

“Ice Free” Fact Sheet



With many of the NYC Reservoirs still ice covered, DEP is providing some guidance on when boats can be launched for fishing. DEP’s recreation rules state that on the Amawalk, Bog Brook, Boyds Corner, Cross River, Croton Falls, Diverting, East Branch, Kensico, Middle Branch, Muscoot, New Croton, Titicus, and West Branch Reservoirs, and on Lake Gilead and Lake Gleneida, boats with valid boat tags may be placed on the water during any “ice free” period.

On all other New York City reservoirs, boats with valid boat tags may only be placed on the water between April 1 and November 30 of each year during any “ice free” period.

While anglers have benefitted from milder winters the past several years, it’s doubtful that many reservoirs will be “ice-free” as of April 1 this year, which is the opening day of trout season throughout New York. People fishing from shore are free to do so wherever they can find open water and are not subject to the “ice free” restriction that applies to boating.

DEP’s interpretation of “ice free” means the main bodies and shorelines of the reservoirs are free from ice. There is the possibility that a reservoir whose main body is free of ice (and therefore “open” to fishing) may still have some ice present in some of the isolated coves and protected areas.

Fishermen should not put their boats on the water if they arrive at their boat storage area and can see ice on the reservoir. If a cove where a boat is stored is iced over, dragging your boat over the ice to launch is not allowed.

If a reservoir’s main body has any ice, it is deemed to be closed by the DEP Police. Boaters should not be launching boats if they happen to find small areas of open water, again, the majority of the reservoir must be ice free.

DEP Police may issue warnings or citations if they feel a boater’s safety is at risk.

When the reservoirs are frozen or partially frozen, keeping people away is a matter of public safety. Ice can pose some of the following hazards:

- Large ice flows can travel with prevailing winds and capsize boats or close off boat areas.
- Wind can send boaters towards ice fringe areas and entrap boats
- Boaters launching over ice can become submerged if the ice gives way.
- First responders could be at risk when performing search and rescues.

Boaters should remain vigilant when they are boating in the early season looking for large pieces of floating ice or debris washing into the reservoir from spring flows. Additionally, NYS navigation laws require Personal Flotation Devices to be worn at all times November 1st to May 1st and this includes NYC reservoirs

Boaters may call DEP's Boat Management offices for general information on the status of boating however; we do not regularly monitor ice conditions. Given the guidance above, boaters may need to assess the conditions themselves.

Ashokan-845-657-2663

Downsville – 607-363-7009

Grahamsville – 845-334-7152

Mahopac – 914-232-1309

Schoharie – 607-588-6231