

# Park manager concerned with finances

As a State Park Manager for the Department of Wildlife and Parks, I am very concerned about the possible loss of state general funds that are used to help operate and maintain Kansas State Parks. It is important to remember that our state parks benefit all Kansans, not just those that utilize the parks. Research has shown that Kansas State Parks generate about \$685 million economic impact annually for Kansas.

The general funds allocation to the park system continues to dwindle from 60.4 percent of the total budget in 1995 to less than 15 percent for the 2005 fiscal year. This reduction has forced the department to increase user fees to levels that now prohibit young families and those on fixed income from using our parks. I believe the children that grow up in our state parks are not the young adults living in our correctional institutions today. This month, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks Commissioners will again be accessing the need to increase permit fees to offset the loss of general funds this fiscal year (approximately \$500,000). Again, even more families could be priced out of the parks.

Park system administration has ordered park managers to submit a service reduction plan with estimated savings which could be utilized later in the fiscal year. This is basically intended to meet cash flow needs in an effort to avoid further drastic measures. ACTUALLY CLOSING STATE PARKS HAS BEEN MENTIONED UNLESS ADDITIONAL FUNDING IS APPROPRIATED.

The park system is nearly 50 years old and has been host to millions of visitors. Many of our facilities are in need of replacement, and much of our equipment is old and obsolete. At the Prairie Dog State Park, both of our shower houses are over 35 years old. Our newest tractor is 21 years old and it is a "hand me down" from Kansas Department of Transportation. The backlog of these needed repairs and replacements has now grown to the millions of dollars statewide. If not for federally funded projects, no improvements would have been made at the Prairie Dog State Park for several years.

I realize there is a huge demand for State General Funds and we are a small agency, but

we do play a very large and important role in the health and well being of all Kansans, and to the state's economy. I urge you to voice your support to our State of Kansas elected officials and Wildlife and Parks Commissioners, and ask them to consider our state parks and their importance to Kansas. Ask for a consistent base of financial support for the state parks.

The following facts were provided by the Kansas Wildlife and Parks, Parks Division staff:

★ Nationwide, Kansas State Parks tie for last place in state general fund spending.

★ The 50 state average spending of state general fund on state parks is 0.24 percent. Kansas parks receive only 0.07 percent while Nebraska receives 0.50 percent, Oklahoma 0.37 percent, Missouri 0.17 percent and Colorado 0.21 percent.

★ Four states receive no state general funds, but they each have other substantial special dedicated tax funds.

★ Four states are totally funded by the state general funds.

★ Four states receive less state general funds than Kansas, but they each receive other dedicated special tax funds.

★ Kansas parks need \$10 million to operate and maintain services, rehab and develop parks.

★ Kansas parks currently generate \$6.2 million in revenue from 7.6 million visits.

★ The current Kansas State Park budget is \$7.2 million compared to Oklahoma — \$45.7 million, Nebraska — \$20.3 million, Missouri — \$30.1 million, and Colorado — \$26.5 million.

— Steve Mathes, Park Manager  
Prairie Dog State Park

## FISHING REPORT:

Sebelius Reservoir — Temperature: 75  
Lake Elevation: 17.47' below Conservation Pool

**Black Bass** — Fair (10-18 inches) Fish are spread all over the lake with most of the fish being caught along the dam and in Leota Cove using spinner baits, crank baits and plastics.

**Bluegill** — Fair (5-9 inches) Anglers are catching a few off the public fishing dock and in Schoen's cove using worms under a bobber.

**Catfish** — Good (wide range) Are catching fish practically lakewide. The best locations are the north shore south of the office and off the public fishing dock by the feeder using worms, shad and cut or prepared baits. The fish feeder is going off at 6 a.m., 9 a.m., noon, 3 p.m., 6 p.m. and 9 p.m.

**Crappie** — Poor (wide range) Anglers are catching a few crappie using jigs and minnows off the public fishing dock, up into Leota Cove and in Shoen's cove, but is real sporadic.

**Saugeye/Walleye** — Fair (wide range) Anglers are catching fish around the

dam, around the stickups just outside of Leota cove and south of the office on the north side of the lake using jig and worms. A lot of throw backs so remember the 18 inch length limit.

**Wipers** — Fair (wide range) Wipers are being caught on the east side of Leota Cove, off the public fishing dock and south of the office on the north shore using jigs with big shiners. Trolling diving lures along the south road bed has also been effective.

**General Comments** — The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks and the Irrigation District have signed a two year minimum pool agreement. Under the minimum pool agreement, water will not be released for irrigation unless surface elevation reaches elevation 2290 or higher, and releases will stop at 2288. Currently the elevation is just below 2288, so unless the lake receives inflow soon, water will not be released for irrigation this year.

## Office and restrooms

The park office is open from 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Sunday-Thursday and 8 a.m.-8 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. NOTE: The office will be closed on Monday August 30.

Due to our annual training requirements, the office will be closed occasionally, so please call the office before making a special trip to the park. Please call the office at 785-877-2953 with any questions you may have.

The water is on in the park. and there are new vault restrooms at the public fishing dock.

## Boating and fishing

Relax and enjoy the historic sites, picnic shelters and small swimming beach. There is a two-lane boat ramp on the east end of the park with parking available for over 100 units.

Please wear your Personal Floatation Device when boating, your life will depend on it! The reservoir covers approximately 870 acres. Fishing for catfish has been excellent during the late summer months. Saugeye fishing and wiper fishing is also good at times.

## Trails and scenic views

In the center of the park, the Prairie Dog Nature Trail is 1.4 miles long and ambles through native prairie and wildlife food plots. Two vintage 19th century buildings are preserved in the park. A one-room schoolhouse and the recently renovated adobe house are snapshots of Kansas history. Food plots and a waterfowl refuge have been established to enhance wildlife watching. In addition to the park's namesake, pheasant, canada geese, wild turkey, badger and mule and white-tailed deer can be observed.



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