



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa Fishing Report

Conservation and Recreation



[Top Iowa Fishing Spots for the Week of Dec. 21](#)

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

NORTHWEST

[Black Hawk Lake](#)

Most of the lake is covered with thin ice. **Unsafe ice conditions.** Warm temperatures forecast and rain will further weaken existing ice; the lake may open up again. The area around the fish house in Town bay is kept ice-free with a water agitator to provide open water fishing opportunities. **Black Crappie** - Fair: There is open water at the fish house in Town Bay; use a small jig. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Try a small jig or a piece of crawler under a bobber.in the fish house in Town Bay.

[Blue Lake](#)

The lake is mostly ice-free. Aerators are in operation off-shore near the park visitor center for the winter season; expect open water and thin ice in this area.

[Brushy Creek Lake](#)

The lake is ice-free. Courtesy docks are removed for the season.

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

Most of Storm Lake is covered with thin ice. **Unsafe ice**; too thin to walk on. Warmer weather and rain forecast will weaken existing ice.

Shoreline fishing is limited with skim ice on most area lakes. Any ice in the district is too thin to walk on. Some lakes may open up again with the warmer temperatures forecast and rain. For more information, contact the Black Hawk District office at 712-657-2638.

Blue Pit

Rainbow Trout - Fair: Use spinnerbaits and small jigs. You need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout.

Clear Lake

Ice fishing is not recommended. 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.

Crystal Lake

The aeration system is running. **Ice fishing is not recommended.**

Rice Lake

Ice fishing is not recommended.

Silver Lake (Worth)

The aeration system is running. **Ice fishing is not recommended.**

Ice fishing is not recommended with above freezing temperatures forecast and rain. 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

Much of the lake is ice covered. Very few areas offer safe ice fishing opportunities.

Black Crappie - Fair: Use minnows and plastics. **Bluegill** - Fair: Try a small hook and piece of worm. In deeper water, use pilkies with wigglers or a slip bobber setup. **Walleye** - Fair. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Sorting will most likely be needed.

Ingham Lake

The lake is mostly iced up, but has a large open area that waterfowl has kept open. **Walleye** - Fair: Anglers have been successful morning and evening.

Lost Island Lake

The lake is almost entirely iced up. **Black Crappie** - Fair. **Walleye** - Fair: Anglers have been successful fishing from shorelines in the evenings.

Minnewashta Lake

Black Crappie - Fair: Try slowly trolling over vegetation with minnows and

plastics. **Bluegill** - Fair. **Pumpkinseed** - Good.

Scharnberg Pond

Rainbow trout were stocked recently. You need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout.

Silver Lake (Dickinson)

Black Bullhead - Good. **Walleye** - Fair: Expect the walleye bite to improve with falling water temperatures.

Spirit Lake

The lake has about 50 percent ice coverage. The current water level is 9 inches below crest. The crappie bite has been good. **Black Crappie** - Good: Minnows and plastics work well. Many nice-sized fish have been seen lately. **Bluegill** - Good: Try a small hook and a small piece of worm. In deeper water, use pilkies with wigglers or a slip bobber setup. **Walleye** - Good: Minnows work well. **Yellow Perch** - Good: Find good numbers; may need to sort for size.

West Okoboji Lake

The lake is mostly open, but ice has started to form in many bays. **Black Crappie** - Fair: Try small jigs tipped with a minnow. **Bluegill** - Good: Use pilkies with wigglers or a slip bobber setup. **Pumpkinseed** - Good: **Walleye** - Good: Minnows and plastics work well. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Sorting may be needed.

Most area water levels are a few inches below crest. Most smaller lakes are covered in a thin layer of ice with a few inches maximum. Warm conditions during the day have delayed ice production. Some bays have thicker ice; fishing access can be hard to find. Check ice thickness often if you go out on the water. For current conditions, call the Spirit Lake District Office at 712-336-1840.

NORTHEAST

Cedar River (above Nashua)

Ice conditions are changing fast with warmer temperatures. **Unsafe Ice conditions.** **Walleye** - Good: Find walleye below the dams; use minnows, crawlers or spinnerbaits.

Decorah District Streams

Trout stream stocking is complete until next April. Staff thanks trout anglers and supporters for making this season fun and rewarding. Many trout streams don't freeze in the winter, making this a great time of year to explore new areas. **Brook Trout** - Fair: Be stealthy approaching streams. Water clarity is excellent. Find fish

in deeper pools above beaver dams. **Brown Trout** - Fair: Anglers may have to be more stealthy when approaching streams due to clear water. Flip a fly along the edge of vegetation. Try flies imitating minnows or other small fish. **Rainbow Trout** - Fair: Use a small chunk of worm or cheese under a bobber fished through a deeper hole.

[Lake Hendricks](#)

Warmer temperatures are creating **unsafe ice conditions**. Open water around the aerator.

[Lake Meyer](#)

Warmer temperatures are creating **unsafe ice conditions**.

[Turkey River \(above Clermont\)](#)

Ice conditions are changing fast with warmer temperatures. **Unsafe ice conditions**.

[Upper Iowa River \(above Decorah\)](#)

Water levels remain low and steady. Areas with low flow are iced-over. **Rainbow Trout** - Slow: Use lures imitating small minnows below the dams. **Walleye** - Slow: Try a crankbait or jig tipped with a minnow below the dams.

[Volga Lake](#)

Warmer temperatures are creating **unsafe ice conditions**.

Water levels on area rivers and streams are below normal for this time of year. Weekend weather in the 50s for highs to upper 30s overnight with a slight chance for showers Friday and Sunday. For current fishing information, please call the Chuck Gipp Decorah Fish Hatchery at 563-382-8324.

[Brinker Lake](#)

Reports of anglers taking some nice crappie. **Black Crappie** - Fair: Use a live minnow on a jig or plain hook in 30 to 40 feet of water near or on top of structure.

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

Anglers are catching walleye on the Cedar River in Black Hawk County. **Walleye** - Good: Cast and retrieve lead head jigs tipped with plastics and a minnow.

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

The walleye bite has picked up on the Shell Rock River in Butler County. **Walleye** - Good: Cast and retrieve lead head jigs tipped with plastics. Evening fishing is best.

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

The walleye bite has picked up on the Wapsipinicon River in Buchanan County. **Walleye** - Good: Cast and retrieve lead head jigs tipped with plastics.

Interior river levels remain low. Anglers are doing well on walleye. With the expected above normal temperatures forecast, anglers should be able to access rivers with boats. Trout streams remain in excellent condition. For further information contact your local bait shops for the most recent information. Contact the Manchester Hatchery at 563-927-3276 for more information.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER

Mississippi River Pool 9

Water level is 8.0 feet at Lansing and is expected to remain stable. Water temperature is near 33 degrees. Lansing Village Creek ramp has been blocked with ice, but some have been breaking ice to get out. **Sauger** - Fair: Sauger have started to move up to the dams. Vertical jig a twister tail or with minnow rig in the tailwaters. **Walleye** - Slow: Vertical jig below the Lock and Dam or use a three-way rig over structure like rock closing dams. Try a jig tipped with a walleye minnow. 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. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Nice perch have been caught near the bottom ends of backwaters.

Mississippi River Pool 10

Water level is 613 feet at Lynxville and is predicted to rise slightly. Water temperature is 35 degrees at Lock & Dam 9-Lynxville. **Sauger** - Slow: Sauger have moved into deep water at the dams. Vertical jig a twister tail or minnow rig in the tailwaters. **Walleye** - Slow: Vertical jig below the Lock and Dam or use a three-way rig over structure like rock closing dams. Try a jig tipped with a walleye minnow. 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. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Nice perch have been caught near the bottom ends of backwaters.

Mississippi River Pool 11

Water level is stable at 4.88 feet below Lock & Dam 10-Guttenberg and is rising slightly. Water temperature is 38 degrees. Repairs on the city ramp in Guttenberg have been completed; the ramp is **open**. **Sauger** - Fair: Sauger have moved into deep water at the dams. Vertical jig a twister tail or with minnow rig in the tailwaters. **Walleye** - Slow: Vertical jig below the Lock and Dam or use a three-way rig over structure like rock closing dams. Try a jig tipped with a walleye minnow.

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. **Yellow Perch** - Fair: Nice perch have been caught near the bottom ends of backwaters.

Upper Mississippi River levels are extremely low and are expected to remain stable. Water temperatures have fallen into the mid-30s. The bite has slowed with the colder temperatures. Panfish have moved into backwater lakes to prepare for winter. Skim ice is forming on backwaters, but is not thick enough for ice fishing. Walleye/sauger fishing remains slower; reports of better catches. Live bait has been most successful. **NOTICE**: Repairs on the city ramp in Guttenberg have been completed.

[Mississippi River Pool 12](#)

The river is stable at Dubuque at 4.8 feet at Lock and Dam 11 and 7.4 feet at the railroad bridge. Water temperature is around 35 degrees. Water clarity is good. Some icing has occurred; ramps remain open and warmer weather is expected. **Sauger** - Good: Lots of small fish; many anglers are using one eye jigging spoons. **Walleye** - Slow: Most anglers are targeting the tailwaters with jigging spoons or jig and minnow rigs. Not much is being reported, but conditions are good. **Yellow Perch** - No Report: Nice 12-inch plus perch were being reported all fall from backwater areas and shallower water in the tailwaters.

[Mississippi River Pool 13](#)

The water level is stable and near 4.4 feet at Lock and Dam 13. Water clarity is good. Water temperature is around 36 degrees. Water levels are low enough that backing off the ends of the ramps will become an issue again. Use the minimum amount of ramp necessary to launch your boat. **Black Crappie** - No Report: Crappie fishing was decent this fall. With the ice transition, we haven't received any reports on crappies for the past few weeks. **Rainbow Trout** - Excellent: The kids trout pond north of the DNR fisheries station is stocked with trout and can provide fun action for kids throughout the winter. If you plan to keep trout, limit yourself to 2 trout per child so we can keep good fishing in the pond throughout the winter. **Sauger** - Fair: The bite seems inconsistent with some anglers doing well and others poorly. Lots of small fish being reported. **Walleye** - Slow: Walleye are being caught on jig and minnow rigs and jigging spoons in the tailwaters. Both the City boat ramp and the DNR boat ramp are open. **Yellow Perch** - No Report: Healthy 9-inch yellow perch were reported along vegetation lines and brush piles all fall.

[Mississippi River Pool 14](#)

The water level is stable at Fulton at near 4.4 feet, 9.0 feet at Camanche and near 4.4 feet at LeClair. Temperature is around 37 degrees. Water levels may get low enough that backing off the ends of the ramps may become an issue again. **Black Crappie** - No Report: Crappie fishing was decent this fall. With the ice transition, we haven't received any reports on crappies for the past few weeks. **Sauger** - Fair: Some smaller sauger were reported; inconsistent bite with some anglers doing well and others have troubles catching fish. **Walleye** - Slow: Walleyes have moved toward the tailwaters and upstream wing-dams. Most anglers are using a jig and minnow combination. **Yellow Perch** - No Report: Some yellow perch are being caught with red worms along exposed vegetation lines. Lots of small fish with an occasional keeper. Some nice ring perch were taken out of the tailwater in about 10 feet of water.

[Mississippi River Pool 15](#)

The water level is stable and near 4.4 feet at Rock Island. Water clarity is good. Water temperature is 36 degrees. Water levels may get low enough that backing off the ends of the ramps may become an issue again. **Sauger** - Slow: Expect some angling to take place in the tailwater with anglers mainly using jig and minnow rigs.

Water levels are low and stable. River and water temperatures are still around 36 degrees. Some minor icing; boat ramps remain open. Low levels elevate concern about backing off the back of ramps; use the minimum amount of ramp necessary to launch your boat. If you have angling questions, please call Bellevue Fisheries Management at 563-880-8781.

[Mississippi River Pool 16](#)

Tailwater stage is 4.37 feet at Lock and Dam 15 in the Quad Cities and has been falling slightly. Backwaters are starting to ice-over. **Unsafe ice conditions.** **Sauger** - Fair: There has been some sauger fishing in Sylvan Slough and below the Lock and Dam. Try jigs and minnows or jigs and crawlers.

[Mississippi River Pool 17](#)

Tailwater stage is 3.58 feet at Lock and Dam 16 at Muscatine and has been falling slightly. The docks are still in the water at Muscatine; there has been some tailwater fishing. Backwaters are starting to ice-up. Big Timber has some skim ice with areas of open water. **Unsafe ice conditions.** **Sauger** - Fair: Reports of saugers being caught below the Lock and Dam on jigs and crawlers; mostly smaller fish with keeper-sized fished mixed in.

[Mississippi River Pool 18](#)

Tailwater stage is 3.49 feet at Lock and Dam 17 at New Boston and has been falling slightly. Backwaters are starting to ice-up. **Unsafe ice**

conditions. Sauger - Slow: There has been some tailwater fishing for saugers below the dam; fishing has slowed. Try jigs and crawlers or minnows. Mostly smaller fish with keeper-sized fish mixed in.

[Mississippi River Pool 19](#)

Tailwater stage is 1.3 feet at Lock and Dam 18 and has been falling slightly. We have not received any fishing reports for this pool this week.

Tailwater stages have been falling slightly the past few days. Main channel water temperature is around 35 degrees. Water clarity is fair. There has been some tailwater fishing for walleye and sauger. Backwaters are starting to ice-up. **Unsafe ice conditions.** If you have questions on fishing Pools 16-19 contact the Fairport Fish Hatchery at 563-263-5062.

SOUTHEAST

[Hawthorn Lake](#)

Very little fishing pressure this past week.

[Lake Miami](#)

Very little fishing activity.

[Lake Sugema](#)

Very little fishing activity with the colder temperatures. Skim ice is forming on cold nights around the shoreline and in the coves.

[Lake Wapello](#)

Very little fishing activity. Skim ice is forming around the shorelines and in the bays during the cold nights.

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

Skim ice is forming around the shorelines on the colder nights. Trout were stocked recently. Try a small tube, in-line spinners, or a piece of nightcrawler. You need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout.

[Rathbun Reservoir](#)

The current lake level is 902.37 msl; recreation pool is 904 msl. Lake Rathbun has zebra mussels so make sure to properly drain, clean and dry equipment before transporting to another waterbody. **Walleye** - No Report: There is a 15-inch minimum length limit on walleye at Lake Rathbun. All walleyes measuring less than 15 inches must be immediately released unharmed.

[Red Haw Lake](#)

Park visitors are asked to avoid the campground area due to the continued storm

damage cleanup. Very little fishing activity has been reported.

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

SOUTHWEST

[Ada Hayden Heritage Park Lake](#)

Rainbow Trout - Fair: Cast in-line spinners, small spoons, jigs with small twister tails or swimbaits, or live baits under floats. You need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout.

[Big Creek Lake](#)

All docks, except the Williams Drive Ramp, have been removed. **Walleye** - Fair: Try jigging shad imitating plastics in 12 feet of water or less in the upper half of the lake. Try fishing off rock jetties in the evenings or find humps that come up to 3 to 6 feet from the surface.

[Lake Petocka](#)

Rainbow Trout - Fair: Cast in-line spinners, small spoons jigs with small twister tails or swimbaits, or live baits under floats. You need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout.

[Terra Lake](#)

As of Dec. 20, Terra Lake was covered in thin ice. With warm temperatures in the forecast, the lake may have open water again by the weekend. **Rainbow Trout** - Fair: Cast in-line spinners, small spoons jigs with small twister tails or swimbaits, or live baits under floats. You need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout.

[Triumph Park East](#)

As of Dec. 20, the pond was covered in thin ice. With warm temperatures in the forecast, the lake may have open water again by the weekend. **Rainbow Trout** - Fair: Cast in-line spinners, small spoons jigs with small twister tails or swimbaits, or live baits under floats. You need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout.

[Triumph Park West](#)

As of December 20, the pond was covered in thin ice. With warm temperatures in the forecast, the lake may have open water again by the weekend. **Rainbow Trout** - Fair: Cast in-line spinners, small spoons jigs with small twister tails or

swimbait, or live bait under floats. You need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout.

For information on central Iowa lakes and rivers contact Ben Dodd at 641-891-3795 or Andy Otting at 515-204-5885.

[Atlantic Quarry Pond 1](#)

The lake has open water. Trout were stocked for a second time on Dec. 6th.

Rainbow Trout - Good: Watch for trout to break the surface of the water and move to that location and cast to them. Try similar tackle used for crappies like small spinners, spoons, twister tails and minnows. You need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout.

[Orient Lake](#)

Orient has a good fish population and should provide quality ice fishing this winter. **Black Crappie** - No Report: Orient has good numbers of 9- to 10-inch fish. **Bluegill** - No Report: Bluegills are 8- to 9-inches and in good body condition.

For information on lakes in the Southwest District, call the Cold Springs office at 712-769-2587.

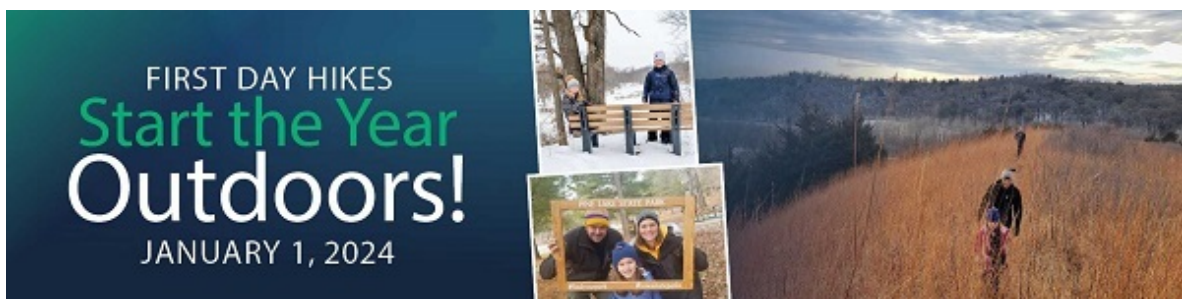
[Three Mile Lake](#)

Lake level is 8 feet below normal pool. The lake will be up to 8 feet below normal pool for the rest of 2023.

[West Lake \(Osceola\)](#)

Main boat ramps are closed due to low water conditions.

Large lakes are open; some skim ice on smaller lakes, especially in the mornings. Water temperature in most Mount Ayr district lakes is in the upper 30s to low 40s. For more information, call the Mount Ayr Fisheries office at 641-464-3108.



What are your plans for New Year's Day 2024? Iowa state parks and forests invite you to enjoy the outdoors and take a hike! Visit state parks on your own, or join a **guided hike** at several parks and forests.

Hikers can expect to be surrounded by the quiet beauty of nature in winter, and experience spectacular views, beautiful settings and the cultural treasures offered by Iowa's state parks.

Find a [First Day Hike](#) near you!