

Minnesota Fishing – December 2017

Wheelhouses require license purchase for ice fishing

In effect this ice fishing season, [anglers using a wheelhouse type of ice or dark-house shelter are required to purchase a license](#) to place the shelter on the ice, even when occupying it.

A new definition for portable shelters has been provided in law, which states that a portable shelter is one that collapses, folds or is disassembled for transportation. In the past, anglers using wheelhouses could use them without shelter licenses as long as they were occupied, including overnight.

A shelter meeting the new definition of portable only needs a license when a person leaves it unattended, meaning they are farther than 200 feet from the shelter.

The change pursued by the DNR and enabled by 2017 legislation accompanied hunting and angling fee increases. For Minnesota residents: an annual shelter license is \$15; a three-year license is \$42; owners of houses to be rented pay \$30 annually or \$87 for a three-year license; and all require an additional \$1 issuing fee. Shelter or fishing [licenses can be purchased online](#), at DNR license agents across Minnesota, or by phone at 888-665-4236.

New northern pike fishing regulations coming this spring

Anglers and spearers pursuing northern pike this winter can prepare for new pike regulations that will be in effect for the spring fishing opener on Minnesota's inland waters. Northern pike fishing remains open until Feb. 25, 2018, and spearing season opened Nov. 15. Pike regulations remain the same this winter; the regulation changes are coming this spring.

The new regulations on inland waters will be in effect starting March 1; however, fishing for northern pike is not allowed on these waters from Monday, Feb. 26, until the fishing opener on Saturday, May 12.

The new fishing regulations beginning in the spring take a cue from hunting regulations and will set up three distinct zones to address the different characteristics of pike populations in Minnesota. For details about the new zone

regulations visit the [pike page on the DNR website](#) or contact [an area fisheries office](#).

Upper Red Lake winter walleye regulations

Anglers fishing Upper Red Lake in northwestern Minnesota this winter will be able to keep four walleye of which only one may be longer than 17 inches.

This same regulation has been in effect since the walleye fishing opener in May, but this will be the first winter season with the combination of a four fish bag limit and one over 17 inches allowed.

Red Lake walleye harvest is managed under a joint harvest plan, revised in 2015 by the Red Lakes Fisheries Technical Committee. [More information on Red Lake fishing regulations](#) can be found on the DNR website.

Mille Lacs winter walleye anglers allowed one walleye

Mille Lacs Lake walleye fishing opened Dec. 1 with no bait restrictions and a limit of one walleye 20-22 inches or one longer than 28 inches. [More detailed winter regulation information](#) for Mille Lacs Lake is available on the DNR website.

Early ice is not safe, wear life jackets on cold water

Outdoor enthusiasts are reminded that no ice can ever be considered “safe ice,” but following [these guidelines](#) can help minimize the risk:

- Carry ice picks, rope, an ice chisel and tape measure.
- Check ice thickness at regular intervals – conditions can change quickly.
- Bring a cell phone or personal locator beacon.
- Don't go out alone; let someone know the plan and expected return time.
- Always wear a life jacket on the ice (except when in a vehicle).
- Before heading out, inquire about conditions and known hazards with local experts.

The minimum ice thickness guidelines for new, clear ice are:

- 4 inches for ice fishing or other activities on foot.
- 5-7 inches for a snowmobile or all-terrain vehicle.

- 8-12 inches for a car or small pickup.
- 12-15 inches for a medium truck.
- Double these minimums for white or snow-covered ice.

DNR issues ice warning for aerated lakes

Along with being cautious every time venturing out on the ice, take extreme care on lakes with winter aeration systems. Watch for the large orange and black warning signs at high use public accesses and the required thin ice signs around open water areas.

Aeration creates areas of thin ice and open water that are extremely hazardous to people and pets. Open water areas can shift or change shapes depending on weather conditions, and leaks may develop in airlines, creating other areas of weak ice or open water. The [updated list of aerated lakes and more information](#) is available on the DNR website.

Questions concerning aeration or thin ice can be answered by calling your [regional or area fisheries office](#) or call the DNR at 888-646-6367.

Women can learn outdoor skills at DNR winter workshop

A supportive environment of fellow women is the backdrop for a workshop that embraces cold and snow this January with classes about sled dog mushing, dark house fishing, birding, archery hunting and other ways to get outdoors.

The winter workshop is Friday, Jan. 26, to Sunday, Jan. 28, at the Audubon Center of the North Woods in Sandstone, and organized by the Becoming an Outdoors Woman Program. The archery classes are the first in a series of classes that continue later in the year designed for women who want to improve their archery skills and learn how to hunt. Winter workshop participants only interested in the archery classes can attend for a single day for \$20.

Youth age 14 or older can attend with a guardian. Lodging, meals, instruction, equipment and evening entertainment are included in the workshop fee, which varies depending on activities chosen. You can find [more information online about the winter workshop](#) including the schedule with a registration form.

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