

# Wetland Habitat Conditions – Fall 2009

Updated October 13, 2009

**Important Note:** In 2008, the Department of Natural Resources' Wildlife Bureau realigned its wildlife management unit boundaries to improve efficiency and adjust land-management workloads. Most of the new wildlife management units were also given new names. Please refer to the revised Wildlife Management Unit map to determine the Wildlife Unit responsible for the area or areas for which you want information.

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## BLACK HAWK WILDLIFE UNIT

Mike Mahn, Wildlife Biologist

### Sac County

**Black Hawk Wildlife Area:** Dike repairs were made late last year so water levels were held lower this past spring and early summer to allow vegetation to become established on the newly repaired dikes as well as on exposed mud flats. The water level is currently below full pool but levels are adequate for small boat use. With the recent rains the water levels are rising. Most of the area is accessible by boat. Flooded smartweed on the south portion of the area has been highly attractive to waterfowl.

**Tomahawk Marsh:** The water levels are reasonably good but dense vegetation continues to cover much of the area, especially the east side. Recent rains are helping the water levels. Some larger open water pockets are appearing on the west side. The pool west of the railroad structure has good water levels but is primarily devoid of vegetation except for the edges.

**Kiowa Marsh:** The water level is at or near crest. The main pool is accessible using boats but some problems with submergent vegetation may be encountered. The habitat conditions are generally good but the main pool is devoid of emergent vegetation except for the south end.

**Burrow's Pond:** Burrow's Pond will be dry this fall in order to accomplish two goals. The area has been drained this year to replace the failing water control structure and simultaneously revegetate the wetland.

### Pocahontas County

**Sunken Grove:** Adequate water levels on the west side should allow general boat access. Habitat conditions remain good. We are continuing to lose some of the emergent vegetation on the main pools. Water levels are holding steady to rising slightly with the recent rains. The east pool is generally not accessible by boat unless additional significant rainfall occurs.

**Shimon Marsh:** Water levels are still below full pool but the level is adequate and starting to rise with the recent rainfall. Improved habitat conditions exist that should be very attractive to waterfowl.

**Lizard Lake:** This area has adequate water levels. Habitat conditions are poor because this area lacks emergent and submergent vegetation.

Calhoun County

**South Twin Lake:** Water levels are down slightly but remain adequate. Habitat conditions are poor with only a narrow band of edge vegetation.

Carroll County

**Artesian Lake:** The water level is at pool elevation and the habitat conditions are good.

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## **CEDAR-WAPSI WILDLIFE UNIT**

Doug Janke, Wildlife Biologist

**Sweet Marsh:** All boat ramps and access points to Sweet Marsh are open and in good shape. The road and boat ramps to segment C and the reservoir are open. Water levels are rising steadily and are on target to be similar to past years for the opener. All moist soil segments look very good, with abundant moist soil vegetation.

**Leopold Area:** Most of the small wetlands north and south of C-50 are holding water. Additional rains are needed this fall to fill up the rest of the wetland areas. New seedings, soybeans and winter wheat fields should offer some good fall goose hunting opportunities.

**Big Marsh:** Big Marsh began filling on August 18th. The water level has come up nicely and all pools are at crest or very close to it. Smartweed production was very good and the tall vegetation should be adequate for hiding most duck boats. Overall, conditions appear to be very good and should be similar to those of the last three seasons. Water levels could potentially rise another 3-6 inches by the end of the season.

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## **CLEAR LAKE WILDLIFE UNIT**

Greg Hanson, Wildlife Biologist

Overall, wetland habitat conditions have improved substantially on most wildlife areas in the Clear Lake Unit as a result of significant rains during the first week of October. Nearly all wetlands in the Unit have a little water in them and some have improved significantly from the first duck season.

**Rice Lake:** The water level is few inches below crest. There is very little shoreline vegetation on the main lake and little submergent vegetation. The Joice Slough, southeast of the main lake, is about 6 inches below crest and submergent vegetation is very dense.

**Elk Creek:** Pool A was lowered about 3 feet in late September to provide habitat for loafing geese and to fill Pools B and C. Pools B and C are both at crest and habitat is excellent.

**Hanlontown Slough:** Water level in the main pool is at crest. Smaller wetlands have water, but some are not at crest yet.

**Harmon Lake:** The water level is at crest on the west and center pools. There is a little less emergent vegetation than last year, but a lot of submergent vegetation. The east pool is nearly full.

**Myre Slough:** The water level is about 3 inches over crest. Vegetation is sparser than last year, but there is a good amount of submergent vegetation, which will attract ducks but make boating with a motor somewhat difficult.

**Meredith Marsh:** Both pools were drawn down for repair of the water control structures but there was some shallow water in the east pool on Oct. 3 that may be accessible to walk-in hunters.

**Crystal Hills and Gladfelter WPAs:** Most wetlands are full or nearly full.

**Eagle Lake:** The water level is at crest, habitat is good. A fair amount of the vegetation is floating due the high water levels in June of 2008. This may create some challenges in regards to boat access from the north ramp.

**East Twin Lake:** The water level is about a half foot below crest. The east pool water level is 3 inches below crest and appears much more open than it did in September.

**Ventura Marsh:** The water level in Ventura Marsh is above crest. High water in June 2008 uprooted some large mats of cattails and they continue to float back and forth across the marsh depending upon the wind direction and speed. The boat ramp has been blocked at times by floating mats of cattails, but these can usually be moved to allow access to the open water.

**Union Hills:** All the wetlands on Union Hills have gained water since the first duck season. Very few, if any of the wetlands are now dry, although many are only shallowly flooded. The shallow water continues to be attractive to migrating teal.

**Lower Morse Lake Wetland Complex:** All the wetlands in this complex have gained water since the first duck season. Water levels, however, are highly variable and many wetlands are only shallowly flooded. The large wetland a mile east-northeast of Lake Cornelia was drawn down to revegetate it and reduce the carp population. Recent rains have put some water back into this wetland and it can be used by small duck boats or canoes.

**Elm Lake:** The water level at Elm Lake is near crest but there is little emergent marsh vegetation except along the shore line.

**Big Wall Lake:** Due to the lack of precipitation in August, the water level in Big Wall Lake was nearly 1.5 feet below crest for the first duck opener. Recent rains, however, have added a half foot of water to the area. The area is heavily vegetated, but there are some open holes in the middle of the marsh. The arrowhead has died back, making the area appear more open than it

did for the first duck opener. Small duck boats and canoes should be able to get around on the area; large boats will be hampered by the dense vegetation and shallow water. Additional precipitation is needed to bring the water level up to crest.

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## **GRAND RIVER WILDLIFE UNIT**

Chad Paup, Wildlife Biologist

Ponds and lakes in the Grand River Unit generally have good water levels, but waterfowl habitat along the shores is generally poor due to the high water levels this past summer.

**Lake Icaria:** The Zimmerman Pool wetland at Lake Icaria has poor habitat conditions because of flooding this past summer.

**Mitchell Marsh** will be full of water for the opener on October 17<sup>th</sup> but will be drained shortly thereafter as part of the Summit Lake renovation project. The lake and marsh will be drawn down to aid in killing the rough fish in the wetland system. Fall and winter are the best times to initiate fish renovation projects of this type. This will also give us the opportunity to do some maintenance work on the marsh, such as like deepening the boat access and building up of the small berms.

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## **GREAT LAKES WILDLIFE UNIT**

Chris LaRue, Wildlife Biologist

Recent rains have improved some small wetlands in this region. Most traditional sloughs and larger wetlands have adequate water now for waterfowl hunting opportunities. Existing water conditions for area wetland complexes are listed below. Any additional rainfall, however, could quickly change habitat conditions.

**Welch Lake Complex:** Excellent walk-in area with adequate water on many of the large and small wetlands. Welch Lake itself can be accessed by boat.

**Kattleson Hogsback Complex:** West Hottes has good water for small to moderately large duck boats. Smaller wetlands have little water. Larger marshes at this point are in fair to good condition for the duck opener.

**Grovers Lake:** Recent rains have not significantly improved water conditions in Grover Lake. Grovers was drawn down over the 2009 growing season to help re-establish essential aquatic vegetation. Boards were replaced in July, but the lack of precipitation has left the area very low, making boat access very difficult. Walk-in hunting may be the best opportunity until Grovers returns to full pool.

**Spring Run:** The larger traditional marshes have good water for the duck opener. There are several good locations for boat access including Lily Lake, Pleasant Lake, Spring Lake, and Prairie Lake.

**Dugout Creek:** The area has good water for boat access and walk-in hunting.

**Christopherson Slough:** The area has good water for boat access and walk-in hunting. The larger marshes now have adequate water for walk-in hunting opportunities.

**Little Swan Lake:** The lake and west bay have good water for the duck opener and boat access.

**Garlock Slough:** The area has good water for walk-in hunting.

**Jemmerson Slough:** The main portion of Jemmerson Slough was recently posted as an inviolate waterfowl refuge. For years, hunters have talked about developing a quality waterfowl refuge in the Iowa Great Lakes (IGL) area. Jemmerson Slough now has improved water level management capabilities, which we have used to restore the waterfowl habitat on the area and enhance the water quality benefits of this marsh. The goal of the waterfowl refuge is to improve waterfowl hunting opportunities in the IGL area throughout the season.

Recent rains have put a small amount of water back into the Jemmerson Refuge. Much of the area is still low or dry to re-establish essential aquatic vegetation for water quality and waterfowl habitat improvements. There are, however, a few large wetlands in the vicinity of the new refuge that will have adequate water for walk-in hunting.

After the last day of the duck season, the inviolate waterfowl refuge will be reopened for public hunting and other recreational use.

**Horseshoe Lake WMA:** Located just northwest of Jemmerson Slough, Horseshoe Lake has good water for hunting and boat access.

**Yager Slough:** Recent precipitation has good water in Yager Slough. The newly established aquatic vegetation looks excellent and should provide some quality walk-in hunting opportunities.

**Sidel Marsh:** The area has very good water for the duck opener. Newly established aquatic vegetation should provide some quality walk-in hunting opportunities.

**Diamond Lake:** Recent rains have brought Diamond Lake up a few inches. Diamond Lake is still 24 inches from full crest. Waterfowl habitat and aquatic vegetation is excellent at this time for the duck opener. Many of the smaller marshes in this wetland complex now have some water with larger marshes having adequate water for walk-in hunting.

**Hales Slough:** Has good water for boat access and walk-in duck hunting opportunities.

**Rush Lake (Osceola County):** Has adequate water for boat and walk-in hunting opportunities.

## IOWA RIVER WILDLIFE UNIT

Tim Thompson, Wildlife Biologist

**Hawkeye Wildlife Area** (Johnson County): Coralville Reservoir and the Iowa River had major flooding in spring and summer. Water levels on the reservoir finally returned to the summer pool of 683.3 in early August. Heavy rains in late August caused the reservoir to rise 15 feet above summer pool. The pool was held at 686.0 msl for the early duck season and then dropped to 685.0 msl to allow additional vegetation to green up. Lake levels will be raised to 686.4 msl by November 01 for the maximum allowed fall raise. Lake level is projected to be at 685.5 for the second duck opener. Willows make up the main vegetative cover in the lake. Small wetlands have good water and fair to good vegetation. The new Greencastle boat ramp on the north side was flooded in September. We have removed the mud and new rock should be in place for the October 17 duck opener. The Babcock boat ramp on the south side is in excellent condition.

**Swan Lake** (Johnson County): Water levels are higher than normal and the marsh is mostly open water.

**Dudgeon Lake** (Benton County): Major flooding on the Cedar River has caused some holes in the dikes. Repairs were completed in August and water levels are being raised on O'Brien Pond. With the continuing rains, water is backing up into good vegetative cover. Upper Detricks and Sanders Pond are both high due to beavers.

**Otter Creek:** Otter Creek Marsh has excellent water conditions for the up coming season. All segments are full or above fall pool levels. Refuge segments are full and have excellent food available to hold large numbers of migrating waterfowl. Boats will have good access to segments 1,7,6, and the rollers will be in place to access segment 4. Walk in hunters will enjoy the high water in segment 4a and 2 as well this year.

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## MAQUOKETA WILDLIFE UNIT

Jeff Glaw, Wildlife Biologist

**Green Island:** Water level conditions will be normal this fall compared to last fall. The levee is fixed and pumps are in good working order. With the more than normal amounts of rain and cool conditions this summer, seasonal vegetation has flourished in the public hunting and refuge segments. Corn, millet and buckwheat plots were planted in the refuge so we should hold good numbers of waterfowl this fall.

**Princeton:** Heavy vegetative conditions exist at Princeton this fall. The water pump has been repaired and the area should have normal water levels for the remainder of the season. With heavy cover, boats may experience some difficulties in maneuvering around the public hunting segment. Crops were planted in the refuge and we should hold good numbers of birds this fall.

**Goose Lake:** Muskrat numbers are peaking at Goose Lake which means less vegetation and more open water. Due to more than adequate rain this year, water conditions are very good.

**Muskrat Slough:** Muskrat Slough has a good mix of vegetation and open water and should allow hunters to spread out this year. Assuming good migrations through the state this year, Muskrat Slough hunters should enjoy good hunting this fall.

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## MISSOURI RIVER WILDLIFE UNIT

Doug Chafa, Wildlife Biologist

The Missouri River is higher than usual for this time of year and is expected to be held at navigation level until November 30. This change in water level management on the Missouri River will help near-channel wetlands to remain full and allow pumping to continue throughout most of the duck season. Pumping is currently underway at **Louisville Bend, Tieville Bend, and Winnebago Bend Wildlife Areas**. Water levels should be at crest on these areas. **Badger Lake** in Monona has a fair amount of water, much better than the past couple of years when it was nearly dry. **Browns Lake** and **Snyder Bend** have normal water levels due to the water supplied from Port Neal power plant. **Luton WMA** in Woodbury County, and the **Owego Complex** are nicely vegetated and have good water levels. Many of the smaller wetlands at **Table Marsh WMA** are very low.

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## NISHNABOTNA WILDLIFE UNIT

Carl Priebe, Wildlife Biologist

**Riverton:** Water depth on the Riverton Area should be similar to most years. But, the vegetation is taller and denser than normal. Paths and openings were mowed in the south end of the area, but it never got dry enough to work near the refuge line. No repairs have been made to the road that was damaged in the 2008 flood. Once again, access will be restricted to one way. Hunters will be required to enter the Riverton Area from the south on 313 Ave and exit to north around the refuge, exiting near the Wildlife Unit Headquarters in the NE part of the area.

The west walk-in area is full of water and the vegetation is dense there as well. Paths and openings have been mowed. Due to heavy sediment deposits during the 2008 flood, the middle segment has about 30 acres less water than in past years.

The Jensen Tract south of Riverton is full of water and is in good shape. The water may be a little deeper than normal near the refuge line in order to get more water to the south end. Sediment deposited during the 2008 flood has caused some problems in the south end and we are trying to overcome them with a little more water. As in the Riverton Area, the vegetation is tall and dense. Many paths and openings were mowed to provide hunter access and opportunity. Each year since the Jensen Tract was acquired there has been a large open water area near the refuge line. Not this year. The only parts open are the paths and openings that were mowed.

In all three portions of the Riverton Wildlife Area the vegetation is tall and dense. Retrieving ducks will be very difficult, finding cripples nearly impossible. Hunters should be very judicious

in their shot selection in order to drop ducks where they can be retrieved. Retrieval can't wait until the shooting slows down. Hunters will need to mark where birds drop and move to that spot immediately to avoid losing birds.

**Forney Lake:** Forney Lake has some water, but not as much as in 2008. Lotus covers much of the refuge while river bulrush dominates the public hunting area. The water in the public hunting portion of Forney Lake is about 1-2 feet deep. Launching boats will be difficult. Although the vegetation looks very dense from the road there are some openings.

**Willow Slough:** Willow Slough is down about 16 inches from normal. Some places near the east side may not be accessible with a boat and motor. To access some locations, hunters may have to get out and pull their boat.

**Haynie Slough:** This wetland is an old oxbow, about 1 3/4 miles long, that is quite narrow. It currently has fair water and appears to be in good shape. Most of the water is 1-2 feet deep, but there is a ditch running through the center of the slough that is 4-5 feet deep in places.

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## **ODESSA WILDLIFE UNIT**

Bill Ohde, Wildlife Biologist

**Mississippi River:** The big river has fluctuated up and down all spring and summer, but with no significant flooding. That has prevented much growth of aquatics or moist soil plants in pools 16-18 except on island fringes and temporary wetlands, which will probably not see water again this fall unless there are significant rains in the watershed. Habitat in those pools is generally poor. The lower half of pool 19 does not fluctuate as much and good beds of emergent and submergent vegetation will provide the normal good habitat found there, mainly between Fort Madison and Keokuk.

**Odessa Wildlife Area:** Fluctuations on the Mississippi River required opening and closing the inlet and outlet on Odessa more often than at any time in the past. No major flooding occurred, but the Mississippi River stayed high enough that a complete drawdown was not possible. The drawdown that was completed was later than planned and hampered by fluctuating water levels. Despite these challenges, a good flush of moist soil plants sprouted and habitat conditions look surprisingly good. Some areas have dense beds of shoulder-high wild millet and other moist soil plants while many other areas have beds of knee-high vegetation. The water level will be more than a foot higher for the 2<sup>nd</sup> opener than it was for the September season, which will be almost the same as last year's 2<sup>nd</sup> opener. Water will be raised slightly through October but won't be taken as high as most years because of the shorter cover until possibly sometime in late November.

**Cone Marsh:** The planned drawdown was unsuccessful because recurrent heavy rains repeatedly filled the marsh and prevented any significant growth of perennial emergent vegetation. Both pools are very open and the upper pool will open up even more now that we've had our first good freeze which should take out the arrowhead. There are vegetated fringes and a couple bays that have emergent vegetation with open water pockets in them, but the area on the

whole is very open. Both pools are slightly lower than last year for the 2<sup>nd</sup> opener but will be raised to similar levels to last year because of the lack of vegetation. Those levels are higher than normal, which we plan to return to once good vegetation is re-established. A complete drawdown will be attempted again next year.

**Wiese Slough:** Wiese is very similar to last year. It has a good mix of open water and emergent vegetation, but a little more open than last year. It also has thick submergent vegetation which will make it tough motoring for conventional outboards. Water level is good but slightly lower than last year to maintain thinning vegetation. Habitat conditions are very good.

**Cedar Bottoms:** Similar to last year, but more water than normal because of summer and fall rains. Recently constructed floodplain ponds and newly scoured areas are all holding water at present but some will dry up if we don't continue to get rain.

**Millrace Flats:** Scours and shallow basins all have water because of continuing rains. Scours will maintain water throughout the fall but shallow basins will be dependant on additional rains or high water on the Iowa River.

**Turtle Bend:** Water areas are all full because of continuing rains. Oxbow areas will probably maintain good water all fall but shallow basins will be dependant on continuing rains or high water on the Iowa River.

**Klum Lake:** The water level is above crest. The area is heavily vegetated, as is usual, with scattered pockets of open water.

**Blackhawk Bottoms:** Water level has receded and is lower than normal but can change rapidly with rains because of the large watershed.

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## **PRAIRIE LAKES WILDLIFE UNIT**

Bryan Hellyer, Wildlife Biologist

Wetland conditions are improving in the Ruthven area. Nearly 4 inches of rain fell during the first week of October. Prior to October 1, the majority of the smaller wetlands were dry. Most now have a few inches of water in them with flooded emergent vegetation around the fringes. Many of these wetlands are walk-in areas, but some are accessible using small boats or canoes. The larger wetlands have also picked up some water, although large boats will still have some difficulty maneuvering in some of the Ruthven area sloughs and wetlands. Abundant submergent vegetation on some wetlands may make using outboard motors difficult. Because wetland habitat conditions vary across the counties, pre-season scouting is highly recommended.

**Barringer Slough:** The water level is 2 inches below crest. The area is ringed with cattails.

**Smith Slough:** The water level is 2 inches below crest and cattail cover is scattered throughout the marsh.

**Trumbull Lake:** The water level has risen 4 inches from the first duck opener, but it is still 6 inches below crest. Trumbull is a shallow open-water lake with a few cattails along the southwest shore.

**Dan Green Slough:** Dan Green Slough is currently dry, but has re-vegetated nicely with a mixture of perennial and annual wetland plants. The construction of the pumping system to dewater the slough was completed earlier this spring. The plan is to have the water level back to normal crest elevation the fall of 2010, assuming we get adequate precipitation.

**Rush Lake (Palo Alto County):** The water level in Rush Lake was manipulated this past summer and consequently produced excellent stands of emergent and submergent vegetation. Most areas outside the main channel have 1.5 feet of water and are packed with smartweed. The current conditions should attract and hold good numbers of local and migrating waterfowl. Initial boat use will be challenging, but will become easier after the first frost. The water level has risen 5 inches since the first duck opener, but is still 12 inches below normal crest. The low water level is due vandals removing stop logs from the water control structure during the first week of September and the lack of rain throughout September.

**Ingham-High Complex:** Most of the large wetlands are below crest, some as much as 6 inches to 1 foot low. Emergent vegetation varies from area to area, with most areas having at least a fringe of cattails. Some of these wetlands will be difficult to access by boat unless we get additional rain this fall. Many small wetlands are nearly dry. Precipitation during the first week of October totaled 3-4 inches in this area.

**4-Mile Lake (Emmet County):** 4-Mile Lake is a little over 2.5 feet deep in the in the deeper portions of the marsh. The marsh is back to a clear water state due to its recent drawdown and revegetation. It has a very nice stand of new emergent and submergent vegetation which should help attract early and late season migrants. Precipitation during the first week of October was also 3-4" in this area.

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## **RATHBUN WILDLIFE UNIT**

Jeff Telleen, Wildlife Biologist

**Rathbun Lake:** Lake elevation as of 10/13/09 is 903.7, which is below the summer pool of 904. The Corp of Engineers will continue to drop the lake to elevation 900 to accommodate shoreline restoration work. Due to high water this spring and summer, there will be no submerged vegetation on the main lake this fall at these elevations. Boat ramps at Indian Ridge and Atwell's will soon be too shallow to use. The impoundments and natural basins on the upper ends of the reservoir are full with the exception of Woodpecker Marsh on the South Fork, which has been lowered to replace the water control structure. Vegetation in the impoundments is generally very good with the exception of the lower end of Brown's Slough which is open water.

**Sedan Bottoms:** Most of the new water control structures at Sedan are open to allow for construction. Buckshot Lake on the east side of the river is full and contains excellent

smartweed and wild millet growth. Oxbow wetlands on the west side of the river are full and will provide some hunting.

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## **RED ROCK WILDLIFE UNIT**

Ron Munkel, Wildlife Biologist  
515-238-6936

**Red Rock Reservoir:** As of 0600 14 OCT 09, the Reservoir is at 743.22, slightly more than 1 foot above normal summer pool (742). The fall rise to 744 is taking place and is projected to be near the fall pool (744) by the 2<sup>nd</sup> waterfowl opener. The reservoir water level may also fluctuate dramatically upward depending on rainfall events in the watershed. The contractor has not arrived on site to start repair work on Richards Marsh dike. Pumping started 12 Oct 2009 at Little Hartford sub-impoundment and walk-in hunting conditions are already good.

Natural moist-soil plants grew well and developed large areas of excellent food and cover. However, it will take water levels well above the fall pool (744) for much of the Reservoir area to be of any value to waterfowl or hunters. The critical zone between 742 and 744 has not fared well. Water was on and off the zone numerous times during the critical growing period for natural moist-soil plants, resulting in very poor development. Limited aerial seeding took place in this zone in late July at White Breast, off of “Box Cars” and in the North Refuge. The aerial seeding sites have done fairly well, although they were under water for several days. The aerial seeding and natural vegetation sites should be of use to waterfowl and hunters with the fall water level increase. With heavy rainfall events in the watershed resulting in dramatic water level fluctuations, there could be some excellent hunting opportunities above fall pool elevations.

There has been considerable silt deposition in the upper reaches of the Reservoir. Boat hunters should be aware that channels and back-water areas have changed and some areas may no longer be accessible.

**Red Rock Sub-impoundments:** “Little Hartford” is being pumped but has a very “leaky” basin. A limited amount of pumping will be conducted during the second season. It currently has adequate water for walk-in hunting and will improve by the 2<sup>nd</sup> opener. It is unlikely that boat access will be available. Richard’s Marsh (Big Hartford) is nearly dry and will be of limited use for the season until construction is complete and pumping can begin. Recent rain events have delayed contractor mobilization to the site delaying scheduled dike repair. As soon as the repair work is completed and Dept Engineers sign off on the work, pumping will begin. There is excellent natural moist-soil plant growth in Richard’s and should be very attractive to waterfowl when we have the opportunity place water on the site.

Swan Refuge is in excellent vegetative condition but will be of limited value to waterfowl until scheduled repairs are completed on dike and pump station damage due to last year’s flooding. Additional damage to interior dikes from this year’s flooding will hamper full utilization of the refuge even if the scheduled repairs are completed early enough to pump.

**Red Rock Oxbows and Shallow Water Areas:** Some of the deeper oxbows have some water and have improved with recent rainfall. Many of the shallow water areas are dry. Recent rain fall has improved conditions on some of these wetlands. Many of these areas have good natural moist soil plant growth and with adequate fall rain could be excellent areas for walk-in waterfowl hunting.

**Banner Flats WMA:** There are numerous shallow water sites on this area. Some of these have water and others are dry. Water levels have improved on some wetlands from recent rain events and beaver activity. Some have excellent moist soil plant growth. With adequate rainfall these basins could be excellent walk-in waterfowl hunting sites.

**Colfax WMA and Chichaqua Bottoms WMA:** There are numerous shallow wetland basins on these areas. Most are dry or nearly dry. Some have improved water condition resulting from recent rain fall. They have good to excellent moist soil plant growth and with adequate rainfall to re-water the basins they could be excellent walk-in waterfowl hunting sites.

**Errington Marsh:** This area has several natural wetlands and constructed wetlands. Some of the deeper basins have water. Others are dry. A number of dry shallow basins have good to excellent moist soil plant growth. Water conditions will deteriorate without additional rainfall. Some good walk-in waterfowl hunting will be available on basins with good water levels and the dry basins with adequate rainfall could provide additional opportunity.

**Rock Creek Marsh:** The water level is normal for this time of year and is determined by the control structure on Rock Creek Lake and stream flows in Rock Creek. There is good emergent vegetation in the upper portion of the Marsh. There should be good walk-in waterfowl hunting opportunity and smaller boats may access portions of the Marsh.

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## **SAYLORVILLE WILDLIFE UNIT**

Scott Peterson, Wildlife Biologist

This report on habitat conditions on selected areas within the Saylorville Wildlife Unit should not take the place of pre-season scouting as habitat and water level conditions can change weekly depending on precipitation and when the first frost occurs.

**Hendrickson Marsh** (Story County): Excellent vegetation. Water level is at crest due to the recent rains and the new boat ramp on the southside is now accessible to all boats.

**Colo Bogs** (Story County): Adequate water and excellent habitat conditions exist in the tract located north of new Highway 30 and south of County E-41 (old Lincoln Highway). This pool has an excellent variety of emergent vegetation. Walk-in hunting only. The large shallow basin north of County E-41 (old Lincoln Highway) is currently holding adequate water and has excellent habitat. Walk-in hunting only.

**Harrier Marsh** (Boone County): Larger basins are holding adequate water for shore hunting. Most basins are surrounded by or covered by heavy stands of cattails. All are walk-in only areas.

**Saylorville Reservoir** (Polk, Dallas and Boone Counties): Water is currently at conservation pool and holding. Pool level will be monitored and adjusted to optimize hunting opportunities as the fall migration progresses. Until water levels are raised, boating north of the Jester Park boat ramp outside of the old river channel can be difficult. Currently there are excellent stands of smart weed and other annuals that should be attractive to migrating waterfowl. Japanese millet was also aerially seeded on selected available mud flats in early July in the vicinity of Jester Park, below the Highway 17 Bridge, to provide food and cover and has matured and is in excellent condition. The Mosquito Creek area will be attractive later in the season as water levels are raised and offers walk-in hunting opportunity and can be accessed from Nissan Drive.

**Big Creek Lake** (Polk County): The upper reaches of the north and west arms of the lake offer the best opportunity for early season waterfowl hunting. Above the silt dams, very shallow water conditions provide for mostly walk-in hunting or very shallow draft boats. Caution is recommended to waders due to deep mud conditions. The bays and points, especially on the west and north shorelines, offer areas to hunt from boats.

**Brushy Creek Lake** (Webster County): The upper stretches of this lake have flooded timber with a few islands. Extra long decoy cords may be necessary depending on where you set up with a boat. West arm of lake is popular. Some walk-in hunting opportunities exist along select shorelines.

**Bays Branch WMA** (Guthrie County):

North segment: Good vegetation. Water is up on to the boat ramp and is useable for smaller boats. Water level has not reached crest and will depend on rain. Walk in hunting is available.

South segment: A new boat ramp south of the middle gravel road is now in place. Water level is still too low for boat access at this ramp. Stop logs are in and water level is dependent on timely rains this fall. Walk-in hunting is available.

**Lakin Slough** (Guthrie County): The water level is below crest. Access to the marsh is difficult without a mud motor due to the very shallow conditions. There is a fringe of cattails around the marsh with a majority of the marsh in an open water condition. There is a fair amount of submergent vegetation that could impair outboard motor operation. Boat accessibility at the south ramp is next to impossible without more rain.

**Snake Creek WMA** (Greene County): All basins are at crest elevation. There is excellent flooded emergent vegetation with open water pockets. The North Slough has excellent emergent vegetation and is at crest. The marsh conditions should be very attractive to waterfowl and should provide some excellent walk-in waterfowl hunting opportunity. Canoes or small marsh boats may be useable on the main marsh. There is no boat ramp.

**Goose Lake** (Greene County): The marsh water level is at crest and conditions are very similar to last season. At the current time, larger boats should have easy access to most of the marsh. Expect to encounter a fair amount of submerged vegetation. Boats with mud motors should be

able to operate under current conditions. Boats with outboard motors may have some difficulty with submerged vegetation.

**Fin Pond WMA** (Greene County): The water level is fair to good. There is a heavy ring of emergent vegetation with scattered stands in the center of the marsh. There should be good walk-in hunting conditions.

**Dunbar Slough Wildlife Management Areas** (Greene County):

**Hoyt Tract Mitigation Wetland** – The water level is below crest. It has heavy vegetation. There could be some walk-in hunting opportunity.

**North Refuge** – The water level is near to above crest. It is in an open water condition with a narrow fringe of emergent vegetation.

**Smith Tract Wetland** – The basin is at crest. There is excellent habitat available and should offer opportunity for walk-in hunting.

**Dunbar Slough** – The current water level is at crest. The central basin is open water. Good emergent vegetation has developed and expanded around the edges of the marsh. There is also a fair amount of submerged vegetation. There should be good to excellent walk-in hunting. Under current conditions the marsh is accessible to small and medium sized boats. Extremely large boats and motors may have some difficulty operating.

**Taylor Wetland Refuge** – At this time, water level is very shallow due to recent dike repairs. Additional water may be impounded as the dike vegetation improves.

**Dunbar Slough Waterfowl Production Areas** (Greene County):

**Hunter Tract A Cell (south)** – The current water level is below crest at this time. Water levels will improve prior to the 2<sup>nd</sup> season due to pumping. There should be fair walk-in hunting opportunities. Currently, smaller boats may be useable.

**Hunter Tract B Cell** – The water level is below the desired fall crest. The marsh has large areas of open water and flooded reeds canary grass. There are some moist soil plants in the upper reaches of the pool that could be flooded if the water level rises. There should be fair to good opportunity for walk-in waterfowl hunting.

**Hunter Tract C Cell** – The water level is below the desired fall crest. There is a fair to good stand of moist soil plants in this cell and with adequate rainfall they will be flooded. There should be fair opportunity for walk-in waterfowl hunting.

**Hunter Tract D Cell (north)** – The water level is slightly below crest. This cell is primarily open water with some flooded reeds canary grass. This cell should provide some walk-in waterfowl hunting opportunities.

**Klocke Tract** – This tract has several shallow wetlands. Currently these basins are dry or nearly dry. Water levels are very unstable and will require additional rainfall to recharge them. There should be some potential for walk-in hunting if we receive significant rainfall.

**McCord Pond** (Guthrie County): The water level is at crest. There has been considerable emergent vegetation growth; the central basin is in a semi-open water condition. Much of the vegetation is flooded making conditions very attractive to waterfowl. The marsh should provide good walk-in waterfowl hunting. Shallow draft boats are useable. Larger boats may have some difficulty.

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## **SUGEMA WILDLIFE UNIT**

Chuck Steffen, Wildlife Biologist

**Fox River WMA** in Van Buren County was kept low this summer and consequently has excellent vegetation conditions. Water levels are about 10” below crest with considerable flooded vegetation for the second opening. As significant rainfall events occur, we will slowly raise water levels throughout the season.

**DeVoss/Foster WMA** in Van Buren County also has good vegetation conditions with adequate water levels.

Water levels at **Hayesville Bend WMA** in Keokuk County are at or above crest, but vegetation conditions are fair to poor because of high river levels this past summer.

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## **UPPER IOWA WILDLIFE UNIT**

Terry Haindfield, Wildlife Biologist

**Cardinal Marsh** in Winneshiek County has good wetland conditions on the main marsh and two of the four segments. The other two segments are half full and need more rain to fill as of Sept 9.

The **Mississippi River (Pools 9 & 10)** has very good habitat conditions this year following a spring and summer with very stable water levels. The river level was at 7.8 at the Lansing gauge as of Sept 9, which makes boating in most backwaters very difficult because of low water levels.