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Water Trails:

The (municipality name) supports the development of the Shiawassee River National Water Trail along the Shiawassee River through the [municipality name] as shown in [Map X]. The river is approximately (length in miles) through (municipality name) and extends from X location to Y.

Development of the water trail through the [municipality name] is part of a 120-mile long trail traversing through communities in Oakland, Genesee, Shiawassee, and Saginaw counties. This water trail--sometimes referred to as a paddling trail or a canoeing/kayaking trail--would essentially identify part of the Shiawassee River as a navigable waterway that could accommodate low-impact, human-powered watercraft such as canoes and kayaks. Such small watercraft typically creates “no wake” and embraces the "Leave No Trace" code of outdoor ethics, which would promote the responsible use and enjoyment of the ecologically-sensitive marsh areas along the River.

The water trail would further serve as a place for solitude and respite from the urban environment, while providing educational and recreational opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts. The trail can also serve to create economic opportunities in supporting existing business as well as creating new businesses that cater to river paddlers.

Important factors for establishing a water trail are the provision of safe and convenient access to a navigable waterway with unobstructed passageways. A launch site or public access point is already established [location]. Additional launch sites in the [municipality name] could be established [locations]. An emergency only access is proposed at [location].

These launch sites and/or public access points are maintained and include [amenities]. Other water trail improvements could include clearing logjams for navigability, installing wayfinding and educational signs, and providing safe portaging areas. In addition, narrow or low underpasses (i.e. small culverts or low bridges) should be replaced with larger openings, when reconstruction is warranted. Large box culverts or higher bridges are recommended, provided that the floodwater flow and storage capacity is not significantly affected, which is subject to approval by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. Since bridges or overpasses may not be reconstructed for a period of time or not at all, an alternative is to provide safe portaging areas. A durable path should be provided for carrying watercraft, which should consist of more natural, less engineered facilities, such as submerged pavers with openings for vegetation to grow through to help retain the natural river bank appearance, along with providing proper roadside signage forewarning motor vehicle traffic of potential portage crossings.

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Definitions:

A "water trail" is an officially designated trail along a waterway or portion of waterway that usually contains a sufficient water level to navigate a small watercraft such as a canoe or kayak with unobstructed passageways while providing safe and convenient access points (put-in and take-out points). Support facilities for water trails may include parking areas, restrooms, signage and picnic areas.

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Plan Implementation:

A detailed water trail plan helps guide development of a Shiawassee River Water Trail. It identifies improvements for trail-related facilities to help establish a safe and navigable trail corridor for both recreational and educational pursuits in an ecologically sensitive manner. The designation of an official water trail may further instill a sense of trail stewardship among canoeists/kayakers to respect the quality of the water and become good caretakers of the river. Specific trail improvements and support facilities that should be identified on the plan may include providing parking facilities, restrooms, handicapped access, and picnicking areas; removing litter and fallen trees for navigability; installing wayfinding and educational signs; and improving underpasses or providing safe portaging areas with durable paths and crossing signs.