



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Stay safe on the ice this winter

As Iowans head out on frozen water to their “go to” spot, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) reminds everyone to beware of ice conditions and check ice thickness often.

Ice conditions change constantly and its thickness can vary across the lake. Rocks, trees, docks or other things that poke through the ice will conduct heat and make the ice around it less stable. Trust your instincts – if the ice does not look right, don’t go out.

A blanket of snow on top of an ice covered lake insulates the ice, slowing the growth of ice and hiding potential hazards or weak spots. River ice is 15 percent weaker than lake ice. Ice with a bluish color is safer than clear ice. Avoid slushy or honey-combed and stay away from dark spots on the ice. Don’t walk into areas where the snow cover looks discolored.

The DNR recommends a minimum of four inches of quality ice for fishing and at least five inches for snowmobiles and ATVs.

### Safety Tips on the Ice

- No ice is 100 percent safe.
- New ice is usually stronger than old ice.
- Don’t go out alone - if the worst should happen, someone will be there to call for help or to help rescue.
- Let someone know where you are going and when you will return.

- Check ice thickness as you go out - there could be pockets of thin ice or places where ice recently formed.
  - Avoid off-colored snow or ice. It is usually a sign of weakness.
  - The insulating effect of snow slows down the freezing process.
  - Bring along these basic items to help keep you safe: hand warmers, ice cleats to help prevent falls, ice picks (wear around your neck) to help you crawl out of the water if you fall in, a life jacket, a floating safety rope, a whistle to call for help, a basic first aid kit and extra dry clothes including a pair of gloves.
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## Spend a winter day ice fishing

If you've never gone ice fishing before, it's time to get in on the fun. Bundle up the family and enjoy some of the best fishing experiences of the year.

"A day on the ice is a great way to get out, recreate responsibly and enjoy some socially distanced fun," said Joe Larscheid, chief of fisheries for the Iowa Department of Natural Resource. "Dress warm, have fun, and stay safe on the ice this winter."

It's a thrill to walk out on a frozen lake or pond and fish through the ice. You can position yourself right over the habitat, place your bait and lure in front of the fish and catch a lot of fish.

More fish are caught through the ice each year than during the open water season. Iowa lakes are full of bluegills, crappies and other panfish. Lakes in northern Iowa will also have yellow perch and walleye.

Check the weekly DNR fishing report ([www.iowadnr.gov/Fishing/Fishing-Reports](http://www.iowadnr.gov/Fishing/Fishing-Reports)) for ice conditions across Iowa before going out. Smaller bodies of water usually freeze faster and thicker than larger lakes or river backwaters, which often have a warmer current moving through.

At a minimum, four inches of clear ice is recommended for fishing. Avoid any ice that is covered by snow or slush. Keep your eyes open for any cracks or changes on the surface of the ice. If the ice does not look right, find a different spot.

Use the DNR's online maps of the lake you are going to fish to find edges of creek channels, fish mounds, brush piles and rock piles that likely hold fish. Printable maps and the online Fishing Atlas are available on the DNR website at [www.iowadnr.gov/Fishing/Fishing-Maps](http://www.iowadnr.gov/Fishing/Fishing-Maps).

Ice conditions change constantly and its thickness can vary across the lake. Drill test holes near shore and as you move to measure the thickness and quality of the ice. Don't go out alone and always let someone else know where you will be and when you expect to return home.

Find more ice fishing tips on the DNR website at [www.iowadnr.gov/icefishing](http://www.iowadnr.gov/icefishing).

**Media Contact:** Joe Larscheid, Chief of Fisheries, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-201-3376.

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## DNR to hold meeting to review hunting and trapping seasons and possible rule changes online

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will host a virtual meeting at 6:30 p.m., Feb. 23, to review the recently completed hunting and trapping seasons, discuss possible changes to rules and regulations, and address other topics as requested and time allows.

"We want people to attend this meeting, listen to the seasons reviews, ask questions and hear directly from our staff," said Todd Bishop, chief of the Iowa DNR's Wildlife Bureau. "Part of the meeting will be devoted to discussing potential rule changes and collecting feedback as we work through the rules process."

The meeting is open to the public and replaces the series of meetings held across the state. This online platform has a limit of 1,000 attendees and attendees must sign up to attend. Sign up in advance for this meeting

at [https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0qfuqsqz8jG9TAEH20gv500Jo\\_VUSq5D8XA](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0qfuqsqz8jG9TAEH20gv500Jo_VUSq5D8XA) confirmation email will be sent containing information about joining the meeting.

Comments collected will be considered along with other related comments received by the Iowa DNR prior to proposing changes to hunting and trapping rules and regulations. Proposed rules will be presented to the Natural Resource Commission during a regular public meeting for consideration and additional public comment.

The DNR will hold an additional virtual meeting if there is a need.

Any person participating in the public meeting and has special requirements, such as those related to mobility or hearing impairments, should contact the Iowa DNR or ADA Coordinator at 515-725-8200, Relay Iowa TTY Service 800-735-7942, or [Webmaster@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Webmaster@dnr.iowa.gov), and advise of specific needs.

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## Iowa DNR accepting comments on proposed catfish regulations and paddlefish licensing changes on the Missouri and Big Sioux rivers

DES MOINES - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is accepting comments on proposed changes to catfish bag and length limits and paddlefish licensing on the Missouri and Big Sioux rivers, through Feb. 15.

Proposed changes include establishing a daily bag limit of 10 channel catfish, five flathead catfish (only 1 > 30"), and one blue catfish in the Missouri and Big Sioux rivers to align Iowa's regulations with Nebraska's and South Dakota's regulations; and including reciprocity language should Nebraska establish a Missouri River Paddlefish snagging season.

Currently, Iowa has a daily combined bag limit of 15 catfish (channel, flathead or blue) with no length limits in Iowa's portion of the Missouri and Big Sioux border rivers, which is different from Nebraska's and South Dakota's regulations. Paddlefish snagging is only

allowed in Iowa's portion of the Missouri River. Some sections of the Missouri River are entirely in Iowa or Nebraska, which is confusing to anglers and creates challenges for law enforcement on both sides of the river.

The proposed rule change would make catfish regulations and state boundary regulations less confusing to anglers who fish the Missouri and Big Sioux border rivers and easier to enforce. South Dakota recently changed its catfish regulations to align with Nebraska's.

If approved, the proposed regulation changes will go in effect Jan. 1, 2022.

Comments on the proposed regulation changes may be submitted through Feb. 15 via email to [fisheries@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:fisheries@dnr.iowa.gov), or by mail to Joe Larscheid, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Wallace State Office Building, 502 East Ninth Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0034.

**Media Contact:** Chris Larson, Western Iowa & Missouri River Regional Fisheries Supervisor, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 712-250-0001.

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## Campground hosts needed for upcoming recreation season

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is seeking people who enjoy the outdoors, camping and meeting new people, to consider becoming volunteer campground hosts for the upcoming recreation season.

Volunteer campground hosts live in state parks from one to five months assisting DNR staff with light maintenance duties, checking in campers, and being a resource for visitors enjoying state parks and forests.

Campground hosts are provided a free campsite while they are actively hosting during the camping season. Hosts volunteer 20 – 40 hours per week, including weekends and holidays, while living on site in their own camper.

Campground hosts general duties include greeting visitors, assisting campers checking in and with reservations, cleaning bathrooms, light maintenance and administrative duties, acting as a liaison between campers and DNR staff and answering questions and disseminating information to campers.

### Host positions are available at:

- Beeds Lake
- Bellevue
- Clear Lake
- Dolliver
- Fairport
- Gull Point
- Pleasant Creek
- Red Haw
- Springbrook

- Stephens State Forest
- Wapsipinicon
- Yellow River State Forest

Information about campgrounds and state parks is available online at [www.iowadnr.gov/stateparks](http://www.iowadnr.gov/stateparks). To discuss the host position, contact the state park directly, or call 515-725-8489.

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## Chickadee tax check-off donations increased in 2019, but continues overall downward trend

Last year, a little over 7,200 Iowa taxpayers helped boost wildlife conservation with donations to the Fish and Wildlife Fund on their state tax form, representing about 0.5 percent of total taxpayers in Iowa.

“We are thankful for those who donated to wildlife conservation with their tax refunds as the funds go directly to habitat development and restoration programs for some of Iowa’s most vulnerable animal species,” said Stephanie Shepherd, wildlife biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Wildlife Diversity program.

The Fish and Wildlife Fund, commonly known as the “Chickadee Check-off,” is a mechanism the Iowa Legislature created in the 1980s for Iowans to donate to wildlife conservation on the Iowa state income tax form. Before this time, so called “non-game” wildlife had no dedicated funding.

Non-game wildlife are the 1,000-plus species such as songbirds, bald eagles, salamanders, turtles, monarchs and bees and more that make up the majority of wildlife in Iowa. The Chickadee Check-off is one of the only funding sources for the Iowa DNR’s Wildlife Diversity program, which is responsible for these species.

Funding helps to improve wildlife habit, restore native wildlife, provide opportunities for citizens to learn about Iowa’s natural resources and much more. Recent projects have been investigating the nesting success of barn owls and figuring out the status of the endangered rusty-patched bumblebee.

Iowans donated a little under \$150,000 on their 2019 tax forms, which translates to an average gift of \$20.39 per donor, an increase from the previous year. Donations can be made in any amount starting at just \$1.

“The tax check-off line is pretty inconspicuous and can be easily missed. Be sure to remind your tax preparer that they have a client wants to donate,” said Shepherd.

Once located, donating is easy: simply write the amount to donate next to the Fish and Wildlife Check-Off, line 57 on Form 1040, and the sum is either automatically deducted from the refund or added to the amount owed.

“If every Iowa taxpayer donated just \$1, it would mean \$1.5 million for wildlife and natural resource conservation,” Shepherd said.

**Media Contact:** Stephanie Shepherd, Wildlife Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-230-6599 or [stephanie.shepherd@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:stephanie.shepherd@dnr.iowa.gov)

