



**FRESH DEPOSITS** of sand all along the Kankakee River downstream from the dam are worrying anglers. The sandy outwash has covered a number of favorite fishing areas and boat ramps. At Alpiner Park, above, a sandy swale inches deep has buried shoreline rocks and logs.

Journal/Bill Byrns

# Sand deposits worry fishermen

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**T**here's an ominous refrain echoing among the pre-spawn fishing reports this spring.

Sand. Huge quantities of sand. Sand in places where it hasn't been seen in years according to eyewitness reports from boat and bank anglers.

"I'm seeing more sand all over the place," says year-round angler Norm Minas of Bourbonnais. "There's more sand down by Rock Creek and I'm seeing it in all the slack water areas this spring."

An outwash of sand has been left in the wake of floodwaters that washed through the Iroquois and Kankakee river systems in mid-January.

In places new deposits are several inches deep. It can be seen in slackwater spawning areas and mid-channel riffles — areas that worry anglers the most.

"These areas are vital to the river's fishery," one fisherman said. "If the sand fills up these downstream riffles — that's it! Goodbye!"

Small sandy beaches and even some new sandbars are popping up along the river downstream from the dam in Kankakee.

Along the east bank at Alpiner Park, a sandy swale inches deep has buried shoreline rocks and logs. The new "beach" runs up 8 to 10 feet high along the eroded shoreline embankment.

Fresh deposits now cover the bank and shoreline at Fisherman's Park in Kankakee.

Waves of sand have buried downstream boat ramps at the Bradley Bourbonnais Sportsmen's Club and the Area 9 launch at Kankakee River State Park.

Even the normally rocky shelf jutting into the river at the mouth of Rock Creek is now blanketed by fine grained new sand.

"This high water certainly took a lot of sand over the dam during the last flood," said J.R. Black, chairman of the Kankakee River Basin Partnership. "There's really no way to know how much sand has washed

down. We knew there were a lot of deposits upstream but we're not sure how much of this is new sand or upstream deposits washed down by higher (river) flows."

The river, despite a fresh glut of sand, is running low and clear, a perfect time for some serious pre-spawn fishing.

"Pike have either just spawned or should be on the spawning beds now," observes local fishing guru Lanny Chouinard.

"All we're waiting for now is a few more degrees of warmth and everything will start to move."

Walleye begin spawning when water temps move into the upper 30s. "On the Kankakee the walleye spawn usually falls around April 1," Chouinard said.

Minas has already seen the signs on the water. "Basically I'm catching male walleyes, 12-to-14-inches, on small crankbaits right now in the spawning areas," Minas said. The big females are coming in at night or early morning.

Minas also reports pike hitting along the backwaters on "slow rolling spinners" at the DesPlaines Conservation Area. Back-

water areas along the river are good spots to look for pike.

Minas is also taking smallmouth bass on crankbaits and jigs out in the current past the first shoreline breaks.

Catfish and bass are the best bets right now at Braidwood, particularly along the south side where water is warmer from the plant's discharge.

Water temperatures were in the mid-50s on the north side Wednesday and 10 degrees warmer on the south end.

At LaSalle Lake anglers are stalking hybrid striped bass weighing upwards of 11 pounds according to biologist Ken Clodfelter. The lake is also reporting hits of big bluegill along the east shore.

LaSalle stocked 50,000 four-inch largemouth and 22,000 smallmouth bass last year. Those fish should grow to around 12 inches by this fall, Clodfelter said.

Both Braidwood and LaSalle are open from 6 a.m. to sunset Wednesdays through Sundays.

Heidecke Lake near Goose Lake Prairie will reopen to fishing on April 1.