



2022

WINNEBAGO SYSTEM

STURGEON SPEARING REGULATIONS

PUB FH - 305 - 2022

Bart Schepp harvested this 69 inch, 108.2 lb sturgeon on opening morning from Lake Winnebago last season.

Photo courtesy of Ben Schepp

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Hunter Zakrzewski's sturgeon harvested from Lake Winnebago.

Photo courtesy of Marisa Salaja

REMINDERS

REGISTRATION STATIONS

Stations will be operated as drive-thru only (see page 7-8 for details). Spearers must remain in their vehicles throughout the registration process.

To help with the registration process, the DNR asks that all harvested sturgeon be placed on your tailgate or in an easily accessible location. Please follow the signs and cones at each registration station to ensure a smooth registration.

TO REPORT VIOLATIONS

Please call 1-800-TIP-WDNR (1-800-847-9367) or dial #367 from any cell phone.

DNR INFORMATION LINE

DNR call center at 1-888-936-7463

SIGN UP FOR STURGEON UPDATES

Get daily updates throughout the 2022 spearing season and updates on the Winnebago System fisheries throughout the year by signing up at:

<https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/fishing/sturgeon/WinnSysSturgeonSpear.html>

TAGS, LICENSES AND PERMITS

- **Spearers must possess a paper copy of their sturgeon spearing license/tag at all times while spearing. A receipt of purchase, driver's license or GoWild card does not meet this requirement.**
- It is **ILLEGAL** to possess more than one copy of a carcass tag.
- Carcass tags **MUST BE** validated immediately upon harvest by removing the validation stub.
- There is mandatory in-person registration of all harvested fish. Fish must be presented at a registration station by 2 p.m. the same day the fish is harvested.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides equal opportunity in its employment, programs, services, and functions under an Affirmative Action Plan. If you have any questions, please write to Equal Opportunity Office, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240. The Department of Natural Resources is committed to serving people with disabilities. If you need this information in an alternative format, please call (608) 267-7498.

This pamphlet is an interpretive summary of Wisconsin's fishing laws and regulations. For complete fishing laws and regulations, including those that are implemented after the publication of this pamphlet, consult the Wisconsin State Statutes Chapter 29 or the Administrative Code of the Department of Natural Resources. Consult the legislative website: <https://docs.legis.wi.gov> for more information. For the most up-to-date version of this pamphlet, go to <https://dnr.wi.gov> and search, "sturgeon spearing regulations."

DEAR WINNEBAGO STURGEON SPEARER,

The anticipation is building as the 2022 sturgeon spearing season is right around the corner. On Feb. 12, the spearing season will begin, and thousands of sturgeon enthusiasts will set out on the frozen waters of the Winnebago System with hopes of harvesting their trophy.

Although February is approaching rapidly, it is still too early to provide an accurate season forecast. Water clarity is the strongest predictor of harvest. Typically, if the Lake Winnebago average water clarity is 12' or greater, harvest caps are met prior to the 16-day maximum season length. Last year was an exception to this trend, as average Lake Winnebago water clarity was 12' and the season went the full 16 days. However, last season's visibility varied drastically by lake area with exceptional visibility in the north and west portions of the lake, while the east and south regions were more turbid. Water clarity is not as strong of a predictor of harvest on the Upriver Lakes as the overall depth is much shallower. Hopefully, the favorable water clarity around portions of Lake Winnebago during the 2021 season was the start of a clearer water trend as visibility during many seasons in the last decade have been poor.

In 2021, many spearers were rewarded for their efforts. In fact, 1,832 lake sturgeon were harvested in total on the Winnebago System, with 1,468 speared on Lake Winnebago and 364 speared on the Upriver Lakes. The Lake Winnebago season went the full 16 days and, although the Lake Winnebago and system-wide safe harvest caps were not reached, the 2021 Winnebago harvest was the highest recorded since the 2015 season. The Upriver Lakes season lasted eight days after 90% of the male harvest cap was reached on day 7, triggering the season closure at 1 p.m. the following day. The Upriver

Lakes harvest of 364 fish was the highest total harvest on the Upriver Lakes since the lottery system began in 2007.

We would like to thank all spearers for respecting and adapting to last year's registration modifications. Your cooperation led to a safe and efficient registration process last year.

To reduce the spread of COVID-19, we will be using the same modified registration process that was instituted in 2021. Registration stations will be a drive-thru process. Successful spearers must remain inside their vehicles while DNR staff remove and process the fish. This will continue to ensure the safety of spearers and DNR staff, while allowing staff to collect crucial biological data needed to successfully manage the lake sturgeon population.

The DNR is committed to returning to traditional registration stations in the future, however, registration stations for the 2022 season will remain in the same alternate locations as the 2021 season ([see page 7-8](#)) so all spearers and staff can feel safe and comfortable participating in this incredible fishery.

With the use of the modified registration process again this year, it will still feel somewhat different than a normal spearing season. However, the 2021 spearing season was an all-around success and we anticipate 2022 to be no different. Thank you again to all spearers who have adapted to the registration process and we hope to see you at a registration station this season with your fish!

TOM MERONEK
DNR Fisheries Team Supervisor



SEASONS

HOURS

7:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

LAKE WINNEBAGO

Feb. 12, 2022 through Feb. 27, 2022 on Lake Winnebago, or until any of the pre-set harvest caps for Lake Winnebago are reached or any of the pre-set Winnebago system-wide harvest caps are reached, whichever comes first (as per trigger closure rules).

UPRIVER LAKES (LAKE BUTTE DES MORTS, WINNECONNE AND POYGAN)

Feb. 12, 2022 through Feb. 27, 2022 on the Upriver Lakes, or until any of the pre-set harvest caps for the Upriver Lakes are reached or any of the pre-set Winnebago system-wide harvest caps are reached, whichever comes first (as per trigger closure rules).

A limited drawing spear fishery was implemented on the Upriver Lakes in 2007. Spearers can either apply for an Upriver Lakes sturgeon spearing license or purchase a preference point (thus not included in the drawing for that season) by Aug. 1. Applicants are notified by Oct. 1 of whether they were successful in receiving authorization to purchase an Upriver Lakes sturgeon spearing license. Group drawing applications of up to four persons are accepted, and the group will carry the preference points of the group member with the fewest points.

Spearers not drawn for an Upriver Lakes sturgeon spearing license receive a preference point and can purchase a Lake Winnebago sturgeon spearing license. Applicants drawn for an Upriver Lakes sturgeon spearing license will lose their accumulated preference points regardless of whether they purchase their Upriver Lakes sturgeon spearing license.

Spearers can only buy a license for either Lake Winnebago or the Upriver Lakes but they cannot buy one for both. License sales for the Lake Winnebago season ends Oct. 31. The Upriver Lakes sturgeon drawing fishery limits participation to 500 tags in 2022 and will have an allotment of the overall sturgeon harvest caps. Upriver Lakes tags can be transferred to a youth (age 12-17) or a person holding a valid Class A, B, C or D disabled permit.

Owen Tesson harvested this 73.1 inch, 130.2 lb sturgeon in 2021.

Photo courtesy of Lonny Ziemer

LICENSE REQUIREMENTS

To spear sturgeon, residents must purchase a sturgeon spearing license for \$20.00 and nonresidents must purchase a sturgeon spearing license for \$65.00.

Only persons 12 years of age and older are eligible to spear sturgeon. No sturgeon spearing license may be issued or purchased after Oct. 31, 2021 except for:

1. Wisconsin residents that turn 12 between Nov. 1, 2021 and the last day of the 2022 spearing season; or
2. Wisconsin residents serving in the Armed Forces that are home on leave during the 2022 spearing season.

The sturgeon spearing license/tag must be carried by the licensee at all times while fishing for sturgeon with a spear and no person may use or carry the license/tag of another person. Lake Winnebago licenses are non-transferable, but Upriver Lakes licenses can be transferred to youth (age 12-17) or a person holding a valid Class A, B, C or D disabled permit.

TAGGING YOUR STURGEON

WHEN AND HOW TO VALIDATE TAG

Upon harvest, the carcass tag must be immediately validated by removing the validation stub of the carcass tag below the dotted line.

WHEN TO ATTACH TAG

The validated tag must stay with the sturgeon until presented at a DNR operated registration station. The tag does not need to be attached to the sturgeon unless the license holder leaves the fish.

PROTECT TAG

It is the responsibility of the spearer to keep the tag protected and legible. Consider enclosing the tag in a sealed plastic bag.

REGISTER

Any harvested sturgeon must be presented by the spearer at an official registration station by 2 p.m. the same day it was speared. Call in or online registration is NOT available for registering harvested lake sturgeon.

Group bagging is not legal. The person who speared the sturgeon must be the one to tag the fish.



Marisa Salaja spearing her first lake sturgeon from Lake Winnebago.

Photo courtesy of Lonny Ziemer



Steven Lenz's 78.2 inch, 154.5 lb sturgeon harvested in 2021 from Lake Poygan.

Photo courtesy of the DNR

HARVEST CAPS

Total harvest of sturgeon will be limited through pre-set harvest caps. Harvest caps for the 2022 Winnebago system spearing season are 400 juvenile females, 875 adult females and 1200 males. Portions of the system-wide harvest caps have been allocated to the fisheries on Lake Winnebago and the Upriver Lakes as shown below:

2022 SPEARING SEASON HARVEST CAPS			
Waterbody	Juvenile Females	Adult Females	Males
Lake Winnebago	320	787	960
Upriver Lakes	80	88	240
<u>Winnebago System</u>	<u>400</u>	<u>875</u>	<u>1200</u>

The DNR will close the sturgeon spearing season on Lake Winnebago before the maximum 16 day season when any of the following conditions occur:

- At the end of a spearing day in which 100% of any one of the three Lake Winnebago harvest caps is reached or exceeded; or
- 24 hours from the end of a spearing day which concludes with a harvest of 90 to 99% of any one of the three Lake Winnebago harvest caps being reached.

The DNR will close the sturgeon spearing season on the Upriver Lakes before the maximum 16 day season when any of the following conditions occur:

- At the end a spearing day in which 100% of any one of the three Upriver Lakes harvest caps is reached or exceeded; or
- 24 hours from the end of a spearing day which concludes with a harvest of 90 to 99% of any one of the three Upriver Lakes harvest caps being reached.

The DNR will close the sturgeon spearing season on all waters of the Winnebago system before the maximum 16 day season when any of the following conditions occur:

- At the end of a spearing day in which 100% of any one of the three Winnebago system-wide harvest caps is reached or exceeded; or
- 24 hours from the end of a spearing day which concludes with a harvest of 90 to 99% of any one of the three Winnebago system-wide harvest caps being reached.

REGISTRATION STATIONS

A person who spears a sturgeon must accompany the fish to an official sturgeon registration station. Phone-in or online harvest registration is NOT available for sturgeon registration.

Any fish harvested from Lake Winnebago must be registered at one of the registration stations on Lake Winnebago. Any fish harvested from Lakes Butte des Morts, Winneconne or Poygan (the Upriver Lakes) must be registered at one of the registration stations on the Upriver Lakes.

All DNR registration stations will be drive-thru only. Spearers must remain in their vehicles throughout the registration process. To help with this new registration process, the DNR asks that all harvested sturgeon be placed on tailgate or in an easily accessible location. Please follow the signs and cones at each registration station to ensure a smooth registration.

Stations are operated daily throughout the season by DNR fisheries staff. The registration process allows for collection of important biological information on the size, sex and tagging history of your fish. A metal registration tag will be attached to your fish during the registration process to signify to law enforcement staff that your fish has been properly registered. The registration tag must be retained until the carcass is consumed.

To avoid the “end of the day” rush, please bring your fish in as soon as possible after spearing it. You must be at the registration station and in-line to register your fish by 2 p.m. on the day it was speared.

Some registration stations may be closed prior to the end of the season depending on spearing activity and volume of sturgeon registrations. Any early closures will be posted at registration stations and included in daily harvest reports sent via GovDelivery.

HARVEST PHOTOS

Photos are a great way to capture special moments, and the DNR is looking for spearers to submit photos that help tell a story through a [photo submission form](#). Photos could be of spearers with their harvest, cutting in, shanty life, scenic views observed during the season or anything else that captures the spearing tradition.

Please be sure to include a brief description of each image. By submitting photos, the DNR is granted a non-exclusive license to use and reproduce the submitted photos for any purposes the DNR may deem appropriate, including future DNR outreach efforts.



Scott Robinson harvested this 76.7 inch, 93.1 lb sturgeon during the 2021 season.

Photo courtesy of the DNR

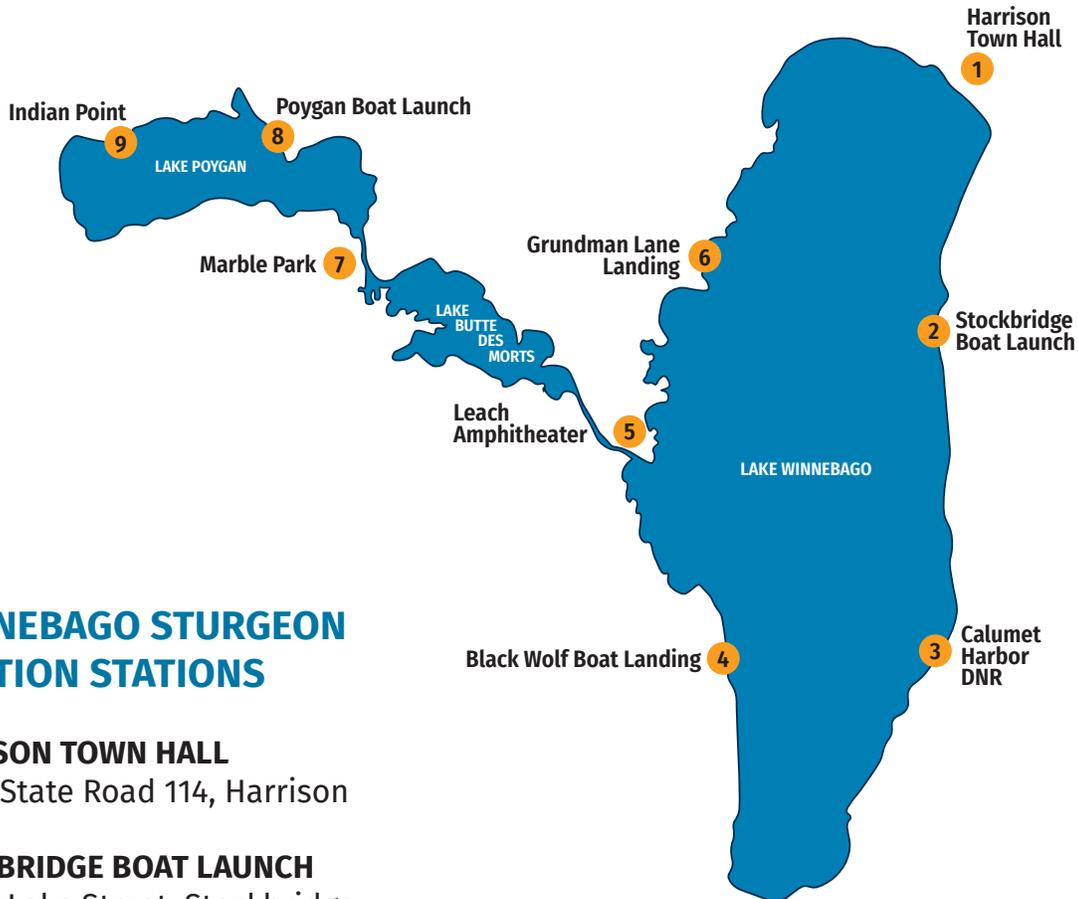


Lana Freiberg harvested this 78.3 inch, 157.8 lb sturgeon in 2021.

Photo courtesy of the Freiberg family

REGISTRATION STATION LOCATIONS

Drive-thru registration stations only.



LAKE WINNEBAGO STURGEON REGISTRATION STATIONS

- 1 **HARRISON TOWN HALL**
W5298 State Road 114, Harrison
- 2 **STOCKBRIDGE BOAT LAUNCH**
1903 W Lake Street, Stockbridge
- 3 **CALUMET HARBOR DNR PROPERTY**
N10339 Calumet Harbor Road, Malone
- 4 **BLACK WOLF BOAT LANDING**
6850 Fond du Lac Road, Oshkosh
- 5 **LEACH AMPHITHEATER**
303 Ceape Avenue, Oshkosh
- 6 **GRUNDMAN LANE LANDING**
1801 Grundman Lane, Oshkosh

UPRIVER LAKES STURGEON REGISTRATION STATIONS

- 7 **MARBLE PARK**
200 South 6th Street, Winneconne
- 8 **POYGAN BOAT LAUNCH**
7499 Richter Lane, Larson
- 9 **INDIAN POINT**
Cty Trk H, 0.5 mi east of Tustin



REGULATIONS

LIMITS

BAG LIMIT: One (1) lake sturgeon per licensee

MINIMUM LENGTH: 36 inches

POSSESSION AND USE OF A SPEAR

No person may have under his or her control any spear or similar device in any enclosure on the ice or waters of the Winnebago system except when authorized during established sturgeon spearing seasons during open spearing hours and while in possession of a valid sturgeon spearing license and unfilled carcass tag.

No person may take, capture, kill or attempt to kill sturgeon on the Winnebago system by any means other than spearing with a spear thrown by hand from inside a fishing shelter placed on the ice during the open spearing season.

It is illegal to spear a sturgeon and then release it back into the water.

SPEARING OF ROUGH FISH

Spearing of any species of fish other than sturgeon from the Winnebago system is prohibited during the sturgeon spearing season.

FISHING EQUIPMENT OR GEAR

It is unlawful to possess a fishing pole, hook and line angling equipment or other similar devices that could be used to catch fish in an ice fishing tent, shanty or ice fishing enclosure with ice holes larger than 12 inches in diameter or square.

The maximum width of a spear head is restricted to 18 inches or less and tines can only be arranged in a single straight line.

LIGHTS, UNDERWATER CAMERAS, DEPTH LOCATORS

The use of artificial lights as an aid during spearing is prohibited during sturgeon spearing. This prohibition begins 48 hours prior to the season opener and runs the duration of the season. Underwater cameras and other forms of technology may be used, but any lights on the camera must be disabled (turned off, taped over or non-illuminating).

Adam Derksen harvested this 77 inch, 160.1 lb sturgeon in 2021.

Photo courtesy of Paul Bloesl

ICE HOLE RESTRICTIONS

No person may cut, use or maintain an ice hole larger than 12 inches in diameter or square for the taking of fish in any manner through the ice except spearing sturgeon on the Winnebago system during the open season. The total area of a sturgeon spearing hole or combination of holes may not exceed a total of 48 square feet, measured at the surface of the ice. Ice holes larger than 12 inches cut, used or maintained for spearing may not be covered by a shelter, shanty or similar device, except during the period from 48 hours before and continuing through the open sturgeon spearing season.

ICE HOLE MARKING

Sturgeon spearing ice holes must be marked with at least two strips of wood that extend a minimum of three feet above the ice. The wood strips must not exceed 1.5 inches in width and .25 inches in thickness (wood lathe meets the requirement).

When you first set your shanty, cut a hole and freeze the lathe into the ice for better marking of sturgeon holes. Lathe markers stuck in snow banks are NOT adequate because the lathe no longer marks holes when warm weather conditions melt snow.

ICE SHANTIES AND SHELTERS

The door of any occupied shanty/shelter shall be such that the door can be readily opened from the outside. All shanties/shelters must have the name and residential address or DNR customer ID number of the person owning or using the shanty. The name and address or DNR customer ID number must be painted or otherwise affixed on the outside with a minimum of 1" lettering. All shanties/shelters must be completely removed from the ice (for all inland waters south of Hwy 64) by the first Sunday following March 1.

LITTER

It is illegal to place or deposit any materials (including fish, fish parts or other biodegradables) on the ice or lake bed that cannot be retrieved. Any material used in a sturgeon spearing hole must be removed by the sturgeon spearer when the hole is abandoned or if requested by a warden. Any material that is left on or frozen in the ice or waters is the responsibility of the person who left the material (including tar paper, wood, cardboard or any other litter used adjacent to shanties).

TRANSPORTATION

It is unlawful for any person to transport an unregistered sturgeon in or on any motor driven vehicle unless the sturgeon is openly exposed. "Openly exposed" means open to view by a person in a passing vehicle.



Cutting in on Lake Winnebago.

Photo courtesy of Collin Albrecht



Ice shanty on Lake Winnebago.

Photo courtesy of David Smith

It is illegal to possess an unregistered sturgeon speared from Lake Winnebago outside the highway boundary area delineated as follows: from the intersection of highways 10 and 114 in Menasha, east on Highway 114 to Highway 55; south on Highway 55 to U.S. Highway 151; south on U.S. Highway 151 to Winnebago Drive in Fond du Lac; west on Winnebago Drive to Scott Street; west on Scott Street to Highway 45; north on Highway 45 to Main Street in Oshkosh; north on Main Street to Waugoo Avenue; east on Waugoo Avenue to Bowen Street; north on Bowen Street to County Highway A; north on County Highway A to Highway 114 in Neenah; east on Highway 114 to the intersection of Highways 10 and 114 in Menasha.

It is illegal to possess an unregistered sturgeon speared from Lakes Butte des Morts, Winneconne or Poygan outside the highway boundary area delineated as follows: from the intersection of Highways 45 and 21 in Oshkosh west on Highway 21 to Highway 116; north on Highway 116 to County Highway B; west on County Highway B to County Highway D; west on County Highway D to Highway 49; north on Highway 49 to County Highway H; east on county Highway H to Highway 110; east on Highway 110 to County Highway II; south on County Highway II to County Highway M; south on County Highway M to Highway 116; east on Highway 116 to Highway 45; south on Highway 45 to Highway 21.

STURGEON EGGS AND MEAT

It is illegal to sell, purchase, barter or trade sturgeon eggs/roe/caviar/meat at any time.

Bartering is the exchange of goods or services for other goods or services without using money. This also means it is illegal to give, keep or accept any portion of lake sturgeon, including but not limited to eggs/roe/caviar/meat, as payment.

GUIDING

No person may engage or be employed for any compensation or reward to guide, direct or assist any other person in sturgeon spearing/fishing unless the person is issued a guide license by the DNR.

Guiding includes receiving compensation of any kind (monetary, gratuity, physical items, etc.) for services rendered. Some examples of guiding would include providing a shanty with the ice hole already cut, placing out bait or decoys, providing/renting equipment or other activities that assist the angler/spearer to locate, attract and/or harvest fish. Please contact your local [Conservation Warden](#) with any questions.



STURGEON GUARD

Each spring, volunteers have an opportunity to educate the public about sturgeon while protecting the fish from poaching and harassment at their spawning sites on the Wolf, Embarrass and Little Wolf rivers.

Sturgeon are very susceptible to illegal harvest and harassment when they are spawning along the river's rocky shorelines. Sturgeon Guard volunteers monitor the vulnerable fish throughout the spawning season. The program is coordinated and directed by DNR law enforcement staff and funded by Sturgeon for Tomorrow and sturgeon spearing license fees.

The status of Sturgeon Guard for 2022 is currently under review. More information will be available later in March and will be posted on the DNR website at <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Fishing/sturgeon/SturgeonGuard.html>.

STURGEON GUARD



Every spring, lake sturgeon spawn close to shore where they are vulnerable to poaching.

Photo courtesy of Bob Rashid