



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

# Iowa Fishing Report

Conservation and Recreation



## [Top Iowa Fishing Spots for the Week of December 21.](#)

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](#)
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- [MISSISSIPPI RIVER](#)
- [SOUTHEAST](#)

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## **Missouri River paddlefish license on sale now**

Try a new fishing experience – snagging paddlefish on the Missouri River. Paddlefish licenses are on sale now through Jan. 7, 2018.

Find complete paddlefish regulations, tips and tagging information on our website at [www.iowadnr.gov/paddlefish](http://www.iowadnr.gov/paddlefish) - click on the Missouri River Paddlefish Season and Regulations tab.

**Buy your paddlefish license**

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# NORTHWEST

Area lakes are partially or completely ice covered. Ice thickness varies from 3-4 inches to areas of open water. Ice fishing is not recommended in most of our lakes. Expect ice conditions to improve over the next week as temperatures drop. More reports will be available when ice fishing begins. For more information, contact the Black Hawk District office at 712-657-2638.

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## Clear Lake

Avoid areas near the aerators. The current ice thickness varies from 2 to 6 inches; use caution and check thickness as you go. **Yellow Bass** - Slow: Use a small jig tipped with live bait at the edge of the vegetation. The best bite is at first light. **Walleye** – Slow: Dead stick a minnow while your jigging with another rod. The best bite is at dawn and dusk. **Yellow Perch**- Slow: Use small jigs tipped with live bait.

## Crystal Lake

Avoid areas near the aerator. Ice thickness is 3 to 5 inches. **Black Crappie** - Good: Use a small jig tipped with spikes near the edge of the dredge cut. **Walleye** - Slow: Best bite is early morning fishing with a minnow.

## Rice Lake

Ice thickness is 3 to 5 inches. **Walleye** - Slow: The best bite is at dawn and dusk fishing with minnows.

## Silver Lake (Worth)

Avoid areas near the aerator. Ice thickness is 3 to 5 inches. **Yellow Perch** - Slow: Use a small jig tipped with a wax worm or spike at the edge of vegetation. **Bluegill** - Slow: Try a small jig tipped with a wax worm or spike at the edge of vegetation with.

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

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## East Okoboji Lake

North end of the lake is ice covered. No ice fishing activity has been reported.

## Spirit Lake

No improvement of ice conditions with many open areas still on the main body of the lake. Limited ice fishing activity observed at the north grade or Anglers Bay; use extreme caution as open water exists at the north grade. Anglers have been ice fishing at Templar Park lagoon. Look for improved ice conditions with cooler temperatures in next week's forecast.

## Upper Gar Lake

No ice fishing activity observed at the lake.

## West Okoboji Lake

The lake remains ice free including Little Millers bay. Skim ice at Little Emerson bay.

Limited ice fishing activity on the Iowa Great Lakes. Look for ice conditions to improve with cooler temperatures in the forecast. For more information throughout the week, contact the Spirit Lake Fish Hatchery at 712-336-1840.

## NORTHEAST

### Cedar River (above Nashua)

About 4 inches of ice on backwaters. Some areas are still open. Use caution if going out on early ice. Check ice depths often, especially in areas with current. **Bluegill** - Fair: Use small jigs tipped with a waxworm or spikes in 10 feet of water. **Black Crappie** - Fair: Use bright colored jigs or small spoons tipped with minnow heads in backwaters.

### **Decorah District Streams**

Many streams run through wildlife management areas where hunting is allowed. Wear bright clothing and make noise when not stalking a trout. **Brook Trout** - Good: Use a dry fly for insects hatching off the water surface. Use a nymph or scud dropper for subsurface critters. **Brown Trout** - Good: Use patterns imitating small fish, eggs, and scuds. Light hatches still occur on warmer afternoons. **Rainbow Trout** - Good: Drift a feathered spinner or a hook tipped with worm along an undercut bank. Always leave gates and fences as you find them.

### Lake Hendricks

No motorized vehicles are allowed on the ice. Ice depths range from 0 to 5 inches. Aerators are on and open water is visible. Geese are keeping this area open. **Black Crappie** - Slow: Water is stained yellow. **Bluegill** - Fair: Anglers are fishing near the point in the deeper channel. Use small jigs tipped with waxworms or spikes.

### Lake Meyer

Open water near the dam. Ice depths range from 0 to 3.5 inches. A few anglers were out this week. Check ice depths often. Clarity is excellent. **Bluegill** - Fair: Use small bright colored jigs tipped with waxworms. A slow jig works best. **Black Crappie** – Fair.

### Volga Lake

Ice depths are variable, especially with windy conditions keeping ice open. Check ice depths often and use the buddy system.

After Friday, temperatures will fall to low teens through the week. Ice continues to form on area lakes with most completely covered by the weekend. Iowa residents may now buy fishing licenses for the upcoming season. They make a great last minute holiday gift. For current fishing information, please call the Decorah Fish Hatchery at 563-382-8324.

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

Reports of anglers getting boats out for walleye fishing with some success. **Walleye**- Fair: Vertical jig or cast and retrieve a jig & plastic tipped with a minnow in deeper overwintering holes.

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

Walleye anglers should have some success in areas where open deep water is accessible. **Walleye** - Fair: Vertical jig or cast and retrieve a jig & plastic tipped with a minnow in deeper overwintering holes.

### Wapsipinicon River (Tripoli to Troy Mills)

Walleye anglers should have some success in areas where open deep water is accessible. **Walleye** - Fair: Vertical jig or cast and retrieve a jig & plastic tipped with a minnow in deeper overwintering holes.

Interior river water levels remain excellent and reports have been very limited. Bitter cold conditions are forecast for next week. Use extreme caution with early ice conditions. Northeast Iowa trout streams remain in excellent condition and provide fantastic trout angling opportunities throughout the entire winter. Call the N.E. Iowa district office at 563-927-3276 for more information.

## MISSISSIPPI RIVER

### Mississippi River Pool 9

River level has been fluctuating slightly and current level is 8.3 feet at Lansing. Water clarity is excellent. Water temperature is near 32 degrees. Use caution accessing the ice as shorelines and sloughs still have some open water. **Walleye** - Slow: Try slow trolling crankbaits on a 3-way rig or minnow tipped jigs in tailwater areas and side channel rock structures. **Yellow Perch** - No Report: Use minnows in about 6-8 feet of water on side channel areas and backwaters vegetation such as marina areas. **Smallmouth Bass** - No Report: Smallmouth are actively feeding on abundant minnows along the main channel borders. Throw silver inline spinners or minnow imitation crankbaits. **Sauger** - Slow: Use jig and minnows fished off the bottom in the tailwater areas and deeper side channels. **Bluegill** - Fair: Ice anglers are catching bluegill. Use small teardrop jigs tipped with waxies in 4-5 feet of water with no current.

### Mississippi River Pool 10

Water level at Lynxville is up about a foot at 15.4 feet and is still fluctuating. Water temperature at the Lock and Dam is 33 degrees. The Slough at Sny Magill ramp is not iced over yet. Anglers are catching bluegill on the upper end of Bussey Lake in the cut. Avoid the lower end of lake as ice is not stable. Park along the south side of causeway road and walk down from the upper end of Bussey. **Walleye** - Slow: Try slow trolling crankbaits on a 3-way rig or minnow tipped jigs in the tailwater areas and side channel rock structures. **Black Crappie** - No Report: Crappies are in backwaters just off side channels with slight current. Jig a crappie minnow in the stumps and fallen tree tops. **Yellow Perch** - No Report: Try minnows in about 6-8 feet of water on side channel areas and in the backwaters vegetation such as marina areas. **Smallmouth Bass** - No Report: Smallmouth are actively feeding on abundant minnows along the main channel borders. Throw silver inline spinners or minnow imitation crankbaits. **Sauger** - Slow: Use jig and minnows fished off the bottom in the tailwater areas

and deeper side channels. **Bluegill** - Fair: Ice anglers are catching bluegill. Use small teardrop jigs tipped with waxies in 4-5 feet of water with no current.

### Mississippi River Pool 11

Water level is fluctuating at Guttenberg tail-water and has risen over a foot this week to 6.9 feet. Water temperature is 32 degrees at the Lock and Dam. Backwaters with no current have formed ice, but many areas of open water remain. Anglers are picking up some bluegills through the ice at Zollicoffers at Mud Lake. Avoid walking near the creek area at Zollicoffer. **Walleye** - Slow: Try slow trolling crankbaits on a 3-way rig or minnow tipped jigs in the tailwater areas and side channel rock structures. **Yellow Perch** - No Report: Try minnows in about 6-8 feet of water on side channel areas and in the backwaters vegetation such as marina areas. **Smallmouth Bass** - No Report: Smallmouth are actively feeding on abundant minnows along the main channel borders. Throw silver inline spinners or minnow imitation crankbaits. **Sauger** - Slow: Use crankbaits or a jig tipped with minnows fished off the bottom in the tailwater areas and deeper side channels. **Bluegill** - Fair: Ice anglers are catching bluegill. Use small teardrop jigs tipped with waxies in 4-5 feet of water with no current.

Upper Mississippi River levels have been stable. Look for panfish to be in the deeper warmer water with no current. Water temperature is at or near 32 degrees. Backwaters areas have around 3 inches of ice, but ice is still variable in depth and many areas are still unsafe for walking.

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### Mississippi River Pool 12

Water levels rose all week and is 6.5 feet at the Dubuque Lock and Dam and 8.9 feet at the RR bridge. Water clarity is good. Water temperature is near 33 degrees in the main channel. **Walleye** - Slow: This fall was a good season for walleyes on Pool 12, but it has been slow lately. **Sauger** - Slow: Sauger fishing was slow this week, but it has been an excellent year for sauger fishing at Dubuque. Lots of nice fish were reported this fall and good fishing could return anytime. **Yellow Perch** - No Report: Yellow perch fishing was strong in the tailwaters and some should be found ice fishing this winter.

### Mississippi River Pool 13

Water level has risen this week at Bellevue Lock and Dam and is around 6.8 feet. The water may continue to rise a day or two and then it will begin to recede. Water clarity is good. Water temperature is 33 degrees in the main channel. As of Thursday, both the DNR ramp and the City ramp are ice free. **Sauger** - Fair: Sauger fishing was very good this fall. Lots of nice fish were reported and fishing pressure was intense at times. Lately a few flurries of good fishing were reported, but in general fishing was slow. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Yellow perch fishing was very good in the tailwaters this fall and a few nice fish were still reported this week but it has tailed off.

### Mississippi River Pool 14

Water levels have risen this week, and will rise a day or two more. Gauge readings are 6 feet at Fulton, 10.2 feet at Camanche and 4.9 feet at LeClaire. Water clarity is good. Water

temperature is 33 degrees in the main channel. **Sauger** - No Report: Lots of angling for sauger was reported, but no word on if the fish were biting.

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

Water levels have risen all week and are 5.9 feet at Rock Island. Water clarity is good. Water temperature is near 33 degrees in the main channel. No fishing was reported to us this week. **Sauger** - No Report: Some angling was reported this week, but no indication on if they were successful or not.

The water is at normal winter lows, but a small bump is currently underway. The water temperature is around 33 degrees in the main channel. If you have any angling questions, please contact the Bellevue Fisheries Station 563-872-4976.

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

Tailwater stage is 5.93 feet at Lock and Dam 15 in the Quad Cities. **Sauger** - Fair: Sauger fishing below the dam has been slow. Try vertical jigging with minnows or pulling three-way rigs with minnows or stickbaits in Sylvan Slough or below the dam.

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

Tailwater stage is 4.82 feet at Lock and Dam 16 in Muscatine. **Sauger** - Fair: Sauger fishing below the dam has been hit or miss. Try fishing with jigs and minnows or pulling three-way rigs with minnows or stickbaits.

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

Tailwater stage is 5.41 feet at Lock and Dam 17 at New Boston. **Sauger** - Fair: Tailwater fishing has been hit or miss. Vertical jig with minnows or pull three-way rigs with minnows or stickbaits.

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

Tailwater stage is 2.64 feet at Lock and Dam 18. **Sauger** - Fair: Vertical jig with minnows or pull three-way rigs with minnows or stickbaits.

Main channel water temperature is around 33 degrees and water clarity has been fair. There has been some tailwater fishing for walleyes and saugers, but the bite has been hit or miss. Ramp conditions may change with the colder temps in the forecast. If you have questions on fishing Pools 16-19, contact the Fairport Fish Hatchery at 563-263-5062.

## **SOUTHEAST**

### [Lake Darling](#)

Lots of open water, but too much ice along the shoreline to fish from shore or launch a boat. The ice is not thick enough to walk on. At best, some of the ponds have 1 - 1.5 inches of ice on some of the most protected ones.

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

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### **Coralville Reservoir**

As of Dec. 21, most of the lake has skim ice. The lake level as is 685.2' and slowly dropping. It is predicted to reach winter pool of 683.3' on January 2. Ice will be forming on dropping water, so ice conditions may be unpredictable for a

### **Lake Macbride**

As of Dec. 21, much of the lake has open water. This lake is often the last in the area to freeze solid due to its size and depth. Ice should begin forming over the weekend, but safe ice will most likely be at least a week away.

### **Pleasant Creek Lake**

The lake is still 10 feet low from the restoration project. The lake has a thin layer of ice, but hopefully will improve over the next week.

As of Dec. 21, there are no areas of safe ice in the Macbride District. For more information, contact the Lake Macbride Fisheries Station at 319-624-3615.

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### **Lake Miami**

Fishing pressure has been low with the colder temperatures. The forecasted temperatures for this weekend should start to make some ice, but it won't be enough to support anglers.

### **Lake Sugema**

Fishing pressure has been low with the colder temperatures. Skim ice is starting to form around the edges of the lake, but the wind is hindering any progress. The forecasted temperatures for this weekend should start to make some ice, but it won't be enough to support anglers.

### **Lake Wapello**

Fishing pressure has been low with the colder temperatures. The forecasted temperatures for this weekend should start to make some ice, but it won't be enough to support anglers.

### **Ottumwa Park Pond South**

Fishing pressure has been low with the colder temperatures. The forecasted temperatures for this weekend should start to make some ice, but it won't be enough to support anglers.

### **Rathbun Reservoir**

The current lake level is 903.18 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. The ramps at the Rathbun marina are closed for the season and all the campgrounds are closed. The forecasted temperatures for this weekend should start to make some ice, but it won't be enough to support anglers.

### **Red Haw Lake**

Fishing pressure has been low with the colder temperatures. The forecasted temperatures for

this weekend should start to make some ice, but it won't be enough to support anglers.

Most of the waterbodies in the district have some skim ice with open water in some areas. The district includes Mahaska, Lucas, Wayne, Monroe, Appanoose, Wapello, Davis and Van Buren counties. Contact the Rathbun Fish Hatchery at 641-647-2406 with questions about fishing in south central Iowa.