

Natural Resources

Hunting and Recreational Opportunities

North Central Kansas is a striking combination of natural beauty. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, Kansas has a temperate but continental climate, with great extremes between summer and winter temperatures but few long periods of extreme hot or cold.

Within the region one can find portions of both the Smoky Hills, an immense area of native prairie named for the Smoky Hill River which courses through the northern Kansas and the Flint Hills, a landscape of native tall grass prairie with a layer of rock just below the soil's surface. The area as a whole boasts some of the state's best pheasant hunting, and the combination of native grassland and cultivated bottom areas creates excellent habitat for a variety of other wildlife including the greater prairie chicken. Deer, quail and turkey hunting opportunities abound. An abundance of federal reservoirs and state lakes provide outstanding public hunting, fishing, boating, and camping opportunities.

Specific Opportunities for enjoying the region's natural amenities include the following. Information was gleaned from the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks managed web sites. More information can be found at <http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us>.

Brzon Wildlife Area - Republic, KS

In 1989 Michael Brzon deeded a 320-acre Republic County farm to the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks through the WILDTRUST program for the purpose of providing a wildlife area to be used by all people whom enjoy the Kansas outdoors. The area is managed under special conditions to allow quality outdoor experiences including upland and big game hunting by special permit. It is located in an area of the state that normally supports a good population of both bobwhite quail and ringneck pheasant and excellent dove shooting.

Glen Elder Wildlife Area - Glen Elder, KS

Glen Elder Reservoir (Waconda Lake) was constructed in 1969 by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. Glen Elder Wildlife Area encompasses almost 13,200 land acres surrounding the 12,500 acre Glen Elder Reservoir. The water level remains relatively stable. You can see and photograph a diversity of wildlife. In winter, bald and golden eagles visit. Deer and pheasant are common sights. Waterfowl stop on their migrations, and a small Canada goose flock make the area home. Doves are plentiful until cold weather moves in. Geese and ducks use the area during migration, depending upon habitat conditions. Most goose hunting occurs when the geese leave the area to feed. Early season duck numbers depend on flooded shoreline vegetation. Duck and goose numbers usually peak in December. Six boat ramps are located around the wildlife area and two in the state park. Developed campgrounds with modern facilities are available

and primitive camping opportunities occur on the wildlife area. RV's, trailers, and campers are limited to the designated campgrounds. Walk-in primitive camping is allowed throughout the wildlife area except in refuges. Hiking and bicycle riding is permitted throughout the area (except for the refuges). Horse riding is limited to open, maintained roadways. Glen Elder State Park offers nearly unlimited recreational opportunities. With it's rural setting, Glen Elder is a perfect place to relax.

Jamestown Wildlife Area - Jamestown, KS

Jamestown Wildlife Area is a collection of historical wetlands and associated uplands that have been under state management since 1932. Historically a "salty", shallow, marshy area, in dry seasons salt was found where the water had been and when there was water an abundance of wildlife was found. The areas marshes attracted Native Americans, early settlers and were important to migrating herds of bison, flocks of waterfowl and other wildlife. Dams were constructed on the lower ends of both large marshes in the early 1900's to provide a more reliable water supply for recreation.

Of the 4,729 acres of public hunting now available on the area, over 1,900 acres are wetlands. The marshes are very shallow and have accumulated silt from the Marsh Creek watershed. As a result, the Department is embarking on a multiple year renovation for the areas wetlands. This area is located along a major migration route for the Central Flyway. The first waterfowl and shorebirds migrate through the area in late August. There are varieties of other wildlife habitats on the area. Upland birds and small game species use weeds, crop fields, grasses and shrubs, while big game prefers the timbered areas. The area offers excellent opportunities to view and photograph wildlife.

Lovewell State Park and Reservoir - Webber, KS 66970

Established in 1967, this 1160 acre State Park w/primitive and utility camping, camping cabins, day use areas, swimming beach, full service marina, modern shower and restroom facilities is adjacent to 3000 surface acre Lovewell reservoir. The 4,625 acre Lovewell Wildlife Area with public hunting available completes the area. Species managed for include deer, turkey, waterfowl and upland game like pheasant, quail, rabbit and squirrel.

Kanopolis - Marquette, KS 67464

Kanopolis State Park started it all. The first Kansas state park has drawn visitors to eastern Ellsworth County since 1955. Situated in the rolling hills, bluffs and woods of the scenic Smoky Hills region of Kansas, Kanopolis is located 33 miles southwest of Salina. The park features a full-service marina, beaches, picnic areas, and trails for horseback riding, mountain biking, and hiking. More than 200 primitive campsites and 119 utility sites are located through the 14 campgrounds

Jewell State Fishing Lake - Jewell, KS

Jewell County State Fishing Lake comprises 57 acres of water and 108 acres of land. It was acquired and built by the Kansas Fish and Game Commission in 1954 using Dingell-Johnson funding. Surrounded by grassland hills, Jewell County State Lake was constructed primarily as a fishing area. Public hunting is allowed, but due to the small land area, opportunities are limited. Pheasant, quail, turkey, dove, fox squirrel, rabbit, mule and whitetail deer, waterfowl, furbearers and many song birds and non-game wildlife inhabit or pass through and use the area. Food plots encourage wildlife to use the area and supplement the food provided by the native plants and surrounding agricultural lands.

Wilson Wildlife Area and Reservoir - Bunker Hill, KS

The 8,069 acre Wilson Wildlife Area was made available to the Kansas Forestry Fish and Game Commission under the terms of a license with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1965. Wilson Wildlife Area is located in the scenic Smoky Hills of north central Kansas and is on the upper end of 9,000 acre Wilson Reservoir. The 8,069 acre public hunting area is made up of 5,000 acres of rugged rolling hills of native prairie, approximately 2,000 acres of cropland, and 1,000 acres of riparian timber along the Saline River, Cedar Creek, Turkey Creek, and Elm Creek. Pheasant, quail, turkey, dove, rabbit, whitetail deer, waterfowl, furbearers and many songbirds and non-game wildlife inhabit or pass through and use the area. The area has a waterfowl refuge that was established in 1996. Hunting opportunities are fair for deer, turkey, waterfowl, and upland birds.

Milford State Park and Reservoir - Milford, KS 66514

Located near Junction City on the shores of the state's largest lake, 16,000-acre Milford Reservoir, Milford State Park is a favorite getaway for outdoors loving visitors. Park facilities include modern campgrounds, shower buildings, toilets, swimming beaches, boat ramps, picnic shelters, a full-service marina, and a multi-purpose trails system. The park also houses a large yacht club. Nearby Milford Nature Center and Milford Fish Hatchery offer a variety of interpretive exhibits and displays. The park comprises five campgrounds with 120 electric/ water utility sites. Thirty of these sites also include sewer hookups. More than 100 improved primitive campsites are also available throughout the park. The state park is a popular destination for anglers eager to experience the excellent fishing available in Milford Reservoir. Walleye concentrate along the face of the dam in early April to spawn, then move to the flats at Farnum Creek and mud points near School Creek. Nearly all of the brushy and rocky coves contain crappie and largemouth bass, but coves in the Rolling Hills and Curtis Creek areas are traditional hot spots for crappie. White bass and catfish are plentiful in a variety of locations, and smallmouth bass frequent the face of the dam, as well as rocky points in the lower half of the lake. Many game species are present on the 18,800-acre Milford Wildlife Area, and a permanent

1,100-acre wildlife refuge has been established on the northern end of the reservoir for waterfowl management.

Mushroom Rock - Marquette, KS 67464

This 5 acre park was donated to the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (Kansas Park and Resource Authority) by the Ellsworth County Historical Society in 1965. The park is part of the Smoky Hill region with Dakota formations and contains the remains of beach sands and sediments of the Cretaceous Period. Sandstone and sedimentary rock is held together by natural cement. The concretions that make up Mushroom Rocks are cemented calcium carbonate. The largest rock measures 27 feet in diameter. A site to see.

Natural Resources – Wind Energy

Although not a new concept, wind energy is an active economic development strategy in North Central Kansas at the present time. According to the High Plains Regional Climate Center,

“...wind energy is harnessing the wind to do work. For over a century, the wind has been harnessed in the central plains of the U.S. to pump water for agricultural and household use. In the first half of the 20th century, small wind turbines produced electricity for remote farms and ranches. When inexpensive public power came to rural America, the small wind turbines almost totally vanished from the landscape. Today, the wind is being harnessed by large wind turbines to produce electricity on a commercial scale. The new generation of commercial wind turbines are placed on towers at least 40 meters tall.”

Kansas has taken an active approach to wind energy which has included mapping the state based on criteria such as wind speed and predictability and the location of energy transmission lines to determine the prime location for wind farm development. The state legislature has also enacted legislation that limits placement of turbines in an area determined to “the heart of the flint hills” – an area of native prairie grass that was deemed worthy of protection. Community information regarding wind energy development is available at <http://www.kansascommerce.com/Publications/CommunityWindToolkit/Default.aspx> ; included at this site our county and statewide maps of wind potential and information that communities will find helpful in understanding this economic development venture.

The North Central Region has several prime locations for wind energy development. Wind energy development areas are currently emerging in the region; the Smoky Hill project is located along I-70 at the Lincoln/Ellsworth County line and in Cloud County. The Cloud County project is called the Meridian Way Wind Farm. The Meridian Way project will involve approximately 125 turbines with a capacity of 200 megawatts. The Smoky Hill project will have 56 turbines with a capacity of 100 megawatts.

Cloud County Community College is also planning to harness the wind. The school is receiving a million dollar federal appropriation to fund the project. The college plans to

build a one to two-megawatt wind turbine for educational training and promotion of wind energy throughout the state and provide energy to power the Concordia campus

The Governor of Kansas has recently formed the Kansas Wind Working Group to advocate and plan for increasing use of wind energy in Kansas which will include the development of additional wind energy producing capacity in the state. In addition, a company in Kansas has recently announced that they will begin to manufacture wind turbines; this represents the opportunity for the state to capitalize on a new aspect of the boom in wind energy production. More information is available at http://www.kansasenergy.org/wind_organizations.htm .

Natural Resources - Water, Oil, Gas, Minerals

The primary source of data related to water, oil, gas and mineral resources in Kansas is the Kansas Geologic Survey. Maps and historic production records can be found at www.kgs.ku.edu.

Construction related mineral sources are prevalent in North Central Kansas; seven of the 12 counties in the NCRPC service area have crushed rock stores while all but one of the 12 have sand and gravel resources. While other areas of Kansas have abundant coal, chalk and helium resources, the North Central Region is nearly devoid of these particular minerals. The newest member of the NCRPC, Marshall County, does have a significant gypsum plant, Jewell has modest pumice and pumicite stores and Ellsworth county on the Southern tier of the service area has Helium, Clay and Salt resources.

Eight of the 12 core counties served by the NCRPC have no oil or gas production. The remaining four; Ellsworth, Clay, Dickinson, and Saline have minimal gas and oil production. By far the largest production level occurs in Ellsworth County.

Water continues to be a critical resource for all of the state of Kansas. Current information from the USGS and the Kansas Water Office based on stream flows categorize Kansas as in a “drought watch” state. Over the last several months in particular daily average stream flows have been below the expected averages. Water quantity is particularly critical as the region moves farther along with several ethanol plant developments. The production of ethanol requires significant quantities of water. Ethanol plants are under construction in Cloud County and Republic County and several other counties would entertain the idea of a plant if a suitable developer would show interest.