

# 2008 Fishing Outlook

For much of North Dakota the story for fisheries is continued drought and low water levels.

Waters in the northwestern and southwestern parts of the state remain below ideal levels. Much the same story exists in the south central region as well, with the exception of Kidder, Logan and McIntosh counties, where a wet spring and early summer in 2007 brought some relief.

Water levels in the north central, northeastern and southeastern regions are much better than those in the rest of the state. The following reports are provided by North Dakota Game and Fish Department's district fisheries supervisors. There are seven supervisors, most of whom manage waters in conjunction with one or more fisheries biologists.

To learn more about these waters see the 2008 North Dakota Fishing Waters guide, also appearing in this issue. Anglers are also encouraged to review regulations in the 2008-10 North Dakota Fishing Guide for details on daily and possession limits, season dates, as well as other important information.

CRAIG BIHRLE



## Northwest District

*Fred Ryckman, district fisheries supervisor, Williston*

About half of all district waters experienced fish kills during winter 2003-04, many of which were considered significant. By contrast, few winter or summer fish kills have occurred since, and low water levels were contributing factors in most cases.

Water levels have declined in the past few years, as drought conditions have intensified. Low water levels are a serious management problem at several district waters.

## NORTHERN PIKE

**Blacktail Dam** (Williams County) – Holds a strong population of pike, with fish of all sizes and some more than 20 pounds.

**Lake Darling** (Renville County) – Though pike numbers are not great, some fish exceed 20 pounds.

**Powers Lake** (Burke County) – Fair numbers of pike, with most being 3-5 pounds, although some are more than 10 pounds. Fishing pressure and harvest are relatively light.

**Skjermo Lake** (Divide County) – This small lake contains a surprisingly good population of pike, most are 2-4 pounds, but some are more than 10 pounds.

**Smishek Lake** (Burke County) – Fair numbers of pike, with some exceeding 20 pounds.

## WALLEYE

**Blacktail Dam** (Williams County) – Contains fair numbers of walleye, with several year-classes present.

**Lake Darling** (Renville County) – A strong population of 12-16-inch fish, and a few very big walleye.

**Northgate Dam** (Burke County) – Despite a significant loss of walleye during winter 2003-04, Northgate continues to maintain a fairly strong population.

**Smishek Lake** (Burke County) – Contains fair numbers of walleye, with some exceeding 8 pounds.

## CATFISH

**Little Missouri River** – Good catfishing at times upstream to Medora. Success is dependent upon flows; high flows generally move greater numbers of catfish farther upstream.

## PANFISH (Yellow Perch, Crappie, Bluegill)

**Blacktail Dam** (Williams County) – Good numbers of perch and bluegill, with some of each species exceeding 1 pound.

**Lake Darling** (Renville County) – The perch population is greatly reduced, although some big fish may still be found, and greater numbers of small fish indicate the perch fishery may be rebounding.

**Epping-Springbrook Dam** (Williams County) – Fair numbers of perch, with some keeper fish.

**Kota-Ray Dam** (Williams County) – Fair populations of perch and bluegill, although most are small.

**Leland Dam** (McKenzie County) – Supports a good bluegill population. Catch-and-release is encouraged.

**McGregor Dam** (Williams County) – Improving numbers of decent-size perch.

**Northgate Dam** (Burke County) – Strong bluegill population, with some exceeding 1 pound. Catch-and-release of larger fish is encouraged. Fair numbers of larger crappies are also present. As with walleye, many bluegill and crappie were lost to winterkill in 2003-04.

**Sather Dam** (McKenzie County) – Supports a good bluegill population, although most are smaller fish.

**Smishek Lake** (Burke County) – Contains fair numbers of perch and also good numbers of bluegill, some exceeding 1 pound.

**Trenton Lake** (Williams County) – This Missouri River backwater contains good numbers of crappies, but most are less than 10 inches.

### **BASS (Largemouth, Smallmouth)**

**Baukol-Noonan Dam** (Divide County) – Good numbers of bass, although most are smaller.

**Lake Darling** (Renville County) – By far the best smallmouth population in the north-west district, with good numbers of fish of all sizes.

**Kota-Ray Dam** (Williams County) – Contains a good population of largemouth bass, but only a remnant population of smallmouth.

**Leland Dam** (McKenzie County) – Supports a good largemouth bass population, although most fish are smaller.

**Sather Dam** (McKenzie County) – Supports a good largemouth bass population, although most fish are smaller.

### **TROUT**

**Baukol-Noonan Wildlife Management Area waters** (Divide County) – The two WMA waters contain fair rainbow trout populations. The waters are lightly fished and could support more angling.

**Iverson Dam** (Williams County) – Contains a fair trout population, although most are less than 14 inches.

**Kettle Lake** (Williams County) – Fair numbers of rainbows and browns, with some larger rainbows. Catch-and-release is encouraged. The lake is now open to year-round fishing.

**Kota-Ray Dam** (Williams County) – Good numbers of trout, but mostly smaller fish. The lake receives relatively high angler use and harvest. Catch-and-release is encouraged.

**McGregor Dam** (Williams County) – Contains a fair trout population, with some fish longer than 18 inches.

**Northgate Dam** (Burke County) – Good rainbow trout population, but fewer large fish compared to past years.

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A Bismarck youngster with his first North Dakota walleye.



JACKE LUNDSTROM



### **Southwest District**

*Jeff Hendrickson, district fisheries supervisor, Dickinson*

Southwestern North Dakota has been in the grip of a dry cycle for some time. Even so, most lakes and fish in the district have done OK in recent years. Mild winters have helped reduce the number of fish kills. Timely spring rains have also helped maintain some lake water levels. Overall, water levels in southwestern North Dakota are not good, with many lakes down 2-8 feet.

### **NORTHERN PIKE**

The outlook for pike fishing in southwestern North Dakota is not too bad.

**Blickensderfer Dam** (Hettinger County) – A fair population of pike that average 3-4 pounds.

**Bowman-Haley** (Bowman County) – A fair spring fishery for smaller pike, but very dependent on water levels.

**Cannonball, Heart and Grand rivers and Cedar Creek** – Good spring fisheries for pike, especially downstream from lowhead dams.

**Cedar Lake** (Slope County) – A fair number of 3-4-pound pike.

**Danzig Dam** (Morton County) – Good numbers of pike, with some more than 6 pounds.

**Heart Butte Reservoir (Lake Tschida)** (Grant County) – Continues to have a limited fishery for pike up to 10 pounds.

**Odland Dam** (Golden Valley County) – Holds a good population of pike, with most fish less than 10 pounds.

**Patterson Lake** (Stark County) – Limited fishery in spring for pike of 4-8 pounds.

**Spring Lake** (Bowman County) – Good numbers of small pike.

**Kalina Dam** (Bowman County) – Good numbers of pike up to 6 pounds.

**Larson Lake** (Hettinger County) – Very good numbers of pike up to 8 pounds.

**Gascoyne Lake** (Bowman County) – Very good numbers of pike up to 6 pounds.

## WALLEYE

Walleye are doing fair in larger, deeper waters such as Heart Butte Reservoir (Lake Tschida), Patterson Lake and Bowman-Haley Dam, although some fisheries have declined due to lower water levels. Smaller lakes also provide some walleye fishing. Anglers are encouraged to release walleye in smaller lakes because they can be fished out easily.

**Indian Creek Dam** (Hettinger County) – Good numbers of walleye up to 1 pound.

**Patterson Lake** (Stark County) – Good numbers of walleye, with some up to 8 pounds.

**Heart Butte Reservoir (Lake Tschida)** (Grant County) – Good numbers of walleye up to 8 pounds.

**Bowman-Haley Dam** (Bowman County) – Fair number of small walleye, with a good year-class coming up.

**Sheep Creek Dam** (Hettinger County) – Good numbers of walleye up to 4 pounds.

## CATFISH

**Heart Butte Reservoir (Lake Tschida)** (Grant County) – A fairly good fishery, with many whopper catfish. This fishery extends up the Heart River to Patterson Lake.

**Little Missouri River** – Good catfishing found in the river upstream to Medora. Success continues even farther upstream when flows are high.

## PANFISH (Yellow Perch, Crappie, Bluegill)

The daily limit for perch, crappie and bluegill is 20 and possession limit 60, except for Odland Dam where the daily limit is 10 and possession limit 20.

**Bowman-Haley Reservoir** (Bowman County) – A limited fishery for large bluegill and yellow perch.

**Danzig Dam** (Morton County) – Limited numbers of larger perch and bluegill.

**Davis Dam** (Slope County) – Many small bluegill, but a good overall population.

**Dickinson Dike** (Stark County) – Fair number of quality bluegill.

**Heart Butte Dam (Lake Tschida)** (Grant County) – Improved fishery for quality-size perch, crappie and white bass.

**Indian Creek** (Hettinger County) – Fair numbers of larger bluegill. Some larger perch also showing up during winter.

**Mirror Lake** (Adams County) – Good populations of quality crappie and bluegill.

**Odland Dam** (Golden Valley County) – Good numbers of large bluegill and yellow perch.

**Patterson Lake** (Stark County) – A limited,

though improving fishery for quality-size crappie. Some nice bluegill and perch also caught in winter.

**Raleigh Reservoir** (Grant County) – Fair bluegill population and some larger perch showing up in winter.

**Sheep Creek Dam** (Grant County) – Excellent bluegill and crappie populations, with fish averaging a quarter-pound. Anglers reported good success in 2007, with at least some fish topping 1 pound.

## WHITE BASS

**Heart Butte Reservoir (Lake Tschida)** (Grant County) – White bass population is expanding slowly, but those caught are quality fish.

## BASS (Largemouth, Smallmouth)

**Belfield Dam** (Stark County) – A fair largemouth population, but fish are generally less than 1 pound. Catch-and-release is encouraged.

**Davis Dam** (Slope County) – A fair largemouth population, with a few fish up to 4 pounds. Catch-and-release is encouraged.

**Camels Hump Dam** (Golden Valley County) – A good population of bass up to 7 pounds.

**Heart Butte Reservoir (Lake Tschida)** (Grant County) – Although smallmouth bass are not common, they are usually large. The tailrace occasionally attracts good numbers of smallmouth.

**Indian Creek Dam** (Hettinger County) – Low density smallmouth population, but some nice fish. The lake also has fair numbers of largemouth bass.

**Raleigh Reservoir** (Grant County) – Boasts a good largemouth bass population that averages 2 pounds. A limited number of smaller-size smallmouth bass available.

**Sheep Creek Dam** (Grant County) – A fair number of largemouth bass up to 2 pounds.

## TROUT

**Belfield Dam** (Billings County) – Limited population of smaller rainbow trout because of drought conditions.

**Camels Hump Dam** (Golden Valley County) – Good numbers of larger trout.

**Davis Dam** (Slope County) – Trout fishing should be fair this year.

**Dickinson Dike** (Slope County) – Excellent trout fishery maintained for youth angling.

**North Lemmon Lake** (Adams County) – Very good rainbow trout lake, with a few nice browns. Angling can be difficult because of drought conditions.

**Raleigh Reservoir** (Grant County) – Good for rainbow trout that average 1 pound.

**Sheep Creek Dam** (Grant County) – Good numbers of larger rainbow trout.

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*North Dakota's quality smallmouth and largemouth bass fishing is mostly overlooked by anglers.*



CRAIG BIRBLE



## Missouri River System

*Dave Fryda, Missouri River System supervisor, Riverdale*

Missouri River System fisheries continue to be challenged by the seventh consecutive year of drought and poor annual runoff. In addition to negative influences to some fish populations, low water conditions have created access problems for both shore and boat anglers on some portions of the Missouri River System in North Dakota.

Despite some challenges, the Missouri River System continues to provide some of the best and most diverse fishing opportunities in North Dakota. While the Lake Sakakawea fishery has endured some declines in recent years, the Missouri River and Lake Oahe below Garrison Dam have recovered greatly from some lean times. Anglers will once again have ample opportunities to pursue a wide variety of species in 2008.

## NORTHERN PIKE

### Lake Sakakawea

Although overall pike abundance has declined in recent years, Lake Sakakawea is likely still an angler's best bet for catching a trophy pike in North Dakota. Sakakawea's pike population exploded in the 1990s as a result of excellent spawning success. In recent years, spawning success has been poor and overall abundance has declined. However, many pike that remain are from the mid-1990s year-classes and many exceed 20 pounds.

Historically, pike fishing was best in the upper regions of the lake. However, low water levels have dramatically limited pike fishing opportunities in the headwater regions and better pike fishing opportunities are now in the middle and lower regions of the reservoir.

## WALLEYE

### Lake Sakakawea

Lake Sakakawea will likely provide some good late spring, early summer walleye fishing. However, anglers will likely encounter a much different fishery from what they have become accustomed to over the last decade. Continued drought has dramatically reduced the forage base and Sakakawea walleye are not the "footballs" they once were. Less

forage has resulted in much thinner fish, slower growth and increased natural mortality; especially among larger walleye. Consequently, relatively few trophy fish remain compared to past years. Anglers, however, will find plenty of keeper walleye in 2008 as the majority of the population will be in the 14-18-inch range.

Open water walleye fishing typically begins earliest in the upper portions of the reservoir and moves downstream as summer progresses. However, drought has largely eliminated open water fishing opportunities above the White Earth Bay region.

## Missouri River/Lake Oahe

The fishery below Garrison Dam downstream to what was once Lake Oahe is the real bright spot in walleye fishing on North Dakota's Missouri River System. This fishery has recovered dramatically from the lean times of 5-10 years ago. Walleye growth and body condition have improved greatly as rainbow smelt abundance in Lake Oahe has trended upward in recent years and other forage species such as gizzard shad have migrated into this region. Walleye fishing was exceptional in spring/summer of 2007, and remained good throughout winter. All indications are that 2008 will be a great year for walleye angling.

## CATFISH

Catfishing opportunities are abundant throughout the Missouri River System in North Dakota and largely underutilized. **Upper Lake Sakakawea, Missouri River (above the reservoir) and Yellowstone River** – A strong catfish population, with some fish exceeding 10 pounds. This is where anglers will find the best chance to catch a big cat in the Missouri River System. Anglers who target the area from Williston to the Missouri River and Yellowstone River confluence are generally quite successful during the open water season, and fair numbers of catfish are caught through the ice. **Lake Sakakawea** – Good numbers of cats throughout the reservoir, but best numbers and fishing success in the upper end. Catfish abundance in Lake Sakakawea has generally been increasing as the drought has continued.



*A northern pike in the net.*

**Garrison Dam Tailrace** – Provides some good fishing for smaller catfish, especially in summer. Cats from this area remain great table fare thanks to relatively cold water throughout the summer months.

**Missouri River, south of Garrison Dam** – Catfish are abundant throughout this reach and good fishing often occurs around the mouths of tributaries and even well upstream during good flow conditions.

## SALMON

**Missouri River System** – Current water levels have affected the salmon fishery in Lake Sakakawea. Coldwater habitat and rainbow smelt – the salmon's main food source – abundance have been reduced. As in recent years, salmon abundance and growth will likely remain reduced in 2008. However, a viable fishery should remain and stocking will continue at reduced rates.

## WHITE BASS

**Missouri River System** – Lake Oahe typically has a much better white bass fishery than Lake Sakakawea. However, white bass experienced a severe die-off in Lake Oahe a few years ago and numbers remain greatly reduced.

## SMALLMOUTH BASS

**Lake Sakakawea** – Similar to northern pike, smallmouth bass abundance in recent years has declined due to low water and poor spawning habitat. Good fishing can still be found in the few areas of the reservoir that contain adequate rock habitat. Trophy fish are a definite possibility.

## TROUT

The Garrison Dam Tailrace continues to produce trophy trout – browns, cutthroat and rainbows. Rainbow trout stocking only recently resumed in this reach and the fishery hasn't become well established. However, world-class brown trout continue to be caught, with a few exceeding 20 pounds each year. The 2007 stocking of cutthroat trout appears to have been especially successful and should provide good fishing in 2008 and beyond.



## North Central District

*Jason Lee, district fisheries supervisor, Riverdale*

Water conditions remain good throughout the north central district and a mild winter raises little concern about significant winterkill. This is welcome news as some fisheries within the district are still recovering from the tough 2004 winter.

## NORTHERN PIKE

While pike populations have been trending downward since the late 1990s, many good fishing opportunities remain. In addition, some formerly good pike fisheries, including Brush Lake, Crooked Lake and Rice Lake, are recovering nicely from severe winterkills in 2004.

While most district lakes provide good angling for primarily smaller- to medium-size pike, at least some large pike are present in the majority.

**Brush Lake** (McLean County) – Good pike population, with some larger fish available.

**Buffalo Lodge Lake** (McHenry County) – Decent pike numbers.

**North Carlson Lake** (Ward County) – Good numbers of pike up to 5 pounds.

**South Carlson Lake** (Ward County) – Good pike angling in recent years, with some larger fish available.

**Coal Mine Lake** (Sheridan County) – Abundant pike population.

**Cottonwood Lake** (McHenry County) – Fair pike numbers.

**Crooked Lake** (McLean County) – Abundant pike, but mostly small- to medium-size because of 2004 winterkill.

**Long Lake** (McLean County) – Abundant pike population.

**Long Lake** (Bottineau County) – Decent pike population, with some large fish available.

**Lake Metigoshe** (Bottineau County) – Good northern pike fishing.

**Rice Lake** (Ward County) – Abundant pike population.

**Strawberry Lake** (McLean County) – Good pike population.

**Wolf Lake** (Sheridan County) – Abundant pike, but many are small.

## WALLEYE

Traditional north central district walleye fisheries such as Lake Audubon and Garrison Diversion Unit lakes will continue to provide good fishing. In addition, several smaller, less popular lakes contain quality walleye populations.

**Antelope Lake** (Pierce County) – High numbers of walleye and many different sizes available to anglers.

**Lake Audubon** (McLean County) – Good numbers of quality-size fish. As a result of a couple of recent strong year-classes, anglers should see good numbers of 14-20-inch fish over the next couple seasons.

**Lake Brekken** (McLean County) – Adjacent to, but not part of the McClusky Canal chain of lakes. High numbers of quality-size walleye.

**Brush Lake** (McLean County) – Walleye population continues to improve after 2004 winterkill. Abundant smaller walleye, with some larger fish available.

**Buffalo Lodge** (McHenry County) – Good walleye population, with many 16-18-inch fish.

**Crooked Lake** (McLean County) – The walleye population continues to rebound after 2004 winterkill. Decent number of 16-17-inch fish.

**Garrison Diversion lakes (New Johns, Heckers, East Park and West Park)** – Walleye abundance has declined in recent years, but large fish are still present. Several strong year-classes in recent years should result in improved fishing over the next several years.

**South Hoffer** (Sheridan County) – Fair number of walleye, with some nice fish available.

**Holmes Lake** (McLean County) – Adjacent to, but not part of the McClusky Canal chain of lakes. Recent netting surveys show decent numbers of small- to medium-size walleye.

**Lake Metigoshe** (Bottineau County) – Some nice walleye.

## PANFISH (Yellow Perch, Crappie, Bluegill)

**Arroda Lakes** (Oliver County) – Fair crappie numbers, with some quality fish available.

**Lake Audubon** (McLean County) – Periodically provides decent winter fishing for nice-size perch. However, there are many small perch in the lake.

**Garrison Diversion Lakes (New Johns, Heckers, East Park and West Park)** – Lots of small- to medium-size yellow perch. Bluegill numbers have increased throughout the McClusky Canal chain, but most are small. Nice-size crappie are occasionally caught.

**Lake Metigoshe** (Bottineau County) – Holds several sizes of bluegill, including some large fish, along with some nice crappies.

**Nelson Lake** (Oliver County) – Abundant quality-size bluegill and crappie.

**Strawberry Lake** (McLean County) – Lots of small perch and bluegill.

### **BASS (Largemouth, Smallmouth)**

The Department strongly encourages catch-and-release fishing for bass, except in lakes where small fish may be over-abundant.

**Lake Audubon** (McLean County) – A good population of smallmouth bass, with some large fish.

**Garrison Diversion lakes (New Johns, Heckers, East Park and West Park)** – Excellent smallmouth bass fisheries, with an abundance of fish up to 18 inches. Largemouth bass in lower numbers, but many are 3-4 pounds.

**Long Lake** (Bottineau County) – Some largemouth bass in the 3-pound class.

**Nelson Lake** (Oliver County) – Hands down the best largemouth bass lake in the state. Open water year-round allows fish to grow better than in other lakes. The state record fish – 8 pounds, 7 1/2 ounces – was caught here in 1983.

**Riverdale Spillway Pond** (McLean County) – Decent smallmouth bass fishery, with some large fish.

### **TROUT**

**Custer Mine Pond** (McLean County) – A good put-and-take fishery in a small, easy-to-fish pond.

**Lightning Lake** (McLean County) – A quality trout fishery, with some large trout.

**Strawberry Lake** (Bottineau County) – Produces keeper fish by mid-summer.

**Velva Sportsmen's Pond** (Ward County) – Consistently a quality fishery for nice-size browns and rainbows.



## **South Central District**

*Paul Bailey, district fisheries supervisor, Bismarck*

Many lakes in Burleigh, Emmons, Morton and Sioux counties continue to suffer from low water due to prolonged drought. However, the wet spring and early summer of 2007 in Kidder, Logan and McIntosh counties provided some relief to many lakes. Increased water levels and relatively little snow accumulation have combined to greatly reduce the threat of winterkill.

### **NORTHERN PIKE**

Drought has been especially hard on northern pike. Low water levels and winterkills have severely affected pike in Horsehead Lake, West Lake Napoleon and the Etta/Alkaline Lake complex. Northern

pike tend to thrive in lakes when water levels rise and this has not happened often since the late 1990s. Pike spawn within flooded vegetation and are well adapted to catch prey in these areas. Despite the drought, numerous lakes in the south central district should continue to provide good pike fishing opportunities.

**Alkaline Lake** (Kidder County) – A strong population of pike, with many fish exceeding 5 pounds.

**Beaver Lake** (Logan County) – Decent numbers of 2-4-pound pike.

**Cherry Lake** (Kidder County) – Good numbers of 2-4-pound pike.

**Dry Lake** (McIntosh County) – Pike are not as abundant as previous years. A good population still exists, but most fish are less than 5 pounds.

**Frettim Lake** (Kidder County) – Fair numbers of 2-4-pound pike.

**Frohlich Dam** (Sioux County) – Low numbers of 2-5-pound pike.

**Green Lake** (McIntosh County) – Fair numbers of nice-size pike.

**Round Lake** (Kidder County) – Good numbers of pike, with many fish exceeding 5 pounds.

**Rice Lake** (Emmons County) – Good numbers of pike of less than 5 pounds.

### **WALLEYE**

South central North Dakota contains several excellent walleye fisheries. Walleye were recently introduced to some of these lakes and others have a history of providing good walleye fishing.

**Alkaline Lake** (Kidder County) – Walleye were first stocked in 2003 and fish up to 5 pounds are abundant.

**Dry Lake** (McIntosh County) – Good walleye population and size range.

**Froelich Dam** (Sioux County) – Fair numbers of walleye up to 6 pounds.

**Green Lake** (McIntosh County) – Smaller walleye are abundant, but fish up to 6 pounds may be caught.

**Lake Josephine** (Kidder County) – Good numbers of smaller walleye, with some larger fish.



MANDY THOMAS

*A trophy trout in the eyes of these young anglers.*

**Marvin Miller Lake** (Logan County) – Walleye were first stocked in 2002 and now there are excellent numbers of fish up to 4 pounds.

**Mundt Lake** (Logan County) – Walleye were first stocked in 2005. Fish are now abundant and have reached 15-17 inches.

**Rice Lake** (Emmons County) – A healthy walleye population, with quite a few fish more than 3 pounds.

**Round Lake** (Kidder County) – Excellent walleye population and good size structure.

**Sweet Briar Dam** (Morton County) – Walleye population had decreased in recent years due to low water levels, but some nice-size walleye remain.

### **PANFISH (Yellow Perch, Crappie, Bluegill)**

Panfish numbers, especially yellow perch, have declined dramatically since the high water years of the late 1990s and early 2000s. Like northern pike, most panfish thrive when lakes are rising and expanding. Unfortunately, drought has negatively influenced most panfish populations in south central North Dakota.

**Becker-Schlepp Lake** (McIntosh County) – Good numbers of perch.

**Braddock Dam** (Emmons County) – Fair numbers of perch and bluegill.

**Dollinger-Schnable Lake** (McIntosh County) – Good numbers of nice-size perch.

**Dry Lake** (McIntosh County) – Low numbers of medium- to large-size perch.

**Fish Creek Dam** (Morton County) – Good numbers of quality-size crappie.

**Frettim Lake** (Kidder County) – Fair numbers of perch.

**Froelich Dam** (Sioux County) – Good numbers of small perch, crappie and bluegill.

**Jasper Lake** (Kidder County) – Good numbers and size range of perch.

**McDowell Dam** (Burleigh County) – Fair numbers of bluegill.

**Nygren Dam** (Morton County) – Good numbers of small bluegill.

**Sweet Briar Dam** (Morton County) – After several years of low water, Sweet Briar filled in 2007 and saw excellent reproduction of yellow perch, bluegill and crappie. Sweet Briar is likely just a few years away from some excellent fishing.

### **BASS (Largemouth, Smallmouth)**

Bass angling opportunities are fairly limited in south central North Dakota, but there are a few fisheries that contain good bass populations.

**Fish Creek Dam** (Morton County) – Good numbers and sizes of both largemouth and smallmouth bass.

**McDowell Dam** (Burleigh County) – Fair numbers of larger largemouth bass.

**Missouri River** (Burleigh and Morton counties) – Areas in and around Bismarck contain good numbers of smallmouth bass.

**Nygren Dam** (Morton County) – Good numbers of largemouth bass, with some larger fish.

### **TROUT**

There are a number of trout angling opportunities in south central North Dakota. Catchable-size trout are stocked in several waters in spring (Cottonwood Park Pond, McDowell Dam, OWLS Pond and Wilton City Pond), but these trout typically do not survive the warmer waters of summer. Anglers wishing to target larger trout should try one of the following waters:

**Fish Creek Dam** (Morton County) – Good numbers of both brown and rainbow trout, with some fish more than 3 pounds.

**Nygren Dam** (Morton County) – Good numbers of rainbow trout, with some larger fish.



### **Northeast District**

**Randy Hiltner**, district fisheries supervisor,  
**Devils Lake**

Water levels continue to be adequate for most northeastern lakes and reservoirs. Devils Lake has dropped about 2 feet the past several years, with much of the runoff flowing through to Stump Lake, which has risen dramatically. Stump Lake reached the same elevation as Devils Lake last summer.

Generally, water conditions are good in the northeastern district and fish populations should thrive in most waters in 2008.

### **NORTHERN PIKE**

Many lakes are either stocked with pike or have some natural reproduction. Pike are the best adapted predator fish for most lakes and will continue to provide lots of fishing opportunities.

**Carpenter Lake** (Rolette County) – A pretty consistent pike fishery that provides a lot of winter recreation.

**Cavanaugh Lake** (Ramsey County) – Improving pike numbers and size.

**Devils Lake** – Devils Lake water levels have remained relatively high, with the lake still in excess of 100,000 acres. Pike habitat is still good, especially in the upper regions of the lake.



*There are fishing opportunities just about everywhere you turn in North Dakota.*

As has been the case the past decade or so, there will be great pike fishing opportunities in 2008. Pike typically average more than 4 pounds in netting surveys, so most are a nice size and put up a good fight. Boat anglers can expect good results when casting crankbaits and similar lures. Excellent pike fishing can also be had from shore in late April through June by fishing with lures and smelt off riprap on ND highways 19 and 281, as well as other roadways and the city dike. Pike are also often caught incidentally with live bait by anglers fishing for walleye or white bass.

**Goose Lake** (Wells County) – Some heavy-bodied pike available.

**Island Lake** (Rolette County) – Excellent pike fishery, with good numbers of fish.

**Juanita Lake** (Foster County) – Last summer's netting survey had good numbers of pike.

**Larimore Dam** (Grand Forks County) – Average-size pike.

**Lake Laretta** (Nelson County) – Has an excellent pike population, with fish of more than 5 pounds.

**Red Willow Lake** (Griggs County) – Continues to provide good fishing. Anglers may not take northern pike less than 24 inches.

**School Section Lake** (Rolette County) – An excellent pike population, but fishing is not always fast and furious.

**Sibley Lake** (Griggs County) – Lots of pike more than 5 pounds. Poor summer boat access. Anglers are reminded to check with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for specific dates the lake is open to fishing.

**Silver Lake** (Benson County) – Continues to produce nice northern pike. Anglers are reminded to check with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for specific dates the lake is open to fishing.

**Stump Lake** (Nelson County) – Pike are now common in this large, deep lake connected to Devils Lake.

**Sweetwater Lake/Morrison Lake** (Ramsey County) – With mild winters and high water, anglers continue to do well on these two lakes. They are primarily winter fisheries.

## WALLEYE

**Bisbee Dam** (Towner County) – Continues to produce nice-size walleye.

**Devils Lake** – Devils Lake continues to support a good walleye population, with many small- to medium-size fish. Strong year-classes are coming up, with many fish from 8-12 inches, as well as good numbers of 15-20-inch fish. Walleye fishing was good last spring and summer, but slower than 2006.

The walleye population continues to thrive with significant natural reproduction and periodic stocking. Walleye fishing opportunities will extend into the future as young fish are recruited to the fishery. Devils Lake continues to be a main destination for walleye anglers as the lake, once again, received heavy fishing pressure last spring and summer.

Eastern North Dakota's small lakes and reservoirs hold fair walleye populations. Walleye tend to be smaller on average in these waters. Water conditions should be good in the northeast, with average rainfall. Because most of these waters are stocked regularly, catch-and-release fishing is encouraged to help maintain a quality, long-term fishery.

**Fordville Dam** – A decent population of keeper walleye.

**Goose Lake** (Wells County) – Walleye are doing well, with good numbers of nice fish.

**McVile Dam** (Nelson County) – A small reservoir, with some nice-size walleye.

**South Golden Lake** (Steele County) – Netting surveys show there are nice walleye in the lake.

**Stump Lake** (Nelson County) – Good population of walleye, most of which are less than 18 inches.

**Tobiason Lake** (Steele County) – A good population of nice walleye.

## CATFISH

**Red River** – Catfishing is excellent over the length of the river. The catfish population is stable in northern reaches and the southern stretch holds more, but smaller fish. The area from Drayton to Pembina produces lots of trophy fish. Red River (and Bois de Sioux) anglers may take daily no more than one channel catfish longer than 24 inches.

## PANFISH (Yellow Perch, Crappie, Bluegill)

The region's many smaller lakes and reservoirs provide some excellent panfishing. Yellow perch, bluegill and crappie are among the more popular panfish. Some large waters, such as Devils Lake, produce large perch. Other new lakes, many of them just big sloughs created by overflow from other waters, have strong perch populations and are providing angling opportunities. However, there are fewer and fewer good perch fisheries as water levels decline or, in some cases, there are high northern pike numbers.

Good bluegill and crappie lakes are rarer than perch lakes. Some waters may have lots of small bluegill and crappie, but few have many big fish.

**Devils Lake** – Perch densities in Devils Lake have remained stable the past several years because of limited spawning success and are still below management objective levels. A strong 2007 hatch may improve numbers of catchable-size perch in a few years. The current population structure is balanced with fish averaging 9 inches in the last netting survey, and ranging from 4-14 inches. Perch fishing improved slightly last winter, but was still generally difficult. Anglers did catch some 10-inch and larger fish last winter.

**Goose Lake** (Wells County) – Some nice perch, with lots of smaller fish.

**Homme Dam** (Walsh County) – Contains a decent crappie and perch population, with some nice fish.

**Larimore Dam** (Grand Forks County) – Smaller crappie, bluegill and perch to keep kids happy. Some bigger fish mixed in to keep adults happy.

**McVile Dam** (Nelson County) – Lots of small perch and bluegill.

**Red Willow Lake** (Griggs County) – This small lake has some good-size bluegill.

**South Golden Lake** (Steele County) – Good numbers of nice perch available.

**Whitman Dam** – A nice size-class of bigger perch.

**Stump Lake** (Nelson County) – Holds some big perch, but population densities are low.

## WHITE BASS

**Devils Lake** – White bass densities have increased the last two years. The lake currently has high numbers of 1-2-pound fish, with some much larger fish. The best times to catch them are late May and early June, although good fishing is possible anytime during open water.

## BASS (Largemouth, Smallmouth)

**Fordville Dam** – Some nice largemouth, but not abundant.

**Homme Dam** (Walsh County) – Decent largemouth bass fishery, with some big fish.

**Larimore Dam** (Grand Forks County) – This small reservoir has several size-classes of largemouth bass, with some fish more than 3 pounds. Catch-and-release is recommended.

**McVile Dam** (Nelson County) – A small reservoir with some nice bass. Catch-and-release is encouraged.

## TROUT

**Hooker Lake** (Rolette County) – A good rainbow population, with catchable-size fish.

**Turtle River** (Grand Forks County) – Game and Fish continues stocking catchable-size trout in spring and fall in Turtle River State Park.



## Southeast District

*Gene Van Eeckhout, district fisheries supervisor, Jamestown*

Water conditions in the southeast have been generally favorable the last two years despite drought, which gripped the middle section of the state. Several new lakes were stocked with pike and walleye. Many non-managed waters in Sargent and Richland counties are producing excellent perch fisheries.

## NORTHERN PIKE

The quality of some pike fisheries deteriorated as others developed. While much reduced from the boom years, there are still some very good pike populations throughout southeastern North Dakota.

**Barnes Lake** (Stutsman County) – Pike numbers are down substantially from a recent high, due mostly to deteriorating water conditions.

**Clark Lake** (Stutsman County) – Number of pike not impressive, but size structure has improved.

**Coldwater Lake** (McIntosh County) – Consistent pike producer.

**Kulm-Edgeley** (LaMoure County) – Fair number of small pike.

**Pipestem Reservoir** (Stutsman County) – Medium-size pike common. Good place to catch a trophy.

## WALLEYE

Super 2005 year-class in many lakes. This year could provide some of the best walleye fishing in years.

**Lake Ashtabula** (Barnes County) – Walleye population improving. Size structure excellent, despite reports of too many small fish.

**Barnes Lake** (Stutsman County) – Number of fish reduced due to heavy fishing pressure the last two years.

**Coldwater Lake** (McIntosh County) – Consistent walleye lake. All sizes represented.

**Jamestown Reservoir** (Stutsman County) – Small fish dominate the size structure, resulting from high harvest of fish longer than 14 inches.

**Pipestem Reservoir** – Good size structure. Overall, the walleye population is down.

**Sheyenne River** – At times, good for walleye below lowhead dams.

**Spiritwood Lake** (Stutsman County) – Abundant, small walleye.

**Lake Tewaukon** (Sargent County) – Located on Tewaukon National Wildlife Refuge. Good age-class of walleye and the fishing should pick up this year, according to Wade King, fisheries biologist, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bismarck.

## PANFISH (Yellow Perch, Crappie, Bluegill)

**Lake Ashtabula** (Barnes County) – Perch recovery has been steady since 2002. Some nice fish, but not overly abundant.



*Another summer day of fishing in North Dakota nears its end.*

**Brewer Lake** (Cass County) – Bluegill are more abundant, but crappie and perch size structures are better.

**Coldwater Lake** (McIntosh County) – Consistent perch fishery. Mostly medium-size fish.

**Dead Colt Creek** (Ransom County) – Historically a good crappie and bluegill fishery. Bluegill are presently the dominant species. (Note: Dead Colt Creek contains Eurasian water milfoil, an invasive aquatic plant. Anglers are urged to take extra precautions in removing all aquatic vegetation from watercraft to prevent spreading to other waters.)

**Jamestown Reservoir** (Stutsman County) – Still a fair crappie fishery, but not the producer it once was. Size structure is excellent.

**Kraft Slough** (Sargent County) – Winter perch fishery 2006-07 didn't live up to expectations. Slow start again in 2007-08. (Note: winter fishery only; reduced daily and possession limits).

**Lake LaMoure** (LaMoure County) – Excellent fishing from time to time. Crappie are abundant, but the average size is small.

**Pipstem Reservoir** (Stutsman County) – Crappie population recovering after several winters of intensive harvest. The average size is small. (Note: reduced daily and possession limits).

**Spiritwood Lake** (Stutsman County) – Consistent perch producer, but small average size.

**Lake Tewaukon** (Sargent County) – Located on Tewaukon National Wildlife Refuge. Some monster-class crappie, according to King.

#### **BASS (Largemouth, Smallmouth)**

**Brewer Lake** (Cass County) – Good largemouth population; presently dominated by smaller fish.

**Dead Colt Creek** (Ransom County) – Excellent largemouth population. (Note: the lake contains Eurasian water milfoil, an invasive aquatic plant. Anglers are urged to take extra precautions in removing all aquatic vegetation from watercraft to prevent spreading to other waters.)

**Heinrich-Martin** (LaMoure County) – Excellent largemouth population.

**Spiritwood Lake** (Stutsman County) – Excellent smallmouth bass fishery for fish of all sizes. Catch-and-release of trophy fish encouraged.

**Sheyenne River (stretch between Fort Ransom and Lisbon)** (Ransom County) – A relatively unused fishery.

#### **TROUT**

**Blumhardt Lake** (McIntosh County) – Stocked annually with rainbows, but both brown and rainbow trout present. Best rainbow population in years.

**Moon Lake** (Barnes County) – Best rainbow population in years. Future management contingent upon water quantity and quality.

**Mooreton Pond** (Richland County) – Catchable-size trout stocked annually. Harvest encouraged prior to mid-summer.

#### **CATFISH**

(Lynn Schlueter, aquatic nuisance species coordinator, Devils Lake, provides his forecast for catfish in the eastern rivers of the state.)

**Red River** – Catfishing should continue to be good, with lots of small fish on the south end. Anglers will find a mixed bag of sizes in

the Fargo area. The population in the southern part of the river (the Red flows south to north) is comprised of more, but smaller fish than the northern stretch. (Note: Red River (and Bois de Sioux) anglers may take daily no more than one channel catfish longer than 24 inches and anglers may only gut and gill their catfish.)

For large catfish, the area north of Grand Forks is better, with the Drayton area in particular having the biggest fish. Additionally, the Red has a nice walleye run in spring and a good sauger run in fall. Anglers will find lots of access to the Red, with good boat ramps along the entire river.

**Sheyenne River** – Excellent catfishing below dams at Lisbon and Fort Ransom, and some walleye fishing in spring and fall.

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*Walleye for most North Dakota anglers remains the quarry of choice.*

