

Iowa DNR News

CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Have fun and stay safe on the water this summer

Iowa lakes and rivers will soon be busy with paddlers, boaters, swimmers and people wading to search for fossils, rocks and driftwood or to clean up litter.

Rivers are dynamic systems that change with high flows and have obstacles hidden just beneath the water surface. Iowa rivers can have sudden drop-offs, holes, submerged shelves, foot holds and rock ledges. Current strength is often deceiving even for strong swimmers.

Some rivers in northwest, north-central and central Iowa are swollen and swift with recent consistent rainfall. Stay on lakes and flat-water while the rivers are high.

Water is refreshing and fun, but it's essential to know how to stay safe in and around water to prevent accidental drownings.

Air temperatures may feel like summer but water temperatures are much cooler, especially below the surface. Cold water (below 70 degrees) reduces body heat 25 to 30 times faster than air does at the same temperature. Once your body is submerged in the cold water, your initial instinct is to survive. Your breathing becomes involuntarily uncontrollable as you gasp for air and inhale water. Don't panic, you have one minute to get your breathing under control and make a plan to self-rescue.

Drowning is swift and silent — there may be little splashing or cries for help. It only takes half a cup of water for somebody to drown.

Follow these tips and precautions to keep you and your friends and family safe while having fun on the water this summer.

Swimming Safety

- Don't dive in; ease into the water slowly.
- Swim with a buddy.
- If you haven't swam in a long-time, refresh your abilities. *All children* should learn to swim with formal lessons.
- Always wear a life jacket. Make sure kids wear their life jackets before getting in the water.
- Keep a close eye on others, especially children. Assign a designated adult to watch over children, and never assume someone else is watching them. Be close enough to touch the child at all times. Even in ankle deep water, the current can be strong enough to sweep you off your feet and out into deeper water.
- Know the early symptoms of hypothermia, including shivering, blue lips, slurred speech or mumbling, drowsiness or very low energy or confusion.
- Learn how to perform CPR. If you are already certified, learn the latest techniques and refresh your skills by recertifying. Check with your local hospital, workplace or doctor's office for training opportunities.
- Take a water bottle with you and keep it nearby throughout the day. It's easy to get dehydrated in the sun, particularly if you're active and sweating. Drink plenty of water to prevent dehydration. Early signs of dehydration can include dizziness, feeling lightheaded or nausea.

Paddling Safety

- Always wear a properly fitted lifejacket. Kids under age 13 must wear a life jacket at all times when the vessel is underway. The vessel must have enough life jackets for all members on board.
- Paddle with a group, not by yourself
- Tell a friend or loved one where you will be paddling, including what access to what access, and when you are expected to return. It will be easier to find you if you need help.
- Avoid swimming, wading, paddling or boating near low-head dams. Often difficult to see from upstream, low-head dams have deadly recirculating currents. Watch for warning signs, listen for rushing water, and get out and scout when in doubt.
- Stay clear of downed trees, bridge piers, scrap metal or clusters of rocks or concrete. Avoid wading in fast water. Bridge construction projects across Iowa could close some sections of rivers this summer. Look for known hazards that have been reported to DNR through their interactive river map at <https://www.iowadnr.gov/things-do/paddling-river-recreation/where-paddle>.
- Always know your river conditions before you go paddling. For the latest river conditions, contact Iowa DNR Customer Service at 515-725-8200 or your local county conservation board for updates.

- Bring along a dry bag with a set of extra clothes you can change into if you get wet, a first-aid kit and a protected cell phone or weather radio.
- Pack plenty of water to stay hydrated. Wear light, loose fitting clothing that dries quickly. Wear a hat, sunglasses and plenty of sunscreen.
- Find individual water trail maps, including access points at <https://www.iowadnr.gov/places-go/water-trails/trail-maps-guides>.

Boating Safety

- Alcohol and boating don't mix. Wind, sun, glare and heat can enhance the effects of alcohol hindering the operator's ability to make decisions.
- Always wear a properly fitted lifejacket. Kids under age 13 must wear a life jacket at all times when the boat is underway. The vessel must have enough life jackets for all members on board.
- Check for open ramps or water hazards before heading out.
- Before leaving the house, check the trailer lights, wheel bearings and the hitch.
- Make sure there is a current fire extinguisher and horn/whistle, a wearable life jacket for everyone and a USCG approved throwable device onboard.
- File a float plan with a friend, including your destination, expected time of return and type of boat.
- Take a boater education course. Iowa law requires any person 12-17 years old, who will operate a motorboat over ten horsepower or a personal watercraft, to successfully complete the education program.

Keep It Clean, Keep It Fun for Everyone

Iowa DNR encourages all outdoor enthusiasts to pick up litter as they go with free reusable litter cleanup bags. The quick drying mesh bags fit easily in your kayak hatch, bike bag, picnic basket, tacklebox, car trunk or backpack.

You can pick up two litter bags at sites across Iowa. Find a [pick-up site](#) close to you. We recommend that you call first to make sure they are open and have bags available. New locations will be added to the map monthly, so keep checking back.

Media Contact: Todd Robertson, Iowa DNR River Programs Outreach Coordinator, 515-205-6845.

Help stop aquatic hitchhikers this Memorial Day weekend

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) reminds all boaters and anglers to “Clean, Drain, and Dry” their boats and equipment this Memorial Day weekend to protect Iowa lakes and rivers from aquatic hitchhikers.

Aquatic invasive species, everything from zebra mussels to Eurasian watermilfoil, move from one waterbody to another by hitchhiking on boats, in bait buckets and on other equipment used in the water. They often grow quickly and spread fast when brought to another lake or stream due to lack of natural controls.

“Boaters and anglers can help slow the spread of aquatic invasive species to new water bodies by checking their boat and equipment for unwanted hitchhikers after each time on the water,” said Kim Bogenschutz, aquatic invasive species program coordinator for the Iowa DNR.

Aquatic invasive species can create serious problems for Iowa waters by reducing native species and making lakes and rivers unusable for boaters, anglers and swimmers.

Clean, Drain, Dry is a simple three step process that boaters need to follow every time they move from one body of water to another.

- CLEAN any plants, animals, or mud from your boat, trailer, and equipment before you leave a waterbody.
- DRAIN water from all equipment (motor, live well, bilge, transom well, bait bucket) before you leave a waterbody and leave drain plugs out during transport.
- DRY anything that comes into contact with water (boats, trailers, equipment, boots, clothing, dogs). Before you move to another waterbody either: Spray your boat and trailer with hot or high-pressure water; or Dry your boat and equipment for at least five days.
- Never release plants, fish, or animals into a waterbody unless they came out of that waterbody and dispose of unwanted bait in the trash.

These steps are not only recommendations; they are the law. It is illegal to possess or transport prohibited aquatic invasive species, transport any aquatic plants on water-related equipment, and transport boats with drain plugs intact in Iowa. It is also illegal to introduce any live fish, except for hooked bait, into public waters.

Find more information about aquatic invasive species and a list of infested waters in the current *Iowa Fishing Regulations* or at www.iowadnr.gov/ais.

Media Contact: Kim Bogenschutz, Fisheries Bureau's Aquatic Invasive Species Program Coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-290-0540.

Lizard Creek recreational activities may resume; fish kill update

FORT DODGE, Iowa - Test results from water samples collected from Lizard Creek indicate that the creek no longer shows any byproducts from the spill that occurred on April 14, and that normal recreational activities can resume in the South Branch and Lizard Creek, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) announced today.

The DNR continues to work with the facility regarding clean-up at the site. State fisheries experts reported that the event impacted 71,933 fish. Information regarding enforcement actions and further updates will be provided upon the completion of the ongoing investigation.

"The time of the year and conditions of the stream, with cooler water and higher flow, reduced the number of fish impacted," said Ben Wallace, fisheries biologist with the Iowa DNR.

Wallace explained that higher water temperatures and slow-moving conditions can increase ammonia's impact on fish populations. Additionally, since the spill occurred earlier in the year, many larger fish species, such as smallmouth bass, may have still been in the larger Des Moines River.

To report a release after hours, call the Iowa DNR's emergency spill line at (515) 725-8694. Quick reporting can help DNR staff identify the cause of an incident. The DNR website has more information about [spill reporting requirements](#).