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IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa Fishing Report

Conservation and Recreation






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MISSOURI & BIG SIOUX RIVERS PADDLEFISH SEASON | TAGS ON SALE NOW–JAN. 7

[Top Iowa Fishing Spots for the Week of December 17](#)

December Fishing Podcast

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 thickness was 2 inches at the boat ramp on Dec. 17. **Ice is unsafe to walk on**; the DNR recommends a minimum of four inches of clear ice for fishing.

[Black Hawk Lake](#)

The lake has iced over. Ice thickness was 2.5 inches at Ice House Point boat ramp on Dec. 17. **Ice is unsafe to walk on**; the DNR recommends a minimum of four inches of clear ice for fishing. Open water fishing opportunities are at the fish house in Town Bay.

[Black Hawk Pits](#)

Ice thickness was 2.5 inches at the boat ramp on Dec. 17. **Ice is unsafe for fishing**; the DNR recommends a minimum of four inches of clear ice for fishing.

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

Limited fishing activity last week due to skim ice. The lake has iced over, but **ice is unsafe for fishing**; the DNR recommends a minimum of four inches of clear ice for fishing.

Fishing activity has been limited this last week due to skim ice. Most water bodies in the district have iced over; **walking on the ice is not recommended**. For more information, contact the Black Hawk District office at 712-657-2638.

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

Ice thickness varies from zero to 6 inches. If you venture out, use caution and check conditions as you go. A few anglers are catching perch and yellow bass in 2 to 3 feet of water near the Farmers beach access. **Yellow Bass** - Fair: Use a small jig tipped with a waxworm. **Yellow Perch** - Good: Try a small jig tipped with a waxworm. **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 37 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 5.5 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 32 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 35 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 or lower with many areas starting to ice over. **Walking out on the ice is not recommended; ice is not thick enough in most areas to hold a person.** 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 be in the 30's to 40's. 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. With Iowa's second shotgun season upon us, 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. Areas in the middle are opened up. **Ice fishing is not recommended.**

[Volga Lake](#)

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

Area rivers are partially frozen. Most lakes are partially or totally iced over. Ice conditions changing daily. Chance of snow later Friday. Temperatures in the low 30's to 20's at night. Iowa's second shotgun deer season closes Dec. 20; wear plenty of orange. For current fishing information, please call the Chuck Gipp Decorah Fish Hatchery at 563-382-8324.

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

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

Interior rivers are in excellent condition and are providing some good walleye angling opportunities right now. Ice is starting to form on lakes and ponds; **ice fishing is not recommended.** Second season deer hunting season is open through December 20th; 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 and is expected to remain stable over the next week. 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 light colored jigs in shallow backwaters in 2 to 3 feet of water.

[Mississippi River Pool 10](#)

Water level at Lynxville is 14.3 feet and is steady. Water temperature is 34 degrees at the Lock & Dam. Ice conditions are variable from 2-3 inches with some areas still having open water. **Sauger** - Good: Try vertical jigging with 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 light colored jigs in shallow backwaters in 2 to 3 feet of water.

[Mississippi River Pool 11](#)

Guttenberg tailwater level is steady near 6 feet. Water temperature is 34 degrees at the dam. **Sauger** - Good: Try vertical jigging with 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 light colored jigs in shallow backwaters in 2 to 3 feet of water.

Ice is building on the backwaters this week, but most areas still do not have safe 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.

[Mississippi River Pool 12](#)

Water levels are expected to hold steady this week. The water level is 5.7 feet at the Lock and Dam and 8.2 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 fishing is underway; be cautious, especially with snow covered ice as it will not freeze well. **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 6 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: Backwaters are starting to freeze; be cautious, especially with snow covered ice as it will not freeze well.

[Mississippi River Pool 14](#)

Water level at the Fulton Lock and Dam is receding at 5.5 feet, 9.7 feet at Camanche and 4.8 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.

[Mississippi River Pool 15](#)

Water level is 6.2 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 steady throughout the district. Tailwater walleye fishing is underway. If you have any fishing questions, please contact the Bellevue Fisheries Station 563-880-8781.

[Mississippi River Pool 16](#)

Tailwater stage is 6.21 feet at Lock and Dam 15 in the Quad Cities and has been falling the past few days. **Walleye** - No Report: Try vertical jigging with minnows or trolling three-way rigs with minnows below the lock chamber and in Sylvan Slough. **Sauger** - No Report: 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 5.04 feet at Lock and Dam 16 in Muscatine and is falling. As of Dec. 17, the boat ramp at Muscatine was still open and there were a few boats out. **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 5.35 feet at Lock and Dam 17 at New Boston and is falling. River stage is forecast to stay fairly steady over the weekend. Tailwater fishing for walleye and saugers has been hit or miss. **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 3.36 feet at Lock and Dam 18 and is falling. River stage is 9.63 feet at Burlington. River stage is 525.69 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 had been falling the past few days. Main channel water temperature is 33 degrees. Water clarity is fair. Tailwater fishing for walleyes and saugers has been hit or miss. Backwaters are starting to skim over with ice. **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](#)

The recent cold calm nights are putting ice on the lake; there is still some open water and what is there is not thick enough to walk on.

[Lake Belva Deer](#)

The last couple of nights has put a very thin layer of ice on most of the lake.

[Lake Darling](#)

This morning (Dec. 17) most of the lake had frozen over; at least 2/3 was still open the day before. The geese are keeping parts of the middle of the lake open.

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

[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 now 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 904.07 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. 16, Big Creek was mostly covered with thin, skim ice.

As of Dec. 16, most waterbodies in Central Iowa were frozen over with skim to 2 inches of ice. 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.

[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.

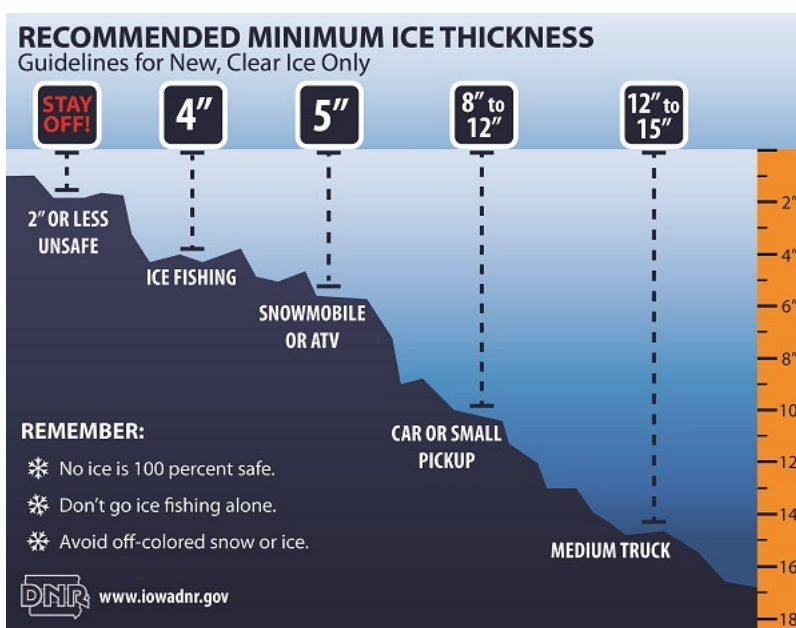
Prairie Rose Lake

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.

Many lakes are skimmed over with ice, but unsafe at this time. It's a good time to get the ice fishing equipment ready. For more information on lakes in the Southwest District call the Cold Springs office at 712-769-2587.



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