



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

# Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 24, 2020

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## Iowa fishing and hunting regulations not affected by COVID-19

Iowa's hunting and fishing regulations are not affected by the current COVID-19 health emergency in Iowa. Despite rumors on social media channels, the DNR has no plans to eliminate seasons, relax regulations or change license prices.

"Fishing and hunting regulations exist to protect human safety as well as wildlife populations over the long-term," said Dale Garner, Conservation and Recreation division administrator at the Iowa DNR. "We balance the long-term sustainability of Iowa's natural resources with the well-being of Iowans, and will continue to take a thoughtful, science-based approach to Iowa's hunting and fishing laws."

For more information about Iowa's hunting and fishing regulations, visit the Iowa DNR website: [www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov)

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## Staying safe during Iowa's spring turkey seasons and spring fishing

Protecting yourself during the COVID-19 national pandemic starts with following the guidance from our state and national health experts – maintain at least six feet between each other, wash your hands with soap for 20 seconds, cover your cough, stay home if you feel sick and avoid groups of 10 or more people. These are unprecedented times and personal health and safety takes top priority.

For hunters and anglers who choose to go out but prefer to minimize their interaction with other people, the Iowa DNR offers online and mobile options to purchase hunting licenses and specialty tags. Licenses and tags may be purchased at [www.iowadnr.gov/hunting](http://www.iowadnr.gov/hunting) or through a mobile app by searching Go Outdoors Iowa. Licenses will be available electronically immediately. For specialty tags, like for deer and turkey, be sure to allow 7-10 business days for delivery.

Iowa's spring turkey seasons begin with the youth only season April 10-12, followed by the first general season April 13-16, second season April 17-21, third season April 22-28 and fourth season April 29-May 17. There is also the archery only season April 13-May 17. Hunters buying their tags online will need to plan accordingly and do it early.

Spending time in Iowa's wild places this spring hunting turkeys or catching fish can still be done. The key is to follow the safety advice from our health experts.

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## Caves closed seasonally for bat hibernation at Maquoketa Caves State Park

MAQUOKETA -- The caves at Maquoketa Caves State Park will reopen to the public after bat hibernation season on April 15. The popular caves are closed annually from Oct. 15 to April 15 to protect hibernating bats. Visitors have access to the rest of the park while the caves are closed.

When planning a trip to an Iowa state park, be sure to check the DNR's State Park Alerts and Closures page at [www.iowadnr.gov/parkclosures](http://www.iowadnr.gov/parkclosures) for information on any seasonal, construction or weather-related closures in Iowa state parks that may impact your visit.

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## Planning underway for renovations at Lake Ahquabi State Park, and Lake Ahquabi and Hooper Lake beginning fall of 2021

Indianola - Lake Ahquabi State Park and lake are in the early planning stages of a major overhaul to improve park roads, upgrade the campground, fix the lake's water outlet structure and eliminate the gizzard shad population.

The two projects are not scheduled to begin until fall of 2021, after the recreation season, and have been designed to occur simultaneously to minimize disruption.

Chad Kelchen, supervisor for State Parks in south central Iowa for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), said they're in the design stage so there's still a lot of moving parts.

"We know our road system will be upgraded to better handle today's recreational vehicles and based on the final road design, we will know what's on the table as far as campground upgrades, lodge and shelter renovation, the beach, fish cleaning station, parking lots – we'll look at all of it," Kelchen said.

Located five miles south of Indianola, Lake Ahquabi State Park has one of the most heavily used campgrounds in the state. The park is a destination for campers enjoying the National Balloon Classic and often serves as a stopover for migrating snowbirds. It currently has a mix of 110 electric and non-electric campsites.

While the work in the park is underway, the Iowa DNR's Fisheries Bureau will move in to fix the water outlet structures in both Lake Ahquabi and nearby Hooper Lake, and eliminate the gizzard shad in Lake Ahquabi.

Ben Dodd, fisheries biologist with the Iowa DNR, said the repair work will require the lake to be drained so there's an opportunity to explore additional in-lake habitat improvements. The lake was last renovated in the early 1990s.

"Lake Ahquabi is a heavily used lake and has had a phenomenal run since it was last renovated. We need to drain the lake to fix the outlet structure and a side benefit of draining the lake will allow us to get rid of gizzard shad. We don't know where the shad

came from but we need to address it because gizzard shad have a negative impact to water quality and our game fish populations in these smaller lakes,” Dodd said.

Dodd said fishing regulations will remain in place until this fall, when the DNR plans to relax the regulations to allow anglers to utilize the resource prior to renovation. Both lakes will be restocked with largemouth bass, channel catfish, bluegill, black crappie and redear sunfish.

“There will be limited fishing opportunities in years one and two, but by year three, fishing will be in good shape,” Dodd said.

Lake Ahquabi and Hooper Lake have a loyal following among the local fishing community. While the renovation and restocking is going on, Dodd suggested anglers give Easter Lake a try.

“We renovated Easter Lake recently,” he said. “It’s not too far from Ahquabi and we’ve seen good growth in the fish, especially the largemouth bass.”

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