

**NORTH DAKOTA  
STATE REPORT**  
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**2017 Deer Season Set**

North Dakota's 2017 deer season is set with 54,500 licenses available to hunters this fall, 5,500 more than last year.

In total, any antlered licenses increased by 1,450 from last year, any antlerless by 1,750, antlered mule deer by 200, antlerless mule deer by 600, antlered whitetail by 550 and antlerless whitetail by 950. In addition, muzzleloader licenses increased by 94, and restricted youth antlered mule deer increased by 20.

Game and Fish will issue mule deer doe licenses in units 4B and 4C for the first time since 2011. However, for the sixth consecutive year there are no mule deer doe licenses available in unit 4A, due to higher winter mortality which caused a slight decline in numbers from 2016.

**Two Deer Test Positive for CWD**

A mule deer doe and a mule deer buck taken during the 2016 deer gun season from unit 3F2 in southwestern North Dakota have tested positive for chronic wasting disease.

Since 2009, the total now stands at nine deer to test positive for CWD and all were from within unit 3F2.

In addition to the 350 samples tested for CWD from unit 3F2, another 1,050 were tested from deer harvested last fall by hunters in the eastern third of the state, and from any moose or elk taken during the hunting season. In all, more than 1,400 samples were tested.

Since the Game and Fish Department's sampling efforts began in 2002, more than 30,000 deer, elk and moose have tested negative for CWD.

**2016 Deer Season Summarized**

A total of 44,140 North Dakota deer hunters took approximately 29,300 deer during the 2016 deer gun hunting season, according to a post-season survey conducted by the state Game and Fish Department.

Game and Fish made available 49,000 deer gun licenses last year. Overall hunter success was 66 percent, with each hunter spending an average of 4.4 days in the field.

Game and Fish issued 13,466 gratis licenses in 2016, and 11,369 hunters harvested 6,593

deer, for a success rate of 58 percent.

A record 26,755 archery licenses (24,532 resident, 2,223 nonresident) were issued in 2016. In total, 22,071 bow hunters harvested 9,492 deer (8,686 whitetails, 806 mule deer), for a success rate of 43 percent.

### **Pronghorn Hunters Successful**

Hunter success during last fall's pronghorn hunting season was 73 percent, according to statistics provided by the North Dakota Game and Fish Department.

Game and Fish issued 730 licenses (474 lottery and 256 gratis), and 716 hunters took 523 pronghorn, consisting of 482 bucks and 41 does. Each hunter spent an average of 2.2 days afield.

The 2017 pronghorn hunting season will be determined in July.

### **2016 Bighorn Sheep, Moose and Elk Harvests**

Harvest statistics released by the North Dakota Game and Fish Department show overall hunter success during the 2016 season for bighorn sheep was 100 percent, 97 percent for moose and 56 percent for elk.

The department issued seven bighorn sheep licenses and auctioned one. All eight hunters harvested a bighorn ram.

The department issued 200 moose licenses last year. Of that total, 192 hunters harvested 187 animals – 121 bulls and 66 cows/calves.

The department issued 348 elk licenses last year. Of that total, 324 hunters harvested 179 elk – 102 bulls and 77 cows/calves.

### **Catchable Trout Stocked**

Almost 40 local fisheries around North Dakota have a fresh supply of catchable trout, as state Game and Fish Department personnel are wrapping up their annual spring trout stocking efforts.

Fisheries production and development section leader Jerry Weigel said while fisheries statewide are at historic highs, many are not as easily accessible to youngsters, older adults and disabled anglers.

“These stockings put catchable fish in waters that are accessible,” Weigel said. “Many community fisheries have fishing piers, and provide a great opportunity for a first-time anglers to catch fish.”

In addition, Weigel emphasized that trout are kid-friendly and they bite aggressively in the spring before temperatures warm up, so the best time to catch them will be in the next few weeks.

The trout are nice-sized too, Weigel said, as more than 20,000 11-inch rainbow trout were stocked, along with 800 1- to 2-pound cutthroat trout.

Anglers can refer to the fishing tab at the Game and Fish Department's website, [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov), for a complete stocking report.

### **NASP State Tournament Results**

A record total of 614 archers competed in the North Dakota National Archery in the Schools Program state bull's-eye tournament March 17-18 in Minot, a 15 percent increase from the mark set last year.

Hankinson students claimed top honors in the elementary (grades 4-6), middle school (grades 7-8) and high school (grades 9-12) divisions.

Overall male and female winners were Hankinson archers Clayton Stone and Jaycee Brown.

Winning teams and the top 10 individuals qualify for the national tournament, scheduled for May in Louisville, Ky. The Game and Fish Department and North Dakota Youth Archery Advisory Council contribute a total of \$3,000 in travel assistance to the first place team in each division, and \$1,000 to the overall male and female individual winners. In addition, a total of \$21,000 in college scholarships was awarded by the NDYAAC to the top five overall scorers in both boys and girls divisions.

### **New Legislation**

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department tracked 28 outdoors-related bills during the 2017 legislative session, 11 of which were passed by both chambers and signed into law.

The following bills take effect Aug. 1, unless the bill includes an emergency clause which indicates it is already in effect.

**HB 1017** – Appropriates \$83,277,498 to the Game and Fish Department for the biennium beginning July 1, 2017, and ending June 30, 2019. Passed House 72-13. Passed Senate 44-1.

**HB 1025** – Provides a guideline for the Director to allocate big game hunting licenses to eligible organizations, and turkey hunting licenses for individuals receiving hunting expeditions from a nonprofit organization. Passed House 84-6. Passed Senate 45-0.

**HB 1150** – Allows a resident of North Dakota, who does not want to receive a hunting license issued by lottery, to purchase a bonus point for a fee that is the same as the respective license. The fee is allocated to the Game and Fish Department's Private Land Open To Sportsmen program. Passed House 90-0. Passed Senate 44-0.

**HB 1204** – Reduces the age from 16 to 12 to qualify for an apprentice hunter validation license; allows youth who turn age 11 before the end of the calendar year to receive a whitetail doe license valid only for the youth hunting season; repeals the eagle language in state law, however, eagles remain protected under federal regulation. Passed House 83-2. Passed Senate 47-0.

**HB 1207** – Allows Game and Fish to seize tangible property presumed abandoned on state game refuges, real property leased or managed by the Game and Fish Department, and state game or fish management areas. After 90 days, the Director may dispose of seized, unclaimed, tangible property presumed abandoned, or order it be turned over to the North Dakota Wildlife Federation to be sold for the highest price obtainable. The sale proceeds, after expenses of the seizure and sale are deducted, must be remitted to the North Dakota Wildlife Federation Report All Poachers fund. A report of the sale, supported by proper vouchers covering all deductions made for expenses, must be filed for the record with the Director. Passed House 84-4. Passed Senate 46-0.

**HB 1367** – An operator of a personal watercraft is not required to have an observer on board while towing an individual on water skis, kneeboard or an inflatable craft if the personal watercraft is equipped with a mirror on each side with an unobstructed field of vision to the rear; allows an individual who is at least 16 years old to windsurf or boardsail without wearing a personal flotation device; prohibits water skiing or surfboarding between one hour after sunset to one hour before sunrise. Includes emergency clause. Passed House 87-5. Passed Senate 44-3.

**HB 1419** – Gives the Director the option to establish a shooting sports grant program, which may be made available to schools, clubs and organized youth groups. Passed House 85-3. Passed Senate 41-4.

**SB 2239** – Repeals the annual inspection of all watercraft used for hire. Includes emergency clause. Passed House 89-2. Passed Senate 47-0.

**SB 2284** – A vendor who sells hunting and fishing licenses may add a 3 percent service fee to the total transaction. The service fee does not apply to license purchases or applications made through the Game and Fish Department website. Passed House 91-3. Passed Senate 46-0.

**SB 2308** – Allows a fish house and a coyote snare to be identified by a registration number provided by the Game and Fish Department. Previously, the trapper or angler needed to display their name or telephone number. This new law provides a registration number as another option for identifying fish house and snare ownership. Passed House 90-2. Passed Senate 47-0.

**SB 2318** – Requires the pheasant hunting season to open no later than October 12. In 2017, the season is tentatively set to open October 7. Passed House 81-10. Passed Senate 46-0.

### **Game and Fish Announces Habitat Projects Designed for Wildlife**

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department is partnering with the U.S Department of Agriculture to provide landowners with options to enroll acreage into two new programs designed to develop wildlife habitat.

A new Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, and State Acres For Wildlife Enhancement, are companion programs to the popular Conservation Reserve Program.

The North Dakota Riparian Project CREP allows states to identify resource concerns and design a custom built CRP along riparian areas, with special focus areas, additional incentives and added flexibility within practices to address resource concerns.

Landowners interested in CREP can enroll acres in portions of Adams, Billings, Bowman, Burleigh, Dunn, Emmons, Grant, Golden Valley, Hettinger, McKenzie, Mercer, Morton, Oliver, Sioux, Slope and Stark counties. The enrollment cap for this program is 20,000 acres.

Over a 10-year period, approximately \$19 million in federal funds from the Farm Service Agency will be used to provide annual rental, incentive and cost-share payments for filter strips, riparian buffers, or pollinator and honeybee habitat. The state will contribute more than \$4.3 million, which is funded from the Game and Fish Department's Private Land Open To Sportsmen program and the North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund.

Riparian areas are identified in the Department's Wildlife Action Plan, and provide important habitat for a variety of fish, plant and animal species, including pollinators and other species of concern, by filtering nutrients and sediments and improving water quality.

Producers interested in developing filter strips, riparian buffers or pollinator and honeybee habitat will enter into a CREP contract with FSA and receive annual rental payments, incentives and cost-share. Game and Fish will also provide additional incentives and cost-share on CREP acres.

Expired CRP is not eligible for the North Dakota Riparian Project CREP. Land offered must meet FSA cropping history requirements and be located within the project boundary.

There is no size requirement for enrolling land into CREP. Any land enrolled in a CREP contract with USDA must also be enrolled in the Game and Fish PLOTS program. Landowners will receive payments for allowing walk-in hunting access, and are eligible for additional habitat enhancements, incentives and cost-share.

Landowners don't have to allow public access to their entire property, only a 40-acre minimum is required for enrollment in PLOTS.

In addition to the CREP, North Dakota landowners can enroll up to 40,000 acres into the Declining Grasslands Birds SAFE, which is designed to develop habitat for species of special concern.

Through SAFE, landowners can establish native grasses and forbs that will help maintain or improve grassland bird populations. Managed grazing is allowed and will help ensure a healthy and diverse prairie habitat. Landowners will receive annual CRP rental payments, cost-share and signup incentives from USDA. Public access is not required, but landowners may be eligible for additional payments and cost-share for allowing walk-in access through the PLOTS program.

Counties in the project area for SAFE are all of Adams, Billings, Bowman, Burleigh, Dunn, Emmons, Grant, Golden Valley, Hettinger, Kidder, Logan, McIntosh, McKenzie, Mercer, Morton, Oliver, Sioux, Slope, Stark and Williams counties; and portions of Burke, Dickey, Divide, Foster, LaMoure, McHenry, McLean, Mountrail, Sheridan, Stutsman, Ward and Wells counties.

For information regarding the project, landowners should contact a local Game and Fish private land biologist or their local county USDA service center.

### **State Record Carp**

Derek Barnick's catch on April 21 is the first entry to North Dakota's list of state record fish in 2017. The Tappen angler took a 31 pound, 9 ounce common carp from Lake Etta-Alkaline with a bow and arrow.

The 36-inch fish broke the old record of 31 pounds taken by Austin Loberg of Thompson from the Sheyenne River in 2003.

### **New Buffalo Record Set by Bow Fisherman**

For the second time in less than three weeks, a North Dakota bow fisherman has set a new state record.

Derek Larson, Mandan, arrowed a new record buffalo on May 5 to follow up a new record common carp taken by Derek Barnick of Tappen on April 21.

Larson's buffalo, pulled in from Heart Butte Reservoir on May 5, weighed a hefty 57 pounds 8 ounces and measured 45 inches. It broke the previous buffalo record of 54 pounds even, taken in the Heart River in 2011 by Keith Huschka of Dickinson.

Buffalo are a native fish sometimes confused with the nonnative and invasive common carp. State Game and Fish Department records indicate that Larson's fish is the largest ever weighed in the state that was not a paddlefish or pallid sturgeon.

### **Fishing Access Sites on Google Maps**

North Dakota angler should note that the vast majority of the more than 600 public fishing access sites in the state are now available through Google Maps.

While users may use any number of word combinations to find what they are searching for, Weigel said the standard is as follows:

- For sites with a boat ramp, type the name of the lake, plus boating access. (For Fish Creek Dam in Morton County, for example, it would be: Fish Creek Dam Boating Access.)
- For sites without a boat ramp, type the name of the lake, plus fishing access. (For Makoti Lake in Ward County, for example, it would be: Makoti Lake Fishing Access.)