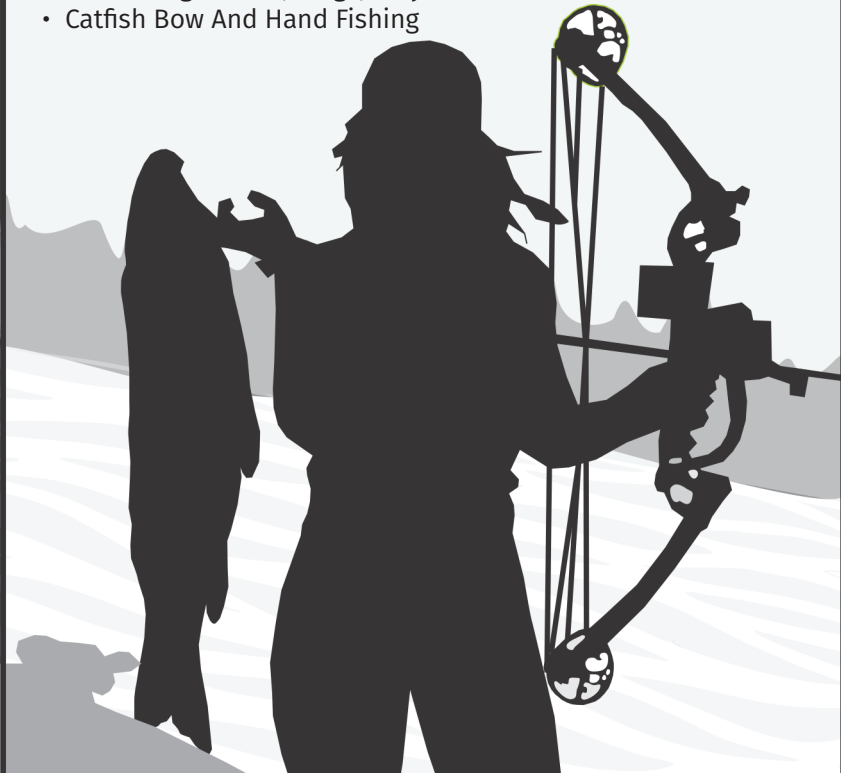


# GUIDE TO WISCONSIN SPEARING, NETTING AND BAIT HARVEST REGULATIONS 2023-2024

*Effective April 1, 2023 through March 31, 2024*

## **Includes regulations on:**

- Rough Fish Spearing
- Dipnetting Rough Fish
- Bowfishing And Underwater Spear Fishing
- Harvesting Turtles, Frogs, Crayfish And Minnows
- Catfish Bow And Hand Fishing



Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
Bureau of Fisheries Management  
P.O. Box 7921  
Madison, WI 53707-7921

**PUB-FH-304 2023**

# Guide To Wisconsin Spearing, Netting And Bait Harvest Regulations 2023-2024

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<a href="#">License Requirements</a> .....	3
<a href="#">General Restrictions</a> .....	4
<a href="#">Spearing Restrictions</a> .....	5
<a href="#">Fishing with Bow and Arrow</a> .....	6
<a href="#">Spearfishing or Bowfishing Prohibitions</a> .....	6
<a href="#">Statewide Spearing Seasons Map</a> .....	8
<a href="#">Underwater Spear Fishing</a> .....	8
<a href="#">Rough Fish Spearing Seasons</a> .....	9
<a href="#">Spearing and Netting in Boundary and Outlying Waters</a> .....	9
<a href="#">Harvesting Catfish by Bow and Arrow and Hand</a> .....	10
<a href="#">Netting and Netting Restrictions</a> .....	12
<a href="#">Dip Nets for Rough Fish</a> .....	13
<a href="#">Nets for Smelt</a> .....	14
<a href="#">Nets for Whitefish and Cisco</a> .....	15
<b>Minnows</b>	
<a href="#">Nets and Traps for Minnows</a> .....	15
<a href="#">Minnows and Individual Angler Harvest</a> .....	16
<a href="#">Minnows and Bait Dealer Harvest</a> .....	16
<a href="#">Frog Harvest</a> .....	16
<a href="#">Crayfish Harvest</a> .....	17
<a href="#">Turtle Harvest</a> .....	17



**Note: Sturgeon spearing regulations are found in the [Winnebago System Sturgeon Spearing Regulations & Information pamphlet](#).**

*This document is intended solely as guidance and does not contain any mandatory requirements except where requirements found in statute or administrative rule are referenced. Any regulatory decisions made by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in any matter addressed by this guidance will be made by applying the governing statutes and administrative rules to the relevant facts.*

**Report Hunting and Fishing Violations  
Text or Call 1-800-TIP-WDNR (1-800-847-9367)  
Toll Free • Statewide • 24-Hour • Confidential  
(This is NOT a general information number)**

## LICENSE REQUIREMENTS

Hook and line, spearing, bow fishing (bow and arrow, crossbow), minnow trapping or taking fish by hand requires a fishing license, unless the person is a resident and otherwise exempted from purchasing a license (i.e., under 16 years old or residents born before Jan. 1, 1927). Note: Nonresidents under the age of 16 do not need a license to fish with hook and line but do need a license to spear, bowfish, net, trap or take fish by hand. Nonresidents under the age of 18 who have a parent that is a Wisconsin resident may obtain a fishing license at the resident fee.

**Netting.** No fishing license is required for residents taking minnows, smelt or rough fish with a dip net, landing net or minnow seine. All nonresidents, regardless of age, are required to have a Wisconsin nonresident fishing license for harvesting smelt or taking rough fish or minnows with dip nets, landing nets, seines or minnow traps. Not all types of nets are allowed for all fish species ([see page 12 for clarification](#)).

**Turtles.** A fishing, small game, sports, patron or resident setline, set/bank pole or commercial Mississippi River license is required for taking turtles, except for residents who are exempt from purchasing a license. Nonresidents of any age need to have a license, unless under age 16 and only taking turtles by hook and line.

**Crayfish And Frogs.** A fishing, small game, sports or patron license is required to take crayfish, except for residents who are exempt from purchasing a fishing license. Sales of crayfish or frogs for fish bait requires a bait dealers license. Nonresidents may not sell crayfish or frogs for fishing bait in Wisconsin. Frogs may be taken and possessed without a license.

**Leeches And Aquatic Insects.** No license is required except a DNR permit may be required for dredging depending on the method, location and amount of bottom material disturbed. [Contact a water management specialist for additional information.](#)

**Minnow Harvest And Sales.** A wild bait harvest permit is required to harvest minnows and transport them away from any water of the state live. A bait dealer license is required to sell minnows or to possess over 600 minnows unless the person is exempted as a resident under 16 years of age who can sell less than \$500 annually and can have up to 5,000 of each species. Because of the VHS fish virus, minnows may not be collected in VHS-affected waters and minnows from other locations must be health certified before sale. Nonresidents may not sell minnows for fishing bait. See [further details about bait harvest and sales regulations](#).

**Rough Fish Sales.** Rough fish may only be sold to the final consumer unless the seller is licensed as a wholesale fish dealer or commercial fisher. Netted suckers taken with dipnets, landing nets or seines may not be sold. Nonresidents may not sell smelt or minnows (including suckers).

**What Is A Minnow Or Rough Fish?** By Wisconsin law, minnows include suckers, mudminnow, madtoms, stonecat, killifish, stickleback, trout perch, darters, sculpins and all species in the minnow family (except goldfish and carp). Rough fish include all suckers (suckers, redhorse, buffalo and carsuckers) not listed as threatened or endangered, common carp, Asian carp (bighead, black, silver and grass), goldfish, freshwater drum, burbot, bowfin, gar, lamprey, alewife, gizzard shad, smelt and mooneye.

## **GENERAL RESTRICTIONS**

### **YOU MAY NOT:**

- Transport water in boats, vehicles, trailers, containers, fishing equipment or gear of any type when leaving any state waters, banks or shores or entering Wisconsin over land for use on any water of this state. This does not apply to any drinking water or up to two gallons of water being used to hold minnows purchased from a Wisconsin bait dealer or registered fish farm, which can be legally transported.
- Transport or operate any vehicle, boat, trailer or object of any kind on any public roadway with any aquatic plants or animals attached. Immediately after leaving any waterbody and before leaving any landing or associated parking area, you must remove all attached aquatic plants or animals.
- Transport any live fish or live fish eggs away from any state waters. There is an exception for minnows obtained from a Wisconsin bait dealer or registered fish farm. These minnows may be transported away live and used again:
  - on the same water, or
  - on any other waters if not exposed to any lake or river water, and no other fish were added to their container.
- Use or possess any fish trap or trammel, cast, gill, hoop net or any other kind of fishing net that might take, catch or kill fish except areas where it is specifically authorized. Cast nets are illegal to possess or use on any state water, except for taking suckers on Wisconsin/Iowa boundary waters.
- Possess or control any bow and arrow, spear, atlatl (spear and thrower) or similar device on or along any water that might be used to take, catch, or kill fish except where authorized during the specified open season for rough fish.
- Use firearms, explosives, air guns or poisons for disturbing or taking any fish.
- Fish with nets, traps, seines, spears (including bow and arrow, crossbow) or by hand in refuges, other closed areas or trout streams (except it is legal to take rough fish by hand in a trout stream). Rough fish may be taken by hand year-round or by hand-held spear June 1 to Aug. 31 where spearing is allowed within 200 feet of a fishway, lock or dam. Note: An atlatl (spear and thrower) does not meet the definition of a hand-held spear and would not be allowed.
- Possess a hand-held spear, or other spear, within 200 feet of a dam, lock or fishway on any boundary waters.
- Fish with hook and line from a boat while in possession of a dip net.
- Leave any dip net or seine unattended within 25 feet of the edge of the water.
- Fish in any other manner while operating a dip net or seine .

■ Have in possession any threatened or endangered species without a permit from the department. These include but are not limited to: some species of fish, frogs, mussels, and turtles. See the DNR website, [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov), for more listed species information.

■ Cut, use or maintain an ice hole larger than 12 inches in diameter or square for the taking of fish in any manner through the ice except taking fish with dip nets or skin or scuba diving, taking minnows with minnow traps, spearing on Lake Superior or sturgeon spearing on Lake Winnebago system waters.

■ Take catfish by hand with the aid of artificial nests or spawning boxes, ropes, gaffes, hooks, grapples or similar equipment for snagging catfish, or breathing devices including snorkel or scuba gear.

■ Take rough fish and catfish by any method from Sept. 15 through Dec. 31 in Lake Michigan tributaries, major Green Bay tributaries and all other tributary streams and ditches to Green Bay upstream to the first dam or lake from one-half hour after sunset to one-half hour before sunrise.

## **SPEARING RESTRICTIONS**

Spearing is defined as fishing with a device consisting of a shaft with an attached sharp, barbed point or points and includes spears, bow and arrow, crossbow, spear guns, atlatls and other similar devices.

■ No person shall have under his control any spear or similar device in any enclosure on the ice or waters of the Embarrass River in Shawano County from the Pella Dam downstream; the Wolf River from Shawano Dam downstream to the Fox River and on the ice of the Fox River from Johnson Creek in Green Lake County downstream through Lake Winnebago and all connecting lakes of both streams except when authorized during established sturgeon spearing season.

■ Spearing ice hole restriction: No person may cut, use or maintain an ice hole larger than 12 inches in diameter or square for the taking of fish in any manner through the ice except spearing on Lake Superior, skin or scuba diving or sturgeon spearing on the Lake Winnebago system.

■ There may be local public safety ordinances that prohibit the use of a bow and arrow or crossbow in some areas. Please check with your local law enforcement office for further information.

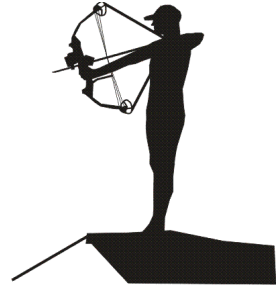
■ Spearing by methods other than bow and arrow or crossbow is restricted from sunrise to sunset on all waters and only during the open season for spearing rough fish on those waters.

**Spearing Bag Limits:** There are no bag limits on rough fish, except the limit for suckers is 600.

## FISHING WITH BOW AND ARROW OR CROSS-BOW

### YOU MAY NOT:

- Take rough fish or catfish with a bow and arrow or crossbow unless the arrow is equipped with a metal barbed tip attached to the bow with a tethered line that allows for the retrieval of the arrow and the fish.
- Release or return any rough fish or catfish taken with a bow and arrow or crossbow, whether dead or alive, to any waters of the state.
- Leave any rough fish or catfish taken with a bow and arrow or crossbow, whether dead or alive, on the ice or banks of any waters of the state.
- Violate local ordinances that prohibit the discharge of bow and arrow or crossbow within their area of jurisdiction. ***Check for local ordinances on the use of bow and arrow or crossbow within city, town or village limits.***



**LEGAL HOURS:** On all inland, outlying and boundary waters with an open season for spearing rough fish or catfish, the taking of rough fish with a bow and arrow or crossbow on that body of water is allowed at any time of day, including from sunset to sunrise during that open season. Lights, including laser sights, are legal to use at night for spearing rough fish or catfish with a bow and arrow or crossbow.

## SPEARFISHING OR BOWFISHING PROHIBITIONS

There are some waters or management areas where the **use of spears, bow and arrow and crossbow are prohibited:**

### Fishing prohibited as posted by department signs

- All fish refuges

### Possession and use of spears, bows/crossbows and similar devices prohibited

- Devils Lake State Park, Sauk County

### Possession of bows/crossbows prohibited unless unloaded and enclosed in a carrying case

- Cedar Grove, Sheboygan County
- Mauthe Lake, Fond du Lac County
- Peterkin Pond, Walworth County
- Picnic Point Fishery Area, Winnebago County

- Point Beach, Manitowoc County
- Scuppernong Springs Nature Area, Waukesha County

**No entry from Sept. 1 to Nov. 30, except by water from a point of access other than within refuge boundaries**

- Collins Marsh, Manitowoc County
- Eldorado Marsh, Fond du Lac County
- Fish Lake, Burnett County
- Germania Marsh Wildlife Area, Marquette County
- Grand River Marsh, Green Lake/Marquette counties
- Honey Island Flowage, Marathon County
- McMillan Marsh, Marathon County
- Meadow Valley, Juneau County
- Mead Wildlife Area, Marathon County
- Mud Lake, Columbia County
- Theresa Marsh, Dodge/Washington Counties
- Townline/Berkhahn Flowage, Marathon County
- Wood County Wildlife Area, Wood County

**No entry from Sept. 1 to Dec. 31, except by water from a point of access other than within refuge boundaries**

- Amey Pond, Adams County
- Big Muskego Lake Wildlife Area, Waukesha County
- Oconto Marsh, Oconto County
- Peat Lake, Kenosha County
- Pershing Wildlife Area, Taylor County
- Pierce County Islands Wildlife Area refuge, Pierce County

**No entry from Sept. 1 to Dec. 31, except by water from a point of access other than within refuge boundaries (cont.)**

- Richard Bong Recreation Area
- Sensiba Wildlife Area, Brown County
- Thunder Lake Wildlife Area/Rice Lake Refuge, Oneida County
- Tichigan Wildlife Area, Racine County

**No use of bows/crossbows from the opening day of waterfowl season to the first Saturday in December**

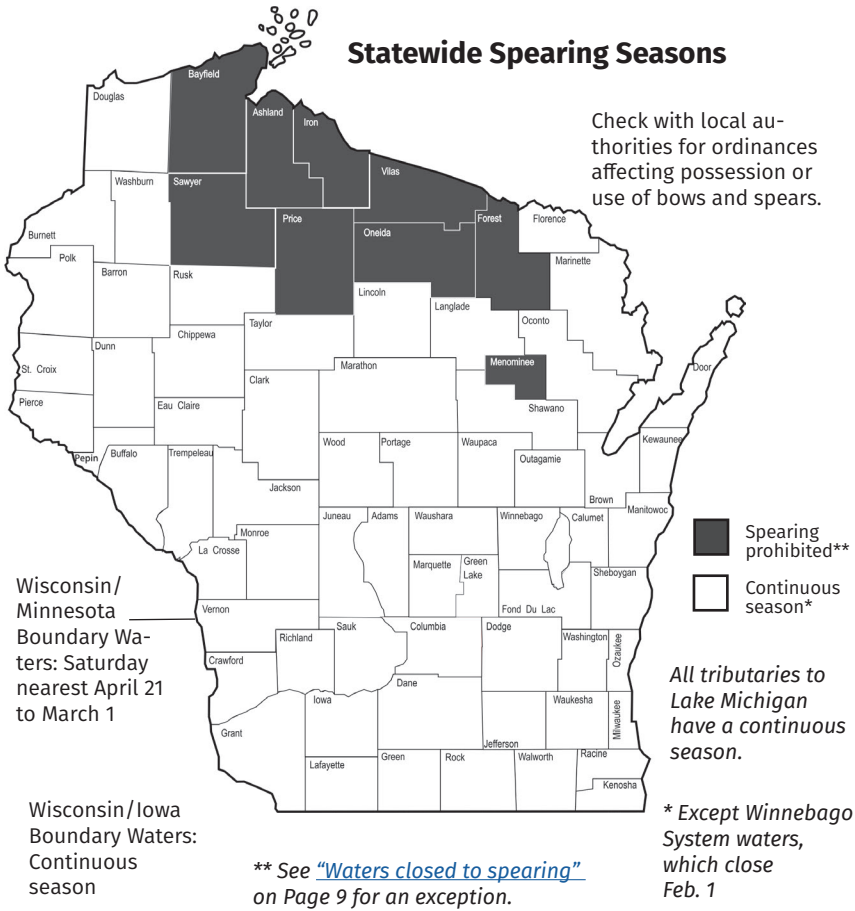
- Oakridge Lake, St. Croix County

**No entry for any reason from April 1 to Aug. 24 when posted with department signs**

- Horicon Marsh Rookery, Dodge County
- Lower Green Bay Islands, Brown County
- Wisconsin Point Wildlife Area, Douglas County

**No entry allowed for any reason**

- Crex Meadows wildlife refuge, Burnett County



## UNDERWATER SPEAR FISHING

It is lawful to take the following fish species with the use of spears and spear guns by skin and scuba diving in all waters where spearing for rough fish is permitted from sunrise to sunset during the listed spearing seasons: white bass, yellow bass, rock bass, crappie, bluegill, perch, pumpkinseed (sunfish) and bullheads provided that the season for these species is also open on the same water. Daily bag limits and length restrictions also apply.



## ROUGH FISH SPEARING SEASONS

(Refer to map)

It is lawful during specified open seasons for any person to take rough fish by means of spears, bow and arrow or crossbow and spear guns and spears while skin and scuba diving, unless otherwise specified, in the inland waters or from the shores of inland waters excluding trout streams as follows:

**Continuous Season:** There is a continuous open season for spearing rough fish in all counties except Ashland, Bayfield, Forest, Iron, Menominee, Oneida, Price, Sawyer and Vilas counties, and for all Lake Winnebago System waters (see below).

**\*April 21 To Feb. 1:** All Lake Winnebago System waters (includes Poygan, Winneconne, Butte des Morts and Winnebago and all their tributaries from their mouths upstream to the first dam including the Fox river from Lake Winnebago upstream to the dam above Princeton and all its tributaries from their mouths upstream to the first dam; the Wolf River from its mouth upstream to the dam in the city of Shawano and all its tributaries from their mouths upstream to the first dam including Cincoe, Partridge Crop and Partridge lakes in Calumet, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Marquette, Outagamie, Shawano, Waupaca, Waushara and Winnebago counties).

**Dec. 15 To Jan. 31 :** Burbot may be speared sunset to sunrise only in the Amnicon, Nemadji Rivers and the Black River upstream to the Soo Line Bridge in Douglas County and the Bad River, Ashland County.

**Waters Closed To Spearing:** No person shall have in his possession or under his control on any of the inland waters or shores of inland waters at any time any spear or similar device that might be used to take, catch or kill fish in the counties of Ashland (except in the Bad River where burbot may be taken by means of spears from sunset to sunrise Dec. 15 to Jan. 31 inclusive), Bayfield, Forest, Iron, Menominee, Oneida, Price, Sawyer and Vilas and the Menominee River in Florence and Marinette counties.

**Exception:** Saturday nearest May 20 to July 1: Rough fish may be taken with bow and arrow or crossbow only in Fish Creek Slough (Bayfield Co.) from its mouth to the junction of North and South Fish Creeks.

## SPEARING AND NETTING IN BOUNDARY AND OUTLYING WATERS

**Wisconsin/Minnesota And Wisconsin/Iowa Boundary Waters:** It is unlawful for any person to use a spear, bow and arrow, crossbow, atlatl or similar device in any manner at any time to take, catch or kill any gamefish of any variety

(except for catfish; [see catfish bow and hand fishing regulations below](#)) or to have in possession or under control any fish spear or spring gaff in a fish house (shanty).

**Wisconsin/Minnesota Boundary Waters:** Rough fish spearing season: Saturday nearest April 21 to March 1; Rough fish may be taken by means of spears, bow and arrow or crossbow sunrise to sunset only, except that bow and arrow and crossbow may also be used on the Wisconsin side of the river from sunset to sunrise.

**Wisconsin/Iowa Boundary Waters:** Rough fish spearing season: Continuous open season. Rough fish may be taken by means of spears, bow and arrow or crossbow sunrise to sunset only, except that bow and arrow and crossbow may also be used from sunset to sunrise. Cast nets no larger than seven feet in diameter or mesh of more than one half-inch stretch measure may be used to take suckers only.

**Wisconsin/Michigan Boundary Waters:** There is no open season for spearing on the Wisconsin/Michigan boundary waters, except that catfish, rough fish and bullheads may be taken with a bow and arrow or crossbow during the open season in Wisconsin waters only.

**Outlying Waters** — Lake Superior, Lake Michigan, Green Bay, Sturgeon Bay, Sawyer's Harbor and the Fox River from its mouth up to the dam at De Pere:

- It is unlawful to spear any game fish except that white bass, yellow bass, rock bass, panfish and bullheads may be speared while skin diving or scuba diving during the open season for rough fish spearing, provided that the season for white bass, yellow bass, rock bass, panfish and bullheads is also open on the same water.
- Northern pike may be speared through the ice in Lake Superior.
- Taking rough fish by bow and arrow or crossbow is also allowed from sunset to sunrise on outlying waters.

## **HARVESTING FLATHEAD OR CHANNEL CATFISH AND BULLHEADS BY BOW AND ARROW, CROSSBOW OR BY HAND**



**Bow Or Crossbow.** - Channel and flathead catfish and bullheads can be harvested with a bow or crossbow during the open season for spearing rough fish (so in most cases, continuously), except in waters with an existing closed season (or fish refuge). In waters with a specific hook and line season or minimum length limit, those restrictions would apply for bowfishing as well.

**By Hand.** - Channel and flathead catfish and bullheads can be harvested by hand from June 1 – Aug. 31. Gear such as hooks, poles, grapples, gaffes, artificial nests/spawning boxes, snorkel or scuba gear are prohibited – anglers may only use their hands. In waters with a minimum length limit for hook and line fishing, that limit would apply for handfishing as well.

**Boundary Waters.** - Channel and flathead catfish and bullheads may be taken by bow, crossbow or by hand only on the Wisconsin side of the waters and only if the [season is open for spearing rough fish](#) (see p. 9). For reciprocity, that means Minnesota, Iowa and Michigan licensed anglers could go into Wisconsin waters and take catfish by these methods, but Wisconsin anglers could not go into the other state's waters and use these methods, even though they can hook and line fish under the reciprocity rules.

**General Limits.**

Daily bag limit: Channel catfish - Five, Flathead catfish - One, Bullheads - none.  
Length limit - none

No commercial fishing for catfish or bullheads with these methods is allowed (Note: guided fishing trips for the purpose of taking catfish, bullheads or rough fish with a bow, crossbow or by hand are legal).

**Exceptions To The General Limits:**

Water(s)	Special Regulations
Lower Wisconsin River from Prairie du Sac Dam to the U.S. Highway 12 bridge	The bow/crossbow season runs from the May 6, 2023 to Nov. 30, 2023. The general hand fishing season dates apply.
Waters of Green Lake and Marquette counties,  Lake Winnebago system waters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Bow/crossbow season runs from May 20, 2023 to Sept. 30, 2023. The general hand fishing season dates apply.</li> <li>· The flathead and channel catfish bag limit for bow/crossbow and hand harvest is five in total but only one may be a flathead catfish regardless of method of harvest.</li> <li>· There is no length limit, except for flathead catfish, where the minimum length limit is 30 inches and catfish from 36 to 42 inches may not be kept.</li> <li>· For bullheads on Lake Winnebago System waters, the bow/crossbow season runs from April 21, 2023 to Feb. 1, 2024 and the general hand fishing season dates apply. There are no length or bag limits.</li> </ul>
Tributaries, streams, rivers and ditches to Green Bay upstream to the first dam or lake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Bow/crossbow season runs May 6, 2023 to March 4, 2024. The general hand fishing season dates apply.</li> <li>· For bullheads, the bow/crossbow season is continuous on major Green Bay tributaries.</li> </ul>
Wisconsin/Minnesota boundary waters	The bow/crossbow season runs from April 22, 2023 to March 1, 2024. The general hand fishing dates apply.

For the application of the catfish rules by specific water, season and length limit, see the [Guide to Wisconsin Hook and Line Fishing Regulations, 2023-2024](#).

## NETTING

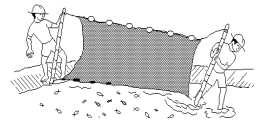
A **Dip Net** is a net suspended from a round or square frame but up to 8 feet in diameter or square and designed to be raised and lowered vertically to take rough fish or minnows.



A **Landing Net** is a net suspended on a frame with an attached handle that is used to help an angler in landing a fish caught with hook and line. Landing nets may also be used to take rough fish where authorized to use dip nets to take rough fish.



A **Seine** is a net made of circular, square, or long webbing of course twine fitted with floats on the top and sinkers on the bottom. The net forms a bag near the center that entraps fish as it is pulled through the water. Seines may be used to take minnows, whitefish, cisco and smelt on some waters. They cannot be used to take rough fish (except smelt as noted).



## NETTING RESTRICTIONS IT IS ILLEGAL:

- To take with traps and nets any fish, other than smelt, from Lake Superior, its bays and tributaries, the St. Louis River and the Montreal River downstream from the Superior Falls Dam.
- To have in possession at any time any kind of net or nets or fish trap except landing net, minnow seines and traps, whitefish and cisco seines, dip nets (may only be set or used from sunrise to sunset), crayfish traps and turtle traps in the following counties: Adams, Barron, Burnett, Calumet, Chippewa, Clark, Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Dunn, Eau Claire, Florence, Fond du Lac, Forest, Green, Green Lake, Iowa, Jackson, Jefferson, Juneau, Lafayette, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Marquette, Monroe, Oneida, Outagamie, Polk, Portage, Price, Richland, Rock, Rusk, Sauk, Sawyer, Shawano, Taylor, Vilas, Walworth, Washburn, Washington, Waukesha, Waupaca, Waushara, Winnebago and Wood or to have in possession or under control any basket traps (slat nets), trammel nets or wooden traps in Buffalo, Burnett, La Crosse, Pepin, Pierce, Polk, St. Croix, Trempealeau and Vernon (Minnesota boundary waters).

## **DIP NETS FOR ROUGH FISH**



There is no bag or possession for rough fish taken by dipnetting except the limit for suckers is 600. No suckers taken with dip nets or seines may be sold or bartered in any manner.

No person, while operating a dip net for rough fish, shall fish for fish in any other manner at that time. No person shall fish with hook and line from any boat while in possession of a dip net, whether in use or not. Only one dip net per person is permitted to take smelt and minnows. Such dip nets must be attended at all times while in use, and such nets shall only be raised and lowered vertically when fishing.

**Frame Dip Nets:** Frame dip nets for rough fish shall not exceed 8 feet in diameter or 8 feet square unless otherwise specified. One frame dip net per person may be used all year to take rough fish at any time in Marinette and Oconto counties and in all streams flowing into Green Bay from a point 200 feet upstream from the mouth and extending 15 miles inland in a straight line, except in the Menominee River where dip nets for rough fish and smelt may be used at any time from April 1 to May 14. It shall be unlawful to use any dip net in that part of the Menominee River beginning at the upstream side of the Hattie Street Bridge in Marinette and extending upstream to the first dam and within 200 feet below all other dams. Frame dip nets used in Menominee River shall not exceed 9 feet square or 9 feet in diameter, making a bag when lifted not more than 4 feet deep.

One frame dip net per person may be used all year to take rough fish in all the nondesignated trout streams and rivers, excluding lakes, flowing into Lake Michigan and Green Bay in the counties of Brown, Door, Kenosha, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine and Sheboygan in that part of each such stream or river beginning at the mouth and extending upstream to a point 500 feet below the first dam located on such stream or river.

One frame dip net per person may be used sunrise to sunset, from May 1 to March 15, to take rough fish except suckers, in that part of the Fond du Lac River in Fond du Lac County beginning at its mouth and extending upstream 3 miles.

One frame dip net per person may be used from April 25 to May 31 for the removal of rough fish from that part of Lake Winnebago within a distance of 500 feet from the shoreline of Calumet County.

The use of dip nets not more than 2 feet in diameter or 2 feet square to take rough fish in the St. Croix River downstream to the St. Croix Falls Dam, Polk County is permitted from the Saturday nearest May 15 to June 30.

Except in Lake Superior, its bays and tributaries, one dip net not exceeding 8 feet in diameter or 8 feet square may be used in all other inland and outlying waters except designated trout streams at any time of the year, sunrise to sunset, to take rough fish with no bag or possession limit, except the limit for suckers is 600.

## NETS FOR SMELT



Smelt taken by nonresidents can not be sold, traded, or bartered in any manner.

Smelt may be taken by same methods and in accordance with seasons and [location restrictions for taking other rough fish](#) (see page 12). In addition, smelt may be taken with dip nets and seines as follows:

Frame dip nets not exceeding 8 feet in diameter or 8 feet square may be used all year without hour restrictions for taking smelt in Lake Michigan including all the streams flowing into Lake Michigan and Green Bay beginning at the lake or bay and extending upstream to 500 feet below the first dam. They may be used 5 miles inland from the mouth on streams which have no dam except the Fox River in Brown County from 500 feet below the dam at De Pere.

Seines not more than 75 feet in length and not more than 6 feet in depth may be used at any time for taking smelt from April 1 to May 25 in Lake Superior, Lake Michigan, Green Bay and most outlying waters except that portion of the Fox River in Brown County from the dam in the city of DePere downstream 1,500 feet.

Seines of this dimension may be used for taking smelt in St. Louis Bay, Superior Bay, Allouez Bay and from the mouth of the St. Louis River upstream to the N 28th St. landing in Douglas County. Seines of this dimension may also be used at any time all year for taking smelt in Beaver Dam Lake, Barron County.

Frame dip nets not exceeding 8 feet in diameter or 8 feet square may be used without hour restrictions from April 1 to May 25 for taking smelt in Lake Superior and all streams flowing into Lake Superior in Ashland, Bayfield, and Iron counties and the Brule River in Douglas County, from the mouth of each stream, inland for one-half mile in a straight line. Zoning does not apply to Bear and Bluff creeks, the Nemadji, St. Louis and Amnicon rivers and the other nontrout streams in Douglas County, and in the waters of the Chippewa, Bad, (upstream to Copper Falls) and White rivers in Ashland County not designated as trout stream or on streams where active sea lamprey control structures are located.

Dip nets not exceeding 8 feet in diameter or 8 feet square may be used without hour restrictions to take smelt in Lake Lucerne, Forest County; the Flambeau lake chain, Vilas County, including thoroughfares and tributary streams 200 feet upstream and downstream from the lake basins. The open and closed seasons shall be at the directive of the Regional Director.

## NETS FOR WHITEFISH AND CISCO



Frame dip nets not more than 8 feet in diameter or 8 feet square may be used at any time of day to take whitefish and cisco in inland waters (except Lake Lucerne in Forest County) from the Saturday nearest Oct. 10 to Feb. 1. The total daily bag limit of whitefish or cisco is 10 fish in total.

Dip nets and seines may be used at any time of the day to take whitefish and cisco from Keyes Lake in Florence County from the Saturday nearest Oct. 10 to Jan. 15 with a daily bag limit of three fish.

Seines not to exceed 75 feet in length and a depth not greater than 6 feet and with a mesh not to exceed 2 inches stretch measure may be used at any time of the day to take whitefish and cisco in inland waters (except Lake Lucerne in Forest County) from the Saturday nearest Oct. 10 to Feb. 1. The total daily bag limit of whitefish or cisco is 10 fish in total. Palette Lake in Vilas County: Permit required.

Note: A fishing license is required for residents age 16 and older and nonresidents regardless of age to take whitefish and cisco.

## NETS AND TRAPS FOR MINNOWS



It is illegal to take live, wild-harvested minnows (including suckers) away from a waterbody unless authorized under a wild bait harvest permit.

It is illegal for anyone to possess more than 600 minnows (including suckers) except licensed bait dealers and residents younger than 16 years old and doing business as a bait dealer. Residents more than 16 years old must have a bait dealer's license to sell minnows, crayfish or frogs for bait. Residents under 16 years old and doing business as a bait dealer can possess no more than 5,000 of each species and can sell less than \$500 worth annually without a bait dealer's license. It is illegal for nonresidents to sell minnows, crayfish or frogs as bait.

### Location Restrictions

*VHS waters* - You may not set, use or operate any net, trap or similar device for the taking of minnows (except suckers as described below) on the waters of Lake Superior, Lake Michigan and Green Bay, the Winnebago System (including Wolf and Fox River systems), Mississippi River and Wisconsin River up to the Prairie du Sac Dam, including all waters connected to these waters upstream to the first barrier impassable to fish ([see the VHS pages on the DNR website - dnr.wi.gov](#) - for an up-to-date list of VHS waters). The exception is that up to 600 suckers may be harvested from these waters by hook and line or with dip nets only, but may not leave the water alive.

*All waters except VHS waters* - Minnows may be harvested with the methods described below, but no harvested minnows may be transported alive away from the bank or shore unless the harvester is a bait dealer.

### Other Restrictions

Unless you have a permit from the DNR, you may not use minnow seines or minnow dip nets of any type or description in inland trout streams or tributary spring ponds. During the open trout season, people who do not possess a bait dealer's license can't use more than three minnow traps to collect or harvest minnows from trout streams.

Bait minnows may be harvested, where allowed, by the following methods only:

- Hook and line.
- With seines no more than 35 feet long with a mesh no larger than one-half inch stretch measure in inland waters. Fifty-foot lengths of seine may be used in Minnesota and Iowa boundary waters.
- With dip nets no more than eight feet in diameter or square.
- With traps no more than 24 inches long and 16 inches in diameter or square with a throat measuring one-and-a-half inches or less. All traps must bear their owner's name and address or DNR Customer ID number and be emptied at least once every 48 hours. Minnows traps on trout streams must be checked and emptied at least once every 24 hours.

### Minnows And Individual Angler Harvest

Personal harvest of minnows is limited to [locations where harvest is not restricted](#) (see page 15) and only for use as bait on the water where they were harvested. These minnows can never be transported away from the bank or shore of the water alive. They may be kept in a live box or other container on that water for future use. Wild bait harvest permits are not available to persons other than bait dealers. Anglers are allowed to use up to three minnow traps in trout streams during the open trout season.

### Minnows And Bait Dealer Harvest

A wild bait harvest permit is required for all licensed bait dealers to harvest wild minnows. These permits include a number of conditions that must be met including gear disinfection and fish health inspections. Full [details concerning wild bait harvest can be found on the DNR's website](#), [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov).

Bait dealers are allowed no more than 20 minnow traps on trout streams during the open trout season, unless they possess a non-standard gear permit issued by the department.

## FROGS



Season: The open season for taking frogs is the Saturday nearest May 1 to Dec. 31.

It is unlawful to take frogs by firearms or airguns.

Possession Limit: Five of each species (not threatened or endangered - [see list at \[dnr.wi.gov\]\(http://dnr.wi.gov\)](#)), except there is no limit on the number that can be possessed for up to 24 hours for fishing bait.

Frogs may be sold for fish bait only under a bait dealers license. It is illegal to sell frogs for purposes other than fishing bait (except northern leopard frogs may be sold as authorized under a Class A captive wild animal farm license).



## CRAYFISH



Season: Wisconsin/Minnesota Boundary Waters - May 1 to the following March 1  
Remainder of State - Continuous open season.

- No person may possess live crayfish and angling equipment at the same time on any water except the Mississippi River, Lake Superior, Lake Michigan, Green Bay, Sturgeon Bay, Sawyer's Harbor and the Fox River from its mouth up to De Pere Dam. Rusty crayfish are a restricted invasive species and may be transported for control or disposal if no individuals or eggs are allowed to escape. Rusty crayfish taken from the Mississippi River can be used on the Mississippi River only. [Go to dnr.wi.gov and search "fishing regulations"](https://dnr.wi.gov).
- Must possess a valid fishing license or small game license, except persons under the age of 16 do not need a license.

Crayfish traps placed in trout streams shall conform to the dimensions of minnow traps. [See Nets and Traps for Minnows](#) (page 15).

Crayfish scoops may be used in the Wisconsin/Minnesota boundary waters provided the scoops do not exceed 4 feet in length, 3 feet in width and 18 inches in depth attached to a handle not to exceed 4 feet in length.

Crayfish may be taken in all waters by the following means only: By hand, by use of minnow seines and minnow dip nets, where the same is permitted for the taking of minnows, and by crayfish traps (other than in trout streams), with the entrance to the trap not to exceed 2-1/2 inches at the greatest diagonal measurement. Crayfish traps used on trout streams must comply with [minnow trap size restrictions \(see page 16\)](#). Traps must bear the owner's name and address or DNR Customer ID number and must be raised and emptied at least once each day following the day set.

Parts of fish and fish by-products including fish meal or prepared parts of such fish may not be used for bait unless: the fish were caught from the water being trapped, are minnows obtained from a bait dealer or are used with written authorization from the DNR. Other meats (e.g., chicken and beef livers) may be used for bait for crayfish.

Floats or markers used to locate traps 1) may not exceed 5 inches, 2) may not extend more than 4 inches above the water surface, 3) must clearly display the name and address or the DNR Customer ID number (in the English language) of the owner or operator, and 4) must not be orange or any other fluorescent color.

## TURTLES



All residents and nonresidents who collect, attempt to collect or possess native Wisconsin turtles must possess a valid approval that authorizes the hunting of small game or fishing, unless otherwise exempted from the need for either of

these types of licenses because of age. Some species are protected and may not be harvested. Residents under the age of 16 do not need a license but must comply with seasons, size and possession limits.

These regulations apply to native Wisconsin turtle species, regardless of their origin.

The open turtle season runs from July 15 through Nov. 30.

Turtles or turtle eggs may not be taken during the closed season. Ornate Box, Wood and Blanding’s turtles may not be taken or possessed without an Endangered Species permit.

Persons may collect or possess up to five individuals of each species with the following exceptions:

- The possession limit for snapping turtles and softshell turtles is three each statewide. The one exception is the Mississippi River, where the possession limit is 10 for snapping turtles and five for softshell turtles. The possession limit is not more than five total for all other species combined.

**Possession Limit for Turtles**

Species	WI-IA/WI-MN Boundary Waters	Inland Waters
Snapping	10	3
Softshell	5	3
Others	5 in total	5 in total

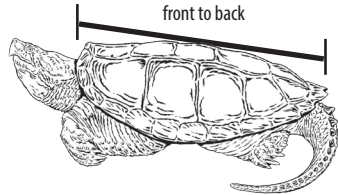
- Licensed bait dealers and registered fish farmers may possess more than five specimens of any unprotected amphibian species which are collected or possessed as part of a bait collection or shipment.

- It is illegal to sell native amphibians and reptiles, except persons with a Class A Captive Wild Animal Farm license may sell:
  - Eastern tiger salamanders, mudpuppies and northern leopard frogs collected in state may be sold.
  - Native amphibians and reptiles collected outside the state may be sold out of state, or to education and research institutions in state.

Legally harvested dead turtles and their parts may be sold during the open season only. A license is not needed to sell dead turtle parts during the open season.

**Size Limits:**

Snapping turtle size limits are a 12-inch minimum and a 16-inch maximum carapace (top shell straight front to back) length. There are no size limits for other turtles.



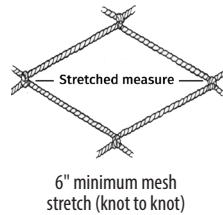
- Turtles may be taken by hand, dip net, hook and line, set line, set or bank poles, hooking or hoop net trap (see allowed design below). No other trap types are allowed.

- Set or bankpoles and setlines used for turtle harvest must be licensed, tagged and used in compliance with rules on the use of these lines for fishing. See the [Guide to Wisconsin Setline, Set and Bank Pole Regulations, 2023-2024](#) for details.

- Turtles may not be taken by hook and line from trout streams during the closed trout season.

- The number of hoop traps that can be operated are 10 in Iowa-Wisconsin or Minnesota-Wisconsin boundary waters and three in all other waters of the state.

Hoop net trap specifications: Traps must be made of stretchable fabric (e.g., nylon) and must have a minimum mesh stretch of 6 inches. No wire mesh is allowed. Each trap must have a metal tag showing the name and address or DNR Customer ID number of the operator attached and must be visible above the water's surface. The operator identified on the trap tag is the only person authorized to tend these traps. Traps must be set with the hoops exposed a minimum of 2 inches above the water's surface. Turtle traps must be checked and the entrapped contents removed at least once each day after the day they are set in all waters.



**Single Entrance Hoop Trap**

