

Interstate 80 Lakes — Grand Island to Elm Creek Fish Survey Results — Spring 2023

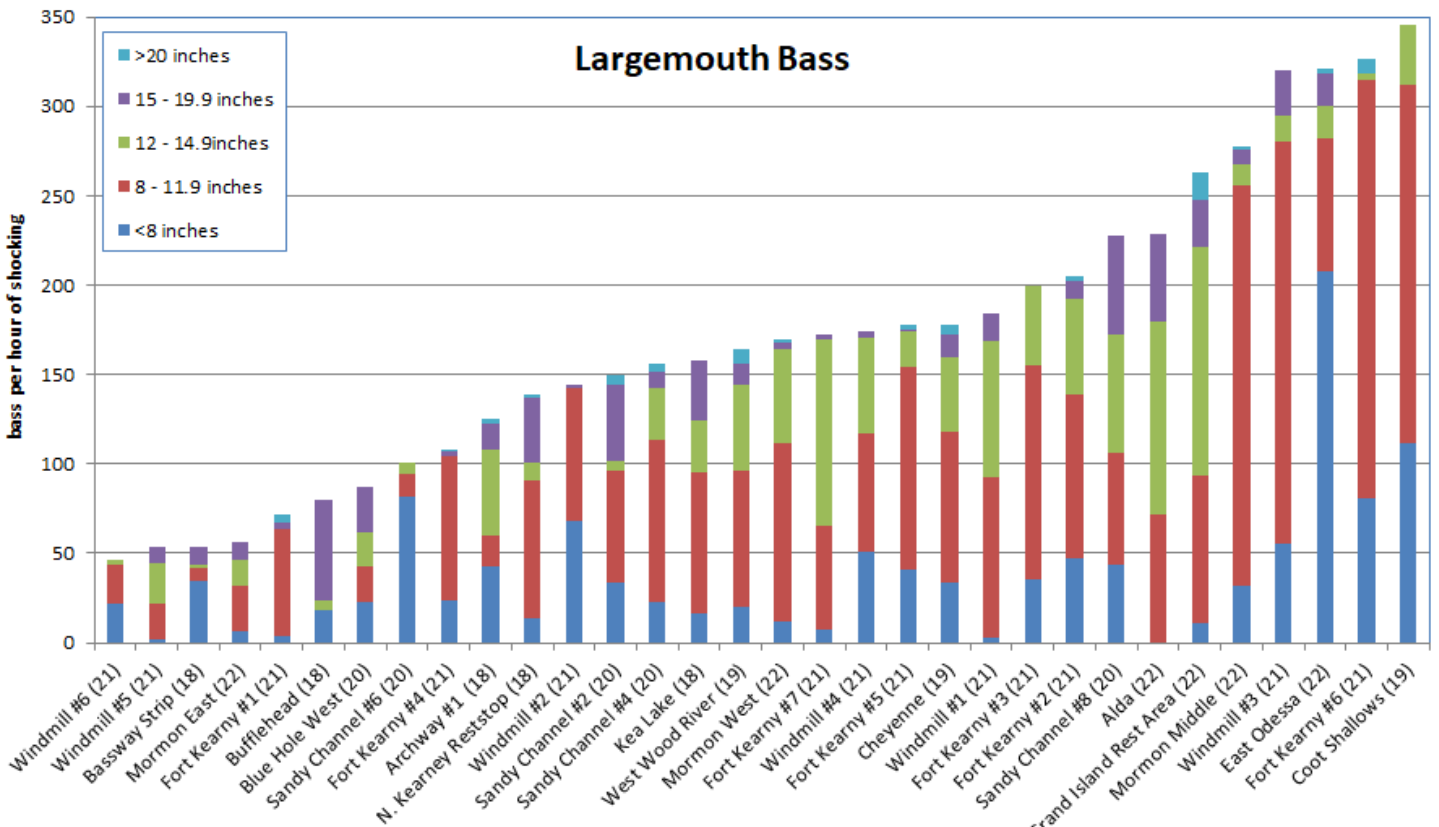
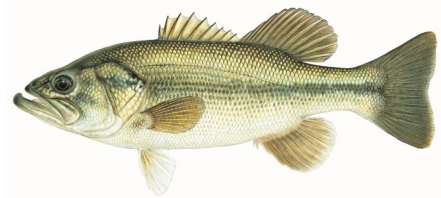


Alex Engel, Fisheries Biologist

Spanning a stretch of 150 miles along Interstate 80 from Grand Island to Hershey more than 60 small lakes are available for public fishing. Fisheries staff from the Kearney office have the management responsibility for the Interstate lakes located from Grand Island to Elm Creek. These man-made lakes, most of which were created for fill material when the Interstate system was developed in the 1960's, range in size from 1 to 42 acres. These ground water fed lakes have excellent shoreline access for anglers and good water quality, providing excellent habitat conditions for largemouth bass and bluegill. In addition, most of the lakes contain channel catfish, while others have crappie, rock bass, walleye, and northern pike. The fish populations are surveyed on a five year rotation and the following graphs and text display these results.

Largemouth Bass

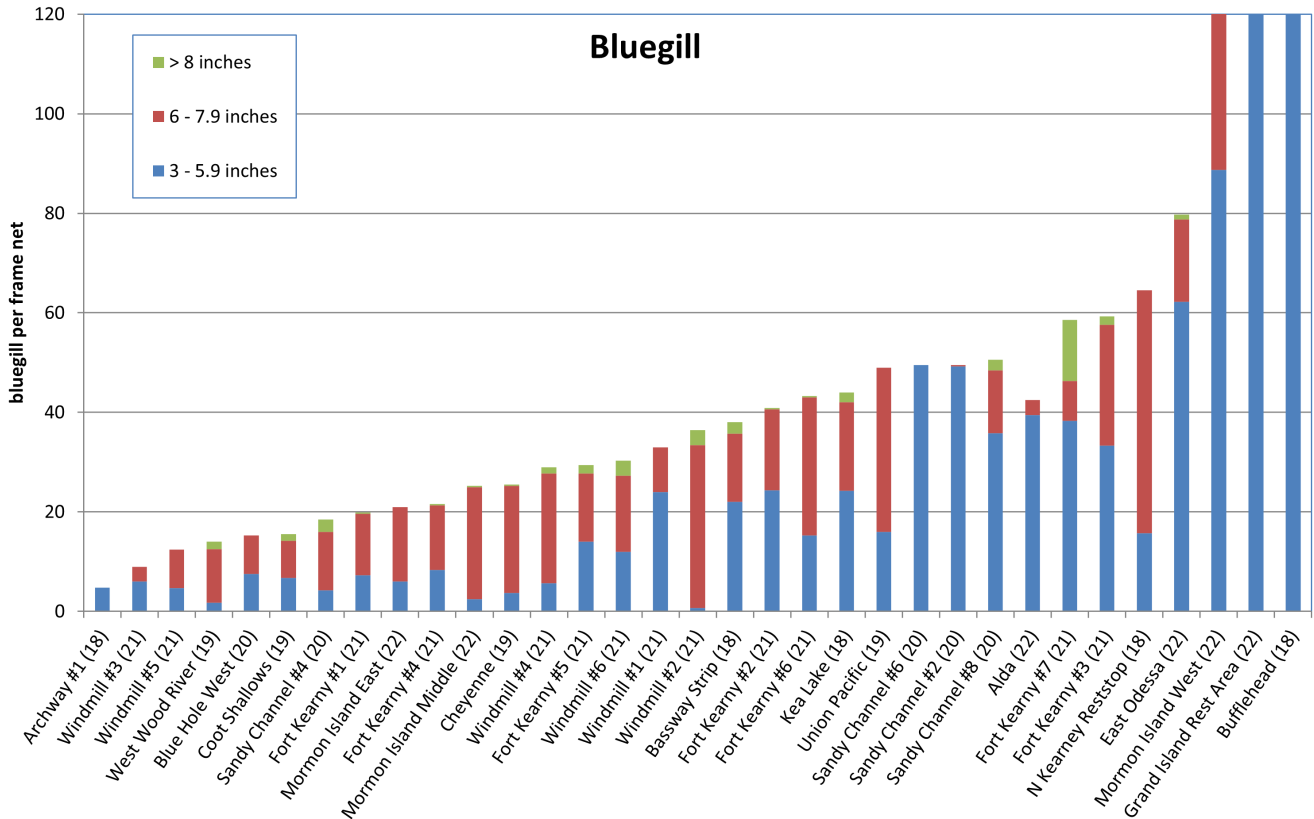
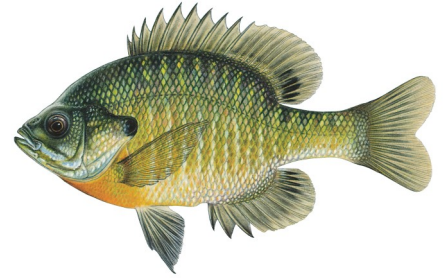
Largemouth bass are present in most of the Interstate lakes in the central portion of Nebraska. Exceptions include; War Axe, Kea West, and Archway Lakes #2, #3, and #4; all of which have been stocked with smallmouth bass. Lakes with high densities of smaller bass can be found at Windmill, Ft. Kearny and Mormon Island SRA's, as well as East Odessa, Union Pacific and Coot Shallows. Lakes with a higher abundance of bass larger than fifteen inches include Grand Island Rest Area, Cheyenne, Windmill #1, Bassway Strip, Archway #1, Kea Lake, Blue Hole West, and Sandy Channel #8. There is a 21-inch minimum length limit on bass at Alda, Mormon Island SRA, Cheyenne, West Wood River, War Axe, Windmill SRA, Fort Kearny SRA, Bufflehead, Archway Lakes, and Sandy Channel SRA. In addition, Kea West is designated as a catch and release only lake for all species. Anglers are encouraged to practice selective harvest or catch and release on bass in the I-80 Lakes as bass in these small lakes are easily over-harvested.



() — year lake was last sampled

Bluegill

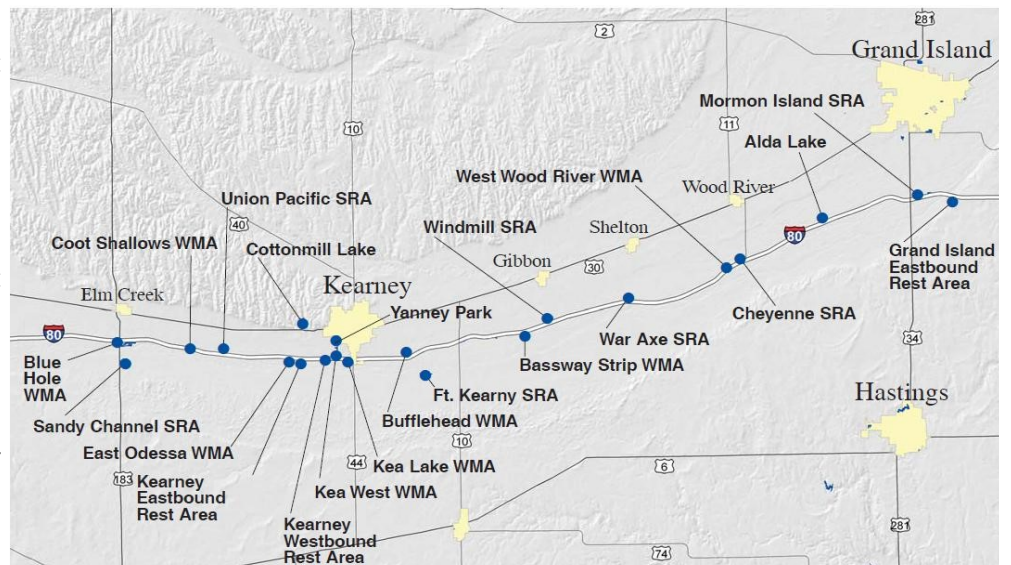
Bluegill are abundant in most of the I-80 lakes in central Nebraska. While most of the lakes can be great places to catch bluegill, some of the best lakes to catch six to eight inch bluegill include Mormon Island West and Middle Lakes, Windmill SRA, Fort Kearny SRA, North Kearney Rest Stop, and Sandy Channel SRA. Big bluegills, greater than eight inches, can be found in low densities in many of the lakes. Lakes consistently producing larger bluegill include Bassway Strip, Kea Lake, East Odessa, Windmill #6 and Ft. Kearny #2 and #7. Anglers are reminded that the daily bag limit for panfish is 15 fish per day.



() — year lake was last sampled

Lake Summaries

The remainder of this document provides additional information on the Interstate 80 Lakes open to public fishing in the central portion of Nebraska. Lakes are covered individually and in geographic order starting at Grand Island and heading west to Elm Creek. Information from the most recent fish population surveys, special regulations, boating regulations, and other general information is covered.



Grand Island Rest Area Lake

Location: 1 mile east of Grand Island Locust Street (Exit 314) Interchange (accessed only from eastbound lane of I-80.)
Latitude: 40.82310 Longitude: -98.32785

Waterbody Information: Grand Island Rest Area is a shallow 6 acre lake with a maximum depth of eight feet. It is owned by the Nebraska Department of Transportation. The fishery was renovated in 2004 to remove rough fish and restocked with largemouth bass, bluegill and channel catfish. Drought conditions during the summer of 2012 resulted in a substantial fish kill that caused the majority of large fish present in the lake to perish. Low water conditions persisted into 2013 resulting in another small fish kill. Due to the shallow depths of this lake, the likelihood of future fish kills remains high during dry years. Survey results from 2022 indicate that largemouth bass populations have rebounded. Several size classes of bass were collected with a good abundance of 16 to 19 inch bass and some bass greater than 19 inches present. Small bluegill were overly abundant as there were 152/net caught. Fair numbers of bluegill from 6 to 8 inches were sampled. No channel catfish were captured during the 2022 survey and last stocking of channel catfish was in 2017. Other fish species captured during the survey included low numbers of 3 to 6 inch green sunfish and high numbers of hybrid bluegill x green sunfish with 26% 8 inches or larger. Low water levels and abundant aquatic vegetation make fishing difficult during the summer months. To better manage vegetation, grass carp were stocked in 2022. No boating is allowed on this lake. Access for shoreline angling is fair.



Mormon Island State Recreation Area

Location: Exit 312, NE quadrant of Grand Island Interstate 80 Interchange
Latitude: 40.82498 Longitude: -98.37416

Waterbody Information: Three lakes are present at the Mormon Island State Recreation Area. The area is maintained by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission as a State Recreation Area and a park entry permit is required to enter. Modern and primitive camping is available, as well as a shower house and swimming beach. A concrete boat ramp is present on the middle and west lakes and boating is limited to 5 mph/no wake. A



handicapped accessible fishing pier is located on the west lake. Shoreline access is excellent on the middle and west lakes making them great places for family fishing outings. Access to the east lake is by walk-in only and shoreline access is poor. Special fishing regulations for these lakes include a 21-inch minimum length limit for largemouth bass and a 40-inch minimum length limit for muskellunge. Walleye regulations include a 15-inch minimum length limit and a daily bag limit of 4, with only one fish larger than 22 inches.

Mormon Island West: The largest of the three lakes at 42 acres. The lake has varied depths, with a maximum depth of 25 feet. A contour map can be found here: <http://outdoornebraska.gov/lakecontourmaps/>. This fishery was renovated in 2010 to remove rough fish and has been restocked with largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, black crappie, walleye, and muskellunge. The most recent fish population survey was completed during the spring of 2022 and is indicative of an established multi-species fishery. Largemouth bass abundance was high, but lower than in 2017 with multiple year classes present. Most bass were 8 to 11 inches, 30% were 12 to 14 inches, and a few were over 15 inches. The largest bass collected was 21 inches. No muskellunge were sampled. Muskellunge are stocked at low densities, usually 1 to 2 per acre. There have been five year-classes (2011, 13, 15, 17, & 22) of muskies stocked since the renovation and anecdotal reports from anglers indicate good angling success, with fish up to 48 inches reportedly caught. Channel catfish were not sampled in 2022, however 10-inch catfish have been stocked regularly every other year since the renovation (2010, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, & 22).

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Mormon Island West (continued):

Panfish populations remain relatively unchanged from the 2017 sample. Bluegill abundance was high and the majority of the fish ranged from 5.5 to 7.5 inches, with no fish greater than 8 inches. Black crappie were abundant, but most were 7 to 8 inches, with only a few larger than nine inches. Five year-classes of walleye have been stocked since the renovation (2013, 14, 16, 18, 22) however only 2 walleye were caught in this last survey. Both walleye measured just under 15 inches. Yellow perch were also fairly abundant, with most perch ranging from 7 to 10 inches. Common carp are present as several 20 to 24 inch fish were sampled. Future stockings include 420 8-inch walleye during the fall of 2023 and 1,260 10-inch channel catfish in fall of 2024. The next fish population survey is scheduled for the spring of 2027.

Mormon Island Middle: This 19 acre lake is shallower than the west lake and has a maximum depth of 12 feet. The lake normally has very clear water and abundant submerged aquatic vegetation. A contour map can be found here: <http://outdoornebraska.gov/lakecontourmaps/>. The fishery was renovated in 2005 to remove rough fish and has been restocked with largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish, black crappie and redear sunfish. The fish population was most recently surveyed during the spring of 2022 which revealed a healthy population of sport fish. Largemouth bass abundance was high and the majority of the bass ranged from 8 to 12 inches. There was fair abundance of 12 to 15 inch bass, but few fish larger than 15 inches. The largest bass collected was 21 inches. Bluegill abundance was double previous survey results, 25 per net compared to 11.25 per net. Most bluegill ranged from 6 to 8 inches. Redear sunfish were more abundant than bluegill with 30 per net. Redears also had a larger size distribution with 40% sampled measuring 7.5 inches or better. There were only a few black crappie sampled in the survey, averaging 10 inches. A few channel catfish were surveyed but all were good size, ranging from 11 to 20 inches. Other species captured in the survey included numerous bluegill x redear hybrids, which ranged from 6 to 8.5 inches. Walleye were stocked in 2020 and two 9-inch walleye were captured. Common carp and gizzard shad were also surveyed in 2022, carp ranged from 20 to 28 inches. Future fish stocking includes 570 10-inch catfish scheduled for 2024. The next fish population survey is scheduled for the spring of 2027.

Mormon Island East: Ownership of this 31-acre lake was recently transferred to Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. 2022 marked the first time Mormon Island East was surveyed since 1995. Largemouth bass, bluegill, and crappie were present along with large numbers of unwanted fish species, including shortnose gar, quillback, common carp, bigmouth buffalo, and yellow bullheads. Crappie ranged from 5 to 13 inches, bluegill ranged from 3 to 7 inches, and largemouth ranged from 7 to 16 inches. All sportfish were found in fairly low densities and fairly high densities of gar were present. Access to this lake is by walk-in only through Mormon Island SRA. Shoreline access is very poor due to dense stands of cattails. Lake depth varies dramatically with sharp drop-offs and shallow flats extending out into the middle. No fish stockings are planned at this time. The next fish population survey is scheduled for the spring of 2027.

Alda

Location: Exit 305, NE quadrant of Alda Interstate 80 Interchange
Latitude: 40.80278 Longitude: -98.49172

Waterbody Information: Alda is a 12 acre lake owned by the Nebraska Department of Transportation. Maximum depth is 15 feet. The latest fish population survey was completed during the spring of 2022. The quality of the fishery is fairly good, especially for largemouth bass and northern pike. Bass abundance and size structure has improved since the previous survey was completed in 2017. Most bass collected in the shocking survey ranged from 11 to 15 inches compared to 8 to 11 inches in 2017. Good numbers of bass from 15 to 18 inches were also sampled, with



the largest bass approaching 19 inches. Bluegill are very abundant, but overall had a poor size distribution. Most bluegill collected ranged from 3 to 5 inches, with only a few larger than 7 inches. Channel catfish were not abundant, but most ranged from 10 to 15 inches. Channel catfish were stocked in 2022 at 10 inches and will continue to be stocked on alternate years at Alda. Northern pike abundance is good at Alda with most fish ranging from 20 to 24 inches. The largest pike sampled was 33.5 inches. Northern pike were stocked in the fall of 2022.

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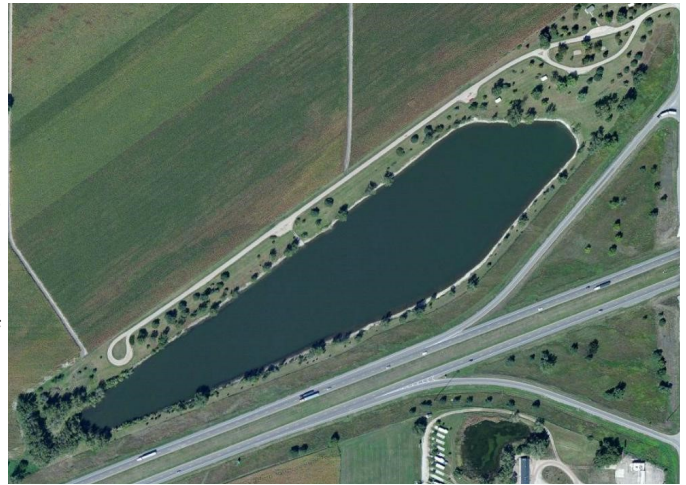
Alda (continued): Other species caught during the survey included high abundance of alewife, moderate numbers of 24 to 30 inch common carp and low numbers of four inch bluegill x green sunfish hybrids. Future fish stockings include black crappie in 2023, channel catfish in 2024, and northern pike in 2025. Anglers should be aware there is a new 21-inch minimum length limit on largemouth bass and there continues to be a 34-inch minimum length limit on northern pike. The parking area is located on the north side of the lake which provides fair shoreline access for bank anglers. No boats are allowed on this lake and no camping is allowed.



Cheyenne SRA

Location: Exit 300, NW quadrant of the Wood River Interstate 80 Interchange
Latitude: 40.76500 Longitude: -98.59027

Waterbody Information: Cheyenne is a 17 acre lake with a maximum depth of 12 feet. The latest fish population survey was completed in 2019. Survey results indicated that largemouth bass abundance has dipped slightly since the previous survey, but bass of all sizes were observed. Bass from 8 to 12 inches were most abundant, but there was also good representation of 12 to 15 inch fish. There was a fairly significant decline in bass larger than 15 inches, but several larger than 20 inches were collected in the sample. There is a 21-inch minimum length limit on largemouth bass for this lake. Bluegill abundance was much lower than past samples, but average size was improved. Most bluegill were 6 to 7.5 inches and a couple larger than eight inches were captured. Low numbers of black crappie were sampled, most ranging from 8 to 9.5 inches. Channel catfish abundance was lower than past surveys, with all sampled fish ranging from 14 to 16 inches. Catfish are stocked on alternate years with the next stocking of 570 10-inch fish scheduled for the fall of 2023. Other fish species sampled included moderate numbers of 20 to 30 inch common carp, fair abundance of green sunfish, bluegill x green sunfish hybrids, and a few shortnose gar. Unfortunately, Cheyenne receives floodwater from local drainage ditches during wet periods, allowing for unwanted species to be periodically introduced into the lake. Cheyenne has a gravel boat ramp and boating is limited to 5 mph/no wake. Shoreline access is excellent, allowing for family friendly fishing trips. The area is managed as a State Recreation Area and a park entry permit is required. Primitive camping is available.



West Wood River WMA

Location: West Binfield Road & South 140th Road,
Directions from Wood River Interchange (Exit 300) go 1/2 mile south, 1 mile west, North across overpass, 1/4 mile west
Latitude: 40.75687 Longitude: -98.61049

Waterbody Information: West Wood River is 15 acres and has a maximum depth of 10 feet. The latest fish population survey was completed in 2019. Survey results indicated that largemouth bass abundance has improved since the previous survey was completed. Bass of all sizes were collected, but bass from 10 to 13 inches were most abundant. Few bass larger than 15 inches were sampled, but there were several that ranged from 20 to 22 inches. There is a 21-inch minimum length limit on largemouth bass for this lake. Bluegill have historically been very abundant with most fish measuring less than six inches. The latest survey indicated that bluegill densities were much reduced and average size had increased. Most bluegill collected in this survey were 6 to 8 inches. Black crappie are present in low abundance, with a couple of 10 to 11 inch fish sampled. Channel catfish abundance was very good and lengths of sampled fish ranged from 13 to 25 inches. Catfish are stocked on alternate years and the next stocking of 450 10-inch fish is scheduled for the fall of 2023. There is a fairly high abundance of common carp present, most ranging from 16 to 24 inches. The only other fish species collected were green sunfish. West Wood River is managed as a Wildlife Management Area and camping is limited to three days. A shoreline clearing project to improve angler access was completed in 2022. A gravel boat ramp is present and boating is limited to 5 mph/no wake.



Research Update– Artificial fish attractors are increasingly a go-to for fisheries biologists looking to improve catch rates at local lakes, however influence of attractors on fish populations hasn't often been studied. Game and Parks partnering with University of Nebraska-Kearney designed a two-year project to identify daily and seasonal fish use of artificial habitat structures at Cheyenne SRA and Wood River WMA. In the fall of 2020, Georgia cube structures made from PVC and corrugated drainage pipe (picture below) were placed in both lakes. Monthly fish sampling using electrofishing and live imaging on and around the Georgia cubes began in May 2021 and concluded in December 2022.



The most common fish species sampled were bluegill, largemouth bass, and black crappie. Other species that were sampled included channel catfish, common carp, white sucker, shortnose gar, black bullhead, and green sunfish. Some of the largest sportfish sampled throughout the study included bluegill up to 10 inches, largemouth bass up to 22 inches, and black crappie up to 15 inches. Fish used the Georgia cubes during the fall and winter months when aquatic vegetation had died back. In the spring and summer fish moved off the cubes and dispersed throughout the lake.



Wood River consistently had more fish using the structures than at Cheyenne. The most fish caught in one sampling period occurred during the day in September 2022 with 120 fish caught. This research is part of larger habitat projects currently ongoing throughout Nebraska. Information gained from this research will provide insight that benefit fish communities and improve angler opportunities in waterbodies statewide. Fish attractors can also be found at Sandy Channel Lake #2, Ft. Kearny #5, and Windmill #2.

War Axe SRA

Location: Exit 291, NE quadrant of Shelton Interstate 80 Interchange

Latitude: 40.72451 Longitude: -98.73529

Waterbody Information: War Axe is 14 acres and has a maximum depth of 20 feet. The fishery was renovated in 2007 and was restocked with smallmouth bass, redear sunfish, and channel catfish. Bluegill, yellow perch, and walleye have also been introduced in recent years. The fish population was most recently surveyed in the spring of 2020. Results indicate that the overall quality of the fishery has declined since the last survey was completed. Smallmouth bass abundance has dropped significantly and catch rates are at an all time low (36 bass/hour of



shocking compared to 128 bass/hour in 2015). Most smallmouth ranged from 13 to 17 inches, with the largest being 18 inches. Small bass abundance is much lower and it appears that there may be reproduction and/or recruitment issues, possibly due to the high density of small panfish. Redear sunfish are experiencing a decline in average size, as most redear ranged from 4 to 6 inches. The largest redear sampled were 8.5 inches. There continues to be a moderately high abundance of channel catfish, with fish ranging from 12 to 20 inches. Channel catfish are stocked on alternate years, with the next stocking of 420 10-inch catfish scheduled for the fall of 2023. Bluegill abundance remains extremely high and the size structure is poor; most ranging from 3 to 5 inches. Yellow perch are present in moderate abundance, with most fish ranging from 4 to 6 inches. Advanced (eight inch) walleye fingerlings have been stocked for several years to help assist with panfish control and provide additional angling opportunities. These stockings have created a good population of 12 to 14 inch walleye and fish from earlier stockings are approaching 21 inches. Walleye will continue to be stocked every other year with the next scheduled for 2023. A gravel boat ramp is present and boating is restricted to 5 mph/no wake. Shoreline access for anglers is good and the area is a great place for a family fishing outing. The area is managed as a State Recreation Area and a park entry permit is required for entry. Primitive camping is available and a modern restroom is open during the summer months. A contour map of the lake can be found here: <http://outdoornebraska.gov/lakecontourmaps/>

Windmill State Recreation Area

Location: Exit 285, NE quadrant of Gibbon Interstate 80 Interchange

Latitude: 40.70691 Longitude: 98.845301

Waterbody Information: Six lakes are available for fishing at Windmill SRA ranging from 1 to 7 acres. The area is maintained as a State Recreation Area and a park entry permit is required. The area provides both modern and primitive camping, as well as a shower house and swimming beach. Shoreline access is very good on all of the lakes and the area is an excellent place to introduce youngsters to fishing. There is a 21-inch minimum length limit in effect on all of the lakes for largemouth bass. No boat ramps exist on these lakes, but boats with electric motors and non-powered boats may be used. The fisheries in all of these lakes were last surveyed during the spring of 2021. Cedar tree piles were added to all lakes, except #2 and #5, in the winter of 2022.



Windmill #1: This is the largest lake on the area at 7 acres. This lake has a good abundance of largemouth bass in all size classes. Survey results indicated high numbers of bass between 12 and 15 inches, with the largest bass topping 18 inches. Bluegill abundance was high and the size structure of the population was fair. Most bluegill sampled ranged from 4.0 to 6.5 inches, with the largest at 7.5 inches. Black crappie are normally abundant in this lake, but none were collected in the 2021 survey. Other gamefish species sampled included a few small green sunfish, bluegill x green sunfish hybrids, and yellow perch. This lake commonly floods, so there are numerous other species present. Common carp, bullheads, gizzard shad, and gar are abundant. Future stockings for Lake #1 include 400 10-inch channel catfish during the fall of 2023. A lake map can be found here: <http://outdoornebraska.gov/lakecontourmaps/>

Windmill State Recreation Area (continued)

Windmill #2: This 2 acre lake has a maximum depth of 18 feet. Largemouth bass abundance has improved since the last survey was completed, but most of the bass collected in the sample were less than 12 inches. The number of bass larger than 15 inches has declined considerably from previous surveys. The largest bass collected was 17 inches. Bluegill abundance was slightly lower, but average size showed improvement. Most bluegill range from 6 to 7.5 inches, but there were a few up to 8.5 inches. Black crappie and yellow perch have been sampled in past surveys, but none were collected in 2021. Channel catfish are present but only one 22 inch fish was caught in the survey. Catfish are stocked on alternate years, with the next stocking of 100 ten-inch fish scheduled for the fall of 2023. This lake also contains a few large common carp, green sunfish, and bluegill x green sunfish hybrids. A handicapped accessible fishing pier is located on the north side of this lake. Catchable rainbow trout are stocked seasonally. Stocking rates consist of 600 trout in March and 600 trout in October. A map of the lake can be found here: <http://outdoornebraska.gov/lakecontourmaps/>

Windmill #3: This one acre lake is the smallest at Windmill. Largemouth bass abundance remains high in Lake 3. Although most are less than 12 inches, there were fair numbers of 15 to 18 inch bass sampled in the last survey. Bluegill abundance was much lower this time around and most bluegill collected ranged from 5 to 7 inches. Green sunfish x bluegill hybrids were much more abundant than what we normally sample in Lake 3. These fish had a great size structure with most fish averaging 8 inches. Channel catfish are present, but only one fish was sampled. Fifty 10-inch channel catfish are stocked on alternate years, with the next stocking scheduled for the fall of 2023. To help provide quality catfishing opportunities, this lake has been designated as catch and release only for channel catfish. Black crappie are present in low abundance with one 10 inch fish collected. Large common carp have been sampled in the past, but none were collected in this survey. A map of Lake #3 can be found here: <http://outdoornebraska.gov/lakecontourmaps/>

Windmill #4: This three acre lake has a maximum depth of 24 feet. Largemouth bass abundance was slightly lower, but remains near the long term average for this lake. All of the bass sampled were less than 15 inches. Bluegill catch was also slightly lower, but the size structure of the population was very good. Most bluegill range from five to seven inches, with several of them approaching 9 inches. Channel catfish are present in moderate abundance, with most averaging 18 inches. Catfish are stocked on alternate years and the next stocking of 150 ten-inch fish is scheduled for the fall of 2023. Black crappie abundance was higher than what has been seen during the past two surveys. While most were less than 8 inches, there was one 12 inch individual captured. Low numbers of green sunfish x bluegill hybrids were also sampled. Common carp remain somewhat numerous, with most of the fish ranging from 25 to 30 inches. A lake map of Lake #4 can be found here: <http://outdoornebraska.gov/lakecontourmaps/>

Windmill #5: Windmill #5 is a shallow, six acre lake with a maximum depth of nine feet. This lake has a designated swimming beach on the west end. The abundance of largemouth bass has been on a downward trend for several years and the latest survey indicated the population is as low as its ever been. While most bass are less than 12 inches, there were several 16 to 18 inch bass captured. Bluegill abundance was also low with fish up to 7.5 inches. Black crappie numbers look improved as several 8-12 inch fish were sampled. Small channel catfish were also abundant. Catfish are stocked on alternate years with the next stocking of 300 10-inch fish occurring in the fall of 2023. Common carp remain in high abundance and efforts were made to remove these from the lake with electroshocking gear. Yellow perch and white bass are also present, but none were sampled this time.

Windmill #6: This 2.5 acre lake has a maximum depth of 25 feet. Largemouth bass abundance continues to be on a downward trend and the majority collected in the last survey were less than 11 inches. Bluegill were fairly abundant and had a good size structure, ranging from 3 to 8.5 inches. Channel catfish are present, but only one fish was sampled. Channel catfish are stocked on alternate years, with the next stocking of 125 10-inch fish scheduled for the fall of 2023. Other species sampled included black and yellow bullheads, a few large common carp, shortnose gar, and green sunfish.



Bassway Strip WMA

Location: Exit 279, Minden Interstate 80 Interchange, 1/4S on Nebraska Hwy. 10, east on county road back toward I-80

Latitude: 40.68630 Longitude: -98.94866

Waterbody Information: This nine acre lake has a maximum depth of 24 feet. A map of the lake can be found here: <http://outdoornebraska.gov/lakecontourmaps/> The fish population was last surveyed in 2018, next survey is scheduled for 2023. Survey results indicated that bass abundance has declined since the 2013 survey. The catch rate was 54 bass per hour, which is half of what was collected in the previous survey. Most bass collected in the sample were less than 12 inches. There were no bass between 12 and 15 inches sampled, but a few 17 to 20 inch fish were collected. The largest bass captured was 20 inches. Bluegill abundance was much higher than previous survey results. All sizes of bluegill were sampled, with most of them ranging from either 3 to 5 inches and



from 6 to 7.5 inches. There were a few bluegill from 8 to 9 inches collected. While black crappie have been sampled in the past, none were collected during this survey. Channel catfish were collected in relatively low abundance, with fish ranging from 13 to 24 inches. Catfish are stocked on alternate years and the next stocking of 270 ten-inch fish is scheduled for the fall of 2023. Other fish showing up in the survey included common carp, yellow bullheads, green sunfish and bluegill x green sunfish hybrids. Carp abundance remains higher than preferred for an Interstate lake, with most fish ranging from 18 to 24 inches. Yellow bullhead abundance also remains higher than preferred. Bullheads ranged from 6 to 11 inches and had an average length of 9.4 inches. A concrete boat ramp is available and boats are limited to 5 mph/no wake. Shoreline access for angling is good along the north side of the lake. Several smaller lakes are also located on the Bassway Strip Wildlife Management Area. While no active fisheries management occurs on these lakes, they provide fair fishing opportunities for largemouth bass, channel catfish and carp. The area also provides excellent access to the north channel of the Platte River and a kayak landing is located near the entrance of the WMA. Camping is limited to three consecutive nights in a six-day time period.

Fort Kearny State Recreation Area

Location: From Kearney Interstate 80 Interchange (Exit 272), 2 miles south, 5 miles east on Highway 50, 1 mile north

Latitude: 40.65208 Longitude: -98.98943

Waterbody Information:

Seven lakes are available for fishing at Fort Kearny SRA ranging from 1 to 4 acres. The area is maintained as a State Recreation Area and a park entry permit is required to enter. The park provides both modern and primitive camping, as well as a shower house, swimming beach, and picnic shelters. A 1.8 mile hike/bike trail located on the eastern edge



of the park provides access to the Platte River. Shoreline access for angling is very good on most of the lakes and the area is an excellent place to introduce youngsters to fishing. No boat ramps exist on these lakes, but boats with electric motors and non-powered boats may be used. The fish populations were last surveyed in the spring of 2021 and the next survey is scheduled for 2026. Anglers are reminded that there is a 21-inch minimum length limit in effect for black bass (largemouth, smallmouth, spotted) on all of the lakes at Fort Kearny and that Fort Kearny Lake #2 has a catch-and-release regulation for all catfish.

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Fort Kearny State Recreation Area (continued)

Fort Kearny #1: Lake #1 consists of two 1.5 acre lakes connected by a small channel. Depths on each lake approach twenty feet. Largemouth bass abundance has slightly declined from results seen during previous surveys. Most bass collected in the survey ranged from 7 to 11 inches. The largest bass sampled was 21 inches. Bluegill abundance was also lower than what's normally sampled in Lake 1. The majority of the bluegill catch was 5 to 7 inches, with some up to 8 inches. Channel catfish abundance is good and fish up to 29 inches were collected. Catfish are stocked in alternate years and the next stocking of 150 ten-inch fish is scheduled for the fall of 2024. Black crappie numbers were improved with most ranging from 8 to 10 inches. Other fish collected during the survey included low numbers of very large common carp, green sunfish, and a rock bass.

Fort Kearny #2: Lake #2 is a three acre lake with a maximum depth of 28 feet. The abundance of largemouth bass is very good, with bass sampled in all size categories. Most of the bass are less than 14 inches and the largest collected was 21 inches. Bluegill are also very abundant; while most were less than 5 inches, there were several 7 to 8 inch bluegill sampled. Lake 2 has historically supported a trophy channel catfish population, but only a few were collected in this survey. There is a catch and release regulation in effect for catfish on this lake. Catfish are stocked on alternate years with the next stocking of 150 ten-inch fish scheduled for the fall of 2024. Green sunfish were fairly abundant and ranged from 6 to 7 inches. Black crappie are present, but none were collected in the last survey.

Fort Kearny #3: Lake #3 is only one acre and is the smallest lake on the area. It has a maximum depth of 28 feet. Largemouth bass abundance has improved in recent years and the past survey revealed good numbers of 10 to 14 inch bass. Bluegill abundance is also greatly improved with fish of all size categories collected. Good numbers of 7 to 8.5 inch bluegill are available. Channel catfish are present, but were not collected in this survey. Catfish are stocked on alternate years with the next stocking of 60 ten-inch catfish scheduled for the fall of 2024. Other fish sampled during the survey included a few green sunfish x bluegill hybrids.

Fort Kearny #4: Lake #4 is 3 acres with a maximum depth of 18 feet. This lake had a very high abundance of bass in the previous two surveys, but numbers appear to be down significantly. Most of the bass population currently consists of fish less than 11 inches, but there were several over 16 inches, including a 21-incher collected. Bluegill abundance is improved and the size structure consists primarily of 6 to 7.5 inch fish. Green sunfish and green sunfish x bluegill hybrids are also common with some up to 8.5 inches. Black crappie have been collected in previous surveys, but none were encountered during this survey. Channel catfish are present and most ranged from 17 to 22 inches. Catfish are stocked on alternate years with the next stocking of 150 ten-inch fish scheduled for the fall of 2024.

Fort Kearny #5: Lake #5 is 3.25 acres and has a maximum depth of 30 feet. Largemouth bass abundance is high, with most fish ranging from 6 to 12 inches. There were few bass larger than 12 inches sampled, but the largest was 22 inches. Bluegill abundance is low and most fish ranged from 6 to 8.5 inches. Black crappie are also present in low numbers. Channel catfish are present, but only a few up to 28 inches were sampled. Catfish are stocked on alternate years, with the next scheduled stocking of 150 ten-inch fish scheduled for the fall of 2024. Other fish captured in low numbers during the survey included large common carp (30-32 inches) and green sunfish. Yellow perch have been stocked several times in recent years, but predation from largemouth bass has limited their survival and no perch were caught during the survey. A handicapped accessible fishing dock is located on the west end of this lake.



Continued on next page

Fort Kearny State Recreation Area (continued)

Fort Kearny #6: Lake #6 is 3.75 acres and has a maximum depth of 20 feet. There is a high density of largemouth bass present and the majority are less than 11 inches. Only a few bass larger than 12 inches were sampled, but there were a couple that exceeded 20 inches. Bluegill abundance has improved and most are 5 to 7.5 inches. Green sunfish x bluegill hybrids (greengills) have been stocked several times in recent years to enhance angling opportunities for fishing workshops. Abundance of these fish are increasing in the lake with most ranging from 5 to 6 inches, although several greater than 8 inches were sampled. Channel catfish remain abundant, with fish up to 24 inches. Catfish are stocked on alternate years, with the next scheduled stocking of 200 ten-inch fish scheduled for the fall of 2024. Black crappie are present, but were not detected in the latest survey. Catchable-sized rainbow trout are stocked in Lake #6 during March and October. There are 1,200 trout stocked in March and 1,080 trout stocked in October. Other fish encountered during the survey included a few very large common carp, green sunfish, a white sucker and rainbow trout. A handicapped accessible fishing pier is located on the south side of Lake #6.



Fort Kearny #7: Lake #7 is 3.5 acres and has a maximum depth of 28 feet. This lake has a designated public swimming beach on the south side. Shoreline access is poor around most of the lake, but a handicapped accessible pier is located on the northeast corner. Largemouth bass abundance is high and most of the bass range from 10 to 13 inches. There were only a few bass larger than 15 inches sampled and the largest was 17 inches. Bluegill abundance is high and there are excellent numbers of 7 to 9 inch fish present. Channel catfish are present, but none were sampled during the survey. Catfish are stocked on alternate years, with the next scheduled stocking of 175 ten-inch fish scheduled for the fall of 2024. Other fish captured in the survey included several very large 34 to 36 inch common carp.

Bufflehead WMA

Location: From Kearney Interchange (Exit 272), 1 mile north to 11th Street, 3 miles east to Cherry Avenue, 1 mile south, 1/2 m east
Latitude: 40.67087 Longitude: -99.01802

Waterbody Information: Bufflehead is a shallow 15 acre lake with a maximum depth of 12 feet. Low water levels persisted in 2022 due to drought. The fish population was last surveyed during 2018. Results of this survey indicated that largemouth bass abundance was low, but there were some larger bass present. Due to reduced densities, a 21-inch minimum bass regulation was put in place. Bluegill and yellow perch were very abundant with most fish measuring less than five inches. There were a few large rock bass sampled. Channel catfish were fairly abundant with most catfish ranging from 10 to 22 inches. There were also lots of green sunfish, green sunfish x bluegill hybrids, and large common carp collected in the survey. Bufflehead



suffered severe flooding from nearby Turkey Creek during a July 2019 flood event. Flood waters flowed into the lake for several days which introduced unwanted fish species, sediment, and excess nutrients. Rough fish, including gizzard shad, bigmouth buffalo, and common carp were sampled in the spring of 2022. Common carp were most abundant and ranged from 16 to 33 inches. Water clarity may have been impacted by increased rough fish densities. A brush clearing project was completed in the fall of 2022 to improve shoreline access for anglers. This area has a concrete boat ramp and all boats are allowed but they are limited to 5 mph/no wake. Eurasian watermilfoil, an aquatic invasive species, was discovered in Bufflehead in 2022. **Boaters are advised to inspect boats and remove all aquatic vegetation before visiting a different waterbody to prevent the spread of invasive species.** No camping is allowed on this WMA.

Archway Lakes

Location: From Kearney Interchange (Exit 272), 1/2 block north, 1 block east on Talmage St., 1 block south on 1st Ave, 3 miles east on 1st St

Latitude: 40.67106 Longitude: -99.03850

Waterbody Information: An agreement was signed with the Archway Foundation in 2010 to provide public fishing access to the four lakes located on their property. These lakes range in size from 1 to 25 acres. There is a 21" minimum length limit for black bass (largemouth, smallmouth) on all of the Archway Lakes. Lake #1 has a gravel boat ramp and powerboats are restricted to 5 mph/no wake. Lake #1 was last surveyed in 2018.



The Archway Lakes were severely impacted by flooding during the July 2019 flood event. Flows from nearby Turkey Creek flowed into all of the lakes for several days; introducing unwanted fish species, excess nutrients, and sediment. Prior to the flood event, only Lake #1 contained undesirable fish species, such as common carp and gizzard shad. Lakes #2 and #4 were previously treated with a fish toxicant to remove all fish and had been restocked with desirable sport fish. Lake #3 did not have any rough fish species present. Sampling efforts during 2020 revealed that the flooding introduced common carp, gizzard shad, buffalo, river carpsucker, and other undesirable species to all four of the lakes. The three small lakes were treated with the fish toxicant rotenone during 2020 to remove all fish species and have been restocked. There are no plans to renovate Lake #1 at this time. Large numbers of young-of-the-year largemouth bass (above left) were observed in Archway #1 in 2022. The next survey for Archway Lakes is planned for spring 2023.



Archway Lakes (continued)



Lake #1: At 25 acres, Lake #1 is the largest lake on the Archway Monument campus. The entire lake is open to public fishing access. Lake #1 has a variety of fish species ranging from largemouth bass to common carp. Largemouth bass are moderately abundant and the size structure of the population is very good. Bass from 3 to 22 inches were sampled in the 2018 survey and about half of them were larger than 12 inches. Bluegill are not overly abundant and most of them range from 5 to 7 inches. Other game fish species sampled in low abundance included green sunfish, green sunfish x bluegill hybrids, channel catfish, white bass, and yellow perch. Channel catfish are stocked on alternate years, with the next stocking of 750 10-inch fish scheduled for September 2024. Rough fish are very common in Lake #1; consisting primarily of common carp, carpsuckers, buffalo, and gizzard shad. Most common carp ranged from 20 to 26 inches. Tiger musky (northern pike x muskellunge hybrid) were introduced into Archway #1 during 2020 to help control rough fish and to provide another sport fish opportunity for anglers. There were approximately 1,600 4.5 inch fingerlings stocked in June and sampling during early fall revealed that some of these fish had already reached 16 inches. Another tiger musky stocking occurred in April 2021 as 2,800 3.5 inch fish were stocked. Future tiger musky stockings are planned for 2023 but will be dependent on availability from the hatchery system. Anglers are reminded that there is a 40 inch minimum length limit in effect for muskellunge and tiger muskellunge. Prior to the renovations that took place on the three smaller Archway Lakes during 2020, salvage efforts were made to remove as many sportfish as possible before the lakes were treated. The salvaged fish, which included largemouth bass, bluegill, black crappie, yellow perch, redear sunfish, and channel catfish were all placed into Lake #1 to provide additional angling opportunities.

Lake #2: This two acre lake was treated with rotenone during April of 2020. It has been restocked with smallmouth bass and yellow perch. At this point, these are the only two species which will be introduced in this water body. It will take two to three years for a quality fishery to develop.

Lake#3: This two acre lake was treated with rotenone during May of 2020. It has been restocked with smallmouth bass, black crappie and channel catfish. It will take two to three years for a quality fishery to develop. Future stockings will consist of alternate year stockings of ten-inch channel catfish (100 fish), with the next stocking scheduled for 2024.

Lake#4: This one acre lake is the smallest on the Archway property. Lake #4 was treated with rotenone during March of 2020. The lake has been restocked with smallmouth bass and rock bass. It will take two to three years for a quality fishery to develop.



Kea Lake WMA

Location: Exit 272, Southwest quadrant of the Kearney Interstate 80 Interchange
Latitude: 40.66765 Longitude: -99.08783

Waterbody Information: Kea Lake is 20 acres and has a maximum depth of 12 feet. The fish population was last surveyed during May of 2018 and survey results revealed that the lake has a good fishery for several species. A moderately high abundance of largemouth bass are present and about two-thirds of the bass were less than 12 inches and the other one-third ranged from 12 to 16 inches. The largest bass sampled was 17 inches. Bluegill are common and most range from 4 to 7 inches. Low densities of bluegill from 8 to 8.5



inches are present. Kea Lake has a small population of triploid hybrid crappie. These fish are created in the hatchery by crossing white and black crappie. The fertilized eggs are subjected to pressure to make them triploid which results in a sterile fish. Growth rates are increased as energy is not used for reproduction. There have been five stockings of hybrid crappie introduced into Kea Lake since 2006, with the latest stocking in 2018. Anglers are encouraged to practice catch and release on these fish as they have the growth potential to become trophy sized fish. No future triploid crappie stockings are planned at this time due to production difficulties. Channel catfish are abundant in Kea Lake, with fish in the last survey measuring from 10 to 25 inches. Catfish are stocked on alternate years with the next stocking of 600 ten-inch fish scheduled for the fall of 2023. Several other fish species were captured in low numbers during the survey; including smallmouth bass, walleye, black bullhead, bluegill x green sunfish hybrids, green sunfish, bluegill x redear hybrids, and white suckers. The City of Kearney manages the land surrounding the lake and a walking trail encircling the lake is available. Shoreline access is improving for anglers, as concentrated spraying efforts to control invasive phragmites the past two years has created more open space for shoreline anglers. A concrete boat ramp is available on the east end of the lake. Boats are restricted to 5 mph/no wake. A lake map is available here: <http://outdoornebraska.gov/lakecontourmaps/> No camping is allowed on this area.



Kea West WMA

Location: From Kearney interchange (Exit 272), 1 mile N to 11th Street, 1 1/4 mile W to Kea West Rd, 1 mile S to overpass approach, turn east

Latitude: 40.66765 Longitude: -99.08778

Kea West WMA received severe damage from the July 2019 Flood event. Turkey Creek flowed directly into the lake for several days introducing unwanted fish species and nutrients to the lake. In addition; the access road, parking area, and boat ramp were damaged. Post flood sampling showed that several unwanted fish species were introduced to the lake during the flood; including gizzard shad, buffalo, carpsucker, and gar. Efforts were made during the spring of 2020 to salvage many of the sportfish from the lake, which were transferred to other local Interstate 80 lakes. The lake was then treated with the fish toxicant rotenone to remove all of the fish from the water body. The lake was restocked with smallmouth bass, yellow perch, and triploid crappie during the summer of 2020. It will take two to three years for the fishery to develop. The access road, parking area, and boat ramp were repaired during the fall of 2021 and the WMA is once again open for public access.



Waterbody Information: Kea West is seven acres with a maximum depth of 20 feet. The lake will be surveyed during 2023 to evaluate the success of the renovation and fish stockings.

Kea West will continue to be managed as a **catch and release only lake** for all species. **Possession of any fish species other than baitfish while fishing this lake is prohibited.** Shoreline access is good and a mowed trail encircles the lake. All boats are allowed, but are limited to 5 mph/no wake. Camping is prohibited on this area.



North Kearney Rest Stop

Location: From Kearney Interchange (Exit 272), 1 mile north to 11th Street, 2 miles west to 30th Ave, 2 miles south
Latitude: 40.67159 Longitude: -99.12372

Waterbody Information: North Kearney Rest Stop is seven acres with a maximum depth of 14 feet. The lake is located directly north of the westbound Interstate 80 Rest Area and the property around the lake is maintained by the Nebraska Department of Transportation. Anglers can either access the lake via the rest stop or from 30th Avenue. Access to the lake is walk-in only and no boats are allowed. Shoreline access is fair and is best along the south side. The fishery was most recently surveyed in 2018. Largemouth bass are moderately abundant and have a good size distribution. Bass sampled in the survey ranged from 5 to 20 inches. Approximately two-thirds of the bass collected in the survey were less than 12 inches, while the other third were 13 to 17 inches. Bluegill abundance has increased six-fold since the previous survey, although the size structure has not changed much. The majority of the bluegill collected during the survey ranged from 5 to 7 inches. No bluegill larger than eight inches were captured. Channel catfish are abundant and have a good size distribution, with catfish ranging from 12 to 25 inches. Catfish are stocked on alternate years and the next stocking of 210 ten-inch fish is scheduled for the fall of 2023. There were a couple rock bass collected during the survey which ranged in length from 4 to 10 inches. Other fish captured in low abundance included common carp (22 inches), green sunfish (3 inches), and green sunfish x bluegill hybrids (8-9 inches).



North Kearney Rest Stop was impacted by the July 2019 flood event as Turkey Creek inundated the lake for several days. Post flood sampling indicated that the largemouth bass and bluegill populations were not directly impacted and had similar abundance and size structure as before the flood. Unfortunately, gizzard shad were introduced into the lake, which could have long term negative impacts on bluegill growth, sportfish recruitment, and water quality. Several severe algae blooms were also noted post flood, likely stimulated by the nutrients that entered the lake with the flood water. Anglers could see reduced water clarity and fishing success in future years. Many of the salvaged sportfish from Kea West Lake were transferred to North Kearney Rest Stop which should help to improve the fishery and control the rough fish introduced from the flood. There are no plans to treat the lake with rotenone at this point.

South Kearney Rest Stop

Location: 4 miles west of Kearney Interstate 80 Interchange (Exit 272) — access is only available from the east bound lanes of Interstate 80 or by walking in from East Odessa WMA
Latitude: 40.67066 Longitude: -99.15849

Waterbody Information: This one acre lake is one of the smallest public lakes located along Interstate 80. It has a maximum depth of 14 feet. No boating is allowed and shoreline access for anglers is fair. Due to its small size and restricted access, limited fisheries management occurs on this lake. The fishery was last surveyed in 2003 and the quality of the fishery at that time was fair. Largemouth bass abundance was lower than average and the majority of the bass ranged from 5



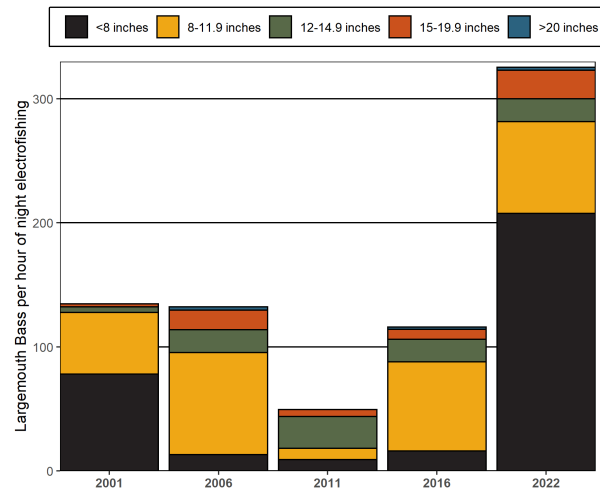
to 12 inches. A few fish greater than 15 inches were sampled and the largest bass was 17 inches. Panfish were abundant and several species were present; including black crappie, bluegill, redear, and sunfish hybrids. Crappie ranged from 6 to 12 inches, bluegill ranged from 3 to 6 inches, and the redear ranged from 3 to 7 inches. A few large common carp were also collected. No catfish were sampled and they are not currently stocked in this lake.

East Odessa WMA

Location: From Odessa Interstate 80 Interchange (Exit 263), 4 miles east on gravel access road on south side of I-80
 Latitude: 40.67048 Longitude: -99.16491



Waterbody Information: This seven acre lake has a maximum depth of 28 feet. The fish population was last surveyed in the spring of 2022. Largemouth bass abundance is high, double what has been sampled previously. The population contains a variety of sizes, ranging from 3 to 21 inches. Most bass ranged from 6 to 8 inches, but there were

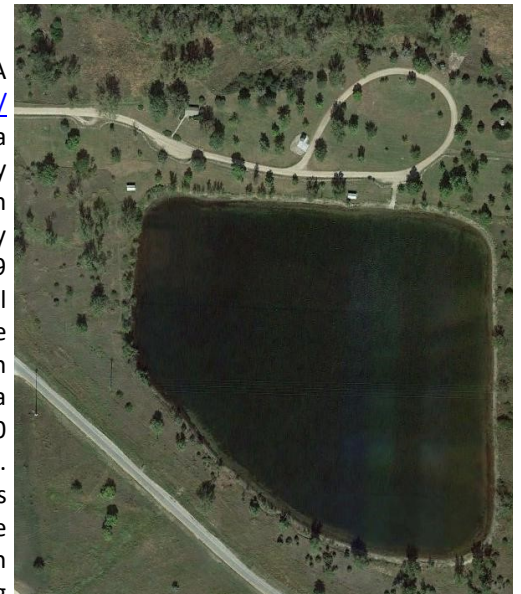


several larger than 15 inches. The largest bass sampled was 21 inches. Bluegill were fairly abundant, but the population's size distribution has declined with most fish less than 5 inches. Channel catfish are numerous and the population contains some large individuals. Catfish lengths ranged from 10 to 27 inches. Catfish are stocked on alternate years and the next stocking of 210 ten-inch fish is scheduled for the fall of 2023. Common carp were less abundant than previous samples and most range in size from 15 to 30 inches. East Odessa lake is located on the 160 acre East Odessa Wildlife Management Area. The access road leading to the property is minimally maintained and can become difficult to navigate when wet. Shoreline access around the lake is fairly good. No boat ramp is available, but the lake is open to electric motors and non-powered boats. Access to the Platte River is also available on this area.

Union Pacific SRA

Location: Exit 263, NE quadrant of Odessa Interstate 80 Interchange
 Latitude: 40.67881 Longitude: -99.25220

Waterbody Information: This 15 acre lake has a maximum depth of 21 feet. A map of the lake can be found here: <http://outdoornebraska.gov/lakecontourmaps/>. The fish population was last surveyed in 2019. There was a substantial increase in the abundance of largemouth bass since the last survey was completed. The majority of the bass collected during the survey ranged from 8 to 15 inches. The abundance of bass larger than 15 inches was also slightly better than previous surveys. The largest bass sampled during the survey was 19 inches. Bluegill continue to be abundant in Union Pacific, but an increase in overall length was seen since the previous survey. Bluegill from 3 to 8 inches were collected, but the majority ranged from 6.5 to 7.5 inches. Rock bass are present in low abundance; with only one 9.5 inch fish collected in the survey. There was a slight increase in the catch of black crappie, with all fish ranging from 5 to 10 inches. Channel catfish remain abundant and several size groups were caught. Catfish lengths ranged from 13 to 22 inches. Catfish are stocked on alternate years and the next stocking of 360 ten-inch fish is scheduled for the fall of 2023. There were only two miscellaneous species caught during the survey; a 22 inch common carp and a 5 inch green sunfish. The lake did receive some minor flooding during the July 2019 flood event. Post flood sampling indicated that the sport fish populations remained relatively unchanged, but a few common carp and longnose gar were collected which likely came from flood waters.



Union Pacific Lake is located on the Union Pacific State Recreation Area and a park entry permit is required to enter. Primitive camping facilities are available and a modern restroom is open during the summer months. A gravel boat ramp is present and boats are restricted to 5 mph/no wake. Shoreline access along the north side of the lake is mowed and is very good for bank angling.

Coot Shallows WMA

Location: From Odessa Interstate 80 Interchange (Exit 263), 3/4 mile North, 2 miles west on 11th Road
Latitude: 40.68423 Longitude: -99.29258

Waterbody Information: This 16 acre lake has a maximum depth of 12 feet. The fish population was last surveyed in 2019 and the next survey is scheduled for the spring of 2024. Survey results from 2019 indicated a decent fishery for several different species. Largemouth bass remain very abundant. Most of the bass sample consisted of 6 to 12 inch fish. There were only a few bass from 12 to 15 inches collected and nothing larger than 15 inches. Bluegill abundance dropped considerably from the past survey and an increase in average size was observed. Fair numbers of 7 to 8 inch bluegill were collected in the nets. Black crappie abundance was slightly lower, but several fish up to 11 inches were sampled. Channel catfish remain abundant and appear to have a good size distribution. Catfish lengths ranged from 14 to 23 inches. Catfish are stocked on alternate years and the next scheduled stocking of 480 ten-inch fish is scheduled for the fall of 2023. Numerous yellow perch were sampled in 2014, but only one fish was sampled during this survey. A concrete boat ramp is available and boats are limited to 5 mph/no wake. Shoreline access along the north side of the lake is very good. Aquatic vegetation is very abundant at Coot Shallows and can interfere with shore angling during the summer months.



Blue Hole West

Location: Exit 257, SW quadrant of the Elm Creek Interstate 80 Interchange
Latitude: 40.68717 Longitude: -99.38198

Waterbody Information: This 24 acre lake has a maximum depth of 12 feet. Blue Hole has an active channel of the Platte River flowing through it, creating poor water quality and allowing various rough fish species to enter. The fish population was most recently surveyed in 2020. The next scheduled survey will take place in the spring of 2025. The fishery provides decent opportunities for a variety of species. Largemouth bass densities are not as high as what is commonly observed in most I-80 lakes, but Blue Hole consistently produces some large bass. Bass up to 19 inches were collected in the survey and about 40% of the sampled bass were larger than 15 inches. The average length was 12.2 inches. Bluegill are moderately abundant, ranging from 3 to 7.5 inches. Both white and black crappie are present in low abundance, with fish up to 10 inches.



Excellent numbers of channel catfish were collected during the survey, ranging from 11 to 22 inches. Catfish are stocked on alternate years and the next stocking of 720 ten-inch fish is scheduled for the fall of 2023. Low densities of 12 to 17 inch white bass were also sampled. With the connection to the Platte River, Blue Hole supports a plethora of riverine fish species. Common carp, carpsuckers, buffalo, gizzard shad, gar, and white suckers are numerous. Other species caught in low abundance included green sunfish and green sunfish x bluegill hybrids. A gravel boat ramp is available and boats are limited to 5 mph/no wake. Shoreline access is fair. Access to the Platte River is available through this property. Camping is limited to three consecutive nights in a six-day time period.

Sandy Channel State Recreation Area

Location: From Elm Creek Interstate 80 Interchange (Exit 257), 2 miles south on Highway 183
Latitude: 40.66838 Longitude: -9937982

Sandy Channel SRA received extensive damage from a flood event during July 2019. Flood water from the south channel of the Platte River flooded most of the lakes on the area and washed out the main entrance road into the park. The road has since been repaired and the main park area has been re-opened. The flood had potentially devastating impacts on several of the lakes as undesirable fish species were introduced. In addition, sediment and excessive nutrients entered these lakes impacting water quality. Post flood sampling on the lakes indicated that most received at least a few unwanted species, such as common carp, gizzard shad, and carsuckers. Of all of the lakes, Lake #2 was probably impacted the hardest by the flood in terms of rough fish invasion. Due to this flood event, anglers could possibly see reduced water clarity and increased chances of algae blooms in these lakes, which may impact angling success.



Waterbody Information: Ten lakes ranging from 0.5 to 30 acres are available at Sandy Channel State Recreation Area. The area is maintained by the Parks Division, and a park entry permit is required to enter the park. Primitive camping is allowed and vault toilets are available. Shoreline access ranges from poor to very good on these lakes. A concrete boat ramp is available on Lakes #2, #4, and #8. Boats are limited to 5 mph/no wake. All the other lakes are open to electric and non-powered boats only. Active fisheries management occurs on Lakes 2, 4, 6, and 8. Many of the remaining lakes are either too shallow or have flooding issues, which limit their potential for quality fisheries. The five lakes listed below provide the majority of the fishing opportunities at Sandy Channel. A fish survey was completed on Lake's 2, 4, 6, and 8 during 2020. The next survey is scheduled for 2025. An angler access project was completed in 2015, which improved shoreline and boating access on Lake's 2, 4 and 8. Anglers are reminded that there is a 21-inch minimum length limit for black bass on all the lakes at Sandy Channel.

Lake #1: This 20 acre lake is located on the southern edge of the park. The south channel of the Platte River flows through this lake allowing rough fish to enter and creating poor water quality. No fisheries management is done on this lake. The lake does provide good fishing opportunities for channel catfish, common carp, and gar. Shoreline access is poor.

Lake #2: This 10 acre lake has a maximum depth of 16 feet. The lake was renovated in 2003 to remove rough fish populations and was re-stocked with largemouth bass, bluegill, and channel catfish. Yellow perch and rock bass were added in 2012. Lake #2 had an excellent fishery following the renovation, but unfortunately it flooded in 2019 and several unwanted fish species were introduced. Despite the flood, the fishery remains pretty good for largemouth bass. While bass abundance is lower than previous surveys, the population contains bass of all sizes. About 30% of the bass sampled were larger than 15 inches, and several bass over 20 inches were collected. The largest bass seen in the survey was 21.5 inches. Bluegill abundance is relatively high, but most fish are less than 5 inches. Black crappie were fairly abundant and fish of several size groups were sampled. The largest crappie captured was 13 inches. Although several stockings of channel catfish have occurred since the renovation, no catfish were collected in this survey. Catfish stockings have been suspended on this lake as it is



anticipated that the lake will need to be chemically treated with rotenone within the next five years to remove the rough fish introduced during the flood event. Other game fish captured in low densities include yellow perch, bluegill x green sunfish hybrids, and green sunfish. Rock bass have been sampled in past surveys, but none were collected in this survey. Following the flood event, there is now a very high abundance of common carp and river carsuckers present, as well as lower densities of gizzard shad, gar and buffalo. Anglers will likely notice a decline in the abundance of aquatic vegetation and increasing turbidity of the water due to the presence of these rough fish. Over time, the degradation of this aquatic habitat will lead to a decline in the quality of the sportfish population. Shoreline access for anglers has been improved along the south side of the lake. A concrete boat ramp is present on this lake.

Sandy Channel SRA (continued)

Lake #4: This 5 acre lake has maximum depth of 14 feet. While this lake also flooded in 2019, survey results show that rough fish invasion was relatively minimal and sportfish populations remain very good. Largemouth bass abundance was high, with most bass ranging from 8 to 12 inches. The density of bass larger than 15 inches was slightly improved from past surveys and several fish larger than 20 inches were collected during the sampling effort. Bluegill abundance was lower, but size structure was much improved. Most bluegill ranged from 6 to 8.5 inches. Channel catfish abundance declined, but quality remained excellent and most fish ranged from 20 to 25 inches. Catfish are stocked on alternate years, with the next stocking of 250 ten-inch fish scheduled for the fall of 2023. Rock bass abundance was slightly lower, but fish up to 9 inches were collected. Black crappie catch was improved with most fish averaging 8 inches. The largest crappie were 12 inches. There were also a few green sunfish x bluegill hybrids sampled in the survey. There was an increase in common carp and carp sucker abundance following the flood. Carp ranged from 12 to 33 inches. One longnose gar was also collected. Shoreline access along the east side of the lake is improved and Lake #4 has an angler node located on the southeast portion of the lake and a concrete boat ramp is available.



Lake #6: This 1.5 acre lake was renovated in 2012 and has been restocked with largemouth bass, yellow perch and channel catfish. In addition, the lake also contains bluegill, black crappie, green sunfish and green sunfish x bluegill hybrids. Largemouth bass are moderately abundant, but most of the bass ranged from 4 to 8 inches. The bluegill, green sunfish, and crappie were all mostly small, ranging from 3 to 6 inches. No yellow perch or channel catfish were sampled during this survey. Shoreline access is fair and no other amenities are present on this small lake.

Lake #8: At 30 acres, this is the largest lake on the area. Lake #8 has a maximum depth of 28 feet and a detailed contour map of the lake can be found here: <http://outdoornebraska.gov/lakecontourmaps/>. Lake #8 is known for its crystal clear water and for providing great angling opportunities for several fish species. Largemouth bass abundance has increased since the last survey was completed and the population currently contains numerous of bass of various sizes. Bass collected in the survey ranged from 4 to 20 inches and about 20% of the population was larger than 15 inches. The largest bass collected was 20 inches. Bluegill are abundant, with most fish ranging from 4 to 7 inches and fish up to 8.5 inches were collected. Rock bass are also common in this lake, with several size classes sampled.



Most ranged from 5 to 8 inches, with the largest fish approaching 10 inches. Black crappie abundance was improved and fish up to 13 inches were sampled. Bluegill x green sunfish hybrids were numerous, with most ranging from 7 to 8 inches. Yellow perch are present, but all perch collected during the survey were less than 8 inches. Channel catfish were abundant in the survey, with most catfish ranging from 18 to 24 inches. Catfish are stocked on alternate years, with the next stocking of 840 ten-inch fish scheduled for the fall of 2023. Advanced walleye fingerlings (300 fish per stocking) are also regularly stocked on alternate years. Since 2013, four stockings of 8 inch walleyes have been placed in the lake, so several sizes of walleye are available to anglers. Low numbers of walleye were collected in the latest survey with sizes ranging from 15 to 20 inches. Muskellunge were introduced into this lake during the spring of 2013, when 60 12-inch fish were stocked. They were stocked again in 2015, 2017, and 2022. Two muskies were collected in the 2020 survey that measured 32 and 34 inches. Muskies are stocked on a tri-annual basis, when available from the hatchery, and are scheduled for stocking in 2025. Anglers are reminded that there is a 40-inch minimum length limit in place for muskellunge. Common carp abundance is slightly higher following the flood, with most fish ranging from 18 to 30 inches. There were a couple gar sampled, but fortunately there did not appear to be many other unwanted species of fish introduced by the flood. Shoreline access has been improved on this lake with the addition of four angler nodes and selective brush clearing. The angler node next to the boat ramp is handicapped accessible. A handicapped accessible concrete boat ramp is located on the northeast side of the lake.

For additional information about fisheries management on these Interstate Lakes, please contact the NGPC Kearney office at 308-865-5310 or by email at the addresses listed below.

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