

CHAPTER 81  
FISHING REGULATIONS

[Prior to 12/31/86, Conservation Commission[290] Ch 108]

Chapter rescission date pursuant to Iowa Code section 17A.7: 1/1/28

**571—81.1(481A) Seasons, territories, daily bag limits, possession limits, and length limits.**

KIND OF FISH	INLAND WATERS OF THE STATE				BOUNDARY RIVERS
	OPEN SEASON	DAILY BAG LIMIT	POSSESSION LIMIT	MINIMUM LENGTH LIMITS	MISSISSIPPI RIVER MISSOURI RIVER BIG SIOUX RIVER
Rock Sturgeon	Closed	0	0	0	Same as inland waters
Shovelnose Sturgeon	Continuous	None	None	None	Same as inland waters except no harvest allowed in the Big Sioux River and aggregate daily bag limit 10, aggregate possession limit 20, in the Missouri River
Paddlefish*	Continuous	2	4	None	Mississippi River— Same as inland waters except for an open season and length limit; see below* Missouri and Big Sioux Rivers—Special regulations; see below*
Yellow Perch	Continuous	25	50	None	Same as inland waters except no bag or possession limit in the Missouri River
Trout	Continuous	5	10	None*	Same as inland waters
Catfish*	Continuous	8 Lakes 15 Streams	30	None	Same as inland waters except no bag or possession limit in the Mississippi River
Black Bass (Largemouth Bass) (Smallmouth Bass) (Spotted Bass)	Continuous	3 In Aggregate	6	See below*	Continuous open season; aggregate daily bag limit 5, aggregate possession limit 10 See below*
Combined Walleye, Sauger and Saugeye	Continuous*	5*	10*	None*	Continuous open season; aggregate daily bag limit 6, aggregate possession limit 12; except aggregate daily bag limit 4, aggregate possession limit 8, in the Big Sioux and Missouri Rivers See below*
Northern Pike	Continuous*	3	6	None	Continuous open season; daily bag limit 5, possession limit 10; except daily bag limit 6, possession limit 12, in the Big Sioux River
Muskellunge or Hybrid Muskellunge	Continuous*	1	1	40"	Same as inland waters
Crappie	Continuous	25*	None	None	Same as inland waters except 50 in possession

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	OPEN SEASON	DAILY BAG LIMIT	POSSESSION LIMIT	MINIMUM LENGTH LIMITS	MISSISSIPPI RIVER MISSOURI RIVER BIG SIOUX RIVER
Bluegill	Continuous	25*	None	None	Same as inland waters except in aggregate with pumpkinseed on the Mississippi River
All other fish species*	Continuous	None	None	None	See below*
Frogs (except Bullfrogs)	Continuous	48	96	None	Same as inland waters
Bullfrogs ( <i>Rana Catesbeiana</i> )	Continuous	12	12	None	Same as inland waters

\*Also see 571—81.2(481A), Exceptions.

[ARC 8195B, IAB 10/7/09, effective 11/11/09; ARC 1702C, IAB 10/29/14, effective 12/3/14]

**571—81.2(481A) Exceptions to seasons and limits, set in 81.1(481A).**

**81.2(1)** Exception closed season. In Lakes West Okoboji and East Okoboji and Spirit Lake, there shall be a closed season on walleye beginning February 15 each year. The annual opening for walleye in these three lakes shall be the first Saturday in May. In these three lakes there shall be an open season on muskellunge and tiger muskie from May 21 through November 30.

**81.2(2)** Black bass. The department may post season, bag or possession limits, length limits, and catch and release regulations specific to a body of water at that body of water. For bodies of water without posted regulations, the following regulations apply to black bass:

- a. A 15-inch minimum length limit shall apply on black bass in all public lakes.
- b. A 12-inch minimum length limit shall apply on black bass in all interior streams, river impoundments, and the Missouri River including chutes and backwaters of the Missouri River where intermittent or constant flow from the river occurs.
- c. A 14-inch minimum length limit shall apply to the Mississippi River including chutes and backwaters where intermittent or constant flow from the river occurs.

**81.2(3)** Walleye.

a. *West Okoboji, East Okoboji, Spirit, Upper Gar, Minnewashta, and Lower Gar Lakes in Dickinson County, Storm Lake in Buena Vista County, Clear Lake in Cerro Gordo County, and Big Creek Lake in Polk County.* The daily bag limit shall be three, with a possession limit of six.

b. *Length limits.* Length limits shall apply on walleye in public waters that have length limits posted or published.

**81.2(4)** Paddlefish snagging is permitted in waters of the state designated in rule 571—81.1(481A), except as follows:

a. There shall be no open season above the Interstate 29 bridge in the Big Sioux River, nor in any tributary of this stream within 200 yards immediately upstream of a tributary confluence.

b. Snagging for paddlefish on the Missouri and Big Sioux Rivers is limited to Iowa waters only, beginning in the Big Sioux River below the Interstate 29 bridge to the Big Sioux River's confluence with the Missouri River and in the Missouri River, including all backwaters and sloughs and any tributary of the Missouri River at its confluence and extending below its Interstate 29 bridge, beginning at the Big Sioux River confluence and extending to the Hamburg Landing boat ramp.

- (1) There shall be an open season from February 1 through April 30.
- (2) Snagging hours are from sunrise to sunset.
- (3) The bag limit is one paddlefish per paddlefish fishing license.
- (4) The paddlefish fishing license quota is 950 for resident anglers and 50 for nonresident anglers.

Licenses shall be issued on a first-come, first-served basis. A person may purchase one paddlefish fishing license from December 15 through December 31 and either a first or second license between January 1 and January 7. No duplicate license or transportation tag shall be issued after the start of the season.

(5) Each angler fishing for paddlefish and any species listed in subrule 81.2(11) on the Missouri and Big Sioux Rivers shall have a valid paddlefish fishing license and unused tag. All snagged fish except for a

species listed in subrule 81.2(11) or a legal paddlefish taken into possession shall immediately be released alive.

(6) Immediately upon an angler's taking into possession a legal paddlefish, a valid current year transportation tag issued with the license shall be visibly attached to the fish's lower jaw. The tag must be attached in such a manner that it cannot be removed without mutilating or destroying the tag. An angler shall not possess a paddlefish fishing license or transportation tag issued to another angler or tag a paddlefish with a transportation tag issued to another angler. The transportation tag shall be attached before the carcass can be moved in any manner from the place of harvest. The transportation tag shall remain affixed to the paddlefish until the paddlefish is processed for consumption. The paddlefish shall remain intact except for the snout in front of the eye until the fish reaches the final processing place. For the purposes of this subrule, the "final processing place" is defined as the angler's residence or the location where consumption occurs. The transportation tag shall be proof of possession of the carcass by the above-mentioned licensee. During the closed season, the possession of paddlefish on the Missouri and Big Sioux Rivers is prohibited unless the paddlefish are legally taken in Nebraska or South Dakota.

(7) No hooks larger than 5/0 treble or measuring more than 1¼ inches in length when two of the hook points are placed on a ruler are permitted when snagging.

(8) A gaffe hook or other penetrating device may not be used as an aid in the landing of a snagged fish.

c. Snagging for paddlefish on the Mississippi River is restricted to the area within 500 yards below the navigation dams and their spillways. No hooks larger than 5/0 treble or measuring more than 1¼ inches in length when two of the hook points are placed on a ruler are permitted when snagging. The open season on the Mississippi River is the period from March 1 through April 15.

d. Except during the Missouri and Big Sioux Rivers open paddlefish fishing season, snagging for paddlefish is not permitted at any time in those areas where snagging is prohibited as a method of take as listed in subrule 81.2(11).

e. On the Mississippi River, a 33-inch maximum length limit shall apply; any paddlefish measuring 33 inches or more when measured from the front of the eye to the natural unaltered fork of the tail must immediately be released alive. On the Missouri and Big Sioux Rivers and on each Missouri River tributary from its confluence and extending to below its Interstate 29 bridge, a 35-inch to 45-inch protected-slot limit shall apply; a paddlefish measuring 35 inches to 45 inches when measured from the front of the eye to the natural unaltered fork of the tail shall immediately be released alive. To measure a paddlefish, the angler shall use a flexible tape and measure along and over the center line contour of the fish while it is lying flat.

**81.2(5)** Trout regulations. The department may post season, bag or possession limits, length limits, catch and release regulations, and tackle restrictions specific to a body of water at that body of water. On bodies of water posted as artificial lure only, "artificial lure" means lures that do not contain or have applied to them any natural or synthetic substances designed to attract fish by the sense of taste or smell. For bodies of water without posted regulations, the following regulations apply to trout:

a. Open season is continuous.

b. A five-fish daily bag limit and ten-fish possession limit shall apply to any combination of brown trout, brook trout, rainbow trout, and their hybrids.

c. A trout fee is required to fish for and possess trout.

**81.2(6)** Exception border lakes. In Little Spirit Lake, Dickinson County; Iowa and Tuttle (Okamanpedan) Lakes, Emmet County; Burt (Swag) Lake, Kossuth County; and Iowa Lake, Osceola County, the following species have a continuous open season and daily bag and possession limits as set forth below:

a. Walleye—daily bag and possession limit 3;

b. Northern pike—daily bag and possession limit 3;

c. Largemouth and smallmouth bass—daily bag and possession limit 3;

d. Channel catfish—daily bag and possession limit 8;

e. Yellow perch—daily bag and possession limit 25;

f. Crappie species—combined daily bag and possession limit 25;

- g.* Sunfish (bluegill, pumpkinseed, green sunfish, orangespotted sunfish, longear sunfish, warmouth, and hybrids)—combined daily bag and possession limit 25;
- h.* White bass, yellow bass, bullhead, common carp, bowfin, suckers, sheepshead, buffalo, gar and quillback—no daily bag or possession limit;
- i.* Muskellunge—daily bag and possession limit one. Open season shall be May 21 through November 30. A 40-inch minimum length limit shall apply on all border lakes;
- j.* Spears and bow and arrow may be used to take carp, buffalo, bowfin, gar, sheepshead, and quillback carpsucker with a continuous open season;
- k.* All species not listed above are subject to the inland regulations of the state and have a continuous open season.

**81.2(7)** DeSoto Bend Lake. All fishers shall conform with federal refuge regulations as posted under the authority of Section 33.19 of Title 50 CFR. The text of the rules will be contained on the signs as posted.

**81.2(8)** General restriction. Anglers must comply with the most restrictive set of regulations applicable to the water on which they are fishing. Where length limits apply, fish less than the legal length must be immediately released into the water from which they were caught.

**81.2(9)** Catfish. For the purpose of this rule, stream catfish bag and possession limits apply at the federal flood control impoundments of Rathbun Lake, Red Rock Lake, Saylorville Lake, and Coralville Lake.

**81.2(10)** Identification of catch. No person shall transport or possess on any waters of the state any fish unless (a) the species of any such fish can be readily identified and a portion of the skin (at least 1 square inch) including scales is left on all fish or fillets and (b) the length of fish can be determined when length limits apply. “On any waters of the state” includes from the bank or shoreline in addition to wading and by boat.

**81.2(11)** Method of take. Artificial light may be used in the taking of any fish. The following species of fish may be taken by snagging, spearing, and bow and arrow: common carp, bighead carp, grass carp, silver carp, black carp, bigmouth buffalo, smallmouth buffalo, black buffalo, quillback carpsucker, highfin carpsucker, river carpsucker, spotted sucker, white sucker, shorthead redhorse, golden redhorse, silver redhorse, sheepshead, shortnose gar, longnose gar, dogfish, gizzard shad, and goldfish. All other species of fish not hooked in the mouth, except paddlefish legally taken by snagging, must be returned to the water immediately with as little injury as possible. A fish is foul hooked when caught by a hook in an area other than in the fish’s mouth. Snagging is defined as the practice of jerking any type of hook or lure, baited or unbaited, through the water with the intention of foul hooking fish. No hook larger than a 5/0 treble hook or measuring more than 1¼ inches in length when two of the hook points are placed on a ruler are permitted when snagging. Exceptions to snagging as a method of take are as follows:

- a.* No snagging is permitted in the following areas:
  - (1) Des Moines River from directly below Saylorville Dam to the Southeast 14th Street bridge in Des Moines.
  - (2) Cedar River in Cedar Rapids from directly below the 5 in 1 Dam under Interstate 380 to the 1st Avenue bridge.
  - (3) Cedar River in Cedar Rapids from directly below the “C” Street Roller Dam to 300 yards downstream.
  - (4) Iowa River from directly below the Coralville Dam to 300 yards downstream.
  - (5) Chariton River from directly below Lake Rathbun Dam to 300 yards downstream.
  - (6) Spillway area from directly below the Spirit Lake outlet to the confluence at East Okoboji Lake.
  - (7) Northeast bank of the Des Moines River from directly below the Ottumwa Dam, including the catwalk, to the Jefferson Street Bridge. Snagging from the South Market Street Bridge is also prohibited.
  - (8) Missouri River, any Missouri River tributary beginning at its confluence and extending below its Interstate 29 bridge and the Big Sioux River from the Interstate 29 bridge to the confluence with the Missouri River, with the exception of snagging paddlefish or any of the species listed in subrule 81.2(11) during the paddlefish open season.

(9) Des Moines River from directly below the Hydroelectric Dam (Big Dam) to the Hawkeye Avenue Bridge in Fort Dodge.

(10) Des Moines River from directly below the Little Dam to the Union Pacific Railroad Bridge in Fort Dodge.

(11) Skunk River from directly below Oakland Mills Dam to the downstream end of the 253rd Street boat ramp.

*b.* No snagging, bow and arrow fishing, or spearing of fish is permitted in the following areas:

(1) Clear Lake and Ventura Marsh from the Ventura Grade, Jetties and Bridge.

(2) Lost Island Lake Inlet within 300 feet of the concrete culvert and metal fish barrier.

(3) Lost Island Lake Outlet within 300 feet of the outlet structure and metal fish barrier.

(4) Barringer Slough Outlet within 300 feet of the outlet and metal fish barrier.

(5) The outlet area of Lower Gar Lake beginning at 230th Avenue and extending downstream to the signed Iowa Great Lakes Sanitary District property line.

**81.2(12)** Panfish. The daily bag limit for crappie and bluegill applies only to public waters of the state. In all waters of the Mississippi River, the daily bag and possession limit applied individually to crappie, yellow perch and rock bass shall be 25 and 50, respectively. In all waters of the Mississippi River, the daily bag and possession limit applied in the aggregate for bluegill and pumpkinseed and for white bass and yellow bass shall be 25 and 50, respectively.

**81.2(13)** Culling. It is prohibited to sort, cull, high-grade, or replace any fish already in possession. Participants in permitted black bass fishing tournaments are exempted, as are participants in catch and release catfish fishing tournaments if the participants are fishing from a boat with a functioning aerated or water-circulated live well. Any fish taken into possession by holding in a live well, on a stringer or in other fish-holding devices is part of the daily bag limit. Once the daily bag limit of a particular species is reached, fishing for that species is permitted as long as all fish of that species caught are immediately released.

[ARC 8195B, IAB 10/7/09, effective 11/11/09; ARC 9052B, IAB 9/8/10, effective 10/13/10; ARC 1702C, IAB 10/29/14, effective 12/3/14; ARC 3443C, IAB 11/8/17, effective 12/13/17; ARC 5056C, IAB 6/17/20, effective 7/22/20]

### 571—81.3(481A) Trotlines and throw lines.

**81.3(1)** *Where permitted.* It shall be lawful to use trotlines or throw lines in all rivers and streams of the state, except in Mitchell, Howard, Winneshiek, Allamakee, Fayette, Clayton, Delaware, Dubuque, and Jackson Counties. Trotlines or throw lines may be used in the above nine counties in the following stream segments: Mississippi River; Maquoketa River, mouth to Backbone State Park Dam; North Fork Maquoketa River, mouth to Jones-Dubuque County line; Turkey River, mouth to the Elkader Dam; and Upper Iowa River, mouth to the first dam upstream in Winneshiek County.

**81.3(2)** *Removal of lines.* All trotlines and parts thereof shall be removed from the shore when they are not being actively fished. A trotline shall be considered actively fished if at least once daily the trotline is left with at least one baited hook in the water.

[ARC 1702C, IAB 10/29/14, effective 12/3/14]

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