

by **Jeremy Olson**

Jeremy Olson grew up in the outdoors. After being burned as a volunteer firefighter, he had to figure out how to teach outdoor skills to his children from a wheelchair all while learning to walk. Today he is an inspirational speaker, author, video producer, wildfire consultant and proud father of the owners of Missouri Secrets Tackle. GOspeaks.live.

Lake Ashtabula

LOCATION: 10 miles north of Valley City in east-central North Dakota. There are eight boat ramps around the lake.

SIZE/DEPTH: Ashtabula is 5,178 acres in size, 42.8 feet at its deepest point, with an average depth around 13 feet. It is a long, skinny reservoir on the James River with around twenty miles of easy-to-access water to fish.




Lake Ashtabula fishes like a typical fertile reservoir. The biggest struggle is making up your mind on which area to fish and tactic to utilize. It sits in a river valley and provides wind protection with west or east winds.


DOMINANT SPECIES: Northern pike, walleyes, bluegills, white bass, smallmouth bass, pure muskellunge, yellow perch, black crappies, and black and brown bullheads. ND Game & Fish reports: “Walleyes, pike and smallmouth bass are abundant, with good numbers of larger fish. There is a moderate number of perch. Occasional crappies, white bass and bluegills are caught, and muskellunge are present.” Zebra mussels are present and decontamination stations are provided at select boat ramps.




- 1 Keep your eye on water temperature so you can target inflows at the right times for various fish species as they head up the lake to spawn or return to the main lake to feed after spawning.
- 2 The two crossings on the lake offer lots of good opportunities and structure elements. If you are not catching the desired species, switch tactics until you start attracting the fish you desire. The deep water below the bridges is a good starting point for crappies.
- 3 The river channel is a great place to target walleyes, smallmouths and white bass. You will catch many of these fish in the same areas, just at different depths in the water column. If you're catching walleyes or smallmouths and prefer to catch other species, simply switch tactics because they are often in the same spots.
- 4 Fish flats using fast tactics to cover a lot of ground—especially the deeper flats on the south side and shallower flats to the north. Once you find fish, stay in a smaller section of the lake to experience good success.
- 5 Ashtabula has a fair amount of manmade structure along several stretches of shoreline. These structures hold panfish, bass, pike and muskies.
- 6 Fish the numerous sunken islands for walleyes, smallmouths and crappies. Big pike and muskies are usually in areas of the humps that are holding forage fish.
- 7 Weed lines are prevalent throughout the lake and hold a lot of fish. Fish these weed lines if you are looking for walleyes! All the big gamefish will be where the small panfish and bullheads are; think of them as fish buffets.



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