



# Trinity River National Water Trail Master Plan

March 26, 2024

# Background

- ▶ 130 miles of the Upper Trinity River was designated as a National Water Trail in 2020
- ▶ NCTCOG via the Trinity River National Water Trail Task Force supports Trinity Coalition's efforts to:
  - ▶ maintain this designation
  - ▶ partner with organizations and communities along the Water Trail



# Trinity River Trail Map

The Trinity River Water Trail covers

- 130 river miles
- nine cities
- three counties

There are 21 launch sites along its length with access to 3 river tributaries and the main branch

- Clear Fork
- West Fork
- Elm Fork



North Central Texas  
Council of Governments  
Environment & Development

# Master Plan

- ▶ Identify long-range actions that advance:
  - ▶ Tourism
  - ▶ Recreation
  - ▶ Economic Development
- ▶ Provide resources to help communities maintain and develop the Water Trail



# Master Plan Timeline



# Stakeholder Meetings

- ▶ NCTCOG met with 12 stakeholders (i.e., cities, counties, nonprofits)
- ▶ Sought feedback on:
  - ▶ Goals for the Trinity River Corridor
  - ▶ Points of interest to highlight
  - ▶ Challenges and opportunities (e.g., design standards, maintenance, signage, safety, etc.)



# Draft Vision and Mission Statements

**Vision:** *The Trinity River National Water Trail seeks to elevate the value of the Trinity River through community access to the river.*

**Mission:** *This will be achieved by ensuring access is safe and equitable, protecting natural resources, promoting economic and cultural assets, and integrating land trail connections and trail expansion. This Trinity River National Water Trail Master Plan will identify long-range actions to advance these ideas, and to help communities maintain and develop the Water Trail and identify resources.*

# Goals for the Trail



## Develop new entry sites to shorten distances between sites

- ▶ Strategically identify, plan, and implement additional access points and launch sites along the Trinity River to reduce distances between sites on the Water Trail.



## Promote the use of the trail and educate all users

- ▶ Increase awareness, utilization, and understanding of the Water Trail. National water trails represent scenic and recreational waterways with cultural, historical, and natural significance to its area.



## Make the trail more accessible to all

- ▶ Ensure that the Water Trail becomes inclusive and welcoming to individuals of diverse abilities and backgrounds.



# Goals for the Trail



## Maintain condition and safety of the existing and future launch sites

- ▶ Ensure an overall well maintained and safe network of launch sites by providing recommendations that preserve future and existing infrastructure, keep users safe, and minimize environmental impact.



## Promote stewardship along the Trinity River

- ▶ Cultivate a sense of responsibility, care, and active engagement among communities and individuals towards the environmental health and overall quality of the Trinity River.



## Connect the trail to the existing land trails

- ▶ Creating a seamless and integrated recreational network that enhances accessibility and promotes a holistic outdoor experience.

# Goals for the Trail

## Extend the Water Trail further south.



- ▶ Expand the reach of the existing Water Trail to the Gulf Coast.

## Promote the economic benefits of the Water Trail.



- ▶ Showcase the positive economic impacts that the Water Trail system can bring to local communities, businesses, and the broader region.

## Highlight the cultural and historical context of the Water Trail.



- ▶ Enrich the Water Trail experience by bringing attention to the rich heritage and historical significance embedded along its route.

# Develop new entry sites to shorten distances between sites

## Recommendations

- ▶ **Identify Locations:** Identify areas where new entry sites can be established. Consider factors such as existing trail segments, user accessibility, and natural features.
- ▶ **Plan and Design Future Launch Points:** Collaborate with local communities to plan and design new launch sites. Ensure that these sites strategically reduce distances between existing trail segments.

## Action Items

- Complete priority gaps along the trail.
- Identify common priority projects to leverage maximum joint investments.



# Promote the use of the National Water Trail and educate all users

## Recommendations

- ▶ **Community Outreach and Events:** Organize community events, workshops, and guided tours to introduce people to the water trail. Collaborate with local schools, outdoor clubs, and environmental organizations to raise awareness about the benefits of water trails.
- ▶ **Online and Social Media Campaigns:** Leverage social media platforms and websites to share water trail stories, photos, and user experiences. Create engaging content that highlights the beauty of water trails, safety tips, and responsible use.

## Action Items

- Establish regularly scheduled trail focus meetings for additional stakeholder input (tourism and visitors' bureaus, recreation groups, health organizations, etc.).
- Increase sharing of information to improve communication with stakeholders (newsletters, blogs, websites, etc.).

# Make the trail more accessible to all

## Recommendations

- ▶ **Evaluate Existing Barriers:** Identify any physical, language, or financial barriers. Consider factors such as trail surfaces, signage, access points, and amenities.
- ▶ **Implement Universal Design Principles:** Apply universal design principles to create an inclusive experience for all users.

**Accessible Signage and Information:** Install clear and well-designed signage at trailheads, access points, and key locations.

Include information in multiple formats to accommodate different needs.

- ▶ **Collaborate with Stakeholders:** Engage with communities of all genders, ethnicities, cultures, ages, income, and abilities to gather insights on existing challenges.



Poor Design: Steep slope, rugged terrain



Good Design: Wide, sturdy staircase



Example of a launch that is too high!

# Make the trail more accessible to all

## Action Items

- Identify ADA accessible launch sites on the trail.
- Ensure best practice design standards meet accessibility standards, including gentle slopes, firm surfaces, and minimal obstacles.
- Involve individuals with disabilities or advocacy groups in the planning and design process to gather insights and feedback for improving accessibility.
- Conduct outreach and educational programs to raise awareness about trail accessibility, inclusivity, and proper etiquette when sharing the trail with diverse users.



# Maintain condition and safety of the trail and existing and future launch sites

## Recommendations

- ▶ **Regular Inspections and Maintenance:** Establish a routine inspection schedule for all launch sites. Inspect docks, ramps, and access points for signs of wear, damage, or hazards
- ▶ **Education and User Guidelines:** Develop clear guidelines for users regarding safe practices at launch sites. Educate boaters, kayakers, and paddlers on proper launching techniques. Promote responsible behavior, such as cleaning up after use and respecting other users.

## Action Items

- Identify and document best management practices for trail construction and maintenance.
- Enhance tools to electronically collect and report trail conditions on Trinity Coalition's website.
- Maintain cohesive signage throughout the trail and clearly mark hazard areas.

# Promote stewardship along the Trinity River

## Recommendations

- ▶ **River Cleanup Campaigns:** Mobilize volunteers and community groups to participate in regular river cleanup drives. Remove litter, debris, and invasive species from the riverbanks and water to maintain a clean and healthy environment.
- ▶ **Water Quality Monitoring:** Regularly test water samples for pollutants, nutrient levels, and other indicators of river health. Share findings with the public to foster a sense of responsibility.

## Action Items

- Develop and implement volunteer programs to increase volunteer engagement in water trails.
- Work with local organizations, schools, businesses, and government bodies to collectively promote stewardship.
- Distribute information that educates visitors about the ecosystem, conservation practices, and the importance of responsible behavior including guidelines for proper trail use.

# Connect the Trinity River National Water Trail to the existing land trails

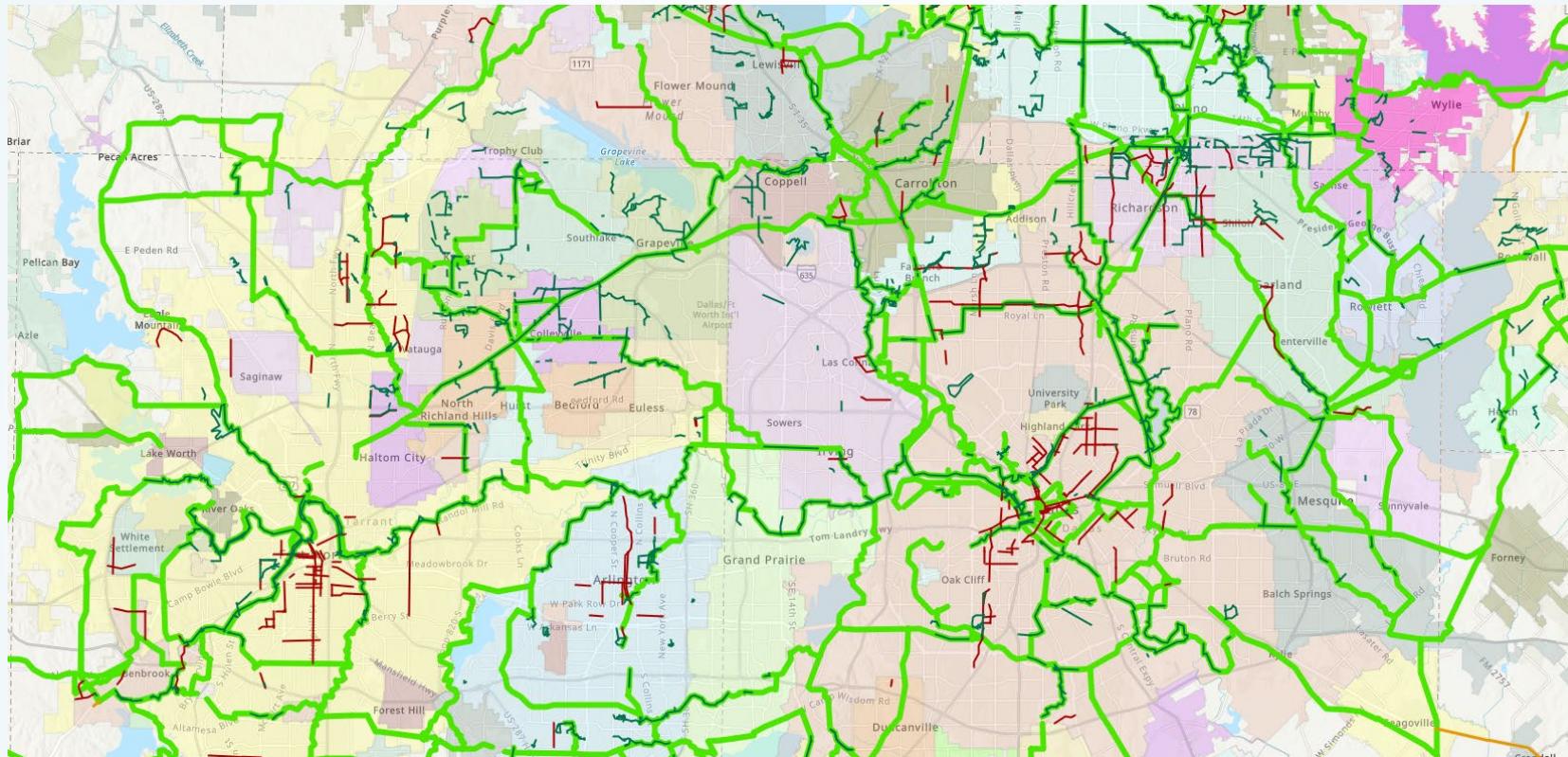
## Recommendations

- ▶ **Trail Connectivity:** Integrate the Water Trail with existing land-based trails. Identify points where the Water Trail can intersect with established hiking, biking, or equestrian trails. Create seamless transitions between water and land routes to enhance user experience.
- ▶ **Highlight Areas of Interest:** Showcase community points of interest that elevate the recreational experience of the water trail.

## Action Items

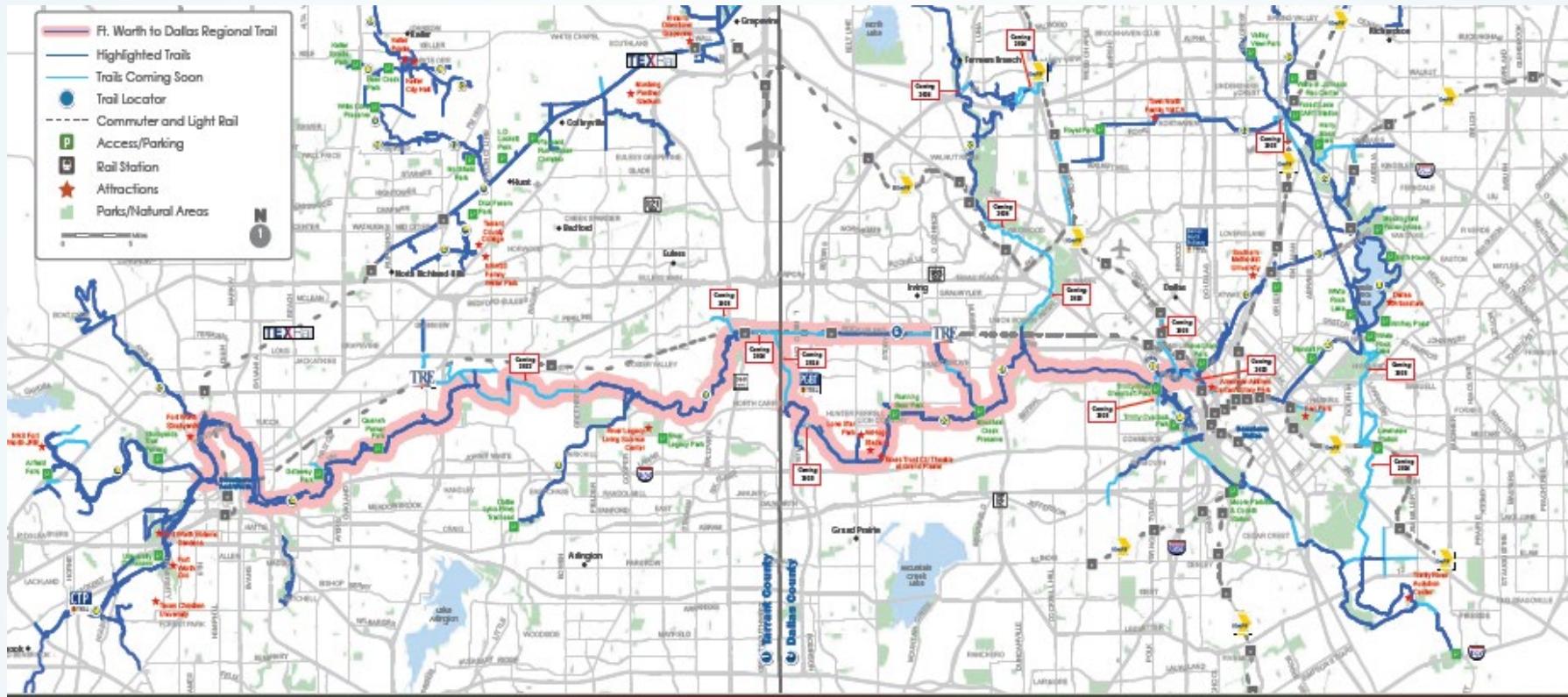
- Create a recreational map that includes the water trail, land trails, bike paths, and points of interest.
- Create guidelines for signage that show the relation of the water trail to existing land trails.

# NCTCOG Veloweb



The active transportation network in the region consists of 8,618 miles of regional shared-use paths (Regional Veloweb), supporting community shared-use paths, and the on-street bikeway network (including on-street wide shoulders in rural areas) in various stages of development.

# DFW Discovery Trail



The DFW Discovery Trail is an initiative of five core cities of the Dallas-Fort Worth Region to create a continuous regional trail from Downtown Fort Worth to Downtown Dallas. Currently various sections of the trail are open in each of the cities. Construction of the remaining trail sections is anticipated to be fully complete in 2024, resulting in a more than 66-mile continuous trail alignment connecting the five cities.



# Extend the National Water Trail further south

## Recommendations

- ▶ **Strategic Trail Planning:** Conduct a thorough assessment of the existing trail network. Identify potential routes and evaluate their feasibility for extending the Water Trail southward. Collaborate with local stakeholders, landowners, and agencies to secure necessary permissions and rights-of-way.
- ▶ **Community Engagement:** Engage local communities and raise awareness about the extended Water Trail. Host public meetings, workshops, and educational events to involve residents in the planning process. Encourage community stewardship and pride in the expanded trail system.

# Extend the National Water Trail further south

## Action Items

- Collaborate with Trinity River Corridor Councils of Governments
  - Heart of Texas Council of Governments
  - Houston-Galveston Area Council
  - Brazos Valley Council of Governments).
- Expand The National Water Trail to additional NCTCOG communities



# Promote the economic benefits of the trail

## Recommendations

- ▶ **Tourism Marketing Campaigns:** Develop targeted marketing campaigns that highlight the Water Trail's unique features. Collaborate with visitor bureaus to promote the Water Trail as a must-visit destination.
- ▶ **Economic Impact Studies:** Conduct studies to quantify the economic impact of the Water Trail. Assess spending by trail users to use as data to advocate for investments in trail development.
- ▶ **Trailside Businesses and Services:** Promote establish businesses near the Water Trail.

## Action Items

- Complete additional studies on the economic impact and value of the Water Trail.
- Collaborate with Tourism Bureaus to promote ecotourism and recreational activities.
- Promote local businesses and services that cater to recreational activities.
- Identify potential vendors.

# Highlight the cultural and historical context of the trail

## Recommendations

► **Collaborate with Local Historians and Community Leaders:** Engage historians, scholars, and community leaders. Collect oral histories, photographs, and personal accounts related to the river. Host community events, workshops, and storytelling sessions.

## Action Items

- Work with indigenous populations to capture the cultural context of the trail.
- Collaborate with schools and universities to capture the historic context of the trail.
- Consult U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Cultural Resources Report.

# Next Steps: Challenges and Opportunities

1. Safety Markings and Communication Plans
2. Design Best Practices
3. Maintenance Plans
4. Signage
5. Political Buy-in and Support
6. User Promotion and Education
7. Economic Development and Tourism
8. Funding

# Contact

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