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Region starts conversation on future of waterways

The public is invited to join a community conversation on the future of approximately 150 miles of creeks and rivers in central Iowa.

A master plan for improving the water trails and nearby greenways in the Greater Des Moines region is being developed by the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization on behalf of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Once complete, the master plan will provide a long-range regional vision for how individuals, governments and other organizations can collaborate to improve the region's waterways for better recreation, enhanced conservation and improved economic vitality.

"Des Moines was established as river town," said Rick Tollakson, president and CEO of Hubbell Realty Company, who is serving as chair of the steering committee for the water trails master plan. "This community conversation invites the public to reconnect with our river roots."

The planning process will include a review of existing conditions, the development of a vision and goals, and the writing of draft and final plan documents. Public opinion will be sought throughout the planning process. Additional activities are planned throughout the summer to engage the public in dialogue about the future of the region's waterways.

The public engagement starts this week with a series of events, including a public art unveiling as part of the LAUNCH: Art event on Saturday at Water Works Park. All upcoming events are detailed below.

Also starting today, the public can weigh in on the water trails plan with a new online engagement tool, a game-like website at watertrails.designmysm.com.

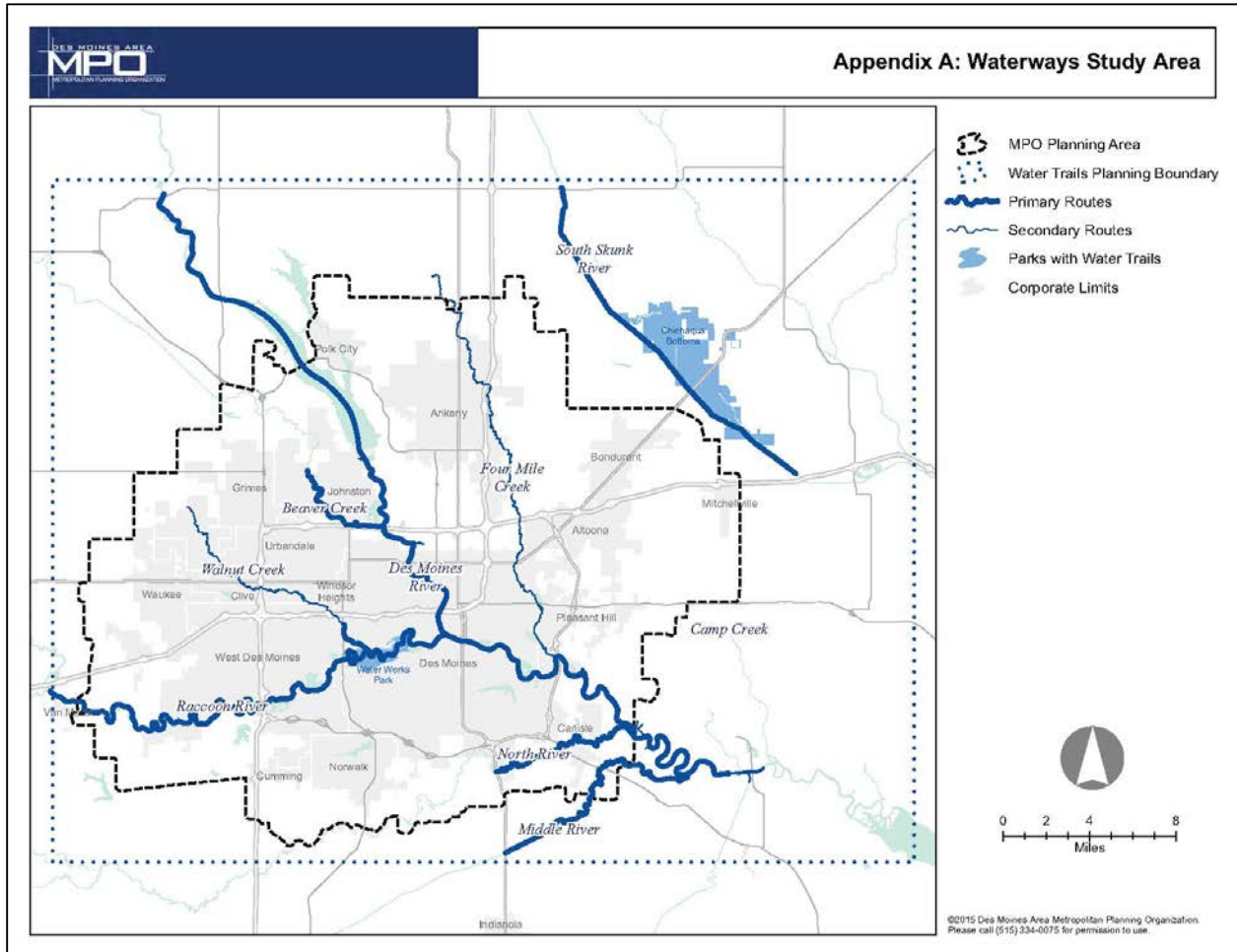
The area being studied as part of the plan includes portions of the Des Moines, Raccoon and South Skunk, North and Middle rivers, as well as Beaver and Walnut creeks. A map of the study area is included below. Additional details about the planning process can be found online at dmampo.org/water-trails. For more information, please call MPO staff at 515-334-0075.

The public art work and the event is funded by the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Greater Des Moines Public Art Foundation, Des Moines Water Works Park Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts and the Iowa Arts Council, a division of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs. The LAUNCH event is sponsored by Scheels, Veridian Credit Union, and Des Moines Water Works Park Foundation.

The Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) acts as a regional forum to ensure coordination between the public and local, state, and federal agencies in regard to planning issues and to prepare transportation plans and programs. The MPO develops both long- and short-range multimodal transportation plans, selects and approves projects for federal funding based upon regional priorities, and develops methods to reduce traffic congestion.

What are water trails?

Water trails are recreational corridors and routes on rivers and can include amenities for activities such as fishing and tubing, as well as preservation of scenic beauty. Coordinated signage and mapping systems guide users toward the types of experiences they seek, ranging from a highly social first-time river experience lasting a few hours to multi-day adventures. Water trails help boost local economies and give central Iowans outdoor experiences just out their back doors.



Upcoming Events and Outings

***Hudson Bay Bound* – 7 p.m. Thursday, May 28, Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden, 909 Robert D. Ray Drive, Des Moines**

Paddler Natalie Warren, who with Ann Raiho became the first women to paddle the 2,250 miles from Minneapolis to Hudson Bay in 2011, will speak about their trip and lessons learned. Event co-sponsored with Central Iowa Paddlers. No registration required.

***Your Community from a Paddler's Perspective* – 7:30 a.m. Friday, May 29, Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden, 909 Robert D. Ray Drive, Des Moines**

Paddler Natalie Warren, founder of Wild River Academy and a national speaker on the relationships between rivers and communities, will focus this talk on how nurturing water ways can spur community development. Event co-sponsored with Iowa DNR. No registration required

***Paddling the Des Moines River* – 1 p.m. Friday, May 29, Des Moines River, launching at the Sycamore Access of NW 66th Avenue, Johnston**

Join Natalie Warren for a six-mile paddling trip from the Sycamore Access to Prospect Park. The trip will take between two and three hours depending on water levels. Wear clothes and shoes that can get wet and dirty, bring sun screen and a water bottle. If you wish to bring personal items such as wallet, cell phone, camera and keys, a dry bag is recommended. While this is considered a safe route, being on the river always poses some risk. Life jackets are required. New paddlers are recommended to come with an experienced paddler and share a canoe. Trip co-sponsored with Department of Natural Resources and Des Moines Parks and Recreation. Space is limited, so reserve your spot here: <http://goo.gl/forms/BirU9qfYUJ>.

***LAUNCH: Art at Water Works Park* – 1 p.m. Saturday, May 30, Water Works Park (near the pedestrian bridge), Des Moines**

The public is invited to the unveiling of a temporary, interactive public art piece being installed on the Raccoon River by artist Mary Mattingly. The featured speaker will be Iowa Department of Natural Resources Director Chuck Gipp at 1 p.m.

LAUNCH is a new annual event aimed at drawing new and current users into Water Works Park to explore its many recreational opportunities. The free event opens at 11 a.m. and features a range of activities, music, food trucks and the Iowa Beer until 6 p.m. Visit <http://www.launch.dmwwpf.org/> for the schedule of activities. The Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department will offer float trips starting at the pedestrian bridge at 11 a.m., 12 p.m., 2 p.m. and 3 p.m. and each last approximately 30 minutes.

LAUNCH is sponsored by Scheels, Veridian Credit Union, and Des Moines Water Works Park Foundation. The public art work and the event is funded by the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Greater Des Moines Public Art Foundation, Des Moines Water Works Park Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts and the Iowa Arts Council, a division of the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs.

***Central Iowa Rivers: What Lies Beneath* – 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, June 3, Water Works Park, Des Moines**

Have you ever wondered what is swimming in Iowa rivers? Join us as Andy Otting and Ben Dodd of Iowa Department of Natural Resources bring several species of fish that reside in the Des Moines and Raccoon Rivers and talk about how we as humans impact their life cycle. In addition, Jennifer Kurth of Iowa DNR will discuss the life history of our native mussels. This event is informational as well as a fun for families.

4th Annual Father's Day Float – Noon to 3:30 p.m. Sunday, June 21, launching Prospect Park, located along Hickman Road

Families come and celebrate dad with this Father's Day paddle from Prospect Park to Birdland Park. The trip will take about half an hour. Wear clothes and shoes that can get wet and dirty, bring sun screen and a water bottle. If you wish to bring personal items such as wallet, cell phone, camera and keys, a dry bag is recommended. Beginning paddlers and families encouraged to attend. While this is considered a safe route, being on the river always poses some risk. Life jackets are required. We recommend that new paddlers come with a more experienced paddler and share a canoe.

New to the event this year, anyone interested in fishing will be able to give it a try. There will be poles and instructions on hand to get you started. Anyone over 16 years of age will need to have a valid fishing license.

Sponsored by Des Moines Park and Recreation, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Central Iowa Paddlers. No registration required.

Paddling History Tour of Des Moines River – 6 to 8 p.m. Thursday, July 23, launching at Prospect Park between MLK Parkway and Hickman Road

Trip Leader and Speaker: John Wenck, DNR

The Des Moines River loses a bit of its natural beauty as it passes through the city, but what it loses in natural beauty it gains in history and culture. The city grew up along the banks of the river. Her residents depended on the river for sustenance and recreation, yet at the same time the river was a barrier to be bridged or forded. Listen to the stories of how past residents of the city were connected to this important resource over the past 150 years.

After meeting at the launch site and shuttling cars to Birdland, we will float down to the Curt Systma & Ellen King Huntoon House to enjoy refreshments and a tour of the century old Victorian house they lovingly restored to its original Victorian grandeur. There is a white sand beach below this house where we can park our paddlecraft and climb the steep stairs to this beautiful Victorian home. Dress for the weather, consider protection from the sun, and rain gear if appropriate. If you wish to bring personal items such as wallet, cell phone, camera and keys, a dry bag is recommended. While this is considered a safe route, being on the river always poses some risk. Life jackets are required. We recommend that new paddlers come with a more experienced paddler and share a canoe. Event co-sponsored with the Department of Natural Resources.

Special Note: This event will include the same content covered as the July 30th History Float, however participants will paddle at this event. Because of limited space we ask that participants that are capable of paddling sign up for this day rather than the 30th.

Space is limited, reserve your spot [here](#).

Pontoon History Tour of Des Moines River – 6 to 8 p.m. Thursday, July 30, launching at Prospect Park between MLK Parkway and Hickman Road

Trip Leader and Speaker: John Wenck, DNR

The Des Moines River loses a bit of its natural beauty as it passes through the city, but what it loses in natural beauty it gains in history and culture. The city grew up along the banks of the river. Her residents depended on the river for sustenance and recreation, yet at the same time the river was a barrier to be bridged or forded. Listen to the stories of how past residents of the city were connected to this important resource over the past 150 years.

After meeting at the launch site at Prospect Park we will motor down to the Curt Systma & Ellen King Huntoon House to enjoy refreshments and a tour of the century old Victorian house they lovingly restored to its original Victorian grandeur. There is a white sand beach below this house where we will disembark and climb the steep stairs to this beautiful Victorian home. Dress for the weather, consider protection from the sun, and rain gear if appropriate. Event co-sponsored with the Department of Natural Resources.

Special Note: This event will include the same content covered as the July 23rd History Float, however participants will ride on a pontoon. Because of limited space we ask that participants that are capable of paddling consider the July 23rd event.

Space is limited, so reserve your spot [here](#).