

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**March 18, 2025**

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## Fishing team leader and businessman advances youth fishing in Southwest Iowa



*Pictured from the left is DNR director Kayla Lyon, 2025 Brass Bluegill Award recipient Bob Harris, chair of the Natural Resource Commission, Marcus Branstad, and DNR fisheries biologist Andy Jansen. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.*

ATLANTIC, Iowa - Bob Harris is the recipient of the 2024 Brass Bluegill award from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources *Fish Iowa!* program.

Harris started a nonprofit organization in 2020 to promote fishing for Junior and Senior High School students. The Southwest Iowa Fishing Team aims to promote, advance, and sponsor amateur youth fishing for boys and girls in Southwest Iowa and surrounding communities.

Their primary initiative is to instill the ideals of good sportsmanship, education, conservation, and fish care through instruction, seminars, and training during all outdoor youth activities.

This endeavor has been a great success. Dozens of Junior and Senior High school aged boys and girls from all over Iowa have joined this team and competed in youth bass fishing tournaments locally and nationally. Harris also provides students with educational opportunities. Using fishing as a springboard, he and his team gain a better understanding of fish biology, habitat, and water management. He works with local agencies, organizations and businesses to access equipment, local resources, and funds for supplies.

The Southwest Iowa Fishing Team is committed to giving back to the natural resources in Iowa. Harris and his team successfully completed a fund-raising campaign to purchase materials the team used to build fish habitat at more than a dozen Southwest Iowa public fishing lakes.

Iowa DNR Fisheries Bureau staff have been assisting Harris and his team to help make these efforts educational and engage students to learn and expand their knowledge about aquatic fish life in the area lakes and ponds. He has built strong support for fishing, and outdoor education overall, in the area schools and community.

The award, along with a set of fishing poles to use with their *Fish Iowa!* programs, was presented at the Natural Resources Commission Meeting on March 13. The Brass Bluegill award has been presented each year since 1996 to *Fish Iowa!* educators with outstanding local programs that exemplify the goals of the *Fish Iowa!* Angler Education program.

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## Trout stocking in northeast Iowa streams starts March 31

The popular trout stream stocking season starts on March 31. Find a list of stocked trout streams on the DNR trout stream map or the [DNR trout fishing webpage](#).

The DNR Trout Program offers Iowa anglers a variety of trout fishing opportunities, including catchable stockings, fingerling stockings, wild trout, streams with restrictive regulations, easy universal access areas and remote streams with difficult access.

About 320,000 catchable-sized rainbow trout and 30,000 fingerling brook trout will be stocked into hundreds of miles of northeast Iowa streams from the beginning of April through the end of October. Funding to support the trout stocking program comes from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses and trout fees. About 50,000 Iowans and 7,000 nonresidents go trout fishing in Iowa each year.

Iowa's trout streams are open year-round and meander through some of the most scenic areas of the state. Get the most out of your trout fishing trip with information about each stream's location, qualities, and other fun facts on the [Iowa trout streams webpage](#).

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## 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.

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## Annual state auction to be held live online on April 19

DES MOINES – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) annual spring auction will be held online at 10 a.m., April 19, 2025.

The Iowa DNR has been tasked for decades to represent the State of Iowa to manage the annual sale of confiscated long guns (rifles, shotguns, bows) to the public who have the state or federally required permits to acquire. Handguns, AR platform rifles and select miscellaneous guns are not included in this sale.

The majority of the firearms in this sale were confiscated by law enforcement agencies from around the state, with only five percent coming from cases involving the Iowa DNR. Money collected from this sale is deposited into the Fish and Wildlife trust fund for use in managing and improving Iowa's natural resources.

Auction Solutions Inc., the auction host, will preview the sale from 4-6 p.m., on April 16, with a live stream at 5 p.m. For more information and to register to bid, go to <https://auctionsolutionsinc.com/auctions>.

Items up for auction include firearms, bows, gun cases and scopes. The items are sold "as is" with no guarantee or warranty. The list of items for sale and the terms of service will be available soon at <https://auctionsolutionsinc.com/auctions>.

Iowans who are winning bidders are required to pick up their firearms from Auction Solutions at their facility located at 7803 Military Avenue, in Omaha, by 4 p.m., April 19, or between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., on April 22.

The Iowa DNR reserves the right to reject any bids and withdraw any item from the sale at any time.