

Illinois Recreational Access Program taking applications for spring turkey hunting

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SPRINGFIELD, IL – The Illinois Recreational Access Program (IRAP) is encouraging youth and adult hunters to plan now to enjoy spring turkey hunting during the 2018 Illinois Spring Turkey Season, with access to excellent turkey habitat available through



IRAP.

IRAP, a program of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), has free hunting sites available to the public for the upcoming youth turkey hunting season, and seasons 3 and 4 during the regular spring turkey season in 2018.

A recommended first step for adult hunters is to apply for the first lottery drawing for 2018 Spring Turkey permits. The application deadline for the first lottery is Dec. 1. To participate as a youth hunter, one must first fill out an IRAP application and send it in by February 23, 2018 to be eligible for the youth drawing. A total of 190 sites are available in 44 counties for the two-weekend youth season.

Another 180 sites are available in 45 counties to turkey hunters for spring seasons 3 and 4. These sites are open on a first-come, first-served basis. To be eligible, a hunter must first apply for his or her spring turkey permit through the IDNR lottery (first lottery application deadline: Dec. 1). Once they receive their permit, hunters can apply for an IRAP turkey site. Preference is given to youth hunters and first-time adult hunters (those who have not hunted turkey in the past five years). In 2017, nearly all who applied secured a hunting site. IDNR spring turkey permit information can be found at <https://www.dnr.illinois.gov/hunting/turkey/Documents/SpringTurkeyPermitInformation2018.pdf>

“The Illinois Recreational Access Program is a wonderful opportunity for us to partner with private landowners to provide for much-needed access for hunting and other outdoor activities,” said IDNR Director Wayne Rosenthal. “Landowners allow public access to their property in exchange for a minimal lease payment and a habitat management plan, but just as important, the landowner also receives assistance with habitat restoration of their property. It is an ideal public/private partnership that delivers positive results for everyone.”

Applications for IRAP Turkey Hunting sites can be found online at <https://www.dnr.illinois.gov/conservation/IRAP/Pages/First-time-Adult-turkey-hunting-.aspx>.

Successful applicants will be notified by mail on where their hunting site is located, be given a map, and an IRAP site permit allowing them to hunt on their assigned turkey hunting site. For youth season, hunters will also need to purchase an over-the-counter IDNR youth turkey permit *after* they have received their IRAP site permit packet.

Turkey hunting on IRAP leased property in the spring of 2018 is available during three spring turkey seasons:

Youth Season: **March 31-April 1, 2018** (*statewide*) and **April 7-8, 2018** (*statewide*)

Third Season: **April 20-25, 2018** (*south zone*) **April 27-May 2, 2018** (*north zone*)

Fourth Season: **April 26-May 2, 2018** (*southzone*) **May 3-9, 2018** (*north zone*)

The IRAP program is funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service. To date, IRAP has leased nearly 18,000 acres in 46 counties to provide for various public access opportunities, such as; turkey, archery deer, small game, and upland bird hunting; as well as pond and riverbank fishing, boat access on public waterways, and access for hiking, birding and outdoor photography.

For more information, visit: <http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/conservation/IRAP/Pages/default.aspx> or e-mail IRAP@illinois.gov.