



MATTERS OF OPINION



Terry Steinwand
Director

While winter wasn't unnecessarily long or brutal, save for a couple cold snaps, we still look forward to spring. We envision simply getting outside for a long walk, taking a jaunt in some native prairie in anticipation of seeing a blooming crocus, finally launching the boat in a favorite fishing hole, or sitting on shore with a line in the water.

We're not as wet as we would like to be in much of the state, but that doesn't mean tremendous fishing opportunities don't exist. In this issue of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*, you'll read some fishing predictions for 2008. If history holds true, which it typically does, the smaller lakes in each management district will provide the first good opportunities, followed by the larger waters later in spring and early summer.

You've likely heard me say a number of times that there is more to hunting and fishing than having the resources available. It also involves the ability to access the resource. Over the years we've worked with a number of federal and local players to provide access to waters as large as Lake Sakakawea or as small as your local 200-acre fishery. The point is to get you on the water, which this issue will also help you do.

You will find in these pages driving directions to the 300 or so fishing waters in the state, including ramps that should be available for use in 2008 on the Missouri River System. The issue also lists the 2007 stocking report, but we caution readers to cache this information for future use as it takes stocked fish some time to grow. Also, until the fishery managers can get out and survey newly-stocked lakes, we can only assume the fish survived.

It takes a number of factors to produce a recreational fishery. It takes adequate water – water clean enough to support fish life without a constant threat of fish kills – regulations and more. Each by themselves can potentially contribute to producing a fishery, but not consistently.

Over the last several years we've been talking about aquatic nuisance species or ANS. We've detailed, among other things, how damaging they could be to our fisheries. Recently, the legislature, through the administrative rule process, has given us additional tools to work with in reducing the risk of these exotic plants or critters from entering our state, or from moving them elsewhere if they've already taken root.

As farmers understand, it's much cheaper to keep noxious weeds out of the fields rather than buying expensive pesticides and using valuable time to eradicate them. We're taking the same philosophy of prevention with aquatic nuisance species. We're trying very hard to keep them out of North Dakota so we can continue to provide quality fisheries.

We live in a great state. I've said before that I can't imagine living anywhere else. While the rest of the nation rests on the verge of a recession, our economy continues to grow. While other states continue to lose anglers and hunters, we're luring more people into the field. So get out and enjoy a leisurely boat ride or let the sun shine on your face while sitting on shore. After all, we do live in the great North Dakota outdoors.

Terry Steinwand