

NDG&F May 27th Newsletter

Missouri River/Lake Oahe Boat Ramp Status

High water levels on the Missouri River have closed or restricted access at virtually every public boat ramp from the Garrison Dam south to the Maclean Bottoms area, according to Bob Frohlich, North Dakota Game and Fish Department fisheries development coordinator.

“The high releases from the Garrison Dam are impacting everyone along the river, including boaters and recreationists,” Frohlich said. “With the exception of the Tailrace ramp, all ramps down to and including MacLean Bottoms will be effectively inoperable within the next week or by about June 1.”

Due to record flows forecasted well into summer, Frohlich said the affected public boating access areas will likely remain unusable for an extended time.

Game and Fish will post [ramp status updates](#) as they occur on its website at gf.nd.gov, and will alert the public of any changes through a department press release.

In addition, an idle-speed-only restriction is in effect until further notice on the Missouri and Heart rivers in the Bismarck-Mandan area.

The north boundary of the idle-speed-only zone is the power lines approximately 1,000 feet south of the Steckel (Wilton) boat ramp, about 23 river miles north of Bismarck. The southern boundary is the MacLean Bottoms Wildlife Management Area boat ramp about 19 miles south of Bismarck.

The idle-speed-only zone on the Heart River starts at the confluence of the Heart and Missouri south of Mandan, and extends upstream to the ND Highway 6 bridge.

Idle-speed-only is defined as operating a boat or other watercraft at the slowest possible speed necessary to maintain steerage.

Spring Walleye Spawn Wrapped Up

Fisheries crews concluded a successful walleye spawning season despite the latest start on record.

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 Fish Hatchery waited for ice to vacate the walleye collection sites on Lake Sakakawea and Devils Lake.

“With the help of the late spring blizzard, strong winds blew everything open,” Weigel said. “There has never been a time when we didn’t collect walleye eggs in April, but this year we got our first nets set May 2 and the first eggs were collected May 4.”

The record water levels on Devils Lake made netting extremely difficult, so crews collected all 60 million walleye eggs from Lake Sakakawea over a 10-day period. "Catches of more than 1,000 walleye a day on Lake Sakakawea made for large egg takes," Weigel said. "Given the great catch on Sakakawea no eggs were collected from Devils Lake this spring."

Weigel said plans are to stock approximately 10 million walleye fingerling into nearly 100 waters in mid-June.

Leave Baby Animals Alone, Motorists Advised of Deer

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department emphasizes a simple message to well-intentioned humans who want to pick up and rescue what appear to be orphaned baby animals – don't touch them. Whether it is a young fawn, duckling, cottontail rabbit or a songbird, it is better to just leave them alone.

More often than not young animals are not abandoned or deserted, and the mother is probably watching nearby. Young wildlife are purposely placed into seclusion by their mothers to protect them from predators.

Anytime a young wild animal has human contact its chance for survival decreases significantly. It's illegal to take wild animals home, and captive animals later returned to the wild will struggle to survive because they do not possess learned survival skills.

The only time a baby animal should be picked up is if a young songbird is found on a doorstep. If that is the case, the young bird should be moved nearby to suitable habitat.

Citizens should also steer clear of adult wildlife, such as deer or moose that might wander into urban areas. Crowding stresses animals, and this could lead to a potentially dangerous situation.

Also, motorists are reminded to watch for deer along roadways. June is one of the peak months for deer-vehicle accidents because young animals are dispersing from their home ranges. With deer more active during these months, the potential for car-deer collisions increases.

The number of reported deer-vehicle collisions in 2010 was 2,949, the fourth consecutive year with declining numbers and the lowest since 2000.

Report on Wildlife and Energy Development Available Online

An updated draft of a report titled "Potential Impacts of Oil and Gas Development on Select North Dakota Natural Resources: A Report to the Director," is now available online at the North Dakota Game and Fish Department website.

The report is a working draft detailing previous research in North Dakota and other states that may provide guidance for off-setting or mitigating oil and gas development impacts on fish and wildlife resources.

The Game and Fish website address is gf.nd.gov, and a direct link to the report is at <http://gf.nd.gov/multimedia/pubs/director-report-oilandgas.html>.