



North Dakota Sportfishing Congress Board Meeting

Saturday, December 12, 2009 – 10:00 AM

ND Game and Fish Offices – Bismarck, ND (100 N. Bismarck Expressway)

Members Present: President Clark Williams; Board members Duaine Ash, Dave Bement, Rick Eagleson, Paul Haug, and; Members Miles Bobb, Joe Herda, Rynee Kellar, Ron Kraft, Ed Sweeney.
Others Present: Terry Steinwand, Greg Power, and Executive Secretary Marie Hoerner.

- President Clark Williams called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and attendees introduced themselves.
- After reviewing the minutes from the Annual Meeting on March 28, 2009, a motion to approve the minutes was made by Ash; seconded by Eagleson and passed. Terry Steinwand did mention that there is no “e” on Gangl, a Game & Fish employee.
- Treasurer Rick Eagleson distributed the “Treasurer’s Report”, which also revealed the income and expenses from the March 28, 2009 fund raiser. The 2009 fundraiser was the most successful net profit fundraiser held. New item at the fundraiser was the gun raffle, which netted an addition \$1,500. It was pointed out that in 2010, there will not any lobbyist expenses, but Clark Williams said he doesn't expect our lobbying expenses to go down in 2011. A motion to approve the financial reports was made by Paul Haug, seconded by Ash, and unanimously passed.
- North Dakota Game and Fish Department Report by Greg Power:
Development
 - 19 boat ramps were rehabbed this year and two new ramps were poured. There are approximately 350 statewide useable ramps. It was noted that if the Game & Fish pouring ramps in-house (rather than hiring it out), this cuts the cost significantly. This year the G&F put in 17 courtesy docks and 20 fishing piers. There was a lot of emphasis on small communities and where possible they are trying to put fishing piers in smaller communities. Also on development, ramps along the Missouri River and Devils Lake have received special attention due to ongoing access problems. At Devils Lake, we are keeping up – got road done in anticipation that the water will go up next spring. Terry Steinwand said they should contact DOT to see about paying for 90% of the road development. Then vault toilets also constructed; in some cases, it's been proven that port-a-potties are much more efficient. If fishing access is provided, the G&F does cost-share when putting in toilets.
 - Ron Kraft commented the G&F “broomed” the Dessert Ramp, which makes access easier. Power said that in SOL and boat ramp development -- if a project is over \$100,000, the G&F needs to bring in an engineer and this increases the costs and the project doesn't appear to be as good. They try to limit the use of engineers and do the work using G&F employees.
 - Miles Bobb said Mosset Bay is a little different since it's owned by the tribes. Mosset Bay just finished the cleaning station, except for the canopy. Southwest Anglers were asked to donate money to the project, but if they donate, they want to make sure the money is used for the specific project.
 - Clark Williams said the average cost of a cleaning station with a grinder is about \$60,000. Ron Kraft asked if G&F would consider a fish cleaning station at the Rifle Range. Greg Power thought conceptually it would be better to have one on 1804, rather than the Rifle Range, because of the amount of traffic.

Save Our Lakes (SOL)

- The Game & Fish removed sediment from 23 lakes, including McDowell Dam. First, they deepen the lakes, and then remove the fill. Dickinson Reservoir at the Lions Park is another example where sediment was removed this past fall.

Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS)

- The Game & Fish continues to step-up the enforcement of ANS. Hopefully ANS becomes an acronym that everyone is familiar with. They worked with the Friends of Sakakawea, and to a lesser degree with Voices for Oahe and the Devils Lake Chamber on ANS. Power said they contracted with some of the large AM radio stations and Joel Heitkamp really hit the ANS issue this year, but said we need to hit FM Radio with ANS messages also. New ANS infestations showed up on Lake Metigoshe, and the Sheyenne River found more spreading. These are the two new locations of ANS. It was noted that the Devils Lake Chamber has done an impressive job on putting out ANS information.
- Dave Bement said he is the chairman for the 2010 Bis-Man Reel & Rec spring derby and he will emphasize ANS at the tournament.
- Duaine Ash asked if Zebra mussels are found in Devils Lake, how many years would they be in the lake before they are recognized? Terry Steinwand said it would take a couple of years before they are seen.
- Greg Power said the G&F put “blue” ANS signs up, but they are trying to reduce the number of signs, because people don't recognize them. G&F hopes to possibly work with MDU, Otter Tail to include a slip on ANS in their billings to customers. In addition, they could send ANS information to Minnesota lake-home owners who are from ND about the ANS concerns in the Pelican Lake drainage. Greg said there are a lot of Grand Forks and Fargo residents that have lake homes.
- Eagleson said that his grandkids remind him to check for ANS when they get done fishing. Clark said it may be beneficial to talk to schools about ANS since kids remember everything, such as buckling up.

Stocking

- Greg said over 11 million fingerling were stocked with walleye, perch and pike into 180 lakes statewide. They hope to increase the Sakakawea salmon stocking next year.
- Status of fishing in the state was really good in the state this year and the overall fishing is only going to get better in future years.
- Game & Fish committed to experimental stock Devils Lake with fingerling perch in the past. This was conducted for two years and unfortunately the results were not promising. Some year down the road they may try one more year of experimental perch stocking. G&F did OTC marking to see what was natural, compared to stocking.
- Dickinson Reservoir had a bad winter kill this past year. G&F got access from about 100 landowners to kill the drainage above Dickinson Reservoir this summer and in November the lake was eradicated. There should be good fishing a few years down the road.

Carp issue in Devils Lake – Greg said they are down to getting one landowner's signature. This time last year, the G&F were waiting for about four landowner signatures, slowly, but surely.

Four issues

- Salmon – A handful of people felt the Game & Fish were killing salmon at the Garrison hatchery on purpose. They put in a request every year to the federal hatchery. This past year (as in most years), they had some extra salmon as they thinned their tanks. The G&F will usually take the extra salmon to stock. This year; however, the G&F did not stock these salmon into Sakakawea due to the ongoing forage problems. However, in retrospect (since the numbers were so small) they could have been likely stocked into the river. There was some misunderstandings by many and some bad publicity for disposing of 14,000 salmon. The salmon egg take this fall was good and it's anticipated the hatchery will again do a great job raising the salmon this winter. The G&F has a stocking request for 200,000 salmon to be stocked in 2010.
- Trout – Terry Steinwand mentioned there has been a long-term problem in ND with “locals” buying into trout-only fishing. Power said that G&F needs public support otherwise we're wasting a valuable public

resource (trout). He also explained it's a real challenge in ND to have 'trophy' trout as some would want due to multi-species, water quality, cormorants, illegal introductions, etc. At Crown Butte, the trout may not survive the winter but they have been stocked. In 2009, the G&F stocked 51 (36,000 pounds) water bodies with trout. There will be challenges in the years to come as salmon and trout compete for space at the hatchery. Cormorants – G&F does everything they possibly can to deal with the cormorant situation. Last year they killed 280. Next year, they are going to try to kill 850 cormorants if the federal government will allow. If they get the permit, they are going to try something different. There are just too many cormorants in North America.

- Regulations – Proposed proclamation changes were brought forth at the eight recent advisory board meetings. April 1, 2010 is the first of the two-year fishing proclamation. The G&F is soliciting input on the ANS regulation (all livewells and baitwells must be drained of water prior to leaving a water body). A copy of the G&F proposed changes for 2010-2012 fishing season are attached to the minutes. After some thorough evaluation, the G&F determined there is no need at this time for changes to daily or slot-limit (one-over) regulations at this time. (more so in Devils Lake and Missouri River). At this point, we are not limited to the number of females (and thus walleye eggs) out there. A copy of this evaluation is also attached to the minutes. G&F is not recommending any changes for walleye or pike limits.

Clark Williams said the Lake Region Anglers Association Board would like to get the limit changed on the white bass, either raising the limit or taking the limit off. They want the white bass out of the Devils Lake. Clark said the G&F will be sent a letter regarding this recommendation.

Other species - Greg stated that there is very little smallmouth bass stocking anymore since most is natural reproduction.

Rynee Kellar asked what you see in the Missouri River System. Greg said we need to have more water in North Dakota during droughts. They did increase the water with the new Master Manual but more will be needed some day.

NDSFC Issues/Committee Reports

- Spring Fund Raiser is scheduled for April 10, 2010 at Mandan Eagles. The 2009 fundraiser worked well, but had problems getting tickets sold in the big towns. Prizes have been from Reed's, however, Scheels is wanting to get involved in getting prizes. It was noted that Scheels won't give us a choice on what we get, while at Reeds, we can make our own selections. Duaine Ash said we need to decide on the amount of dollars to spend on prizes, and not make it determined on the number of ticket sales. Paul suggested buying the guns from Scheels and the fishing prizes from Reeds. Miles Bobb suggested checking with Scheels on depth finders or bigger items. Clark is going to ask Johnny Candle to talk to Scheels and see what kind of a deal we can work out for door prizes. It was the consensus that we continue to get the guns from Scheels. Mike Anderson needs to get permit and Clark said the tickets can be printed in Devils Lake.

Duaine Ash made a motion that if we go with Reeds that we determine the amount to spend on door prizes and it is not depending on the number of ticket sales. The motion was second by Miles Bobbs, unanimously passed. The four cash prizes (\$500; \$100 and 2 \$50) will remain the same and the cost of the ticket will remain the same at \$25. Marie Hoerner will work with Mike Anderson to get 100 of the special \$50 ticket sales incentives for the 2010 fundraiser.

- It was pointed out that the clubs have been good about paying their dues.
- President Clark Williams encouraged the clubs to update your websites.
- Election of Board Members – the terms for Vice President Lynn Schluetter and board members Rick Lee, Paul Haug and Ed Dosch are up in April 2010. Clark will inquire about their interest to continue serving. He encourages clubs to get involved as club delegates. Paul Haug will visit with Ron Sahr and Ken Cumber as to their interest in serving on the board.

- The Nominating Committee will consist of President Clark Williams, Past President Duaine Ash and Dave Bement. If you are interested in a position or know of someone who is interested, please contact one of the Nominating Committee members.
- Newsletter – The clubs are asked to submit articles by mid-February for a newsletter to go out around March 1, 2010. Clark will also ask the Game & Fish to submit articles for the newsletter.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Duaine Ash, seconded by Paul Haug and passed to adjourn the meeting at about 1:30 p.m.

Submitted by: Marie Hoerner, Executive Secretary

Date Submitted: December 13, 2009

Assessing a "One-Over" Walleye Length Restriction



Many anglers often wonder about fish size restrictions and whether they would work to make fishing better on their favorite water. The most common solution suggested is either a water-specific or statewide "one-over" regulation for walleyes, which would allow anglers to keep only one fish over a certain length in their daily limit.

Because of such high public interest, over the past few years Game and Fish fisheries biologists have made a concerted effort to review all possible length regulation restrictions and report findings through public meetings, video presentations and publications.

In addition, during winter 2009, fisheries staff held five public meetings across the state to specifically address the status of Devils Lake, Lake Sakakawea and Lake Oahe / Missouri River fisheries. Included in these discussions were ongoing evaluations and the lack of any data that would support the need for any new regulation restrictions.

And yet, some anglers still suggest that additional conservation measures are needed, based on opinions that too many large walleye are being harvested, particularly on Devils Lake and the Missouri River.

BIOLOGICAL

Maximum length limits (a "one-over" is a derivative of a maximum length limit) are likely to benefit fisheries where recruitment of fish is limited by the number of brood fish, and angling mortality of large fish is high. Therefore, a one-over regulation might help in a lake where angling exploitation is reducing the number of spawning-age fish, and that reduction is inhibiting natural reproduction.

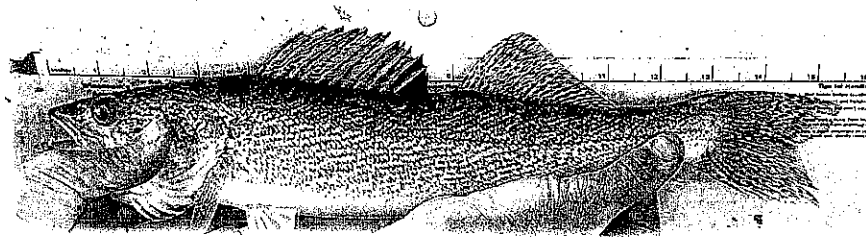
In North Dakota, only Devils Lake and the Missouri River/Lake Oahe could have this concern as they are the only two major walleye fisheries that currently depend exclusively upon natural reproduction. All other waters, including Lake Sakakawea, are supplemented or maintained exclusively through walleye stocking efforts.

A typical walleye population is considered sustainable with total mortality rates of 40-55 percent, according to scientific literature from across North America. Rates above 55 percent become problematic.

At Devils Lake, a current tagging study estimates angler exploitation in 2007 and 2008 at about 25 percent each year, with total mortality estimated at 34-39 percent.

On the Missouri River/Lake Oahe, estimated total annual mortality was 42 percent in 2008, higher than Devils Lake, but still within the sustainable range. From the best data we have available, we can conclude that mortality is not excessively high on Devils Lake or the Missouri River/Lake Oahe.

Since mortality is not excessively high, it's also not surprising that reproduction is not being affected. At Devils Lake, 1.75 million



and 1.7 million walleye were stocked in 2006 and 2007, respectively. Subsequent analysis showed that the stocked fish only contributed about 25 percent of the total YOY (young-of-year) catch those years. This strongly indicates

that natural reproduction was a far larger contributor than stocking.

Some anglers continue to express concerns over excessive harvest of large walleye from Devils Lake's tributary coulees in the spring, as was the case in 2009. However, despite the perception of excessive harvest of spawners by a few, in 2009 Devils Lake had its highest walleye reproduction ever documented, during a year when Game and Fish did not stock *any* walleyes in the lake.

The Missouri River/Lake Oahe has not been stocked with walleyes since 1981. And yet, the Missouri River had record high walleye reproduction each of the last two years, indicating that past exploitation up to 2009 has not inhibited reproduction.

SOCIAL

Beyond biological considerations, some anglers feel a "one-over" length limit will extend the "big fish" resource, allowing other anglers to catch released fish at some point in the future.

Biologists evaluated the potential effectiveness of a possible 20- or 22-inch one-over regulation restriction on the Missouri River/Lake Oahe because Game and Fish has comprehensive and recent creel survey data to evaluate. Despite a walleye population that has/had the most 20-inch-plus walleye for any fishery in the state for years, only 10 percent of the boats with only one angler and 5 percent of boats with multiple anglers harvested (kept) more than one walleye greater than 20 inches on any single fishing outing.

From April through August 2009, anglers on the Missouri River/Lake Oahe harvested approximately 300,000 walleye. Of that total, about 37,000 (12.4 percent) were greater than 20 inches and 8,000 were greater than 22 inches.

If a one-over 20 inches regulation had been in place in 2009, anglers then would have had to release about 6,600 fish. Of these, anglers could expect to recatch about 1,400 at some point in the future, which means 5,200 would die naturally, never again caught by another angler.

If the one-over regulation was 22 inches, about 650 would have been released that were otherwise harvested, with 140 of those eventually caught again. As a point of reference, during this same time anglers *voluntarily* released more than 77,000 walleye. Many of these were greater than 20 inches.

CONCLUSION

Game and Fish is fortunate to have sufficient long-term information to help effectively manage the state's fisheries. At current fishing effort and exploitation rates, Game and Fish biologists are confident that a one-over regulation would serve no biological or social purpose.

Proposed Changes for the 2010-2012 Fishing Seasons



- All livewells and baitwells must be drained of water prior to leaving a water body.
- Excluding legal live baitfish, no fish species may be transported in water away from the water body in which they were taken with the following exception: ice in a cooler or other container may be used to transport fish.
- Any container used to transport aquatic bait must be five gallons or less with the following exception: baitwells in boats while on the water.
 - These proposed rule changes are in response to a recent discovery in Minnesota of zebra mussels in the Red River Basin. Zebra mussels and many other ANS flora/fauna can be easily moved in water and due to their small size, are difficult to visually observe.
 - These measures are a preventive and proactive extension of current ANS and bait vendor administrative rules (April 2008) that prohibits water in bilges and other areas of recreational boats and commercial equipment.
- Added Harmon Lake and Crown Butte Dam (both in Morton County) to the list of 'no legal live baitfish'.
 - Both lakes are new or recently renovated. Use of baitfish is not needed in either water body given the species composition of the two recreational fisheries.
- Added the State Fair Pond (Pathway Pond) (Ward County) to the list of closed to all fishing from November 1 through March 31.
 - Lake safety concern as a new aeration system is now in place and will be operated during the winter months when angler's safety on the ice would be a real concern.
- Added Carlson Lakes (Ward County), Gravel Lake (Rolette County) and West Napoleon Lake (Logan County) and removed Patterson Reservoir (Dickinson Reservoir) Stark County) to dark house spear fishing.
 - Ongoing assessment of potential lakes that could be open to dhsf. Patterson will be eliminated as a dhsf lake due to future fish management that will focus on walleye as the only predator (and eradicated in Nov 2009).
- Lake Metigoshe (Bottineau County) daily and possession limit for bluegill will be reduced to 10 and 20 respectively.
 - Perhaps our best bluegill lake in the state that at times has some higher effort and perhaps harvest. Fourth lake that will have exceptions to statewide limits – ongoing evaluation to assess effectiveness.
- Eliminated the 14" minimum walleye size limit on Spiritwood Lake (Stutsman County) and Lake Ashtabula (Barnes County).
 - After years of being in place, the above length restrictions on these two lakes are proposed to be removed as they never achieved any (significant) positive benefits.