



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nov. 26, 2019

IHAP sites help meet the demand for public hunting areas



The familiar burnt orange sign identifies this piece of private land as open to public hunting. Whether its pheasants or deer, doves or turkeys, the addition of IHAP sites to the menu of public hunting locations is unquestioningly popular with hunters as well as with landowners. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.

WEST UNION, Iowa - The winding roads of Fayette County, east of Eldorado, lead to a 130-acre area split by the Turkey River that could be a sneaky-good spot for hunting deer in a part of the state known for its deer hunting.

“This site has two food plots on it next to a grove of trees near the river as part of a hundred-acre tall grass prairie – I think it would be a great place to harvest a deer or two,” said Greg Schmitt, private lands biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Schmitt knows this particular area – identified as IHAP Fayette 2 on the DNR’s online hunting atlas – because he’s the one who worked with the landowner to get it enrolled in the program. IHAP – which is an acronym for Iowa Habitat and Access Program – is a state managed program from the Federal Farm Bill.

How the program works - the Iowa DNR meets with interested landowners who want to make habitat improvements to their land. Through IHAP, the DNR helps fund the improvements, and provides technical assistance to meet the landowner’s and wildlife objectives.

Landowners receive habitat improvements at little to no expense to themselves; hunters gain access to private land; the DNR upgrades wildlife habitat.

Win.

Win.

Win.

There is a minimum of 40 acres to enroll and contracts run from 3-10 years.

The IHAP has added 650 acres of land open to public hunting spread across five areas in Fayette County. It has also expanded hunting opportunities in Allamakee, Winneshiek, Clayton, Buchanan and Delaware counties to the tune of nearly 900 acres. Statewide, there’s nearly 23,000 acres enrolled in IHAP.

Fayette County has a lot of private land enrolled in CRP that supports an established pheasant population, Schmitt said, that will likely be the source of pheasants on these new IHAP sites. The IHAP sites offer a mix of native prairie flowers and grasses that support a lot of bugs young pheasants need for protein and habitat hens need to raise a brood.

This combination of newer areas, young birds and a late harvest should be on hunters’ radar.

“There could be some good late season pheasant hunting on these IHAP areas because of all the standing corn that’s around,” Schmitt said. “Some of these birds probably haven’t been hunted yet.”

Whether its pheasants or deer, doves or turkeys, the addition of IHAP sites to the menu of public hunting locations is unquestioningly positive. IHAP is popular with hunters as well as with landowners to the point of when funding is available to enroll new properties, there is often a list of landowners waiting to get in.

“This program is only available because landowners were willing to participate in it. We encourage hunters to respect private property, stay on the land enrolled in the program and pick up after themselves,” Schmitt said.

Site maps are available at www.iowadnr.gov/ihap showing boundaries, which species would be most likely attracted to the habitat and the location of a checkout box where hunters are asked to leave their comments on the program. Look for the orange signs.

Walk-in public hunting through IHAP is available between September 1 and May 31. The IHAP is supported with money from Federal Farm Bill and Habitat Stamp.

Media Contact: Greg Schmitt, Private Lands Wildlife Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 563-380-0373.