

LAKE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVES

Fishing Guide



Lake County
Forest Preserves

847-367-6640
LCFPD.org/fishing

Table of Contents



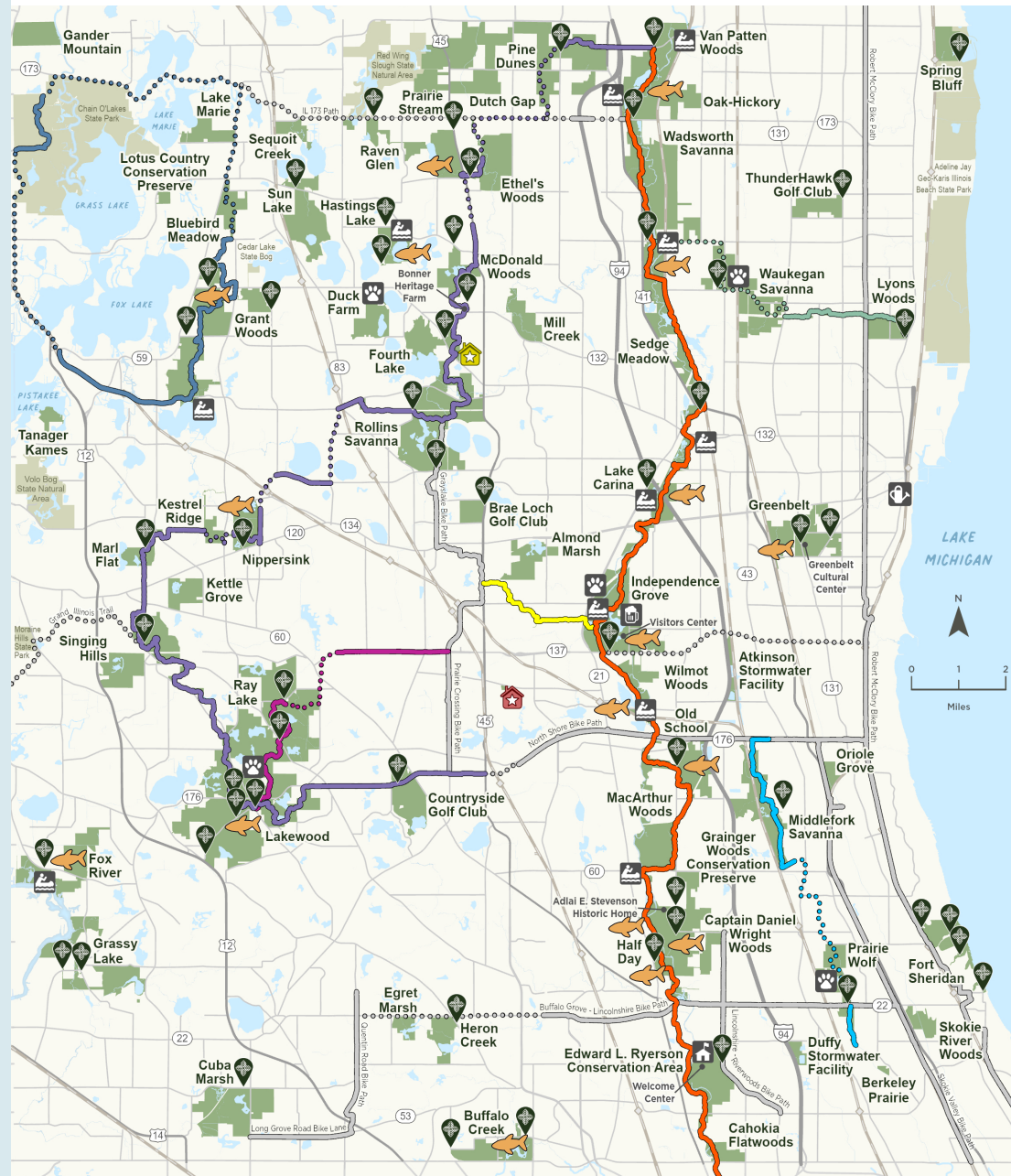
Fishing Information	2-4
Buffalo Creek Forest Preserve (Long Grove)	
Buffalo Creek Reservoir	5
Captain Daniel Wright Woods Forest Preserve (Mettawa)	
Wright Woods Pond	6
Des Plaines River Greenway	7
Fox River Marina and Forest Preserve (Port Barrington)	
Fox River	8
Grant Woods Forest Preserve (Ingleside)	
Rubber Duck Pond	9
Greenbelt Forest Preserve (North Chicago)	
Dugdale Lake	10
Pulaski Lake	11
Catch Them if You Can	12-13
Half Day Forest Preserve (Mettawa)	
Half Day Pond	14
Hastings Lake Forest Preserve (Lake Villa)	
Hastings Lake	15
Independence Grove Forest Preserve (Libertyville)	
The Lake at Independence Grove	16-17
Lake Carina Forest Preserve (Gurnee)	
Lake Carina	18
Lakewood Forest Preserve (Wauconda)	
Banana Lake	19
Taylor Lake	19
Nippersink Forest Preserve (Round Lake)	
Nippersink Lake	20
Old School Forest Preserve (Mettawa)	
Old School Lake	21
Raven Glen Forest Preserve (Antioch)	
Timber Lake	22
Sedge Meadow Forest Preserve (Wadsworth)	
Des Plaines Lake	23
Van Patten Woods Forest Preserve (Wadsworth)	
Sterling Lake	24
Be a Hero, Transport Zero™	25

Lake County Forest Preserves

More than 31,200 acres make up your Lake County Forest Preserves. Most preserves are open 6:30 am-sunset, daily. If a preserve gate is open before 6:30 am, the preserve is considered open for use.

MAP CURRENT AS OF
February 11, 2025

- FOREST PRESERVE**
- STATE LAND**
- ENTRANCE/PARKING**
- METRA STATION**
- CASEY TRAIL**
- CHAIN O'LAKES BIKE PATH**
- DES PLAINES RIVER TRAIL (DPRT)**
- DPRT TO LYONS WOODS**
- FORT HILL TRAIL**
- MIDDLEFORK GREENWAY**
- MILLENNIUM TRAIL**
- Planned Section**
- OTHER REGIONAL TRAILS**
- Planned Section**
- GENERAL OFFICES & DUNN MUSEUM**
- OPERATIONS & PUBLIC SAFETY**
- BEER GARDEN**
- CANOE LAUNCH**
- COMMUNITY GARDEN**
- EDUCATION CENTER**
- OFF-LEASH DOG AREA**



For emergencies, call 911. For nonemergency public safety issues, call our Ranger Police at 847-968-3404 (Mon-Fri, 6:30 am-3 pm) or visit [LCFPD.org/safety](https://www.lcfd.org/safety) to report a concern. After hours, call the Lake County Sheriff's 911 Communication Center at 847-549-5200. You can also email FP_police@LCFPD.org.

Fish and northern pike cover illustrations © Samantha Gallagher. Angler, boat, cloud, fishing line, lure, pier, tree line and water illustrations by Jeanna Martinucci Cristino. Design by Brett Peto. Photography © Jeff Goldberg, Pablo Jones. Depth contours provided by Lake County Health Department, Lakes Management Unit.

TRAIL MAP
Use our interactive trail map to navigate your adventure. To view the map, open the camera app on your phone and scan the QR code to the right.



847-367-6640
[LCFPD.org/fishing](https://www.lcfd.org/fishing)



Fishing is allowed in any Forest Preserves waterway unless a sign prohibiting it has been posted. Waterbody sizes vary, from two acres to 129 acres. Fish shown in this guide represent species typically found in each waterbody. Availability may vary. Learn more: LCFPD.org/fishing

Licenses

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) requires all anglers ages 16 and up to have a fishing license. Fees from these licenses provide funds to manage many waterways. Purchase a license at ifishillinois.org or at an approved vendor, including the Independence Grove Marina and sporting goods stores. IDNR Illinois Free Fishing Days occur each June.

Bait

Live bait is permitted. Seining or trapping baitfish is not permitted in any Forest Preserves waterway. Please do not release unused minnows. They are usually non-native species, and can compete with native fish for food and space. Worms and tackle are sold at Fox River Preserve and Marina and Independence Grove.

Catch-and-Release

Catch-and-release fishing is an important part of maintaining good fish populations. It's mandatory at Independence Grove and Nippersink. At other preserves, we encourage you to release bass and northern pike. They help keep panfish populations in check. Careful handling and release help reduce stress on fish and give them the best chance to live, reproduce and be caught again. Practice the following procedures.

- Quickly land the fish. If you have to net the fish, keep it in the water as you remove the hook. Rubber mesh nets are best.
- Use barbless hooks. Have a hemostat or needle-nose pliers available for hook removal.
- Be gentle. Don't grab the fish around its abdomen, or put your fingers in its eyes or gills.
- Limit the time the fish is out of the water to 30 seconds or fewer.
- Practice CPR: catch, photo and release. Wet your hands and lift the fish from the water into a horizontal position. Support its weight by placing your off-hand under the fish's belly. Have someone ready with a camera before you remove the fish from the water.
- For deeply hooked fish, cut the line as close to the hook as possible and release the fish.
- Place—don't toss—the fish back in the water. Simply turn your net over for release if possible. Don't swish the fish back and forth to aerate it. Gills are designed for one-way water flow only.
- Large trophy fish are usually healthy females. Release them as soon as possible so they can continue to reproduce.

Boat Fishing and Rentals

Bring your small, non-motorized watercraft to Hastings Lake, Lake Carina, Long Lake at Grant Woods or one of six canoe launches along the Des Plaines River. Electric trolling motors are allowed at Sterling Lake at Van Patten Woods. A launch for boats, personal watercraft and paddlecraft is available at Fox River Marina. Several types of watercraft, including fishing boats, are available for rent at Independence Grove. Float tubes, belly boats and wading are not permitted.

Hours

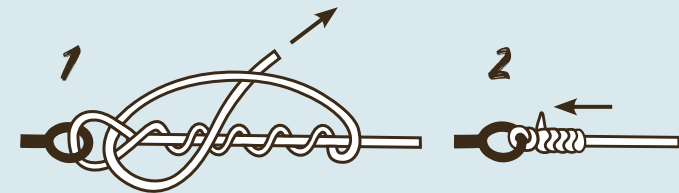
Fishing hours at most preserves are 6:30 am–sunset daily. At the Independence Grove Marina, daily service is available Memorial Day through Labor Day. Weekend service is available at the Marina early May through Memorial Day and again Labor Day until late September. Marina hours are 6:30 am–one hour before sunset. Call **847-968-3499** or visit LCFPD.org/ig to learn more.

Basic Fishing Knots

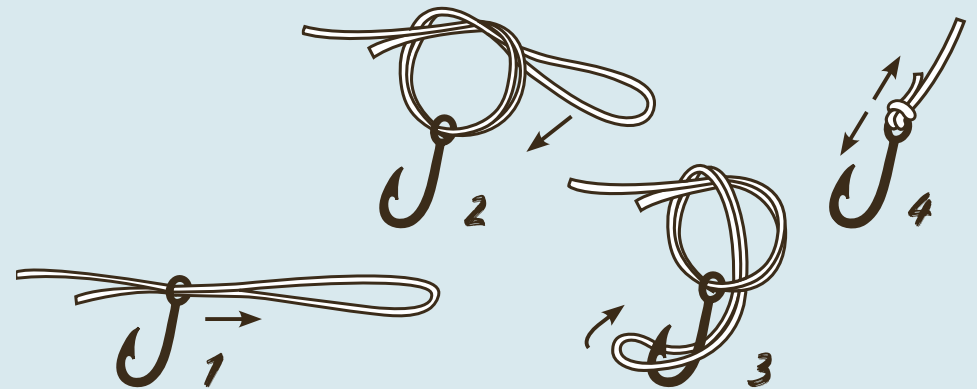
Use fishing knots to tie your line to your hook, lure, swivel and other tackle. Anglers commonly use the knots shown below. Each knot has a specific purpose. When creating your knot, consider the following.

- The tag end, or working end, is the end of the line used to tie the knot.
- The standing end is the line that comes from your reel.
- You want the strongest knot possible to avoid losing fish.
- Simple overhand knots weaken your line.
- Leave about 12 inches of the tag end of the line to tie knots properly.
- Practice tying until you can create each knot easily and correctly.
- Use saliva to wet knots as you pull them tight. This prevents damage to the line, helps pull the knot tight and stops it from slipping.
- Once tied, trim knots closely. A good, tight knot will not come loose. Close trimming prevents it from catching snags or weeds. Dispose of all used line in appropriate receptacles.
- Do not burn the tag end. Heat damages the line and knot.

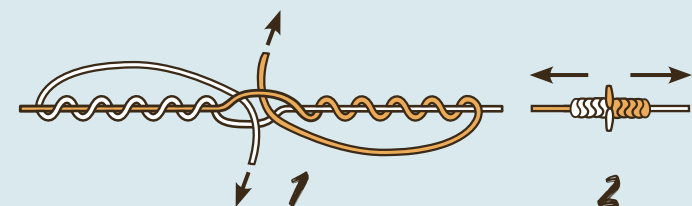
Improved Clinch Knot Tie fishing line to a hook or lure for lines up to 20-pound test. The secret is making five turns of the tag end around the standing end before putting the tag end back through the formed loop. The final tuck of the line back through the loop makes this knot very strong.



Palomar Knot Tie fishing line to a hook or lure for lines up to and over 20-pound test. This takes more line to tie and can tangle because it is doubled first, but it is a favorite of many because it is easy and can be tied in the dark.








Blood Knot Join two lines of similar diameter.



Ice Fishing

Ice fishing is permitted on five designated waterbodies when conditions allow from 6:30 am–sunset daily. It’s at your own risk. The Forest Preserves does not monitor ice conditions. Anglers should check ice thickness before going onto any frozen waterbody. A minimum of four inches of solid ice over the entire waterbody is recommended before attempting to ice fish.

-  **Hastings Lake: permitted on any part of the lake.**
-  **Independence Grove: permitted on any part of the lake apart from the ice skating area west of the Marina.**
-  **Lake Carina: permitted on any part of the lake.**
-  **Lakewood: permitted on Banana Lake only.**
-  **Van Patten Woods: permitted on any part of Sterling Lake. Ice fishing here is open for extended hours, 6:30 am–one hour after sunset daily.**

Bring your own gear. Temporary shanties and shelters are permitted but must be removed by the end of the day. Only two poles are allowed, or tip-ups with no more than two hooks on each line. Holes must be drilled 6 inches or smaller in diameter. All other fishing regulations apply.

Fishing in Your Lake County Forest Preserves

The Forest Preserves works with IDNR to manage a number of lakes and ponds that provide quality fishing. State of Illinois fishing regulations, including site-specific regulations, apply at all sites in addition to the following limits. Further information is available at ifishillinois.org.

Only line fishing is allowed in Forest Preserves waterways. Anglers may use a maximum of two poles. We encourage the use of barbless hooks, which are easier to remove and cause less damage to fish. Please deposit all litter, including fishing line, in appropriate receptacles. Most sites offer recycling and fishing line collection tubes.

Species	Minimum Length	Creel Limit
Bluegill/sunfish	N/A	N/A
Channel catfish	N/A	3 per day
Crappie	N/A	N/A
Largemouth bass	15 inches	1 per day
Muskellunge	36 inches*	1 per day
Northern pike	24 inches	3 per day
Smallmouth bass	15 inches	1 per day
Walleye	16 inches	6 per day

























*At Sterling Lake in Van Patten Woods, the minimum length for muskellunge (muskie) is 48 inches. All live bait greater than 8 inches must be rigged with a quick set rig.

Origins

Lake County owes its abundance of lakes to the last ice age, when the Wisconsin glacier advanced and retreated across the landscape 10,000–12,000 years ago.

Glaciers gouged and carved the landscape, and large masses of ice left behind created depressions that form some of our present-day lakes. Some lakes and ponds in the preserves are dammed streams. Others are humanmade former quarries or borrow pits, such as the Lake at Independence Grove.

Preserve Map Legend

 Beer Garden	 Picnic Shelter
 Boat Launch	 Playground
 Bridge	 Toilet
 Canoe Launch	 Visitors Center
 Cartop Boat Launch	 —2 ft— Depth Contour
 Drinking Water	 ——— Des Plaines River Trail
 Fishing Pier	 Forest Preserve
 Forest Preserve Entrance	 ——— Millennium Trail
 Kiosk	 ——— Railroad
 Overlook	 ——— Road
 Parking Lot	 ····· Trail
 Parking (Accessible)	 Waterbody

Buffalo Creek

18163 West Checker Road
Long Grove, IL 60047
Southern Lake County



Buffalo Creek Reservoir

Size: 39 acres

Max depth: 4.5 feet

Designed and built as a flood control reservoir in 1986, the lake is not managed or stocked for fishing. Careful, creative design of the reservoir has created a natural-looking wetland. During and after rainstorms, water levels can rise 10 or more feet.



BLUEGILL



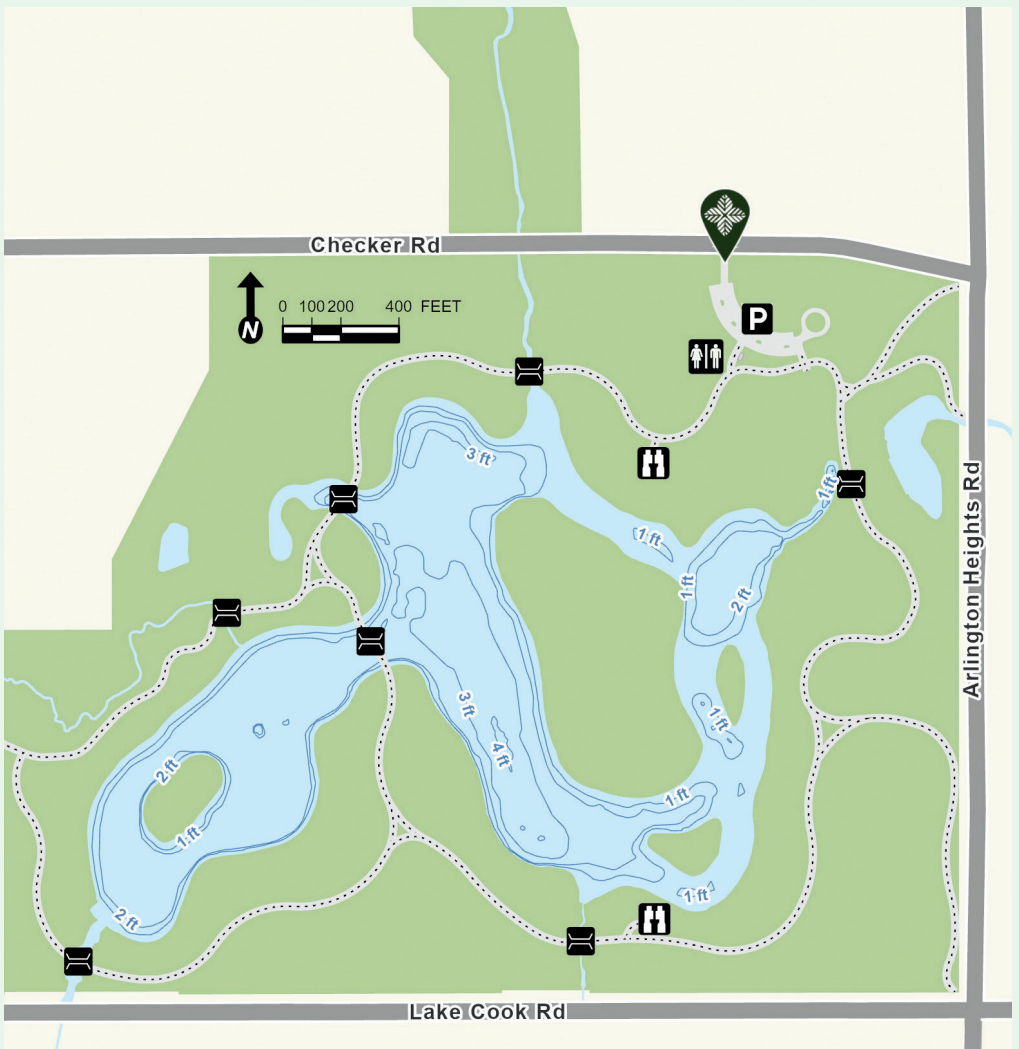
NORTHERN PIKE



GREEN SUNFISH



LARGEMOUTH BASS



Captain Daniel Wright Woods

24830 St. Mary's Road
Mettawa, IL 60045
Southeastern Lake County

Wright Woods Pond

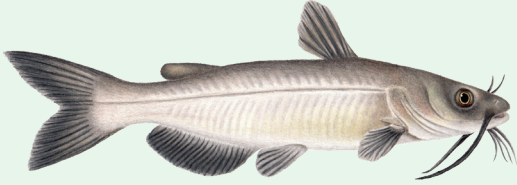
Size: 3 acres

Max depth: 8 feet

This humanmade pond was created in 1964 and reshaped in 1992. Generally, largemouth bass are stocked here every two years. A fishing deck is available along the northeastern shore of the pond.



BLUEGILL



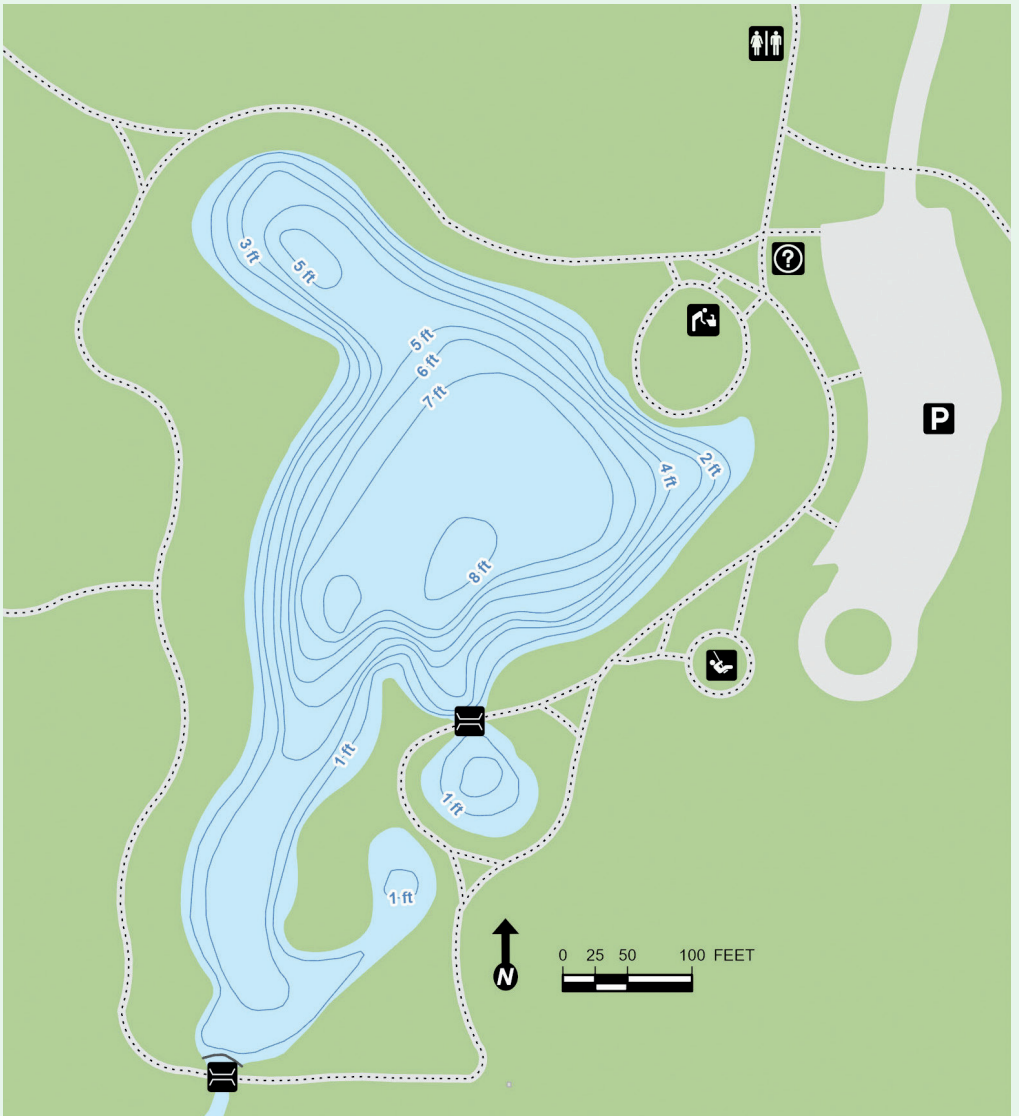
CHANNEL CATFISH



GREEN SUNFISH



LARGEMOUTH BASS



Des Plaines River Greenway

Length: 34 miles

Des Plaines River

Average depth: 3 feet

While not stocked or managed for fishing, the Des Plaines River contains many fish species and is a great spot for anglers. Parking and access to the river's edge are available at six canoe launches.

Van Patten Woods Canoe Launch

East of Rte 41 on Russell Road

Sedge Meadow Canoe Launch

East of Rte 41 on Wadsworth Road

Lake Carina Canoe Launch

Near McClure Ave. & O'Plaine Road

Accessed from Gowe Park

Independence Grove Canoe Launch

Near Parking Lot J

Wilmot Woods Canoe Launch

On Oak Spring Road

West of St. Mary's Road

Captain Daniel Wright Woods Canoe Launch

On Rte 60

East of Milwaukee Ave. (Rte 21)

River fishing is not allowed at MacArthur Woods, Ryerson Conservation Area or Wadsworth Savanna due to their status as Illinois Nature Preserves.



BLACK CRAPPIE



BLUEGILL



CHANNEL CATFISH



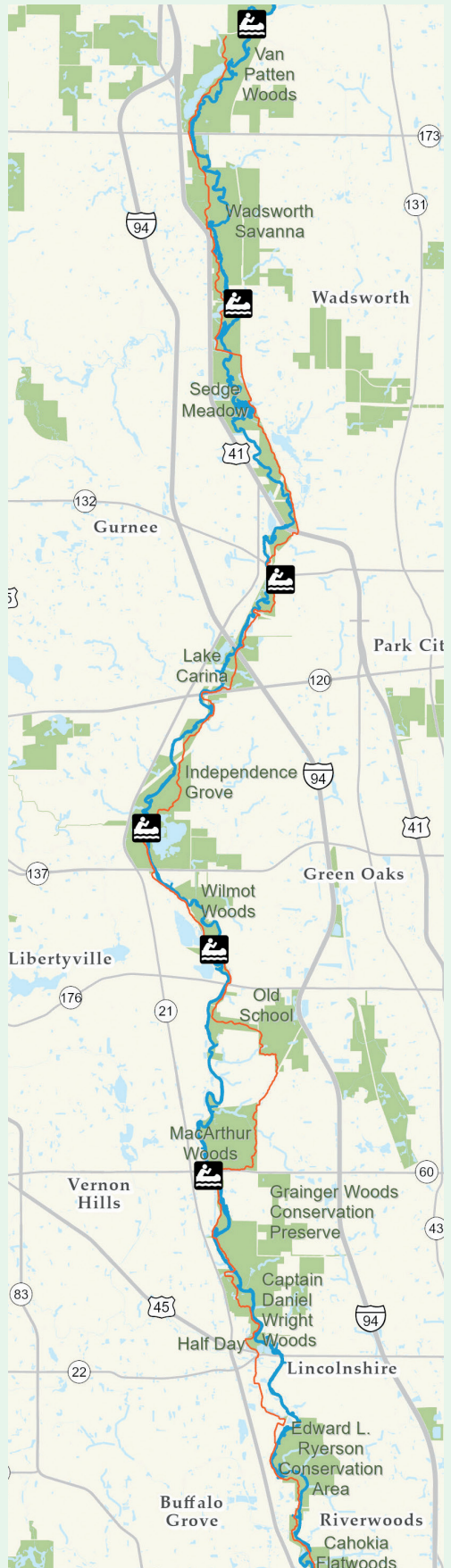
GREEN SUNFISH



LARGEMOUTH BASS



NORTHERN PIKE



Fox River Forest Preserve

28500 West Roberts Road
Port Barrington, IL 60010
Southwestern Lake County



Fox River

Fox River Forest Preserve is open for shoreline fishing along the riverbank only. Fishing is not allowed in the Marina and dock area, or from the boat launch. The 169-slip Marina offers 20, 25 and 30-foot slips, and includes a four-lane launch for boats and personal watercraft. Larger slips provide electric and water access, and optional in/out privileges. Indoor dry storage is available. Call **847-381-0669**.



BLACK CRAPPIE



BLUEGILL



CHANNEL CATFISH



GREEN SUNFISH



LARGEMOUTH BASS



NORTHERN PIKE



SMALLMOUTH BASS



WALLEYE



Grant Woods

25405 West Monaville Road
Ingleside, IL 60041
Northwestern Lake County

Rubber Duck Pond

Size: 2 acres

Max depth: 12 feet

A good beginner spot for catching bluegill, Rubber Duck Pond was excavated in 1987. Turn the map on its side to see how the pond got its name. No stocking is done here. Depth contours are estimates. Actual depths may vary.



BLUEGILL



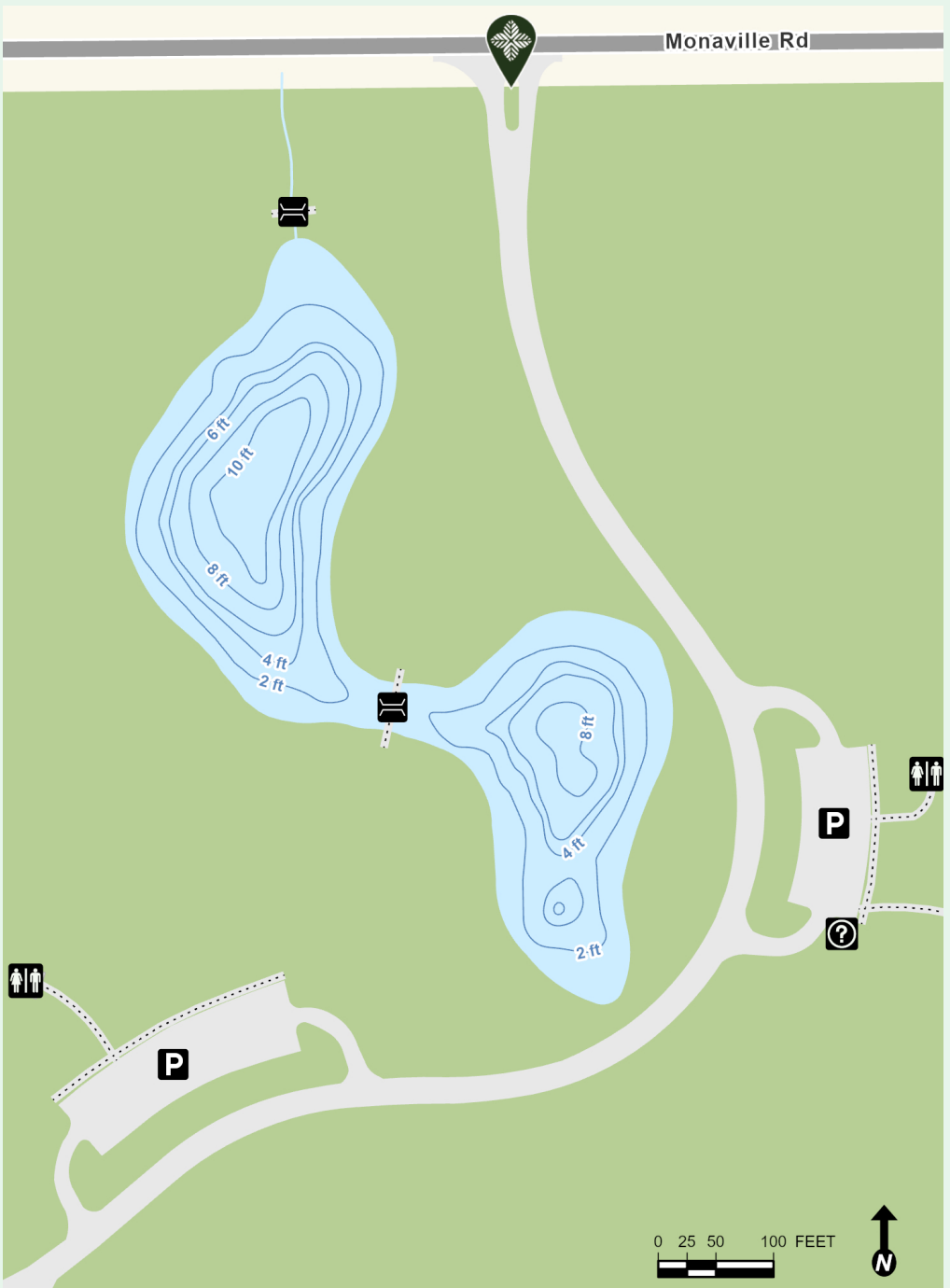
CHANNEL CATFISH



GREEN SUNFISH



LARGEMOUTH BASS



Greenbett

2250 West Dugdale Road
Waukegan, IL 60085
Northeastern Lake County

Dugdale Lake

Size: 4 acres

Max depth: 18 feet

Built to its final shape in 1984, Dugdale Lake offers good shoreline fishing, particularly for beginners looking to catch bluegill.



BLACK CRAPPIE



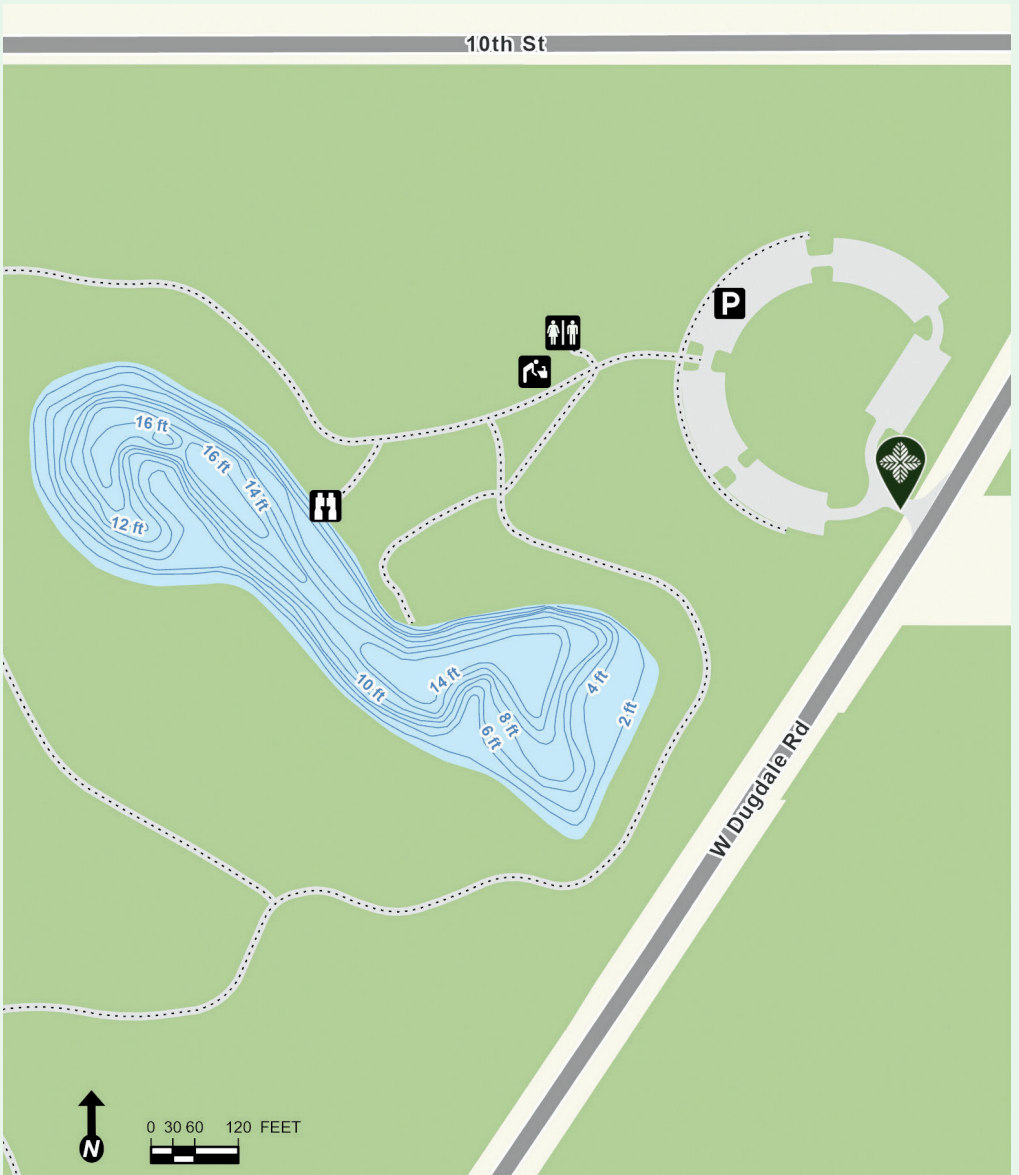
CHANNEL CATFISH



BLUEGILL



LARGEMOUTH BASS



Greenbett

1110 Green Bay Road
North Chicago, IL 60064
Northeastern Lake County

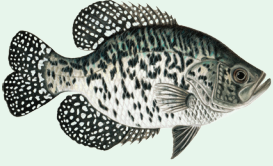


Pulaski Lake

Size: 8 acres

Max depth: 21 feet

Built as a borrow pit for the 14th Street overpass in 1976, occasional flooding of the adjacent Skokie River has allowed fish such as channel catfish and common carp access to Pulaski Lake.



BLACK CRAPPIE



CHANNEL CATFISH



BLUEGILL



LARGEMOUTH BASS



Catch Them if You Can

Bluegill, channel catfish, common carp, crappie, largemouth bass, muskellunge (muskie), northern pike, smallmouth bass, sunfish, walleye and yellow perch are found in Lake County waterways. Some species are common and easier to catch, such as panfish, a class so named because they are edible fish that do not usually outgrow the size of a frying pan.

Channel catfish and common carp are plentiful in most preserves. Large predatory fish, such as walleye and muskie, are fairly rare and challenging to catch. Learn about these sport species from videos, books, other anglers and fishing clubs.

If you need a line to cast, purchase an inexpensive starter kit from a sporting goods store. There are four types of reels: spincast, spinning, fly and baitcast. Beginners typically start with a spincast reel and rod, and graduate to a spinning reel. Depending on what they are fishing for, professionals and avid anglers use a baitcast, fly or spinning reel. The most versatile piece of equipment is a spinning reel. Bring along a rod and spincast reel, fishing line, tackle box, hooks, sinkers, bobbers, needle-nose pliers, fishing forceps, sunscreen and polarized sunglasses.

Our staff suggest trying live bait first. An effective rig can entail a worm and a bobber. Worms and minnows are attractive to nearly all fish.

Intermediate fishers might experiment with artificial lures, which typically advertise the species they are intended for on their packages. Look at water clarity when selecting lure colors. In clear waterbodies, use browns and greens. A color called green pumpkin looks lifelike. In murky waterbodies, the colors fish see best are black and blue.

With license and gear prepped, choose a destination. Staff generally agree that sunrise and sunset, spring through fall are when many fish species are most active. Water quality, weather and waterway structure also influence the quantity of fish caught.

Judging whether a waterbody provides good fish habitat is a useful skill to develop. A healthy shoreline and aquatic vegetation help sustain good sport fish. One ideal place is weed beds growing near a drop-off underwater. Cast along the edge of the weeds to prevent snags.

Adhere to leave-no-trace principles. Avoid hooking yourself and others, logs, rocks and terrestrial plants. Lures and line caught in trees can tangle wildlife, sometimes fatally. Unhook caught fish and return them to the water quickly so they are stressed for the shortest amount of time possible. Dump unwanted bait in the trash, not in waterways. Recycle used containers and fishing line in appropriate receptacles.

There is no guarantee whether the day's catch will be plentiful or not. But success is how you interpret it. Even if you do not catch a fish, you will see plants and wildlife, and be surrounded by nature. 🐟

Photos (Top to bottom):

- Fishing is a self-paced, rewarding activity available in the preserves.
- Nippersink has two lakes totaling 15 acres.
- Independence Grove is a popular fishing spot for beginner and experienced anglers.
- Start small with a new fishing gear collection and add to it over time. Keep extra supplies such as hooks, sinkers, line and lures on hand.



Half Day

24255 North Milwaukee Avenue (Route 21)
Vernon Hills, IL 60060
Southeastern Lake County

Half Day Pond

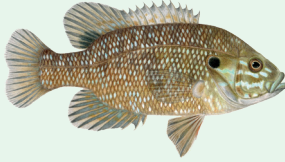
Size: 3 acres

Max depth: 12 feet

Named after the Potawatomi Chief Aptakisis, whose name means "Half Day," this pond was built in 1989.



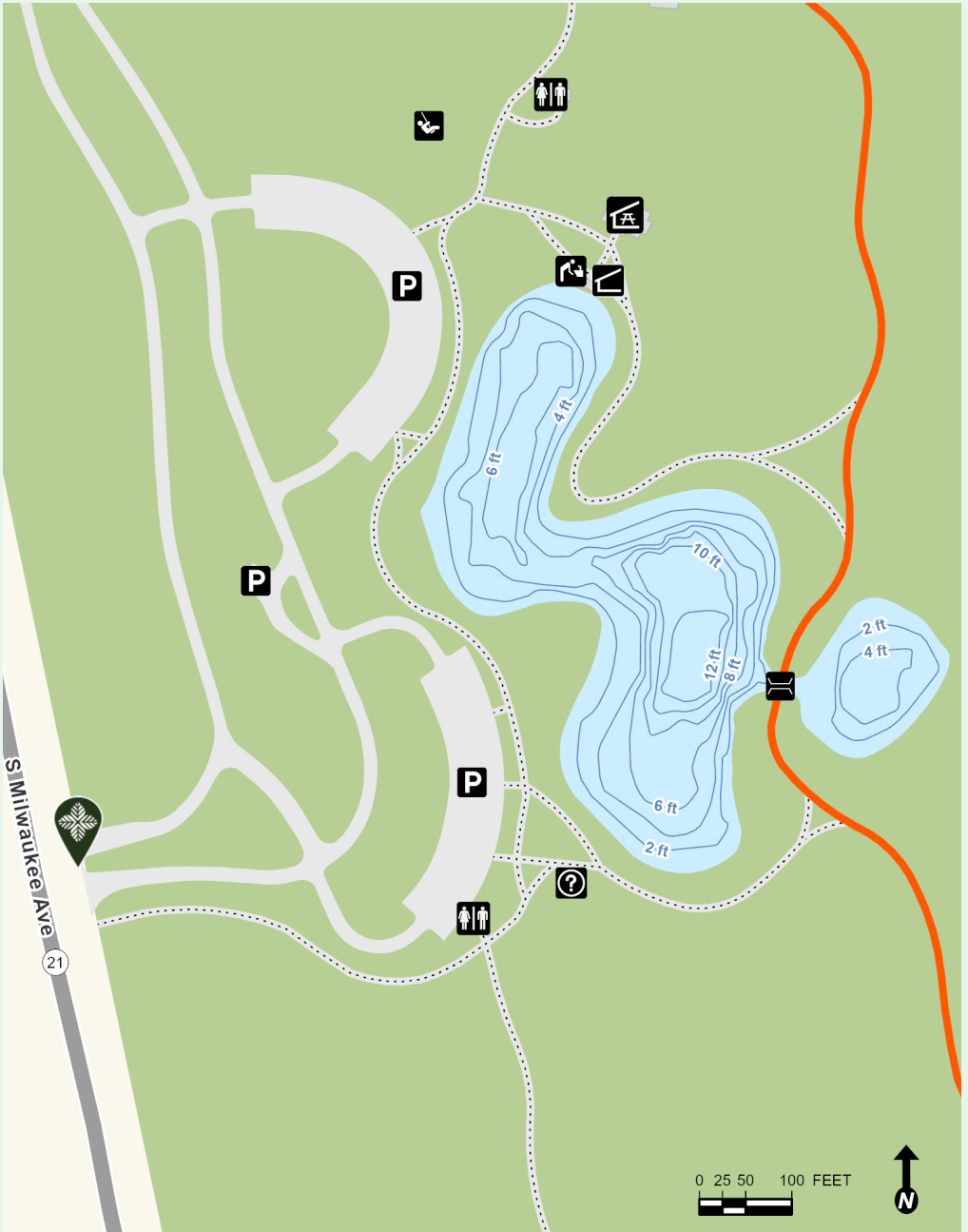
BLUEGILL



GREEN SUNFISH



LARGEMOUTH BASS



Hastings Lake

21155 West Golden Road
Lake Villa, IL 60046
Northern Lake County



Hastings Lake

Size: 74 acres

Max depth: 24 feet

Hastings Lake features 7,800 feet of shoreline and many species for fishing. Parking and lake access for cartop boats, canoes, kayaks and other non-motorized watercraft are available. Two fishing piers are located on the western shore. Fishing nodes are on the southeastern shore. Depth contours are estimates. Actual depths may vary.



BLACK CRAPPIE



BLUEGILL



GREEN SUNFISH



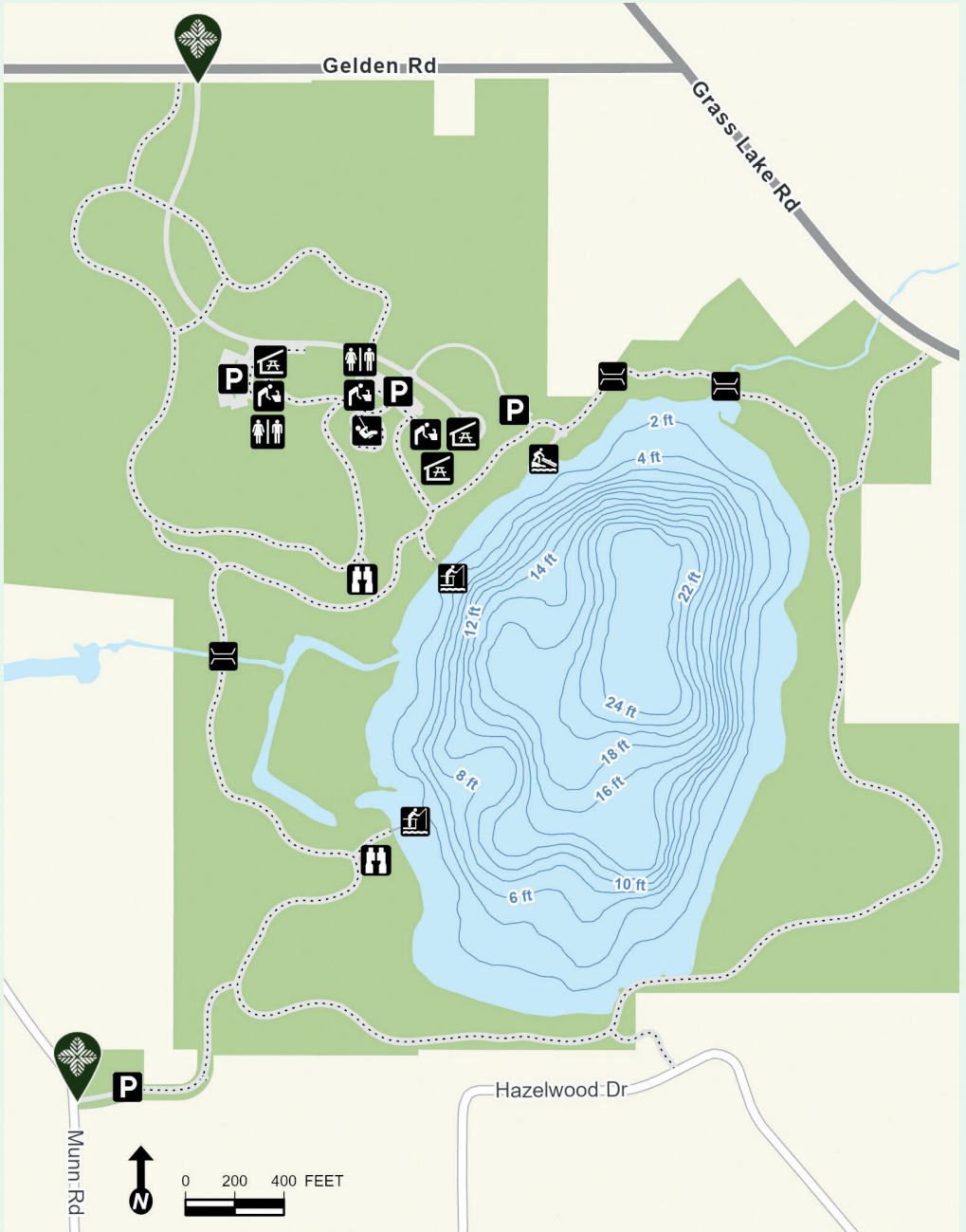
LARGEMOUTH BASS



NORTHERN PIKE



YELLOW PERCH



Independence Grove

The Lake at Independence Grove

16400 West Buckley Road
Libertyville, IL 60048
Central Lake County

Size: 129 acres

Max depth: 46 feet

We've transformed a sterile gravel quarry with steep sides into a rich aquatic ecosystem with gently graded slopes and underwater islands. There is good fishing here, especially for bass. Fishing piers are on-site. A variety of watercraft is available for rent at the Marina. Bait, tackle and concessions are for sale. No private watercraft are permitted on the lake.

Catch-and-release fishing is mandatory here. Use barbless hooks. At the Independence Grove Marina, daily service is available Memorial Day through Labor Day. Weekend service is available at the Marina early May through Memorial Day and again Labor Day until late September. Marina hours are 6:30 am—one hour before sunset.

Dogs, horses and other pets (besides service animals) are not permitted at Independence Grove except on the Des Plaines River Trail. A parking fee applies for nonresidents. Call 847-968-3499 or visit LCFPD.org/ig to learn more.



BLACK CRAPPIE



BLUEGILL



CHANNEL CATFISH



GREEN SUNFISH



LARGEMOUTH BASS



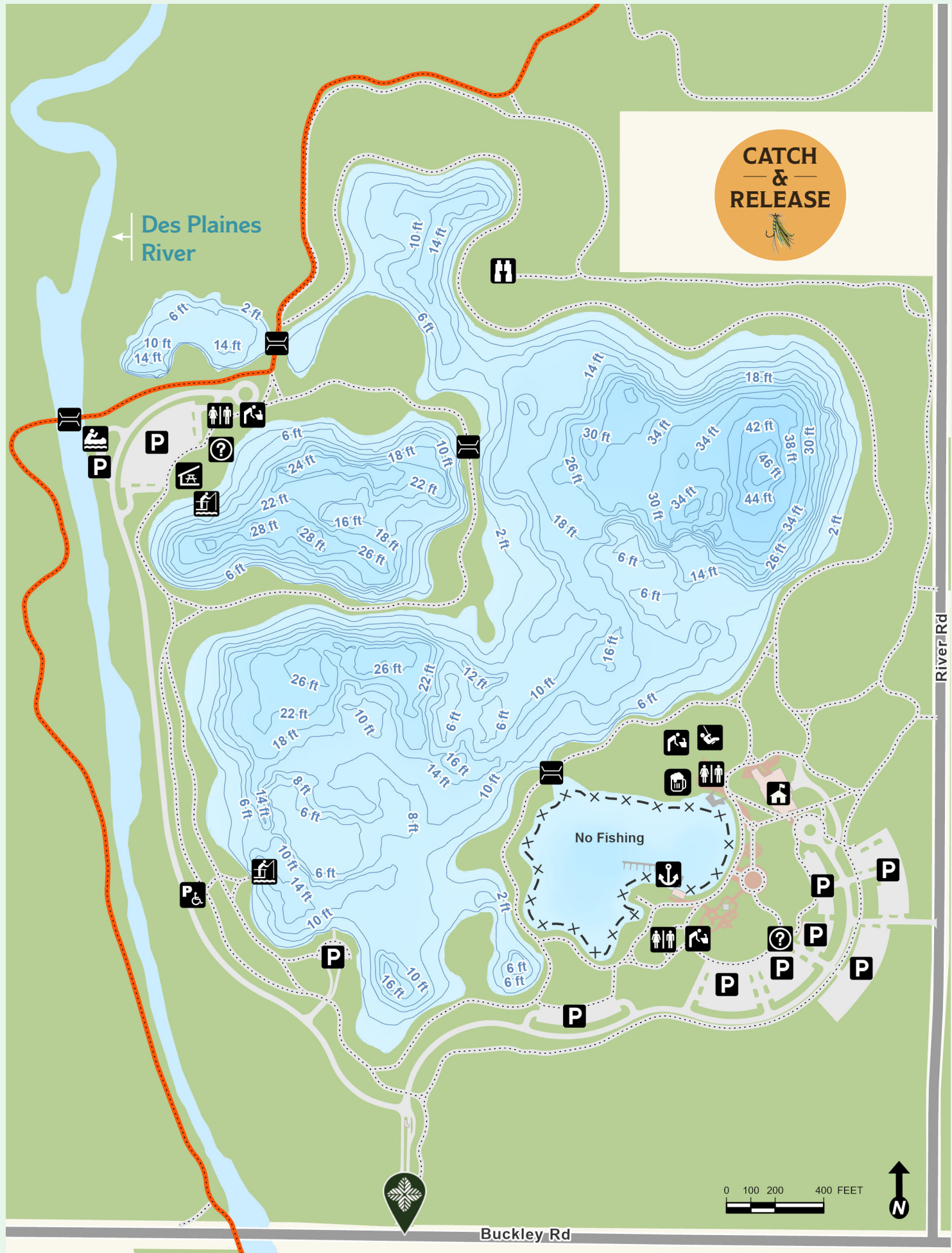
NORTHERN PIKE



WALLEYE



YELLOW PERCH



Lake Carina

33919 Milwaukee Avenue (Route 21)
Gurnee, IL 60031
North-central Lake County

Lake Carina

Size: 23 acres

Max depth: 23 feet

A popular fishing hole and former gravel pit, this preserve's main feature is Lake Carina. A gravel trail provides walk-in access and connects the parking area with a fishing pier. Parking and lake access for cartop boats, canoes, kayaks and other small, non-motorized watercraft are available.



BLACK CRAPPIE



BLUEGILL



GREEN SUNFISH



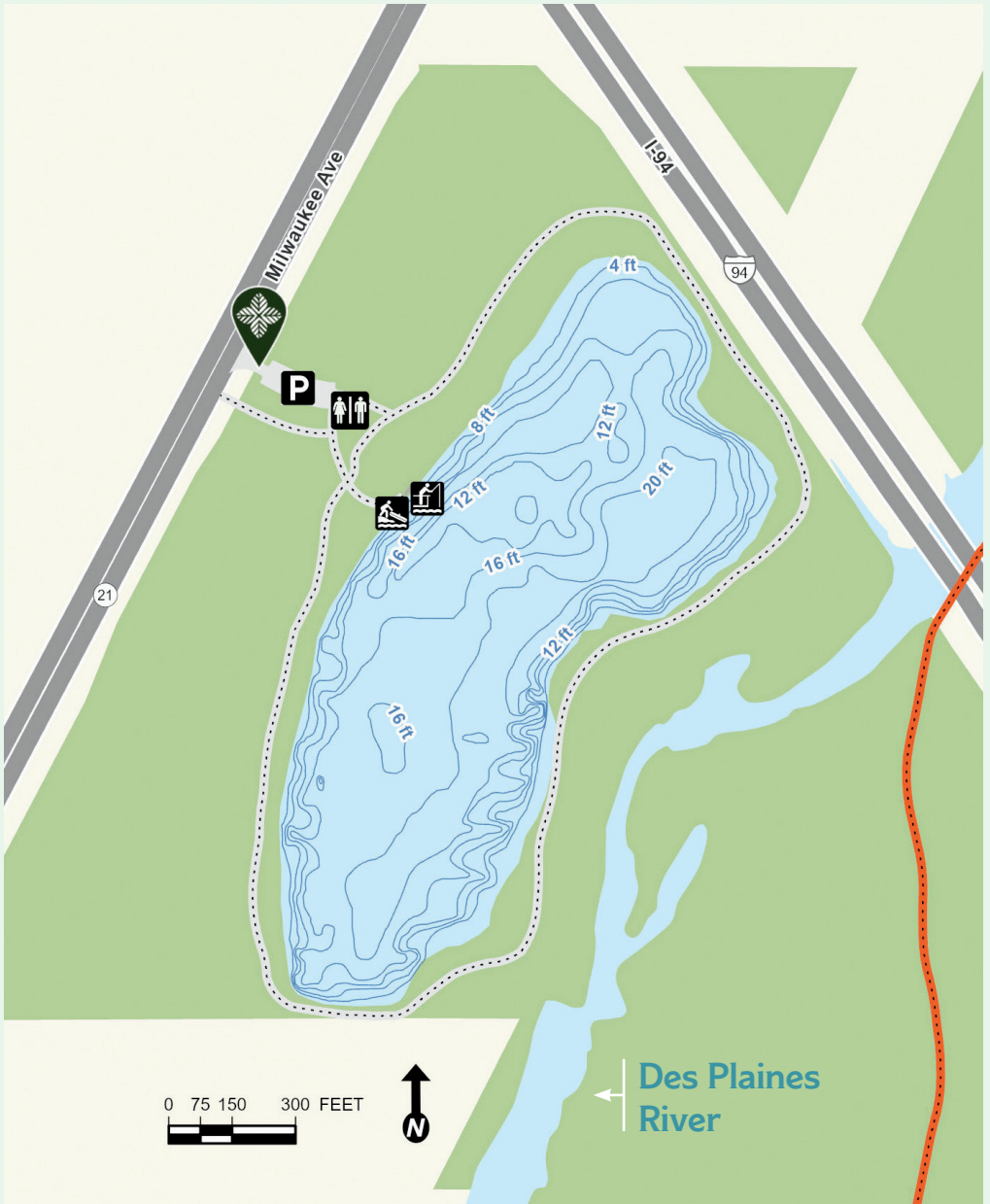
LARGEMOUTH BASS



NORTHERN PIKE



YELLOW PERCH



Lakewood

27277 Forest Preserve Road
Wauconda, IL 60084
Southwestern Lake County

Banana Lake

Size: 5 acres

Max depth: 27 feet

Taylor Lake

Size: 6 acres

Max depth: 17 feet

Two fishing areas at Lakewood are shown in this guide. Ice fishing is permitted on Banana Lake only when conditions allow.



BLACK CRAPPIE



BLUEGILL



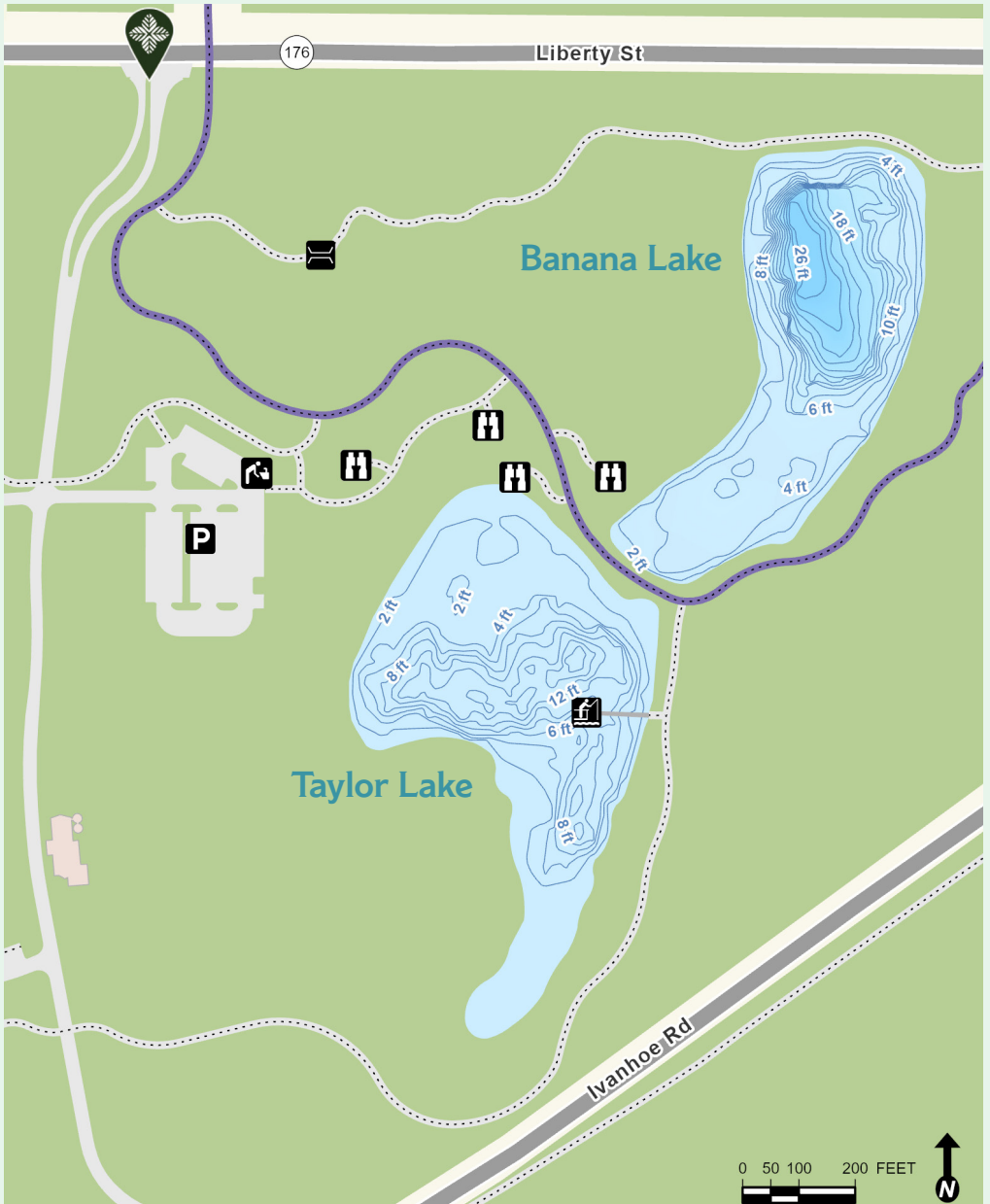
CHANNEL CATFISH



GREEN SUNFISH



LARGEMOUTH BASS



Nippersink

900 West Belvidere Road
Round Lake, IL 60073
West-central Lake County



Nippersink Lake

Size: 15 acres

Max depth: 8.5 feet

Humanmade in 1965, extensive shoreline restoration efforts and improved fish habitats make Nippersink's two lakes great for fishing. The lakes are connected by culverts. Anglers can fish from shore or from two fishing piers. Catch-and-release fishing is mandatory here. Use barbless hooks.



BLACK CRAPPIE



BLUEGILL



CHANNEL CATFISH



GREEN SUNFISH



LARGEMOUTH BASS



Old School

28285 St. Mary's Road
Mettawa, IL 60048
Central Lake County

Old School Lake

Size: 8 acres

Max depth: 12 feet

Old School Lake began as a borrow pit left over after construction of Interstate Tollway 94 in the 1950s. It was later expanded and reshaped into the form present today. Depth contours are estimates. Actual depths may vary.



BLUEGILL



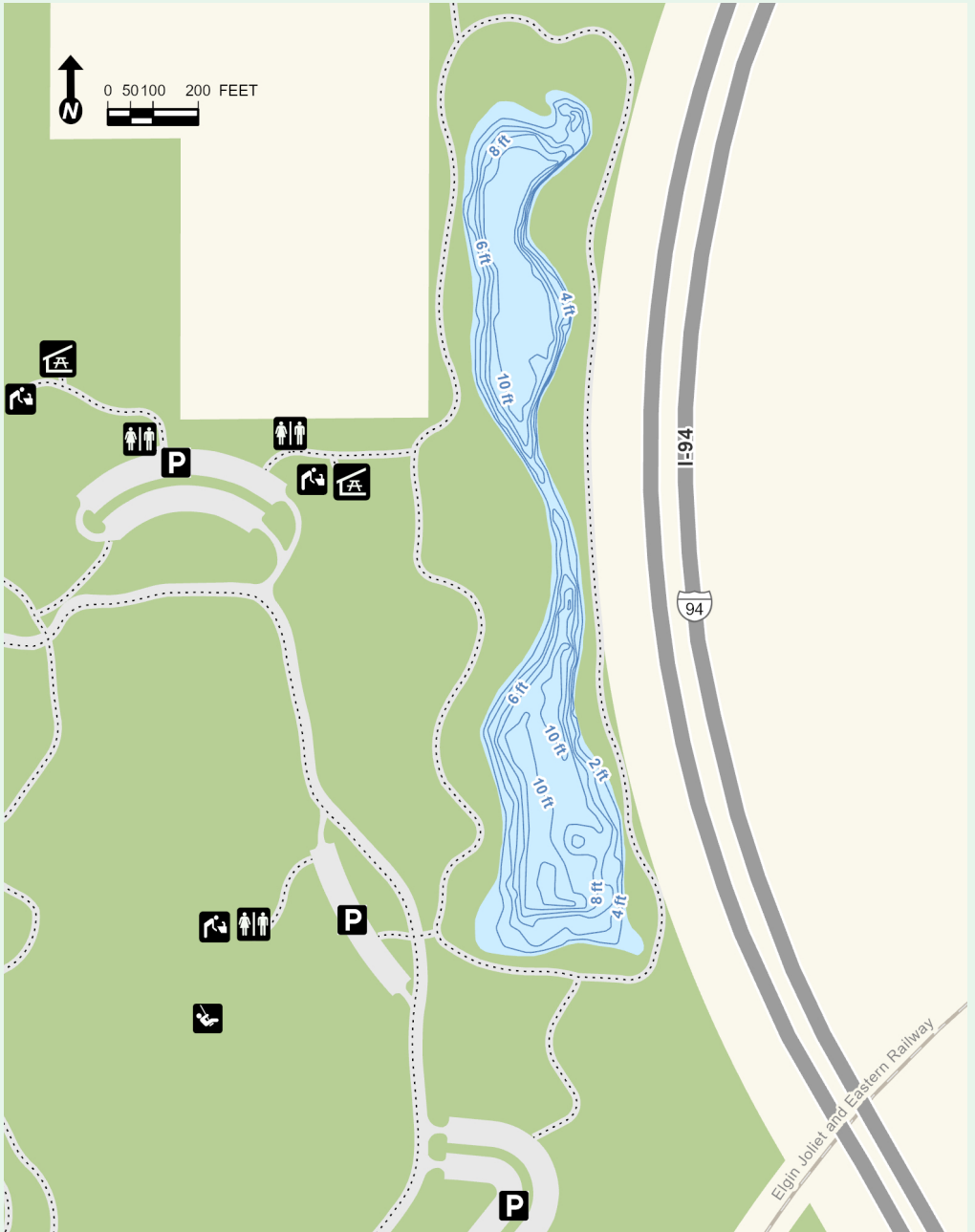
CHANNEL CATFISH



GREEN SUNFISH



LARGEMOUTH BASS



Raven Glen

41080 North U.S. Highway 45
Antioch, IL 60002
Northern Lake County



Timber Lake

Size: 33 acres

Max depth: 33 feet

Timber Lake is one of the most prominent natural features of Raven Glen. Anglers can fish from shore or from two fishing piers. The northern and western shorelines of the lake are privately owned and not accessible for public use.



BLACK CRAPPIE



BLUEGILL



GREEN SUNFISH



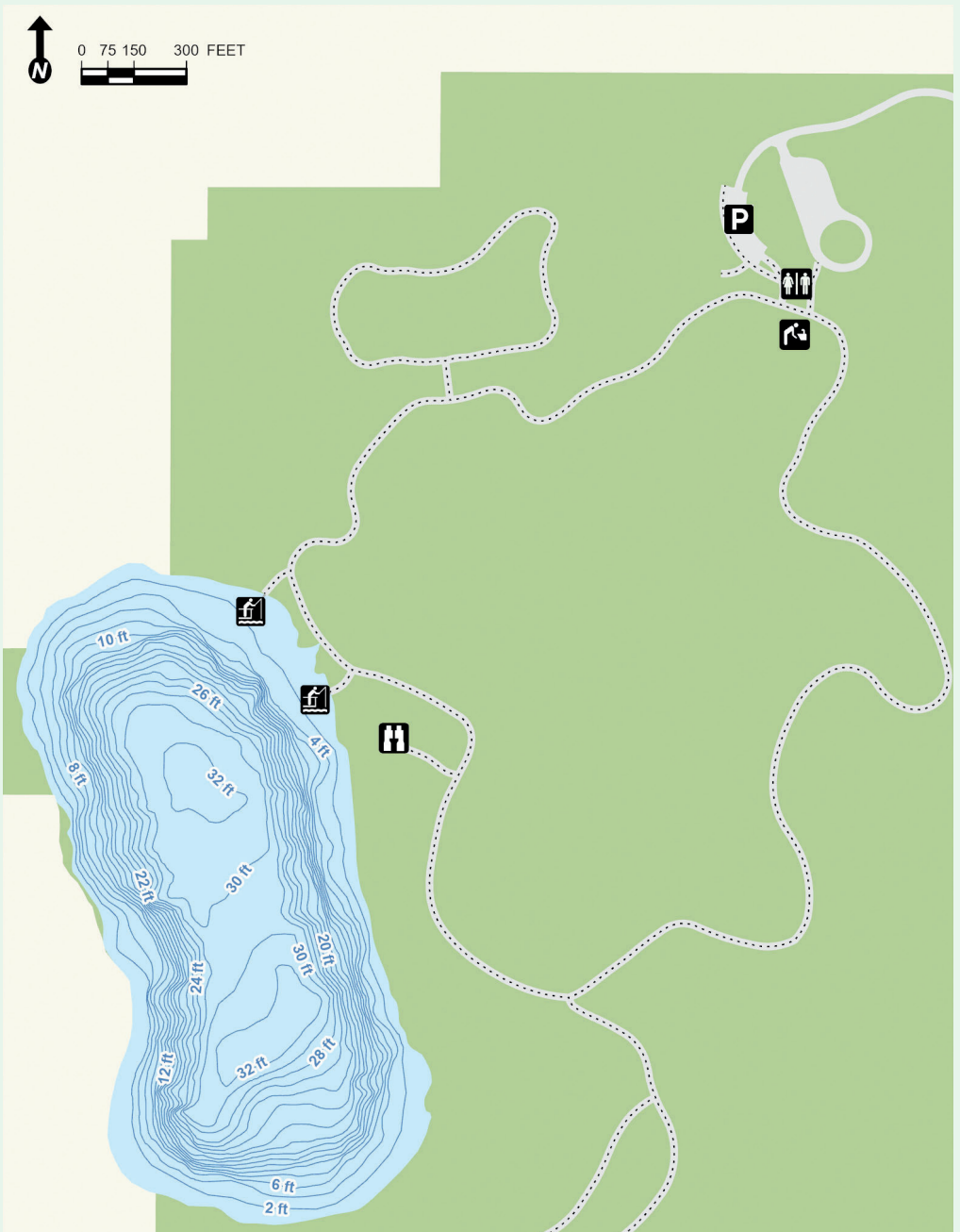
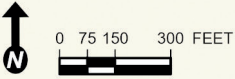
LARGEMOUTH BASS



NORTHERN PIKE



YELLOW PERCH



Sedge Meadow

15313 West Wadsworth Road
Wadsworth, IL 60083
Northeastern Lake County

Des Plaines Lake

Size: 26 acres

Max depth: 24 feet

Originally an isolated sand and gravel pit, the Des Plaines River was rerouted through the Lake in 1987. Des Plaines Lake can be accessed from the Des Plaines River Trail with parking available at the Sedge Meadow main lot or Canoe Launch located south of Wadsworth Road.



BLACK CRAPPIE



BLUEGILL



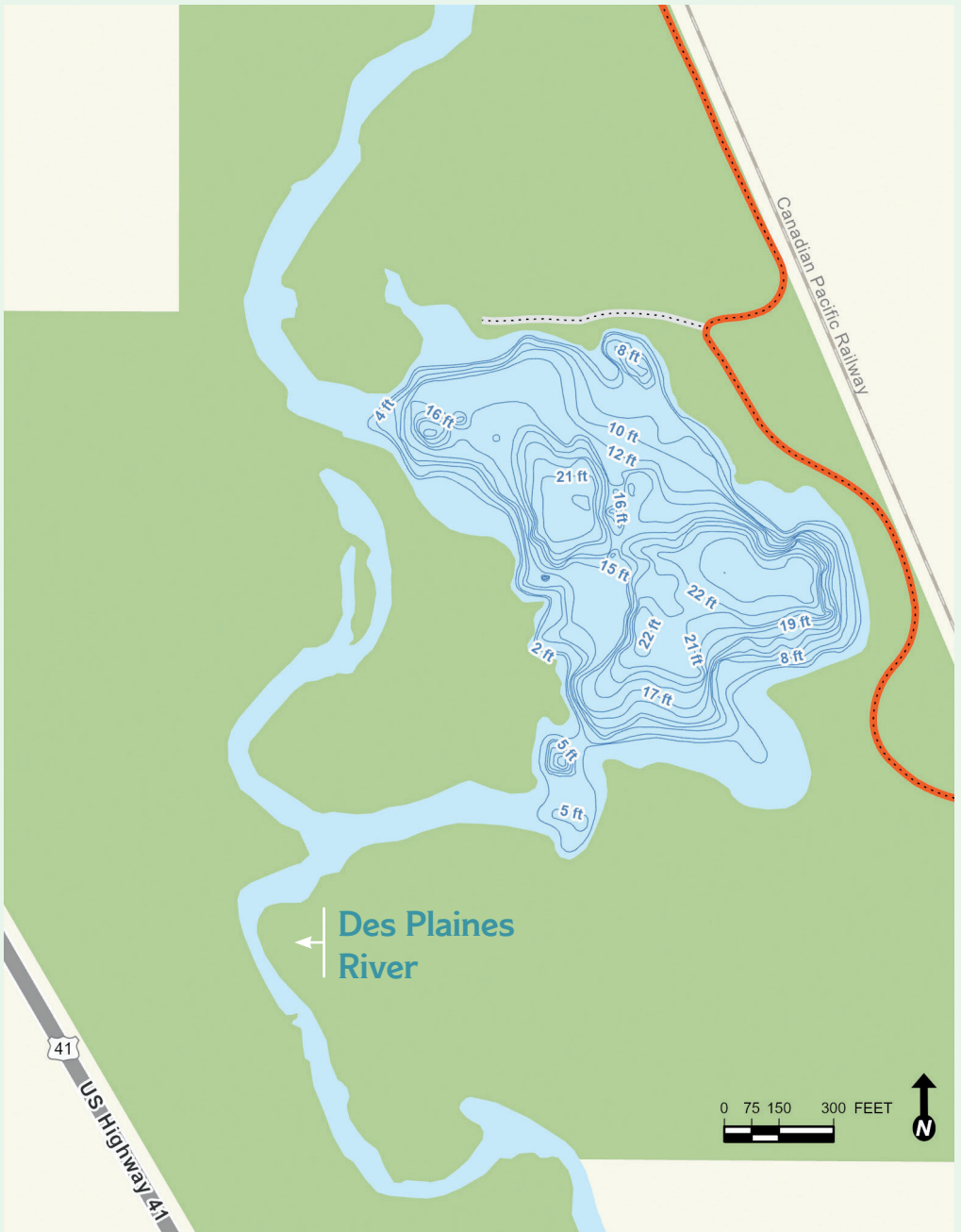
GREEN SUNFISH



LARGEMOUTH BASS



NORTHERN PIKE



Van Patten Woods

15838 West Route 173
Wadsworth, IL 60083
Northern Lake County

Sterling Lake

Size: 87 acres

Max depth: 26 feet

Sterling Lake features a launch for cartop boats, canoes, kayaks and other small, non-motorized watercraft. Launching is free and at your own risk. Use flotation gear approved by the U.S. Coast Guard. Boats must be registered with the State of Illinois. Trailer parking is limited to the grass overflow lot. Electric trolling motors are allowed. Ice fishing is permitted on Sterling Lake when conditions allow.



BLACK CRAPPIE



BLUEGILL



CHANNEL CATFISH



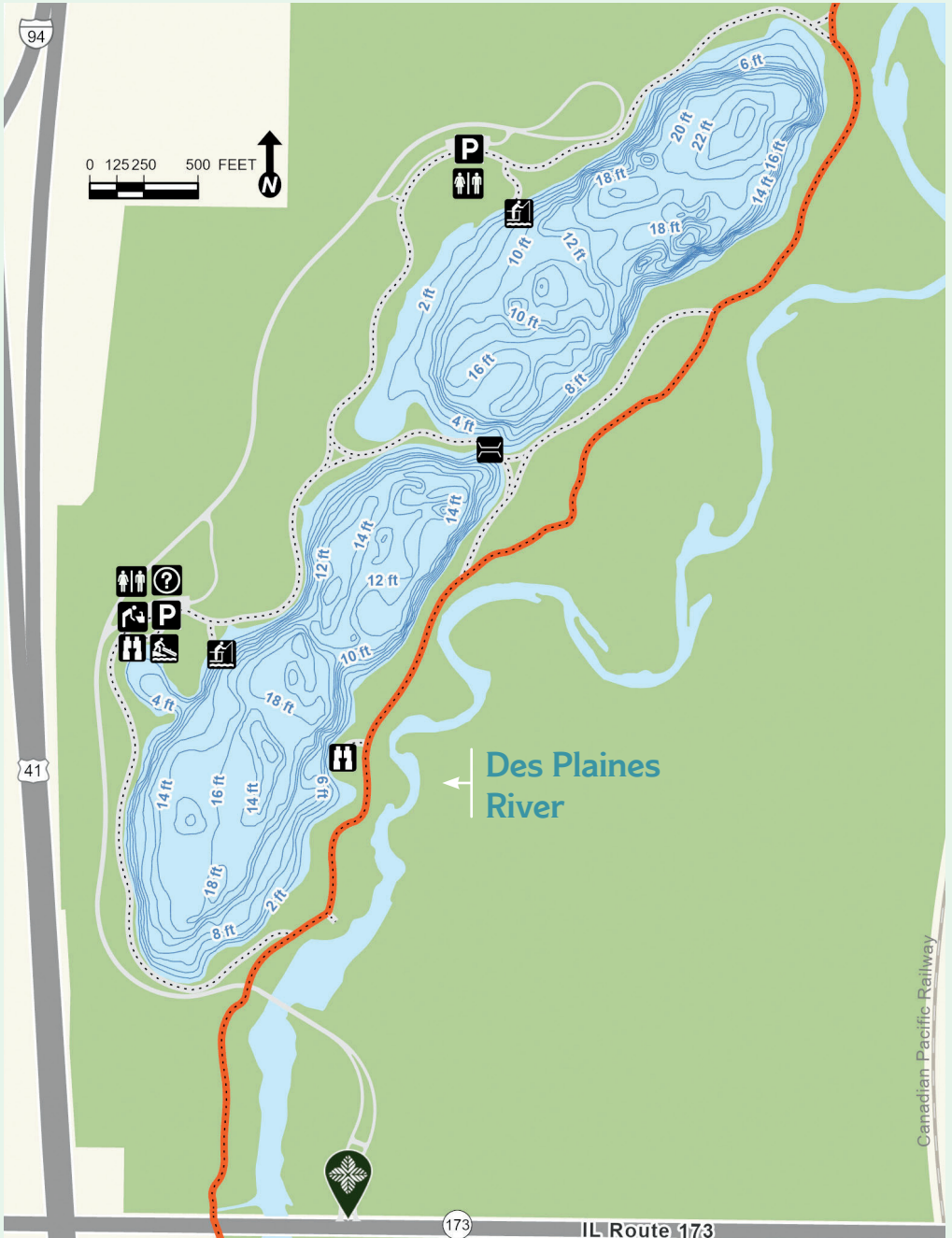
GREEN SUNFISH

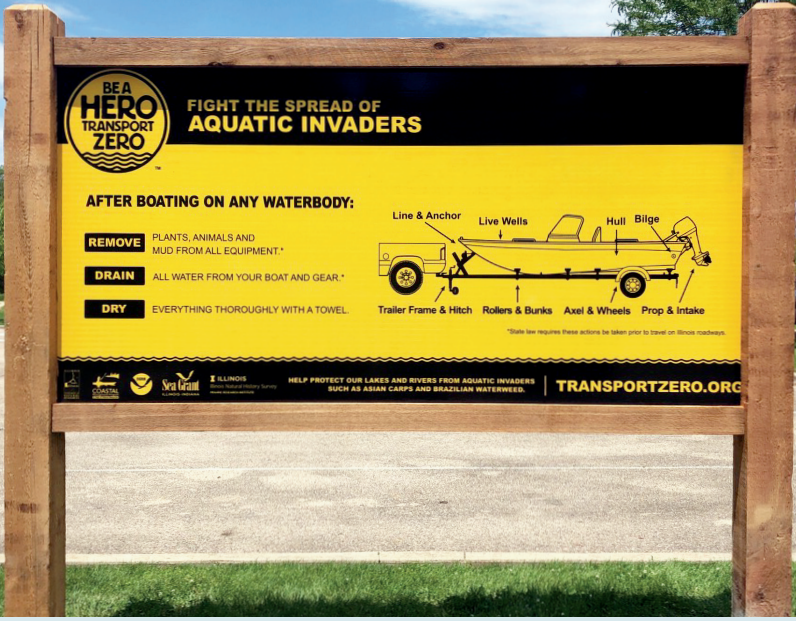


LARGEMOUTH BASS



WALLEYE





Be a Hero, Transport Zero™

The Forest Preserves is a proud partner of the regional Be a Hero, Transport Zero™ initiative. This campaign fights the spread of aquatic invaders such as zebra mussels, silver carp and the fish disease viral hemorrhagic septicemia by encouraging outdoor enthusiasts to clean their gear and watercraft after they're done with their day of fun. You can do your part by following these three key steps.

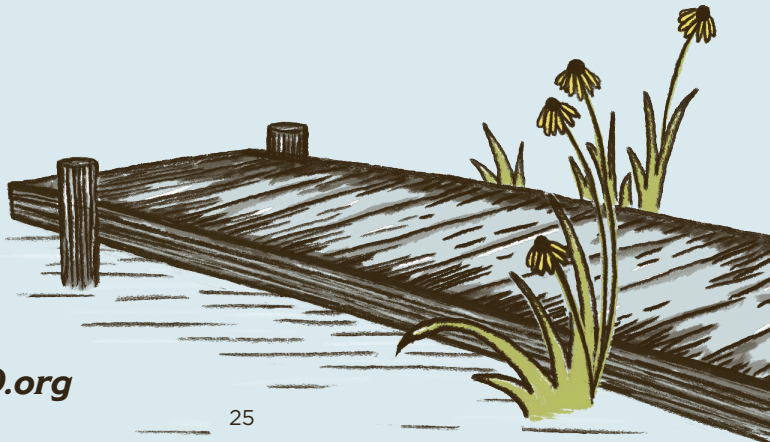
- ➔ **Remove plants, animals and mud from all equipment.** Many aquatic invaders spread by attaching to boats, trailers and other gear.
- ➔ **Drain all water from your boat and gear.** Pull drain plugs and remove water from all equipment, such as portable bait containers, ballast tanks, motors, bilge tanks, livewells and baitwells.
- ➔ **Dry everything thoroughly with a towel.** Wiping down your boat, trailer and other equipment not only leaves you with clean gear, but also removes any aquatic invaders. If possible, let your gear remain dry for at least five days.

The Be a Hero, Transport Zero™ initiative is a partnership between the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Prairie Research Institute. Learn more at transportzero.org.

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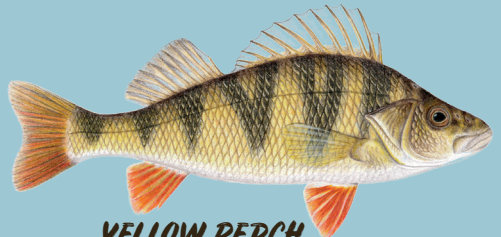




Fish shown in this guide represent species typically found in each waterbody. Availability may vary.



BLUEGILL
(*Lepomis macrochirus*)



YELLOW PERCH
(*Perca flavescens*)



NORTHERN PIKE
(*Esox lucius*)



LARGEMOUTH BASS
(*Micropterus salmoides*)



GREEN SUNFISH
(*Lepomis cyanellus*)



SMALLMOUTH BASS
(*Micropterus dolomieu*)



COMMON CARP
(*Cyprinus carpio*)



MUSKELLUNGE
(*Esox masquinongy*)



BLACK CRAPPIE
(*Pomoxis nigromaculatus*)



CHANNEL CATFISH
(*Ictalurus punctatus*)



WALLEYE
(*Sander vitreus*)

These non-native fish are now found in many bodies of water, including lakes and rivers.

