

NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION[571]

Regulatory Analysis

Notice of Intended Action to be published: paragraph 51.6(2)“c”
“Game Management Areas”

Iowa Code section(s) or chapter(s) authorizing rulemaking: 455A.5(6)“a” and 481A.6

State or federal law(s) implemented by the rulemaking: Iowa Code sections 456A.24(2)“a,”
481A.6 and 481A.39 and 2026 Iowa Acts, Senate File 654

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.

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 al 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 Enslinger
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 the 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 labeling requirements for tree stands used for deer hunting on GMAs as required by 2026 Iowa Acts, Senate File 654.

Analysis of Impact

1. Persons affected by the proposed rulemaking:

- **Classes of persons that will bear the costs of the proposed rulemaking:**

Deer hunters utilizing tree stands on GMAs will be required to label their stands with a metal tag. These tags are available for sale at numerous retailers for a very low cost (less than \$0.25 per tag).

- **Classes of persons that will benefit from the proposed rulemaking:**

Citizens of Iowa and users of GMAs will benefit. Abandoned, unmarked tree stands have become a common problem on Iowa's public hunting areas. This rulemaking will help alleviate that problem by establishing an accountable party and providing for a process to remove abandoned stands.

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 impose any financial burdens on the public.

- **Qualitative description of impact:**

This proposed rulemaking will help to improve GMA users' experience by eliminating abandoned tree stands from Iowa's wild areas.

3. Costs to the State:

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

No additional costs will be borne by the Department or other agencies.

- **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 will bear minimal costs (less than \$0.25 per tag) to comply with this proposed rulemaking. This proposed rulemaking will help to improve GMA users' experience by eliminating abandoned tree stands from Iowa's wild areas.

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. This rulemaking is required by Iowa law.

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

Not applicable. This rulemaking is required by Iowa law.

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. Amend paragraph **51.6(2)“c”** as follows:

c. *Exception—tree blinds stands.* ~~Portable blinds~~ Tree stands with a metal tag displaying the owner’s DNR customer identification number affixed to it and visible from the ground may be placed in trees and used for purposes other than deer hunting waterfowl. Tree stands may be left on an area for a continuous period of time beginning seven days prior to the open season for hunting deer or turkey and ending seven days after the final day of that open season. Portable blinds Unlabeled tree stands or stands left after the permissible period will be removed from the game management area by department staff. Tree stands left on game management areas during the deer season do not guarantee the owner exclusive use of the blind stand when unattended, or exclusive use of the site where the stand is placed.