



# BEGINNING FARMER LEASE PROGRAM

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) maintains a portion of the public lands it stewards for Iowa citizens in agricultural production as a cost effective and efficient way to achieve wildlife habitat goals and objectives. These lands are planned and managed in cooperation with the USDA-NRCS through an approved Soil and Water Conservation Plan.

The DNR manages 356,000 acres of land as public wildlife areas. About 10 percent of these lands are in some form of crop rotation. Wildlife habitat management goals for these agricultural lands differ by area, but generally include:

- the provision of food, winter cover, and nesting cover,
- control of natural succession and annual weeds,
- provide lure crops to help reduce wildlife depredation on adjacent private lands,
- prepare soil for permanent seedings, and
- attract wildlife to public hunting areas for improved hunting opportunity.

The Beginning Farmer Program was created in 2013 through the passage of H.F. 457 Agricultural Land Leases for beginning farmers. It allows local farmers and ranchers to farm or ranch wildlife management areas managed by the DNR in accordance with Wildlife Management Area Management Plans.

Available leases are posted no later than **November 1, 2023** for 2024 crop year leases at [www.iowadnr.gov/beginningfarmer](http://www.iowadnr.gov/beginningfarmer). Reach out to the DNR contact listed for more information.

Leases occasionally come available throughout the year. If you would like to be notified when leases come available, apply for Beginning Farmer status with the Iowa Finance Authority and let the local DNR contact know you would like to be contacted.

Prospective tenants should check back every year for new available leases. Beginning Farmers approval is only valid for the leases offered this year. In subsequent lease offerings, prospective beginning farmers will have to apply to Iowa Finance Authority to be certified a beginning farmer.

Process for beginning farmers once they have identified a lease they would like to apply for.

\*Apply for Beginning Farmer status with Iowa Finance Authority by **December 1, 2023**

- Beginning Farmer Application should be submitted to Iowa Finance Authority – Not the DNR

\*Contact listed DNR contact by **December 1<sup>st</sup>** to confirm interest.

- Iowa Finance Authority will notify DNR if you are approved.
- Priority will be given to first time beginning farmers if more than one applies for a specific lease.
- If more than one beginning farmer applies for the same lease, lots will be publicly drawn to determine who get the lease.
- If no beginning farmers apply for a lease, it will be offered to the general public.

\*Required to be considered for Lease

For more information: Nathan Schmitz, Iowa DNR Land Management Specialist, [Nathan.Schmitz@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:Nathan.Schmitz@dnr.iowa.gov) or 515-371-2062