



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

# Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Sept. 10, 2019

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## Green Island Wildlife Area battles through flooding



*A great egret hunts for a meal on a Green Island Wildlife Area floodplain. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.*

MILES, Iowa - Life along the Mississippi River is rarely boring. Case in point: the 4,000-acre Green Island Wildlife Area, in Jackson County.

Situated at the confluence of the Maquoketa and Mississippi rivers, Green Island is a popular bird watching location, duck and deer hunting spot, and, increasingly, a paddler

destination.

Curt Kemmerer has been the wildlife biologist responsible for managing Green Island for the past nine years and for seven of those years, the area has been flooded.

“It’s difficult to get much management done with all the flooding,” he said. “Flooding has a compounding effect - the prolonged flood changes the historic vegetation beds, creating open spaces where invasives can get their start.”

And 2019 has been a bad year for flooding on the Mississippi River.

The flood came early and stayed for months, overtopping roads and parking lots, drowning Canada goose nests and washing out food plots on the bottoms intended for migrating ducks. The high value buttonbush on the wetland is starting to disappear and trees are showing stress. For habitat diversity, most all that remains is what can handle the flood – bulrush and smartweed.

Once a waterfowl hunting destination filling boat ramps with 100 or more duck boat trailers, the loss of habitat has reduced that number to about 25. While waterfowl hunting isn’t what it once was, there is a project on the horizon to rehabilitate and enhance the habitat on the area through a partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The multi-year project includes dredging to create deeper water overwintering areas for fish and use the dredge materials to create islands. It includes establishing floodplain forests and improving the water control structures.

“Ideally we would have pumps that could pump in two directions to put water on and take water off certain areas to create food and cover for migrating waterfowl,” he said.

With the river not currently cooperating, Kemmerer has shifted his attention to improving the habitat on higher ground.

His crew, who operates from the office at the base of a bluff at Green Island, is developing a cedar tree planting for winter cover on top of a ridge. In about five years the trees will be tall enough to offer wildlife an escape from the snow, ice and cold of winter. Next to the cedars is a small area being converted into a field of native grasses. The young area is alive with bugs and grasshoppers which is exactly the high protein needed by young turkeys and other birds.

“This is our one little spot that’s not on the river floodplain,” he said.

This winter, the focus will shift to improving timber stands, removing sumac and other not-target tree species to allow the mast producing trees – oaks and walnuts – some space to grow. Kemmerer said they are working on a forest stewardship plan that will help manage the timber resource on Green Island, including creating brushy transition along the timber edge, using a management technique to eliminate non-target tree species but allowing that tree to remain standing to provide habitat for woodpeckers, bats, owls and other wildlife, and help direct invasive species removal.

### **New Acquisition**

The Iowa DNR acquired 371 acres in 2017 that were impacted when the dam at Lake Delhi failed in 2010, emptying the lake into the Maquoketa River which blew through a

levee, flowed for a mile, then exited back through the levee and into the Maquoketa River. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers estimated the cost to fix the levee around \$600,000.

Four of the five landowners impacted by the breach decided they had had enough.

A Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnerships application submitted to the NRCS received funding that would allow landowners to voluntarily enroll their eligible land into easements to protect, restore and enhance wetlands on their properties. Wetland reserve easements enabled landowners to successfully reduce impacts from flooding, recharge groundwater, enhance and protect wildlife habitat and provide outdoor recreational and educational opportunities.

The four landowners accepted the offer creating a permanent easement. They eventually sold the land to the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation who sold it to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Researchers are interested in studying the ecosystem of reconnecting backwater floodplain to the river on this acquisition.

“We’ve created a pretty neat corridor for wildlife and the public enjoys it either through the lens of a camera or scope on a shotgun,” Kemmerer said.

### **Etcetera**

All of Green Island is in the closed Canada goose zone except the newly acquired 371 acres. The new acquisition is west of Hwy. 52, placing it outside of the closed goose zone.

First REAP Project. Green Island was awarded the first grant from a new state fund supporting cultural and natural resources created by the Iowa Legislature in 1989. The Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) fund provided more than \$1.2 million to Green Island for wetland development.

Optical illusion – the Mississippi River bends around the north side of Green Island, which means at this location, it’s flowing from west to east.

Green Island has seen an increase in use by paddlers. Jackson County Conservation Board leads organized paddling events for paddlers of various skill levels.

The Iowa DNR has partnered with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop Green Island, and Ducks Unlimited who helped design the sub impoundments.

**Media Contact:** Curt Kemmerer, Wildlife Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 563-357-2035.

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## **Water level to drop at Lake Anita**

ANITA, Iowa – The water level of Lake Anita in Cass County will be lowered five feet for a seawall replacement project. This may limit access to Lake Anita this fall.

The gate will be closed and the lake allowed to refill as construction allows. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources plans to extend the boat ramps to allow for boating access after the drawdown is complete.

All other facilities at Lake Anita State Park will remain open.

**Media Contact:** Bryan Hayes, Fisheries Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 712-769-2587.

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## Red Haw State Park to Host Dedication Ceremony for Donation of New ADA-Accessible Dock

CHARITON, Iowa – Red Haw State Park will host a dedication ceremony Friday, Sept. 20 at 11 a.m. for a new ADA-accessible dock donated by the Clarence Ormond Landrum Trust.

The donation by the Landrum Trust was for \$36,000 to purchase the ADA-accessible dock and two kayak launchers for Red Haw Lake.

“We greatly appreciate the donation and dedication to Red Haw State Park,” said Todd Coffelt, chief of state parks for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. “The ADA-accessible dock will be a great addition to the park that will enhance the experience and open opportunities to enjoy the lake for many visitors.”

The ceremony will take place at the Red Haw State Park campground boat ramp. The public is welcome to attend.

**Media Contact:** Bonnie Friend, (641) 774-5632; email: [Bonnie.Friend@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Bonnie.Friend@dnr.iowa.gov)

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## DNR removes no-wake speed restriction at Blue Lake

MONONA COUNTY, Iowa – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources has lifted the no-wake speed restriction, which equates to roughly 5 mph, for boating on Blue Lake at Lewis and Clark State Park.

The water levels have dropped to below flood stage and the lake level has returned to normal levels around 1041.7 feet.

The no-wake restriction had been in place since July 3 to minimize the impact of the high water to infrastructure around the lake, as well as boater safety issues associated with flood related debris floating just under the water surface.

**Media Contact:** Frank Rickerl, Supervisor, Parks Bureau, Northwest Iowa, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 712-330-8127.

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## Neal Smith Trail closed at the I-35/80 bridge over the Des Moines River

GRIMES, Iowa – Work to repair and widen the Interstate 35/80 bridge over the Des Moines River will detour trail users of the Neal Smith Trail for their safety on a signed detour ([see map](#)) until summer 2021, weather permitting, according to the Iowa DOT.

The detour for trail users began Sept. 9.

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## Kent Park Lake celebration to highlight lake restoration project

OXFORD, Iowa – A celebration of the lake restoration efforts at F.W. Kent Park in Johnson County will be held Sept. 21<sup>st</sup>, from 1-4:30 pm at the boat ramp at Kent Park Lake, located at 2408 US-6 in Oxford.

A grand opening ceremony will be held at 1 pm to officially celebrate the park's completion of lake restoration activities. The celebration will highlight many of the lake and watershed restoration efforts that have helped improve water quality at Kent Park Lake.

The event is free to the public and will feature a variety of environmental and recreational family-friendly activities including: a water monitoring demonstration and biocell interpretive event, hayrack tours of the park, free use of kayaks and canoes, fisheries demonstrations, guided eco-tours of the lake trail, an interactive stream table, and educational booths.

Project partners began developing a lake restoration plan in 2016 to improve water quality at Kent Park Lake. Before the restoration, the lake suffered from frequent algae blooms, excess phosphorus and sediment pollution, and high bacteria levels at the beach. Partners developed a watershed management plan and work started in 2016 to improve water quality in the watershed, including renovating the six existing sediment ponds within the park and building six new ponds to capture nutrient and sediment pollution.

The Johnson County Conservation Board and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources began in-lake restoration work in 2017 by drawing down the lake, removing over 100,000 cubic yards of excess sediment from the lake, protecting shorelines from erosion, rebuilding boat ramp and parking lot and adding a biocell to the parking lot to reduce stormwater runoff, adding a limestone for easy shoreline access, and a new accessible fishing pier and restrooms.

The total investment for watershed and in-lake restoration efforts is \$3.9 million.

**Media Contact:** Michelle Balmer, Iowa Department of Natural Resources Lake Restoration Program, [Michelle.Balmer@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Michelle.Balmer@dnr.iowa.gov) or 515-725-8448; or George Antoniou, Iowa Department of Natural Resources Lake Restoration Program, [George.Antoniou@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:George.Antoniou@dnr.iowa.gov) or 515-725-8449.



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## State Preserves Advisory Board meets Sept. 23

The State Preserves Advisory Board of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources will meet at 2:00 p.m., Sept. 23, in the fourth floor east conference room in the Wallace State Office Building, 502 East Ninth Street, in Des Moines.

Members of the State Preserves Advisory Board are Rebecca Kauten, Tony Caligiuri, Amy Crouch, Michael Sullivan, Perry Thostenson and Barbara Schroeder. The Deputy Director of the DNR is Bruce Trautman.

The following is the Sept. 23 agenda.

- Approve Agenda
- Approve minutes of August meeting
- Strasser Woods State Preserve trail plan

A more detailed agenda is available on the Iowa DNR's website at [www.iowadnr.gov/spab](http://www.iowadnr.gov/spab).

For more information, contact John Pearson at 515-669-7614.