

NORTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA FISHING REPORT

Issue: January 15, 2015



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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Black Knight Industries, Oil City (www.GammaFishing.com)

Wiegel Brothers Marine, Franklin (www.wiegelbrothersmarine.com)

The Landing Net

by Darl Black

Ice cover has arrived on NW PA lakes! I celebrate for ice fisherman, not for myself. Ice fishing – I've tried it; don't like it. Finally sold all ice gear last year. I'll go out occasionally with others to do a story or two for various publications. But I cannot get excited about ice fishing. I look for open water to do my winter fishing. The Jan-Feb 2015 issue of the PA ANGLER & BOATER magazine carries my article on non-ice fishing winter angling opportunities in NW PA – mostly in the tailraces of area dams. To stay busy, I'll join other writers at Dave Lefebvre's Erie Ice Camp next week to shoot photos and gather story material. And I'll be shooting photos at Timberland Bait's Canadohta Ice Tournament on Feb 14 and at Conneaut Lake on Feb 28. Before I know it, spring will be here!



Winter at Woodcock Spillway/ db photo

NW PA FISHING REPORT for January 15, 2015

This Report is brought to you by PA Great Lakes Region tourism, with additional sponsorship support from Wiegel Brothers Marine (Franklin) and Gamma Fishing Line (Oil City).

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: Since the severe cold snap that set in last week, edge ice, slush and ice chunks have choked French Creek; the slower pools and bend holes have frozen up completely.



Angler Al’s French Creek Diary

- Christmas week: “Saturday’s frigid air held me hostage the entire afternoon and I only managed one small pike to the net. Sunday was bait gathering day and right after work on Monday I sped down to French Creek. The first big chub out of the bucket was cast to the back of swirling eddy. Before I could get a second rod rigged, the bobber went under. I let it run a little longer than normal before setting the hook. That was a mistake. Upon setting the hook, the large unidentifiable fish cut the **Gorilla Braid**. Crazy! Never had that happen before. Prior to dark I jigged up a small pike and the smallest walleye I’ve ever caught. The 8-9 inch fish ate a piece of bait nearly as big as itself. The lid of my 5-gallon bait bucket is 12 inches...check the picture of the ‘eye and bait on the lid! Tuesday was pleasantly mild. My brother Steve and nephew Riley joined me for another go on French Creek. On Steve’s first cast, a large pike swiped his blue **MoGlo Jig** tipped with a medium shiner, cutting his line at the bank. Riley caught a nice 21” ‘eye on a white Road Runner tipped with small shiner. Uncle Al was proud of Riley’s jigging technique and his composure in landing the fish. Photo included. Wednesday I spent 1-1/2 hours at an eddy with shiner bait. Only caught two pike and got ripped off by a third.”
- January 4: “It was my first attempt to catch a fish in the New Year. Nephew Riley joined me on what was mild temperature but very windy afternoon on French Creek. Bobber rigged rods with large baits failed to produce in the dirty high water. So I took to jigging but didn’t have much that way either. However as our quitting time drew near, a 17 inch sucker smacked my floating jighead tipped with a medium size shiner. I can’t remember the last time I caught a jig while jigging a shiner! Happy New Year everyone.” (See photos below)



Rich Sari (Franklin); filed 1/10: “I caught a 28 inch brown trout in French Creek a couple weeks ago. I turned it loose so the fish is available for the next guy.”

CRAWFORD COUNTY

Pymatuning Lake

Rich Sari (Franklin); filed 1/10: "I checked out the south end of Pymatuning today. There was 3 inches of ice near shore but it looks bad out on the lake. The weight of up to nine inches of fresh snow had cracked the ice and water was seeping through the cracks to create slush. At the north end, there is 4 inches along shore; went out 100 yards, drilled a hole and only had two inches. Shenango is about the same as Pymatuning. I expect we should be ice fishing by weekend of 17th."



Dave @ Richter's Tackle; filed 1/14: "I've had reports of a handful of anglers out on the ice out of Snodgrass, Manning and Tuttle Point access areas. They report 5 inches of ice, and they are catching a few crappies and walleyes."

Canadohta Lake

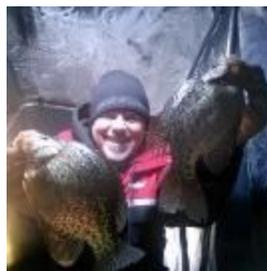
Jerry @ Timberland Bait; filed 1/14: "The ice on Canadohta is reportedly 5 to 6 inches, but I have not heard a thing about anyone catching fish. Don't forget, Timberland Bait will be sponsoring Crawford County's annual Ice Fishing Tournaments at Canadohta on February 14th and on Conneaut Lake on February 28th. For complete information, visit our website at TimbelandBait.com or call me at 814-882-8369."

ERIE COUNTY

Presque Isle Bay

Rich @ Erie Sport Store; filed 1/12: "GOOD NEWS! Parts of Presque Isle Bay now have safe ice. Over the weekend fishermen were on Misery Bay, Horseshoe Pond and the Stink Hole. Ice thickness was reportedly 4 inches in these areas. There was some drifting snow in areas that may lead to unsafe ice conditions. In general, fishing reports were slow. Some respectable catches of panfish were reported at Misery Bay and Stink Hole. A few nice perch came from the Stink Hole. The Erie Sport Store has a good inventory of ice fishing gear, including huts, hand augers, power augers and battery-operated augers. We are well-stocked with plenty of ice rods and accessories. Another shipment of **Slab Grabbers** due to arrive any day."

Dave Lefebre (Erie); filed 1/11: "Sorry I couldn't answer my phone, and I can't talk now either...I am cleaning 50 crappies. I've had back to back limits of 11 to 14 inch black crappies yesterday and today. But the bite is actually tough for the bluegill and perch guys...all we heard was whining and most everyone left by midday. But we were on crappies – spots located during the fall with GPS. My first green bass of 2015 was a 4.2 pounder, and Dan Mansky caught a 10 pound brown trout. Weird and awesome weekend. All fish came from Misery Bay; most fish were caught on chartreuse **VMC Nymph Jigs**." (See photos)



Ric @ Trout Run Bait; filed 1/9: "They fished Misery Bay yesterday. Four inches ice reported. Only three inches at Stink Hole. Lake starting to freeze. Some folks did catch some fish in Walnut Basin yesterday after throwing rocks through the ice. Crazier than I are they!"

Steelhead Streams

Gary @ Poor Richards; filed 1/14: "Steelhead streams locked up with ice; stream fishing pretty much over until we get substantial warming. They are now ice fishing on Walnut Creek Marina Basin and catching a few steelheads."

Lake Pleasant

Jerry @ Timberland Bait called with an angler report that Lake Pleasant has 5 to 6 inches of ice and anglers are catching trout.

MERCER COUNTY



Shenango Lake/ db photo



Wilhelm not safe/ db

Lake Wilhelm

Vickie @ Fergie's Bait; filed 1/14: "No one is ice fishing at Wilhelm. Ice is not safe. Angler reports say maybe three inches at some spots, but walk out a few feet and it may only be one to two inches in next test hole. Ice very unstable right now."

Shenango River Lake

Dave @ Richter's Tackle; filed 1/14: "Reports from two anglers who were on Shenango the other day – only small crappies. Ice reportedly 5 inches."

Shenango River



Shenango River @ Jamestown/ db

Editor's note: Looking for open water to fish? While checking NW PA lakes for safe ice on the 11th, I discovered that sections the Shenango River were running warmer than French Creek or Allegheny River – the result of warmer water coming out of Pymatuning Lake and Shenango River Lake. Both French and the Allegheny had edge ice with slush and chunk ice floating downstream.



Shenango River @ Sharpsville/ db

However, the Shenango from Pymatuning Dam to south of Jamestown was pretty much ice free. Also the Shenango for a couple miles below the Shenango Dam was ice free as well. River below Pymatuning Dam holds some walleyes, crappies and occasional musky; the river below Shenango Dam yields pike, trout, walleye and crappie. (See photos)

VENANGO COUNTY

Mike @ Jigger Wholesale Tackle; filed 1/14: "Based on customer reports, here is the ice thickness on area lakes: Kahle Lake @ 5 inches; Justus Lake @ 5 inches; Sugar Lake @ 5 inches; Lake Wilhelm is reported as unsafe. Stop in to see our full line of ice fishing tackle and bait.

Sugar Lake and Two Mile Run

Bill @ Griffins Bait & Tackle; filed 1/14: "We had our first ice fisherman of the season head to Sugar Lake on the 10th. Anglers are reporting 3.5 inches in some areas and up to 5 inches in other areas on the lake. We have been selling lots of wax worms and maggots, some cicada lures in the 1/16-ounce to 1/8-ounce sizes. Bait has been hard to get as some roads have been closed due to weather thereby preventing distributors from getting to us. Andrew Sculimbrene reported 3-1/2 inches of ice at Two Mile Run. He fished from daybreak till noon on Sunday the 11th, and caught 4 nice bluegills and three rainbow trout. All trout were 15 inches. He was fishing in 6 feet of water in weedbeds with tungsten jigs tipped with waxies and maggots. We have a good deal on a one-year old **Shappell DX 3000** ice hut. Check it out on our Facebook page."

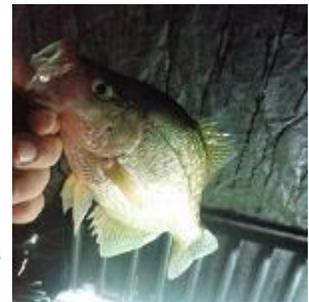
Kahle Lake



Malek photo

Frank Malek (Oil City); filed 1/9: "My first ice fish of the New Year came on the 9th at Kahle Lake; ice was 4 to 5 inches in some areas...thinner in other areas." (See photos)

RJ Graham (Tionesta); filed 1/12: "I've been fishing on Kahle Lake the past two days. The fish are finicky. We have caught a few largemouths on **Kastmaster Spoons** and some crappies and perch – small numbers. All fish came from deep water – about 20 feet. The dam area was last to freeze and ice was not safe about 200 yards out from dam



Graham photo

on the 12th. Ice there should be good by coming weekend. Venango side of lake has thicker ice." (See photos)

Allegheny River

Editor's Note: As of January 15, the river between Oil City and Franklin is completely chunked up with ice. Although not frozen solid in all areas, any attempt at boating would be unwise. The following two reports arrived from anglers over Christmas week.

Bill Logan (Pleasantville); filed 12/27: "Fishing the Tionesta pool, I hooked something big while yo-yoing a **Rapala Rippin' Rap**, but the fish pulled off after a short run. Lots of boats, but not much fish-catching action. The day before I caught a pike on a **Galida Grub** and watched a guy lose a musky at the ramp.

Steve Udick (Oil City); filed 12/23: "New moon, noon bite on chart. I had three bass in the first five casts. Air temp 41 degrees but water temp was 35-36 degrees...fish are cold. Ended session with seven nice bass and a four walleyes from 18" to 20" – losing a fifth 'eye. Also lost 3 unknown fish. Almost all fish came on **Rapala Shad Rap in Helsinki Shad** color. Eleven fish in water that cold impressed me."



Udick photo

The Livewell

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Gamma Fishing Tip

This week's tip about preparing for the upcoming fishing season is from Jim Tutt, FLW Tour Pro and member of the Gamma Line Pro-Staff. Tim says:

1. Trying to organize all your tackle at one can be boring and often leads to you losing focus. Do a little at a time – one box an evening. Have HD end-cutters to remove old split rings and rusty hook. Replace rings and hooks. Clean all hard lures with hot soapy water then dry them thoroughly and replace in box with some system of size, color, weight, etc. Label boxes on sides and ends for quick recognition.
2. Check all rod eyes with cotton swabs for cracks. Clean cork with warm soapy water.
3. I use Gamma Edge Fluorocarbon on most of my setups. Gamma never breaks down from sun or weather exposure. I will spool out the line, reverse it on the spool, stretch it, reel in and spray with KVD line conditioner. This helps line lay out better on casts and helps keep line from freezing on early season trips.
4. When re-organizing tackle, remove stuff you haven't used in the last 2 years and put it in a box for a yard sale. Take the money you earn from old tackle and go buy new stuff!



Jim Tutt—Member Gamma Pro-Staff

You can find Gamma Line locally at the following NW PA Tackle Shops:

Consumer Direct Sports: www.cdssports.com

Hill's County Store: www.facebook.com/hillscs

The winner of the spool of Gamma Line for this issue of the Fishing Report is **Rich Sari**.

If you are the winner of this issue's Gamma Line sample spool, please email your shipping address to Darl Black to claim your prize, along with desire type of line (Polyflex, Edge, Touch, Torque) and pound-test.