



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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For immediate release

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MONITORING BEGINS AT STATE PARK BEACHES

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DES MOINES — As temperatures continue to warm around the state, many are preparing for another summer filled with outdoor activities, including spending time at Iowa state park beaches. The DNR will again monitor and report on the water quality of these beaches to protect public health and enhance understanding of water quality.

The DNR routinely collects and analyzes water samples at Iowa's 37 state park beaches. The samples are compared to water quality standards to determine the risk of waterborne illnesses for swimmers. Most beaches will continue to be monitored at least twice per week, as increased monitoring frequency allows sample collection to take place closer to the weekends when the majority of swimmers are spending time at the beach.

Monitoring at all state park beaches began Monday and will continue into September.

Iowans and visitors to the state can find the weekly results on the DNR Web site at www.iowadnr.gov by clicking on "Beach Monitoring." DNR's interactive mapping service, the Iowa Water Web, graphically shows the current status of the water quality at beaches, including any advisories posted.

“Our monitoring over the past nine swimming seasons has shown that our state park beaches are safe for swimming the vast majority of the time,” said Eric O’Brien, supervisor of the DNR Watershed Monitoring and Assessment Section.

During the summer of 2008, beaches exceeded standards causing swimming advisories less than 5 percent of the time.

Just as in previous years, state park beaches will post a “swimming is not recommended” sign if:

- The geometric mean, a calculation based on samples collected in the previous five weeks, exceeds the water quality standard of 126 *E. coli* bacteria per 100 ml of water.
- The beach has historically had a number of bacteria violations and any one sample exceeds Iowa’s one-time maximum standard (235 *E. coli* bacteria per 100 ml of water)

Posting a swimming advisory does not close a beach. However, the DNR reserves the right to close a beach in the event of a documented health risk including (but not limited to) events such as a wastewater bypass, spills of hazardous chemicals, or localized outbreaks of an infectious disease.

However, the DNR will close beaches at four state parks for most or all of the summer. Lake Darling in Washington County and Green Valley Lake in Union County will be closed all summer, as they were drained to allow for lake restoration efforts. Lake Wapello in Davis County is refilling following restoration work, and the beach may open later this summer. The beach at George Wyth Memorial State Park in Black Hawk County is also closed while park staff continues to make repairs to damage caused by last summer’s flooding. Check www.iowadnr.gov throughout the summer for updates on George Wyth and Lake Wapello.

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMISSION SUPPORTS INCREASED PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE TO REDUCE GREENHOUSE GASES

DES MOINES – A resolution to support expanded passenger rail service to several of Iowa’s largest cities was unanimously passed Tuesday by the Iowa Environmental Protection Commission citing the environmental benefits.

Greenhouse gas emissions and fuel use per passenger mile are far lower for rail, especially high speed rail, versus other common forms of transportation. British government data estimates that emissions per passenger mile for rail are 45% that of cars and trucks, and 27% that of air travel on short haul routes like Des Moines - Chicago. Electric rail can potentially operate with zero carbon emissions if powered by renewable energy, and increase the market for Iowa-manufactured renewable energy. Where

occupancy is high, passenger rail also significantly reduces other forms of air pollution produced by transportation and diminishes traffic congestion.

Iowa currently is served by two passenger trains – the California Zephyr and Southwest Chief – both of which serve southern Iowa. In recent years many Iowans have worked to bring passenger rail service back to other portions of the state, with current proposals to bring service to Dubuque, the Quad Cities and Iowa City and longer term plans to bring service to other communities such as Des Moines and West Des Moines.

Governor Culver's I-JOBS Initiative includes \$3 million for expanded passenger rail service in the state. In the 2009 session, the Iowa legislature enacted Senate File 151, which eased regulations to help expand passenger rail in Iowa. In addition, the Iowa Department of Transportation will be competing for federal passenger rail funds under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. All of these steps position Iowa to work with Illinois and Amtrak to bring new passenger rail lines to the state that connect more Iowa communities with Chicago.

For more information, contact Environmental Protection Commissioner Carrie La Seur at 319-362-2120.

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LANDOWNERS CAN NOW EXTEND CRP CONTRACTS TO KEEP GRASSLANDS; PROTECT WATER QUALITY

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DES MOINES – Some landowners whose Conservation Reserve Program contracts expire in September can now extend their contracts, keeping the land in grassland or woodland.

“That’s very good news for Iowa’s landowners, wildlife and water quality,” said Todd Bogenschutz, DNR upland game biologist. “Without this opportunity, about 88,500 acres or nearly 140 square miles of mostly grassland would likely be converted into cropland this fall.

“That would be a travesty for Iowa’s grassland bird species – from the bobolink and prairie chicken, to pheasant and quail,” he said. “But just as important, CRP grassland and forests sequester significant green house gases; and hold soil in place on some of the most erosive ground, protecting lakes and streams from sediment, ag chemicals and excess nutrients.”

Landowners with general CRP contracts that expire Sept. 30, 2009, should receive a letter in May from the USDA-Farm Service Agency (FSA) that indicates if they are eligible for

a contract extension. Eligible landowners should visit their local FSA office before June 30 to apply for an extension.

Extensions will only be offered to landowners whose contracts have the highest environmental benefits for soil erosion. In Iowa FSA will offer extensions on about 86 percent or 75,611 of the existing acres under contract. Generally landowners who planted good wildlife mixes on highly erosive land will qualify for an option to extend the contract. Extended contracts will be at the same rental rate they are currently receiving.

In Iowa, eligible contracts will be extended for five years. Landowners can choose to extend the entire acreage under contract or a portion of it. However, they cannot enroll additional acres and USDA will not hold a general CRP signup this year.

Visit the local FSA office to sign up. Or, call (515) 281-5918 for the name of a DNR private lands biologist who can help with plant material choices.

Continuous CRP may be an option for other landowners or those who do not receive an offer to extend their contracts. Check with your local FSA office for options and rental rates. Stream buffers and filter strips are examples of eligible practices. Sign-up deadlines will vary, depending on whether the land is currently under contract or not.

The grass, trees and shrubs that are planted under a CRP contract provide long-term protection to soil and water while adding wildlife habitat to the landscape. In return for the societal benefits, landowners receive annual rental payments, which help offset the cost of not raising a crop on those acres.