



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

# Iowa Fishing Report

Conservation and Recreation



**Free Virtual  
Ice Fishing  
Courses**

**Jan. 12: Basic Ice  
Fishing**  
**Jan. 19: Advanced  
Ice Fishing**

## [Top Iowa Fishing Spots for the Week of December 23](#)

Stay safe when fishing with these tips:

- Try a new fishing spot — if your regular fishing location is popular and busy, try out a new one that is not so crowded.
- Once you find your spot, keep at least 6 feet of distance between you and other groups.
- Stick with your immediate family, but keep groups to fewer than 10 people.
- Bring lures from home instead of buying bait to minimize your interaction with other people.
- Bring hand sanitizer and wash your hands often.

This weekly fishing report is compiled from information gathered from local bait shops, angler creel surveys and county and state parks staff. You can check the activity of your favorite lake or stretch of river within each district, including which species are being caught, a rating of the bite (slow, fair, good or excellent), as well as a hot bait or lure pattern.

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](#)

## **NORTHWEST**

### Arrowhead Lake

Ice fishing is not recommended.

### Black Hawk Lake

As of Dec. 23, ice has pulled away from shore in many areas. Ice thickness is extremely variable and **conditions are unsafe for ice fishing**. There is a large area of open water in the east basin. Open water fishing opportunities are at the fish house in Town Bay and under the inlet bridge.

### Black Hawk Pits

Ice has pulled away from shore in some areas. **Ice is unsafe for fishing**; the DNR recommends a minimum of four inches of clear ice for fishing.

### Storm Lake (incl Little Storm Lake)

Several days of warm and windy weather have created variable ice conditions that are unsafe in many areas. **Ice is unsafe for fishing**; the DNR recommends a minimum of four inches of clear ice for fishing.

Ice on area lakes has deteriorated due to several days of warm and windy conditions. Ice has pulled away from shore in many areas and some larger lakes have pockets of open water. **Ice is unsafe for fishing**. For more information, contact the Black Hawk District office at 712-657-2638.

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### Blue Pit

**Rainbow Trout** - Good: Trout are biting on a variety of baits. You need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout. The daily bag limit is 5.

### Clear Lake

Warm weather and high winds the last few days have deteriorated ice conditions. Ice thickness varies from open water to 5 inches. If you venture out, use caution and check conditions as you go. **Yellow Bass** - Fair: Use a small jig tipped with a waxworm. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: A few anglers fishing the Farmers beach area are catching perch in 2 to 6 feet of water on small jigs. Use caution near the access and avoid the seams. **Walleye** – Slow.

### Lower Pine Lake

The lake is mostly frozen over. **Ice is unsafe for fishing**.

### Rice Lake

Ice thickness varies from zero to 3 inches.

### Silver Lake (Worth)

Ice thickness varies from zero to 3 inches.

### Upper Pine Lake

The lake is mostly frozen over. **Ice is unsafe for fishing**.

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

### East Okoboji Lake

The walleye season is open. The water temperature is 33 degrees. All hoists and docks have been pulled out for the season. **Bluegill** - Fair. **Yellow Perch** - Fair.

### Lake Pahoja

**Bluegill** - Good: Use small jigs tipped with waxworms. **Black Crappie** - Good: Try small jigs tipped with waxworms. **Largemouth Bass** - Good: Use rubber worms or other slow-moving jigs.

### Lost Island Lake

**Yellow Perch** – Fair: Anglers are catching 9- to 10-inch perch in 10 feet of water. **Walleye** – Fair.

### Silver Lake (Dickinson)

**Walleye** – Fair.

### Spirit Lake

The walleye season is open. Ice conditions vary across the lake with up to 4.5 inches in Anglers Bay and Templar Lagoon. Test ice often while going out. Small perch have been caught from the north grade fishing pier within the open water. The water temperature is 33 degrees. All hoists and docks have been pulled out for the season. **Yellow Perch** - Fair.

### West Okoboji Lake

The walleye season is open. The water temperature is 34 degrees. All hoists and docks have been pulled out for the season. **Bluegill** - Fair. **Yellow Perch** - Fair.

Iowa Great Lake water temperatures are around 35 degrees. Much of the area ice has deteriorated due to strong winds and warm temperatures which has also opened many holes as well. **It is not recommended to go out on the ice in many areas.** If you go out on the ice, bring a buddy along and a form of flotation and ice picks. After this week, air temperatures are expected to fall to the 20's and teens. For current conditions, call the Spirit Lake District Office at 712-336-1840.

## NORTHEAST

### **Decorah District Streams**

Iowa's trout season is open all year. Trout streams generally don't freeze over even on really cold days. Many streams maintain excellent populations of brown trout and stocked catchable-size rainbow trout. Good insect hatches on warm afternoons. Many trout streams flow through wildlife management areas; wear plenty of orange. **Rainbow Trout** - Good: Use hair jigs, spinnerbaits or small shallow water crankbaits for aggressive fish. Plenty of fish remain in streams over winter. **Brown Trout** - Fair: Avoid stepping on trout nests or redds; these are freshly cleaned areas on stream bottoms. Brownies may be slow to take bait. A keen eye and a fly box filled with a variety of sizes and colors will help match a hatch. **Brook Trout** - Fair: Walk around cleared areas in the stream bottom; these are trout nests or redds. Use small flies imitating midges, minnows

or mayflies. Please respect private property open to angling; pick up trash and be considerate.

### Lake Hendricks

Lake is iced over. Open water around the aerator. **Ice fishing is not recommended.**

### Lake Meyer

Lake is mostly ice covered. Edges have 3 to 4 inches of ice. Areas in the middle are opened up. Clarity excellent with 12 feet visibility. Use caution when ice fishing; check depths often. **Bluegill** - Slow: Use a small jig tipped with a waxworm or spike on overcast days with excellent water clarity.

### Volga Lake

Lake is mostly iced over. **Ice fishing is not recommended.**

Area rivers are partially frozen. Use caution in areas with current. Most lakes are partially or totally iced over. Ice conditions changing daily. Temperatures are highly variable from low 30's to low teens at night. Take advantage of the holiday season. **2021 are licenses available now.** For current fishing information, please call the Chuck Gipp Decorah Fish Hatchery at 563-382-8324.

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### Cedar River (Nashua to La Porte City)

**Walleye** - Fair: Cast and retrieve large running crankbaits for active fish; concentrate on the deeper overwintering holes. Jig and plastics tipped with or without live bait has been very productive.

### **Manchester District Streams**

Trout streams in the Manchester District are in excellent condition. All three trout hatchery offices are still closed.

### Maquoketa River (above Monticello)

No reports for the Maquoketa River this past week.

### Shell Rock River (Greene to Shell Rock)

**Walleye** - Fair: Cast and retrieve large running crankbaits for active fish; concentrate on the deeper overwintering holes. Jig and plastics tipped with or without live bait has been very productive.

### Wapsipinicon River (Tripoli to Troy Mills)

Reports have been fair for walleye and good for northern pike on the Wapsipinicon River; concentrate on the deeper overwintering holes. Pike have been biting well on portions of the Upper Wapsipinicon. **Walleye** - Fair: Cast and retrieve large running crankbaits for active fish. Jig and plastics tipped with or without live bait has been very productive. **Northern Pike** - Good: Cast and retrieve large bucktail spinners.

Interior rivers are in excellent condition and are providing good walleye angling opportunities. Ice is starting to form on lakes and ponds; **ice fishing is not recommended.** Deer hunting muzzleloader season has begun; wear blaze orange and

be aware of hunting activity. Trout streams remain in excellent condition. Call the Manchester Hatchery at 563-927-3276 for more information.

## MISSISSIPPI RIVER

### Mississippi River Pool 9

Pool level is 8.1 feet at Lansing. Use extreme caution on the ice until colder temperatures stay. Water temperature is 33 degrees. Ice thickness is variable from 2 to 4 inches. **Sauger** - Good: Try vertical jigging with hair jigs in tailwaters of the Lock and Dam. **Walleye** - Good: Try jigging spoons or a jig tipped with a minnow in tailwaters of Lock and Dams. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Use a jig and minnow in 4 to 12 feet of water. **Bluegill** - Fair: Try jigs tipped with mousies in shallow backwaters.

### Mississippi River Pool 10

Lynxville water level fell to 13.5 feet last week creating unsafe ice conditions. Water temperature is 34 degrees at the Lock & Dam. Ice conditions are variable from 2 to 4 inches with some areas still having open water. **Sauger** - Slow: Try vertical jigging with jigs in tailwaters of the Lock and Dam. **Walleye** - Slow: Try jigging spoons or a jig tipped with a minnow in tailwaters of Lock and Dams. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Use a jig and minnow in 4 to 12 feet of water. **Bluegill** - Good: Try jigs tipped with mousies in shallow backwaters.

### Mississippi River Pool 11

Guttenberg tailwater level has dropped to 5.1 feet. Water temperature is 32 degrees at the Lock and Dam. Ice anglers are catching panfish at Mud Lake. Use extreme caution as ice deteriorated late last week. **Avoid the creek area due to unsafe ice.** **Sauger** - Slow: Try vertical jigging with jigs in tailwaters of the Lock and Dam. **Walleye** - Slow: Try jigging spoons or a jig tipped with a minnow in tailwaters of Lock and Dams. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Use a jig and minnow in 4 to 12 feet of water. **Bluegill** - Good: Try jigs tipped with mousies in shallow backwaters.

Some fluctuations in water levels paired with last week's warmer weather created unsafe ice conditions. Colder temperatures over the holiday should help rebuild ice. Ice thickness ranges from 2-4 inches across Pools 9-11. Walleye slot length limits now apply on the entire Mississippi River. All walleyes less than 15 inches long and between 20-27 inches long must be released immediately. Only one walleye greater than 27 inches can be kept. Combined walleye/sauger daily harvest limit of 6 and possession of 12.

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### Mississippi River Pool 12

Water levels are expected to recede this week. The water level is 4.9 feet at the Lock and Dam and 7.7 feet at the RR bridge. The water temperature is around 34 degrees. Water clarity is good. Ice is forming in most backwaters; be cautious with ice conditions. **Bluegill** - No Report: Ice conditions are marginal; it's a good time to get your safety equipment prepared for ice fishing season. **Walleye** - Good: Most walleye and

sauger angling is near the Lock and Dam in 15 to 30 feet of water. Jig and minnow is commonly used this time of year.

### [Mississippi River Pool 13](#)

The water level is 5 feet at the Bellevue Lock and Dam and is receding. Water temperature is around 35 degrees. Water clarity is good. Repairs are complete on the Bellevue City Ramp and it's open. **Walleye** - Good: Most walleye and sauger angling is near the Lock and Dam in 15 to 30 feet of water. Jig and minnow is commonly used this time of year. **Bluegill** - No Report: Ice conditions are marginal; it's a good time to get your safety equipment prepared for ice fishing season.

### [Mississippi River Pool 14](#)

Water level at the Fulton Lock and Dam is receding at 5.1 feet, 9.6 feet at Camanche and 4.5 feet at LeClaire. Water temperature is around 35 degrees. Water clarity is good. **Walleye** - Good: Most walleye and sauger angling is near the Lock and Dam in 15 to 30 feet of water. Jig and minnow is commonly used this time of year. **Bluegill** - No Report: It's a good time to get your safety equipment prepared for ice fishing season.

### [Mississippi River Pool 15](#)

Water level is 5.5 feet at Rock Island and is receding. The water temperature is near 35 degrees. Water clarity is good. **Walleye** - Fair: Most walleye and sauger angling is near the Lock and Dam in 15 to 30 feet of water. Jig and minnow is commonly used this time of year.

Water temperature is in the middle 30's. Water level is receding throughout the district. Tailwater walleye fishing is underway. If you have any fishing questions, please contact the Bellevue Fisheries Station 563-880-8781.

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### [Mississippi River Pool 16](#)

Tailwater stage is 5.57 feet at Lock and Dam 15 in the Quad Cities and is forecast to fall over the holiday. As of Dec. 23, the Marquette St boat ramp was open, but conditions may change with colder temperatures in the forecast. **Walleye** - Fair: Try vertical jigging with minnows or trolling three-way rigs with minnows below the lock chamber and in Sylvan Slough. **Sauger** - Fair: Some saugers are being caught downstream from the lock chamber. Try vertical jigging with minnows or trolling three-way rigs with minnows.

### [Mississippi River Pool 17](#)

Tailwater stage is 4.64 feet at Lock and Dam 16 in Muscatine and has been fairly steady the past few days. As of Dec. 23, the boat ramp at Muscatine was still open and a few boats were out. Ramp conditions may change with colder temperatures in the forecast. **Walleye** - Fair: Some anglers have been out trying to catch walleyes below the dam. Try vertical jigging with minnows or trolling three-way rigs with minnows. **Sauger** - Fair: Some anglers have been out trying to catch saugers below the dam. Try vertical jigging with minnows or trolling three-way rigs with minnows.

### [Mississippi River Pool 18](#)

Tailwater stage is 5.05 feet at Lock and Dam 17 at New Boston and is forecast to fall over the holiday. Tailwater fishing for walleye and saugers has been hit or miss. As of

Dec. 23, the Toolsboro ramp is still open, but ramp conditions may change with colder temperatures in the forecast. **Walleye** - Fair: Try vertical jigging with minnows or trolling three-way rigs with minnows below the dam. **Sauger** - Fair: Try vertical jigging with minnows or trolling three-way rigs with minnows below the dam.

### [Mississippi River Pool 19](#)

Tailwater stage is 2.72 feet at Lock and Dam 18 and is forecast to fall over the holiday. River stage is 8.91 feet at Burlington. River stage is 525.71 feet at Ft. Madison. We have not received any tailwater fishing reports for walleye and sauger this week. **Sauger** - No Report: Look for saugers in the tailwaters. Try vertical jigging with minnows or trolling three-way rigs with minnows. **Walleye** - No Report: Look for walleyes in the tailwaters. Try vertical jigging with minnows or trolling three-way rigs with minnows.

Tailwater stages have been fairly steady the past couple days, but are forecast to fall over the holiday. Main channel water temperature is 35 degrees. Water clarity is fair. Tailwater fishing for walleyes and saugers has been hit or miss. Many of the backwaters have opened up again this past week with the recent warm temperatures. **Unsafe ice conditions**. If you have questions on fishing Pools 16-19 contact the Fairport Fish Hatchery at 563-263-5062.

## SOUTHEAST

### [Lake Belva Deer](#)

Warm weather and strong winds took away a lot of the ice.

### [Lake Darling](#)

After Monday's (Dec. 21) warm weather and strong wind, there is lots of open water for the geese to enjoy.

### [Lost Grove Lake](#)

**Open water and unsafe ice.**

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

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### [Central Park Lake](#)

The lake is partially ice covered.

### [Coralville Reservoir](#)

The lake has been drawn down to winter pool of 683.3 feet and is partially ice covered.

### [Diamond Lake](#)

The lake is partially ice covered.

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

Unsafe ice conditions.

### [Lake Macbride](#)

The lake is partially ice covered.

### Pleasant Creek Lake

The lake is partially ice covered.

### Wapsipicon River (Troy Mills to Oxford Junction)

The boat ramp at Pinicon Ridge is closed for the winter. **The backwaters have unsafe ice.**

**There is no safe ice in the Lake Macbride District.** Most bodies of water are only partially frozen and existing ice is unsafe. For more information, contact the Lake Macbride Fisheries Station at 319-624-3615.

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### Hawthorn Lake

Skim ice is starting to form. Target submerged habitat once the ice thickens up.

### Lake Miami

Skim ice is forming on the cold nights. Be prepared to find the cedar tree piles for the best success once the ice is safe to fish on.

### Lake Sugema

Once the ice is safe to fish on, target underwater structures for the best success.

### Lake Wapello

Skim ice is forming along the shorelines and bays. The cedar tree piles will be the best place to target once the ice is safe to fish on.

### Ottumwa Park Pond South (Trout Pond)

Skim ice is covering the pond, but is not thick enough to fish on. You need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout.

### Rathbun Reservoir

The current lake level is 904.03 msl. Recreation pool is 904 msl. The lake is still open water with a little skim ice forming in the bays and along the shorelines. Lake Rathbun has zebra mussels, so make sure to properly drain, clean, and dry equipment before transporting to another waterbody. The Corps of Engineers have pulled their boat docks and their campgrounds and ramps are closed. State owned ramps are still open.

### Red Haw Lake

Skim ice is forming on cold nights. Be prepared to find the submerged structure for the best success once the ice is safe to fish on.

Very few anglers have been out. Skim ice is forming on smaller water bodies and around the shorelines. 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**

### Big Creek Lake

On Dec. 22, Big Creek was mostly covered with thin ice; **unsafe ice for fishing.**



### [Des Moines River \(Saylorville to Red Rock\)](#)

**Walleye** - Fair: Cast jigs baited with shad imitating plastics or shiners below the Red Rock dam. **Wiper (Hybrid Striped Bass)** - Fair: Cast jigs baited with shad imitating plastics or shiners below the Red Rock dam.

As of Dec. 22, most waterbodies in Central Iowa were frozen over with thin ice unsafe for ice fishing. More fishing reports will resume when ice conditions support angling. For more information on Central Iowa lakes and rivers, call Ben Dodd at 641-891-3795 or Andy Otting at 515-204-5885.

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### [Lake Anita](#)

Lake Anita historically has provided good panfishing in the winter. Expect good bluegill fishing; you will need to sort for larger crappies.

### [Lake Manawa](#)

The dredging project has provided excellent habitat to find fish this winter. Expect good numbers of black and white crappies plus good walleye numbers.

### [Littlefield Lake](#)

Fisheries surveys from 2020 show good fish populations in Littlefield. Be prepared to find the cedar tree piles in the lake for best success through the ice.

### [Meadow Lake](#)

Meadow will be a good ice fishing destination this year. It has a good population of 8-inch bluegill and 9-inch black crappie.

### [Prairie Rose Lake](#)

Prairie Rose is a top pick for lakes with large bluegills. It also has a small population of large black crappies.

### [Viking Lake](#)

Viking has a very good crappie population that will provide good fishing this winter.

**Unsafe ice conditions.** For more information on lakes in the Southwest District call the Cold Springs office at 712-769-2587.