

**PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE  
CITY OF DRAYTON, NORTH DAKOTA**

The City of Drayton will hold a public meeting at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 22, 2024, in the Drayton Public School to discuss the Sanitary, Water, Storm, and Street Improvements project.

The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss the current issues, the work that will be completed, estimated costs, funding, and schedule. Residents are encouraged to attend.

Drayton City Council

**'FARM LOANS' CON'T FROM PAGE 3**

FSA helps America's farmers, ranchers and forest landowners invest in, improve, protect and expand their agricultural operations through the delivery of agricultural programs for all Americans. FSA implements agricultural policy, administers credit and loan programs, and manages conservation, commodity, disaster recovery and marketing programs through a national network of state and county offices and locally elected county committees. For more information, visit [fsa.usda.gov](http://fsa.usda.gov).

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**River otter trapping season closed**

North Dakota's river otter trapping season is closed. The statewide season's predetermined harvest limit of 25 has been reached.

Only North Dakota residents were eligible to participate, with a season limit of one otter per trapper.

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**A look back at spearing in North Dakota**

By Doug Leier, Outreach Biologist



Have you ever been darkhouse spearfishing for pike? It's relatively new compared to most outdoor recreation, having started a mere 25 years ago, but for those who have taken the opportunity it's hard to compare.

I remember the first time I went spearfishing at Spiritwood Lake. Sitting still in a darkhouse was like nothing I'd ever done before. I'm no expert but when the first northern drifted into the decoy as I sat undetected, I locked up. Not surprisingly, I missed it.

Maybe it's close to the thrill of calling turkeys into a decoy? Others might describe the rush like sitting undetected in a tree stand archery hunting for deer. I can attest it's a rush of its own unique draw.

Decoying a pike isn't the same as decoying ducks or holding a draw on a deer. None of those take place in the middle of a frozen lake with nothing but ice and cold water between you and the pike.

If you've ever watched a pike come in and attack a decoy, it's incomparable. To get to that point is not easy. The combination of cold, snow and dark could be why the popularity of darkhouse spearfishing hasn't, and likely never will, rival the sun, waves and water of summer fishing?

Looking at last year's spearfishing statistics prove how a warmer winter with poor ice conditions results in lower participation and success.

Greg Power fisheries division chief highlights a few notes:

► 3,109 individuals registered - 2018 residents, 1091 non-residents from 29 states including 716 from Minnesota (23%); despite an open-winter, the number of registrants were similar to the previous winter which was greatly impacted by extreme cold weather and snowfall.

► 9,181 northern pike were harvested, the lowest number since 2010-11 and less than a one-third



Decoying a pike isn't the same as decoying ducks or holding a draw on a deer. Photo by NDGF-Ashley Peterson

of that harvested in 2017-18 (the record year).

► Average spearer was 42.8 years old and 88% were male.

► Survey respondents indicated participation in DHSF on a record 138 water bodies (up 32 from 2021-22).

► DHSF effort of the top 15 lakes accounted for nearly 75% of the effort with Sakakawea accounting for about 35% of the total effort (which basically equaled the effort of the next ten water bodies).

► Top 14 lakes accounted for more than 73% of the DHSF pike harvest with Sakakawea accounting for 28% of the total harvest. The top four waters (i.e. Sakakawea, Devils Lake, Twin (LaMoure) and Horsehead) accounted for 56% of the total pike harvest.

► Median and mean weights of the largest pike reported harvested by the respondents were 10.0 and 10.5 pounds respectively - these metrics are the highest ever recorded.

► 2022-23 was the first winter that the taking of walleye (in addition to pike and rough fish) during DHSF was legal for the Devils Lake, Stump Lake, and MRS including Lakes Sakakawea and Oahe. For this past winter (23-24), the following number of spears harvested the following number of

walleye - Sakakawea - 88 spears and 218 walleye,

Devils Lake 26 spears and 54 walleye, Missouri River three spears and three walleye, and Stump one and one.

**2024-25 North Dakota darkhouse spearing**

Individuals required to possess a valid fishing license (age 16 and older) to darkhouse spearfish must first register online at the North Dakota Game and Fish Department website, [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov).

Darkhouse spearing is allowed for all anglers with a valid fishing license and for youth under age 16.

Northern pike and nongame fish are the only legal species statewide, while walleye can be speared at Stump Lake and the Devils Lake complex south of U.S. Highway 2 and the Missouri River System (including lakes Oahe and Sakakawea and the Missouri River) up to the first tributary bridge.

Spears and anglers are reminded that materials used to mark holes must be in possession as soon as a hole greater than 10 inches in diameter is made in the ice.

Registration and full details can be found on the Game and Fish Department's website at [gf.nd.gov](http://gf.nd.gov).

**'YEAR IN REVIEW' CON'T FROM PAGE 5**

**Tourism**

Tourism in North Dakota reached new heights, with a 5.3% increase to 25.6 million visitors contributing a record \$3.3 billion in visitor expenditures to local economies. These achievements showcase North Dakota's increasing appeal as a travel destination, bringing economic benefits to communities across the state.

**Workforce**

The Office of Legal Immigration (OLI) hosted North Dakota's first Global Talent Summit, engaging 215 employers and earning recognition as a USCIS "Best Practice Office" in May 2024. It has also been highlighted by Bloomberg TV.

Since its 2022 relaunch, Find the Good Life continues to draw new people to North Dakota, with more than 4,200 jobseekers utilizing the relocation help desk. The number of workers is already up 10,000 from the end of 2023, with future plans to include expanded tracking and increased funding to amplify its success.

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