

Black Hawk County Water Trails Master Plan



What is a Water Trail?

A water trail is a designated route for kayaks, canoes, and other watercraft. The rivers (and sometimes lakes) are the trail.

A major part of the water trails planning process is identifying improvements to each river access. Improvements to parking areas and boat launches will depend on the layout and topography of each individual site. Design of these improvements will be based on best practices and guidance from the Iowa DNR. Improvements must take into account stormwater flow, wheelchair accessibility, loading and unloading, habitat, and riverbank stability at each location.

The Iowa DNR has taken the lead in developing water trails in Iowa. The development of State-designated water trails is classified into four different categories: gateway, recreational, challenge, and wilderness. Gateway routes have the most public amenities, while challenge and wilderness routes are less developed and suited for more experienced paddlers.

Once the Water Trails Master Plan is complete, the Cedar River and Black Hawk Creek are expected to become State-designated water trails. Once each river receives State designation, grant applications for projects along the rivers will likely be more competitive from a statewide standpoint. City and County staff will have supporting documentation ready in advance, and projects will have been vetted through the local planning process.

What is a water trail?

Water trails include a variety of access locations that can be used for trips of various lengths and difficulty. The planning process will identify improvements for each access area and the difficulty of each segment between the accesses.

Below is a map of the existing access points to be included in the Black Hawk County Water Trails Master Plan:

