

Nature

Continued from 32 and continue the benefits the lakes have provided."

Zebra mussels pose multiplying threat

The threat from zebra mussels appears to be more immediate than that of sedimentation. Study of the problem provides hope the zebra mussel threat will also be transitory, and that effective counter measures of control will likely emerge.

According to KDWP, zebra mussels have been found in Cheney, El Dorado and Perry reservoirs, the Walnut River and Winfield City Lake, and in many lakes in Nebraska, Missouri and Oklahoma.

Because of their numbers (females can produce one million eggs per season), zebra mussels can create a very expensive problem. They can attach themselves to anything firm, including water intakes of power generating plants and municipal and rural water systems. They can severely reduce the flow of water and pose a multi-billion dollar threat to industry, agriculture and municipal water supplies.

As with all the state's lakes, Pomona and Melvern lakes face a potential threat from the pests. As of May 2008, KDWP had not found any evidence of zebra mussels in either Pomona Lake or Melvern lakes.

Hayden said that zebra mussels were brought from Europe, so they have no known natural predators in the U.S., although one species of fish, the blue catfish, has been found to feed on mollusks.

"The channel catfish and the flathead catfish do not feed on mollusks," he said, "so we have started to increase introduction of the blue cat into Kansas rivers and lakes."

Hayden said many states are working on the zebra mussel problem. Until a solution is found to eliminate them, "we must rely on cooperation to reduce chances of spreading them," he said. "Newly hatched zebra mussels are nearly microscopic in size. It is quite easy

to spread them by bringing them into an uncontaminated body of water, simply by spilling water brought in from a contaminated body of water, such as a bait bucket."

KDWP requests the public report discovery of the pests to help prevent their spread into other lakes and rivers. Kansas boaters can play a strong role in prevention of the spread of zebra mussels by initiating protective measures before moving boats from one body of water to another.

Zebra mussels look like small clams with yellow-brown shells, accented with alternating light and dark colored stripes. Most adults are less than one inch long. They usually grow in clusters containing numerous individuals, and are generally found in shallow algae-rich water.

Anyone who discovers a zebra mussel in the upper reaches of the Marais des Cygnes River basin - or in any other creek, river or lake in Kansas - should not return the pest to the water in which it was found. The date and location where it was discovered should be noted. The nearest KDWP office should be contacted.

"Not everything is negative about zebra mussels," Hayden noted. "They are clarifiers. As they search for food, they remove turbidity from water."

According to Green, the pest will have little effect on water recreation.

"Although zebra mussels continue to spread, as they have recently into Lake Perry," Green said, "the likelihood of affecting water sports and recreation at the two lakes would be relatively minor, except for someone who cuts a foot by stepping on a shell."

In locations where zebra mussels are known to be present, swimmers and waders should wear protection against injuries from zebra mussels' razor-like shell.

"We do not see zebra mussels as a catastrophic threat to water recreation in Kansas," Hayden said. "Unchecked, however, they can become a very costly threat to water supply systems, particularly intakes of those systems."

Lakes provide recreation, beauty

Gabe Faimon
Herald-Chronicle

A wide array of natural amenities have set the stage for Pomona and Melvern reservoirs to become outdoor recreation resources for diverse populations, not only within Osage County, but far beyond its borders. Sustaining the outdoor recreation resources in a safe and healthful manner benefits individuals, communities, the environment, and the economy, but requires ongoing vision and effort, not only by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, but also affiliated agencies and organizations.

"The lake areas provide countless opportunities for fishing, hunting, boating and other activities which make living in Osage County desirable," said state Rep. Willie Prescott. Ongoing development of Osage County's reservoirs and state parks has made them popular destinations for outdoor enthusiasts.

The lakes' resources provide freshwater fishermen, hunters, water skiers, bird watchers and sightseers ample opportunities for outdoor and water recreation in an area where natural lakes do not exist.

The Kansas State Park and Resources Authority (KPRRA) developed and maintains concession leases for marinas, making it possible to rent boats and dock space, and obtain other services at both lakes. The Corps has granted a variety of permits, licenses and easements to individuals, utilities, groups and state agencies for use of project lands.

Prescott noted the development of the reser-



Jeremy Gaston/Herald-Chronicle

Derek and Madison Weber, Gardner, ski on Pomona Lake during Get Outdoors Day in June.

voirs has resulted in two state parks in Osage County. An agreement between the Corps and KPRRA provided for establishing state parks at the reservoirs.

Melvorn Outlet Park has the highest use rate of all facilities managed by the Corps in Osage County, and between state and federal facilities, generates annual use income of \$400,000.

The popularity of the state parks is also signified by the heavy use of recently constructed cabins, according to Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) Secretary Mike Hayden.

"During the next 30 days, Melvern Cabin at Eisenhower State Park is reserved for 26

ies management to KDWP. Through the agreement, the Corps assists KDWP with implementation of various management activities, such as fish stocking and habitat development. Brush piles and banded tire reefs are placed in the lake to improve fish habitat and fishing success. Game fish such as wipers, walleye, largemouth bass, flathead and channel catfish have been stocked to increase the variety of fish species available for sport fishing.

During a typical year, wetlands are allowed to fill with water during the spring and fall to support migrating fowl and spring fish spawning. During summer, water is drawn down to encourage growth of wetland plants.

Lands surrounding the reservoirs contain a large variety of wildlife. Some of the more common species include whitetail deer, fox, squirrel, cottontail rabbit, mourning dove, bobwhite quail, and many species of waterfowl. Of equal importance are the non-game species, such as songbirds, raptors, rodents, reptiles, amphibians and insects.

Approximately 14,000 acres of land adjacent to the two reservoirs are managed specifically for wildlife. Various resource management techniques are used to protect and conserve wildlife habitats, including brush piles, nesting structures, food plots, tree and shrub plantings, and controlled hunting. This concern for wildlife habitats not only enhances wildlife populations, but also provides visitors with high quality recreational opportunities.

The lakes also add to Osage County's scenes of natural beauty and tranquility, providing opportunity for quiet reflection in the outdoors.

Tornado shatters lake's tranquility

In 1978, the natural beauty and tranquility at Pomona Lake was shattered by a brief, violent burst of nature, wreaking tragedy instead of the pleasure. Weather History recorded the following account by Bill Murray:

"On Saturday evening June 17, 1978, forty-seven passengers and a crew of thirteen were aboard the Whippoorwill Show Boat on Lake Pomona in Osage County, Kansas. The Whippoorwill featured a popular dinner theatre cruise on the beautiful lake.

"A tornado watch was in effect when the vessel set sail early that evening. Storm clouds were building in the distance. While the boat was cruising on the lake, a thunderstorm intensified and

moved closer. Suddenly, a funnel snaked out from the thundercloud and touched down on the lake, throwing a furious spray up from the surface of the water. Seeing the twister develop, the captain turned his boat to shore and began sailing quickly toward the dock.

"The tornado, or waterspout, was small by Kansas standards, only 150 feet wide. During its time on land, it only received an F1 rating. But in an unlikely tragedy, the funnel overtook the boat and capsized it. People were thrown into the water and some were trapped under the overturned hull. Despite heroic rescue efforts by other boaters on the lake, the final death toll was sixteen."

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