



POCKET GUIDE • WINTER 2026–27

Ice Fishing in Iron County, Michigan

Which lakes to fish for walleye, panfish, lake trout and perch, how to read the ice, and the rules that matter. Save it to your phone and take it out on the lake.

Lakes • Rules • Safety • Local help

Pick your fish, then your lake

FIRST ICE – MARCH 15

Walleye

Best at first ice, low-light mornings and evenings, fished just off the bottom. Numbers are down on Chicaugon and Lake Emily right now.

Try: Iron, Lake Ottawa, Sunset, Stanley, Hagerman, Swan, Brule, Perch, and the Michigamme Reservoir.

FIRST ICE

Bluegill & crappie

Crappie come first and hang suspended over deep basins. Bluegill take over through early ice.

Bluegill: Ice, Iron, Chicaugon, Buck, Winslow. **Crappie:** Ice, Iron, Michigamme Reservoir.

ALL WINTER

Lake trout & splake

Four lakes stay open to trout all winter. Splake are a lake trout–brook trout cross, and Golden Lake is stocked with them.

Try: Chicaugon, Lake Ottawa, Golden, Ellen.

FEBRUARY – LAST ICE

Yellow perch

The fish most people are after through the ice, and they get better as winter goes on. Schools move, so keep drilling until you find them.

Try: Iron, Chicaugon, Lake Ottawa, Stanley, the Michigamme Reservoir, and Lake Emily for numbers.

Iron County ice fishing lakes

LAKE	ACRES	THROUGH THE ICE
Chicaugon	1,100	Perch, bluegill, lake trout, whitefish Trout all winter Walleye down
Iron	396	Perch, walleye, crappie, bluegill
Lake Ottawa	541	Walleye, perch, lake trout Trout all winter
Michigamme Reservoir	6,400	Walleye, crappie, perch, pike. Big water, freezes later.
Peavy Pond	2,700+	Perch, walleye, pike
Sunset	545	Walleye
Stanley	310	Walleye, perch
Lake Emily	325	Perch (lots, mostly small) Plowed access Walleye down
Perch	994	Walleye, perch
Hagerman	—	Walleye

More lakes worth a hole or two

LAKE	ACRES	THROUGH THE ICE
Swan	—	Walleye Plowed access
Brule	—	Walleye
Lake Mary	—	Walleye Plowed access
Ice	85	Bluegill, crappie
Buck	—	Bluegill, walleye
Winslow	—	Bluegill
Indian	—	Bluegill Plowed access
Golden	—	Splake, lake trout Trout all winter
Lake Ellen	—	Trout Trout all winter Plowed access

Plowed access: the launch was plowed all last winter so you can park and walk on. The new list comes out in January.

Trout all winter: open to lake trout and splake through the ice.

Walleye down: walleye numbers are low right now. Fish it for other species. Paper lake maps are available at the Iron County Welcome Center in Iron River.

The rules that matter

Mar 15 Walleye & pike close

Open through March 15 on inland lakes, then closed until May 15.

All year Perch & panfish

Open right through last ice. Limit 25 perch and 25 sunfish (bluegill, crappie and the rest combined) a day.

3 lines Rods and tip-ups

Up to 3 lines per person, with no more than 6 hooks in total.

Mar 31 Shanties off the ice

Shanties must come off by midnight March 31, or sooner if the ice goes bad. Mark your ID on each side in letters at least 2 inches tall.

Feb 13–14 Free Fishing Weekend

No license needed on the 2027 winter weekend. Every other rule still applies. The rest of the season, you'll need a Michigan license: 24-hour, 72-hour and annual licenses are sold locally and online.

Trout lakes: 5 trout a day, no more than 3 over 15 inches. Lake trout must be 15 inches and splake 12 inches. Limits change, so check the current Michigan fishing regulations before you go.

Stay safe out there

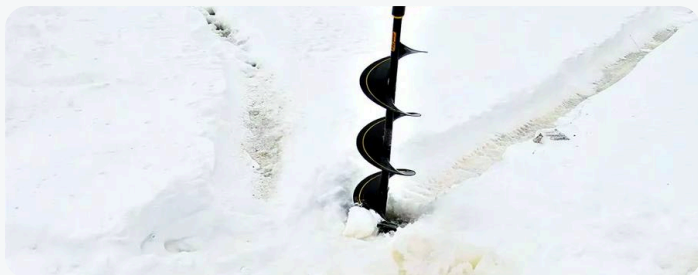
There's no magic number

Ice changes from spot to spot. Test it as you go and turn back if anything looks wrong.

- ☐ Check thickness with a spud, needle bar or auger
- ☐ Clear, bluish ice is strongest. Milky ice is weak
- ☐ Stay off slush. Treat snow-covered ice as unsafe
- ☐ Watch for open water at the shoreline and near current
- ☐ A cold snap can crack ice within half a day

Pack list

- ☐ Ice picks around your neck and a life jacket
- ☐ A phone or radio that has signal
- ☐ Spud or auger, plus a slush scoop
- ☐ Short jigging rods and a couple of tip-ups
- ☐ Minnows, wax worms or spikes
- ☐ Layers, waterproof boots, spare gloves
- ☐ Ice cleats for glare ice



Bait, maps and a warm bed

Crystal Bait & Marine

Crystal Falls · (906) 875-4434

Minnows, gear and the latest word on the ice.

Iron County Welcome Center

50 E. Genesee St., Iron River · (906) 265-3822

Lake maps and local tips.



Find lodging

Iron County Lodging Council
members



Plan your trip

AI Travel Assistant

More online: ironcountylodging.com, with the full ice fishing guide, snowmobile trails, Ski Brule and everything winter in Iron County.

