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One Vision, Many Communities

The Greater Des Moines Water Trails and Greenways Plan establishes a regional vision for the region's 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.

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 the Des Moines River, 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

The Des Moines River is the longest stretch of any of the river segments studied, capped by major Army Corps of Engineers property at either end in Saylorville Lake and Lake Red Rock. This river features the greatest diversity and intensity of current uses from paddling and rowing to motor boats, fishing, hunting, and birding. There is significant public land along this stretch of river, which is already designated a state water trail. Any discussion of the Des Moines River will include a discussion of the low-head dams in downtown Des Moines and potentially opening up that space for recreation, economic development, and environmental restoration.

Ding Darling & Des Moines River Regional Parks

A significant amount of contiguous parkland exists along the Des Moines River. There is great benefit in beginning to connect the individual parks and treat them as an integrated regional park system. While owned and managed by different governments, they are enjoyed by citizens throughout the region regardless of their residency. Beginning to view these parks as a connected park system would lead to improved planning of amenities, synergies in management and maintenance, and improved marketing of the various experiences offered within this segment of the water trails and greenways system.

The US Army Corps of Engineers along with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Polk County Conservation and the City of Des Moines held a dedication ceremony on June 23, 1999 to honor “Ding” Darling and his efforts towards conservation. It was from this point forward that the greenway from Saylorville Lake to the Grand Avenue Bridge would be known as the “Ding” Darling Greenway. It is recommended the parks along this stretch become the Ding Darling Regional Park with coordinated approach to planning, maintenance, wayfinding, and marketing. The string of greenspaces and parks downstream of downtown to Lake Red Rock could be referred to simply as the Des Moines River Regional Park. Naming the downtown section could be part of a fundraising strategy, yet consideration should be given to historical names already established along the waterway including the Jim Muto Recreation Area.
Urban Refuge and Urban Partnership Program
The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is engaging multiple partners within the metro area to establish the greenway network as an Urban Refuge Partnership. This partnership would enable the Service to engage with urbanites and serve as a catalyst, interfacing with other conservation organizations in order to help define and promote consistent conservation messages, allowing all conservation organizations to be involved more directly with urban communities.

Historic points of interest
Humans have been living along these rivers for thousands of years. This creates significant opportunities for interpretation – deepening our sense of connection to Iowa's human past. From over 25 Oneota archaeological sites to Woodland Indian Mounds dotting downtown and the 7000-year old “Palace” village, the Des Moines River valley is rich with archeological resources. Events, educational programs, interpretive elements, and public art should be integrated to honor this human history. The immense quantity of sites along the river can also pose a challenge for construction of boat access or other amenities along the waterways.
In 1958, Congress authorized the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to construct Saylorville Lake on the Des Moines River about 11 miles upstream from the City of Des Moines. The principal purpose of the Saylorville Lake Project is to supplement the flood control capacity of the downstream Red Rock Dam and to provide flood protection to the City of Des Moines.

The Saylorville Lake Master Plan provides direction for project development and use as well as guidance for appropriate uses, development, enhancement, protection, and conservation of the natural, cultural, and man-made resources at the Saylorville Lake. Throughout the Master Plan process, the Corps focused on the modernization of current recreation areas and facilities within their existing footprints. No new recreation areas are being proposed at this time.

A key recommendation is the development of an Urban Wildlife Refuge downstream of the Saylorville Lake Dam. These Corps lands represent a significantly sized riparian corridor of high value wildlife habitats. The Master Plan declared this riparian zone as having the highest concentration of sensitive areas on Corps lands. The goal is to successfully nominate and designate these acres as an Urban Wildlife Refuge.

The recommendations of the Master Plan address:
- Land classification
- Managing for native sustainable resources
- Fishing and hunting
- Recreation development
- Connection to the environment
- Keeping it wild
- Public access to public lands

The Master Plan provides direction for project development and use as well as guidance for appropriate uses, development, enhancement, protection, and conservation of the natural, cultural, and man-made resources at Lake Red Rock. It is a vital tool for the responsible stewardship of project resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

The Master Plan balances three different project purposes: flood risk management, fish and wildlife management, and recreation. These three purposes align closely with the stated goals for the Greater Des Moines waterways and highlight the need to find projects and strategies that achieve multiple positive benefits.

### Relevant Links
- Saylorville Lake Master Plan
- Lake Red Rock Master Plan
- Lake Red Rock Water Trails
- State of the Rivers Report
Recommendations by Segment

Des Moines River Section 1: Hwy 210 – Saylorville Lake
This section falls under the heavy influence of the dam at Saylorville Lake. The broad floodplain is nearly treeless, making it entirely open. This section—with the wind, motorboats, and lack of shade—makes for an unpleasant experience for paddlers. There is a high level of traffic at the High Trestle Bridge with no access to the river. It is recommended to provide river access for wading. Opportunities also exist for the addition of soft trails for birding.

Category: Recreational

Des Moines River Section 2: Saylorville Dam to Birdland Marina
This section of river is used by anglers, motor boaters, jet skiers, rowers and paddlers. It is a crowded stretch. The plan recommends enhancing the Sycamore boat access by adding amenities including expanding parking and decommissioning the boat access at Cottonwood and making it a fishing park. It would be more efficient to maintain amenities such as lighting, parking, restrooms, signage at one location. Additionally the backwaters of the river up Rock Creek offers a rare intimate experience along this river good for any beginner paddler and is especially family friendly.

It is recommended to add a carry-down access at Euclid Ave. at the River Point Plaza. Prospect Park was donated by “Ding” Darling himself and he should be acknowledged at the park. Prospect Park could also become a fishing park with unique amenities such as a cleaning station added. It already hosts many gatherings, the addition of river-side places to play and find respite would make this lesser-known park a regional amenity. Likewise, Birdland Marina should receive upgrades to improve an existing resource and function as a marina for those with boat slips and for those without. It could host a bar or restaurant if the footprint of existing storage buildings is maintained.

Category: Recreational
Des Moines River Section 3: Botanical Garden to Scott Avenue
The place in the metro where the river is most visible is in downtown Des Moines. Opportunities abound. The river benefits from many neighboring public facilities that can support additional programs and activities that draw people to the river. While the Riverwalk has activated the area along the river, in-water activities are not supported. The following recommendations encourage development that opens up the river for safe use for residents and tourists alike.

Dams
Through significant public input, there is resounding consensus around dam mitigation. The public and businesses leaders are interested in seeing the dams mitigated to make the river safe again and to support a variety of recreational activities. If the dams are to be mitigated a number of considerations should be made:

- The significant historical nature of the dams and balustrades.
- Maintain the pool of water upstream at a level that matches low-flow pool levels with flash-boards installed.
- Significant approval process including permitting with the Army Corps of Engineers along with the Department of Natural Resources.
- If the dams are mitigated, a full spectrum of experiences should be included when feasible from whitewater to lazy river experiences. A water trail can provide an adrenaline rush but also a path suitable for families.

Access for Paddlers, Anglers, and Families
- Fishing is the closest in-water activity currently allowed and is an important activity along the river. Currently anglers have to negotiate steep levees. No place exists along downtown that caters to the needs of anglers. Proposed improvements include fishing piers of rock outcroppings to provide safer access by anglers. Additionally the rock outcroppings as well as a naturalized shoreline should enhance fish habitat.
- Rock outcroppings and other design tools should be employed to allow access to the river that is safe for families.
- The historic nature of the balustrades will be a major consideration. Sections may need to be removed to allow safe access to the water. The balustrades are a key contributor to the historic designation of the Civic Historic District.
- The river is a significant corridor for migratory birds. It is recommended that additional tree canopy be established along the Des Moines and Raccoon Rivers to enhance the species that migrate through downtown. Additionally, interpretive signage and programming should be added to help people understand the wildlife in and on the water.
- There was not a strong interest in providing motorboating through downtown Des Moines.
**Shoreline Treatment**
There is strong interest in naturalizing the shoreline to stabilize the banks and create habitat for aquatic and bird species. The leader for shoreline restoration could be the Botanical Garden. The riverfront could be an extension of their grounds and offer the public a new understanding of the benefits of a naturalized edge of the river.

**Des Moines River Section 4: Harriet Street to Yellow Banks Park**
In this section the Des Moines River turns from urbanized core to a more meandering, scenic river. It is recommended that a few less-than-scenic locations of industry—including the sewage treatment facility, power plant, vehicle recycling, etc.—be screened from the river view. This section is popular with anglers in flat-bottom boats which is more paddler friendly. It is recommended that a system of soft trails along the levee be implemented to connect the Harriet Street boat access to Yellow Banks Park. This would require working with MidAmerican Energy to gain permission to pass through their property.

This section of river, along with Beaver Creek, are the few opportunities for a beginner level paddling experience. Wildlife is abundant in this stretch and would provide for a unique experience just outside of downtown Des Moines.

**Boat Access Enhancements:**
- Harriet Street: need to expand the amenities so people feel safer at this location. It is recommended to make this a multi-use site with soft trails, fishing piers and wading access to diversify the users.
- Pleasant Hill Boat Ramp: it is recommended to pave this parking in order to facilitate more efficient removal of sediment after a flood.
- Yellow Banks Boat Ramp: it is recommended to move this boat ramp—see map on page 22.

*Category: Gateway*
Des Moines River Section 5: Yellow Banks to Lake Red Rock

This long stretch is dominated by the effects of Lake Red Rock, an Army Corps of Engineers flood control dam between Knoxville and Pella. The level of water held back by the dam influences this stretch. Paddlers need to be aware that a few feet of difference in water level will mean a drastically different experience including level of currents and access to boat ramps (some disappear in high waters, others are not accessible in low water). Careful planning is a necessity and future marketing efforts will need to communicate how to judge the potential dangers. Effort should be made to make current access points more dependable and not susceptible to closures due to high water. It is also recommended that public access be negotiated at the Webb’s Camping Resort which is currently the only dependable access at the mid-point of this stretch of river.

Wayfinding within the river channel is also recommended as at high water levels it can be difficult to follow the flooded river channel. Likewise, better signage of existing boat accesses along the river’s edge is recommended. Some are difficult to spot while paddling.

While this section may not be for the beginner paddler, it is full of off-water resources including incredible birding. Great egrets, white pelicans, eagles, green herons and double-crested cormorants all call this river home. Significant investment should be made to add soft trails to the greenspaces along the water so that those that do not paddle can enjoy the diversity of birds and other wildlife that can be seen here.

Category: Recreational
## Key Projects

### Sections 1 and 2: Hwy 210 to Birdland Marina

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<th>Location</th>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Key Amenities</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity Hub</td>
<td>High Trestle Trail Crossing</td>
<td>Army Corps of Engineers</td>
<td>• Soft trails</td>
<td>• Capitalize on the trail traffic and bring people down to the water.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Wading area</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Birding amenities and interpretive signage</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Wayfinding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carry-Down Access</td>
<td>Hwy 17</td>
<td>Army Corps of Engineers</td>
<td>• Wayfinding signage</td>
<td>• Low maintenance design for access and infrastructure</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Parking</td>
<td>• Emphasize security, this will be a more remote access with less surrounding activity</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Lighting</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Trash cans</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft Trails</td>
<td>North side of river north of the lake</td>
<td>Army Corps of Engineers</td>
<td>• Wayfinding and interpretive signage</td>
<td>• Keep area wild while adding some public access</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Benches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portage</td>
<td>Saylorville Dam</td>
<td>Army Corps of Engineers</td>
<td>• Wayfinding and interpretive signage</td>
<td>• Direct, paved connection to the river south of the dam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Minimal access point</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity Hub</td>
<td>Cottonwood Access</td>
<td>Army Corps of Engineers</td>
<td>• Fishing access and cleaning station</td>
<td>• The carry-down access will be removed as an official access point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Lighting</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Programming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity Hub</td>
<td>Prospect Park</td>
<td>Des Moines</td>
<td>• Fishing access and cleaning station</td>
<td>• Wayfinding for both the water trail and connections to the Neil Smith Trail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Benches, picnic areas, scenic views</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Improved motor boat access</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Hub</td>
<td>Riverpoint Place</td>
<td>Polk County</td>
<td>• Livery and shuttle service</td>
<td>• Wayfinding to surrounding businesses and transit connections</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Signage to surrounding amenities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Restrooms, lighting</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Improved carry-down access</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Hub</td>
<td>Union Park</td>
<td>Des Moines</td>
<td>• Fishing access and cleaning station</td>
<td>• Regional park connections to the Ding Darling Greenway and Urban Wildlife Refuge through programming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Benches, picnic areas, scenic views</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Improved motor boat access</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Improve marina and fishing access</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Livery and shuttle service</td>
<td>• Manage use conflicts in a high activity area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Signage to restaurants, businesses, and amenities</td>
<td></td>
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*Additional initiatives can be found in the Policies and Practices Booklet*
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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Key Amenities</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic Hub</td>
<td>Botanical Gardens</td>
<td>Des Moines</td>
<td>• Carry-down access&lt;br&gt; • Rentals and outfitter possible at the Armory Building</td>
<td>• Complement and capitalize on Botanical Garden’s activities and expertise for programming opportunities&lt;br&gt; • Start of the whitewater loop&lt;br&gt; • Pedal to paddle opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity Hub</td>
<td>Iowa Women of Achievement Bridge</td>
<td>Des Moines</td>
<td>• Sitting/viewing area for whitewater loop&lt;br&gt; • Carry-down access&lt;br&gt; • Natural vegetation&lt;br&gt; • Fishing outcroppings</td>
<td>• Make use of current excess parking rather than building new&lt;br&gt; • Consider drop-off and park designs&lt;br&gt; • Pull-out point for whitewater loop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity Hub</td>
<td>Court Ave</td>
<td>Des Moines</td>
<td>• Existing amenities at Hub Spot&lt;br&gt; • Add carry-down access</td>
<td>• Create connections to Court Ave., the Riverwalk, and the Downtown Farmers Market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Hub</td>
<td>Principal Park</td>
<td>Des Moines</td>
<td>• Carry-down and emergency access&lt;br&gt; • Wading area&lt;br&gt; • Restrooms</td>
<td>• Partner with the Iowa Cubs to create mutually beneficial recreation opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity Hub</td>
<td>Scott Ave.</td>
<td>Des Moines</td>
<td>• Carry-down access&lt;br&gt; • Improved parking&lt;br&gt; • Fishing outcroppings&lt;br&gt; • Activity areas</td>
<td>• Connect with trails for pedal to paddle opportunities&lt;br&gt; • Connect across river to Mullet’s area and trails</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Key Projects

**Sections 4 and 5: Harriet St to Lake Red Rock**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Key Amenities</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity Hub</td>
<td>Harriet St Access</td>
<td>Des Moines</td>
<td>• Improve access</td>
<td>• Use programming and signage to connect to downtown activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Fish cleaning station</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Parking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity Hub</td>
<td>Pleasant Hill</td>
<td>Pleasant Hill</td>
<td>• Fishing access and cleaning station</td>
<td>• Improve the current access point with greater amenities and maintenance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Boat Ramp</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Restrooms, lighting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Expand parking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move Access</td>
<td>Yellowbanks</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>• Move access to west end of the park</td>
<td>• Keep space natural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Add fishing space and amenities</td>
<td>• Major step towards regional park system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation</td>
<td>Harriet St to</td>
<td>Des Moines/ Pleasant Hill</td>
<td>Trail on north side of river</td>
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<tr>
<td>Area</td>
<td>Pleasant Hill</td>
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<td>• Portage point to lakes on north side</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>• Birding access</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Hub</td>
<td>Runnels</td>
<td>Runnels</td>
<td>• Trails connecting to city</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Parking, lighting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Carry-down access</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Regional Park System**

A significant amount of contiguous parkland exists along the Des Moines River. There is great benefit in beginning to connect the individual parks – Saylorville Lake, Ding Darling Greenway, Prospect Park, Union Park – and treat them as an integrated Des Moines River Regional Park System. While owned and managed by different governments, they are enjoyed by citizens throughout the region regardless of their residency. Beginning to view these parks as a connected park system would lead to improved planning of amenities, synergies in management and maintenance, and improved marketing of the various experiences offered within this segment of the water trails and greenways system.
Throughout the public engagement process, dam mitigation was heard again and again as crucial to unlocking the potential of the Des Moines River. Downtown Des Moines is a massive economic and activity center with numerous destinations including the Botanical Garden, Science Center, Hub Spot, Simon Estes Amphitheatre, and Brenton Plaza. Downtown enjoys an active waterfront with anglers, bicyclists, families and businesses, but suffers from an inactive river as there is currently no access on the water between the dams.

The feedback heard from the public clearly expressed a desire to see what could be done with the downtown dams to allow greater access and activity as long as the pool of water upstream could be maintained at low-flow levels with the flash-boards installed.

With this in mind, in May 2016 the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization hired Bolton & Menk Inc. to develop concept drawings visualizing different possibilities for mitigating the dams in downtown Des Moines. These drawings highlighted several options for edge conditions and channel conditions including a more natural and a more programmed look.
Following the Downtown Dam Debate hosted by the Des Moines Register and a more general survey pushed out in May, the finalized vision for the Des Moines River between the dams was conceived.

Below are the two finalized drawings of the river at the Iowa Women of Achievement Bridge and at the confluence with the Raccoon River. At the first location, the in-river conditions allow for both a calm paddling experience as well as a recreational whitewater channel for paddling and tubing. The river elevation is stair-stepped down to maintain the pool levels upstream. The riverbanks mix natural vegetation and environmental restoration practices with recreational spaces. The confluence area provides the calmed river access and passage. As fishing is already one of the most popular activities along the river, both areas provide expanded areas for fishing through rock outcroppings and accesses.

These drawings were guided by extensive public engagement and are intended as a visionary tool for local and regional partners who wish to expand access to the Des Moines River in downtown Des Moines. These are not fully engineered designs and would require greater technical analysis and public engagement before making a final decision on dam mitigation.
Section 1: Highway 210

Experience

This segment of the Des Moines River offers a stretch of quiet paddling north of the lake, though the water levels are often quite shallow and navigation through the channels just north of the lake are very difficult.

The lake itself offers great experiences for motor boats, anglers and trail users with ample amenities and activities.
Section 2: Saylorville Dam

Experience

This segment of the Des Moines River is currently used by rowers, motor boats, paddlers, anglers and many others. With established access points and connected user groups, this stretch can feel crowded at times, but is well supported and active.
to Birdland Marina

Color Codes
- Existing
- Potential
- Modifications

Amenities
- Carry-down Access
- Boat Access
- Fishing Access
- Wading Access
- Birding
- Portage
- Sailing
- Point of Interest

Potential Hubs
- Economic Hub
- Activity Hub

Other Icons
- Mile Marker
- Des Moines River
- County Boundary
- Conservation and Park Land (Public)
- Floodplain

Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities
- Trail Needed
- Existing
- Future
Section 3: Downtown Des Moines
Experience

This segment of the Des Moines River is a great area for beginner paddlers. Wildlife is abundant and there are many unique views from the river.

It is also a popular fishing area with anglers in flat-bottomed boats.
Section 4: Harriet Street to Yellowbanks Park

**Color Codes**
- Existing
- Potential
- Modifications

**Amenities**
- Carry-down Access
- Boat Access
- Fishing Access
- Wading Access
- Birding
- Portage
- Sailing
- Point of Interest

**Potential Hubs**
- Economic Hub
- Activity Hub

**Other Icons**
- Mile Marker
- Des Moines River
- County Boundary
- Conservation and Park Land (Public)
- Floodplain

**Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities**
- Trail Needed
  - Existing
  - Future
Experience

The final segment of the Des Moines river is a much more challenging experience, especially as you approach the channels near Lake Red Rock. This area just before Lake Red Rock requires significant experience to navigate and GPS tools are encouraged to find your way.
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
Imagine an afternoon playing on a whitewater course in downtown Des Moines. You rent river tubes from Brenton Plaza, jump in the water, and float down beginner’s side of the river, over soft riffles where the Center Street Dam used to be. You get out near Court Avenue, walk back to the beginning, and jump back in for another lap. Your family relaxes on a viewing deck on the bank until it’s time for lunch at a nearby restaurant. Feeling brave, you trade in the river tube for a kayak and sign up for lessons on the adventure course on the more challenging whitewater side of the river.