

# July 18 Iowa Outdoors

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## Public meeting to discuss Kent Park Lake improvement plan

OXFORD- The Johnson County Conservation Board (JCCB) will host a public meeting at 6:30 p.m., July 25, at the Conservation Education Center at F.W. Kent Park, to discuss plans for improving water quality and recreational opportunities at Kent Park Lake, in Johnson County.

An update on the progress of phase 1 will be presented at the meeting, along with preliminary plans for phase 2 of the lake restoration project. Iowa Department of Natural Resources staff, officials from Stanley Consultants and JCCB staff will be available to answer questions.

Phase 1 includes restoring existing catch basins, building several new catch basins, renovating the parking lot at the boat ramp and handicap fishing pier and installing a new ADA compliant restroom at the boat ramp parking area. Bio-retention cells will be added to the parking area to help stop storm water run-off from entering the lake. Extensive progress has been made on these features and contractors are on schedule to complete all of these improvements by this fall.

Phase 2 will include removing sediments from the lake basin, reshaping portions of the bank and lake basin, and adding fish habitat and other items as identified by engineers and fisheries biologists.

To prepare for the work in phase 2, Kent Park Lake was drained this spring. The original valve was opened on April 24 and the lake was empty by June 1, except for the water in the small stream channel.

Kent Park Lake is one of Iowa's significant publicly owned lakes prioritized for restoration work to improve water quality. The overall goal of this restoration is to improve water quality and recreational opportunities in the lake and remove the lake from the Impaired Waters List.

Any person attending the public meeting and has special requirements such as those related to mobility or hearing impairments should contact the DNR or ADA Coordinator at 515-725-8200, Relay Iowa TTY Service 800-735-7942, or [Webmaster@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Webmaster@dnr.iowa.gov), and advise of specific needs.

For more information, contact the Johnson County Conservation Board at 319-645-2315 or Iowa DNR fisheries biologist Paul Sleeper at 319-624-3615.

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*Purple prairie clover grows on Three Rivers Wildlife Area in Humboldt County. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.*

## Three Rivers Wildlife Area is beginning to blossom

Thor, Iowa - Brothers Roger and Palmer Larson had a vision of what their farm could be in 2001 when they invited the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in for a visit.

The two bachelor farmers from southeast Humboldt County had lived their entire lives on the farm and hoped that one day their land could be returned to its original mix of prairie and wetlands. The brothers wanted their farm to become a place that residents of Humboldt County could enjoy and where they could recreate. They wanted to leave a legacy.

The land was officially transferred to the Iowa DNR in August of 2013 as directed by their estate, after Roger Palmer passed away a year earlier.

“If a person ever has a blank slate to work with, this is it,” said Rob Patterson, wildlife technician with the Iowa DNR. Patterson and wildlife biologist Bryan Hellyer created a plan to transform the nearly 150 acres from highly productive north central Iowa farmland into highly productive north central Iowa prairie and wetlands, just as the brothers wanted.

Not only is it the newest wildlife area in Humboldt County; it’s also the largest.

The Three Rivers Wildlife Area has two parcels – the north parcel covers 52 acres and is in its third year of converting into a prairie. The south parcel is about 64 acres and was seeded prairie in March. Both parcels will focus on restoring native wetland-prairie ecosystems with an emphasis on pheasant habitat. There are currently two food plots on the north parcel.

The north parcel is being designed to include severe winter habitat along the southern end, near the old farmstead. This will be a combination of conifers, shrubs and food plots to provide high quality winter cover for pheasants and other local wildlife. The developing prairie is already attracting insects and grasshoppers that will feed growing pheasant chicks.

The Humboldt County Pheasants Forever Chapter has been an important partner developing the area. Patterson said members donate their time to conduct the mowing necessary to establishing a prairie. The young prairie requires regular mowing during the growing season, which is about 95 percent of what it takes to restore native prairie.

Walking through the north parcel, Patterson points to a small depression that will become a wetland. He said pheasants and partridge found the area last fall, after its final mowing of the year. Dickcissels, bobolinks and monarchs have, too.

“This area just feels alive,” he said. “It’s great now and will only get better.”

Located in the heart of flat north central Iowa farm country, the small island of prairie is beginning to take shape, just as the Larson brothers wanted.

What could be the unintended consequences of their generous action?

“If a local farmer is on the fence about whether or not he should put in CRP, he can come by this area to see it in practice,” Patterson said.

And that might be their real legacy.

### **Volunteers fill important role at Three Rivers Wildlife Area**

Once the land transfer from the Larson's estate to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources was completed, John Kollmorgen reached out to wildlife biologist Bryan Hellyer to offer his services as the president of the Humboldt County Pheasants Forever chapter.

The new wildlife area is near the Humboldt-Wright County line. Public land is plentiful in Wright County. In Humboldt County, not so much.

"It's kind of a big deal for us," Kollmorgen said.

Hellyer said establishing a prairie requires the area to be mowed at specific intervals over two years and the mowing had to happen within a week of being notified. He asked if the chapter could take that responsibility on. They gladly accepted.

Chapter members Doug Sandven, Al Kirsch and Custom Seeding & Habitat each donated the use of their equipment and Mike Vitzthum, Dave Erdman, and Nate and Zach Kollmorgen gave their time to use the equipment to mow the areas.

Their preparation made it possible that six of the seven mowings were completed by volunteers. Only one had to be contracted out. The members and volunteers will provide two more mowings this year and three mowings next year on the south parcel.

### **Wildlife area bisected by popular bike trail**

A portion of the north parcel of Three Rivers Wildlife Area has the popular Three Rivers Bike Trail that passes through along the south end. The 33 mile crushed limestone trail connects Eagle Grove to Rolfe.

**Media Contact: Bryan Hellyer, Wildlife Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 712-330-2563.**

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## **Avenson Archery Range Dedicated Today**

The archery range at Volga River State Recreation Area, in Fayette County, will be dedicated Avenson Archery Range July 18, at 4 p.m.

Don Avenson, for whom the range is named, lived a short distance from the Volga River area and was instrumental in protecting it as a state recreation area.

From 1972-1990, Avenson served as a member of the Iowa Legislature in the House of Representatives. During this time, Avenson's primary political focus was on environmental legislation and among his most noteworthy achievements were the Resource Enhancement

and Protection (REAP) program, one of the most comprehensive conservation programs in Iowa, and the Groundwater Protection Act.

Don Avenson, 72, died May 19.

“Because of Don's significant accomplishments in protecting Iowa's natural resources and the fact he was an avid bow hunter and archer, we felt it fitting that the range should be named in his honor,” says Chuck Gipp, director of the Iowa DNR.

Through the partnership of the local Echo Valley Archers and Volga River State Recreation Area, the area has become known for its archery opportunities. Together they play host the annual Reinhart Target R100 – a national 3D archery event, drawing more than 600 archers each year.

The archery range is located west of the Albany Campground off Hill Road. Refreshments are provided by Echo Valley Archers. The event is open to the public.

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## **Wildland fire suppression grants available to rural fire departments**

AMES – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources forestry section's fire program, working in coordination with the U.S. Forest Service has grant money available for Iowa's rural fire departments to help battle wildfires.

The grants offer funding assistance for wildfire suppression equipment, slide in units, hoses, nozzles, adapters, portable tanks and pumps, personal protective equipment and communications equipment. Additionally, if a fire department has a special need that can be tied directly to wildfire suppression, this grant allows for such special requests.

The grant provides 50 percent reimbursement for wildland fire equipment with a maximum reimbursement grant of \$3,500 per department.

Gail Kantak, state wildland fire supervisor for the Iowa DNR, reminds fire departments that they should send her a Wildland Fire Report whenever they respond to a wildland fire or provide assistance to a prescribed or controlled wildland fire. Departments actively returning these reports can receive priority points in the Volunteer Fire Assistance grant application scoring process.

“It is important for rural fire departments to return these reports so we can assess the actual demands on our rural fire departments as a result of wildfire activity,” Kantak said. “The wildland fire reports are compiled locally and nationally and reported to Congress.”

The Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant applications are due October 15, 2017.

In mid-June, fire departments were mailed information about the Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant. The grant application package and the Wildland Fire Report form are also available online at [www.iowadnr.gov/fire](http://www.iowadnr.gov/fire).

For more information, contact Gail Katak at [gail.katak@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:gail.katak@dnr.iowa.gov), 515-233-8067 or 515-233-1161.

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## **Backyard forest invasive species field day**

Registration is now open for an educational forest field day taking place at Hickory Hill Park in Iowa City, Sept. 30, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The Backyard Forest Invasive Species Field Day will cover issues related to invasive species including identification and management, as well as establishment of healthy native habitat.

The event is free and open to the public. Landowners are encouraged to join the experts to learn how to improve their woodlands and become advocates for healthy forests.

The field day is sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service, Trees Forever and the Iowa DNR, in partnership with Iowa City Parks and Recreation. For planning purposes, pre-registration is required. Detailed registration information can be found at <http://www.treesforever.org/backyardforest>