

# Iowa DNR News

CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Feb. 4, 2025

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## Ice fishing shelters must be removed by Feb. 20

DES MOINES – Ice fishing shelters, left unattended, must be removed from state-owned lands and waters, including parking lots and boat ramps by Feb. 20.

Ice fishing shelter owners who camp in a paid campsite within a state park can remain past the February 20 deadline.

Ice fishing shelter owners are encouraged not to wait until the last minute to get their shelter off the ice. If a shelter falls through the ice, the owner is responsible for getting it out of the lake.

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## Iowa conifers struggling with winter burn

Iowa Department of Natural Resource (DNR) foresters are anticipating reports of moderate to severe winter burn damage to arborvitae and white pine trees across Iowa.

“The ground remains frozen, but the ambient temperatures have been above freezing,” explains Tivon Feeley, DNR forest health forester. “The tree is forced to use their water reserves in the needles, but can’t absorb new water from the frozen soil. The lack of water causes the trees to dry out.”

Winter burn is common on conifers planted in open, unprotected locations exposed to severe winter weather. Symptoms include browning or bleaching of the needles, trees losing needles, and tree death. These symptoms become more apparent as the day becomes warmer in late spring and tend to be worse on the side of the tree exposed to sunlight or wind during the winter months.

If needles on the tree are dead but buds are alive, new plant foliage will regrow to replace the winter burned foliage. If both the buds and needles are dead, the tree will not recover. The tree will need to be removed.

There is no way to prevent winter burn. You can reduce the risks by properly mulching around your conifers and making sure the tree is well-hydrated before it goes dormant in the fall. Watering is especially important in drought years.

The DNR cautions planting certain conifers in newly planted windbreaks. Deciduous trees generally grow faster, have fewer disease and insect problems, and provide faster protection. Contact your local district forester for further assistance.

**Media Contact:** Tivon Feeley, Forest Health Forester, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-669-1402.

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## Walleye season closes Feb. 15 on Iowa Great Lakes

SPIRIT LAKE – The walleye fishing season on Spirit, East and West Okoboji lakes is open through Feb. 14. It will close after that date and reopens on May 3. These are the only Iowa lakes that have a closed season for walleye.

For more information on fishing regulations, go to [www.iowadnr.gov/fishing](http://www.iowadnr.gov/fishing).