

Cast Away

Area 4: Get Ready for Great Ice Fishing



by Art Michaels

The Commission's Fisheries Management Area 4 includes Tioga, Bradford, Susquehanna, Lackawanna, Wyoming, Luzerne, Sullivan and Columbia counties. According to Area 4 Fisheries Manager Rob Wnuk, the ice action this year should be really good.

"In Tioga County, Beechwood Lake, Hammond Lake, Cowanesque Lake and Hills Creek Lake will be your best bets," says Wnuk. "At Beechwood, you'll find an excellent fishery for trophy largemouth bass and big crappies, perch and bluegills. There's also a nice walleye population, and the Commission stocks hatchery trout there late in the winter."

At Hammond Lake, look for excellent action with big crappies.

Cowanesque Lake offers an excellent fishery for trophy muskellunge, Wnuk says. "Muskie tend to prefer the shallower areas at the upper end of the lake, and there's very good crappie and largemouth bass fishing."

Hills Creek Lake is very good for large bluegills with good crappie, walleye, and largemouth bass fisheries.

In Bradford County, says Wnuk, Stephen Foster Lake is a good ice-action bet where you'll find excellent fisheries for yellow perch, crappies, bluegills and largemouth bass.

"Try Quaker Lake in Susquehanna County," Wnuk says. "Quaker is mostly a private lake, but anglers can get to it from the Commission access. It's primarily a stocked trout fishery." Trout are stocked there pre-season, in-season and in late winter. The lake can hold trout year-round, so trophy fish are present.

In Lackawanna County, Wnuk suggests Lackawanna Lake, Fords

Lake and Merli-Sarnoski Park Lake. Wnuk says that Lackawanna Lake is an excellent bluegill and crappie fishery, and trophy muskies and bass are present. Muskies seem to hang out at the point near Kennedy Creek, in the "neck," and near the main boat launch. Hatchery trout are stocked there in fall and late winter.

"Fords Lake is a very good crappie fishery, and the largemouth bass population there is improving," Wnuk says.

At Merli-Sarnoski Park Lake, Wnuk says to look for very good action with chain pickerel. Hatchery trout are stocked there in the fall.

In Wyoming County, Stevens Lake and Lake Winola are good bets for ice fishing, Wnuk says. "Stevens Lake is a very good fishery for crappies and largemouth bass. Lake Winola is mostly private, but anglers can reach it from the Commission access." Wnuk adds that Winola offers excellent fisheries for yellow perch, bluegills and rock bass. Hatchery rainbow trout there can hold over, so trophy fish are present. The bass population appears to be improving in response to a slot limit regulation.

In Luzerne County, Frances Slocum Lake is very good for crappies. Wnuk says that trophy muskellunge, walleyes and largemouth bass are also present.

Also in Luzerne County, Harveys Lake is mostly private, but anglers can reach it from the Commission access. Wnuk says that Harveys Lake has an exceptional fishery for trophy brown trout up to 12 pounds. Miscellaneous special regulations apply to the trout. Wnuk notes that walleye and smallmouth bass populations are also exceptional there, but these species can

be hard to catch, particularly through the ice.

Another Luzerne County pick, Harris Pond is very good for crappies, bluegills and largemouth bass with a fair chain pickerel population.

"Luzerne's Lily Lake is excellent for trophy northern pike," Wnuk says. The pike tend to concentrate at the first point and associated cove east of the Commission access. "Big bluegills, crappies and yellow perch are present there in good numbers, Wnuk adds, and hatchery trout are stocked in fall and late winter.

At Luzerne County's Moon Lake, hatchery trout are stocked in the fall and late winter. Bluegills and largemouth bass are present.

"In Luzerne and Sullivan counties, Lake Jean, in Ricketts Glen State Park, is located on the top of the Allegheny Front, so it's the first to freeze in my area," Wnuk says. "It is affected by acid precipitation, but fish populations appear to be improving in response to biannual liming treatments. Chain pickerel, largemouth bass and yellow perch populations are fair." Additionally, says Wnuk, hatchery trout stocked in April can hold over and provide some action in the winter.

Lastly, Wnuk suggests Columbia County's Briar Creek Lake, which is very good for bass and panfish. Hatchery trout are stocked there in the fall and late winter. □



Photo: Waterways Conservation Officer Dave Knesek

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