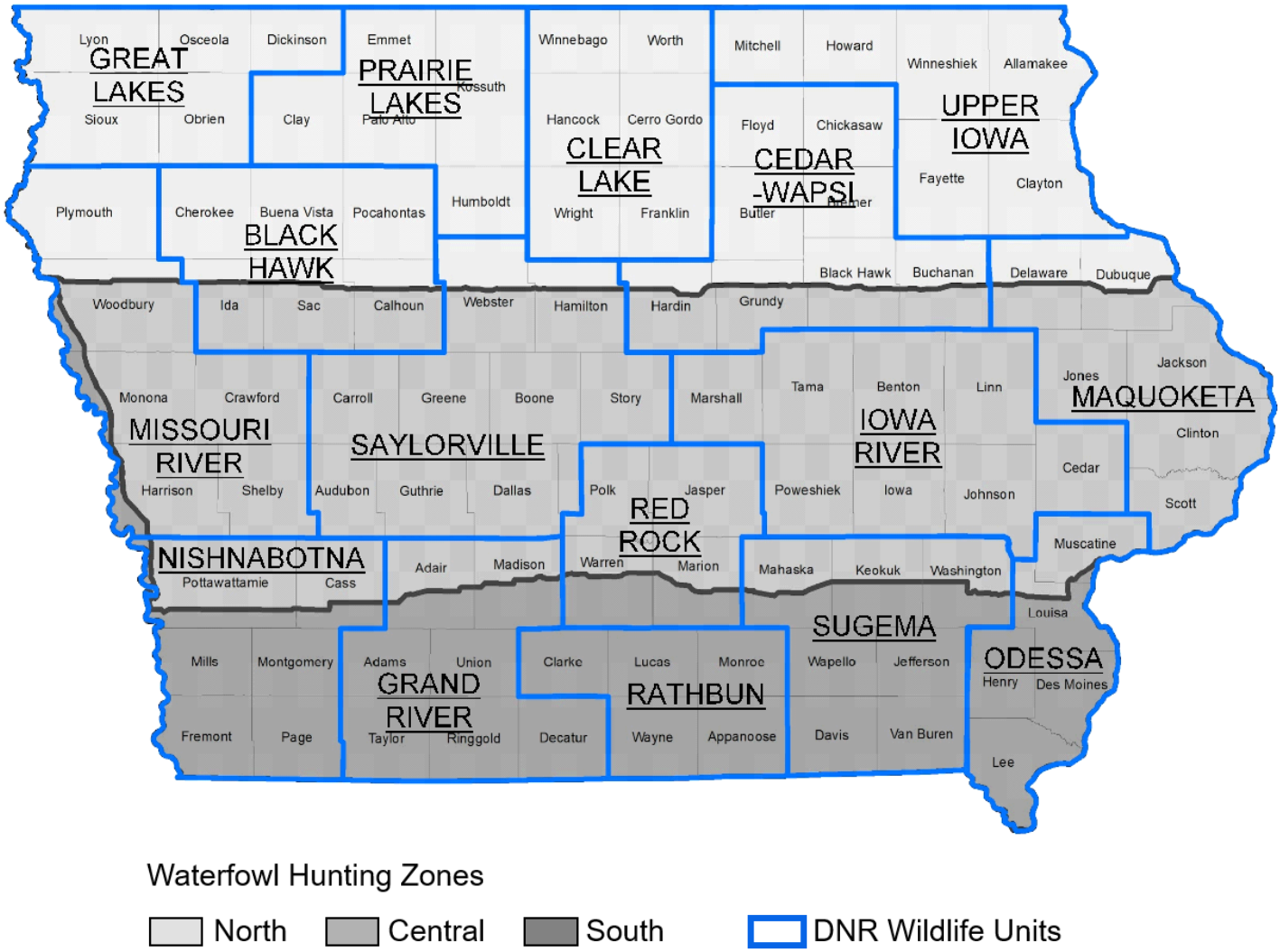
Wetland Habitat Conditions – Fall 2026

Updated: **8/28/2026**



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: 8/27/2026

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 4” below 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 should fill nicely.
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 well below 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 or near 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 below crest elevation and smaller wetlands are below as well.
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 in approx. 1.5' below 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 or near 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 dry. Smaller wetlands on the Complex have very little 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 wetlands on the Complex are below crest elevation. Kiowa North - 3" low, Kiowa Main - 19" low, Cork - 10" low, Feilmeier Pond - 5" low and Heidenreich - 9" low.

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 well below crest. The entire Complex has little to no 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. Prescouting is recommended due to current emergent vegetation conditions.

Cedar-Wapsi Wildlife Unit

Wildlife Biologists: Jason Auel and Justin Clark
Date Updated: 8/27/2026

Bremer County

Leopold Area

Water Level: Most wetlands are at or near crest

Vegetation: Abundant emergent and submergent vegetation

Notes: Rainfall will be needed to maintain current water levels. Scouting the area prior to hunting will be important.

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 water levels will be similar to previous years for the teal season. Vegetation will make use of outboard motors difficult.

Butler County

Big Marsh

Water Level: Below crest, typical early season water levels.
Vegetation: Habitat conditions are very good, abundant emergent vegetation.
Notes: Most outlying areas with small wetlands have good water and strong vegetation.

Clear Lake Wildlife Unit

Wildlife Biologist: Rob Patterson
Date Updated: 08/27/2026

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

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 slightly below 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 will between ⅓ to ½ crest for the teal season. Water levels will be increased throughout the fall to provide quality habitat for migratory birds.

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: Pool A will provide quality hunting opportunities for walk in hunters and smaller boats during the teal season.

Elk Creek-Pool B

Water Level: The DU segment of Pool B is at crest elevation. The lower or eastern portion of Pool B will be approximately ½ crest for the early teal season. Water levels will be increased throughout the fall to provide quality habitat for migratory birds.

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: DU segment will provide quality boat hunting opportunities throughout the fall. The eastern portion of Pool B will provide quality walk in and small boat opportunities during the teal season. **Use the Iowa DNR Public Hunting Atlas to see the Waterfowl Refuge Boundary on Pool B.**

Elk Creek-Pool C

Water Level: Pool C will between ⅓ to ½ crest for the teal season. Water levels will be increased throughout the fall to provide quality habitat for migratory birds.

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. Gradually flooding this quality vegetation throughout the fall will provide excellent habitat for migratory birds.

Notes: Pool C will provide quality hunting opportunities for walk-in hunters and smaller boats during the teal season.

Rice Lake

Water Level: Water levels at Rice Lake & Joice Slough are near or slightly below 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 below 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 below 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 slightly below 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 or slightly below 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 our slightly below 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: 8/24/2026

Adams County

Lake Icaria

Water Level: A little below crest.

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

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

Union County

Mitchell Marsh

Water Level: Water levels are still fairly low.

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

Notes: We will gradually add water to the marsh up until the main duck season. For teal season it will be walk-in hunting and we plan to have enough water for boats by the main duck season.

Great Lakes Wildlife Unit

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

Dickinson County

Christopherson Slough

Water Level: The main slough is near crest elevation
Vegetation: Habitat conditions are good with emergent vegetation
Notes: Most of the larger wetlands in the complex still 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 just below crest elevation
Vegetation: Habitat conditions are generally good
Notes: The lake is accessible by large and small boats with outboard motors. All small wetlands in the complex are dry; however, larger wetlands have good water 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 small wetlands are dry; however, all larger wetlands have good water for walk-in hunting opportunities.

Garlock Slough

Water Level: Garlock Slough is about +/- 18 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. Most small wetlands in the complex are dry at this point; however, all larger wetlands have good water 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 just below 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 just below 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 sub-mergent vegetation.

Jemmerson Slough Waterfowl Refuge

Water Level: The main sloughs are about +/- 8 inches below normal pool elevations.

Vegetation: Most areas of the refuge have good to excellent habitat and abundance 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 and Marble Lake area just below crest elevations with Big Spirit Lake.

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 large wetlands in the complex have good water 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. All small wetlands in the complex are dry however larger marshes will provide good walk-in hunting opportunities.

Sidel Marsh

Water Level: The main marsh is 1 foot below normal crest level due to dryer than normal conditions

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 below crest levels

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

Notes: Most small wetlands are dry at this stage; however, larger wetlands have water for walk-in hunting opportunities. Scouting is recommended to evaluate water and wetland conditions. Lily lake and Spring Lake are below crest due to dryer than normal conditions. However, it should be 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 are low in the overall complex

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

Notes: All small wetlands are dry at this stage with only larger marshes having water for good walk-in hunting opportunities.

Yager Slough

Water Level: Yager Slough is below crest level and fairly low

Vegetation: Habitat and aquatic vegetation is good

Notes: All small wetlands in the complex are dry; however, larger wetlands have water for good walk-in hunting opportunities.

Osceola County

Rush Lake

Water Level: Rush Lake is +/- 8 inches below 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 however the lower water level may make it difficult to some degree when launching.

Iowa River Wildlife Unit

Wildlife Biologist: Matt Shanklin
Date Updated: 08/__/2026

NO REPORT

Benton County

Dudgeon Lake

Water Level:
Vegetation:
Notes:

Johnson County

Hawkeye Wildlife Area

Water Level:
Vegetation:
Notes:

Swan Lake

Water Level:
Vegetation:
Notes:

Tama County

Otter Creek

Water Level:
Vegetation:
Notes:

Maquoketa Wildlife Unit

Wildlife Biologist: Nick McClimon
Date Updated: 8/27/2026

Clinton County

Goose Lake

Water Level: North Pool: Slightly below crest. Center Pool: At crest elevation. South Pool: Slightly below crest.

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: Both pools are below 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 set to begin as usual in mid-September.

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: Below crest

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 expected to begin in mid-September as usual.

Missouri River Wildlife Unit

Wildlife Biologist: Doug Chafa

Date Updated: 8/__/2026

NO REPORT

Harrison County

Round Lake

Water Level:

Vegetation:

Notes:

Nobles Lake

Water Level:

Vegetation:

Notes:

Tyson Bend

Water Level:

Vegetation:

Notes:

Soldier Bend

Water Level:

Vegetation:

Notes:

California Bend

Water Level:

Vegetation:

Notes:

Monona County

Badger Lake
Water Level:
Vegetation:
Notes:

Blue Lake
Water Level:
Vegetation:
Notes:

Louisville Bend
Water Level:
Vegetation:
Notes:

Tieville Bend
Water Level:
Vegetation:
Notes:

Woodbury County

Browns Lake
Water Level:
Vegetation:
Notes:

Luton WMA
Water Level:
Vegetation:
Notes:

Snyder Bend WMA
Water Level:
Vegetation:
Notes:

Winnebago Bend WMA
Water Level:
Vegetation:
Notes:

Table Marsh WMA
Water Level:
Vegetation:
Notes:

Nishnabotna Wildlife Unit

Wildlife Biologist: Matt Dollison
Date Updated: 08/26/26

Fremont County

Riverton-Main Area (Larsen Tract)

Water Level: Channels have water. Hasn't reached boat ramp yet.
Vegetation: Good amount of annual food plants throughout.
Notes: All water from the pump going to the Larsen Tract currently.

Riverton-Jensen Tract

Water Level: 8 inches from full pool.
Vegetation: Good amount of annual food plants throughout.
Notes:

Forney Lake

Water Level: Dry.
Vegetation: Upland vegetation was killed off by water in July, 50/50 mix of smartweed & river bulrush replaced it.
Notes:

Copeland Bend

Water Level: Deeper excavations have water.
Vegetation: Wetland fringes have a mix of annual and perennial vegetation.
Notes:

MU Payne

Water Level: Only the deepest excavations have water.
Vegetation: None. Good concealment cover around wetlands.
Notes:

Cooper Creek

Water Level: Most of the water in the middle and south cells is in the borrow ditches. Plenty of concealment cover around the full borrow ditches. The north cell wetland excavation is about 18 inches below full pool.
Vegetation: Little vegetation in the borrow ditches. The north excavation has a mix of annual and perennial vegetation throughout.
Notes:

Auldon Bar

Water Level: Only the deep scour holes have water.
Vegetation: None.
Notes:

Botna Bottoms

Water Level: Dry.
Vegetation: Good annuals in the basins. If flooded, it will be attractive for ducks.
Notes: There is no access to the west tract off of Hwy 2, due to road construction.

Draper Bottoms

Water Level: Only the deepest excavations have water.
Vegetation: None. Good concealment cover around wetlands.
Notes:

Mills County

Willow Slough

Water Level: At full pool.
Vegetation: 50/50 mix of cattails and more open water. Some lotus in the deeper areas.
Notes:

Haynie Slough

Water Level: 10 inches from full pool.
Vegetation: Cattails dominate the deepest water, some annuals on the wetland edge.
Notes:

Noddleman Island

Water Level: Deeper excavations have water.
Vegetation: Mix of annual and perennial vegetation.
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: 8/27/2026

Des Moines County

Blackhawk Bottoms

Water Level: Heavy rains over the past few weeks have raised the Patterson Lake and Round Pond water levels to above normal for this time of year. The impoundment north of Patterson Lake is currently low.
Vegetation: Dense emergent and submergent vegetation.
Notes: Boards will be placed in the impoundment during the coming weeks after the dense moist-soil vegetation is managed.

Louisa County

Cone Marsh

Water Level: Near normal for this time of year.
Vegetation: Dense emergent and submergent vegetation.
Notes:

Klum Lake

Water Level: Klum Lake is currently drawn down. Pumping will begin in late September or early October as vegetation matures.
Vegetation: Mix of emergent 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. However, a major flash flood impacted the area during the heavy rains in mid-August, destroying some of the vegetation. However, good habitat conditions should still exist this fall.

Odessa Wildlife Area

Water Level: (NOAA Gauges website) Odessa is currently drawn down.
Vegetation: There are two zones of vegetation at Odessa this year. 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 the

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 destroyed by localized flash flooding in mid-August that temporarily raised the Odessa water level nearly two feet. However, the vegetation established during the early drawdown survived and is in excellent condition.

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: 8/24/2026

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 all +/- 4 inches below 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. 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: 8/25/2026

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 905.9, which is slightly higher than when water levels are projected to be held for fall (905.6)

Vegetation: Flooded vegetation 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 half 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: 8/26/2026

Jasper & Polk Counties

Colfax WMA and Chichaqua Bottoms Green Belt WMA

Water Level: Recent heavy rains have hydrated the wetland areas. The Skunk River River levels impact the oxbows in the floodplain, and the river has remained high the majority of the summer.

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 low for shorebird habitat and is currently at 741.6. The DNR has 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. 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 is excellent above 744 elevation. The vegetation below this elevation was subject to higher lake levels this summer and has restricted growth.

Boat Access: The Box Cars, OK Hill, and Bennington boat ramps are all accessible. The Dunreath boat ramp is very shallow and difficult to launch until lake levels reach 743. Due to continued siltation, the Walnut Creek Cut will not be passable until higher lake levels are reached, typically at least 745.

Notes: The lake levels are planned to be raised fairly quickly in October to get water into vegetation with food for waterfowl.

Swan Refuge

Water Level: There is decent water currently in the refuge due to the recent heavy rains. Pumping will initiate in later September to hydrate the refuge.

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 we should be able to reach full capacity.

Warren County

Banner Flats WMA

Water Level: The wetlands in this area are oxbows or constructed basins vary in water levels. The large reconstructed wetland by the shooting range is half full. Other wetland water levels are full, but will vary depending upon the weather and the proximity of the wetland to the Middle River channel, which is currently at good levels for this time of year.

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 wet conditions this summer.

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 wetland has some water left from the flooding, but walk-in only, no boat access. Big Hartford (Richard's Marsh) is very full from the flooding, and pumping is planned later in the year to maintain levels. The Big Hartford Marsh boat ramps are both currently usable, and Little Hartford boat ramp is not usable due to the low water levels.

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 nearly full due to flood conditions this summer. Mud creek flow is currently being diverted into the marsh to maintain the level, but creek flows will determine the levels.

Vegetation: There is good moist soil plant growth throughout all of Runnells Marsh since it did not completely get submerged by the summer 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: 836.00
Vegetation:
Notes: Levels were held at 837 until late summer which limited vegetation response.

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: 8/24/2026

Keokuk County

Hayesville Bend WMA
Water Level: At Crest
Vegetation: Emergent and submergent
Notes:

Van Buren County

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

DeVoss/Foster WMA
Water Level: 6” below crest
Vegetation: Emergent
Notes:

Fox River WMA
Water Level: At Crest
Vegetation: Emergent and submergent
Notes:

Upper Iowa Wildlife Unit

Wildlife Biologist: Troy Anderson
Date Updated: 8/26/2026

Allamakee County

Mississippi River-Pool 9
Water Level: 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: 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: We were able to capture and hold a good amount of water during the rain events in July. The recent dry spell has caused the water level to slightly recede. The Main marsh has a decent amount of water for boat navigation and plenty of open water for the teal 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 a decent amount of water 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 good huntable open water. Segment D was drawn down this summer and has an abundance of rice cut grass with less open water.

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