Cold comfort

January’s frigid first days instill hope in businesses, anglers and snowmobilers

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There are a few things it’s generally advised not to talk about in polite company: religion, politics and, sometimes, a snowless December.

At the start of last month, that looked to be just what Prior Lake and Savage were getting. There wasn’t a substantial, lasting snowfall until Dec. 28. That’s also the day Upper Prior Lake finally froze. To give some perspective: the Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District keeps records of ice-overs on local bodies of water. Their measurements go back as far as 1966. In all that time, there has never been a later ice-over date recorded. The closest on record is the winter of 2001, when the lake finally crusted over on Christmas Eve.

On social media, perplexed locals reported that as far back as the 1950s, they never remembered open water surviving until Christmastime.

Winter to 5 »

Prior Lake Bait and Tackle store manager Kris Astorp bags a clump of squirming minnows for a customer. Luckily, with more ice on the lakes, merchandise is moving again. At top – For almost the entire month of December, local lakes resisted icing over. Even now, parts of Upper and Lower Prior Lake are unsafe to walk on.