



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa Fishing Report

Conservation and Recreation

**DON'T
BREAK
THE ICE**

NO ICE IS
100% SAFE

**AVOID OFF
COLORED
SNOW OR ICE**

ICE SHOULD BE AT LEAST...
4 INCHES THICK FOR FISHING
& **5 INCHES** THICK FOR
SNOWMOBILES

[Top Iowa Fishing Spots for the Week of December 19](#)

This weekly fishing report is compiled from information gathered from local bait shops, angler creel surveys and county and state parks staff. For current information, contact the district fisheries office at the phone number listed at the end of each district report.

- [NORTHWEST](#)
- [NORTHEAST](#)
- [MISSISSIPPI RIVER](#)
- [SOUTHEAST](#)
- [SOUTHWEST](#)

New Rathbun Reservoir map available on our website

Our fisheries staff recently surveyed [Rathbun Reservoir](#). An updated fishing map is available on the [DNR Fishing Maps website](#). The lake map includes depth contours, boat ramp locations, and other amenities at Rathbun Reservoir.

Updated lake maps are also available for [Storm Lake](#), [Viking Lake](#), [Red Haw Lake](#), [Badger Creek Lake](#), and [Grays Lake](#).

NORTHWEST

[Arrowhead Lake](#)

Arrowhead Lake had around 4.5 inches of ice at the boat ramp, as of Dec. 19.

[Bacon Creek Lake](#)

Bacon Creek has around 4 inches of ice. A few anglers have been out on foot.

[Black Hawk Lake](#)

As of Dec. 19, there was 6 inches of ice off the Ice House Point boat ramp. There are still open water fishing opportunities at the Fish House and the Inlet Bridge. **Yellow Perch** -

Fair: Anglers are catching some perch around Shotgun Hill and the Ice House Point boat ramp. Keeper size perch range from 8- to 12-inches.

[Black Hawk Pits](#)

There is 5 inches of ice at the Black Hawk Pits boat ramp, as of Dec. 19.

[Browns Lake](#)

Browns Lake has around 6 inches of ice.

[North Twin Lake](#)

There was around 4 inches of ice on North Twin earlier this week. Some anglers have been out on foot.

Lakes in West Central Iowa are pretty well iced over. Foot traffic on the ice is increasing. For more information, contact the Black Hawk District office at 712-657-2638.

[Beeds Lake](#)

Ice thickness is 4 to 5 inches.

[Clear Lake](#)

Ice thickness is 7 to 8 inches. **Bluegill** - Slow: Use a small jig tipped with a waxworm near the edge of vegetation. **Yellow Perch** - Good: Yellow perch are biting on a variety of baits. You may have to change your technique to catch larger fish. **Walleye** - Fair: Try small jigs tipped with a minnow head. **Black Crappie** – Slow.

[Crystal Lake](#)

Ice thickness is 5 to 6 inches. No fishing activity reported.

[Lake Smith](#)

Ice thickness is 5 to 7 inches. Anglers are catching small bluegills and a few crappies. Use caution near the aeration hole southeast of the island.

[Little Wall Lake](#)

Ice thickness is 4 to 5 inches. Anglers reported catching small crappies and bluegills.

[Lower Pine Lake](#)

Ice thickness is 4.5 inches at the boat ramp. Ice thickness varies significantly across the lake; there is a large area of open water between the island and the beach.

[Rice Lake](#)

Ice thickness is 6 to 8 inches. **Bluegill** – Slow. **Yellow Perch** – Slow.

[Silver Lake \(Worth\)](#)

Ice thickness is 6 to 8 inches. Bluegills are biting on small jigs tipped with a waxworm.

[Upper Pine Lake](#)

Ice thickness is 4.5 inches at the boat ramp. Ice thickness varies significantly across the lake.

For information on the lakes and rivers in the north central area, contact the Clear Lake Fish and Wildlife office at 641-357-3517.

East Okoboji Lake

Ice thickness is 5 to 7 inches. **Bluegill** - Good: Sorting is needed, but the bite has been good in the southern section of the lake along the weed line. Use small jigs and wigglers near the trestle and the Hattie Elston Boat Ramp. **Walleye** - Good: Fishing near Parks Marina in the evening has been good. Use spoons, jigging raps, or minnows in early morning or evening.

Ingham Lake

The aeration system has been started. Use caution in the southeast side of the lake. Signs are up around the aerator hole.

Lost Island Lake

Yellow Perch – Fair. **Walleye** – Fair.

Silver Lake (Dickinson)

The aeration system has been started. Use caution on the east side of the lake. Signs are up around the aeration holes.

Spirit Lake

Ice thickness is 7-9 inches. **Walleye** - Good: Fish 1 hour before and after sunrise or sunset. Use spoons or jigging raps tipped with minnow heads in 12-14 feet of water. Also try live minnows. **Bluegill** - Fair: Use wigglers and small jigs in Anglers Bay and Trickles Slough. **Yellow Perch** - Good: Try minnows and small jigs in Anglers Bay and Minniwaukon. **Black Crappie** – Fair.

Trumbull Lake

Yellow Perch - Fair: Size quality is outstanding with some sorting. Use jigs and minnows or wigglers in the main lake.

West Okoboji Lake

West Okoboji was the last lake to fully ice up, locking up Dec. 12. Use extreme caution when heading out on the ice; check ice thickness and conditions regularly. Ice thickness has been up to 5 inches in small bays and thinner on the main lake. **Bluegill** - Fair: Little Emerson Bay has been producing a few nice bluegills; sorting is needed. **Walleye** - Fair: Fish rocky areas in 18-20 feet of water. Live minnows work best an hour before and after sunset. **Smallmouth Bass** - Good: A unique early season bite has been reported in Little Emerson Bay.

Ice thickness has improved with thickness ranging from 4-10 inches. Use caution with ATV's. No vehicle traffic is advised. Water flow into and out of area lakes has caused weak areas around bridges and other constrictions. Use caution and test the ice often. Aeration systems at Center Lake, Silver Lake (near Lake Park), and Ingham Lake have been started and signs put up. Stay clear of these systems. For current conditions, call the Spirit Lake District Office at 712-336-1840.

NORTHEAST

Cedar River (above Nashua)

Backwaters and slack water areas frozen. Use care when crossing areas with current. Check depths often. Anglers are finding fish. **Black Crappie** - Fair: Find deeper water or off-channel refuges out of current. Use waxworms or spikes. **Yellow Perch** - Slow: Anglers are finding a few perch mixed in with the crappie.

Decorah District Streams

Stocked fish remain in streams through the winter creating excellent angling opportunities. Trout streams with good flows stay open even during winter. Second shotgun deer season closes Sunday; wear bright orange and be visible to hunters. **Brown Trout** - Good: Try a fly imitating small silvery fish. Feathered spinner baits work well when fished through pools. **Rainbow Trout** - Good: Use an ultra-light pole and reel for fun action. Try a spinner in eddies and around structure. **Brook Trout** - Good: With fewer insect hatches, try using flies imitating minnows such as a wholly bugger.

Lake Hendricks

Lake Hendricks has about 6 inches of ice with a skiff of snow on top. Water has a brown tint to it. Open water around the aerator. **Not safe for ice fishing.** Motorized vehicles are not allowed on the ice. **Black Crappie** - Good: Use a small jig tipped with a waxworm. Fish are suspended off the bottom. **Bluegill** - Good: Use a baited hook; gills are sitting closer to the bottom.

Lake Meyer

Lake Meyer has about 5 inches of ice. Hit or miss action on panfish, but no limits yet. **Bluegill** - Good: Use a small jig tipped with a waxworm around brush piles. **Black Crappie** - Good: Crappie are suspended above brush piles. Baited hooks work best.

Turkey River (above Clermont)

Backwaters and slack water areas are ice covered. Motorized vehicles are not allowed on Vernon Springs impoundment when covered with ice. Water is crystal clear. Check ice depths often, especially where there is current.

Volga Lake

Volga Lake has about 6 inches of ice. Use care when going on ice; check depths often. **Black Crappie** - Fair: Use waxworms or spikes fished in brush or rock piles. **Bluegill** - Fair: Try small bait on small hooks. Gills are small.

Great weekend weather to go ice fishing. Low 40's for highs to low 20's for lows. Many rivers have areas of open water. Use care when around areas with current. Most area lakes have about 5 inches of ice. Trout streams are good to excellent. For current fishing information, please call the Chuck Gipp Decorah Fish Hatchery at 563-382-8324.

Alice Wyth Lake

Anglers are catching panfish on Alice Wyth Lake, but size structure is small. **Bluegill** - Fair: Try vertical jigging with an ice jig tipped with a spike or waxworm. **Black Crappie** - Fair: Try vertical jigging with an ice jig tipped with a spike or waxworm or fish a dead stick with a live minnow tipped on a jig.

[Cedar River \(Nashua to La Porte City\)](#)

No reports on the Cedar River in Black Hawk and Bremer counties this past week. **Walleye** - No Report: Cast and retrieve crankbaits or use jig and minnow near instream habitat or deeper overwintering areas.

[Horton Pond](#)

Anglers are fishing Horton Pond, but there are no catch reports. **Bluegill** - No Report: Try vertical jigging with an ice jig tipped with a spike or waxworm.

Manchester District Streams

Most streams have great populations of wild brown trout and catchable stocked rainbow trout.

[Maquoketa River \(above Monticello\)](#)

No reports this past week on the Maquoketa River in Delaware County. **Walleye** - No Report: Cast and retrieve crankbaits or use jig and minnow near instream habitat or deeper overwintering areas.

[Martens Lake](#)

Reports of anglers catching some bluegill ice fishing Martens Lake early morning; sorting may be needed. **Bluegill** - Fair: Try vertical jigging with an ice jig tipped with a spike or waxworm.

[North Prairie Lake](#)

Reports of anglers catching some trout out of North Prairie Lake. You need a valid fishing license (age 16 and older) and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout. **Rainbow Trout** - Fair: Try vertical jigging with a small flashy jig tipped with or without a waxworm.

[Plainfield](#)

Anglers are fishing Plainfield Lake, but there are no catch reports. **Bluegill** - No Report: Try vertical jigging with an ice jig tipped with a spike or waxworm.

[Shell Rock River \(Greene to Shell Rock\)](#)

No reports this past week on the Shell Rock River in Bremer and Butler counties. **Walleye** - No Report: Cast and retrieve crankbaits or use jig and minnow near instream habitat or deeper overwintering areas.

[Wapsipinicon River \(Tripoli to Troy Mills\)](#)

No reports on the Wapsipinicon River in Buchanan County this past week. **Walleye** - No Report: Cast and retrieve or troll crankbaits or use jig and minnow near instream habitat or deeper overwintering areas.

Ice flows on the interior rivers are stopping any reports right now. Second shotgun deer season again this weekend; wear orange if at all possible if out fishing. Lakes and ponds are just starting to lay down some good ice, but the extended seven day forecast may deteriorate that quickly. Use extreme caution if ice fishing throughout this warm-up. All trout streams remain in excellent condition. Call the N.E. Iowa district office at 563-927-3276 for more information.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER

Mississippi River Pool 9

River level is 8.9 feet at Lansing and expected to continue to fluctuate slightly this week. Ice is just starting to form on backwaters; **ice fishing is not recommended** until the ice strengthens. Water temperature is 32 degrees. **Walleye** - Fair: A lot of smaller fish are being caught. Vertical jigging with twister tails or trolling crankbaits has been successful in Lock and Dams tailwaters. **Sauger** - Fair: Vertical jigging with twister tails or jig tipped with minnows has had the most success in Lock and Dams tailwaters. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Fish for perch through the ice in deeper cuts with some vegetation in backwater areas. **Black Crappie** - Slow: Few reports of crappie mixed with bluegills fished through the ice. **Bluegill** - Good: Bluegill are biting on waxworms fished through the ice in backwater lakes.

Mississippi River Pool 10

River level is 616.9 feet at Lynxville and expected to rise slightly this week. The ramp at Lynxville may be difficult to use because of ice flows. Ice is just starting to form on backwaters; **ice fishing is not recommended** until the ice strengthens. Water temperature is 34 degrees. **Walleye** - Fair: A lot of smaller fish are being caught. Vertical jigging with twister tails or trolling crankbaits has been successful in Lock and Dams tailwaters. **Sauger** - Fair: Try jigs tipped with a minnow in the tailwaters of the Lock & Dams. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Fish for perch through the ice in deeper cuts with some vegetation in backwater areas. **Black Crappie** - Slow: Few reports of crappie mixed with bluegills fished through the ice. **Bluegill** - Good: Bluegill are biting on waxworms fished through the ice in backwater lakes.

Mississippi River Pool 11

River level is 8.4 feet at Guttenberg and is expected to continue to rise slightly then level out this week. Ice is just starting to form on backwaters; **ice fishing is not recommended** until the ice strengthens. The DNR ramp has iced in, but make breakup with warmer weather. The city ramp may be difficult to use because of ice flows. Water temperature is 32 degrees. **Walleye** - Fair: A lot of smaller fish are being caught. Vertical jigging with twister tails or trolling crankbaits has been successful in Lock and Dams tailwaters. **Sauger** - Fair: Try jigs tipped with a minnow in the tailwaters of the Lock & Dams. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Fish for perch through the ice in deeper cuts with some vegetation in backwater areas. **Black Crappie** - Slow: Few reports of crappie mixed with bluegills fished through the ice.

Upper Mississippi River levels have fallen, but some fluctuation is occurring this week. Many of the roller gates are now down which will help stabilize tailwater areas. A lot of new ice is flowing down the channel which will make fishing difficult; some ramps are starting to ice in. Ice is just starting to form on backwaters with reports of up to 4 inches. Caution is recommend ice fishing until the ice strengthens. Areas of current do not have safe ice. Water temperature is 32 degrees

Mississippi River Pool 12

The water level is 7.5 feet at the Dubuque Lock and Dam and 10 feet at the RR bridge.

River levels at Dubuque are expected to hold steady over the next week. The water temperature is 34 degrees. Water clarity is good. The tailwater has been mostly iced in or has had ice flows. It may become accessible with expected warmer temperatures. **Sauger** - Good: Tailwater sauger fishing has most anglers are using a jig and minnow. Lots of small sauger and small walleye are being reported. The tailwater may open up with warmer temperatures this weekend. **Black Crappie** - Fair: Backwater ice has just started and is marginal. Some crappies are being caught. **Walleye** - Fair: Most anglers are pulling crank baits in the tailwaters. **Yellow Perch** - Good: Yellow perch are starting to show up in the ice fishing creel. **Bluegill** - Slow: Most bluegill fishing has been slow, but some experienced anglers are finding fish.

[Mississippi River Pool 13](#)

Water level is 7.9 feet at the Bellevue Lock and Dam and is steady. The water temperature is 33 degrees. Water clarity is good. Tailwaters experienced significant ice flows at times, but is presently ice free. **Sauger** - Good: Most anglers are using a jig and minnow. **Walleye** - Fair: Some walleyes are being reported by anglers pulling double Rapalas or a floating jig head with a minnow.

[Mississippi River Pool 14](#)

The water level is 6.2 feet at the Fulton Lock and Dam, 10.2 feet at Camanche and 5.1 feet at LeClaire. Water temperature is around 33 degrees. River levels are expected to rise slightly next week. **Walleye** - Fair: Some walleyes are being taken on double Rapala rigs. **Sauger** - Good: Use a jig tipped with a minnow. Lots of small fish reported.

[Mississippi River Pool 15](#)

Water levels are 7 feet at Rock Island and will fall this week. The water temperature is around 33 degrees. Water clarity is good.

Tailwaters were receiving high fishing pressure, but some ice flows are occurring. If you have any fishing questions, please contact the Bellevue Fisheries Station 563-872-4976.

[Mississippi River Pool 16](#)

Tailwater stage is 7.03 feet at Lock and Dam 15 in the Quad Cities and is forecast to reach 7.4 feet by Tuesday. Flood stage is 15 feet at Lock and Dam 15. A bunch of floating ice chunks at the Marquette St Landing in Davenport could make loading and unloading boats difficult. **Unsafe ice conditions. Walleye** - Slow: Look for walleyes in the tailwaters. Use jigs and minnows or troll three-way rigs with minnows or stick baits. **Sauger** - Slow: Look for saugers in the tailwaters. Try jigs and minnows or troll three-way rigs with minnows or stick baits.

[Mississippi River Pool 17](#)

Tailwater stage is 5.95 feet at Lock and Dam 16 in Muscatine and is rising slightly. Flood stage is 15 feet at Lock and Dam 16. River stage is 8.16 feet at Muscatine; flood stage is 16 feet. As of Dec. 19th, there is a bunch of floating ice chunks at the Muscatine ramps that could make loading and unloading boats difficult. The gates at the Lock and Dam were back in the water. **Unsafe ice conditions. Walleye** - No Report: Look for walleyes by the dam. Try vertical jigging with minnows or pulling three-way rigs with minnows or

stick baits. **Sauger** - No Report: Use jigs and minnows or pull three-way rigs with minnows or stick baits in the tailwaters.

[Mississippi River Pool 18](#)

Tailwater stage is 7.03 feet at Lock and Dam 17 at New Boston and is forecast to reach 7.5 feet by Monday. Flood stage is 15 feet at Lock and Dam 17. River stage is 8.77 feet at Keithsburg; flood stage is 14 feet. A couple of days ago there was a ridge of ice at the bottom of the ramp and there was a lot of flow ice at Toolsboro. We have not received any tailwater fishing reports for walleye and sauger. **Unsafe ice conditions. Sauger** - No Report: Look for saugers below the dam. Try vertical jigging with minnows or trolling three-way rigs with minnows or stick baits. **Walleye** - No Report: Look for walleyes below the dam. Try vertical jigging with minnows or trolling three-way rigs with minnows or stick baits.

[Mississippi River Pool 19](#)

Tailwater stage is 4.41 feet at Lock and Dam 18 and has been steady the past few days. Flood stage is 10 feet at Lock and Dam 18. River stage is 10.43 feet at Burlington; flood stage is 15 feet. River stage is 526.8 feet at Fort Madison; flood stage is 528 feet. We have not received any fishing report information for this pool.

Tailwater stages have been steady to rising slightly this past week. Main channel water temperature is around 32 degrees. **Unsafe ice conditions.** If you have questions on fishing Pools 16-19 contact the Fairport Fish Hatchery at 563-263-5062.

SOUTHEAST

[Big Hollow Lake](#)

Unsafe ice.

[Lake Belva Deer](#)

Open water and **unsafe thin ice** with a little snow on top.

[Lake Darling](#)

About 100 acres of open water surrounded by about 1 inch of ice. **Unsafe ice thickness.**

Lake Darling District Farm Ponds

Getting closer to two inches, thick but not there yet.

[Lost Grove Lake](#)

Ice is getting a little thicker, but still way too thin to walk on.

[Pollmiller Park Lake](#)

The lake finally skimmed over with ice, but the 3 inches of snow on top isn't helping it build more ice.

For more information on the above lake, call the Lake Darling Fisheries Office at 319-694-2430.

[Coralville Reservoir](#)

Much of the lake is ice covered, but it is extremely variable due to falling water conditions and increased flows over the past week. The lake is now down to winter pool of 683.4 feet.

[Diamond Lake](#)

The lake is partially covered in skim ice.

[Iowa Lake \(Iowa Co.\)](#)

Skim ice formed over most of the lake this week.

[Lake Macbride](#)

Most of the lake is ice covered, but the ice is extremely variable. Some areas have 3 inches. A few anglers out, but **ice fishing is not recommended**.

[Otter Creek Lake](#)

The lake is ice covered. Much of the lake has 3-4 inches, but it can vary. There have been some anglers out; use caution.

[Pleasant Creek Lake](#)

The lake is ice covered and variable. **Ice fishing is not recommended**.

[Wapsipicon River \(Troy Mills to Oxford Junction\)](#)

Skim ice has formed over the backwaters, **but is still unsafe**. The boat ramp in Pinicon Ridge is closed for the winter.

Most lakes/ponds now have skim ice; **there is no safe ice in this area**. For more information, contact the Lake Macbride Fisheries Station at 319-624-3615.

[Lake Miami](#)

Skim ice is forming overnight when cold enough, making fishing difficult.

[Lake Sugem](#)

Skim ice is forming in some of the bays. Geese are keeping large areas open.

[Lake Wapello](#)

Skim ice is forming at night, making fishing difficult.

[Ottumwa Park Pond South](#)

Trout were stocked on Oct. 25th. The pond is covered in skim ice, making fishing difficult. You need a valid fishing license (age 16 and older) and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout.

[Rathbun Reservoir](#)

The current lake level is 904.23 msl. Normal operating elevation is 904.0 msl. Lake Rathbun has zebra mussels, so make sure to properly drain, clean, and dry equipment before transporting to another water body. Most docks have been pulled out for the season and most campgrounds are closed. The bays and coves will start to be covered with skim ice, making fishing difficult.

[Red Haw Lake](#)

Skim ice is forming overnight, making fishing difficult.

There has been very little angler activity in the last week. There is **no safe ice** in the Rathbun district. The district includes Appanoose, Davis, Lucas, Mahaska, Monroe, Wapello, Wayne and Van Buren counties. Contact the Rathbun Fish Hatchery at 641-647-2406 with questions about fishing in south central Iowa.

SOUTHWEST

[Ada Hayden Heritage Park Lake](#)

As of Dec. 18, there was 4.5 inches of ice off the boat ramp. **Rainbow Trout** - Fair: Catch trout through the ice fishing 5 to 20 yards off shore using panfish jigs and small jigging spoons tipped with waxworms. You need a valid fishing license (age 16 and older) and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout.

[Big Creek Lake](#)

As of Dec. 18, anglers were just starting to test the ice and try fishing. Ice conditions are variable, with thin ice yet further out from shore. There was 6 inches of ice at the 100th Street Ramp, 3 inches at West Ramp, 5 inches at the East Ramp and 3 inches at the Marina Ramp.

[Don Williams Lake](#)

As of Dec. 18, there was 5 inches of ice off the boat ramp. A couple anglers were out. Use caution, the ice is still variable. **Black Crappie** - Good: Expect fair to good crappie fishing this winter with many 8.5- to 10-inch fish. Fish suspended fish over the stump covered ridge that extends out from the shoreline across from the boat ramp.

[Lake Petocka](#)

As of Dec. 18, there was 4 to 6 inches of ice. **Rainbow Trout** - Good: Catch trout through the ice using panfish jigs and small jigging spoons tipped with waxworms. Start by fishing close to shore in 3 to 5 feet of water. If no activity, keep moving slightly deeper until fish are found. You need a valid fishing license (age 16 and older) and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout.

Ponds and lakes in Central Iowa have formed ice ranging from 2 to 6 inches. Anglers are just starting to check ice and start fishing. For more information on Central Iowa lakes and rivers, call Ben Dodd at 641-891-3795 or Andy Otting at 515-204-5885.

[Big Lake \(Including Gilbert's Pond\)](#)

Unsafe ice. You need a valid fishing license (age 16 and older) and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout.

[Lake Anita](#)

There was some activity on the ice last week. Ice thickness is variable from open water to 4 inches. Use extreme caution. **Black Crappie** - No Report: 10 inch black crappie

were collected in the DNR fall survey. **Bluegill** - No Report: Anita consistently produces 8 inch plus bluegills.

Littlefield Lake

Ice thickness is variable up to 4 inches. Some activity on the ice last week. Use caution. Bluegill - Good: Fish around the brush piles and sort for 8 inch plus fish.

Ice conditions have improved on the lakes in the northern part of the district. For more information call the SW District Office at 712-769-2587.

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