



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 21, 2020

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Walleye season opens May 2 on Iowa's Great Lakes

The 144th walleye fishing season officially opens May 2 at Spirit Lake, East and West Okoboji lakes.

“The start of the walleye season typically draws many anglers to the Iowa Great Lakes,” said Mike Hawkins, fisheries biologist for the Iowa DNR. “But anglers should remember, there will be plenty of great fishing in the weeks and months ahead.”

The walleye season is just opening at the Iowa Great Lakes, but it is open continuously on all other Iowa lakes and streams. If your favorite walleye fishing spot is popular and busy, try out a new one where less people are fishing.

A day on the water could provide you the calm you need right now. Just be careful and responsible and abide by the physical distancing protocols recommended by the state to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

- Only one boat should use a ramp at a time to help prevent contact with other boaters.
- Keep at least 6 feet of distance between you and other anglers and avoid popular areas where people may congregate.
- Stick with your immediate family, but keep groups to fewer than 10 people.
- Bring along hand sanitizer.
- Disinfect surfaces that others may have touched (e.g. boat dock handrails).

Walleye season opens the first Saturday in May and runs through February 14 each year on Spirit Lake, East Okoboji Lake and West Okoboji Lake. There is a protected slot limit on walleyes from 17- to 22-inches, with only one walleye over 22-inches allowed per day on Spirit Lake, East and West Okoboji Lake, Upper and Lower Gar Lake and Minnewashta Lake. The daily limit is three walleyes with a possession limit of six.

To further promote physical distancing and less travel, the Iowa Great Lakes Chamber of Commerce's 38th annual Walleye Weekend Fishing Contest has been cancelled. An

extended contest will still be held May 4th through August 31st. For more information on the contest, visit the Iowa Great Lakes Chamber's website at www.okobojichamber.com.

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

Volunteers step in to clean up popular shooting range



Members with Backcountry Hunters and Anglers Iowa Chapter initiated a volunteer cleanup project at the Hawkeye Wildlife Area shooting range on April 10. In four hours, the volunteers removed four truckloads of trash from the popular range. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.

Swisher, Iowa - One of Iowa's most heavily used shooting ranges was the recipient of a cleanup project led by volunteers who stepped in after the local range manager was sidelined with a non-work related injury.

The Hawkeye Wildlife Area shooting range, between Iowa City and Cedar Rapids, is a popular destination for avid target shooters who come to sharpen their skills and site in their rifles. The range consists of three separate ranges – a 100 yard range, a 50 yard range and a 25 yard range. Range rules require users to clean up after themselves and to take out what they bring in.

“Unfortunately, people don't follow the rules,” said local wildlife biologist Steve Woodruff.

With the range manager down and the trash piling up, Woodruff contacted Adam Pinckney, with Backcountry Hunters and Anglers Iowa Chapter, who had approached

him a year earlier offering his members as volunteers to help maintain public wildlife areas.

“When I reached out to Adam to discuss the project, he jumped on it,” Woodruff said.

On April 10, Woodruff closed the range from 8 a.m. to noon, to allow Pinckney, and fellow Backcountry Hunters and Anglers members Brian Shirk and Jeff Karr, to get to work. They were joined in the clean up by Mike Baker who had come out to shoot.

In four hours, the volunteers removed four truckloads of garbage, spent shell casings, trash and other junk from the range.

“They did an exceptional job and we can’t thank them enough,” Woodruff said.

Media Contact: Steve Woodruff, Wildlife Biologist, Iowa River Wildlife Unit, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 319-330-7013.

Successful turkey hunters encouraged to provide a leg for disease surveillance

Hunters who bag a turkey this spring are encouraged to keep one of the lower legs to be tested for the presence of Lymphoproliferative Disease (LPDV).

“We want hunters to be aware of this disease. We conducted a small project last year and had several birds test positive so we know it’s here. What we don’t know is the range and extent and if it’s having an impact on our turkey population,” said Jim Coffey, forest wildlife research biologist for the Iowa DNR.

Iowa’s current turkey population trend is mostly flat or slightly declining across much of the state. It’s a trend occurring not only in Iowa, but in other Midwestern states as well as nationally and experts are looking at different possibilities as to why the decline is occurring.

Illinois is researching the impact black flies may have on young turkey survival. Missouri researchers are studying predator’s relationship with nesting turkeys.

“We’re looking at the possibility of LPDV impacting the Iowa population and need hunter assistance to provide samples from across the state to test,” Coffey said.

To provide a sample, after hunters’ tag and report their bird, they can cut the leg off at the joint where the feathers end and the leg becomes scaly, wrap the leg in a paper towel, put it in a zip top bag and place it in the freezer. They can then go online to <https://www.iowadnr.gov/Hunting/Turkey-Hunting> and click on the Wild Turkey Sample Submission Form on the right side of the page. They will receive a postage paid envelope, instruction sheet with short questionnaire, and an additional zip top bag. This will be an aggressive effort and all samples are welcomed, Coffey added.

Hunters are encouraged to send one whole lower leg, however if they would like to keep the spur it can be removed and the scaled portion above the spur can be submitted.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is working with Iowa State University on this project. The goal is to collect 1,000 legs, including samples from every county. So far, an estimated 120 sample submission packets have been requested. Iowa's individual turkey seasons run through May 17.

LPDV is a disease that does not impact people. Birds that test positive are still able to be consumed. Always use good meat handling and cooking protocols as with any other meat, poultry or wild game.

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.