



[Top Iowa Fishing Spots for the Week of Dec. 22](#)

- [NORTHWEST](#)
- [NORTHEAST](#)
- [MISSISSIPPI RIVER](#)
- [SOUTHEAST](#)
- [SOUTHWEST](#)

NORTHWEST

[Arrowhead Lake](#)

Ice thickness was 4 inches near the boat ramp on Dec. 21.

[Black Hawk Lake](#)

As of Dec. 21, ice thickness was 7 inches off of Ice House Point boat ramp. Anglers have been out on the ice in this area. Anglers can also fish open water at the fish house in Town Bay where the area directly underneath the structure is kept open with a small water agitator. **Black Crappie** - Fair. **Yellow Perch** - Fair.

[Black Hawk Pits](#)

Ice thickness was 4 inches of ice off of the boat ramp on Dec 21.

[Brushy Creek Lake](#)

Most of the lake is iced over, except for a small pocket of open water by the beach on the west side of the lake. Most bays and the shore were open last week; they have just recently frozen over with thin ice. As of Dec 21, reports of **unsafe ice** at 2-3 inches thick in some areas; no or very little ice fishing activity at that time.

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

Ice thickness is 0 to 8 inches. Ice thickness is variable and can change quickly. There is open water near the big island. Use extreme caution if venturing out; test ice thickness often. **Walleye** - Fair: Best bite is mornings and evenings. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: The bite is hit-or-miss. Use small jigs tipped with a minnow.

Ice thickness is 3-8 inches on area lakes as of Dec. 21. Use caution if venturing out; conditions are variable. For more information, contact the Black Hawk District office at 712-657-2638.

Blue Pit

Blue Pit was recently stocked with rainbow trout. You need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout. **Rainbow Trout** - Excellent: Use spinnerbaits and small jigs.

Clear Lake

Ice thickness is 0 to 9 inches. Use caution near the west aeration system. Clear Lake has a protected slot on walleye. All walleye between 17 and 22 inches must be immediately released unharmed. The daily limit is 3 with no more than one walleye longer than 22 inches may be taken per day. **Black Crappie** - Slow. **Bluegill** - Fair. **Walleye** - Fair: Use a jigging spoon tipped with live bait. Best bite is after sunset. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Try live bait and jigs near vegetation. Use a bigger bait to avoid the small fish.

Lake Smith

Ice thickness is 7 inches. **Bluegill** - Good: Try a small jig tipped with waxworms.

Lower Pine Lake

Ice thickness is 2.5 to 3 inches at the boat ramp. Use caution between the island and the beach.

Rice Lake

Ice thickness is 0 to 9 inches. **Yellow Perch** - No Report: Try a small jig tipped with bait near vegetation.

Silver Lake (Worth)

Ice thickness is 0 to 9 inches. **Yellow Perch** - Slow: Try a small jig tipped with bait near vegetation.

Upper Pine Lake

Ice thickness is 2.5 to 3 inches off the boat ramp.

Winter aeration systems are running at Clear Lake, Crystal Lake, Rice Lake and Silver Lake. 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 entirely iced over with around 4.5 inches in most areas. Use caution when going out; watch for holes that have iced over more recently on the south bay. The water level is 10 inches below crest. **Black Crappie** - Good: Try small jigs tipped with a minnow or tube jig and bobber. **Bluegill** - Good: Use tube jigs, plastics, or other small jigs. **Northern Pike** - Good: Tip-ups are working well. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Minnows work well; some sorting may be needed.

Ingham Lake

Use caution; there is an open hole in the lake with the aerator in use.

Lost Island Lake

Ice thickness is around 9+ inches in most places. **Black Crappie** - Good. **Walleye** - Good.

Minnewashta Lake

Ice thickness is 10.5+ inches. **Black Crappie** - Excellent. **Bluegill** - Good.

Silver Lake (Dickinson)

Ice thickness is around 9 inches. Use caution; the lake aerator is in use. This creates an open hole on the east side of the lake. **Walleye** - Good: Best bite is at dusk.

Spirit Lake

The lake is entirely iced over with 8+ inches in most places. The best ice is on the south end and Anglers Bay. Marble beach access has a few holes and is heaved up along the shoreline. **Walleye** - Good: Best bite is around dusk. **Yellow Perch** - Good: Use small jigs tipped with a minnow. Sorting may be needed.

West Okoboji Lake

Most bays have safe ice for foot traffic. Use caution, some areas, such as Emerson bay, have very spotty ice conditions ranging from 6 inches to recently iced over open holes spotting the entire area. The water level is 10 inches below crest. **Black Crappie** - Fair: Try small jigs tipped with a minnow. **Bluegill** - Good: Use tube jigs, plastics, or other small jigs. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Use small jigs tipped with a minnow. Sorting may be needed.

Most lakes have 8+ inches of ice. Larger lakes may have holes that have more recently iced over; use caution when going out, especially if using an ATV or vehicle. A good amount of snow forecast in the area will make reading ice conditions more difficult. Check ice thickness often and bring a friend. For current conditions, call the Spirit Lake District Office at 712-336-1840.

NORTHEAST

Cedar River (above Nashua)

About 7 inches of ice is covering the impoundments. Geese and pelicans are keeping some areas open. Use caution in areas with current. Check ice thickness often. **Black Crappie** - Fair: Use small jigs tipped with minnows; find deeper water with little current. **Walleye** - Good: Use small jigs tipped with minnows. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Try a small jig tipped with a colored spike or waxworm fished near bottom in areas with little current and around structure.

Decorah District Streams

Water clarity is good to excellent on most streams. Parking areas on public ground are not plowed. Trout anglers using any kind of light weight rods and reels with spinnerbaits or a hook tipped with small piece of crawler, cheese, or dough can be just as successful as fly anglers. **Brook Trout** - Good: Walk around cleared areas in stream bottom; these are trout nests or "redds". Brook and brown trout eggs won't hatch for a few more months. **Brown Trout** - Good: For brownies slow to take bait, a keen eye and fly box filled with a variety of sizes and colors makes a difference between catching and taking your pole for a walk. **Rainbow Trout** - Good: Plenty of fish remain in the stream over winter. Use hair jigs, spinnerbaits or small shallow water crankbaits for aggressive fish.

Lake Hendricks

Ice thickness is about 6-8 inches. Use caution around aerator; geese are keeping this area open. **Black Crappie** - Good: Fish a little above bluegills with similar gear. Crappie tend to strike from below. **Bluegill** - Good: Find fish near the lake bottom. Use a small jig tipped with a waxworm. **Largemouth Bass** - Fair: Anglers are catching bass when fishing for bluegills.

Lake Meyer

Ice thickness is about 4-6. The afternoon bite is best. **Bluegill** - Good: Anglers are catching 3- to 4-inch gills with some nice ones in the mix. Find fish in 10-12 feet water near the bottom. Use a small brightly colored jig with a waxworm. **Largemouth Bass** - Fair: The occasional bass will strike while fishing for bluegills; 10- to 15-inch bass are common.

Volga Lake

Ice thickness is about 6-8 inches. **Black Crappie** – Slow. **Bluegill** - Good: Try small jigs tipped with colored spikes near brush piles.

Winter weather advisory for strong winds, blowing snow, and bitter cold temperatures through the weekend. [2023 resident fishing licenses](#) are now available and make great holiday gifts. 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: Most anglers are having good success fishing plastics tipped with a minnow.

Maquoketa River (above Monticello)

There have been no reports on the Maquoketa River. **Walleye** - No Report: Most anglers are having good success fishing plastics tipped with a minnow.

Shell Rock River (Greene to Shell Rock)

Walleye - Good: Most anglers are having good success fishing plastics tipped with a minnow.

Wapsipinicon River (Tripoli to Troy Mills)

Walleye - Good: Most anglers are having good success fishing plastics tipped with a minnow.

Interior rivers are in excellent condition and are frozen over. Walleye fishing has been good to excellent on the rivers when conditions allow. Weather conditions should improve ice thickness on most water bodies; use extreme caution. Contact your local area bait shops for the most recent hot spots. For more information, contact the Manchester Hatchery at 563-927-3276.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER

Mississippi River Pool 9

Water level is 8.4 feet at Lansing. Water temperature is 32 degrees in the main channel. Ice is building with an average of 6 to 8 inches. Early ice pan-fishing has been good in deeper backwater cuts. **Bluegill** - Fair: Ice anglers are doing some sorting for larger gills. Try ice jigs tipped with waxworms. **Sauger** - No report: Try vertical jigging with a minnow in the Lock and Dam tailwaters. **Walleye** - No report: Bottom bounce a jig with twister tails in the Lock and Dam tailwaters. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Shore Slough near Lansing has been producing some perch through the ice in the deeper cuts.

Mississippi River Pool 10

Water level is 615.3 feet at Lynxville. Water temperature is 34 degrees at the Lynxville dam. Ice is building with the colder temperatures. Bussey Lake at Guttenberg has been fair for pan-fishing at the upper end in the cuts. Use caution around the shorelines. **Bluegill** - Fair: Ice anglers are doing some sorting for the larger gills. Try ice jigs tipped with waxworms. **Sauger** - No Report: Try vertical jigging with a minnow in the Lock and Dam tailwaters. **Walleye** - No Report: Bottom bounce a jig with twister tails in the Lock and Dam tailwaters. **Yellow Perch** -

Fair: Try a small jig tipped with a waxworm in the vegetation along deeper backwater dredge cuts.

Mississippi River Pool 11

Water level is 5.7 feet at Guttenberg. Water temperature is 33 degrees in the channel. Ice is building in backwaters with 6 to 8 inches. Mud Lake has been fair in the marina area. Avoid thin ice in the creek area leading to Zollicoffers. Panfish have settled into deeper backwaters with zero current. Fishing has been slow in the Lock and Dam tailwaters with smaller saugers being caught. **Sauger** - Fair: Bottom bounce a jig with twister tails in the Lock and Dam tailwaters **Walleye** - Slow: Bottom bounce a jig with twister tails in the Lock and Dam tailwaters

Upper Mississippi River levels are stable. Backwaters are building ice with an average of 6 to 8 inches. 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. Walleye/sauger combined daily limit 6/possession 12.

Mississippi River Pool 12

The water level is 5.3 feet at Lock and Dam 11 and 8.1 feet at the RR bridge. Water temperature is around 33 degrees; the water is clear. Ramps in the Dubuque area are mostly frozen in; most anglers have turned to ice fishing in the backwater lakes. **Bluegill** - Good: Nearly all panfish are in backwater areas for the winter, which are lakes with no flowing water and hopefully deep enough to not freeze to the bottom. Better ice is bringing out more anglers; reports vary, but there has been some nice catches. **Sauger** - No Report: Overall on the Mississippi River, the fall/winter tailwater angling for walleye and sauger was pretty decent. Many anglers in the Dubuque pool were disappointed as fish seemed to be harder to find. Boat ramps are frozen in; getting to the tailwaters will be greatly restricted.

Mississippi River Pool 13

The water level is 5.5 feet at Lock and Dam 12 at Bellevue and is stable. Water clarity is excellent. Water temperature is around 33 degrees. Launching in both tailwater ramps will be difficult as the River is freezing in. **Bluegill** - Good: Nearly all panfish are in backwater areas for the winter, which are lakes with no flowing water and hopefully deep enough to not freeze to the bottom. Expect ice angling to ramp up after this cold spell; ice fishing conditions should greatly improve. **Rainbow Trout** - Excellent: The Bellevue kids trout pond is open and vegetation free. It is a nice safe place to fish with kids on warmer winter days. Please only keep two fish per child, if you plan to keep any. **Sauger** - Good: The bite in the Bellevue Pool was up and down this fall, but most anglers report it was a solid season with lots of nice walleye and sauger taken. Ramps are iced in as of late December; we will report if they open back up again.

Mississippi River Pool 14

The water level is 4.4 feet at Fulton, 9 feet at Camanche and 4.4 feet at LeClaire. Water clarity is excellent. Water temperature is near 33 degrees. Launching at most boat ramps will be difficult as they are icing in. **Bluegill** - No Report: Nearly all panfish are in backwater areas for the winter, which are lakes with no flowing water and hopefully deep enough to not freeze to the bottom. Expect ice fishing action to ramp up after the this cold spell and ice conditions improve. **Sauger** - Good: Fall walleye and sauger angling was reported as good by many

anglers with both numbers and nice-sized fish reported. Most ramps are iced in; it will be difficult to access the tailwaters.

[Mississippi River Pool 15](#)

The water level is 5.3 feet at Rock Island. Water clarity is excellent. Water temperature is 33 degrees. Ramps are being iced in. **Bluegill** - No Report: Expect ice fishing conditions to greatly improve; not a lot of ice angling goes on in Pool 15 as true backwater areas are not present in this pool.

Radical change in River conditions this week as the winter cold settles in. Most boat ramps are frozen in or have significant ice near shore and are not usable. Some ice fishing was reported this week; expect ice fishing activity to ramp up over the holiday season. If you have angling questions, please call the Bellevue Fisheries Management Station at 563-880-8781.

[Mississippi River Pool 16](#)

Tailwater stage is 5.32 feet at Lock and Dam 15 in the Quad Cities and has been falling. As of Dec. 21, the Marquette St boat ramp was frozen in. Backwaters are frozen over with skim ice. **Unsafe ice conditions.**

[Mississippi River Pool 17](#)

Tailwater stage is 4.15 feet at Lock and Dam 16 in Muscatine and has been falling the past few days. As of Dec. 21, the boat ramp at Muscatine is frozen in and flow ice is coming down the channel. Backwaters are frozen over. **Unsafe ice conditions.**

[Mississippi River Pool 18](#)

Tailwater stage is 4.13 feet at Lock and Dam 17 at New Boston and has been falling the past few days. Flow ice is coming down the channel. Backwaters are frozen over. **Unsafe ice conditions.**

[Mississippi River Pool 19](#)

Tailwater stage is 1.84 feet at Lock and Dam 18 above Burlington and has been falling the past few days. We have not received any fishing reports for this pool this week. **Unsafe ice conditions.**

Tailwater stages have been falling the past few days. Many of the boat ramps are freezing in with the recent cold weather. Backwaters have frozen over with skim 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](#)

Thin ice covers the lake; not thick enough to hold people yet.

[Lake Belva Deer](#)

The geese left the lake last night; it has frozen over. Ice around the edges is a couple of inches thick, but not too far out from shore it isn't near that thick.

[Lake Darling](#)

Ice thickness is about 2 inches around the edges; much thinner ice further out. The geese and swans left last night; their several acres wide spot of open water froze over last night.

[Lost Grove Lake](#)

A couple of inches of ice around the shoreline, but there was still open water in spots last Saturday with the wind. Wouldn't try it for a few more days at the earliest.

[Wilson Lake](#)

Wilson Lake by Fort Madison is just freezing over; might be frozen over by this weekend. Unsafe ice most years this time of year.

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

[Lake Miami](#)

Little fishing pressure lately. Ice is too thin to support anglers.

[Lake Sugema](#)

Ice thickness is about 1-2 inches in some areas. There is still open water near the dam due to geese keeping an area open.

[Lake Wapello](#)

Ice thickness is about 1 1/2 inches in some spots. There is open water out from the beach area due to geese.

[Ottumwa Park Pond South \(Trout Pond\)](#)

Ice is not thick enough to support anglers. You need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout.

[Rathbun Reservoir](#)

The current lake level is 904.02 msl; recreation pool is 904 msl. Ice thickness is about 1-2 inches in some areas. There is open water on most of the main lake and around the Bridgeview boat ramp. Lake Rathbun has zebra mussels, so make sure to properly drain, clean and dry equipment before transporting to another waterbody. **Walleye** - No Report: [Effective January 1, 2023 there will be a 15-inch minimum length limit on walleye](#). All walleyes measuring less than 15 inches must be immediately released unharmed. This regulation does not apply to the Chariton River below Rathbun dam; the upper limit of the regulation will be the Wayne/Appanoose county line.

[Red Haw Lake](#)

Ice thickness is not enough to support anglers. Red Haw State Park has partially reopened. Visitors can access the beach and north boat ramp area, but are asked to avoid the campground.

Most area lakes still have some open water; ice conditions are not yet thick enough for anglers. Contact the Rathbun Fish Hatchery at 641-647-2406 with questions about fishing in south central Iowa.

SOUTHWEST

[Ada Hayden Heritage Park Lake](#)

Ada Hayden is usually one of the last lakes in Central Iowa to ice over. **Rainbow Trout** - Fair:

Once ice thickness is suitable for ice angling, use jigging spoons tipped with waxworms or minnows. You need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout.

[Big Creek Lake](#)

As of Dec. 21, ice thickness was 3 to 4 inches near shore. Ice may be thinner mid-lake.

[Lake Petocka](#)

Rainbow Trout - Fair: Use jigging spoons tipped with waxworms or minnows. You need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout.

[Terra Lake](#)

Rainbow Trout - Fair: Use jigging spoons tipped with waxworms or minnows. You need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout.

[Triumph Park West](#)

Rainbow Trout - Fair: Use jigging spoons tipped with waxworms or minnows. You need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout.

As of Dec. 21, ponds and lakes in Central Iowa had 3 to 4 inches of ice. Use caution as there may be thin spots, especially on large lakes. For information on Central Iowa lakes and rivers contact Ben Dodd at 641-891-3795 or Andy Otting at 515-204-5885.

[Big Lake \(Including Gilbert's Pond\)](#)

A second trout stocking will occur in January when the ice is safe. Continue to check the fishing report for updates. **Rainbow Trout** - No Report: Try similar size tackle used for bluegill and crappie; nightcrawlers and minnows are good live bait options. You need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout.

[Greenfield Lake](#)

Greenfield has a large year class of 9-inch black crappie that will provide good ice fishing this winter.

[Lake Anita](#)

Lake Anita has a good year class of black crappie averaging 9-inches going into the ice fishing season. Bluegills look good as well, averaging 8-inches.

[Littlefield Lake](#)

Littlefield will be a good ice fishing destination this winter. Expect 9-inch black crappie, 8- to 9-inch bluegill and perhaps a bonus yellow perch.

[Meadow Lake](#)

Expect to catch 10- to 12-inch black crappies and 8-inch bluegill this winter.

[Prairie Rose Lake](#)

Fish surveys show a large number of 10- to 12-inch black crappie. Bluegills will be 8.5- to 9-inches. Prairie Rose will be a good ice fishing destination this winter.

[Viking Lake](#)

Viking Lake has a good number of 8- to 10-inch black crappie with a smaller percentage of larger fish. Bluegill size will range from 7.5- to 8-inches.

Lakes in the district have 2 to 4 inches of ice. For information on lakes in the Southwest District call the Cold Springs office at 712-769-2587.

Three Mile Lake

Courtesy docks are in at the main ramp.

As of Dec. 20, most Mount Ayr district lakes have variable ice conditions from 1-3 inches. For more information, call the Mount Ayr Fisheries office at 641-464-3108.

Stay safe on the ice this winter

With cold weather finally arriving in Iowa and freezing over lakes and ponds, ice fishing activity has begun at certain northern lakes.

Test the ice thickness frequently and to trust your instincts – if the ice does not look right, don't go out. Ice forms at different rates on each body of water depending upon its size and depth. Once frozen, conditions change constantly and ice thickness can vary across the lake. Rocks, trees, docks or other things that poke through the ice will conduct heat and make the ice around it less stable.

