

## Northwest

## Pennsylvania

## Fishing Report

**Reporting Date:**

**March 20, 2014**



**Pennsylvania's Great Lakes Region**  
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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. If you would like to share your fishing experiences or photos from any waterway in the four counties, please email to Darl Black at [darlblack@windstream.net](mailto:darlblack@windstream.net). In providing information or pictures, you are agreeing to your comments being edited, and posted to websites and distributed electronically.

## The Landing Net

**by Darl Black**

The calendar says the First Day of Spring, but it looks like a bad April's Fool Joke on area waters where heavy ice cover remains. Anglers are still ice fishing on several waters. Ice is so thick on lakes that the Fish Commission is postponing Mentored Fishing Days. While the immediate forecast does not indicate quick relief to this winter that will not let go, gradual warming and longer days will eventually eat away at the ice. For me, the edge ice on lakes is getting too soft so I will not be out on the ice any more this spring. However, the Allegheny River, French Creek and steelhead streams are open for fishing. I hope to have my river boat out next week. Open water on lakes will eventually happen, but no one is taking bets on when.



## NW PA FISHING REPORT: 3/20/2014 – FIRST DAY OF SPRING

### Brought to you by PA GREAT LAKES REGION

What's biting in the counties of Crawford, Erie, Mercer and Venango?

#### SPRING NEWS

We are kicking off the First Day of Spring NW PA Fishing Report with BIG NEWS.

The **Fishing Report Prize Packet Giveaway** for this coming season is BIG. Anyone who contributes to the Fishing Report at least once a month is eligible to win; if you contribute twice a month, your name goes in the hat twice for the monthly drawing.

Lure Packet: Thanks to friends at Rapala, Tru-Turn Hooks, Road Runner, Uncle Josh, Get Bit Baits, Lake Fork Tackle, Bobby Garland, Gene Larew, Yum, Scum Frog, Thill and Lindy, this season's Field Test Packet has 17 items with a retail value of over \$80.00! One Field Test Packet will be awarded each month from April through November.



Gamma Line Giveaway: Instead of giving away a particular spool of Gamma Line provided by the company which you may not find useful in your fishing, this season the winning contributor will receive a filler spool of the Gamma Line you desire (Polyflex, Edge Fluorocarbon, Touch Fluorocarbon, or Torque) in the pound-test you really want to test out.

However, there is a new caveat: I am not going to automatically send out the prize – you've got to locate the winning names in the Report. I will draw one name each for the Lure Packet and the Gamma Line once a month, with the announcement appearing somewhere in the second monthly issue of the Fishing Report. When you spot your name as a winner, send me an email with your shipping address to claim a prize. Lure Packets will be sent directly from me, and the line will come to you by way of Gamma.

No giveaway in this Special Report; watch for the winning name in the second issue of the Fishing Report each month starting in April.



The NW PA Fishing Report welcomes **Griffins Bait & Tackle Shop** at Cooperstown in Venango County and **Harvey's Hook Line n Sinker Tackle Shop** at Mt. Hope in Crawford County as new contributing tackle shops to the Fishing Report. Both tackle shops have opened recently and have special events planned for this year. Stop in and say "Hi!"



News Flash from the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission: **Mentored Youth Fishing Days are re-scheduled to May 10** due to thick ice still covering many lakes in the state. The program is designed to encourage adults to take kids fishing and promote outdoor recreation. The Mentored Days would have been the week before trout season, but the Fish Commission does not expect all lakes to be ice free. Go to [www.GoneFishingPA.com](http://www.GoneFishingPA.com) for more details.

In conjunction with major tackle manufacturers, the NW PA Fishing Report will sponsor a special **Crap-pie Technique Fishing Seminar** at Pymatuning Lake on Thursday, May 15. Although the seminar is free, seating is limited and you will need to have a ticket. Free tickets will be available at certain area tackle shops. More about this in April issues of the Fishing Report.

#### **Open Buddy Bass Tournaments for Spring 2014**

- April 27 – Clarion County Bassmasters Pymatuning Open, contact Tom Jackson at 724-290-3900
- May 10 – Bassmasters of Crawford County Spring Classic at Pymatuning, contact Eric Marsh at 814-336-9119
- June 29 – Clarion County Bassmasters PIB/Erie Open, contact Tom Jackson at 724-290-3900

#### **Now to the fishing...**

#### **FRENCH CREEK** – Flowing through all four counties

Dustin Shay (Meadville) 3/17: Dustin reports the ice jams have broken up on the creek; however there are large slabs of ice lying on the banks making it impossible to reach many favorite early spring spots at this time.

#### **CRAWFORD COUNTY**

##### Pymatuning Lake

**Espyville Outdoors** reports anglers were still on the ice as of March 18. At the north end of Pymatuning between Tuttle Point and the Spillway, ice anglers were catching good numbers of crappies and perch on minnows in about 8 feet of water. A few anglers were jigging Sonars for walleye at the Linesville Spillway but have not had much success. Water is open from Spillway out for 100 yards.

Pymatuning Lake Association conducted an ice fishing tournament during Winter Fun Days in February. See photos of winning fish on the Livewell Page.

##### Sugar Lake & Woodcock Lake

**Griffins Bait & Tackle Shop**; 3/14: Reports anglers on the ice are still catching pickerel, bluegills and some sizeable crappies from Sugar Lake. Bob Keith caught a 46", 23 lb. musky at Woodcock Lake recently; photo supplied by Griffins Bait.



Woodcock musky

##### Canadohta Lake

**Timberland Bait & Tackle** conducted another successful ice fishing tournament on Canadohta in February. This is the longest running ice fishing tournament in NW PA. It was a tough day of fishing for the 250 anglers; no large musky was caught. Bob Keith took top honors with a northern pike.

##### Conneaut Lake

**Timberland Bait & Tackle** second ice fishing tournament for 2014 was conducted on Conneaut Lake with 150 anglers participating. Conditions were perfect and many fish were caught. View photos on Livewell page. Winners were:

Steve Elmen of Guys Mills with 45-1/2 inch musky  
Mike Kozalla of Saegertown with 33-1/4 inch northern pike  
Kevin Hall of Meadville with 11-3/4 inch crappie  
Nick Bosko of Meadville with 12 inch perch

## ERIE COUNTY

### Erie Tributary Streams

Rick Gariloff (**Trout Run Bait & Tackle**); 3/19: "Streams are finally open in Erie! Fishermen are doing well on Elk, Crooked and at Trout Run. Eggs, emerald shiners, crawlers, jigs and streamers are all producing fish. Upper Elk is clear above I-90; lower Elk is being impacted by ice jam above Rt. 20, slowly melting. However those fishing lower Elk have also picked up Brown Trout. Fish range from new to old, even past I-79."

Dan Seaman (**Elk Creek Sports**); 3/18: "There is open water on Elk from Whiteman's Bridge to the mouth of the creek. The mouth is still closed but the access is open. Fishermen have been having great luck on both browns and steelheads. The upper stream at the West Road Bridge was open also. The big problem is the major ice jam that extends from the old Rt. 20 bridge in Girard at the Legion to Rt. 90; it is the worst I have ever seen on the creek, and it could create major problems for landowners downstream and any fishermen in the stream when it lets go."



Ice Jam on Elk; Bill Logan photo

### Presque Isle Bay

Thomas Watral, Erie; 3/12: "The Bay is starting to open up in a few areas. Many anglers are still ice fishing. Let's hope things turn around and the ice melts quickly so we can get on the perch. I am making and offering for sale my custom Perch Rigs made with **Gamma Line**, and a few other items. Swing by 3024 Holmes Street in Erie on the East Side and check out the rigs."



Mitchell & Dave; DB photo

Dave Lefebvre, Erie; 3/16: "Still 20 inches of ice on Misery Bay as of Sunday. Using tiny **Trigger** soft plastic larva baits, Mitchell and I caught enough bluegill for a fish dinner. My **Marcum Underwater Camera** showed hundreds of bluegills and crappies milling around the bottom in about 13 feet."

Ric Gariloff (**Trout Run Bait & Tackle**); 3/19: Ric wins the Lindy Rigging Pack for being the initial contributor to provide a report and photo of this spring's first open water crappies. (See photo) Ric says these crappies were taken in open water in PIB but was not specific – I'm guessing the Lagoons or the open water near Head of Bay. The challenge went out earlier this month to all contributors to produce the first crappie, walleye or musky from open water.



Open-water crappies; Gariloff

## MERCER COUNTY



Wilhelm crappies; DB photo

### Lake Wilhelm

Darl Black (Cochrannton); 3/9: "I stopped by Wilhelm last Sunday after hearing from Mike at **Jigger Tackle** that anglers were catching nice crappies near the dam. I was pleasantly surprised with what I saw, considering angler complaints about small crappies at the lake due to the gizzard shad over population in recent years. Maybe things are turning around."

### Shenango River Lake

Chuck Sari (Franklin); 3/2: "Kevin and my grandson Reece have been fishing Shenango all winter with great success. Attached is a picture of Reece on Saturday, March 1 with a couple nice crappies. We have been using small jigs tipped with maggots and our **Vexilar** sonars."



Shenango crappies; DB photo

Ken Smith (Sharon); 3/6: "I fished the swim beach area twice this week, and I'm headed back there today. The shoreline is solid right now but that can change as soon as they start holding back water again. As usual this time of year, the crappie bite is great. Bigger fish are moving in from the deeper water and feeding up. I've been using plastic and doing very well."

Darl Black (Cochrannton); 3/12: "I swung by Chestnut Swim Beach area on Shenango Lake to check out angler success. One angler had a bucket full of nice crappies – all taken on small minnows."



Chuck Sari photo

## VENANGO COUNT

### Allegheny River

Note: Ice jams had been blocking major parts of the river in Venango County. However within the last couple days, the ice has given way, but some ramps remain closed due to huge chunks of ice sitting on the ramps. Here are some reports from up and down the river.

Gene Winger (Oil City); 3/19: "I just checked the river...it looks like the ice jam in Oil City eddy move out last night. The next issue is going to be getting the ice buildup off the marina ramp. I'm estimating at least 5 feet of thick ice chunks from water's edge half way up ramp...more than my Kubota can handle. FYI – I have my G3 1756 w/Yamaha 60/40 jet, fully equipped including 6' Talon, fishfinders, 2 bank charger, etc. Call me at 814-676-2623.

**Wiegel's Bros. Marine** reports some anglers going out of Franklin ramp last week, but didn't catch any walleyes; concerned about ice chunks in the river.

Keith Eshbaugh (**Dutch Fork Lures**) reports fishing the Three Rivers area on March 10. He caught 10 walleyes and a few catfish, plus accidental catch of a 30" paddlefish. **Jigging Rapala's** and blade baits were best. Schools of catfish were in the deeper holes.

## Livewell Starts Here

Bill Logan and Jim Simionelli report catching some nice brown trout in the tailrace area below Kinzua Dam in the past couple weeks.



Jim Simionelli photo

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Jim Simionelli photo

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Bill Logan photo

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Ice Fishing Tournament at Pymatuning Lake during Winter Fun Days (Darl Black photos)



Timberland Bait & Tackle Ice Fishing Tournament at Conneaut Lake



Northern pike; DB photo

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Perch; DB photo

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Winning musky; VanTassel photo

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# The Livewell

Brought to you by:



Photos on previous page.

This page is devoted to showcase the wide variety of boats currently available at Wiegel Brothers Marine. River or Lake, Fishing or cruising, Wiegel has you what you need.



PK Classic 156 Tiller



PK Sportsman 154 SE



PK 14' Dakota utility



Rouge Jet with kicker motor



Express Center Consul with 80 HP jet



Veranda 19' Pontoon with 50 Yamaha

PROCESSED FOR PERFORMANCE



## Gamma Fishing Tip

### Gamma Line helped 2014 Bassmaster Classic Champ to Victory

Gamma Lines Pro-staff Members Finish Strong at 2014 Bassmaster Classic

Dale Black, President of Gamma Lines, says the 2014 Bassmaster Classic at Gunterville Lake was billed as a “must see event”, and it didn’t disappoint. Gamma was well represented in the Classic with six pro-staff anglers in the 55 angler field –including the 2014 BM Champion Randy Howell.

“Gamma Lines is extremely proud of Randy winning the 2014 Bassmaster Classic,” explains Black. “It was great to see Randy win, he is not just a great angler but a great man. Gamma also had BASS Nation phenom Paul Mueller finish 2<sup>nd</sup> and BASS and FLW star Randall Tharp finished 5th. I am extremely proud of all my pro-staff; it’s like watching my own kids.”

“It is simply the best line on the market,” says Bassmaster Classic Champion Randy Howell. “For a long time Gamma has been the secret line of the pros. The most important thing between you and the fish is your line so you never want to compromise.”

Gamma Lines makes a full range of line, fluorocarbon (Edge, Touch and FC Leader), monofilament (Polyflex-copolymer) and Braid (Torque). Black explains it is the special line treatment process that separates Gamma from all other line. “Our pro-staff has taken advantage of that with extremely strong showing,” says Dale Black.

You can check Gamma out online at [www.gammafishing.com](http://www.gammafishing.com)

Follow Darl as he fishes with angling experts around the country at

[www.darblack.blogspot.com](http://www.darblack.blogspot.com)

Obtain the PGLR fishing brochure “Reel It In!” at [www.pagreatlakes.com](http://www.pagreatlakes.com)