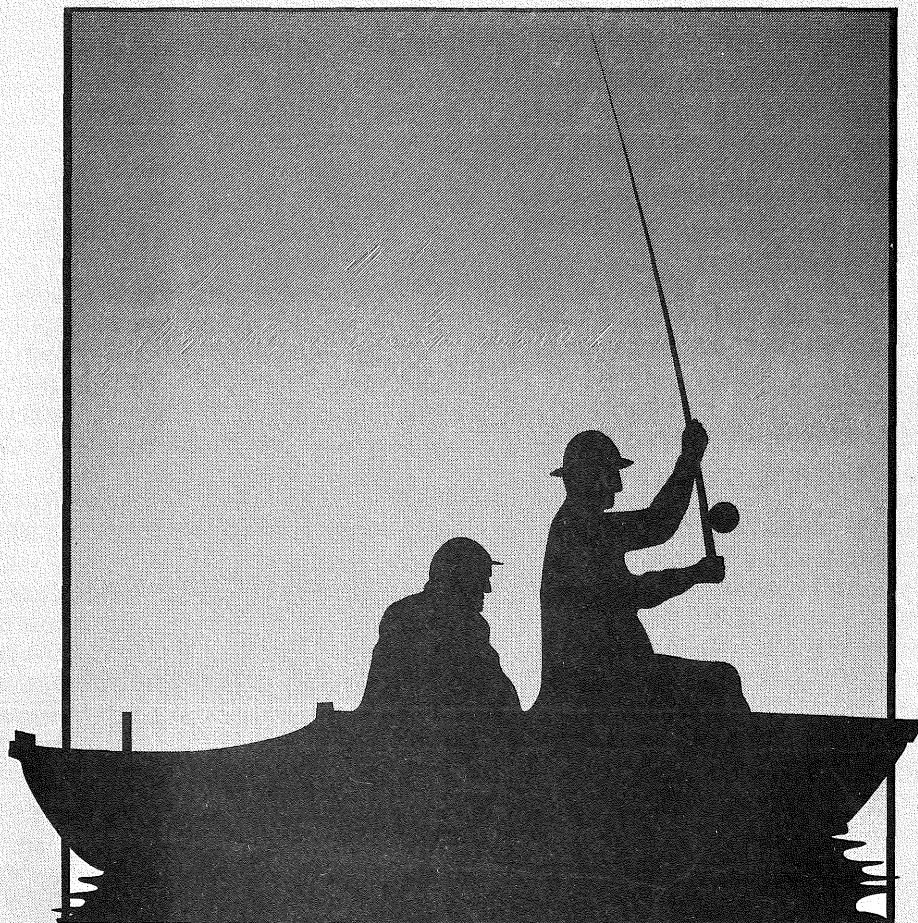




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# RED RIVER ANGLER'S GUIDE



Produced in 1996 by :

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
Minnesota Game and Fish

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## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS BROCHURE?

This brochure is intended to serve as a synopsis of information for people that fish the Red River. Included in the pamphlet is information on such topics as fisheries management, fish biology, access locations, and who to contact to get more information. We hope the information is valuable and interesting to you. Please let us know what you think of the brochure.

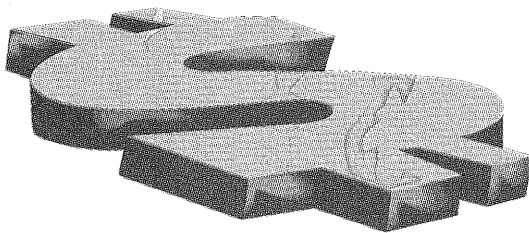
## THE RED RIVER OF THE NORTH - "BEST OF THE BEST!" TROPHY CATFISH AND A WHOLE LOT MORE

When the who's who of catfish angling talk about channel catfish, the Red River leads the pack. The Red River is internationally known for its trophy-sized channel catfish. The area from Fargo ND / Moorhead MN north to Lake Winnipeg, MAN is prime catfish territory.

In recent years, European and Australian anglers have been attracted to the Red River fishery, not because of catfish, but because of **carp**! Yes, carp are a highly desirable game fish in many parts of the world. Carp were brought to North America because of the demands of early European settlers. The world is getting smaller. You may be fishing next to an angler who traveled thousands of miles to fish this river.

## FISHING IS BIG BUSINESS

The Red River fishery generates millions of dollars of tourist activity. The fishing activity on a ten mile stretch of the Red River near Selkirk, Manitoba, adds about 10 to 12 million dollars annually to the



local economy. Results reported in a 1994 survey of the U.S. section of the river estimated that about 2 million dollars was spent on fishing related activities during a four month period.

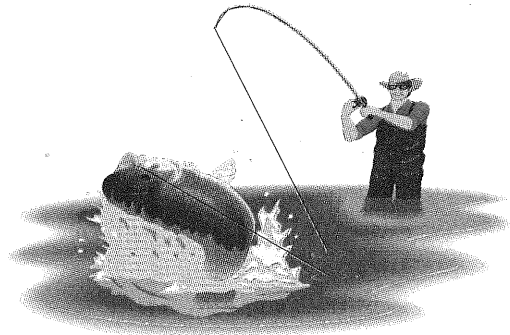
## RIPARIAN LANDS

Good land stewardship practices within watersheds, and especially on land adjacent to streams, rivers, lakes and ditches, benefit not only the adjacent waters but the downstream areas as well. Some of the benefits are: bank stabilization, flood control, increased water quality, wildlife habitat, and fisheries habitat. Leaves, bark and wood entering the water provide valuable habitat for invertebrates, insects, fish, and wildlife. Trees, snags and large woody debris along the stream bank and within the stream channel provide current breaks, shade, ambush sites, spawning substrate and cover for fish. Anglers benefit because fish congregate around good habitat.

Society benefits when riparian lands function as flood plains to reduce downstream flooding, and as buffer strips to remove sediment, chemicals, and trash. Protecting a natural stream corridor is like putting money in the bank. And yes, the fish you eat will have fewer chemicals in their flesh.

## FISHERIES MANAGEMENT ON THE RED RIVER

The Red River Fisheries Technical Committee was formed in 1989 to develop a cooperative management plan for the shared fish stocks in the Red River. Fisheries professionals from Minnesota, North and South Dakota, and the



Canadian Province of Manitoba are represented on the committee.

The goals of the committee are: 1) to determine the status of the fish populations, 2) to determine necessary management options to protect the fish stocks, 3) to develop standardized fisheries assessment methodology, and, 4) to develop an action plan for future management on the Red River.

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One of the first actions of the committee was to institute special regulations protecting channel catfish. The regulations were instituted in response to complaints by anglers that catfish quality was declining due to excessive harvest of large catfish. A reduced possession limit of 5 catfish, with only one allowed over 24 inches, was put in place before the 1990 fishing season.

In 1990, Minnesota and North Dakota conducted a river-wide assessment of the catfish population. Over 6,800 channel catfish were sampled in the Red River and four of its' tributaries. Over 3,000 of these catfish were tagged. The tagged fish were part of a study conducted by a graduate student at the University of North Dakota. The information gained from these initial studies laid the ground work for present management of the channel catfish.

In 1994, Minnesota DNR Fisheries conducted a recreational use survey of the Red River and the Red Lake River to determine angler use and expectations, harvest by species, and economic benefit from the fishery.

In 1995, the Minnesota DNR repeated the population assessment using the methods developed in 1990.

The committee hopes to fund a catfish radio telemetry study beginning in 1997. The purpose of the study is to identify critical habitats such as spawning sites and wintering sites, and to assess how the fish utilize in-stream habitat on a daily basis.

The committee is attempting to standardize regulations on the Red River to make fishing on the border more "user friendly."

#### **MINNESOTA TRESPASS LAW: ASK FIRST**

Always ask for permission before entering private land. Unless the DNR has purchased an access easement from the landowner, you can not trespass on privately owned lake or stream shorelines without permission.

#### **NORTH DAKOTA TRESPASS LAW: ASK FIRST**

Permission is always required to enter private land that is posted. It is recommended that you always get permission to enter private land that is not

posted.

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE LIBRARY

Trespassing is a misdemeanor in both Minnesota and North Dakota. If you are convicted of violating trespass laws, your fishing privilege may be taken from you. All conservation officers and peace officers enforce trespass laws.

#### **LOWHEAD DAMS ON THE RED RIVER**

There are eight lowhead dams on the Red River and many of the tributaries have lowhead dams.

#### **LOWHEAD DAMS ARE ALL DANGEROUS AND VIEWED AS "THE DROWNING MACHINES."**

Lowhead dams create a "hydraulic" current that pulls objects to the face of the dam and back to



**LOWHEAD DAM**

DANGEROUS CURRENT

the bottom of the stream. Anglers should be aware of their presence, and should keep a safe distance away from them. Whether on shore or in a boat, people should not enter the restrictive zones associated with lowhead dams for any purpose. Lowhead dams are located at: Wahpeton-Breckenridge, Wolverton, ND, Hickson, ND Fargo-Moorhead (3), Grand Forks-East Grand Forks, and Drayton, ND.

#### **CATCH AND RELEASE**

The Red River and several of its' tributaries possess a high quality fishery. Channel catfish, northern pike, sauger, walleye, smallmouth bass and carp are present with numerous individuals of "trophy" size. Muskie are present in low numbers but large fish have been sampled in recent years.

Anglers are encouraged to release the medium to large individuals of all species to maintain the high quality fishery that exists in the Red River.

Catch and release will not work if the fish dies after being released. Fortunately, almost all fish correctly played, landed, and released will survive.

Studies by natural resources agencies have shown survival rates of between 70 and 100% for released fish.

To ensure that the fish you release survive, follow these simple guidelines: 1) Use barbless hooks, 2) Set the hook quickly, 3) Play the fish quickly, 4) Hold the fish firmly, but gently while removing the hook, 5) Use a needle nose pliers to remove the hooks, 6) Cut the line if the fish is throat-hooked, and, 7) Gently slide the fish into the water.

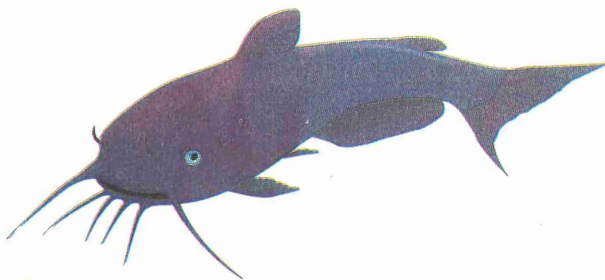
For more information on catch and release, you may receive a copy of "An Angler's Guide to Catch and Release" from a Minnesota DNR fisheries office.

### FISH OF THE RED RIVER

The Red River is home to a diverse, quality fish community. Researchers have identified more than fifty species of fish in the river. The following section gives a brief run-down on a few of the species.

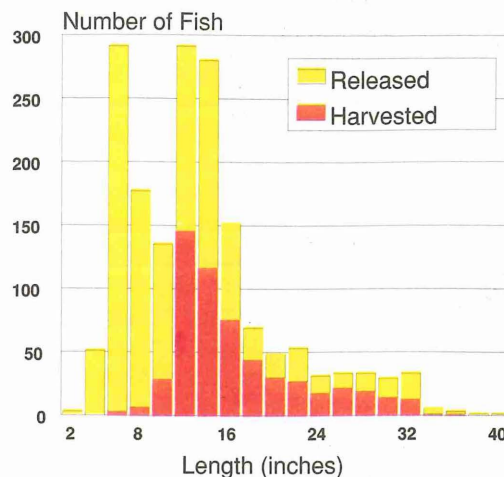
#### Channel catfish

Channel catfish are the most common game fish within the Red River and its tributary streams. Channel catfish are slow growing and do not attain 30 inches until they are teenagers. Channel catfish are long-lived in the Red River. Individuals have been aged to 24 years old, and they can grow to over 30 lbs. Natural reproduction is adequate to sustain a world class fishery. Because these catfish are at the northern extent of their range, sexual development requires a huge investment in energy. To compensate for this high



energy demand, some Red River catfish have developed a reproductive scheme which insures adequate health of the individual fish by not spawning every year. Channel catfish average size tends to increase as you move downstream.

The Red River tagging study indicated that while most catfish movement is localized, some individual fish travel large distances (up to 300



**Length distribution of channel catfish from Red River anglers surveyed in 1994.**

miles). Lowhead dams on the Red River inhibit fish movement, but some tagged catfish were able to move around dams during high flow periods. Catfish utilize Red River tributary streams for spawning, nursery and adult life stages.

#### Muskellunge

Reports of anglers catching muskies on the Red River are becoming more common. A large muskie was reportedly caught in 1993, while two small fish were reportedly caught in September, 1994. The Minnesota DNR, Section of Fisheries, sampled two muskies during a 1995 population assessment. The two robust fish were approximately 20 and 28 lbs. If you catch a muskie, please report this to the local fisheries office, along with a photo if you have one.

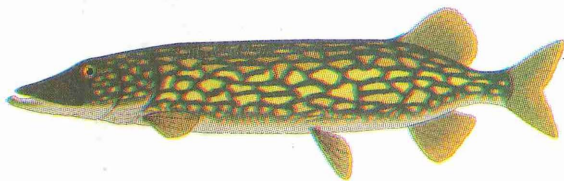
Muskies spawn when the water temperature reaches 48-59 degrees, about two weeks after northern pike. They will usually spawn a second time about 14 days after the first spawning period. The eggs of a muskie are not adhesive like the northern pike, but rather the eggs settle to the bottom. The eggs hatch in about 20 days. The muskies diet is similar to that of northern pike.



### Northern pike

Northern pike are common throughout the Red River watershed. Northern pike as large as 45 inches were sampled during the 1995 assessment netting. There are several strong year classes of northern pike in the population now. Anglers can expect good northern pike fishing in years to come.

Northern pike spawn as soon as the tributaries are free of ice (33-45 degrees). Northern pike spawn in wetlands and flooded vegetation within the floodplain. Northern pike will move up watersheds until they encounter a barrier. It is not uncommon to hear of northern pike being stranded in ditches and fields after moving up through farm tile. The



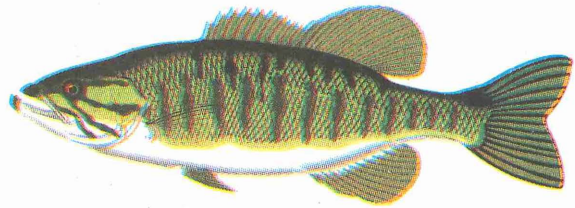
female randomly deposits her sticky eggs on submerged vegetation. The eggs will hatch in about two weeks. The fry feed on plankton and then invertebrates, but soon switch to a diet of fish. Pike will grow to a length of 8-12 inches during their first year of growth. Northern pike live to about 10-12 years of age and may exceed 20 pounds. Northern pike feed on a variety of fish species.

### Smallmouth bass

Smallmouth bass exceeding four pounds are present in the upstream areas of the Red River from Breckenridge/Wahpeton to Grand Forks. Smallies are abundant in the lower reaches of the Red Lake River downstream from Thief River Falls, MN. Smallmouth bass were introduced to the Red Lake River in the early 1980's to provide a game fish for the high quality rock riffle areas between Thief River Falls and East Grand Forks. The introduction has been successful in establishing a self-sustaining population.

Smallmouth bass are continuing to expand their range within the Red River. Smallmouth bass are also present in the Otter Tail River between Schmidt's bridge and Orwell Dam near Fergus Falls, MN. This population is expanding its' distribution. Smallies spawn in late May to late June. The male builds a nest for the female to

deposit her eggs in. The male defends the nest and the young until they are able to feed on their



own. Best year classes are produced during years of moderate to low flow. Bass feed on a variety of insects, fish, frogs and crayfish.

### Freshwater drum (sheepshead, croaker, thunderpumper)

Freshwater drum are common in the main stem of the Red River and the lower reaches of the larger tributaries. Downstream reaches possess the largest individuals. The drum has a special set of muscles that they can vibrate against their swim bladder to produce the loud drumming or croaking sound for which they are named. Drum are bottom feeders selecting for insects, small fish, crayfish, and small clams.

Drum spawn in early to late June. Spawning occurs in open water, and the eggs are broadcast over the stream bottom. During spawning, croaking or drumming can be heard with regularity.

### Sauger

Sauger are abundant in the lower reaches of the Red River downstream of Grand Forks. Sauger grow to lengths of about 16 inches in the Red River. Sauger spawn in mid to late May over clean gravel substrate. Recruitment is stable in the Red River, with many year classes present. Sauger feed on minnows, insects and crayfish. Anglers seek sauger for its excellent eating quality.

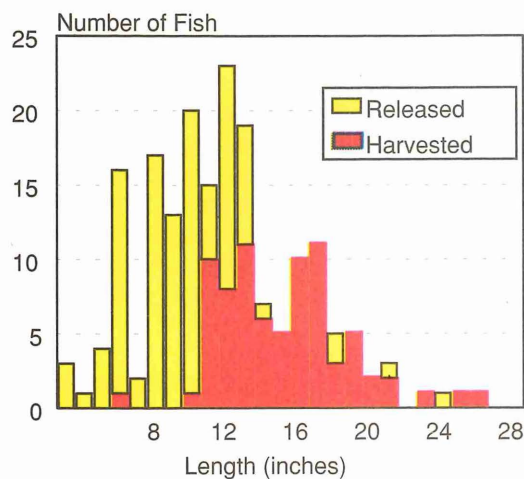
### Bullheads

Black and brown bullheads are common within the watershed. Brown bullheads tend to inhabit areas with better water quality than black bullheads. Bullheads build a nest to spawn in. The male of the species defends the nest from intruders. Spawning usually takes place during May and June. Bullheads are omnivores, eating any food

item. This may include worms, minnows, snails, clams, frogs, crayfish and even vegetation on occasion. Bullheads are easy to catch and tasty to eat.

### Walleye

Walleye are common throughout the Red River and its larger tributaries. Individuals as large as 12-13 pounds are caught each year. Walleye spawn in late April to mid May over clean gravel and rock, or over clam beds. The female randomly deposits her sticky eggs on the gravel and rock. The eggs will hatch in about three



**Length distribution of walleye from Red River anglers surveyed in 1994.**

weeks. Red River walleye grow fast, and recruitment into the population is stable, with many year classes present. Walleye feed on fish, worms, insects, and crayfish. Walleye are sought for their excellent eating quality.

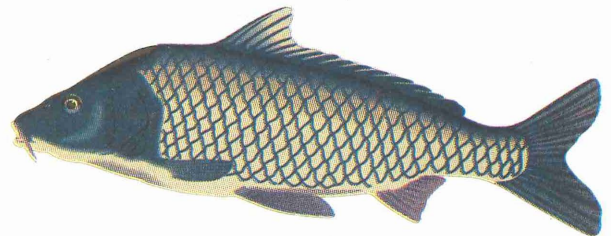
### Goldeye and mooneye

Goldeye and mooneye are common in the Red River and the lower reaches of its' larger tributaries. Goldeye are abundant in the downstream reaches of the Red River, while mooneye are more abundant in the upstream reaches. Goldeye and mooneye spawn in June, broadcasting their eggs along the bottom. They feed on a variety of insects, small fish, crayfish and small clams. Goldeye and mooneye are a

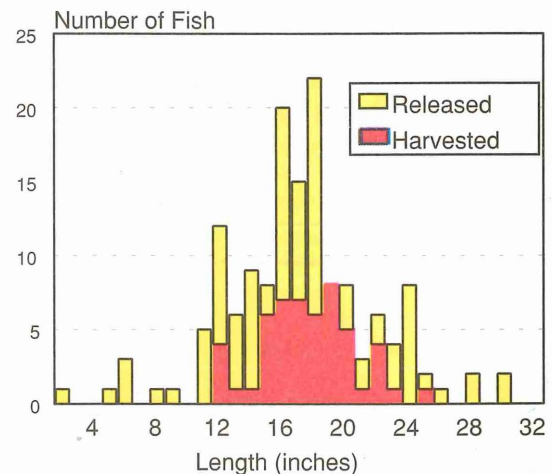
very important forage item for the large predator fish such as channel catfish, walleye, and northern pike. Anglers seek to catch them for use as bait or to eat, usually as a smoked fish.

### Carp

Carp are common in the Red River and downstream of major fish barriers on its'



tributaries. Carp spawn in early May through late June. Carp will spawn in areas of flooded



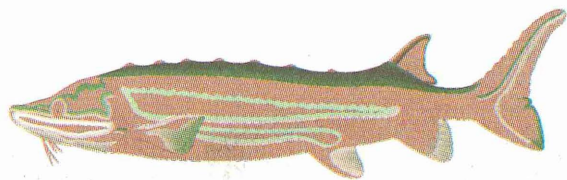
**Length distribution of carp from Red River anglers surveyed in 1994.**

vegetation; the eggs are broadcast over the vegetation. Anglers seek carp for its exceptional fighting qualities and its good table fare. Anglers from Europe and Australia come to Manitoba waters of the Red River to fish this untapped resource.



## **Lake sturgeon**

Lake sturgeon were common in the Red River and several of its' tributary streams in the early 1900's. Sturgeon have been caught from headwater streams such as: Roseau, Red Lake, Wild Rice, Sheyenne, Pelican and Otter Tail Rivers. But as men settled in the Red River Valley, they developed the land, dammed the rivers and



polluted the water, and sturgeon numbers declined. Today, there may be only a few remnant individuals in the Red River system. Two fish were reportedly caught during 1994, but there have been no documented reports of sturgeon from the Red River or its' tributaries in recent years. There is no open angling season for lake sturgeon on the Red River.

Manitoba, Minnesota and North Dakota are developing a joint management plan to increase the number of lake sturgeon in the Red River. You can help this effort by reporting any historic and present day observations of lake sturgeon.

## **FISH CONSUMPTION ADVISORY**

To ensure the continued good health of citizens, the Minnesota and North Dakota Departments of Health have developed guidelines for how often fish can be safely eaten. The advisories are not intended to discourage anglers from eating fish, but should be used as a guide to choosing which are safest to eat. Recommendations for individual waters are list in this publications.

For more information, anglers should refer to the current publication of the Minnesota Fish Consumption Advisory. Copies are available at local MN DNR offices and from the MN Department of Health at 1-800-627-3529.

In North Dakota, anglers should contact the North Dakota State Department of Health and Consolidation Laboratories at (701) 328-5210.

## **TO REPORT GAME AND FISH VIOLATIONS ONLY!!! 24 HOURS A DAY**

### **Minnesota TIP (Turn In Poachers) 1-800-652-9093**

This is a nonprofit organization founded to stop poaching in Minnesota's outdoors. Cash rewards are given for tips leading to arrests. You may remain anonymous.

### **North Dakota RAP (Report all Poaching) 1-800-472-2121**

This program provides people the opportunity to report wildlife violations, remain anonymous if they prefer and to receive monetary rewards for convictions based on their information. Anonymous callers will be given a special code number and are not required to give their name. Rewards range from \$50.00 to several thousand dollars depending upon the nature and seriousness of the crime.

## **MINNESOTA DNR FISHERIES OFFICES**

Baudette Area Office  
Rt. 1, Box 1001  
Baudette, MN 56623  
218-634-2522

Detroit Lakes Area Office  
P.O. Box 823  
Detroit Lakes, MN 56502  
218-847-1579

Fergus Falls Area office  
1221 Fir Avenue East  
Fergus Falls, MN 56537  
218-739-7576

## **NORTH DAKOTA FISHERIES OFFICES**

Devils Lake District Office  
Rt. 5, Box 281B  
Devils Lake, ND 58301  
701-662-3617

Spiritwood District Office  
Rt. 1, Box 224  
Jamestown, ND 58401  
701-252-4634

## **PUBLIC ACCESS SITES**

### **Pembina, ND**

The Pembina city campground has a concrete ramp, dock, and a bank fishing area. The campground is located at the confluence of the Pembina and Red Rivers.

### **MN Highway #175 Crossing**

Public boat launching and bank fishing site: located 10 miles west of Hallock on Highway #175 on the north side of the highway bridge. There is a bituminous-surface parking area for 15 car-trailer units and a concrete plank ramp. No services.

### **Drayton, ND**

The Drayton dam has a concrete ramp and a bank fishing area.

The city of Drayton has a concrete ramp and a bank fishing area located directly east of the city water tower.

### **Oslo, MN**

Boat launching and bank fishing site located on the north side of the MN Highway #1 bridge near the water tower. Bituminous surfaced parking lot for 10-12 car-trailer units. There is a concrete ramp with floating dock. No services.

### **Grand Forks, ND**

There is a concrete ramp and bank fishing area located east of State Mill road approximately 1.5 miles north of US Highway 2.

There is bank fishing area downstream of the Riverside dam located east of State Mill road on Red Dot Place.

Grand Forks has two large parks (Central and Lincoln) along the Red River. Bank fishing is a popular activity in these parks.

### **East Grand Forks, MN**

Public boat launching site is located in central East Grand Forks off Hill Street at Central Avenue. This is a full service municipal park facility with camping, electric and water hook ups, sanitary facilities and picnic area. There is a gravel parking lot for many vehicles. A dock is located adjacent to the ramp.

Public Bank Fishing Site: Lafave Park has good bank fishing opportunities on the Red River and Red Lake River.

### **Buxton, ND**

Belmont Park east of Buxton has a concrete ramp and bank fishing. Camping, water, and toilets are available.

### **Halstad Municipal Park, MN**

Bank fishing opportunities and earthen boat ramp are located 1 mile west of MN Highway # 75 on MN Highway #200 in Halstad. There is a picnic area with water, shelter and sanitary facilities.

### **Norman County Road #25, MN**

Public boat launching site located 1 mile west of MN Highway #75 on Norman County Road # 25, near Hendrum. Asphalt parking surface for 8-10 car-trailer units. Concrete plank ramp. No dock or services.

### **Fargo, ND**

Bank fishing opportunities are located at Fargo water treatment plant, Trollwood Park, Veterans Hospital, El Zagal Park, Tree Foil Park (also called Dike East), North Dam, Oak Grove Park, Middle Dam, Lindenwood Park and Lemke Park (South Dam).

### **Moorhead, MN**

Public boat launching site located off of Eleventh Street North at M.B. Johnson Park, about ½ mile north of the Crystal Sugar processing plant. There is a bituminous-surface parking area for 15-20 car-trailer units and a bituminous-surface access to a double concrete plank ramp. No dock or services.

Bank fishing opportunities are located at: M.B. Johnson Park, North Dam, Memorial Riverfront Park, Woodlawn Park, Middle Dam, Gooseberry Mound Park, River Oaks Park (South Dam).

### **Wahpeton, ND / Breckenridge, MN**

Public boat launching site, public fishing pier, and bank fishing areas located off U S Highway 75 to Minnesota Avenue in the city of Breckenridge; west on Minnesota Avenue to the Red River. Concrete boat launch ramp, parking, and pier are located in Wells Memorial Park on the south shore of the Otter Tail River.



## **TOURISM PROMOTION ORGANIZATIONS**

If you need information on accommodations, local events, river conditions, camping sites, local contacts, maps, or guides, the following organizations would like to serve you:

Breckenridge Chamber of Commerce  
Ms. Sue Wanek  
420 Nebraska Avenue  
Breckenridge, MN 56520  
(218) 643-5244

Crookston Area Chamber of Commerce  
Ms. Jeannine Windels  
1915 University Avenue Suite # 2  
Crookston, MN 56716  
(218) 281-4320 or 1-800-809-5997

Drayton Community Chamber of Commerce  
604 North Main  
Drayton, ND 58225  
(701) 454-3474

East Grand Forks Area Chamber  
Ms. Diana Blair  
P.O. Box 295, 218 4th St NW  
East Grand Forks, MN 56721  
(218) 773-7481

Fargo/Moorhead CVB  
Mr. Cole Carley  
2001 44th Street S.W.  
Fargo, ND 58103  
(701)-282-3653 or 1-800-235-7654

Fergus Falls CVB  
Ms. Judy Stringer  
Box 868  
Fergus Falls, MN 56538  
(218) 736-6979 or 1-800-726-8959

Greater Grand Forks CVB  
Ms. Kim David  
4251 Gateway Drive  
Grand Forks, ND 58203  
(701) 746-0444 or 1-800-866-4566

Grafton Chamber Office  
Joyce Geddes  
432 Hill Avenue  
Grafton, ND 58237  
(701) 352-0781

Mahnomen Chamber of Commerce  
Mr. Tom Ryan  
P.O. Box 36  
Mahnomen, MN 56557  
(218) 935-2573

Red Lake Falls Civic & Commerce  
P.O. Box 37  
Red Lake Falls, MN 56570  
(218) 253-2684

Northwest Gateway Association  
Ms. Jan Anderson  
Stephen, MN 56757  
(218) 478-3092

Riverland Association  
P.O. Box 692  
Thief River Falls, MN 56701  
(218) 681-3720

Thief River Falls CVB  
Ms. Julie Olson  
2017 Highway #59 S.E.  
Thief River Falls, MN 56701  
(218) 681-3720 or 1-800-827-1629

Wahpeton Recreational Department  
120 4th St North, City Hall  
Wahpeton, ND 58075  
(701) 642-2811

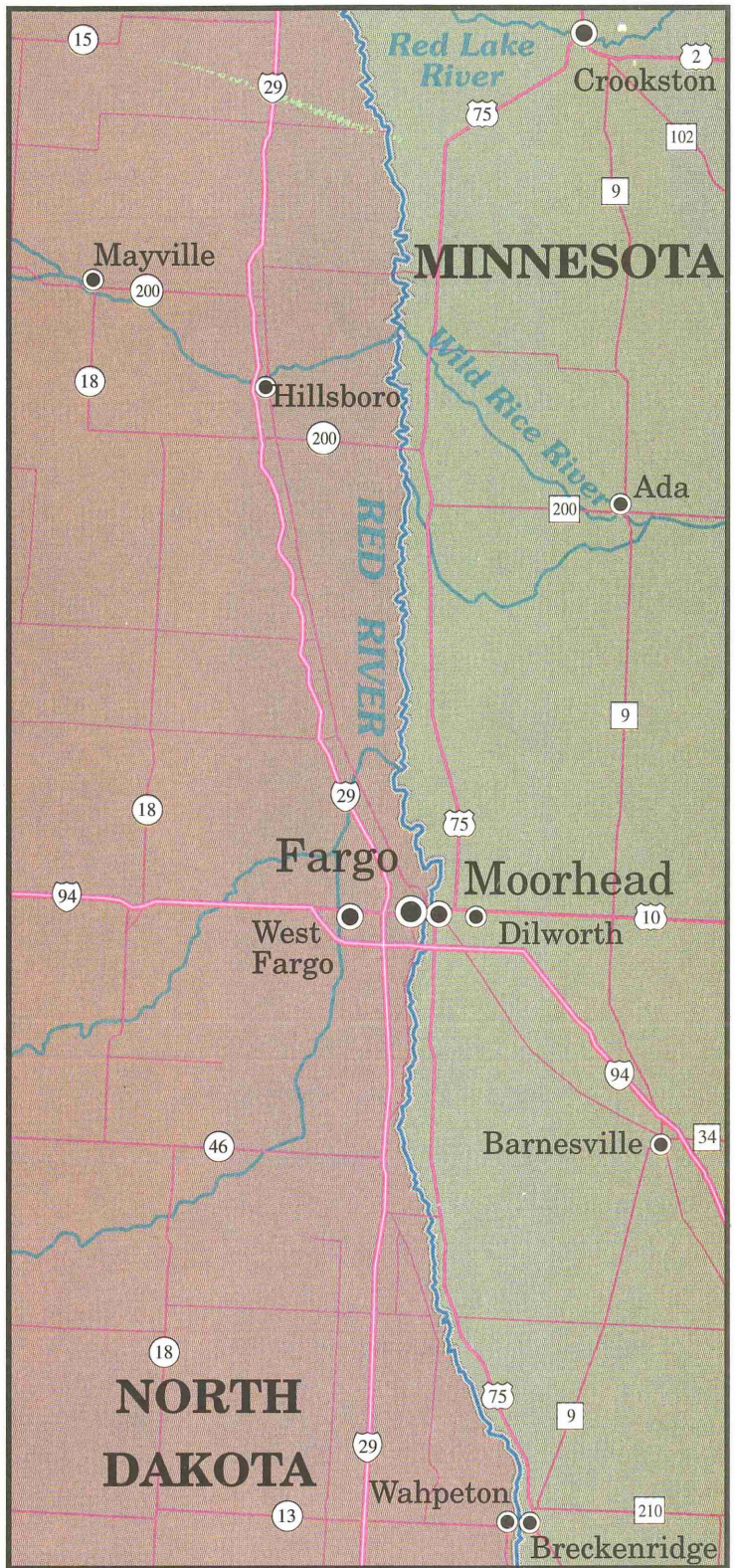
Rendezvous Region  
Kathy Stremick  
P.O. Box 384  
Walhalla, ND 58282  
(701) 549-2707

# ESTIMATED FISH WEIGHT FOR EACH LENGTH INTERVAL

\*\*Individual fish weights may vary from this estimate

Total Length (inches)	Estimated weight in pounds for selected fish				
	Channel catfish	Walleye	Northern pike	Carp	Smallmouth bass
10		0.3			0.5
11		0.4			0.6
12	0.5	0.5		0.8	0.8
13	0.6	0.7		1.0	1.1
14	0.8	0.9		1.2	1.4
15	1.0	1.1		1.5	1.7
16	1.2	1.3	1.1	1.8	2.1
17	1.5	1.6	1.3	2.1	2.5
18	1.9	1.9	1.6	2.4	3.0
19	2.2	2.3	1.9	2.8	3.6
20	2.7	2.7	2.2	3.2	4.3
21	3.1	3.1	2.6	3.7	5.0
22	3.7	3.6	3.0	4.2	5.8
23	4.3	4.1	3.4	4.7	6.6
24	4.9	4.7	3.9	5.3	
25	5.7	5.3	4.4	5.9	
26	6.5	6.0	5.0	6.6	
27	7.4	6.8	5.6	7.3	
28	8.3	7.6	6.3	8.1	
29	9.4	8.5	7.0	8.9	
30	10.5	9.4	7.8	9.8	
31	11.8	10.2	8.6	10.7	
32	13.1	11.5	9.5	11.6	
33	14.6	12.6	10.5	12.7	
34	16.1	13.9	11.5	13.7	
35	17.8	15.2	12.6	14.9	
36	19.6	16.6	13.7	16.1	
37	21.5	18.0	14.9	17.3	
38	23.5	19.6	16.2	18.6	
39	25.7	21.2	17.6	20.0	
40	28.0		19.0	21.4	
41	30.6		20.5	22.9	
42	33.2		22.1	24.5	
43	36.0		23.8	26.1	
44	38.9		25.6	27.8	
45	42.0		27.4	29.6	





Miles



