

## **NDF&G October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2009 newsletter**

### **Reproduction Survey Shows Excellent Numbers of Young Fish**

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department's annual fall survey shows exceptional numbers statewide of young-of-the-year walleye, perch and northern pike, according to Scott Gangl, fisheries management section leader. "The end result is a combination of our stocking efforts and excellent natural reproduction," Gangl said, noting that a record number of lakes were stocked this year. The Missouri River from Garrison Dam to Lake Oahe led the way with outstanding natural walleye reproduction. "This stretch was phenomenal, and this is noteworthy because it is all natural," Gangl said. "Nothing is stocked in the Missouri River."

Lake Oahe and Devils Lake also showed excellent numbers of young fish during the survey. "This was one of the best years ever for Lake Oahe, definitely a top five year," Gangl said. "Devils Lake was off the charts, with numbers six times greater than the long term average."

Game and Fish did not stock walleye in Lake Oahe or Devils Lake in 2009. Lake Sakakawea wasn't nearly as good as the other larger systems, but it was better than the last few years. "There was some natural reproduction, and numbers were similar to the end of the last drought in the early 1990s," Gangl said. Many of the smaller lakes had good numbers of young fish as well. "Whether it was because of stocking efforts or on lakes with natural reproduction, it was pretty standard across the state with a really good take of fish this year," Gangl said. "Flooding across much of the state provided excellent fish habitat conditions."

In general, fisheries crews saw good numbers of early spawning species, such as walleye, pike and perch, Gangl said. "Pike and perch take advantage of flooded vegetation and with the large amount of water this year we saw good natural reproduction," he said.

Statewide, Gangl said forage species did really well. "Fathead minnows in smaller lakes were very abundant," he added. "On some of the bigger systems, there was really good reproduction of white bass, crappies, and other minnow and sucker species."

Gangl said a disappointment from this fall's sampling was the lack of gizzard shad in the Missouri River and Lake Oahe. "Shad can't tolerate cold water for long periods, and the severity of last winter appears to have depleted much of the adult population, as few young-of-the-year shad were collected this year," he said.

Fall reproduction sampling provides biologists with an index that measures natural reproduction and stocking success. It allows biologists to see if fish did spawn, and how fingerlings survived the summer. All large and mid-sized reservoirs are sampled every year, and many small lakes are targeted as well. Survey nets are designed for small, young fish, which allows biologists to assess reproduction and status of both game and forage fish species.

"Good reproduction or stocking success is certainly the first step to good fishing, but those little fish have to survive their first couple of winters before they get to a size that anglers can catch," Gangl said.

### **Motorists Warned to Watch for Deer on Roads**

Motorists are reminded to watch for deer along roadways, especially this time of year, because juvenile animals are dispersing from their home ranges.

Late October through early December is when deer are most active, resulting in the peak period for deer-vehicle accidents. Bill Jensen, big game biologist, said motorists are advised to slow down and exercise caution after dark to reduce the likelihood of encounters with deer along roadways. "Most deer-vehicle accidents occur primarily at dawn and dusk when deer are most often moving around," Jensen said.

Deer-vehicle accidents are at times unavoidable. However, motorists should be aware of warning signs signaling deer are in the area. When you see one deer cross the road, look for a second or third deer to follow. Also, motorists are urged to pay attention on roadways posted with *Deer Crossing Area* caution signs.

If an accident does happen, a local law enforcement agency should be contacted. Also, a permit is required to take parts or the whole carcass of a road-killed deer. Permits are free and available from game wardens and local law enforcement offices.

A few precautions can minimize chances of injury or property damage in a deer-vehicle crash.

- Always wear your seat belt.
- Don't swerve or take the ditch to avoid hitting a deer. Try to brake as much as possible and stay on the roadway. Don't lose control of your vehicle or slam into something else to miss the deer. You risk less injury by hitting the deer.
- If you spot deer ahead, slow down immediately and honk your horn.
- No published research supports the effectiveness of deer whistles on vehicles. Deer can't hear ultrasonic frequencies.

### **Hunters Cautioned of Wet Ground Conditions**

North Dakota hunters are reminded that recent moisture throughout much of the state has made travel in some areas extremely difficult.

Randy Kreil, wildlife chief for the state Game and Fish Department, said it is important for hunters to maintain positive landowner/hunter relations. "We ask hunters to be cognizant of these conditions," Kreil said. "Driving on soft, muddy roads and trails is strongly discouraged until they dry out or freeze up."

Hunters are advised to seek permission before attempting any off-road travel.

### **Fox Island Ramp to Close for Repairs**

The Fox Island boat ramp in south Bismarck will close for approximately three weeks beginning Oct. 14 for major reconstruction. The timing coincides with lower releases from Garrison Dam, resulting in lower river levels needed for the ramp construction.

The project – similar to what has been done at Kimball (Desert) Bottoms and Little Heart Bottoms – will include extending the bottom end of the ramp, along with removing and replacing deteriorated portions of the existing ramp.

Although this work may cause a temporary inconvenience for anglers, the new ramp will be a major improvement over the existing facilities.