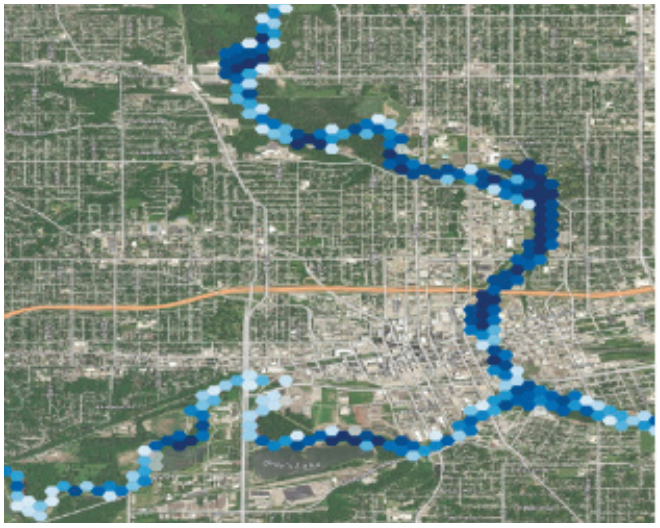
Economic Benefits of ICON Access Points

Client:	ICON Water Trails
Location:	Des Moines, IA
Study Period:	Feb – Nov 2023

BACKGROUND

Central Iowa's waterway access points, managed by Iowa Confluence (ICON) Water Trails, play a crucial role in regional economic growth and community enrichment. With nearly 87% of Iowans prioritizing water-based recreation, ICON's sites not only offer outdoor recreation opportunities but also stimulate local businesses. Despite the desire for water-based recreation, 10% of Iowans are unaware of local recreation opportunities, representing untapped potential for the outdoor recreation economy.



Central Iowa River Use Heatmap

SCOPE OF WORK

The goal of this analysis was to estimate the economic benefits of ICON's access points and project the potential benefits of integrating new access points into the ICON network.

The project evaluated ICON's water trails' direct economic impacts, including consumer spending, job creation, and tax contributions in Polk County. Additionally, it assessed the non-market benefits of these sites, including physical activity benefits and consumer surplus from river recreation.

To overcome the challenges of sparse and inconsistent visitation data, Radbridge developed a machine learning model that combined observed data with mobile location data to estimate visitation to unique ICON sites and categorize visitors as local or nonlocal.

RESULTS

This multifaceted analysis provides useful insights for future park development and budget allocation. Key findings from the analysis included:

- **Visitation:** The analysis estimated 252,000 visits to ICON access points, with non-local visitors comprising 31% of all visits.
- **Economic Impact:** Visitor spending exceeded $11 million, supporting 112 jobs and generating nearly $3.4 million in wages.
- **Tax Contributions:** Visitor spending contributed approximately $1.3 million in state, county, and city taxes.
- **Non-market Benefits:** ICON's access points generated a consumer surplus of $12.7 million in 2022, representing the value visitors place on these sites beyond their direct spending.
- **Health Benefits:** Recreational activities at these sites led to an estimated $16.7 million reduction in healthcare costs.

CONTACT

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