

Kansas
State Report
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Kansas Candidate Conservation Agreement/Safe Harbor Agreement to include Western Fanshell

KDWP developed a statewide Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) and Safe Harbor Agreement (SHA) starting in 2020 to include 14 aquatic species of greatest conservation need. The agreement allows for the introduction, reintroduction, augmentation, and conservation of these imperiled native species in Kansas. Goals for this agreement are to increase the resiliency, redundancy, and representation of these covered species. Eligible landowners enter into these agreements and are willing to engage in habitat management actions to benefit the species covered under the CCAA/SHA. In exchange, landowners are granted consistent regulatory assurances under the federal Endangered Species Act.

With the recent addition of the Western Fanshell (*Cyprogenia aberti*) to the federally threatened list, KDWP has amended the statewide CCAA/SHA to include this species. Inclusion will allow for assurances to eligible landowners as they continue and/or implement improved land practices to improve water quality, reduce erosion, reduce sedimentation, and improve riparian habitats while these lands are enrolled under the agreement. Such practices will increase the probability that covered species will expand their range, survive, and recruit new cohorts in these areas.

Native species stocking

Approximately 2500 state threatened Plains Minnows (*Hybognathus placitus*) were stocked in the Arkansas River in Sumner County Kansas in November of 2022. These fish were propagated at the Kansas Aquatic Biodiversity Center, located in Farlington, KS, from 250 brood fish collected over the past two years from the Salt Fork Arkansas River in Barber County, KS.

The purpose of releases of this type are to help ensure long-term viability of imperiled species throughout current and historical distributions in Kansas. Eventual down-listing and removal of these species of greatest conservation need from their threatened or endangered status is the goal of recovery efforts of this type.

Kansas Bald Eagles Tracked

In Kansas, just two bald eagle nests were documented in 1990. As of March 2023, 295 nesting territories had been documented since those original nests. In 2021, a planned three-year study began collecting data to assist wildlife managers and energy developers make science-based decisions when addressing potential conflict between bald eagles and energy development infrastructure. That year, 13 bald eagle nestlings in five different counties were banded and affixed with GPS transmitters. The 7- to 9-week-old nestlings were captured in the nest, lowered to the ground in bags and fitted with identification leg bands and GPS transmitters. These units have provided data on the birds' location and flight altitudes, heading, and speeds at intervals of 3-5 seconds in flight and 15 minutes at roost. The goal is to gain an understanding of what environmental conditions and eagle responses to those conditions may put them at risk from wind turbines, power lines, and associated features. Since the study began, mortality has been documented in several study animals while GPS telemetry has documented significant movements across the landscape. Given the explanatory power of the growing dataset, KDWP has extended the project to track the original eagles for up to six years, at which time they will have reached maturity and established their own nesting territories. The agency also plans to affix up to 16 additional birds with GPS transmitters. Data collected will offer a robust assessment of where juvenile eagles fly, seasonal ranges, and how they use airspace in the context of topography, weather, land cover, and energy infrastructure, while potentially allowing conservationists to document their movements from the time of fledging through establishing nesting territories of their own.

Land Acquisitions

The Department was successful in acquiring an additional 562 acres of public land that will be open to hunting and other recreational access opportunities. KDWP is statutorily restricted for land acquisitions. Any proposed tract for purchase exceeding 160 acres must be approved by the Kansas Legislature. There are only a couple of exceptions to this requirement in that in the SE counties of Cherokee, Crawford, Labette, and Neosho (Natural Resource Damage Assessment counties), legislative approval is not required for tracts of less than 640 acres. The other exception to the 160-acre restriction is if a willing seller agrees to a purchase price that is less than appraised value. The Department is allowed to receive donated tracts of lands without Legislative approval and occasionally is the recipient of land if the property passes our review and approval process.

28 acres was purchased in Russell County and lies adjacent to Wilson Reservoir Wildlife Area. 40 acres was purchased in Jewell County and is adjacent to Lovewell Wildlife Area. The largest tract purchased in 2022 was in Kingman County, adjacent to Byron Walker Wildlife area, and totaled 494 acres. This tract did require Legislative approval and was worked in the legislative session for several years before finally passing during the 2022 session. We are working to close on an additional 470 acres combined in Jewell, Kingman, and Sherman counties for 2023.

Law Enforcement

Several needed programs were implemented during 2022 that will aide KDWP officers in the Law Enforcement, Public Lands, and Parks Divisions. New mobile and hand-held radios were purchased and continue to be purchased that will improve communications statewide for our officers and ensure officer safety upgrades are maintained as a priority. The three enforcement divisions also received body-worn cameras that addresses officer safety, liability, and case management needs. The Department is initiating a couple of new records management systems that will make case management, training, and annual reporting more efficient than what we've had in the past.

Fisheries

Paddlefish Program

The KDWP Fisheries Division is opportunistically stocking Paddlefish in reservoirs throughout native range in eastern Kansas to bolster populations. This is an interstate project aimed at enhancing Paddlefish stocks throughout the Mississippi River Basin. In 2022, we stocked a total of approximately 50,000, 8 to 10-inch Paddlefish among John Redmond, Elk City, Perry, Pomona, and Tuttle Creek reservoirs. Evaluation of the program is restricted to angler catch information due to the challenging nature of sampling in flowing waters.

Walleye Program

The KDWP continued the construction of a multi-million-dollar recirculating aquaculture facility to intensively rear Walleye and other species at Meade State Fish Hatchery. This facility will save water in an arid part of the state while increasing production of fingerling and intermediate Walleye. The larviculture techniques used can be transferable to other species in the future.

Research

In 2022, research projects began on typical applied fisheries projects but also included several program evaluations. Currently, the state's Trout Program and Urban Channel Catfish Program are being evaluated through angler use information and fish population data to improve the efficacy and efficiency of those programs. These projects are ongoing but will lead to changes in 2023 and 2024.

Education

Kansas Birding Trail

Kansas is home to more than 475 species of birds. The state enjoys the country's largest inland marsh and largest stretch of tallgrass prairie in the world. Experience a rich diversity of habitats and the possibility of rare bird sightings planned out in convenient driving trips!

Background

- Each trail is anchored in Kansas cities that have lodging, food, and fuel available

- Designed to be entered or exited at any point
- Includes up to 12 excellent birding locations
- Can be completed during a day trip
- Uses paved roads

Trails Locations

1. KC Parklands Trail – Kansas City
2. Eastern Lakes and Wetlands Trail – Northeast
3. Flint Hills Trail – Manhattan
4. Smoky Hills Trail – Northcentral
5. Wetland Wonders Trail – Southcentral
6. High Plains Lakes Trail – Northwest
7. Habitat Islands Trail – Western
8. Cimarron Trail – Southwest
9. Red Hills Trail – Southcentral/Southwest
10. Town and Country Trail – Wichita
11. Osage Cuestas Trail – Southeast
12. Kansas Woodlands Trail – Southeast

For More Information

Visit www.ksbirdingtrail.com

KDWP receives \$25,000 in grant funding from the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) with the goal to reach the Hispanic population in Kansas without a current fishing license and provide them with access to fishing information, resources, and opportunities in the state in both English and Spanish, while emphasizing the importance of buying a fishing license and promoting license sales.

This effort is in line with and provides additional support to KDWP's Limited English Proficiency Plan, *Afuera Para Todos*. In Kansas, Spanish is the first most commonly spoken language after English. KDWP only recently began providing targeted resources for its growing Hispanic population, including translated boating and fishing regulations, as well as simple and eye-catching landing pages and resource tabs. KDWP aims to increase the awareness of these resources, while communicating to its Hispanic constituency in both English and Spanish the importance of purchasing a fishing license and local fishing opportunities by utilizing targeted digital marketing strategies on several platforms, focusing primarily on Facebook, and potentially expanding to include Instagram, Google, and Division D advertising. Based on campaign performance, KDWP will glean information about the needs and preferences of its Hispanic constituency to better inform future campaigns and continue building relationships with this important subset of anglers.

Hispanic audiences have been historically underserved by past KDWP digital marketing efforts but engage in fishing throughout the state both individually and socially. Through the Hispanic Hunters Digital Campaign, KDWP demonstrated its ability to reach the growing KS Hispanic

population (12%, ~350,000 people), through targeted digital advertising strategies promoting license sales as well as specifically tailored resources and opportunities which have been only minimally promoted. The Hispanic hunting campaign generated over 6,000,000 impressions, and generated over \$43,000 in revenue, despite a portion of ads being information-based rather than directly promoting a sale. KDWP anticipates an even greater return on the proposed Hispanic Anglers campaign, and an increased awareness of resources available to the Spanish-speaking community of anglers in Kansas.

New Brandt Licensing System

On May 1, 2022, KDWP went live with a brand-new licensing system. The system includes licensing and permitting, vessel registration, public land check in/out, event management, a mobile app for customers as well as a secure law enforcement mobile app and so much more. Along with a new system KDWP made some enhancements which include hard card sales. This is a durable hard card printed and mailed with all active licenses, as well as some pretty cool artwork created by our very own Dustin Teasley.

We also have vessel hard cards for registrations valid for 3 years. The card costs \$6.00 and has been a very popular item.

KDWP also implemented a donation round- up option and has generated over \$70,000 in contributions that will go directly to wildlife conservation in Kansas.



Year To Date Stats



130,215

Transactions



235,574

Products Sold



7,765

Boat Registrations



112,637

Customers



22,466

New Customers



30,567

Lifetime License Customers

Weekly Stats

Week of 4/16/2023 to 4/23/2023

\$442,440

System
Revenue

605

New
Customers

13,434

Products
Sold

36

Brandt Service Desk
Phone Calls

231

Vessel
Registrations

617

Hard
Cards

\$3,816

Donations
Recieved

5,894

Mobile
Customers

