

NDG&F May 17th Newsletter

Safe Boating Week Emphasizes Need for Life Jackets

National Safe Boating Week is May 22-28. Nancy Boldt, boat and water safety coordinator for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, said this annual campaign emphasizes the need for water recreationists to wear a life jacket.

“There’s no safety substitute for wearing a personal flotation device while recreating on public waters,” Boldt said.

Failure to wear a PFD is the main reason people lose their lives in boating accidents. Boldt said each year, about 700 people nationwide die in boating-related accidents. Nearly 70 percent are caused by drowning, and eight of 10 victims were not wearing a life jacket.

North Dakota law requires Coast Guard approved PFDs in the following circumstances:

- On watercraft less than 16 feet in length, one wearable PFD must be on board for each person.
- Anyone being towed on water-skis, surfboard, or a similar device must wear a PFD.
- No person may operate or permit the operation of a personal watercraft without each person on board wearing a PFD.
- Watercraft of 16 feet or longer must have one wearable PFD for each person on board, and one throwable flotation device.
- On any vessel less than 27 feet in length, all persons 10 years of age or younger must wear a properly fastened, Coast Guard approved PFD.

Boaters are reminded to test life jackets for serviceability and fit. All straps and buckles must be intact and there should be no rips or tears in the fabric.

Spring Spawn Wrapped up

Fisheries crews concluded a successful spawning season by surpassing a walleye egg goal that was the largest in more than a decade, and nearly reaching the target established for northern pike.

Jerry Weigel, fisheries production and development section leader for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, said department staff, along with personnel from the Garrison Dam and Valley City national fish hatcheries, collected 60 million walleye eggs during spring spawning.

“The timing was perfect for spawning walleye in North Dakota,” Weigel said. “The weather was ideal and the fish were healthy.”

Crews collected 33.9 million walleye eggs from Lake Sakakawea over an 8-day period. In addition, 24.4 million came from Devils Lake, and another 1.9 million from Lake Audubon.

“It is interesting to note that the peak of the run was occurring in Lake Sakakawea right when crews were closing down operations because the egg goal had been met,” Weigel said.

While near-record catches occurred on Lake Sakakawea, the higher water level at Devils Lake made netting difficult, resulting in a lower walleye catch at Devils Lake than in recent years.

Warm weather conditions dictated an early pike run, Weigel said, and a quick spawn resulted in an egg take of 14.3 million.

“We had a very short window, making pike egg collections a challenge,” he added. “But staff netted six lakes – the most in one spring – and the above-average egg quality provided more than enough pike eggs to meet hatchery needs.”

Crews collected pike eggs from Alkali/Spiritwood Lake in Stutsman County, Lake Ashtabula in Barnes County, Devils Lake in Ramsey County, Turtle Lake in McLean County, Pfiefle Lake in McIntosh County, and Beaver Bay on Lake Oahe.

With the return of normal water conditions in the Missouri River System, the importance of Beaver Bay was especially noteworthy as it led the state in terms of pike egg take.

Weigel said plans are to stock approximately 9 million walleye fingerling into nearly 120 waters in mid-June, and 2.5 million pike fingerling into approximately 90 waters during the last two weeks of May.

Remaining Deer Samples Negative for CWD

the remaining 1,000 North Dakota deer samples that were tested for chronic wasting disease and bovine tuberculosis are negative, according to Dr. Dan Grove, wildlife veterinarian for the State Game and Fish Department.

In all, more than 3,000 targeted and hunter-harvested samples from 2009 were sent to a lab in Minnesota. One mule deer taken last fall in unit 3F2 in western Sioux County tested positive for CWD, the first positive sample taken from a North Dakota animal.

Grove said one positive test result is not cause for alarm as the deer population remains healthy. "We've had a plan in place because of the presence of CWD outside of the state's borders," he added. "It is of high importance, however, that hunters continue to provide heads for testing."

The deer population in unit 3F2 is above management goals, Grove said, so sampling efforts and hunter pressure will continue to be put on the population in the unit again this fall.

In addition to sampling 3F2, the Game and Fish Department will continue its three-year rotation of the Hunter-Harvested Surveillance program by sampling deer this fall from units in the eastern third of the state. In addition, all moose and elk harvested in the state, regardless of hunting units, are eligible for sampling.

Since the department's sampling efforts began in 2002, more than 16,000 deer, elk and moose have tested negative for CWD.

CWD affects the nervous system of members of the deer family and is always fatal. Scientists have found no evidence that CWD can be transmitted naturally to humans or livestock.

Predator Removal on Two WMAs in McLean County

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department is conducting predator removal efforts this spring and summer to enhance waterfowl and upland game production on two wildlife management areas in McLean County.

Trapping and predator removal will occur until July 15 on islands within Audubon Wildlife Management Area and on Mallard Island, which is part of Wolf Creek Wildlife Management Area.

Islands within Audubon WMA are closed to public use until July 16.

Mallard Island will remain open to recreationists during this time, but caution is advised. A limited number of signs will be posted in the vicinity of Mallard Island to warn the public about predator control activities.

North Dakota's Deer Season Set

you can view the [deer license spreadsheet by clicking here](#).

North Dakota's 2010 deer season has been set with 116,775 licenses available to hunters this fall, a decrease of 27,625 from last year and the fewest since 2001.

Randy Kreil, wildlife chief for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, said a significant reduction in deer numbers was evident statewide this past year with statewide hunter success rates dropping to 59 percent, down considerably from 70-75 percent success rates North Dakota deer hunters typically experience.

"The reduced deer numbers are a result of significant mortality from the past two difficult winters and subsequent low reproductive success," Kreil said, "and nearly a decade of aggressive deer management by having a large number of antlerless licenses available in many units because the population was well above management goals."

As a result, 35 of the 38 hunting units will have fewer deer licenses. The only exceptions are three units in the southwest where deer populations remain above management objectives and winter mortality was least evident.

"The mule deer population in the badlands was also hurt by the winter of 2008-09, and probably by this past winter as well, and as a result there are fewer mule deer licenses available this fall," Kreil said.

Another noteworthy change from last year's deer season is the use of lighted nocks on arrows is now allowed for big game archery seasons. Kreil said this is the only exception to the regulation that prohibits the use of electronic devices attached to the bow or the arrow.

The number of licenses available for 2010 includes 7,275 for mule deer, a decrease of 1,425 from last year; 2,190 for muzzleloader, down 524 from last year; and 320 restricted youth antlered mule deer, a decrease of 25 from 2009.

North Dakota's 2010 deer gun season opens Nov. 5 at noon and continues through Nov. 21. The dates for the youth deer season are noon Sept. 17 through Sept. 26. No special herd reduction deer gun seasons are included in the 2010 proclamation.

Online applications for the regular deer gun, youth, muzzleloader, and resident gratis and nonresident landowner seasons will be available by May 5 by accessing the Game and Fish Department's Internet website at gf.nd.gov. Also, paper applications will be at vendors throughout the state by mid May. The deadline for applying is June 2.