



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa Fishing Report

Conservation and Recreation



[Top Iowa Fishing Spots for the Week of December 20.](#)

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.

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NORTHWEST

[Arrowhead Lake](#)

Ice is around 4-5 inches thick in front of the boat ramp. Anglers are making their way out. Ice conditions have deteriorated since last week; use caution. **Bluegill** - Fair: Some bluegill have been picked up near the east shoreline. Find fish in submerged structure.

[Black Hawk Lake](#)

As of Dec. 20, ice thickness near the boat ramp at Ice House Point was 5-6 inches. Most ice fishing activity has been in front of Gunshot Hill, near the rock pile north of Cottonwood Point, and near the inlet bridge. There is open water off Ice House Point and in the east basin. There is a pressure seam with open water across the east basin. Use extreme caution; ice conditions may continue to deteriorate throughout the week. **Bluegill** - Fair: Bluegills are being caught from open water under the inlet bridge out front of Gunshot Hill at the rock pile north of Cottonwood Point and from the fishing shelter off of 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. **Walleye** – Fair.

[Black Hawk Pits](#)

Ice is around 5 inches thick off of the boat ramp. There are areas of open water and thin ice in some areas near shore. Use caution and test ice thickness often. **Bluegill** - Fair: Use waxworms; sorting is needed. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Try waxworms fished near the bottom.

[Brushy Creek Lake](#)

Ice conditions have deteriorated with the recent warmer temperatures and rains. As of Dec. 20, a few anglers have been fishing the northeast arm and in front of the west boat ramp. Some areas near shore and in the main lake have thin ice/pockets of open water and are unsafe. Ice may continue to worsen throughout the week. Use extreme caution and check ice thickness often. **Bluegill** - Fair: A few bluegill have been picked up through the ice in the northeast arm of the lake with waxworms. **Walleye** - Fair: Walleye are being picked up near structure in the northeast arm using minnows and jigging spoons.

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

Ice is variable from 5 to 8 inches in most areas. Some areas have deteriorated during the warmer temperatures. Use caution if venturing out and check ice thickness often. **Walleye** - Fair: Use minnows and jigging spoons. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Try waxworms and minnows.

Ice conditions in the Black Hawk District are variable and have deteriorated in some areas. There are still 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 8 to 11 inches. The warm weather has melted all the snow off the ice. Ice cleats are recommended. **Yellow Bass** - Good: Use a small jig or jigging spoon tipped with several spikes. 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: Best bite is early morning and evening.

[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 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. Warm temperatures have deteriorated what ice was here and there is still significant open water on the west end of the lake.

Rice Lake

Ice thickness is 10 to 11 inches. **Yellow Perch** - Slow: Best bite is early morning and evening. You have to stay mobile to find fish.

Upper Pine Lake

Ice fishing is not advised.

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

Open areas on the south end of the lake. Some 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: Next trout stocking will be January 19, 2019 at noon.

Silver Lake (Dickinson)

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

Silver Lake (Palo Alto)

Yellow Perch - Fair: Anglers report catching some fish from the lake.

Spirit Lake

Anglers are expanding the areas they are ice fishing on the main lake; ice conditions remain variable. Foot traffic only is advised. **Walleye** - Good: Angler acceptable size fish are being caught; best action is 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. **Bluegill** - Good: Report of good numbers of fish being caught from the Anglers Bay area.

Trumbull Lake

Yellow Perch - Fair: Report of fish being caught from the lake; action is slow, but anglers will be pleased by the quality of the fish caught.

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 8 inches are being caught.

West Okoboji Lake

Ice fishing activity observed at Emerson, Little Emerson and the canals. Very thin ice on the main lake; no fishing activity observed on the main lake.

Ice conditions remain variable on the Iowa's Great Lakes and area lakes; foot traffic only. Very mild temperatures in the forecast for next week. 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. **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

Iowa's trout season stays open all year long. **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

Ice fishing not recommended. An angler fell through the ice Dec.13. Edges are thin. Warmer weather this next week will weaken ice. Most activity is around the dock up from parking lot. **Bluegill** - Fair: Fish the brush piles.

Temperatures are warming through next week. 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.

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

Reports of anglers catching walleye on the river; most reports are from Bremer County. **Walleye** - Good: 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.

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

No reports this past week on the Shell Rock River, but walleye angling should be favorable.

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

No reports this past week on the Wapsipinicon River, but walleye angling should be favorable.

The interior rivers are open and ice free. Walleye fishing reports have been good to excellent on the Cedar River. Ice conditions are deteriorating fast with the recent warm weather; ice fishing is not recommended. 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 7.9 feet and is expected to remain stable this week. Backwater ice reports of 5-6 inches, but the edges have open water. **Walleye** - Fair: Try vertical jigging with hair jigs tipped with a minnow below the Lock & Dam. **Sauger** - Fair: Try jigging spoons or a hair jig with minnows in the tailwaters of the Lock & Dam. **Northern Pike** - Fair: 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** - Fair: A few perch are being caught through the ice in deeper cuts in backwater lakes.

[Mississippi River Pool 10](#)

River level at Lynxville has risen to 15.4 feet and is expected to remain stable this week. Ice thickness around 5 inches, but warmer weather may cause unsafe conditions. Bussey Lake ice is opening on the boat ramp side. Edges have open water. **Walleye**-Fair: Try vertical jigging with hair jigs tipped with a minnow below the Lock & Dam. **Sauger** - Fair: Use jigging spoons or a hair jig with minnows in the tailwaters of the Lock & Dam. **Northern Pike** - No Report: Some northerns are being caught on tip-ups using shiners in backwater lakes and marina areas. **Bluegill** - Slow: Bluegill through the ice is picking up with a lot of sorting through smaller ones. **Yellow Perch** - Slow: A few perch are being caught through the ice in deeper cuts in backwater lakes.

[Mississippi River Pool 11](#)

River level at Guttenberg has risen to 7.2 feet this week. Backwater ice thickness is 5-6 inches. Avoid ice in areas with current and the open water around the edges. **Walleye** - Slow: Try vertical jigging with hair jigs tipped with a minnow below the Lock & Dam. **Sauger** - Fair: Use jigging spoons or a hair jig with minnows in the tailwaters of the Lock & Dam. **Northern Pike** - Slow: Some northerns are being caught on tip-ups using shiners in backwater lakes and marina areas. **Bluegill** - Fair: Bluegill through the ice is picking up with a lot of sorting through smaller ones. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: A few perch are being caught through the ice in deeper cuts in backwater lakes.

Upper Mississippi River levels have risen slightly this week. Warmer temperatures and rain have caused ice conditions to deteriorate. Ice fishing is not recommended. Tailwater fishing below the lock & dams is still an option.

[Mississippi River Pool 12](#)

Water levels rose a bit this week and are 7.2 feet at the Dubuque Lock and Dam and 9.5 feet at the RR bridge. Water clarity is good. The water temperature is around 35 degrees. Some ice flows at the tailwater, but it remains open to boating. **Sauger** - Good: Jig and minnow or three way rigs with minnows are the most popular methods of catching walleye and sauger. Smaller sauger came into the tailwater later this fall. **Bluegill** - Good: Reports of panfish being caught, but ice is decent in only a few areas.

[Mississippi River Pool 13](#)

Water levels rose a bit this week and is 7.9 feet at the Bellevue Lock and Dam. Water clarity is good. The water temperature is around 35 degrees. Some ice flows at the tailwater, but it remains open to boating. The north ramp at Sabula now open after bridge construction. **Sauger** - Good: Three way rigs with minnows or a jig and minnow is the most popular methods to catch walleye and sauger. **Bluegill** - No Report: Ice thickness varies greatly; some spots have decent thickness, but not a lot of reports yet as ice remains marginal in many places.

[Mississippi River Pool 14](#)

Water levels rose a bit this week and are 7.5 feet at Fulton Lock and Dam, 11.1 feet at Camanche and 5.8 feet at LeClaire. Water clarity is good. The water temperature is around 36 degrees. **Sauger** - Good: Jig and minnow or three way rigs with minnows are the most popular ways to catch walleye and sauger.

[Mississippi River Pool 15](#)

Water level rose a bit this week and is 8.1 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 continues in some 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 8.18 feet and has risen close to a foot since last weekend. Tailwater stage is forecast to start falling by the end of the week. 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 6.71 feet at Lock and Dam 16 in Muscatine and has risen slightly since the weekend. 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](#)

Tailwater stage is 8.08 feet at Lock and Dam 17. The Toolsboro ramp is open. There has been some tailwater fishing for walleye and saugers. Unsafe ice conditions. **Sauger** - Fair: Try vertical jigging with minnows or trolling three-way rigs with stick baits or minnows. **Walleye** - Fair: Try vertical jigging with minnows or trolling three-way rigs with stick baits or minnows.

[Mississippi River Pool 19](#)

Tailwater stage is 5.24 feet at Lock and Dam 18 above Burlington and has risen slightly the past few days. There has been some tailwater fishing for walleyes and saugers. The Tama Beach boat landing is covered in mud. 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.

Tailwater stages have risen slightly the past few days, but are forecast to start falling by the weekend. Main channel water temperature is around 33-34 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.

[Lake Darling](#)

Unsafe ice conditions. Lake Darling remains froze over (1 inch thick), but warm weather and light rain will not improve ice conditions.

[Lost Grove Lake](#)

Unsafe ice conditions.

For more information on the above lake, 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. **Bluegill** - Good: Most fish are 4-7 inches.

[Coralville Reservoir](#)

The lake level is at winter pool of 683.4 feet. The lake had frozen over, but now has lots of open water.

[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; still use caution. **Bluegill** - Fair: Use small jigs/waxies around the sunken brush or rock piles. **Walleye** – Fair.

[Hannen Lake](#)

About 4 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.

[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](#)

The lake had up to 6 inches of ice, but it has deteriorated, especially along shorelines, in the boat channel, and in the southeast bay. 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 3-4 inches of ice, but the upper end has open water and some of the shoreline is poor. Ice fishing is not recommended.

[Sand Lake](#)

Unsafe ice.

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

There had been ice anglers a week ago, but the ice has deteriorated. The ice should not be considered "safe".

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 906.76 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.

Many of the smaller lakes are starting to skim over with ice. There is no safe ice in the Rathbun district. Open water fishing opportunities are still available at some lakes. 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

Boone District Farm Ponds

Bluegill - Good: Some ponds north of Highway 30 may be holding on to suitable ice; be very cautious and check ice often. The bluegill and crappie fishing is especially good during early season.

Central Iowa ice anglers will have to head north for a little while. Ice conditions have deteriorated this week; ice fishing is not advised. For more information on Central Iowa lakes and rivers, call Ben Dodd at 641-891-3795 or Andy Otting at 515-204-5885.

Ice fishing is not advised in the southwest district. Ice conditions have deteriorated to the point of being unsafe. For more information, contact the Cold Springs office at 712-769-2587.