



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sept. 2, 2021

- [A busy Labor Day weekend expected on Iowa waters and state parks](#)
- [Derecho Community Forestry Grant Program accepting additional applications](#)

A busy Labor Day weekend expected on Iowa waters and state parks

DES MOINES, Iowa – The unofficial end to summer this weekend is expected to draw thousands of Iowans out to their state parks and waterways.

The weekend weather forecast appears to be favorable for various outdoor activities. The DNR reminds users to abide by all safety measures in order to have a safe and enjoyable Labor Day holiday weekend.

Boating Safety

Boaters headed out to a lake, river, pond or any other waterway should adhere to the following safety tips:

- Plan ahead and avoid peak hours and large crowds of boaters.
- Park your vehicles and trailers in designated parking spaces NOT in grass areas or they will be ticketed and towed.
- Alcohol and boating don't mix. Wind, sun glare and heat can enhance the effects of alcohol, hindering the operator's ability to make necessary decisions.
- The same limit of .08 for operating a vehicle under the influence applies to boating.
- Always have a designated operator that avoids consuming alcohol.
- Wear your life jacket, it floats, you don't! Any children under the age 13 must wear a lifejacket at all times on a vessel underway in Iowa.
- Every boat or vessel must have a wearable life jacket for everyone on board; a USCG approved throw-able flotation device is also required on vessels 16' or longer.
- Make sure there is a charged fire extinguisher on board, as well as a horn/whistle.
- Slow down and watch for other boaters or personal watercraft, have patience.
- Avoid dams and other hazards on waterways.
- Obey all posted warning signs and rules.
- Drain plugs and other water draining devices must be removed and/or remain open during transport to avoid spreading of invasive species.

Beach & Swimming Safety

Wherever you choose to swim this Labor Day weekend, whether it's a backyard pool, a pond or lake, or a public pool, please follow these safety tips:

- Remember to keep young children at arm's reach at all times. Never, even for a moment, leave small children alone or in the care of another young child while swimming.
- Drowning is silent.
- Learn how to perform CPR.
- Avoid alcohol use while swimming.
- Alcohol is prohibited at some public beaches.
- Glass bottles are prohibited on beaches.
- Stay within the roped area of the lake.
- Swim with a buddy.
- Obey posted signs and flags.
- Wear a life jacket or some kind of personal flotation device if needed.
- Use sunscreen and drink plenty of water as needed.
- Iowa's public beaches do not have lifeguards on duty.

Because the beaches are busier this summer, staff are encouraging visitors to utilize the non-peak times and days. For the busier beaches/parks, the non-peak days usually include Sundays through Thursdays, and Fridays before 5:00 pm. If you plan to go to the beaches on Saturdays, the non-peak hours are usually before noon.

Parks staff may temporarily close parking lots when they become full and limit the number of visitors at that point. The DNR recommends visitors go to another nearby park or beach that is not as heavily populated. Visitors are reminded to only park in designated parking spaces. All violators will be cited by staff.

State Parks/Campgrounds Safety

This weekend will be another very busy one if you plan to visit a state park and campground, use these safety tips to ensure an enjoyable time:

- Pack snacks, food, water and personal hygiene products, including hand sanitizer, to bring along for hiking and utilizing the state parks.
- Stay hydrated with plenty of fluids.
- Don't hike alone and always have some way to communicate if you get lost and need help.
- Wear proper outdoor attire for hiking.
- Plan ahead for your visit to our parks and campgrounds. If a parking lot becomes full at a park or campground, staff may temporarily close the parking lots and limit the number of visitors at that point.
- If there is no parking available, do not park in the grass areas or any other area that is not a designated parking spot. All violators will be cited.

- Utilize the parks during non-peak times, which often include mornings and evenings.
- If a park is heavily populated, find another nearby state park that is less populated.
- Don't transport firewood, buy it locally.
- Be respectful of your neighbors camping around you.
- Slow down on park roadways and obey posted speed limit signs. Families and kids are often walking or biking on the roads!
- "Carry In, Carry Out"—please pick up any trash and carry out what you carry into the park. Be respectful and care for our natural resources.
- Campers should dispose of trash in receptacles, not burn it in the campfires.
- Check [the DNR website for all of the latest closures](#).
- If you plan to fish, be sure to have a current fishing license. You can purchase one by visiting: gooutdoorsiowa.com, or by downloading the Go Outdoors Iowa app on your smartphone through the Google Play store or the App Store. You can also purchase your fishing license at some local retailers in your area.

Paddling Safety

Whether it be tubing, kayaking or canoeing, paddlers are enjoying the splash of the water, scenic views, and wildlife viewing from Iowa's rivers, rapids and streams, stay safe each time you paddle with these simple safety tips:

- Some rivers in northeast and north-central Iowa are swollen and swift with consistent rainfall earlier this week. Stay on lakes and flat-water while the rivers are high.
- With very low water levels in central and western Iowa, due to drought conditions, some waterways are not suitable for paddling, often leaving paddlers stranded.
- Always know your river conditions before you go paddling. For the latest river conditions, contact Iowa DNR Customer Service at 515-725-8200 or your local county conservation board for updates.
- Let others know where you will be paddling, including what access to what access, and when you are expected to return.
- Always wear your life jacket. Kids under age 13 must wear a life jacket at all times. The vessel must have enough life jackets for all members on board.
- Avoid sandbar crowds and "rafting" up together. Tubers are reminded not to go in groups larger than 10 and don't tie tubes to one another.
- Check the Iowa DNR's interactive paddler's map at www.iowadnr.gov/Things-to-Do/Canoeing-Kayaking/Where-to-Paddle for updates on real-time hazards like downed trees and log jams, strainers and bridge construction. Pay attention to the dam warning signs and know where dams are located before you head out on the water.
- Find individual water trail maps, including access points at www.iowadnr.gov/Things-to-Do/Canoeing-Kayaking/Water-Trail-Maps-Brochures.

Media Contacts: Susan Stocker, Boating Law Administrator and Education Coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-313-6439 or Todd Robertson, Iowa DNR River Programs Outreach Coordinator, 515-243-3714.

Derecho Community Forestry Grant Program accepting additional applications

Local governments, schools and service organizations are eligible to apply for tree-planting grants in counties hard-hit by the 2020 derecho. The application deadline has been extended to 4:30 p.m. on Monday, Sept. 13.

The Derecho Community Forestry Grant Program is open to organizations located within the 27 Iowa counties included in the Governor's Derecho Disaster Proclamation. The Iowa Legislature appropriated \$250,000 of state infrastructure funds to DNR for the community-based tree-planting program to help recover from the derecho.

Reimbursable grants from \$500 to \$5,000 can be used to purchase and plant trees on publicly owned lands. Tree species must be suitable to Iowa's climate. Qualifying public planting lands include, but are not limited to, street right-of-ways, parks, school grounds, courthouse lawns, public buildings, fairgrounds, cemeteries, libraries and trails.

Award recipients are required to provide a dollar-for-dollar cash match for purchase of trees and materials from Iowa businesses. The application and rules are available online at www.iowadnr.gov/urbanforestry. Entities may submit multiple proposals.

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