



IOWA OUTDOORS

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

CONSERVATION AND RECREATION DIVISION | WWW.IOWADNR.GOV/NEWS/

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: SEPTEMBER 22, 2009

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PERCH FISHING AT SPIRIT LAKE REACHES RECORD LEVEL

SPIRIT LAKE, Iowa – September is only half over and anglers are already catching a record number of yellow perch from Big Spirit Lake. The Dickinson County lake has seen more than 41,000 yellow perch harvested from its waters in September alone.

This is the best yellow perch fishing since record keeping began in 1956.

“Something special is happening at Spirit Lake,” said Mike Hawkins, district fisheries management biologist for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. “This is the most perch ever in Spirit Lake, and we are on track to break the annual harvest record. Spirit Lake is in its heyday.”

The technique is fairly basic. Use a vertical jigging lure and tip it with a wiggler or wax worm. Anglers have been harvesting 8 to 9-inch perch, but lately, the average size has been increasing. Because of the sheer number of perch, growth is slower than in some other years.

“Most anglers are fishing in the traditional spots. You don’t have to guess where they are, just look for the flotilla of boats. Fish around the edges then search for similar habitat in other areas of the lake. The fish are schooling up, but they are literally everywhere,” Hawkins said. “If you don’t have a boat, fishing is going to be good through the ice, too.”

Factor in the near perfect fall weather and spending a weekend on the water is an inviting proposition.

“This is the fishing trip you take the kids on because it’s fun and there is lots of action,” Hawkins said.

With the excellent perch fishing currently underway, Hawkins said other species are just becoming more active. As the water temperature drops, walleye, white bass and smallmouth bass become aggressive feeders heading in to the winter.

Media Contact: Mike Hawkins, fisheries biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 712-336-1840.

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HOTLINE NOW PROVIDING FALL COLOR UPDATES

AMES – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources Forestry Bureau fall colors hotline began providing updates on September 21. The hotline number (515) 233-4110 is updated weekly with information on what colors are showing in which region.

The brightest displays of color occur with an early fall with bright sunny days and cool nights. These conditions develop red pigments. Cloudy days and warm nights will produce less brilliant colors because chlorophyll breaks down slowly and the red pigments are not formed quickly enough. Dry weather causes a greater buildup of sugars in the leaves, enhancing the production of the red pigments.

Windy, rainy weather causes many leaves to fall prematurely, lessening the intensity of the display. A killing frost will destroy the leaf cells and the coloration process will not function effectively.

Peak fall color occurs in northeast Iowa, on the average, on the weekend closest to October 10. Peak fall color occurs later in the more southern parts of the state, but it all depends on the weather.

The forestry bureau has fall color information on its website <http://www.iowadnr.gov/forestry/fallcolor.html> that gives approximate best viewing times and what colors different trees produce.

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PUBLIC MEETING IN DES MOINES TO DISCUSS PROPOSED FISH RESTITUTION RULES

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is holding a public meeting to receive comments on proposed rules covering compensation to the state and public for damages to natural resources and wildlife resulting from water pollution or a hazardous condition.

Proposed rule changes updates the definition of "AFS" to state the American Fisheries Society's Special Publication 30 shall be used to assess the value of fish loss and revises the fish species to be valued at \$15 per fish unless the AFS publication requires a higher value, in which case the higher value shall be applied.

The public hearing is scheduled for 2 p.m., October 6, in the fourth floor west conference room, Wallace State Office Building, 502 E. 9th St., in Des Moines. Any persons who attend the public hearing and have special needs, such as hearing or mobility impairments should contact the Department of Natural Resources at (515)281-6976 and advise of specific needs.

For more information, contact Martin Konrad at (515) 281-6976 or Tamara Mullen at (515) 281-8934.

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DNR DIRECTOR'S PUBLIC FORUM HEADS TO STONE STATE PARK IN WOODBURY COUNTY

MEDIA CONTACT: Tammie Krausman, DNR, at (515) 402-8763 or Tammie.Krausman@dnr.iowa.gov.

SIOUX CITY– Iowa Department of Natural Resources Director Richard Leopold will hold a public forum at Stone State Park main lodge in Sioux City on Thursday.

Leopold is holding forums across the state again this year to discuss natural resource issues with Iowans.

"I really look forward to hearing from Iowa's citizens. Last year, we got great feedback and ideas from more than 300 attendees," said Leopold about the seven forums held last year. "Our relationship with Iowans is something we highly value within the DNR and we will work together on the things most affecting our natural resources."

Each public forum begins at 6 p.m. with Leopold outlining the DNR's top priorities, the environmental report card, providing an update on budget cuts and discussing local issues. Another hour-and-a-half will be devoted to answering questions from the public.

Leopold has hosted more than 200 people at forums at Honey Creek Resort, Dolliver, Macbride, Bellevue and Lake of Three Fires State Parks so far this summer.

Upcoming public forums scheduled for Leopold are as follows, listed alphabetically by city:

Council Bluffs

Hitchcock Nature Center
Wednesday, Sept. 30, 6 p.m.

Sioux City

Stone State Park Lodge
Thursday, Sept. 24, 6 p.m.

Be Fire Wise: This is the second of a three part series on fire prevention [electronic image available upon request]

WILDLAND/URBAN LANDSCAPE

Des Moines – The Iowa landscape has drastically changed over the past century. The population has increased more than 30 percent and has shifted from a rural to an urban lifestyle. With more than 60 percent of Iowa’s population living in urban communities, many communities have expanded into traditionally natural areas.

Each year Iowa’s beautiful landscapes entice more urban residents to push a little further into those natural, wildland areas. This trend has created an extremely complex landscape, known as wildland/urban interface, and a new set of conditions: houses and businesses constructed amid wooded or wildland areas. By populating natural areas, a wildland fire can now reach beyond its natural fuels like trees, brush, and grass to homes, businesses, and human endangerment.

Adapting to a wildland lifestyle requires a viewpoint with fewer urban expectations. For instance, it may be much more difficult, if not impossible, for a fire department to access your house soon enough to save it from a high-intensity wildfire. Wildland fires are a natural process; understanding this and making your home fire-resistant is not only wise but it may protect your entire community.

In order to make your property fire-resistant, you need to first realize that a wildfire does not always burn everything in its path – its course is determined by fuel, weather, and terrain. A fire’s fuel is anything that burns – trees, shrubs, grass, homes, fences, decks, boardwalks, sheds, stored wood. Dead grass or leaves and pine needles spread fire faster than dead twigs and branches. A fire is also energized by dry, windy weather, increasing its flame and spread with embers or sparks. Wind can quickly change a fire’s path, carrying burning embers a mile or more away. And the type of terrain can determine a fire’s path; a fire will travel uphill quicker, with longer flames, than when spreading downhill or on level ground.

The following is a brief outline to help you begin fireproofing your property. For more detailed information visit the Iowa DNR website,

www.iowadnr.gov/forestry/fire/firewise.html, or contact Iowa DNR Wildland Fire Supervisor, Gail Kantak, Gail.Kantak@dnr.iowa.gov.

1. Assess the landscape of your community and how your property is placed within this landscape. Consider the following questions: Is there dense vegetation in your community?; Does your property have road access capable of handling emergency equipment?; Does your property have vegetation or any flammable materials within 10 feet of the house?; Do the treetops make a canopy over the buildings?; What type of materials are used in the structures? Assess everything, noting everything that is flammable on your property and how they relate to each other.

2. After your assessment, start making landscape adjustments. The landscape is the easiest and most noticeable place to start. The goal is to limit flammable vegetation and materials surrounding the home, and to have space between individual and/or groups of plants and trees.
 - Start with the 5 foot perimeter nearest the home; it should have nonflammable landscaping such as rock, pavers, annuals, high-moisture perennials. Remove all dead leaves and stems from the landscape, gutters, and under the deck immediately. Move any stacked firewood to at least 100 feet from the house.
 - Next move to the 30 foot zone surrounding the home, it should be well-irrigated and free from flammable materials and debris. Plants in this area should be carefully spaced and low-growing. Mow the lawn regularly. Keep wood mulch moist. Prune trees so that the lowest limbs are at least 6 to 10 feet above ground. Remove limbs that hang over the house – not only are they themselves flammable, but they drop leaves and twigs on the house which can easily catch a spark. Do not store patio furniture or lawn accessories under a deck. Firewood and propane tanks should be moved to at least 100 feet from the house.
 - The next zone is 30 to 100 feet from your home. In this area, clusters of two or three trees should be 30 feet apart or individual trees should be 20 feet apart. Try to mix deciduous and evergreen trees. And again keep tree branches 6 to 10 feet above ground and remove woody debris. Also, creating firebreaks such as driveways, gravel walkways, and open lawns are a huge asset in fire prevention.
 - And now move to the zone that is 100 to 200 feet from the home. It should be thinned out, but not as thinned as in the 30 to 100 foot zone. Remove heavy accumulations of woody debris such as wood piles or brush piles. Remove any evergreen seedlings growing among taller trees; they act as ladders for a fire to climb to the treetops. Strategically prune tall trees so the treetops are not touching, this reduces the possibility of a crown fire reaching your home.

3. Continue fireproofing by choosing fire-resistant building materials. Even with a perfectly groomed landscape, fire may still reach your home. So the construction materials are significant in how much damage your home sustains.
- The roof can be the most vulnerable area during intense wildfires. But, using fire-resistant roofing materials like composition shingle, metal, clay or cement tile can slow a fire's spread.
 - Next consider the exterior wall building materials. The best wall materials to resist heat and flames include cement, plaster, stucco, and masonry (concrete, stone, brick or block).
 - Windows can suffer from intense heat as well. The glass on exterior windows can fracture and collapse, allowing the fire to enter the interior. Use double-pane glass to reduce this risk. Tempered glass is the best option, since it has a high heat tolerance and is less breakable.
 - Just as fire can enter a home through a broken window, it can enter a home through fascias, soffits, and vents. Enclose these areas with metal screens, reducing the size of the openings. Screening vents prevent burning embers from entering the home.
 - Also protect vulnerable overhangs or additions to the house, such as room additions, bay windows, decks, porches, carports, pergolas, boardwalks, etc. Remove anything flammable near these areas, and box in the undersides of overhangs, decks, and balconies with fire-resistant materials. Do not attach wood fences to the home.

Living in the beautiful Iowa landscape can have its rewards. Just remember that living within a natural landscape is different than urban-life, so by replacing urban ideals with rural wisdom you can enjoy nature's rewards for years to come.