

# 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

Information Service



Mark Melega caught this 6 pound Smallmouth Bass from Presque Isle Bay earlier in April. Mark was using 8-lb.

Gamma

## Landing Net by Darl Black

The weather this April was certainly unusual. Summer-like temperatures (although wet and windy) at the start of the month which seemed to get fish moving early. Then the bottom fell out as cold, wet, windy weather moved in and put a damper on fishing. Some anglers had great days in April if you could put up with the weather. But for the most part, bites were tough in April as water temperature bounced all over. And cold, wet, winter-like continues are kicking off May. But one thing stands out – small-mouth bass fishing was exceptional. Check out the fish photos in this issue: 18 of 50 fish photos are big small-mouths. Being unpredictable fish, small-mouth apparently like unpredictable weather.

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 is 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 - May 3, 2023

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County by County Reports for Crawford, Erie, Mercer and Venango

### CRAWFORD COUNTY

#### Pymatuning Lake

**Bean @ Richter's Bait & Tackle**; filed 5/1: Miserable weather has kept angler numbers down in recent weeks, so reports are down as well. I'm hearing that the walleyes being caught are good size, not a lot of sub-legal ones. Dad has been catching walleyes during the day by drifting nightcrawlers in about 5 feet of water. Anglers are picking up some nice perch while walleye fishing, too. Crappies are in the trees on the South End. The musky spawn is on, so there are quite a few 30 to 35-inch males being caught.

**Laurie @ Duck-N-Drake**; filed 5/1: Weather has been lousy. Surface temp was near 70 degrees early April, but has dropped back to 54 degrees the first day of May. The Ohio Huskie Muskie Tournament this past weekend only yielded 3 legal fish – all under 40 inches. For the ongoing Crappie Brawl contest, I only had one angler bring a fish in this past week. I have not heard much about walleye on the North End. (See photo right)

**Patty @ Poff's Place**; filed 5/1: Not much to report with all the bad weather. I heard the NE Ohio crappie club tournament about 1-1/2 weeks ago caught very few fish. The Pymatuning Lake Association crappie tournament had a lower than normal turn out, and catching fish was tough. The shallow perch bite

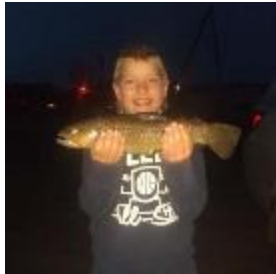


has slowed down. Some nice eating-size walleyes are being caught in the North End, but it seems to be hit and miss. In one word, Pymatuning fishing is “unsettled” going into May.

**Matt Romanosky** filed a photo of a very nice 15-inch 2.16-pound Black Crappie he caught from the North End of Pymatuning. (See photo to right)



### Conneaut Creek



**Ronan Horne** (Hartstown); filed 4/20: I fished with my Dad on Conneaut Creek near Conneautville.

We caught some brown trout, and I caught the biggest one. It was 16 inches long. (See photo) This was my first-time night fishing for brown trout and it was a lot of fun. We used homemade spinners we had made over winter.

### Conneaut Lake

**Thomas Duncan**; filed 4-29: I'm still catching crappies in the canals at Conneaut Lake. A few quality ones, but lots of small ones. My biggest crappie this week was a 14-inch, 1 lb. 14 oz. I caught it on a 1/16-oz white and silver hair jig.



### Canadohta Lake

**Jerry @ Timberland Bait Shop**; filed 5/1: Weather wise, this has been a ridiculous spring so far. Too warm early, too cold now. Not much to report on. Not the typical crowds of anglers out. A few of my customers have been catching crappies from the canals at Canadohta, but the fish are on the small side.

## **ERIE COUNTY**

### Lake Erie – main lake, tributaries & Presque Isle Bay

**Kirk @ East End Angler**; filed 5/1: There are still a few steelhead in the stream, but if we get a warm up by this weekend that raises the stream temperature, any remaining steelhead will likely depart. Good news on the Lake Trout front – anglers are catching them about 50 feet of water out of Northeast Marina...if the water is clear. There has been a fluctuating mud line in the lake due



Brock Morocco



to ongoing wind and rain. Smallmouth bass are moving in the Bay and the Lake. Lake temperature readings are anywhere between 42 degrees and 50 degrees. Anglers are scoring some big perch off the South Pier; I got a 14.25 inch one the other night, keeping only 3 of the 10 I caught. Crappie bite at Liberty Park seems to be dying. Walleye opens this coming weekend; I observed walleyes chasing bait on the surface off the South Pier about dusk the other evening. (See picture of Brock Morocco)

**Dominic @ Poor Richards;** filed 5/1: Smallmouth are in the Bay in numbers. Some perch still in the Bay, too, likely on the way out to the lake. Smallmouth are up Elk Creek as far as Legion Hole according to customers.

**Bill @ Tudor Hook-N-Nook at Elk Creek Sports;** filed 5/1: We are still very busy organizing the store stock and creating areas like the Breakfast Bar. The wet, cold and windy weather during April has impacted all fishing-related businesses. Hopefully the weather will normalize going into May. For fly fishermen, the good news is smallmouth bass are in Elk Creek, and the shallow water pike & largemouth bite in Bay continues.

**Brandon @ Consumer Direct Sports;** filed 5/1: Dad and I were up to the Bay a week ago. Smallies were in various depths. We did best along breaklines where smallmouths were holding before moving up shallower. My best bass was a 5.25 pounder taken on a Galida's Grubz. (Photo right)



**Keith @ Dutch Fork Guide Service;** filed 4/29: The lake trout bite is on – when we can get out. Check these out. (See photos below)



**Capt. George Mro**; filed 4/29: Early April temperatures were like summer, but we are back to the normal cool, wet and windy Erie weather. The water temps are right around 50 degrees and the bite is pretty good most days. Smallmouth are in a variety of depths with 5 to 10 feet being the best; sunshine seems to move the fish up shallower. Suspending jerkbaits, swimbaits, tubes and Ned Rigs have worked best. The bass are in prespawn; no sign of beds yet. Limited dates available in May and June. Pics below



## MERCER COUNTY

### Shenango Lake

**Randy @ Fish West PA**; filed 4/29: Shenango is warming little by little, and fish are moving shallow. Pike, walleyes, crappies, perch, white bass and a few hybrid stripers are active and feeding. It will just get better from here on. (See photos below)

EDITOR UPDATE: On April 30, Randy had what he called an "epic day on Shenango" with several good-size hybrid stripers plus largemouth & smallmouth bass.



**Scott Selle**; filed 5/1: Big crappie (slab size) are hitting at Shenango Lake. We were using jigheads with a Bobby Garland Baby Shad body on a float set at 2 to 4 feet around brush piles and wood. (See photos right)





## Shenango River



**Chris McVey**; filed 4/30: Chris reported getting a great start to the 2023 fishing season with two big fish of different species. On April 19, he reported a 38-inch musky – his second of the year. On April 30, Chris reported huge flathead catfish – his first of the year, taken at 4:30 in the afternoon. (See photos left and right)



## VENANGO COUNTY

### Sugar Creek, Oil Creek, Big Sandy, East Sandy Creek

#### Trout Fishing in Venango County is Great!

**Angler Al @ Buttermilk Hill**; filed 4/29: Mikey Galkowski and I enjoyed much success trout fishing since opening day. Together we have been wade-fishing Sugar Creek and Big Sandy; I also caught trout in Oil Creek. Most of the time we were catching trout on pieces of nightcrawler, salmon eggs or wax worms. Mikey has also used a yellow Rooster Tail spinner. I fished a Girdle Bug and San Juan Worm on my fly to corral some of my trout. Mikey caught several 13 to 15-inch 'bows and browns, as did I. I also landed 3 trout over 20 inches – one Rainbow, one Palomino and a stud 24-inch Brown. All trout were safely released to do battle another day! PTL from Angler Al. (See photos below)



**Denny Beggs** (Franklin); filed 5/1: On April 26, I caught 4 rainbows on a Grannom Dry Fly from Oil Creek. Top water hits are super FUN! On April 25, I landed a nice rainbow from East Sandy Creek on a salmon egg. (See photos left)



**Adam Horne** (Hartstown); filed 4/20:

Went out in the April snow showers to seek some solitude and some trout.

Found the solitude due to the weather, and found trout due to perseverance.

The water was gin clear and low, but there were fish to be had with patience

and the right presentation. I fished Sugar Creek south of Townville with small spinners.

Trout were hiding in cover, but willing to hit. Gold spinners seemed to be the best in the snowy conditions. Small spinners work in low water. (See photos)



**John Hummel** (Kennerdell); filed 4/30: Anticipation and excitement proceeded opening day of trout season. However, a downpour the night before rendered the streams in southern Venango County nearly unfishable. After returning home, a serious wind storm hit the area, toppling many trees and power lines. The main roads in and out of Kennerdell were blocked off, as well as other rural roads to East Sandy Creek. After several days of no electric or Wi-Fi, things returned to normal, which meant returning to work and school – but not the fishing hole. (Photos from Opening Day)



## Allegheny River

**Jeff @ Keystone Connection Guide Service**; filed 4/29: My guide trips on the middle Allegheny River began on April 10, when the river receded to a fish-able level. Initial outings found smallmouth bass on shallow flats next to deep pools; fish crushed suspending jerkbaits. Periods of unseasonably warm weather quickly elevated water temperatures. Bass re-located to prespawn locations near spawning flats. Both soft and hard jerkbaits have been the best presentation. With the weather cooling off, the fish are holding in prespawn mode. This spring's action has been outstanding with 30 to







50 smallmouth bass per outing with numerous 19 to 21-inch fish taken. This includes two 5.5 pounders. The bass are extraordinarily fat, perhaps due to the mild winter and a glut of food fish. (See Jeff Knapp photos left & right)



***Pete @ SmalliesontheYough Guide Service:*** Allegheny April Diary (photos below)

- 4-9-23: We had a great day on the Allegheny. The water was still up some and had a slight stain. Smallies were spread out all over and bite was good at times, and very soft other times. We landed a bunch of nice fish, including Don's personal best of 20.5 inches.
- 4-13-23: It was really warm today which had smallmouth going crazy. They were crushing just about everything we tossed. The water level is dropping and warming fast. We landed smallies in the 18 to 21-inch range; it was an incredible day!
- 4-14-23: Today was even warmer than yesterday and water was lower. The bite was a bit softer than yesterday, but the bass were still eating. We didn't land as many fish as the day before, but managed some decent ones.
- 4-15-23: Even warmer today. Crazy temperatures for April. The bite is starting to cool down for me. We landed a lot less fish than the two previous days, but still had a great day of fishing. Today I used Ned Rigs and 412 Bait Company Tubes to get bites.
- 4-20-23: Allegheny smallmouth prespawn is in full swing with a variety of baits producing. The changing weather has them on and off throughout the day. The river is in great shape.
- 4-21-23: The smallmouth bite was tough today. I landed a few fish in the 18 to 20-inch range using small soft plastics in moderate current.





## **Area Guide Services contribute to the NW PA Fishing Report**

Looking for a trip on a Crawford, Erie, Mercer and Venango county water?

**Dutch Fork Guide Service:** Lake Erie Walleye trolling, casting and jigging. Keith Eshbaugh; 724-884-3977; fishinkeef5132@gmail.com

**Keystone Connection Guide Service:** Allegheny River Smallmouth, Walleye and Musky plus Pymatuning Walleye. Jeff Knapp; 724-902-6082; keystone-connectionguideservice@gmail.com; www.facebook.com/keystoneconnectionguideservice.

**Smallies on the Yough LLC:** wading for Smallmouth Bass on the Yough River, Allegheny River and other streams. Pete Cartwright; 412-215-6254; pete@smalliesontheyough.com; www.facebook.com/smalliesontheyough/.

**Fishing with Bo Guide Service:** Specializing in panfish in area lakes and kayak swamp trips for bowfin. Bo Bartholomew at bcbaitshadley@gmail.com; 724-704-1723

**Solitude Steelhead Guide Service:** Fly-fishing the tributaries of Pennsylvania. Bob Packey; 724-972-8813; solitudesteelheadguide@yahoo.com; www.solitudesteelheadguideservice.com

See your name below? You've been drawn for the prize indicated. Email Darl at darlblack@windstream.net with you shipping address to collect your prize.

**Mark Melega** - Cover shot wins a pack of Mike's Custom Tackle Tube Jigs.

**Matt Romanosky** - drawn for spool of Gamma Line of your choice.

**Denny Beggs** - drawn for pack of Galida's Grubz

# The Livewell

Brought to you by:  
Wiegel Brothers Marine  
704 1/2 Elk Street  
Franklin, PA 16323  
Phone 814-437-2077



Email: [Debbie@riverjetpro.com](mailto:Debbie@riverjetpro.com)

Allegheny River produces big smallmouth bass in April and early May, as well as a surprise or two.



Bill Logan scored big in early April with tubes and Galida's Grubz



On April 30, John Galida had to forego his Grubz for a jerkbait to catch bronze fishing with Jeff Knapp



Pete was on smallies all month



Pete put clients on big fish, too.



Scott Brown with a brownie that isn't a smb!



Black Knight Industries

Oil City, PA 16301

[www.gammafishing.com](http://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
- East End Angler, Harborcreek, PA; 814-898-3474

### Gamma Success!

Last week Pete Cartwright was on a four-day trip to Lake St. Clair for smallmouth bass. Weather was rough at times, but they managed to get some time on the water. While fishing a Venom 4-inch Green Pumpkin Tube in 9 to 12 feet of water, a musky inhaled the jig. This was no little musky. It was a monster! With only 8-pound test and no musky net in the boat, many anglers would have lost their cool and likely lost the fish. But with years of experience, Pete kept the pressure on the fish with his Gloomis MH E6X rod and Shimano Sustain 3000 reel. The line held – it was Gamma 8-pound Edge after all. When the musky finally tired, Pete and his fishing partners were able to wrestle the big fish into the boat for quick photo or two – all 50 inches of it! "This 50-incher was the largest musky I've ever landed. Sure, glad I had Gamma Line on my reel."





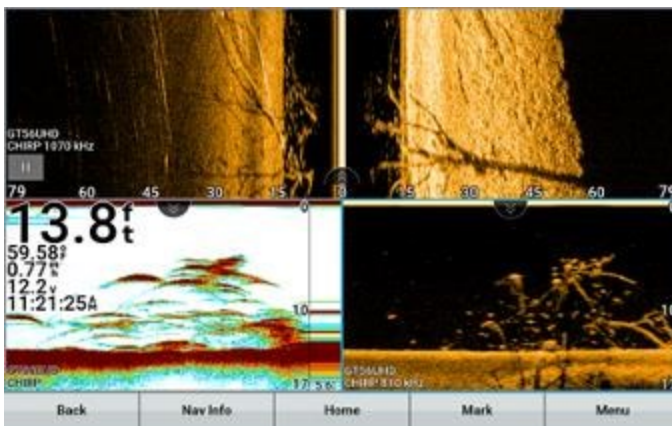
# GARMIN INFORMATION PAGE



- Real anglers share actual fishing experiences with Garmin units
- For professional local installation of Garmin units, contact G&G Marine Electronics at 724-290-9045

## Garmin Tip from Jeff Knapp

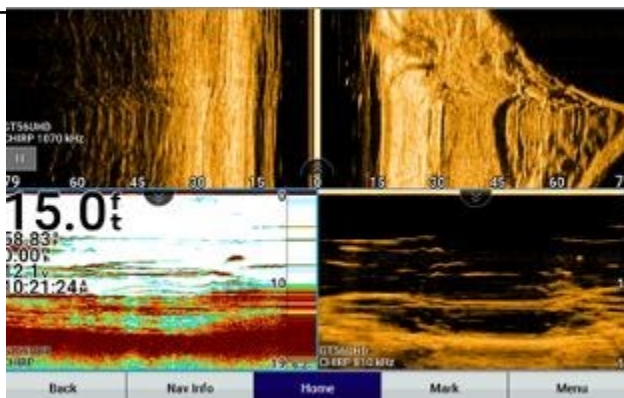
Thanks to their exceptional definition, Garmin Marine UHD and Ultra Echomap chartplotters excel when searching for springtime crappies – crappies that often relate to relatively shallow submerged trees and brushpiles. Crappies suspended within sunken branches “pop” on Clearvu and Sidevu imagery as you idle along and over cover. I prefer to keep the scroll speed set at 4 which produces excellent sonar images when scanning cover and trolling. And when I’m spot-locked over wood cover, I can spot fish swimming in and out of the sonar beam when the boat is stationary — Jeff Knapp.



View while Idling.



Spring crappies with Garmin assistance



View when spot-locked over wood

## **DIRECTORY OF FISHING REPORT SUPPORT**

The following agencies and business may be found on Facebook pages.

**PENNSYLVANIA GREAT LAKES REGION** (Regional tourism association is prime sponsor of the NW PA Fishing Report)– County organization listing provides information on Activities, Shopping, Lodging, Restaurants and Special Events

- Crawford County Convention & Visitors Bureau

- VisitErie

- Visit Mercer County PA

- Oil Region Alliance

**AREA TACKLE SHOPS** – Regularly provide information to NW PA Fishing Report on status of the public waters fished by their customers. Support these shops.

- Erie County

  - East End Angler

  - FishUSA

  - Poor Richards Bait & Tackle

  - Tudor Hook-N-Nook At Elk Creek Sports

- Crawford County – Pymatuning

  - Duck-N-Drake

  - Poff's Place

  - Richter's Bait

- Crawford County East

  - Timberland Bait

- Mercer County

  - Consumer Direct Sports Supplies (CDS)

- Venango County

  - Maurer's Trading Post

**LOCAL TACKLE MANUFACTURERS** – They supply the prizes for giveaways on the NW PA Fishing Report.

- B.C. Baits Custom Tackle

- French Creek Fishing Company

- Galida's Grubz

- Luckis4rabbits

- Mike's Custom Tackle