

**IOWA
STATE REPORT
January 2018-December 2018**

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Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Conservation and Recreation Division
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Iowa DNR Mission Statement: To conserve and enhance our natural resources in cooperation with individuals and organizations to improve the quality of life for Iowans and ensure a legacy for future generations.

Iowa DNR Vision Statement: Leading Iowans in caring for their natural resources.

The Department of Natural Resources – Conservation and Recreation Division:

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has been led by Acting Director Bruce Trautman since May 1, 2018, after the retirement of Director Chuck Gipp. The current Divisions within the DNR are Environmental Services Division (regulatory) and the Conservation and Recreation Division (CRD). CRD is charged with the management of Iowa's fish, wildlife, and natural resource management under the bureaus of Fisheries; Land and Waters; Law Enforcement; State Parks, Forests, and Preserves; and Wildlife. In February 2017, Dr. Dale L. Garner was appointed to serve as Division Administrator.

Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund (formerly known as Sustainable

Natural Resource Funding): In 2006, the legislatively appointed Sustainable Funding Advisory Committee, chaired by the DNR, began their in-depth four year internal and multi-state research in preparation for their comprehensive reports to the Governor and General Assembly. In 2008 and 2009, proposed legislation was overwhelmingly passed to allow the people of Iowa to vote on a Constitutional amendment that would create a dedicated trust fund. In November 2010, the people of Iowa voted to amend Iowa's Constitution to create the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund and authorize a dedicated funding source of 3/8 of 1% of sales tax the next time the tax is legislatively raised. Iowa Code Chapter 461 provides the framework for the distribution, use, and accountability of this Trust Fund. Since the Trust Fund's enactment on January 1, 2011, legislators continue to discuss sales tax options to finance this Trust Fund. To date, the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund has not acquired any receipts. The DNR submits mandated reports to the General Assembly annually. These reports and more information can be found at: www.iowadnr.gov/About-DNR/Grants-Other-Funding/Natural-Resources-Rec-Trust.

Support for the DNR's Fish and Wildlife Trust Fund (FWTF): The FWTF is a special account first established in Iowa in 1937 to manage and regulate Iowa's wildlife and fishery resources. In 1996, an amendment to the Iowa Constitution was passed to protect the Trust Fund from being diverted for other purposes during difficult state economic times. This amendment stipulates that fee-generated revenue and associated federal funds can only be used for the

purposes of promoting, managing, researching, and regulating hunting, fishing, and trapping in Iowa. The adjustment to fees was only through legislative action, which reduced flexibility in the DNR's management of funds, and many fees had not been increased since 2003. With the support of many stakeholder groups and license buyers over the years, in 2018, the legislature passed, and Governor signed, a bill that shifted the authority of setting license fees to the DNR (House File 631). New fees were implemented beginning with the 2018-2019 season.

Fisheries Bureau:

Big Creek Fish Barrier Study - A physical fish barrier was constructed on the Big Creek Lake (Polk County) spillway in the summer of 2012 to reduce adult Muskellunge escape. The barrier consists of six chain link top rails (1.6" outer diameter) stacked in a horizontal fashion with 2" openings between the rails (21.6" total height). The rails are made of 16 gauge galvanized steel and are attached to vertical spillway posts with line rail clamps. Automated PIT tag readers were installed at the Big Creek Lake and Brushy Creek Lake (Webster County) spillways in the spring of 2016. The effectiveness of the barrier is being evaluated by monitoring PIT tagged Walleye and Muskellunge escape. Brushy Creek Lake is being used as a control lake because it has similar attributes, but it lacks a barrier. Managers have implanted 32 mm HDX PIT tags into 5,000 Walleye and 900 Muskellunge per lake. Habitat use and seasonal movement of Walleye and Muskellunge are also being monitored with radio-telemetry. A total of 168 Walleye and 104 Muskellunge have been tracked over the course of the study. Pool elevations, flow, and water temperature are being monitored with Onset HOB0 data loggers to determine how these environmental variables relate to fish movement and escape. Preliminary results indicate that the barrier is effective at reducing escape at Big Creek Lake. One-hundred eighty-one Walleye and 66 Muskellunge have escaped from Brushy Creek, where only 58 Walleye and 11 Muskellunge have escaped from Big Creek. Fish that have escaped from Big Creek have all been juvenile fish.

An Overview of Iowa DNR Hatchery Operations - Fisheries management biologists have many tools available to them for the management of fish populations in rivers, streams, reservoirs, impoundments, and natural lakes. Habitat, watershed improvements, and fishing regulations are good examples, but stocking fish is another valuable tool. In many cases, a successful fishing trip for Iowa anglers is the result of our stocking program. Without stocking, fisheries for Channel Catfish, Muskellunge, and Walleyes would be minimal in reservoirs and impoundments. Like other states, the DNR has a fish production system comprised of hatcheries and grow-out facilities. The DNR has four hatcheries, located in Fairport, Manchester, Rathbun, and Spirit Lake, and three grow-out facilities located in Decorah, Elkader, and Mount Ayr. In 2018, twelve species of fish were produced by these facilities and stocked into public bodies of water: Bluegill, Blue Catfish, Brook Trout, Brown Trout, Channel Catfish, Largemouth Bass, Muskellunge, Northern Pike, Palmetto Bass, Rainbow Trout, Smallmouth Bass, and Walleye. Within some of these species, we stock several sizes of fish ranging from fry up to a catchable size. In total, 164.9 million fish were stocked from Iowa DNR fish production facilities in 2018. By far, the most stocked fish, by number was Walleye fry at 162.4 million. The most stocked fish by weight were catchable trout at 137,382 pounds.

Distribution of Remnant Brook Trout Populations Research: In 2017 and 2018, the DNR and Iowa State University received a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) two-year grant totaling \$98,694 to inventory coldwater stream fish communities and habitat and search for

remnant native Brook Trout populations in N.E. Iowa. In 2018, about 90 sites were surveyed with an additional 90 sites scheduled for summer 2019. In addition to fish and habitat surveys, each site also had a water temp logger installed. Sites will be monitored for water temperatures for at least two years. This data will be used to update State of Iowa coldwater stream classifications. In addition to the USFWS grant, Iowa State University provided about \$12,000 to the project in the form of a teaching assistantship and the DNR has contributed about \$44,000 in project support as of March 2019. This project will conclude in June 2020.

Genetics of Iowa Driftless Brook Trout Research: The Iowa DNR and University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point received two grants from USFWS to evaluate the genetic diversity and source of Iowa's wild Brook Trout fisheries. All wild populations have been sampled and genetic clips taken to be evaluated by UWSP. Preliminary results of the analysis showed 1) there is no reason to believe that South Pine Brook Trout are not native to Iowa, 2) the South Pine population is relatively diverse when compared to other wild populations in MN and WI, 3) most other streams restored by using South Pine Brook Trout could be used for future broodstock collections, 4) a couple Iowa streams could use additional stockings to increase genetic diversity, and 5) three streams stocked with Ash Creek (WI) Brook Trout have strong similarity to Ash Creek (WI). This project should be completed by Fall 2019 and the genetic information will be used to guide Brook Trout management in the Iowa Driftless that possibly include restoring Brook Trout populations in other streams using South Pine Brook Trout and reducing or eliminating the production of St Croix domestic Brook Trout. This project was made possible by contributions from the following conservation partners: Driftless Chapter and North Bear Chapter of Trout Unlimited and the Iowa Chapter of the American Fisheries Society.

Forestry Section:

Forest Health: Foresters continued to monitor for serious insect, disease, invasive plant species, and environmental problems in Iowa's woodlands. Aerial surveys of 1,841,166 acres were mapped to determine forest health problems and potential management plans. There were 1,020,827 aerial acres mapped out of dead and dying trees from emerald ash borer (EAB) alone. Ground confirmations were conducted to resolve any issues identified in the aerial survey. District foresters worked with impacted landowners on appropriate salvage and reforestation efforts in areas with oak wilt, Dutch elm disease, oak tatters, aspen decline, bur oak blight storm, and flood damage. In cooperation with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship's (IDALS) State Entomologist and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Forestry Bureau assisted in contracting, placing, and monitoring 4,327 gypsy moth traps that captured 178 male gypsy moths. A natural established gypsy moth population was detected through the survey in Jackson County just west of Bellevue, IA. DNR worked with IDALS to eradicate this gypsy population to prevent further damage from this pest and prevent the establishment of quarantines. A total of 1,260 acres were treated with Btk (Foray 48B) in May 2018. EAB larvae or adults have now been identified in 65 of Iowa's 99 counties. A total of 604 walnut twig beetle monitoring traps were placed around the state. No walnut twig beetles were captured. However, 3,596 ambrosia beetles, Pityophthorus beetles, and weevils were collected and submitted as part of the national survey. A total of 8,055 maples in 19 communities were examined for the presence of Asian longhorned beetle; none of the trees were positive for the beetle. Several invasive plant workshops were hosted with the demand being on

Oriental bittersweet control. To help educate the public, thirty-two pest workshops discussing the pests detailed above were held throughout Iowa.

Urban Forestry: The Urban and Community Forestry Program continues to provide technical, educational and financial assistance to communities, individuals and organizations. Last year the program provided support to 330 communities. One of the main components of assistance continues to be tree inventories, forestry management plans and EAB preparation for communities under 5,000 in population. A recent statewide canopy cover assessment provides data on where and how much tree cover we have in Iowa. Iowa communities have 18.5 percent tree cover, about 253,056 acres of community forest. Urban Forests continue to be threatened by canopy loss. The economic loss caused by the top five key pests (Gypsy moth, bur oak blight, EAB, Asian long-horned beetle and thousand cankers disease) is an estimated \$1.4 billion over 20 years for forest landowners and wood products businesses and over \$20 billion in urban tree removal. Additionally, Forest Service studies show 4.5 million trees were lost due to development in Iowa from 2010 to 2015.

Land and Waters Bureau:

Public Land Acquisition and Management Program: The bureau provides assistance to operating bureaus to acquire lands and to address land management issues, such as unauthorized land-uses and boundary issues. It also assists the program bureaus with agreements such as habitat leases, county or city management agreements, office leases and building disposal agreements. In 2018, public land and conservation easement acquisitions, totaling 3,595 acres, protecting natural resources and providing Iowans with new and enhanced outdoor recreational opportunities were completed; 3,223 of these acres directly impact water quality and watershed improvement efforts.

Rivers Program: This program contains multiple initiatives over four major areas, including: water trail outreach, mapping, planning, designing, constructing and signing; low-head dam mitigation to remove or reduce hazards to public safety and/or fish passage; moving water education instruction and training; and comprehensive conservation efforts, in partnership with local groups and stakeholders, in identified protected water areas. A total of 970 miles of dedicated water trails have been developed with 753 additional miles under evaluation.

Environmental Review & Sovereign Lands Program: The Environmental Review and Sovereign Lands Construction Permit staff provide information about endangered species, state preserves, natural communities, and other significant natural resources for the review of potential environmental impact of proposed construction and development projects requiring a permit from the Department. The Threatened & Endangered Species staff coordinates the conservation of 18 federally listed species of plants and animals and over 300 state-listed species. Staff develop and maintain a database of locations of listed species and special natural communities such as prairie and fen wetlands and oversee research activities including federally funded projects. The State Preserves staff work with the State Preserves Advisory Board to develop and maintain a statewide network of 97 preserves on lands with significant biological, geological, archaeological, historical, or scenic value.

Engineering and Construction Services: This program oversees the Department's capital improvement projects. From the smallest restroom to complete lake and watershed renovation projects, professional staff provide and put into practice the most advanced technology to ensure safe and cost effective solutions to architectural and engineering projects. Services provided include: planning and development, topographic surveys, professional engineering and architectural design services, contract administration, project management and construction inspection, federal emergency management, emergency response projects, consultant selection and contract negotiations, and investigative reporting. In 2018, 108 engineering, construction, and public capital improvement projects totaling \$18,991,290.72 on public lands were contracted; \$4,283,140.88 of these projects were associated with lake restoration, watershed, and water quality improvement projects.

Lake Restoration Program: Many of our Iowa Lakes, similar to our nation's lakes, are impaired and suffer from excessive algae growth and sedimentation due to nutrient loading and soil loss. The Lake Restoration Program's focus is on restoring Iowa's significant publicly owned lakes and publicly-owned shallow lakes/wetlands. The goal is to invest in projects with multiple benefits such as improved water quality, a healthy aquatic community, and increased public use. Iowa has completed restoration work at 25 lakes, with 16 projects underway, and 19 projects in the initial planning stages. Additionally, restoration work has been completed on over 33 shallow lakes/wetlands across the state.

Law Enforcement Bureau: Currently the Iowa DNR Law Enforcement Bureau employs 83 full-time, sworn peace officers. The Bureau added 5 new officers in October 2018, but with retirements, there are still seven vacant positions. Soon, another position will open as the Chief of Enforcement has announced his retirement effective June 27, 2019.

Iowa officers continue to often times serve several counties. They have to prioritize calls and work efficiently to complete their duties. Deer calls take up the bulk of an officer's time in the fall as many people come to Iowa in search of a trophy. With all the deer activity, officers still find time for other enforcement activities. This past year, Officer Steve Griebel was named the Mississippi Flyway Officer of the Year. This award was voted on by the member states and Canadian Provinces that make up the Mississippi Flyway. This was the first time that this prestigious award has been won by an Iowa officer. Steve made a number of great cases that often covered activity that stretched into neighboring states. He also worked hard at education efforts with young hunters and wetlands protection with landowners.

Many cases are made throughout the state by the use of social media and online postings. One of our officers made a multi-state case involving several subjects. These subjects were filming deer and turkey hunts and claiming that they were conducted in other states. Familiar background scenes in the postings led officers to sites in Iowa that they were able to match up perfectly with the videos. Several individuals, both residents and non-residents, were charged with license and other violations related to their deer and turkey hunting.

In addition to officers continuing to protect the resources of the state, they also participate in engaging new people into outdoor sports. Officers work at hunting and fishing clinics and outdoor shows and events. They talk to school groups and take kids and young adults on

mentored hunts, as well as being out on snowmobiles, boats, and ATVs. Iowa officers strive to be the face of the mission and vision of the Iowa DNR.

State Parks, Forests, and Preserves Bureau: The DNR manages 70 State Parks, Recreation Areas and State Forest Campgrounds. These areas encompass 102,000 acres and host an estimated 15 million visitors each year. The State Park infrastructure system has 4,812 campsites, 94 rental cabins, 31 day use lodges, 157 picnic shelters, and over 450 miles of trails. Park amenities also include restrooms, latrines, shower buildings, beaches, concession buildings, boat ramps, docks and piers. Providing service to these amenities requires the construction and maintenance of sewer systems, lagoons, water systems, wells, electric lines, transformers, roads, parking lots, sidewalks, lights, offices and storage buildings. In 2018 there were more than 90 maintenance and renovation projects underway in Iowa State Parks and Forests areas.

New Legislation: In 2018 the Iowa Legislature passed Senate File 2389, which authorizes the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to establish certain fees at state parks and recreation areas. This significant change eliminates the need for the DNR to go through rule making under the authority of the Natural Resource Commission to establish, change and manage fees for camping, use of rental facilities, and other special privileges in state parks and recreation areas. The new pricing structure will afford the DNR flexibility to set and change fees to attract new park visitors, expand state park visitor customer base, maximize facility use, manage capacity issues, maintain state assets and respond to trends and promotional opportunities in a timely manner. DNR spent most of 2018 compiling data to use in its creation of new fee schedules for all state park, recreation area and forest campgrounds and rental facilities. DNR also began the rule making process in 2018 to adopt new rules, which are needed to implement the new legislation. The new rules will go into effect in 2019.

State Forests: Iowa's state forest system of over 46,000 acres is comprised of four large state forests. State Forests provide some of the largest contiguous tracts of public forest land in Iowa. They are sustainably managed to yield forest products, wildlife habitat, soil, and water protection, protection of unique plant and animal communities, and outdoor recreational opportunities. They are the backbone of several of Iowa's Bird Conservation Areas. State Forest staff completed 927 acres of forest stand improvement, 33 acres of reforestation, 524 miles of trail maintenance, 3,031 acres of prescribed fire, 126 acres of prairie and savanna management, collected 105 bushels of seed, and conducted 14 educational programs in 2018. They also sold 549,000 board feet of timber valued at \$307,875.

Wildlife Bureau: The Wildlife Bureau operates and maintains 491 public fish and wildlife areas spanning 397,673 acres. About one-third of these acres are federal lands managed by the wildlife bureau under agreements with USFWS and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Federal lands include more than 22,000 acres of Waterfowl Production Areas in the Prairie Pothole Region of Iowa. All of these public lands are managed to provide quality wildlife habitats and hunting, fishing, and other consumptive and non-consumptive fish and wildlife related recreational opportunities. Managed wildlife habitats include nearly 100,000 acres of wetlands, 140,000 acres of grasslands, and 115,000 acres of forest/woodland. Annual management activities include burning 32,577 acres of prairie, and managing wetland habitats through water level manipulation

utilizing 881 water control structures, 246 miles of dams, dikes, and levees and 33 pumping stations.

The **Iowa Habitat Access Program (IHAP)** on private lands started in 2011 under a Voluntary Public Access grant from USDA. For the 2018/19 hunting season there were 161 sites and 22,547 acres of managed wildlife habitats on private lands open to public hunting. The Southwest Iowa Communities for pheasants and farming initiative formed in 2018 and added 1,000 acres of private land to hunting. This initiative is a partnership with Pheasants Forever, local communities and organizations to increase hunting opportunities while offering precision agricultural services at a reduced cost to landowners. The majority of IHAP acres include wildlife habitats that are at or nearing full establishment and hunting use and satisfaction continues to trend upward as these new habitats become better established. 99% of hunters indicated they would hunt an IHAP site again with upland birds being the most pursued game. In 2018 landowners enrolled in the program were surveyed and 95.5% indicated that they were satisfied and 92% indicated that they would recommend IHAP enrollment to a friend.

The **Private Lands Program** assists landowners in implementing forestry and wildlife habitat improvements on their property. In 2018, efforts were expanded in association with the Young Forest Initiative and partnering with the Wildlife Management Institute (WMI) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service to promote healthy forest management. Through this partnership, WMI hired 4 new Forestry Specialists to help private landowners improve their woodlands for wildlife, recreation, wood products, and soil and water quality. A fifth WMI Forestry Specialist position has been created as part of an effort to accelerate implementation of forest wildlife stewardship plans on forested wildlife areas. Under professionally developed forest management plans, young forest will be created on a combination of public and private lands through forest stand improvement, prescribed fire, and other forest conservation and management practices that will benefit many species of wildlife experiencing population declines, including ruffed grouse, American woodcock, wild turkeys, and many species of songbirds.

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD): Since 2002, Iowa has tested 76,071 wild white-tails and 4,597 captive deer and elk for CWD. In 2018-2019 DNR staff collected medial retropharyngeal lymph nodes from 7,220 wild white-tailed deer for testing. In addition, 2 free-roaming elk and 4 fallow deer were also tested. Captive animal samples (260) were collected from 10 different facilities. The greatest collection effort for wild deer was concentrated on counties with known positives. Nine new positives were identified in Allamakee and 4 in Clayton. Additionally, 1 positive roadkill deer was discovered in Dubuque County in 2018. Intensive sampling following the 2017 discovery of a positive wild animal in Wayne County (south central Iowa) yielded 4 additional positive animals. In total, 18 new wild positives were discovered during the 2018-19 deer seasons. In early 2018, 3 positive white-tailed deer from a shooting facility in Pottawattamie County were confirmed. The facility was depopulated by USDA Wildlife Services and a total of 79 animals (73 white-tailed deer and 6 elk) were removed. An additional 12 white-tailed deer and 1 elk were confirmed positive from the depopulation effort. It is anticipated that intensive sampling will continue in northeastern (Allamakee, Clayton) and southcentral (Wayne) and efforts will be increased in the new Dubuque zone during the 2019-20 seasons. Surveillance efforts will continue in the remainder of the state with special emphasis placed on proximity to neighboring states' positives and known CWD positive captive facilities.