

NORTH DAKOTA 2026-2028 FISHING PROCLAMATION

Relating to the times, places and manner of taking fish, possessing fish, closing certain waters to fishing, setting size and creel limits, and establishing game species for the period of April 1, 2026, through March 31, 2028, for recreational and commercial fishing, bait vending, and the take of clams and turtles. By virtue of the authority vested in me by Chapter 20.1-08 of the North Dakota Century Code as amended, and upon recommendation of the Game and Fish Director (Director), I do hereby Order and Proclaim:

A. RECREATIONAL FISHING

Recreational fishing is defined as those methods described hereafter as allowable activities during each of the two fishing years of this proclamation with the possession of a valid fishing license. A fishing year is defined as being from April 1 of one calendar year through March 31 of the following calendar year.

Free Fishing Days - Residents of North Dakota may fish without a resident fishing license on June 6-7, 2026, December 26-27, 2026, June 5-6, 2027 and December 26-27, 2027.

No individual shall take for the purpose of sale, barter or trade any fish except as provided in Section B.

Americans with Disabilities - The Director may make reasonable accommodations to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

1. SPECIES DEFINITIONS

GAME FISH are defined as bluegill, burbot, channel catfish, chinook salmon, crappie (black and white), largemouth bass, muskellunge (pure and tiger hybrid), northern pike, paddlefish, sauger, saugeye, smallmouth bass, sturgeon (pallid, shovelnose, and lake), trout (brown, cutthroat, lake, rainbow, and tiger hybrid), walleye, white bass, yellow perch and zander.

NONGAME FISH are all other species of fish, other than game fish, that inhabit and reproduce in the waters of the state.

2. BAIT AND LURE

2-1. Definitions

2-1-1. Legal Live Aquatic Bait. Legal live aquatic bait are leeches, frog, salamander and crayfish species that are native to North Dakota, and the following live baitfish species: fathead minnows, white suckers, creek chubs, rainbow smelt and brook sticklebacks. All other species of live aquatic bait are illegal.

2-1-2. Legal Terrestrial Bait. All terrestrial bait (live or dead), including nightcrawlers and waxworms, are legal.

2-1-3. Game Fish. The use of game fish and parts thereof are illegal, except yellow perch eyes, and trout and salmon eggs.

2-1-4. Nongame Fish. The use of live nongame fish not listed in Section 2-1-1 is illegal. The use of dead nongame fish, or parts thereof, is legal.

2-1-5. Manufactured and Biodegradable Bait. Products manufactured as edible fishing bait and other inert biodegradable substances are legal bait.

2-1-6. Lure. A lure is defined as any man-made object made or used to catch fish. A lure may not contain more than three hooks and the maximum distance between any hooks on a lure may not exceed 12 inches. A single hook may not include more than three points, barbed or otherwise. Spinners, and other live bait rigs and harnesses are considered a lure and are permissible. Hookless dodgers or attractors used ahead of a lure or bait or attached to a downrigger ball are legal.

2-2. Bait Restrictions

2-2-1. No live aquatic organisms may be imported into the state. This includes all fish, amphibians, aquatic insects and aquatic invertebrates.

2-2-2. It is illegal to possess or use as live aquatic bait any species other than those defined in Section 2-1-1. The possession of a live baitfish species while fishing in waters prohibiting their use is illegal. The transportation of live rainbow smelt is illegal except as allowed in 2-2-3.3.

2-2-3. Statewide

Except for species and areas specified in Sections 2-2-3.1,2,3, the only legal live baitfish species statewide are fathead minnows, creek chubs and brook sticklebacks.

2-2-3.1. No live baitfish are allowed in the following areas:

- a. Bylin Dam/Dougherty Dam (Walsh County)
- b. Camels Hump Dam (Golden Valley County)
- c. Indian Creek (Hettinger County)
- d. Lightning Lake (McLean County)
- e. Nelson Lake (Oliver County)
- f. North Lemmon Dam (Adams County)
- g. Raleigh Reservoir (Grant County)
- h. Ryan Park Pond (Grand Forks County)
- i. Sheep Creek Dam (Grant County)
- j. Velva Sportsmen's Pond (Ward County)

2-2-3.2. Red River and Bois de Sioux River (up to the first vehicular bridge or crossing on any of its tributaries), Lake Audubon, Devils Lake complex south of US Highway 2 and Stump Lake, the only legal live baitfish species are:

- fathead minnows, creek chubs, brook sticklebacks and white suckers.

2-2-3.3. Lake Sakakawea, Lake Oahe, Missouri River and the Yellowstone River; up to the initial point where either a bridge spanning a tributary or a road crossing over a tributary is encountered, whichever occurs first - the only legal live baitfish species are:

- fathead minnows, creek chubs, brook sticklebacks, white suckers and rainbow smelt.

3. MANNER OF TAKING FISH

Legal equipment, restrictions, seasons, water bodies, species, and care and use of fish are defined as follows:

3-1. HOOK AND LINE FISHING

3-1-1. Equipment and Restrictions

With the exceptions noted in Section 3-1-1.1, legal hook and line equipment for each angler shall consist of not more than two poles, each equipped with one line, that are in the water at any one time. Each line may have one or two lures attached (see Section 2-1-6). The use of any free floating, anchored, or remote-controlled device with an attached hook and line that is not held by an angler or secured to the boat, shore or ice with the use of a line is illegal. The use of any device to retrieve the fish is illegal. Ice fishing is defined as hook and line fishing which occurs while on the ice. Tip-ups are permissible for ice fishing and each tip-up is considered one pole. All holes greater than 10 inches in diameter made in the ice must be marked when the area is vacated as specified in Section 5. Any fishing pole which is unattended or not checked for a period exceeding one hour is deemed to be a set line and is illegal. At all times, fishing poles must be easily visible and within a maximum distance of 150 feet of the participating angler.

3-1-1.1. Exceptions to two poles are as follows:

1. While ice fishing, four poles per angler (maximum) is allowed.
- Note: When fishing a water body where both open water and ice fishing occur at the same time, an angler is allowed a maximum of four poles of which no more than two poles can be used in open water.

3-1-2. Seasons and Water Bodies for Legally Taking Fish

Except in areas and times specified in Section 3-1-2.1, the hook and line season is open in all waters of the state open to fishing from April 1 through March 31 of each fishing year.

3-1-2.1. Exceptions:

1. U.S. National Wildlife Refuges are closed to fishing except for:
 - a. Areas designated by the Refuge manager of J. Clark Salyer, Arrowwood, Tewaukon, Lake Ilo, Long Lake, and the Upper Souris National Wildlife Refuge (Lake Darling) are open to shore and/or ice fishing from April 1 through March 31 of each fishing year. Designated areas are open to boat fishing from May 1 through September 30 but closed all other times.
 - b. Audubon and Lake Alice National Wildlife Refuges are open to ice fishing but closed to all open water fishing and boating.
2. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Easement Refuge lakes:
 - a. Dakota Lake, Hobart Lake, and Lake Ardoch, Rose Lake, Sibley Lake (Griggs Co), and Silver Lake (Benson Co) are open to fishing from April 1 through March 31 of each fishing year. These lakes are closed to boating from October 1 through November 30 except for Rose Lake NWR which is open to boat fishing year-round.

3. The state waterfowl rest areas as provided in the waterfowl rest area proclamation.
4. It is illegal to fish from the bridge located between North and South Lake Metigoshe as well as 100 feet in any direction from this structure at any time.
5. Areas near the Garrison Dam Tailrace so posted by the US Army Corps of Engineers are closed to fishing.
6. OWLS Pond (Burleigh County) or State Fair Pond (Ward County) are closed from sunset to sunrise.
7. No individual shall fish or boat in areas posted and designated by the Game and Fish Department as rearing ponds, spawning areas, or other designated areas.
8. Lake specific rules may be issued by Department signage at access areas and bridges.

3-1-3. Species Legal to Take

All species (game and nongame) can be harvested while hook and line fishing except the following: pallid sturgeon, shovelnose sturgeon, lake sturgeon, and paddlefish (these four species must be immediately released back into the water from which they were caught regardless of condition).

3-1-4. Care and Use of Fish

Legal live baitfish taken by hook and line fishing may be possessed either live or dead. Possessing of any other nongame fish species is legal if killed immediately after being taken.

Possession of foul-hooked (snagged) fish is illegal. Any foul-hooked (snagged) fish must be returned immediately to the water regardless of condition. A foul-hooked (snagged) fish is defined as any fish hooked or caught in any area from behind the gill covers to the tail. For fish hooked by a lure with multiple hooks, the fish is not considered foul-hooked if at least one of the hooks is embedded from the gill covers forward.

Attempting to foul-hook (snag) any fish is prohibited.

Landing a fish caught on hook and line equipment with aid of a gaff is legal except for sturgeon, paddlefish, muskellunge and species in waters in which there are size limits. No gaffed fish may be returned to the water.

High-grading or culling of fish is illegal. No fish may be returned to the water after being held on a stringer or confined by or in any type of holding structure, except with written permission from the Director 1) live-release organized youth fishing events, or 2) permitted live-release fishing tournaments.

It is legal to return all other fish to the water at the site of capture if done no longer than the time needed to unhook, measure and/or photograph the fish immediately after being caught. Anglers must exercise reasonable care in limiting harm to the fish when being released. All fish released from bridges and wing-walls (e.g., Garrison Dam Tailrace) must be done immediately after being placed in a fish basket/open container to ensure fish survival. Fish, on which there is a size limit, if undersized or oversized, must be handled carefully to avoid injury and must be returned to the water immediately regardless of condition.

It is illegal to tag or mark any fish prior to release except with written approval from the Director.

3-2. BOW (ARCHERY), SPEAR AND UNDERWATER SPEAR FISHING

3-2-1. Equipment and Restrictions

Legal bow equipment for licensed anglers is any hand-drawn and released longbow, recurve bow, compound bow or rubberband-assisted (sling) bow, to which an arrow is attached by a line and equipped with a harpoon-style or wire barbed point. Crossbows are prohibited, except with a special Director's permit that may be issued if an individual is permanently disabled. The use of night vision equipment or electronically enhanced light gathering optics including all lights used for locating and/or shooting at fish is legal. Possession of a bow is counted as a hook and line fishing pole while bow fishing.

Legal spear equipment is any manually powered shaft with barbed points. Possession of a spear is counted as a hook and line fishing pole while spear fishing.

Legal equipment for underwater spear fishing is rubber band powered, or pneumatic powered spear guns only. All spear guns shall have the spear attached by a lanyard with a maximum length of twenty feet. Underwater spears may be discharged only when the operator and equipment are entirely under the surface of the water. Underwater spear fishing is prohibited within 150 feet of any designated swimming or water ski area, boat dock or spillway or individuals engaged in fishing. The Diver's Down Flag must be displayed on the water on a float or buoy during any underwater spear fishing. Underwater spearers must stay within 100 feet of the vertical position of their Diver Down Flag. Individuals who underwater spearfish between sunset and sunrise must display a lighted Diver's Down Flag and must carry a hand-held light which must be visible from a distance of 150 feet. The hand-held light must be displayed when the diver is at the surface.

3-2-2. Seasons and Water Bodies for Legally Taking Fish

Bow fishing is legal from April 1 through March 31 of each fishing year.

Spear fishing is legal from April 1 through March 31 of each fishing year.

Underwater spear fishing is legal for residents and non-residents from April 1 through March 31 of each fishing year.

Bow and spear fishing is open on all waters open to hook and line fishing (Section 3-1-2) with the following exception:

1. That portion of the Missouri River from the Garrison Dam downstream three miles to the southern boundary of the US Army Corps of Engineers Downstream Recreational Area.

Underwater spear fishing is open only in the following areas:

1. Missouri River, except from the Garrison Dam downstream three miles to the southern boundary of the US Army Corps of Engineers Downstream Recreational Area;
2. Lake Sakakawea (except those areas posted by the US Army Corps of Engineers near the Intake and Spillway Structures);
3. Lake Oahe;
4. Lake Audubon (those areas open to fishing);
5. Devils Lake;

- 6. Stump Lake;
- 7. Spiritwood Lake

3-2-3. Species Legal to Take

Bow and spear fishing – other than the exception listed below, game fish, as defined in Section A-1 of this proclamation, may not be taken. All other species are legal.

Exception - Channel catfish may be harvested within Lakes Sakakawea and Oahe, and the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers, up to the initial point where either a bridge spanning a tributary or a road crossing over a tributary is encountered, whichever occurs first.

Underwater spear fishing - all species except the following may be taken -- muskellunge (pure and hybrid), paddlefish, pallid sturgeon, and shovelnose sturgeon.

It is illegal to return fish to the water after being shot or speared.

3-3. DARK HOUSE SPEAR and BOW (ARCHERY) FISHING

3-3-1. Equipment and Restrictions

Legal dark house spear equipment is any manually powered shaft with barbed points. Pneumatic or rubber band powered spear guns shall not be legal while dark house spear fishing. Legal bow fishing (archery) equipment for licensed anglers is any hand-drawn and released longbow, recurve bow, compound bow or rubberband-assisted (sling) bow, to which an arrow is attached by a line and equipped with a harpoon-style or wire barbed point. There is no limit on the size of the ice hole while actively engaged in dark house spear and bow fishing. All holes greater than 10 inches in diameter made in the ice must be marked by the spearer(s)/archer(s) when the area is vacated as specified in Section 5.5. Possession of a spear or bow is counted as a hook and line fishing pole while dark house spear or bow fishing. Artificial and all bait as defined in Section 2-1, except for live white sucker and rainbow smelt, may be used as decoys (note: it is legal to use live white suckers as a decoy in the waters listed in 2-2-3.2 and 2-2-3.3 and where dark house spear fishing is allowed). Any line used for a decoy and without a hook(s) is not considered a hook and line fishing pole. It is illegal to return fish to the water after being speared or arrowed.

3-3-2. Seasons and Water Bodies for Legally Taking Fish

Dark house spear and bow fishing is legal from November 15 through March 15 of each fishing season. Dark house spear and bow fishing is open to all waters open to hook and line fishing (Section 3-1-2) with the following exceptions:

East Park Lake (McLean Co.)	New Johns Lake (Burleigh Co.)
Heckers Lake (Sheridan Co.)	Red Willow Lake (Griggs Co.)
Lake Audubon (McLean Co.)	West Park Lake (McLean Co.)
Lake Ashtabula (Barnes and Griggs Co.)	Whitman Dam (Nelson Co.)
Larimore Dam (Grand Forks Co.)	Wood Lake (Benson Co.)
McClusky Canal	

3-3-3. Species Legal to Take

Northern pike and nongame species (as listed in Section 1) are legal species for dark house spear and bow fishing. Northern pike cannot be taken on the Red River with bow equipment.

Walleye are legal for dark house spear and bow fishing in the Devils Lake complex south of US Highway 2, Stump Lake, Lakes Sakakawea and Oahe, and the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers, up to the initial point where either a bridge spanning a tributary or a road crossing over a tributary is encountered, whichever occurs first.

Channel catfish are legal for dark house spear and bow fishing on Lakes Sakakawea and Oahe, and the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers up to the initial point where either a bridge spanning a tributary or a road crossing over a tributary is encountered, whichever occurs first.

3-4. PADDLEFISH SNAGGING

3-4-1. Equipment and Restrictions

Each paddlefish angler must cast for, hook and reel (retrieve) their own fish. The use of more than one snag hook per line is illegal. Snagging from a boat is illegal. It is illegal to gaff any species other than paddlefish, and it is illegal to use or possess a gaff in any of the paddlefish snagging areas during the snag and release days. It is illegal for an individual to use fish snagging equipment in the paddlefishing area at any time if that individual has no tag in their possession.

3-4-2. Seasons and Water Bodies for Legally Taking Fish

Paddlefish snagging is legal from May 1 through May 21 of each fishing year. Paddlefish snagging is legal only from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm (CT) during each day of the paddlefish snagging season. If harvest approaches the maximum allowable harvest of 1000 paddlefish as determined by the Department, an in-season closure may occur with a 24-hour notice issued by the Director. If there's an early closure, then snag and release only at the area and time defined in Section 3-4-2.1 will be allowed for a seven-day period immediately following the harvest closure, but not to extend beyond May 21. Notice of an early closure and subsequent days set aside for 'snag and release only' will be issued by a special news release from the Department.

Paddlefish snagging is legal in the Yellowstone River and that area of the Missouri River lying west of the U.S. Highway 85 bridge to the Montana border, excluding that portion of the Missouri River from the pipeline crossing (River Mile 1577) downstream to the upper end of the Lewis and Clark WMA (River Mile 1565).

3-4-2.1. Specific Area and Time Open to Extended Snag and Release

That area of the Missouri River starting

- on the north shore from the Confluence boat ramp then east (downstream) to the pipeline crossing (River Mile 1577), and
- on the south shore from the Confluence with the Yellowstone River then east (downstream) to the pipeline crossing (River Mile 1577).

For the extended snag and release season only, paddlefish snagging is legal from 7:00 am to 9:00 pm CT.

3-4-3. Species Legal to Take

The only species that can be taken during the paddlefish snagging season is paddlefish.

3-4-4. Other Regulations

All individuals snagging for paddlefish must obtain and have in their possession a paddlefish tag in addition to a license and certificate that may be required. Only one tag per angler will be issued per season and this tag is not transferable to another individual. Any paddlefish tag that is locked shut prior to attachment, altered, or modified is voided and will not be replaced. Except for snag and release days, each paddlefish must be tagged immediately when caught and must be tagged with one's own tag. In case of an early season closure (Section 3-4-2), there will be no refunds for unused tags.

The release of any paddlefish after snagging is prohibited except for 1) each Sunday, Monday and Thursday during the month of May during the paddlefish snagging season, and 2) in the case of an early harvest closure, the (up to) four-day period immediately following the harvest closure, which is designated as 'snag and release' only. All snagged fish must be released immediately on all snag and release days. Snaggers must possess a current and unused paddlefish tag to participate in paddlefish snagging.

If a fish is cut up, the tag must accompany the dressed fish either by attachment to the bag containing the dressed fish or within the bag. The snagger must keep that portion of the back and dorsal fin (back fin) necessary to maintain the tag sealed to the fish.

The sale, barter, trade or purchase of paddlefish eggs is legal for only one qualified and properly permitted paddlefish caviar operation, and any party with whom it contracts. The permit will be issued annually to a nonprofit, bonded entity that has met all requirements to ensure a legal operation. All fish delivered to and/or processed fish transported away from the Confluence fish cleaning operation (the permitted caviar processing site) must be done so by either the individual who snagged the fish or an approved individual working for the permitted Confluence fish cleaning operation. Any fish left at the Confluence fish cleaning operation after 8pm the day they were snagged will be considered abandoned and the snagger is subject to fine.

It is legal for an individual to keep and process paddlefish roe from their legally taken paddlefish. However, no individual may take paddlefish eggs from other snaggers for any reason including in exchange for cleaning their fish.

All paddlefish snagged and tagged must be removed from the river by 7pm of each snagging day.

3-5. SALMON SNAGGING, BOW (ARCHERY), AND SPEARING

3-5-1. Equipment and Restrictions

Each snagger must cast for, hook and reel (retrieve) their own fish. The use of more than one snag hook (treble) or lure per line is illegal. Possession of a snagging pole is counted as a

hook and line fishing pole. See Section 3-2-1 for Bow and Spearing Equipment and Restrictions.

3-5-2. Seasons and Water Bodies for Legally Taking Fish

Salmon snagging, bow (archery) and spearing are legal from sunup to sundown, September 25 through October 31 of each fishing.

Salmon snagging, bow (archery) and spearing are legal in Lake Sakakawea from the Garrison Dam upstream to the Highway 23 bridge near New Town. This area includes up to the initial point where either a bridge spanning a tributary or a road crossing over a tributary is encountered, whichever occurs first.

3-5-3. Species Legal to Take

The only species that can be taken during the salmon snagging season are salmon and nongame species as described in Section 1.

3-6. TAKING OF LEGAL LIVE AQUATIC BAIT

3-6-1. Equipment and Restrictions

It is legal for a fishing license holder to take and possess legal live aquatic bait (see Section 2-1-1) by hand, by hook and line fishing, by use of one dip net, or by use of one trap which shall not exceed 12 inches in diameter and 30 inches in length with a throat or mouth opening not to exceed 3 inches. The owner's name, city, and telephone number or the customer equipment registration number issued by the department must be on the fish trap. It is illegal to tamper with other individual's bait traps. Legal live baitfish taken in a trap, by hand, by hook and line fishing or dip net may be possessed either live or dead. Possessing of any other nongame fish species is legal if killed immediately after being taken. It is legal to return fish to the water if done immediately after being caught.

3-6-2. Seasons, Water Bodies and Species Legal to Take

Legal live aquatic bait (see Section 2-1-1) may be taken in all public waters of the state except for the following:

- Those areas listed in Section 2-2-3.1.
- Water bodies designated as infested with prohibited or regulated Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) (see North Dakota Game and Fish Departments website (gf.nd.gov) for current list of lakes).
 - Exception - taking of rainbow smelt is allowed in Lakes Sakakawea and Oahe, and the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers up to the initial point where either a bridge spanning a tributary or a road crossing over a tributary is encountered, whichever occurs first. All smelt taken from the above must be dead when transported.

4. FISH DAILY AND POSSESSION LIMITS, TRANSPORTATION AND SIZE RESTRICTIONS

4-1. DESCRIPTIONS AND MEANS

The daily creel limit is defined as the maximum number of legally taken fish (by species) that may be harvested from midnight to midnight. No individual may harvest or possess more than North Dakota's daily limit of fish while on the water or the ice or actively engaged in any manner of fishing.

The possession limit is defined as the maximum number of legally taken fish (by species) or aquatic bait that an individual may have in their actual possession during any phase of any single fishing trip of more than one day.

Residence is defined here and thereafter in NDCC 20.1.

The storage limit at one's residence is unlimited.

Wanton Waste - no individual shall waste, destroy, spoil or abandon the edible flesh (fillets) of any game fish at the place where taken and between that place and his or her residence.

At no time may an individual transport more than a possession limit unless with written approval of the Director and in the manner as approved by the Director.

At no time may an individual store more than a possession limit away from their permanent residence unless with written approval of the Director.

Fish may be filleted for transport, unless size limits apply, under the following conditions:

- Each individual portion of the meat removed from a fish is considered a fillet*,
- Two fillets are counted as one fish,
- The packaging of fish, away from one's permanent residence, must be done in a manner so that the fillets can be readily separated and counted, and
- If fillets are frozen, they must be packaged so that the fillets are separated and thus can be easily counted without thawing.

*Fish cheeks and pectoral girdles (wings') are not considered as fillets and are legal to transport.

It is illegal to remove more than gills, entrails, and scales from fish species harvested in waters that are subject to a size limit while on the water or actively engaged in fishing. It is illegal to remove more than the gills and entrails (head, fillets and tail must be attached) from channel catfish east of ND Highway 1 while on the water, actively engaged in fishing, transporting or until the fish are at the license holder's residence.

Any fish (whole and/or fillets) may be given (gifted) to another individual, but the fish must be counted in the donor's daily limit. Individuals who receive gifted fish may not exceed the possession limit while the fish are being transported.

Gifted fish, including packages of fish, must be accompanied with the following information from the individual gifting the fish: name, fishing license number, phone number, date, and species and number of fish gifted.

Except for legally gifted fish, it is illegal to possess or transport another individual's game fish or parts thereof without the license holder accompanying or as otherwise permitted.

Commercial processors, common carriers, and common storage areas may possess any individual's legally taken possession limit of fish. Each package must be labeled with the owner's name and address.

4-2. DAILY CREEL AND POSSESSION LIMITS

4-2-1. Statewide

Except as specified in Section 4-2-2, the daily creel and possession limit in waters of the state are:

SPECIES	DAILY CREEL	POSSESSION
Walleye, sauger, saugeye, or combination ^{a, b, c}	5	10
Northern Pike ^c	5	10
Largemouth bass, smallmouth bass or combination	5	10
Salmon	5	10
Brown trout, cutthroat trout, lake trout, rainbow trout, tiger hybrid trout or combination	3	6
Muskellunge (pure or hybrid) ^b	1	1
Bluegill	10	20
Crappie	10	20
Burbot	10	20
Yellow Perch	20	40
White Bass	30	60
Channel Catfish (East of ND Highway 1) ^{b, c} (West of ND Highway 1)	5 20	5 40
Nongame fish (other than smelt and legal live baitfish)	no limit	no limit
Paddlefish (for legal snagging only)	1 per season (see Section 3-4)	
Smelt	5 gallons	
Legal Live Baitfish ^d	150	150
Leeches	300	300
Snapping Turtles ^e	1 annually	1 annually
Frogs	50	50
Salamanders	50	50
Crayfish	50	50
^a Zander are included as part of the walleye, sauger, saugeye combination in Spiritwood and Alkali lakes (Stutsman Co.) ^b Size restrictions also apply (Section 4-3) ^c No individual may have a daily and/or possession limit more than what is allowed in Section 4-2-2.1,2 ^d Aggregate of all legal species ^e Only one snapping turtle may be harvested with hook and line equipment between July 1 through November 15 of each fishing year		

4-2-2. Exceptions

1. Red and Bois de Sioux rivers (up to the first vehicular bridge or crossing on any of their tributaries) - The daily creel and possession limit for

- walleye, sauger, saugeye or combination are three. The daily creel and possession limit for northern pike are three.
2. Red and Bois de Sioux rivers (up to the first vehicular bridge or crossing on any of their tributaries) - The daily creel and possession limit for channel catfish are 5 regardless of the number of state or provincial licenses purchased by the angler. The daily and possession limit for catfish exceeding 24 inches is one.
 3. OWLS Pond (Burleigh County) – All fish caught must be released immediately, regardless of condition.
 4. State Fair Pond (Ward County) – All fish caught between April 1 and July 31 must be released immediately, regardless of condition.
 5. McDowell Dam (Burleigh County) - All fish caught while ice fishing must be released immediately, regardless of condition.

4-3. SIZE LIMITS

4-3-1. Minimum Size Restrictions

4-3-1.1. Walleye and Sauger - It is illegal to take or possess walleye or sauger less than 14 inches in total length from the following waters:

- Buffalo Lake (including connected waters north to Sargent County Road 1) in Sargent County.
- Jamestown Reservoir and Pipestem Reservoir upstream to and including the first bridge or crossing on both, in Stutsman County.
- Lake Elsie in Richland County.

4-3-1.2. Muskellunge (pure or hybrid) - It is illegal to take or possess muskie (pure or hybrid) less than 48 inches in total length from any waters in North Dakota.

4-3-2. Maximum Size Restrictions

4-3-2.1. Channel Catfish - It is illegal to take or possess more than one channel catfish greater than 24 inches in total length east of ND Highway 1.

5. OTHER RULES AND REGULATIONS

1. It is illegal to deposit or cause to be deposited any fish or parts thereof, upon the ice, in the water, or upon the shore of any water body in North Dakota.
2. It is illegal to introduce anything into waters of the state for the purpose of attempting to attract fish (e.g., chumming, artificial light, acoustic equipment, etc.) that is not attached or applied to a lure as defined in Section 2-1-6. Decoys used while dark house spear fishing are excluded.
3. All unoccupied ice houses must be removed from all waters beginning midnight March 15 until ice-out.
4. It is illegal to leave fish houses on state-owned or managed land after March 15 of each fishing year.
5. When a hole greater than 10 inches in diameter is left in the ice after ice fishing or darkhouse spearing is moved, the area in the immediate vicinity of the hole must be adequately marked with 1) a natural object, or 2) a brightly painted or colored wooden lath. Markers must be visible from a minimum of 150 feet. Markers must be in the possession of the anglers and/or spears as soon as a hole greater than 10 inches in diameter is made.
6. No individual or entity may conduct a fishing contest on waters of the state without first receiving a permit issued by the Director.

7. Shared boundary waters: Individuals fishing the Red River and/or the Bois de Sioux River that possess a valid fishing license from either North Dakota or Minnesota may fish the river(s) between the banks of the river separating North Dakota and Minnesota and on the shoreline of the state issuing the license. Those individuals possessing the correct, valid license may transport caught fish by the most convenient and direct route to the state in which they are licensed. All anglers and boaters are required to comply with aquatic invasive/nuisance species and fish and bait transport regulations of the State in which they occupy, except while on the water or ice anglers must comply with the regulations of the state for which they are licensed. (NOTE: this includes those who are not required to have a license).
8. Possession or transportation of any live fish, live fish eggs, live amphibians, or other live aquatic organisms, shall be illegal except for 1) licensed anglers transporting legal bait by legal means; 2) dealers of tropical fish species for the pet trade sold by a commercial outlet; or 3) individuals in possession of the appropriate license or permit from the Director.
9. Stocking of any live fish, live fish eggs, live amphibians, or other live aquatic organisms into any waters of the state shall be illegal except with the appropriate license or permit issued by the Director.

6. **LICENSES OR TAGS** must be obtained for each season prior to engaging in the activity allowed under the license or tag and are issued in a manner and form prescribed by the Director and in accordance with the law.

7. **VIOLATIONS AND PENALTIES**

1. Fishing with or possession of an illegal live bait (Section 2) – penalty – noncriminal - \$250.
2. Fishing with illegal lures or other equipment (Sections 2 and 3) – penalty – noncriminal - \$100.
3. Fishing with an excessive number of lines up to and including four lines in excess of the legal number of lines (Section 3) – penalty – noncriminal - \$50 per line.
4. Failure to attend fishing equipment (Section 3) – penalty – noncriminal - \$25.
5. Failure to release properly in a basket or other container (Section 3) – penalty – noncriminal - \$25.
6. Fishing in a closed area (Section 3) – penalty – noncriminal - \$100.
7. Violation of signage rules of the proclamation (Section 3) – penalty – noncriminal - \$100.
8. Possession of a foul-hooked fish (Section 3) – penalty – noncriminal - \$100.
9. Snagging for paddlefish or salmon before or after legal hours (Section 3) – penalty – noncriminal - \$100.
10. Transfer of a paddlefish tag to another (Section 3) – penalty – noncriminal - \$200.
11. Failure to immediately tag a paddlefish with one's own tag (Section 3) – penalty – noncriminal - \$100.
12. Cast for or attempt to hook a paddlefish for another (Section 3) – penalty – noncriminal - \$100.
13. Use more than one hook per line for paddlefish (Section 3) - penalty – noncriminal - \$100.
14. Use or possess a gaff in restricted areas or on catch and release days while paddlefish snagging (Section 3) – penalty – noncriminal - \$100.
15. Snag for paddlefish from a boat (Section 3) – penalty – noncriminal - \$100.
16. Release a paddlefish on harvest days or fail to release a paddlefish on release days (Section 3) – penalty – noncriminal - \$200.
17. Fail to have tag accompany processed paddlefish (Section 3) – penalty – noncriminal - \$100.
18. Wanton waste of game fish (Section 4) – one to five fish - penalty – noncriminal – \$50 per fish; in excess of five fish – penalty – Class B misdemeanor.
19. Possession of undersized game fish species other than muskellunge (Section 4) – penalty – noncriminal - \$25 per fish; possession of undersized muskellunge (Section 4) – penalty – noncriminal - \$100 per fish.

20. Exceeding the daily limit of fish, one fish in excess of the daily limit (Section 4) – penalty – noncriminal - \$100. More than one fish in excess of the daily limit or second violation within one year is a Class B misdemeanor. The aforementioned noncriminal penalty does not apply to over limit of paddlefish or muskellunge.
21. Removing more than gills, entrails, and scales from fish that are subject to a size limit while on the water or actively engaged in fishing on waters having a size restriction - or - removing more than gills and entrails from channel catfish east of ND Highway 1 while on the water, actively engaged in fishing, transporting or until the fish are at the license holder's residence (Section 4) – penalty – noncriminal - \$100.
22. Failure to accompany one's own game fish during transportation or transporting another's game fish (Section 4) – penalty – noncriminal - \$100.
23. Failure to properly package fish (Section 4) – penalty – noncriminal - \$25.
24. Illegal deposit of fish or parts thereof on shore, on ice or in the water (Section 5) – penalty – noncriminal - \$100.
25. Illegal introduction of fish attractants to the water (Section 5) – penalty – noncriminal - \$50.
26. Tampering with bait (minnow) traps (Section 3) – penalty – noncriminal - \$50.

B. COMMERCIAL TAKE - FISHING, BAIT VENDING, CLAMMING, TURTLES AND FROGS

1. NON- CONTRACT COMMERCIAL FISHING

Non-contract commercial fishing is licensed only through application to the Game and Fish Department.

1. Seasons for Legally Taking Fish

Non-contract commercial fishing is open from May 15th through November 30th of each fishing year.

2. Species, Gears and Areas of the State for Legally Taking Fish

Channel catfish and nongame fish species excluding legal live baitfish (as defined in Section A-1) may be taken with the following gear in the following areas (Note – for non-contract commercial fishing, there is no limit for channel catfish):

Seines and hoop nets - that portion of Lake Oahe and the Missouri River lying between where the electric transmission line crosses the Missouri River north of Beaver Bay to the Leland Olds Power Station/UPA boat ramp; that portion of Lake Sakakawea and the Missouri River north and west of the Four Bears Bridge to the Montana border; and the Yellowstone River.

Set lines – that portion of the Little Missouri River lying west of N.D. Highway 22 Bridge; and the Yellowstone River.

3. Gear Restrictions

- a. **Seines** – maximum length 100 feet. Stretched mesh size shall not be less than 1 ½ inches square or more than 3 inches square.
- b. **Hoop nets** – maximum hoop diameter is four feet. No more than five hoop nets may be possessed.
- c. **Set lines** – no more than ten hooks per set line is allowed. No more than five set lines may be possessed. The entire set line, except for the ends used for anchoring, must be below the water line at all times. All set lines must be pulled and checked at least once every 48 hours.
- d. Tags furnished with the license must be attached to the respective gears at all times.

4. **Other**

A licensed non-contract commercial fisherman may sell their catch at their residence only.

2. CONTRACT COMMERCIAL FISHING

Contract fishing is for nongame fish species only (see Section A-1) and will be performed, if deemed acceptable, under an individual contract with the Game and Fish Department. Contract fishing requires a bond from a recognized bonding company or a line of credit from a recognized financial institution.

3. BAIT VENDING

An individual may not take, possess, purchase, transport, or sell legal live aquatic bait at wholesale or retail without first obtaining the appropriate license. Bait vendor licenses are only available online on the Game and Fish Department's website (gf.nd.gov). Licensed bait vendors may take (must be killed immediately) and possess up to 50 gallons of rainbow smelt annually.

4. SEASON FOR COMMERCIALY HARVESTING CLAMS (MUSSELS), TURTLES AND FROGS

The season for harvest of clams (mussels), turtles, and frogs is closed.

GIVEN UNDER BY HAND and the Great Seal of the State of North Dakota

this 5th day of February, 2026.



Kelly Armstrong
Governor

ATTEST



Michael Howe
Secretary of State