

NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION[571]

Notice of Intended Action

Proposing rulemaking related to small game hunting and providing an opportunity for public comment

The Natural Resource Commission (Commission) hereby proposes to amend Chapter 96, “Small Game Hunting,” Iowa Administrative Code.

Legal Authority for Rulemaking

This rulemaking is proposed under the authority provided in Iowa Code sections 481A.38, 481A.39 and 481A.48.

State or Federal Law Implemented

This rulemaking implements, in whole or in part, Iowa Code sections 481A.38, 481A.39 and 481A.48.

Purpose and Summary

Chapter 96 governs small game hunting by residents and nonresidents in Iowa. Specifically, this chapter regulates small game hunting and sets forth season dates, bag limits, possession limits, shooting hours, areas open to hunting, and transportation requirements.

The proposed rule defines annual nonresident small game hunting license parameters and designates resident-only hunting periods on public lands. In more detail, the proposed rule designates a few blocks of time as resident-only for public lands, namely the opening week of the pheasant season and a four-week block in late fall for rabbit, squirrel, and grouse. Importantly, nonresidents visiting Iowa to hunt small game on private land by themselves or with family or friends will not be impacted by this proposed change. The proposed resident-only portions of the rule will only apply on public lands.

The proposed rule will more evenly distribute small game hunting pressure on public land providing for a safer and more enjoyable experience for resident and nonresident hunters alike. Additionally, a typical nonresident hunter spends five days or fewer hunting small game in Iowa annually. The proposed rule provides for up to 14 days of hunting on an annual nonresident license, with the option to purchase multiple annual licenses. In other words, this proposed change allows nonresident small game hunters to visit and hunt in Iowa for more days than they have historically been able to. Finally, and importantly, the proposed rule does not change the fees for small game hunting licenses for either residents or nonresidents.

Regulatory Analysis

A Regulatory Analysis for this rulemaking was published in the Iowa Administrative Bulletin on July 8, 2026. A public hearing was held on the following date(s):

- July 28, 2026

Fiscal Impact

This rulemaking has no fiscal impact to the State of Iowa. As noted above, the proposed rule does not change the fees for small game hunting licenses. No change in license sales is expected from this rulemaking. As noted above, this proposed change allows nonresident small game hunters to visit and hunt in Iowa for more days than they have historically been able to.

Jobs Impact

After analysis and review of this rulemaking, no impact on jobs has been found.

Waivers

Any person who believes that the application of the discretionary provisions of this rulemaking would result in hardship or injustice to that person may petition the Commission for a waiver of the discretionary provisions, if any, pursuant to 7—Chapter 2504.

Public Comment

Any interested person may submit comments concerning this proposed rulemaking, which must be received by the Department of Natural Resources (Department) no later than 4:30 p.m. on September 22, 2026. Comments should be directed to:

Chris Ensminger
Iowa Department of Natural Resources
6200 Park Avenue, Suite 200
Des Moines, Iowa 50321
Email: chris.ensminger@dnr.iowa.gov

Free Language Assistance: If you need assistance in a language other than English, contact the Department of Natural Resources (Department) at chris.ensminger@dnr.iowa.gov or civilrights@dnr.iowa.gov or by telephone at 515.250.6886 at least seven days before the event.

Asistencia lingüística gratuita: Si necesita ayuda en un idioma que no sea inglés, comuníquese con el Departamento al chris.ensminger@dnr.iowa.gov o civilrights@dnr.iowa.gov o por teléfono a 515.250.6886 al menos siete días antes del evento.

Public Hearing

A public hearing at which persons may present their views orally or in writing will be held as follows:

September 22, 2026
1 to 2 p.m.

Suite 200
6200 Park Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa

Persons who wish to make oral comments at the public hearing may be asked to state their names for the record and to confine their remarks to the subject of this proposed rulemaking. Any persons who intend to attend the hearing and have special requirements, such as those related to hearing or mobility impairments, should contact the Department and advise of specific needs.

Free Language Assistance: If you need assistance in a language other than English, contact the Department at chris.ensminger@dnr.iowa.gov or civilrights@dnr.iowa.gov or by telephone at 515.250.6886 at least seven days before the event.

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Review by Administrative Rules Review Committee

The Administrative Rules Review Committee, a bipartisan legislative committee which oversees rulemaking by executive branch agencies, may, on its own motion or on written request by any individual or group, review this rulemaking at its [regular monthly meeting](#) or at a special meeting. The Committee's meetings are open to the public, and interested persons may be heard as provided in Iowa Code section 17A.8(6).

The following rulemaking action is proposed:

ITEM 1. Adopt the following **new** rule 571—96.10(481A):

571—96.10(481A) Small game hunting by nonresidents.

96.10(1) Small game species for nonresident hunting include pheasant, quail, partridge, grouse, dove, rabbit, and squirrel.

96.10(2) Nonresident small game hunters purchasing a nonresident annual hunting license shall be limited to two 7-day periods totaling not more than 14 days per annual license purchased. Multiple nonresident annual hunting licenses may be purchased.

96.10(3) The two seven-day periods must be designated at the time the annual license is purchased and may be consecutive. The seven-day periods must fall within the season dates defined in rules 571—96.1(481A) through 571—96.4(481A) and this rule, except:

a. Small game hunting by nonresidents is not allowed on public land during the first seven days of the pheasant season as defined in subrule 96.1(1).

b. Rabbit, squirrel, and grouse hunting by nonresidents is not allowed on public land from the third Saturday in October through the third Saturday in November.

96.10(4) A designated period may be changed prior to the beginning date of the period by contacting the department.

96.10(5) The nonresident five-day hunting license may be purchased independently or in conjunction with a nonresident annual hunting license.