



Thomas Hazelton <countyparksiowa@gmail.com>

December 9 Iowa Outdoors

1 message

Press Releases from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Tue, Dec 9, 2014 at 12:34

<DNR.Media@dnr.iowa.gov>

PM

Reply-To: DNR.Media@dnr.iowa.gov

To: Iowa Association of County Conservation Boards <IACCB@mycountyparks.com>



IOWA OUTDOORS

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES | CONSERVATION AND RECREATION DIVISION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: DECEMBER 9, 2014

www.iowadnr.gov | [facebook.com/iowadnr](https://www.facebook.com/iowadnr) | twitter.com/iowadnr | [pinterest.com/iowadnr](https://www.pinterest.com/iowadnr)

1. Deer Harvest up 19 Percent over 2013; Better Weather Likely the Reason
2. Paddlefish Fishing Returns to Missouri and Big Sioux Rivers in 2015
3. REAP Responsible for Pine Lake State Park's Return to Glory
4. Iowa State Parks Celebrates the New Year with First Day Hikes Across the State on January 1

DEER HARVEST UP 19 PERCENT OVER 2013; BETTER WEATHER LIKELY THE REASON

Hunters reported harvesting 19 percent more deer in Iowa during the first three days of first season shotgun deer compared to 2013 when cold weather likely minimized the amount of time hunters spent in the timber. If the harvest trend continues, the first season shotgun harvest would be around 37,000 deer, which is similar to 2012.

The 2014 first season shotgun deer closes on Dec. 10.

A popular season with hunters is a busy weekend for wildlife officials.

State Conservation Officer Brett Reece patrolled Benton and Tama counties during opening weekend.

"I probably came across 40 deer hunters in northern Benton County Saturday and counted 11 deer that were harvested. Sunday, I came across 20 deer hunters in Tama County and about that many deer were harvested," he said.

"People had been telling me that deer numbers were pretty much stable compared to last year, but down from 10 years ago," Reece said.

In nearby Johnson County, State Conservation Officer Erika Billerbeck said she saw 70 hunters through the weekend.

So far, hunters reported harvesting 18 percent more bucks and 7 percent more does than 2013, while purchasing 3,000 few licenses. The license sales decline was primarily due to fewer antlerless licenses begin available, which was by design.

Iowa second season shotgun deer opens December 13 and the unseasonably mild temperatures in the weekend forecast could lead to more hunters having success.

"When the weather is nice, we often see more people out hunting and hunter success rates increase because they spend more time in the field to fill their tags," said Willie Suchy, wildlife research supervisor with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Information on hunter harvest is one tool used by the DNR to help manage Iowa's deer herd when it considers seasons and regulation changes. A regulation change for 2014 restricted the deer harvest in 27 counties in northwest Iowa to buck-only during first season shotgun. During the second season shotgun, hunters may harvest any deer in those 27 counties.

Second season shotgun license sales are trending similar to first season – hunters are waiting to the last minute. The DNR expects to sell about 35,000 licenses before Saturday. Second season shotgun closes Dec. 21. Hunters are required to report their harvest.

MEDIA CONTACT: Willie Suchy, Wildlife Research Supervisor, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-725-8499.

-30-

PADDLEFISH FISHING RETURNS TO MISSOURI AND BIG SIOUX RIVERS IN 2015

Paddlefish fishing will return to the Missouri and Big Sioux rivers for the first time since 1986, when the

Iowa Department of Natural Resources opens the season on March 1.

The paddlefish season had been closed on Missouri River in 1986 due to concerns that habitat loss, altered hydrology and migration barriers created by reservoirs could jeopardize the population. In 1979, the Iowa Geological Survey Bureau reported that 61,642 acres of habitat between Sioux City and Hamburg was lost when the river was channelized.

Paddlefish are one species that have demonstrated resilience to changes in the river. Catch rates from netting surveys mirror results from other large Midwestern rivers. Unfortunately, usable population estimates from mark and recovery studies have eluded biologists. But that could change with help from anglers.

“This new season could provide us with enough angler collected data of recaptured tagged fish to provide us with a population estimate that we would have some level of confidence in. We encourage anglers to report any tagged fish they catch,” said Van Sterner, fisheries biologist for the Missouri River with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

The tag is a small aluminum band around the fish’s lower jaw. Each tag has a unique identification number, tagging agency information and a phone number.

To participate, anglers will need a special Missouri and Big Sioux River paddlefish license – limited to 950 resident and 50 nonresident – that are only on sale from Dec. 15 to Jan. 31. A resident license sells for \$22 and nonresident for \$42. Anglers must also have a valid Iowa fishing license.

The Missouri and Big Sioux paddlefish season is March 1 to April 15. Those season dates were selected to coincide with the increasing discharge from the upstream federal reservoirs and when the fish are in their prespawn migratory pattern. Catch rates from netting surveys are highest during the spring rising discharge.

Snagging paddlefish on the Missouri River is different than other rivers where paddlefish will concentrate in tail water areas.

“These fish are extremely migratory, traveling hundreds of miles. They will try to get out of the current when they can so areas behind wing dykes with slow moving, deep water will be places to target,” Sterner said. “They don’t associate with the bottom like catfish, but will be suspended so watch the electronics and if they are there, you should see them.”

The flood of 2011 created scour holes in the river that have been popular with paddlefish and for anglers who can find them.

The Missouri River is a fast flowing river so anglers should be prepared to use heavy weights – from one ounce on up to 4-4-1/2 ounces, a medium-heavy to heavy rod at least six feet long and braided line of at least 50 pound test strength. Treble hooks can be no larger than 5/0 or measuring more than 1-1/4 inches in length when two hook points are placed on a ruler. It would also be wise to wear a lifejacket while on the water.

The state record 107 pound paddlefish was caught in the Missouri River in Monona County in 1981. Paddlefish is an ancient species. It doesn’t have any bones and eats by straining zooplankton from the water. It reaches maturity at 6 or 7 years of age and can live for 30 years or more.

The slot limit requiring the release of all 35-45 inch fish protects the primary breeding stock. Most of the fish harvested will probably be below the slot limit. The firm white flesh of the paddlefish is excellent table fare as long as the red meat near the skin is trimmed off.

The paddlefish license is required for the Missouri and Big Sioux rivers, but not for the Mississippi and Des Moines rivers.

MEDIA CONTACT: Van Sterner, Fisheries Management Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 712-249-1997.

-30-

REAP: 25 Years of Enhancing and Protecting Iowa's Resources

REAP RESPONSIBLE FOR PINE LAKE STATE PARK'S RETURN TO GLORY

ELDORA, Iowa – REAP is responsible for the complete renovation of Pine Lake State Park — Iowa's second oldest state park.

Near Eldora in north central Iowa, the park was originally dedicated in 1920 as Pine Creek State Park. It was re-named Pine Lake State Park in 1926 after the original dam was built pre-Civilian Conservation Corps in 1923.

In 1991, more than \$1.5 million in REAP funding rebuilt Lower Pine Lake's dam. Five huge dynamite blasts ultimately brought down the old dam, breaking it apart into dump-truck-sized chunks of concrete. The project took 14 months to complete and was financed entirely through REAP funding. The new 14-foot-thick concrete dam walls hold back Lower Pine Lake's millions of pounds of water, while the old dam became the face of a new fishing jetty near the spillway. What better way to repurpose such massive blocks of concrete?

Upper Pine Lake and its surrounding woodlands provide the scenic backdrop for one of the finest campgrounds in the state that features 124 camping units with electrical hook-ups, modern showers, restroom facilities and a trailer dump station.

REAP funding has completely renovated the Upper Pine Lake campground with new electric, water, sewer and sidewalk systems. Seven lift stations throughout the park pump sewage to water treatment plants in Eldora, through pressurized sewage lines that eliminate the need for wastewater discharge. Guest day totals for the Pine Lake Campground — defined as one person camping one night — increased by more than 3,000 from 2013-2014.

REAP also paved the way for more than 2.5 miles of 10-foot-wide multi-use concrete trail that connects every major feature of Pine Lake State Park. The trail closely snakes the shoreline of the park's twin lakes and traverses scenic bluffs, cruising underneath 250-year-old white pine trees.

Pine Lake's unpaved trails have also been renovated, allowing circumnavigation of Lower Pine Lake on foot. Monthly trail users skyrocketed from 600 to 6,000 after trail renovations were complete. Trails are marked with points of interest that correspond with trail brochures available at trail heads, the campground and the park office.

"These projects are like the field of dreams...if we build it, they will come," said Pine Lake State Park manager Don Primus.

Near Lower Pine Lake's large all-sand beach, a REAP-funded shelter and restroom/sidewalk renovation

took place in 2000. Upper and Lower Pine Lakes have separate boat launches and only electric motors are allowed. Both lakes are stocked with bass, crappie, northern pike and catfish. The Iowa River borders a portion of the park and is noted for its fine angling for channel catfish and smallmouth bass.

Pine Lake Lodge sits perched high above the recently paved trail, overlooking Lower Pine Lake. Complete with flush toilets and running water, Pine Lake's Lodge was completely restored — again thanks to REAP — and all beams remain original except for three new supports under the side peaks.

"New floors, new roof, new windows, new water, new sewer, and look at that view!" exclaimed Primus.

Inside, the false ceiling was removed to show off gorgeous original ceiling supports, while the restrooms were updated with new wood paneling for a clean look. Original wood furniture, grand fireplace and chandeliers, exposed original circular-saw-cut beams and vintage sandstone walls combine to exude a fine, warm, rich feeling that is heightened by the commanding view of the lake and valley through the woods.

"Before REAP renovated the lodge, we averaged 11 rentals per year. This year we had 44. Talk about servicing the people of the state of Iowa, if nothing else REAP has certainly done that," said Primus.

In the 1930s, sandstone was mined locally. Drilled by two-person teams armed with a spike and sledgehammer, dynamite was placed five feet into the stone to blast off a chunk. Metal saws were used to manually cut and shape the stones into functional, decorative pieces — like the inverted stone archways that continue to hold strong today.

Stripped to the core, original sandstone walls were all that remained of Pine Lake's famed cabins before a complete restoration was finished in 1993. Private donations were matched with REAP funds to completely restore the stone and timber cabins to their original glory, modernized with all-new flooring, windows, roofs, insulation, electrical, water and sewer systems.

Nestled in steep wooded hills along the Iowa River, Pine Lake's four year-round cabins were the first available for rent online. Following REAP-enabled renovations their occupancy rate rose to 76 percent — the highest of any cabins in the state park system. Cabins are available 365 days a year.

Surrounded by sandstone walls warmed from original arched-stone fireplaces, the 1930s cabins' rich wood accents combined with stellar scenery bring out the primitive spirit in us all. Blanketed by snow in the deep winter months, Primus said the level of quietness is unreal.

"You might as well be in the Yukon Territory, but you're inside city limits! Come up here for New Year's Eve and nobody's going to find you unless you want them to."

Primus suggests booking early as reservations are usually solid for three months of the year, starting before Thanksgiving and running past New Year's Eve.

Pine Lake's white-barked birches, ancient white pines and the fresh-scented air they afford are pleasing Iowa rarities. Primus said the cabins have always had a strong following and that some adults who spent time in the cabins as kids are now bringing their own children to Pine Lake.

"Think about that! REAP has been very, very good to Pine Lake and the people who visit Pine Lake," said Primus.

REAP's influence in the area doesn't stop at Pine Lake.

The newly paved trail comes out of the park and across a scenic bridge to Deer Park, nestled on a bluff. The city of Eldora received \$75,000 REAP funds for the park that includes a shelter, restrooms, railway museum, picnic area and playground equipment.

Plans for Eldora's Rail Trail include a 22-mile stretch of abandoned railway to be converted into paved, multi-use trail. The trail will eventually connect Steamboat Rock to Marshalltown, linking Pine Lake State Park and the proposed 10.7-acre Gunderson Nature Park. REAP funding, provided through city of Eldora grant, purchased the land where the future Gunderson Nature Park's pavilion, lodge, trails and pond area will connect via trail to the adjacent Pine Lake State Park, Deer Park, and Rail Trail.

In its 25 years, REAP has benefited every county in Iowa by supporting 14,535 projects. REAP has funded these projects with \$264 million in state investments, leveraging two to three times the amount in private, local and federal dollars.

Collectively, these projects have improved the quality of life for all Iowans with better soil and water quality; added outdoor recreation opportunities; sustained economic development; enhanced knowledge and understanding of our ecological and environmental assets, and preservation of our cultural and historic treasures.

-30-

Rejuvenate by taking a family friendly trek through a state park close to home

IOWA STATE PARKS CELEBRATES THE NEW YEAR WITH FIRST DAY HIKES ACROSS THE STATE ON JANUARY 1

DES MOINES – Iowa State Parks will sponsor free, guided hikes in five state parks on New Year's Day as part of America's State Parks First Day Hikes initiative in all 50 states.

America's State Parks First Day Hikes offer individuals and families an opportunity to begin the New Year rejuvenating and connecting with the outdoors by taking a healthy hike on January 1 at a state park close to home. First Day Hikes offer a great way to get outside, exercise, enjoy nature and welcome the New Year with friends and family.

"We are excited to host First Day Hikes as part of this national effort to get people outdoors and into our parks. First Day Hikes are a great way to cure cabin fever and burn off those extra holiday calories by starting off the New Year with an invigorating walk or hike in one of our beautiful state parks," said Todd Coffelt, chief of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources State Parks Bureau.

Priscilla Geigis, president of the National Association of State Park Directors (NASPD), said last year, state parks across the country hosted nearly 28,000 people who hiked 68,811 miles as part of America's State Parks First Day Hikes. "Think of it as the start of a new and healthy lifestyle, for the whole family. Whether you're staying close to home or traveling, join us at one of America's State Parks on New Year's Day," Geigis said.

Iowa's state parks boast a variety of beautiful settings for year-round outdoor recreation, and each First Day Hike will offer an opportunity to explore the unique natural and cultural treasures close to home.

"Studies have proven that getting outdoors is one good way to relax and recharge the body, mind and spirit," stated Lewis Ledford, NASPD's executive director. "We hope that hiking along a trail in a state park will become part of an individual's or family's regular exercise routine."

First Day Hikes originated more than 20 years ago at the Blue Hills Reservation, a state park in Milton, Mass. The program was launched to promote both healthy lifestyles throughout the year and year round recreation at state parks. Last year marked the first time all 50 state park systems have joined together to sponsor First Day Hikes.

Park staff and volunteers will lead the hikes, which average one to two miles or longer depending on the state park. Details about hike locations, difficulty and length, terrain and tips regarding proper clothing are listed on the America's State Parks website. Visit www.naspd.org to find a First Day Hike nearest you.

In Iowa, hikes will be offered at the following locations and times:

- Bellevue State Park, Jackson County – 1 p.m. – meet at South Bluff Nature Center
- Brushy Creek State Recreation Area, Webster County – 1 p.m. – meet at Prairie Resource Center
- Mines of Spain State Recreation Area, Dubuque County – 1 p.m. – meet at EB Lyons Nature Center
- Walnut Woods State Park, Polk County – 9 a.m. – meet at Walnut Woods Lodge
- Waubonsie State Park, Fremont County – 1 p.m. – meet at park office

For more information about the hikes, go to the events calendar on the DNR website www.iowadnr.gov

America's State Parks is committed to promoting outdoor recreation in state parks as a way to address obesity, especially among children. Getting kids outside and unplugged from video games and other electronic media creates a unique connection with nature that promotes physical and mental well-being and encourages creativity and stewardship of our shared resources.

###

The mission of the NASPD and America's State Parks is to promote and advance the state park systems of America for their own significance, as well as for their important contributions to the nation's environment, heritage, health and economy.

These five locations will have staff on hand to lead the hike and celebrate the first day of the calendar year by enjoying the scenery and wildlife in Iowa's state parks. Last year, four different events were held in Iowa with more than 100 participants. Interested parties can get more information by contacting the park or visiting the website. Iowa has many natural areas within a short distance of residents where they could participate on their own in an unofficial event to kick off the New Year.

MEDIA CONTACT: Todd Coffelt, Chief, State Parks Bureau, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-725-8485.

MICK KLEMESRUD Information Specialist

Iowa Department of Natural Resources



P 515-725-8280 | F 515-725-8201 | mick.klemesrud@dnr.iowa.gov

Wallace Building | 502 East Ninth Street | Des Moines, IA 50319

WWW.IOWADNR.GOV



Leading Iowans in Caring for Our Natural Resources.

Please Note: My new phone number is 515-725-8280, and new fax number is 515-725-8201.

--
You are currently subscribed to major_statewide_media as: IACCB@mycountyparks.com.
To unsubscribe click the Unsubscribe link below, or send a blank email to: leave-980120-10891386.9a5dc933ee2c145b3c46328d31d66ab9@Lists.ia.gov
http://Membership.Lists.ia.gov/u?id=10891386.9a5dc933ee2c145b3c46328d31d66ab9&n=T&c=F&l=major_statewide_media(click here to unsubscribe)

If you received this message from a friend and would like to sign up for DNR Press Releases e-mails, please send a blank e-mail to: major_statewide_media@lists.ia.gov