

NDG&F October 29th Newsletter

Salmon Spawn Goal Reached

Fisheries crews have completed their annual salmon spawning operation on Lake Sakakawea after collecting 1.5 million eggs, easily surpassing their goal of 900,000.

Dave Fryda, North Dakota Game and Fish Department Missouri River System supervisor, said the majority of eggs came from Lake Sakakawea and the remainder from the Missouri River below Garrison Dam. The average size of Lake Sakakawea females was about 6.5 pounds, similar to 2011. The Missouri River females, which are typically larger than the lake fish, were smaller in size this year reflecting the decline in forage abundance in Lake Oahe.

“The 2012 salmon spawning run was a success with good numbers of fish available throughout the run,” Fryda said. “We were able to exceed our own egg collection goals early, which enabled us to provide assistance to South Dakota and possibly Montana in meeting their egg needs for 2013.”

Plans for 2013 are to stock Lake Sakakawea with 200,000 salmon, with none scheduled for the river below Garrison Dam, Fryda said.

Chinook salmon begin their spawning run in October. Since salmon cannot naturally reproduce in North Dakota, Game and Fish Department and Garrison Dam National Fish Hatchery personnel collect eggs and transport them to the hatchery.

Once the eggs hatch, young salmon spend several months in the hatchery before being stocked in Lake Sakakawea.

Fisheries Division Recognizes Tuttle Wildlife Club

The State Game and Fish Department recently honored the Tuttle Wildlife Club for its ongoing efforts to develop and improve public use facilities at numerous lakes in northern Kidder County.

Each year the Department’s fisheries division presents a “Certificate of Appreciation” to an organization that has signed on as a cooperating partner in local projects. District fisheries supervisor Paul Bailey said the Tuttle group is “an outstanding example of the difference a small club can make on their local fisheries.”

Tuttle club members over the years have helped with construction and installation of boat ramps, courtesy docks, toilets, fishing piers, fishing access roads and parking areas at lakes Josephine, Cherry, Jasper, Frettim and Williams, among others.

In addition, Bailey said, the club also assumed primary responsibility for maintaining these facilities after construction. “The long-term commitment of providing the needed maintenance is as important as the initial construction,” Bailey noted, “and the club does an outstanding job in performing this task.”

Game and Fish Continues Intensive ANS Efforts

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department spent a record amount of time monitoring the state’s waterways looking for aquatic nuisance species in 2012. Despite these intense efforts only one new infestation was documented – curly leaf pondweed in Lake Elsie in Richland County.

Fred Ryckman, ANS coordinator, said one of the biggest surprises in 2012 was no detection of zebra mussel in the Otter Tail and Red rivers at Wahpeton, where young zebra mussels were found in both 2010 and 2011. However, Ryckman said the recent announcement by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources that adult zebra mussels have become established and continue to move downstream in Minnesota’s Otter Tail drainage is discouraging. “Thankfully we haven’t found any adult zebra mussels anywhere in North Dakota,” Ryckman added. “The news coming from Minnesota emphasizes the need for us to be vigilant in our monitoring efforts and to continue to stress public participation in following ANS regulations.”

Statewide monitoring efforts also indicated known populations of ANS in existing North Dakota water bodies are stable. A few adult silver carp were again observed in the James River below Jamestown Dam, after having moved upstream into the James during extremely high flows in 2011.

This year, Game and Fish continued both an intensive and extensive information and education campaign regarding concerns with ANS, and the need for the public to be fully compliant with existing rules and regulations. In part, these efforts included updating ANS posters and brochures and distributing them to numerous outlets across the state, having a far greater ANS presence at the North Dakota State Fair, increasing the number of water bodies monitored for ANS and continuing to place ANS information signs at all public boat ramps throughout the state.

In addition, game wardens continued to check angler/boater compliance regarding ANS in 2012, and chief warden Robert Timian said the Department’s educational efforts are paying dividends. “Checkpoints were done throughout the year, and boater and angler compliance was good,” Timian said. “However, there are still some individuals who are unaware, or don’t care, how important this issue is. We will continue to have checkpoints and will issue citations to individuals who are in violation of the rules.”