

## **NDG&F January 13th Newsletter**

### **Careful When Removing Fish Houses**

Early ice fishing reports from many areas of the state have been promising. However, the North Dakota Game and Fish Department advises winter anglers to be cautious when moving or removing permanent fish houses and travelling on state lakes.

Robert Timian, chief game warden, said an unseasonably mild winter has caused some ice houses to already break through the ice. "Record breaking high temperatures and strong winds this winter have resulted in inconsistent ice conditions in much of the state," Timian said. "Anglers should assess the need to move their respective ice houses. If ice conditions on a lake deteriorate, they should check the weather forecast and consider removing their house."

While snow and colder temperatures are yet to come, those conditions might come too late to help form solid ice for any length of time. "When we get into late February, warm weather and longer daylight will deteriorate ice conditions, causing shorelines that are already thin to weaken," Timian said. "Therefore, we suggest anglers be aware of these unique winter conditions and be prepared to move, or even remove their ice houses."

Whether the ice house is removed now or in two months, Timian advises anglers to do so before the ice begins to thaw. "Fish houses can become frozen into the ice under these conditions, causing some anglers to only take parts of the house that are easily retrievable," he added. "This is unacceptable. The owner has a legal responsibility to remove the entire house and its contents."

Permanent fish houses must be off the ice by midnight, March 15. Portable fish houses may be used after March 15 if they are removed daily.

### **Hunter Ed Instructor Workshops and Banquet Scheduled**

North Dakota Game and Fish Department hunter education instructors are invited to attend one of four regional workshops scheduled in 2012.

The workshops are Feb. 25 at the Hilton Garden Inn in Grand Forks; March 10 at the Ramada Grand Dakota Lodge in Dickinson; March 24 at the Best Western Grand International Inn in Minot; and March 31 at the Ramada Plaza and Suites in Fargo.

Each workshop runs from 1-5 p.m., with registration beginning at 12 p.m. Instructors are asked to call the hunter education office in Bismarck to preregister. Conference invites, agenda and registration information will be mailed out to all certified instructors.

Instructors are also reminded of the 28th annual Hunter Education Instructor Conference and Recognition Banquet on Feb. 11, 2012 at the Best Western Ramkota in Bismarck.

Hunter education instructors are volunteers and provide their expertise and time free of charge.

Volunteer instructors must be 18 or older, have hunting experience, have not been convicted of a felony or serious law violation and have successfully completed a hunter education course. Anyone interested in becoming a volunteer hunter education instructor should call Jon Hanson, hunter education

coordinator, at (701) 328-6316.

### **Time to Think Boating Basics**

Now is a good time for parents with children who want to operate a boat or jet ski this summer to have them take the state's [boating basics course](#).

State law requires youngsters ages 12-15 to pass the course before they operate a boat or personal watercraft with at least a 10 horsepower motor. In addition, major insurance companies give adult boat owners who pass the course a premium discount on boat insurance.

The course is available for home-study from the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's Bismarck office. Two commercial providers also offer the course online, and links to those sites can be found by accessing the department's website at [gf.nd.gov](#).

While the home-study course is free, students will be charged a fee to take it online. The online provider charges for the course, not the Game and Fish Department. The fee stays with the online provider.

Upon completion of the online test, and providing a credit card number, students will be able to print out a temporary certification card, and within 10 days a permanent card will be mailed.

The course covers legal requirements, navigation rules, getting underway, accidents and special topics such as weather, rules of the road, laws, life saving and first aid.

For more information contact Nancy Boldt, North Dakota Game and Fish Department, by email at [ndgf@nd.gov](mailto:ndgf@nd.gov); or call (701) 328-6300.

### **Watchable Wildlife Checkoff on State Tax Form**

North Dakota citizens with an interest in supporting wildlife conservation programs are reminded to look for the Watchable Wildlife checkoff on the state tax form.

The 2011 state income tax form gives wildlife enthusiasts an opportunity to support nongame wildlife like songbirds and birds of prey, while at the same time contributing to programs that help everyone enjoy all wildlife.

The checkoff – whether you are receiving a refund or having to pay in – is an easy way to voluntarily contribute to sustain this long-standing program. In addition, direct donations to the program are accepted any time of year.

To learn more about Watchable Wildlife program activities, contact the North Dakota Game and Fish Department at 328-6300; or email [ndgf@nd.gov](mailto:ndgf@nd.gov).