

Iowa Outdoors

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

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[Electronic photos available upon request]

2009 WALLEYE COLLECTION SMASHES RECORD AT SPIRIT LAKE

SPIRIT LAKE – The fishing prospects for walleyes at Spirit Lake in 2013 should be excellent after a record catch of adult walleyes during the 2009 gill-netting season.

Donna Muhm, manager of the Spirit Lake Fish Hatchery, said the 2001 walleye class was the majority of fish collected for their eggs. The 2001 class passed through a slow growth period to a period where growth has exploded, thanks in part to a huge yellow perch population in the lake. The offspring of the perch were the main forage for these walleyes that led to their rapid growth and into the 17 to 22-inch protected restriction.

The protected slot regulation added in 2007 is working as intended because it caused anglers remove smaller fish from Spirit Lake which increased the food and growth rate of the remaining walleyes, said Mike Hawkins, fisheries management biologist for the Spirit Lake district.

“This is the highest brood stock density in Spirit Lake that we have seen in 50 years and we are still seeing good growth rate even with these densities,” Hawkins said. “Even when these fish move out of the special slot, which could happen later this year, we don’t expect a whole lot of harvest because our research has shown that anglers fishing these brood stock lakes see these fish as high value. They are likely to release these fish and harvest fish under the slot.”

The gill-netting conditions were nearly ideal; there was a nice warming trend and the winds were calm. The collection began on April 10 with three crews netting on East Okoboji Lake and three crews netting on Spirit Lake. Crews would collect fish twice

each night. By April 12, all six crews were netting on Spirit Lake, and collected a record 746 adult walleyes that night alone. The following night, the crews set a new record of 814 adults.

“We had so many fish that were ready to spawn,” Muhm said. Hatchery staff striped 200 females on April 13, followed by 300, then 340 on April 15. Staff continued to strip fish through April 17, when the hatchery was full at 1,130 quarts of eggs. “We typically don’t take that many, but we wanted to this year as a precaution to make sure we had enough fry to fill our requests,” Muhm said.

The gill-netting netting crews are now gone, but the hatchery work is hitting its peak. The hatchery will be staffed 24 hours a day until the last egg is hatched, including muskies, which runs into the middle of May.

Ideally, the eggs will begin hatching in 18 to 24 days after fertilization, but the time frame is water temperature dependant. Warmer water leads to shorter hatching time. A good portion of the huge 2009 year class will be stocked in the walleye collection lakes including Clear Lake, Storm Lake as well as back in Spirit Lake, and will be approaching angler acceptable size in 2013.

“A huge investment of research has made monitoring and managing this walleye population possible, from collecting age and growth data, compiling creel surveys, evaluating stocking size and survival, and computer modeling of population dynamics,” Muhm said. “The results are that we are seeing some of the best fishing this area has ever seen.”

Media Contact: Donna Muhm, fish hatchery manger, Spirit Lake Fish Hatchery, or Mike Hawkins, fish management biologist, Spirit Lake district, at 712-336-1840.

EDWARDS NAMED CHIEF FOR DNR LAW ENFORCEMENT

DES MOINES – Randy Edwards, 54, of Indianola, has been promoted to chief of the Law Enforcement Bureau for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Edwards has been with the DNR for 34 years, serving as the assistant chief of the Law Enforcement Bureau for the past 10 years.

Edwards began his career as an assistant park ranger at Black Hawk State Park in 1975. He was promoted to park ranger at Pleasant Creek State Recreation Area, near Cedar Rapids then was hired for a newly created position of Recreation Safety Officer for northeast Iowa district in 1985, and left the State Parks Division for the Law Enforcement Bureau.

In 1989, Edwards was promoted to supervisor of conservation officers in south central Iowa, and relocated to Des Moines, prior to becoming assistant chief in 1999.

Edwards has a BA in Criminal Justice and a Masters in Public Administration, both from Drake University. He has served as president of the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators in 2005, as president of the Northern Association of Boating Law Administrators in 2000 and on numerous national boating and fish and game officer committees.

The Law Enforcement Bureau has a full time staff of 102, seasonal staff of 45 and an annual budget of \$12.5 million.

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SPRING CLEANING IN HIGH GEAR AS PARKS READY FOR THE BUSY SEASON

Spring cleaning has a whole different meaning when it comes to preparing a state park for the camping season. Each park will need a good “going over” after winter’s blanket of snow disappears, revealing trash, downed tree limbs and other debris that had accumulated since last fall.

Parks staff will spend a good portion of April preparing parks for the busy season. Lodges, shelters and cabins all need attention, courtesy docks need to go in and fish cleaning stations readied for the spring bite.

“We set a goal to turn on the water in our campgrounds during the week of April 15 each year, then move on to getting everything else up and running,” said Jim Lawson, supervisor for state parks in south central Iowa. “Occasionally when we turn the water on, we discover a broken water line that needs attention. There is a long list of things to do to get our parks ready for campers.”

That long list may take longer to get through because of the current economic climate. “We are asking our park visitors to be understanding that due to budget constraints some services like cleaning and mowing will be reduced,” said Kevin Szcodronski, chief of the State Parks Bureau.

There is significant progress towards getting the parks ready which is fortunate because Camping Kick-off Weekend is right around the corner, Lawson said.

Campers in an Iowa State Park during May 1, 2 and 3 will receive a gift package that includes a camping coupon good for one night of camping at an electrical site, a free issue of *Iowa Outdoors* magazine, recipes, camping tips and more in a reusable mesh trash bag. Campers will need to pay the appropriate site fees to camp during Camping Kick-off Weekend.

Media Contact: Kevin Szcodronski, chief, State Parks Bureau, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, at 515-281-8674.

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FOUR WATER TRAIL PROJECTS RECEIVE FUNDING

AMES – The Natural Resource Commission approved \$50,000 in grants to create water trails in Iowa at its April 9 meeting in Ames.

Commissioners approved funding for the Grand River Water Trail, Decatur County Conservation Board (CCB), \$16,109; the Lizard Creek Water Trail, Webster CCB, \$11,002; the Turkey River Water Trail Project, Fayette and Clayton CCBs, \$21,037; and the Raccoon River Water Trail, City of Des Moines, \$1,852. Funds will be available July 1.

These projects will enhance safety and recreation, and call attention to these waterways, when the projects are completed within approximately two years.

Five Water Trails Opening This Year

DES MOINES – Five ceremonial ribbon cutting water trail events are planned this summer. More than 1,000 river miles are currently being developed as water trails since the program was launched in 2006. These dedications will double the number of designated water trails.

Events are scheduled on the Des Moines, Wapsipinicon, and Boone rivers. Ceremonies involve short speeches by dignitaries and an award of certificate presented to the water trail group by an Iowa DNR official. “It’s a nice way to recognize all the hard work that has been accomplished and at the same time draw attention to the newly established water trail,” said Nate Hoogeveen, river programs coordinator.

DNR water trails will include low impact accesses, directional signage, informational kiosks, and a brochure with a map that assists with navigation.

“It’s our hope that this infrastructure will offer convenient access to and foster a greater appreciation for our rivers,” said John Wenck, river programs outreach coordinator. The public is encouraged to show up and participate in these water trail grand openings. Other activities, such as, organized floats are being planned at these events, so be sure to contact your local conservation office for more information.

Three designations are planned for the Des Moines River. The first designation is scheduled for 5 p.m., on June 5, at Prospect Park, in Des Moines. Contact Polk County Conservation Board (CCB) for more information at 515-323-5300. The second designation is scheduled for 12 p.m., July 10, at 326 11th Ave. North, in Fort Dodge. Contact the Webster CCB for more information at 515-576-4258. The third designation ceremony is scheduled for 9 a.m., Sept. 19, at the Hwy. 30 Bridge Access in Boone County. Contact the Boone CCB for more information, at 515-353-4237.

The Wapsipinicon River designation is scheduled for 1 p.m., June 6 at the Bathing Beach, Independence. Contact the Buchanan CCB for more information at 319-636-2617. The Boone River designation is scheduled for 9:30 a.m., June 6, at Riverside Park, in Webster City. Contact the Hamilton CCB for more information, at 515-832-9570.

Media Contact: John Wenck, river programs outreach coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, at 515-281-8969

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DNR TO HOST PUBLIC MEETING APRIL 29 ON PROPOSED WILDLIFE RULES

DES MOINES – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is hosting a public meeting to discuss a number of new proposed regulations including changes to deer, waterfowl, and turkey hunting seasons and some changes to the trapping seasons. The meeting will be conducted over the Iowa Communications Network (ICN) on April 29, from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

“This is an opportunity for our hunters and people who support wildlife to give us some feedback on these regulations,” said Dale Garner, chief of the DNR’s wildlife bureau. “We will go over the proposed regulations and seasons and our rationale behind each change, and take comments from anyone willing to speak, then, if there is any time remaining, we will open the discussion to other topics.”

The proposed changes include reducing the number of fall turkey hunting licenses that will be available, changing the counties that will be open for the November and January antlerless deer seasons and changing when the antlerless licenses for these seasons will go on sale. Other topics include proposed waterfowl season dates and restrictions on placing traps in roadways before the trapping season begins.

Any interested person may make written suggestions or comments on the proposed changes on or before April 29, 2009. Persons who wish to convey their views orally should contact the Wildlife Bureau at (515)281-5034 or at the Wildlife Bureau offices on the fourth floor of the Wallace State Office Building. Written comments may be sent to the Wildlife Bureau Chief, Department of Natural Resources, Wallace State Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0034; or faxed to (515) 281-6794.

The DNR will have staff members from the wildlife bureau at each site to answer questions, and to take any written comments.

ICN Locations:

Ames	Ames High School, 20 th and Ridgewood
Calmar	Northeast Iowa Community College, Dairy Education Center, 1527 Hwy. 150 South
Centerville	Centerville High School, 600 CHS Drive
Clinton	Graphic Arts Technology Center of Iowa, 1951 Manufacturing Drive
Council Bluffs	Abraham Lincoln High School, 1205 Bonham Avenue
Creston	Creston High School, 601 West Townline Road
Dubuque	Dubuque Senior High School, 1800 Clarke Drive
Fort Dodge	St. Edmund High School, 501 N. 22 nd Street
Iowa City	Iowa City High School, 1900 Morningside Drive
Johnston	Johnston High School, 6501 NW 62 nd Avenue
Marion	Marion Public Library, 1095 6 th Avenue
Marshalltown	Marshalltown High School, 1602 S. 2 nd Avenue
Mason City	North Iowa Area Community College – 4, 500 College Drive
Ottumwa	Ottumwa High School, 501 E. 2 nd
Sheldon	Northwest Iowa Area Community College, 603 W Park St.
Sioux City	Central Campus Individual Learning Center, 1121 Jackson Street
Spencer	Spencer High School, 800 East 3 rd Street
Waterloo	Hawkeye Community College – 1, 1501 E. Orange Road
West Burlington	Southeastern Community College – 1, 1500 West Agency

**Media Contact: Willie Suchy, Supervisor, Wildlife Research Section, Iowa DNR,
515-281-8660.**

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