Summer 2015
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Kansas City District Fisheries Newsletter

Biologist's Notes

Although the wet spring and early summer may have put a damper on some of this year's fishing opportunities (it sure made some of my spring sampling for largemouth bass challenging), the sustained high water in most of the area's waterbodies could lead to a promising outlook for fish production. The high water (and timing of high water events) experienced at Hillsdale Reservoir and other area waterbodies allowed young-of-year fish to access newly flooded vegetation which provided cover from predators and an abundance of invertebrates, a primary food source for young fish. Only time will tell, but this summer's high water could be a good forecast for fish populations in the years to come.

The remainder of the summer passed by in a whirlwind, thanks in part to the continuation of ongoing projects in the Kansas City District. An ongoing research project involving stocking of early-spawned largemouth bass in Hillsdale Reservoir continued. An early-spawned largemouth bass project update is included within this issue. Monthly stocking (March-September) of catchable size (3/4 - 1 1/2 lbs.) channel catfish in 22 urban waterbodies occurred, with the final stocking date occurring on September 15th. Fish feeding operations were maintained at Olathe-Cedar Lake, Gardner City Lake, and Middle Creek State Lake to enhance angling success. Youth fishing events (derbies and clinics) were once again in high demand, and to date this year the Kansas City District Office conducted or assisted in 20 youth fishing events with over 490 participants, with several more events scheduled for the remainder of summer and fall.

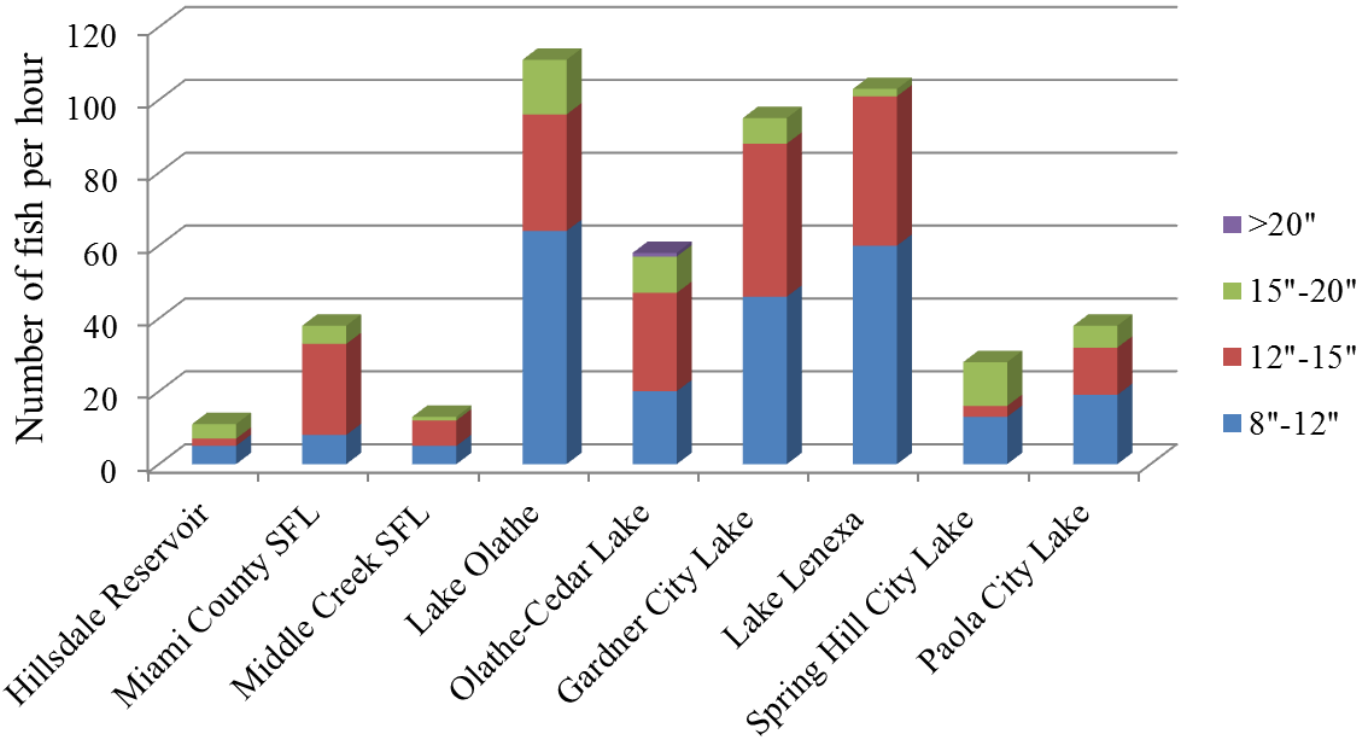
As summer draws to a close, remember that great fishing opportunities exist in the fall. Forage fish, such as young-of-year gizzard shad, are very abundant in the fall. As water temperatures cool, game fish become more active and feed on forage fish to fatten up for winter. For best success, match baits to the prey base of your particular waterbody and hold on for some action. Good luck and **get out there and fish**!

"takemefishing"

Inside this issue:

2015 Kansas City District Largemouth Bass Spring Sampling Summary

Fisheries biologists use a variety of gear to sample fish depending on species, season, and environmental conditions. Every spring, district fisheries biologists around the state use electrofishing boats to assess black bass populations. The electrofishing boat puts a charge into the water which stuns the fish allowing it to be netted by someone on the front of the boat. Black bass sampling is conducted during the spring when the bass are in shallow waters and more efficiently caught. This sampling allows biologists to assess relative abundance, length structure, and condition of black bass populations. Below is the largemouth bass sampling summary for the Kansas City District in 2015.



Nice largemouth bass sampled at Olathe-Cedar Lake.

KDWPT technician Zach Peterson displays some nice fish from Spring Hill City Lake.

Early-spawned Largemouth Bass Stocking Project Update

Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism has been conducting a research project on largemouth bass in Hillsdale and Clinton Reservoirs which will hopefully lead to increased angler success and more stable largemouth bass populations. The project is aimed at evaluating stocking of early-spawned largemouth bass. The idea behind the project is that advanced sized largemouth bass will be large enough at the time of stocking to immediately begin feeding on the abundant forage fish available, giving the stocked largemouth bass the best chance for increased growth and survival. The early-spawned largemouth bass are produced at a rearing facility at the Meade State Fish Hatchery. The project was initiated in 2013 and analysis will run through 2017.

Genetic samples have been taken from largemouth bass sampled during standardized spring sampling and from largemouth bass caught by tournament anglers to help determine early-spawned largemouth bass' contribution to the overall population. Results are still pending. From standardized spring sampling at Hillsdale Reservoir catch rate of largemouth bass < 8 inches was up in 2015, so genetic results from these young fish will be particularly interesting.

In 2015, 219,000 early-spawned largemouth bass were stocked into Hillsdale Reservoir over three separate days. During these stockings, the water level of Hillsdale Reservoir was up an average of 5 feet. This was probably a best case scenario for the survival and growth of the young-of-year largemouth bass due to increased habitat provided by a large amount of flooded terrestrial vegetation.

Zebra Mussel Infestation Confirmed at Paola City Lake (Lake Miola)

On May 23, an angler snagged an old fishing rod near the boat ramp at Paola City Lake with live adult zebra mussels attached and reported it to the local KDWPT game warden. Subsequent sampling by KDWPT aquatic nuisance species staff confirmed the presence of zebra mussels lakewide at various life stages. The population appears to be well established and has most likely been present for some time.

Paola City Lake (Lake Miola) is now a designated aquatic nuisance species waterbody. This means, legally, no water or live organisms can be transported from the waterbody. This is particularly concerning because of Paola City Lake's proximity to Hillsdale Reservoir, which is currently free of aquatic nuisance species. Prevention is the best way to stop the spread of aquatic nuisance species. Zebra mussels are just one of the non-native aquatic species that threaten our waters and native wildlife. After using any body of water, people must remember to follow regulations and precautions that will prevent their spread:

- Clean, drain, and dry boats and equipment between uses.
- Use wild-caught bait only in the waterbody where it was caught.
- Do not move live fish from waters infested with zebra mussels or other aquatic nuisance species.
- Drain livewells and bilges and remove drain plugs from all vessels prior to transport from any Kansas waterbody on a public highway.

A little information about zebra mussels

Zebra mussels are dime-sized mollusks with striped, sharp-edged, two-part shells. They can produce huge populations in a short time and do not require a host fish to reproduce. A large female zebra mussel can produce 1 million eggs that, when fertilized, develop into microscopic veligers that are invisible to the naked eye. Veligers drift in the water for at least two weeks before they settle out as young mussels which quickly grow to adult size and reproduce within a few months.

After settling, zebra mussels develop byssal threads that attach their shells to submerged hard surfaces such as rocks, piers, and flooded timber. They also attach to pipes, water intake structures, boat hulls, propellers, and submerged parts of outboard motors. As populations increase, they can clog intake pipes and prevent water treatment and electrical generating plants from drawing water. Removing large numbers of zebra mussels to ensure adequate water flow can be labor-intensive and costly.

Zebra mussels are native to the Black and Caspian seas of western Asia and eastern Europe and were spread around the world in the ballast water of cargo ships. They were discovered in Lake St. Clair and the Detroit River in 1988 and quickly spread throughout the Great Lakes and other rivers including the Mississippi, Illinois, Ohio, Tennessee, Arkansas and Hudson. They were first discovered in Kansas in 2003 at El Dorado Reservoir. Despite public education efforts to alert boaters about the dangers of zebra mussels, and how to prevent spreading them, the species continues to show up in new lakes every year. Moving water in boats and bait buckets has been identified as a likely vector.

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