



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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State Parks prep for 100th Anniversary at Sept. 28 Volunteer Day

Iowans can lend a hand at the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' third annual statewide Volunteer Day on Sept. 28.

More than 40 parks will be hosting volunteer events to help spruce up trails, buildings and other park amenities. According to Todd Coffelt, State Parks Bureau chief, volunteer projects will focus on prepping for the upcoming 100th anniversary of the Iowa state park system in 2020.

"Iowa state parks are beloved places for many Iowans, and we greatly appreciate the help volunteers provide," said Coffelt. "We are excited for this year's event to kick off our state's celebration of the park system's centennial next year."

Clean-up efforts at this weekend's Volunteer Day will be unique for each park depending on clean-up needs, but may include litter pick-up, staining or painting buildings, planting trees, clearing trails and more.

Citizens interested in volunteering can learn more at www.iowadnr.gov/volunteer. If weather looks inclement on Saturday, volunteers should contact the individual park office in case changes to date, time or meeting location for the event occur.

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

Out of sight wetland at Blackhawk Bottoms is in plain view of waterfowl



The newer 75-acre addition to Black Hawk Bottoms Wildlife Area is thick with high quality duck attracting vegetation that will have 16-24 inches of water on it for the waterfowl migration. After this year, it may no longer be an off the radar duck hunting hotspot. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.

Burlington, Iowa - It's not often that a trip to the grocery store ends with an unsolicited public endorsement but that's what Andy Robbins got last year while walking to his vehicle.

Robbins is the wildlife biologist for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources responsible for managing state wildlife areas in six counties in southeast Iowa.

On this particular day, the grocery courtesy was retelling the events of an excellent trip he and his buddies had walking in to hunt ducks on an off the radar wetland. The area in discussion was a newer 75-acre addition to Black Hawk Bottoms Wildlife Area.

Robbins didn't let on who he was, but took in the story and the young man's excitement. "It was so great to hear that," Robbins said. "The area is doing exactly what we wanted it to."

Just south of Burlington, near the mouth of the Skunk River, this small Mississippi River backwater is quietly becoming one of the better walk-in duck hunting locations in southeast Iowa, made possible through a cost-share program with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that is focused on restoring aquatic ecosystems.

To the untrained eye, the roads leading to the area may look more like a construction site than a wildlife area, but once you reach this hidden gem there's no mistaking it, and once the word gets out, it will be one busy place.

"I think this area is going to be a sleeper," said Robbins, standing on the berm overlooking the back side of the wetland. The growing vegetation is a duck food buffet -

90 percent wild millet, with smartweed and yellow nut sedge mixed in. The vegetation is thick and that may mislead some to think that the ducks may pass it by.

Don't be fooled. Robbins will begin putting 16-24 inches water from Spring Creek on it in late September, just ahead of the migration. While waterfowl is a significant management and recreation focus at Blackhawk Bottoms, it's more than a duck hotspot. It's also a welcomed stopover on the migration superhighway.

Visitors include everything from bald eagles to wading birds that draws bird watchers and wildlife viewing nature lovers.

The diverse habitat here supports year round residents including a handful of turtle species - painted, map, red-eared sliders and snapping, otters, beavers, deer, herons, northern water snakes, pileated woodpeckers and more.

Media Contact: Andy Robbins, Wildlife Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 319-551-8459.

Successful turkey hunters encouraged to participate in disease monitoring study

Attention turkey hunters – the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is looking for a few good turkey legs. Well, actually, any wild, lower turkey leg will do.

The Iowa DNR, in partnership with Iowa State University, is continuing a study looking for the presence of lymphoproliferative disease virus (LPDV) in wild turkeys. This relatively new disease, involving wild turkeys has been found in other states and may be making its way to Iowa. The study is designed to look for the presence of the disease in Iowa and, if it's here, where is it and at what extent.

Successful hunters are asked to save one lower leg for disease testing. Simply cut the leg at the joint between the feathered portion of the leg and the scaled part of the lower leg, wrap the scaled portion in a paper towel, place it in a zip top bag and freeze it. Step 2 is to request a mailing envelope through the Iowa DNR webpage under the Hunting/Turkey section. You will receive a questionnaire along with a postage paid envelope to submit the sample.

"Hunters will need to write down their DNR Customer ID number and the tag registration number - both found on their tag - or they can simply use the leg with the transportation tag as the sample," said Jim Coffey, forest wildlife research biologist for the Iowa DNR. "Our goal is to collect samples from across the state and we will not be able to do this without hunter participation."

LPDV is not a human health issue.

Iowa's fall turkey season runs from Oct. 1 to Dec. 6 and Dec. 23 to Jan. 10 for archery only license hunters and Oct. 14 to Dec. 6 for gun/bow license hunters. More information about the fall season can be found in the hunting regulations booklet located online at www.iowadnr.gov.

Media Contact: Jim Coffey, Forest Wildlife Research Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 641-774-2958.

Meeting in Oelwein to discuss waterfowl season, zone structure moves to Oct. 17

The meeting to present the waterfowl season and zone structure of the 2021-2025 season originally scheduled for Oct. 16, has been moved to Oct. 17, due to a scheduling conflict.

At the meeting, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources will present information including the results from the statewide hunter survey, the federal rules and guidelines that govern waterfowl hunting and its proposed season and zone structure for 2021-2025.

All meetings are scheduled from 6-8 p.m. Meetings are scheduled for:

- Oct. 14, Three Mile Lake Lodge, near Afton
- Oct. 15, Washington County Conservation Education Center, near Ainsworth
- Oct. 17, Oelwein Community Plaza, in Oelwein
- Oct. 22, Story County Conservation Center, McFarland Park, near Ames
- Oct. 23, Alta Community Center, in Alta

Feedback collected at these meetings will be reviewed before an official proposal is submitted to the Natural Resource Commission for consideration. If approved, the rule would have an open comment period before going in front of the commission again for a final vote.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service allows states to make changes to their waterfowl zones and boundaries once every five years. Any changes will be reflected in the 2021-2025 waterfowl seasons.

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, and advise of specific needs.

Iowa DNR, Imagine Iowa Great Lakes launch seawall repair project

Okoboji, Iowa – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Imagine Iowa Great Lakes began work this week to repair the seawall at Arnolds Park. The project will stabilize the foundation of the sidewalk and ultimately serve as a platform for the beautification work led by Imagine Iowa Great Lakes.

The project intent is to stabilize the existing seawall by placing pervious lightweight foam concrete behind the seawall and constructing a sheet pile wall in front of the seawall to prevent scour. The existing sidewalk will be removed and replaced with a new ADA compliant concrete sidewalk. The project will enhance and maintain the beach feel of the area once completed.

“This project exemplifies how the State of Iowa and nonprofits can join together to more efficiently deliver projects across the state,” said DNR Director Kayla Lyon. “Public-private partnerships allow our agency to further our dollars and our impact.”

When the engineering work is complete, the Imagine Iowa Great Lakes team will install a wooden boardwalk adjacent to West Lake Okoboji along with planting areas, brick pavers, a public art piece, and site furnishings that will enhance visitors’ experience in the project area.

“The Imagine team is grateful for the DNR’s prompt attention to this issue and the agency’s collaborative spirit,” said Michele Goodenow, Imagine Iowa Great Lakes executive director. “It’s because of these partnerships that our region is able to flourish and continually grow our tourism industry.”

Repair work on the seawall is being led by Graves Construction Company, Inc., and will be complete by the end of December.

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The Iowa Department of Natural Resources manages fish and wildlife programs, ensures the health of Iowa’s forests and prairies, and provides recreational opportunities in Iowa’s state parks. Just as importantly, the DNR carries out state and federal laws that protect air, land and water through technical assistance, permitting, and compliance programs. The DNR also encourages the enjoyment and stewardship of natural resources among Iowans through outreach and education.

Imagine Iowa Great Lakes seeks to enhance Lake Okoboji for the residents and visitors of today and tomorrow. A privately funded initiative, Imagine creates a strategic vision to guide beautification and enhancement efforts in the Okoboji area.

Imagine goals include improving the visual quality, environment, and safety of the area; strengthening the connection to the lakes; enhancing the natural environment; and, introducing elements and themes that evoke the spirit of the Iowa Great Lakes region.

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