

NDG&F December 3rd Newsletter

Winter Fishing Regulations

North Dakota anglers are encouraged to refer to the 2012-14 North Dakota Fishing Guide or the State Game and Fish Department's website for winter fishing regulations.

In addition, anglers can access the Game and Fish website, gf.nd.gov, for an extensive list of fishing questions and answers, and a winter fishing preview from North Dakota Outdoors magazine.

Some winter fishing regulations include:

A maximum of four poles is legal for ice fishing. However, when fishing a water body where both open water and ice occur at the same time, an angler is allowed a maximum of four poles, of which no more than two poles can be used in open water.

Tip-ups are legal, and each tip-up is considered a single pole.

There is no restriction on the size of the hole in the ice while fishing. When a hole larger than 10 inches in diameter is left in the ice, the area in the immediate vicinity must be marked with a natural object. See regulations for more information.

It is only legal to release fish back into the water immediately after they are caught. Once a fish is held in a bucket or on a stringer, they can no longer be legally released in any water.

It is illegal to catch fish and transport them in water.

It is illegal to leave fish, including bait, behind on the ice.

Depositing or leaving any litter or other waste material on the ice or shore is illegal.

Any dressed fish to be transported, if frozen, must be packaged individually. Anglers are not allowed to freeze fillets together in one large block. Two fillets count as one fish.

The daily limit is a limit of fish taken from midnight to midnight, and no person may possess more than one day's limit of fish while actively engaged in fishing. The possession limit is the maximum number of fish that an angler may have in his or her possession during a fishing trip of more than one day.

Be Cautious of Early Ice

Winter anglers are encouraged to consider early ice conditions before traveling onto and across North Dakota lakes.

Keep in mind:

Snow insulates ice, hampering solid ice formation, and makes it difficult to check thickness. Snow also hides the blemishes, such as cracked, weak and open water areas.

Avoid cracks, pressure ridges, slushy or darker areas that signal thinner ice. The same goes for ice that forms around partially submerged trees, brush, embankments or other structures.

Ice thickness is not consistent and can vary significantly even in a small area. Ice shouldn't be judged by appearance alone. Anglers should drill test holes as they make their way out on the lake, and an ice chisel should be used to check ice thickness while moving around.

Daily temperature changes cause ice to expand and contract, affecting its strength.

The following minimums are recommended for travel on clear-blue lake ice formed under ideal conditions. However, early in the winter it's a good idea to double these figures to be safe: 4 inches for a group walking single file; 6 inches for a snowmobile or all-terrain vehicle; 8-12 inches for an automobile; and 12-15 inches for a pickup/truck.

These tips could help save a life:

Wear a personal flotation device and carry a cell phone.

Carry ice picks or a set of screwdrivers to pull yourself back on the ice if you fall through.

If someone breaks through the ice, call 911 immediately. Rescue attempts should employ a long pole, board, rope, blanket or snowmobile suit. If that's not possible, throw the victim a life jacket, empty water jug or other buoyant object. Go to the victim as a last resort, but do this by forming a human chain where rescuers lie on the ice with each person holding the feet of the person in front.

To treat hypothermia, replace wet clothing with dry clothing and immediately transport victim to a hospital.

ANS Prevention in Winter

North Dakota ice anglers are reminded that regulations designed to reduce the spread of aquatic nuisance species also apply in winter.

It's important to reiterate that only legal live bait can be transported in water in a container up to five gallons. Bot game and nongame species cannot be transported in water, although a daily catch can be packed in snow.

Other simple methods to prevent winter ANS introductions are:

Do not use illegally imported baits.

Do not empty a bait bucket into any water body.

Do not drop plant fragments into the water.

Dispose any unused bait into the trash.