

NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS

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GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

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MATTERS OF OPINION



Terry Steinwand
Director

It's been an exciting and busy fall hunting season – a little wet for some activities, but that's the nature of North Dakota. We never know what to expect.

So far I've had many bright spots, both personally and professionally. I've had several chances to partake in our upland game hunting season, and while I haven't had that much luck, the bright side is that I've seen more pheasants than expected, and my son's dog, Harley, is getting pretty darn good.

I've written about Harley before and mentioned her potential. There were times I questioned whether I was "reading" her right, but if this fall is any predictor, I'd say I read her pretty well. She's a mixed breed with way too much energy, but then again she's just 2 years old. As with any young dog, it takes about an hour to run off the excess energy before she really starts hunting, but even that is getting better.

Earlier this fall I decided to take her to a local wildlife management area one afternoon. A year ago, Harley was reluctant to go into the brush, but on that day she readily put her nose to the ground and dove into the cover.

As is usually the case with me, pheasants flushed on the other side of the brush and I wasn't able to pull the trigger.

Near the end of the afternoon my legs were feeling the miles and Harley was slowing down a bit, too. We hit another brushy spot and, again, she readily entered the area, broke out the other side, then pulled a U-turn. I was ready to whistle her back, but it was a welcome relief to just stand and watch her work.

When Harley entered the cover for a third time, she flushed a grouse that, you guessed it, flew behind some trees and brush, preventing another opportunity for a shot. If I were

to translate the look she gave me, it would be something like: "I went through all that and you didn't even shoot?"

While I didn't harvest anything that day, it was one my most enjoyable hunting days of the fall. It was an absolute blast to be outdoors on a beautiful day in North Dakota and watch a young dog work her magic. Having my family along on the hunt is the only thing that would have made the day better.

While that was one of my personal bright spots, on a professional level, I've received a number of emails, phone calls, and letters from hunters who want to share their stories. I've received some good reports from pheasant hunters, so even though bird populations are down from last year, there are still plenty out there in places for people who put forth an effort.

The youth-only deer season has also come and gone, and evidently it provided some of the intended benefits of offering young people the opportunity to participate in a hunting season without competing adults. The letters and emails indicate that hunting is alive and well in North Dakota, and appreciated by those parents and mentors who want their children to have the same opportunities they did.

We have to continue to work to maintain this heritage in North Dakota. We are losing habitat, and weather conditions will continue to play a large role in how our wildlife fares. Preserving what we have, replacing at least some of what we've lost, and continuing to work toward that balance on the landscape is vitally important.

We live in a special place and things constantly change. But we don't want our heritage to change. Let's work together to preserve those things that make North Dakota special and prosperous.

Terry Steinwand

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The mission of the North Dakota Game and Fish Department is to protect, conserve and enhance fish and wildlife populations and their habitats for sustained public consumptive and nonconsumptive use.

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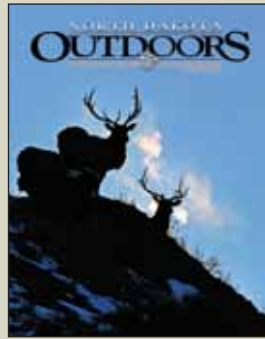
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Front Cover

Bull elk in western North Dakota. *Photo by Darcy Kramlich, Grassy Butte.*



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The Future of DEER MANAGEMENT

Deer licenses made available to hunters in North Dakota hit an all-time high of 149,400 in 2008. Later that year, however, the first of three consecutive hard winters settled in, making life difficult for deer on the Northern Plains. By 2013, deer license numbers fell to about 59,000.

Starting in 2001 and lasting for roughly a decade, North Dakota had unprecedented deer hunting opportunities. For the first time, licenses made available to hunters topped 100,000 and kept climbing. State wildlife managers said without hesitation that these were the good old days of deer hunting.

MANAGEMENT

By Ron Wilson

But there was a caveat, a warning that was easy to ignore at the time because deer hunting was so good. “We told hunters that this wouldn’t last, that the days of hunters carrying multiple deer licenses in their back pockets would eventually end,” said Randy Kreil, North Dakota Game and Fish Department wildlife division chief.

To get to where Game and Fish made available more than 145,000 deer licenses for a six-season stretch beginning in 2004, the answer is simple enough, but also highly unique for this neck of the Northern Plains.

“We got there because we had super habitat conditions on the landscape and more than a decade of moderate to mild winters, which is extraordinary for North Dakota,” Kreil said. “It’s hard to believe, but no less than five years ago we had people demand that we issue doe licenses for \$5, or that you had to shoot a doe before shooting a buck, because of the high number of animals on the landscape.”

While it’s impossible to predict what Mother Nature will throw our way, Kreil said wildlife managers saw that more and more habitat was disappearing across the state and that deer numbers would likely follow.

“While we could see this coming from a habitat standpoint, no one

would have predicted back-to-back-to-back tough winters,” Kreil said of the trio of difficult winters that were hard on animals statewide, the first of which hit in 2008. “Couple this with the fact that we had been harvesting the doe segment very hard for several years to meet the tolerance levels of landowners, motorists and even hunters, it’s no surprise what followed.

“We might not have been that aggressive in harvesting does if we would have known that three tough winters were coming, but how do you predict that?” Kreil said. “The Department does have some responsibility in this, but we were doing what we thought was best to balance the deer population between what hunters wanted for recreation and what landowners would tolerate.”

By comparison to the decade prior, deer license numbers were drastically decreased to 65,300 in 2012, followed by 59,000 in 2013, the lowest number since 1983. And for the second time in as many years, hunters in 2013 could receive only one license for the gun season.

“We had 44,000 unsuccessful applications this year, and I would bet that most of them would be happy to spend \$20 for a doe license, just to be able to go deer hunting,” Kreil said.

In the next three to five years, it’s



CRAIG BIHRLE

unknown if the Game and Fish Department will be able to appease a percentage of those unsuccessful applicants.

“If Mother Nature cooperates and gives us moderate to mild winters, and we can somehow stem the tide of habitat loss, we would like to be in the position to meet the demand for hunting opportunities, which would put us right at around 100,000 licenses,” Kreil said. “That’s where we would like the numbers to be.”

The question, however, is can we get there?

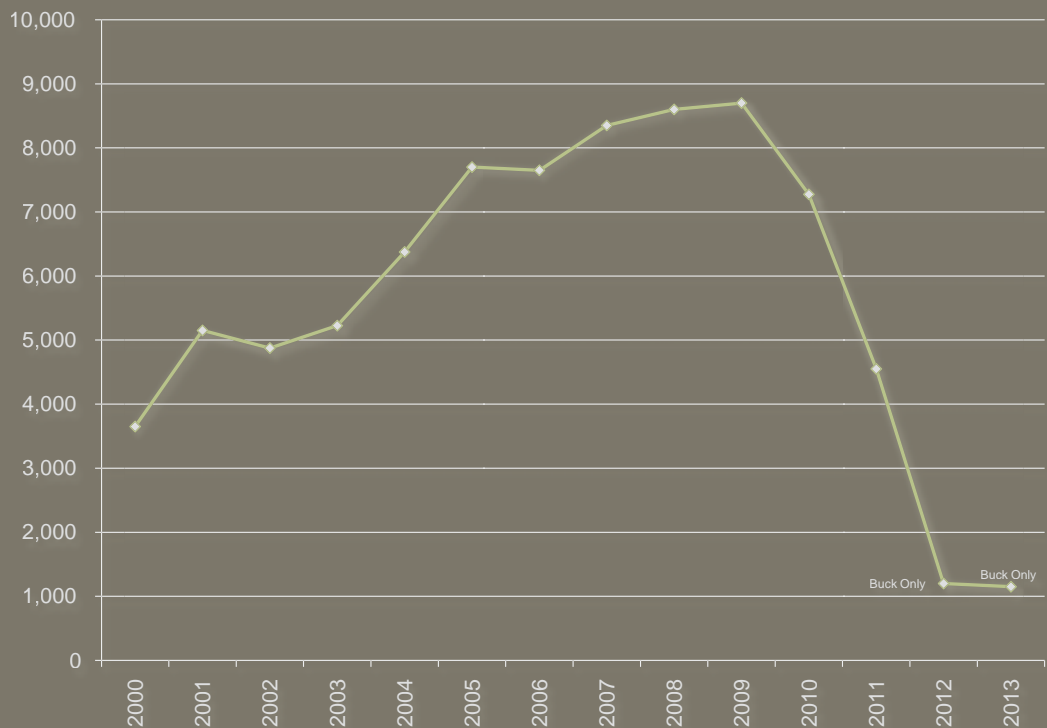
“We know that we can’t control the weather, so we’ll always have to deal with that,” Kreil said. “And slowing the loss of habitat from border to border will be a real challenge, too.”

North Dakota, unfortunately, is losing wildlife habitat at a rapid clip.

“If you include the loss of about 2 million Conservation Reserve Program acres, plus the loss of native grassland, the destruction of miles and miles of tree belts, and the influence of energy development in the western part of the state, those are some really big hits to North Dakota’s wildlife habitat,” Kreil said. “Habitat is the foundation for healthy wildlife populations, and we’re losing it.”

MULE DEER LICENSES AVAILABLE

For the second year in a row in 2013, the Game and Fish Department did not issue any mule deer doe licenses in eight hunting units in the badlands.



COLIN PENNER

CRP AND SOIL BANK PROGRAMS ANNUAL WHITETAIL HARVEST - 1956-2012



COLIN PENNER



Drawing a mule deer license in the badlands is a big deal. Yet, like whitetails around the state, mule deer numbers have declined in recent years following difficult winters and a loss of habitat.

CRAIG BIRBLE

North Dakota is at a crossroads in terms of habitat and how much of it people want on the landscape, Kreil said. “As a state, do we want a habitat base that is able to sustain 100,000 deer hunting opportunities per year,” he said. “Or will we settle for wildlife populations and habitat conditions that existed prior to 1985, that gave us far fewer than 100,000 deer licenses.”

Kreil said with just two deer seasons thus far where license numbers have mirrored those in the 1980s, hunters are starting to show some concern, but perhaps not as much as the situation warrants.

“We need hunters to fully understand the potential for it to stay at this level, or possibly get worse,” Kreil said. “We want people to know why it might take several years now just to draw a whitetail doe license.”

Considering there are far more white-tailed deer than any other big game animal in the state, much of the focus when it comes to deer hunting often centers on these animals. However, mule deer numbers in western North Dakota have also been negatively influenced by weather and loss of habitat.

In 2012, in response to poor fawn production and higher adult mortality rates, the Game and Fish Department did not issue any mule deer doe licenses in eight badlands hunting units.

This fall, following some signs of recovery, Game

and Fish again decided against issuing any mule deer doe licenses in the same eight units.

According to Department big game biologists, 2013 is the first year since 2007 that the spring mule deer index was higher than the previous year. While the 2013 spring index was 15 percent higher than 2012, it was still 22 percent lower than the long-term average.

Biologists are attributing the population increase to not harvesting antlerless mule deer in the badlands in 2012, coupled with a relatively mild winter over much of the primary mule deer range.

Kreil said the Department hasn't completely suspended the harvest of antlerless whitetails in some deer hunting units like it's done for mule deer. Yet, in some units the number of antlerless whitetail licenses has been reduced to a point that the doe harvest is a nonfactor.

“A couple of examples include 3A1 and 2A where we've reduced doe licenses to 100 or less,” Kreil said. “So in essence, we're using that strategy in a few units where whitetail populations are low. In most other units, we've reduced doe license numbers dramatically to help rebuild the deer population.”

Future License Distribution Options

With deer populations at levels hunters haven't seen in decades, Kreil said one of the questions

DEER LICENSES AVAILABLE



COLIN PENNER

CRAIG BIRBLE



CRAIG BIRKLE

In some hunting units in North Dakota, the number of antlerless whitetail licenses has been reduced to a point that the doe harvest is a nonfactor.

agency officials receive from hunters is, if the deer population remains at low levels, and the demand for deer gun hunting licenses can't be met, will the Department consider changes to how licenses are distributed?

"People ask if it's time for a deer management approach that would allow one deer license per person per year, regardless of whether they choose to use a gun, bow or muzzleloader?" Kreil said. "We have been discussing that concept for the last three years."

For instance, under the current format, anyone who applies in the regular deer gun season license lottery can also apply for a second license in the muzzleloader season lottery, and also purchase an archery license.

No firm proposals are on the table yet, but under any potential future system, Kreil said Game and Fish would like to maintain the statewide either sex/species archery license option for residents. However, that could mean a tradeoff of sorts, where a hunter who opted for a statewide archery license could not also have a deer gun or muzzleloader license.

At 140,000 deer licenses, Kreil said, the additional deer harvest from archery and muzzleloader hunters was not an overriding factor in setting deer license numbers. At the same time, while not everyone could get a buck license in the unit they preferred, there were more than enough licenses so everyone who wanted to hunt deer could get one.

In the last two years, that situation has changed dramatically. In 2013, North Dakota had about

40,000 applicants in the deer gun lottery who did not get a license. "If we were to move toward one deer license per hunter," Kreil said, "it would allow us to offer more licenses in the deer gun lottery, which would mean more people would get a chance to hunt. We still wouldn't be able to accommodate everyone, but we would improve somewhat the odds for drawing a license."

In 2004, Game and Fish set its first statewide deer management goals in all hunting units. In 2010, those management goals were re-evaluated and updated, and the statewide goal at time was set for the next five years.

"The next review is coming quickly in 2015 and at that time we will look very closely at all 38 deer management units," Kreil said. "We will assess deer populations, wildlife habitat, hunter success and demands. From that, we will set goals for the next five years."

Because deer hunting has a long-standing tradition in North Dakota, and remains a popular activity as one in six residents want to draw a license each fall, Kreil said Department administrators take deer management seriously.

"We work really hard to meet the needs of people who want to go deer hunting, while at the same time try to balance the impacts deer have on farmers, ranchers and the general public," Kreil said.

RON WILSON is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.

Deer Season Questions and Answers

By Greg Freeman

Every year the North Dakota Game and Fish Department receives questions from deer hunters who want to clarify rules and regulations. Some common questions are listed below.

Hunters with further questions are encouraged to call the Game and Fish Department at (701) 328-6300, from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. weekdays, or access the hunting link at the Department's website, gf.nd.gov.

What licenses do I need for deer gun season?

A fishing, hunting, and furbearer certificate, the general game and habitat stamp or a combination license, and the deer license. Gratis license holders need only the gratis license.

Is there a concurrent season in 2013?

No. Hunters can get only one license for the deer gun season.

Can I use my deer gun license during the muzzleloader or archery season?

No. The deer gun license is valid for only the regular deer gun season.

Can I use my gratis license to take a mule deer doe?

No, not in the primary mule deer units 3B1, 3B2, 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D, 4E and 4F. Outside of those units, gratis license holders may take a mule deer doe.

I shot a deer in Unit 3F2. What field dressing restrictions must I follow?

Hunters cannot transport a carcass retaining the head and spinal column outside of the unit unless it's taken directly to a meat processor. The head can be removed from the carcass and transported outside of the unit to submit to a Game and Fish Department district office, chronic wasting disease surveillance drop-off location or a licensed taxidermist. If the deer is pro-

cessed in the field to boned meat, and the hunter wants to leave the head in the field, the head must be legally tagged and the hunter must be able to return to or give the exact location of the head if requested for verification.

I received a lottery license, and I own land in another unit. Can I hunt on my land in the other unit with my lottery license?

Only if the unit in which your land is located adjoins the unit in which you have the lottery license.

I can't find my deer license. What should I do?

You must obtain an application for a duplicate license from the Game and Fish Department – by calling (701) 328-6300 or printing it off the website at gf.nd.gov – or from a county auditor. Fill out the form, have it notarized and return it to the Department along with a fee. You may

not hunt without a deer license in your possession.

Can hunters age 14 or 15 (and qualifying 13 year olds) with a youth season license who did not harvest a deer during the youth season hunt the regular deer gun season with this license?

Yes, but you are subject to the restrictions listed on the license.

I was unsuccessful in filling my mule deer buck license in a restricted unit during the youth season. Can I hunt the remainder of the state during the regular gun season?

No. You are restricted to the same unit as during the youth season.

I shot a deer, but it is rotten. What can I do?

You must take possession of the animal by tagging it. A license only allows you the opportunity to hunt. It is not a guarantee to harvest a deer, or to the quality of the animal.

What should I do if I find a wounded deer?

Contact a game warden. Do not shoot the deer unless you want to tag it, or are instructed by the warden to do so.

Is camouflage blaze orange acceptable for the deer gun season?

No. You must wear both a hat and outer garment above the waistline totaling at

least 400 square inches of solid daylight fluorescent orange.

I hunt with a bow. When do I have to wear orange?

During the regular deer gun season you must wear orange. During the muzzle-loader season, however, bowhunters do not need to wear orange.

Can I retrieve a wounded deer from posted land?

If the deer was shot on land where you had a legal right to be and it ran on posted land, you may retrieve it. However, you may not take a firearm or bow with you. The Department suggests contacting the landowner as a courtesy prior to entering.

What if the landowner says I cannot retrieve a deer from posted land that was shot on land where I had a right to be?

Contact a game warden.

Can I drive off a trail on private land to retrieve a deer?

Unless prohibited by a landowner or operator, you may drive off-trail on private land once a deer has been killed and properly tagged. You must proceed to the carcass by the shortest accessible route, and return to the road or trail by the same route. However, off-trail driving is prohibited in all circumstances on state wildlife management areas, Bureau of Land

Management lands, national wildlife refuges, national grasslands, federal waterfowl production areas and state school land.

Can I transport someone else's deer?

Yes, but you will need a transportation permit from a game warden. The license holder, person transporting the animal, and the carcass must be presented to the game warden before the permit is issued.

What if I am going to take my deer head to a taxidermist and meat to a butcher shop?

How do I keep the tag with it all?

The tag should remain with the head and the carcass tag should remain with the meat.

Can I use a bow to fill my regular deer gun license?

Yes. You may use any legal firearm or bow during the regular deer gun season.

Can I carry both bow and gun afield during deer gun season if I have both licenses?

Yes, but only if you are going to fill your gun license. No firearms, except handguns, may be in the hunter's possession while hunting with a deer bow license. However, handguns may not be used in any manner to assist in the harvest of a deer with an archery license.

GREG FREEMAN is the Game and Fish Department's news editor.



ICE FISHING

under the


radar

By Ron Wilson

North Dakota has never been in this position. Never before has the state been blessed with so many fishing waters and so many fish.

Many lakes, however, will go mostly unnoticed this winter as ice anglers stick to traditional fishing routines or simply trail rumors of the latest hot bite.

What follows is a list of lakes, and an accompanying map, of waters that typically fly under the ice fishing radar, yet have strong fish populations and the potential to provide good fishing.



Northern pike numbers in North Dakota waters have never been higher. Yet, with the uncertainties of Mother Nature, it's only a guess how long these strong pike populations will be around.

Darkhouse spearfishing has grown in popularity and is open virtually statewide. There is only a short list of waters where the activity is prohibited.



ASHLEY SALWEY

Darkhouse Spearfishing

Darkhouse spearfishing is legal from December 1 through March 15. All waters open to hook and line fishing are open to darkhouse spearfishing except the following waters:

- Braun Lake, Logan County
- East Park Lake, McLean County
- Heckers Lake, Sheridan County
- Lake Audubon, McLean County
- McClusky Canal
- New Johns Lake, Burleigh County
- Red and Bois de Sioux rivers
- Red Willow Lake, Griggs County
- Sweet Briar Dam, Morton County
- West Park Lake, McLean County

In addition to possessing a valid fishing license, all darkhouse spearfishing participants must first register on the North Dakota Game and Fish Department website, gf.nd.gov, or through any Game and Fish office.

According to Greg Power, North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries chief, some of the lakes are large, while many are much smaller. Some are well-known for summer fishing, while others have names you've maybe never heard.

"What they all have in common, but perhaps for different reasons, are healthy fish populations that have received little ice fishing pressure in the past," Power said.

Scott Gangl, Department fisheries management section leader, said because North Dakota has a history of more drought than flood, biologists understand the fishing opportunities in these waters and others are only temporary.

"When water started coming back in 2009, we saw new lakes form and older lakes recharge," Gangl said. "We took advantage of this by adding fish to lakes, but in the back of our minds we were thinking that some of these lakes are going to be around longer than others."

Some of those here-today-gone-tomorrow waters have made this list because their future is uncertain, but support strong fish populations today.

"It's going to dry up some day, and some of these waters may only be around for a few more years," Power said. "We encourage anglers to give them a try today."

On larger bodies of water such as the 7,000-acre Horsehead Lake in Kidder County and Bowman-Haley Dam in southwestern North Dakota, there are no worries of too much fishing pressure.

"These lakes and a few others could certainly handle lots of ice fishing attention ... there are no worries of overharvest because of their size and historic lack of use," Power said. "Big or small, the underlying message in all the lakes is that they all have strong fish populations."

When the lakes do freeze, providing safe access to anglers, the majority – about 94 percent during any given winter – are out to catch walleye, pike or yellow perch.

"Right now, we have all-time high populations in district lakes for pike, walleye, and nearly so for yellow perch," Power said.

Knock on wood in hopes that ice anglers can take advantage of the good fishing opportunities because you just never know. In three of the last five winters, too much snow made access to

lakes around the state difficult, if not impossible in places.

During three consecutive winters, starting in 2008, only 13 percent of the statewide effort was attributed to ice fishing. The last two winters when snow conditions were more tolerable, 22 percent of the fishing effort was attributed to ice anglers.

“There is a bit of tradition, an ice fishing heritage in North Dakota,” Power said. “If there is access and the fish are biting, the anglers will come.”

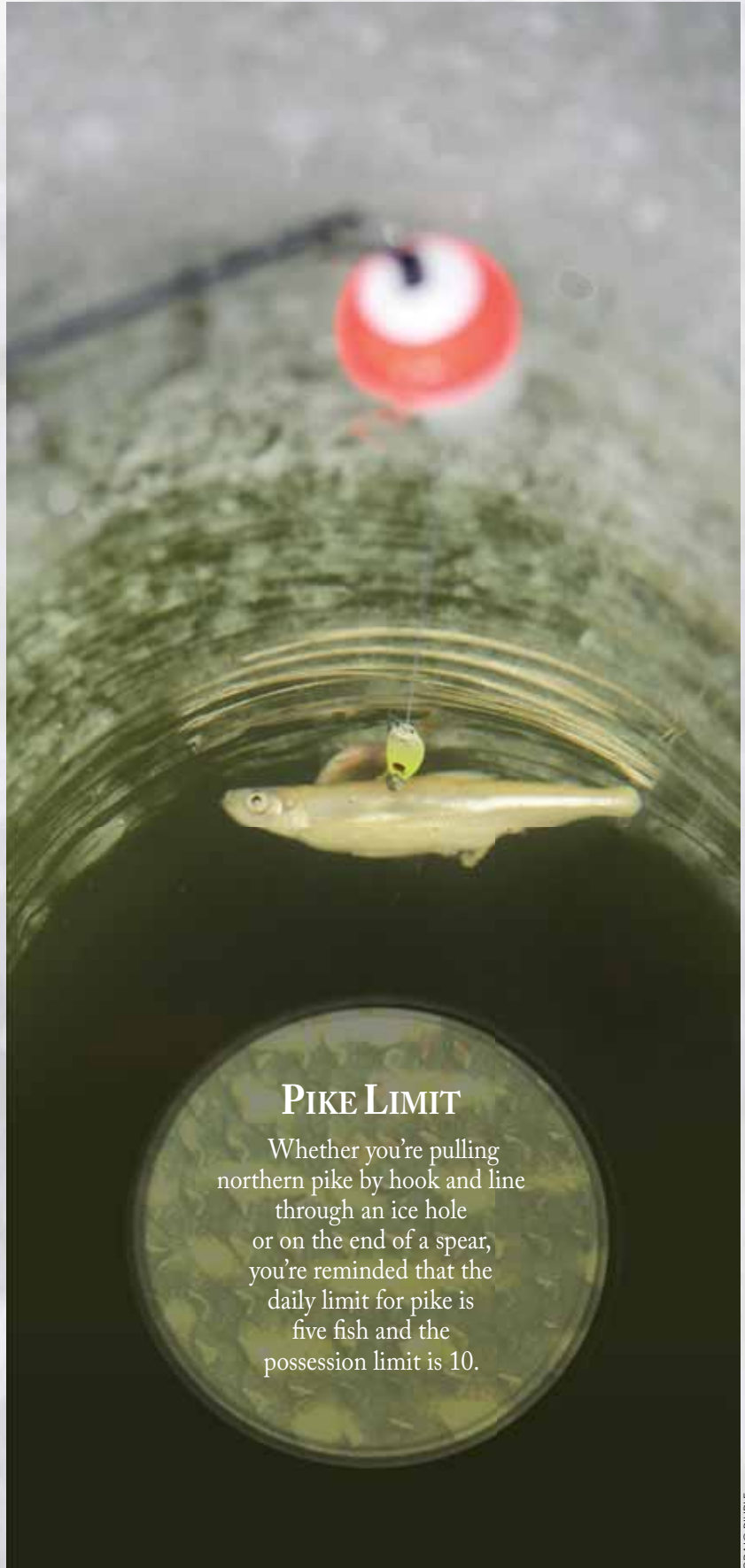
RON WILSON is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.



Y Bone Help

Northern pike populations have never been higher in North Dakota and Game and Fish Department officials encourage anglers to take advantage of the fishing opportunities while they exist.

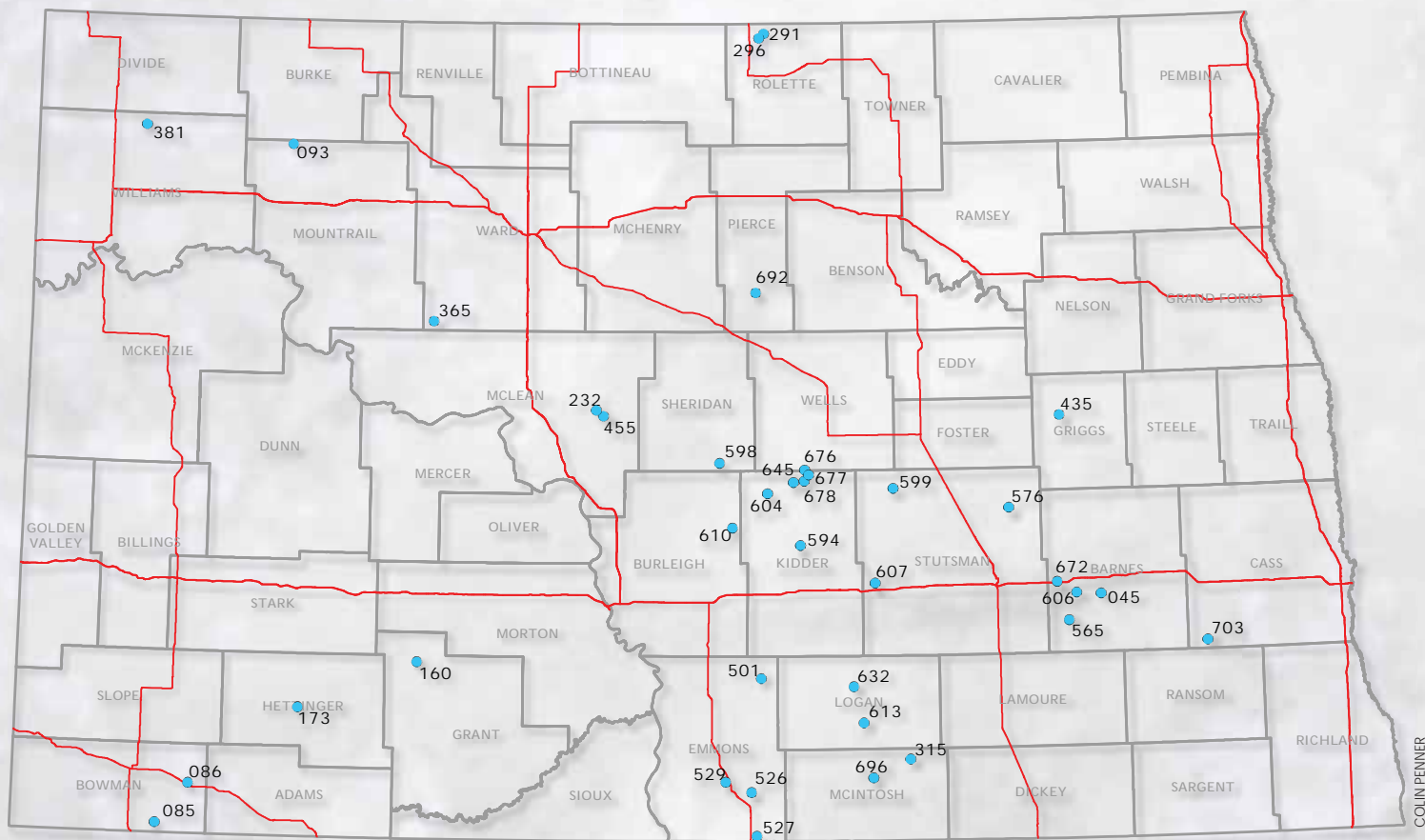
While there is more than one way to remove bones from pike, visit the Department’s website, gf.nd.gov, for a fish cleaning method that has worked for a number of anglers. The publication is titled, *Removing the Y Bones From Northern Pike*. It can also be found in the January 2011 issue of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.



PIKE LIMIT

Whether you’re pulling northern pike by hook and line through an ice hole or on the end of a spear, you’re reminded that the daily limit for pike is five fish and the possession limit is 10.

CRAIG BIHRLE



Overlooked Waters

Game and Fish Department fisheries biologists provided the following list of “under the radar” waters that could offer some good ice fishing opportunities this winter. These waters, for various reasons, often go unnoticed by anglers, but have strong fish populations.

The waters are listed in alphabetical order and driving directions and county are provided. The number in parenthesis that follows each lake name is simply code used by biologists to help identify those waters. The codes are also found on the map to help readers locate the waters in which they are interested.

- **Baumgartner Lake (529)** – 6 miles south of Linton. Northern pike abundant. (Emmons County)
- **Big Mallard Marsh (599)** – 9 miles north, 1 mile east of Woodworth. Mostly medium-sized walleye. Pike not as abundant. (Stutsman County)
- **Bowman-Haley Dam (085)** – 11

miles south, 8 miles east, 2 miles south of Bowman. Dominated by walleye, some up to 6 pounds, northern pike up to 10 pounds and small-mouth bass up to 3 pounds. Some yellow perch up to 2 pounds and small white bass. (Bowman County)

- **Brekken Lake (232)** – 1.5 miles north of Turtle Lake. Very good population of 8- to 11-inch perch. Good numbers of smaller walleye, with some larger 16- to 18-inch fish. (McLean County)
- **Carpenter Lake (291)** – 12 miles west of St. John. Supports a good pike population, even during tough winters. Most fish less than 5 pounds. (Rolette County)
- **Cottonwood Lake (381)** – 1 mile east, .5 miles north of Alamo. Good numbers of northern pike and fair numbers of yellow perch, although most of the perch are fairly small.

(Williams County)

- **Davis WPA (598)** – 8 miles south, 1 mile east of Denhoff. Abundant yellow perch, with some quality-sized fish. Walleye population expanding in recent years, with a good number of 14- to 16-inch fish. (Sheridan County)
- **Gascoyne Lake (086)** – 1.5 miles northwest of Gascoyne. Northern pike are stocked annually and pike up to 4 pounds present. (Bowman County)
- **Goose Lake (501)** – 3 miles east of Braddock. Northern pike and yellow perch abundant. (Emmons County)
- **Lake Harriet (Arena Lake) (610)** – 8 miles west, 1 mile south of Tuttle. Northern pike abundant and yellow perch present. (Burleigh County)
- **Heart Butte Reservoir (Lake Tschida) (160)** – 15 miles south of Glen Ullin. Dominated by small

walleye, but some up to 10 pounds, 2- to 5-pound northern pike, white bass up to 2 pounds, catfish up to 10 pounds and smallmouth bass up to 2 pounds. Some yellow perch up to 1 pound, crappie up to 2 pounds and small bluegill.

- **Hoggarth Dam (576)** – 3 miles west, 3 miles south of Courtenay. Excellent population of 6- to 11-inch yellow perch. (Stutsman County)
- **Holmes Lake (455)** – 1 mile north-east of Turtle Lake. Good numbers of 7- to 11-inch yellow perch. Fair number of 14- to 16-inch walleye. (McLean County)
- **Homestead Lake (696)** – 8 miles south, 8 miles east, 2 miles north of Wishek. Northern pike abundant. Yellow perch also present. (McIntosh County)
- **Horsehead Lake (594)** – 2 miles west, 6 miles south of Robinson. Northern pike population recovering and once again offers good fishing opportunities. (Kidder County)
- **Island Lake (672)** – 3 miles south, .5 miles east of Urbana. Walleye up to 15 inches and small yellow perch. (Barnes County)
- **Jake's Lake (527)** – 13 miles south, 1 mile east of Strasburg. Northern pike abundant. (Emmons County)
- **Kee Lake (606)** – 7 miles south, 2 miles east of Eckelson. Yellow perch up to 14 inches. Walleye up to 17 inches. (Barnes County)
- **Koenig North (676)** – 12.25 miles north, 1.5 miles east of Robinson. Multiple year-classes of yellow perch present. (Kidder County)
- **Koenig South (677)** – 12.25 miles north, 1.5 miles east of Robinson. Multiple year-classes of yellow perch present. (Kidder County)
- **Larson Lake (173)** – .5 miles north and 2 miles east of Regent. Abundant northern pike up to 4 pounds. Some yellow perch up to a half-pound. (Hettinger County)

- **Leno Lake (604)** – 1 mile east, 7 miles north of Tuttle. Northern pike abundant. (Kidder County)
- **Lesmeister Lake (692)** – 3.5 miles west, 2 miles south of intersection of ND highways 3 and 19. New walleye lake with a good number of 13- to 16-inch walleye. (Pierce County)
- **Lindemann Lake (703)** – 2 miles east, 2 miles north, .5 miles west of Enderlin. Walleye up to 16 inches. Good yellow perch population. (Cass County)
- **Logan (Mueller) WMA (613)** – 8 miles north, 5 miles west, 1 mile south of Lehr. Walleye abundant. Low numbers of yellow perch. (Logan County)
- **Makoti Lake (365)** – 6 miles south of Makoti. Good numbers of 24-inch northern pike and 8-inch yellow perch. (Ward County)
- **Meadow Lake (565)** – 6 miles west, 6 miles north of Litchville. Yellow perch up to 14 inches. (Barnes County)
- **Miller Lake (315)** – 7.5 miles east, 2.5 miles south of Lehr. Northern pike abundant, with fish occasionally topping 8 pounds. Fair numbers of yellow perch. (McIntosh County)
- **Powers Lake (093)** – Southeast side of Powers Lake. Good numbers of northern pike and a few yellow perch. (Burke County)

- **Reule Lake (607)** – 5 miles west, .5 miles north of Medina. Excellent walleye population, with fish up to 24 inches. (Stutsman County)
- **School Section Lake (296)** – 9 miles north, 2.5 miles east of Dunseith. Had a partial winterkill in 2013, but still a good number of northern pike and some yellow perch available. (Rolette County)
- **Senger Lake (526)** – 1 mile north, 6 miles east of Strasburg. Multiple year-classes of yellow perch. (Emmons County)
- **Sibley Lake (435)** – 1 mile west, 3 miles south of Binford. Good northern pike population, some yellow perch. (Griggs County)
- **St. Mary's Lake (045)** – 2 miles west, 5.5 miles south, 4 miles west, 1 mile north of Valley City. Excellent yellow perch population. Walleye recently introduced. (Barnes County)
- **Swan Lake (678)** – 10.5 miles north of Robinson. Abundant yellow perch. (Kidder County)
- **Wentz WPA (632)** – 12 miles east of Napoleon. Abundant walleye. (Logan County)
- **Willow Lake (645)** – 9 miles north, 3 miles west of Robinson. Abundant yellow perch. (Kidder County)



While it's tough to say which water will feature the hot yellow perch bite this winter, it's certain news of good fishing will spread quickly.

GREG GULLICKSON



CRAIG BIHRLE

Outdoor Heritage Fund Takes Shape

By Craig Bihrlle

North Dakota's Outdoor Heritage Fund is ready for action. Initially proposed by North Dakota Governor Jack Dalrymple in his 2013-15 biennial budget request, and eventually passed by the North Dakota legislature during its 2013 session, the Outdoor Heritage Fund is designed to enhance habitat, public access, hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreation in the state. The Outdoor Heritage Fund is supported by funding from a slice of the state's oil and gas production tax.

The State Industrial Commission, comprised of the governor, attorney general and agriculture commissioner, is the governing authority over the Outdoor Heritage Fund. In addition, the governor has appointed a 12-member advisory board to evaluate project proposals and make recommendations to the commission.

The Outdoor Heritage Fund advisory board has met several times in recent weeks to develop a process for accepting, evaluating and ranking proposals for funding. At its October 22 meeting, the

Industrial Commission approved guidelines for the first round of project proposals. That application period is now open, with a deadline of December 2. Three additional project application periods will occur in 2014.

"I think that the fund will make a significant impact on our ability to enhance outdoor recreation and preservation of the outdoors, with an overall public appreciation for the outdoor experience," Governor Dalrymple said. "This fund is very versatile ... funds can go in a number of different directions, but they all deal with the conservation and enhancement and appreciation of the outdoors."

North Dakota Game and Fish Department Director Terry Steinwand, who serves as one of four ex-officio or nonvoting members of the Outdoor Heritage Fund advisory board, said the legislation is a significant state funding commitment for conservation and outdoor recreation, beyond what hunters and anglers have for years contributed through license fees and excise taxes on equipment.

The Outdoor Heritage Fund advisory board met several times in September and October to develop details for accepting and scoring grant proposals. The first deadline for project applications is December 2.

"This provides for great strides in conservation on North Dakota's landscape," Steinwand said. "In concert with existing Game and Fish programs, it has the potential to enhance hunting and fishing in the state."

Outdoor Heritage Fund Details

House Bill 1278, passed during the 2013 legislative session, created a North Dakota "Outdoor Heritage Fund" that is governed by the State Industrial Commission. The bill was sponsored in the House by representatives Todd Porter, Mandan, and Al Carlson, Fargo, and in the Senate by Stanley Lyson, Williston, and Rich Wardner, Dickinson.

The fund can receive up to \$15 million annually, or \$30 million per biennium, under a formula that provides a percentage of oil and gas production taxes. In comparison, the Game and Fish Department's annual budget is about \$34 million.

The legislation specifically directs the Industrial Commission, with recommendations forwarded to the advisory board, to provide grants to political subdivisions,

nonprofit organizations, state agencies and tribal governments.

Qualifying grants are those that:

- Provide access to private and public lands for sportsmen, including projects that create fish and wildlife habitat plus provide access for sportsmen.
- Improve, maintain, and restore water quality, soil conditions, plant diversity, animal systems; and to support other practices of stewardship to enhance farming and ranching.
- Develop, enhance, conserve, and restore wildlife and fish habitat on private and public lands.
- Conserve natural areas for recreation through the establishment and development of parks and other recreation areas.

At the same time, the Industrial Commission may not use the fund, in any manner, to finance:

- Litigation.
- Lobbying activities.
- Any activity that would interfere, disrupt, or prevent activities associated with surface coal mining operations; sand, gravel, or scoria extraction activities; oil and gas operations; or other energy facility or infrastructure development.

- Acquisition of land or to encumber any land for a term longer than 20 years.
- Projects outside North Dakota or projects that are beyond the scope of the legislation.

After attending the advisory board's first meeting, Governor Dalrymple said he was encouraged to see that the board's first decision was to establish a very open process in terms of who could apply for a grant, how much they could apply for, and what types of projects they could propose. "I think the board was very clear in that starting out," Dalrymple said, "they want to make the fund as inclusive as possible to provide for a wide range of projects that enhance and protect our great outdoors."

Outdoor Heritage Fund Advisory Board

While the Industrial Commission governs the Outdoor Heritage Fund, the governor also appoints a 12-member advisory board that will consider, rank and recommend project proposals to the Industrial Commission.

The enabling legislation requires the advisory board to consist of:

- Four members from the agriculture community, including one each representing the North Dakota Farm Bureau; North Dakota Farmers

Union; North Dakota Stockmen's Association; and North Dakota Grain Growers Association.

These four appointees are:

- North Dakota Farm Bureau – **Eric Aasmundstad**, Devils Lake.
- North Dakota Farmers Union – **Robert Kuylen**, South Heart.
- North Dakota Stockmen's Association – **Wade Moser**, Bismarck.
- North Dakota Grain Growers Association – **Dan Wogsland**, Bismarck.

Two members from the energy industry, including one member from the North Dakota Petroleum Council and one member from the Lignite Energy Council. They are:

- North Dakota Petroleum Council – **Blaine Hoffman**, Gladstone.
- Lignite Energy Council – **Jim Melchior**, Bismarck.

Four members from the conservation community, including one member from Ducks Unlimited of North Dakota, one member from the North Dakota chapter of Pheasants Forever, and two members from the conservation community at large representing statewide conservation groups (including North Dakota Natural Resources Trust, The Nature Conservatory, North Dakota Wildlife Federation, North Dakota Chapter of The Wildlife Society,

GRANT APPLICATION, REVIEW AND SCORING

Step One

Submission of application. Application forms are on the Industrial Commission website – www.nd.gov/ndic and deadline for submitting is **Monday, December 2**.

Step Two

Review of application by staff. If application is incomplete, the applicant will have an opportunity to make corrections and resubmit within three business days.

Step Three

All complete applications submitted by the first deadline will be posted to the Outdoor Heritage Fund website.

Step Four

The Outdoor Heritage Fund technical committee, which consists of the four ex-officio members of the advisory board, reviews all applications. Technical committee members may use staff from their agencies, or work with outside experts, to determine whether an application meets the requirements of

law, and satisfactorily addresses scientific aspects of the project. The technical committee does not participate in scoring the applications.

Step Five

Outdoor Heritage Fund advisory board members review applications, and at the January 2014 meeting (week of January 13-17, specific date not yet set) applicants will have 10 minutes to give an oral presentation, though an oral presentation is not a requirement, followed by time for questions.

Board members then score the applications and vote on recommendations to forward to the Industrial Commission. At its scheduled meeting on January 27, 2014 the Industrial Commission will award the first round of grants.

Future Application Periods

After the December 2 application deadline, three more application rounds are scheduled for 2014, with deadlines occurring on April 1, August 1 and November 1.

and the Badlands Conservation Alliance). They are:

- Ducks Unlimited – **Dr. Tom Hutchens**, Bismarck.
- Pheasants Forever – **Patricia Stockdill**, Garrison.
- Conservation at Large – **Dr. Carolyn Godfreed**, Bismarck.
- Conservation at Large – **Kent Reier-son**, Williston.
- One member from the business community: Greater North Dakota Chamber – **Jon Godfreed**, Bismarck.
- One member from the North Dakota Recreation and Park Association – **Randy Bina**, Bismarck.

Also serving on the advisory board as nonvoting, ex-officio members are:

- **Terry Steinwand**, Director, North Dakota Game and Fish Department:
- **Mark Zimmerman**, Director, North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department:
- **Larry Kotchman**, State Forester, North Dakota Forest Service:
- **Rhonda Vetsch**, North Dakota Association of Soil Conservation Districts.

The term for each board member is four years and members may not serve more than two consecutive terms. The terms are

staggered, so at first some of the board members will serve only two or three years before they are up for reappointment.

At its first meeting September 16 the advisory board elected Wade Moser as chairman. Jim Melchior was voted in as vice-chairman at the October 7 meeting.

Moser, a lifelong rancher and retired executive director of the North Dakota Stockmen's Association, said he was interested in the challenge of serving on a new board and starting something from the ground up and seeing it become successful.

"As diverse a group as we are," Moser told Industrial Commission members at their October 22 meeting, "I think we're on the same page, so it's a win-win for everybody. We'll do the best we can to bring forward good project applications."

Governor Dalrymple said the advisory board by design does include members from varied organizations. "When we proposed this fund to the legislature in our budget recommendation, I envisioned that this group of people, even though they come from different perspectives, are going to find a lot of common ground in terms of how to approach the challenge," Dalrymple said. "And I think they're going to agree 95 percent of the time on

what is effective and what will produce the best results. And that really has a lot of value, because I think in the past we've had too much emphasis on the differences between groups, and the differences between people, in the way they view preservation of the outdoors. This is a great opportunity for us to turn it into a very positive initiative, where everybody is working together. They have a common goal. I'm confident that they're going to find they have a lot of common ideas and they'll find a lot of consensus."

Now that the process and people to manage the Outdoor Heritage Fund are in place, the door is open for proposals both large and small that will improve North Dakota's outdoors, for wildlife and people, for years to come.

"The Outdoor Heritage Fund has great potential to help us preserve and enhance the outdoors, and with strong public support could potentially lead to greater funding from the legislature in the next session," Governor Dalrymple said. "So, we'll see, but I think it's going to be a very popular fund and a strong asset for the people of North Dakota."

CRAIG BIHRLE is the Game and Fish Department's communications supervisor.



The State Industrial Commission approved the Outdoor Heritage Fund application processes and project scoring methods at its October 22 meeting. Wade Moser (far left), chairman of the Heritage Fund advisory board, discussed the details with Commission members Doug Goebing, North Dakota Agriculture Commissioner; North Dakota Governor Jack Dalrymple, and North Dakota Attorney General Wayne Stenejem.



BUFFALOBERRY PATCH

By Greg Freeman, Department News Editor

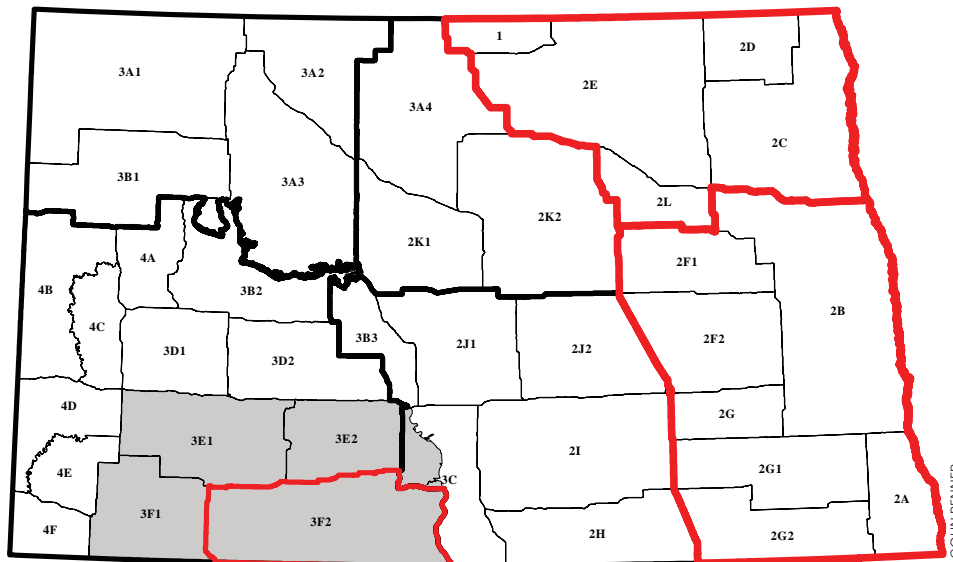
CWD Surveillance Continues

The State Game and Fish Department will continue its Hunter-Harvested Surveillance program during the 2013 hunting season, by sampling deer for chronic wasting disease and bovine tuberculosis from 13 units in North Dakota. In addition, all moose and elk harvested in the state are eligible for testing.

Samples from hunter-harvested deer taken in the eastern portion of the state will be tested from units 1, 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E, 2F1, 2F2, 2G, 2G1, 2G2 and 2L. In addition, deer will be tested from unit 3F2 in the southwest.

Every head sampled must have either the deer tag attached, or a new tag can be filled out with the license number, deer hunting unit and date harvested.

Hunters should visit the Game and Fish website at gf.nd.gov for a complete list of



COLIN PENNER

locations participating in the surveillance effort. CWD affects the nervous system of members of the deer family and is always fatal. Scientists have

found no evidence that CWD can be transmitted naturally to humans or livestock.

CATCHABLE TROUT STOCKED

North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries personnel stocked seven waters with catchable trout earlier this fall.

Jerry Weigel, Department fisheries development and production section leader, said the trout will provide exciting fall and winter fishing opportunities. "Shasta strain rainbow trout average more than 1 pound each, with some up to 5 pounds," he said.

More than 800 were stocked in the Turtle River near Arvilla in Grand Forks County, while 115 went in the OWLS Pond in Burleigh County.

Wyoming Game and Fish Department also provided 7,500 Firehole strain rainbows as part of an annual trade for walleye fingerlings. Half-pound trout were stocked in McGregor Dam in Williams County,



CRAIG BHIRLE

Lightning Lake in McLean County (closed to ice fishing), Fish Creek Dam and Harmon Lake in Morton County, and Mooreton Pond in Richland County.

"Trout provided from Wyoming give anglers a chance to catch unique strains and species that otherwise would require a trip to the Rocky Mountains," Weigel said.

Anglers should refer to the fishing tab at the Game and Fish Department's website, gf.nd.gov, for a complete stocking report.

Hunter Ed Classes

Hunter education courses have wrapped up for 2013.

However, individuals or parents with children who will need to take a course in 2014 should monitor the Game and Fish website, gf.nd.gov, as classes that begin in January will be added to the online services link as soon as times and locations are finalized.



WINTER FISHING REGULATIONS

Anglers are encouraged to refer to the 2012-14 North Dakota Fishing Guide or the State Game and Fish Department's website for winter fishing regulations.

In addition, anglers can visit the Game and Fish website, gf.nd.gov, for an extensive list of fishing questions and answers.

Some winter fishing regulations include:

- A maximum of four poles is legal for ice fishing. However, when fishing a water body where both open water and ice 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.
- Tip-ups are legal, and each tip-up is

considered a single pole.

- There is no restriction on the size of the hole in the ice while fishing. When a hole larger than 10 inches in diameter is left in the ice, the area in the immediate vicinity must be marked with a natural object. See regulations for more information.
- It is only legal to release fish back into the water immediately after they are caught. Once a fish is held in a bucket or on a stringer, they can no longer be legally released in any water.
- It is illegal to catch fish and transport them in water.
- It is illegal to leave fish, including bait, behind on the ice.

- Depositing or leaving any litter or other waste material on the ice or shore is illegal.
- Any dressed fish to be transported, if frozen, must be packaged individually. Anglers are not allowed to freeze fillets together in one large block. Two fillets count as one fish.
- The daily limit is a limit of fish taken from midnight to midnight, and no person may possess more than one day's limit of fish while actively engaged in fishing. The possession limit is the maximum number of fish that an angler may have in his or her possession during a fishing trip of more than one day.

ICE AWARENESS FOR HUNTERS, ANGLERS

State Game and Fish Department officials caution hunters to be wary of where they hunt. Late-season weather conditions can quickly cause North Dakota's small and mid-sized waters to ice over, giving the appearance of safe foot travel.

Nancy Boldt, Department boat and water safety coordinator, said hunters should be cautious of walking on frozen stock ponds, sloughs, creeks and rivers.

"Ice can form overnight, causing unstable conditions for thousands of deer hunters that participate in the hunting season," she said. "Even though deer might be able to make it across, it doesn't mean hunters can."

Ice thickness is not consistent, Boldt said, as it can vary significantly within a few inches. Hunters walking the edge of a cattail slough will not find the same ice thickness in the middle.

"The edges firm up faster than the center," she said. "So, with your first step the ice

might seem like it is strong enough, but it isn't anywhere near solid enough once you progress away from the shoreline."

And in the case of snowfall, Boldt cautions hunters to be aware of snow-covered ice. Snow insulates ice, inhibiting solid ice formation, and makes it difficult to check thickness. Snow also hides cracked, weak and open water areas.

"Basically, if there is ice formation during the deer season, stay away from it," Boldt said. "It will not be safe."

Winter anglers are also encouraged to consider early ice conditions before traveling onto and across North Dakota lakes.

Keep in mind:

- While snow insulates ice, hampering solid ice formation, it also makes it difficult to check thickness. Snow also hides the blemishes, such as cracked, weak and open water areas.
- Avoid cracks, pressure ridges, slushy or darker areas that signal thinner ice. The same goes for ice that forms around partially submerged trees, brush, embankments or other structures.
- Ice shouldn't be judged by appearance alone. Anglers should drill test holes as they make their way out on the lake, and an ice chisel should be used to check ice thickness while moving around.
- Daily temperature changes cause ice

to expand and contract, affecting its strength.

- The following minimums are recommended for travel on clear-blue lake ice formed under ideal conditions. However, early in the winter it's a good idea to double these figures to be safe: 4 inches for a group walking single file; 6 inches for a snowmobile or all-terrain vehicle; 8-12 inches for an automobile; and 12-15 inches for a pickup/truck.

These tips could help save a life:

- Wear a personal flotation device and carry a cell phone.
- Carry ice picks or a set of screwdrivers to pull yourself back on the ice if you fall through.
- If someone breaks through the ice, call 911 immediately. Rescue attempts should employ a long pole, board, rope, blanket or snowmobile suit. If that's not possible, throw the victim a life jacket, empty water jug or other buoyant object. Go to the victim as a last resort, but do this by forming a human chain where rescuers lie on the ice with each person holding the feet of the person in front.
- To treat hypothermia, replace wet clothing with dry clothing and immediately transport victim to a hospital.

ADVISORY BOARD MEETINGS ANNOUNCED

Outdoor enthusiasts are invited to attend a North Dakota Game and Fish Department advisory board meeting in their area.

These public meetings, held each spring and fall, provide citizens with an opportunity to discuss fish and wildlife issues and ask questions of their district advisors and agency personnel.

The governor appoints eight Game and Fish Department advisors, each representing a multi-county section of the state, to serve as a liaison between the Department and public.

Any person who requires an auxiliary aid or service must notify the contact person at least five days prior to the scheduled meeting date.

District 1 – Divide, McKenzie and Williams counties

Date: November 25 – 7 p.m.

Location: Williston MDU Building

Host: Missouri United Sportsmen

Contact: Wayne Aberle, (701) 770-6902

Advisory board member: Jason Leiseth, Arnegard, (701) 586-3714

District 3 – Benson, Cavalier, Eddy, Ramsey, Rolette and Towner counties

Date: November 25 – 7 p.m.

Location: Rolette Memorial Hall

Contact/Advisory board member: Tom Rost, Devils Lake, (701) 662-8620

District 7 – Burleigh, Emmons, Grant, Kidder, McLean, Mercer, Morton, Oliver, Sheridan and Sioux counties

Date: November 26 – 7 p.m.

Location: Hazen Golf Course

Host: Hazen Wildlife Club

Contact: Mike Ness, (701) 748-3773

Advisory board member: Frank Kartch, Bismarck, (701) 516-2156

District 2 – Bottineau, Burke, McHenry, Mountrail, Pierce, Renville and Ward counties

Date: November 26 – 7 p.m.

Location: Anamoose VFW Club

Host: Anamoose Wildlife Club

Contact: Myron Miller, (701) 465-3631

Advisory board member: Robert Gjellstad, Voltaire, (701) 338-2281

District 6 – Barnes, Dickey, Foster, Griggs, Logan, LaMoure, McIntosh, Stutsman and Wells counties

Date: December 2 – 7 p.m.

Location: The Bunker, 1520 3rd Street SE, Jamestown

Host: United Sportsmen of North Dakota

Contact: Larry Kukla, (701) 320-4182

Advisory board member: Joel Christoferson, Litchville, (701) 973-4981

District 8 – Adams, Billings, Bowman, Dunn, Golden Valley, Hettinger, Slope and Stark counties

Date: December 2 – 7 p.m.

Location: Scranton Town Hall

Host: Scranton Rod and Gun Club

Contact: Gary Symanowski, (701) 275-8807

Advisory board member: Dwight Hecker, Fairfield, (701) 575-4952

District 4 – Grand Forks, Nelson, Pembina and Walsh counties

Date: December 3 – 7 p.m.

Location: Minto Community Center

Host: Minto Area Sportsmen's Club

Contact: Chris Misialek, (701) 248-3978

Advisory board member: Ronald Houdek, Tolna, (701) 262-4724

District 5 – Cass, Ransom, Richland, Sargent, Steele and Traill counties

Date: December 3 – 7 p.m.

Location: Cayuga Community Center

Host: Southeast Sportsmen's Club

Contact: Donald Dathe, (701) 736-2460

Advisory board member: Duane Hanson, West Fargo, (701) 367-4249

ANS Prevention in Winter

North Dakota ice anglers are reminded that regulations designed to reduce the spread of aquatic nuisance species also apply in winter.

It's important to reiterate that only legal live bait can be transported in water in a container up to five gallons. Both game and nongame species cannot be transported in water, although a daily catch can be packed in snow.

Other simple methods to prevent winter ANS introductions are:

- Do not use illegally imported baits.
- Do not empty a bait bucket into any water body.
- Do not drop plant fragments into the water.
- Dispose of any unused bait into the trash.

Order 2014 OUTDOORS Calendars

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department is taking orders for its *North Dakota OUTDOORS* calendar, the source for hunting season and application dates for 2014. Along with outstanding color photographs of North Dakota wildlife and scenery, it also includes sunrise-sunset times and moon phases.

To order, send \$3 for each, plus \$1 postage, to: Calendar, North Dakota Game and Fish Department, 100 N. Bismarck Expressway, Bismarck, ND 58501-5095. Be sure to include a three-line return address with your order, or the post office may not deliver our return mailing.

The calendar is the *North Dakota OUTDOORS* magazine's December issue, so current subscribers will automatically receive it in the mail.





SUBMITTED PHOTO

Bob Frohlich (center), Game and Fish Department fisheries development supervisor, presents the 2013 award to John Dassenko (left), Wahpeton Park superintendent, and Wayne Gripentrog (right), Wahpeton Park Board president.

Fisheries Division Recognizes Wahpeton Park Board

The State Game and Fish Department has honored the Wahpeton Park Board for its ongoing efforts to develop and improve public boating and fishing facilities at numerous lakes, rivers and recreation sites in Richland County.

Each year the Department's fisheries division presents a "Certificate of Appreciation" to an organization that has a history of accomplishments as a cooperating partner in local fisheries projects. Bob Frohlich, Department fisheries development supervisor, said the park board is a perfect example of

how a willing entity can make a difference for local fisheries.

"The Wahpeton Park Board and its members have helped with construction and installation of boat ramps, courtesy docks, toilets, fishing piers, fishing access roads and parking areas at Mooreton Pond, Brushvale Landing and numerous sites on the Red River in the immediate Wahpeton area," Frohlich said. "They have also assumed primary responsibility for maintaining these facilities after construction, and the park board does an outstanding job in performing this task."

LAKES CLOSED TO FISHING

Anglers are reminded that three North Dakota lakes are closed to ice fishing.

The State Fair Pond in Ward County, McDowell Dam in Burleigh County and Lightning Lake in McLean County are closed when the lakes ice over.

Anglers should refer to the 2012-14 North Dakota Fishing Guide for open water and winter fishing regulations.



SPORTSMEN AGAINST HUNGER ACCEPTING DEER, LIGHT GOOSE MEAT

North Dakota's Sportsmen Against Hunger Program is again accepting donations of deer at select processors across the state. In addition, the program is also able to accept light goose breast meat (snow, blue and Ross's geese) for the first time this fall.

Canada goose meat, while accepted during the early goose season, is not eligible for donation during the regular waterfowl season.

Sportsmen Against Hunger is a program administered by the North Dakota Community Action Partnership, a nonprofit agency that serves low-income families across the state. SAH raises funds to pay for processing of donated deer and geese, and coordinates distribution of ground venison and goose meat to food pantries around the state.

The State Game and Fish Department strongly supports the SAH program and encourages hunters to consider donating deer, according to agency Director Terry Steinwand. The program can accept whole deer only, which must be processed at a participating licensed meat processor.

According to NDCAP executive director Andrea Olson, the SAH program has sufficient funding available to process deer and geese this fall. "The meat that is generated is so appreciated by the families who receive it," Olson said. "They are all so grateful for access to a nutritious source of protein; something that is often expensive and otherwise difficult for them to obtain."

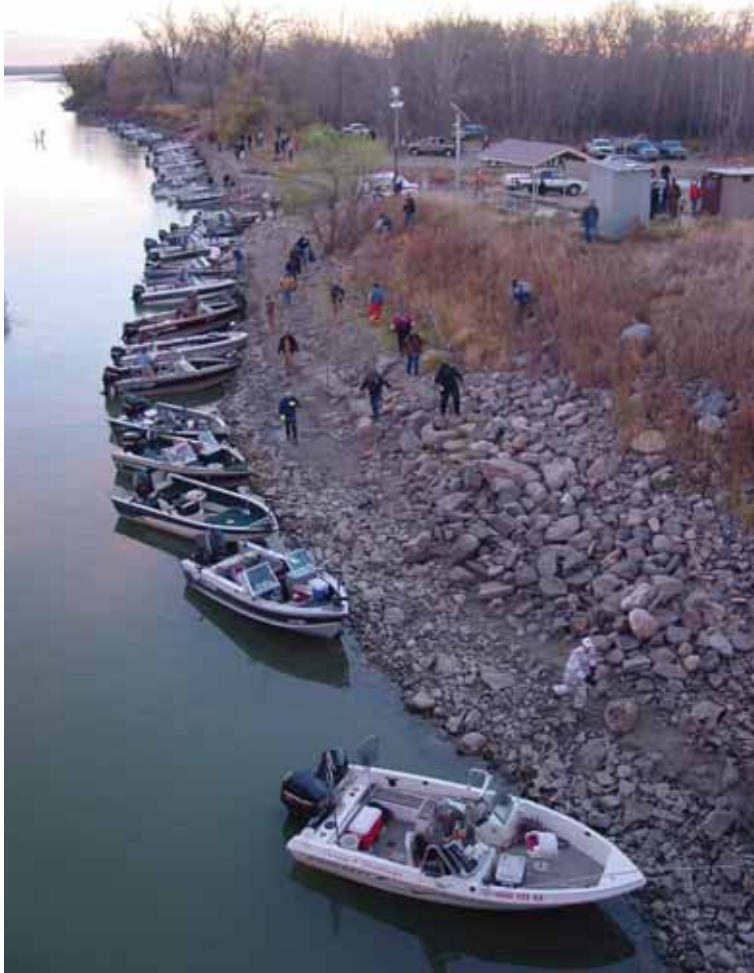
A list of participating processors and more information is available on the Community Action website at capnd.org.

Staff Notes

John Mazur of Pingree has been hired as the Department's hunter education coordinator. Mazur has a parks and recreation management degree from Slippery Rock University, Pennsylvania, with a master's in business administration from the University of Mary, Bismarck. Mazur has experience as a private land biologist at Chase Lake Wetland Management District with Ducks Unlimited. He is currently an officer with the North Dakota National Guard.



John Mazur



FRED RYCKMAN

Fishing Tournaments Require 30-Day Notice

Organizers planning fishing tournaments, including ice fishing contests this winter, are reminded to submit an application to the North Dakota Game and Fish Department at least 30 days prior to the start of the event.

The 30-day advance notice allows for review by agency staff to ensure the proposed tournament will not have negative consequences or conflicts with other proposed tournaments for the same location and/or time.

Tournaments may not occur without first obtaining a valid permit from the Department.

In addition, the number of open-water tournaments on lakes Sakakawea and Oahe, the Missouri River and Devils Lake are capped each year, depending upon the time of the year and location. Tournament sponsors for these waters must submit their application prior to January 1 to ensure full consideration.

NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH ONLINE

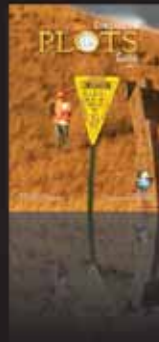
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back cast

By Ron Wilson



It's difficult to say if we're at the beginning of a new era of deer hunting in North Dakota. Two years of 1980s-like license number totals is too small of a sample size to say this is how it's going to be from here on out.

For our hunting party, a small, five-guy assemblage ranging in age from 19 to seventysomething, things couldn't be more different. Our future, beginning November 8 at noon and ending when our doe tags are hopefully filled, is uncertain.

We've hunted together in the same unit in eastern North Dakota in the Sheyenne River Valley for more than a decade. It's a big unit, with a lot of no hunting signs. We mostly wander the eastern third of the unit, hunt on public land and a few private acres that aren't marked with posters taped to five-gallon buckets or stapled to fence posts.

This year, for the first time in many, we won't be going to deer camp. Camp was sold in spring, and an auction featuring everything from a garden tractor, to waterfowl decoys, to a mounted wild boar's head, was held before the first day of summer in a hard rain.

Forced indoors at one point, auction-goers struggled at times to decode the auctioneer's rapid-fire bid-calling from rain drumming on a metal roof. A flatbed lined with shovels, power tools, chain-saw and empty coffee cans filled with nuts, bolts and other hardware sold to people with soft-shell tacos in one hand and bid numbers in the other.

The 150 or so acres of CRP that was for years the camp's dominant feature was plowed and planted by auction time by the new

owner. I wondered aloud what would follow in the place of waist-high grass, and someone nearby with a practiced eye for what was already sprouting, said beans.

It will be strange to drive by camp this season and not see the CRP, and odder yet not to be able to turn into the short driveway without permission. And if someone is sitting in the deer stand built atop four old telephone poles behind camp, we'll wonder who in the heck is in it and if they've spotted any deer.

2012 was our last season in deer camp, but we didn't know it at the time. Freezing rain, snow and high winds knocked out power to camp and there was some discussion by flashlight about spending a cold night without heat. The outage lasted about an hour, which was much shorter-lived than anticipated. Years earlier, another storm robbed us of power for a day or longer, but we borrowed a generator from a friend in the area and life in camp barely skipped a beat.

This season we're staying in a small motel in a town of fewer than 1,000 residents. I've never been inside, but the woman on the phone when I made reservations said rooms include a microwave, small refrigerator and a television. A restaurant within walking distance serves a hunter's breakfast beginning well before sunrise.

After more than a decade of staying in a camper, hanging wet hunting clothes from cupboard doors and sleeping to the low hum of an electric space heater, we'll be able to shower at day's end and maybe catch a ballgame on TV when it gets dark.

It won't be deer camp, but maybe we'll get used to it.

RON WILSON is editor of
North Dakota OUTDOORS.



GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT PHOTO

A Look Back

By Ron Wilson

In the early 1960s, North Dakota Game and Fish Department big game biologists gathered in the Killdeer Mountains in the western part of the state to gather biological information on deer harvested by hunters.

Back then, the bonus of having Department personnel drop in on a hunter after he shot his deer was cracking back while biologists weighed, then field-dressed the animal. After the animal was cleaned, measurements were taken, teeth were examined to determine age, the deer was weighed once again, sometimes in the field or in an area landowner's barn.

"Through this unusual approach, the Department will secure valuable weight and measurement data that will aid in better management of deer resources in North Dakota," according to an article in the November 1964 *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.

The year this photo was taken in the Killdeer Mountains was 1963.

The photo cutline read: "The game is weighed again to determine normal weight loss of animals in each age and sex group during the field dressing process. These cooperating hunters from New Town, New Rockford, Minto and Cavalier are happy with the arrangement. They are (from left to right) Bud Pudill, Eggert Einarson, James Walski and Harvey Nordin."

The buck was shot by Walski and it weighed 242 pounds.

In 1963 the deer gun season in North Dakota was just 9 ½ days long, which is short by today's 16 ½-day standard. Even so, it beats what hunters were afforded just a decade earlier in 1953, which was no season at all.

Back in the day, when deer weren't as plentiful across the North Dakota landscape, having a closed season wasn't that unusual. From 1931 to 1953, deer season in North Dakota was closed 10 times, and in those years when the season was

open, hunters had less than a week to harvest their animal.

In 1963, total licenses made available to hunters statewide was 30,039, but not everyone made it into the field. The hunter total that year was 29,753.

Hunter success in 1963 was about 41 percent. By comparison, the Department's current hunter harvest goal is about 70 percent. Some years it's lower, some years it's higher. For a number of years in the 2000s, hunter success statewide exceeded 70 percent.

Also in 1963, the total harvest was 12,537 deer. Nearly 10,000 of those were whitetails and the remainder mule deer.

And for certain, at least according to this dated black and white photograph, at least one group of hunters didn't have to get their hands messy field-dressing their deer.

RON WILSON is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.