



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa Fishing Report

Conservation and Recreation



[Top Iowa Fishing Spots for the Week of December 30](#)

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.

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NORTHWEST

[Black Hawk Lake](#)

Ice is up to 4 inches near the Ice House Point boat ramp; anglers have just started to get out on the ice. Ice is variable, especially in the east end where some areas recently froze over. Check ice thickness often. There are still open water fishing opportunities near the fish house in Town Bay.

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

Anglers have started to get out on the ice in some areas using extreme caution and foot traffic only. Ice is variable; some waterfowl holes are still open and some have recently frozen over with thin ice. Use caution and check ice thickness often if venturing out. **Bluegill** – Fair. **Yellow Perch** – Fair.

Inconsistent ice thickness from 0-5 inches on area lakes. Anglers are starting to get out on some lakes. Avoid open areas and waterfowl holes that may have just recently frozen

over. Use caution and check ice thickness often. For more information, contact the Black Hawk District office at 712-657-2638.

Blue Pit

Rainbow Trout - Fair. Trout were stocked the first week of November. 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 is 0 to 7 inches. **Starting January 1st, Clear Lake will have a protected slot on walleye. All walleye between 17 and 22 inches must be immediately released unharmed. No more than one walleye longer than 22 inches may be taken per day. The three fish daily bag limit remains unchanged.** **Bluegill** - Slow: Use a small jig tipped with a waxworm in open areas in the vegetation in 2 to 3 feet of water. **Walleye** – Slow. **Yellow Bass** - Slow: Try a small jig tipped with bait in 5 to 6 feet of water. You have to stay mobile to find fish. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Perch are biting in the Farmers beach area in 2 to 4 feet of water. Try fishing near vegetation; use a larger bait to get the bigger fish.

Lower Pine Lake

Lower Pine Lake is mostly ice-covered. **Unsafe ice conditions; fishing is not recommended.**

Rice Lake

Ice thickness is 0 to 6 inches. **Bluegill** – Slow. **Walleye** – Slow. **Yellow Perch** – Slow.

Upper Pine Lake

Upper Pine Lake is mostly ice-covered. **Unsafe ice conditions; fishing is not recommended.**

Aeration systems are running at Clear Lake, Crystal Lake, Rice Lake and Silver Lake. Avoid any open water areas and be cautious of waterfowl holes on these lakes that may have recently frozen over. Check ice thickness often as you go. 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 lake is fully iced with an average of 8 inches in most areas **Black Crappie** - Fair. **Bluegill** – Fair.

Lost Island Lake

The lake has varying ice conditions with an average of around 8 inches. Check ice conditions often.

Minnewashta Lake

The panfish and crappie bite has been fairly good recently with the recent onset of ice. The bite is good enough that live bait hasn't been needed to be successful. Ice conditions are safe enough to venture out on foot with an average ice thickness of 8+

inches. **Black Crappie** - Fair: A nice crappie bite can be found with a little movement around the lake. **Bluegill** - Fair. **Pumpkinseed** - Fair.

Scharnberg Pond

Trout were stocked unannounced this fall. You need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout. **Rainbow Trout** - Good: Trout are biting on a variety of different baits. Try a worm or lure that imitates a minnow.

Silver Lake (Dickinson)

The lake is fully iced with an average thickness of 10 inches. Be wary of holes that have frozen over more recently on the main basin. **Walleye** - Fair.

Spirit Lake

The lake is fully iced, but conditions can vary in areas that had open holes until recently. Ice thickness is 7-8 inches in most places. **Black Crappie** - Fair: Mostly being caught along with perch; use tube jigs with wigglers or pilkies. **Bluegill** - Fair: Mostly being caught along with perch; use tube jigs with wigglers or pilkies. **Yellow Perch** - Fair.

West Okoboji Lake

The lake is fully iced, but conditions can vary in areas that had open holes until recently. Ice thickness is 7-8 inches in most places. **Black Crappie** - Fair. **Bluegill** - Fair.

Starting January 1st, the protective walleye slot limit will change to 19 to 25 inches at Big Spirit Lake, East and West Okoboji Lakes, Upper Gar Lake, Minnewashta Lake, Lower Gar Lake and Storm Lake; no more than one walleye longer than 25-inches can be taken per day. The majority of area lakes are fully iced over and have safe enough ice for foot traffic. There are a lot of holes and seams that have more recently frozen over. Make sure you have flotation, ice picks and check ice thickness often. Colder temperatures forecast this weekend should help create even better ice conditions. For current conditions, call the Spirit Lake District Office at 712-336-1840.

NORTHEAST

Cedar River (above Nashua)

Ice is about 4 inches covered with about 3 inches of snow on impoundments. Ice depths vary in areas with current. Check ice thickness often. Anglers are catching a variety of fish. Morning and evening bites are best. **Black Crappie** - Good. **Bluegill** - Good: Try waxworms and spikes. **Walleye** – Fair: Use minnows under a slip bobber with enough weight to get your bait near the bottom.

Decorah District Streams

Deer hunting season continues. Many trout streams flow through wildlife management areas where hunting occurs. Use care when fishing a stream; wear bright orange and make noise informing hunters you're present. **Brook Trout** - Good: Walk around cleared areas in stream bottom; these are trout nests or redds. Brook and brown trout eggs will not hatch for a few more months. **Brown Trout** - Good: For brownies slow to take bait, a keen eye and a fly box filled with a variety of sizes and colors makes the difference between catching and taking your pole for a walk. **Rainbow Trout** - Good: Plenty of

rainbows stay in the stream over the winter. Use hair jigs, spinnerbaits or small shallow water crankbaits for aggressive fish.

Lake Hendricks

Ice about 5 inches covered with 2 inches of snow. Ice not clear. Avoid areas around the aerator. Best bite is afternoon to early evening. **Black Crappie** - Good. **Bluegill** - Good: Find fish near drop-offs; use small jig tipped with a waxworm.

Lake Meyer

About 3 to 5 inches of ice covered with 5 inches of snow. Ice is very clear. Evening bite is best. **Black Crappie** - Good: Fish deeper water suspending your lure about 5 feet off the bottom. **Bluegill** - Good: Find fish in deeper water; use a teardrop shaped jig tipped with a waxworm.

Volga Lake

The main portion of the lake is open as of Dec. 29. **Ice fishing is not advised.** Use extreme caution if venturing on ice; check ice thickness often.

Two to five inches of snow fell across the area Tuesday with more predicted over the weekend. Ice conditions greatly improved with 3 to 5 inches on most waterbodies. Temperatures well below freezing into the new year. For current fishing information, please call the Chuck Gipp Decorah Fish Hatchery at 563-382-8324.

Manchester District Streams

Area Manchester streams remain in excellent condition providing many angling opportunities for rainbow and brown trout.

Interior river conditions remain favorable providing decent angling opportunities; no reports on the interior rivers over this past week. Ice conditions are sketchy with the recent snowfall; **ice fishing is not recommended.** Trout streams remain in excellent condition. Call the Manchester Hatchery at 563-927-3276 for more information.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER

Mississippi River Pool 9

Lansing water level is 8.7 feet and is expected to remain stable over the next week. Water temperature is near 32 degrees. Ice continues to build, but it is extremely variable with snow cover. **Unsafe ice in sloughs and areas with any current. Notice:** Dredging is completed at Lansing Village Creek. The west part of the parking lot remains closed. **Black Crappie** - Fair: Fish backwaters with zero current just off the bottom. **Bluegill** - Fair: Try waxworms in the shallow backwaters with no current. **Sauger** - Fair: Sauger bite has improved some in the tailwaters of the dam. Try vertical jigging with an active minnow. **Walleye** - Fair: Walleye bite has improved in the tailwaters of the dams. Use a heavier jig tipped with minnow or three-way rig bounced off the bottom; move often. **Yellow Perch** - Good: Try jigs tipped with a minnow fished in shallows with no current.

Mississippi River Pool 10

Lynxville water level is near 14.7 feet and is expected to remain stable over the next week. Water temperature is 32 degrees. Ice continues to build, but it is extremely variable with snow cover. **Unsafe ice in sloughs and areas with any current. Black Crappie** - Fair: Fish backwaters with zero current just off the bottom. **Bluegill** - Fair: Try waxworms in the shallow backwaters with no current. **Sauger** - Fair: Sauger bite has improved some in the tailwaters of the dam. Try vertical jigging with an active minnow. **Walleye** - Fair: Walleye bite has improved in the tailwaters of the dams. Use a heavier jig tipped with minnow or three-way rig bounced off the bottom; move often. **Yellow Perch** - Good: Try jigs tipped with a minnow fished in shallows with no current.

Mississippi River Pool 11

Guttenberg tailwater is 5.7 feet and is expected to remain stable this week. Water temperature is 32 degrees at the Guttenberg dam. Ice continues to build, but it is extremely variable with snow cover. **Unsafe ice in sloughs and areas with any current. Black Crappie** - Fair: Fish backwaters with zero current just off the bottom. **Bluegill** - Fair: Try waxworms in the shallow backwaters with no current. **Sauger** - Fair: Sauger bite has improved some in the tailwaters of the dam. Try vertical jigging with an active minnow. **Walleye** - Fair: Walleye bite has improved in the tailwaters of the dams. Use a heavier jig tipped with minnow or three-way rig bounced off the bottom; move often. **Yellow Perch** - Good: Try jigs tipped with a minnow fished in shallows with no current.

Upper Mississippi River levels have stabilized at lower levels. Backwaters have only a few inches of ice. **Areas with current are still unsafe.** Use extreme caution with snow cover; ice conditions are variable. Walleye slot length limits now apply on the entire Iowa border of the Mississippi River. All walleyes less than 15 inches long and between 20-27 inches must be immediately released. One walleye over 27 inches may be kept. Combined walleye/sauger daily limit 6/possession 12.

Mississippi River Pool 12

The water level is slowly rising and temperature is in the low 30's. Water levels are 5.6 feet at the Lock and Dam and 8.2 feet at the railroad bridge. Water clarity is good. At these low river levels, be careful not to back off the ends of the boat ramps. Use the minimum water as necessary to launch boats. Check with local bait shops if any ramps are available for launching. **Sauger** - Fair: Use jigs in the tailwater. Most fish reported have been small. **Walleye** - Slow: Most angling for walleye and sauger is taking place in the tailwaters with anglers using jig and minnow or a one-eye jigging spoon. Fishing for walleyes has been slower in the Dubuque area. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Expect to see more yellow perch in the creel until ice up. We have had excellent reproduction of yellow perch in the past few years.

Mississippi River Pool 13

The water level at the Bellevue Lock is rising and is near 6.2 feet. Water temperature is near freezing in the main channel. Water clarity is good. Levels are still low; be careful not to back off the ends of the boat ramps. Use the minimum water necessary to float

boat. A new universally accessible boat loading platform has been built at the Bellevue City ramp; if you fish with someone who has a tough time to get in the boat, consider launching here. **Rainbow Trout** - Good: The kids' trout pond just north of the DNR station has been stocked with rainbow trout for the winter. You can only keep two trout per child. **Sauger** - Good: Some sauger are being caught on jig and minnow rigs. **Walleye** - Fair: Most angling for walleye and sauger is taking place in the tailwaters with anglers using jig and minnow or a one-eye jigging spoon. Windy conditions have hampered fishing this past week. **Yellow Perch** - Excellent: Lots of small perch are being seen during fish surveys. The future looks bright for decent yellow perch fishing in Pool 13. Most of the fish being caught are small.

[Mississippi River Pool 14](#)

The water level is rising at the Fulton Lock and Dam is 5.8 feet, 10.2 feet at Camanche and 4.9 feet at Le Claire. Water temperature is around 33 degrees in the main channel. Water clarity is good. With the low water, be careful not to back off the ends of the boat ramps. Use the minimum water necessary to float boat. **Sauger** - Good: Smaller sauger are being reported from the tailwaters mainly on a jig and minnow. **Walleye** - Fair: Most angling for walleye and sauger is taking place in the tailwaters with anglers using jig and minnow or a one-eye jigging spoon. Most fishing occurs at depths greater than 20 feet. Windy conditions greatly hampered fishing this week. **Yellow Perch** - No Report: Lots of small perch are in the system; the future looks bright for yellow perch fishing in Pool 14.

[Mississippi River Pool 15](#)

The water level at Rock Island is 6.3 feet and is steady. The water temperature is near 33 degrees. Water clarity is good. **Sauger** - No Report: Try fishing in the tailwater with a simple jig and minnow. Usually you need to fish at a depth greater than 20 feet for walleye and sauger.

Water temperatures are near freezing; ice is reforming in most backwaters. Wind has hampered good ice formation. Ice is still thin; use caution if you plan to venture out on the ice. The main channel water is low and clear, be careful not to back off the ends of ramps. If you have angling questions please call the Bellevue Fisheries Station at 563-880-8781.

[Mississippi River Pool 16](#)

Tailwater stage is 5.66 feet at Lock and Dam 15 in the Quad Cities and is forecast to fall the next few days. Main channel water temperature is 34 degrees. **Unsafe ice conditions.** As of Dec. 30th, the Marquette St. boat ramp was open. There is some snow and ice on the ramp that could make launching a boat difficult. Ramp conditions may change with snow and cold weather in the forecast. **Sauger** - Slow: Look for saugers below the Lock and Dam and in Sylvan Slough. Try vertical jigging with minnows or plastics. Fish can also be caught trolling three-way rigs with minnows or stick baits. Most fish being caught are small. **Walleye** - Slow: Look for walleyes below the dam or in Sylvan Slough. Some walleyes can also be caught fishing the wing dams.

Try vertical jigging with minnows or plastics. Walleyes can also be caught trolling three-way rigs with minnows or stick baits.

[Mississippi River Pool 17](#)

Tailwater stage is 4.59 feet at Lock and Dam 16 in Muscatine and is forecast to slowly fall the next few days. Main channel water temperature is around 34 degrees. We have not received any tailwater fishing or ramp condition information for this pool. **Unsafe ice conditions. Sauger** - No Report: Look for saugers below the dam. Try vertical jigging with minnows or trolling three-way rigs with minnows or stick baits. **Walleye** - No Report: Look for walleyes below the dam. Some walleyes can also be caught on the wing dams. Try vertical jigging with minnows or trolling three-way rigs with minnows or stick baits.

[Mississippi River Pool 18](#)

Tailwater stage is 5.01 feet at Lock and Dam 17 at New Boston and is forecast to fall slowly the next few days. Main channel water temperature is around 34 degrees. As of Dec; 30th, the Toolsboro ramp was open but ramp conditions may change with snow and cold weather in the forecast. **Unsafe ice conditions. Sauger** - Slow: Saugers are being caught below the dam. Try fishing with jigs and minnows or trolling three-way rigs with minnows or stick baits. **Walleye** - Slow: Some walleyes are being caught below the dam. Try vertical jigging minnows or trolling three-way rigs with minnows. Some walleyes can also be caught on the wing dams.

[Mississippi River Pool 19](#)

Tailwater stage is 2.65 feet at Lock and Dam 18 above Burlington and is forecast to fall. Main channel water temperature is around 34 degrees. We have not received any tailwater fishing information for this pool this week. **Unsafe ice conditions. Sauger** - No Report: Look for saugers below the Lock and Dam. Try vertical jigging with minnows or trolling three-way rigs with minnows. **Walleye** - No Report: Look for walleyes below the Lock and Dam or on the wing dams. Try vertical jigging with minnows or trolling three-way rigs with minnows.

Tailwater stages have risen close to a foot since last weekend. Main channel water temperature is 34 degrees. Water clarity has been fair. Tailwater fishing for walleye and saugers is being reported as slow. There is some skim ice on the backwaters, as well as some open water. **Unsafe ice conditions.** If you have questions on fishing Pools 16-19 contact the Fairport Fish Hatchery at 563-263-5062.

SOUTHEAST

[Jefferson Co. Park New Pond](#)

Rain took most of the ice off, but it is starting to refreeze. **Rainbow Trout** - Good: There was even a few nice brook trout in the mix. By now they have adjusted to their new home; look for them to be stuck tight to the habitat, but in fairly shallow. You need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout.

[Lake Belva Deer](#)

Lake is just starting to freeze back over after rain on Tuesday took off nearly all of the ice. **Bluegill** - No Report: Headed out to their winter homes.

Lake Darling

Lake was nearly ice free on Wednesday. Just starting to freeze back over today.

Bluegill - No Report: Use baits and lures sized for ice fishing in the deep water ice fishing spots.

Wilson Lake

Some ice around the edges. **Rainbow Trout** - Good: Look for them around the dropped trees and out around the cedar trees sunk in 6 to 8 feet of water. You need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout.

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

Hawthorn Lake

Bluegill - Slow: Target areas around deeper submerged structure and rock piles; use baits that you would use during ice fishing. **Largemouth Bass**- Slow: Largemouth bass are not very aggressive; try slowing down spinnerbaits or rubber worms along rocky shorelines and fishing jetties.

Lake Miami

Bluegill - Slow: Try small jigs fished around the cedar tree piles; use baits you would use when ice fishing. **Largemouth Bass**- Slow: Use spinnerbaits and rubber worms fished along the dam and around the fishing jetties. Try slowing down your presentation with the cool water temperatures.

Lake Sugema

Bluegill – Slow: Use small jigs along the shorelines and flooded timber. **Largemouth Bass** - Slow: Try slowing down spinnerbaits and crawdad presentations along the fishing jetties and other rocky shorelines.

Lake Wapello

Black Crappie - Slow: Try jigs tipped with a minnow around the cedar tree piles. **Bluegill** - Slow: Use small jigs around the submerged structure and cedar tree piles. Vertically jig ice fishing lures. **Largemouth Bass** – Slow: Use a slow presentation; bass are not very aggressive with the colder water temperatures. Try around the cedar tree piles.

Ottumwa Park Pond South (Trout Pond)

The fall stocking of trout was unannounced; 1000 trout were stocked. You need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout. **Rainbow Trout** - Fair: Try spoons, inline spinners or live bait under a bobber.

Rathbun Reservoir

The current lake level is 904.54 feet msl; 904 feet msl is recreation pool. Lake Rathbun has zebra mussels; make sure you properly drain, clean and dry equipment before transporting to another waterbody. Prairie Ridge, Island View and the Bridgeview campgrounds are closed for the season. The ramp is still open at Bridgeview and Island View high water ramp. Docks have been removed for the year. **Black Crappie** - Slow:

Try jigging around submerged structure or rock piles. **Walleye** - Slow: Try jigging spoons over rock piles.

Red Haw Lake

Bluegill - Slow: Look for submerged structure; these areas should hold fish. Use ice fishing lures over these structures. **Largemouth Bass**- Slow: Target areas around submerged structure with a slow presentation. Try rubber worms or other plastics.

Skim ice is forming around the shorelines. Contact the Rathbun Fish Hatchery at 641-647-2406 with questions about fishing in south central Iowa.

SOUTHWEST

Big Creek Lake

As of Dec. 29, Big Creek Lake is mostly open water with thin ice forming on the upper end of the lake.

As of Dec. 30, Central Iowa ponds and small lakes have ice conditions ranging from areas of open water to 3 inches thick. Ice fishing on ponds may be possible over the New Year weekend; use caution and check ice thickness often. For information on Central Iowa lakes and rivers contact Ben Dodd at 641-891-3795 or Andy Otting at 515-204-5885.

Viking Lake

Viking Lake is 5.5 feet below full pool. **Black Crappie** - No Report: Find crappies around deep tree piles.

Lakes in the southwest district are starting to ice up. As of Dec. 29, there are still areas of open water; **unsafe ice conditions**. For information on lakes in the Southwest District call the Cold Springs office at 712-769-2587.

