

## The Iowa Report 2010



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Rich Leopold was named Director of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources on January 12, 2007, and appointed and confirmed by a unanimous vote of the Iowa State Senate in April, 2007. Director Leopold, along with the more than 1,000 fulltime and seasonal employees and a \$120 million operating budget (reduced from \$150 million due to the economic downturn), is responsible for maintaining state parks and forests, protecting the environment, and managing energy, fish, wildlife, and land and water resources in Iowa. Director Leopold promotes three core beliefs for the DNR: 1. Focus on the Resource, 2. Coach for Compliance, and 3. Foster Local Leadership.

### **The DNR's Mission:**

To conserve and enhance our natural resources in cooperation with individuals and organizations to improve the quality of life for Iowans and ensure a legacy for future generations.

### **Sustainable Natural Resource Funding**

The State of Iowa moved one step closer to designating funding for natural resources when our legislature overwhelmingly passed Senate Joint Resolution-2002 in May 2008 and House Joint Resolution-1 in February 2009. These bills, of the exact same language, needed to pass two different General Assemblies before a request to amend Iowa's constitution could go before the people for a vote. The bills request the creation of a trust fund to constitutionally protect 3/8 of one cent of the next sales tax increase for natural resources. The vote of the people will occur in November 2010.

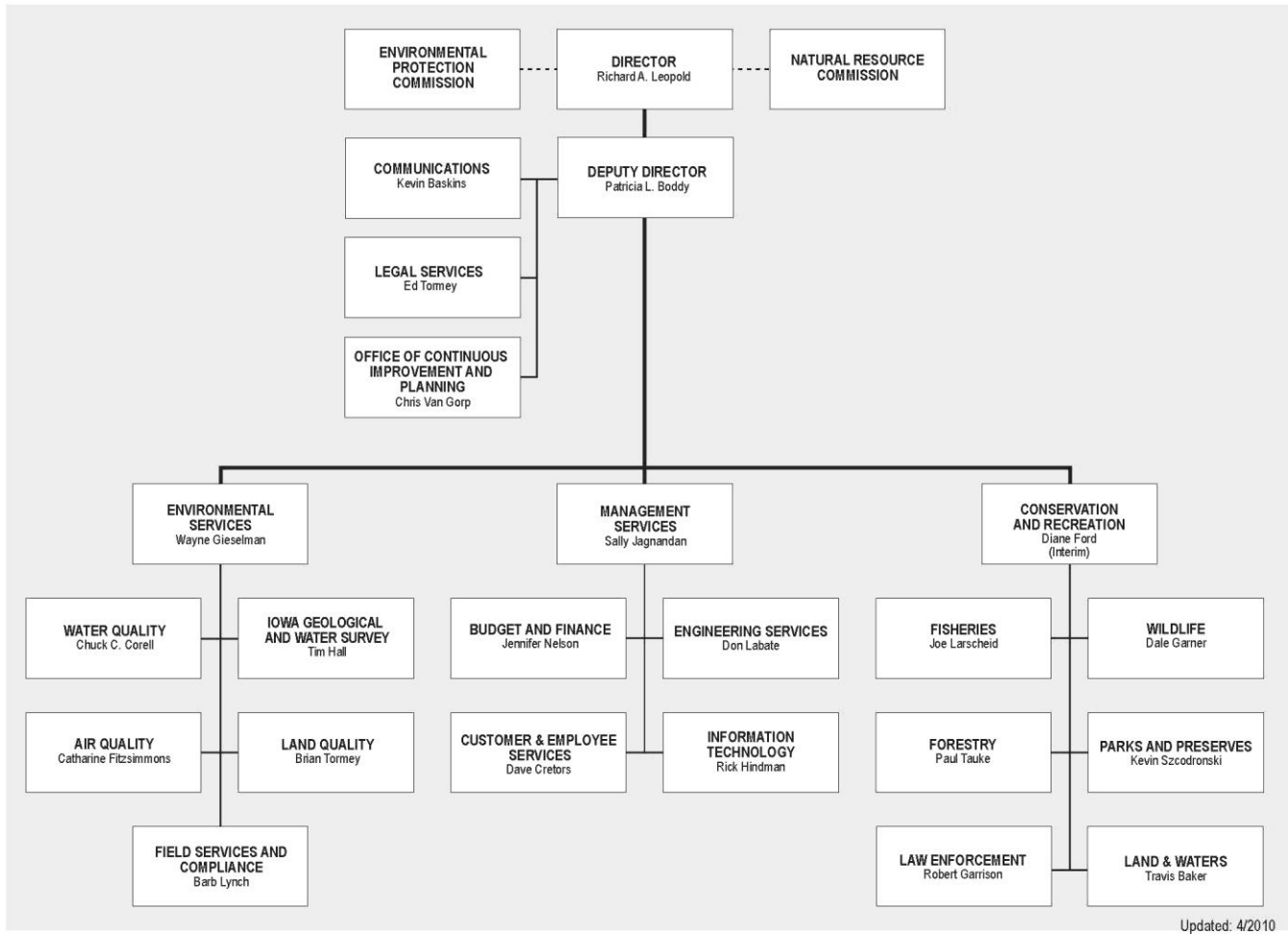
Many states have spent years to get to this point. Iowa has been very fortunate in its leadership who understand the comprehensive value natural resources bring to the state. The ball began rolling in 2006. Our forward thinking legislators proposed and supported the concept of sustainable funding by requesting diverse organizations to an Advisory Committee, which was an indicator that this is an important issue for all of Iowa. This importance remained evident in the legislative voting that occurred during the legislative sessions and the reauthorization of the Advisory Committee. Reports and background information can be found at <http://www.iowadnr.gov/sustainablefunding/index.html>.

(During the 2010 session, legislators introduced and voted on Senate File-2310 which designates funding allocations and criteria for sustainable funding in preparation for November's vote. The Governor signed the bill on 04/23/10.)

**The Department of Natural Resources – Conservation and Recreation Division:**



# DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES



The Conservation and Recreation Division is organized into a Policy and Coordination Section and six bureaus: Fisheries, Forestry, Land and Waters, Law Enforcement, Parks, and Wildlife. The Division welcomed Ken Herring as the Administrator in June 2005. Herring had worked in the wildlife bureau for nearly 30 years and, prior to his appointment as Administrator, was the wildlife management supervisor. In April 2010, Ken has joined the ranks of the retired and the Division is being managed by an interim Administrator, Diane Ford, until a permanent appointment is made.

**Fisheries Bureau (<http://www.iowadnr.com/fish/index.html>):**

**Lake restoration program:** The intent of the Iowa Lake Restoration Program is to develop and administer lake/watershed projects that foster a community commitment to lake and watershed protection, provide significant improvement to the quality of Iowa lakes and ensure a cost-effective investment for the State of Iowa. This restoration program was significantly expanded in 2005 and through 2010 has received over \$40 million dollars of general fund appropriations to leverage with local, state and federal funds to implement water quality improvement initiatives. Project planning includes working with local communities to develop a joint restoration plan. Reductions in phosphorus and sediment delivery coming from the watershed must be controlled before in-lake restoration can begin. Lake restoration / watershed activities are in progress at twenty-six lakes throughout the state and either in the planning or initial community outreach stage at an additional eleven lakes. An annual report is presented to the legislature each year that outlines current activities and provides a suggested work plan for the coming year (<http://iowadnr.gov/water/lakerestoration/>).

**Shallow Lakes Initiative:** Most of Iowa's shallow lakes are located in the prairie pothole region of northwest and north central Iowa. Many of these lakes have a maximum depth of 6 to 8 feet and are too shallow to be consistently good lakes, however too deep to be consistently good marshes. They are difficult to manage for water quality and often exist in a turbid water state. When they exist in that condition they are characterized by turbid water, little to no aquatic vegetation, limited emergent vegetation, a poor fishery dominated by carp and bullheads, and limited waterfowl production and hunting opportunities. In an attempt to better manage and utilize these resources, Iowa DNR Fisheries and Wildlife Bureaus have partnered with Ducks Unlimited and initiated a shallow lakes initiative. The restoration of Diamond Lake (Dickinson Co.) is Iowa's inaugural shallow lake restoration project providing resource management professionals with experience and expertise for managing shallow lakes. Diamond Lake is a 166 acre shallow natural lake in northwest Iowa. Historical records indicate this lake once had a thriving and diverse aquatic plant community, clear water, and a healthy aquatic ecosystem. For the past 80-100 years, however, the lake has exhibited poor water quality, excessive blue-green algal growth, and extremely limited fisheries and wildlife habitat. This project focused on improving water quality by shifting the lake to a clear water state using water-level management to consolidate bottom sediments, re-establish aquatic plants, and control common carp populations. This project also provided stakeholders a demonstration of the restoration potential for other shallow lakes and was recognized nationally by the Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership as a "Top Two Waters to Watch."

**Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS):** In Iowa a portion of boat registration fees are used to administer and enforce programs to control aquatic invasive species (AIS). Priority AIS species in Iowa are Eurasian watermilfoil, zebra mussels, Asian carps, brittle naiad, and purple loosestrife. The goals of the Iowa AIS program are to minimize the risk of AIS introductions into the state, limit the spread of established populations of AIS, and to eradicate or control AIS infestations. In 2009 we conducted 7,015 watercraft inspections contacting almost 20,000 people, supported 13 new and ongoing partnerships, leased 12 billboards with AIS preventative messages, continued a volunteer watercraft inspection program in the Iowa Great Lakes, chemically treated nine water bodies infested with AIS, surveyed aquatic vegetation in 79 water

bodies, surveyed for zebra mussels with dive teams, settlement samplers, and water samples, and reached statewide audiences through boat access signs, posters, brochures, regulations booklets, news releases, radio, TV, and presentations. The statewide AIS program is led by two full-time Fisheries Bureau employees.

**Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS) surveillance:** In 2009, fish were again sampled for VHS from many of our public and private fish hatcheries and from our rivers. No samples taken from any location in Iowa tested positive for VHS. Sampling costs were picked up by a grant from the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). More information can be found at <http://www.focusonfishhealth.org/>.

**Hatchery Production:** A new “dark room” was constructed at Rathbun Hatchery to continue to improve Iowa's unique program of intensively culturing walleyes in covered raceways with submerged lighting during the habituation (feeding) phase. Over 185,000 walleyes over 9.2 inches in length were stocked in Iowa lakes from our Rathbun Hatchery. Our more northerly located Spirit Lake Hatchery continues to duplicate Rathbun techniques and achieved over 25,000 6.7” walleye in their system. Recent advances in artificial feeding techniques have increased the numbers and reliability of producing muskellunge yearlings in Iowa. (Currently, our muskellunge populations are experiencing the highest level of recruitment ever recorded. These high recruitment levels are the sole result of stocking yearling muskellunge in the spring. Our adult muskellunge populations in Iowa are in great shape providing the Iowa angler a unique opportunity to catch a trophy fish.)

**Urban Fishing Initiatives:** Since 2006, the “Fish Iowa!” aquatic education program has provided grants to urban park and recreation departments to fund development of locally supported fishing education efforts. In 2008, we began work with the Des Moines Park and Recreation Department. That effort has expanded into a comprehensive approach that includes assessment of fisheries and angling access, as well as education and outreach. This laid the foundation for a partnership between the DNR, City of Des Moines, Polk County, and Iowa State University to develop a long-term plan for Des Moines and overall guidance for urban fishing initiatives in population centers across the state. This is a two-year effort through 2012 that includes sampling of fisheries/potential fisheries, development of a case study and logic model to determine best approaches for engaging the local government and communities, and development of a plan for implementation.

As part of our urban fishing initiatives the Iowa DNR Fisheries Bureau has been involved in cool weather urban trout stocking continuously since 1981. The urban lakes trout program is an effort to introduce trout fishing to more anglers across the state, and has recently been expanded to include more urban areas. Currently, the urban trout program includes special fisheries within close proximity to seven large metropolitan cities across the state. The urban winter trout stockings give anglers a “close to home” way to discover trout fishing and ice fishing. Trout are ideal for small urban lakes because they are fairly easy to catch once stocked. Promotions associated with these trout stockings focus on fishing as a family form of outdoor recreation and inform anglers about Iowa’s trout program. These lakes received 1,500 rainbow trout in October/November and receive additional trout in January and March.

### **Forestry Bureau (<http://www.iowadnr.com/forestry/index.html>)**

Iowa's state forest system is comprised of 46,000 acres in four large state forests and 6 smaller units. Oaks, hickories, maples, ashes, hackberries and cottonwood are the dominant species in Iowa forests. In 2009, the Bureau has 25 foresters among the 46 full-time and 9 part-time staff and those who operate the State Forest Nursery. As the State is affected by the economy, so has the Department's allocation of General Fund dollars. From FY2009 to FY2011, the State has cut the forestry budget by almost 40% totaling approximately \$1 million. Due to these considerable budget cuts, we had to close one of our two nurseries as well as leave critical vacancies unfilled (which vacancies increased due to a financial incentive legislators enacted to encourage retirements in 2010).

**Urban/Community Forestry Assistance:** Although budget cuts dramatically affected the program, urban forestry assistance was provided to over 500 communities. There were 92 communities designated as a Tree City USA and 29 one day tree care workshops provided. The "Operation ReLeaf," partnership with Alliant Energy sold locally purchased landscape trees worth more than \$264,095 to 1,881 Alliant Energy customers to help reduce energy costs. This year, a similar partnership was started with MidAmerican Energy called "Plant Some Shade." This program provided locally purchased landscape trees to 1,842 MidAmerican Energy customers worth \$239,460. By 2009, efforts to slow the spread of the Emerald Ash Borer found in surrounding states, special emphasis was given to prepare Iowa communities to respond quickly and effectively if the pest is discovered in the community. Complete street tree inventories were conducted. The 19 inventories conducted will be used to create comprehensive management plans that focus on the importance of street trees, overall forest health of street trees, management cycles, risk tree mitigation, and suggestions on how to manage the urban ash tree populations.

**Iowa Emerald Ash Borer Surveillance Effort:** The Forestry Bureau in cooperation with Iowa State University Extension (ISUE) and Iowa Department of Agriculture (IDALS) State Entomologist Office have been following the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USFS) protocol to monitor Iowa for signs of the emerald ash borer (EAB). The detection of EAB in Peru, IL, in July 2007 placed the insect only 85 miles away from Davenport, IA, which is of concern because of its proximity to Iowa and Interstate 80 linking the two states. Furthermore, the confirmation of EAB in Missouri and Wisconsin in 2008 was of great concern. According to recent sources, Iowa has an estimated 50 million rural ash trees (USFS 2006) and 30 million urban ash trees (USFS 2008).

A visual surveillance effort has been in place the past five years in Iowa to look for EAB. For 2004 and 2005, this activity consisted of visual surveys of urban ash trees (towns/cities with a population greater than 1000) in all 99 counties, visual inspection of ash saw logs at 43 sawmills, and ash nursery stock. Visual surveys in 2004 involved 2078 trees on 252 sites, and in 2005 involved 1318 trees on 238 sites. During the 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009 season, surveillance strategy shifted to the highest risk areas in the state, campgrounds. Sites were selected based on location near interstate highways, near tourism sites, and/or on the eastern border of Iowa. Up to 10 trees were examined in each campground for signs of EAB. The larger the campground and the greater the ash density, the more ash trees visually examined. In 2006, 417 ash trees were visually examined in 50 state and 10 county campgrounds. In 2007 EAB visual surveillance

increased to 400 campgrounds (all federal, all state, all private and large campgrounds in 69 counties) involving 1102 trees. In 2008, 235 campgrounds in 55 counties were identified as high risk sites and 1,269 ash trees were inspected. No evidence of EAB was noted during visual surveillance in Iowa (2004 - 2008). A total of 235 campgrounds and all sawmills were surveyed for the 2009 detection year. (On 06/14/10, it was announced that a quarantine of Allamakee County has been issued to prevent the spread of the EAB. EAB infestation had been confirmed along the Mississippi River two miles south of the Minnesota border in Allamakee County.)

**Land and Waters Bureau (<http://www.iowadnr.gov/realty/index.html>):**

In 2009, the Land and Waters Bureau was created integrating the Realty Bureau and staff from Policy and Coordination into one bureau. The following are summaries of programs this bureau supports.

**Land Acquisition and Donation Program:** The DNR purchases land for the management and protection natural resources, wildlife habitat and to provide public recreation opportunities. This program provides realty services to the operating bureaus in order to acquire public property. These services include: appraisal, appraisal review, negotiations, conservation easement acquisition, relocation and closing services.

**Land Management Program:** DNR land management services include handling land title issues, unauthorized land use issues, boundary agreements, and drainage district issues. Land use agreements such as leases, permits, management agreements, and the issuance of easements are negotiated by land management personnel. Other services include facilitating state title transfers to other government agencies, agricultural lease program coordination and oversight, contracting for land surveys, building disposal, and management of DNR field office leases.

**State Preserves Program:** The Preserves Program works with State Preserves Advisory Board to develop and maintain statewide network of 96 preserves on lands with significant biological, geological, archaeological, historical, or scenic value. They also oversee research activities covering wide range of topics from inventory to management.

**Threatened & Endangered Species Program:** The T&E Species program coordinates conservation of 13 federally listed species of plants and animals and over 300 state-listed species. They develop and maintain a database of locations of listed species and special natural communities such as prairie and fen wetlands. They oversee research activities including federally funded projects.

**Environmental Review & Sovereign Lands Program:** The Environment Review and Sovereign Lands Program applies information about endangered species, state preserves, natural communities, and other significant resources for the review of potential environmental impact of proposed construction and development projects requiring a permit from the Department.

**Rivers Programs: This program contains multiple programs within: 1) Water trails** outreach & planning assistance, technical assistance map design, signage design, and grant program. 2) **Low-head dam** signage, portage, dam modification/removal grant program and technical assistance. Water trails access/portage design, work planning, & construction. Act as

project leader with local forces and volunteers for “trail-scale” accesses. 3) **Moving Water safety education**: Canoe/kayak instruction to “train the trainers” (naturalists, paddling leaders, DNR staff). Development and dissemination of materials, outreach at safety fairs and kids events, media, Rivers Revival, paddler events, etc. 4) **Protected Water Areas**: Iowa’s version of a scenic rivers program. Work with local partners & adjacent landowners to protect scenic views, oversee land purchase program along scenic waterways, purchase properties that aid connectivity for navigation, fish, & wildlife. 5) **Iowa Stream Keepers** encourage locals to adopt water trail segments to keep banks and launches clean and aesthetically pleasing. They provide information for successfully conducted clean-ups, properly disposed of trash, and discouraging illegal dumping.

**Law Enforcement Bureau (<http://www.iowadnr.com/law/index.html>):**

The Law Enforcement Bureau ended the 2009 calendar year with an unprecedented number of vacancies due to budget issues and retirements. Fifteen of our 78 Conservation Officer positions were vacant. Eight of those retired in December 2009. The Bureau Chief, Assistant Chief, and two supervisors were, also, vacant for at least half the year. Although short in officer staff, the bureau grew by nine due to the Department’s restructuring and integrating of the licensing section from another Division.

The bureau continues to field test the TraCs (Traffic and Criminal Software) program. This program will allow our field officers to submit reports, activity reports, accident reports, and time sheets electronically into a database. This system will also allow them to submit citations electronically directly to the court.

The Iowa DNR teamed up with Iowa Health Systems during the summer, for the 'I Got Caught' Program. This program rewards young people for being safe. The 'I Got Caught!' program utilizes law enforcement to "catch" and reward young Iowans practicing good safety habits through life jacket wear, ATV helmet use, and bike helmets. The Seasonal Water Patrol Officers, full time Conservation Officers, and Iowa DNR Park Rangers handed out ice cream coupons to young people across the state.

In 2009, our bureau partnered with the Izaak Walton League to assist in organizing their first Iowa Outdoor Expo for families and kids. This event, free to the public, provided opportunities for the entire family to discover new and exciting ways to enjoy Iowa’s outdoors through activities such as fishing, archery, shooting, hunter safety, water/boat safety, and canoeing.

The National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) promotes student education and participation in the lifelong sport of archery. The program's focus is to provide International style target archery training in physical education classes for grades 4-12. The National Archery in the Schools Program in Iowa is coordinated through the DNR. Currently there are nearly 100 Iowa schools participating in the program. The second NASP Iowa Championship was held March 7th, 2009. The Iowa DNR provides NASP Basic Archery Instructor (BAI) training throughout the state to teachers and archery program organizers. BAI training is provided at no cost to teachers conducting NASP programs as part of a 2 week in-school course.

**Parks Bureau (<http://www.iowadnr.gov/parks/index.html>):**

Iowa has 85 state park properties totaling approximately 60,000 acres, attracting 14 million visitors a year, including 650,000 overnight campers. Forty-eight parks have full-time employees comprised of park rangers, park managers, and natural resource technicians. Iowa does not have any national parks or national forests, so tourists seeking natural and scenic areas most often find themselves in a state park.

**Economic Stimulus Package for State Parks:** Governor Culver and the state legislature worked together on an economic stimulus package for Iowa called I-JOBS. State bonds were made available to jumpstart Iowa's overall economy. State parks were a key element of I-JOBS since the projects are distributed throughout the state and throughout various economic sectors, such as planning and engineering, construction materials, and construction jobs. Three million dollars were made available for state parks and emphasis was placed on renovating wastewater systems. Prefabricated restrooms, pit vault latrines, and shower buildings were used because of their very competitive pricing compared to stick-built and they were more "shovel-ready" to get the economic stimulus working as soon as possible.

**All State Parks Remain Open:** Like many state park systems throughout the nation, Iowa is not immune to harsh economic conditions. Sixty percent of Iowa's state parks budget comes from the General Fund. Iowa does not have a state parks entrance or user fee. Because of this, reductions in the General Fund have immediate and significant direct impacts to funds available for park operations and maintenance. In spite of a 40% General Fund reduction to state parks (\$4 million), we have been able to keep all state parks open to the public. Given the several unfilled permanent staff positions and 75% in reduction in seasonal workers, the appearance of state parks are "rough around the edges" and park visitors have significant less contact with employees. The saving factor for us being able to keep fairly intact was 117 AmeriCorps workers available at 100% federal funding through the federal stimulus program.

**Wildlife Bureau (<http://www.iowadnr.com/wildlife/index.html>):**

**Private Lands Program:** 2009 marked the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Bureau's Private Lands Program (PLP). PLP staff provided assistance to 1,805 landowners providing habitat improvement recommendations on 73,227 acres of which 43,615 acres of those recommendations were implemented. This includes 9,945 acres of wetland restoration, 28,158 acres of prescribed fire through assistance with writing burn plans, 1,162 acres of grassland CRP practices, and 4,123 of other wildlife habitat improvements. Biologists presented 56 public programs contacting over 3,500 people.

**Chronic Wasting Disease:** In 2009–2010 DNR staff collected brainstems and medial retropharyngeal lymph nodes from 3,628 (50 targeted, 7% road kills, 33% adult males) wild and 339 captive whitetail deer, 4 captive elk and 3 free-ranging ear-tagged elk for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) testing. All samples were submitted to the National Veterinary Services Laboratory in Ames, Iowa. The majority of samples (65%) from wild deer were collected during the fall firearms season from seven counties in northeast Iowa, the area closest to the Wisconsin and Illinois CWD outbreaks. Since 2003, Iowa has tested 33,657 wild deer and 1,902 captive deer and elk. To date, testing on all samples (wild and captive) has been completed using

immunohistochemistry and all usable samples tested thus far are negative for presence of PrP protein.

**Feral Hogs:** The feral hog issue has been minimized in Iowa due to the quick response of wildlife and law enforcement staff. Field staff have done an excellent job responding, investigating and documenting all sightings on public and private land. This past year, six hogs were eradicated; one in Lucas County, the source of which remains unknown with no additional sightings in the area. The other five were in Taylor County which had escaped from an agricultural operation. We continued to provide education through press releases, presentations, radio programs, and working one-on-one with landowners. Legislation passed in 2007 helps prohibit any further movement or release and send a strong message that feral hogs are dangerous animals. Since fall 2004, 163 hogs have been eradicated. Of those, 88 were tested for swine brucellosis and pseudorabies and thus far, all samples have been negative. This aggressive effort has resulted in no established populations in the state.

**Acquisition:** The Wildlife Bureau currently manages more than 360,000 acres of public fish and wildlife lands, which includes approximately 90,000 acres of Army Corps of Engineer reservoir land and 25,000 acres of Waterfowl Production Area land owned by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. In Fiscal Year 2009, the Fish & Wildlife Service purchased 657 acres of land in north-central Iowa that will be managed by the Wildlife Bureau. The Wildlife Bureau also purchased 2,028 acres of land with an appraised value of \$9.1 million, of which 70% of this cost was from federal cost-sharing and funding from Wildlife Bureau partners.