

NORTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA FISHING REPORT

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Pennsylvania's Great Lakes Region
crawford • erie • mercer • venango

The NW PA Fishing Report provides timely angling information for Crawford, Erie, Mercer and Venango Counties – covering all species and all waters open to the public. The fishing comments and photos are offered by regional tackle shops and area anglers, compiled and published twice a month. The NW PA Fishing Report is based on experiences, observations and opinions of individual contributors; information sources are considered reliable but comments are not independently verified. In providing information or pictures, you are agreeing to your comments being edited, and posted to websites and distributed electronically.

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The Landing Net

by Darl Black

Happy 4th of July! Here's wishing everyone a grand weekend of fishing to celebrate the birth of this great country. While it's hard to put much faith in a weather forecast several days out, there has been a change in the forecast overnight which is leaning towards a dry Friday, slight chance of showers on Saturday and a dry Sunday. That would be a wonderful gift for anglers. But many waters are high and muddy. Look for July 4th Fishing Recommendations in this Report. Go fish! (© Kim Harris Photo)



NW PENNSYLVANIA FISHING REPORT FOR JUNE 29, 2015

This Report is brought to you by **PA Great Lakes Region** tourism with additional sponsorship from **Wiegel Brothers Marine** and **Gamma Fishing**.

We answer the question “*What’s biting in the lakes, streams and rivers of Crawford, Erie, Mercer and Venango counties?*”

FRENCH CREEK – Flowing through all four counties

Editor’s note: Most creek anglers have written off French Creek until this weather pattern of constant storms subsides. The Creek continues to run very muddy and very high.

Dustin Shay (Meadville); as told to Darl Black: Dustin called the other day to let me know he was getting ready to start serious fishing again. He has his sights set on catching a huge flathead catfish from French Creek following an incident on the stream. The other evening he was casting for musky at a favorite spot when he hears something splashing on the surface on the other side of the creek and downstream a little bit. In the twilight he can make out the splashing but not much else. He makes a super long cast with a surface musky bait (I don’t recall the name), began turning the reel handle. A huge mouth opened and slurped the plug in. Working the fish slowly upstream to his position, the fish seemed to be simply swimming with the suspected meal without realizing anything was wrong. When Dustin finally got a look at the fish, he said it was a HUGE flathead. Suddenly all heck breaks loose when the catfish feels line pressure and sees Dustin. The fish turns, powers to the bottom and pulls loose from the plug...that is if it was actually hooked but just holding on. “That’s when I decided it was time to start my flathead quest again. This time with heavier tackle than what I use for French Creek muskies.”

CRAWFORD COUNTY

Pymatuning Lake

Angler Al (Franklin); filed 6/29: “Since it wasn’t raining this morning, Stan and I headed to Pymatuning. At 8:15 am we already have caught a walleye and catfish using red/gold double willow crawler harness.”

Norm @ Jamestown Boat Livery; filed 6/29: “Been a quiet weekend for fishing on the lake with all the stormy weather – nobody going out. Lake temperature at 10 feet down is 75 degrees – usually on July 1st, it is in the low 80s. Fish are biting, but few anglers can work around the weather to get on them. If you are coming up for weekend of the 4th, I suggest

working weedbed edges with a jig and nightcrawler, or trolling a Hot-n-Tot in deeper water.”

Brian @ Espyville Boat Livery; filed 6/29: “No one ventured out this past weekend from our livery – well, that’s not entirely correct. I had one reservation. The guy showed up and went out for a few hours in the rain until I had to call him in due to high wind warning being posted. Prior to the stormy weekend, those few anglers dodging the daily showers have managed to catch some walleyes. One spot has been south of the Espyville Causeway in 20 to 22 feet of water on the Ohio side. Also, anglers have been taking nice bluegills in 8 to 9 feet of water between our boat livery and Tuttle Point – not in the bays but outside the bays in 8 to 9 feet.”

Patty @ Poff’s Place; filed 6/29: “Been a rough week for fishing, but a few anglers have made it out. If you are coming up for the holiday weekend, focus on bluegills in the shallows – still some bedding but slowing down; use wax worm on small jighead. Or try trolling for walleyes with a **Hot-n-Tot**, **Berkley Flicker Shad**, or **Rapala Shad Rap**.”

Laurie @ Duck N Drake; filed 6/29: “The walleye bite has been fantastic. Just within the last week walleye catches are starting to change over from crawler harnesses to **Shad Raps**. On the North End of the lake the bite has been in 12 to 13 feet of water, and in the South End in 15 to 21 feet. Bluegills are still spawning; use a wax worm on either a 1/32-oz jig or ant. We have a raffle going on over July 4th, and all proceeds are going to help out Pymatuning Valley High School Band Color Guard get new uniforms for the upcoming season. Stop by our store for your ticket to help out.”

Dave @ Richter’s Tackle Shop; filed 6/28: “We’ve had rough weather, no doubt about it. After our excellent success night fishing a little over a week ago when my son and I each had our limit of walleye, we tried night fishing again on Friday. But the wind was out of the east and we only caught 2 ‘eyes. One customer from West Virginia brought in a couple nice walleye to the shop which he caught in the Shenango River below the dam, plus a bunch of catfish. Muskies are finally showing up... Park Manager Dan Bickel picked up a 38” musky while trolling for walleyes this past week; a night walleye wader got a big musky near the swim beach; and another angler reported a 28” musky near the campground while trolling for musky. But we are not hearing any success from actual musky fishermen. This has been one screwed up year. But for walleyes this coming holiday weekend, I would recommend fishing a jig-n-crawler around weedbeds, and trolling a **Hot-n-Tot** or worm harness in 16 feet to 18 feet of water.”



Team Richter’s night catch

Sydney @ Robinson's Bait; filed 6/28: "Not much happening fishing wise this past weekend. But before the stormy weather, some old timers have been catching walleyes between Harris Island and Swim Beach with worm harnesses. Remember, Hillbilly "Catfish" Ed told us 'Fish aren't done biting yet' – see his photo. Also, we now carry PA Hunting Licenses...so if the weather is bad over the 4th, stop in the shop for a cup of coffee, a little conversation and pick up your new hunting license."



Hillbilly "Catfish" Ed

Hooker @ Hill's Country Store; filed 6/24: "So far this year has been anything but typical, and June continues to demonstrate that trend. By now we should be concentrating our crappie-catching efforts in the mid-depths for white and black crappies. These fish should be established in their deeper summer haunts – but they are not there yet. Guests on Hookers fishing taxi have been enjoying success from 2 to 12 feet, and learning new techniques while doing so. The majority of crappies are coming on **Bobby Garland Swimming Minnows jigs** in Bluegrass and Screamer colors. Some of the bigger fish are being tempted by heavier jigs banged into the bottom. Walleyes are being caught in 8 feet of water with jig and crawler. One of my customers is using a bass spinnerbait loaded with a crawler and fluttered down beside scattered clumps of emerging grass." Hooker contributed photos below:



Hooker



Dave



Tony

Canadohta Lake

Jerry @ Timberland Bait; filed 6/28: "Before the storms rolled in this week, anglers on Canadohta were having a field day on crappies. One customer staying at Pier 66 caught a mess of crappies right off the dock with live minnows and **Berkley Power Worms**. Up at Union City Reservoir, some customers reported good catches of bass, crappies and perch, while down at the outflow of Union City Dam anglers were catching pike."

ERIE COUNTY

Lake Erie – West



Rich Weber @ Erie Sports Store; filed 6/30: "The enclosed photo was taken on Father's Day. Pictured are Scott Ketchel (l) and Dick Emling (r). The three of us caught our limit in 53 feet off Walnut Creek. We went out the following Wednesday, 6/24, and again, in the same area, caught our limit. Perch fishing as you can see has been picking up but the recent weather has limited the fishing on Lake Erie. *ERIE*

SPORTS STORE SPECIALS for the month of July include: 20% off all flavors of Shore Lunch, 20% off complete stock of fishing lures, and 15% off all fishing rods."

Ric @ Trout Run Bait; filed 6/29: "Fishing was picking up a bit on the lake, but once again interrupted by the wet, windy weather of this past weekend. Perch are not yet schooled up in big packs, but those going north out of Walnut to 50 feet have been catching nice size perch in decent numbers. Perch are also being caught off Trout Run in 42 feet and off Elk Creek anywhere from 35 to 42 feet. The closer to shore one gets the more silver bass, white perch and sheephead are caught along with yellow perch. The trade-off is this: perch in shallower depths have been averaging larger than those out deep.

"Walleye are still being caught by those casting off the beaches at night! Big floating **Rapala** and **Bomber 15A** in Fire Tiger, Perch or Rainbow Trout colors have been producing. Those anglers trolling have been picking up fish anywhere from 30 to 45 feet between Walnut and the Ohio line. Plugs have been taking those walleyes. **Bandits** in Green Clown and Fire Tiger have been producing along with **Reef Runners** and **Bagley's**. Slow trolling or drifting with worm harnesses have also been producing fish. We have had success with blue or pink blades trolled at slower speeds in 30 foot depths for the past couple weeks. **Dutch Fork Harnesses** work great at the slow speeds or when drifting. Try the dual quick change clevis to have two blades spinning in front of the harness. Dual blades really made a difference on a couple trips out. The dual blades not only cause more commotion, but also give a bigger profile at the head.

"Smallmouths are still being caught in the Bay and the tributary creeks. Elk seems to hold the most bass. Streamers in a variety of colors are working well. Bait anglers are using crawler, leeches, shiners and crayfish. You must catch your own crayfish since bait shops are no longer permitted to sell them. Smallmouths are being caught in Presque Isle Bay with topwater baits in the morning and evening. The North Pier continues to produce for those anglers bouncing large jigs.

“Of course all this may change after the rain and northeast winds have made their way through the area. Let us hope the holiday weekend is a nice one so we can all get out and enjoy the water. As in the past, *TROUT RUN BAIT & TACKLE* will be having 20% sale on all rods and reels in stock to celebrate the weekend of the 4th. Here’s wishing everyone a safe, fun, fish-filled weekend with family and friends!”

Brian @ Poor Richard’s Bait reports conditions on the lake over the weekend included 8 foot waves; no one was out fishing. Before the bad weather, anglers had been catching perch in 42 to 46 feet of water out of Walnut Creek, and in 52 feet off the Peninsula. Walleyes are scattered.

Dan @ Elk Creek Sports reports some smallmouth still in Elk Creek, but on the way out; lots of catfish still in the creek. With continued storms every few days, the main lake fishing is screwed up; water temp cooler than usual. Walleyes are being taken in 15 to 35 feet of water; big schools have not moved in yet. After the big blow of this past week, lake needs time to settle down.

Lake Erie – East

Tim @ North East Marina; filed 628: “Fishing from the North East Marina has been good to excellent when the weather permits. The walleye bite is getting better as the waters begin to warm up to low 60s right now; location is 42-52 feet of water, fishing with lead core 5 colors with worm harness. Color seems to be orange in willow leaf, fished close to or on the bottom. Lead core is also taking a lot of fish off the boards (5 colors out with **Bay Rat Deep Divers**; **Renosky divers** on a #1 Dipsey on 3-1/2 setting at 110 feet back). Colors vary; top three are orange, blue and silver, and black and purple. Locations are Marina east to state line; just east of Freeport to the first boat house; and McCord’s Point to Shorewood.

“The perch bite is on! Lots of limit catches! Try Sabiki Rigs tipped with minnows, 42 to 52 feet of water. Locations are McCord’s Point 52 feet, off Greenfields at 42, Marina 42-52 and off Twenty Mile Creek at 42 feet. The perch being caught are above average in size from 10 to 14 inches. If the weather permits, a slow drift produces better than being anchored.

“Bass seem to be moving off shore to 28-42 feet of water with the W’s being the number on spot. Leadhead jigs or drop weights with melon-pepper or goby color plastic. Lake trout area still being caught out in 105 feet of water but bite is very slow.”

Presque Isle Bay

Adam @ Lake Erie Bait and Tackle reports conditions over the weekend were not conducive to fishing. Prior to the storms, anglers were catching smallmouth and largemouth bass in the Bay. Also, perch were being caught on the North and South Piers.

Dennis Beggs (Franklin); filed 6/17: "My son, Devin, encouraged me to take my river boat to Presque Isle Bay on Saturday the 13th. My daughter Dia and a couple of my son's college buddies came along. Five of us fished the light wind, choppy water and caught smallmouth bass perch and gobies. No great fish stories here, but a fun journey with the kids. It was rough motoring through the waves with the flat bottom tunnel hull Roughneck with out-board jet. But it kept us afloat! We boated near the Flagship Niagara in the channel to the main lake...awesome to see!"



We just want to have fun!



Inland Erie County

Thomas Watral (Erie); filed 6/28: "I had people coming from all over Erie County this week to get bait. According to customers, the best places have been Lake LeBoeuf for crappie and pike; Segal Marsh for bass and catfish at the spillway; Edinboro Lake for bass, small walleye, pike and panfish – all hitting on different bait. In PIB, bass and perch are hitting minnows and shiners, with catfish hitting crawlers on the bottom at night."

MERCER COUNTY

Lake Wilhelm

Vickie at Fergie's Bait; filed 6/29: "There are reports of very good bluegill fishing along the shoreline out to about 15 feet. They were catching some very nice crappies off the Fishing Pier in 4 to 6 feet. Walleyes are being picked up around 15 feet between Access #3 and #4, and down by James Run."

Angler Al (Franklin); filed 6/27: "Lake Wilhelm produced a few decent walleye for us this past week on **Hot-N-Tots**. Pictured are Stand Huefner and myself with Wilhelm walleye."

RJ Graham (Tionesta); filed 6/25: "I went to Wilhelm on the 21st. Wow! The rumors of the lake's bass bite picking up are spot on. I caught 31 bass including this 6.09 in the picture. The 6 pounder and most others were taking on crankbaits, although 6 bass came on a jig fished in wood. I just drove around and looked for stuff to fish deep and did not fish until I found what I was looking for. I went back today and caught several more bass over 5 pounds."



RJ's six pounder plus



Jason Hagg photo at Wilhelm



Jason Hagg photo -27" eye

Jason Hagg (Franklin); filed 6/21: "It was a perfect overcast, walleye chop kind of day on the 19th. I was coming out of my skin until I realized the fish were not snapping. Obviously I wasn't doing something right. Just scratching my head on what I wasn't doing right. But my gosh, those panfish down there are starving. Fished 4.5 hours, caught 71 panfish and 0 walleyes with crankbaits and worm harnesses trolled on eight poles. The skinniest crappies I've ever seen; brought eight crappies along with four perch. All the keeper crappies had eggs in them. I would assume they will be absorbing the eggs. We returned to Wilhelm on Father's Day and changed up the planer boards from harnesses to cranks, and it got us the one big 27 inch walleye. Otherwise, only one other 16" walleye. Changing from natural colors to bright colors pulled both eye. Panfish bite was slow that day, but we did catch two medium size bass and nice bullhead!"

Shenango River Lake

Editor's note: At last check, many of the ramps on Shenango are closed due to high water. I think the only ones open are at Sharpsville right above the dam and Campground at Clark. Double check Shenango Lake Facebook Page to verify what is open and what is closed. With the high level of muddy water, Shenango Lake likely not a good bet for fishing this holiday weekend.

Dave Horvath (Mercer); filed 6/27: "Hi, Darl. Not much to report on Shenango Lake. Water is still high as of 6/25. Only two launches are open – Sharpsville and the Campgrounds. Fishing is still good – but the catching is bad! I had one report of small crappies taken by

bank fishermen on the river near Hamburg Bridge. We can only hope for the rain to stop. It will be awhile before Shenango is back to summer levels.”

VENANGO COUNTY

Griffins Bait & Tackle Shop reports fishing activity has been very slow due to all the showers and thunder storms. Sugar Creek and French Creek are high and muddy. Still, they have been selling a lot of **Rapala** lures and night crawlers.

Justus Lake



Austin's 24 5/8 inch SMB!



Angler AI photo

Ken Anderson; filed 6/30: “Kelly McFarland was shore fishing at Justus Lake on Monday, June 29 with a group of three local kids when Austin Saville, age 9 of Oil City, caught a fish of a lifetime. The smallmouth bass measured 24 5/8 inches and weighed 6 lbs. 15 ounces. The monster bass took a bluegill on a #12 hook tied to 6 pound monofilament.”

Angler AI reports the trout are still hitting at Justus Lake in Two Mile County Park. See photo above.

Allegheny River

Editor's Note: As of Monday, June 29, the Allegheny River was at Franklin was 7.5 feet and rising following the stormy weekend. The water was the color of dark chocolate and looked about the same consistency as pudding. With continued rain forecast for Tuesday-Thursday, it is unlikely the river will drop or clear much.

Gene Winger (Franklin); filed 6/28: “I have not been the river for several weeks...thanks to Mother Natures and her relentless rain! Hopefully the rain stops so I get out next week or so. This not fishing is killing me!”

Marilyn Black (Franklin); filed 6/27: “Darl and I fished for a couple hours after work on Friday evening at Oil City. However, the river extremely muddy, bass were not to be found. As we were taking out, a boat with three individuals arrived to go catfishing. They said

Where to fish for the 4th of July Weekend

It's been a rough June for fishing given all the rain, wind and electrical storms. Of course May wasn't a picnic either. There is one thing in our favor -- water temps across the board are cooler than normal for the first of July which means there are still some late spring bites happening, such as bluegills still on the beds in many waters, walleyes still on the shoreline of Erie at night, etc. Of course if the waterway is high and muddy, fishing success will likely be negatively impacted.

Based on comments from tackle shop owners and other contributing anglers, here is the list of Best Bets for the 4th of July Weekend:



- The Allegheny River, French Creek and larger streams are blow out and likely will not recover to fishable conditions by the weekend. Catfishing may be the only option.
- Flood control reservoirs including Shenango River Lake and Woodcock Creek Dam are holding back a lot of water. Most ramps on Shenango are closed. High dirty water over the banks does not make for a good fishing experience.
- Better bets are smaller natural lakes (LeBoeuf, Edinboro & Pleasant) and small impoundments with minimal inflowing water (Justus Lake). Reports from Justus Lake have been particularly encouraging.
- Lake Wilhelm has limited inflowing sources and is not a flood control impoundment, therefore it is one of the Best Bets – especially since recent fishing reports are extremely encouraging for walleye, crappie and bass.
- Although our largest inland impoundment, Pymatuning is fed by small streams. Even though it is higher than normal, it is not overly high. Fishing reports for walleye are positive, along with bluegill and catfish. Go Pymi!
- Lake Erie is the wild card. Reports are encouraging on yellow perch and for walleye – especially for walleye out of North East Marina. But with continued unsettled weather, the lake can blow up in a hurry. If you lack Lake Erie boating experience or do not have a large Erie-capable boat, the safer bet would be going to Presque Isle Bay. Yes, it will be outrageously busy, but still safer than getting caught offshore in a sudden storm on the main lake. Reports are good for bass in the bay along with panfish.

The Livewell

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Boat of the Month: Outlander 155T— Perfect boat for area 20 HP lakes



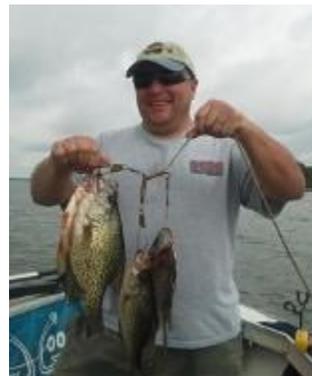
Second look at a nearly 7-pound Smallmouth Bass from Justus Lake — way to go Austin!



Angler Al & Stan after Wilhelm 'eye.



Night 'eye on Bomber Long A



Tony with Pymi crappies



Dennis Beggs photo—Happy 4th!

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Gamma Fishing Tip

You can find GAMMA line locally at the following tackle shops:

Consumer Direct Sports – Grove City, PA

Griffins Bait & Tackle – Cooperstown, PA

Hill's County Store – Williamsfield, OH

Maurer's Trading Post—Franklin, PA

Robinson's Bait & Tackle — Espyville, PA

_____ is the winner of tackle prize for this issue of the Fishing Report.

Please email your shipping address to Darl Black to claim your prize.

Rather than a direct fishing tip, this week's Gamma Tip will be devoted to information about the most asked question this late spring/early summer: Did Pymatuning crappies spawn this year? Area 1 Fisheries Biologist Tim Wilson comments:

"I've been hearing the same thing from anglers regarding crappies still having eggs in them. I don't know what to say other than the water temperatures have been above the levels that trigger crappies to spawn for over a month – although those couple cold snaps really seemed to mess up the crappie fishing. During my own trips, it seemed like the crappies were moving deep to shallow and then back on a daily basis with the constant changes in weather.

"A quick literature search did not turn up info on delayed crappies spawn. However, females of many species are often incapable of expelling 100% of eggs. What isn't expelled during the spawn is reabsorbed back into the body. Cannot say if what anglers are finding are simply un-expelled eggs. I guess it's the goofy weather this spring that has fish confused. By the way, Ohio DNR will not be sampling for crappies in Pymatuning until fall of 2017."