

# Dept. of Natural Resources: 2026 sturgeon spearing season opens Feb. 14

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**OSHKOSH, Wis.** – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is preparing for the sturgeon spearing season opening Saturday, Feb. 14, 2026, on the Winnebago System.

With one of the largest lake sturgeon populations in North America, the Winnebago System supports an annual spearing season that runs for a maximum of 16 days (closing March 1, 2026) or until any of the predetermined harvest caps have been met.

This year's harvest caps are:

<b>WATERBODY</b>	<b>JUVENILE FEMALES</b>	<b>ADULT FEMALES</b>	<b>MALES</b>
Lake Winnebago	280	659	981
Upriver Lakes	70	73	245
Winnebago System Totals	350	732	1,226

If any harvest cap is met early, a closure notice will be posted to the DNR's [Winnebago System Sturgeon Spearing webpage](#) and sent to subscribers of the DNR's Sturgeon Spearing Updates email list.

[Subscribe online to receive DNR sturgeon spearing season updates by email.](#)

## Season Predictions

The sturgeon spearing harvest is usually dictated in part by [water clarity](#) and ice conditions on the Upriver Lakes and Lake Winnebago. This year's assessments indicate excellent water clarity throughout Lake Winnebago, which is on track with other highly successful years. The DNR does not check water clarity in the Upriver Lakes, although clarity is usually not a major factor in predicting harvest on these waterbodies because they are shallow.

Spearers will be able to find the season forecast and daily harvest updates on the [Winnebago System Sturgeon Spearing webpage](#) and via email.

The DNR would also like to remind spearers of the [construction work off Samers Bay](#) on Lake Butte des Morts, which is likely to occur during the spearing season.

### **Registration Information**

The DNR reminds spearers that their sturgeon spearing tag must be on their person. Spearers are encouraged to visit [Go Wild](#) and print their tag before heading onto the ice. Once they have successfully speared a sturgeon, the tag must be validated by tearing off the bottom portion, and the sturgeon must then be brought to [an official registration station](#). The spearer needs to be in line 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, and any sturgeon harvested from the Upriver Lakes (lakes Poygan, Butte des Morts or Winneconne) must be registered at one of the Upriver Lakes registration stations.

As successful spearers head off the ice to register their fish, the sturgeon must be openly exposed, meaning it is visible to a person in a passing vehicle.

Please check the [2026 Sturgeon Spearing Regulations](#) for specifics.

### **Stay Safe While Spearing**

Spearers and spectators are reminded that no ice is 100% safe. The DNR does not monitor ice conditions; check with local fishing clubs and conservation groups for current conditions.

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

## Share Your Spearing Experience

Help us keep the spearing tradition alive! The DNR is seeking [photos of the spearing season](#) for communication and outreach. Photos of cutting in, shanty life, spearkers with their catch or any other part of the spearing tradition are encouraged.