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**Feb. 17 Iowa Outdoors**

1 message

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**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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1. Memorial Weekend Campsites Soon Available for Reservation
2. Wetlands Project Sinks Hole-In-One

## MEMORIAL WEEKEND CAMPSITES SOON AVAILABLE FOR RESERVATION

The three month window to reserve a state park campsite for a Friday arrival on Memorial Day weekend opens this Sunday, Feb. 22. But more than a few campers have their sites already reserved arriving on the weekend before Memorial Day and staying through the holiday.

“Campers can make reservations for sites three months ahead of their first night stay,” said Todd Coffelt, chief of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources State Parks Bureau, “and we had a flurry of

reservations when campers began getting their sites for a two-week stay that includes the Memorial Day weekend.”

Most parks will have nonelectric sites available for the Memorial Day Weekend. Not every campsite is available on the reservation system. Parks maintain between 25 and 50 percent of the electric and nonelectric sites as non-reservation sites, available for walk up camping.

Information on Iowa’s state parks is available online at [www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov) including the link to reservations. Campers can also log on directly to <http://iowastateparks.reserveamerica.com>; enter their preferred amenities and requirements, dates and/or parks to see what sites are available and make a reservation.

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

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## WETLANDS PROJECT SINKS HOLE-IN-ONE

The cackle of pheasants has replaced the roar of tractors along the north and west sides of Okoboji View Golf Course after a major watershed improvement project converted 350 acres from row crops into wetlands and native prairie.

The 1,700 acres of land which flow through the project site were identified as the major contributor of silt to West Okoboji Lake, estimated at 480 tons delivered during each two-inch rainfall.

“This was a targeted project in a targeted watershed and we knew collectively there were serious issues here,” says Chris LaRue, DNR wildlife biologist.

The complex project was led by a partnership of LaRue, DNR fisheries biologist Mike Hawkins and the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, but could not have happened without significant involvement from Dickinson County Soil and Water District, Okoboji View Golf Course, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. EPA – Section 319 and private landowners Bernard and Linda Voss.

In 2009, the first phase of the project began to reshape the area. Crews would eventually move more than 30,000 yards of dirt and thousands of feet of tile that would transform the former row crop land into a series of wetlands and native prairie capable of slowing, catching and holding water from this large watershed.

The wetlands were designed to allow manipulation of water levels, enhancing aquatic plant life, which removes nutrients from the runoff before it enters West Okoboji Lake. These wetlands are capable of holding 100 acres of water during extremely wet periods, lessening downstream flooding and sediment delivery to the lake.

Most of the construction was completed in the late summer and fall of 2013. The final pieces were finished in spring 2014, just in time for some very heavy June rains. The work performed well, capturing this big rainfall and slowing down the water.

The area became attractive to wildlife almost immediately.

Wetlands planted in rye provided food and cover for ducks, and the native prairie is home to pheasants, doves and many nongame species of birds.

This was a very complex project, LaRue said. It involved a series of acquisitions and easements, plus design and construction while working in and around a popular golf course. All of this while coordinating with multiple partners to secure funding.

### **Okoboji View Golf Course**

Curt Schnell owns Okoboji View Golf Course with his brothers Dan and Steve. The Milford native grew up hunting and fishing in the area and has been playing or working at the golf course since high school.

Once they were approached about the project, he says the decision to help improve the water quality in West Okoboji Lake was an easy one.

Part of the project included restoring two critical wetlands on the golf course. One of the wetlands eliminated an area on the golf course that was kind of an eye sore and often too wet.

How has Schnell's clientele reacted?

"I can't recall any negative comments, other than one or two holes are more difficult," Schnell said. "It's been real positive."

The Iowa Great Lakes story, as well as other success stories from 2014, are highlighted in "Working for Clean Water: 2014 Watershed Improvement Successes in Iowa," a booklet available at <http://www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/WaterQuality/WatershedImprovement/WatershedSuccesses.aspx>.

For more information on the DNR's watershed improvement efforts, contact Steve Hopkins at [515-725-8390](tel:515-725-8390) or at [Stephen.Hopkins@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Stephen.Hopkins@dnr.iowa.gov) or visit [www.iowadnr.gov/watershed](http://www.iowadnr.gov/watershed)

- 30 -

## **MICK KLEMESRUD** Information Specialist

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

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