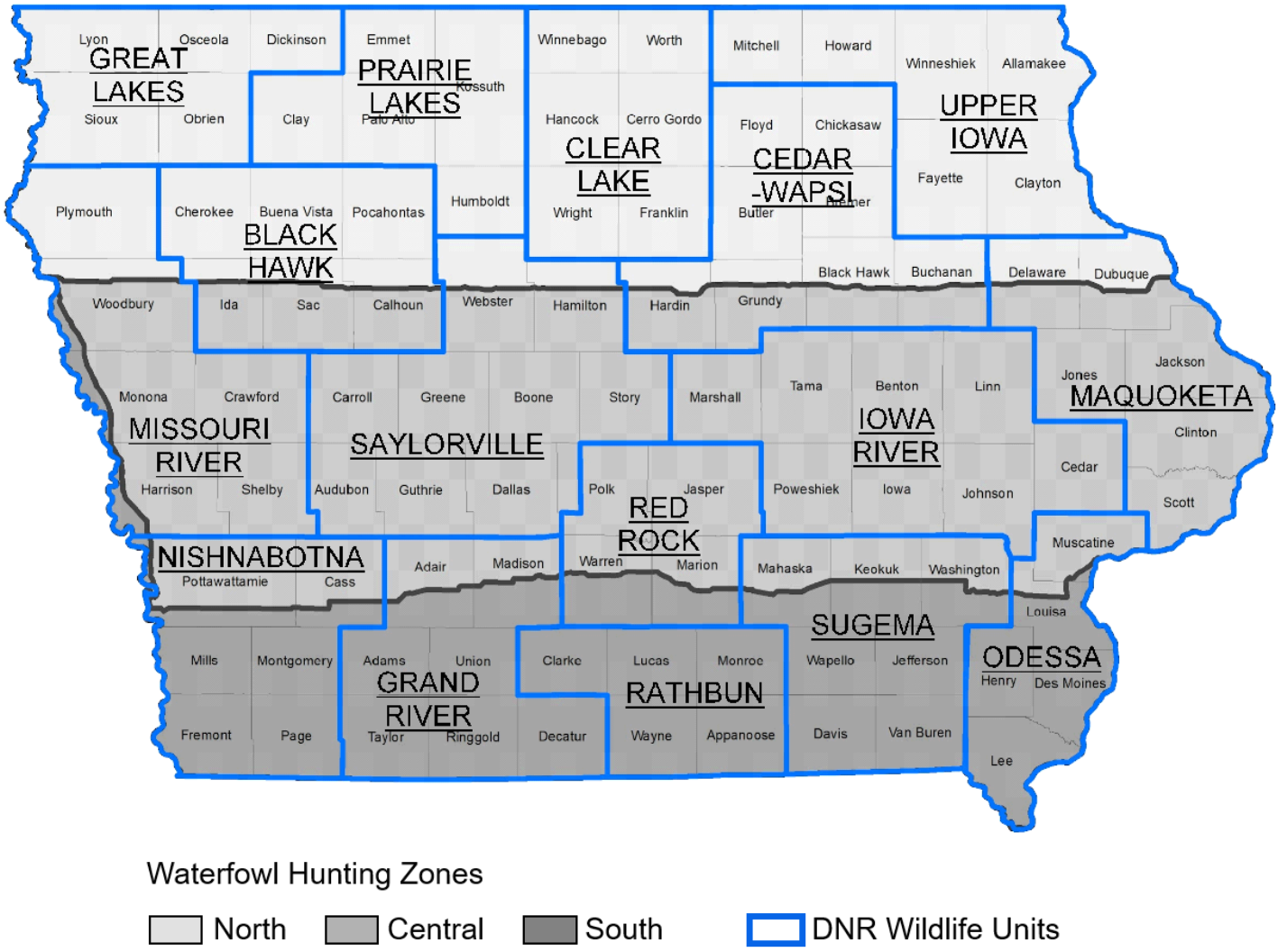
Wetland Habitat Conditions – Fall 2026

South Zone Updated the week of: **10/15/2026**



Waterfowl Hunting Zones

North Central South DNR Wildlife Units

DNR Public Hunting Atlas:

https://iowadnr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=f9161b90cddb4fcfb35a96901882a4b7/

Definitions of Terms Commonly Used In Descriptions of Areas -

- Crest water level refers to the established optimum or target water level for the lake or wetland or the maximum water level legally allowed on the lake or wetland.
- Emergent vegetation refers to plants like cattails, bulrushes, burreed, etc., that are rooted on the bottom of the marsh but project above the surface of the water.
- Submergent vegetation refers to plants like sago pondweed, curly leaf pondweed, wild celery, coontail, etc., that grow beneath the surface of the water. The tops of these plants sometimes reach the surface in shallow water. Water clarity and fish populations largely determine the amount of submergent vegetation in wetlands. Wetlands with good water clarity and few, if any, fish usually have good submergent plant communities that attract a wide variety of ducks.
- WMA is the acronym for Wildlife Management Area, which includes lands owned and managed by the Wildlife Bureau of the DNR.
- WPA is the acronym for Waterfowl Production Area, which includes lands owned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and, in most cases, managed by the Wildlife Bureau of the DNR.

Black Hawk Wildlife Unit

Wildlife Biologist: Clint Maddix
Date Updated: 9/29/2026

Buena Vista County

Little Storm Lake

Water Level: 5” below crest elevation.
Vegetation: Substantial amounts of both emergent and submergent vegetation exist.
Notes: The rock ramp across from Frank Starr Park is usable to launch small boats.

Storm Lake

Water Level: 5” below crest elevation.
Vegetation: The lake has very little emergent vegetation, submergent vegetation is minimal.
Notes: Storm Lake should be accessible for all boats through the fall.

Calhoun County

South Twin Lake

Water Level: The lake is at crest elevation and has been slowly filling since the drought.
Vegetation: The majority of the lake is covered by emergent vegetation
Notes: The rock ramp on the south is accessible.

Carroll County

Artesian Lake

Water Level: The basin was drained to facilitate infrastructure maintenance that was completed 8-20. Boards were replaced 8-21. The area is fed by three artesian wells and is currently at or near crest.
Vegetation: Emergent vegetation should look excellent once the area refills.
Notes: Pre-scouting recommended as the wetland fills. There is a rock ramp but only usable by smaller boats.

Pocahontas County

Little Clear Lake

Water Level: The Lake is at crest elevation.
Vegetation: Emergent vegetation exists around the perimeter and the area is heavy with submergents.
Notes: There are two boat ramps on either side of the lake that accommodate small or medium sized boats.

Lizard Lake

Water Level: Lizard Lake is at or near crest elevation.
Vegetation: The lake still has abundant emergent and submergent vegetation.
Notes: The concrete ramp on the East side is usable by boats of all sizes. Two primitive launch locations exist on both the East and West which are usable by small vessels.

Shimon Marsh

Water Level: The marsh is at crest elevation.
Vegetation: The marsh is heavy with emergent and submergent vegetation.
Notes: The rock boat ramp is accessible to small boats. The area does not allow for motorized vessels, so no motors can be utilized on the marsh.

Sunken Grove

Water Level: The main wetland is near crest elevation and smaller wetlands are below crest.
Vegetation: The marsh has fair stands of emergent and decent submergent vegetation.
Notes: The concrete ramp on the West lobe can be used by small to medium sized boats. The gravel ramp on the shallower East lobe is only usable by small boats.

Sac County

Black Hawk Wildlife Area

Water Level: Black Hawk Lake Inlet, Black Hawk Pits and DU Marsh are all at or slightly above crest elevation. State Marsh is also at crest.

Vegetation: Vegetation varies but most wetlands have solid stands of emergent vegetation. The Inlet on Black Hawk Lake has lost a considerable amount of its emergent vegetation and is planned for draw-down next year.

Notes: Black Hawk Lake Inlet has a concrete and rock boat ramp. State Marsh has a rock ramp and Black Hawk Pits has a concrete ramp. All other areas are walk-in. Pre-scouting is recommended due to varying levels of emergent vegetation on all wetlands.

Black Hawk Lake

Water Level: Black Hawk Lake is currently at crest elevation.

Vegetation: The lake has very little emergent vegetation and few pockets of submergents.

Notes: There are three concrete boat ramps that can be used by boats of any size.

Burrow's Pond

Water Level: The main basin is at 14 inches below crest elevation. Smaller wetlands on the Complex have some water.

Vegetation: All wetland basins have substantial emergent vegetation.

Notes: There is very little water on the entire area. Waterfowl opportunities will be very limited this fall.

Kiowa Marsh

Water Level: All bigger wetlands on the Complex are at crest elevation. Smaller wetlands on the Complex have varying water levels, some are still dry and some are at crest.

Vegetation: Vegetation is good to excellent on most wetlands.

Notes: There are three rock boat ramps on the Kiowa Marsh Complex, pre-scouting is recommended due to inconsistent water levels.

Sac City Wetland Complex

Water Level: All basins are below crest. The entire Complex has no open huntable water.

Vegetation: All basins are full of emergent vegetation.

Notes: Waterfowl opportunities on this Complex will be extremely limited this fall.

Tomahawk Marsh

Water Level: Water levels at Tomahawk are at or near crest for wetlands on the complex.

Vegetation: Habitat conditions are generally good. Wetlands have abundant emergent vegetation.

Notes: This is a walk-in area. Pre-scouting is recommended due to current emergent vegetation conditions.

Cedar-Wapsi Wildlife Unit

Wildlife Biologists: Jason Auel and Justin Clark
Date Updated: 10/01/2026

Bremer County

Leopold Area

Water Level: Most wetlands are at or near crest

Vegetation: Abundant emergent and submergent vegetation

Notes: The recent rains will create some flooding issues on the area with the peak flood projected to be October 3-4. Scouting will be important to determine impacts.

Sweet Marsh

Water Level: Most segments are within a foot of crest

Vegetation: Habitat conditions are generally very good. Abundant emergent and submergent vegetation

Notes: The recent rainfall may cause water levels to be variable throughout this season. Scouting will be important prior to hunting. Vegetation will make use of outboard motors difficult.

Butler County

Big Marsh

Water Level: Main marsh is near the crest in all pools. Very good conditions this year. Sub-impoundment and northern segments should be scouted for water that will be added after crop harvest.

Vegetation: Habitat conditions are very good, abundant emergent vegetation.

Notes: Most outlying areas with small wetlands have good water and strong vegetation. Recent rain has added some water to shallow water excavations.

Clear Lake Wildlife Unit

Wildlife Biologist: Rob Patterson
Date Updated: 09/30/2026

Cerro Gordo County

Union Hills

Water Level: Water levels at Union Hills are at or near crest for the majority of the wetlands on the complex. Two wetland basins on the east side of the complex are lowered to facilitate infrastructure maintenance.

Vegetation: Habitat conditions at Union Hills are generally very good. Most wetlands have abundant emergent and submergent aquatic vegetation.

Notes: Use the Iowa DNR Public Hunting Atlas to see the Waterfowl Refuge Boundary on the west side of the Union Hills Complex.

Ventura Marsh

Water Level: Water levels at Ventura Marsh are about 1.5 ft below crest. This is part of the management event to improve water quality and wetland habitat

Vegetation: Habitat conditions at Ventura Marsh have become somewhat diminished. Abundant rough fish populations have negatively impacted vegetation throughout the marsh.

Notes: A gradual drawdown is occurring over the next several weeks to improve conditions next year

Hancock County

Crystal Hills WMA

Water Level: Water levels at Crystal Hills WMA are at or near crest.

Vegetation: Habitat conditions at Crystal hills are generally good. Most wetlands have abundant vegetation.

Notes:

Gladfelter WMA

Water Level: Water levels at Gladfelter WMA are at or near crest.

Vegetation: Habitat conditions at Gladfelter WMA are generally good. Most wetlands have abundant vegetation.

Notes:

Eagle Lake

Water Level: The water level at Eagle is at crest.

Vegetation: Habitat conditions within Eagle Lake are good. Abundant emergent and submergent vegetation is present through the lake.

Notes: Pumping at the Eagle Flats Refuge will begin once repairs are completed on pumping equipment.

East Twin Lake WMA

Water Level: Water levels on East Twin are at or slightly below crest. Water levels on the eastern pool of East Twin are below crest to facilitate dike repair.

Vegetation: Habitat conditions are good, quality wetland vegetation is present throughout the lake.

Notes:

Meredith Marsh

Water Level: Water levels at Meredith Marsh are at our slightly below crest.

Vegetation: Habitat conditions at Meredith Marsh are good with quality vegetation present throughout the WMA.

Notes:

Winnebago County

Harmon Lake

Water Level: Water levels on the west and east portions of Harmon Lake are at or slightly below crest. The middle portion of Harmon Lake may be slightly below crest due to a dike repair project that was completed in late summer.

Vegetation: Both emergent and submergent wetland vegetation is prevalent throughout the system.

Notes:

Myre Slough

Water Level: Very low, the water control structure for Myre Slough was severely degraded and a replacement structure is being constructed. Once the structure is complete stoplogs can be installed to capture any run off during the fall.

Vegetation: Vegetation is abundant throughout Myre Slough.

Notes:

Worth County

Elk Creek-Pool A

Water Level: Pool A is at approximately ½ full fall crest.

Vegetation: Moist soil management efforts on Pool A were very successful for 2026. Smartweed, barn yard grass and other annual wetland plant species are abundant throughout the pool. Gradually flooding this quality vegetation throughout the fall will provide excellent habitat for migratory birds.

Notes:

Elk Creek-Pool B

Water Level: Pool B is at approximately ½ full fall crest. The DU segment of Pool B is at crest elevation.

Vegetation: Moist soil management efforts on Pool B were very successful for 2026. Smartweed, barn yard grass and other annual wetland plant species are abundant throughout the pool. Gradually flooding this quality vegetation throughout the fall will provide excellent habitat for migratory birds.

Notes: **Use the Iowa DNR Public Hunting Atlas to see the Waterfowl Refuge Boundary on Pool B.**

Elk Creek-Pool C

Water Level: Pool C is currently approximately ¾ full fall crest.

Vegetation: Moist soil management efforts on Pool C were very successful for 2026. Smartweed, barn yard grass and other annual wetland plant species are abundant throughout the pool. Flooding this quality vegetation throughout the fall will provide excellent habitat for migratory birds.

Notes:

Rice Lake

Water Level: Water levels at Rice Lake & Joice Slough are at crest.

Vegetation: Habitat conditions at Rice Lake are fair, emergent aquatic vegetation is present in some of the shallower areas of the lake. Habitat conditions on Joice Slough are excellent with quality diverse wetland vegetation throughout the slough.

Notes: **Use the Iowa DNR Public Hunting Atlas to see the Waterfowl Refuge Boundary on the west side of Rice Lake.**

Hanlontown Slough

Water Level: Water levels across the Hanlontown Slough Complex are at or slightly above crest.

Vegetation: Habitat conditions at Hanlontown Slough are good with quality wetland vegetation throughout the entire complex.

Notes:

Silver Lake and Marsh

Water Level: Water levels at Silver Lake and Silver Lake Marsh are at or slightly above crest.

Vegetation: Habitat conditions at Silver Lake and Silver Lake Marsh are generally good. Some areas have good emergent vegetation and most areas have good submerged vegetation.

Notes:

Wright County

Big Wall Lake

Water Level: Water levels at Big Wall Lake are at or slightly above crest.

Vegetation: Habitat conditions are good at Big Wall Lake with abundant emergent and submergent vegetation throughout the complex

Notes:

Elm Lake

Water Level: Water Levels at Elm Lake are at crest.

Vegetation: Habitat conditions at Elm Lake are generally poor, water quality is poor within the lake and vegetation is limited.

Notes:

Lower Morse Lake Wetland Complex

Water Level: Water levels at the Lower Morse Complex are at crest.

Vegetation: Habitat conditions throughout the complex are generally very good with abundant vegetation present in most wetlands.

Notes:

Grand River Wildlife Unit

Wildlife Biologist: Josh Rusk
Date Updated: 10/15/2026

Adams County

Lake Icaria

Water Level: At crest.

Vegetation: Vegetation is not great due to repairs needed to outlet pipes.

Notes: A blown out on an outlet pipe has limited our ability to draw marsh down this year.

Union County

Mitchell Marsh

Water Level: At crest.

Vegetation: Abundant moist soil vegetation such as smartweed and barnyard grass.

Notes: High waters did lay over much of the most soil vegetation.

Great Lakes Wildlife Unit

Wildlife Biologist: Chris LaRue
Date Updated: 8/18/2026

Dickinson County

Christopherson Slough

Water Level: The main slough is at crest elevation
Vegetation: Habitat conditions are good with emergent vegetation
Notes: Most of the larger and some small wetlands in the complex have water for good walk-in hunting opportunities. The main slough is accessible by boats with small outboard motors. A drawdown is planned for 2027 to remove rough fish and enhance aquatic vegetation and habitat conditions.

Diamond Lake

Water Level: Diamond Lake is near crest elevation
Vegetation: Habitat conditions are average
Notes: The lake is accessible by large and small boats with outboard motors. Recent rains have helped increase small and large wetlands water levels for good walk-in hunting opportunities. The partial 2026 drawdown was not successful to improve vegetation due to unanticipated rains. Water quality monitoring is being done and another partial drawdown may be started early next spring 2027 to help improve aquatic vegetation and habitat conditions.

Dugout Creek

Water Level: The main marsh is at crest elevation
Vegetation: The main marsh has an abundance of vegetation and good habitat
Notes: The area is accessible by large and small boats. Mud motors will fare better with the conditions and vegetation. Most wetlands have good water from recent rains for walk-in hunting opportunities.

Garlock Slough

Water Level: Garlock Slough is about +/- 15 inches below its normal crest level with West Lake Okoboij after a mostly successful drawdown to enhance aquatic habitat for water quality benefits in 2026.
Vegetation: Excellent habitat conditions and abundant aquatic vegetation
Notes: The main slough is not accessible by boat. Recent rains have helped add water to some small and large for excellent walk-in hunting opportunities. A drawdown again in 2027 may be attempted to further enhance the overall aquatic habitat for water quality benefits.

Grovers Lake

Water Level: The lake is near crest elevation
Vegetation: Good habitat conditions and abundant aquatic vegetation
Notes: The lake is accessible by large and small boats however, mud motors may fare better with the existing conditions.

Hales Slough

Water Level: Hales Slough is near crest elevation with Big Spirit Lake
Vegetation: Good habitat conditions and abundance of aquatic vegetation
Notes: The Slough is accessible by large and small boats with outboard motors. Some of the larger wetlands in the complex have good water for good walk-in hunting opportunities.

Horseshoe Lake WMA

Water Level: The lake is near crest elevation
Vegetation: Good habitat conditions with abundance of aquatic vegetation
Notes: Horseshoe is accessible by large and smaller boats however outboards may struggle with the submergent vegetation.

Jemmerson Slough Waterfowl Refuge

Water Level: The main sloughs are about just below normal pool elevations.

Vegetation: Most areas of the refuge have good to excellent habitat and abundant aquatic vegetation.

Notes: Please note that 665 acres are in the designated *Waterfowl Refuge*. The refuge is **CLOSED** to all public access during the duck season. Currently the 70-acres SW Slough is being drawn down to remove rough fish and to improve waterfowl habitat conditions.

Kettleson-Hogsback Complex

Water Level: West Hottes is at crest elevations with Big Spirit Lake. Marble lake is being drawn down at this time.

Vegetation: Habitat conditions on West Hottes and the larger wetlands in the complex are good to excellent with abundant aquatic vegetation.

Notes: West Hottes is accessible by large and small boats with outboard motors. Marble Lakes accessibility may change if pumping commences later this fall. Fall 2026-2027 the Lake may be drawn down to remove rough fish, enhance vegetation, and habitat conditions for improved recreational opportunities and long-term water quality benefits. Most wetlands in the complex have good water from the recent rains for possible walk-in hunting opportunities.

Little Swan Lake

Water Level: Swan Lake is at crest level

Vegetation: Habitat and aquatic vegetation is good

Notes: Large and small boats and outboard motors can be used. Most wetlands in the complex have water from recent rains that will provide good walk-in hunting opportunities.

Sidel Marsh

Water Level: The main marsh is near normal crest level due to recent rains

Vegetation: Aquatic vegetation and habitat is good to moderate in the marsh

Notes: The marsh is more open compared to past years and with lower than normal water levels this will be a good walk-in area to consider.

Spring Run

Water Level: Most of the shallow lakes are just below or near crest level due to recent rains.

Vegetation: Habitat conditions and aquatic vegetation is good to excellent throughout the overall wetland complex.

Notes: Larger and some smaller wetlands have good water from recent rains for walk-in hunting opportunities. Scouting is recommended to evaluate water and wetland conditions. Lily lake and Spring Lake are near crest due to recent rains. They are accessible by boats with mud motors. Pleasant and Prairie Lake are accessible by large and small boats with outboard motors.

Welch Lake Complex

Water Level: Water levels have improved in the overall complex due to recent rains.

Vegetation: Habitat conditions are good to excellent on various wetland basins

Notes: Most wetlands now have water for good walk-in hunting opportunities.

Yager Slough

Water Level: Yager Slough is just below crest level from recent rains.

Vegetation: Habitat and aquatic vegetation is good

Notes: Most wetlands in the complex have water for good walk-in hunting opportunities.

Osceola County

Rush Lake

Water Level: Rush Lake is near crest level

Vegetation: Habitat conditions are variable on the lake with some good areas

Notes: Rush lake is accessible typically by larger and smaller boats with small outboard or mud motors.

Iowa River Wildlife Unit

Wildlife Biologist: Matt Shanklin
Date Updated: 10/5/2026

Benton County

Dudgeon Lake

Water Level: Slightly below crest elevation.
Vegetation: After a successful summer drawdown there was a good vegetative response of emergent and submergent species.
Notes: Recent high-water events have altered planned pool rise and as some vegetation has been topped, therefore crest will be achieved earlier this season.

Johnson County

Hawkeye Wildlife Area

Water Level: Elevation 685.4 ft. Based on ACOE forecast Hawkeye will be between 685-6 & 685.7 ft for the central zone opener.
Vegetation: With the summer draw down Hawkeye generated a great vegetative response. Many of the basin vegetative acres have been topped by the recent high-water events. Flats on the upper extent of the basin still have good emergent vegetative growth and many of the subimpoundments have a good mix of open water with emergent and sub emergent vegetation. There is good moist soil species response in the previous years willows that have been sprayed, and expect acres treated this season to have the same great response of smartweeds, bidens, and millets along with many other beneficial species for the fall migration.
Notes:

Swan Lake

Water Level: Water at crest, visually present through edge vegetation.
Vegetation: Very full of emergent vegetation across the entire footprint of the lake's basin.
Notes:

Tama County

Otter Creek

Water Level: Crest
Vegetation: Successful drawdown throughout the marsh complex and extensive vegetative response throughout. With heavy rains throughout the watershed some of the vegetation has been topped but still an ample amount of emergent vegetation is present.
Notes:

Maquoketa Wildlife Unit

Wildlife Biologist: Nick McClimon
Date Updated: 9/30/2026

Clinton County

Goose Lake

Water Level: North Pool: At crest elevation. Center Pool: At crest elevation. South Pool: At crest elevation.
Vegetation: Aerial spraying in all three pools during the summer of 2025 was successful at setting back the dense cattail stands. The open water areas have heavy submergent vegetation. Bidens, barnyard grass, and smartweed have been growing where the cattail was sprayed.
Notes: Floating bogs can make access on the south side difficult at times.

Jackson County

Green Island

Water Level: West Side: 6” below crest. East Side: Above Crest.

Vegetation: This year's drawdown has been successful in growing beneficial moist soil plants such as smartweed, barnyard grass, and walters millet. There is also submergent and emergent vegetation in the open water areas.

Notes: Expect average early season water levels, pumping operations are underway. Crews will be on site throughout the fall repairing flood damage, minimal impacts to hunters are expected.

Jones County

Muskrat Slough

Water Level: At crest elevation

Vegetation: The main marsh has an abundance of submergent and emergent vegetation and good habitat.

Notes:

Scott County

Princeton

Water Level: At crest elevation.

Vegetation: Aerial spraying in the summer of 2025 was successful at knocking back the dense cattail stands. The open water areas have thick stands of lotus.

Notes: Pumping operations are underway. Crews will be on site throughout the fall repairing flood damage, minimal impacts to hunters are expected.

Missouri River Wildlife Unit

Wildlife Biologist: Doug Chafa
Date Updated: 09/28/2026

Harrison County

Round Lake

Water Level: below crest

Vegetation: lots of emergent vegetation

Notes:

Nobles Lake

Water Level: below crest

Vegetation: lots of emergent vegetation

Notes:

Tyson Bend

Water Level: water in the backwater

Vegetation: wide open

Notes: Mouth of backwater silted closed, limiting boat access by river. Mo River 12.9 ft at Blair.

Soldier Bend

Water Level: backwater has water

Vegetation: none

Notes: Mouth of backwater silted closed, limiting boat access by river. Mo River 12.9 ft at Blair.

California Bend

Water Level: backwater has water

Vegetation: none

Notes: Mouth of backwater silted closed, limiting boat access by river. Mo River 12.9 ft at Blair.

Monona County

Badger Lake

Water Level: basin is empty
Vegetation: thick emergent veg and cottonwood & willow saplings.
Notes:

Blue Lake

Water Level: below crest.
Vegetation: ring of emergent vegetation around the main lake.
Notes: Boat ramp usable on main lake. NW, SW, and SE segments of the lake are empty

Louisville Bend

Water Level: below crest.
Vegetation: shoreline veg.
Notes: pumps running. Boat ramp on south end is usable

Tieville Bend

Water Level: very low.
Vegetation: good smartweed and emergent vegetation.
Notes: pumps were vandalized, repairs are being made. River 19.24 ft (26,400 cfs) at Decatur gauge.

Woodbury County

Browns Lake

Water Level: 3 ft below crest (1068 ft msl).
Vegetation: Perimeter of cattails, lots of lily pads.
Notes: Supplemental water from power plant coming in continuously. West end still not boatable.

Luton WMA

Water Level: very little sheet water in basins.
Vegetation: Basins grew up with annual weeds.
Notes: walk-in access only.

Snyder Bend WMA

Water Level: 8” below crest.
Vegetation: Lots of smartweed with the summer drawdown.
Notes: boat ramp in Snyder Bend park is usable.

Table Marsh WMA

Water Level: very little sheet water in basins, most wetlands empty.
Vegetation: annual weeds in wetland basins.
Notes: walk-in area only.

Nishnabotna Wildlife Unit

Wildlife Biologist: Matt Dollison
Date Updated: 10/12/26

Fremont County

Riverton-Main Area (Larsen Tract)

Water Level: At full pool.
Vegetation: Good amount of annual food plants throughout.
Notes:

Riverton-Jensen Tract

Water Level: At full pool.
Vegetation: Good amount of annual food plants throughout.
Notes:

Forney Lake

Water Level: 2-3 inches of water at the refuge line. Likely to be less by opener with no rain & high temps.
Vegetation: Upland vegetation was killed off by standing water, 50/50 mix of smartweed & river bulrush replaced it.
Notes:

Copeland Bend

Water Level: Deeper excavations have water and there is also some recently flooded shallow wetlands.
Vegetation: Newly flooded shallow wetlands have mostly a mix of annuals & perennials.
Notes:

MU Payne

Water Level: Deeper excavations have water and there are also some recently flooded shallower wetlands.
Vegetation: Mix of flooded annuals/perennials and a little cropland.
Notes:

Cooper Creek

Water Level: Good amount of water in all 3 cells.
Vegetation: Mix of annuals and perennials in recently flooded shallow water.
Notes:

Auldon Bar

Water Level: Mostly only water in deep scour holes. Most of the recently flooded shallow water has receded.
Vegetation: None except in the small amount of recently flooded shallow wetlands that remain.
Notes:

Botna Bottoms

Water Level: East cell is 8 inches from full pool. West cell is 2.5 feet from full pool.
Vegetation: Mostly annuals.
Notes: There is no access to the west tract off of Hwy 2, due to road construction.

Draper Bottoms

Water Level: Deeper excavations are very full and there are a few scattered shallow water pockets throughout.
Vegetation: None in deep excavations. Mix of perennials and annuals in the scattered shallow wetlands.
Notes:

Mills County

Willow Slough

Water Level: At full pool.
Vegetation: 50/50 mix of cattails and more open water. Lotus is dying back.
Notes:

Haynie Slough

Water Level: At full pool.
Vegetation: Cattails dominate the deepest water, some annuals on the wetland edge.
Notes:

Noddleman Island

Water Level: Deep to shallow water wetlands available.
Vegetation: Annuals present in recently flooded shallow wetlands.
Notes:

Keg Creek I-29

Water Level: Higher than it has been the past several years.
Vegetation: Cattails around the edge of much of the water.
Notes:

Odessa Wildlife Unit

Wildlife Biologist: Andy Robbins
Date Updated: 10/13/26

Des Moines County

Blackhawk Bottoms

Water Level: Currently above normal.
Vegetation: Dense emergent and submergent vegetation in Patterson Lake and Round Pond. The sub-impoundment north of Patterson lake has a good stand of moist soil vegetation.
Notes: The sub-impoundment north of Patterson Lake is currently near fall crest.

Louisa County

Cone Marsh

Water Level: Above normal fall crest
Vegetation: Dense emergent and submergent vegetation.
Notes: Heavy rainfall and high water on the Iowa River has put water levels at Cone Marsh well above normal.

Klum Lake

Water Level: Just below normal fall crest
Vegetation: Mix of emergent, submergent, and moist-soil vegetation.
Notes: Klum lake was drawn down this year to promote the growth of moist-soil plants and diverse wetland vegetation as a follow-up to several years of controlling the dense stands of cattails by aerial spraying. Currently excellent habitat conditions.

Odessa Wildlife Area

Water Level: (NOAA Gauges website)
Vegetation: An early, partial drawdown led to the growth of a narrow but dense stand of barnyard grass, walter's millet, and smartweed along the perimeter of shorelines and in the buttonbush. High water on the Mississippi River delayed the full drawdown until late July. Much of the vegetation that was being established during the late drawdown was later destroyed by localized flash flooding and seepage from high water on the Iowa and

Mississippi Rivers. However, the vegetation established during the early drawdown survived and is in good condition. Overall fair habitat conditions exist.

Notes: Water levels will be slowly raised throughout the fall.

Muscatine County

Wiese Slough

Water Level: Near normal fall crest

Vegetation: Dense emergent and submergent vegetation

Notes:

Prairie Lakes Wildlife Unit

Wildlife Biologist: Dusten Paulus and Lucas Straw

Date Updated: 9/29/2026

Clay County

Elk Lake

Water Level: At or near crest elevation.

Vegetation: Emergent and submergent vegetation is plentiful throughout the lake.

Notes: Habitat conditions are good at Elk Lake.

Barringer Slough

Water Level: At or near crest elevation.

Vegetation: Emergent and submergent vegetation is plentiful throughout the slough.

Notes: Habitat conditions on Barringer Slough are very good.

Dan Greene Slough

Water Level: At or near crest elevation.

Vegetation: Emergent and submergent vegetation is plentiful throughout the slough.

Notes: Habitat conditions are excellent again this year on Dan Greene Slough. Muskrats are continuing to open several pockets of vegetation that will provide terrific hunting opportunities.

DU Marsh

Water Level: At or near crest elevation.

Vegetation: Emergent and submergent vegetation is plentiful throughout the marsh.

Notes: Habitat conditions are good at DU Marsh again this year.

Trumbull Lake-Smith Slough Complex

Water Level: At or near crest elevation.

Vegetation: Emergent and submergent vegetation is plentiful throughout the lake and Slough.

Notes: Habitat conditions are excellent at both Trumbull Lake and Smith Slough this year. Muskrats are opening up several hidden pockets of water on both bodies of water that will provide excellent opportunities for hunters this fall. Scouting recommended.

Emmet County

Cheever Lake

Water Level: Water levels are near crest

Vegetation: Cheever Lake supports abundant and diverse vegetation

Notes: The boat ramp is prone to plugging by floating cattails. Preseason scouting is highly recommended

Four-Mile Lake Complex

Water Level: Water levels are near crest, smaller wetlands have huntable water

Vegetation: Four Mile Lake supports quality stands of emergent and submergent vegetation, smaller wetlands have abundant vegetation

Notes: Floating cattails periodically block both the north and south boat ramp and channel. Preseason scouting is highly recommended

Ingham High Complex

Water Level: Water levels on Ingham Lake, High Lake, Cunningham Slough, West Swan Lake, Jensen Slough, and Snipe Meadow are at or near crest. East Slough is in partial drawdown in preparation for structure replacement.

Vegetation: Ingham Lake, High Lake, and Cunningham Slough have very little vegetation. East Slough, Snipe Meadow, West Swan Lake, and Jensen Slough all have good stands of vegetation. Smaller sloughs and wetlands have abundant vegetation.

Notes: Preseason scouting is highly recommended. Ingham Lake, High Lake, Cunningham Slough, and West Swan Lake provide the best opportunity for boatable water.

Iowa Lake and Iowa Lake Marsh Complex

Water Level: Iowa Lake is at crest. Smaller wetlands have huntable water

Vegetation: Iowa Lake has very little aquatic vegetation, smaller wetlands have abundant vegetation

Notes: Preseason scouting is highly recommended

Tuttle Lake Complex

Water Level: Tuttle Lake is at crest. Smaller wetlands have huntable water

Vegetation: Tuttle Lake has little to no vegetation, smaller wetlands have abundant vegetation

Notes: Preseason scouting is highly recommended

Kossuth County

Goose Lake Complex

Water Level: Goose Lake is at the managed pool and has boatable water. Smaller wetlands have huntable water

Vegetation: Goose Lake has sparse emergent vegetation, with large pockets of submergent vegetation, smaller wetlands have abundant vegetation

Notes: Preseason scouting is highly recommended

Palo Alto County

Blue-Wing Marsh

Water Level: At or near crest elevation.

Vegetation: Emergent and submergent vegetation is plentiful throughout the complex.

Notes: Blue-Wing Marsh is looking very good this year. Excellent walk in opportunities here.

Dewey's Pasture Complex

Water Level: Most wetlands are at or near crest elevation.

Vegetation: Emergent and submergent vegetation is plentiful throughout the complex.

Notes: A couple of wetlands are holding less water due to lack of late summer rain, but most are looking good now with the recent fall precipitation. Pre-season scouting is recommended.

Fallow Marsh

Water Level: At or near crest elevation.

Vegetation: Emergent and submergent vegetation is plentiful throughout the Marsh.

Notes: Fallow Marsh looks good this year. Should provide excellent walk in opportunities.

Rush Lake

Water Level: At or near crest elevation.

Vegetation: Emergent cattails are present throughout the lake, but lack diversity. No submergent vegetation to speak of this year on the lake.

Notes: Floating cattails can block the boat launch area, please scouting recommended prior to season.

Rathbun Wildlife Unit

Wildlife Biologist: Heath Van Waus
Date Updated: 10/12/2026

Appanoose County

Rathbun Lake Complex

Water Level: Due to the potential for fluctuating lake levels, it is crucial to monitor the lake water level and river flows at the USACE website Current water level is 907, which is 1.5ft higher than when water levels are projected to be held for fall (905.6). Water levels will continue to drop to 905 as the ACOE is currently releasing water.
Most wetlands on the North and South fork are at crest with good vegetation. Wetlands with smaller watersheds are closer to half full.

Vegetation: Flooded vegetation on the lake is minimal due to higher water levels during the summer months

Notes: Scouting is recommended to find flooded vegetation in shallow bays.

Sedan Bottoms

Water Level: Varies throughout the WMA. Refuge is roughly 3/4 full while some of the southern impoundments are close to crest.

Vegetation: Vegetation throughout the area varies but overall wetlands have a diversity of emergent and submergent veg.

Notes:

Red Rock Wildlife Unit

Wildlife Biologist: Todd Gosselink
Date Updated: 10/5/2026

Jasper & Polk Counties

Colfax WMA and Chichaqua Bottoms Green Belt WMA

Water Level: Recent heavy rains have hydrated the wetland areas. The Skunk River levels impact the oxbows in the floodplain, and the river is currently flooding.

Vegetation: Excellent stands of vegetation are present due to the wet summer conditions.

Notes: Because these wetlands are on the river floodplain and in close proximity to the river channel, they are often underlain by porous soils and water levels are dependent upon the river water level, which is currently very high.

Rock Creek Marsh

Water Level: The water level is determined by the elevation of Rock Creek Lake, which is currently at normal pool. The wetlands north of the lake are fully hydrated due to the wet summer conditions.

Vegetation: There has been extremely heavy sedimentation the last few years resulting in reduced water surface area. The main marsh has some open water conditions, but dense willows and arrowhead plants fill much of the marsh. Some of the basins that have been isolated by sedimentation have good stands of emergent vegetation. The 2 larger wetlands upstream have 2 new water control structures that increase the size of these wetlands by several acres.

Notes: Good for walk-in access.

Marion County

Red Rock Reservoir

Water Level: Lake Red Rock pool is currently very high at 756 and will crest on Oct 7 and start to drop. The DNR had requested that the USACE raise the lake pool to 743.5 on Oct 3, 744.0 on Oct 10, 745.0 on Oct 24, 746.0 on Nov 1, and 747 on Nov 25. However, due to the flooding and high lake levels, the DNR has requested to

hold the lake at 746 when the lake recedes, which is currently forecasted by Oct 18. The maximum pool raised allowed for waterfowl management in the fall in 747, which we would request is brought to by Nov 10. Due to the potential for fluctuating lake levels, it is crucial to monitor the lake water level and river flows at the USACE website

Vegetation: Vegetation was excellent above 744 elevation, but now degraded with the high water levels.

Boat Access: The Box Cars, OK Hill, and Bennington boat ramps are all currently not usable. But will become usable as the water recedes. The Dunreath boat ramp is currently usable.

Notes: Conditions will change rapidly as the lake is drawn down to 746.

Swan Refuge

Water Level: The refuge is currently open water with the flood waters. As the water level drops, an attempt will be made to hold as much water as possible, but severe dike damage may have occurred making it difficult to hold water. Dike condition will not be known until the water recedes (all under water now).

Vegetation: Decent vegetation occurs in the upper levels of the refuge, with the lower elevation levels sparse in vegetation due to the flooding of the summer.

Notes: The dike has been fixed in 2 places in the refuge due to flooding this summer, and hopefully their integrity has held up with the flooding.

Warren County

Banner Flats WMA

Water Level: The wetlands in this area are oxbows or constructed basins are currently very full due to flooding. Access may be difficult due to current flooded roads, but this should recede soon.

Vegetation: Good stands of moist soil and emergent plants are present in the wetland.

Notes: These are walk-in areas.

Red Rock WMA

Water Level: There are numerous oxbows and constructed wetlands in the South River Unit, SW of Hartford. Most wetlands are currently high due to recent flooding.

Vegetation: Vegetation stands vary based on the summer flooding. Some areas are excellent, and other areas were flooded out in the summer and are recovering quickly.

Notes: These are walk-in areas.

Red Rock WMA Sub-impoundments

Water Level: Little Hartford and big Hartford (Richard's Marsh) are very full from the flooding. The Big Hartford Marsh boat ramps are both currently not usable due to flooding, and Little Hartford boat ramp is not usable due flooding.

Vegetation: Both marshes have good vegetation, but reduced growth in lower elevations due to flood conditions this summer.

Notes:

Runnells Marsh

Water Level: The Runnells Marsh is flooded and not open for access until the water recedes. Vegetation: There is good moist soil plant growth throughout all of Runnells Marsh but is completely submerged by recent flooding.

Notes: This marsh is an excellent walk-in site also, with access from HWY 316 and the boat ramp. The southwest portion of the marsh can be accessed by crossing the dike and water control outflow structure on the south side of the marsh.

Saylorville Wildlife Unit

Wildlife Biologist: Josh Gansen and Dean Nelson
Date Updated: 8/24/2026

Greene County

Dunbar Slough WMA
Water Level: Crest
Vegetation: Emergent and submergent
Notes:

Dunbar Slough WPA
Water Level: Drawdown
Vegetation: N/A
Notes:

Goose Lake WMA
Water Level: Crest
Vegetation: Emergent and submergent
Notes:

Snake Creek WMA
Water Level: Crest
Vegetation: Emergent
Notes:

Guthrie County

Bays Branch WMA
Water Level: Drawdown
Vegetation: Emergent and submergent
Notes: Very low water level, depending on rain amounts-not boatable

Lakin Slough
Water Level: Crest
Vegetation: Emergent and submergent
Notes:

McCord Pond
Water Level: Foot below crest
Vegetation: Emergent and submergent
Notes: Will continue to rise to crest rainfall

Polk County

Saylorville Reservoir
Water Level: 837.00
Vegetation: Vegetation was flooded up to 838.5 after late Sept heavy rainfall across central Iowa.
Notes:

Story County

Hendrickson Marsh
Water Level: 12 inches below Fall Crest
Vegetation: Emergent and submergent
Notes: Work will be completed on the Water Control Structure this fall to aid in water level management

Sugema Wildlife Unit

Wildlife Biologist: Keith Wilcox
Date Updated: 10/13/2026

Keokuk County

Hayesville Bend WMA

Water Level: Two feet above crest
Vegetation: Emergent and submergent
Notes: Frequent flooding has occurred; vegetation conditions have deteriorated. Pre-scouting is recommended.

Van Buren County

Lake Sugema

Water Level: At Crest
Vegetation: Emergent and submergent
Notes:

DeVoss/Foster WMA

Water Level: At crest
Vegetation: Emergent
Notes:

Fox River WMA

Water Level: At Crest
Vegetation: Emergent and submergent
Notes: Flooding has occurred, vegetation conditions have deteriorated. Pre-scouting is recommended.

Upper Iowa Wildlife Unit

Wildlife Biologist: Troy Anderson
Date Updated: 9/30/2026

Allamakee County

Mississippi River-Pool 9

Water Level: Even with the recent September rains, the water level has been slightly below normal “pool” stage for the last couple of months. This will make for some difficulty to navigate into some of the historically shallow sloughs and backwaters.
Vegetation: The consistent water levels make for a good vegetative response. There is a good mix of submergent and emergent vegetation. “Wild” rice has become more abundant recently.
Notes: As always with the Mississippi River, pool levels may rise or fall with rain events or lack thereof. Pre scouting is recommended

Clayton County

Mississippi River-Pool 10

Water Level: Even with the recent September rains, the water level has been slightly below normal “pool” stage for the last couple of months. This will make for some difficulty to navigate into some of the historically shallow sloughs and backwaters
Vegetation: The consistent water levels make for a good vegetative response. There is a good mix of submergent and emergent vegetation. “Wild” rice has become more abundant recently.
Notes: As always with the Mississippi River, pool levels may rise or fall with rain events or lack thereof. Pre scouting is recommended

Winneshiek County

Cardinal Marsh-Main Marsh

Water Level: With the heavy September rains we were able to capture significant water late in the month. The Main marsh has an excellent amount of water for boat navigation and plenty of open water for the waterfowl season.

Vegetation: The main marsh has a good mix of emergent and submergent vegetation with plenty of open water to provide excellent hunting conditions.

Notes: Pre scouting is recommended, boat size and type of motor (surface drive, standard prop, etc.) may limit how far one can travel throughout the marsh. There is an abundance of submerged and floating vegetation which may hinder standard prop driven vessels.

Cardinal Marsh-Segments

Water Level: All segments (A through D) have excellent water levels from the late September rains with plenty of open water hunting opportunities.

Vegetation: There is a good mix of submergent and emergent vegetation in segments A, B and C, along with some plenty of huntable open water. Segment D was drawn down this summer and has an abundance of rice cut grass and a good amount of open water pockets.

Notes: The segments are mainly walk-in areas and pre-scouting is recommended.