



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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State Park Passport recognized by America's State Parks national organization

RALEIGH, N.C. – The National Association of State Park's Directors (NASPD) has recognized the Iowa State Park Passport for extraordinary achievement among people, projects and programs in managing state park systems.

NASPD awarded the State Park Passport with a Presidential Award for Corporate Partnership, honoring the leadership and innovation of Travel Iowa and Bandwango working alongside the Iowa DNR to create the successful passport program, especially engaging park visitors safely during the national pandemic.

The free digital passport, created to mark the 100th anniversary of Iowa State Parks, encouraged Iowans to discover new state parks and enjoy the outdoors, plus provided discounts to restaurants and tourist attractions near each state park. Since June 2020, more than 13,000 travelers checked in more than 25,000 times. Travel Iowa is part of the Iowa Economic Development Authority, helping to drive Iowa's tourism efforts. Bandwango is a travel technology platform that connects people to places.

"America's state parks and the people who visit them are the prime beneficiaries of the outstanding contributions from these organizations and individuals," Lewis Ledford, NASPD executive director, said. "Taking just a few moments to recognize and thank them for their efforts is the least we can do when evaluating all they have done to improve the quality of life and recreational opportunities in their communities."

The award was presented at the NASPD annual conference, Dec. 9 - 10. The conference of parks and recreation professionals was held virtually this year to share best practices in park management.

The NASPD works to promote and advance America's State Parks for their significance and contributions to the nation's environment, heritage, health and economy. For more details visit: <https://www.stateparks.org/news-events/americas-state-parks-recognizes-state-parks-excellence/>

Fish Iowa program opens registration for virtual ice fishing courses



DES MOINES - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is offering two free virtual ice fishing courses to individuals who have little to no ice fishing experience or would like to further improve their current skills.

“If you haven't ice fished at all or are looking to sharpen your skills, then these are the courses for you,” said Barb Gigar, aquatic education coordinator with the Iowa DNR.

Join the two events online for an evening of all things ice fishing. Fisheries and Law Enforcement staff with the Iowa DNR will be providing the instruction for both courses.

During the first course, participants will have the chance to learn the basics on ice safety, cold weather fish behavior, choosing a location, and basic ice fishing gear and tactics. This course will focus on panfish as the desired species. During the second course, participants will have the chance to learn about more advanced skills such as reading the ice, specialized equipment, fishing shacks and will focus on species such as bass, walleye and trout. Both courses will cover ice-fishing regulations and participants will have the chance to ask questions to DNR staff.

The courses are geared for participants 16 and older. Those under 16 must have an adult register and participate in the course as well. Space online will be limited so register right way to ensure your spot. The events will be held on January 12 and 19 and will run from 6 to 8 p.m. For more information and to begin the registration process visit:

January 12: Basic Ice Fishing - <https://tinyurl.com/icefishbasics>

January 19: Advanced Ice Fishing - <https://tinyurl.com/icefishadvanced>

The program is provided through the Iowa DNR as part of a national effort to recruit, retain and reactivate hunters and anglers due to the overall decline in hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation.

Media Contact: Barb Gigar, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, (515) 494-3891.

Iowa DNR offices closed additional day for Christmas holiday

DES MOINES, Iowa -- All Iowa Department of Natural Resources offices will be closed on Thursday, Dec. 24 and Friday, Dec. 25. Normal business operations will resume on Monday, Dec. 28.

The DNR wishes you and your family the very best this holiday season.

Many DNR services are still available electronically, 24/7 via www.iowadnr.gov.

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.