

Fort Peck Lake: You and Mother Nature

The lake may be lower than we are used to, but that does not mean it is any less hazardous, especially when mother nature decides to put a serious damper on your fishing trip. Many changes have occurred in the last two years to provide users of Fort Peck Lake with information to keep them aware of the elements. From video cameras and weather observation sites to forecast products that are issued, no one should get caught on the lake unaware of a thunderstorm or a significant high wind day.

There are two video cameras that provide you a first hand look at the lake. The first is at the face of the dam, and was done in partnership with Walleye's Unlimited, the National Weather Service in Glasgow and the US Army Corps of Engineers in Fort Peck. The second camera is at Hell Creek and is provided by Walleye's Unlimited, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the Hell Creek Marina. The camera at the dam can be seen at: <http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/ggw/fortpeck.php>. Both the Dam and the Hell Creek Camera can be seen at: <http://www.walleyesunlimited.com/webcams/cams.html>

There are four observation sites on the lake, two of which report year round. The year round sites are at the face of the dam, near the video camera, and a new site was recently installed at The Pines. There are two sites that rely on ham radio communications, one at Duck Creek and the other on York Island. To view these observations you can go to: <http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/ggw/current.php>. There are also observations sites from the Bureau of Land Management on the western half of the lake. They can be viewed at the same site. They are not right on the lake, but can give you general feel for what is occurring in the area.

There are several NOAA Weather Radio transmitters around the lake. The first is on Tower Hill above the dam. It will broadcast watches, advisories and warnings as soon as they are issued and covers the majority of the lake. The west end of the lake has more difficulty receiving the NOAA Weather Radio reception because of terrain. The following transmitters and frequencies are available for free to anyone with a special receiver designed just for the broadcast.

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| • Glasgow/Fort Peck Lake | 162.400 MHz | Channel 1 or A |
| • Jordan | 162.500 MHz | Channel 5 or E |
| • Winnett | 162.400 MHz | Channel 1 or A |
| • Circle | 162.550 MHz | Channel 7 or G |
| • Malta | 162.475 MHz | Channel 4 or D |

The National Weather Service in Glasgow has responsibility for issuing watches, warnings and advisories that affect Fort Peck Lake. A survey was done last fall by Walleye's Unlimited and Pikemasters, and thanks to the many responses, information was received on how to better serve the users of Fort Peck Lake. The criteria for a Lake Wind Advisory was changed. It used to be a 25 mph wind sustained for 3 hours or more. The criteria as of this spring has been changed to a 20 mph wind for three hours or more and/or any continual wind gusts to 30 mph or higher. This will lead to more issuances of the Lake Wind Advisory, but hopefully will also reduce the number of occurrences of people getting caught in a terrible wind that nearly swamps their boat. A High Wind Warning is issued with winds sustained at 40 mph and/or any wind gust to 58 mph. These advisories, watches and warnings can be viewed from the NWS Glasgow web page or heard over NOAA Weather Radio.

The newest feature this year will be a Lake Recreation Forecast. This forecast can be accessed from the NWS Glasgow web site at: <http://www.weather.gov/glasgow>. It covers a 48 hour period (ie. Tonight, tomorrow, tomorrow night, the next day), and includes weather, probability of precipitation, temperatures and wind. It is divided into three segments: one for the West End of the Lake including Crooked Creek, UL Bend, Hell Creek and the Pines; one for the dam area including Duck Creek, York Island and Haxby Point; and the final segment for the Dry Arm including Rock Creek, Timber Creek and Nelson Creek.

The National Weather Service in Glasgow is looking for feedback on the products that are issued for Fort Peck Lake. You can contact Tanja Fransen at 406-228-2850, tanja.fransen@noaa.gov or c/o NWS Glasgow 101 Airport Rd. Glasgow, MT 59230.