

# Pittsburg District Fisheries Newsletter

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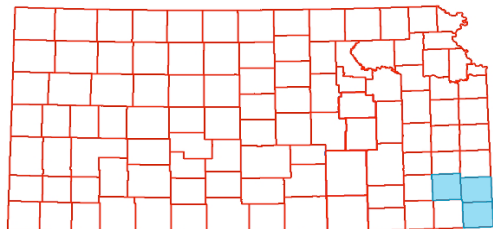
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## Mined Land Wildlife Area Units No. 22-23 Reclamation Improvements Continue

The Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) is continuing reclamation work in Units No. 22 and No. 23 of the Mined Land Wildlife Area (MLWA). The areas are currently open to fishing but closed to vehicle traffic. The closure to vehicles was necessary so that extensive reclamation work could be completed along interior roadways by Kansas Department of Health and Environment's (KDHE's) Surface Mining Section.

KDHE is funding this \$625,000 project that is nearing completion. David Jenkins, KDWPT's Mined Land Wildlife Area manager, stated, "Benefits of the project include safer interior roadways, new culverts and improved drainage system, native grass plantings for wildlife, improved angler access, and improved fish habitat. A channel catfish feeding program will also help create some quality fishing when the units fully reopen In May, 2018."



The Pittsburg Fisheries District  
Crawford, Cherokee and Neosho Counties



*Anglers will enjoy improved shoreline access following KDHE's reclamation project in MLWA Units No. 22-23.*

Work yet to be completed includes mulching and crimping, placement of 795 boulders as barricades, and road resurfacing with AB-3 rock.



*Improved drainage and shoreline access will create a hotspot for channel catfish anglers in Units No. 22-23. Catfish often go on feeding frenzies in areas where heavy runoff enters a water body.*

## Brown Trout Stocked in Mined Land Wildlife Area

On Tuesday afternoon Jan. 24, 2017, an estimated 3,534 small 7- to 9-inch brown trout were stocked in the trout lake in Unit #30 of the MLWA. These fish were acquired through a trade with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. The browns were picked up in Wyoming on Oct. 19, 2016 by Fisheries Division Assistant Director Kyle Austin and taken to the Pratt Fish Hatchery.

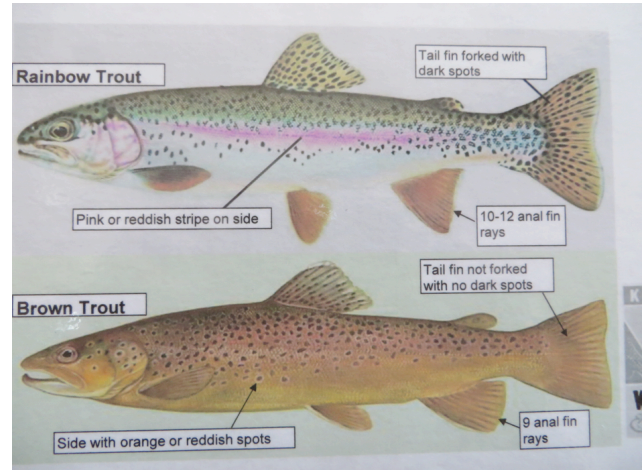
Water temperatures were too high for stocking at the MLWA trout lake in mid-October, so the fish were held in a raceway at the Pratt Fish Hatchery and fed to increase their size. When the water temperature dropped and slowed growth, the trout were harvested and stocked in January. The feeding resulted in an increase in size from 9.1 fish per pound to 5.7 fish per pound, nearly a doubling in size.

Brown trout were first stocked in the MLWA in 1999 when a few surplus browns were available from KDWPT's contract hatchery, Crystal Springs Trout Farm in Cassville, Mo. Since then, there have been three brown trout stockings totaling 6,236 fish. The last stocking occurred in October 2011. Brown trout are difficult to rear, and few hatcheries have surplus fish to trade. The fish we have received over the years have all been small 7 to 9-inch fish.



*Goals of the brown trout stockings are to improve the quality of the existing trout fishery, provide another unique fishing opportunity, and hopefully, in a few years, create some trophies.*

The October 2016 rainbow stocking in MLWA Unit No. 30 marked 31 seasons trout have been stocked in this 28-acre strip-mined lake. This lake's unique characteristics permit trout to survive year-round, allowing some fish to reach trophy size. More than 390,000 catchable trout have been stocked over the past 31 years, providing anglers some great cold-water angling.



*Anglers will now have to identify their catch at the MLWA trout lake. This signage is posted to assist you in distinguishing between the two. There is a 20-inch minimum length limit on browns, so handling the small browns with care and releasing them gently will be imperative for them to reach trophy size.*

## 2017 Pittsburg District Fishing Prospects

The following fishing forecast is a species by species summary of the information obtained in our spring electrofishing and fall test netting efforts, and my best guess on where you can find the top fishing in and around my three-county Pittsburg District.

In general, the smaller, shallower ponds and pits will warm up first. Fish will be active and spawning in these impoundments a week or two before the fish in larger, deep lakes and reservoirs.

This spring paddlefish have been running up the Neosho River following very heavy runoff, and at times the snagging has been very good at the Chetopa low-water dam. It's been good at a lot of other areas around the region, as well.

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## Fishing Prospects (cont.)

**Crappie** – It's time to get out there now. When the water temperature reaches the low to mid-60s, crappie move in shallow to spawn. That is the best time to catch high numbers, and often from the shore. The highest density population of 8-inch and larger crappie in the Pittsburg district was again found at Neosho State Fishing Lake. The October frame-net catch was 28 fish/net. Although numbers are high, you'll have to sort through some smaller fish for a good mess to eat.

Bone Creek Lake and some of the larger lakes on the Mined Land Wildlife Area have more quality-size fish to offer. Bone Creek frame-net catch rates are low due to the very clear water, but anglers are commonly reporting catching crappie 12 inches and larger. Bourbon County Lake (Hiattville), usually known for high numbers of smaller fish, has been producing lots quality-sized crappie this spring. Nearby Elk City and Big Hill Reservoirs have crappie populations rated excellent in 2017, and would be good places to go for a chance for some larger fish. If you are willing to drive a couple hours, the best crappie fishing in the state is again at John Redmond Reservoir, located just north of Burlington.



*Crappie are one of the best eating fish around, and are abundant in many local lakes.*

**Largemouth Bass** – 2016 electrofishing results showed that the best bass lakes in the Pittsburg district are Neosho State Fishing Lake, Thayer City Lake and Bone Creek Lake. The Mined Land Wildlife Area would also rate high, but the hundreds of small lakes on the area are not routinely sampled.



*Frank Naccarato proudly displays his great catch from the Mined Land Wildlife Area trout lake in March 2017.*

The new Thayer City Lake had the highest density bass population as the electrofishing catch rate for 8-inch plus fish was 113 fish per hour. Neosho State Lake was not far behind at 110 fish per hour. The catch rate at Bone Creek Lake was 62 fish per hour, but an astounding 61 percent of the stock (8-inch-plus) catch was over 15 inches in length. Crawford State Fishing Lake also had a very high percentage of fish 15 inches or larger with 37 percent. Although Crawford has a high percentage of big fish, the electrofishing catch rate was a disappointing 29 fish per hour. Even with the high catch rate at Neosho State Lake, 25 percent of the stock catch were over 15-inches.

All MLWA lakes have bass, but the best for big fish are often the ones that don't receive heavy fishing pressure. It could be worth the extra effort to walk into or portage into an overlooked or hard-to-get-to lake. Other nearby lakes with good bass ratings include Big Hill Reservoir, Wilson State Fishing Lake and Bourbon State Fishing Lake. Bourbon has very high numbers (122 fish/hour) with mostly 12- to 15-inch fish. LaCygne Reservoir is within an hour's drive, and is rated the second best bass reservoir in state.

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## Fishing Prospects (cont.)

**Channel Catfish** – Catfish are plentiful in all our public waters. Channel catfish don't reproduce and maintain their numbers in small lakes on their own, but KDWPT hatcheries do a great job of producing 8- to 12-inch fish for stocking. Approximately 33,500 are stocked in the Pittsburg district every year.

Neosho State Lake, Crawford State Lake, and Chanute City Lake ranked the highest, based on samplings last October. Neosho had the highest catch rate at 11.5 fish per net (our objective is 5 to 10 fish per net). Fifty-four percent of the catch was 16 inches or larger.

Crawford State Lake ranked second for channel catfish in the Pittsburg District at 5.3 fish per net with 77 percent of the catch 16 inches or larger. Chanute City Lake ranked third, also recording a 5.3 fish per net catch rate along with 50 percent of the sample 16 inches or larger. Although Bone Creek only had a catch rate of 3.4 fish per net, 24 percent of the catch was over 24 inches.

The MLWA also has a lot to offer, as each fall 14,000 fish are stocked throughout hundreds of pits. One tip to improve your catfishing success – don't fish too deep throughout the summer months. Most large, deep lakes stratify, and there is no oxygen in deeper water. You'll have better luck fishing at the shallower ends or along shoreline vegetation in water 15 feet deep or less.



*Channel cats are abundant, easily caught, and active during the summer. I'm shown here with my happy granddaughter, Mia Onelio, and a beauty she landed last summer.*

If you like river fishing and the opportunity to set limb-lines or trotlines, the Neosho River and Spring River-Empire Lake complex offers some good fishing. There is public access on 2 miles of the Neosho River east of Chanute through the FISH program.

Other good catfish lakes nearby include Elk City Reservoir (excellent rating), Big Hill Reservoir, Bourbon State Lake and Critzer Lake.

**Bluegill/Redear** – Bluegill and redear are common in most of our lakes. Put a worm on a small hook below a bobber and fish along weed lines, and you will probably be successful. 2016 nettings showed Bone Creek Lake and Neosho State Fishing Lake have the best quality sunfish fishing. The MLWA is also offers great opportunities. As for redear, Bone Creek rates the best, with Thayer City Lakes and Neosho State Fishing Lake also rating highly.



*Bluegill, redear, black bass, and crappie are members of the family Centrarchidae, or nest builders. When spawning, they move into shallow water where the male builds a plate-size nest he tends until the eggs hatch. The clearer the water, the deeper the nest. This shallow water movement creates great opportunities for shore anglers.*

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



## Thayer CFAP Grant Progressing Nicely

On August 25, 2016 the City of Thayer was awarded a \$40,000 grant through KDWPT's Community Fisheries Assistance Program (CFAP). The City requested the grant money to fund much needed recreational improvements at their 45-acre "new" lake.

The proposed improvements include a 16-foot X 30-foot shelter house, a unisex restroom, a handicapped assessable floating fishing pier, an earthen fishing pier, expanded 100-foot x 50-foot parking area, and a new informational sign. This project will provide boaters, anglers, and outdoor enthusiasts with essential restroom facilities and will greatly improve limited shoreline fishing access. Along with the added attraction of a shelter house, these improvements should increase public use and enjoyment of this beautiful lake.

The City is responsible for 26 percent of the total cost of this project, or \$10,400. Part of the grant's match can be provided by use of City labor and equipment. 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. Application 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. About \$225,000 is available statewide annually.



*A group shelter was the first segment of the project completed with the CFAP grant at Thayer City Lake.*



*Construction of an earthen fishing pier should improve success of shoreline anglers at Thayer City Lake. This shows the first day of work in constructing the pier.*

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## Habitat Structures Placed at Crawford State Lake and Mined Land Wildlife Area

The purpose of this habitat enhancement project was to increase angler success at Crawford State Lake and the Mined Land Wildlife Area through placement of PVC habitat structures within casting distance of shoreline access points heavily used by anglers. Unlike many lakes constructed today, all the timber and fish-holding structure was cleared from the Lake Crawford basin at the time of construction. Same is true for strip-mined lakes. Providing habitat that will benefit the fishery and concentrate sport fish within casting distance of the few shoreline access sites on these lakes is a high priority.

Anglers and biologists have for years provided habitat or "structure" in the form of brush piles, tire-reefs or half-cuts in known locations to concentrate fish and increase fishing success. Fish are attracted to these structures because they provide cover, shade and food.

The PVC habitat structures used in this project, known as "Georgia cubes," have been scientifically proven to hold as many fish as brush pile attractors and may last 10 to 20 years.

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*Habitat structures are loaded and ready to bundle and place at Crawford State Lake. The structures, called "Georgia cubes", stack more than 50 feet of corrugated pipe on a PVC frame, creating optimum surface area to attract fish while still maintaining an open design. These structures quickly accumulate periphyton, a complex mix of algae, fungi, and bacteria, which attract insects and fish.*

A total of 44 cubes were placed this winter. Twenty-four went to Crawford State Lake as part of an Eagle Scout project for Girard High School senior Brayden Garner. Brayden did a good job of organizing a work crew to assemble the structures and assist me in bundling and placing the structures. Just months after completion of the project, I'm happy to announce that Brayden earned his Eagle Scout distinction. The 20 structures placed in the Mined Land Wildlife Area were put in the largest lake in Unit No. 41 by KDWPT staff.

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 and Mined Land Wildlife Area structures have been added to the website.

Kansas licenses fees and federal funds from the Sport Fish Restoration Program have financed the components used to assemble the cubes.



*Brayden Garner prepares to add weight to habitat structures on the pontoon boat. Two cubes were placed on the bottom with one on top, making each structure 8 feet long and 8 feet high. Behind Brayden is one of the four 3-cube structures we placed at each site.*

## Upcoming Fishing Derbies

- May 6, 2017 O.K. Kids Fishing Derby  
Lakeside Park, Pittsburg  
8:00 - 10:00 am  
620-231-8310
- June 10, 2017 Eagles Kids Fishing Derby  
West Mineral Eagles Club  
Sign-up Fri. 6-9 pm & Sat 6-9 am  
Weigh-in Sat 4:00  
620-827-6171
- June 11, 2017 Frontenac Homecoming Derby  
Frontenac City Park Lakes  
9:00-11:00  
620-232-9473
- July 4, 2017 Pittsburg Annual 4th of July Derby  
Lincoln Park Ponds, Pittsburg  
8:00 - 10:00 Youth & adult categories  
620-231-8310
- Aug 13, 2017 Arma Homecoming Derby  
Hookie Park, Arma  
10:00 - 12:00  
620-347-4125

**Free Fishing Weekend  
June 3-4, 2017. Why not go  
fishing with friends?**