

NDG&F June 16th Newsletter

Stocking Requests Grow as Public Waters Increase

North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries personnel are gearing up to stock a record number of walleye lakes this year.

Fisheries production and development supervisor Jerry Weigel said 20 years ago approximately 50-70 waters were stocked annually with walleye fingerlings, with the number of waters growing to 100 in the early 2000s. This year, 156 waters are scheduled to receive a share of 9 million fingerlings. "The growth in walleye waters is directly correlated to the number of public fishing waters we manage," Weigel said.

In 1988, Game and Fish managed 160 public fishing waters totaling 99,098 acres, not including the Missouri River System. Today, Weigel said the department manages 415 waters and 345,988 acres, excluding the Missouri River System.

"This has put a lot of pressure on the two federal hatcheries in the state, Garrison Dam and Valley City," Weigel added. "We need every available pond to meet a 9 million walleye fingerling request. In the last four years we have stocked more than 38 million walleyes in the state, in addition to salmon, trout, pike, bass and panfish."

Weigel said the flood of 2011 caused the 40 east unit hatchery ponds at Garrison to lose their water supply. In order to fill the 40 1.5-acre ponds, he said Game and Fish had to rent pumps in 2012 and 2013. The department recently completed a permanent fix at a cost of \$500,000, thus eliminating the need to rent pumps in the future.

To help offset the reduced role the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has with recreational fish production in recent years, Game and Fish provides seasonal staffing at both hatcheries and pays for half the operational costs at Garrison Dam. According to Weigel, this is in addition to both collecting all the eggs each spring and transporting all fish from both hatcheries.

"There is no question the hatcheries play a vital role in the growth of the state's fisheries and will continue to be needed to sustain this growth," Weigel added. "The federal hatchery staff strives to operate at 100 percent efficiency, and thankfully that has been the case. Even at that, there is growing demand, thus Game and Fish has increased its assistance when possible."

MULEY Day Camp Slated for July 12

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department's Encouraging Tomorrow's Hunters program is a primary sponsor for a youth and family outdoor learning event in the Bismarck area on Saturday, July 12.

Put on by the Mule Deer Foundation, the MULEY Day Camp runs from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Moffit Gun Range. It includes rifle and archery target shooting, hunting and safety information and demonstrations.

All equipment is provided, along with a free lunch and door prizes for youth (age 18 and under) with parent, guardian or family present. To preregister, contact Shelle Michaels by email shellemichaels@msn.com or call 218-779-7271. Visit www.muledeer.org for more information on the MULEY program and event details.

The Game and Fish Department's Encouraging Tomorrow's Hunters program provides grant dollars to help local communities and organizations fund events that promote youth hunting and shooting sports. For more information, contact outreach biologist Pat Lothspeich at 701-328-6332.