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Outdoors

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BOATING • FISHING • HUNTING • NATURE • CONSERVATION

Fishing

Aroma Park holds plenty of honey holes

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The Kankakee River is finally starting to settle down to a more reasonable flow after several weeks of high water.

Once it does, landbound anglers will again be hitting the water.

Some of the best fishing spots in the area can be found at Aroma Park where the Kankakee and Iroquois rivers meet.

The confluence of streams is the basis for the name of this weekend's Two Rivers Festival.

But for fishermen, the festive honey holes on the rivers are at places like the mudline, woodpile, old dam, bayou and the wall.

Keith Snedden, proprietor of Keith's Bait & Tackle, is hoping better weather brings anglers back out to the honey holes.

"It's been slow this past week. The river is running high and fast, but it's starting to drop."

River levels falling

River levels have fallen better than two feet below flood stage although the current remains unusually fast for September.

Most river watchers have been surprised to see the Kankakee still high and fast while the Iroquois River appears to be dropping quickly to normal flows.

"The mouth of the Iroquois is always a good walleye spot," Snedden said, adding that it is also a "high (boating) traffic area."

Walleye often lurk just beyond "mudline" ready to ambush baitfish where the murky Iroquois meets the clearer Kankakee.

Boaters on the Kankakee generally troll for walleye and pike for several hundred feet down from the mouth of the Iroquois. The best trolling route follows a series of concrete walls along the west bank.



The Daily Journal file photo
A bird's-eye view shows where the murky Iroquois River meets the clearer Kankakee at Aroma Park. The photo reveals several favorite fishing spots including the mudline of the Iroquois, the west bank and the long arm of the Bayou.

Another favorite spot is a sharp break in the sandy "hump" at the mouth of the Iroquois. The faster current along the west bank is a high traffic zone for fish.

Up the Iroquois, a normally slower stream, anglers switch to drifting bait along the rocky bottom. "All along the Iroquois past the Aroma Park Boat Club there's a lot of rock bottom," Snedden said.

Shoreline access can be found nearby at the Point Grove Campgrounds, formerly known as Riggs Grove. The campgrounds is flanked by both rivers.

Island woodpiles

Farther up the Iroquois, a series

of massive woodpiles at the first large island hold crappie during the summer months. A deeper channel on the east side is generally good for catfish and smallmouth bass.

Perhaps Aroma's best-known fishing hole is the bayou just west of the boat launch off Front Street.

Shoreline access extends along the marshy banks and back into the downstream bayou. The woody shoreline is a good spot for catfish.

Farther back into the bayou crappie, largemouth bass, pike and walleye can be found in the shallow, silty water.

"I'm really surprised that no one,

so far, has pulled any big pike out of the bayou," Snedden said, noting the shallow backwater is normally a northern haunt.

Old dam

During low water, waders work the old dam site on the Kankakee near Ryan's Pier. "The current's too heavy to wade there now," Snedden warns. The dam rubble is a natural lure for bass and cats. Shallow-running boats can access the upper river through a narrow breach along the south shore.

All in all, Aroma Park offers a lot of opportunities for anglers with plenty of structure to be found where the two rivers meet.