

## NDG&F April 10th Newsletter

### MRS Walleye Tagging Study Continues

Year two of a four-year walleye tagging study on the Missouri River and Lake Oahe is complete, and returns are providing biologists with valuable information.

Paul Bailey, North Dakota Game and Fish Department south central district fisheries supervisor, said nearly 17,000 fish were tagged in 2013 and 2014, the first two years of the study, and more than 3,000 tag numbers were turned in by anglers.

“The study is designed to assess walleye movements, mortality and what proportion of the walleye population is harvested annually by anglers,” Bailey said.

The study area extends from the Garrison Dam in central North Dakota downstream to Oahe Dam in South Dakota, and involves a major collaboration of biologists and researchers from North Dakota Game and Fish, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks, and South Dakota State University.

The study targets adult walleye, each fitted with a metal jaw tag stamped with a unique number to identify the fish, and a phone number to report the tag. Anglers can either keep or release the fish. Anglers practicing catch-and-release can write the tag number down and report it, leaving the tag on the fish when released.

Bailey said the first two years of the study revealed some interesting movement patterns. “For example, over half of the tagged walleye that were reported by anglers were caught within 10 miles of where they were tagged and released,” he added. “However, fish tagged in North Dakota moved greater distances than those tagged farther downstream, and North Dakota fish moved both upstream and downstream after tagging.”

Most of the returns in both 2013 and 2014 were from May, June and July, and Bailey said when the bite slowed in August, so did the returns.

[Anglers can report tags](#) by calling the phone number found on tags, which, anglers should note, is a South Dakota phone number. Tag information can also be reported on the Game and Fish Department’s website, [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov), or by calling 701-328-6300.

Anglers should record the date and location of the catch, whether the fish was kept or released, tag number and length and weight (if the fish was measured). Anglers who report tagged fish can keep the tag, and will receive a letter providing some history on the fish.

A small portion of the tags offer a reward to anglers to encourage returns, Bailey said, with these tags clearly marked “Reward.”

Reward tags must be physically turned in to Game and Fish offices in Riverdale or Bismarck, or to a Game, Fish and Parks office in South Dakota.

### Paddlefish Snagging Season Opens May 1

North Dakota’s [paddlefish snagging season](#) opens May 1, and the season is scheduled to continue through the end of May. However, depending on the overall harvest, an early in-season closure may occur with a 24-hour notice issued by the state Game and Fish Department.

Paddlefish tags are available over-the-counter-only in Bismarck at the North Dakota Game and Fish

Department's main office; in Williston at the Williams County auditor's office, Scenic Sports and Wal-Mart; and in Dickinson at Runnings Farm and Fleet.

Snaggers should be aware that mandatory harvest of all snagged paddlefish is required on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. On these days, all paddlefish caught must be tagged immediately. All paddlefish snagged and tagged must be removed from the river by 9 p.m. of each snagging day. The use or possession of a gaff hook within one-half mile in either direction of the Highway 200 bridge on the Yellowstone River is illegal at any time during the snagging season.

Snag-and-release of all paddlefish is required on Sundays, Mondays and Thursdays. Those planning to participate during snag-and-release-only days need to have in their possession a current season, unused paddlefish snagging tag. Use or possession of gaffs is prohibited on snag-and-release-only days, and, if it occurs, during the snag-and-release extension period.

Legal snagging hours are from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily. One tag per snagger will be issued. Snagging is legal in all areas of the Yellowstone River in North Dakota, and in the area of the Missouri River lying west of the U.S. Highway 85 bridge to the Montana border, excluding that portion from the pipeline crossing (river mile 1,577) downstream to the upper end of the Lewis and Clark Wildlife Management Area (river mile 1,565).

If the season closes early because the harvest quota is reached, an extended snag-and-release-only period will be allowed for up to four days immediately following the early closure, but not to extend beyond May 31. Only snaggers with a current season, unused paddlefish snagging tag are eligible to participate. Only a limited area at the confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers is open to this extended season snagging opportunity.

All paddlefish snaggers must possess a paddlefish tag in addition to a valid fishing license and certificate that may be required. Cost of a paddlefish tag is \$10 for residents and \$25.50 for nonresidents.

Addresses and phone numbers of vendors selling tags:

**Bismarck Game and Fish Office**

100 N. Bismarck Expressway  
Bismarck, ND 58501  
701-328-6300

**Williams County**

Williams County Auditor  
PO Box 2047  
Williston, ND 58802  
701-577-4500

**Scenic Sports**

1201 East Broadway  
Williston, ND 58801  
701-572-8696

**Wal-Mart, Inc.**

4001 2nd Avenue West  
Williston, ND 58801

701-572-8550

**Runnings Farm and Fleet**

2003 3rd Avenue West

Dickinson, ND 58601

701-483-1226