

Mild Winter Ice- Ice Fishing Bulletin

February 16, 2023

Nothing beats the excitement of seeing a sprung flag and the mad dash to your tip-up that follows as your mind races in anticipation for what might be on your line. Thanks to ice fishing technology such as pop-up ice shelters and electric ice augers, it's never been easier to take the family out for a comfortable, successful, and fun day on the ice.

A mild winter has left ice conditions across the Granite State variable depending on the region. However, there are still plenty of opportunities to get out and fish this winter. Lakes in the north are your best bet for finding plenty of quality ice, with some places reporting 8 inches or more. You will likely find around 6 inches of ice on many waterbodies in the central part of the state. There are even small areas of Lake Winnepesaukee that are providing opportunities for ice anglers. Southern lakes, especially larger ones, will be offering the poorest quality of ice. Anglers may find 4 inches of fishable ice in many areas. Avoid areas of running water and rivers as this ice will likely be unsafe.



Always check ice safety yourself before heading out and never rely solely on second-hand information. Ice that looks dark black or “honeycombed” should be avoided as it is unsafe and will likely not support your weight. Stay off the ice along the shoreline if it is cracked or squishy. Docks, rocks, and downed trees absorb the sun’s heat and can cause the ice around them to be thin.

If you do break through the ice, stay calm. Move or swim back to where you fell in, where you know the ice was solid. Lay both arms on the unbroken ice and kick hard. This will help lift your body onto the ice. A set of ice picks can help you pull yourself out; wear them around your neck or put them in an easily accessible pocket. Once out of the water, roll away from the hole until you reach solid ice.

If someone you are with breaks through the ice, don’t rush over to the hole—keep yourself safe. Look for something to throw or to use to reach out to the person such as a rope, tree branch, or ice spud. Lie down flat and reach out with your tool. After securing the person, do not stand—wiggle backwards on the solid ice pulling the person with you.

To learn more about ice safety visit www.wildnh.com/outdoor-recreation/ice-safety.html

There are other ways to keep yourself safe will fishing this winter. For fishing on lakes with no snow cover, wear ice cleats or “creepers” to avoid slipping injuries. Read safety instructions before operating

equipment such as ice augers. Fish with other people and always tell someone not participating where you will be.

After safety, fun is top priority. For a higher chance of success, fish warm waters that possess species like yellow perch and pickerel. Want more of a challenge? Try your luck at targeting trout (*just make sure you are following rules and guidelines associated with some trout waters*). Visit <https://wildlife.state.nh.us/maps/bathymetry.html> to find a list of waterbodies and species found in each.

For more information on ice fishing in the Granite State, visit <https://wildlife.state.nh.us/fishing/ice-fishing.html>.

Good luck and happy fishing!