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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.

**This Booklet**
The Greater Des Moines Water Trails and Greenways Plan looks at more than 150 miles of waterways. This booklet provides an overview of Fourmile and Mud Creeks, 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

Fourmile Creek and Mud Creek have received much attention the past few years. With the development of watershed plans to improve the water quality and flooding impact of both creeks, as well as, the recent kick-off of the development of a master plan for the Fourmile Creek greenbelt, great things are in store for creeks on the east side of the metro. Recommendations listed here are meant to echo and compliment these other planning efforts.

Access and Connections
While there are less opportunities for in-water activity in these creeks compared to other waterways in the area, the trails running adjacent to these creeks offer multiple uses. Currently trail users lack visual connections with the creek. Attention should also be paid to creating spaces for trail users to interact with the creek. These connections could include soft trails for birdwatching, safe places for families to enter the creek to wade and play, rock step-downs to wade in the water, places to sit and enjoy the view, public art to interpret the ecology of the creeks, and fishing nodes. Maintenance along the trail should focus on opening up the scrubby barrier between the trail and the creek at key points along the way.

Existing and future parkland along the creek offers key locations for the enhanced play and access. Fourmile Creek Community Center is recommended as one of the activity hubs. The play features at the community center could be greatly enhanced if interaction with the creek were integrated.

Programming and Conservation
Interpretation of the hydrology is highly recommended along the trails running adjacent to the creeks. This would offer a unique opportunity for citizens to learn about the nature of water quality and flooding challenges. Interpretive signage integrated with public art is recommended along the creeks.

Additional stream restoration and watershed improvements should be implemented according to the Fourmile Creek Watershed Plan and the Mud, Camp, Spring Creeks Watershed Plan. Whenever possible, the 100-year floodplain should be protected and maintained as a habitat corridor.
## Key Projects

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<th>Project</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Jurisdiction</th>
<th>Key Amenities</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
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| Activity Hub  | Chichaqua Valley Trail            | Polk County  | • Wading area                  | • Make area visible from the trail  
• Fishing access  
• Trail connections                                           |
| Activity Hub  | Fourmile Community Center         | Des Moines   | • Wading area                  | • Create connections and programming that highlight the community center       |
| Economic Hub  | Anderson Elementary School        | Bondurant    | • Fishing access  
• Wading area  
• Soft trails                                                  | • Connect to the elementary school through trails and programming  
• Expand park lands along creek                                    |
| Activity Hub  | NE of NE 80th St and 9th St NW    | Altoona      | • Fishing access  
• Wading area  
• Picnic tables                                                 | • Capitalize on public lands to create an area of rest and respite |
| Future Park   | NE 80th ST and 9th St NW          | Altoona      | • Fishing access  
• Wading area                                                   | • Orient future park towards the creek to connect amenities and programming to the water |

### Relevant Links

- [Fourmile Creek Watershed Plan](#)
- [Mud, Camp, Spring Creeks Watershed Plan](#)
- [State of the Rivers Report](#)
Fourmile Creek

Northwest Segment

Southeast Segment
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 spending a hot summer day playing with your kids in the cool mud along Fourmile Creek. You relax at a picnic table while your kids wade into the creek, laughing and jumping in the shallow water. Your youngest child sneaks up on a leopard frog, which jumps out of her reach just before being caught. Before heading home, you top at the rinse station near the restrooms, where the kids wash away the mud, then march to the car wrapped in dry towels.