



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 5, 2024

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USDA announces Conservation Reserve Program general signup for 2024

DES MOINES, Iowa – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that agricultural producers and private landowners can begin signing up for the general Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) starting March 4 and running through March 29, 2024. This conservation opportunity gives producers tools to conserve wildlife habitat while achieving other conservation benefits, including sequestering carbon and improving water quality and soil health.

“Historically, CRP has been important to us but it has become more important through time,” said Todd Bogenschutz, upland wildlife biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR). “As a percentage of habitat on the landscape, CRP has grown from 42 percent in 1990 to 62 percent in 2023. As CRP goes in Iowa, so goes Iowa pheasants, and that’s why the Farm Bill is so important to us.”

In addition, landowners are reminded USDA opened up the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (Continuous CRP) for signups on Jan. 12. Continuous CRP is one of the most flexible conservation tools we can provide producers and landowners. One popular wildlife practice under Continuous CRP is the State Acres For Enhancement (SAFE). The SAFE initiative restores vital wildlife habitat in order to meet high-priority state wildlife goals. Iowa has SAFE projects that target pheasants, quail, prairie chicken, ruffed grouse and grassland songbirds.

Landowners and producers interested in CRP should contact their local USDA Service Center to learn more or to apply for the program before their deadlines.

Those landowners interested in more details on SAFE can visit the DNR's CRP page at www.iowadnr.gov/crp.

As one of the largest private lands conservation programs in the United States, CRP offers a range of conservation options to farmers, ranchers, and landowners. It has been an especially strong opportunity for farmers with less productive or marginal cropland, helping them re-establish valuable land cover to help improve water quality, prevent soil erosion, and support wildlife habitat.

Spring community trout stocking starts March 21

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources fisheries staff will release between 1,000 to 2,000 rainbow trout in nine lakes across Iowa in March and April as part of its cool weather trout program.

The spring community trout stockings are a great place to take kids to catch their first fish. A small hook with a nightcrawler or corn under a small bobber to casting small simple spinners such as a Panther Martin or Mepps is all you need to get in on the fun.

Bringing trout to cities and towns offers a “close to home” option for Iowans who might not travel to northeast Iowa to experience trout fishing. Most locations also host a family-friendly event to help anglers have success and fun while fishing.

The popular program is supported by the sales of the trout fee. Anglers need a valid fishing license and pay the trout fee to fish for or possess trout. The daily limit is five trout per licensed angler with a possession limit of 10.

Children age 15 or younger can fish for trout with a properly licensed adult, but they must limit their catch to one daily limit. The child can buy a trout fee which will allow them to catch their own limit.

Once you buy your trout fee, you can fish for trout all year long at any of the community trout lakes and trout streams in northeast Iowa. Find more information about Iowa trout streams on the DNR website at www.iowadnr.gov/trout.

2024 Spring Community Trout Stocking Schedule

March 21

[Prairie Park Fishery](#), Cedar Rapids, 10 a.m.

[Liberty Centre Pond](#), North Liberty, 10:30 a.m.

March 22

[East Lake Park Pond](#), Mount Pleasant, 10:30 a.m.

[Lake of the Hills](#), Davenport, 10 a.m.

[Wilson Lake](#), Fort Madison, Noon

March 23

[Ottumwa Park Pond](#), Ottumwa, 11 a.m.

April 19

[Sand Lake](#), Marshalltown, Noon

April 20

[North Prairie Lake](#), Cedar Falls, 10 a.m.

[Heritage Pond](#), Dubuque, 10 a.m.

Media Contact: Mike Siepker, Regional Fisheries Supervisor, Northeast Iowa, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 563-382-8324.

Ice-out channel catfish are biting

Channel catfish move close to shore and are eager to bite in many lakes and large reservoirs across Iowa just after the ice is gone. The bite starts sooner in southern Iowa impoundments since they lose ice a week or two before northwest Iowa natural lakes.

After eating light during the winter, channel catfish are prone to feed heavily during early spring, cleaning up small fish that died over the winter. Search for actively feeding fish on windblown shorelines, points where dead fish are piled up, and shallow areas where the water warms quickly. Keep the wind in your face and move often until you find actively feeding fish.

Use cut bait or shad sides fished on the bottom. To keep the bait on the hook, try using a 1/0 to 3/0 bait holder hook and enough weight (3/8th to 1/2 ounce) to cast into the wind. Bring along disposable latex gloves to handle the bait and help keep the smell off your hands.

Ice-out catfishing can be good in any lake that has an abundant catfish population. Iowa's flood control reservoirs: Rathbun, Red Rock, Coralville and Saylorville usually offer the best action. Try catfishing in natural lakes, such as: Storm Lake, North Twin, Tuttle, East Okoboji, Little Wall Lake, or Black Hawk Lake in northwest Iowa soon after the ice is gone. Small impoundments, like Don Williams, Big Creek, Volga Lake, Diamond Lake, Mormon Trail Lake, Greenfield City Reservoir, or Lake Icaria, also offer good early spring catfishing.

Catfish can be found in almost every body of water across Iowa. Check the [weekly fishing report](#) to find out where catfish are biting.

Media Contact: John Lorenzen, Fisheries Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 712-769-2587.

Shoreline stabilization project underway at Silver Lake to improve water quality

LAKE PARK, Iowa - Work is underway to stabilize the shoreline on the northwest section of Silver Lake, in Dickinson County.

The contractor will close segments of the Trappers Bay State Park roadway as work progresses. Road closures and signage will be adjusted to allow as much public access as possible. Access must be restricted when trees are being removed to ensure the safety of park users. The public is advised to not drive or walk past the road closure signs.

Silver Lake's water quality has declined in recent years, in part from an estimated 1,600 pounds of phosphorus that enters the lake each year from shoreline erosion.

"Stabilizing large sections of shoreline that is actively eroding is an important part of the overall restoration strategy for Silver Lake," said Chris La Rue, wildlife biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

About 4,000 feet of Silver Lake's shoreline was stabilized in 2022. This phase of the project will stabilize 3,500 feet of deteriorated shoreline and remove less desirable underbrush, like honeysuckle, Chinese elm and autumn olive, that do little to prevent erosion. Stable, quality trees, like bur oaks, will remain where possible. The area will be reseeded with native grasses and flowers and covered with a natural erosion netting until the vegetation is established. Riprap will be used to protect against wave-action erosion at the water level.

Protecting the shoreline is an important part of the overall plan to improve the health and water quality of the 1,032-acre natural lake. This plan, developed over

the last few years, was largely driven by the community and other partners.

“A lot of credit goes to the Silver Lake Protective Association and the City of Lake Park for their efforts to partner with the Iowa Lake Restoration Program and local funding sources like the Dickinson County Water Quality Commission,” said Mike Hawkins, fisheries biologist with Iowa DNR. “This project is only the first in a series of improvements for the lake and its watershed.”

This project will be constructed in two stages. The current stage of removing trees and brush will be completed in March. There will then be a short delay before work begins to repair and armor the shoreline. If the weather cooperates, work on the second phase of the shoreline project is expected to be completed this fall.

Lakeshore owners with erosion concerns on their own property are encouraged to contact the DNR to request a site visit and receive technical advice about protecting their shoreline.

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