



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

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Purple Martin Lake Water Resource Area opens for public use

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DES MOINES, Iowa -- The metro's newest recreational area is open for outdoor enthusiasts. On Thursday, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, along with the Des Moines Water Works, the City of West Des Moines and the Friends of Walnut Woods State Park held a grand opening of Purple Martin Lake Water Resource Area located off Army Post Road, southwest of Walnut Woods State Park.

Purple Martin Lake Water Resource Area is owned by Des Moines Water Works and was a former sand, rock and gravel quarry that now serves dual purposes of drinking water supply for DMWW customers and recreational use. The area will offer hiking, jogging and walking, along with all non-motor recreation on the water, similar to Maffitt Reservoir.

"The former quarry provides an operational benefit to Des Moines Water Works' ability to produce safe, affordable and abundant drinking water to 500,000 central Iowans; however, it was recognized early on the inherent benefits of the property. Des Moines Water Works appreciates the initiative and dedication of Iowa Department of Natural Resources staff to manage the property as an extension of Walnut Woods State Park. This partnership is consistent with Des Moines Water Works goal of stewardship of public land, and will additionally provide an opportunity to highlight the story of water," said Bill Stowe, CEO and General Manager, Des Moines Water Works.

Through an agreement with Des Moines Water Works, the DNR will manage Purple Martin Lake Water Resource Area and the area surrounding the lake as an extension of the DNR's neighboring Walnut Woods State Park.

“We are thrilled to oversee this new hub for outdoor recreation. This area will provide one more option locally to get outside and enjoy the great resources Iowa has to offer. It is a top priority for the DNR to provide great areas like this to help attract newcomers outdoors to enjoy nature,” said Chuck Gipp, Director, Iowa DNR.

The opening of Purple Martin Lake Water Resource Area is just the beginning of a much larger plan that will provide vast recreational opportunities in the years to come.

“A pedestrian bridge over the Raccoon River has been part of West Des Moines’ Master Parks and Trails Plan for several years and has recently become one of the City’s priority park projects. The City looks forward to providing this future connection between Raccoon River Park on the north side of the river with Walnut Woods State Park, Purple Martin Water Resource Area, the Great Western Trail, and proposed trails south of the river,” said Rick Messerschmidt, West Des Moines Mayor Pro-tem.

The area is named after the Purple Martin bird species and has several Purple Martin birdhouses and an area for visitors to view the birds. The name came about and project came to fruition through collaboration among the Des Moines Water Works, Department of Natural Resources, City of West Des Moines and the Friends of Walnut Woods State Park.

"We are excited to finally see this area open for the public to enjoy. The partnerships that have developed during this process will benefit everyone as we all work together to connect these beautiful green spaces along the Raccoon River" said Linda MacBride, President, Friends of Walnut Woods State Park.

The area will be open daily from 6:00 am – 10:30 pm.

More about Purple Martin Lake:

In 2015, DMWW purchased a series of water bodies along the south side of the Raccoon River, east of the McMullen Water Treatment Plant. Long term plans will connect all of the water bodies in a series to form “Chain of Lakes,” which will be capable of providing up to 15 million gallons per day of water supply.

Shortly after DMWW purchased the Bishop Farms property, the IDNR approached DMWW with a proposal to manage the property as an extension of Walnut Woods State Park in exchange for DMWW to allow public access to the recreational opportunities the property has to offer.