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Media Contact: Teva Dawson
515-334-0075 | tdawson@dmampo.org

Draft recommendations: Develop abundant regional network of river recreation

Greater Des Moines could become home to an abundant network of river recreation, offering residents and visitors a multitude of places for tubing, birding, hiking, paddling, boating, fishing and more.

Such are the newly released recommendations for 150 miles of the region's creeks and rivers that are proposed in the DRAFT Greater Des Moines Water Trails and Greenways Plan, now available for public comment. The plan covers the Des Moines, Raccoon, South Skunk, North and Middle rivers, as well as Beaver, Fourmile, Mud and Walnut creeks.

"We know there is tremendous passion among the public to see this project happen – so we want to make sure we get the plan right," said Todd Ashby, executive director of the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), which is developing the water trails plan on behalf of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

The draft plan was developed over the past year with research of existing conditions and input from people and organizations with a wide range of interests in the waterways, notably recreation, quality of life, economic development, tourism and environmental conservation. Over the coming summer, these recommendations will be vetted by the public, and the plan will be refined as needed before being finalized this fall by vote of the MPO Policy Committee.

The plan is available for review online at www.dmampo.org/water-trails/, where the public can also take a three-question survey indicating their level of interest in pursuing water trails. Additionally, the public is invited to public meetings where they can learn more about the draft plan and give feedback to planning staff:

Open House – 6-7 p.m. June 14, Raccoon River Nature Lodge, 2500 Grand Avenue, West Des Moines
(Followed by Jim Pease presentation at 7 p.m. as part of The Tomorrow Plan 2016 Speaker Series)

The Dam Debate: Part II – 7-8:30 p.m. June 28, The Des Moines Register, Community Room, 400 Locust St., Des Moines

Open House – 6-8 p.m. June 29, Birdland Park - Ding Darling Shelter, 2100 Saylor Road, Des Moines

The plan recommends regional coordination of the water trails network, and highlights the importance of planning for people's safety in and on the water. Other highlights include

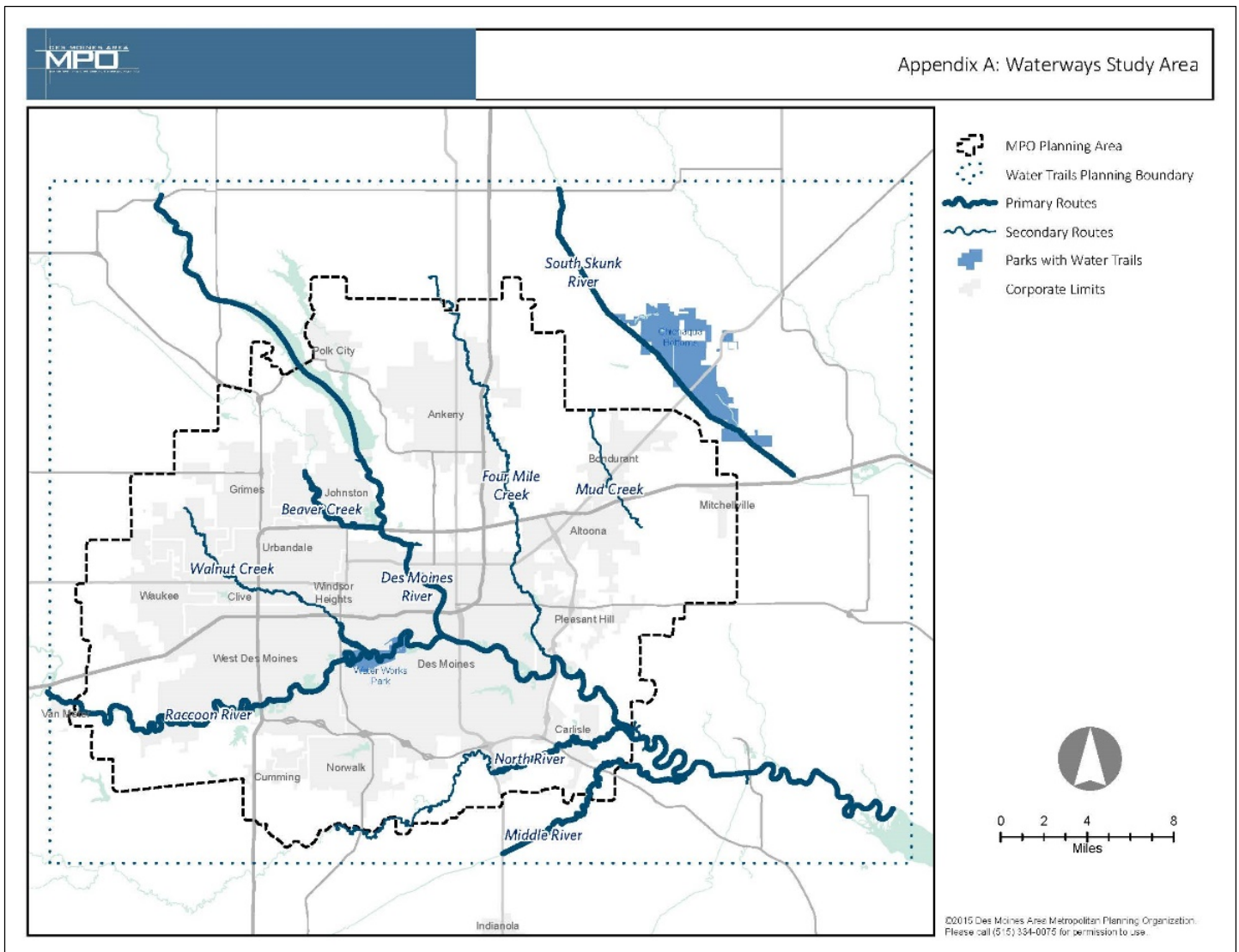
- 23 soft trails
- 13 carry-down accesses points for paddle vessels
- 15 fishing nodes
- 7 economic hubs
- 18 wading areas
- 14 activity hubs

For more information, please visit to dmampo.org/water-trails, call 515-334-0075, or email info@dmampo.org.

What are Water Trails?

“Water Trails” is a designation given by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and are defined as recreational corridors and routes on rivers and lakes that provide a unique experience for all water users. Water trails help re-connect lowans to their waterways’ history, heritage, geology, fisheries, and wildlife. Water trails provide adequate access and can include amenities like riverside camping, wild spaces, picnic areas, and restrooms, and watercraft rentals provided by local, state, and federal partners. 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 lowans outdoor experiences just out their back doors.

Study Area for Greater Des Moines Water Trails and Greenways Plan



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.