

NDG&F May 2nd Newsletter

Northern Pike Spawn Completed, Population Healthy

A healthy northern pike population is a main reason fisheries crews were able to complete spring spawning efforts in short order under less than ideal weather conditions.

Scott Gangl, North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries management section leader, said crews wrapped up taking northern pike eggs in just six days. "Our crews battled rain, snow and sleet," Gangl said. "Despite the weather, everything else was like clockwork."

Crews collected more than 19 million eggs from Beaver Bay (Lake Oahe), and Alkali and Spiritwood lakes (Stutsman County).

"Oahe has been full the past couple years so we were able to collect a lot of eggs from Beaver Bay," Gangl said. "The high water level has really benefited our spawning operation the last two years."

The northern pike population is booming, Gangl said, and a variety of sizes were evident during spawning. "We saw a lot of 2, 3, 5, 10 and 15 pound pike," he added. "We've had good year-classes the past few years, and in those lakes where there is good forage there are now a lot of 3-4 pound fish. The 2008 year class is now in the 6-8 pound range."

Gangl mentioned the abundance of nice eating-sized pike in the population, but most fish are still a few years away from trophy-sized wall hangers. "But there are some pike getting close that are weighing in the teens," Gangl said. "In about five years anglers will see a lot of 20-pound pike."

Lakes that offer pike fishing opportunities are scattered statewide, but are more plentiful in the south central and north central portions of the state. "There are many smaller lakes in those areas of the state that have really good pike populations and fishing should only get better in the months and years to come," Gangl said. "In addition, the Missouri River System will be very good over the next couple of years, as well as anything connected to Devils Lake. Overall, from a statewide perspective, northern pike populations have never been higher."

Anglers should contact a local Game and Fish Department office for information on pike fishing lakes, or refer to the March-April issue of North Dakota OUTDOORS. In addition, anglers can refer to the department's website, gf.nd.gov.