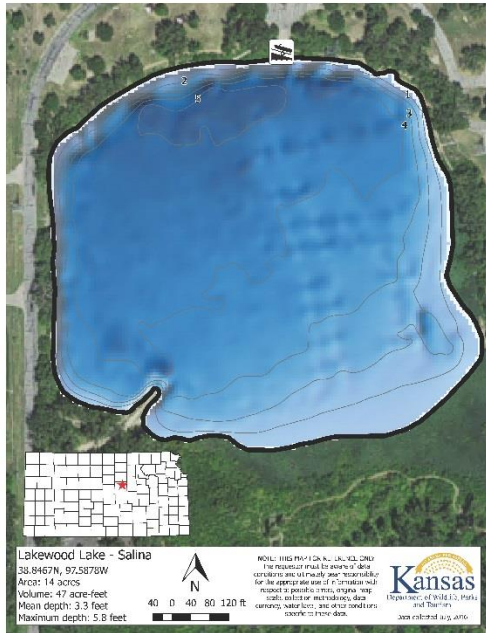
### Black Kettle State Lake

This state fishing lake is located on the southern edge of McPherson County just east of Moundridge off I-135. It is a shallow, 6-acre lake that includes a boat ramp on the south side. The lake contains a good largemouth bass population consisting of many fish from 2-4 lbs. and is stocked annually with channel catfish.

	2015 Sample
Total fish	34
% of juveniles	29%
% of 8" fish	12%
% of 12" fish	15%
% of 15" fish	38%
% of 20" fish	6%

## Other Projects

### *Salina – Lakewood Lake Renovation*



The fishery in the Salina's 13-acre Lakewood Lake will be renovated this fall with a grant from the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism's (KDWPT) Community Fisheries Assistance Program. Owned and operated by Salina Parks and Recreation and located in Lakewood Park, Lakewood Lake will be opened for public fish salvage Sept. 11-30, 2016 during Phase 1 of the renovation. A public salvage allows anglers to harvest fish prior to the complete renovation. Creel and length limits will not be enforced during public salvage and additional means of take will be allowed.

On October 1, all angler access to fishing at Lakewood will be suspended and KDWPT staff will supervise fish removal through the end of the month. During this phase, no fish may be taken from the lake. All fish will be disposed of by KDWPT and park staff.

Once fish have been removed, the lake's new life will begin with a fresh stocking of bluegill later in the fall. Largemouth bass and catfish will be stocked next spring. Pending water quality testing results, rainbow trout will be stocked for the trout season, which opens Nov. 1.

To learn more about the renovation and the factors that triggered the project, plan to attend the information night

Sept. 27 at the Lakewood Discovery Center, beginning at 5 p.m. KDWPT district fisheries biologist Bryan Sowards will describe some of the techniques biologists use to sample and assess fish populations in Kansas lakes. He will also take questions about fisheries management programs.

Salina Parks and Recreation is also hosting a free trout fishing clinic at Lakewood Discovery Center on November 1, beginning at 5.p.m. To fish for trout, anglers age 16 and older must have a trout stamp, which can be purchased anywhere licenses are sold. Call Lakewood Discovery Center for more information, (785) 826-7335.

### *Great Bend – Veteran's Memorial Lake Rainbow Trout*

Rainbow trout will be stocked in Vet's Lake again in 2017. For the last few years these winter fish have been stocked into Stone Lake rather than Vet's Lake due to water quality issues at the latter. A blue-green algae watch/warning was issued for Vet's lake for the last few years but due to Aluminum sulfate treatments, in conjunction with geese deterrents and common carp removal, these issues have been alleviated and water quality has improved.

Remember, the Kansas trout season runs from Nov. 1<sup>st</sup> to April 15<sup>th</sup>. You will need a permit to fish for these at Vet's Lake (\$14.50) and are allowed 5 fish/day. Youth 15 and younger do not need a trout permit but without it they will be limited to only 2 trout per day. Good luck this winter!





A bag containing nearly 2,000 small Saugeye fry stocked into Sterling City Lake in April, 2016

### **Saugeye stocked into Sterling City Lake!**

Yes, saugeye have been stocked at Sterling City Lake, a small community lake in downtown Sterling, KS. These fish were stocked to not only provide an additional angling opportunity but for the biological control of gizzard shad and small sunfish. The objective is to keep smaller, stunted fish under control. This should then provide larger bluegill and, consequently, larger Largemouth Bass for the area anglers.

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## **What is that plant?**

### **Wilson Reservoir**



*Phragmites Australis* in Marshall Cove, Wilson Reservoir.

*Phragmites Australis* or Common Reed is a prevalent sight at Wilson Reservoir. This invasive weed has been prevalent at the lake for many years and can also be seen lining the Saline and Smoky Hill rivers in central Kansas. The plant sometimes displaces other native

plants in wetland habitats. It can grow nearly 18 feet high and is long-lived. The Common Reed spreads rapidly by sending out above ground stolons and below ground rhizomes that root several feet from the existing plant which makes it very successful at spreading towards wet areas even during a drought. Unlike the Cattail, the Common Reed is able to withstand submersion in several feet of water making it a beneficial plant for fish habitat.

Most fish benefit from vegetative habitat but sunfishes (e.g. Bluegill and Largemouth Bass) benefit immensely. The plants act as substrate for aquatic insects and other macroinvertebrates (e.g. snails) which become abundant fish food. This builds a healthy food chain for our sport fishes. Furthermore, these vast stands of vegetation provide nursery habitat for fish which allows them to hide from predators and recruit to sizes that are favorable to anglers.

### **Newsletter Subscription**

If you know someone who might like to subscribe to the newsletter, they can do so by clicking [here](#). If you would like to unsubscribe, please send your info to [contact us](#) with “unsubscribe Ellsworth Fishing District 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!

Go Fish Kansas!



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