



Spring Trout Season Opens Soon

by Lee Keck

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Though many of the lakes and ponds in the fall catchable trout season continue to produce catches of these popular fish, a new shipment of hard-fighting rainbow trout will soon arrive for some of these waters.

Illinois rainbow trout anglers converge on numerous special fishing locations statewide in early April for the annual spring catchable trout season.

Though the spring season opener receives considerably less notoriety than the annual Missouri trout stream event, it probably attracts as many or more participants.

From veteran anglers to children getting a first taste of fishing, the spring trout season is always a popular family activity in Illinois. In fact, the spring trout opener is always a big day in Illinois and it's a great way to begin the new fishing season.

The IDNR stocks more than 80,000 rainbow trout each spring in bodies of water where trout fishing is permitted during the spring season. Unlike the fall program where several area lakes receive fish, slightly fewer downstate sites participate in the spring program.

According to biologists, this is due to several reasons including angler participation and water temperatures. Compared to anglers in the northern part of the state, downstate anglers have so many more spring fishing opportunities and seem less interested in trout.

Trout are also a cold-water fish and downstate lakes often warm very quickly in the spring. The potential for a quick dieoff exists if the lakes become too warm before the trout are caught.

Rainbow trout typically become stressed when the water temperatures near the 70-degree mark. There are many years when downstate water temperatures near the 70-degree mark before the end of April.

During the recent and coming weeks, the IDNR will stock rainbow trout into participating sites throughout the state..

To legally take these fish, anglers must have a 2021 Illinois fishing license and valid inland trout stamp, or a 24-hour fishing license (which includes trout fishing privileges).

Those exempt from the license requirement include anglers under age 16, those blind or disabled, or an Illinois serviceman or servicewoman home on leave. The 2021 fishing licenses, currently on sale, are valid through March 31, 2022.

Stocking for the rainbow trout fishing program in Illinois is made possible through the sale of inland trout stamps to those anglers who participate. The stamps are available for \$6.50 each at most IDNR offices, at many baitshops, sporting goods dealers, and at all other locations where fishing licenses are sold.

Inland trout stamps, as well as fishing licenses, also may be purchased with a credit card by calling DNR Direct toll-free at 1-888-6PERMIT (1-888-673-7648).

Anglers are prohibited from taking trout from any of the stocked sites prior to the season. This includes any fall trout fishing sites that are included in the spring program.

Anyone attempting to take trout before the legal opening will be issued citations. The creel limit is five rainbow trout per day. There is no special size limit on rainbow trout caught from the participating waters.

Newcomers to the sport will find the trout relatively easy to catch. While they are often taken by anglers fishing with small artificial lures, most Illinois trout enthusiasts prefer to use live baits like mealworms, redworms or minnows.

Local waters included in the spring trout fishing program include the Frank Holten State Park main Lake, Willow Lake at the Peabody River King site and Jones Park Lake in St. Clair County, Beaver Dam Lake in Macoupin County, Morgan Lake in Jacksonville, Siloam Springs State Park Lake in Adams County and Gridley Lake at the Jim Edgar site in Cass County.

Other nearby sites participating in the program include the Washington Park Pond in Springfield and the Forest Park Lagoon in Shelbyville.

It will be illegal to possess trout taken from any of the participating sites until the legal program opener at 5 a.m. Anglers attempting to take trout before the legal opening will be issued citations.

A complete list of participating sites is available on the IDNR website at:

www.ifishillinois.org.