

NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION[571]

Regulatory Analysis

Notice of Intended Action to be published: 571—Chapter 51
“Game Management Areas”

Iowa Code section(s) or chapter(s) authorizing rulemaking: 481A.6 and 455A.5(6)“a”
State or federal law(s) implemented by the rulemaking: Iowa Code sections 456A.24(2)“a,”
481A.6 and 481A.39

Public Hearing

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

May 19, 2026
1 to 2 p.m.

6200 Park Avenue, Second Floor
Des Moines, Iowa

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 515.326.0430 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 515.326.0430 al menos siete días antes del evento.

Public Comment

Any interested person may submit written or oral comments concerning this Regulatory Analysis, which must be received by the Department no later than 4:30 p.m. on the date of the public hearing. Comments should be directed to:

Chris Ensminger
Department of Natural Resources
6200 Park Avenue, Suite 200
Des Moines, Iowa 50321
Phone: 515.250.6886
Email: chris.ensminger@dnr.iowa.gov

Free language assistance: If you speak a non-English language, the Department offers language assistance services free of charge. Contact the Department at chris.ensminger@dnr.iowa.gov.

Servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística: Si habla un idioma que no sea el inglés, los servicios de asistencia lingüística están disponibles de forma gratuita. Comuníquese con el Departamento al chris.ensminger@dnr.iowa.gov.

Purpose and Summary

Chapter 51 designates State-owned lands and waters under the jurisdiction of the Natural Resource Commission (Commission) as game management areas (GMAs). This designation helps effect sound wildlife management and preserve biological balance, both of which are required by law. To that end, Chapter 51 contains the allowable uses of GMAs. These use restrictions are established to protect the primary purpose of GMAs, which is to create and protect fish and wildlife habitat and to promote fish- and wildlife-based recreation.

The proposed rulemaking defines “trail camera” and prohibits the use of trail cameras on GMAs, except when specifically authorized by permit or when used directly by the Department or its designated agents. This prohibition is consistent with the ethical hunting principle of fair chase, ensuring that a hunter does not gain an improper or unfair technological advantage over game. Furthermore, the proliferation of trail cameras has generated numerous concerns and complaints from the public. This measure will protect the recreational experience of sportsmen and sportswomen and other visitors to these wild areas.

Analysis of Impact

1. Persons affected by the proposed rulemaking:

• Classes of persons that will bear the costs of the proposed rulemaking:

Not applicable. There are no associated compliance costs since the proposed amendments only restrict the use of a particular piece of equipment. The only costs generated by the rules are related to education and enforcement, and those will be borne by the Department.

• Classes of persons that will benefit from the proposed rulemaking:

Citizens of Iowa and users of GMAs will benefit. All of Chapter 51’s use restrictions are established to protect the primary purpose of GMAs, which is to create and protect fish and wildlife habitat and promote fish- and wildlife-based recreation. Protecting and enhancing the State’s natural resources ensures the health and abundance of Iowa’s natural heritage, which underpins substantial economic activity.

2. Impact of the proposed rulemaking, economic or otherwise, including the nature and amount of all the different kinds of costs that would be incurred:

• Quantitative description of impact:

This proposed rulemaking does not have a direct economic impact or cost. However, all of Chapter 51’s use restrictions exist to further the Department’s wildlife management objectives. The careful stewardship of Iowa’s natural resources supports the State’s overall economy.

• Qualitative description of impact:

This proposed rulemaking does not impose any financial burdens on the public.

3. Costs to the State:

• Implementation and enforcement costs borne by the agency or any other agency:

The Department currently manages GMAs and enforces these rules. It also provides assistance to users in understanding and complying with the rules. None of these services will change because of these proposed amendments.

• Anticipated effect on State revenues:

This proposed rulemaking has no impact on State revenues.

4. Comparison of the costs and benefits of the proposed rulemaking to the costs and benefits of inaction:

The public does not have any costs to comply with this proposed rulemaking. It is simply proposing to limit the use of a certain device on GMAs.

5. Determination whether less costly methods or less intrusive methods exist for achieving the purpose of the proposed rulemaking:

There are no costs associated with this proposed rulemaking.

6. Alternative methods considered by the agency:

• Description of any alternative methods that were seriously considered by the agency:

None were considered.

• Reasons why alternative methods were rejected in favor of the proposed rulemaking:

Not applicable.

Small Business Impact

If the rulemaking will have a substantial impact on small business, include a discussion of whether it would be feasible and practicable to do any of the following to reduce the impact of the rulemaking on small business:

- Establish less stringent compliance or reporting requirements in the rulemaking for small business.
- Establish less stringent schedules or deadlines in the rulemaking for compliance or reporting requirements for small business.
- Consolidate or simplify the rulemaking’s compliance or reporting requirements for small business.
- Establish performance standards to replace design or operational standards in the rulemaking for small business.
- Exempt small business from any or all requirements of the rulemaking.

If legal and feasible, how does the rulemaking use a method discussed above to reduce the substantial impact on small business?

This proposed rulemaking will not have an impact on small business.

Text of Proposed Rulemaking

ITEM 1. Adopt the following **new** definition of “Trail camera” in rule **571—51.1(481A)**:

“Trail camera” or “game camera” means any remote motion-activated or infrared camera in which the shutter is activated by sound triggers, proximity sensation, radio transmitters, or a self-timer built into the trail or game camera.

ITEM 2. Amend rule 571—51.6(481A), catchwords, as follows:

571—51.6(481A) Use of blinds, and decoys, and trail cameras on game management areas.

ITEM 3. Adopt the following **new** subrule 51.6(5):

51.6(5) Trail cameras. Trail cameras are prohibited on game management areas unless specifically authorized by permit or when used directly by the department or its designated agents.