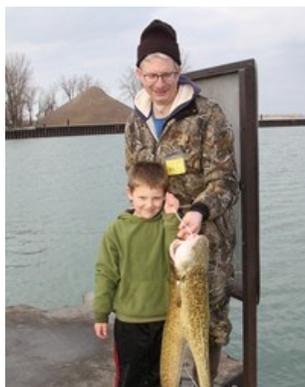


# NORTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA FISHING REPORT

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Issue: January 18, 2016



**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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## The Landing Net

*by Darl Black*

Well, it was a nice “extended” fall while it lasted! But it is looking like winter is settling in, and safe ice may not be far off. Yes, I know some crazies are out there already on 3 to 4 inches of ice. But given the amount of snow falling recently on thin ice that reported 3 to 4 inches may not be solid “good” ice. If you check the PFBC website, you will find a chart that says 4” blue ice is good for ONE ice angler and gear; 5” for one snowmobile; and 7” for group activity (which to me means large groups of ice anglers). Other charts say 5” to 6” for ice fishing. And remember, early ice in particular freezes unevenly; keep checking by drilling a hole every so many feet as you advance on what you think may be safe ice.



## NW PA FISHING REPORT for January 18, 2016

This Report is brought to you by PA Great Lakes Region tourism with additional sponsorship from Wiegel Brothers Marine and Gamma Fishing.

We answer the question *“What’s biting in the lakes, streams and rivers of Crawford, Erie, Mercer and Venango counties?”*

### CRAWFORD COUNTY

#### Pymatuning Lake

*Dave @ Richter’s Bait & Tackle*; filed 1/18: “No safe ice on South End of Pymatuning yet; maybe within the week if we don’t get a layer of insulating snow on top of thin ice. A couple local guys are catching a few walleyes in the Shenango River below Pymatuning Dam. Also, a handful of anglers are drilling holes in the thin ice off the docks at Jamestown Liv-  
ery; I hear the bite has slowed with only a few small panfish being caught.”

*Patty @ Poff’s Tackle*; filed 1/18: “Nothing to report. With no safe ice, not many fishermen are stopping by. A few guys have been hitting the Linesville Spillway; hit it right and catch a few walleyes or crappies – but not numbers of fish.”

*Sydney @ Robinson’s Bait*; filed 1/18: “There’s about 3 inches of ice on the North End – not safe for ice fishing. Hopefully by next weekend anglers can get out.”

RJ Graham (Tionesta); filed 1/16: “I checked Pymatuning today. No safe ice, so I drilled holes off the docks at Jamestown Marina. I caught some small bluegills and perch – but no crappies.”

Brandon Blystone; filed 1/16: “I fished from the docks at Jamestown Marina for several days in early January. I caught mostly small panfish, but did get a couple nice crappies and my first largemouth bass of 2016.” (See photos below)



1st bass 2016 for Brandon

Bill Cusick (Greenville); filed 1/8: "I caught an 18 inch walleye with a blade bait on Christmas Eve down by Ackerman Island."

Marilyn Black (Cochrannton); filed 1/1: "On New Year's Day, Darl and I caught our first fish of 2016 in the Shenango River below Pymatuning Dam. Darl's first fish was a tiny perch. Mine was a tiny crappie. Once we pinpointed the exact current break holding fish, we caught a number of small crappies on tiny jigs under a float – but none of the fish were big enough to keep." (See photos below)



### Canadohta Lake

*Jerry @ Timberland Bait & Tackle*; filed 1/18: "The shop is closed for renovations, so I'm not sure – but I don't think we have safe ice on Canadohta yet. However, we will be holding our Canadohta Ice Fishing Tournament on February 13; go to our website for details. We will not hold the Conneaut Lake Ice Tournament this winter, but plan to return with it next winter."

### Sugar Lake

*Janice @ Griffins Bait & Tackle*; filed 1/18: "I've had reports from fishermen stopping for bait this past weekend that Sugar Lake has 4 inches of good ice, and they are catching small perch. I also have anglers stopping for shiners to fish for pike and walleye in French Creek – although I've not heard back on success or not."

## **ERIE COUNTY**

### Presque Isle Bay

*Jim @ Lake Erie Bait & Tackle*; filed 1/19: "Nothing to report in the last week. Ice isn't safe enough for fishing – too much insulating snow even though it is cold. No idea when it will be safe...maybe by the weekend on Misery Bay."

Darl Black (Cochrannton); filed 1/10: "I drove up to PIB to meet Dave Lefebre to check on his smallmouth bass success out on the lake while filming a pilot for his new TV show, and to hopefully get a picture of a burbot. I scored on both. Dave and his crew caught 10 smallmouth bass on grubs in deep water about 6 miles east of PIB – all fish were in the 3 to 4.5

pound range. And out on the South Pier, Richard Fill of Waterford had caught two nice burbot. Seven year old Joseph Torok offered to hold the burbot.” (See photos below)



Lefebre's January Lk Erie SMB



It's a burbot!



Dave Lefebre (Harbor Creek); filed 1/1: “The day after Christmas, I took visiting bass pro Jacob Wheeler out on the Bay to catch perch. This was the first time he ever intentionally went perch fishing. We got a limit of BIG ones! Most of our fish came on **Rapala Jigging Raps.**” (See photos on Livewell Page)

Paul Stewart (Butler); filed 12/31: “Went perch fishing yesterday with my buddy Cliff and his son. We started at Border Patrol Dock. It was slow so we moved to the Convention Center Dock. I limited out and they caught a good number for being their first time perching. Hard to believe we still had open water going into January.”

Thomas Watral (Erie); filed 12/30: “Perch fishing had been good in the Bay during late December (see photo). But after the high winds and rain the other night, PIB is a mess. Junk floating everywhere. Muddy water. No one doing much – catching a few perch.”

### Steelhead Streams

*Gary @ Poor Richards*; filed 1/18: “The streams were in good shape this past weekend and anglers did very well with a lot of average size steelheads being caught. However, the streams are filled with flush today and with the forecast of low temps and heavy snow for the next few days, you can forget about fishing.”

*Dan @ Elk Creek Sports*; filed 1/18: “With up and down conditions over past weeks, there are fish in the streams. They were catching them over the weekend, but now the streams are headed to freeze up. Once they freeze, it will take more than warm temps to open them – it will take a heavy rain to melt and push the ice out.”

*Rick @ Trout Run Bait*; filed 1/18 “I caught steelheads on Saturday – conditions were good. Conditions are not good today and the forecast is not encouraging. We are in the in-between stage – steelhead streams are freezing up but PIB does not have safe ice for fishing. With west wind, the lake shore is beat up at mouth of creeks. However, the best

spot to fish with this west wind might be the rock jetties at East Ave access. Guys have been catching brown trout and steelhead by casting into the lake at the East Ave Access.”



*Uncle John's Campground*; filed 1/18: “During the last week or so, Elk Creek has been blown out with high water and mud. Now with the freeze, uncertain when streams will be fishable.”

Bill Logan (Pleasantville); filed 12/23: “With nice weather around Christmas, I was fishing 16 Mile and 20 Mile in my shirt sleeves. I caught three little fishies!”

## MERCER COUNTY

### Lake Wilhelm

*Vickie @ Fergie's*; filed 1/16: “The ice is starting to form on Lake Wilhelm. Approximately an inch right now is what I’m hearing. Also hear about 3 inches on Sugar Lake and Kahle Lake. Not really safe for ice fishing yet. Thanks for postponing the Fishing Report; it was a good move according to the chatter. I’ve heard positive comments that you put safety of anglers ahead of putting out a Fishing Report on time. Always check the ice!”

*Russ @ Lake Wilhelm Marina*; filed 1/14: “This is Russ from Lake Wilhelm Marina. I am out of the country until spring, but I did receive information from Marci to post the winner of the 2015 Fishing Contest. Ten-year-old Kaleb of Washington, PA won the Under 15 category with a 27.25 inch 8 pound walleye. Sandy and Skip won the Over 16 category with a 29” 7.5 pound walleye taken on a **Hot-n-Tot**. See you in the spring.” (See Photos)



Youth winner

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Adult winner

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Chaunc on Shenango

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## VENANGO COUNTY

### Allegheny River

Steve Udick (Oil City); filed 1/17: "Glad the Report is going out late. Pat Murray (Oil City) and I launched from the OC Marina on the first 29 degree day last week. We barely were able to get around the Ice Boom as trees had all the openings blocked from high water. We fished the Tarbottom Eddy. I was able to land 3 walleyes on a **Rapala Black/Silver Husky Jerk** and an 18" bass on a **Rapala Firetiger Shad Rap**. We have never been skunked in 13 years of winter fishing in the eddy. Quite a feat!" (See photos)

"Also, this past week Jim Allen (Oil City) and I made it out twice. Jim landed his first ever northern pike on a **Shad Rap**. He also caught an 18" smallmouth using a minnow. I think the El Nino extended season is coming to an end. Ice fishermen may have a chance next week!" (See photos in Livewell)

### **BREAKING NEWS – Safe Ice at Kahle Lake!**

RJ Graham (Tionesta); filed Tuesday 1/19: RJ sent a text message saying he fished Kahle Lake on Monday, catching 6 largemouth bass and several bluegills on **Kastmaster Spoons**

### **Burbot Mania at Presque Isle Bay this winter!!!**



Burbot (a.k.a. ling cod, eelpout, lawyer fish) live in the deep, cold water of Lake Erie most of the year and are rarely seen. But they move shallow to spawn in the late fall — but are seldom caught by Pennsylvania Erie anglers except....during Nov-Dec-Jan in the shipping between the main Lake and Presque Isle Bay. This November through early January was an exceptional year for catches. Many people like to eat them, claiming they taste like lobster when prepared properly. Mike Mainhart had very informative article in Ohio Outdoor Times January 2016 issue. Mike also supplied this photo of his

friend Paul with their December catch off the channel pier wall.

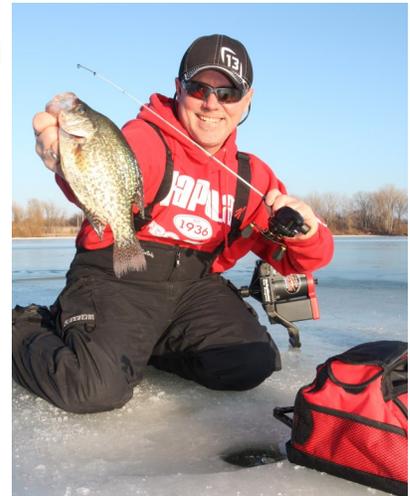
## **FIRST ICE Tips:** from Dave “Hardwater” Lefebvre, member of the Ice Force Team

I have not been out, too busy this week with editing process of a new fishing show coming soon...shhhh-don't tell anyone, lol. Saturday was the first day with ice potential, and if I could have, I would have gone somewhere this morning, but I'm stuck in meetings.

First ice is probably my favorite time to get out, but also the most dangerous, so be extra careful. I've already gone out in the boat just before the freeze, so I know exactly where the “good” grass is and where the holes are. This stuff changes every year; anglers who go back to the same spot every winter are in a rut and likely not catching as many fish as those who pre-scout areas before ice.

Do you want to be “that guy” in the middle of a large crowd catching fish when everyone else is scratching their head? The most important thing at first ice is taking advantage of the pre-scouting opportunity in a boat before ice forms...idle around those typical ice fishing areas and know it all like the back of your hand. Too late for that this season, but file that away somewhere for next winter.

Crappie fishing is typically good early. Bluegills can be good all through the season, and don't get me wrong, I love big bluegills, but I save that for when crappie fishing gets tougher. For the slabs, I like bigger baits like the 2-inch Yamamoto Grub and VMC Nymph Tail, normally in whites, clears or chartreuses. I use a heavy head, even in the shallows, but with a small profile. You can't beat the Tungsten Tubby 1/32 oz. head. I'll use glow, chartreuse and maybe some pinks and reds to add little flare and contrast. Finding crappies is more important than the bait, though both are critical at times.



During the day, covering water and having a bunch of holes is a favorite approach of mine at first ice especially. I take note of hotter holes because I may want to camp on them at prime time – dawn and dusk. Remember crappies move around a lot but are easy to pattern, so pay attention to every bite. Are they in the holes near grass? Are they in the thick stuff? Are they suspended? If you don't have one, get yourself a good ice flasher unit for crappie fishing – otherwise you are fishing blind. I use a Marcum LX-5. There are more expensive ones but I keep coming back to this one!

Best of luck on the ice, be safe and follow my little ice fishing community and feel free to message me anytime or post photos and reports, too! <https://facebook.com/ErielceFishingAdventures/>.

# The Livewell

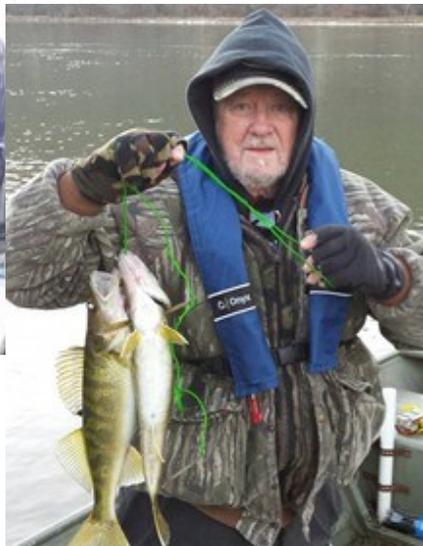
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Steve Udick and Jim Allen on the Allegheny in January



Boat of the Month: Don't need a boat? Bet you can use a new motor! Visit Wiegel's!

Dave Lefebre and Jacob Wheeler perchin' on Presque Isle Bay on December 26



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## Gamma Fishing Tip

You can find GAMMA line locally at the following tackle shops:

- Consumer Direct Sports – Grove City, PA
- Griffins Bait & Tackle – Cooperstown, PA
- Hill's County Store – Williamsfield, OH
- Maurer's Trading Post—Franklin, PA
- Robinson's Bait & Tackle — Espyville, PA

RJ Graham is the winner of a spool of Gamma Ice Braid for this issue of the Fishing Report. Please email your shipping address to Darl Black to claim your prize.



Keith Eshbaugh at Dutch Fork Custom Lures writes "I'm having withdrawal symptoms from not fishing. I'm going to need therapy soon!" Perhaps it's too late to help Keith. He has already disassembled his boat trailer and is rebuilding it. Will he have it done in time for spring? We shall see.

If you are having Cabin Fever already, I would suggest starting to work on cleaning and repairing rods and reels, and organizing lures. Maybe buy some new tackle boxes. It's certainly cheaper than having to buy a new boat trailer!

But the most important thing you can do before spring thaw is to put new line on all your reels. The only line I put on my reels is Gamma—whether its Gamma Polyflex (mono), Gamma Edge (fluorocarbon) or Torque Braid. When it comes to mono or fluorocarbon. I only strip off approximately 50 yards, and tie fresh line in with a blood knot. Braid will last several years without requiring a change. Gamma Polyflex and Edge are the strongest line per pound-test rating that I have ever used. By dropping down a size in pound-test of previously used line, you will still have a strong line and a more manageable line since you are using a thinner diameter. Go Gamma! Darl