

2026 PADDLEFISH SNAGGING SEASON REGULATIONS

Season: October 1 - 31, 2026

Snagging Hours: 7 a.m. - 7 p.m. central time daily

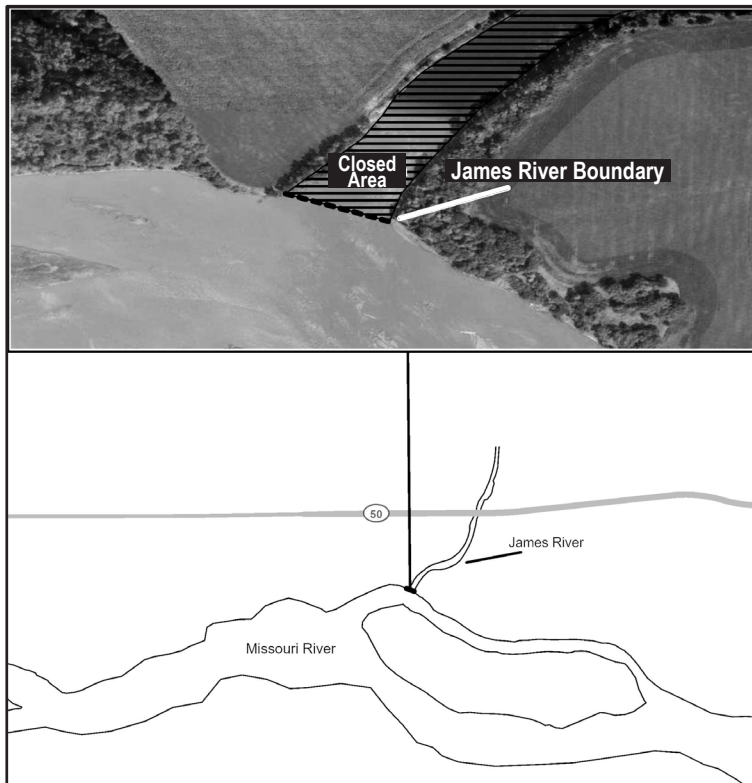
Species: Paddlefish only, rough fish (until paddlefish limit is reached)

Limit: Daily and possession - equal to the number of tags issued (maximum of 2). *See minimum size restrictions below.*

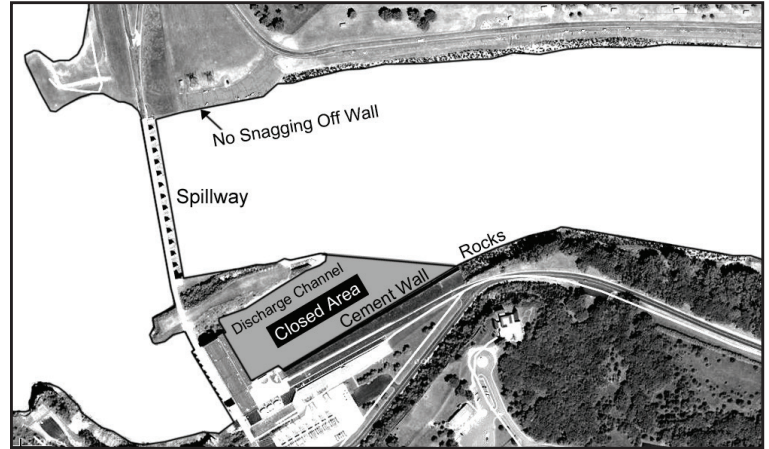
OPEN AREA:

Residents - Snagging of paddlefish is permitted in the Missouri River from Gavins Point Dam downstream to the mouth of the Big Sioux River and in the Big Sioux River from the I-29 bridge to the confluence of the Big Sioux and Missouri Rivers, except for a closed area that extends downstream from Gavins Point Dam to a line that extends from the east end of the south bank cement wall of the discharge channel northwest to the east end of the chalk point. However, snagging off the north wall of the stilling basin is prohibited (see figure below). All other tributaries are closed to snagging.

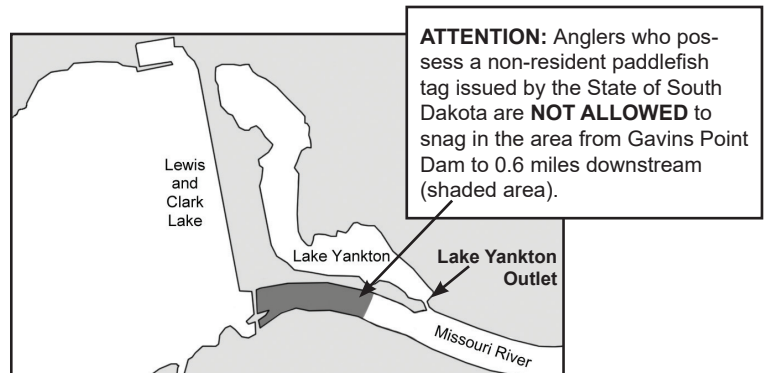
James River - Closed Area



NOTE - boating restrictions during spillway flows may be in effect. Please contact the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at 402.667.7873 or 402.667.2546 if you have questions about boating restrictions.



Nonresidents - Snagging of paddlefish by anglers possessing a nonresident South Dakota tag is only permitted in the Missouri River downstream from the point 0.6 miles below Gavins Point Dam (see figure below) to the mouth of the Big Sioux River and in the Big Sioux River from the I-29 bridge to the confluence of the Big Sioux and Missouri Rivers. All other tributaries are closed to snagging. Nonresidents wishing to snag paddlefish in the Missouri River within the area from the Gavins Point Dam to 0.6 miles downstream must have a nonresident paddlefish license/tag issued by the state of Nebraska.



RETURN POLICY (New for 2026)

DEADLINE: August 1, 2026

FEES: \$10 Residents | \$30 Nonresidents

A fee will be assessed if a customer returns their license, and they are not eligible for subsequent draws for that respective season.

CAUTION: Do NOT close your metal tag prior to placement on a paddlefish. Closing your tag will lock it, making it impossible to re-open for attachment to your paddlefish.

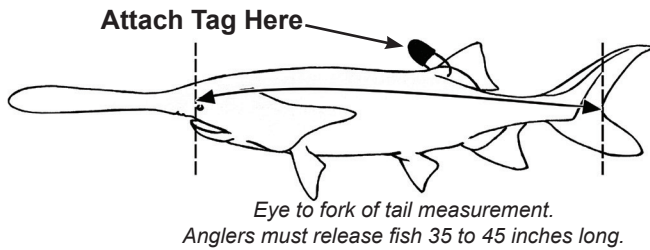
(OVER)

License: The metal tag received in the license package must be in your possession when paddlefish snagging and may not be transferred. Paddlefish anglers under 18 years of age are not required to purchase a fishing license. Anglers 18 years of age and older are required to purchase a fishing license. South Dakota and Nebraska have different licensing requirements for youth anglers.

South Dakota residents ages 16-17 should call the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission at 402.471.0641 if they plan to fish from the Nebraska bank or with a Nebraska Paddlefish license. A Nebraska resident possessing a South Dakota nonresident paddlefish permit is exempt from the South Dakota fishing license requirement if the Nebraska resident angler possesses a valid Nebraska fishing license or is legally exempt from compliance with Nebraska license or permit requirements.

Tagging: The metal tag received in the license package must be immediately affixed to the fish and locked in the manner and place as indicated below, or the snagged fish must be immediately returned, unharmed, to the water from which it was taken. (To help prevent accidental tag loss, be sure to secure the metal tag in the bottom, fleshy part of the dorsal fin.)

Paddlefish tags that are closed prior to attachment to a fish will lock in place and are NOT usable.



Minimum Size: Any paddlefish taken which measures between 35 inches and 45 inches (measured along and over the center line contour of the fish, lying flat, including the entire eye to the natural unaltered fork of the tail) must be immediately released to the water from which it was caught. Measure across the fish's body with a flexible tape (see figure above).

Other requirements:

- All paddlefish anglers must cast for, hook and retrieve their own fish.
- A person may not attempt to snag rough fish or paddlefish after reaching the paddlefish limit.
- A gaff hook or other penetrating device may not be used as an aid while landing snagged paddlefish.
- Tackle: One line and one hook may be used. Hook size is limited to a single or treble hook with a gap no wider than 1/2 inch between the point and the shaft (2/0 hook or smaller).
- **Only the snout in front of the eyes, gills and entrails of a paddlefish may be removed for transportation. The head, skin and tail must remain attached. Final processing may only be completed once the angler has reached their residence or immediately prior to consumption.**
- Boats launched from any Nebraska boat ramp, including the North Tailrace ramp below Gavins Point Dam, need to have a Nebraska Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) stamp affixed to the starboard (right) rearward side of the boat. Boats launched from South Dakota boat ramps do not need the AIS stamp to access SD/NE border waters. For more information visit: outdoornebraska.gov/permits/fishing-permits/ais-stamp



Contact us

605.223.7660 | wildinfo@state.sd.us | gfp.sd.gov