

WALLEYE WEEKEND EDITION  
MAY 6-7, 2023

# kobojian



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FALLS THROUGH



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ON HIGHWAY 71





# Okoboajian

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# LAKE ICE RETREATING FAST AHEAD OF WALLEYE WEEKEND



## WHERE TO LOOK:

The 10 tagged walleye will be released by the Department of Natural Resources in locations on Big Spirit Lake, East Lake Okoboji and West Lake Okoboji, but chamber officials said they can also be caught in Little Spirit Lake, Upper Gar Lake, Lower Gar Lake or Minnewashta. Only fish caught in the contest area will be accepted and eligible for prizes at weigh-in stations.

## WHERE TO WEIGH:

Official weigh-in stations for the 2023 Walleye Weekend tournament include:

- Kabele's Trading Post — 504 Hill Ave. in Spirit Lake
- Oak Hill Outdoor/The Hook Up — 2188 Highway 86 in Milford
- Stan's Bait & Tackle — 2306 Okoboji Ave. in Milford

All fish must be alive and caught during tournament hours to qualify. All weigh stations have computerized digital scales certified by the state of Iowa. Individuals may weigh fish once per day but are limited to one winning weigh-in per heaviest fish category.

**Seth Boyes**  
News Editor

It wasn't too long ago that those hoping to hook a fish in the Iowa Great Lakes had to come prepared with an ice auger but, with some early summer-like temperatures this season, the surface of the local lakes has rapidly thawed ahead of the 41st annual Walleye Weekend fishing tournament.

Each year, 10 specially tagged walleye are released into the local chain of lakes to mingle with all the panfish, bass and other prospective catches. Anglers entered in the upcoming tournament could win up to \$41,000 if they catch one of the tagged walleye and confirm its serial number at a participating business. The tournament officially begins at 12:01 a.m. Saturday, May 6 and ends at noon Sunday, May 7 — participants can pay a little extra to enter the extended contest and be eligible for a percentage of the contest fees if they happen to

catch a tagged walleye before Sept. 1. The weekend tournament also includes numerous prizes for the heaviest stringers of walleye, pike, panfish and bullhead.

Officials with the Iowa Great Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce said they're excited to see how many people the yearly competition will draw this year. Kiley Zankowski, the chamber's director of marketing and events, said registration is looking good again this year, noting there's always an uptick as soon as the ice goes out of the lakes.

"We've had an average of over 2,000 anglers participate in this event for quite a few years now — from about 15 different states — so it's really fun to see new people coming from all across the country that maybe have never seen our area before," Zankowski said. "Of course, it helps our local economy, because they're eating here, they're staying here, they're gassing up their boats and their cars, they're buying bait and tackle and really affecting so

many different businesses in our community?"

Though things will be a little different shoreline this year while the repaving of Highway 71 continues, the chamber expects the construction won't dampen anglers' enthusiasm during Walleye Weekend. Zankowski said traffic might be a bit slower and competitors may want to weigh their catches earlier, but they shouldn't have much trouble getting on the water amid the construction work.

"We are pretty lucky that most of the boat ramps aren't affected, so there's a ton of access onto the lakes for people to use," Zankowski said. "They can avoid the boat ramps right on 71 and still be able to get right onto the lake. And with the ice going out, we're hopeful that we're going to be able to get quite a few docks in at those public access points where people will be able to fish on shore as well."

■ Walleye Weekend  
**continued on 4**



■ Walleye Weekend  
continued from 3

The highway construction is part of a major undertaking by the Iowa Department of Transportation to repave portions of the area's main thoroughfare, where regular patching has been needed for more than a decade. The contractors have agreed to maintain access to local businesses — restaurants, marinas, retail shops — during construction. DOT officials said during a mid-March presentation in Arnolds Park that patrons may need to use side streets or other routes at times to get to a particular business, and contractors are expected to work with local business owners as work continues.

Zankowski said the chamber encourages visiting anglers and year-round residents alike to be patient as they make their way to their favor-

ite Lakes Area businesses during the project.

“Really, there’s maybe only one more stop light than you’re normally used to,” she said. “The road may be a little narrow, but it’s going to be worth it in the end, and those businesses have a lot of great stuff to offer, so don’t forget them.”

### **BIGGEST WALLEYE TOURNAMENT RETURNS IN 2023**

It’s been a handful of years since Walleye Weekend’s lineup of events included the Biggest Walleye Tournament, but Zankowski said the chamber is excited to add the popular contest to its tackle box once again during the 41st annual competition.

“It is run through an app because it’s a no-kill tournament, so we want to make sure we keep the fish within the slots safe and are returning as many fish to our lakes as we can,” she said.

Anglers will need a smart phone to participate through the FishDonkey app, and they’ll also need to register for the Biggest Walleye Tournament separately. The top three competitors will receive a percentage of the entry fees — 25 percent for first place, 15 percent for second and 10 percent for third — in addition to bragging rights.

“It’s going to be a ton fun,” Zankowski said. “It’s a great way to see some of the catches people are getting.”

### **WALLEYE WEEKEND GRANT PROGRAM ENTERING SECOND YEAR**

The 2023 tournament will also mark the second year Walleye Weekend funds will go toward grants for local projects related to either fishing or water quality. The grant program debuted as part of the tournament’s 40th

year, and chamber officials doled out almost \$24,000 to six organizations — helping local groups do anything from install fishing rod holders on municipal docks and a fish-cleaning station near a public boat ramp to water monitoring at Iowa Lakeside Laboratories and the treatment of invasive curlyleaf pondweed.

“The grant program really helps us know where those funds are going and ensure they go to things that directly affect angling and water quality in our area,” Zankowski said. “We’re really glad we get to keep all that money locally and have a grant portion of the proceeds go to different area projects. We’ve seen a lot of those projects come to fruition, and we’re excited to see what grant applications we get this year.”

Grant applications are available through the Iowa Great Lakes Area Chamber’s website and are due May 5.

NORTHWEST IOWA

# FISHING REPORT



This fishing report is compiled from information gathered from local bait shops, angler creel surveys and county and state parks staff. The report below is from Thursday, April 13, the latest report available ahead of print deadlines. For current conditions, call the Spirit Lake District Office at 712-336-1840. All lakes are open or starting to open up. Most courtesy docks are not yet in place. The walleye season on the Iowa Great Lakes opens May 6.



**EAST OKOBOJI LAKE**

The lake is open. No courtesy docks are in place. Black Crappie — Good: Try small jigs tipped with a minnow or tube jig and bobber. Bluegill — Good: Use tube jigs, plastics or other small jigs. Northern Pike — Good: Tip-ups are working well. Yellow Perch — Fair: Minnows are working well; some sorting may be needed.

**INGHAM LAKE**

The lake is ice-free. Walleye — Fair.

**LOST ISLAND LAKE**

Black Crappie — Good. Walleye — Good.

**MINNEWASHTA LAKE**

Black Crappie — Fair. Bluegill — Fair.

**SILVER LAKE (DICKINSON)**

Walleye — Fair.

**SPIRIT LAKE**

A large portion of the lake is still covered with a thin layer of brash ice. Black Crappie - Good. Yellow Perch — Good: Use small jigs tipped with a minnow. Sorting may be needed.

**WEST OKOBOJI LAKE**

Most of the lake is still covered with a thin layer of brash ice. Black Crappie — Fair: Try small jigs tipped with a minnow. Bluegill — Fair: Use tube jigs, plastics or other small jigs. Yellow Perch — Fair: Try small jigs tipped with a minnow. Sorting may be needed.

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# IRMMA ANNOUNCES 20TH SEASON OF ROCK THE ROOF

The Iowa Rock 'n Roll Music Association recently announced the 20th Anniversary season of Rock the Roof. The Iowa Great Lakes tradition features a full slate of 12 concert/dances this summer at the Roof Garden Ballroom in Arnolds Park.

“What an exciting anniversary to celebrate, the 20th season of music and dancing at Rock the Roof,” said Executive Director Clay Norris. “Our partners at Arnolds Park asked us if we could please move Rock the Roof primarily to Wednesday nights to give them flexibility on Thursdays, and we were glad to cooperate. Our staff worked hard to put together a great slate of shows covering 12 of the 15 possible weeks this summer, continuing the wonderful tradition that was started in 2004.”

The 2023 series kicks off with the popular group Starfire on May 31. Crowd favorite

Richie Lee and the Fabulous '50s will be on Thursday night, June 15.

General admission per show is \$15. Members of the Iowa Rock 'n Roll Music Association pay \$12. Season passes are on sale now for \$120, which equates to 12 shows at \$10 each. The passes are available for purchase at the Iowa Rock 'n Roll Music Hall of Fame and Museum from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

### ROCK THE ROOF SCHEDULE

- May 31: Starfire
- June 7: Denny & The DC Drifters
- June 15: Richie Lee & The Fabulous '50s
- June 28: The Expressions
- July 5: Lake Patrol
- July 12: Mogen's Heroes
- July 26: Sean Benz & The Misfits
- Aug. 2: Surfin' Safari
- Aug. 9: Galaxy
- Aug. 16: Rock a la Carte
- Aug. 23: Elvis night with Denny Charnecki
- Aug. 31: Mr. V — '50s & '60s All Stars Band



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# ROTARY CAR FINALLY FALLS AMID WARM WEATHER

Lakes Area residents eagerly watch Smiths Bay on West Lake Okoboji as the temperatures climb each year, in hopes of seeing the Iowa Great Lakes Rotary Car fall through the ice.

The Iowa Great Lakes Rotary Club places the vehicle on the ice each winter as part of an annual fundraiser — several vehicles have been used over the years, each one having been stripped of components which would pollute Iowa's deepest natural lake. Rotarians sell off tickets for each minute of the day — be it a.m. or p.m. — as the public guesses when the ice will finally give way beneath the car. The local service club places a specialized clock inside the car, which is rigged to stop the moment it hits the water, and the winning ticket holder receives \$1,000.

This year's car fell through the ice some time during the evening of April 11. Seasonably high temperatures this year prompted ice on the lake to retreat relatively quickly. Organizers planned to pull the car from the bottom of the bay Friday afternoon — weather pending. Rotarians had yet to officially declare a winner as of staff's deadline for this edition of the Okobojian.



The Iowa Great Lakes Rotary Club places a car on the frozen surface of Smiths Bay in West Okoboji each winter as part of an annual fundraiser. The public purchases tickets, guessing which minute of the day the hollowed out vehicle will fall through the thinning ice as spring sets in. The car fell through the ice the evening of April 11 this year — just hours after the Dickinson County News' staff snapped this photo.

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# DETOUR IN PLACE AS DOT REPAVES HIGHWAY 71

Seth Boyes  
News Editor

The commute has been a little different for many Lakes Area motorists since March, when the Iowa Department of Transportation began work repaving Highway 71.

Traffic expecting to head south through Dickinson County will largely be routed along Highway 86 — on the western side of West Lake Okoboji. The detour will not be an issue come June — contractors are expected to pause their work on May 25 to avoid clashing with the area's busy summer economy, and they will begin work again in early September.

DOT officials previously explained that the concrete used in paving Highway 71 some 20 years ago required regular patching just eight years after it was poured. Iowa DOT planner Dakin Schultz previously said that there may have been a chemical issue with the concrete.

Crews began some preliminary work on the highway in mid-March. Bright orange traffic cones and roadside signs informed motorists to be on the lookout as contractors started cutting the highway's pavement. The saws were seen slowing making their way down the center of the causeway bridge between Okoboji and Arnolds Park on March 15.

Schultz indicated the contractors plan to repave the northbound lane of the highway — including the bridge — between Ackley Street in Arnolds Park and Gordon Drive/Lake Shore Drive in Okoboji. The bridge — which is the sole crossing point between the two cities — is expected to be closed for four weeks this fall. Emergency vehicles will still be able to cross the bridge during that time, and Dakin previously indicated that contractors felt it best to have one lane prepared for emergency crews ahead of the fall season.

Many local businesses are located along the repaving project's route and rely on the highway to carry patron to their doorstep each summer. Schultz told locals during a March 7 presentation that access to area businesses along the highway must be maintained throughout the project under the terms of the contract.

"Access to business doesn't necessarily look like it does today during construction," Schultz said. "It may have to be from a side street during part of that phase. The contractor is going to work with the business owner to provide access."

The project's overall schedule runs into 2024 — alternating between spring and fall with some routine maintenance in between — and it could spill over into the spring of 2025, Schultz said.



The current phase of the project is scheduled to end May 25, with the project slated to finish in the fall of 2024 — any remaining work may spill into 2025. (Photos by Seth Boyes)





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# OKOBOTREE RECEIVES EMPOWER RURAL IOWA GRANT TO EXPAND TREE CARVING PROJECT

**S**pirit of Okoboji is excited to announce it plans to commission the sculpting of at least a dozen expired trees in 2023 through its OkoboTree project — an effort to preserve trees by transforming them into visual art pieces. The project kicked off last year with three tree carvings funded in part through a Mountain Dew Outdoor grant. Now OkoboTree has received an Empower Rural Iowa grant to expand the project.

In October, Gov. Kim Reynolds and the Iowa Economic Development Authority announced a total of more than \$450,000 in grants were awarded through six Empower Rural Iowa Grant Programs. The grant awards are aimed at supporting rural initiatives. In its inaugural year, the Rural Enrichment grant is funding 11 projects across the state, including OkoboTree.

“I signed the Empower Rural Iowa Act in 2019 to ensure that the rural communities that are the heart of who we are as a state have the resources needed to connect, invest and grow,” Reynolds said. “Since then, Empower Rural Iowa grants have provided support for dozens of now thriving businesses, communities and entrepreneurs in our rural communities.”

Organizers with Spirit of Okoboji said three of the 12 goal-trees for 2023 have already been identified. OkoboTree is now asking the public for help identifying additional expired trees in the Iowa Great Lakes area which could be a part of this year’s planned carvings. Community members who know of a potential tree or would like to have a tree evaluated for the project may visit [okobotree.org](http://okobotree.org) and fill out a form.

The first three trees in the project were completed last summer and include a tree along the trail in Isthmus Park, a tree straight in from the stone entrance at Lakeside Lab and a tree located just south of the intersection of 125th Street and 253rd Avenue, along a segment of the Iowa Great Lakes Spine Trail, east of Big Spirit Lake.

For more information, contact OkoboTree coordinators Ed Purdy at 712-336-2074 or [walker1891@hotmail.com](mailto:walker1891@hotmail.com), or Kathy Fahy at 605-359-7177 or [krfahy@gmail.com](mailto:krfahy@gmail.com).

**Des Moines chain saw artist Gary Keenan** applied his tools to the trunk of three different dead trees in the Lakes Area during the summer of 2022. Keenan’s creations were the first of the nonprofit Spirit of Okoboji’s OkoboTree project, which is aimed at creating public sculptures from deceased trees around the community. (File photos)



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Danielle Clouse Gast, visual arts director at the Pearson Lakes Art Center, (left) met with Mark Plucker (right) to accept a donation of paintings created by Plucker's late wife Anita. While some of the work is expected to be auctioned, the painting "Wood, Water and Conversation" (pictured) will remain in the art center's collection. (Photo by Seth Boyes)

Seth Boyes  
News Editor

The Pearson Lakes Art Center gained a few more framed works last week, when Mark Plucker donated a number of paintings created by his late wife Anita.

Danielle Clouse Gast, visual arts director at the Pearson Lakes Art Center, said Anita Plucker was both an instructor and exhibitor in the center's galleries. She said the art center has been putting greater emphasis on including works its collection which represent local history — through either the subject matter or the artists themselves.

"In this case it's both," Clouse Gast said.

Anita Plucker passed away Jan. 3, 2022, at the age of 71. Sometimes known as Katie, the artist was born and raised in Terril, according to obituary information, graduating from Terril Community School and earning a bachelor's degree in art education.

"She put her artistic career on hold as she soon married and stayed home with her two boys," the obituary said. "As the boys grew older, Katie was able to create more work and began to enter area art shows. Her artwork continued to evolve and grow popular as she

went from art show to art show, to having limited-edition prints published, to displaying her work in juried exhibitions and galleries."

Those present at last week's donation said Plucker was particularly skilled in depicting people, water and boats.

Plucker was part of the Spencer Area Arts Council, the American Watercolor Society and at one point served as the director of education and outreach for Arts on Grand in Spencer before teaching art at Spencer Middle School for 15 years. After her time teaching, Plucker became a full-time artist, according to her family, and conducted workshops across the Midwest as well as at her studio in Terril.

Clouse Gast said some of Plucker's donated paintings will be auctioned off on Saturday, June 3, during the art center's annual Celebrate the Arts fundraiser. However, Plucker's painting titled "Wood, Water and Conversation" is to be a gift and remain part of the art center's collection. The framed water color shows several individuals gathered on a dock near a classic wooden boat — a scene those at last week's donation said is familiar to many in the Lakes Area. Clouse Gast also noted "Wood, Water and Conversation" will be the second example of Plucker's work to be brought into the gallery's collection.

# Welcome Back

## OPEN WATER WEEKEND

**Saturday May 6th**

Take advantage of early season deals on pontoons!

**In-Water Test Drives!**

When you choose to pursue the boating lifestyle with **Parks Marina**, enjoy exclusive offers throughout the **Marina District**.

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FULL MOON PARTY MAY 5TH WITH THE FISHHEADS

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## MOMS, MUSIC & MIMOSAS

Miss Chievous

Sunday, May 14th | 1-3 PM

Treat Mom with a cruise around West Lake!  
 Enjoy an assortment of hors d'oeuvres, live music and cash mimosa bar.

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# WALLEYE WEEKEND

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free bag of ice with purchase of a 12pk

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boat supplies, snacks, beer, restrooms & more

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