



IT'S NEW! IT'S EXCITING! IT'S GREAT!

# KANOPOLIS STATE PARK

*It's Kansas' Playground of the Prairies!*

NEW MODERN  
SERVICE  
FACILITIES

• Fishing • Camping • Swimming  
• Boating • Hiking • Skiing

OUTDOOR FUN  
FOR ALL  
THE FAMILY

by Rick Martin

*Kanopolis State Park manager, Lindsborg*

***The Kansas Park and Resources Authority was created by the Kansas Legislature in 1955. In 1959, Kanopolis State Park was opened and dedicated. Today, state parks are administered through the Parks Division of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, but 50 years later, the goal is still the same: improving the quality of our lives by providing outdoor recreation at our state parks.***

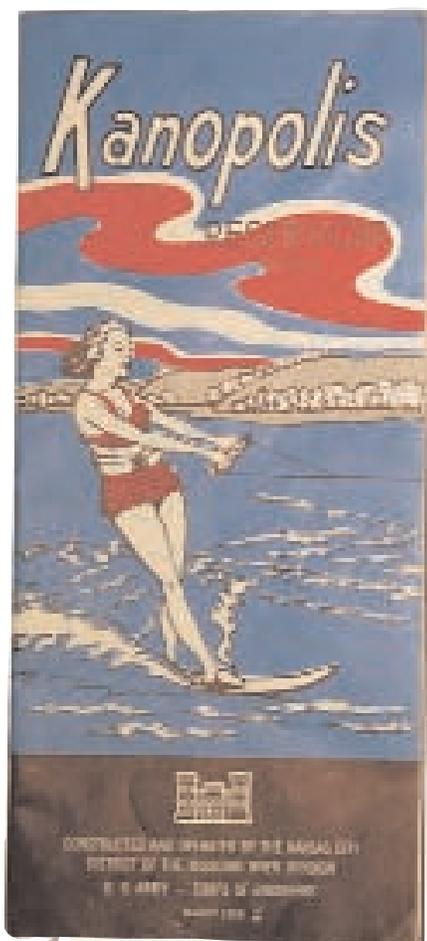
**K**ansas Governor Fred Hall and the Kansas Legislature authorized and created the Kansas Park and Resources Authority in 1955 to develop and manage state parks. First completed was Kanopolis State Park, which was dedicated May 30, 1959. The need for such public areas was summarized in statements by then Governor George Docking, who stated: "Kanopolis State Park and others like it are among our greatest natural assets. They bolster the industrial development climate, increase tourist travel, and provide areas of wholesome outdoor recreational opportunity for our own citizens. With

the trend moving toward more leisure time and more cars, the need and desire for family outdoor recreation is increasing. The development of public access areas on federal reservoirs is an economical and available means to fill the recreational desires of our citizens."

Kanopolis visitors were surveyed that summer, and their responses were enthusiastic. On September 22, 1959, Mr. Tib Anderson, Chairman of the Kanopolis State Park Advisory Board, wrote in a letter to the entire Advisory Board, "It was not by accident that Kanopolis was chosen as the location for the first State Park under the

new Park Authority. It offers the most return for the tax-payer's dollar. Its central location in the state, the very terrain lends itself to economical basic improvement necessary where there is heavy traffic of people seeking varied out-of-door recreational facilities. We seem to have forgotten that here is one of our natural resources being developed for our use, unique in that it has appeal to people in all walks of life. It has direct bearing on our industrial development, a natural local asset at no special cost."

From this beginning, other parks were developed across the state. A significant change



occurred in 1987, when Governor Mike Hayden and the Kansas Legislature combined the Kansas Fish & Game Commission with the Kansas Park and Resources Authority to create the new Kansas Department of Wildlife & Parks (KDWP.) This was done to streamline conservation and recreational needs within one budget and department. Administration of state parks is now conducted from the Parks Division of KDWP.

The value of Kanopolis and other state parks continues to be proven over time. For the past 50 years, a central and significant theme has driven the management of Kanopolis State Park: People. This is reflected in the Department's current Parks Mission Statement – to Enhance



Kanopolis Reservoir was constructed as a flood control lake by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The 4,000 acres impoundment opened a whole new world of water recreation to Kansans. The state park facilities completed the picture.

or conserve the natural, historical, cultural, and wildlife resources, through good stewardship, while providing for quality outdoor recreation experiences. We will provide service which includes courtesy, cleanliness of facilities, protection of resources, and safety, being responsive to the needs of the people and resource.

Kanopolis, like most of the current 24 state parks, has experienced its share of ups and downs. It has endured floods, tornadoes, economic boom and bust, and changes in recreational trends. Despite these conditions, Kanopolis State Park remains one of the state's most popular attractions. Kanopolis visitors continue to enjoy a wide variety of outdoor activities including hiking, biking, horseback riding, birding, boating, fishing, and camping, among others. As demand for these outdoor experiences increases from a growing urban population, park staff continue to explore ways to meet this demand within ecological,

social, and financial limits.

This task is not easy, given that 97 percent of Kansas land is in private ownership and less than a third of the remaining three percent is available for public recreational purposes. In 2004, Kanopolis State Park visitation exceeded 240,000 people on 1,600 acres. Statewide, more than 8 million people recreated on just over 63,000 acres. Innovative thinking is needed to balance recreation, ecology, resource protection, and public demand. KDWP seeks to meet increasing demands placed on limited resources.

Of course, all of this comes with a price tag. In 1995, 60 percent of the Parks Division operating budget came from the State General Fund. Today, this level of funding has decreased to about 16 percent, with the remainder coming from user fees.

Our agenda for the next 50 years will be based on feedback from constituents and local communities. We will seek funding for new projects through grants,

partners and volunteers, and the fee program. Goals include improving customer service, expanding education and interpretation programs, and building community relation-

ships.

As I started to gather ideas for this article, the history of Kanopolis was very prominent. That is fitting, since Kanopolis is where Kansas State Parks had

their beginning. Fifty years of camping, boating, fishing, campfire stories, endless weekends and holidays with friends and family, the first fish, the first time on wooden water skis pulled behind the boat, raccoons raiding supplies left outside the tent, watching eagles in the late fall, horseback riding in Horsethief Canyon – the list of good memories goes on and on.

But the real reason for this article is to get us all to look to the future with the past in mind. KDWP Secretary Mike Hayden put it very simply: “It’s the people, both inside and outside the department, who are the most important element in our past, present and future. We look forward to the challenges of the future, and building on the successes of the past.”

*On May 7, 2005, the history of Kansas state parks will be celebrated at Kanopolis State Park. Activities include guided hikes, kids fishing clinic, horse riding, a 1950s dance, and speakers, including Mike Hayden, Keith Sexson, Susan Smith, Shari Wilson, and Jerry Hover.*

