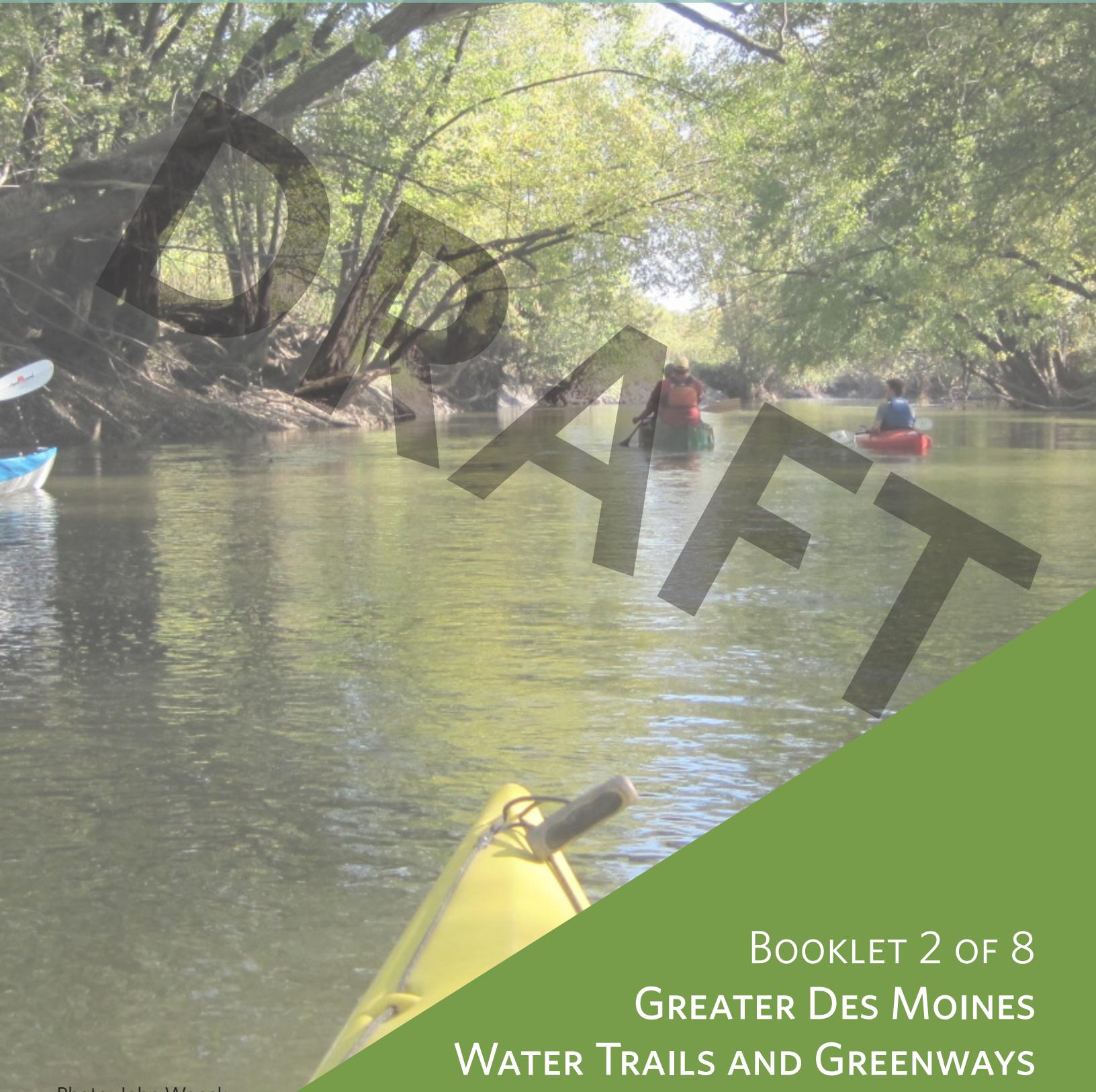




# A VISION FOR BEAVER CREEK



Booklet 2 of 8  
GREATER DES MOINES  
WATER TRAILS AND GREENWAYS

Photo: John Wenck,  
Beaver Creek

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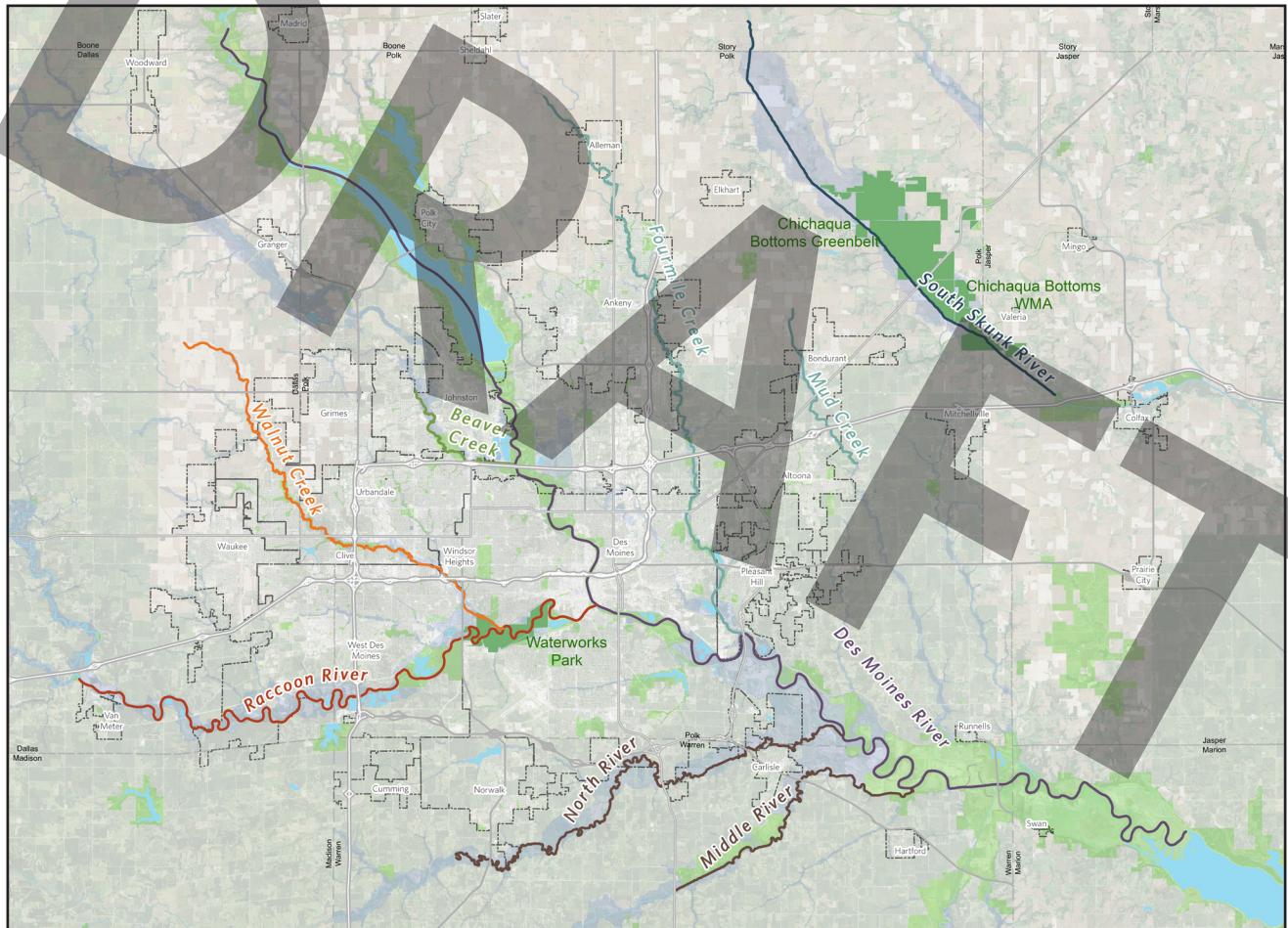
## Booklet 8: Walnut Creek

# One Vision, Many Communities

The Greater Des Moines Water Trails and Greenways Plan establishes a regional vision for our rivers, creeks, and greenways. Through extensive community engagement and with the help of a strong steering committee, a clear regional vision emerged.

## Regional Vision

The water trails and greenways of Greater Des Moines will be a natural haven, healthy ecosystem, signature recreational destination, economic driver, and community focal point that welcome people of all ages, abilities, interests, incomes, and cultures to connect with their rivers, creeks, and greenways.



Greater Des Moines Water Trails and Greenways planning area

## This Booklet

The Greater Des Moines Water Trails and Greenways Plan looks at more than 150 miles of water ways. This booklet provides an overview of Beaver Creek, including recommendations to improve its environmental, recreational, and economic potential for the entire community. There are companion booklets for each waterway, as well as a strategies and policies booklet.

# Recommendations

Beaver Creek is especially scenic and natural. There is strong interest in preserving the natural feel to the greenway corridor. The narrow and sinuous nature of the creek compared to the larger river systems offers a more intimate experience suitable for playing or walking along sandbars, fishing, birding, and paddling. That being said, there are additional opportunities for greater connections along the waterway.

## Access and Connections

Three non-motorized boat accesses are proposed for Beaver Creek. The first access point, at Mile Marker 5, would connect with a trail hub, provide interpretive signage, restrooms, and other key amenities for water and paved trail users.

The second, at Terra Lake Park, would create more connection between the park and creek, including soft trails for birding and hiking, carry-down boat access, wading areas, vistas, and fishing spaces. This would capitalize on the existing amenities the park offers.

The final access, at Merle Hay Road, offers a unique opportunity to develop an economic hub near the intersection of several quality of life amenities. Redevelopment that attracts businesses to capitalize on the convergence of the paved and water trails is encouraged as well as public art features for a gateway entrance that highlights the scenic creek as a focal point for the community. This area is ripe for restaurants, bars, bait and tackle shops, birding stores, and more that celebrate the trails and the various recreational uses they support. A livery could also be supported here to provide rentals and schedule outings.



## Fishing and Birding

Demand for fishing and birding is high, and both with designated access points with adjoining amenities such as parking, restrooms, soft trails, and a fish-cleaning station. Fishing amenities added along the creek are highly recommended in the last mile and a half of the creek before it reaches the confluence. Recently a conflict arose due to anglers parking along roadways to access foot paths along the creek. More enhanced places for fishing, parking, etc, will be a big attraction and improve safety.

## Conservation and Greenspace

The plan recommends restoring, currently operational, quarries as future recreation and greenspace. Significant opportunities exist to add fishing and birding as an amenity in these areas. Additionally, creek and shoreline restoration should be implemented according to the 2009 Johnston Watershed Assessment Stormwater Management and Action Plan. Wherever possible, the 100-year floodplain should be protected and maintained as a habitat corridor.



Additional recommendations include working with Camp Dodge to expand access to the creek that runs through their property. Currently there is access but only by permit.

## Relevant Links

[Terra Park Improvement Plans](#)

[Johnston Watershed Assessment Stormwater Management and Action Plan](#)

[State of the Rivers: Beaver Creek Report](#)



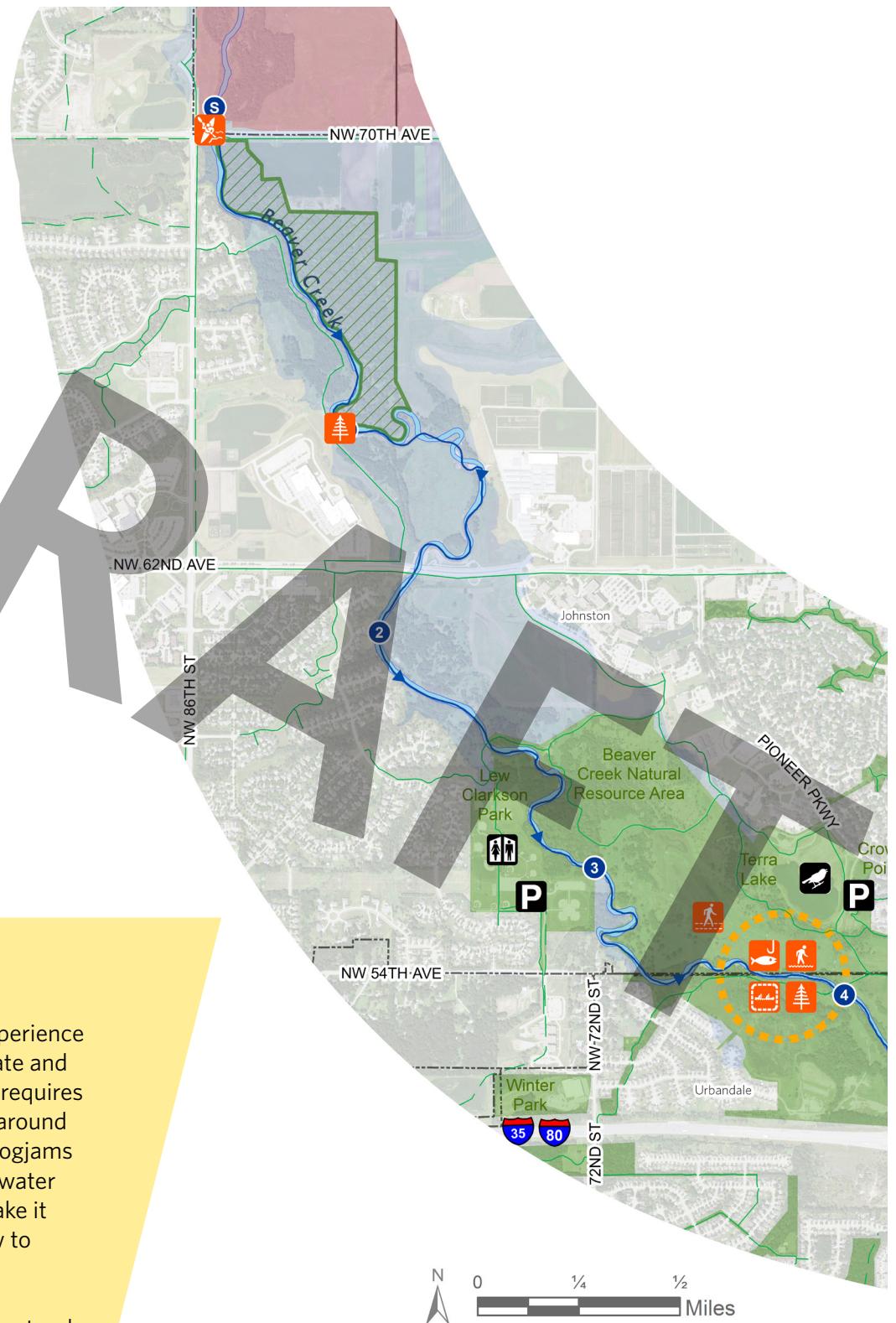
# Key Projects

Project	Location	Jurisdiction	Key Amenities	Considerations
Carry-down access	Mile marker (\$)	Johnston	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wayfinding signage</li> <li>Small-scale parking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low maintenance, minimal design for access and infrastructure</li> </ul>
Portage	Terra Lake Park	Johnston	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wayfinding to Terra Lake Park</li> <li>Wading area</li> <li>Creek-side fishing spaces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paved portage path</li> <li>Align with park master plan and take advantage of existing amenities</li> </ul>
Soft Trails	Terra Lake Park	Johnston	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wayfinding and interpretive signage</li> <li>Benches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connect and direct to Terra Lake Park amenities</li> <li>The lake and the park can offer complementary, but different experiences</li> </ul>
Economic Hub	Merle Hay Road	Johnston	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Livery and shuttles</li> <li>Small business development</li> <li>Public art and focal points</li> <li>Restrooms</li> <li>Fish-cleaning station</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistent, quality maintenance needed</li> <li>Traffic management</li> <li>Safe walking connections to surrounding businesses and amenities</li> </ul>
Fishing access	Trestle-to-Trestle Trail to Confluence	Johnston	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parking</li> <li>Restrooms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase ease and safety of use</li> <li>Design to minimize litter</li> </ul>
Quarry restoration	NW of the Confluence	Urbandale/ Johnston	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpretive signage</li> <li>Benches and scenic views</li> <li>Habitat restoration</li> <li>Fishing amenities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Return to more natural state</li> <li>Recreational potential</li> <li>Important greenway corridor connection for wildlife</li> </ul>

\*Additional initiatives can be found in the Policies and Practices Booklet

# Beaver Creek

DAP

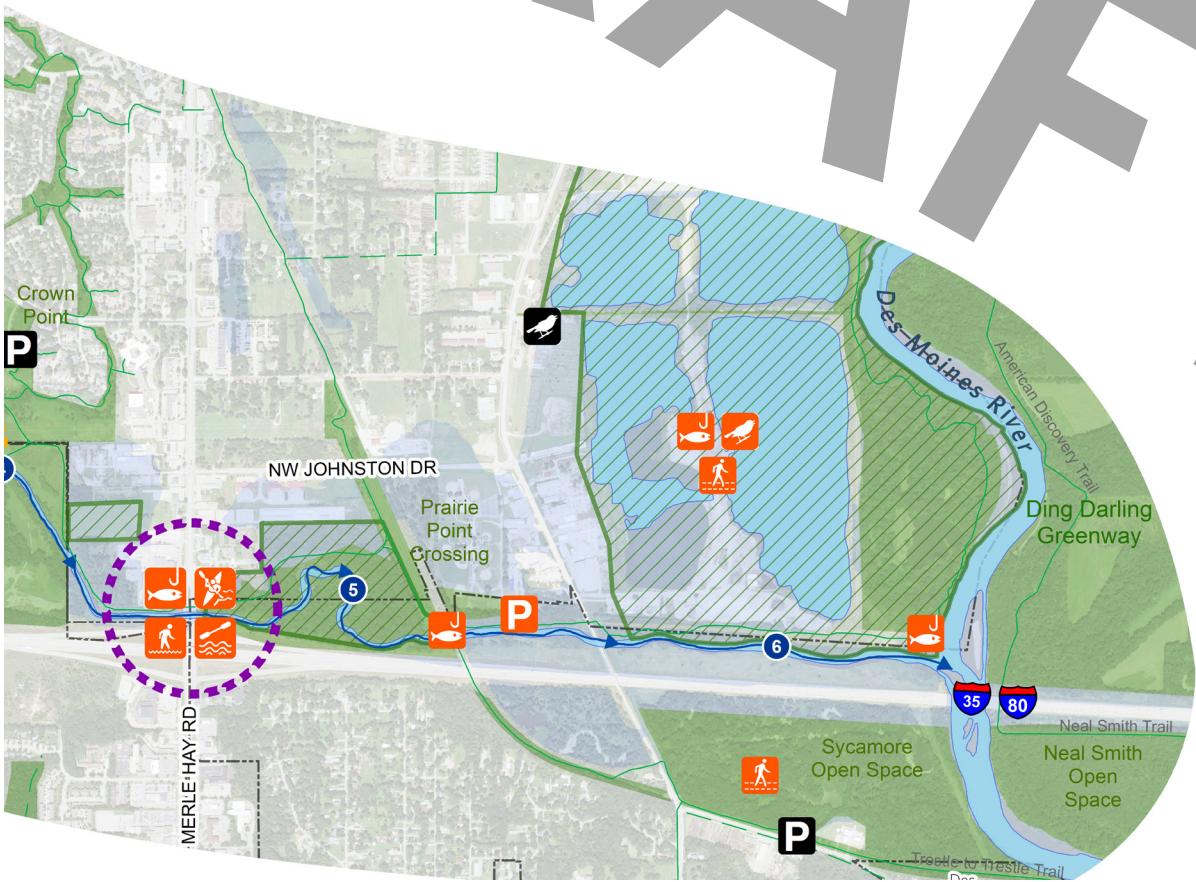


## Experience

Beaver Creek is a recreational experience that is appropriate for intermediate and experienced paddlers. The creek requires paddling experience to navigate around logjams and obstructions. If the logjams were removed, the slow-moving water and broad curves of the creek make it an excellent place for people new to paddling.

For all users, the creek is a quiet, natural respite from the surrounding metro.

# DRAFT



Color Codes	Potential Hubs	Other Icons
Existing	Economic Hub	Mile Marker
Potential	Activity Hub	Beaver Creek
Modifications		County Boundary
<b>Amenities</b>		Conservation and Park Land (Public)
		Floodplain
		<b>Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities</b>
		Trail Needed
		Existing
		Future

# Symbology Explained

## Carry-down Access



Carry-down accesses are for non-motorized paddling such as kayaking, tubing, or canoeing. Site design involves many factors, and should first look at the Iowa DNR's *Developing Water Trails in Iowa* guidelines. Lesser accesses are denoted by the portage symbol, and may not require the same level of infrastructure or amenities.

- Lighting and trash cans
- Parking
- Restrooms
- Launch types
- Watercraft and bicycle lockers
- Interpretive and wayfinding signage



## Wading Access



Wading spaces are where we can get our feet wet. They can be designed for mucking among natural vegetation and sandbars or as play spaces with steps and stones. No matter the design, wading areas allow us the opportunity to physically connect to the water and nature.

- All ages access
- Restrooms/showers
- Benches and resting points in view of access



## Fishing



Fishing is a popular activity all along the creeks and rivers. Creating access points can provide safe and comfortable areas that support anglers. Rock outcroppings, docks, and other designs offer different experiences. Universal design is critical since fishing is often a multi-generational activity.

- Restrooms
- Lights and trash cans
- Spaces for relaxing
- All-ages/abilities design
- Parking and bicycle parking



## Respite



Areas to relax, take in the view, and enjoy the river allow people to find a moment of respite in the metro. These areas can be natural greenspaces or more urban like the Principal Riverwalk depending on the context of the area and desire of the community.

- Benches with a view
- Picnic areas and tables
- Paths and trails along water



## Economic Hub

Water trails can play a role in developing economic hubs. These hubs typically represent the convergence of multiple assets, such as a river, trails, residential and economic clustering, and other factors. These are destinations that draw in visitors for multiple reasons. The scale changes for smaller or rural communities, but the economic impacts remain. These hubs are opportunities for supportive development along the rivers.

- Event spaces
- Parking
- Restrooms
- Launch types
- Bicycle parking
- Public art
- Restaurants and shops
- Liveries/outfitters
- Shuttle service



## Activity Hub

Activity hubs leverage existing attractions into destinations where multiple activities converge. These hubs take advantage of nearby parks and trails to create spaces for longer visits and multiple activities. Often multi-generational and family-friendly spaces, these hubs should be planned with a diverse audience in mind and combine several different reasons to visit.

- Play spaces
- Educational opportunities
- Areas to eat, relax and play
- Programming
- Restrooms and trash cans
- Lights
- Bicycle parking
- Wayfinding



## Conservation Area

A key component to fully enjoying the rivers and creeks is ensuring their natural quality and sustainability over time. Creating connected spaces for habitats, restoring wetlands and reducing flooding, and educating the next generation of river stewards are central pieces to the long-term health of the waterways.

- Educational programming
- Interpretive signage
- Habitat connectivity
- Wetlands restoration
- Floodplain management

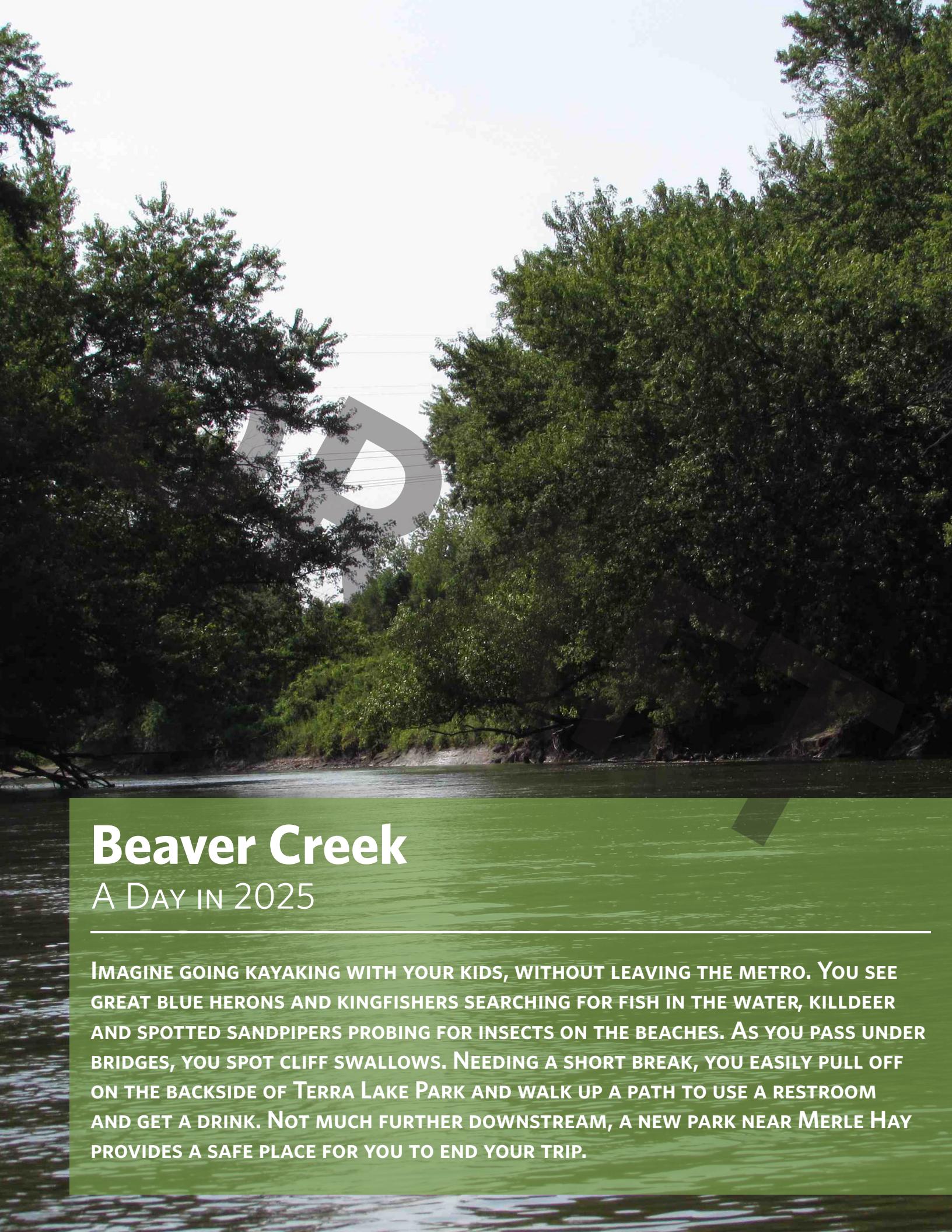


## Soft Trails

Unpaved walking, hiking, and birding trails give people access to nature and offer a much different experience than paved trails. They also do not disrupt wildlife connections and can provide the opportunity for education programming.

- Educational programming
- Interpretive signage for history or birding
- Maintenance and conservation





# Beaver Creek

## A Day in 2025

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IMAGINE GOING KAYAKING WITH YOUR KIDS, WITHOUT LEAVING THE METRO. YOU SEE GREAT BLUE HERONS AND KINGFISHERS SEARCHING FOR FISH IN THE WATER, KILLDEER AND SPOTTED SANDPIPER PROBING FOR INSECTS ON THE BEACHES. AS YOU PASS UNDER BRIDGES, YOU SPOT CLIFF SWALLOWS. NEEDING A SHORT BREAK, YOU EASILY PULL OFF ON THE BACKSIDE OF TERRA LAKE PARK AND WALK UP A PATH TO USE A RESTROOM AND GET A DRINK. NOT MUCH FURTHER DOWNSTREAM, A NEW PARK NEAR MERLE HAY PROVIDES A SAFE PLACE FOR YOU TO END YOUR TRIP.