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Sept. 9 Iowa Outdoors

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IOWA OUTDOORS

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES | CONSERVATION AND RECREATION DIVISION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: SEPTEMBER 9, 2014

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OPENING WEEKEND LOOK-BACK AT SPECIAL SEPTEMBER TEAL SEASON

Busy Saturday; slower on Sunday. With the best yet to come?

That pretty well describes the opening weekend of Iowa's early teal season and a peek into the next few days.

"Some hunters had their limit in 15 minutes...others did not do as well," reviewed Orrin Jones, DNR waterfowl biologist. "That cold front just ahead of the Saturday opener brought a big push of migrating birds."

With cooler weather moving across Iowa this week, Jones sees the best teal hunting in the days ahead. "This should be the leading edge of the migration."

In east central Iowa, conservation officer Aric Sloterdyk ran into similar results, in the Chain of Lakes area along the Cedar River.

"No limits, but people had ducks. A group of four guys I checked had 15," said Sloterdyk.

This 16-day teal only season is in addition to Iowa's regular, 60-day split duck season, which gets underway in a few weeks. Iowa has begun a three year experiment, to see if hunters prefer and can identify the early migrating teal....many of which have migrated, by the traditional duck opener.

Reports, though, from law enforcement officers and wildlife workers in the field during the teal opener, indicate there is room for improvement.

"Hunters have to identify that duck coming in as a teal. This is a teal *only* season," stressed Jones. "Also, shooting starts at sunrise. That is different from the regular duck season...and other fall hunting seasons. Early teal hunters need to be familiar with the regulations of this new season"

"Overall, I had a couple issues. I wrote four tickets, including one, after a mallard was shot in front of me," agreed Sloterdyk. He also heard early shooting, noting it could not all have come from dove hunters or urban zone goose hunters. Their regulations allow shots a half hour before sunrise.

The future of the early teal season will depend on hunter compliance, overall preference, and on their duck identification skills.

"If I could reinforce anything...it would be 'know your duck, before you shoot,' emphasizes Sloterdyk. "Also, be aware of local sunrise."

Video and other information which details the new teal regulations can be found on the DNR website; www.iowadnr.gov.

MEDIA CONTACT: Orrin Jones, Waterfowl Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 641-357-3517.

Lake Darling State Park will be formally rededicated at 1:30 p.m. September 17, during an hour long ceremony at the Cottonwood shelter. Attendees are encouraged to bring a lawn chair.

In the event of rain, the ceremony will move to the Lake Darling Lodge.

The program will be a series of brief remarks from individuals who had a role in the \$12 million renovation of the lake and park that began more than a decade ago. Filmmaker Sam Koltinsky, will provide an update on his documentary; 'Darling is Back.'

Hy-Vee will serve food upon its conclusion.

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources, the Friends of Lake Darling, state legislators, local officials, the Washington County Riverboat Foundation, NRCS and others affiliated with the project will be on hand to mark the occasion.

The park reopened in late July after being closed for renovation since 2010. The renovations, made possible by support from the Friends of Lake Darling, the Izaak Walton League, Washington County Riverboat Foundation, the Sheldon Foundation and numerous private donors, include:

- Replacing the dam
- New sediment catch basins in the watershed
- Two silt dams in the lake
- Lake level raised two feet to increase surface acres
- Installed shoreline riprap, fishing jetties and piers
- New ADA fishing trail
- New roads
- New campground, with 50 amp service
- New boat ramps
- New shelter at boat rental area
- New sand on the beach
- New waterlines throughout the park
- Two new shower buildings
- New dump station
- New fishing bridge
- New trail bridge and others refurbished
- New park lodge
- And three, two bedroom, year round cabins will be built this fall.

MEDIA CONTACT: Zach Haworth, Park Ranger, Lake Darling State Park, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, [641-325-1783](tel:641-325-1783).

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SEDLMAYR TO LEAD DNR LAW ENFORCEMENT BUREAU

Mark Sedlmayr, 53, of rural Union County, was promoted to chief of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' Law Enforcement Bureau, on Sept. 5, succeeding Robert Garrison who retired June 30.

Garrison had been bureau chief since 2010.

Sedlmayr began his career with the Iowa Conservation Commission in 1980 as a summer worker at Gull Point State Park. He worked in the State Parks Bureau rising to the position of park ranger until 2004 when he was hired as the Law Enforcement Bureau's southwest district supervisor.

He will oversee 90 officers who enforce Iowa's hunting and fishing laws, assist with hunter education classes, provide water patrol and ATV and snowmobile enforcement.

Sedlmayr, a Reinbeck native who grew up hunting, fishing and trapping in Grundy County, is a graduate of Vermillion College, in Ely, Minn. He and his wife Brenda have two sons; Zac, 28, a game warden with Idaho Fish and Game and Isaac, 21, a student at Upper Iowa University in Fayette.

MEDIA CONTACT: Mark Sedlmayr, Chief of Law Enforcement, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, [515-281-5919](tel:515-281-5919).

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DOVE SEASON OPENER RECAP

Iowa's dove hunting season continues to increase in popularity as judged by busy wildlife areas with full parking lots and empty store shelves where dove loads were once on display.

Reports from the field found hunter use of food plots on public land nearly all positive with the only

complaints that there weren't more opportunities on more land.

The Department of Natural Resources has developed more than 400 food plots on 114 public areas across the state. The food plots range in size from only a few acres on up to 10 acres to accommodate growing hunter interest.

"Dove hunting is very much catching on in the area and the number of hunters and the excitement show it," said Matthew Washburn, conservation officer for Cerro Gordo County. "All the hunters I contacted were very happy, only complaint I heard was that they wished more plots existed to help distribute the hunters and provide more opportunity."

That sentiment was shared from wildlife biologists and officers from across the state: more hunters were out, bagging limits of doves and enjoying the experience.

"At one time there were at least 13 vehicles in the parking lot and along the road. There actually could have been more—we saw several vehicles drive to the parking lot and then keep going," said Pete Hildreth, southwest Iowa district supervisor for the DNR's Wildlife Bureau.

"Hunter comments combined with the empty store shelves before the dove opener tell me that the word is out on Iowa's dove season," said Ken Lonneman, conservation officer in Wright and Hancock counties.

"We probably had three times the number of hunters than we've had in the last few years," said Matt Dollison, wildlife biologist for the DNR in southwest Iowa.

"We had areas in Muscatine, Lee and Scott counties that had a lot of hunters and a lot of doves shot," said Bill Ohde, southeast Iowa district supervisor for the DNR's Wildlife Bureau.

In the Maquoketa Wildlife Unit, one five acre plot had 70 hunters on it, and at Lost Grove Lake, an estimated 100 vehicles were parked with hunters spread among the area's nine food plots.

"We had a great dove opener," said Curt Kemmerer, wildlife biologist for the DNR in east central Iowa. "Muskrat Slough, Buffalo Creek, Whitewater and Lost Grove Lake were extremely busy and most hunters shot limits or close to it."

Iowa's dove season is open through Nov. 9.

MEDIA CONTACT: Bill Ohde, Southeast District Wildlife Supervisor, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, [319-694-2430](tel:319-694-2430).

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[A pdf of the trail map is available upon request by sending an email to Tammie.Krausman@dnr.iowa.gov]

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

REAP FUNDING KEY TO SPENCER/CLAY COUNTY RECREATION SYSTEM

REAP funding has its hand in every corner of Spencer's unique Recreational Trail system in western Iowa. Spencer Recreational Trail, interspersed with natural resource areas, has become an integral part of the town's very nature.

"One of the really neat things, which REAP has really helped with, is we actually have a greenway that goes all the way through the city of Spencer, made up of city and county land — that's been very beneficial for connecting our trail system," said Spencer Parks and Recreation director Delray Bredehoeft.

Starting in east Spencer, the trail system connects major community recreational centers, passing along the high school, baseball diamonds, middle school and through part of Oneota county park, which offers a 200-horse arena and more than 200 acres of wildlife area.

Onward, past the family aquatic center and eight tennis courts of River View Park, the trail continues adjacent a giant playground, campground, shelter house, skate park, basketball court, band shell, winter ice rink and art display in East Leach Park.

Next, the trail cruises through the heart of main street Spencer, under Grand Avenue's bridge and across one of three trail bridges. These bridges allow the public greater access to expanses previously underutilized by pedestrians and cyclists.

According to Bredehoeft, trail usage has gone up dramatically in the past few years. "We didn't used to have a bike store in town; now we do and it's tremendously busy, which is great!" he said.

Past Grand Avenue Bridge, West Leach Park offers another playground, fishing access, REAP-funded canoe access, picnic tables and a neighborhood park before the recently completed Little Sioux River Trail enters pristine woodlands along the river.

"REAP has been very instrumental in forming our trail system, but it has also had a huge impact on the whole park system, in terms of both higher quality facilities and better access to nature," said Bredehoeft.

Grassy field picnic areas, benches and large gravel-pit lake formulate Stolley Park, where the trail system continues along the reservoir. One of Spencer's oldest parks, Stolley provides a beautiful nature area for fishing, hiking and bird watching.

Clay County Conservation Board director Dan Heissel explained, "Clay County is blessed by its location, with three major land forms we can tap for recreational opportunities. On the eastern side of the county we have wetlands and riverine areas, centrally we have uplands and timber and as you get to the west more prairie. People can visit Clay County and go biking, bird watching, canoeing, hiking, hunting and fishing all in one county and experience all kinds of different habitat. Being in the corridor just south of the Iowa Great Lakes, we get a great deal of traffic and people using our areas that come to the Iowa Great Lakes to recreate. They discover what we have to offer as well and stay in Clay County."

Spencer's Recreational Trail has proved how effective city/county cooperation can be for all area residents by partnering to acquire land plots that allow for functionality and convenience in its unique trail system.

"We communicate and work together well. There just aren't enough tax dollars in the budget to do these types of projects. That's why REAP is so unique and successful. By working with the City we look at

the whole county and how the whole county will benefit. Lands we purchase and trails we work on together affect everyone in the county and provide recreational opportunities that wouldn't be there if we didn't collaborate and work together. By providing these opportunities we are improving the quality of life for the citizens of Clay County as well as the people of Iowa," said Heissel.

In addition to joint REAP grants, Clay County Conservation has also received grants to assist in the purchase of more than 387 acres of land along the Little Sioux and Ocheyedan rivers, including where they meet. Heissel expressed, "REAP has helped us pursue a corridor along the Little Sioux River which is one of five Protected Watersheds in Iowa. Without REAP dollars we would be unable to pursue these acquisitions and protect these lands."

Plans are in the works for the final connection that will make the Spencer Recreational Trail contiguous. The recently REAP-funded Deerfield Park intra-park all-surface trail will be connected near Clay County's popular fairgrounds via an 18th St and 18th Avenue link. The northern part of Spencer's Recreational Trail will connect from Stolley Park in the west to Fairview Park in the east, near Jefferson school.

"A lot of our trails wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for the funding that came through REAP. Its ability to partner funding really makes it work," said Bredehoeft.

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.

More information on REAP's 25th anniversary celebration can be found at <http://www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/REAP/25Years.aspx>

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