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Press Release
Parks to People: Grant Wood Mississippi River Region
Public Input Sought

Gov. Terry E. Branstad, the Iowa Parks Foundation and the Green Ribbon Commission - a special commission charged with developing a long-term and sustainable strategy to revitalize Iowa's State Parks systems – announced at the end of September that the Grant Wood Mississippi River Region was selected as the location for the first strategic Iowa parks pilot project. The region consists of Jones, Jackson, and Dubuque counties, which includes four state parks (Wapsipinicon, Maquoketa Caves, Bellevue State Park and Mines of Spain), scenic byways (Grant Wood Scenic Byway and the Mississippi River Parkway or Great River Road), and potential for land and water trail development. The Grant Wood Mississippi River Region plans to expand infrastructure; create connections; and improve the structural, economic and community connections to state, county and city parks.

The pilot project will be a public-private partnership - funded by the State Legislature at \$1.9 million and matched 5:1 by local companies, non-profits and citizens. The pilot project will set the precedent for what can be accomplished in a region with dedicated strategic planning and sustainable funding. The region already has a history of successful partnerships that will prove to be helpful in this pilot project.

Lt. Gov. Reynolds stated that the advancement of Iowa's parks system would help improve education and health in Iowa. "We're pleased to announce the Grant Wood Mississippi River Region as the first pilot region and are eager to see the process expand throughout Iowa. Better parks will encourage more Iowans of all ages to get outdoors, learn, and become healthier."

Gov. Branstad believes that the Iowa Parks Foundation and the Green Ribbon Commission's strategic recommendations can create a lasting legacy for Iowa. The Iowa Parks system will celebrate its hundredth anniversary in 2020, and Gov. Branstad sees a great opportunity with park development and beautification in the next several years. "The long term, sustainable success of Iowa's parks will attract successful people to our state, grow jobs, and create a healthier population."

The Grant Wood Mississippi River Region will be hosting public input sessions throughout the three county area in mid-January. Each of the open house sessions will provide an opportunity to learn more about the goals and expectations for this pilot region. These input sessions will also be an opportunity for the public to share their ideas of how to enhance and share our regional recreational resources.

Dave Heiar, Director of the Jackson County Economic Alliance, commented, "The initial phase of the planning process has already creating improved lines of communication and cooperation among the various partners within our three County region. Working collaboratively, we can accomplish much more than we could individually. We are eager to expand this collaborative process by getting input, feedback and ideas from the public."

The regional open house/input sessions will be hosted as follows:

COUNTY	LOCATION NAME	ADDRESS	CITY	DATE	TIME
Jackson Co.	Hurstville Interpretive Center	18670 63th Street	Maquoketa	1/21/2015	5pm-7pm
	Water Street Market	118 North Riverview Drive	Bellevue	1/22/2014	5pm-7pm
Jones Co.	Calkins' Barn	104 East Main Street	Wyoming	1/13/2015	5pm-7pm
	Lawrence Community Center	600 East Main Street	Anamosa	1/20/2015	5pm-7:30pm
	Veteran's Hall	220 E. First St.	Monticello	1/23/2015	11am-2pm
Dubuque Co.	Grand River Center	500 Bell Street	Dubuque	1/21/2015	6pm-8pm
	Dyersville Community Center	625 3rd Avenue Southeast	Dyserville	1/22/2015	6pm-8pm

If you are unable to attend, but wish to share your ideas, please email hockenberry@thejcea.org.