

Bonnie Reservoir sees tough times in drought

By Andy Heintz

Colby Free Press
aheintz@nwkansas.com

The Bonnie Reservoir has seen better days. According to Colorado Department of Natural Resources the reservoir has about 800 surface acres of water, but when full it can hold 1,900 surface acres. It's located on the south fork of the Republican River near Hale, Colo., just west of the Kansas border in Yuma County.

Today the reservoir is having water drained from it so the state can be in accordance with a water sharing agreement with Nebraska and Kansas. On June 17 state engineers began releasing water from the dam. 1.2 inches of water will be released from the reservoir for ten straight days, said Donna Mosier, seasonal manager at Bonny State Park. The water agreement between the three states centers around the ownership of the water flowing in the Republican River drainage.

"Put simply, Colorado owes more water under a longstanding compact than the river, which has its headwaters in this state, can deliver," writes Denver Post Reporter Charlie Meyers.

Bonny State Park generates millions of dol-

lars for Burlington's economy, but the number of people visiting the park each year has shrunk. Meyers writes that 200,000 people visited the park on an annual basis until the year 2000, but this number shrank to 60,000 in 2007, when few boats could be launched and fish stocks dwindled along with the lake's size.

Although the lake has shrunk over the years, fish can still be caught at the reservoir. In fact the reservoir is filled with several species of fish, including walleye, crappie, wipers (a hybrid between a white bass and a striper), white bass, northern pike largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, bullheads, bluegill and channel catfish. Donna Mosier, seasonal manager at Bonnie State Park, said the anglers have been reporting catching catfish and wipers recently. She said the fish were being caught in the evening and morning. According to the department of natural resources a few large wipers were caught off the face of Bonny Dam on crankbaits last week. Channel catfish ranging from two to four pounds have been taken along the face of the dam.

Mosier said a 20 pound channel catfish was caught last week, and a week before someone reported catching a 10 pound wiper.



Take I-70 east to Burlington, then north 23 miles on US 385. Turn east on County Roads 2 or 3 for 1.5 miles to get to Bonnie Reservoir.

The walleye fishing has slowed down since the water has gotten warmer, said Mosier. She said 21 and 28 inch walleyes were taken three weeks ago. The department of natural resources reported that a few walleyes were taken on nightcrawlers and crankbaits last week. Anglers are allowed to keep one walleye over 21 inches per day on the lake.

Mosier said the draining of the dam will probably lead to only 17 or 18 foot boats being allowed on the lake. The department of natural resources reports that at this time

most boats up to 21 feet and pontoons with their motor trimmed are allowed on the lake. The boat-ramp depth is 4 to 5 feet, with a channel about 34 inches deep. The department warns that not all hazards on the lake are marked.

While it looks as if Bonny Reservoir's days might be numbered, the lake still holds quality fish and area anglers may want to test their mettle at the lake before it's too late.



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