



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 21, 2018

Paddlers urged to stay off rain swollen rivers

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Iowa streams are swollen and swift with consistent rainfall the past several days. Some rivers are already dangerously high, and more rivers could rise fast with chances of rain forecast through next week.

“We encourage all paddlers, especially new and inexperienced paddlers, to stay on lakes and flat-water while the rivers are high due to heavy rain”, said Todd Robertson, paddling instructor and Outreach Coordinator for Rivers Programs at the Iowa DNR.

The Iowa DNR has received reports of inexperienced paddlers on the Des Moines River who tipped over their boats in the strong current and were rescued by other boaters .

“We’ve rescued five paddlers since May 1st on the Des Moines River during high water conditions”, said Terry Nittler of the Des Moines Power Boat Club. Nittler estimates that about 90% of the paddlers he sees on high water have little to no experience and many are not wearing life jackets.

“Swollen rivers are super powerful and have unpredictable current along with tons of wood debris coming downstream to form deadly “strainers”, said Robertson. He said that even experienced paddlers should stay off of rain swollen rivers. “If you get into a situation where you are struggling and fighting the current, the river will win”, said Robertson.

Always know your rivers conditions before you go paddling. For the latest river conditions, visit the USGS site at <https://waterdata.usgs.gov/ia/nwis/current/?type=flow> or contact your local county conservation board for updates.