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Oct. 15 Iowa Outdoors

1 message

Press Releases from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources

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IOWA OUTDOORS

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES | CONSERVATION AND RECREATION DIVISION

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GET OUTDOORS IN SOUTHEAST IOWA

Head outdoors this fall to stay Healthy and Happy.

Iowa's Healthy & Happy Outdoors---or H2O program connects Iowans with the activities and places to improve their health and reduce stress. And while they are at it, they can log in, to win prizes.

In southeast Iowa, that might be walking through a state forest or along the Des Moines River, enveloped by the sight, sounds and shades of autumn. It could be paddling along one of Iowa's dozens of water trails, fishing in a hidden pond or trekking the fields or woods, hunting.

With a click at <https://programs.iowadnr.gov/healthyhappyoutdoors/Pages/Home.aspx>, you can take your pick of state parks, county parks, canoe routes and wildlife areas, as decide whether to hike, paddle, watch wildlife, camp, hunt or fish. And each time you log in, you receive credit for your outdoor activity; increasing your odds in monthly drawings for outdoor gear. More importantly, you can also improve your health and reduce stress.

While opportunities abound from county to county; some high quality—but overlooked outings are out there. One is the Odessa Water Trail, where you can meander your way across pools, wetlands and timbered chutes in Louisa County.

Depending on your experience, routes can be challenging or more for novices. "Through fall migration, you will see thousands of waterfowl, shorebirds and other wildlife, as you navigate through a national wildlife refuge," points out Nate Hoogeveen, DNR river programs coordinator. Learn more at www.naturallylouisacounty.com or www.iowadnr.gov

And to stay healthy, keep track of fall weather while you canoe or kayak. "Make sure you pull on coldwater gear, as the *combined* air and water temperatures dip below 120 degrees," recommends Hoogeveen.

Fall foliage is usually at its peak through the last half of October in southeast Iowa. Whether you are walking, hiking or fishing, river corridors offer spectacular shows, at the peak of the leaf turn. One of the better locations for leaf looking is in or around Shimek State Forest through Lee and Van Buren Counties.

In fact, Shimek's Keosauqua unit has almost eight miles of hiking trails. With large blocks of oak and hickory, mixed with a thousand acres of planted pine, Shimek is a unique natural resource. Camping is available in various units of the forest. Go to www.iowadnr.gov/Destinations/StateForests/Shimek Cabins are also available, in the town of Keosauqua and other locations.

Hunting is underway through much of the fall and early winter in Shimek; a different 'big woods' sort of feel; as opposed to the farmstead and timber stands or grassland through most of Iowa. Deer and turkey hunting are big favorites. Squirrel hunting holds with some of the traditionalists.

Almost lost in all those Healthy, Happy activities is fishing. Ponds throughout the Shimek units offer exceptional bluegill and redear sunfish fishing. "Some anglers fish the dam. Others pull a kickboat back with them and float the 1½ to 10 acre ponds," suggests DNR fisheries biologist Chad Dolan. "I'd suggest 1/32nd ounce lead head jigs or wet flies casting around structure, from the water. The setting is fantastic. You drive part way through the mature trees, and hike a quarter mile back through the pines to get to them."

Shimek's White Oak and Shagbark ponds get high marks from the guy who manages the state forest ponds.

For traditional fall lake fishing, wet a line at Lake Sugema. County Conservation Department cabins are nearby for a rustic feel, yet still offering a roof over your head, despite roughing it, in the outdoors.

Fall walleye fishing can be great on the 570-acre lake, with plenty of standing timber. "With its good water quality, the 'witching hour', just before dark always seems to be the best period," suggests DNR fisheries biologist Mark Flammang. He suggests crankbaits along rocky points and shorelines...also along the dam. If you are after fall crappies, look for 'stick ups', structure left in the bed when the lake was flooded, about 20 years ago.

For a fall surprise, though, turn back to 22-acre Lacey-Keosauqua Lake. "There is great bluegill fishing", notes Flammang. "The steep sided lake produces large bluegills. Sometimes, just drifting with a jig tossed from the boat, with a piece of night crawler (will attract them)."

While you are cleaning fish or looking back at your fall foliage photos, though, don't forget to log in to record your fall H2O excursion. Healthy and Happy await!

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LOST GROVE LAKE NEARING COMPLETION

A site about half way between Eldridge and Princeton in northern Scott County was selected in 1987 from about a dozen other potential locations to become a lake on Iowa's eastern border, and after 26 years, the project is nearing completion.

For anxious anglers, the wait to fish Lost Grove Lake is almost over.

"I'm excited about this lake," said Chad Dolan, fisheries management biologist for southeast Iowa. "I fail to see how this lake won't produce fish with all this habitat. You're talking about a panfish and bass mecca."

Work on Lost Grove Lake began almost immediately after the site was selected.

The DNR began purchasing land in 1988 and by 1995 had nearly every piece, but it wasn't until 2003 when the final parcel was secured.

While the DNR was negotiating land purchases, homes began to appear in the area downstream from the lake. This turn of events required the dam to meet a higher design standard, changing it from a medium hazard dam to a high hazard dam.

"The dam had a few delays because of the redesign and having to allow the soil to dry out because of too much moisture," Dolan said. Construction began in July 2010 and the gate was officially closed on July 11, 2012.

Once the gate was closed, Lost Grove Lake almost immediately began impounding water as a series of heavy rains filled the lake to within 13 feet of full pool. What was supposed to take 2 to 3 years to fill based on its watershed size, took only a fraction of that.

"We didn't have the ramps in so we needed to open the gate to dewater the lake," Dolan said. Eventually, 16 feet of water was released before the gate was shut. An estimated 33 feet of water at the dam remained.

Construction crews are installing boat ramps and parking lots: the three lane main ramp near the dam, the two lane middle ramp almost half way up the lake on the south side, and the single lane west ramp on the north side near the causeway at the upper end of the lake, and adding rip-rap on the north and south side of the lake in close proximity to the dam. Restrooms will be added to all three boat ramps in coming years.

Work progressed in stages and during the late summer 2011, contractors were busy placing riprap along the shoreline and installing fish habitat.

The following July as the dam was nearing completion, two four-foot risers were added to culverts under Utica Ridge Road that will slow down and filter sediment, nutrients, and chemicals from runoff before the water enters the lake.

The DNR partnered with Scott County Secondary Roads who designed the structures and expedited the construction. One riser will back up water 1,600 feet and the other about 3,000 feet.

"This was probably the best \$90,000 we spent on the whole project," Dolan said. "And Scott County Secondary Roads has been an excellent partner."

The project took less than a month to complete.

"These protections will keep silt from entering the lake and as they do their job and fill up with silt themselves, it will be easy and cost effective to dig out the sediment and get them back in working condition," Dolan said.

For now, anxious onlookers drive by checking on the progress as heavy machinery is preparing the final touches before the parking lots, ramps and access roads are paved.

Fishing is available in the 22-acre causeway at the upper end of the lake. Once the work is finished, all that remains is for the main lake to fill. Dolan expects fishing will be good for some species in 2014, but excellent for most in the summer of 2015.

Special Features

Lost Grove Lake has three ADA compliant fishing trails accessible by wheelchair. One trail follows the lake shore from the middle ramp parking lot 2,000 feet to a significant pine tree covered point developed for boat and shore angling, a second from the main fishing access about mid lake on the north side 1,000 feet to the east and west, and the third on the south side at 230th Ave. that runs 350 feet to the west. Fish attracting habitat has been placed within casting distance of the trails.

Three, 50-foot parallel fishing structures extending 12 feet from shore are located around the lake providing access to deeper water. The structures are built with sheet pilings driven in to the ground, filled with dirt and topped with gravel. These structures are also ADA compliant.

Special canoe and kayak accesses are located along the shore fishing accesses.

A 12 foot by 9 foot cement culvert will serve as a boat passage allowing anglers access to the lake north of 220th Avenue. The boat passage will have about three feet of water in it for boats to pass under the road.

A Community-wide Project

The construction of Lost Grove Lake involved many local partners, including the Hawkeye Fly Fishers and other local fishing clubs, local quarries that donated rock, local haulers that donated rock hauling, the Scott County Waste Commission for assistance with tire removal, local landowners for various assistance, Scott County Secondary Roads and more.

“A lot of people have a stake in the final outcome of this lake,” said Dolan. “Their efforts have played an important role in making this a successful project.”

Fish Stocking

- July/October 2012: Bluegills
- Fall 2012: Redear Sunfish, 5-inch largemouth bass
- Spring 2013: 11-inch muskies, channel catfish, walleyes and largemouth bass
- Crappies were previously stocked in the pool above the causeway and passed through to the main lake when conditions allowed.
- Adult crappies will be added in 2014 to allow the fishery time to mature.
- Fall 2013: 7-inch channel catfish.

Size

Lost Grove Lake is three miles long and covers 400 acres. It collects runoff from a 5,000-acre watershed. The lake at maximum depth is 62 feet, with most of the area in front of the dam at least 50 feet deep. The average depth is 24 feet.

Cost

The cost to purchase the land and build Lost Grove Lake will be \$12.5 million.

Economic Impact

Iowa State University Center for Agriculture and Rural Development research indicates that a lake of this size with good water quality will annually provide for 350,000 visits and create about \$20 million in local spending, supporting 175 jobs.

MEDIA CONTACT: Chad Dolan, Fisheries Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, [319-694-2430](tel:319-694-2430).

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OUTDOOR RECREATION, CONSERVATION TO BE DISCUSSED AT REAP MEETINGS

DES MOINES - The public will have a chance to shape the future of Iowa's conservation and outdoor recreation at any of the Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) assemblies this fall.

REAP is a program that provides grants for and encourages enhancing and protecting Iowa's natural and cultural resources. The assemblies will show local impacts of REAP.

The assemblies will also allow attendees to voice ideas for changes and modifications to REAP and its programs.

The assemblies will also allow participants to elect five members for REAP Congress. REAP Congress will meet Jan. 4 at the state capitol to talk about a variety of conservation topics such as soil conservation, water quality and outdoor recreation.

Next year is the 25th anniversary of REAP, so the meetings will reflect on REAP's accomplishments. They will also look to the future.

"REAP is as relevant today as it was 24 years ago, and the needs are still as great," said Krausman.

Assemblies are open to the public and will have open houses from 6 to 6:30 p.m. The assembly will be held from 6:30 to 8 p.m.

REAP received \$16 million for fiscal year 2014 (July 1, 2013 to June 2014). In addition to projects that enhance and protect resources, funding also goes to enhance soil and water quality, historic preservation, roadside vegetation and several other programs that are beneficial to Iowa. REAP has funded projects in every county in Iowa.

County REAP committee chair person contacts can be found on the DNR's website at www.iowadnr.gov/Portals/idnr/uploads/REAP/2012%20REAP%20County%20Chairs.pdf

Meeting locations and dates are listed below. Additional meeting details can be found at: www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/REAP/REAPPublicParticipation.aspx.

Correctionville, Oct. 15

Spencer, Oct. 16

Carroll, Oct. 17

Muscatine, Oct. 22

Burlington, Oct. 23

Fairfield, Oct. 24

Shenandoah, Oct. 28

Council Bluffs, Oct. 29

Fort Dodge, Nov. 5

Lovilia, Nov. 6

Afton, Nov. 12

West Des Moines, Nov. 13

MEDIA CONTACT: Tammie Krausman, REAP Coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, [515-2818382](tel:515-2818382).

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CLERMONT MAN WINS ADVENTURE READY GIFT CARD GIVEAWAY

Rick Swenson, from Clermont, is this week's winner of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' Adventure Ready Gift Card Giveaway. Swenson won a \$50 gift card generously donated by Mills Fleet Farm.

Hunters and anglers who purchase one of four new licenses in 2013 will be automatically entered into a weekly drawing for a \$50 gift card.

To participate in the drawing, Iowans can simply purchase one of the four qualifying licenses at any license retailer or on the DNR's website at www.iowadnr.gov. The four qualifying licenses are:

- **Bonus Line License** – resident and nonresident anglers can fish with one additional line (with the purchase of the annual fishing license, which allows two lines), for \$12.
- **Outdoor Combo License** – annual resident hunting/fishing/habitat combo license for \$47.
- **Angler's Special** – a three-year resident fishing license for \$53.
- **Hunter's Special** – a three-year resident hunting license with habitat included for \$86.

The DNR will draw every Monday at noon and announce the weekly winner on its website and through Twitter on Tuesday afternoon. The promotion will run through December 23, 2013.

Cappel's Ace Hardware, in Atlantic, is sponsoring the Oct. 21 gift card drawing. Weekly winner announcements, gift card sponsors and complete drawing details can be found at www.iowadnr.gov/giveaway.

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IOWA'S YOUTH PHEASANT SEASON IS OCT. 19-20.

Resident hunters ages 15 and younger may hunt rooster pheasants during the youth pheasant season without having a hunting license, paying the habitat fee or passing a hunter education course.

The youth hunter must be accompanied by an adult 18 years old or older who has a valid hunting license and has paid the habitat fee, if normally required. Only the youth may shoot pheasants.

The season is open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. each day. The daily bag limit is one rooster pheasant with a possession limit of two, after the first day.

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DUCK SEASON OPENS OCT. 19 IN THE SOUTH ZONE

The duck, merganser and coot hunting season opens Oct. 19 in the south duck hunting zone.

Hunters have a few new law changes to be aware of, including a new possession limit of three times the daily bag limit, which is an increase from twice the daily bag limit. The scaup limit was increased to three per day and the canvasback limit increased to two per day.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources issues a weekly migration report on Fridays at www.iowadnr.gov/Hunting/MigratoryGameBirds/WaterfowlMigrationSurvey.aspx. It also has an online wetland habitat condition report compiled from each of the DNR's wildlife management districts at www.iowadnr.gov/Hunting/MigratoryGameBirds/WetlandHabitatConditions.aspx.

Hunters can use that information to prepare for marsh conditions or to change their hunting location.

Hunters not sure where to go can start at the Iowa hunting atlas, which is an interactive map that shows all 600,000 acres of public hunting land that is owned by the state, county or federal governments, then use the wetland habitat report to narrow their focus. The atlas is available online at www.iowadnr.gov/hunting.

A click on an area will show basic information like zone and open season, and links to maps, if available.

The atlas view from above allows hunters to zoom in on an area, see how to get there, the lay of the land and where one parcel of public hunting land is in relation to others.

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The following news release is from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Office of Communications, Arlington, Va. Contact: Bruce Decker, 703-358-2521, bruce_decker@fws.gov

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE REOPENS WATERFOWL PRODUCTION AREAS

Due to the ongoing lapse in Congressional appropriations, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service made the decision to close all facilities and lands to public use. The closure comes at an extremely difficult time with hunting seasons just underway, fall migratory bird migrations at their peak, and hundreds of communities forced to cancel events as part of National Wildlife Refuge Week. With approximately 78 percent of its employees furloughed, we determined it would be difficult for the remaining, non-furloughed workforce to ensure the safety of facilities, lands, and resources, in a manner that incurs no further financial obligation to the U.S. Government.

Despite limited staffing, the Service has undertaken an assessment to determine what, if any, potential exists to open lands to public use consistent with our obligations under the government-wide shutdown. It has been determined that allowing public access to Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs) will not incur further government expenditure or obligation and is allowable under a government shutdown. Therefore, effective immediately, all WPAs will reopen to public use.

As the shutdown continues, if the Service determines that maintaining the WPAs in open status, individually or cumulatively, would likely cause Service expenditures or obligations to be made in violation of the Anti-Deficiency Act, the Service will close public access.

Additional information about the Service's efforts to support conservation on national wildlife refuges can be found at <http://www.fws.gov/> which will be operational after the shutdown ends. Shutdown-related information continues to be available at www.DOI.gov/shutdown.

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