

## **State water trail designation could boost riverfront investment**

*Great Miami, Stillwater and Mad rivers to make up Great Miami River Watershed Water Trail*

The Great Miami, Mad and Stillwater rivers will be officially designated Ohio Water Trails by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Watercraft (ODNR) at a dedication ceremony on Thursday, Aug. 26, at 5 p.m. at the confluence of the three rivers in Dayton. And officials believe the designation could lead to a boost in riverfront investment.

“The Ohio Water Trail designation is an important component of our efforts to promote river communities – and their businesses,” says Sarah Hippensteel, program development specialist for the Miami Conservancy District.

Studies have shown that kayakers and canoeists can spend more than \$50 a day on food and lodging alone, says Hippensteel.

“And the number of registered canoes and kayaks in Ohio alone saw a 34-percent increase in a five-year span ending in 2008, according to the ODNR Division of Watercraft,” she says. “So, with the increased statewide recognition of our water trails, businesses in our riverfront communities could see more foot traffic in the coming years. Plus, the designation lets people know the rivers are accessible, safe and enjoyable.”

The Ohio Water Trail program not only gives the Great Miami, Mad and Stillwater rivers statewide recognition but will provide additional funding for projects like MCD’s three river recreation maps. The free, waterproof maps show the public access points along the rivers as well as provide a variety of safety information. Since 2004, MCD has distributed more than 45,000 maps.

The three rivers are part of the new Great Miami River Watershed Water Trail – the largest water trail system in Ohio. The trail collectively offers 265 miles of waterway accessible to recreational boaters, fishermen and wildlife watchers.

Much of the water quality in these waterways ranks high. The Great Miami River is perfect for paddlers and offers miles of beautiful streamside forests. The Mad River is well known as a popular trout fishing and canoe

and kayak destination. And the scenic beauty of the Stillwater River attracts paddlers and fishermen from all over the country.

The Great Miami River Watershed Water Trail will join other designated water trails on portions of the Kokosing, Muskingum, Vermilion, and Black rivers; and on Lake Erie's East Sandusky Bay.

The Great Miami River Watershed drains more than 4,000 square miles in all or parts of 15 counties. The major rivers include the Great Miami, Stillwater, and Mad. Originating just upstream from Indian Lake, the Great Miami River flows 156 miles southwest to its confluence with the Ohio River west of Cincinnati. The Mad River flows southwest for 65 miles while the Stillwater River flows southeast for 45 miles and they both join the Great Miami River in Dayton.

The Ohio Water Trails program is administered by the ODNR Division of Watercraft. Its program planning team includes employees from several divisions within the Ohio Department of Natural Resources that works with local partners to promote the awareness of public boating access by developing designated water trails on Ohio waterways

*The Miami Conservancy District (MCD) is a regional government with its boundaries in the Great Miami River Watershed. Created in 1915 to protect the region from flooding, it has evolved over the years to address water resources issues of all kinds including promoting recreation opportunities. MCD has promoted recreation, including parks, bikeways, and water trails since its inception, recognizing that communities that utilize the resources are more likely to want to care for them.*

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