



Iowa Habitat and Access Program

PROGRAM QUESTIONS

Q: How did the Iowa Habitat and Access program get started?

A: The Iowa DNR received a three-year grant for \$1.5 million from the U.S. Department of Agriculture as part of the 2008 farm bill. Because hunting access and habitat are two continual concerns impacting Iowa, a pilot program offering landowners funds for habitat improvements in exchange for public hunting access on private land will help test a new option for increasing both.

Q: Iowa state government has a lot of budget concerns these days. Are state taxpayer dollars used for this program?

A: No, state tax dollars are not used for this program. In addition to VPA HIP grants, \$1.00 from each wildlife habitat fee collected annually from Iowa hunters will go to the program. The fee is required to be spent on habitat, which is the goal of this program.

LANDOWNER SIGN-UP QUESTIONS

Q: Are all Iowa landowners required to participate? A:

No, this is a completely voluntary program.

Q: What is the commitment?

A: Contract lengths are from three to 10 years. Landowners can decide the length of contracts they would like to apply for, which will be used in the ranking process.

Q: I'm interested. How do I enroll?

A: Please visit with your local DNR wildlife staff (a listing can be found at [file:///iowa.gov.state.ia.us/data/dnrusers/bhickma/Downloads/staff_privatelands%20\(2\).pdf](file:///iowa.gov.state.ia.us/data/dnrusers/bhickma/Downloads/staff_privatelands%20(2).pdf)) who will help you identify needs and write a habitat improvement plan as step one toward enrollment.

Q: Are properties enrolled first-come first-serve?

A: The DNR will review applications every 30 days. Landowners will work with DNR private lands staff to develop a wildlife habitat management plan as part of their application. That application will be ranked against all others in the 30-day period and the highest ranking projects will be accepted into the program. Applications not selected will be re-evaluated at the landowner's request during each subsequent 30-day review.

Q: What if after entering into a contract I decide the program is not a fit for my property? How do I terminate my contract?

A: The landowner may end their agreement prior to the termination date by providing 60-days written notice. In such an event, the landowner will reimburse the DNR a prorated amount of the value of the wildlife habitat improvement work completed on their property.

Q: If I sign up, is my farm pond open to public fishing, or is my land open to other recreational activities such as hiking or snowmobiling?

A: No, only hunting is allowed on the property.

Q: Will my land be open to the public year-round?

A: The enrolled property is open for public hunting from September 1 – May 31 during the length of the contract.

Q: Can a landowner pick and choose which wildlife species are hunted on their land?

A: No, the land will fall under the same hunting regulations that apply to publically owned, state-managed lands. All legal Iowa hunting seasons and regulations apply.

Q: How will hunters know which properties are enrolled and how to find them?

A: Signs will be placed along the perimeter of property. Maps will be developed and posted on the DNR website. The DNR website will also show property boundaries on its interactive recreation website.

Q: What happens if I (as a landowner) find someone doing something wrong on my property?

A: A landowner may deny a hunter access to his/her property if the hunter engages in behavior that reasonably threatens the health, safety or property of the landowner and his/her family or tenants. The landowner can also work with the local DNR conservation officer to deny access.

Q: Who is responsible if a hunter damages my property while it is enrolled in the pilot program and who is responsible for repairs?

A: Hunters who damage private land are responsible for that damage, just as they are on public lands. The DNR understands it can be challenging to identify the responsible hunter. Regular patrols and enforcement by DNR conservation officers will assist in this effort.

Q: What happens if a hunter has an accident or is injured while on my property? Am I liable?

A: State law specifically protects the landowner from liability in most cases. If you have questions or concerns, a DNR legal staff person can help explain the law.

Q: Is my *entire* property open for public hunting, or just the acres where habitat improvements have been made? A:

The landowner decides which portion of land to enroll. All enrolled land is open for public hunting.

Q: Will hunters be knocking on my front door or asking permission?

A: Hunters are not required to ask permission of the landowner. By enrolling in the program the landowner agrees to open the property to public hunting, with similar hunting access as public wildlife areas.

Q: Can my friends and family still hunt on my land? Are they limited in their other activities such as ATV use or fishing, or is that up to me?

A: Between September 1 and May 31 a landowner's friends and family may hunt on your land in the same manner the public may use the land. Between June 1 and August 31 the property is not open for public use and the landowner may grant permission to whomever they choose for whatever activities they choose, so long as those activities do not conflict with the DNR contract (i.e. activities that damage habitat work created through this program).

This material is based upon work supported by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, US Department of Agriculture, under number 69-3A7514-290. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the US Department of Agriculture.