



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 17, 2022

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Boaters to hit the waters this Memorial Day weekend

The unofficial beginning to summer is just days away and that also marks the unofficial beginning of Iowa's boating season. Boaters across the state are anxious to get out on the lake after the cool and wet spring and are preparing their watercraft for the long holiday weekend.

Susan Stocker, boating law administrator and education coordinator for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, said safety should be the top priority for all boaters.

In 2021, there were 33 reported boating incidents on Iowa waters: 26 of those were personal injury; 17 involved property damage, and three resulted in fatalities. None of the fatalities involved alcohol.

"Now is the time to review Iowa boating laws and plan to have patience at the ramp and on the water," she said. "With the recent storms across the state, boaters should use extra caution for floating debris and higher waters."

Stocker advised to have someone on your watercraft be a lookout for large debris that is often under the water with only a small portion showing above water. It is easy to miss and can cause major damage to your vessel. Be sure to check ahead that the boat ramps are open before heading out.

Just like any party on land, boaters should plan ahead to have a designated sober operator that is cautious with speed and on the lookout for other vessels.

Another way boaters can stay on the water is by inspecting their vessels prior to heading to the lake.

Lifejackets should be in good condition and the right size for each person onboard. Check the fire extinguisher, boat and trailer lights, whistle, and throwable floatation.

Boaters are reminded about the requirement that drain plugs and other water draining devices must be removed and/or remain open during transport to avoid spreading invasive species. Anglers leaving with fish are recommended to put them on ice, whether in a cooler, a bucket or a live well (plug must still be removed and/or opened).

Iowa has more than 231,000 registered boats.

BOATING SAFETY TIPS

- Alcohol and boating don't mix. Wind, sun glare and heat can enhance the effects of alcohol hindering the operator's ability to make decisions.
- Check for open ramps or water hazards before heading out.
- Before leaving the house, check the trailer lights, wheel bearings and the hitch.
- Make sure there is a current fire extinguisher and horn/whistle, a wearable life jacket for everyone and a USCG approved flotation device onboard.
- File a float plan with a friend, including your destination, expected time of return and type of boat.
- Wear your lifejacket - it floats, you don't.
- Inflatable lifejackets are light weight, comfortable and USCG approved. Wear it.
- Take a boater education course available online at <https://www.iowadnr.gov/Things-to-Do/Boating/Boater-Education>. It has valuable information and many insurance companies will offer a discount on boat insurance. Familiarize yourself with Iowa's boating laws.
- Top two safety violations in Iowa are having inadequate life jackets and operating too fast and too close to other vessels.

Media Contact: Susan Stocker, Boating Law Administrator and Education Coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-313-6439.

Red Haw State Park partially opens after tornado damage

CHARITON – Red Haw State Park will open to visitors starting May 20 after a March tornado caused extensive damage to the park. The campground and surrounding trails, which are the most heavily damaged areas, remain closed.

Visitors can access the beach and north boat ramp area, but are asked to avoid the campground as professional clean-up crews continue to remove trees and debris with heavy equipment. The DNR anticipates that the campground will remain closed until after Labor Day.

For future updates, visit the DNR's Alerts and Closure page at www.iowadnr.gov/parkclosures

Help stop aquatic hitchhikers this Memorial Day weekend

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) reminds all boaters and anglers to "Clean, Drain, and Dry" their boats and equipment this Memorial Day weekend to protect

Iowa lakes and rivers from aquatic hitchhikers.

Aquatic invasive species, everything from zebra mussels to Eurasian watermilfoil, move from one waterbody to another by hitchhiking on boats, in bait buckets and on other equipment used in the water. They often grow quickly and spread fast when brought to another lake or stream due to lack of natural controls.

“Checking your boat and equipment for unwanted hitchhikers will help slow the spread of aquatic invasive species and protect our local waterways for future generations,” said Kim Bogenschutz, aquatic invasive species coordinator for the Iowa DNR.

Aquatic invasive species can create serious problems for Iowa waters by reducing native species and making lakes and rivers unusable for boaters, anglers and swimmers. Boaters and anglers can unintentionally spread aquatic hitchhikers if they do not take the proper precautions each time they leave a lake or river.

Clean, Drain, Dry is a simple three step process that boaters should follow every time they move from one body of water to another.

- CLEAN any plants, animals, or mud from your boat and equipment before you leave a waterbody.
- DRAIN water from all equipment (motor, live well, bilge, transom well, bait bucket) before you leave a waterbody.
- 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 or high-pressure water; or Dry your boat and equipment for at least five days.
- Never release plants, fish, or animals into a waterbody unless they came out of that waterbody and empty unwanted bait in the trash.

It is illegal to possess or transport prohibited aquatic invasive species. It is also illegal to transport any aquatic plants on water-related equipment in Iowa. Signs posted at public accesses remind boaters to stop aquatic hitchhikers and identify infested waters.

Boaters must also drain all water from boats and equipment before they leave a water access and keep drain plugs removed or opened during transport. It is also illegal to introduce any live fish, except for hooked bait, into public waters.

Find more information about aquatic invasive species and a list of infested waters in the current *Iowa Fishing Regulations* or at www.iowadnr.gov/ais.

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