Message from Director Colleen Callahan

Sometimes it’s good to just “be” – be by yourself, be lost in the beauty of a view, be quiet, be outdoors.

And because May is National Mental Health Awareness Month, it’s a great reminder for us all to spend more time experiencing the peace and happiness that can be found in nature.

A 2020 survey by IDNR showed that 85% of Illinoisans say outdoor recreation is important to their quality of life. State parks, trails, waterways, and other natural areas a vital part of that equation. Illinois is home to nearly 400 free public sites that are accessible to residents who want to explore the outdoors.

Illinois state parks offer all of the “ings”— camping, hiking, bicycling, boating and kayaking, fishing, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, swimming, golfing, stargazing, wildlife watching, and more.

Research has shown that relaxing outdoors lowers stress, improves self-confidence, brightens our mood, and sharpens our memory and cognition. Whether it’s watching the sun rise from a campsite, going for a quiet hike or bike ride, or listening to the peaceful sounds of water lapping the shore of a lake, the outdoors offers endless opportunities for natural, recuperative healing, as well as a connection to something greater than ourselves.

According to the World Health Organization, the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted a 25% increase in depression and anxiety worldwide. Factoring in the stress generated by economic uncertainty, military conflicts, social unrest, and environmental catastrophes, it’s no wonder people may be feeling frazzled, isolated, or depressed.

So, visit our website to learn more about sites throughout Illinois where visitors are welcome to relax and be nurtured by nature.

Finally, if appreciating nature finds you enjoying time on Illinois lakes and waterways, IDNR is encouraging visitors take precautions, particularly when boating.

May 21-27 is National Safe Boating Week. According to the U.S. Coast Guard, drowning was responsible for four out of every five recreational boating fatalities in 2020, and 86% of those who drowned were not wearing life jackets.

Safety is not just about life jackets. Boaters should take a safety course, use legally required engine cut-off devices for emergencies, and never boat under the influence.
**Highlights**

**Illinois Public Hunting Areas Report available**
The 2020-2021 *Illinois Public Hunting Areas Report* is developed each year to provide information on public hunting and trapping efforts and wildlife harvest. The report provides hunting and trapping information for Illinois Department of Natural Resources owned, leased or managed public hunting sites.

**Endangered Species Protection Board to meet in May**
The *Illinois Endangered Species Protection Board* will meet at 10 a.m. May 20 in the Lake Level Conference Room at the Illinois Department of Natural Resources headquarters in Springfield.

**Host a Free Fishing Days event**
Organizations that would like to host a Free Fishing Days celebration can apply to receive a gift and educational materials for both children and adults. The 2022 Free Fishing Days are June 17-20.

**IDNR publications available for ordering**
Many publications are available from the IDNR covering a variety of topics. Posters, activity books, brochures and other educational items are offered in both English and Spanish.

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**DNR in the News**

**Bird watching is back at Kickapoo Creek Park**

**Take in history, recreation opportunities along I&M Canal in Ottawa**

**Take down bird feeders, baths until threat of bird flu passes**

**Join World Migratory Bird Days on three dates this spring**

**Park officials share tips for staying safe as spring hiking season kicks in**

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**Statewide Offices**

Springfield, IL  
217-782-6302

Bartlett, IL  
847-608-3100

Benton, IL  
618-435-8138
How to help injured or orphaned wildlife
Anyone who finds sick or injured wildlife should either leave the animal or bird where it is or call a wildlife rehabilitator. Untrained individuals should not handle wildlife. Most wildlife in Illinois is protected by the Wildlife Code and cannot be kept in captivity without a permit.

Visit an Illinois state park lodges
Illinois’s eight state park lodges offer a range of options for visitors, from a room with a view of Lake Michigan to a historic lodge just a short hike from a waterfall in a magnificent, glacier-carved canyon. Visitors will find comfortable overnight accommodations, fine dining spots, gift shops and recreational opportunities.

Learn more with IDNR’s Historic Preservation Division
Great information can be found on the IDNR Historic Preservation Division website. “How do I research the history of my home?” “How do I find out if my property is already considered historic?” “How can my town revitalize its historic downtown?”

Natural Areas Stewardship Grant applications accepted through May 27
Eligible applicants are conservation land trusts exempt from taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of the federal Internal Revenue Code and whose originating documents include in their purposes the restoration and stewardship of land for conservation purposes. The grant program’s goal is to increase the delivery of stewardship activities to natural areas protected within the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission system.
Join today for just $35!

By becoming a member of the ICF, your support will help build, preserve, and restore conservation across Illinois. As an ICF member, you’ll also receive these exclusive member benefits:

• Personalized Membership Card
• ICF Branded Stainless Steel Tumbler
• ICF Vinyl Sticker
• ICF’s Digital Newsletter
• VIP Opportunities at Future ICF Events

Click for info
https://ilconservation.org/Who-We-Are/ICF-Membership

Highlights

1,258 turkeys harvested during youth turkey season
Youth turkey hunters harvested a preliminary total of 1,258 birds during the 2022 Illinois youth turkey season March 26-27 and April 2-3. In 2021, a total of 1,304 turkeys were taken. The record total was set in 2020 when 1,733 turkeys were harvested.

Stop the spread of invasive species
As the boats come out of storage for the season, boaters are reminded to be aware of invasive species that pose a threat to lands and waterways. To fight the spread of aquatic invaders, the IDNR is asking residents to “be a hero, transport zero.” The best way to stop the spread of invasive species is to remove, drain and dry boats after they’re used in any Illinois waterway.

IRAP leasing private ponds for fishing access
The Illinois Recreational Access Program is leasing ponds, impoundments and stream banks along public waterways from private landowners and making access available for the general public. Fishing is a great way to spend quality time with family and friends. For more information, visit IDNR’s fishing site, ifishillinois.org. Available sites are listed on the IRAP Pond Site Map and Riverbank site maps.

Experience Theatre in the Park at Lincoln’s New Salem
Makes plans to visit Lincoln’s New Salem State Historic Site in Menard County and enjoy a performance at the site’s Kelso Hollow outdoor theatre throughout the summer. Scheduled performances for the 2022 season include “A Little Princess: The Musical,” “Company,” “Babes in Arms,” and “Inherit the Wind.”

Hunters can apply for deer firearm season second lottery permit
Illinois residents who did not apply or were not successful in the first lottery drawing can apply for the second deer firearm season lottery May 11 through June 30. Non-Illinois residents also can apply during this time.
Equal opportunity to participate in programs of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and those funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other agencies is available to all individuals regardless of race, sex, national origin, disability, age, religion or other non-merit factors. If you believe you have been discriminated against, contact the funding source’s civil rights office and/or the Equal Employment Opportunity Officer, IDNR, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271; 217/785-0067; TTY 217/782-9175.

**Highlights**

**Learn to raise Monarch butterflies**
Learn how to raise Monarchs from egg to adult, including information about types of milkweed that Monarchs like, and insects that affect milkweed or the butterflies themselves. This free event will begin at 1:30 p.m. May 22 at the Singing Bird Center at Black Hawk State Historic Site in Rock Island.

**National Safe Boating Week approaching**
The Safe Boating Campaign kicks off the weekend before Memorial Day with National Safe Boating Week and continues throughout the year with various events and activities. May 20 is Wear Your Life Jacket at Work Day. Boaters will be encouraged to wear their life jackets at work, snap a picture and share on social media with the hashtags #wearyourlifejacketatworkday and #safeboating.

**Lewis and Clark Point of Departure event May 7-8**
The Lewis and Clark State Historic Site will celebrate the 218th anniversary of the start of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with a Point of Departure Celebration May 7 and 8. Visitors can interact with military demonstrations, historic artisans and more at this free event. Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. both days.