

Dept. of Natural Resources: Publishes 2021 sturgeon spearing season forecast; season opens Feb. 13

Posted on Wednesday, Feb 3, 2021

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Contact: Ryan Koenigs, DNR Winnebago System Sturgeon Biologist
Ryan.Koenigs@wisconsin.gov or 920-420-7444

OSHKOSH – Wisconsin’s annual sturgeon spearing season begins Feb. 13 and runs for 16 days, or until any of the pre-determined harvest caps are met. This year, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) predicts that harvest caps will be met prior to the 16-day season limit.

System-wide harvest caps for the 2021 Winnebago system sturgeon spearing season are 430 juvenile females, 950 adult females and 1,200 males.

Sturgeon spearing in Wisconsin is a sport rich in tradition and culture. Photos are a great way to preserve highlights of the season. The DNR encourages spearers to share their stories using this [photo submission form](#). Photos of spearers with their catch, cutting in, shanty life, scenic views observed during the season or any other captivating spearing traditions are encouraged. Please include a brief description for use in future outreach efforts.

Clear Waters Will Likely Result In High Harvests

This year, with more snow cover and less runoff leading up to the season kickoff, the DNR anticipates better water clarity than seen in recent years. Since water clarity is crucial in spearing success, the DNR expects higher harvests from Lake

Winnebago in 2021 and for harvest caps to be met before the 16-day season cutoff.

Spearers who have already scouted for the best areas for fish activity have reported clearer water, which was confirmed by DNR staff during a preliminary clarity check showing between 10 to 16 feet of clear water. Historical harvest data shows that an average lake-wide clarity of 12 feet or greater typically results in a shortened season with harvest caps being met more quickly. As the season approaches, the DNR will monitor water clarity since conditions can change rapidly.

Additional season forecasts and daily season harvest reports will be available throughout the season on the [Winnebago system sturgeon spearing webpage](#).

Important Season Changes

Spearers should review the [2021 sturgeon spearing regulations](#) for essential changes to the registration process, including new spear size and tine arrangement restrictions.

For the 2021 season, all DNR registration stations will be contactless. Spearers should place harvested sturgeon on tailgates or in an easily accessible location before entering the registration area and then remain in their vehicles throughout the registration process. The 2021 season will also be the first year that spear size and tine arrangement will be restricted. The maximum spear head width is now limited to 18 inches and tines can only be arranged in a single plane.

2021 Ice Safety Measures

Although recent cold weather has strengthened ice conditions throughout the Winnebago system, the DNR reminds spearers that no ice is ever 100% safe. The DNR does not monitor ice conditions, so spearers should check with local fishing clubs and conservation groups near the area they plan to spear. These groups monitor conditions and maintain access points and ice roads around the lake system.

Because of the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency, the DNR urges spearers and spectators to practice social distancing, wash their hands, use hand sanitizer and wear masks. Visit the [DNR's website](#) for more information on the DNR's response to COVID-19.