



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

# Iowa Fishing Report

Conservation and Recreation



## Don't miss your chance to get hands-on fisheries career experience

Summer seasonal positions at Iowa DNR fisheries offices are open for applications until **January 10**. Get a glimpse into a seasonal fisheries position with the [DNR YouTube video](#).

Learn about fisheries careers and gain valuable experience while working alongside biologists and technicians. Positions are available in research, management, culture and aquatic invasive species. Six-month positions usually start at the beginning of April and three-month positions start the middle of May.

Find more details and how to apply [online](#). Application deadline is January 10, 2024.

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## [Top Iowa Fishing Spots for the Week of Jan. 4](#)

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

### [Arrowhead Lake](#)

The lake is covered with skim ice; too thin for ice fishing.

### [Black Hawk Lake](#)

The lake has frozen over; there are a few small open areas. Ice thickness is 1 to 2 inches; unsafe to walk on. Ice will continue to build throughout the week. 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.

### [Black Hawk Pits](#)

Skim ice; too thin and unsafe for walking at this time.

### [Blue Lake](#)

Aerators are in operation off-shore near the park visitor center for the winter season; expect open water and thin ice in this area when the lake starts to freeze over.

### [Brushy Creek Lake](#)

Skim ice is forming in the bays; other area remain open. **Unsafe ice conditions.**

### North Twin Lake

The lake has iced over. Ice thickness is 1 to 2 inches; unsafe to walk on.

### Storm Lake (incl Little Storm Lake)

The lake has iced over. Ice thickness is 0 to 2 inches. **Unsafe ice conditions.** Ice will continue to build throughout the week.

Most lakes in the area are covered with thin ice. All ice in the district is too thin to walk on. Ice will continue to build throughout the week. For more information, contact the Black Hawk District office at 712-657-2638.

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### Clear Lake

The lake has started to form ice again. 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

Winter aeration system is operating.

### Rice Lake

The lake has started to form ice again.

### Silver Lake (Worth)

Winter aeration system is operating.

There is no fishable ice in the district. For information on the lakes and rivers in north central Iowa, contact the Clear Lake Fish and Wildlife office at 641-357-3517.

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### East Okoboji Lake

The lake is about 80 percent ice covered. Expect safe ice conditions in some areas within the next week. **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 covered. Lots of waterfowl are residing on the lake. **Walleye** - Fair: Anglers have been successful morning and evening.

### Lost Island Lake

The lake is almost completely ice covered. **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

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 is 80 percent ice covered. Expect safe ice conditions within the next week. **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 about 10 percent ice covered. **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 larger lakes have started to freeze over again. Very few areas have safe ice fishing conditions. Some bays have thicker ice; ice fishing access can be hard to find. The extended forecast shows highs below freezing; expect ice formation to pick up in the coming week. Check ice thickness often if you attempt to go out on the water. For current conditions, call the Spirit Lake District Office at 712-336-1840.

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## NORTHEAST

### Cedar River (Nashua to La Porte City)

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

### Shell Rock River (Greene to Shell Rock)

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

### Wapsipinicon River (Tripoli to Troy Mills)

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

Interior river levels remain low. Anglers picked up a few walleye here and there this past week. 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.

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## MISSISSIPPI RIVER

### Mississippi River Pool 9

Water level is 8.7 feet at Lansing and is expected to remain stable. Water temperature is near 33 degrees. Lansing Village Creek ramp has been blocked with thin ice, but some have been breaking ice to get out. **Black Crappie** - Slow: Try minnows under a slipper bobber around wood structure of backwater sloughs. **Sauger** - Fair: Sauger are in the deeper water in the tailwater of the dams.



Vertical jig a twister tail or with a minnow rig. **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 stable at 615.7 feet at Lynxville. Water temperature is 36 degrees at Lock & Dam 9-Lynxville. **Black Crappie** - Slow: Try minnows under a slipper bobber around wood structure of backwater sloughs. **Sauger** - Slow: Sauger have moved into deep water at the dams. Vertical jig a twister tail or a 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 7 feet below Lock & Dam 10-Guttenberg. Water temperature is 38 degrees. Repairs on the city ramp in Guttenberg have been completed; the ramp is **open**. **Black Crappie** - Slow: Try minnows under a slipper bobber around wood structure of backwater sloughs. **Sauger** - Fair: Sauger are in the deeper water in the tailwater of the dams. Vertical jig a twister tail or with minnow rig. **Walleye** - Fair: 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 have risen a few feet and are expected to recede next week. Water temperature is in the mid to upper 30s. The bite has slowed with

fish not as active in colder temperatures. Panfish have moved into backwaters for winter. Skim ice is forming on backwaters, but is not yet thick enough for ice fishing. Walleye/sauger fishing remains slower; reports of better catches. Live bait works best. **NOTICE:** Guttenberg ramp is **open**.

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### [Mississippi River Pool 12](#)

The river is rising at Dubuque to near 6.8 feet at Lock and Dam 11 and 9.2 feet at the railroad bridge. Water temperature is around 36 degrees. Water clarity is good. **Sauger** - Fair: 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 receding to near 7.1 feet at Lock and Dam 13 . Water clarity is good. Water temperature is around 36 degrees. **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 is inconsistent with some anglers doing well and others poorly. Lots of small fish being reported. Most anglers are using one-eye jigging spoons or a jig and minnow rig. **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 receding at Fulton to near 6.6 feet, 10.6 feet at Camanche and near 5.3 feet at LeClair. Temperature is around 36 degrees. **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. Most anglers are using a jig and minnow rig. **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. Nice ring perch were taken out of the tailwater in about 10 feet of water.

### [Mississippi River Pool 15](#)

The water level is receding to near 7.0 feet at Rock Island. Water clarity is good. Water temperature is 36 degrees. **Sauger** - Slow: Expect some angling to take place in the tailwater; anglers mainly using jig and minnow rigs.

Water levels are low and rising. Water temperatures are around 36 degrees. If you have angling questions, please call Bellevue Fisheries Management at 563-880-8781.

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### [Mississippi River Pool 16](#)

Tailwater stage is 6.91 feet at Lock and Dam 15 in the Quad Cities. Tailwater stage is forecast to start to fall over the weekend. 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 5.464 feet at Lock and Dam 16 at Muscatine. Tailwater stage is forecasted to start to fall over the weekend. 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 fish mixed in.

### [Mississippi River Pool 18](#)

Tailwater stage is 5.71 feet at Lock and Dam 17 at New Boston. Tailwater stage is forecast to start to fall early next week. 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 2.86 feet at Lock and Dam 18 above Burlington. Tailwater stage is forecast to start to fall by early next week. We have not received any fishing reports for this pool this week. **Sauger** - No Report: Look for saugers below the Lock and Dam. Try vertical jigging with minnows or crawlers. Trolling three-way rigs with minnows can work, too.

Tailwater stages have been rising the past few days and are forecast to keep rising. Main channel water temperature is around 40 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.

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## SOUTHEAST

### [Big Hollow Lake](#)

Most of the lake is ice-free. On the colder mornings, the boat ramp bay will get a layer of thin ice over it before it melts away again.

### [Lake Belva Deer](#)

Percent of the lake covered by a thin layer of ice varies by day and time of day. Lots of open water.

### [Lake Darling](#)

During the first day hike the lake was entirely ice free. On Jan. 3 the lake was about 30 percent ice covered, but the wind and above freezing temperatures were eating the ice pretty fast.

### [Lost Grove Lake](#)

The lake is mostly wide open. In the mornings you might find some skim ice in the bays; the same as last week.

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

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### Central Park Lake

The lake is partially skimmed over.

### Coralville Reservoir

The lake is partially skimmed over.

### Diamond Lake

The lake is partially skimmed over.

### Green Castle Lake

The lake is partially skimmed over.

### Iowa Lake (Iowa Co.)

The lake is 75 percent skimmed over; geese are keeping some of it open.

### Lake Macbride

The lake is all open. There are still docks in at Main ramp and Anglers Point ramp. **Black Crappie** - Slow: Try minnows over brush piles in 15-20 feet of water. **Largemouth Bass** - Slow: Use slow moving baits on rock edges. **Muskellunge** - Slow. **Walleye** - Slow: Some fish are on rock reefs and others are on deeper points. Try jigs with plastics or minnows. **Wiper (Hybrid Striped Bass)** - Slow.

### Otter Creek Lake

The lake is still empty due to the renovation project; the project is complete and the lake will fill as mother nature allows.

### Pleasant Creek Lake

The coves are skimmed over, but the main lake is open. Docks have been removed for the season. The water is very clear.

### Sand Lake

The lake is partially skimmed over.

## [Wapsipinicon River \(Troy Mills to Oxford Junction\)](#)

A dredging project in the Pinicon Ridge backwaters will affect ice fishing this winter.

Some lakes have skim ice, some are open. For more information, contact the Lake Macbride Fisheries Station at 319-624-3615.

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## [Hawthorn Lake](#)

Very little fishing pressure reported this past week.

## [Lake Miami](#)

Very little fishing activity.

## [Lake Sugema](#)

Very little fishing activity. 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 902.46 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.

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## SOUTHWEST

### Big Creek Lake

Big Creek Lake is mostly open water except for skim ice on the very upper end where water depth is less than 8 feet. **Walleye** - Slow: Anglers can still catch open water walleyes with slow jigging presentations mid-lake over road beds and old creek channel drop-offs.

Most small ponds in Central Iowa have some skim ice. Larger ponds and lakes are mostly open water. For information on central Iowa lakes and rivers contact Ben Dodd at 641-891-3795 or Andy Otting at 515-204-5885.

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### Atlantic Quarry Pond 1

The lake has open water. **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.

### Prairie Rose Lake

Prairie Rose will offer excellent ice fishing opportunities this winter. Check the fishing report weekly for ice conditions.

There is no safe ice in the district. For information on lakes in the Southwest District, call the Cold Springs office at 712-769-2587.

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### [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 have large areas of open water; skim ice on smaller lakes. For more information, call the Mount Ayr Fisheries office at 641-464-3108.

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**Book a state park cabin in January or February, get 20% off your stay!**

**Promo Code: Cabin2024**



Are you ready for a cozy getaway in an Iowa State Park cabin? Get 20% off your stay with Promo Code **Cabin2024** when you [book now](#) for the months of **January or February 2024**. Enjoy the pristine beauty and outdoor fun of winter in an Iowa state park.

**This promo applies to the year-round cabins at:**

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- [Black Hawk State Park](#) (1 cabin, max occupancy 11)
- [Lake Darling State Park](#) (6 cabins, max occupancy 6)
- [Lake Wapello State Park](#) (2 cabins, max occupancy from 6 to 10)
- [Pine Lake State Park](#) (4 cabins, max occupancy from 4 to 6)
- [Springbrook State Park](#) (1 cabin, max occupancy 14)
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- [Waubonsie State Park](#) (2 cabins, max occupancy from 6 to 12)

*Promo code only can be applied for [online reservations](#) for January 1 through February 29, 2024. Promo code is good only for the state parks listed. Two-night minimum. Last day to make a reservations is February 21, 2024. Rules and fees apply.*