



The Des Moines Register

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Friday, April 15, 2016

Tressa Glass | 515-284-8550 | tglass@dmreg.com
Gunnar Olson | 515-334-0075 | golson@dmampo.org

Public invited to wade into ‘The Dam Debate’

The time has come for an important community discussion on the fate of the dams in downtown Des Moines, starting with a central question: What would people like to be able to do on the Des Moines River in downtown Des Moines?

The public is invited to participate in “The Dam Debate,” being hosted by *The Des Moines Register*, starting at noon Tuesday, April 26, at Des Moines Central Library, 1000 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, in the main floor meeting room wing. The main program will last through 1 p.m., followed by an open-house discussion until 2 p.m. To RSVP, please visit <https://tickets.desmoinesregister.com/e/the-dam-debate>.

“Our rivers can become a signature recreational amenity for Greater Des Moines,” said Rick Tollakson, president and CEO of Hubbell Realty Co. who chairs the Water Trails Steering Committee. “The question now is, what is our vision?”

The public’s ideas and opinions will help shape the [Greater Des Moines Water Trails and Greenways Master Plan](#) that the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization is developing on behalf of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. When complete later this year, the plan will become the first regional roadmap for developing a network of recreational corridors along 150 miles of rivers and creeks in central Iowa.

Participants of “The Dam Debate” will review illustrations showing the range of concepts for the kinds of activities that could happen in and along the river if the Center Street and Scott Street dams were mitigated. Participants will then be able to express their preferences by voting in real-time using a mobile device. *Important note: Only concepts that maintain existing water levels above the Center Street dam are being considered.*

The Des Moines Register recently published an [editorial](#) calling on the people of Greater Des Moines to debate the fate of the dams as the late David Hurd has wished. Hurd wrote a [guest editorial](#) in December 2014 citing the many drowning deaths caused by the Scott Street and Center Street dams – and the many possible benefits of rethinking the river’s role as a natural asset in downtown Des Moines.

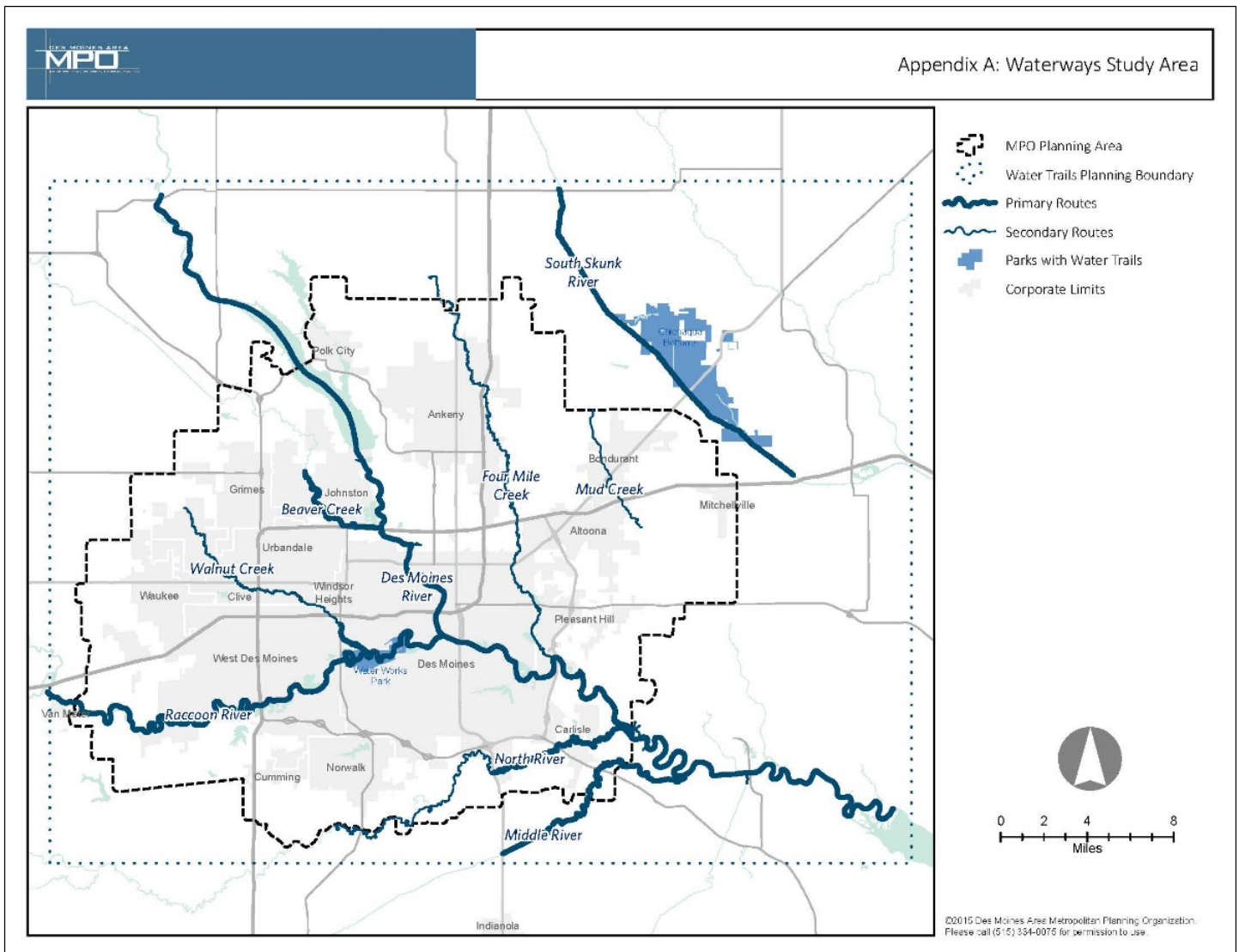
“Could our rivers again become our most treasured assets?” Hurd wrote in December 2014. “Assets that draw people not only to the riverbank for fishing, picnicking, strolling, biking and community events, but also *into* the water for regattas up and down the river, sport fishing, paddle-boarding from a downtown dock, and a riverboat with fine dining in the center of it all.”

A draft of the water trails plan will be released for public comment in early summer of 2016; the final plan is expected by late 2016. For more information, please visit 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 Master 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.