



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

# Iowa DNR News

## Conservation and Recreation

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**April 24, 2018**

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## **DNR requesting public to avoid River Valley OHV Park after weekend fire**

COUNCIL BLUFFS, Iowa – A weekend brushfire that burned 300 acres of the popular River Valley Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Park in Council Bluffs has created dangerous conditions for visitors to the area, according to DNR officials.

While the OHV park's main entrance is closed, pedestrians can still access the area from nearby walking trails. Michelle Reinig, supervisor of the DNR's southwest state park district, is asking visitors to avoid the park until damage to the area can be fully assessed.

"Most of the trees within the park have been burned, and many are still smoldering," said Reinig. "It's very important for people to avoid the area while conditions are still hazardous."

According to Reinig, the two primary concerns are the potential for damaged trees to fall and the fire reigniting.

Park staff is working with area foresters to conduct a forest health assessment of the damaged trees, and also is partnering with city and county officials to minimize further damage. The DNR will provide updates as more information is gathered.

**Media Contact:** Michelle Reinig, Southwest District Parks Supervisor, Iowa Department of Natural Resources State Parks Bureau, 515-250-2222; or

## Get Ready for Camping Kick-Off Weekend, May 4-6

### State Parks Preparing for Camping Season

As Iowans excitedly anticipate warmer temperatures, state park staff are getting ready for the start of the 2018 camping season. Iowa State Parks will officially launch the camping season during the first weekend in May with its annual Camping Kick-Off Celebration.

“We look forward to welcoming people to our parks each year,” said Todd Coffelt, chief of state parks for the Iowa DNR. “Camping Kick-Off is our way of showing appreciation to our campers by offering programs and activities for the entire family.”

More than 30 state parks will host special activities the weekend of May 4-6, including kayaking clinics, fun runs, night sky hikes, volunteer projects and more. A list of parks and their programs is available at <http://www.iowadnr.gov/campingkickoff>

Campers will also receive a free issue of the DNR's Iowa Outdoors magazine.

Those wanting to join the Camping Kickoff celebration are encouraged to make a reservation now. Iowa has more than 4,700 state park campsites; 75 percent of them can be reserved in advance. Reservations can be made at: <https://iowastateparks.reserveamerica.com/>

“Iowa state parks are beloved overnight destinations for many people,” says Coffelt. “We offer campsites that appeal to a broad range of campers, from the more rustic hike-in sites to those with all the popular amenities.”

And if camping isn't your thing, 93 cabins are available for rent in 19 state parks, reminds Coffelt. In the off season, (from the Thursday after Labor Day to the Friday before Memorial Day), cabins can be rented for a two-night minimum stay. Most of those cabins require a seven-day minimum stay during the peak summer season.

Most state parks now have water turned on, with shower and restroom buildings open for campers. Visit [www.iowadnr.gov/stateparks](http://www.iowadnr.gov/stateparks) for more information about campsites, cabins, events, closures and to sign up to receive State Parks News electronically.

**Media Contact:** Todd Coffelt, Chief, Iowa Department of Natural Resources State Parks Bureau, 515-725-8485.

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## Southwest Iowa will be home to eight new trumpeter swans on May 10 and 11



*Two trumpeter swans head to the water during a release event in 2015. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.*

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will release eight trumpeter swans at three locations in southwest Iowa as part of the effort to create a self-sustaining population of swans south of Interstate 80. All releases will occur rain or shine.

- Four swans will be released on the north side of Lake Icaria at the east boat ramp on May 10 at 9:30 a.m., in partnership with the Adams County Conservation Board.
- Two swans will be released at Viking Lake near the restaurant/beach area on May 10 at 1 p.m.
- Two swans will be released at Lake Anita on May 11 at 1:30 p.m., in partnership with the Cass County Conservation Board.

These releases are part of the Iowa DNR's statewide effort to restore trumpeter swans to Iowa that began in 1993. Trumpeter swans were once common in Iowa, but were gone from the state by the late 1880s. By the early 1930s, only 69 trumpeter swans remained in the lower 48 states.

It takes six years, on average, before trumpeter swans successfully nest. Last year, Iowa was home to 54 pairs of nesting trumpeter swans; however, only two of those nesting pairs were south of I-80. Dave Hoffman, wildlife research technician with the Iowa DNR,

said the goal is to raise that number to seven, which would likely create a self-sustaining population.

“We are hopeful to get them nesting here in a year or two,” Hoffman said. “We had swans displaying some territorial signs last year at Lake Icaria, which is encouraging.”

As the largest North American waterfowl, these all-white birds can weigh up to 32 pounds and have an 8-foot wingspan. The trumpeter swans being released are young and flightless and will imprint on the area where they learn to fly, returning each year as open water is available. The swans were donated to the project from zoos in Cleveland, Kansas City, Green Bay, Wis. and Maryland.

Each event includes a swan and wetland presentation, an opportunity to touch and view the swans up close, and a photo opportunity with the kids.

**For more information,** contact David Hoffman at [David.Hoffman@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:David.Hoffman@dnr.iowa.gov) or 641-425-0737.

For the Lake Icaria release, contact Travis Paul, Adams County Conservation Board, at 641-322-4793; for the Viking Lake release, contact Todd Carrick Iowa Department of Natural Resources Viking Lake State Park at (712) 829-2235; for the Lake Anita release, contact Joshua Peach, Iowa Department of Natural Resources Lake Anita State Park, (712) 762-3564 or Lora Kanning, Naturalist Cass County Conservation Board (712) 769-2372.

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## Walleye season opens May 5 on Iowa's Great Lakes



*Empty boat trails overflow available parking at the Marble Beach boat ramp during opening day of the 2014 walleye season. Photot courtesy of the Iowa DNR.*

The 142th walleye fishing season officially opens May 5 at Spirit Lake, East and West Okoboji lakes.

“Winter is still hanging on in northern Iowa and some lakes are still frozen. The latest ice out for Spirit Lake and the Okoboji’s is April 28th, 1951, and we’re on track to get close to that date,” said fisheries biologist Mike Hawkins. “There aren’t many years of history to study to know how this late ice will affect the bite. We expect the spawn to be delayed and the spring pattern accelerated.”

Walleye population assessments in the Iowa Great Lakes show healthy numbers of walleyes. “We continue to see some very good numbers of broodstock sized fish (17-inches and greater) in the Iowa Great Lakes.” Hawkins added that the number of fish under 17 inches will also be good this year. “On Spirit Lake, I predict anglers will catch quite a few 13- to 15-inch walleyes.”

Like many of Iowa’s lake walleye populations, stocking success is highly variable with good year classes of walleyes occurring every 3-5 years. “Even when millions of walleyes are stocked each year, Mother Nature and other lake variables usually dictate how well a stocking will do,” Hawkins notes. “This year looks to be one of those years when we will hit the part of the cycle with good numbers of harvest sized fish.”

Marble Beach State Park, a popular area campground and boat ramp, will be closed this year for an extensive improvement project. Since the entire park is closed, the fish cleaning station will not be in operation. Campgrounds at Gull Point and Emerson Bay

will be open with other private facilities and hotels also available. The fish cleaning station at Emerson Bay State Park will be available.

Walleye season opens the first Saturday in May and runs through February 14 each year on Spirit Lake, East Okoboji Lake and West Okoboji Lake. There is a protected slot limit on walleyes from 17- to 22-inches, with only one walleye over 22-inches allowed per day on Spirit Lake, East and West Okoboji Lake, Upper and Lower Gar Lake and Minnewashta Lake. The daily limit is three walleyes with a possession limit of six.

The Iowa Great Lakes Chamber of Commerce will host the 36rd annual Great Walleye Weekend Fishing Contest in conjunction with the opener. For more information on the contest, visit their website at [www.okobojichamber.com](http://www.okobojichamber.com).

**Media Contact:** Mike Hawkins, Fisheries Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 712-336-1840.

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## Late spring delays walleye netting in Iowa lakes

MORAVIA, Iowa – Crews with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources are usually working around the clock in early April collecting walleyes. The cold, late spring is making this year’s collection schedule less predictable and much later than normal.

“This spring has been very unusual,” said Jay Rudacille, DNR Warm and Coolwater Fish Culture supervisor. “Typically there is a lot of overlap between our four walleye spawning operations with netting at Rathbun Lake and Storm Lake starting about the same time followed by Clear Lake and Spirit Lake.”

The late night, walleye collection was completed at Rathbun Lake on April 15, with crews netting for nine nights starting April 7. Netting began at Storm Lake on April 11, was delayed a week with cold weather and winter conditions, and has started again. Netting operations are expected to start at Clear Lake and Spirit Lake later this week.

“Looking back on the history of walleye netting, Rathbun Lake has never finished netting before Spirit Lake has started,” Rudacille said.

Winter is still hanging on in northern Iowa. “The latest ice out for Spirit Lake and the Okoboji’s is April 28th, 1951,” said fisheries biologist Mike Hawkins. “We’re on track to get close to that date this year.”

**Media Contact:** Jay Rudacille, DNR Warm and Coolwater Fish Culture Supervisor, 641-647-2406.

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## Honey Creek Resort to debut ‘Honey Creek Live’ concert series in 2018

MORAVIA, Iowa – Honey Creek Resort, located on Iowa’s Rathbun Lake, recently announced “Honey Creek Live,” a new, six-week outdoor concert series that will take place at the resort every Thursday from June 28 to Aug. 2.

The concert series will be free for both resort guests and visitors. The stage, located on Honey Creek’s Great Lawn, allows for scenic views of the resort area and Rathbun Lake. The lineup features local Iowa musical acts and boasts nationally-recognized artists in pop-rock, country, folk rock, blues and funk. All shows will be family friendly, with Honey Creek Resort’s vast lawn providing ample space for children to play. Food and drinks, including beer and bottled alcoholic drinks, will be available for sale at each show. Beer and food sales will support the concert series and future events.

### Series lineup:

- June 28 – Brazilian 2wins: Brazilian 2wins draws influence from pop, hip hop and funk while incorporating their signature violin and ukulele instrumentals.
- July 5 – The Boys: The Boys are a modern country cover band from southeastern Iowa, covering popular artists such as Chris Stapleton, Eric Church, John Pardi, Luke Bryan, Granger Smith and many more.
- July 12 – Decoy: Decoy is a pop/rock band that creates its own unique sound from an eclectic mix of influences.
- July 19 – Final Mix: Final Mix serves up the latest in R&B, jazz fusion, blues, hip hop, rock & roll and original material.
- July 26 – The Nadas: The Nadas are an alternative, Americana, country, folk, indie, rock, songwriter group from Des Moines with a dedicated local and national following.
- Aug. 2 – Standing Hampton: Standing Hampton are a premier export of the Des Moines music scene, performing selections from the ‘70s, ‘80s and beyond.

Acts will begin at 6 p.m. and finish around 9 p.m. Guests should bring a chair or a blanket.

**Media Contact:** Lindsay Truesdell, Delaware North, 716-858- 5024, email: [ltruesdell@delawarenorth.com](mailto:ltruesdell@delawarenorth.com)

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# Big Creek State Park to Host 6,000 Step Family Challenge Event

Big Creek State Park is hosting a 6,000-step challenge walk on April 29 from 1 to 4 p.m., encouraging people to be healthy outdoors.

The fun walk is free and will take participants to various locations throughout the state park, with trivia about park history, amenities, natural resources and healthy aspects of outdoor recreation. Participants will be entered into a drawing that will take place at 4 p.m. (need not be present at the time of drawing to win).

Big Creek State Park is located at 8550 NW 142nd Ave., northwest of Polk City. Meet at Shelter #1 near the beach concession stand.

**Media Contact:** Chad Kelchen, Park Manager, Iowa Department of Natural Resources State Parks Bureau, 515-984-6473; or [Chad.Kelchen@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Chad.Kelchen@dnr.iowa.gov)