

# JACKSON LAKE DAY TRIP

By Jud Hurd

Gary Cage, Anne Fiore, George Ottenhoff, Mark Scott, Marsha Dougherty, Brian Hunter and I got together for a day paddle on Jackson Lake just northwest of Fort Morgan.

I woke up to a beautiful day with clear skies and the sun shining. As I loaded up my kayak and gear I was looking forward to a great day on the water. My spirits were further lifted as I drove through Greeley and got to stop at Red's Dogs and Donuts and buy some Spudnuts to eat on the drive out. For those who don't know me, my family ran a Spudnut shop in Stillwater, Oklahoma, for 22 years. I worked in the shop and grew up eating those special donuts made with potato-based flour, so that takes me back to my childhood. They taste as good today as they did 22 years ago. [Rekindle your memories or tease your taste buds at: <http://www.reddogsanddonuts.com>]

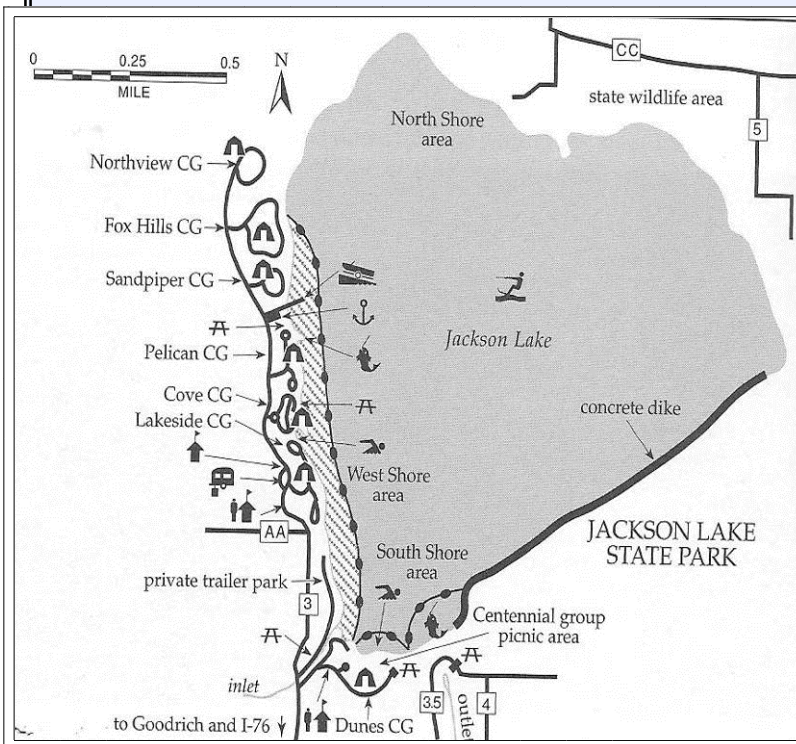
The drive to Jackson Lake was very pleasant but the further east I traveled the more I noticed the winds picking up. As I got to the lake I could see we had a fairly strong, cold wind blowing out of the west and we had a good set of whitecaps whipping up. I was starting to wonder if we were going to be able to do the paddle. Our launch site was about half-way up the west shore at the marina boat ramp. Anne and Gary arrived shortly after I did and we assessed the situation. Since the wind was out of the west, the west shore looked much calmer so we decided we could paddle north in the protection of the west shore. If we decided it was too strong we could come back. The fact that the forecast was for the winds to die down during the day (before picking up again in

the evening) affected Anne's assessment of the situation. Also, not a cloud in the sky was a factor.

As the others arrived we all agreed this was a reasonable plan to follow. Always looking for a silver lining to every cloud I decided this would be a good foul weather practice day.

I thought to myself, "Suppose you are on Glacier Bay with Dave, Lou Ann and Al two days out from the put-in and you wake up to these conditions? You won't have the luxury of deciding to bag it and go home, so you had better get used to dealing with these conditions and make the most of it."

So, with that attitude we all began to get ready. As we were putting on our gear I noticed the wind had

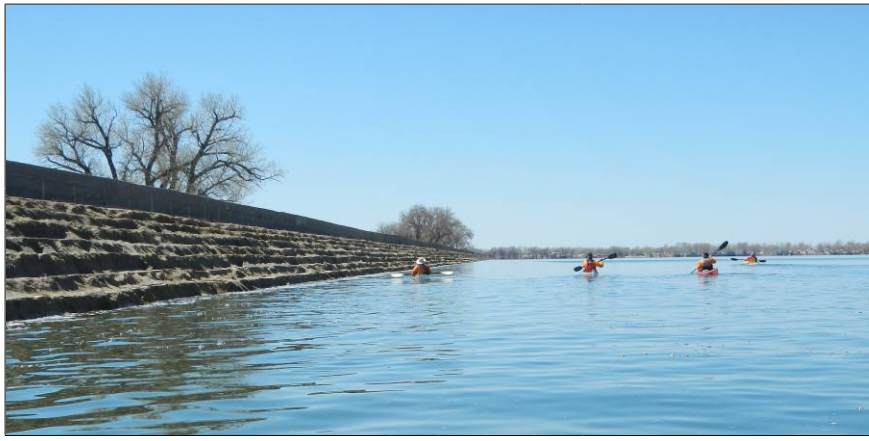


calmed down a bit. By the time we launched the wind had calmed down even more and there weren't as many white-caps. As we paddled north along the west shore the wind died down to a perfect gentle breeze and it turned into a picture-perfect day for paddling.



Glassy smooth water on Lake Jackson

We enjoyed a nice paddle around the lake sighting a number of owls and hawks, and a few jumping carp. We stopped after about an hour for a short break. As we continued around we soon came to the dam and had to make a decision as to which end of the dam we wanted to stop for lunch. The group felt we could paddle the dam in about 30 minutes so we elected to continue. It turned out it was a little over two miles long.



The dam was poured in what looked like three different designs. The first section was a large slope of concrete and we could see where large surface sections had broken out. Those were patched in a variety of ways and a lot of it looked like someone had just poured more dark concrete on the broken areas and spread it around, like chocolate frosting spread on a large cake.

The next section was large concrete steps and looked a little like the beginning of a pyramid. The last section at the end of the dam had a squared off top and a couple of feet below the top was a nice rounded slope down to the water. Years ago I brought my kids here for camping and boating. I remembered sitting on this part of the dam and my youngest son Jake caught his first trout.

Anyway, forty-five minutes later we finally get to the end of the dam and pull onto the swim beach for a nice lunch break. The lake was so full that the swim beach was almost totally under water and it was lined with tumble weeds that had blown across the lake. But we had benches to sit on and a nice outhouse to use. Our final leg of the paddle was along the south end of the west shore and along a small community of houses, trailers and campers. I don't think it is a formal town but it had a real eclectic look to it—you could see a trailer next to a nice cottage or house



next to a camper on blocks. All the homes along the shore had ramps and facilities for enjoying the lake including a swing rope hanging from a tree. That would have been a lot of fun to play on if the water hadn't been so cold. We paddled along the houses waving at people and finally made it back to our put-in. Brian's GPS showed we did a little over eight miles and I think everybody had a good time.

It was good to see some of the members after a long winter's hiatus and it was nice to paddle with Mark and get to know him a little. I want to commend this group for doing a good job of staying together on this paddle. I like to think it was due to outstanding leadership again but Brian hollering at the lead paddlers to slow down probably helped a little also. After the paddle Marsha commented that this was her first paddle of the year and she thoroughly enjoyed it. This might be another keeper to do again next year, perhaps a little later in the year when the water is warmer.