

Dept. of Natural Resources: 2022 Sturgeon Spearing season opens Feb. 12

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OSHKOSH, Wis. – A giant among Wisconsin's inland fresh water fishes, the bottom-dwelling lake sturgeon is a living fossil – a relic from the Middle Ages of fish evolution. The Winnebago system is home to one of the largest lake sturgeon populations in North America and is one of only two locations where lake sturgeon can be harvested with a spear.

The state's annual sturgeon spearing season begins Feb. 12 and runs for 16 days (Feb. 27), or until any of the pre-determined harvest caps are met. The system-wide harvest caps for the 2022 season are 400 juvenile females, 875 adult females and 1,200 males.

Water Clarity Report

During the week of Jan. 24, 2022, the DNR conducted pre-season water clarity readings. Fourteen depth readings over six geographic regions of Lake Winnebago were taken. Reading locations were chosen by access and safety of travel conditions. The average water clarity was 10.71 feet. Strong winds prior to freeze-up and patches of open water that held strong into January likely played a role in the decreased average clarity this season.

Water appears to be a bit clearer in the northern portion of the lake, with fairly uniform visibility across Lake Winnebago. If stable weather patterns continue leading up to the sturgeon spearing season, spearers could see improved water clarity, but a longer spearing season is still anticipated.

Water clarity readings were not conducted on the Upriver Lakes as water clarity has less of an impact on Upriver Lakes harvest numbers. Preliminary reports from anglers and spearers out scouting on the Upriver Lakes indicate favorable water clarity in several areas again this season.

Registration Reminders

Any person who spears a sturgeon must accompany their fish to [an official sturgeon registration station](#), and any harvested sturgeon must be registered by 2 p.m. on the day it was speared.

To help prevent the spread of COVID-19, this year's DNR registration stations will again be operated as drive-thru only. Spearers should remain in their vehicles throughout the registration process. Spearers should place their harvested sturgeon in an easily accessible location to allow staff to collect important biological data such as the size, sex and tagging history of the sturgeon.

The DNR reminds spearers that any fish harvested from Lake Winnebago must be registered at one of the registration stations on Lake Winnebago. Likewise, any fish harvested from lakes Poygan, Butte des Morts or Winneconne must be registered at one of the Upriver Lakes registration stations.

Please check the [2022 sturgeon spearing regulations](#) for more information on the registration process.

No Ice Is Safe Ice

Spearers are reminded that no ice is ever 100% safe and are urged to check with local fishing clubs and conservation groups near the area they plan to spear for local ice condition information. These groups regularly monitor conditions and maintain access points and ice roads. The DNR does not monitor ice conditions. [Find safety tips on the ice safety webpage.](#)

Additional season forecasts, a look at the 2022 water clarity report, and daily season harvest updates will be available throughout the season on the [Winnebago system sturgeon spearing webpage](#). Spearers can also [subscribe](#) to receive helpful daily sturgeon harvest updates via email.

Your Best Shot

Sturgeon spearing in Wisconsin is a sport rich in tradition. The DNR would love to see your highlights of the season. 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. Send us your photos using this [photo submission form](#).