

The Dallas County Conservation Board and the cities of Dallas Center and Waukee are pleased to announce the completion of the Raccoon River Valley Trail segment between the two communities. You are invited to join us for a ribbon cutting to celebrate this great accomplishment!

WHO: The Dallas County Conservation Board and Cities of Dallas Center & Waukee

WHAT: Ribbon Cutting Celebration

WHERE: 270th Street [Meredith Drive] at the Raccoon River Valley Trail intersection (see map)

WHEN: Saturday, October 15th, 2011 at 9:00 AM

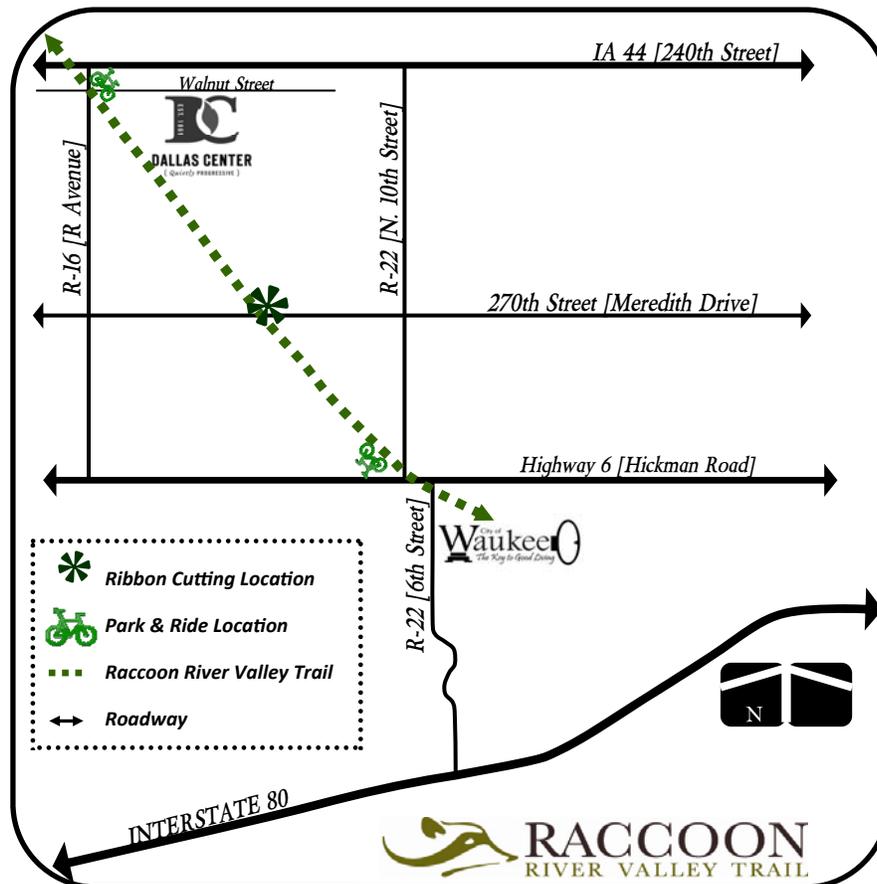
Please RSVP: Becky Schuett, bschuett@waukee.org or call (515) 987-4522

*** Everyone is encouraged to bike, walk, or run to the event ***

Dallas Center - leaving from Walnut St. trailhead at 8:30 a.m.

Waukee - leaving from Highway 6 trailhead at 8:40 a.m.

* For additional information please contact: Matt Jermier, Parks and Recreation Director for Waukee at: (515) 978-0007 *



history of the trail...



The Raccoon River Valley Trail uses the former right-of-way of a railroad built in the 1870s and early '80s to connect the city of Des Moines with the Iowa Great Lakes region in the northwest part of the state. For more than 50 years, it was a popular rail line, taking many vacationers from central Iowa right to the shores of Storm Lake, the Okobojis and Big Spirit Lake.

By 1952, however, when the easy availability of automobiles had changed the public's preference in traveling, passenger service on the Milwaukee Road was discontinued. The line was used by freight trains another 35 years. In 1982, it was purchased by the Chicago and Northwestern Transportation Company, but the farm crisis in the mid 1980s led to a discontinuation of any rail service on the route. When the Chicago & Northwestern began considering abandoning the route, the Central Iowa Energy Cooperative (CIECO), an affiliate of the Central Iowa Power Cooperative, purchased the right-of-way in late 1987.

Its new life as a recreational trail was about to begin. CIECO, the Iowa Trails Council, and the Conservation Boards from Dallas and Guthrie Counties came to an agreement in late '87 to allow the development of a multi-use trail on the right-of-way.

The first section of the Raccoon River Valley Trail opened on Oct. 7, 1989, with a 34-mile route completed in 1990 from Waukee to Yale. A 12-mile addition from Jefferson south to Herndon was completed in 1997, with Greene County Conservation becoming part of the consortium owning and operating the RRVT. In 1999, a five-mile extension was completed east from Waukee to connect with the Green Belt Trail in the Des Moines suburb of Clive, and another five miles of trail was completed to link Herndon and Yale in northern Guthrie County.

In 2001, the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, one of the state's premier trail-developing organizations, helped the counties' Conservation Boards complete the purchase of the right-of-way from CIECO. The purchase was made possible by an Iowa Trails Grant from the Iowa Department of Transportation.

The former railroad right-of-way on which the 33-mile "North Loop" of the RRVT is being constructed, was purchased in late 2007 from the Union Pacific Railroad. It runs northwest from Waukee through Dallas Center and Minburn to Perry, then swings west through Dawson and Jamaica before it intersects again with the RRVT in the unincorporated town of Herndon.

Bicyclists, joggers, walkers, skaters, campers, cross-country skiers, birdwatchers, hunters, fishermen, naturalists and snowmobilers all use the RRVT, or at least those portions of the trail that are opened to specific uses.

In recent years, the Conservation Board directors have estimated that more than 125,000 people per year are using the RRVT. With the connection into the metro trail system now completed in Des Moines, as well as the new North Loop being completed on the RRVT, the number of users is expected to mushroom in the years ahead. The Dallas County Conservation Board and the cities of Dallas Center and Waukee are excited for the opportunities created by the recently completed 5.5 mile segment linking these two active communities!



above: completed trail through Dallas Center



above: completed trail through Waukee