



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

# Iowa DNR News

## Conservation and Recreation

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**June 19, 2018**

- [Two organizations to receive Governor's Volunteer Awards for work in Iowa State Parks](#)
- [Backbone State Park voted top mom-approved place to fish and boat in Iowa](#)
- [Public Meeting to discuss West Lake Park improvement plan](#)
- [Swimmer's itch showing up at a number of northern Iowa Lakes](#)
- [Help stop aquatic hitchhikers this Fourth of July](#)
- [Kettleston Hogsback is like nowhere else in Iowa](#)

## **Two organizations to receive Governor's Volunteer Awards for work in Iowa State Parks**

Biolife Plasma Services of Ankeny and the Friends of Cedar Rock, from Quasqueton, are recipients of 2018 Governor's Volunteer Awards.

Employees of Biolife Plasma Services will receive a Group Volunteer Award for work at Big Creek State Park.

During the last two years, volunteers removed invasive honeysuckle, autumn olive and multiflora rose from more than one acre of shoreline and fixed a jetty by removing seven tons of rock and installing a staircase that improved its accessibility to the lake.

The company is receiving its award Tuesday, in Des Moines.

The Friends of Cedar Rock also were selected for a Group Volunteer Award for restoring the last remaining original Frank Lloyd Wright river pavilion. The friends group raised nearly \$200,000 for the project and will receive its award at a ceremony on July 30 in Marion.

"We greatly appreciate the hours of hard work and dedication these two organizations provided to care of state parks," said Todd Coffelt, DNR parks bureau chief. "Both of these organizations exemplify the importance of volunteerism and we thank them for their service."

Coordinated by Volunteer Iowa, the Governor's Volunteer Award program—now in its 35th year— recognizes the dedicated people who volunteer their time and talent to help fulfill the missions of Iowa nonprofits, charitable organizations, and government entities. The program provides an easy way for these organizations to honor their volunteers with a prestigious, state-level award.

More than 500 awards are being presented this year during ceremonies held at several locations around the state. It is estimated that more than 20,000 hours of service, with an economic impact of nearly \$500,000, were served by this year's honorees during the past 12 months. More information is available at <https://volunteeriowa.org/awards>

---

## Backbone State Park voted top mom-approved place to fish and boat in Iowa

Backbone State Park, south of Strawberry Point, has been recognized among the [Top 50 Mom-Approved Places to Fish and Boat](#), according to the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF).

A nationwide survey of thousands of moms revealed the list of favorite fishing spots in each state that have everything a family needs to experience the great outdoors – play areas and family-friendly amenities, picnic areas, safe water and boat access and of course, plenty of fish to catch.

Vote today ([www.takemefishing.org/momapproved/](http://www.takemefishing.org/momapproved/)) for Iowa to win a place on the Top 10 Mom-Approved Places to Fish and Boat in the Nation list. You can vote daily through June 29. Each vote is entered for a chance to win a family fishing/boating trip in Florida.

### About RBFF

RBFF is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to increase participation in recreational angling and boating, thereby protecting and restoring the nation's aquatic natural resources. RBFF's recently announced [60 in 60 effort](#) strives to attract 60 million anglers to the sport by the end of 2021. To help recruit, retain and reactivate participants, RBFF developed the award-winning [Take Me Fishing™](#) and [Vamos A Pescar™](#) campaigns creating awareness about boating, fishing and conservation, and educating people about the benefits of participation. These campaigns help boaters and anglers of all ages and experience levels learn, plan and equip for a day on the water.

---

# Public Meeting to discuss West Lake Park improvement plan

BLUEGRASS –The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Scott County Conservation Board (SCCB), in coordination with FYRA Engineering, will host a public meeting at 5 p.m., June 28, at the Blue Grass Public Safety Building (606 Mayne Street) to discuss plans for improving water quality and recreational opportunities at West Lake Park.

Restoration activities planned for the park will be presented at the meeting, along with an opportunity for the public to express their comments and ask questions about the long term management and improvement plan.

Water quality at the lakes has deteriorated in recent years due to sedimentation, an overabundance of undesirable fish species, and high concentrations of nutrients and bacteria. The SCCB started working with the DNR in 2016 to develop a comprehensive restoration plan for the park and watershed that would improve water quality and opportunities for recreation at Lake of the Hills, Bluegrass Lake, Railroad Lake and Lambach Lake.

Construction planned for the park includes restoring several ponds within the park, as well as adding new ponds to trap nutrients and sediment from the watershed and prevent them from entering the lakes.

Planned in-lake restoration work includes removing excess sediment from the lakes in the West Lake Park Complex, stabilizing the shoreline, fish habitat improvements, and updating the lakes' outlet infrastructure. Work in the watershed is scheduled to start this fall and will likely be completed in the next two to four years.

Lake of the Hills, located within the park, is currently listed on the State's list of Impaired Waters due to high levels of algae. The overall goal of this restoration project is to improve water quality and recreational opportunities at the park and remove the lake from the Impaired Waters List.

West Lake Park is a very popular local recreational destination, hosting thousands of campers each year, and receiving over a ½ million visitors annually. The park is also home to local and national disc golf championships and the Quad Cities Triathlon. Park improvements are expected to increase visitation at the lake and provide better recreational opportunities to visitors.

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.

**Media Contact** – George Antoniou, Lake Restoration Program Coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-725-8449.

---

## Swimmer's itch showing up at a number of northern Iowa Lakes

SPIRIT LAKE – Swimmer's itch is starting to make its presence known in the Iowa's Great Lakes and surrounding northwest and north central Iowa lakes.

The condition, common in clear water lakes around the world, is caused by a microscopic parasitic flatworm. The flatworm eggs are transferred to water by bird droppings. The eggs hatch and infect snails, from which the free swimming form of the flatworm larvae emerges. Without a suitable host such as a bird, the parasite will try to penetrate the skin of humans, and quickly dies after that, causing an allergic reaction and itchy rash.

To help prevent swimmer's itch, avoid swimming or wading in marshy areas where snails are commonly found, reduce the amount of time in the water, avoid beaches that have been pounded by waves over the past few days and quickly rinse or dry off when after getting out of the lake. Use of waterproof sunscreen has been reported to help protect skin from swimmer's itch.

The welts and itching caused by the little parasitic pest can last for several days to about a week and usually don't require a visit to the doctor. You can treat the affected areas with an antihistamine along with calamine lotion.

Visit the following websites for more information on swimmer's itch:

<http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/swimmersitch/>

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/swimmers-itch/DS00902>

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

---

## Help stop aquatic hitchhikers this Fourth of July

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is encouraging all boaters and anglers to check for unwanted hitchhikers on their boats and equipment this Fourth of

July to help protect Iowa lakes and streams.

Aquatic invasive species, everything from zebra mussels to Eurasian watermilfoil, move from one waterbody to another by hitchhiking on boats, in bait buckets and on other equipment used in the water.

“Aquatic invasive species can create serious problems for Iowa waters by reducing native species and making lakes and rivers unusable for boaters, anglers and swimmers,” said Kim Bogenschutz, aquatic invasive species coordinator for the Iowa DNR.

These invasive species often grow quickly and spread fast when brought to new lake or stream due to lack of natural controls.

“Boaters and anglers can help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species to new waterbodies by cleaning, draining and drying their boat and equipment after each time on the water,” said Bogenschutz.

- CLEAN any plants, animals, or mud from your boat and equipment before leaving a waterbody.
- DRAIN water from all equipment (motor, live well, bilge, transom well) before leaving a waterbody.
- DRY anything that comes into contact with water (boats, trailers, equipment, boots, clothing, dogs). Before transporting to another waterbody either: Spray your boat and trailer with hot, high-pressure water; or Dry your boat and equipment for at least 5 days.
- DISPOSE of unwanted bait in the trash. Never release plants, fish or animals into a water body unless they came out of that water body.

It is illegal to possess or transport prohibited aquatic invasive species or to transport any aquatic plants on water-related equipment in Iowa. Signs posted at public accesses remind boaters to stop aquatic hitchhikers and identify infested waters.

Boaters must also drain all water from boats and equipment before leaving a water access and must keep drain plugs removed or opened during transport. It is also illegal to introduce any live fish, except for hooked bait, into public waters.

Find more information about aquatic invasive species and a list of infested waters in the 2018 Iowa Fishing Regulations booklet.

**Media Contact:** Kim Bogenschutz, Fisheries Bureau’s Aquatic Invasive Species Program, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-290-0540.

---

## Kettleson Hogsback is like nowhere else in Iowa



*The rarest of rare Iowa landscapes, remnant prairie is found in certain locations on the Kettleson Hogsback wildlife area. Its high quality and diverse prairie plants have been the seed source used to establish other Iowa prairies. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.*

SPIRIT LAKE - Dickinson County is home to a unique Iowa glacial area that has been attracting thousands of visitors a year, some from as far away as California, just to enjoy the scenery.

The 2,040-acre Kettleson Hogsback Wildlife Management Area is home to Grover Lake, West Hottes Lake, Welch Lake, East Hottes Lake, Sunken Lake and Little Spirit Lake, plus a series of marshes, native prairie, oak forest and grasslands that reaches from the west shores of Big Spirit Lake northwest to the Minnesota state line.

Native prairie in Iowa is extremely rare, with less than one tenth of one percent remaining, and parts of Kettleson Hogsback have this never-been-plowed treasure. White lady slippers, prairie fringed orchid, prairie bush clover, wooly milkweed and porcupine grass call this land home. The wide diversity of prairie plants here has provided seed used to establish other Iowa prairies.

Kettleson Hogsback isn't just a public wildlife area; it's also working to protect another popular area attracting thousands of visitors each year – Big Spirit Lake and the rest of the Iowa Great Lakes. Its marsh and shallow lake system slows water from 4,225 acres, removing nutrients and sediment before it enters the chain of lakes.

“It’s a glacial hidden gem that people can forget about,” said Chris LaRue, wildlife management biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. “West Hottes Lake is one of the most important lakes we have in Dickinson County.”

The lakes at Kettleon Hogsback benefited from a significant water quality project that brought together the Big Spirit Lake Protective Association, the Iowa DNR, Ducks Unlimited, Dickinson County, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Natural Resources Conservation Service and private citizens. The project was designed using a practical, science-based approach that allowed LaRue to manipulate the water levels to encourage aquatic vegetation growth and to restrict carp reproduction, which makes for a healthy system.

“This project provides critical watershed protection that was designed to last for generations,” LaRue said.

Construction began in the fall of 2014.

Heavy equipment moved gingerly through this sensitive area to install two large pump station water control structures. Talented semi-truck drivers had to thread their 45 foot trailer back through the narrow pathway as much as three-fourths of a mile to deliver their equipment and materials. More than a mile of electrical cable was trenched in to get power to the pumps. Screens with 1-1/2-inch openings were placed as barriers to restrict adult fish from moving into these shallow lakes and marshes to spawn.

The construction phase was completed in the winter of 2015. LaRue drew the water down, vegetation appeared, and then brought it back to pool in 2016. The established vegetation has been actively using nutrients from the water just as planned.

The improved water quality is preferred by muskrats that are closely followed by muskrat trappers. A large family of active beavers has made its home near where West Hottes Lake flows into East Hottes Lake. There is evidence that a raccoon had a nice meal of turtle eggs on the berm separating the two lakes. This area also attracts thousands of migrating birds and waterfowl each spring and fall.

“This project has allowed us to significantly improve the water quality in these once degraded, shallow lakes and provide valuable fish and wildlife habitat,” LaRue said. “Gone are the days of blue green algae.”

And that improvement hasn’t gone unnoticed.

More than 270 different species of birds has been identified at Kettleon Hogsback with more likely to be seen.

“The thing that makes it such a great area, I think, is, it is one of the most bird-rich of any area of the state,” said Doug Harr, president of Iowa Audubon. “It has absolutely every kind of habitat in northwest Iowa.”

Harr said it has been the historic home to black terns, Forster's terns, black-crowned night-herons and oak timber has been an important stop for warblers in the spring.

"It's just hard to find a place like that anywhere else," Harr said.

Fortunately, for visitors, Kettleton Hogsback is easy to find.

During the peak times of the busy summer season, kayakers and hikers can use the area to get away from the noise, traffic and crowds that fill beaches and boat ramps.

For kayakers, about 900 acres of the 2,040 acre area is lakes, shallow lakes or marshes. Most of the lakes have boat gravel boat ramps perfect for small watercrafts. Hikers can take a quick detour off the paved roads and in the winter the area is used by cross country skiers.

### **Colorful history**

- Hottes Lake was one location used for commercial waterfowl hunting that sent thousands of ducks to markets in Chicago and larger cities on the east coast.
- Iowa's State Archeologist brings a class to Dickinson County and specifically to Kettleton Hogsback every year. Given its location, the area has key archeological sites.
- It was named for the glacial plateau (hogs back) that divides two of its lakes - Marble Lake and West Hottes Lake.
- Currently, the area has more than 30 species listed as either threatened or endangered.

**Media Contact:** Chris LaRue, Wildlife Management Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 712-330-4543.