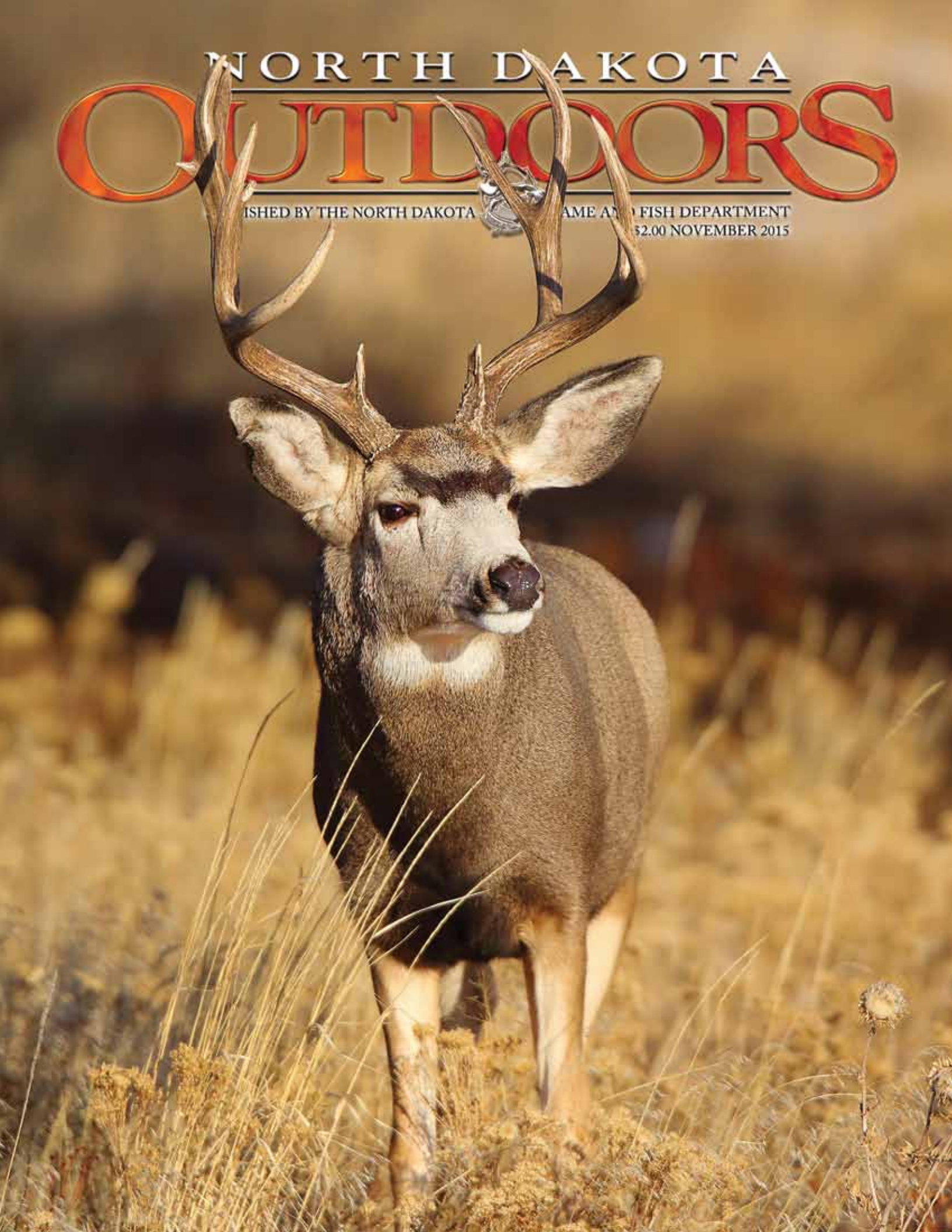


NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS

PUBLISHED BY THE NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT
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MATTERS OF OPINION



Terry Steinwand
Director

While the November issue of *North Dakota OUTDOORS* isn't billed as a deer hunting issue, you sort of get the feeling that it could be.

From the front cover to the back cover there are photographs and articles that touch on seasons past, present and in the future.

Deer hunting in North Dakota is a big deal. It's been that way for years. And based on our strong hunting heritage, it will stay that way for years to come.

At the Game and Fish Department – as biologists, wildlife managers and hunters – we understand the passion associated with hunting both mule and white-tailed deer. We appreciate the annual union of hunting parties made up of family and friends because many of us are part of it.

As you'll read in this issue, we're getting closer to finalizing the Game and Fish Department's five-year deer management plan. This is our third plan, the first coming in 2005.

Considering landowner tolerance, hunter expectations, changes to wildlife habitat across the state's landscape, and other factors, we're proposing a plan that will support issuing 75,000 deer licenses.

To get further understanding of the plan and where we hope to head, read the article within this issue. But first, let me say this. A big player in our aim to increase the statewide deer population is our unpredictable winter weather.

A difficult winter can make it tough on North Dakota's wildlife, especially on a landscape that has lost acres and acres of cover animals need to survive the snow and cold.

Hopefully, Mother Nature will smile on our neck of the Northern Plains this winter and present both animals and humans tolerable conditions.

A mostly open winter would certainly be welcomed by North Dakota's enthusiastic and growing ice fishing community. Last winter anglers were afforded good access to many of the state's waters, which resulted in a record number of people drilling holes and chasing yellow perch, walleye and northern pike.

We are living in a time in North Dakota when fishing opportunities in many parts of the state are pretty darn good.

While many ice anglers will have their ears to the frozen ground waiting to hear about the next hot yellow perch bite, and there will likely be one, somewhere, we encourage people to take advantage of our incredible northern pike population.

With northern pike found in about 200 waters scattered across the state, people don't have to venture far from home for some good fishing opportunities.

Whether you're hunting deer this month or ice fishing when the conditions allow, remember to respect the resource and others while enjoying North Dakota's great outdoors.

Terry Steinwand

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Governor Jack Dalrymple

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NORTH DAKOTA OUTDOORS

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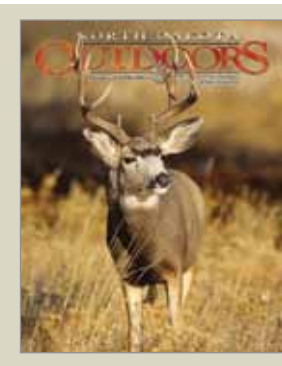
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Front Cover

A mature mule deer buck in North Dakota's badlands.
(Photo by Kelly Krabbenhoft, West Fargo.)



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In 11 of the last 15 years, more than 100,000 deer gun licenses were made available to hunters. With a changing landscape across North Dakota, those days are likely behind us.

CRAIG BIRKLE

MANAGING DEER HUNTER EXPECTATIONS

By Ron Wilson

FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 2005, the year wildlife officials initiated the Game and Fish Department's first five-year deer management plan, the aim is to increase the statewide deer population, not reduce it.

Jeb Williams, Department wildlife division

chief, said that every five years the Game and Fish Department develops deer population goals for each of the state's 38 hunting units. A number of tools are used in this process, including harvest results and winter deer surveys, plus input from landowners, hunters and others.



In an effort to start rebuilding the state's deer population, Game and Fish has significantly reduced whitetail doe licenses, and has not issued any mule deer doe licenses for several years.

CRAIG BIRRE

Licenses Over Time

What follows is a look at North Dakota deer gun licenses made available to hunters over the last three-plus decades:

- 1978 – 41,620
- 1979 – 43,198
- 1980 – 43,484
- 1981 – 49,058
- 1982 – 55,542
- 1983 – 57,550
- 1984 – 62,175
- 1985 – 70,625
- 1986 – 88,935
- 1987 – 84,860
- 1988 – 64,125
- 1989 – 72,750
- 1990 – 66,475
- 1991 – 70,525
- 1992 – 78,875
- 1993 – 88,300
- 1994 – 86,125
- 1995 – 92,025
- 1996 – 93,900
- 1997 – 92,650
- 1998 – 82,125
- 1999 – 86,475
- 2000 – 88,350
- 2001 – 106,350
- 2002 – 116,925
- 2003 – 123,475
- 2004 – 145,250
- 2005 – 145,600
- 2006 – 143,500
- 2007 – 148,550
- 2008 – 149,400
- 2009 – 144,400
- 2010 – 116,775
- 2011 – 109,950
- 2012 – 65,300
- 2013 – 59,500
- 2014 – 48,000
- 2015 – 43,275

LARA ANDERSON

The plan is reevaluated every five years because changes in the landscape, deer populations, deer hunter expectations and landowner tolerance levels go up and down.

During the other two five-year cycles, when the Department made available more than 100,000 deer gun licenses, the management objective was to decrease deer numbers statewide.

“Looking back at North Dakota’s long deer hunting history, allocating more than 100,000 licenses to hunters, which we did from 2001 through 2011, is the exception, not the rule,” Williams said. “We went through a time when all the stars aligned and we had good habitat on the landscape and had several good winters, which proved to be a great recipe for building the state’s deer herd.

“That was fun to see that many deer on the landscape, and from a hunter’s perspective it’s not hard to see why they’d like to see it like that forever,” he added. “But that was unusual and probably won’t be repeated to that degree again, at least not in our deer hunting lifetime.”

While the Department’s new five-year deer management plan isn’t finalized, Game and Fish officials are proposing a plan that will support issuing 75,000 deer licenses.

Based on the amount of wildlife habitat on the landscape and the uncertainties of North Dakota’s winter weather, Williams said 75,000 licenses is a realistic expectation.

Considering that the Department made available 43,275 deer gun licenses this year, getting there won’t happen overnight.

“The challenge in that is knowing that 75,000 licenses is not going to meet hunter expectations, but this is what we think is reasonable for a five-year plan and what the landscape can hold,” he said. “If something would happen, like the weather cooperating this winter and

next, and we start hitting our deer unit goals, we would continue to try to move that bar up.”

To get there, Williams said the Department will be conservative with the number of deer gun licenses to build the deer herd in certain parts of the state.

“The recovery mode for building deer numbers will be a much slower process than in years past,” he said. “But if we get a string of mild winters, we have the room out there to increase those numbers in certain areas.”

The number of deer gun licenses the Game and Fish Department made available this fall is the lowest total since 1978.

“The last couple of years, the majority of the license cuts have been in the eastern part of the state because of some tough winters and the habitat conditions have changed,” Williams said. “Deer haven’t been as plentiful in that part of the state and we know this by harvest and a number of vocal locals. We know that the deer population is lower than in the past.”

In southwestern North Dakota, deer numbers continue to build, but Williams said a conservative management plan is needed in that part of the state as well.

“We have disease challenges down there with EHD (epizootic hemorrhagic disease) and CWD (chronic wasting disease),” he said. “Our plan is to manage that population at a lower level so we don’t increase the chance of disease in that area. We don’t want to build that population so that EHD rears its head and kills a bunch of deer.”

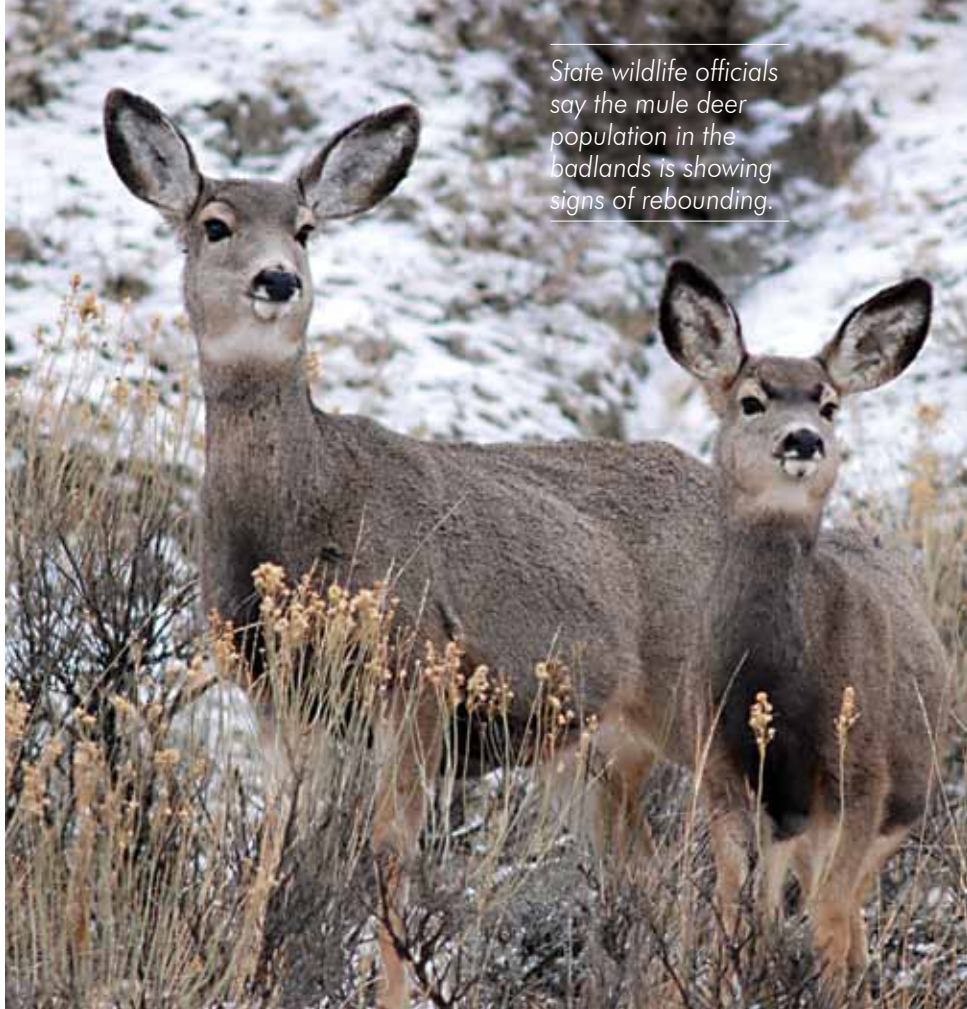
Following some years of poor adult survival and fawn production, Williams said mule deer in the badlands are making some good strides. This fall, for the fourth season in a row, no antlerless mule deer licenses were issued in eight badlands hunting units.

“We are getting to the point, especially south of Interstate 94, that hunters will see mule deer doe hunting opportunities soon if the population continues to build,” Williams said. “The Department gave some consideration to issuing mule deer doe licenses this year, but decided to stay on the conservative side.”

Expectations for this fall’s deer season are reasonable across the state, Williams said, for putting some venison in the freezer.

“While everyone would like to see more deer on the landscape, there is something to be said for a quality experience,” he said. “For those who drew a license, it is a quality experience because there aren’t as many people in the field, and land access is better because you don’t have 10 hunters knocking on the same door asking to hunt. All of this adds to the quality of the hunting experience.”

RON WILSON is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*



State wildlife officials say the mule deer population in the badlands is showing signs of rebounding.

MIKE ANDERSON



Considering the interest of hunters wanting to hunt in western North Dakota, drawing a mule deer buck license no matter the year is difficult.

LARA ANDERSON

FOLLOWING A *Record*



Myles Eback, 11, Bismarck, with an 18-pound, 4-ounce northern pike caught in Lake Oahe's Beaver Bay last winter. Myles caught four big ones that day, the biggest weighing 19 pounds, 6 ounces. He released them all.

JUSTEN BARSTAD

Dear

By Ron Wilson

It's only a guess what winter will bring, but if North Dakota's ice anglers have any say in it, they'll likely order a little more of the same.

"We've had three winters in a row where access to North Dakota's lakes was, for the most part, pretty good," said Greg Power, North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries chief.

Because some of the 40-plus new walleye lakes in the state don't have boat ramps, most of the fishing pressure occurs during the ice fishing season.



While yellow perch garner little interest during the open water months, they become a crowd favorite once area lakes freeze and provide safe access.



GREG GULLICKSON

Even though North Dakota harbors a record number of waters, never-seen-before northern pike populations in about 200 of those lakes, and scattered walleye populations that don't see fishing pressure during open water months, if anglers can't access the ice, these proclamations mean little.

"We know from history that during an open winter, one-fourth of the annual fishing pressure will occur during the ice fishing season," Power said. "During winters when it is much more difficult to access the ice, that effort can be as low as 5-8 percent."

Last winter, 69,000 residents and 32,000 nonresidents went ice fishing in North Dakota. Also, 47 percent of all people who fished during the year ice fished at least once.

"That's the highest participation on record," Power said.

Along those same lines, darkhouse spearfishing numbers from last winter were all record highs. For example, participants, about 2,600 of them, logged more than 14,000 days of spearing. While they speared about 23,000 pike, it's important to note that number equates to just a small portion of the overall pike harvest by North Dakota anglers.

Darkhouse spearfishing opened in the state in 2001. Department officials opened

Many of North Dakota's waters continue to hold record numbers of northern pike.

CRAIG BIRHLE

the new season with some caution, allowing participants to spear on about 30 lakes.

“Today, now there are about 200-plus pike lakes open to spearing across the state,” Power said. “With a record number of pike lakes, record numbers of fish and good winter access of late, interest in spearing keeps growing.”

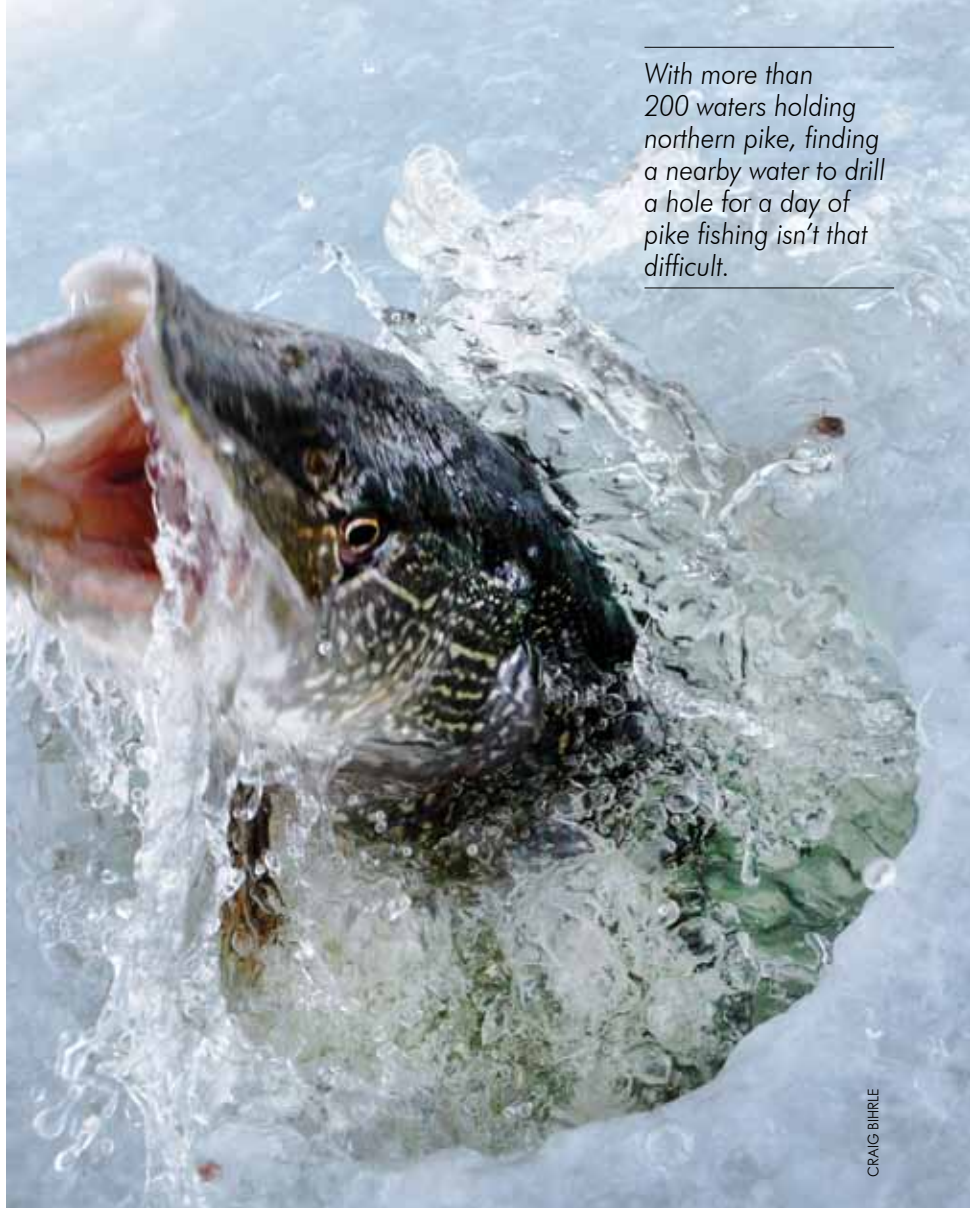
While some lakes south of Interstate 94 lost some water during the summer, Power said the drop in water levels shouldn't influence fishing. Elsewhere, he said waters are in good to great shape.

“Pike numbers are still good, yellow perch lakes are fewer in number than a few years ago, and certainly fewer than the early 2000s, but there will still be new hot perch bites somewhere,” he said. “The new kids on the block are the lakes that feature some good walleye fishing opportunities. There are more than 40 new, high-quality walleye fisheries out there, scattered, but especially through central North Dakota.”

To forecast which walleye water will feature the hot bite this winter is impossible. Considering how fast word spreads in the ice fishing community, it won't be a secret for long.

“These new walleye lakes are attractive,” Power said. “Many hold fish up to 20 inches and better and fish in decent numbers.”

RON WILSON is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.



With more than 200 waters holding northern pike, finding a nearby water to drill a hole for a day of pike fishing isn't that difficult.

CRAIG BIRBLE

Winter Creel Survey

Results are in on a creel survey conducted by the State Game and Fish Department last winter in south central North Dakota.

Instead of a lake-specific survey, Department survey clerks followed the hot bite on 14 lakes, primarily in Logan, McIntosh and northern Kidder County to capitalize on encounters with as many anglers as possible.

“What we were trying to get at, mostly, were angler preferences in the number, species and size of fish harvested by resident and nonresident anglers,” said Scott Gangl, Game and Fish Department fisheries management section leader. “For that purpose, the survey worked well.”

Some of the survey results include:

- Nearly 640 anglers were surveyed from early January 2015 to ice off.
- Two-thirds of the anglers encountered were residents.
- Resident anglers caught and harvested walleye faster than nonresidents, and released a larger percentage of the fish they caught. At the end of the day, both nonresident and resident anglers kept about the same number of fish.
- Nonresident anglers caught and harvested yellow perch faster than residents. Nonresidents also harvested and released about three times more perch than residents.

“While nonresidents caught and harvested yellow perch about three times faster than residents, that simply tells us that nonresidents were keying in on, targeting, this species of fish,” Gangl said. “On most lakes, nonresident and resident anglers harvested similar sizes of yellow perch. Both were equally likely to harvest a perch if they caught one.”

Gangl said Game and Fish Department officials are not going to change or set fishing regulations based on the results of the survey alone.

“But when we combine the survey results to netting data and logical information, it helps guide our decision-making process down the road,” he said.

Lake Alice Open to Ice Fishing

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced earlier this fall that Lake Alice will be open to ice fishing this winter once conditions permit.

The lake, which is part of Lake Alice National Wildlife Refuge, covers about 11,000 acres and is connected to Devils Lake and Lake Irvine.

Greg Power, North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries chief, said Lake Alice will provide additional ice fishing opportunities in a region full of them.

“The USFWS should be applauded for these efforts to expand recreational activity,” he said.

The announcement by the USFWS also expanded or maintained fishing opportunities at three easement refuges – Lake Ardoch, Rose Lake and Silver Lake – in the Devils Lake Wetland Management District.

It should be noted that commercial fish guiding services are not permitted on any of the refuge waters.

For more information, see the following:

- **Lake Ardoch National Wildlife Refuge** – Open to shore-fishing and ice fishing on designated areas of the refuge in accordance with state regulations. Vehicles and ice houses allowed. Vehicle use restricted to nonvegetated ice areas and designated roads.
- **Lake Alice NWR** – Open to ice fishing on designated areas of the refuge in accordance with state regulations from 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. Vehicles and ice houses allowed. Vehicle use restricted to nonvegetated ice areas and designated roads. Ice fishing shelters and personal property must be removed from the refuge each day by 10 p.m. Unattended fish houses prohibited in uplands or parking areas.
- **Rose Lake NWR** – Allows fishing on designated areas of the refuge in accordance to state regulations. Vehicles and ice houses allowed. Vehicle use restricted to nonvegetated ice areas and designated roads. Boats allowed south of Nelson County Road 23. Shore anglers required to park vehicles in the designated parking lot.
- **Silver Lake NWR** – Allows fishing on designated areas of the refuge in accordance to state regulations. Vehicles and ice houses allowed. Vehicle use restricted to nonvegetated ice areas and designated roads. Boats allowed south of the confluence of Mauvais Coulee and Little Coulee from May 1 through September 30. Water activities (e.g., sailing, skiing, tubing, etc.) not related to fishing prohibited.



Keeping it Legal

When the ice fishing season heats up in North Dakota, phone calls at the Game and Fish Department concerning what can and can't be used to catch fish increase.

"With the popularity of ice fishing growing, manufacturers throughout the world are making more stuff to sell to anglers," said Greg Power, North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries chief. "And, considering that we get a lot of nonresident anglers, there is some confusion as fishing regulations vary from state to state."

According to the 2014-16 North Dakota Fishing Guide, "It's illegal to fish with any spring, lever, chemically, electrically, or mechanically actuated hook at any time. The use of any mechanical device to automatically retrieve the fish is also illegal."

Power said anglers need to understand that contraptions

that set the hook for the angler are legal, but any device that reels in the fish is not.

"The angler has to reel in his or her own fish," he said.

Power said some states allow lights in the water and some don't. North Dakota is one of the latter.

Again, according to the 2014-16 North Dakota Fishing Guide, it is illegal to introduce anything into the water for the purpose of attracting fish that is not attached or applied to a lure. Decoys used for darkhouse spearfishing are excluded.

"Fishing with a lantern as background light is OK, but you can't put, say, a light stick or any other kind of light in the hole to attract fish," he said. "Other than a decoy for darkhouse spearfishing or fishing bait, you can't put anything else in the hole."

Word of the latest hot yellow perch bite spreads quickly through the ice fishing ranks.



ANS EDUCATION, PREVENTION EFFORTS



ONGOING



Game and Fish Department fisheries personnel searched the Red River north and south of Grand Forks in October and had little difficulty finding zebra mussels on submerged rocks.



Zebra Mussels Found in Red River

By Greg Freeman

It's been more than two decades since the North Dakota Game and Fish Department launched a communications effort about the dangers of aquatic nuisance species and the stranglehold the exotics could have on state waters once established.

Greg Power, Game and Fish Department fisheries chief, said in the early 1990s, anglers were reminded it was illegal to dump bait buckets into a local fishery. A decade later, the Department began far more formal ANS monitoring, public education and control efforts.

"The Department, with input from members of the Aquatic Invasive Species Committee, created a list of North Dakota aquatic nuisance species," Power said. "This list was compiled in large part based upon the conclusions of a risk assessment report on the potential for introduction and establishment of ANS in North Dakota."

In 2005, the Department's newly drafted statewide ANS management plan was approved and implemented.

In 2008, Game and Fish implemented its first laws, and since then some laws were tweaked and others were added.

Law enforcement check stations have shown that most anglers, boaters and hunters grasp these rules and keep boats and equipment free of unwanted species.

CRAIG BIRBLE



JOSH KNUISON

Signs along the Red River alert water users to the precautions they must follow in the effort to not further spread zebra mussels to other waters.

Robert Timian, Department enforcement chief, said early October check stations on Interstate 94 and U.S. Highway 2 revealed the majority of hunters and anglers kept their equipment free of unwanted species. Wardens not only examined boats, but thoroughly dissected hunting and fishing gear.

“Our main focus was directed toward duck hunters trailering boats,” Timian said. “All total, there were less than a handful of individuals with minor violations.”

Timian said check points late in the year serve as a good educational reminder that not only do you have to abide by ANS rules during peak fishing and boating months, but later in the year as well.

“You are just as likely to move ANS in September and October as you are in April and May,” Timian said.

With that in mind, waterfowl hunters must remove plants and plant fragments from decoys, strings and anchors; remove plants seeds and plant fragments from waders and other equipment before leaving hunting areas; remove all water from decoys, boats, motors, trailers and other watercraft; and remove all aquatic plants from boats and trailers before leaving a marsh or lake.

In addition, individuals and local entities performing winter preparation duties should thoroughly check for new ANS infestations when pulling and storing fishing piers, boat docks and lifts prior to ice up. Fred Ryckman, Game and Fish Department ANS coordinator, said zebra mussels attach to hard surfaces, especially the undersides or other areas not exposed to direct sunlight.

Three adult zebra mussels were found in late September on Sorlie Bridge in Grand Forks by staff from the U.S. Geological Survey. Ryckman said the three adults were attached to an aluminum pipe approximately 3 feet below the surface of the water.

Since then, fisheries personnel have found many adult zebra mussels in the northern portion of the Red River, specifically in the Drayton/Oslo and northern Grand Forks reaches.

“Our staff found adults without much difficulty,” Ryckman said. “All they had to do was simply overturn rocks that were slightly inundated, especially in the rock shoals farthest from shore.”

Game and Fish implemented two new emergency rules because of this year’s findings along the Red River, each designed to prevent the spread of zebra mussels outside the river.

The emergency rules are as follows:

Anglers may no longer transport live bait in water away from the Red River. That means all water must be drained from bait buckets as anglers leave the shore, or remove their boat from the water. Anglers must properly dispose of unused bait away from the river, as dumping bait in the water or on shore is illegal. In the rest of the state, anglers can transport live bait in water in containers of 5 gallons or less in volume.

All boats and other watercraft must have their plugs pulled when exiting the river, and plugs must remain pulled when the watercraft leaves the access area. In addition, all boats entering North Dakota must have their plugs pulled. This rule would also apply on any other waters where Class I ANS, including zebra mussels, are discovered in the future.

These new regulations are in addition to other statewide aquatic nuisance species rules that are already in place. They include:

- Water must be drained from watercraft, including from livewells and bilges, prior to leaving a water body.
- Bait buckets and/or any container of 5 gallons or less in volume can be used to transport legal live baitfish or other bait in water.
- Fish species other than minnows in containers of 5 gallons or less in volume may not be held in water and/or transported in bait buckets/containers when away from a water body.
- No aquatic vegetation, or parts thereof, shall be in or on watercraft, motors, trailers and recreational equipment when out of water.
- All water must be drained from all watercraft and recreational, commercial, and construction equipment bilges and confined spaces, livewells and baitwells, when out of water or upon entering the state.

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



JOSH KNUTSON

After discovery of a single adult zebra mussel in the Red River at Fargo in July, a crew from Valley City State University searched other areas of the Red for further evidence of how far the exotics have spread.

TO PROTECT OUR WATERS FROM ZEBRA MUSSELS AND OTHER ANS:

- *Inspect boat, motor, trailer and other equipment.*
- *Thoroughly drain livewells, baitwells, bilges and all other water.*
- *Remove plants and ANS.*
- *Obey bait rules – state law prohibits transporting live aquatic bait across state lines.*

NORTHERN PRAIRIE MARKS 50 YEARS OF RESEARCH

By Josh Knutson



For the past 50 years the Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center near Jamestown has played a major role in gathering impartial, objective, science based information on land use, wetland habitats, climate change and the needs of native species in North Dakota.

This year NPWRC is celebrating its 50th Anniversary by remembering the great programs of the past, as well as concentrating on the center's work today and into the future.

Initially developed to help the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service gather data on the life cycle requirements of wetland birds and their habitats, since opening its doors in 1965, NPWRC scientists have conducted research on a variety of ecological areas in the state.

Perhaps the most well-known NPWRC effort is its role in restoring the giant Canada goose from the brink of extinction. Wildlife biologist Forest B. Lee was the driving force behind that notable project, which began in the early 1970s.

At the Riverside Building at NPWRC, Lee began to select breeding pairs and reintroduce geese and goslings back into national wildlife refuges in North Dakota. Lee and his team's efforts were eventually successful in bringing giant Canada goose numbers back to healthy standards.

Their plan was to release at least 3,400 birds by 1976, and by the 1980s North Dakota had more than 6,000 giant Canadas. Today, North Dakota's giant Canada population is estimated at more than 300,000 breeding birds.

Another major project from the early days of the center that still is relevant today is the Cottonwood Lake study area. The area is 40 miles northwest of Jamestown, and to this day is one of the most studied wetland areas in the United States.

The Cottonwood Lake study started back in the 1960s and has produced a significant amount of information concerning hydrological fluctuations over time. Hundreds of papers have been written about the area since the start of the project, providing beneficial information for scientists nationwide.

In 1987, the center developed the "4 Square Mile Plot" design for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service survey. The survey

design was a culmination of waterfowl surveys that had taken place in North Dakota, and created a basic understanding of how waterfowl use land. The initial design was created for North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota, but is now used over the Upper Midwest. These surveys are done annually every May.

"The foundational waterfowl and wetlands work that was being done at the center helped a lot with our basic understanding of breeding waterfowl habitats," said Mike Szymanski, migratory game bird supervisor for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, "The 4 Square Mile Survey provided science for identifying important habitats and the importance of small wetlands – how they function, their dynamics, and how they impact duck abundance came out of that model."

Director Robert Gleason has been with NPWRC for the past 18 years and has seen firsthand how it has grown. During that time, the center partnered with the U.S. Geological Survey to make available a greater variety of work, specialties and research.

"Our role essentially broadened" Gleason said. "We evolved, especially through our partnerships with other science centers. There was a great body of resources, like hydrologists and geologists, through the USGS that were now available to us."

Mark Sherfy, deputy director of NPWRC, is in charge of center operations, the facilities team, and science processes. He has also seen growth since his start there. "We were born as a center focused on wetlands and waterfowl, but it has led us into diversifying our entire staff," he said.

Woodworth Station and study area has been an outpost for wetland and waterfowl research since the mid-1960s.





NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT ARCHIVE PHOTO

Shortly after the Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center started operations, Forrest Lee came on board to lead the effort to restore giant Canada goose populations.

Today NPWRC has approximately 50 permanent employees, about 20 of whom are scientists devoted to many different areas of research such as climate change, land management, wildlife productivity and more. One of the main research program goals is providing information for land management decisions by the U.S. Department of the Interior, which includes the USGS and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as other organizations.

The information includes data about land use and land changes that may affect natural resources. For instance, one recent effort is investigating how conversion of Conservation Reserve Program acres and native grasslands is affecting the health of pollinators such as honey bees. Honey bees are a big focus in North Dakota right now because of their economic importance, and the center's primary partner in the pollinator study is the North Dakota Department of Agriculture.

Looking at how residents use land is becoming even more important, and the Department of Agriculture and other states throughout the country can

use the information gathered in North Dakota to improve pollinator health and productivity.

Partnerships with other organizations are a common theme in the day to day operations of NPWRC. "We're all about providing information and tools to help others make informed management choices," Sherfy said.

The 2005 Missouri River Project is an example of one of these partnerships. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers manages several dams in North Dakota, such as the well known Garrison Dam on the Missouri River, and others such as Ashtabula, Pipestem and Bowman-Haley.

In 2005, NPWRC scientists began monitoring two shorebird species that nest on sandbars and shorelines along the Missouri River. The piping plover and least tern were monitored for 10 years for productivity and movement patterns and how those related to changing water levels. During the 2011 Missouri River flood, center researchers were in prime position to study the long-term effects, and are writing a report on their findings.

Other active studies include general studies of climate change and how greenhouse gas levels are affected by land use and change.

Center scientists also continue to study population dynamics of wetland birds that use alkali wetlands and Lake Sakakawea and Missouri River shorelines, sandbars and islands. These three areas are studied on a landscape scale. The study is designed to show how species and resources react and adapt to climate and landscape change.

Nearly 80 seasonal and temporary workers call NPWRC home every year. Many of those seasonal workers are college students from around the region doing graduate studies alongside full-time employees at the center. Graduate students from North Dakota State University, University of North Dakota, Valley City State University, University of Minnesota, and South Dakota State University are responsible for roughly a dozen research projects that have involved work with NPWRC.

The prairie is an ever-changing landscape that offers countless opportunities for research, and Northern Prairie has been a part of many past and current projects that have had regional and even international implications.

"Every year is different. It is impossible to know what kind of changes are coming," Gleason said, "but the center is in a great position to be able to evaluate resources and the impacts of future changes."

JOSH KNUTSON is a communications major at the University of Jamestown who is interning with the Game and Fish Department during the fall 2015 semester.

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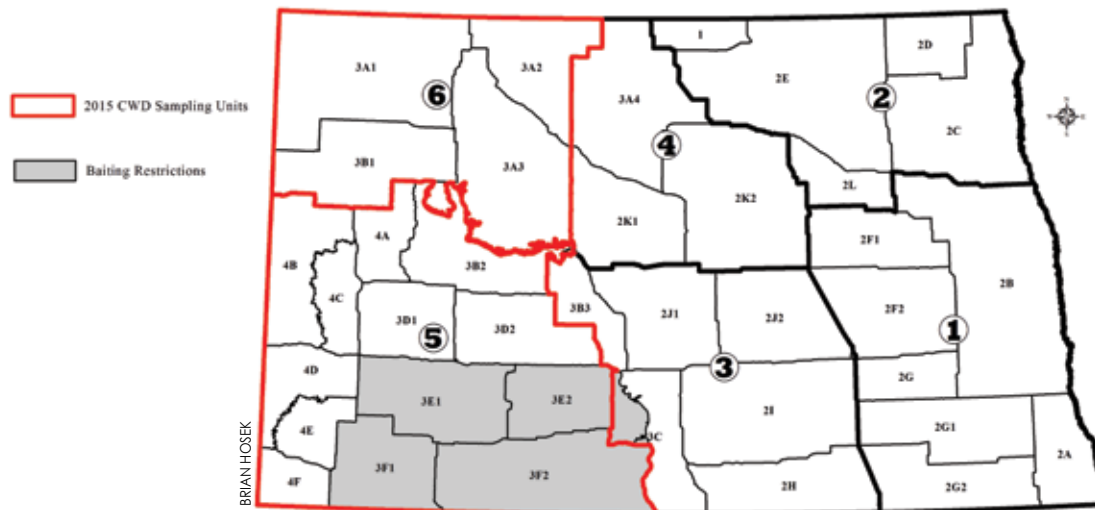
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BUFFALOBERRY PATCH

By Greg Freeman, Department News Editor

CWD SURVEILLANCE UNITS FOR DEER IN NORTH DAKOTA



CWD Surveillance Ongoing

The State Game and Fish Department will continue its Hunter-Harvested Surveillance program during the 2015 hunting season, by sampling deer for chronic wasting disease and bovine tuberculosis from 17 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 western portion of the state will be tested from units 3A1, 3A2, 3A3, 3B1, 3B2, 3D1, 3D2, 3E1, 3E2, 3F1, 3F2, 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D, 4E and 4F.

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 are encouraged to drop off deer heads at the following locations:

- Belfield – Superpumper
- Bismarck – Game and Fish Department headquarters, West Dakota Meats, Call of the Wild Taxidermy
- Bowman – Frontier Travel Center
- Crosby – Crosby Water Plant
- Dickinson – Game and Fish district office
- Dunn Center – Lake Ilo National Wildlife Refuge
- Elgin – Gunny’s Bait and Tackle, Melvin’s Taxidermy
- Glen Ullin – Kuntz’s Butcher Shop

- Hazen – Hazen Meats
- Hettinger – Dakota Packing
- Kenmare – Des Lacs NWR, Lostwood NWR, Kenmare Meat Processing
- Mandan – Butcher Block Meats
- Minot – Johnson Taxidermy
- Mohall – Engebretson Processing
- New Leipzig – Hertz Hardware
- Parshall – Myers Custom Meats
- Riverdale – Game and Fish district office
- Roseglen – Giffey Taxidermy
- Scranton – Wolf’s Processing
- Stanley – Farmer’s Union
- Washburn – Enerbase
- Williston – Game and Fish district office, Mertin Kirschbaum, Scenic Sports, Bickler Taxidermy
- Wilton – Cenex.

Moose and elk heads should be taken to a Game and Fish office.

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.



DONATE DEER TO SAH

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department encourages deer hunters to consider the Sportsmen Against Hunger program this fall.

While this year’s deer proclamation allows only one deer gun license per hunter, families with more than one license might want to consider donating a deer to this worthy cause. In addition, hunters with an archery or muzzleloader license can help as well.

The list of participating processors is available on the Game and Fish Department website at gf.nd.gov, and at the North Dakota Community Action Partnership website, capnd.org.

Sportsmen Against Hunger is a charitable program that raises money for processing of donated goose and deer meat, and coordinates distribution of donated meat to food pantries in North Dakota. It is administered by NDCAP, a nonprofit agency that serves low-income families across the state.

For more information, visit the NDCAP website, or contact program coordinator Sarah Hasbargen at 701-232-2452.



JOSH KNUFSON

Sabrina Boit, North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries seasonal, helps with fall fish survey work on Hobart Lake North in Barnes County.

Fall Fish Surveys Completed

North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries biologists have evaluated fish spawning and stocking success across the state.

Scott Gangl, Department fisheries management section leader, said Lake Sakakawea produced good catches of walleye and yearling perch.

“We had a good hatch on perch in 2014, and our guys were still seeing a lot of those in the nets this year,” Gangl said. “Our walleye catch was above average with a combination of stocking and natural reproduction. Smelt numbers aren’t compiled yet, but other forage fish remain fairly stable when compared to prior years.”

The Missouri River is beginning to show slow signs of recovery, Gangl said, as more adult game fish are showing up between Garrison Dam and Bismarck.

“But reproduction is still poor, and we didn’t see much for young-of-the-year fish this fall,” he added. “The habitat is starting to rebuild, but it still lacks the productive capacity necessary for fish to reproduce and survive.”

Lake Oahe smelt numbers, according to Gangl, remain very low.

“White bass, walleye and crappie numbers were fair for young-of-the-year fish, but down from a good year in 2014,” he said.

The Devils Lake basin reported lower numbers of young-of-the-year walleye, but white bass were plentiful.

“Last winter was relatively dry, and generally our best reproductive years coincide with good water levels and inflows,” Gangl said.

Statewide, smaller lakes showed various levels of success.

“On many of the newer lakes where fish are introduced for the first time, our catches were generally good,” Gangl said. “However, in other lakes where we have strong populations of fish, our catches tended to be lower than average, which is not unusual when there already is an established population.”

WINTER FISHING REGULATIONS

Anglers are encouraged to refer to the 2014-16 North Dakota Fishing Guide or the Game and Fish Department’s website at gf.nd.gov for winter fishing regulations.

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.
- 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.
- 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.



CRAIG BIRBLE

Advisory Board Meetings Announced

Outdoor enthusiasts are invited to attend a North Dakota Game and Fish Department fall 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 5 – COUNTIES: CASS, RANSOM, RICHLAND, SARGENT, STEELE AND TRAILL

Date: November 23 – 7 p.m.
Location: Hughes Shelter, Wahpeton
Host: Red River Area Sportsmen's Club
Contact: Wayne Beyer, 899-1700
Advisory board member:
Duane Hanson, West Fargo, 367-4249

DISTRICT 7 – COUNTIES: BURLEIGH, EMMONS, GRANT, KIDDER, McLEAN, MERCER, MORTON, OLIVER, SHERIDAN AND SIOUX

Date: November 23 – 7 p.m.
Location: Public School, Flasher
Host: Raleigh Sportsmen's Club

Contact: Florian Zins, 597-3661
Advisory board member:
Dave Nehring, Bismarck, 214-3184

DISTRICT 1 – COUNTIES: DIVIDE, MCKENZIE AND WILLIAMS

Date: November 24 – 7 p.m.
Location: Ray Senior Center
Host: Ray Sportsmen
Contact: Rick Liesner 648-9712
Advisory board member:
Jason Leiseth, Arnegard, 586-3714

DISTRICT 3 – COUNTIES: BENSON, CAVALIER, EDDY, RAMSEY, ROLETTE AND TOWNER

Date: November 24 – 7 p.m.
Location: Community Center, Leeds
Host: Leeds Wildlife Club
Contact: Billy Harkness, 351-0149
Advisory board member:
Tom Rost, Devils Lake, 662-8620

DISTRICT 4 – COUNTIES: GRAND FORKS, NELSON, PEMBINA AND WALSH

Date: November 30 – 7 p.m.
Location: Community Center, Northwood
Host: Northwood Mens Club
Contact: Tom Leen, 218-230-8123
Advisory board member:
Joe Solseng, Grand Forks, 317-5009

DISTRICT 6 – COUNTIES: BARNES, DICKEY, FOSTER, GRIGGS, LOGAN, LAMOURE, McINTOSH, STUTSMAN AND WELLS

Date: November 30 – 7 p.m.
Location: Americana Inn, Valley City
Host: United Sportsmen of North Dakota
Contact: Shawn Vachal, 840-1143
Advisory board member:
Joel Christoferson, Litchville, 973-4981

DISTRICT 2 – COUNTIES: BOTTINEAU, BURKE, McHENRY, MOUNTRAIL, PIERCE, RENVILLE AND WARD

Date: December 1 – 7 p.m.
Location: Nelson Science Center Room 25, Dakota College, Bottineau
Host: Bottineau County Wildlife Club
Contact: Tom Nowatzki, 256-0984
Advisory board member:
Robert Gjellstad, Voltaire, 338-2281

DISTRICT 8 – COUNTIES: ADAMS, BILLINGS, BOWMAN, DUNN, GOLDEN VALLEY, HETTINGER, SLOPE AND STARK

Date: December 1 – 7 p.m.
Location: Memorial Hall, New England
Host: Hettinger 4-H Shooting Sports Club
Contact: Duaine Marxen, 824-2095
Advisory board member:
Dwight Hecker, Fairfield, 575-4952



RON WILSON

DARKHOUSE SPEARFISHING REGISTRATION

North Dakota's darkhouse spearfishing season opens on most state waters December 1. The season extends through March 15. Legal fish are northern pike and nongame species.

Darkhouse spearing is allowed for all residents with a valid fishing license and for residents under age 16. Nonresidents may darkhouse spearfish in North Dakota if they are from states that offer the same privilege for North Dakota residents.

All individuals who participate in darkhouse spearfishing must register with the North Dakota Game and Fish Department prior to participating. Registration is available at the Department's website, gf.nd.gov, or through any Game and Fish Department office.

All waters open to hook and line fishing are open to darkhouse spearing except: Braun Lake, Logan County; East Park Lake, West Park Lake, Lake Audubon, McLean County; Heckers Lake, Sheridan County; McClusky Canal; New Johns Lake, Burleigh County; Red Willow Lake, Griggs County; and Sweet Briar Dam; Morton County.

Anglers should refer to the 2014-16 North Dakota Fishing Guide for more information.

30-Day Notice for Fishing Tournaments

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 on the time of year and location. Tournament sponsors for these waters must submit their application prior to January 1 to ensure full consideration.

Some Refuges Open to Late-Season Upland Game

Hunters are reminded that several North Dakota national wildlife refuges open to late-season upland game bird hunting the day after the deer gun season closes.

Arrowwood, Audubon, Des Lacs, J. Clark Salyer, Lake Alice, Lake Zahl, Long Lake, Lostwood, Tewaukon (pheasants only), and Upper Souris NWRs open November 23.

However, portions of each refuge are closed to hunting. Hunters should contact refuge headquarters for information on closed areas and other restrictions: Arrowwood 701-285-3341; Audubon 701-442-5474; Des Lacs 701-385-4046; J. Clark Salyer 701-768-2548; Lake Alice 701-662-8611; Lake Zahl 701-965-6488; Long Lake 701-387-4397; Lostwood 701-848-2722; Tewaukon 701-724-3598; and Upper Souris 701-468-5467; or visit www.fws.gov for details on each individual refuge.

National wildlife refuges are managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Hunters are reminded that use of nontoxic shot is required on all USFWS lands. State regulations found in the North Dakota 2015-16 Small Game Guide apply. Seasons for pheasant, sharp-tailed grouse, Hungarian partridge and ruffed grouse close statewide on January 3, 2016.

CABLE DEVICE USERS MUST REGISTER

Trappers using cable devices must register with the North Dakota Game and Fish Department prior to trapping this year.

Registration is available through the Game and Fish Department website, gf.nd.gov, or through any Game and Fish office. Upon completion, a registration number will be provided. The number must be written on the back of the furbearer or combination license.

Information collected during registration will be used to conduct voluntary education efforts and create a mailing list for post-season surveys.



RICK TISCHAEFER



Order 2016 OUTDOORS Calendars

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department is taking orders for its *North Dakota OUTDOORS* calendar, the source for all hunting season and application dates for 2016. 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.

HUNTER ED CLASSES

Hunter education courses have wrapped up for 2015.

However, individuals or parents with children who will need to take a course in 2016 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.

PLOTS Photo Contest

A photo contest will again decide the cover of the 2016 Private Land Open To Sportsmen Guide.

Shelly Zumbaum of Minot won the contest for the 2015 cover.

From end-of-day hunting shots, to scenic action or landscape shots, the Game and Fish Department wants to feature hunter photos on the 2016 PLOTS cover and elsewhere that showcase North Dakota's strong hunting heritage.

The Department's free PLOTS Guide, which highlights walk-in hunting areas across the state, was first published in 1999.

Contest photos should include a PLOTS sign, front-facing or silhouette.

The contest deadline is April 30, 2016. Log on to the Game and Fish Department's website, gf.nd.gov, to learn more about contest prizes, rules and entry information.



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back cast



By Ron Wilson

Earlier in this magazine, Jeb Williams, North Dakota Game and Fish Department wildlife division chief, said expectations this fall are reasonable for putting some venison in the freezer.

Fair enough. I'll take reasonable.

At a time when the state's deer population isn't where wildlife officials or deer hunters would like to see it, I'm good with simply getting the opportunity to hunt.

My son, grandpa and I all drew doe tags. While it seems longer, last year was the first in seven that we didn't hunt together.

Hunting together, the three of us, is important. While it sounds worn-out, hackneyed that the state's deer hunting season is, in large part, about family gathering and friends, separated by distance, reconnecting, it's true.

I don't remember for certain the last time any of us drew a buck tag. Given a choice, we'd like to have a buck license or two in our small group. Yet, considering the overall drop in license numbers and the odds of drawing a buck license in our unit, we apply for antlerless deer because we want to hunt.

Based on the 2014 deer drawing results, a person with no points had a 93.7 percent chance to draw a doe license as a first choice in our unit. Conversely, a hunter had only a 5.8 percent chance of drawing a buck license as a first choice with no points.

In just a matter of days, we'll bunk in a motel in Sheridan County, our headquarters for opening weekend. When I reserved two rooms weeks before the season, the woman taking my reservation over the phone said not to worry about giving her my credit card information because we must be deer hunters and we're a good bet to show.

Better than reasonable.

We could easily hunt out of our home, sleep in familiar beds, eat home-cooked meals and catch a ballgame on television before turning in, but we don't really even consider it.

In nearly 30 years of doing this in North Dakota in November, not once have I hung my fluorescent orange cap at home opening weekend, but rather in an abandoned farmhouse, campers parked out of the wind and small town motels.

One of the things we do have control of – not the deer license drawing, fluctuating license numbers and changing landscape – is a how we approach the opening weekend of deer season.

To do otherwise, to stay at home and eschew what passes as deer camp to us, wouldn't be the same, wouldn't be reasonable.

RON WILSON is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.



NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT ARCHIVE PHOTO

A Look Back

By Ron Wilson

To many of today's hunters, the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's peel and stick deer tags are as conventional as, say, fluorescent orange hunting gear.

Give or take a few years, both have been standards within the deer hunting ranks for roughly 40 years.

Before today's peel and stick tags, hunters in North Dakota tagged harvested deer with metal locking seals. While the metal tag in the photograph provided was from the 1965 deer season, it's uncertain exactly when the Game and Fish Department first employed this type of tag.

"I bought my first deer tag, it was buck-only back then, over the counter at the Coast to Coast Store in Langdon," said Bob Timian, Game and Fish Department enforcement divi-

sion chief. "I remember getting it and I remember my first deer hunt, but I don't remember exactly what year that was."

Likely sometime between 1968 and 1970, Timian figured.

"I'm pretty sure we had switched to paper tags by the time I got out of the military in 1975," Timian added.

That's the way Ray Parsons, Game and Fish Department procurement officer, remembers it.

"We made the transfer to paper, the adhesive tags, in 1974 when I first started at Game and Fish," he said. "After using the metal tags for some time, there were several naysayers within the Department who thought the adhesive tags would never work, that they would get full of deer hair or whatever and never stick."

In 1965, H.H. Spitzer, the Department's chief game warden at the time, reminded hunters in *North Dakota OUTDOORS* that the language of the law in tagging a deer immediately after harvest is quite clear.

The metal locking tag, Spitzer wrote, "shall be attached and sealed between the leg bone and tendon in such a manner as not to be lost or removed."

"It's just as easy to do this part of the hunt properly as improperly and it will guarantee you the respect of every warden and sportsman, plus the inner satisfaction of a job well done," he wrote.

Turns out, the same holds true today.

RON WILSON is editor of *North Dakota OUTDOORS*.