



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa Fishing Report

Conservation and Recreation



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

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

[Arrowhead Lake](#)

Most of the lake remains ice-covered. Remaining ice is unsafe.

[Black Hawk Lake](#)

The lake has opened up. Anglers are targeting panfish in and around the fish house in Town Bay. **Channel Catfish** - Fair: After ice-out is a good time to target channel catfish close to shore. Use cut bait or shad sides fished on the bottom. To keep the bait on the hook, use a 1/0 to 3/0 bait holder hook and enough weight (3/8th to 1/2 ounce) to cast into the wind. Black Hawk Lake has a good population of 2-5 pound channel catfish. Try along the lakeside shoreline of the state marina (Drillings Point) and along Ice House Point.

[Brushy Creek Lake](#)

Most of the lake is covered with unsafe ice. The lake will likely open up within the next

week.

[Crawford Creek Impoundment](#)

Crawford Creek is completely ice-free. Open water anglers have started to make their way out. **Largemouth Bass** – Fair.

[North Twin Lake](#)

The lake is partially ice-covered, but will likely open up within the week.

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

Most of the lake has opened up; there are still some areas covered with unsafe ice. About half of the marina is open; it likely will be ice-free within the week. Some anglers have just started to make their way out in the ice-free areas. All walleye between 19 and 25-inches must be immediately released unharmed at Storm Lake; no more than one walleye longer than 25-inches can be taken per day. **Channel Catfish** - Fair: After ice-out is a good time to target channel catfish close to shore. Use cut bait or shad sides fished on the bottom. To keep the bait on the hook, use a 1/0 to 3/0 bait holder hook and enough weight (3/8th to ½ ounce) to cast into the wind.

Many area lakes have recently opened up. Any remaining ice is unsafe. For more information, contact the Black Hawk District office at 712-657-2638.

[Clear Lake](#)

Ice conditions are changing fast. Use caution and check ice thickness often if you venture out. Avoid areas where vegetation is sticking through the ice. Clear Lake has 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. **Black Crappie** - Fair: Crappie have been caught in a variety of locations using small spoons and jigs. Best bite is dawn and dusk. **Walleye** – Good: Use a jigging spoon tipped with minnow heads and live minnows fished below a bobber.

[Lake Smith](#)

The lake is about half open. Ice fishing is no longer safe.

Ice conditions are changing fast. Most area lakes are unsafe for ice fishing. For information on the lakes and rivers in north central Iowa, contact the Clear Lake Fish and Wildlife office at 641-357-3517.

[Center Lake](#)

Ice thickness is around 7 inches. There is a large open hole where the aeration unit had been running throughout the winter.

[East Okoboji Lake](#)

Ice conditions have diminished heavily, but are still allowing foot traffic. Try heavy tungsten jigs, plastics and baits. **Black Crappie** - Fair. **Bluegill** – Fair: Try jigging with tube jigs or a tungsten jig and live bait. **Yellow Bass** - Good: With a little movement on the basin, you should be able find a decent bite and also catch a few other species.

Ingham Lake

Ice conditions very heavily around the lake; most areas have 12 inches. There is a large open hole where the lake aeration unit had been running this winter.

Lost Island Lake

Ice conditions vary with an average of around 8 inches. **Caution:** The aeration system is currently in operation on the east side of the lake out from the nature center. This creates a large open hole in the ice. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Lots of sorting may be needed.

Minnewashta Lake

Ice conditions have deteriorated with an average ice thickness of 8 inches. The panfish and crappie bite has been fairly good. **Black Crappie** - Fair: A nice crappie bite can be found with a little movement around the lake. **Bluegill** - Fair: Try jigging with tube jigs or a tungsten jig and live bait. **Pumpkinseed** - Fair.

Scharnberg Pond

Trout were stocked this winter; fish should be biting well. You need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout. **Brook Trout** - Good. **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 has a large open hole along the eastern side; the eastern access is very diminished. Ice thickness still allows foot traffic in most places. **Walleye** - Fair.

Spirit Lake

The lake is open on the south side and has highly diminished ice conditions throughout the rest of the lake. **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. **Walleye** - Slow: Season is closed until May 7th. **Yellow Perch** - Fair.

West Okoboji Lake

Ice conditions around the lake have diminished heavily. There are still a few bay areas that are able to be fished by foot. Panfishing on Millers bay has picked up with the warmer weather. **Black Crappie** - Fair: Try jigging with tube jigs or a tungsten jig and live bait. **Bluegill** - Fair: Many anglers have been successful off Triboji on the north end of the lake. Try jigging with tube jigs or a tungsten jig and live bait.

The walleye season for the Iowa Great Lake chain is closed. The season opens back up May 7th. Ice conditions on most lakes in the area have deteriorated heavily with the recent warm weather. There are still a handful of areas that allow foot traffic for ice fishing. The quality of the ice has diminished heavily leaving many open holes, seams, and very few good accesses. For current conditions, call the Spirit Lake District Office at 712-336-1840.

NORTHEAST

Cedar River (above Nashua)

Best fishing is in open water below dams. Ice flows are more common as rivers begin to swell and ice breaks up. Ice fishing season is ending on the Cedar River. **Channel Catfish** - Fair: Catfish are starting to look for food floating their way. Try a hook loaded with a crawler. **Northern Pike** - Fair: Pike are on the move looking for good spawning grounds as ice melts and water warms. **Smallmouth Bass** - Fair: Smallies are showing up below dams. Use a nightcrawler. **Walleye** - Fair: Try worms under a slip bobber with enough weight to get your bait near bottom. **Yellow Perch** - Fair.

Decorah District Streams

Stream clarity is excellent, but could change depending on rain/snow amounts. Gravel roads are thawing; usually better in morning until the sun warms the ground. Use care when walking from site to site as ground conditions are highly variable from ice to mush. **Brook Trout** - Fair: Insect hatches are starting to take place on sunny afternoons. Use midge, minnow or scud patterns for fish looking to get more bang for their effort. **Brown Trout** - Fair: Melt water flowing into streams is bringing a fresh supply of foods for curious brownies. Try spinner or crankbaits near or around structure. Also try flies that look fishy. **Rainbow Trout** - Fair: Rainbow Trout are teasing anglers with soft strikes and nudges. Use small spinnerbaits, hair jigs or hooks tipped with imitation eggs floating past structure.

Lake Hendricks

Ice is opening up around the shoreline. Ice fishing is not recommended.

Lake Meyer

Ice is melting away from the shoreline. Ice fishing is not recommended. **Bluegill** – Slow: Use a small jig and waxies. Ice conditions are changing fast.

North Bear Creek

Bridge replacement work is starting on Sacquitne Bridge on 360th St. Parking lot and stream access should remain open. Be courteous to workers. **Rainbow Trout** - Fair.

Volga Lake

Volga Lake has about 2 feet of open water around the edges of the entire waterbody. Ice fishing is not recommended.

Slight chance of rain possible Thursday and Friday. Temperatures ranging from 30's to low 60's by Sunday. Ice depths and conditions on area waters are quickly deteriorating. Ice on rivers is breaking up. Ice fishing is not recommended. For current fishing information, please call the Chuck Gipp Decorah Fish Hatchery at 563-382-8324.

Cedar River (Nashua to La Porte City)

Anglers are starting to catch a few walleye and northern pike on the Cedar River. **Northern Pike** - Fair: Cast bucktail spinnerbaits or float a chub or shiner under a

bobber. **Walleye** - Fair: Cast a jig tipped with plastic and a minnow. Keep your presentation slow and just off of the river bottom near current breaks or slack water areas.

Manchester District Streams

Trout streams are in excellent condition. Very clear water conditions; use subtle presentations and approach fish from downstream. Sunday could provide some runoff on our streams which can often be beneficial in catching brown trout. **Brown Trout** – Fair. **Rainbow Trout** – Fair.

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

Anglers are starting to catch a few walleye. **Walleye** - Fair: Cast a jig tipped with plastic and a minnow. Keep your presentation slow and just off of the river bottom near current breaks or slack water areas.

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

Anglers are beginning to catch a few walleye and northern pike. **Northern Pike** - Fair: Cast bucktail spinnerbaits or float a chub or shiner under a bobber. **Walleye** - Fair: Cast a jig tipped with plastic and a minnow. Keep your presentation slow and just off of the river bottom near current breaks or slack water areas

Ice fishing is not recommended. Reports of anglers catching walleye and northern pike on the interior rivers. Call area/local bait shops for the most up to date reports. Contact the Manchester Hatchery at 563-927-3276 for more information.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER

[Mississippi River Pool 9](#)

Water is 7.9 feet at Lansing and is predicted to reach 8.4 feet. Ice conditions are poor and changing fast. Boaters are open water fishing at Genoa tailwaters; some ice chunks are making fishing difficult near the dam. Village Creek ramp is still iced in. **Bluegill** - Fair: Ice anglers are drilling lots of holes and moving often to find bigger gills. Try a jig tipped with a waxworm in the weed edges of deeper backwaters. **Northern Pike** - Good: The bite is picking up as pike start to feed to prepare for the spawning season. **Sauger** - Fair: Some smaller sauger are being caught on twister tail jigs in tailwater areas. **Walleye** - Fair: Walleye are moving to tailwaters and side channel structure pre-spawn. Try vertical jigging and drifting a live minnow. **White Crappie** - Slow: The late ice bite has picked up. Try minnows over woody structure in backwater lakes. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Perch are biting on plastics; fish are becoming more active pre-spawn.

Mississippi River Pool 10

Water level is 614.3 feet at Lynxville and is predicted to rise over 616 feet. Tailwater fishing has picked up; some ice chunks are still coming through the dam. Ice fishing conditions are poor and changing fast. Avoid crossing the slough at Sny Magill; conditions have become unsafe. **Bluegill** - Good: Ice anglers are drilling lots of holes and moving often to find bigger gills. Try a jig tipped with a waxworm in the weed edges

of deeper backwaters. **Northern Pike** - Good: The bite is picking up as pike start to feed to prepare for the spawn season. **Sauger** - Fair: Some smaller sauger are being caught on twister tail jigs in tailwater areas. **Walleye** - Fair: Walleye are moving to tailwaters and side channel structure pre-spawn. Try vertical jigging and drifting a live minnow. **White Crappie** - Slow: The late ice bite has picked up. Try minnows over woody structure in backwater lakes. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Perch are biting on plastics; fish are becoming more active pre-spawn.

[Mississippi River Pool 11](#)

Water level in the tailwater is 6 feet and is predicted to rise to 8.5 feet this week. Ice conditions are changing daily. Use caution and avoid dark ice along shorelines and areas with current. The Guttenberg south boat ramps are free of ice and open. **Bluegill** - Good: Ice anglers are drilling lots of holes and moving often to find bigger gills. Try a jig tipped with a waxworm in the weed edges of deeper backwaters. **Northern Pike** - Fair: The bite is picking up as pike start to feed to prepare for the March spawn. **Sauger** - Fair: Some smaller sauger are being caught on twister tail jigs in tailwater areas. **Walleye** - Fair: Walleye are moving to tailwaters and side channel structure pre-spawn. Try vertical jigging and drifting a live minnow. **White Crappie** - Good: The late ice bite has picked up. Try minnows over woody structure in backwater lakes. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Perch are biting on plastics; fish are becoming more active pre-spawn.

Upper Mississippi River levels continue to rise this week. Water temperatures are near 34 degrees. Ice is breaking up in main channel areas. Use caution on ice along shorelines and areas of current. 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](#)

Water levels are 8.5 feet at the Lock and Dam and 8.4 feet at the railroad bridge. Water clarity is fair. Some ice flows are periodically flowing downstream, but ramps are generally open. **Sauger** - No Report: Ramps are open; we have not received any reports. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Spring can be a good season to hit tailwater yellow perch. Minnow heads often are the preferred bait.

[Mississippi River Pool 13](#)

The water level at the Bellevue Lock is rising at near 7.4 feet. The City of Bellevue Boat ramp is open, but ice flows at times make launching and boating difficult. Ramps are open for boating. Water clarity is good. **Paddlefish** - Good: Paddlefish season is underway; review all [paddlefish rules](#) before angling in Iowa and Illinois waters. Contact the Bellevue Fisheries Management office or the local game wardens if you are uncertain of paddlefish snagging rules. **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** - Slow: The Bellevue City boat ramp is open; fishing

has been reported to be slow. **Yellow Perch** - No Report: Ice out catches of yellow perch often are found in the tailwaters.

[Mississippi River Pool 14](#)

The water level is rising at 5.7 feet at the Fulton Lock and Dam, 9.8 feet at Camanche and 5.0 feet at Le Claire. Water temperature is around 34 degrees in the main channel. Water clarity is fair. Boat ramps are reported open; ice flows are diminishing. **Paddlefish** - Good: Paddlefish season is underway; review all [paddlefish rules](#) before angling in Iowa and Illinois waters. Contact the Bellevue Fisheries Management office or the local game wardens if you are uncertain of paddlefish snagging rules. **Sauger** - Slow: Ramps are open with periodic ice flows; ice flows are diminishing. **Yellow Perch** - No Report: Lots of small perch are in the system; the future looks bright for yellow perch fishing in Pool 14. The tailwaters can be a great early spot for perch when the ice recedes.

[Mississippi River Pool 15](#)

The water level at Rock Island is receding at 6.2 feet. The water temperature is near 35 degrees. Water clarity is fair, but improving. **Bluegill** - No Report: Not a lot of backwater bluegill habitat exists on Pool 15 outside of marina areas.

Spring is slowly returning to the river with lots of migrating birds going north and ice flows going south. The main channel water is low, but is rising slowly. If you have angling questions please call the Bellevue Fisheries Station at 563-880-8781.

[Mississippi River Pool 16](#)

Tailwater stage is 6.11 feet at Lock and Dam 15 in the Quad Cities and has been falling. Tailwater stage is forecast to start rising over the weekend. There has been some tailwater fishing for walleyes and saugers. **Sauger** - Fair: Some saugers have been caught below the Lock and Dam in the Quad Cities. Use hair jigs and minnows or nightcrawlers; mostly small saugers have been caught.

[Mississippi River Pool 17](#)

Tailwater stage is 4.98 feet at Lock and Dam 16 in Muscatine and has been falling the past few days. Water clarity is poor at Muscatine. Big Timber is free of ice. **Sauger** - Slow: Look for saugers below the Lock and Dam. Try vertical jigging with minnows or crawlers. **Walleye** - Slow: Some anglers were out this past week. Try vertical jigging with minnows or crawlers.

[Mississippi River Pool 18](#)

Tailwater stage is 5.85 feet at Lock and Dam 17 at New Boston and has been starting to fall the past few days. Tailwater stage is forecast to begin rising slowly by the middle of next week. There has been some tailwater fishing for walleye and saugers. **Sauger** - Slow: Try vertical jigging with minnows or crawlers. **Walleye** - Slow: Try vertical jigging with minnows or crawlers.

[Mississippi River Pool 19](#)

Tailwater stage is 3.25 feet at Lock and Dam 18 above Burlington and is forecast to fall

over the weekend. We have not received any reports on tailwater fishing for walleye and sauger. **Sauger** - No Report: Look for saugers below the dam. Try vertical jigging with minnows. **Walleye** - No Report: Look for walleyes below the dam. Try vertical jigging with minnows.

Tailwater stages have been slowly falling the past few days. There has been some tailwater fishing for walleyes and saugers below the Locks and Dams. Water clarity is poor to fair. Water temperature is 38-40 degrees. If you have questions on fishing Pools 16-19 contact the Fairport Fish Hatchery at 563-263-5062.

SOUTHEAST

[Big Hollow Lake](#)

All open water.

[Iowa River \(Columbus Junction to Mississippi River\)](#)

Open water; you will see some ice floating down the river on the coldest of mornings.

[Lake Belva Deer](#)

Ice free. Very little angler activity.

[Lake Darling](#)

Ice free. The dock at main ramp was put in on March 16.

[Lost Grove Lake](#)

More open water, less ice. No ice to walk on.

[Skunk River \(Rose Hill to Coppock\)](#)

All open water; you will see some ice floating down the river on cold mornings.

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

[Hawthorn Lake](#)

Open water.

[Lake Miami](#)

Open water. **Channel Catfish** - Slow: Try dead chubs around the shoreline.

[Lake Sugema](#)

Open water.

[Lake Wapello](#)

Open water.

[Rathbun Reservoir](#)

The current lake level is 904.93 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. **Channel Catfish** - Slow: There is open water for most of the lake. Try dead chubs or shad sides for early ice out catfish.

[Red Haw Lake](#)

Red Haw State Park is closed due to the damage from the tornado on March 5th.

Lakes are open water. Contact the Rathbun Fish Hatchery at 641-647-2406 with questions about fishing in south central Iowa.

SOUTHWEST

[Big Creek Lake](#)

Ice is going out. The lake may be ice-free by the end of this weekend. **Channel Catfish** - Fair: Catch channel catfish off wind-blown shorelines on the upper end of the lake with dead gizzard shad fished shallow in 2 to 6 feet of water

[Des Moines River \(Saylorville to Red Rock\)](#)

Walleye - Slow: Use twister tails, swimbaits or live minnows on jigs.

Central Iowa ponds and lakes are ice-free south of I-80 and partially ice covered north of I-80. For information on Central Iowa lakes and rivers contact Ben Dodd at 641-891-3795 or Andy Otting at 515-204-5885.

[Greenfield Lake](#)

Greenfield Lake is a good destination for ice-out catfish. **Channel Catfish** - No Report: Look for channel catfish in the upper end of the lake or wind-blown shoreline using shad sides.

[Lake Anita](#)

As water temperatures warm, the crappie bite picks up in the upper ends of the lake.

[Littlefield Lake](#)

Littlefield has a good catfish population. **Channel Catfish** - No Report: Cast the wind-blown shoreline; move often to find actively feeding channel catfish.

[Prairie Rose Lake](#)

Prairie Rose will provide good spring fishing.

[Viking Lake](#)

Viking lake is 5 feet low; access is compromised. **Black Crappie** - Fair: Search the brush piles to find active crappies. **Channel Catfish** - No Report: Viking has a good catfish population. Use shad sides on a wind-blown shoreline.

Lakes are ice-free in the southwest district. For information on lakes in the Southwest District call the Cold Springs office at 712-769-2587.

Lake Icaria

Channel Catfish - Fair: Try cut bait along wind-blown shorelines to catch channel catfish of all sizes.

Three Mile Lake

Courtesy docks are in place at the main ramp.

Mount Ayr district lakes are 100 percent ice free. Water temperature is in the mid-40s. For more information, call the Mount Ayr Fisheries office at 641-464-3108.



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