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Feb. 9, 2023

- [Oxbow restoration project returns unique ecosystem to Cedar Rock Wildlife Area](#)
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Restored oxbow of the Wapsipinicon River. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.

Oxbow restoration project returns unique ecosystem to Cedar Rock Wildlife Area

Media Contact: Jason Auel, Wildlife Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 319-213-2815.

Staff with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Cedar Wapsi Wildlife Unit were working to install wetlands on the Cedar Rock Wildlife Area when the opportunity to restore an oxbow on the Wapsipinicon River came along.

“There are not a lot of oxbow ecosystems out there and they are difficult to restore,” said Jason Auel, wildlife biologist with the Iowa DNR. “This would not have been possible without federal

partnership and federal funding – it was not a cheap restoration.”

The oxbow restoration was selected as a flood mitigation project by the Upper Wapsi River Watershed Management Authority. It identified a six-acre oxbow filled in by five feet of siltation to be excavated to its original riverbed. It would be connected to the Wapsipinicon River on the south end.

Contractors worked during last winter and eventually removed roughly 26,000 cubic yards of silt. That material would be used by Buchanan County for fill as part of its Quasqueton Diagonal road expansion project and incorporated back to Cedar Rock Wildlife Area as part of the restored prairie.

As soon as the oxbow was holding water, the wetland plants returned – arrowhead, bidens, smartweed, cattails. The improved habitat is benefitting ducks, geese, turtles, frogs and more. All that remains for the project is for the last of the excavated silt material to be removed for the highway project and the disturbed area seeded to prairie.

Away from the river, the management plan includes restoring prairie on the old crop fields and then eventually creating an oak savanna using seedlings from the State Forest Nursery. The young oaks were planted in the prairie, then caged to give the young trees a head start. Once the trees are established, the cages will be removed to let Mother Nature take its course.

Auel said the next step is to create a forest management plan to address the tree community on the wildlife area and the adjacent state park.

“It’s a fairly well used public hunting for deer and turkey,” he said.

The maintained firebreaks cover around 2.5 miles and are popular places to take a walk along the prairie and through the timber.

The 153-acre Cedar Rock Wildlife Area is near [Cedar Rock State Park](#), which is home to the Walter House, a home designed by noted architect Frank Lloyd Wright and gifted to the Iowa Conservation Commission in 1981 by Lowell and Agnes Walter.

January Water Summary Update: Wetter than normal month, drought remains.

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DES MOINES – The start of 2023 was encouraging for water resources in Iowa. Precipitation for the month was 1.82 inches, nearly double the normal moisture. All of Iowa’s reporting stations reported near to above-average precipitation. The US Drought Monitor remained largely unchanged for the month. Streamflow, soil moisture, and shallow groundwater conditions are showing some improvement, but continued above normal precipitation is needed.

“January was the third month in a row of above-normal moisture for Iowa, which is the trend we need to see. Continued wetter than normal conditions are needed throughout the winter and spring months to significantly improve drought conditions in Iowa,” said Tim Hall, Iowa Department of Natural Resources’ coordinator of hydrology resources. “Average monthly precipitation typically increases each month until July, so we are hoping to see diminishing drought designation in the months ahead.”

For a thorough review of Iowa's water resource trends, go to www.iowadnr.gov/watersummaryupdate.

The report is prepared by technical staff from Iowa DNR, the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, IIHR—Hydroscience and Engineering, and the U.S. Geological Survey, in collaboration with Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Department.

DNR enforcement actions

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DES MOINES – DNR staff work with individuals, businesses and communities to help them protect our natural resources by complying with state and federal laws. This approach is very effective. In the few cases where compliance cannot be achieved, the DNR issues enforcement actions. The following list summarizes recent enforcement actions. Find the entire, original orders on DNR's website at www.iowadnr.gov/EnforcementActions

Consent Orders

A consent order is issued as an alternative to issuing an administrative order. A consent order indicates that the DNR has voluntarily entered into a legally enforceable agreement with the other party.

Buchanan County

Boderic Higgins

Pay a \$3,000 administrative penalty.

Clinton County

Joe Brandenburg/Brandenburg Drainage, Inc.

Cease illegal disposal and open burning of solid waste, including waste tires; comply with applicable law in the future; and pay a \$4,500 administrative penalty.