

Press Release
May 4th, 2026

Morgan Strauss
Iowa Great Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce
P.O. Box 9 - 565 S. Hwy 71, Suite 4
Arnolds Park, IA 51333
712-332-2107
morgan@okobojichamber.com



Walleye Weekend 2026: Year 44, fish on!

This weekend we were just four entries away from breaking our record from last year with over 2,300 anglers that we welcomed to the Iowa Great Lakes to cast their chance at \$44,000 grand prize. This annual kickoff event brought individuals of varying ages from 22 different states to see what our area has to offer.

There were two tagged walleye caught over the weekend, unfortunately one was from a previous year's tournament, and the other one didn't meet certain criteria in the rules of the tournament to qualify to receive the grand prize.

Thank you to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources for assisting in the tagging and releasing of the 10 walleye. A huge thank you to our sponsors: City of Arnolds Park, The River Coaching & Consulting Tony Thelen, Oak Hill Outdoor, Pure Fishing/Fisherman's Factory Outlet, Walker Insurance, Mediacom, United Community Bank and Okoboji Lodge/Lunkers Lounge. An additional thank you to all of our bait shops and weigh-in stations that we are fortunate enough to work with including Fisherman's Factory Outlet, Kabele's Trading Post, Oak Hill Outdoor, and Stan's Bait Shop & Tackle.

We also want to thank over 60 of our member businesses who donated a variety of items and prize packers to be given out during our Awards luncheon. And a big thank you to Pure Fishing for generously donating over \$3,500 in prizes for our 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners in the heaviest fish categories.

Thank you to our dedicated Iowa Navy Commodores and other volunteers for their time spent prepping and at the Awards Luncheon on Sunday. An additional thank you to Rocky Thompsen with SplitRock Photography for capturing our awards luncheon!

Thank you to ALL of you for taking part in the 44th Annual Walleye Weekend. To find out more about Walleye Weekend and this year's results, 'LIKE' us on our Facebook or visit www.okobojichamber.com.

##

RESULTS

Nearly 100 registered anglers joined in on the return of our Biggest Walleye Contest put on through the Fish Donkey App sponsored by Okoboji Lodge/Lunkers Lounge with 20 large fish submissions. First place and second place tied with a large fish of 26.75", deciding factor being the time they were submitted. Blake Mulder took first and his fish being worth \$510 and Hunter Gill second worth \$408. Third place and fourth place doing the same with a large fish of 26.25", Brandon Swagel took 3rd with a fish worth \$306, Kyle Thompsen \$204 and 5th place Cody Ptarek at 25.75" worth \$102.

Heaviest fish categories brought in tons of fish to our local bait shops to be weighted. Over \$3,500 in rod and reels were donated from Fisherman's Factory Outlet and Pure Fishing for the winners of each categories.

Heaviest Northern Pike

1st Place: Jay Nelson of Spencer, IA with 8.53lbs

2nd Place: Heather Ericksen of Jackson, MN with 8.44lbs

3rd Place: Brennen Carpenter of Sioux City, IA with 7.08lbs

Heaviest Stringer of (10) Bullhead

1st Place: Chris Daisey of Spirit Lake, IA with 14.32lbs

2nd Place: Grayson Waddell of Solon, IA with 14.13lbs

3rd Place: Brandon Rylend of Fort Dodge, IA with 13.83lbs

Heaviest Stringer of (5) Panfish

1st Place: Chris Daisy of Spirit Lake, IA 6.31lbs

2nd Place: Barry Andersen of Milford, IA 6.07lbs

Josh Divan, Scoville, IA 4.39lbs

Heaviest Stringer of (3) Walleye (under 19")

1st Place: Lance Christensen of Spencer, IA 7.24

2nd Place: Lori Christensen of Spencer, IA 7.10lbs

3rd Place: Bradley Watson of Rolla MN 6.5lbs