



Dennis Foster

# Outdoors

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## Reason to Smile

What I am referring to here is a deadly presentation method that, when added to your bag of tricks, will ultimately put more walleyes in your boat this season. I will describe an innovative system that will help you bridge the gap between traditional ultra-slow live bait fishing and quickly moving spinners through an area. We can now go from both ends of the speed spectrum, and anywhere in between, with the same setup.

It's up to you to finish 'em off

The system is predicated on using Mack's Lure Smile Blades for an attractor on live bait leaders in lieu of more mundane snells and offers an extremely attractive substitute for a traditional bouncer and spinner combo. This is definitely something that not many fish have seen before and can give you an advantage in heavily fished areas.

They consist of a spinning Delta Wing-shaped blade made of extremely lightweight Mylar plastic. The unique construction allows them to remain nearly neutrally buoyant and rotate at speeds as low as .25 mph, meaning they don't immediately sink to the bottom and snag as do other leader options presented at low speeds. This gives us the advantage of adding action to our baits at speeds previously unheard of. Thus, we can apply a bit of spice to our live bait of choice. Try this with a conventional metal bladed spinner and all you will do is dredge bottom.

Now that we're aware of the low end capabilities, we need to discuss bumping the pace up a notch. You can simply do just that as the rig continues to function, just spins faster. No need to switch to a spinner when you want to increase your speed. By leaving the Smile Blade setup on, you can achieve any action you feel the fish might want. Very beneficial in the fact that you can effortlessly go up and down the scale, letting the fish tell you what they prefer at any given moment.

Another method of throwing the fish a changeup with this presentation is you can either bend the blades inward for a tighter more compact spinning motion or outward for an action that can be best described as undulating and erratic.

Further triggering action is accomplished without changing boat speed by simply sweeping your rod forward and letting it fall back under slight tension.

Changes not only the tempo but thump and vibration, conveying some visual cues to fool the fish into thinking your bait is either scurrying away or is in distress and falling back. You do not see minnows swimming at a constant pace in a straight line for any distance. If you can help it, your offerings shouldn't sit

# Artificial weed structures bring encouraging results

By Dennis Foster  
Special to the American News

I was recently fortunate enough to be invited to spend some time evaluating a perch spawning habitat project being conducted by LaDredge Outdoors — the folks who make ReelWeeds.

If you're not familiar with ReelWeeds, they are remarkably realistic sections of artificial weed structure. The original and accepted concept is to use them for attracting fish for angling purposes — particularly through the ice. Those of us that have put them to use can attest as to just how attractive the fish find them.

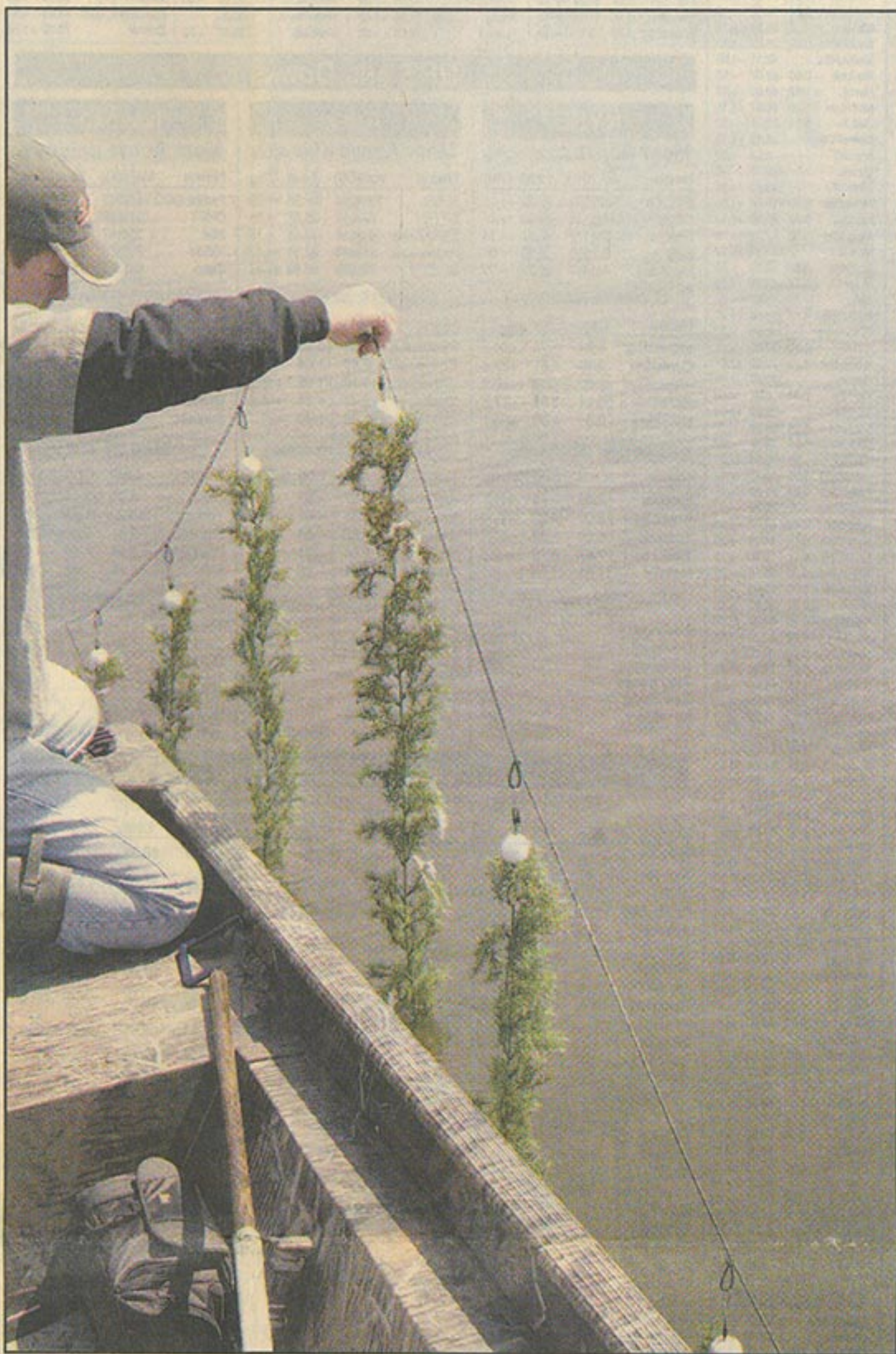
The next logical question would be if fish like to use them for cover; wouldn't they also put them to use as spawning habitat? As perch and other species seek out weeds and other underwater objects on which to lay their eggs, it would seem to be a reasonable conclusion. Thus, a project was started in April 2007 putting this theory to the test, as well as providing an important platform from which to gather important data.

The initial project was conducted (and will continue for years to come) on a small glacial lake in northeast South Dakota, with extremely encouraging results. Although the weather has been anything but cooperative this spring of 2008 due to numerous cold fronts, late season snows and resulting low water temperatures, preliminary samples once again look promising. Once the weather stabilizes and water temps begin to rise, increased fish activity and subsequent spawning efforts can be fully expected.

Several different types of sites have been chosen to place each set of ReelWeeds and although they vary greatly, the fish seem to discover the weeds and lay significant egg masses — no matter what the location. One can draw the conclusion that the fish find the presence of suitable habitat on which to spawn playing the primary role in success.

Although you might have a sufficient number of mature females full of eggs, if they don't come across what they are seeking, they will simply choose not to lay them and absorb the mass back into their bodies. Thus, a major portion of a year's class can be lost.

What we learn from these studies might well present



Courtesy photo

**Helping habitat:** A worker drops a string of ReelWeeds into a lake in northeast South Dakota as part of a project to improve spawning habitat.

us with a major advantage in providing valuable spawning habitat on lakes with marginal opportunities and have an inconsistent record of spawning success.

When we consider that this system is durable and can be used for many seasons, the possibilities begin to become apparent. We can make the comparison to Christmas tree type of plantings which have been documented to have limited success for only one year before losing their appeal and becoming ignored.

Ask any fisheries biologist about the costs and risks

involved in stocking efforts versus the extremely low percentage of fish that ever reach a catchable size and we very well might be on to something. This system offers the fish just the help they need to take care of themselves with minimal effort or expense required from us.

With just a little assistance we can let Mother Nature take over. As with any type of wildlife, natural reproduction has always proven to be the best course of action.

In addition to the work being done by LaDredge

Outdoors, South Dakota Game Fish and Parks employees are conducting their own scientific tests with ReelWeeds. Some fascinating data will be available once the results are published.

If you would like to see a detailed power point presentation of the glacial lake 2007 results, you can visit [www.eyetimepromotions.com](http://www.eyetimepromotions.com) or [www.reelweeds.com](http://www.reelweeds.com). This presentation will help you to fully understand the concept. Of particular note, check out the captivating underwater videos of fish reacting to the habitat.

### N.D. raccoon hunt

The United Kennel Club will hold a raccoon hunt June 6-7 at Gwinner, N.D. Participants should meet at Waloch Cafe on North Main Street with a deadline to sign up

## OUTDOORS ALMANAC

the youth deer hunting season will run statewide from monthly meeting.

prices, the need for food assistance is growing at an almost alarming rate," according to Matt Gassen, director of the Community Food Banks of South Dakota. Details: [## OUTDOOR CALENDAR](http://www.feedthe</a></p></div>
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MAY 16-

South Dakota: Parks' Weekend and Free Fishing. During the annual event, entrance and fishing fees are waived for all South Dakota's state recreation areas. Camping apply. Details: (800) 773-3391.

MAY 17

Aberdeen: Free Walking in the Trees at Richmond Lake Recreation Area. Millbank: Disc Golf To Amateurs at 3 p.m. at Beach State Park.

MAY 17-

Huron: South Dakota on the South Dakota grounds. Admission is hours are 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. There will be about 100 activity booths for all ages to enjoy. Event will strive to teach standing and appreciation and its importance in outdoor heritage. Details: 7340 or sdoutdoorexp

MAY 18

Aberdeen: Brown County's Club rifle range. Range located 5 1/2 miles Highway 281 and Highway 121 section.

MAY 21

Aberdeen: Class 3 of session for the HuntSt. Aberdeen, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Terry O'Keefe Hunter Center located at the Club of Brown County 5 1/2 miles south of Aberdeen, U.S. Highway 281. Registration must be done at the Aberdeen office at 5850 East Highway 281.

MAY 22

Aberdeen: Brown County's Club rifle range. Range located 5 1/2 miles Highway 281 and Highway 121 section.

MAY 24

Aberdeen: American I ciation shoot at 9 a.m. located 5 1/2 miles south 281 and Highway 121. Details: Chris Getty at 8522 or cgetty@abe.rn. Rapid City: Cleghorn Fish Hatchery public celebrate hatchery re p.m. to 3:30 p.m. MDT hatchery manager Will (605) 394-4100.

MAY 25

Aberdeen: Brown County's Club rifle range. Range located 5 1/2 miles Highway 281 and Highway 121 section.

MAY 28

Aberdeen: Youth trap begins at trap club six. Aberdeen on U.S. Highway 281. Register: Harlan Young 380-7130.

MAY 29

Aberdeen: Brown County's Club rifle range. Range located 5 1/2 miles Highway 281 and Highway 121 section.

JUNE 1

South Dakota: Enrollment for the 2008 GFP program.

JUNE 5-4

Pierre: Monthly meeting Commission at the Recreation Centre. The group's meeting will be at 2 p.m.

June 6-7

Gwinner, N.D.: United Club's raccoon hunt. Participants should meet at Waloch North Main Street with sign up for the hunt at fee is \$15. Details: Fay Master of Hounds at (705) 734-0000 or fatcat@drtel.net.