

# Iowa Habitat and Access Program (IHAP)

*The DNR's voluntary public access habitat incentive program was developed with habitat stamp fees\**



## Private Landowner IHAP Benefits:

- › Amount of effort is landowner's choice
- › Practice incentive payment for habitat improvement
- › Practice incentive payment can cover CRP responsibilities
- › Land is patrolled and hunting seasons and regulations enforced by DNR conservation officers
- › Limited landowner liability for hunters on IHAP properties
- › Better wildlife habitat



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF  
NATURAL RESOURCES  
*Leading Iowans in Caring for  
Our Natural Resources*

\*A portion of funding is provided by the federal farm bill Voluntary Public Access – Habitat Incentive Program.

*Imagine your Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land turned into wildlife habitat with very little effort and no out-of-pocket expenses, while you receive annual rent payments.*

That could happen if you enroll your CRP land into the Iowa Habitat & Access Program (IHAP).\*

Even if your land is not enrolled in CRP, DNR private lands wildlife biologists will help you turn suitable land into better wildlife habitat and costs will be covered by IHAP funds. If you decide to do the work yourself, IHAP will pay you to do that work.

Why? Because the state wants to provide more opportunities to promote the tradition of hunting to Iowans.

### Eligibility

Eligible landowners (or those who have legal authority to sign land contracts for the landowner) for IHAP must have at least 40 acres of land with adequate or the potential for adequate wildlife habitat that the landowner is willing to open to the public for walk-in hunting from Sept. 1 through May 31 for three to ten years.

### Agreement

The IHAP enrollee enters into a cooperative agreement with Iowa DNR to allow the posting of public access areas, hunters to hunt the land and Iowa conservation officers to patrol it.

In return, a private lands biologist will walk the land to determine the quality of the wildlife habitat, provide a plan to improve it, and manage the process to complete any necessary habitat improvements. In nearly all cases IHAP practice incentive payments will cover the cost to improve, restore or establish the wildlife habitat identified in the wildlife habitat plan.

The IHAP enrollee has the choice to do the work, contract the work, or allow the DNR to contract the work described in the contract. A sample of an IHAP agreement is available on the DNR website at [www.iowadnr.gov/ihaplandowner](http://www.iowadnr.gov/ihaplandowner).

### Agreement lengths from 3 to 10 years

Landowners determine the length of agreement that is right for their situation. However, the longer the contract, the more competitive the application will be for enrollment into IHAP.

### Competitive selection

If you decide to apply for IHAP participation, contact your local DNR private lands wildlife biologist. He or she will develop

**In a survey conducted after hunting seasons ended May 31, 2013, 76% of IHAP enrollees were extremely satisfied with the overall behavior and respect hunters showed their property; 17% stated they were somewhat satisfied, and 7% didn't know.**



*These signs are posted around the perimeter of the landowner's IHAP property every 1/8 mile. Property outside of these signs is restricted from public hunting.*

an improvement plan for the property based on wildlife species expected to be hunted. The biologist will then submit the application and plan for consideration by the DNR IHAP Review Committee.

Applications will be ranked and reviewed with other applications submitted within the same 30-day period. Among the factors considered are the proximity of land to existing public lands, the size of the access area, the amount of habitat, the length of contract, and whether the land is currently enrolled in a USDA conservation program.

### Limited owner liability for hunters

Under Iowa law, an IHAP enrollee bears no liability for injuries suffered by the public allowed to access their private property to hunt. This protection applies unless the IHAP enrollee charges a fee for access or willfully or maliciously fails to guard or warn against a dangerous condition, use, structure, or activity on-site.

In other words, the public should be given notice of all known and foreseeable dangers, such as a large unplugged well hidden by the landscape, but the hunters are not considered "invitees" or "licensees".

\*This is a summary of Code of Iowa 461C Public Use of Private Lands and Waters as it pertains to the Iowa Habitat and Access Program contracts with landowners. Contact the DNR's legal department for further explanation at 515-725-8200.

The liability protection law was drafted, and recently amended, specifically to encourage public access on private lands without worry of financial ruin from lawsuits, and is required by the terms of the law to be construed liberally and broadly in favor of IHAP enrollees.

IHAP has been in place since 2011 and the DNR is unaware of any liability-based lawsuits for enrolled properties.

## Clarifications and Restrictions

### Practice Incentive Payments

Flat rates paid for habitat improvement, restoration or establishment work is on the DNR website at: [www.iowadnr.gov/ihaplandowner](http://www.iowadnr.gov/ihaplandowner).

The biologist will monitor the wildlife habitat area after habitat improvements are made to ensure no modifications or destruction occurs to the IHAP improvements. The plan may be adapted by the biologist to reach habitat goals.

### Public hunting access to IHAP property

The hunting public has access to IHAP property during all lawful hunting season dates and times each year between Sept. 1 and May 31. They may not hunt on IHAP property between June 1 and August 31. However, landowners retain the right to control nuisance wildlife species any time of year.

Landowners cannot restrict any hunter from hunting on IHAP properties. However, if a hunter threatens the health, safety or property of the landowner or landowner's family members, that hunter may be denied access. The local DNR conservation officer will be available for assistance.

IHAP property landowners may not charge a hunter to hunt on the property. The landowners may not intentionally obstruct the participation of a hunter in the lawful activity of hunting on IHAP properties.

### Hunting restrictions on IHAP property

The "hunting" definition for IHAP property is the use of

*\*\*The Administrative Rule for IHAP references Chapter 51, the Administrative Rule for DNR wildlife areas.*



*Turkeys return to improved timber habitat from a farm roadway where they dried their wings from overnight dew.*

**Wildlife dependent recreation spurs economic opportunities. With only one percent of Iowa's area available for public hunting, your voluntary enrollment in IHAP will help open 30,000 additional acres to support the Iowa tradition of hunting and associated economic opportunities in rural Iowa.**

legal bows and firearms, as permissible under Iowa hunting regulations. No trapping or fishing is allowed.

Hunters are allowed to construct a blind on IHAP property using only the natural vegetation found in the area, except no trees or parts of trees other than willows can be cut for that purpose. Use of such blinds is on a first-come, first-served basis no matter who constructed the blind.

Tree stands that require driving any nail, spike, pin or other metal object into a tree to provide hunting access to a location above the ground may not be brought onto IHAP property.

Free-standing tree stands may be left on IHAP property from seven days prior to the start of a deer season until seven days after the final day of that season. These must be walked into IHAP property, as vehicles are prohibited.\*\*

### Hunting dogs, horses, vehicles, decoys

Hunting dogs and falcons are allowed to assist hunters on IHAP property. Other activities such as target shooting, camping, horseback riding, or professional dog training are not included in IHAP contracts and are therefore prohibited.

Vehicles, including ATVs, snow-mobiles, all-terrain bicycles and motocross motorcycles, are not allowed on IHAP property. Vehicles must be parked in a designated area or along the road.

Live animals may not be used as decoys for hunting. Likenesses of birds or animals may be used to lure game within shooting range.

*"The IHAP contract for the Jensen Trust CRP land is for 10 years. The land isn't suitable for farming, and the DNR manages the mid-contract work which saves me money and time. I trust that they'll make the best environmental choices for the land."*

— Jim Tinker  
Jensen Trust,  
Adams County

## Is It Trespassing?

It is illegal in Iowa to discharge a firearm within a 200-yard buffer around occupied dwellings such as homes, livestock buildings and open animal feedlots whether the land is IHAP property or public or private property.

Iowa law allows unarmed hunters to follow the blood trail of a wounded animal legally shot onto neighboring or adjoining properties so as to recover the carcass. Under state law, this is not trespassing. However, trespassing laws shall be enforced, along with other applicable laws, by DNR conservation officers on all IHAP properties."

### For More Information

For more information about Iowa's hunting regulations, the Iowa Habitat and Access Program, or to get contact information for your local DNR private lands wildlife biologist or conservation officer, contact the DNR central office in Des Moines at 515-725-8200 or go to [www.iowadnr.gov/ihaplandowner/](http://www.iowadnr.gov/ihaplandowner/) or [www.iowadnr.gov/InsideDNR/DNRStaffOffices/ConservationLawEnforcement/LawEnforcementContacts.aspx](http://www.iowadnr.gov/InsideDNR/DNRStaffOffices/ConservationLawEnforcement/LawEnforcementContacts.aspx).

### To turn in poachers, call 1-800-532-2020

You can remain anonymous when using the 800 number. If the poaching is not currently occurring, submit confidential information about poaching or suspected poaching on the DNR Online Tip Form at [www.iowadnr.gov/tip](http://www.iowadnr.gov/tip).



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## Iowa Habitat Access Program Is Perfect for...

- Landowners that want their financial responsibilities under CRP and the extra costs of developing higher quality habitat covered.
- Landowners who want someone to handle the mid-contract management requirements of their CRP.
- Recreation land and timber owners who want their wildlife habitat improved and managed with practices such as timber stand improvement or savanna thinning and burning.
- Landowners who want to provide wildlife habitat to increase wildlife diversity and survival rates, prevent soil erosion and have their conservation land managed for them.

## Is IHAP Perfect for You?