

# Local ice fishermen wrapping up season

By Nick Crow

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FORT ATKINSON

Jerry Schwab wasn't having any luck ice fishing near Blackhawk Island on Lake Koshkonong on Sunday.

But that didn't stop him from enjoying his time with his brother and niece.

"Today, I don't like anything," Schwab said. "We've been out here all day and haven't had a flag yet."

"Still, it's just nice to get out," he said.

Schwab and his family had a temporary shelter set up to sit in while they fished. The Fort Atkinson resident said other, more hardcore fisherman have more elaborate shelters that can have wood burning stoves, lights and even television sets.

Lake Koshkonong is a 10,595-acre lake with a maximum depth of 7 feet. Fish in the lake include muskellunge, panfish, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, northern pike, walleye and catfish.

But as spring approaches and the ice begins to melt, those using the bigger, fixed ice shelters have to remove them as of Sunday.

"By this time of year, it's really starting to warm up," Schwab said. "This week we're talking about 50 degrees, so the ice is going to go pretty quick."

According to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, ice fishing shelters must be removed daily as of Sunday for all inland waters south of Highway 64. The shelters also need to be removed when they are not occupied.

This is done because fishermen might not be able to get back to their shelter if it is not removed daily.

Boyd Richter, conservation warden for the Wisconsin DNR in Rock County, said shelters were to be removed by midnight Sunday.

"It's up to the individuals to get it done, but we do enforce the rules," Richter said. "We check after the deadline to make sure they are all off there."

For waters north of Highway 64, along Lake Michigan, along Lake Superior and the Bay of Green Bay, anglers have until next Sunday, March 15, to remove shelters.

"We've definitely got some warm weather coming," Richter said. "This time of year it can warm up pretty fast. The erosion of water underneath on Koshkonong can become a hazard if they don't get them (the shelters) off on time. We've had them go (into) the water in past years if people aren't aware of the deadline."

Anglers may continue to use a shelter after the deadline, but must remove them daily and when they are not being actively used, according to the DNR.

“If there is a problem, we ask that people let us know so we can get them in contact with someone who might be able to help them,” Richter said. “This year shouldn’t be a problem because we have given them plenty of time to get their shacks off.”



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Fort Atkinson resident Emily Schwab checks her fishing line on Lake Koshkonong near Blackhawk Island on Sunday. Sunday was the deadline set by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to remove shelters from the ice.