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‘Wading Bridge’ invites people to reconnect with the river

The public is invited to dip their feet in the Raccoon River as part of a public art installation by New York-based artist Mary Mattingly.

The temporary public art installation, titled “Wading Bridge,” is a dock off the riverbank that lets people walk not only over the water – but in the water – as the center section of Wading Bridge is submerged under water. The art installation opens to the public Friday, July 24, and will remain in the water through Sunday, August 9, near the boat launch in Water Works Park.

“Our rivers determine our land, livelihood and lives – and Des Moines’ rivers are a force,” Mattingly said. “Crossing ‘Wading Bridge’ and getting our feet wet allows us a momentary intimacy with this river.”

The public art installation is aimed at engaging people in a community conversation about the future of the waterways and nearby greenways in Greater Des Moines. The public is being asked for their ideas for approximately 150 miles of the region’s waterways as part of a regional water trails master plan being developed by the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization on behalf of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

The public art work and the event is funded by the Des Moines Area MPO, 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. The installation of the art in the river was made possible by the generous volunteer work of Michael LaValle, president of Port of Des Moines, LLC, and Tim Monson of Shuck-Britson.

The public can share their ideas for improving the region’s waterways in an interactive online game, available at watertrails.designmysdm.com. Additional details about the planning process, the launch and community events can be found at dmampo.org/water-trails.

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. www.dmampo.org

The Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs is responsible for developing the state’s interest in the areas of the arts, history and other cultural matters with the advice and assistance from its two divisions: the State Historical Society of Iowa and the Iowa Arts Council. DCA preserves, researches, interprets and promotes an awareness and understanding of local, state and regional history and stimulates and encourages the study and presentation of the performing and fine arts and public interest and participation in them. It implements tourism-related art and history projects as directed by the General Assembly and designs a comprehensive, statewide, long-range plan with the assistance of the Iowa Arts Council to develop the arts in Iowa. www.culturalaffairs.org

The Greater Des Moines Public Art Foundation, established in 2004, recognizes that art belongs not just in galleries and museums, but in streetscapes, parks, buildings and infrastructures of a thriving community. Dedicated to envisioning, developing, advancing and promoting public art projects, the Public Art Foundation collaborates with local entities and artists to engage, inspire and enrich the lives of residents and visitors to the community. The goal is to increase awareness of our community as a world-class destination for public art. www.dsmpublicartfoundation.org

