

February 24, 2015

The Honorable Terry Branstad
Governor of Iowa
1007 East Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Dear Governor Branstad,

It has come to my attention that rules proposed by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) regarding protections for Iowa's turtle populations are not moving forward. The DNR is charged with protecting Iowa's wildlife and providing for biologically sustainable harvest, where appropriate, for fish and wildlife species. The Iowa Environmental Council supports reasonable rules promulgated by DNR to protect Iowa's wildlife.

The modest rules proposed by the DNR would provide the protection of suspending harvest during the breeding and egg laying season for wild turtles in Iowa. This protection is afforded to other harvested wildlife species in Iowa subject to hunting, fishing and trapping. Pheasants and waterfowl are not hunted during their breeding season, nor are deer hunted during the time they are fawning and caring for their young.

The rules that govern harvest seasons, method of take and bag and possession limits are based on biologically-based principles and information. The Council supports science-based rules and regulations. Harvest regulations are put in place to sustain populations (of any recreationally or commercially harvested fish and wildlife) at stable levels for continued harvest into the future.

Many surrounding states have these types of basic protections in place to maintain and expand their harvested turtle populations, but Iowa does not, a problem heightened by the fact that Iowa's turtle populations are facing increased pressure as a result of high prices for turtle meat and products in foreign markets. In this environment, minimal, basic regulations regarding harvest during the breeding season are a prudent step to protect populations.

Please allow the DNR to fulfill its statutory responsibility and protect Iowa's turtle populations. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Ralph Rosenberg
Executive Director
Iowa Environmental Council