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August 12 Iowa Outdoors

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Press Releases from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Tue, Aug 12, 2014 at 11:45

<DNR.Media@dnr.iowa.gov>

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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: AUGUST 12, 2014

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POLK COUNTY RESIDENTS BENEFIT FROM SUCCESSFUL URBAN DEER HUNT

Bowhunters have removed more than 5,300 deer from Des Moines and the surrounding suburbs since 1997, when the cities joined in a deer reduction effort targeting does. Removing 5,300 deer may seem like a large number, the impact is exponentially greater as those deer are no longer producing fawns.

Original aerial surveys in 1998 recorded deer numbers as high as 200 per square mile and most of the survey areas had deer numbers above the goal of 30 deer per square mile.

The urban deer management program has lowered the deer population in most of the 20 survey areas. Today, more than half of the survey areas are below goal and only a few remain with very high density levels. Now the means are in place to control deer numbers if and when citizens request their city take action.

"The program has been very successful where it has been implemented," said Roger Jacobson, with the City of Johnston.

Bowhunting in city limits and the size of the deer herd were hot issues during Des Moines city council meetings in 1996-97. City leaders formed an urban deer task force to study the issue and recommend solutions to council members.

Task force members came from cities departments, the humane society, the Iowa DNR, Polk County Conservation Board (CCB), and special interests, like flower growers and gardeners. It was lead by former Polk CCB chair Ben Van Gundy.

The group documented deer damage in city and county parks, and determined that an urban bow hunt, similar to what was going on successfully in Waterloo, was the safest and most cost effective way to reduce the herd.

Waterloo selected bowhunting as the method of take because deer are taken at close range. Waterloo also required participating hunters to use an elevated stand and complete a bow hunter safety course and pass proficiency tests each year.

The elevated stand reduces the likelihood of an errant shot and the tests demonstrate hunter capability with their bow.

The Polk County task force provided guidelines that cities could use to begin an urban hunt. The cities run their own hunts but over the years, the processes and requirements have evolved to a nearly identical set of standards making it easier for hunters to participate.

Areas are posted alerting passersby that bowhunting is going on in the area. Property owners living in the vicinity of an area to be hunted must approve of the hunts for it to take place.

Johnston has allowed urban deer hunts for 16 years. Jim Sanders, Johnston city administrator, said he relies on the task force and avid hunters for recommendations on who participates in the hunt.

Sanders said the hunts have been successful and safe. As the herd numbers have come down, hunters shifted from hunting large parcels in the city to smaller residential sized lots.

Erv Wagner, with the Iowa Bowhunters Association and chair of the Deer Task Force, said he took five deer this year, all within 15 yards of his stand.

Citizen attitudes have now come full circle said Mike Gaul, administrator from Des Moines.

"Initially, we received calls from concerned and cautious homeowners, but it's switched to compliments," Gaul said.

The purpose of the urban hunts is not to eliminate the deer herd, but to get the herd to manageable levels of 30 deer per square mile. In Waterworks Park, deer numbers fell to nine per square mile, so the urban hunt was suspended for 2013. The population has since risen to 12 deer per square mile.

In Urbandale, there are certain parks in the east side of town where deer can flee that provide a sanctuary and hunts will be restarted in those areas. West Des Moines also has small areas with high deer numbers that will be addressed if the locals ask for assistance.

Many of the deer taken are donated to the HUSH program and distributed through local food banks.

In 2014, the deer task force will meet to discuss goals, review surveys and decide on the harvest for the upcoming season. The urban hunt is open from mid September through mid January. Anyone interested in knowing about the hunt can contact their city deer hunt administrator.

“This has been a great example of city leaders responding to citizens concerns and finding an efficient answer,” said Bill Bunger, wildlife biologist for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

In addition, the hunters involved in this program have shown a great sense of ethics and responsibility in helping accomplish the cities goals, he said.

“They have been involved at their own expense and shown respect for this great resource while providing a valuable service to residents of Polk County,” Bunger said.

MEDIA CONTACT: Bill Bunger, Wildlife Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, [515-975-8318](tel:515-975-8318).

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PROPOSED FISHING REGULATIONS TOPIC OF FOUR PUBLIC MEETINGS

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources has scheduled four public meetings to discuss proposed changes to the state fishing regulations for 2015.

Hearings are scheduled for August 28, 7 p.m., at the DNR Wildlife Stations on Balsam Avenue, Ventura; Sept. 2, 6:30 p.m., at the Lewis and Clark State Park Visitor Center, 21914 Park Loop, Onawa; Sept. 3, 6:30 p.m., at the Dickinson County Nature Center, 2279 170th Street, Okoboji; and Sept. 4, 3 p.m., in the fourth floor conference room, Wallace State Office Bldg., 502 East Ninth Street, Des Moines.

The DNR is proposing a series of rule changes to make the regulations easier to understand, to protect lake improvements, remove duplicate language in the Iowa code and to enhance fishing opportunities.

Proposals include aligning the muskie season on Iowa's border lakes with Minnesota with the Iowa Great Lakes' season; modifying the fishing regulations on the Iowa-Minnesota border lakes to be more consistent with that of the Iowa Great Lakes; allowing the DNR to manage walleye populations in the same

manner as it does bass by posting length limit signs at lakes, and removing Black Hawk Lake from the list of lakes that have additional restrictions for walleye fishing and replace the three walleye daily bag limit with a daily bag limit of five.

Other proposals include prohibiting snagging, bow and arrow, and spear fishing at certain Clear Lake and Lost Island Lake locations to protect the significant investment in lake improvements and for public safety at the Lower Gar Lake Outlet; removing hand fishing as a legal means of take for all rough fish; establishing a paddlefish season on the Missouri and Big Sioux rivers; and removing duplicate trotline or throw line language in the Iowa Administrative code.

At the hearing, persons will be asked to give their names and address for the record and to confine their remarks to the content of the proposed amendments. Any persons who intend to attend the hearing and have special requirements, such as those related to hearing or mobility impairments, should contact the DNR and request specific accommodations.

Any person may submit written suggestions or comments on the proposed amendment through Sept. 4, 2014. Written materials should be addressed to Martin Konrad, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 502 East Ninth Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0034, by fax at [515-281-8895](tel:515-281-8895) or by email to martin.konrad@dnr.iowa.gov.

Persons who have questions may contact Martin Konrad at [515-281-6976](tel:515-281-6976).

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DNR PROPOSES RULES TO HELP MANAGE VEGETATION AROUND BOAT DOCKS

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is proposing to amend rules that will allow dock permittees more flexibility in removing aquatic vegetation around boat docks and to create boating pathways to open water without a permit.

The proposal will be discussed during two public meetings: 6 p.m., Aug. 28, at the DNR Wildlife Station, Balsam Avenue, Ventura; and 1:30 p.m., Sept. 4, in the fourth floor conference room, Wallace State Office Bldg., 502 East Ninth Street, Des Moines.

Recent lake and watershed restoration efforts to improve water quality have been very successful. Clear water is a benefit of improved water quality but may result in the growth of dense-rooted aquatic plants.

Dock permittees, faced with excessive growth of rooted aquatic plants around boat docks and in pathways to open water, have requested a streamlined process for removing such vegetation.

The proposal is intended to give dock permittees additional justification to remove aquatic vegetation without a permit, thereby eliminating the time it takes the DNR to review and issue permits and for dock permittees to remove the vegetation in a manner that does not harm water quality or aquatic life.

Any person may submit written suggestions or comments on the proposed amendments through September 4, 2014. Such written material should be submitted to Martin Konrad, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 502 East 9th Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0034, fax [515-281-8895](tel:515-281-8895), or by email to Martin.Konrad@dnr.iowa.gov. Persons who have questions may contact Martin Konrad by email or by telephone at [515-281-6976](tel:515-281-6976).

Persons may present their views orally or in writing. At the hearing, persons will be asked to give their names and addresses for the record and to confine their remarks to the content of the proposed amendments.

Any persons who intend to attend the public hearing and have special requirements, such as those related to hearing or mobility impairments, should contact the DNR and request specific accommodations.

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BANNER SHOOTING RANGE OFFERS PROGRAMS FOR BEGINNER SHOOTING, TEAL HUNTING

The Banner Shooting Range has new programs and promotions planned for August and September. The Banner Shooting Range is at 13796 Elkhorn Street, north of Indianola. The phone number is [515-961-6408](tel:515-961-6408).

First Shots

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is partnering with the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) to offer up two First Shots programs at Banner Shooting Range.

Banner Shooting Range will be hosting first shot programs on Aug. 21 – shotguns and on Sept. 18 - rifles. Both programs are free to the public and a space can be reserved by visiting <http://reservations1.usedirect.com/IowaWeb/Activities/SearchFilters.aspx>. Under category, select “Shooting Range Course” to view and register for First Shots programs.

“When it comes to learning about shooting and firearms ownership, not knowing how or where to start can be an intimidating hurdle. First Shots is a great way to introduce first-time shooters to firearm safety and the shooting sports,” said Tyler Seuferer, chief range safety officer at the Banner Shooting Range.

Space is limited so sign up today for a free spot at this exciting introductory firearms safety and shooting sports program.

Teal Hunting Informational Seminar/5-Stand

Come try your hand at “crazy teal” 5-stand and learn more about the upcoming new teal only hunting season.

DNR staff will be on hand from 5-7:30 p.m., on August 28, to provide information about how to scout for and identify teal, and offer some teal hunting basics. The range's 5-stand course will be set to throw targets to simulate teal flight patterns so hunters can get some practice in prior to the season opening on September 6.

Hunting License Promotion:

Purchase any Iowa DNR hunting license (annual, combo, or three-year) or a 2014 deer tag at Banner Shooting Range August 18-24, and receive one free hour of range time. License and/or tag privileges must be purchased on site at Banner Shooting Range in order to qualify for the free hour of range time.

MEDIA CONTACT: Tyler Seuferer, Chief Range Safety Officer, Banner Shooting Range, [515-961-6408](tel:515-961-6408).

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WALNUT CREEK MARSH DRAINED FOR FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has begun draining Walnut Creek Marsh in Ringgold County to make improvements in the marsh toward preventing summertime fish kills, similar to the significant fish kill that occurred in mid July. The marsh will drain over the next few weeks.

Draining the marsh will allow the DNR like removing an excessive abundance of American Lotus, a likely contributor to the summer fish kill. The DNR will also consider other potential improvements such as increasing the depth of the marsh through dredging or increasing the height of the existing dam.

The DNR will re-stock fish once the marsh has refilled.

Walnut Creek Marsh suffered a significant summer fish kill in mid-July due to low dissolved oxygen conditions caused by decaying vegetation. The DNR continued to monitor water conditions after the fish kill and it was determined that aquatic life could not be sustained under the current conditions.

Summer fish kills generally occur in small, shallow ponds with excessive vegetation. Sunny conditions during the daytime allow for plant photosynthesis that produces dissolved oxygen. However, at night, the dissolved oxygen produced during the day is used for respiration by fish, insects, plants, and other aquatic organisms. After a period of calm, cloudy days the dissolved oxygen produced may be depleted by decomposing vegetation and result in a fish kill.

Walnut Creek Marsh will not be available for fall fishing and duck hunting in 2014.

For more information contact Iowa DNR Fisheries Biologist Andy Jansen at [641-464-3108](tel:641-464-3108) or Iowa DNR Wildlife Biologist Chad Paup at [515-238-5708](tel:515-238-5708).

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MICK KLEMESRUD Information Specialist

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