Lease to Beginning Farmers Program

During the 2013 session, the Iowa Legislature passed a bill creating a program providing beginning farmers with the opportunity to lease agricultural land managed by the DNR for wildlife habitat.

A beginning farmer is defined as an individual, partnership, family farm corporation, or family farm limited liability company with a low to moderate net worth that engages in or wishes to engage in farming. The net worth limit is set by the Iowa Agricultural Development Division (IADD) of the Iowa Finance Authority (IFA), and it is currently set at $678,731. In addition to the net worth requirement, the beginning farmer must be a permanent resident of the State of Iowa and must have sufficient education, training, or experience.

The beginning farmer must be certified by the IADD prior to entering into a lease under this program. Beginning farmer certification forms are available on the IADD website at http://www.iowafinanceauthority.gov/IADD and the Iowa DNR Realty website http://www.Iowadnr.gov/realty. Certification forms must be submitted to the IADD, 2015 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50312 no later than December 1, 2014.

All leases available for rent will be posted on the DNR Realty website on November 1, 2014. Interested farmers should review the details and contact the listed DNR contact if interested in entering into a lease prior to December 1st. Leases will be awarded beginning in December. If there is more than one beginning farmer is interested in a particular lease, the lease will be awarded by random draw. Each farmer is limited to a maximum of 240 acres of crop ground under this program. In subsequent lease periods, preference will be given to farmers who have not previously participated in the program.

Rental amounts are set by DNR staff based on previous rental history, market factors, and the cost of implementing conservation and wildlife management practices. The beginning farmer should closely examine the lease details prior to entering into the lease. Most DNR leases have stipulations that are not typical in standard agricultural leases including planting food plots, restricted forage cutting dates, etc.