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Black Hawk Lake restoration efforts receive national recognition

DES MOINES – Project partners behind a major restoration effort to improve water quality in Black Hawk Lake, located in Sac County, received national recognition for their achievements.

The Black Hawk Lake Watershed Project, The City of Lake View, and the Black Hawk Lake Protective Association (BHLPA) received the 2022 North American Lake Management Society's Appreciation Award for a Lake Management Success Story. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Sac County Soil and Water Conservation District, and other agencies partnered with the award recipients on the project.

"Black Hawk Lake has a long history of water quality challenges," said Michelle Balmer, with the DNR's Lake Restoration Program. "But the collective efforts of the watershed project, the City of Lake View, and the LPA have helped to improve water quality in the lake and promote awareness throughout the watershed of what can be achieved when everyone works together."

Partners began working together in 2008 to develop a long-term restoration plan for Black Hawk Lake, starting with a Diagnostic and Feasibility Study and culminating with a watershed and restoration action plan. The Black Hawk Lake Watershed Project, funded by a US EPA Section 319 grant administered by the Iowa DNR, began in 2012. Since the project's inception, more than 211 practices have been installed in the watershed, resulting in a 4,369-ton reduction in the annual amount of sediment and a 9,390-pound reduction in the amount of phosphorus that entered the lake. Additionally, the City of Lake View has worked to reduce stormwater runoff to the lake by investing in numerous urban practices including bioswales, a wet detention pond, and rain gardens.

This reduction in nutrients represents more than 56 percent of the phosphorus reduction goals outlined in the watershed plan. Phosphorus is the key nutrient fueling algae blooms in lakes.

"The success of the Black Hawk Lake Watershed Project has been through building long term partnerships," said Ethan Thies, project coordinator for the Black Hawk Lake Watershed Project. "Project support has come from federal, state, and local agencies, however, none of this would be possible without the participation of the LPA, the City of Lake View, and of course

watershed residents. This watershed project is a fantastic example of groups coming together to improve a public resource.”

The City of Lake View and the BHLPA also invested in an ADA fishing pier and fish cleaning station to improve recreational opportunities at the lake in 2012. Since the project began, vegetation has returned to the lake, water clarity has improved, and fewer algae blooms have been observed. The sport fishery has also improved, with large communities of walleye, panfish, and muskellunge available for anglers. The lake is also drawing an average of 20,000 more visitors annually today than in 2014 (CARD study for 2014 and 2019), which bolsters the local economy.

As the lake has changed from a turbid water system dominated by cyanobacteria to one with an abundance of vegetation, the City and the BHLPA have been amazing partners to address excessive vegetation within the lake. The City operates and maintains a vegetation harvester as needed, and the BHLPA works with the local fisheries biologist to develop and fund a vegetation management plan for the lake that works for both recreational boaters and provides habitat for aquatic life. Together, these two partners have invested more than \$50,000 in vegetation management efforts at Black Hawk Lake.

Today, the City and the BHLPA continue to work with the DNR to implement additional restoration practices in the lake. Dredging in the main body, which began in the summer of 2022, will remove 750,000 cubic yards of sediment, reducing internal loading significantly. The BHLPA raised significant funds to assist with dredging efforts and has led the way to support long term vegetation management at the lake.

“It is great to be recognized,” said City of Lake View Mayor John Westergaard. “But the recognition really goes to the great partners and all who support Black Hawk Lake.” He went on to say, “When we met for the first time thirteen years ago, the DNR said that successful projects are locally driven, and our community really took that to heart. The Black Hawk Lake Project is now held as an example of how strong public support can make a large project happen.”

The North American Lake Management Society, whose mission is to forge partnerships among citizens, scientists, and professionals to foster the management and protection of lakes and reservoirs, presents the Lake Management Success Story Appreciation Award annually to a project or group nominated by its membership.

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Conservation officers push safety, target ID messages during first shotgun deer season

Hunter safety and target identification were the top messages by Iowa’s state conservation officers over the weekend during the first shotgun deer season.

“Safety is our number one concern,” said Craig Cutts, chief of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement Bureau. “We want everyone to have fun, and at the end of the day, we want them all to come home safe and sound.”

Cutts encouraged hunters to review their blaze orange to make sure it's not faded and is in fact 100 percent solid blaze orange – no camo patterns. The law requires each hunter to wear one piece of external visible solid blaze orange clothing: vest, jacket, coat, sweatshirt, sweater, shirt or coveralls. The purpose is to be seen by other hunters.



He said hunters using a blind to hunt deer during the shotgun seasons also need to have a minimum of 144 square inches of blaze orange marking on the blind visible from all sides. Hunters using blinds must also satisfy the requirements of wearing blaze orange on their person.

He also advised hunters to double check their deer tags to make sure they have the correct tag for the correct season; to have a valid hunting license and habitat fee; reminded hunters that landowner deer tags are assigned to the specific farm unit, and must be used for that specific farm unit; and that the allowable rifles do not include .300 Win Mag or .30-06. Only rifles firing an expanding type bullet with a diameter from .350 to .500 of an inch with a published or calculated muzzle energy of 500 foot pounds or higher are legal for hunting deer in the shotgun seasons.

“Hunters need to be familiar with the range of their firearm and their skills and stay within those boundaries,” he said. “We always stress that hunters need to not only properly identify their target, but what is behind it as well, and avoid shooting at running deer. If there’s any question about taking a shot, don’t pull the trigger, because once you pull the trigger, you can’t call the shot back. No deer is worth taking an unsafe shot; another deer will come along.”

Hunters reported harvesting 21,000 deer from Dec. 3-5. Iowa’s first shotgun season ends Dec. 7. Iowa’s second shotgun season is Dec. 10-18.

Missouri and Big Sioux River paddlefish license on sale Dec. 15

Iowa anglers can buy the Missouri and Big Sioux River paddlefish license and tags starting Dec. 15 through Jan. 7.

Buy your special paddlefish license and tags on the Iowa DNR online licenses sales website at <https://gooutdoorsiowa.com>. A resident license sells for \$25.50 and a nonresident license is \$49. You must also have a valid Iowa fishing license.

You can buy up to two tags – one from Dec. 15 to Dec. 31 and an additional tag from Jan. 1 to Jan. 7, or two tags if you didn’t buy one in December. A limited number of paddlefish licenses are available - 950 resident and 50 nonresident.

The license, harvest tag(s), and regulations will be mailed to purchasers in mid-January. Purchasers will be asked to complete an electronic survey to help the Iowa DNR evaluate the success of the paddlefish season. Please complete the survey whether you harvested a paddlefish or not. The Iowa DNR is always working to improve the paddlefish season for anglers; any input provided is considered and is greatly appreciated.

The Missouri and Big Sioux River paddlefish season opens Feb. 1 and runs through April 30.

For more information about Iowa's special paddlefish season, visit the DNR website at www.iowadnr.gov/paddlefish - click on Missouri River Paddlefish Season and Regulations.

Media Contact: Chris Larson, Western Iowa & Missouri River Regional Fisheries Supervisor, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 712-769-2587.

Stay safe as Iowa lakes freeze over

The recent blast of arctic air is growing ice on lakes and ponds across the northern two-thirds of Iowa. Anglers are ready to get out for the popular early ice fishing season.

"Many of us can't wait to get out on the ice each winter," said Joe Larscheid, chief of fisheries for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR). "Ice fishing is a fun, inexpensive activity for anglers of all ages to get outdoors and avoid cabin fever."

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

"Check ice thickness as you make your way to your favorite fishing spot," Larscheid said. "Ice conditions change constantly and its thickness can vary across the lake. 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.

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.

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

2023 hunting, fishing licenses on sale Dec. 15

Iowans can begin buying 2023 resident hunting, fishing and other licenses on Dec. 15. Licenses purchased for 2022 expire on Jan. 10, 2023.

The menu of license options includes the popular Outdoor Combo annual resident hunting/fishing/habitat combo license for \$55; the Angler's Special three-year fishing license for \$62; and the Hunter's Special three-year hunting license with habitat included for \$101.

Also available is the Bonus Line option for \$14 letting resident and nonresident anglers to fish with one more line in addition to the two lines allowed with the regular fishing license.

Upgrade your paper license to a durable hard card with custom art from Iowa artists for only \$6.

Download the GoOutdoorsIowa mobile app for iPhone and Android devices to buy and access your license information, no matter where you are. Sync your hunting and fishing licenses on the app to show in the field. You may download multiple customer licenses to offer one secure digital license document location for families, groups, and more.

Licenses are available at 700 locations across the state, and on the DNR website at www.iowadnr.gov/GoOutdoorsIowa.

Hunting and fishing are often enjoyed with family and friends. A fishing or hunting license makes a great stocking stuffer.