

Dept. of Natural Resources: 2023 sturgeon spearing season opens Feb. 11

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MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is preparing for the sturgeon spearing season opener on Feb. 11, giving spearers a chance to harvest Wisconsin's largest and oldest fish species.

With one of the largest lake sturgeon populations in North America, the Winnebago System supports an annual spearing season that will run for a maximum of 16 days (Feb. 26) or until any of the predetermined harvest caps have been met. This year's harvest caps have been set at:

WATERBODY	JUVENILE FEMALES	ADULT FEMALES	MALES
Upriver Lakes	70	79	246
Lake Winnebago	280	714	985
Winnebago System	350	793	1231

If harvest caps are met early, a closure notice will be posted to the DNR's [Winnebago System sturgeon spearing webpage](#).

Season Predictions

The sturgeon spearing season length is usually dictated in part by water clarity of the Upriver Lakes and Lake Winnebago. Warmer temperatures this winter prevented biologists from safely conducting water clarity assessments until this week. There is an average of 13.0 feet of water clarity around Lake Winnebago with generally clearer water on the eastern shores as well as farther from shores along the west side of the lake.

With better water clarity this year, we should see a good harvest, though the warm weather could deteriorate ice conditions which may reduce spearing success. Recorded low chironomid densities (lake fly larvae/red worms) this year may also impact sturgeon distribution around Lake Winnebago.

Spearers can find the full water clarity report, season forecast and daily harvest updates on the [Winnebago System sturgeon spearing webpage](#) and by [signing up for email updates](#).

Registration Information

The DNR reminds spearers that once they have successfully speared a sturgeon, the tag must be validated by tearing off the bottom portion. The sturgeon must then be brought to [an official registration station](#) and registered by 2 p.m. on the day it was speared.

Any sturgeon harvested from Lake Winnebago must be registered at one of the registration stations on Lake Winnebago. Likewise, any sturgeon harvested from lakes Poygan, Butte des Morts or Winneconne must be registered at one of the Upriver Lakes registration stations.

This year's registration stations have returned to their pre-pandemic locations. Some locations will continue to offer the drive-thru registration option.

Please check the [2023 sturgeon spearing regulations](#) for specifics.

Stay Safe On The Ice

Spearers are also reminded that no ice is 100% safe. Check with local fishing clubs and conservation groups for local ice condition information as the DNR does not monitor ice conditions.

[Get tips for staying safe on the ice from the DNR's ice safety webpage.](#)

Caught On Camera

Photos are a great way to show the spearing tradition and keep the memories alive for years to come. [Send us your photos](#) from the season, and we may use them in future DNR outreach efforts. Photos of cutting in, shanty life, spearers with their catch or any other part of the spearing tradition are encouraged.