

NORTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA FISHING REPORT

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The NW PA Fishing Report is brought to you by:



Pennsylvania's Great Lakes Region
crawford • erie • mercer • venango



Fishing with Darl Black

Guide Service



Linesville Spillway in March. Photo by James Scott

The Landing Net It's another "in between" season. Ice fishing is winding down. But lakes are not "Ice free" yet. Walleye season is closing down (except for Pymatuning) at midnight March 14th so tail waters and rivers offer little opportunity. Steelhead streams still open but the spring run is always an unknown factor. Over the next 2 to 3 weeks you can fight for a spot at the Linesville Spillway at Pymatuning and maybe catch a walleye. Or check out some flooded backwaters and tributary mouths on French Creek for possible early crappies. Best bet? Spend some time with the NW PA Fishing Report to check the Calendar for upcoming events, get tip from Dave Lefebre on his best ice-out lure for deep water, and check out the local tackle companies that will be providing prizes for the coming issues of the Report.

The NW PA Fishing Report provides timely angling information for Crawford, Erie, Mercer and Venango counties. Fishing comments and photos are offered by regional tackle shops and area anglers. The NWPAFR 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 for clarity and brevity, and posted to websites and distributed electronically.

NW PA Fishing Report for 3-13-19

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Calendar of Upcoming Events

April 6: **PFBC Linesville Hatchery Open House**, Saturday, start at 11 AM. Learn about propagation of fish and much more.
13300 Hartstown Rd, Linesville



Linesville Hatchery

April 27: **PLA Crappie Tournament**, Espyville Boat Launch. For more info go to Pymatuning Lake Association Facebook Page.

May 5: **BMCC Spring Classic at Pymatuning**. Contact Eric for info at ep-marsh@zoominternet.net

May 18: **PLA Walleye Tournament**, Espyville Boat Launch. For more info go to Pymatuning Lake Association Facebook Page.

June 8: **"Bluegill Bev" Conneaut Lake Panfish Tournament**. For more info visit Loby Premier Entertainment Facebook Page.



County by County Reports

French Creek – Flowing through all four counties

Angler Al, Franklin; filed 3-11: On a Saturday morning a few weeks back, I ventured down to French Creek. It was my first attempt to land a fish in the new calendar year. Lively 3 to 4-inch trapped creek baits should have made it a cinch. However, after nearly



French Creek Pike

an hour of casting, nothing had taken a swipe. My arm was telling it was time to call it quits. But the smell of skunk wasn't how I wanted to begin my angling for the year. So, I rebaited. I flung the last cast as far as my tired arm would allow. My cast splashed down about midway across the creek. As the ¼-oz blue Road Runner slowly sank, I began the retrieve. Ka'wack. Or Spanktasticess! Either term – you get my drift. The hook up was on. During the moments of the battle, I realized the amazing satisfaction one gets from fishing. I was compensated for my due diligence – blessed with a priceless memory and gifted Kodak smile. I wish all my fellow fishermen and fisherwomen a safe and fantastic new season. (See photo)

CRAWFORD COUNTY

Pymatuning Lake

Dave @ Richter's Tackle; filed 3/11: Last chance for walleye and musky fishing in the river below the dam spillway. Inland season for these fish closes March 14th. A few anglers have continued to have success below the dam even when the water flow was low. There were still a few guys fishing from the Jamestown Marina docks but the catches seemed to be mainly small bluegills. Docks close to fishing on April 1. I'm seeing a few guys at the Linesville Spillway but no one is saying much, although one guy stopped by to say he limited out up there during the little warm spell we had. Ice on main lake is not safe enough for me to be out and after the expected warm up later this week, the lake will likely open up in some areas. I hope to be out in a boat in a crappie bay on Friday. (See photos)

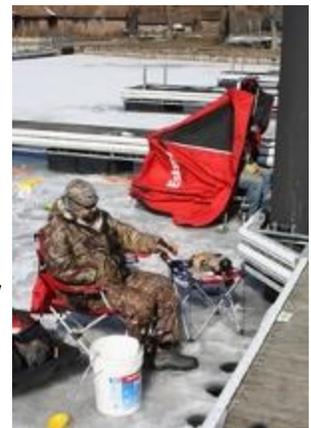
Patty @ Poff's Place; filed 3/11: Not much happening. Ice on the way out. Mixed reviews of what's happening at Linesville Spillway. Usual story of some walleyes taken late evening, night and early morning but not during the day yet. (See photo)

Conneaut Lake

Darl Black, Cochran; 3/11: I visited the Conneaut Lake Ice House Bay Festival the end of February. The ice sculpture that caught my eye was the Angler. An individual had a display of items and old photos of the ice harvest that occurred on Conneaut Lake until electrical refrigeration came about. I was intrigued by the spiked horseshoes used on the feet of horses that pulled the ice plows. (See photos on next page)



21inch 'eye/Richter photo



Dock-bound ice anglers



Conneaut "Ice Angler"



Ice Spike Horseshoe



Woodcock Spider Hump



Woodcock Post Cluster

Woodcock Lake

Joseph Arnett @ USACE Woodcock Creek Lake; filed 2/27: It was a bad ice fishing season on the lake due to inconsistent ice. However, the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission just wrapped up a pretty aggressive habitat project on the north shore of Woodcock Creek Lake. Post Clusters and Spider Humps were the main components. Now we will monitor the structures via electro shocking to see which species are using them and then likely put together the next 5-year plan with that information. (See photos)

Canadohta Lake

Jerry @ Timberland Bait; filed 3/5: Following two postponements due to poor ice conditions, we finally held our annual Canadohta Ice Fishing Tournament. Winners in each of the species categories are pictured below. (See photos of winners below; photos by Jerry)



Northern Pike



Crappie



Walleye



Perch

ERIE COUNTY

Tributaries & Presque Isle

Lynne @ East End Angler; filed 3/11: After the blow out on Sunday, all east side steelhead streams should be good for fishing by later today or Tuesday. With only limited rain expected Thursday morning, looks like we should have good conditions for at least a week. In the Bay, there is open water along South Pier and guys are catching perch. They were getting perch and steelhead off the Lampe Docks as the ice was too weak to walk on. Also getting steelhead through the ice in Marina Lake, but that ice is likely questionable now. Marina Docks close to fishing on April 1.

Phil @ Poor Richards; filed 3/11: Streams busted up over weekend; no fish reported. Water is coming down today but will retain some color.

Becky @Elk Creek Sports; filed 3/11: Too much water and too much current over weekend. But no major rain in forecast. Setting up for a good weekend of steelhead.

MERCER COUNTY

Shenango Lake

Corey Bice, Sharpville; filed 2/23: I've had a decent ice season on Shenango although ice conditions were changing due to weather and rain. You have to know how to get out to good ice. Today I caught crappies pretty good, including my largest for the season. (See photo)



Corey's big Crappie

Editor's Note: I met Corey while doing a drive around of Shenango at the end of February. His was the only ice fishing report I received from Shenango Lake this season. As a USACE flood control lake like Woodcock, Shenango is prone to unexpected raising and lowering of water level based on rain fall. The ice is slower to form due to current, and the ice pack can break loose from shore during times of heavy rain as lake level raises.

Lake Wilhelm

Keith @ Dutch Fork Custom Lures; filed 3/9: I fished Lake Wilhelm on Friday, March 8 for one last ice trip of the year. My daughter was home on spring break, so we borrowed some gear and headed to the south end of the lake. In 18 feet of water we caught crappie and bluegill on small spoons and jigs tipped with maggots. However, the sunny afternoon proved a bit tougher. With sun out, crappie stopped biting. But we moved shallower to 15 feet and bluegills continued to bite – but mostly smaller fish. We only caught a few large crappies. Other guys were only catching small fish in the afternoon, so we left.



Wilhelm Crappie/Keith photo

Bo @ BC Baits; filed 3/9: We had a couple anglers out on Wilhelm throughout the week. They reported catching good amounts of crappies and bluegills on white Pickworms and pink Terry Bugs down towards Launch 1 and the Dam. The ice today was an average of 4 inches and appeared to be melting fast. I fear safe ice fishing has come an end with this evening's rain. I did fish Neshannock Creek this evening with a flyrod. I observed a number of trout but only hooked up once using a pink Pickworm.

Lake Latonka — Mercer County

Editor’s note: On Saturday, March 9th, Gus Glasgow & friends had a great end-of-season ice fishing day on Mercer County’s Lake Latonka as can be seen by this group shot. Both Latonka and Wilhelm had reliable ice because of minimal flow into these lakes. Whereas as a flood control reservoir, Shenango Lake gets inundated with runoff over a wide area when temperatures go above freezing.



Guests at Lake Latonka—hot panfish bite

VENANGO COUNTY

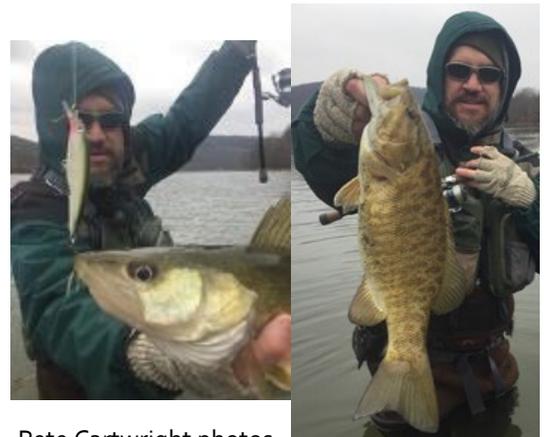
Allegheny River

Jeff Knapp @ Keystone Connection Guide Service; filed 3/9: We’ve had excellent walleye action on both the middle (free flowing) and lower (impounded) Allegheny River. Lots of walleyes with plenty of quality sized ones up to 26 inches. Clients have kept a few eating sized males, but all the big females have been released. Jig and minnows, jig and Berkley Gulp Alive Minnow have been the productive offerings. The recent string of cold nights with single digit lows, combined with low river flows produced lots of ice on the middle Allegheny, thereby limiting access there. Rain and warmer temperatures will likely dramatically change river conditions. Walleye season ends midnight March 14. The focus will switch to smallmouth bass as soon as water temperatures rise into the low 40s. (See photos below)

Pete Cartwright @ SmalliesontheYough.com; filed 3/7: Under cold cloudy conditions with water temp of 35 degrees on the Allegheny River, we got out and landed a few fish today. Smallmouth bass and walleye fell victim to our 412 Bait Co tubes and Rapala XRap. With a soft bite, our Gamma Edge helped us identify fish picking up the bait. The bite should be getting better as the water warms. (See photos below)



Jeff Knapp photos



Pete Cartwright photos

Erie Extreme Angling Tip with Pro Angler Dave Lefebre

A blade bait is the first lure to throw for smallmouth bass and wall-eye after ice out. And the best blade bait on the market these days is the SteelShad.



In the coldwater period before smallmouth begin thinking about making their move to shallower water, the tight vibration and alluring flash of the SteelShad draws strikes from deep-water smallies on Lake Erie and inland lakes. With a variety of new reflective color patterns on the SteelShad, you will find one that works best for whatever water clarity you face.

The SteelShad is great for ice-out walleye on Pymatuning. All those boats you see on Pymatuning around the Espyville Causeway bridge shortly after ice out are working blades. But the new SteelShad is balanced differently and therefore offers a vibration that is different from older style blades, so it's likely you can draw strikes from walleye that may have become accustomed to older blades.

I primarily use the ½-ounce model. You can jig it vertically by dropping it straight to fish observed on the sonar. Or you can pitch it out, let it sink and then use a slow lift and drop to work it back to the boat. Initially work very deep breaklines, around deep grass lines as the water begins to warm.



Dave sez: All eyes on Steelshad at ice out.

Fishing with Darl Black Guide Service



Put yourself in this photo...May and June are prime months for crappie fishing at Pymatuning Lake. All tackle and bait provided. We use the best equipment: BnM Rods, Gamma Line, Garmin Electronics, Driftmaster Rod Holders, Bobby Garland Crappie Baits, Road Runner Lures and Thill Floats. Five hour trips are limited to one or two guests, providing ample instructions for anyone not proficient with spinning gear and rigs. Gift Certificates available. Email

darlblack@windstream.net or phone 814-720-1407 for more info.

Who doesn't like to win a prize?

For the last seven years, contributors to the NW PA Fishing Report have had the opportunity to win a tackle prize simply by submitting reports and/or photos for publication in the newsletter. As we start a new fishing season, I wanted to give everyone a rundown on the locally-based tackle companies which will be supplying prizes for 2019 Spring through Winter Fishing Reports. If you run into these local owners, be sure to thank them. If you want an opportunity to win a tackle pack or Gamma Line, send a report to darlblack@windstream.net.

Galida's Grubz -- John Galida started making the famous 4-inch ribbed grub about the same time I started fishing tournaments back in the late 1970s, and I caught my first limit of Lake Erie smallmouth with them during a club tournament. In short order his "Smoke Grub" became legendary among bass fishermen. I, like many other anglers, have caught untallied numbers of fish of all species on this grub. Today John offers his Grubz in a variety of new colors, with some tailored specifically to walleye and stripers. You can visit his Galida's Grubz Facebook Page and his website to learn more, see all the colors and order what you need.

Dutch Fork Custom Lures – I met Keith Eshbaugh many years ago when he was fishing the pro walleye tournaments; the FLW magazine assigned me to do an article about him – in particular about his pastime of bow & primitive weapons making, and living in a hand-made teepee during hunting season. A few years later he was making the rounds at local sports shows with his homemade worm harnesses equipped with special blades. Next thing he is doing custom paint jobs on popular walleye plugs. Today he is well-known for his custom paint schemes on lures, catching big walleyes and guiding for walleye on Erie. If fortunate to win a walleye pack, you will be impressed with Keith's special worm harnesses.

Someday Isle Tackle – Like so many custom lure shops, the Hellmann bothers started off making baits for personal use. But when friends tried the unique jighead, they wanted more. Driven by angler success, Someday Isle started marketing to a few local shops. Today with high demand particularly among walleye anglers, the Water Puppet Jig is available in different colors and sizes. It can be found in tackle shops from Vermont to North Dakota. Here in NW PA, walleye anglers love to bait the specially designed head ¼ to 1-ounce heads with a plastic body, tip it with a nightcrawler and drift the waters of Pymatuning or Lake Erie. Smaller weight jigs are used suspended below a bobber for perch, crappies, white bass and even smallmouth bass.

B.C. Baits Co. Custom Lures – I was introduced to Bo Bartholomew and BC Bait Co. on Facebook this past year. Based in Hadley, PA, they offer several small plastic baits that are dynamite for panfish and trout. Plastic baits include the Hadley Worm, Pick Worm, Terry Bug and more. Their smaller plastic bodies are a perfect match to Someday Isle Tackle's Shimmerling jigheads for bobber fishing. They also make micro handtied panfish jigs and other custom rigs. You will find their sample baits in a Panfish Pack this season.

Mike's Custom Tackle – Although I had heard about Mike's Custom Tackle out of Oil City for several years, my initial meeting with Mike McFadden didn't occur until late last fall when Dale Black and I returned to the Oil City ramp on the Allegheny River. Turns out that my fishing partner that day had just beat me by a margin of 3 to 1 with smallmouth caught on a custom color tube produced by Mike. I learned that Mike does custom colors in soft plastic for many tournament anglers who feel a special combination will give them the edge. Well, it worked for Dale Black during our Bronzeback Friday fish off! To see the array of tubes, fluke-like lures, stick worms and craws that Mike makes, you will need to visit his Facebook Page. Presently he does not market his products through local shops. But when you have a secret color you want produced in soft plastic, Mike is the man to contact through Mike's Custom Tackle Facebook Page.

Gamma Fishing Line – I've spent the better part of my adult life writing about fishing and the fishing industry. But I never thought one of my best friends would end up owning the company that produces what many consider the absolute best monofilament and fluorocarbon lines available today, and that line is spooled right here in Oil City. If you are into fishing, you probably already know Dale Black, president of Gamma Fishing, Dale has been a supporter of the NW PA Fishing Report since the beginning. We give away a spool of Gamma Line every other Report (once spool a month). If you are the winner, you choose which one you want. Try it, you'll love it!

Prize winners will be listed at the end of the Gamma Tip Page. You must send me an email with your mailing address in order to have your prize sent to you. If you do not claim your prize by the time of the next Fishing Report, the prize goes back in the hat to be pulled for a future Report. Please give your prize product a try and provide feedback for a future Fishing Report.

The Livewell

Brought to you by:
Wiegel Brothers Marine
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Phone 814-437-2077



Email: Debbie@riverjetpro.com

Jet boats in stock to meet your family's needs— 16 ft, 17ft, and 18 ft



Express with stick-steering



G3 Gator Tough



Kingfisher



Catch more fish—Knapp photo



Black Knight Industries

Oil City, PA 16301

www.gammafishing.com

Gamma Line may be found locally at the following tackle shops:

- Consumer Direct Sports (CDS) near Grove City Outlet Mall
- Maurer’s Trading Post, Franklin, PA



Gamma Tip from Gus Glasgow of Western PA Hardwater

With the 2019 Western PA Hardwater Series now in the books, we have to look back and thank all our contestants and event sponsors for helping the series grow. We were able to work around the weather and hold four events averaging 60 teams per event – making WPA Hardwater the largest ice fishing tournament series in the United States.

WPA Hardwater paid out \$14,000 in cash to winning contestants, made a \$1,000 donation to Make-A-Wish and gave away an additional \$12,000 in prizes from our amazing sponsors, including Gamma Fishing, Striker Ice, ION, Eskimo, Robert Stevens Jewelers, Jisco Off-Road, R2 Outdoors Podcast, FishUSA, Kenders, HD Laser Engraving, The Outdoor Marketplace, Simmons Taxidermy, BC Baits, Vexliar and XTR Outdoors.

Follow WPA Hardwater on Facebook and on the web at www.wpahardwater.com.



1st Place final tournament



Season Point Leaders



Check to Make-A-Wish

Fishing Report Prize winners: (1) Cover Shot—James Scott; (2) Gamma Line—Corey Bice
Email darlblack@windstream.net with your address to claim your prize