

Work to begin at Iron Bridge Access
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Some major changes will take place at the Iron Bridge Access between Independence and Quasqueton, making this key recreation area a state-recognized gateway to the Wapsipinicon River. Users of the popular access will see work begin sometime in the first couple weeks of August. During construction at the site, access will be kept open to the ramp, but parking may be limited. Once completed, the access will provide for vastly improved parking and ramp use.

During the past 20 years, use of the Iron Bridge Access has greatly increased, largely due to the explosion in popularity of kayaking and other types of paddling. The diversity of users also has increased to include more families and people of all ages, physical needs, and boating abilities. Although it is great that so many people are enjoying the extraordinary recreation resources of the river corridor, it has become obvious the current ramp and parking facilities are not adequate to meet demand for safe and enjoyable water access. The small parking area leads people to park along the busy gravel road (Nolen Ave.). Lack of parking guidance results in a free-for-all for parking and traffic flow. The ramp is narrow and there is little room for people to carry boats and gear to the water. And there are no restroom facilities.

To help remedy issues at the access, the Buchanan County Conservation Board has embarked on a substantial project that will result in the following:

- *An improved concrete boat ramp and “universal launch” to better allow for loading and unloading motorboats and paddle craft. This includes a second ramp and a pedestrian sidewalk. A transfer area allows gear and people to easily transport between the ramp and sidewalk.*
- *A reconfigured and enlarged parking area. The new paved parking will include painted parking lanes to alleviate the current parking “free-for-all” and two parking spots for handicap parking.*
- *Restrooms to better handle human waste.*
- *Overhead lighting (solar) at the ramp, restroom and parking area.*

The project will result in the State’s first fully functional gateway access with universal launch on a state-designated water trail. Iowa DNR Rivers Coordinator Nate Hooegeveen stated the need for such accesses: “It is important that at least some sites around the state are designed and advertised as places for people with varied physical abilities and boating skills to safely access Iowa’s rivers.” The Wapsipinicon River Corridor at the Iron Bridge Access is the perfect place for this gateway to the river. It features some of the river’s most scenic forested bluffs, abundant wildlife, and quality fishing. The old Iron Bridge structure is on the National Register of Historic Places. Downstream, boaters float past the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Walter House at Cedar Rock State Park. The Wapsi is easy to enjoy while paddling or boating on a section of river with few water hazards – appropriate for people with a wide range of skills and experience. The value of this project has been clear to several grant funding

programs. The Conservation Board's application to Iowa's Water Recreation Access Cost-share Program received the top score in the state. Funding also comes from successful grant applications to the Wellmark Foundation, Black Hawk County Gaming Association, and Buchanan County Community Foundation. Independence Lions Club has donated \$500 to the project. Buchanan County Board of Supervisors and County Engineer Brian Keierleber are supportive of the project, and Assistant County Engineer Alex Davis provided engineering services. Eastern Iowa Excavating and Concrete, Inc. in Cascade, Iowa is the General Contractor for the project. The access is located at 2707-2 Nolen Ave., Rowley.

Caption 1: View of the current access from the Nolen Avenue Bridge.

Caption 2: Paddling has become very popular along the Wapsipinicon River – particularly from Independence to Quasqueton. The new access will serve both paddle craft and motorboats.