PADDLEFISH MANAGEMENT IN NORTH DAKOTA [AFS]

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North Dakota's only paddle fish (*Polyodon Spathula*) occur in the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers upstream of Williston. The paddlefishery in North Dakota is relatively new with the first season initiated in 1976. Regulations remained fairly static until 1992 when the season limit was reduced to allow the current harvest of two fish.

Historically, paddlefish research in North Dakota was limited to cooperative movement/ migration studies between Lake Sakakawea and the Yellowstone River. In recent years, research funding has focused on identifying rearing grounds in upper Lake Sakakawea and developing year class indexing methodology for young-of-the-year paddlefish. Current research focuses on determining the effects of predation on young paddlefish. In the past few years, approximately 2000 adult paddlefish have been tagged in North Dakota. Data from those tagged fish are helpful in ascertaining exploitation rates and movement information. The establishment of a caviar operation in North Dakota (similar to the Glendive, MT operation) has allowed for additional collection of valuable paddlefish data.

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, the North Dakota Game and Fish Department, and Dr. Dennis Scarnecchia from the University of Idaho have collaboratively developed a Paddlefish Management Plan. This document will assist in directing future paddlefish management in North Dakota and Montana.