



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa Fishing Report

Conservation and Recreation



**Freeze time
with your favorite
fishing buddy.**

**2019 fishing licenses
on sale Dec. 15**

[Top Iowa Fishing Spots for the Week of December 13.](#)

December Fishing Podcast

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](#)

NORTHWEST

[Arrowhead Lake](#)

Ice is around 5 inches thick in front of the boat ramp. Anglers are making their way out. **Bluegill** - Fair: Some bluegill have been picked up near the east shoreline. Find fish in submerged structure.

[Black Hawk Lake](#)

As of today, ice thickness near the boat ramp at Ice House Point was 5 inches. Most ice fishing activity has been in front of Gunshot Hill. There are areas of thin ice and open water off of Ice House Point near Town Bay and in the east basin. Use extreme caution and check ice depths often. **Bluegill** - Fair: Bluegills are being caught from open water under the inlet bridge out front of Gunshot Hill and from the fishing shelter off Ice House Point. **Black Crappie** - Fair: Crappie are being picked up from the open water under the inlet bridge. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Catch perch under the inlet bridge and off the shoreline of Gunshot Hill.

[Black Hawk Pits](#)

Ice is around 5 inches thick off of the boat ramp. **Bluegill** - Fair: Use waxworms; sorting is needed. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Try waxworms fished near the bottom.

[Brushy Creek Lake](#)

Anglers are beginning to make their way out. Most activity has been in the northeast arm, the far southeast area, and in front of the west boat ramp. The main lake just froze over a week ago, so is likely unsafe for travel. **Bluegill** - Fair: A few bluegill have been picked up through the ice in the northeast arm of the lake with waxworms.

[Storm Lake \(including Little Storm Lake\)](#)

Ice is variable from 5 to 8 inches in most areas. Use caution if venturing out and check ice thickness often. **Walleye** - Fair: A few walleye are being picked up through the ice. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Use waxworms and minnows.

Ice conditions in the Black Hawk District are variable, but anglers are starting to venture out. Some areas still have pockets of open water; use caution and check ice thickness often. For more information, contact the Black Hawk District office at 712-657-2638.

[Beeds Lake](#)

Ice thickness is 6 inches on the east end of the lake. The geese have a hole open on the west end of the lake.

[Clear Lake](#)

Ice thickness is 6 to 9 inches. **Yellow Bass** - Fair: Use a small jig tipped with several insect larvae. You have to be mobile to stay on fish. **Yellow Perch** - Good: Lots of small fish are being caught. **Black Crappie** - Fair: Try a jigging spoon tipped with a minnow head in the early morning. **Walleye** – Slow.

[Crystal Lake](#)

Ice thickness is 6 to 8 inches. Avoid the pressure ridge near the center of the lake and a hole kept open by waterfowl by the east fishing jetty. **Bluegill** - Good: Use small jigs tipped with waxworms in the evening. **Black Crappie** - Good: Try small jigs tipped with a minnow in the evening. **Yellow Perch** - Good: Lots of small fish are being caught.

[Lake Cornelia](#)

Ice thickness is 8 to 9 inches on the north end of the lake. The south end was open close to shore last weekend, but has since froze over. No fishing activity reported.

[Lake Smith](#)

Ice thickness is 7 to 9 inches. **Bluegill** - Fair: Use small ice jig tipped with insect larvae; best bite is early morning and evening.

[Lower Pine Lake](#)

Ice fishing is not recommended. There are still significant areas of open water on the west end of the lake.

Rice Lake

Ice thickness is 7 to 9 inches. **Yellow Perch** - Slow: Best bite is early morning and evening. You have to stay mobile to find fish.

Silver Lake (Worth)

Ice thickness is 7 to 9 inches.

Upper Pine Lake

Fishing not recommended. Ice thickness varies from 1 to 3.5 inches.

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

Lake is snow covered. The large open water area has skimmed over, but there is still open water areas. No ice fishing activity observed.

Lost Island Lake

Ice conditions are variable; foot traffic only. Open water areas has capped over, but there is extreme thin ice in these areas.

Scharnberg Pond

Rainbow Trout - Good: 1500 trout was stocked on Nov. 17th. You must have fishing license and trout stamp to fish for and/or possess trout.

Silver Lake (Dickinson)

Poor ice conditions continue; thin ice conditions on the east side of the lake.

Spirit Lake

Anglers are starting to ice fish the main basin; ice conditions remain variable. Foot traffic only is advised. **Walleye** - Good: Angler acceptable size fish are being caught; best action is during prime time - half hour before sunset to half hour after sunset. **Yellow Perch** - Good: Numbers of angler acceptable size fish are being caught; sorting is needed as numbers of small fish will also be in the catch.

Upper Gar Lake

Limited ice condition continue; there are open water areas on the lake due to the flow.

Virgin Lake

Ice conditions are variable on the lake; foot traffic only is advised. **Walleye** - Good: Good numbers of fish averaging 16 inches are being caught from the lake. **Yellow Perch** - Good: Fish averaging eight inches are being caught.

West Okoboji Lake

West Okoboji Lake has iced over; there are very thin ice conditions on the main lake. Limited ice fishing observed.

Area lakes continue to have scattered open water and are snow covered from last week's storm. No activity on the lakes; ice fishing isn't recommended. For more

information throughout the week, contact the Spirit Lake Fish Hatchery at 712-336-1840.

NORTHEAST

Cedar River (above Nashua)

Check ice depths often, especially where there is current. Flows remain high. Go with a buddy. Let someone know where you are going and when you will return. Backwaters have 4 inches of ice. Anglers are catching a variety of fish this week. **Black Crappie** - Fair: Use a small jig tipped with a waxworm or colored spike. **Yellow Perch** - Slow: Catch perch up to 10 inches on a waxworm. Bounce a jig off the bottom for fun action.

Decorah District Streams

2019 Iowa resident fishing licenses go on sale this Saturday, Dec. 15. Iowa's trout season stays open all year long. Second shotgun deer season closes Sunday. Many trout streams run through wildlife management areas. Wear bright colors and make noise so hunters know you're not a deer. **Brown Trout** - Good: Use larger flies or lures mimicking minnows. **Rainbow Trout** - Good: Fish near the bottom if no hatches are occurring. Use a weighted caddis stonefly or mayfly nymph. **Brook Trout** - Good: Try nymphs, emerger or aquatic bug patterns when hatches slow. Fish the calm area next to a fast channel of water at the head of a pool.

Lake Hendricks

No motorized vehicles allowed on ice. Ice depths average 7 inches. Use caution on ice. Open water around the aerator; keep away from the aerator. **Bluegill** - Fair: Early evening is best. For clear ice and water be set-up quiet and ready early. Use small jigs tipped with waxworm or spike near deeper water drop offs. **Black Crappie** – Slow. **Largemouth Bass** - Slow: Anglers are catching a few small bass.

Lake Meyer

Ice is 5 to 6 inches. Check ice depths often, especially near springs. Caution recommended. The bite slowed earlier in week with the recent weather change. **Bluegill**- Good: Early evening is best. Use small teardrop shaped jigs tipped with waxworm in brush piles in 12-15 feet of water. **Black Crappie** – Slow.

Volga Lake

Anglers are starting to test the ice. Use care and check ice depths often. Most activity is around the dock up from parking lot. **Bluegill** - Fair: Fish the brush piles.

Temperatures in the upper 30's this weekend. Perfect weather for ice fishing. Use care on early ice as conditions can change fast. Ice depths are highly variable. For current fishing information, please call the Decorah Fish Hatchery at 563-382-8324.

[Big Woods Lake](#)

Reports of anglers catching bluegill on Big Woods Lake. **Bluegill** - Fair: Try and find structure using a jig tipped with a waxworm.

[Casey Lake \(aka Hickory Hills Lake\)](#)

Reports have been hit and miss for bluegill and crappie, but the fish they are catching are quality size. **Bluegill** - Fair: Try and find structure near the dam or west of the dam using a jig tipped with a waxworm. Look for areas of angler activity. **Black Crappie** - Fair: Try and find structure near the dam or west of the dam using a jig tipped with a waxworm or minnow. Fish one rod actively jiggling and the other a dead stick with a bobber.

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

Reports of anglers catching walleye on the river where there are open areas of water. Most reports have come from Bremer County. **Walleye** - Fair: Anglers are catching walleye using lead heads and plastic baits tipped with or without a minnow.

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

Anglers have taken a few walleye on the Maquoketa River, mainly in Delaware County. **Walleye** - Fair: Anglers are catching walleye using lead heads and plastic baits tipped with or without a minnow.

[Martens Lake](#)

Anglers are getting out on areas of Martens Lake where there is good ice. It is not possible, as of today, to access the lake from across the reservoir on the north side. **Bluegill** - Fair: Tip an ice fishing jig with a waxworm fished at various depths.

[North Prairie Lake](#)

Anglers have been hit and miss on trout, depending on the weather fronts on North Prairie Lake. **Rainbow Trout** - Good: Try jiggling jigs or little spoons vertically from top to near bottom.

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

No reports this past week on the Shell Rock River.

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

Anglers are catching small bluegill on jigs and a few northern pike on tip-up rigs. Look for areas of angler activity for spots to start fishing. **Bluegill** - Fair: Use a jig tipped with a waxworm. **Northern Pike** - Fair: Try fishing a tip-up device tipped with a live shiner.

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

No reports this past week on the Wapsipinicon River.

The interior rivers should open up with the warm weather ahead for good walleye fishing. Smaller lakes and ponds now average 4-5 inches of ice; use extreme caution. 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 at Lansing is 8.1 feet and is expected to remain stable this week. Backwater ice reports of 5-6 inches. **Walleye** - Slow: Try vertical jigging with hair jigs tipped with a minnow below the Lock & Dam. **Sauger** - Slow: Jig spoons or a hair jig with minnows in the tailwaters of the Lock & Dam. **Northern Pike** - Good: Some northerns are being caught on tip-ups using shiners in backwater lakes and marina areas. **Bluegill** - Good: Bluegill through the ice is picking up with a lot of sorting through smaller ones. **Yellow Perch** - Good: A few perch are being caught through the ice in deeper cuts in backwater lakes.

Mississippi River Pool 10

River level at Lynxville has dropped to 14.7 feet and is expected to remain stable this week. Ice thickness around 5 inches, but warmer weather may cause unsafe conditions. Bussy Lake ice may not yet be safe from the boat ramp side. Anglers are walking in from the north end off Island Road. **Walleye**- Slow: Try vertical jigging with hair jigs tipped with a minnow below the Lock & Dam. **Sauger** - Slow: Jig spoons or a hair jig with minnows in the tailwaters of the Lock & Dam. **Northern Pike** - Good: Some northerns are being caught on tip-ups using shiners in backwater lakes and marina areas. **Bluegill** - Good: Bluegill through the ice is picking up with a lot of sorting through smaller ones. **Yellow Perch** - Good: A few perch are being caught through the ice in deeper cuts in backwater lakes.

Mississippi River Pool 11

River level at Guttenberg has fallen to 6.3 feet this week. Backwater ice thickness varies, averaging 5 inches. Avoid ice in areas with current. **Walleye** - Slow: Try vertical jigging with hair jigs tipped with a minnow below the Lock & Dam. **Sauger** - Slow: Jig spoons or a hair jig with minnows in the tailwaters of the Lock & Dam. **Northern Pike** - Good: Some northerns are being caught on tip-ups using shiners in backwater lakes and marina areas. **Bluegill** - Good: Bluegill through the ice is picking up with a lot of sorting through smaller ones. **Yellow Perch** - Good: A few perch are being caught through the ice in deeper cuts in backwater lakes.

Upper Mississippi River levels have fallen this week. Warmer temperatures this weekend may cause ice conditions to deteriorate. Avoid ice in areas with current. Thickness is around 5 inches with little snow cover.

Mississippi River Pool 12

Water levels are stable at 6 feet at the Dubuque Lock and Dam and 8.4 feet at the RR bridge. Water clarity is good. The water temperature is around 35 degrees. **Sauger** - Good: Jig and minnow or three way rigs with minnows are the most popular methods of catching walleye and sauger this fall. Smaller sauger came into the tailwater later this fall. **Bluegill** - Good: Reports of panfish being caught, but ice is just starting to be safe in only a few areas.

[Mississippi River Pool 13](#)

Water levels are stable at 6.5 feet at the Bellevue Lock and Dam. Water clarity is good. The water temperature is around 35 degrees. The north ramp at Sabula now open after bridge construction. **Walleye** - No Report: Three way rigs with minnows or a jig and minnow is the most popular methods to catch walleye and sauger this fall. Not a lot of tailwater fishing this week with ice flows. **Bluegill** - No Report: Ice thickness is varies greatly; some spots are probably safe, but not a lot of reports yet.

[Mississippi River Pool 14](#)

Water levels are stable with 6.3 feet reported at Fulton Lock and Dam, 10.4 feet at Camanche and 5.2 feet at LeClaire. Water clarity is good. The water temperature is around 36 degrees. **Walleye** - No Report: Jig and minnow or three way rigs with minnows are the most popular ways to catch walleye and sauger this fall.

[Mississippi River Pool 15](#)

Water level is stable and is 7.2 feet at Rock Island. Water clarity is good. The water temperature is around 36 degrees.

Tailwaters are open to angling, but ice flows are occurring. Ice fishing has started in many places, but anglers remain cautious about conditions. Water levels are now stable throughout the district. If you have any angling questions, please contact the Bellevue Fisheries Station 563-872-4976.

[Mississippi River Pool 16](#)

Tailwater stage at Lock and Dam 15 in Davenport is 7.2 feet and is falling. There has been some tailwater fishing for walleye and saugers. Unsafe ice conditions. **Walleye** - Good: Try vertical jigging with minnows or trolling three-way rigs with stick baits or minnows below the Lock and Dam and in Sylvan Slough. **Sauger** - Good: Try vertical jigging with minnows or trolling three-way rigs with stick baits or minnows below the Lock and Dam and in Sylvan Slough.

[Mississippi River Pool 17](#)

Tailwater stage is 6.01 feet at Lock and Dam 16 in Muscatine and is falling. Walleye and sauger fishing in the tailwaters has been hit or miss. Unsafe ice conditions. **Walleye** - Fair: Try vertical jigging with minnows or trolling three-way rigs with stick baits or minnows. **Sauger** - Fair: Try vertical jigging with minnows or trolling three-way rigs with stick baits or minnows.

[Mississippi River Pool 18](#)

We have received no information about fishing on this water body this week. **Sauger** - No Report: Try vertical jigging with minnows or trolling three-way rigs with stick baits or minnows. **Walleye** - No Report: Try vertical jigging with minnows or trolling three-way rigs with stick baits or minnows.

[Mississippi River Pool 19](#)

Tailwater stage is 4.7 feet at Lock and Dam 18 above Burlington and is falling. We have

not received any fishing information for this pool this week. Unsafe ice conditions.

Tailwater stages have been falling the past few days. Main channel water temperature is around 32-33 degrees. There has been some tailwater fishing for walleye and saugers. 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

Very unsafe ice.

Lake Belva Deer

Unsafe ice conditions. The upper end froze over first, but is not thick enough to walk on.

Lake Darling

The lake finally froze back over last weekend again except for a large hole that the geese are keeping open near where the campground arm enters the main lake. Warmer weather has slowed ice formation; 1-1 ½ inches of ice at best.

Lost Grove Lake

Unsafe ice conditions.

Skunk River (Rose Hill to Coppock)

The river is frozen along the banks, but most of the rest of it is wide open.

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

Central Park Lake

The lake was restocked this spring after the renovation project.

Central Park Pond

About 5 inches of ice reported on West Pond.

Coralville Reservoir

The lake level is at winter pool of 683.4 feet. The lake had frozen over, but seams have opened up in the channel. It is unsafe for travel.

Diamond Lake

Much of the lake has open water.

Green Castle Lake

Anglers report 3-5 inches of ice on the lake.

Grundy County Lake

Much of the lake has 4-6 inches of ice. Quite a bit of ice fishing activity here the last

week, but use caution should. **Bluegill** - Fair: Use small jigs/waxies around the sunken brush or rock piles. **Walleye** – Fair.

[Hannen Lake](#)

About 5 inches of ice has been reported. There has been some ice fishing activity on the lake, but use caution. **Bluegill** - Fair: Use a jig/waxie around sunken trees.

[Iowa Lake \(Iowa County\)](#)

Reports of 3-4 inches of ice at the boat ramp, with less ice on the main lake. The ice should be considered unsafe at this time.

[Kent Park Lake](#)

The lake is currently drained for a lake restoration project.

[Lake Macbride](#)

The lake has 1-3 inches of unsafe ice.

[Otter Creek Lake](#)

Much of the lake has 2-3 inches of ice, but the middle portion had been kept open by geese and has much less ice. The lake should be considered unsafe.

[Pleasant Creek Lake](#)

The lake has 1-3 inches of ice and should be considered unsafe.

[Rodgers Park Lake](#)

Much of the lake has 4 inches of ice, but the upper end has open water and some of the shoreline is poor.

[Sand Lake](#)

Unsafe ice.

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

Some ice anglers have been fishing the backwaters at Pinicon Ridge, although there is only a few inches of ice. It should not be considered "safe" ice.

Many areas have unsafe ice. A few areas between Highway 20 and Highway 30 have "fishable" ice. Use extreme caution if venturing out anywhere on the ice. For more information, contact the Lake Macbride Fisheries Station at 319-624-3615.

[Lake Miami](#)

Fishing pressure has been low with recent colder temperatures. Skim ice has been forming around the shore.

[Lake Sugema](#)

The north ramp is closed due to a parking lot construction project. Fishing pressure has been low with recent colder temperatures. Skim ice is forming around the shore.

[Lake Wapello](#)

Skim ice is forming around the shore.

Rathbun Reservoir

The current lake level is 908.33 msl. Normal operating elevation is 904.0 msl. Skim ice is forming along the shore in some areas. Lake Rathbun has zebra mussels, so make sure to properly drain, clean, and dry equipment before transporting to another water body.

Red Haw Lake

Fishing pressure has been low. Skim ice is forming along the shore.

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.

SOUTHWEST

Big Creek Lake

Very little ice fishing activity at Big Creek with ice ranging from open water in the lower portion of the lake to 5 inches in coves and the upper end. **Black Crappie** - Good: When conditions improve and ice fishing activity picks up, Big Creek is worth a trip for anglers seeking larger crappies. The lake has good numbers of 10-12 inch fish.

Boone District Farm Ponds

Bluegill - Good: Anglers are getting on ponds in Central Iowa using caution. Many ponds have 3 to 6 inches of ice. Use more caution on city ponds that have stormwater inlets. Bluegill and crappie fishing is especially good during early season.

Don Williams Lake

Black Crappie - Good: Ice anglers are starting to get on Don Williams. Check ice depths often. It will be a good season for crappies through the ice, but the size will be on the smaller size with most fish in the 7.5 to 8.5 inch range this year.

Ponds and small lakes in Central Iowa have 3 to 6.5 inches of ice. Larger lakes like Big Creek have areas of open water to 5 inches of ice. Check ice thickness often. For more information on Central Iowa lakes and rivers, call Ben Dodd at 641-891-3795 or Andy Otting at 515-204-5885.

Cold Springs District Farm Ponds

Most ponds in the southwest district have 3 to 6 inches of ice. Drill holes often when venturing out. **Bluegill** – Fair. **Black Crappie** – Slow.

Farm Creek Lake

Reports of 5 inches of ice. **Black Crappie** - No Report: Fisheries survey showed a good year class of 10 inch black crappie. **Bluegill** - No Report: Ice anglers will find 8 to 9 inch bluegill in Farm Creek this winter.

Lake Anita

Anglers report 5 inches of ice in the campground arm. Geese are keeping a large portion of the lake open.

Littlefield Lake

Ice conditions vary from 3 to 5 inches.

Prairie Rose Lake

Anglers report 5 inches of ice north of the pump house, but unsafe conditions west towards the dam. Use extreme caution. **Bluegill** - Fair: The best fishing is north of the pump house in 14 feet of water. Bluegills are 8 to 10 inches. **Black Crappie** - Slow: A few 10 inch black crappies can be caught along the creek channel with minnows in late afternoon.

Viking Lake

Geese are keeping a large portion of the lake open. Anglers are finding crappies in the upper end near the campground. **Black Crappie** - Good: The late afternoon crappie bite has been good. Find a tree pile in 14 to 18 feet of water to catch 9 to 10 inch fish.

Anglers report variable ice conditions across the southwest district. Use extreme caution if venturing out. For more information, contact the Cold Springs office at 712-769-2587.