



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 23, 2019

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Boaters advised to use caution at former Green Mill Ford Bridge site on the Cedar River

Fishing boaters and paddlers should use extreme caution if navigating the Cedar River between Waverly and Janesville, where ice jams destroyed the Green Mill Ford Bridge in mid-March.

The remaining debris has traveled down river and clearing it could take some time, according to the Bremer County Emergency Management System. Temporary buoys have been placed on the river and signs mark areas to avoid. Most of the bridge deck has been located, with some sections found nearly two miles downstream from where the bridge once stood. Steel and bridge pilings are also visible.

On April 5, two anglers in a fishing boat struck some debris that punctured the boat and caused it to leak. Todd Robertson, Iowa DNR River Programs outreach coordinator, said the anglers were fortunate to get the boat to shore safely.

“But results can be tragic if boaters, regardless of their swimming skills and experience, get caught in the debris after being thrown into the water,” Robertson said.

Strong current, combined with the debris stretching from the old bridge site downstream up to a few miles, will require strong boat control and navigation skills to safely get through this area of the Cedar River.

Media Contact: Todd Robertson, Iowa DNR River Programs Outreach Coordinator at 515-243-3714.

Walleye season opens May 4 on Iowa's Great Lakes

The 143rd walleye fishing season officially opens May 4 at Spirit Lake, East and West Okoboji lakes.

"Annual broodstock netting is complete and the walleye spawn is coming to a close," said fisheries biologist Mike Hawkins. "Walleyes will start the recovery process by consuming a lot of calories. This brings good fishing."

Walleye population assessments in the Iowa Great Lakes show healthy numbers of walleyes. "We continue to see some very good numbers of broodstock sized fish (17-inches and greater) in the Iowa Great Lakes," said Hawkins. "This year, our netting crews collected all the broodstock fish we needed for the hatchery in just a few nights. Walleye numbers in the lakes are very good."

The Iowa Great Lakes walleye fishery, like most in Iowa, is maintained through stocking. The Iowa Great Lakes are a source of broodstock for Iowa's walleye program and are managed to maintain high numbers of large fish. Walleye stocking success is highly variable with a strong year class of fish produced only every three to five years on average.

"Lake conditions, predator levels, and other environmental conditions are usually responsible for the strength of a year class of fish," he said.

Marble Beach State Park, a popular area campground and boat ramp, is closed for an extensive improvement project. The fish cleaning station at Marble Beach is closed with the construction at the park. Campgrounds at Gull Point and Emerson Bay are open with other private facilities and hotels also available. The fish cleaning station at Emerson Bay State Park is available.

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.

The Iowa Great Lakes Chamber of Commerce will host the 37th annual Great Walleye Weekend Fishing Contest in conjunction with the opener. For more information on the contest, visit their website at www.okobojichamber.com.

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

Geode State Park restoration project starts next phase

Danville, Iowa – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will start another phase of work at Geode State Park to improve water quality at Lake Geode and enhance accessibility and recreational opportunities in the park.

Lake restoration construction work at Lake Geode started in January 2018. About 80,000 cubic yards of sediment has been removed from the lake. Planned work will remove an additional 112,000 cubic yards of sediment, stabilize the eroded shoreline, build fishing jetties, and add fish habitat structures. Local angling groups will help place additional fish habitat features in the lake bottom. The DNR will replace the existing lake drain valve and complete maintenance work on the concrete spillway. Construction work is expected to be finished in the spring of 2020. Final efforts to stabilize the shoreline will be done via barge after the lake refills.

Campground improvements, started in March 2018, are expected to be completed this summer. Improvements include a new shower building, pit toilet, and dump station, and 14 campsites with full utility hook-ups and 52 campsites with electrical hook-ups.

Lake Geode is one of the lakes in the state selected for lake restoration work designed to improve water quality, habitat, and provide a positive economic return to the community. Poor water quality has impacted the fish population and affected all water based recreation at the lake. Implementation of water quality improvement practices in the watershed is currently underway.

Media Contact: George Antoniou, Lake Restoration Program Coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-725-8449.

May is Invasive Species Awareness Month

In an effort to increase awareness of invasive species and the impact they have on Iowa's ecosystems and economy, Governor Kim Reynolds recently proclaimed May as Invasive Species Awareness Month in Iowa.

Each year, public and private organizations spend millions of dollars in an effort to control invasive plants, insects, diseases and animals species.

Invasive species, such as emerald ash borer, Asian longhorned beetle and oriental bittersweet threaten Iowa's ecosystem by competing with and destroying native trees and by disrupting the natural complex habitat system.

Iowa woodlands, wildlands and waterways draw hundreds of thousands of tourists and recreational users each year, and raising awareness of invasive species and their impacts is an important step towards behavior change, which can prevent the introduction and spread of invasive species.

Invasive Species Awareness Month provides an opportunity for the public and private sectors to join forces, and take action against the introduction and spread of invasive species in the Iowa.

More information on forest invasive species can be found on the DNR website at www.iowadnr.gov/invasives.

Media Contact: Tivon Feeley, Forest Health Program Leader, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-725-8453 or tivon.feeley@dnr.iowa.gov.

Management planned for Eurasian watermilfoil found at Crystal Lake

Crystal Lake, Iowa – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) confirmed last fall that Eurasian watermilfoil was growing again in Crystal Lake, located seven miles west of Forest City in Hancock County.

Crystal Lake had the first confirmed infestation of Eurasian watermilfoil in Iowa in 1993. It was treated with the aquatic herbicide Sonar in 1994, and no Eurasian watermilfoil had been found in the lake after that treatment, until it was found along the north shore last fall.

Another aquatic invasive plant, curlyleaf pondweed, is also growing throughout the Crystal Lake.

The DNR will use Sonar again this month to treat the Eurasian watermilfoil. It will take about 60 days after treatment for all the plants to die. If plants are killed too quickly, the mass of decaying plants will rob the water of oxygen and could cause a fish kill.

There are no restrictions on fishing or swimming with the use of Sonar. This treatment should also kill curlyleaf pondweed plants that are currently in the lake, but it will not prevent turions from growing later in the year.

Eurasian watermilfoil reproduces by fragmentation, which means small pieces of it grow into new plants. This makes Eurasian watermilfoil easier to control than other aquatic plants that grow from seeds or roots, because once the plants are dead, there are no structures left to grow into new plants.

Curlyleaf pondweed grows from turions, which are seed-like structures that are dropped into the sediment. Because turions can live for many years in the sediment before spouting, new plants can grow even after the current plants die.

“It is extremely expensive to control invasive plants with herbicides,” said Kim Bogenschutz, the DNR’s Aquatic Invasive Species Program Coordinator. “Preventing the spread of Eurasian watermilfoil and curlyleaf pondweed to other lakes is key because these plants are difficult, if not impossible, to get rid of once they get into a lake.”

“Boaters and anglers can unintentionally spread aquatic invasive species if they do not take the proper precautions - clean, drain, dry - after each time out on the water,” said Bogenschutz.

- CLEAN any plants, animals or mud from boat and equipment before you leave a water body.

- DRAIN water from all equipment (motor, live well, bilge, transom well, bait bucket) before you leave a water body.
- DRY anything that comes into contact with water (boats, trailers, equipment, boots, clothing, dogs). Before you move to another waterbody either: Spray your boat and trailer with hot, high-pressure water; or Dry your boat and equipment for at least 5 days.
- Never release plants, fish or animals into a water body unless they came out of that water body and empty unwanted bait in the trash.

It is illegal to possess or transport prohibited aquatic invasive species, such as Eurasian watermilfoil and curlyleaf pondweed, in Iowa. Boaters must also drain all water from boats and equipment before leaving a water access and must keep drain plugs removed or opened during transport.

Find more information about aquatic invasive species and a list of infested waters in the 2019 Iowa Fishing Regulations booklet or on the DNR's website at www.iowadnr.gov/ais.

Media Contacts: Scott Grummer, Clear Lake Fisheries Office, at 641-357-3517 or Kim Bogenschutz, Boone Wildlife Research Station, at 515-290-0540.

Summer season highlights topic of Brushy Creek, Dolliver public meeting

Lehigh, Iowa - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is hosting a public meeting to discuss upcoming activities at Dolliver State Park and Brushy Creek State Recreation Area for the 2019 season. The meeting will be held in Center Lodge at Dolliver State Park, beginning 6 p.m., on April 29.

The meeting will highlight activities at the parks, what's new this year, what's coming for the centennial celebration of the Iowa state parks system in 2020, and other topics as time allows.

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.

For more information, contact Kevin Henning, Park Manager, Dolliver State Park, 515-359-2539 or Amber O'Neill, Park Manager, Brushy Creek State Recreation Area, 515-543-8298.

Ramsey Subaru donating \$1,000 to Ledges State Park at April 24 ceremony

Madrid, Iowa – Ledges State Park is receiving a \$1,000 donation from Ramsey Subaru, of Urbandale, that will be presented during a ceremony on Wed., April 24 at 11 a.m.

Staff from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources State Parks Bureau, representatives from Ramsey Subaru and members of the Ledges State Park friends group will meet at the eastern park entrance for the check presentation.

The donation was a result of a “Pick-a-Park” promotion sponsored by Ramsey Subaru, where Iowans could choose their favorite central Iowa state park to receive a \$1,000 donation for park improvements.

According to Andy Bartlett, manager of Ledges State Park, the \$1,000 will be used to help build a new playground for the state park.

“The friends group has worked for years to raise money for the playground, and this donation will help immensely in reaching our goal,” he said.

Media are invited to attend the ceremony. The eastern park entrance is located just west of the park residence at 1519 250th Street, Madrid.

Media Contact: Andy Bartlett, Park Manager, Ledges State Park, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-290-7677 or Andy.Bartlett@dnr.iowa.gov

Bat survey looking for volunteers

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources and Iowa State University are looking for volunteers interested in performing night time surveys for bats in Dubuque, Lucas, Jackson, Warren and Clayton counties.

The survey monitors bat occurrence in key areas of the state. It began in response to declining bat population from White Nose Syndrome, among other challenges.

This survey uses acoustic recording equipment mounted on top of a car to detect bats along specific routes. Data has been collected on these standardized survey routes for the last six years.

Volunteers will need a vehicle and a partner to run the survey and be available for at least two nights; one in June and one in July. The survey begins 30 minutes after sunset and takes roughly 2-1/2 hours to complete.

The total time commitment, including training, the two surveys and picking up and dropping off equipment, is roughly 10 hours. More details can be found at www.iowadnr.gov/vwmp as well as a volunteer interest form that should be downloaded, completed, and returned via email.

Media Contact: Stephanie Shepherd, Wildlife Diversity Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resource, 515-230-6599.

Public meeting to discuss Windmill Lake fish renovation this fall

Bedford, Iowa – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Taylor County Conservation Board will host a public meeting at 4 p.m., May 8, at the Bedford Fire Station, 702 Dodge Street, in Bedford, to discuss the proposed fish renovation of Windmill Lake near New Market in Taylor County.

Water quality and sportfish quality at Windmill Lake has declined since the early 2000s due to an increasing population of common carp.

Information will be presented on plans to eliminate common carp, as well as in-lake improvements to further improve the lake's water quality and recreation opportunities.

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.

Media Contact: Nick Fehring, Taylor County Conservation Board Director, 712-523-2852 or Andy Jansen, Iowa DNR Fisheries Management Biologist, 641-464-3108.

State Preserves Advisory Board meets May 2

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

The meeting is open to the public. 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.

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

The following is the May 2 agenda.

- Approve Agenda
- Approve minutes of June meeting
- Introduction of new members
- Starr's Cave State Preserve trail update
- Strasser Woods State Preserve – plans by the Polk County Conservation Board to renovate the existing walking trail as part of a National Trails Day project.
- Palisades-Downs State Preserve – a temporary access agreement has been prepared for an access lane crossing a remote corner of the preserve until an alternative can be identified.

- Heendah Hills Preserve – discuss options to renew the nomination for this preserve.
- Select dates for 2019 meetings

A more detailed agenda is available at www.iowadnr.gov/spab.

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