



"VARIETY IN HUNTING AND FISHING"

NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

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Dear Angler:

All too often letters or newsletters articles start with "Well it's been an interesting year". Forgive me for the redundancy but it **HAS** been an interesting year. Flood issues have taken center stage virtually in every section of our state. Given our tumultuous summer of rain and more rain ... and in-between Sportfishing Congress newsletters, I thought I'd provide you with a short, up-dated summary of bullets on the impacts and status to/of North Dakota's fishery to date.

- Flooding
 - Devils Lake – despite new record highs, Dept. staff and contractors were able to develop six ramp sites this spring/summer bringing the total to eight usable ramps.
 - Souris (Mouse) River – a 500 year flood event resulted in record, devastating flooding in Minot and Burlington. Appears Lake Darling's fishery may have been impacted somewhat but overall it still appears to be in decent shape.
 - Missouri River System (MRS) – record elevations and summer flows at Williston (Missouri River), Bismarck (Missouri River) and Lake Oahe. Total volume of water moving through the MRS makes it also a 500 year flood event. Of the past 1,350 months (dating back to 1898) this past June, May and July would rate number 1, 3 and 5 in terms of runoff! Ongoing concerns to the Department include serious public boat ramp access issues (primarily on the river), production impacts at the Garrison Dam National Fish Hatchery, reservoir high bank erosion and sedimentation, fish loss through the dam(s), impacts to the former Spillway Lake and Lake Audubon, and long-term and unknown effects to the river fishery due to potential changes to Missouri River habitat. Despite all the hardships and impacts of flooding, remember historically, the lack of water in the MRS has caused even more significant problems concerning the recreational industry and many other user groups.
 - Jamestown and Pipestem reservoirs – again record flows continue through these two dams and fish loss through the dams and public fishing access remain as concerns.
 - Red and Sheyenne rivers – it seems that one or many gauge readings on these two rivers have been above flood stage since ice out this past spring. Fishing access has been at times challenging.
 - Many, many other water bodies across the state – without doubt, numerous natural lakes in North Dakota are at all-time highs (since post-glaciation!). As a result, simple road access to many lakes has been challenging if not impossible at times. Further, a number of boat ramps remain inundated. Also, with so much water moving across North Dakota's landscape, undesirable species such as carp are now able to access new water bodies.

- The upside of so much water on North Dakota's landscape
 - With all-time record high water levels across most of the state, fish populations in our lakes will continue to benefit. Never has the state had so many different water bodies to fish.
 - Pike opportunities – we've experienced three consecutive years of record year classes of pike. Fishing will only get better in the months and years to come.
 - Boating access – despite the many challenges of too much water, our development crew continues to work with local officials in providing decent boat ramps at most lakes. Hopefully, by ice-up we'll be able to address most of the district lakes.
- Other
 - ANS – for the second year in a row, evidence of zebra mussels were found in the Red River area near Wahpeton. Thankfully, ongoing monitoring elsewhere in the state has not found new infestations.
 - Stocking - despite the flooding challenges to both Garrison Dam and Valley City national fish hatcheries their production was again noteworthy. 8.3 million walleye fingerlings were stocked into 88 lakes and rivers across the state and another 2.3 million northern pike fingerlings were also stocked into 53 water bodies.
 - Regulations – we have just begun assessing all past data/information for possible incorporation into the new fishing proclamation next year. Recommended changes will be brought to the fishing public at this fall/winters advisory board meeting.

As summer winds down I would again urge you to get out and do some fishing. Despite the ongoing flooding issues, there are so many quality opportunities spread throughout the state. Overall fishing reports have been tremendous especially given the fact we're right now in the traditional 'dog days of August'. Do a little homework ensuring both roads and public access sites are open – and then get after it and wet a line.

Respectfully,



Greg Power, Chief
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