



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 31, 2020

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Rathbun and Spirit Lake fish hatcheries busy netting walleye

MORAVIA, Iowa – The late night, annual walleye collection will start this week at Rathbun Lake and the Iowa Great Lakes. Crews with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Bureau will set gillnets at night looking for walleyes ready to spawn.

Hatcheries will operate around the clock as local staff bring in the nightly haul well past midnight. The eggs are removed from the walleyes in the morning and the fish are returned to the lake where they were caught to make room for the next night's catch.

All DNR offices, including fish hatcheries, are closed to the public until further notice due to COVID-19 precautions. Since you can't come to the Rathbun or Spirit Lake fish hatcheries this year to see the walleyes collected, check out last year's walleye collection efforts with the [Iowa DNR Storm Lake Gillnetting 2019 video](#).

Media Contact: Jay Rudacille, Iowa DNR Warm and Coolwater Fish Culture Supervisor, 641-647-2406.

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 Iowa Department of Natural Resources (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 Dr. 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

Time to start planning to control plants in Iowa ponds

A healthy pond needs aquatic plants, but too many plants can limit the pond's use and cause imbalances in the fish population. If you had problems using your pond last year because of aquatic plant growth, you could have similar problems this year.

In an existing pond, mechanical and chemical control methods are the best options for immediate control. They usually work best if you start early, when plant growth is not at its maximum level. If you wait until growths are thick, control will be difficult, take longer, and chemical control could cause water quality issues that harm fish.

Mechanical methods include bottom blanketing, shading, removal and lowering water levels. Temporarily blanket the bottom of a private pond and leave it in place for 30 days early in the season to limit plant growth in fishing or swimming areas. Use weighted commercial weed barrier products or thick black plastic (punctured to allow gases to escape).

To shade a pond, apply a pond dye in April, before most plants are actively growing, to reduce the amount of light needed for plants to grow. This works best in ponds with a small watershed. Many blue and black pond dye products are available for pond beautification; Aquashade® or Admiral®, both blue dyes, are the only products labeled by the EPA to limit plant growth. Re-apply the product at a reduced rate throughout the spring and summer since inflowing water can dilute it and ultra-violet light can decompose it.

Removal is a low-cost way to take out plants from high-use areas. It can be done by hand or with special rakes and cutters (make your own or buy from retail outlets).

Lowering water levels is another way to control aquatic plants. Let water out of the pond this spring (or winter) to expose aquatic plants to drying (or freezing) conditions to limit their growth after water is allowed to refill the pond.

Herbicides will control pond plants chemically, but you may need to reapply during the summer to get season-long control. Follow these five steps when you apply any herbicide: 1) correctly identify the plant you want to control; 2) measure the area you are going to treat (surface area and average depth); 3) read the herbicide label to determine the correct timing and amount to apply; 4) identify possible restrictions on uses of the water (e.g., irrigation or watering animals) and 5) apply according to label directions. Most aquatic herbicides work best if applied on a calm, sunny morning.

Find more information on aquatic plants in ponds on the DNR website at www.iowadnr.gov/ponds.

Media Contact: Darcy Cashatt, Fisheries Technician, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 641-647-2406.

Iowa DNR and local partners to manage the invasive curlyleaf pondweed at Iowa Great Lakes

Spirit Lake, Iowa - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), working with the East Okoboji Lakes Improvement Corporation (EOLIC), will start the first phase of the curlyleaf pondweed management strategy for the Iowa Great Lakes in April.

About 60 acres of curlyleaf along shorelines will be treated with an herbicide approved for use on lakes to provide some relief around docks and boat ramps. "Our first use of the herbicide in 2018 treated the areas just outside of the dock on about 4.25 miles of shoreline. In 2019, we expanded that treatment to over 8 miles of shoreline," says Mike Hawkins, Iowa DNR fisheries biologist. "In 2020, we will replicate last year's treatment and make adjustments to our methods to maximize the value per acre."

"Another five miles of trails will be created using a commercial plant harvesting system in the coming weeks," says Hawkins. "We are also doing 30 acre block treatments with both mechanical removal and herbicide in the north bay of East Okoboji Lake to reduce the amount of plant material that dies off in June and help prevent a fish kill from low oxygen."

Curlyleaf pondweed is an invasive plant first discovered in the Okoboji chain in the mid 1900's. It has been in all of the lakes since that time, but has caused navigation and lake access issues in recent years. Under the right conditions, this underwater plant can form dense mats making it hard to get through. A series of late and unseasonably warm fall seasons has allowed this plant to gain an advantage and increase in density.

"Unlike native aquatic plants, curlyleaf pondweed germinates in the fall and takes advantage of the long growing season created by mild conditions," Hawkins says. "It grows under the ice and dies back in mid to late June. Once the plant starts to dominate, conditions for its growth improve even more because it clears the water and lets more sunlight shine through."

Because there are so many different types of aquatic plants, some people often confuse later growing native plants with curlyleaf pondweed which starts to die back in late June and quickly disappears. Hawkins states, "If you see aquatic plants in the lake after the first of July, those are native species and extremely important to keep the lake healthy."

Although curlyleaf pondweed is widespread and causes problems throughout the United States, management strategies are mostly limited to spot treatments while attempts to eliminate it have failed. Larger treatment area control is being investigated and evaluations are underway in Iowa and other states.

"Over the past few years, we've worked with the community to design a strategy to treat the plant near shore and in a series of boating paths. We've done this with a combination

of herbicide and mechanical harvesting,” says Hawkins. This year around 85 acres of the plant will be treated.

Terry Wilts, who has helped spearhead the local committee and is part of the EOLIC, says this isn’t an easy issue to tackle. “We’ve worked with the Iowa DNR, local cities, businesses, and municipal water systems to develop a plan that is safe, cost effective, and considers everyone’s concerns.”

Lakeshore property owners can remove plants around their docks and hoists without a permit. The plants can be cut, raked, or harvested using mechanical means only. It is not legal for private citizens to treat plants with chemicals in public waters.

“The use of herbicides by private individuals is dangerous and against the law,” Hawkins says. “Only certified professionals who are trained in aquatic application and have the necessary permits can apply herbicides to public lakes in Iowa. Aquatic herbicide application is strictly regulated to protect drinking water and all recreational users.”

Media Contact: Mike Hawkins, Fisheries Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 712-336-1840.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is working with state and local officials to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and has transitioned employees to work remotely. DNR offices are closed to the public during this time and only available by appointment.

In other efforts to further reduce the spread of Covid-19, the DNR is encouraging the use of the online services for purchasing licenses, submitting applications, payments and other daily tasks and interaction with DNR staff.

The **FREE Go Outdoors Iowa app** is available at the App store and Google Play. The Go Outdoors Iowa app allows users to purchase and view hunting and fishing licenses and submit harvest and quota reports, all from your cell phone.

Full list of DNR’s online services:

<https://www.iowadnr.gov/about-dnr/about-dnr/online-services-databases>.

Up-to-date information on DNR services, facilities and events impacted by Covid-

19: <https://www.iowadnr.gov/About-DNR/Covid-19>.

Technical information for regulated businesses in regards to Covid-

19: <https://www.iowadnr.gov/About-DNR/Social-Media-Press-Room/Disaster-Assistance#3057321-covid---19-outbreak>.

Thank you for your patience and flexibility during this time. If you need to contact DNR staff you can reach them by email or phone or by calling (515) 725-8200.