



MATTERS OF OPINION



Terry Steinwand
Director

After a long and near-record winter, residents are still fighting high water across much of the state. While that water will ultimately provide habitat for creatures that depend on aquatic environments, there is also a sense of helplessness for those dramatically affected by flooding. But we're resilient North Dakotans who will recover, right along with the resource, stronger than ever.

One of Governor Hoeven's six pillars of growth in North Dakota is quality of life. My belief is the Game and Fish Department's mission contributes to the quality of life component. And one of those qualities is the ability to access any number of fisheries across the state. Sitting on shore soaking a worm, or relaxing in a boat with fishing friends, is refreshing for the soul. Plus, it can also put a delicious meal on the table, so take a break from all the stress and hard work and go fishing.

Many small lakes across the state should provide some good early fishing. But as spring eases into summer, growth of aquatic vegetation near shore can make it more difficult to fish from shore, which can be a problem for those who don't own a boat. The Game and Fish Department collaborates with local governmental entities or fishing clubs to buy and place fishing piers for the primary purpose of getting past weedlines. The concept is popular and this issue of *North Dakota OUTDOORS* goes into more detail on the number of fishing piers and their locations across the state.

Fish, like any other life form, are susceptible to diseases or parasites, and the effects of those diseases are typically magnified when fish are stressed. Like humans, fish carry disease organisms with them almost constantly and they are surrounded by other pathogens. The

mucosal covering is a safeguard to most diseases, but every once in awhile fish are stressed and succumb to the symptoms of disease. No different than us. And, like us, they can be exposed to a new organism against which they may have no defense. Also in this issue, Scott Gangl, Department fisheries management section leader, takes a closer look at some of the more common diseases seen in fish in North Dakota.

As I write this article, the legislative session is winding down. There have been some disappointments during the session, but overall it's been fairly good. The number of bills we dealt with was down from past sessions, but that doesn't mean the work involved was down.

Those who choose to serve in the legislature have a difficult job, and are pulled in many different directions. Take the time to thank your representative for the work he or she has done. This issue provides a general overview of the bills we tracked this session.

A few years ago the Game and Fish Department became involved with the National Archery in the Schools Program. This program has been popular and has grown over the years, yet we hope to get even more schools involved. In winter, the first state tournament was held in North Dakota and we congratulate those teams and individuals who qualified for the national NASP tournament in Kentucky.

It's shaping up to be a great summer so get out and take advantage of it. Lakes should be full. Fishing should be good. But remember that common sense and courtesy should rule the day. North Dakota waters and resources belong to everyone to share equally.

Terry Steinwand