Hillsdale Lake

Kansas

US Army Corps of Engineers

Welcome

The Kansas City District of the Corps of Engineers – Welcomes you to Hillsdale Lake. We invite you to use and enjoy the lake, the parks, and the surrounding public lands. Your observance of the rules and regulations will make your visit and the visits of other more enjoyable. We hope that your visit is pleasant and that you will return to this lake often. Please remember, only a safe visit is an enjoyable one. Whatever your activity –

KEEP SAFETY IN MIND.

The Visitor Center

A short tour of the Visitor Center, located at the east end of the dam, will make your visit more enjoyable. In addition to maps, literature and educational displays, the Visitor Center provides exhibits that explain the lake's history, recreational opportunities and natural resources. Near the Visitor Center, the Hidden Spring Nature Trail offers a hiking experience that will help visitors explore the natural environment of Hillsdale Lake.

Project Development

Hillsdale Lake was authorized by Congress in 1954 as part of a comprehensive flood control plan for the Osage and Missouri River Basins. Support for the project by local citizens and the Hillsdale Lake Development Association resulted in Congress appropriating funds for construction in 1973. Actual construction began in 1976 and was completed in 1982 at a cost of $61 million. In 1989, 12,880 acres of land and water was leased to the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks for recreation and wildlife purposes.

History

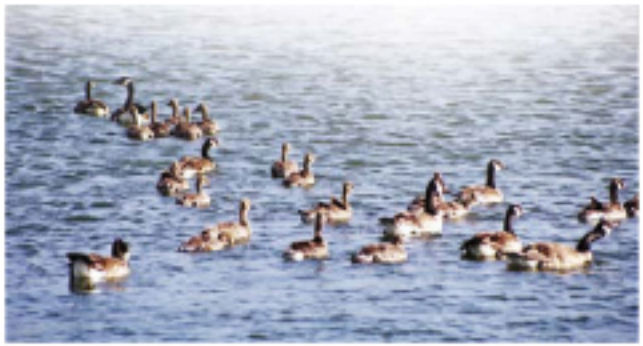
When early French explorers first entered Kansas around the beginning of the 18th century, the Kansas Indians dominated the northeastern section of what is now Kansas, and the Osage Indians controlled the western part of Missouri. Both tribes probably hunted in the Bull Creek region, but there are no historical references to Bull Creek until the 19th century. With development of the Santa Fe Trail in 1812, traffic to the area increased dramatically. Two branches of the trail crossed through the headwaters of Bull Creek about two miles north of the present Hillsdale Lake. Reservations established in eastern Kansas soon attracted settlers eager to trade with the Indians. The relationship with the Indians changed dramatically about the time Kansas became a territory. Squatters, speculators and the railroads competed for the reservation lands, forcing the Indians to move to Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma in 1868.

About the same time as the Indians were being forced out, guerrilla warfare began between the abolitionists and the pro-slavery forces. John Brown arrived in Osawatomie in 1855 to lead the abolitionists in the fight against slavery. He earned lasting fame in 1857 for his attack on Harper's Ferry, West Virginia. Another historic figure, William Quantrill, came to Miami County in 1857 to teach school. During the Civil War, Quantrill frequented the area and camped near Bull Creek following his historic raid on Lawrence, Kansas. The Civil War brought many such conflicts to the eastern part of the state and consequently it became known as "Bleeding Kansas".

Plant and Animal Life

Located in the transition zone between the prairie lands of the west and the mixed hardwood forests of the east, the project area has a great diversity of plant communities that support an abundance of wildlife. In centuries past, this zone has undergone changes as the climate changed, favoring either grassland or forest. Today, the prairie and forest are in competition in areas not being utilized for agriculture. These different habitats provide homes for many kinds of wildlife, including white-tailed deer, raccoon, beaver, squirrel, rabbit, coyote and bobcat.

Birdwatchers will delight in the many species of birds at the lake. The changing seasons bring the promise of migrating waterfowl and shorebirds that use Hillsdale Lake as a rest stop.



Controlling a drainage area of more than 144 square miles, Hillsdale Lake provides flood protection along Bull Creek downstream from the dam. As part of the Osage River Basin system of lakes, Hillsdale contributes to flood protection on the Marais des Cygnes, Osage and Missouri Rivers.

As a water supply source, the lake can provide millions gallons of water each day for municipal and industrial needs of surrounding communities.

In addition to providing water supply and flood protection, Hillsdale Lake improves downstream water quality, and provides recreation and fish and wildlife benefits.

Recreation

Hillsdale Lake offers a wide range of recreational opportunities on its more than 8,000 acres of land. Fishing, hunting, camping, picnicking, boating, swimming, hiking and equestrian trails, a model airplane field and many other types of activities are available.

Although the Corps of Engineers constructed the dam, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks has the responsibility to develop and maintain recreational and wildlife areas. Modern and primitive campgrounds, boat ramps, beaches for swimming and wind surfing, shelter houses, and parking facilities are available within Hillsdale State Park.

The multipurpose pool (normal lake level) offers sportsman 4,580 acres of water. To enhance the fisheries, over 70% of the standing timber was left in the lake to provide fish habitat. Game fish include walleye, catfish, largemouth bass, crappie, white bass and bluegill. Since large areas of the lake were left uncleared, extreme care should be taken when boating. Be especially watchful for rocks, logs, shallow areas, or other objects that lie under the surface of the water. Lake level fluctuations can add new submerged hazards to previously safe water areas. Be alert at all times!

Hillsdale Lake provides unique opportunities in which people can discover nature at its finest. The outdoor enthusiast will enjoy fishing in quiet secluded cove, hiking through Eastern Kansas woodlands, or just watching a magnificent Bald Eagle soar above the lake. Information and maps are available at the Hillsdale State Park Office.

Information and maps are available at the Hillsdale State Park Office or the Corps of Engineers Visitor Center.

www.nwk.usace.army.mil/hillsdale/hillsdale_home.htm

www.kdwp.state.ks.us/pmforum/hillsdale.html