



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

# Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Jan. 16, 2024**

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## Stay safe on the ice this winter

With cold weather finally arriving in Iowa and freezing over lakes and ponds, ice fishing activity has begun at certain northern lakes.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) reminds all anglers - especially those in central and southern Iowa - to stay patient and allow ice thickness to grow before heading to their favorite ice fishing spot.

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

Ice forms at different rates on each body of water depending upon the size and water depth. Once frozen, conditions change constantly and ice 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. The DNR recommends that anglers test the ice thickness frequently and to 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.
- Check the [DNR weekly fishing report](#) for current ice conditions on lakes and rivers across Iowa.
- 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 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.

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## Snowmobilers welcome return of winter

Snowmobilers across Iowa are welcoming the return of winter, eager to get out and enjoy the fresh snow. Snowmobiling is a great way to enjoy the outdoors during the winter months, but there's one hard truth: drinking alcohol and/or consuming drugs and riding just don't mix.

"It's important to remember that operating any type of motor vehicle, including snowmobiles, while under the influence of alcohol or drugs can cause traumatic injuries, tragic loss of life, and is flat-out against the law," said Captain Matt Bruner with the Iowa DNR's Law Enforcement Bureau. "We recommend snowmobile riders of all ages take a snowmobile safety course, don't outride your abilities or trail conditions, and perhaps most importantly, don't drink and ride."

The following safety tips will make snowmobiling a great experience with all recreation explorers:

- Don't drive impaired: Alcohol and drugs have a negative effect on the driver's vision, balance, coordination, and reaction time. Don't ride with people who drink and ride!
- Stay on the trail or stay home: Trespassing is a major complaint about snowmobilers and can result in trail closure. Always stay on designated snowmobile trails. Venturing off trails can result in accidents. Only ride private property when you have landowner permission.
- Watch the weather and check trail and ice conditions before riding: Don't ride in adverse weather conditions. Plan your trip and check the trails you'll be riding prior to departure.
- Never ride alone: Always ride with a friend on another snowmobile. This way if one machine is disabled, you have another to get help.
- Dress for safety and survival: Always wear a quality DOT helmet and facemask. Wear layers of clothing to keep warm and dry. Snowmobile suits, bibs, jackets, gloves, and mittens should cut the wind, repel water, and keep you ventilated.
- Slow down: Excessive speed is a major factor in many accidents, especially at night. To help avoid accidents, keep your nighttime speed under 40 MPH.
- Take a snowmobile safety training course: Designed to educate the student on basic snowmobile operation, laws and regulations, and safety, these classes can help save lives and reduce injuries.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources and Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) are teaming up to promote a safe and sober snowmobile season by hosting a booth at the Iowa Winter Games in Okoboji, Jan. 25-28, in Arnolds Park.

**Media Contact:** Jessica Flatt, State Parks, Forests, and Preserves Bureau, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-975-8569.

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## Learn to Hunt program opens registration for Field To Fork deer hunting program

DES MOINES - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is offering a six-month workshop to teach skills needed to hunt, field dress and cook white-tailed deer to individuals who have little to no archery hunting experience.

Experienced instructors will lead the workshop which includes hunting opportunities throughout Iowa's archery season. The course, designed for participants 21 and older, will be hosted in Adel, Ames, Council Bluffs, Davenport and Iowa City.

Participants will spend the summer months becoming proficient archers with compound bows provided by Iowa DNR. As summer progresses, they'll learn basic strategies for hunting deer such as proper equipment, where to hunt, safe shooting practices, and tree stand placement. During the fall, participants will learn how to field dress, clean and cook deer from professional butchers and local chefs.

"For those interested in the challenge of bow hunting as a means of sourcing their own meat, this program provides the opportunity to learn the skills and knowledge it takes to do it all yourself," said Jamie Cook, Hunter Education coordinator with the Iowa DNR.

Applications will be accepted beginning Jan. 16 for all locations. Once accepted, participants will be invited to register for the course. The course cost is \$200 which includes course supplies and archery loaner equipment. Applications will be accepted through May 15 or until registration is filled. Space is limited so early registration is encouraged.

For more information and to begin the 2024 Field to Fork application process, go to <https://forms.gle/VTGjbq3vBEkieFZr7>

The program is provided through a partnership with Raised at Full Draw, The Iowa Bowhunters Association, Johnson, Linn and Story County Conservation, and other various local partners and archery retailers. It is part of a national effort to recruit, retain and reactivate hunters due to the overall decline in hunting and outdoor recreation.

**Media Contact:** Jamie Cook, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-350-8091.

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## DNR postponing trout stockings in Council Bluffs and Fort Dodge

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is postponing the trout stockings scheduled for this Friday, Jan. 19 at Big Lake, Council Bluffs, and Moorland Pond, Fort Dodge, due to unsafe ice conditions and extreme cold weather.

The stockings will be completed after the ice thickens. A news release will announce when the stockings have been completed.

The family fishing event also scheduled for this Saturday at Big Lake has been canceled and will not be rescheduled.

Upcoming trout stockings are still on schedule with significantly colder weather in the forecast. Winter storms last week may slow ice formation by insulating the ice with snow. Check the DNR Trout Fishing website at [www.iowadnr.gov/trout](http://www.iowadnr.gov/trout) for the most up to date information.

**Media Contact:** Dan Rosauer, Fisheries Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 563-927-3276.

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## 2023 hunting, fishing, trapping license sales

In 2023, Iowa residents purchased...

### Fishing

199,031 annual licenses

8,773 lifetime fishing licenses

17,428 three-year licenses

1,022 seven-day licenses

2,998 one-day licenses

44,278 trout fees

232 paddlefish licenses

20,619 third line licenses (resident and nonresident combined)

36,327 fishing, hunting and habitat combination licenses

### Hunting

39,602 annual licenses

55,553 hunting and habitat annual combination licenses

3,610 lifetime hunting licenses  
7,510 hunting and habitat three-year licenses  
1,210 apprentice (hunting and habitat) licenses  
24,714 migratory game bird licenses  
39,893 habitat fees  
14,474 furharvester annual licenses age 16 and older  
495 furharvester annual licenses age 15 and younger  
469 furharvester and habitat annual combination licenses  
358 lifetime furharvester licenses

## **Large Game**

### **Deer**

12,551 youth general deer, 1,050 antlerless deer licenses  
267 disabled hunter general deer, 31 antlerless deer licenses  
54,285 archery general deer, 21,632 antlerless deer licenses  
6,796 early muzzleloader general deer, 1,463 antlerless deer licenses  
44,492 first shotgun general deer, 17,278 antlerless deer licenses  
47,420 second shotgun general deer, 18,514 antlerless deer licenses  
19,642 late muzzleloader general deer, 9,651 antlerless deer licenses

### **Turkey**

5,248 spring bow licenses  
16,673 spring gun/bow licenses seasons 1-3  
18,807 spring gun/bow licenses season 4  
6,175 spring youth gun/bow licenses  
2,356 fall gun/bow  
1,821 fall bow

## **Landowner-Tenant**

### **Deer**

66 youth general deer licenses, 55 antlerless deer licenses  
5,202 archery general deer licenses, 5,558 antlerless deer licenses  
979 early muzzleloader general deer licenses, 867 antlerless deer licenses  
22,653 first and second shotgun season general deer licenses, 19,016 antlerless deer licenses  
2,254 late muzzleloader general deer licenses, 3,539 antlerless deer licenses

## **Turkey**

2,067 spring gun/bow season 1-3

2,366 spring gun/bow season 4

815 bow licenses

39 youth licenses

2,526 fall gun/bow

1,009 fall bow

## **In 2023, nonresidents purchased...**

### **Fishing**

27,264 annual licenses

2,673 seven-day licenses

11,813 three-day licenses

14,951 one-day licenses

7,868 trout fees

44 paddlefish licenses

### **Hunting**

5,440 annual licenses age 18 and older

16,346 hunting and habitat annual combination licenses age 18 and older

4,737 five-day licenses

2,204 five-day hunting and habitat combination

12,672 habitat fees

4,069 migratory game bird fees

745 apprentice (hunting and habitat) licenses

119 furharvester annual licenses

47 furharvester and habitat annual combination licenses

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## **Grant funds available for communities impacted by the 2020 derecho**

The Iowa Legislature appropriated state infrastructure funds to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources to be used for a community-based tree planting program for derecho recovery tree planting.

The Community Forestry Grant Program provides reimbursable grants to be used to purchase and plant trees suitable to Iowa in counties included in the 2020 Governor's disaster proclamation. A total of \$250,000 in funds are available to state and local governments, schools and volunteer organizations, and service organizations in the 27 impacted counties.

Award recipients will be reimbursed \$500 to \$5,000 and are required to provide a dollar-for-dollar cash match for purchase of trees and planting materials. Qualifying public planting lands include, but are not limited to, street rights-of-way, parks, school grounds, courthouse lawns, public buildings, fairgrounds, cemeteries, libraries, and trails (DNR lands are not eligible).

The spring application and rules are available online at [www.iowadnr.gov/urbanforestry](http://www.iowadnr.gov/urbanforestry). Applications are due March 1, 2024 by 4:30 p.m.

**Media Contact:** Ellie Jones, Community Disaster Recovery Coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources and Trees Forever, 319-826-0814 or [ellie.jones@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:ellie.jones@dnr.iowa.gov).