

Fall River Fisheries District Newsletter

Fall River Fisheries District Fishing Forecast

The 2012 sampling results are in. You can read the results of the 2013 Fishing Forecast on the KDWPT web site. Here's how the fish populations in the Fall River Fisheries District lakes ranked among waters in the rest of the state:

Species: Largemouth bass/hr. electrofishing

| Lake | # >12" | # >15" | # >20" | Biggest Fish |
|------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Severy | 4 th | | | 3.00 lbs |
| Sedan Old | 6 th | 8 th | 4 th | 5.62 lbs |
| Lyon SFL | 9 th | | | 10 th 6.00 lbs |
| Madison | | 10 th | 2 nd | 5.59 lbs |
| Howard | | | 11 th | 5.92 lbs |
| Eureka | | | | 6 th 6.37 lbs |
| Reservoir | | | | |
| Fall River | 12 th | 9 th | tie 3 rd | 8 th 4.68 lbs |
| Toronto | 11 th | 8 th | | 11 th 3.50 lbs |

There were 87 lakes and 17 reservoirs electrofished in Kansas in 2012. The main body of Fall River and Toronto Reservoirs don't have the necessary largemouth bass habitat to support a high density bass population. However, the flooded timber and clearer water in the backwater section of the rivers and creeks produce a fair density bass population. Fall River had 14 bass per hour of electrofishing around the Ladd Bridge section of the river. Toronto Reservoir had 17 bass per hour of electrofishing in Walnut Creek. The ideal catch rate would be 80-100 bass per hour.

Small lakes with their stable water levels and weedy shorelines provide good bass habitat. The Fall River Fisheries District had six lakes that ranked among the top lake in Kansas. Madison, Sedan Old, and Howard City Lakes had populations of lunker bass. Although Eureka City Lake didn't rank among the top ten bass lakes in the state, it did have an excellent bass population with many bass over five pounds, and had the sixth largest bass electrofished by biologists in 2012.



Six pound largemouth bass electrofished from Lyon State Fishing Lake.

One reason these lakes consistently rank high is due to their location. Not only do these lakes have good water quality due to grassland run-off, but they receive low fishing pressure due to their distance away from major metropolitan areas. Whether you are looking for a lake with high catch rates like Severy, Sedan Old, or Lyon SFL to teach a young angler the different techniques for bass fishing, or you looking to hook a lunker over five pounds, if you are lucky enough to live near one of these hidden gems or are willing to drive, these lakes show great promise this year.

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Species: White crappie/trap net

| Lake | # >8" | # >10" | # >12" | Biggest Fish |
|------------|-----------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| Sedan Old | 3 rd | | | 0.96 lbs |
| Eureka | 5 th | | | 1.21 lbs |
| Moline New | | 12 th | 16 th | 1.38 lbs |
| Lyon SFL | | | 3 rd | 1.27 lbs |
| Reservoir | | | | |
| Fall River | | 11 th | 6 th | 1 st 2.29 lbs |
| Toronto | 4 th | 3 rd | 1 st | 2 nd 2.16 lbs |

There were 73 lakes and 23 reservoirs trap netted in Kansas in 2012. Although the crappie populations in Toronto and Fall River Reservoirs were on a low cycle due to drought conditions again in 2012, they still ranked highly, especially for big fish. Toronto Reservoir really stood out this year. It had the most fish over 12 inches, third most over 10 inches, fourth highest density over eight inches, and the second largest white crappie sampled. While Fall River Reservoir didn't have high numbers of fish in the population this year, the fish you do catch will be big. It had the sixth highest density of fish over 12 inches in the state and the largest fish sampled by biologists this year. Speaking with 28 years of experience, the 2.29 pound crappie sampled there last fall was likely not the biggest one in the lake. The biggest crappie I've ever sampled came from a trap net in Fall River Reservoir located on the dam near the outlet in 2007. It weighed a whopping 3.96 pounds.

While small lakes with their stable water levels and weedy shorelines provide ideal habitat for growing bass, crappie is another matter. Small lakes typically don't have the nutrient inflow of the large federal reservoirs; therefore, crappie growth is slower. A good crappie population in a small lake would consist of 10 inch fish. Moline New City Lake and Lyon SFL both have good populations of crappie over 10 inches. These are both good lakes to fish when you get blown off the better producing reservoirs. Anglers can easily fish both of these lakes from shore, too.

If you're willing to dress a bunch of eight to nine inch crappie, Eureka and Sedan Old City Lakes are among the top ten this year. Eureka Lake even has a heated fishing dock, if you get spring fever this winter and want to get outdoors, but not too much. Many

anglers mistakenly think that throwing back these small crappie will allow them to grow to a larger size.



A 16.5 inch, 2.86 pound white crappie with some other keepers.

At least in these lakes, where I've conducted age and growth analysis from scale samples, throwing them back would be counterproductive. You would actually improve the crappie population size structure and fish condition by harvesting every fish you catch. In other words, crappie would grow bigger, faster, and weigh more if there were fewer mouths to feed in the population. In high density populations like these, crappie die of old age (about five years) before reaching larger sizes. Due to the isolationism of the Fall River Fisheries District, I have yet to document angler overharvest of any fish species. So enjoy yourself and have at 'em.

Get your friends, get your family
 ... and FISH KANSAS!



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Species: Channel catfish/gill net

| Lake | # >16" | # >24" | # >28" | Biggest Fish |
|-----------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| Sedan Old | 8 th | | | 7.12 lbs |
| Sedan New | 10 th | 10 th | | tie 7 th 15.43 lbs |
| Eureka | | 1 st | 3 rd | 12.75 lbs |
| Lyon SFL | | | | tie 7 th 15.43 lbs |

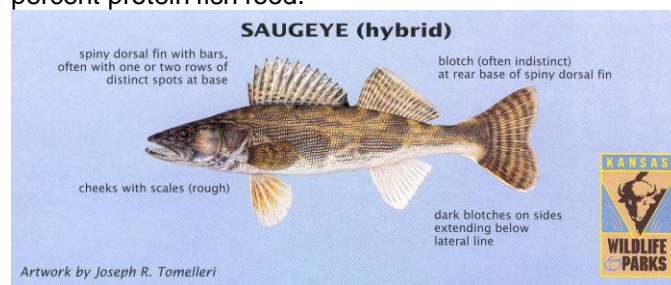
According to statewide creel surveys, channel catfish rank as the most sought fish species. That doesn't mean they are the most popular, only that there are a lot of anglers out there fishing for them. You'd think that shallow muddy reservoirs like Toronto and Fall River would be ideal habitat for channel catfish and they would rank highly among state reservoirs. However, recruitment in these reservoirs is limited. You can read about what's being done to improve channel catfish recruitment in the May 2011 issue of the Fall River District Fisheries Newsletter found here: <http://www.kdwpt.state.ks.us/news/KDWPT-Info/News/Past-Newsletters>.



Lyon State Fishing Lake channel catfish.

Sedan Old and New City Lakes, Eureka Lake, and Lyon SFL all had excellent channel catfish. Eureka Lake especially had an unusually large population of really monstrous cats. Channel catfish at all four lakes had excellent body condition. Mean Wr's (length:weight

ratio) were high in or exceeded the objective range of 80 to 100. Fish condition increased with size. This was likely due to competition for fish food at the feeders. Smaller size channel catfish were likely crowded out by larger fish feeding on pellets. These populations greatly benefited from the solar powered automatic fish feeders set to dispense 50 pounds per acre per year of 32 percent protein fish food.



Species: Saugeye/gill net

| Lake | # >14" | # >18" | # >22" | Biggest Fish |
|-----------|------------------|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Howard | | 6 th | 2 nd | 2.26 lbs |
| Madison | | tie 8 th | 1 st | 6 th 5.22 lbs |
| Eureka | 14 th | tie 8 th | | 1 st 8.58 lbs |
| Sedan Old | 15 th | tie 9 th | | 2.43 lbs |
| Sedan New | 16 th | | | 2.03 lbs |

There were 83 lakes gill netted in Kansas in 2012. Madison and Howard City Lakes had the first and second highest densities of saugeye over 22 inches in the state. The largest saugeye (8.58 lbs.) sampled by biologists during fall test netting in 2012 was from Eureka City Lake. Howard, Madison, Eureka, and Sedan City Lakes also ranked among the best lakes for saugeye over 18 inches.

Saugeye were stocked in these city lakes to increase predation on white crappie, add creel diversity, and provide a trophy fish potential. Historically, the lakes had populations of walleye from stocking. Despite good water quality, walleye did not seem to prosper in the lakes. Statistics showed that lakes with low hydrologic residence time, like Madison City Lake's 196 days, typically had poor walleye populations. Stocking of walleye was discontinued in favor of saugeye in 2000. Recruitment of stocked saugeye was better than walleye and resulted in some of the best populations in the state.

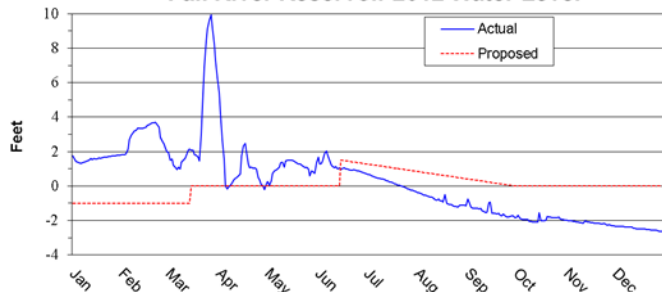
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How Low Can You Go?

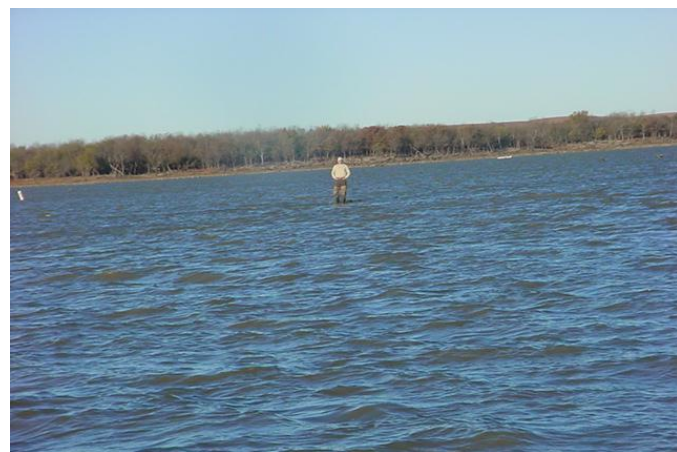
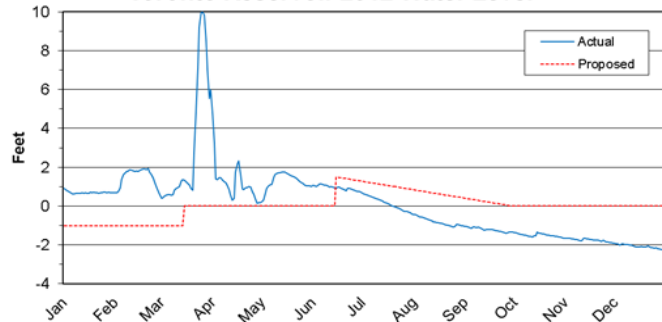
As any angler who has tried to launch a boat can tell you, lake levels in the Fall River Fisheries District continue to decline. According to the noaa.gov web site, we are in an "extreme drought". The Fall River Reservoir drainage basin, which consists of 585 square miles and covers 374,400 acres, received only 13.48 inches of precipitation in 2012. That's 37 percent of the normal rainfall of 36 inches per year. Despite the sparse runoff, Toronto Reservoir was 2.25 feet low and Fall River Reservoir was 2.67 feet low by the end of the year. In contrast, Council Grove Reservoir was 5.74 feet low.

and that the fish are in any danger of running out of water. The main concerns of low water levels are the limited boat ramps and under water obstructions that are now boating hazards. At Fall River, the only boat ramps that are usable are Engineer Bay on the reservoir and Ladd Bridge on the river. At Toronto, the only boat ramps that are usable are Toronto Cove on the reservoir, Baker Bridge on Walnut Creek, and Moon on the river.

Fall River Reservoir 2012 Water Level



Toronto Reservoir 2012 Water Level



Toronto Reservoir shallow water north of Duck Island.

The problem that arises when Toronto and Fall River Reservoirs get low is that they are so shallow to begin with. Fall River only has an average depth of 6.4 feet, and Toronto only averages 3.7 feet when the reservoirs are at conservation elevation. That doesn't mean that there isn't plenty of deep water in these lakes,

Two years of drought limited boating access at two lakes in the Fall River Fisheries District. Both Moline Old City Lake and Olpe City Lake were more than four feet low by October, which prevented them from being sampled because the boat couldn't be launched. You can see the prop wash at the end of the boat ramp at Moline Old City Lake (photo on next page). The Olpe City Lake boat ramp looked similar. However, the City received a grant from KDWPT to renovate the lake, so the lake level was lowered even further to facilitate shoreline fisheries habitat improvements. At Olpe Lake, the prop wash was scooped out and old broken concrete sidewalks were placed in the hole to prevent boat trailers from falling into it.

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In addition to these two lakes that currently don't have usable boat ramps, most other lakes within the District are in danger of having their boat ramps become inoperable due to low water. I was able to launch my work boat for sampling in October by backing the trailer into the prop wash off the end of the boat ramps at Eureka, Moline New, and Sedan Old City Lakes. Only Lyon SFL, Madison, Howard, and Sedan New City Lakes had sufficient water over the boat ramps. If we don't get sufficient runoff this spring to fill these lakes back up, anglers will likely be either fishing from shore, or using carry-in boats.

impact of the 30,420 hunting trips at \$131.13 per trip was \$3,988,975. The economic impact of 146,073 trips to Fall River State Park in 2012 at \$2.07 per trip was \$302,371. The total recreational economic impact of the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism at Fall River Reservoir was approximately 5.3 million dollars per year.



Moline Old City Lake boat ramp.



Olpe City Lake boat ramp repair.

If anglers and boaters don't visit area lakes due to drought conditions and low water, it will have an economic impact. Fall River and Toronto Reservoirs contribute significantly to the state and local economy. A 2010 Kansas Department of Commerce report showed that tourism brought in 5.46 billion dollars to the state's economy; tourism was the third largest industry in Kansas; and it generated 27.4 percent of all state and local tax revenue.

At Toronto Reservoir the economic impact of the 8,723 fishing trips (2002 creel census) at \$69.65 per trip (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation) was \$607,557 per year. The economic impact of the 24,685 hunting trips at \$131.13 per trip was \$3,236,944. The economic impact of 249,634 trips to the State Park in 2012 at \$2.13 per trip was \$531,720. The total recreational economic impact of Toronto Reservoir was approximately 4.4 million dollars per year.

At Fall River Reservoir, the economic impact of the 14,177 fishing trips (2003 creel census) at \$69.65 per trip (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation) was \$987,428 per year. The economic

Even small lakes, like Lyon State Fishing Lake, contribute significantly to the economy. According to the 2007 creel survey, an estimated 6,944 anglers fished at Lyon County State Fishing Lake from March thru October. Of these anglers, 31 percent (2,183) fished from a boat, and 69 percent (4,761) fished from shore. The total estimated number of hours, anglers spent fishing at the lake was 22,588 (167 hours per acre).



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That was 74 hours per acre (55.5 percent) more fishing pressure per acre than the 1997 creel survey prior to renovation. The economic impact of the 6,944 fishing trips at \$69.65 per trip (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation) was \$483,650 per year. Don't let low water discourage you from fishing. Think of the low water as simply concentrating the fish making them easier to catch.

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