

LAWRENCE DISTRICT FISHING NEWSLETTER

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August 2015

Special Points of Interest:

- High water levels at Clinton and Melvern provide a change of pace
- Spring electrofishing results give anglers clues of where to go
- Possible changes on tap for blue catfish regulations at Clinton and Melvern



Biologist Notes

Well, we wanted rain to fill up Clinton and Melvern, and boy did we get it! Both reservoirs at one point were 10 feet above normal pool level. High water created some challenges for lake managers, as well as users.

Water, Water, Everywhere

High water during May, June and July at Clinton and Melvern reservoirs served to provide excellent expanded habitat for local fish populations. Water pushed into parking lots, and abundant terrestrial shoreline vegetation allowing fish to take advantage of additional prey opportunities. Runoff brought much needed nutrients into reservoirs which should bode well for fish growth and production. High water did result in some problems as a few docks were damaged, one fish feeder overturned, and some parking lots and beaches were not useable for awhile. High releases were necessary to remove water from reservoirs, which may have flushed some walleye, wipers and white bass, among other species downstream. Higher than normal outlet flows did produce some good fishing opportunities, and many anglers took advantage.



Last Scheduled

Early Spawn Largemouth Bass Stockings at Clinton

During May and June; 103,926 fingerling largemouth bass were stocked into Clinton Reservoir in an effort to improve the largemouth bass fishery. This was the third year of largemouth bass stockings. These bass were spawned early at Meade Fish Hatchery to give stocked fish a size advantage over naturally produced bass at the lake. Larger fish should be able to better utilize available prey and not be as limited regarding size of prey. These characteristics should allow stocked fish to exhibit higher survival and growth. DNA profiles of stocked bass are slightly different than naturally produced bass at Clinton so they can be differentiated in the lab. Spring electrofishing, DNA samples collected from bass tournament fish, and angler creel surveys over the next several years should determine if this is a feasible strategy to improve largemouth bass fisheries at Clinton Reservoir. The initial year of DNA analysis indicated that about 20% of one year old bass sampled last year were stocked fish. Habitat conditions are a lot better now, so hopefully stocked bass survival will show improvement and overall largemouth density at Clinton will increase.



Lawrence District Electrofishing Results

Bass sampling did occur in 2015, although rain storms did provide some change of plans a few times. Black bass are sampled with electrofishing boats during the spring when they are in close to the bank, and water temperatures vary from 65-72 °F. This years' results are summarized below in Table 1. Columns include name of lake, total number of bass sampled per hour of electrofishing, number of bass exceeding 8"/hr, number of bass exceeding 12"/hr, number of bass exceeding 15"/hr, and number of bass exceeding 20"/hr of electrofishing.

Lonestar had the highest catch rates for each category, indicating that it is the best bass lake in the District. Douglas SFL had high catch rates for total bass , 8" + and 12"+ bass, but not for bass greater than 15" in length. Anglers interested in bass over 15" should try Lonestar, Melvern River Pond, Carbondale City Lake, Melvern Reservoir, Lake Shawnee, and Clinton Reservoir in that order according to the table. Of course, all lakes listed do have bass greater than 20" long, even though they were not always caught in the sample.

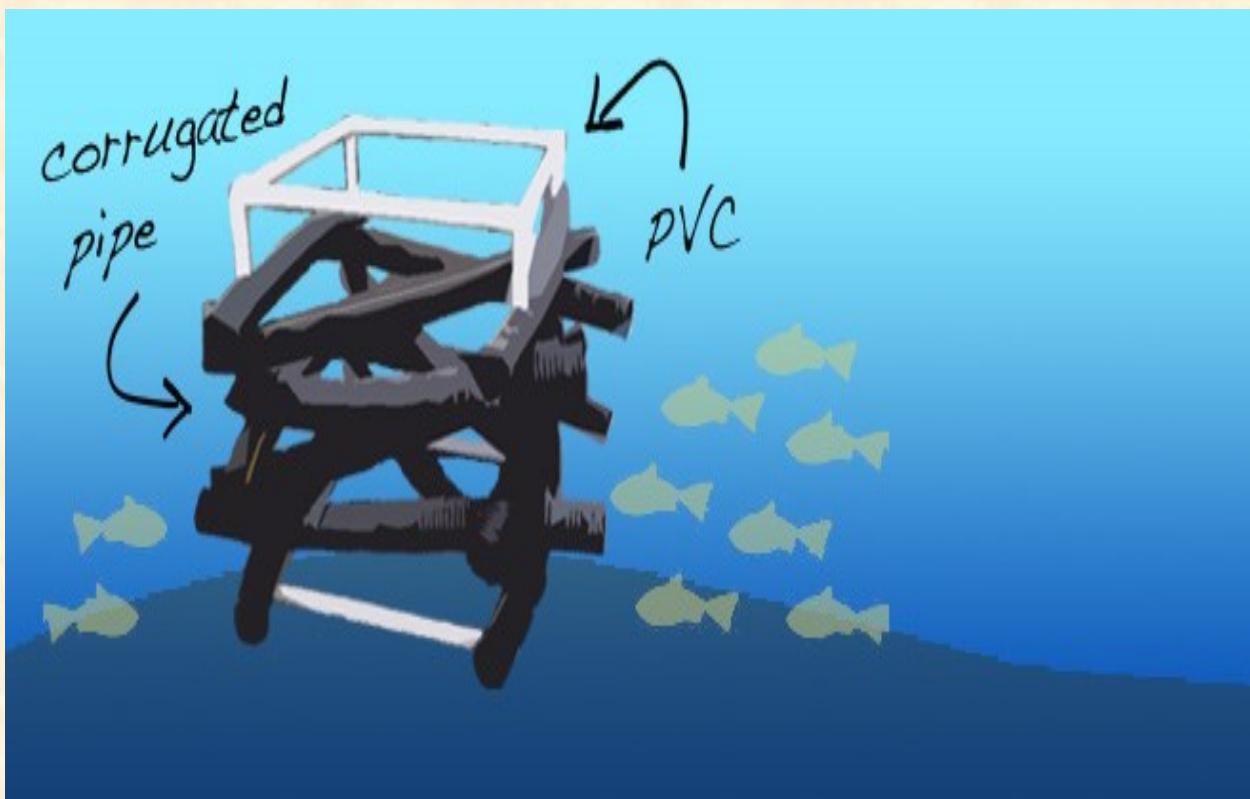


Lake	Total/hr	>8"/hr	>12"/hr	>15"/hr	>20"/hr
Clinton	13	7	3	1	0
Melvern	28	15	7	4	1
Carbondale	31	17	8	5	1
Douglas SFL	111	84	44	0	0
Lonestar	266	174	84	11	2
Melvern River Pond	50	33	14	9	0
Osage SFL	90	56	16	0	0
Lake Shawnee	70	26	24	3	0

Table 1. Spring 2015 electrofishing results for black bass species (largemouth, smallmouth, and spotted bass) at various Lawrence District lakes.

Fish Cube Habitat Module

Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism (KDWPT) has partnered with bass clubs to place PVC habitat structures into lakes across the State to improve largemouth bass habitat. These structures are made of PVC pipe and corrugated plastic pipe. Corners are glued and screwed for strength. These units were designed by Georgia Dept. of Wildlife and Parks and held fish, in some cases better than natural materials. One of the real assets of these structures is that they last much longer than trees. Ten structures were placed in Melvern Reservoir May 2015 by Olathe Bass Club at the following 2 GPS locations: N38°29.994' W95°44.812' and N38.49950 W95.73732.



Percid (Walleye/Sauger) Stockings Completed

A total of 8.7 million walleye fry were stocked at Clinton and 7 million fry were stocked at Melvern this spring. In addition, 750,000 sauger fry were stocked at Clinton, no sauger were stocked at Melvern this year. Good numbers of young (young of the year through 2 years old) walleye and sauger were observed at both Clinton and Melvern this summer while sampling for gizzard shad.

Urban Waters Within Lawrence and Topeka Receive Stockings

Lakes in urban settings typically get overfished, there are just too many people vying for the same resource. In order to maintain a fishable population, many of these waters are stocked multiple times throughout the angling season. So far this summer, the following total numbers (in parenthesis) of channel catfish have been stocked at area urban waters. Governor's Pond West (86), Governor's Pond East (1504), Governor's Cedar Crest Pond (1504), Auburndale Park Stream (72), Westlake (3468), Central Park (1862), Clarion (251), Horseshoe Bend (495), Freedom Valley (274), Shawnee Jr. (2148), Clinton State Park Picnic Pond (77), Clinton State Park Lake Henry (805), Pat Dawson Billings North (486), Pat Dawson South Billings South (286), Mary's Lake (2413), and Sandra Shaw (444). These lakes may offer a more convenient



Fishing alternative within walking/biking distance for some anglers. All these waters have bluegill, which along with stocked channel catfish can supply some good kids' fishing. So if you feel like you are going on an expedition when you pack up to go to one of the larger out of town lakes, think about giving one of these urban locations a try.

Blue Catfish Sampling Clinton and Melvern

Ten locations were sampled at Clinton and Melvern reservoirs for blue catfish this summer. Seven of ten sites at Clinton produced blue catfish, although the number sampled was low ($n=18$). Blues ranged in size from 15-24 inches long, with an average of about 19 inches. Clinton was stocked 7 times over an 8 year period to establish a blue catfish population. It takes about 7 years for blue catfish to reach sexual maturity in Midwestern waters. In order to protect this young fishery and to maximize its chance for success, a 35 inch minimum length limit and reduced creel limit of 5 per day was proposed for implementation January 1, 2016.



Only 5 blue catfish were sampled at 10 locations at Melvern. Only 2 sites yielded fish. Melvern has an older population than does Clinton, but natural production appears very limited. In an effort to increase the density of blue catfish at Melvern, a 35 inch minimum length limit and reduced creel limit of 5 per day was requested to go into effect January 1, 2016. The hope is that increased protection will result in increased numbers of breeding adults to improve the production of blue catfish.

Take a Kid Fishing

Many young people do not get the chance to experience the joys of angling. There are many reasons for this, but a few may be increased single parent families, detachment from natural resources, and completing activities. Most young kids like to fish. There are lots of things to see and do even if the fish don't bite. My youngest grandson is very content throwing rocks into the water or dropping them to watch the splashes. The older grandson watches his line fairly intently, but if a frog or dragonfly comes by he is more than ready to shift gears away from fishing to observe something that he doesn't see everyday. The point is that even if fishing is slow, there are other things to pique a child's interest. And if fishing is good,; they will have a memorable time, and I'm guessing you will too! So take a kid fishing, if you can.



Loaner Fishing Poles Available

If you are organizing a fishing event for a group and need poles, KDWPT has 2 locations within the Lawrence District to provide poles; Clinton State Park and the Topeka Regional Office. Call 785-832-8413 for more information or to reserve fishing poles for your event.

FISH Program Offers Pond Angling Experience

KDWPT began leasing private ponds years ago in an effort to provide more fishing opportunities. There are 11 ponds leased within Douglas, Shawnee and Osage counties. The Fishing Atlas is an annual publication that lists all of these FISH waters and shows where they are located. In my District, FISH ponds range from 0.5 to 15 acres in size. They contain largemouth bass, bluegill, and channel catfish, and some have crappie. Most of the time they can provide a nice laidback setting for a fishing trip



See You On The Water!

If you haven't been able to get out and go fishing as much as you wish, and who has? There is plenty of summertime angling left—catfish are still going strong! Topwater bass fishing is happening right now at some area lakes and farm ponds. White bass and wiper are busting shad at some area waters, so the time is now to get after them! **Good Luck and Good Fishing!**