

# Marketing Information

## Marketing Themes and Target Market Identification

Marketing themes help a tourism destination “package” their sites, attractions and services in ways that help set them apart from the competitive marketplace.

Effective marketing cannot occur without matching the product with the markets. Target markets are those individuals or groups interested in the intrinsic qualities or distinctive products and services of the Minnesota River Valley. Target marketing reduces promotional costs and aims promotional messages at markets appropriate for the Byway. It also selectively promotes the Byway to these markets to carefully manage the numbers of people using this sensitive resource.

The following are categories of new marketing opportunities that the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway should consider. Some are visitor markets that offer expansions or modifications on current markets; other markets are entirely new segments that the Byway can attract in either the short or long term.

The strategies that suggest Targeted Geographic Markets, Targeted Publications, and Targeted Mailing Lists were abstracted from data collected from *The Lifestyle Market Analyst*, an annually updated database of consumer segment groups collected from over 16.9 million U.S. households. Data is analyzed in terms of geographical distribution (cities across U.S.), lifestyle (type of activity)



households (number of households participating in activity in geographic area) and index (the rate of participation of this geographic group in comparison to the total U.S.).

### **Birdwatchers**

This is a growing segment of the environmental tourism market and one that Big Stone National Wildlife Reserve, Lac qui Parle Wildlife Management Area, and other public lands along the river area are attracting in growing numbers. It is likely that this market could be a steady and year round source of revenue for local tourism businesses. Of particular importance, however, is to provide quality and distinctive lodging options that these consumers are looking for. Members of this market will seek out Bed & Breakfasts and inn-type lodging experiences over camping, RVing and motels.

#### **Strategies:**

1. Become active leaders in the Audubon Bird Trail Project.
2. Identify birding chapters in surrounding states and Canada and invite them to the ongoing birding festivals.
3. Work with Big Stone and Madison to promote event in such publications as *Bird Watcher's Digest*, *Birder's world*, *Birding*, and *Wildbird Magazine*.
4. Create birdwatchers' tools, such as bird-lists, self-guided birding tours of hot spots, and a list of local bird guides for hire.
5. Create a website for birding along the Minnesota River.
6. Targeted Publications: *Birders' World*, *Bird Watchers Digest*, *Birding*, *Earthwatch*, *North American Birds*, and *Wildbird*.
7. Targeted Geographic Markets: Cedar Rapids- Waterloo- Dubuque, Des Moines-Ames, Fargo-Valley City, Indianapolis, Rochester-Mason City, Sioux City, Sioux Falls-Mitchell

### **Native American and Western History Enthusiasts**

The Minnesota Valley played an important part in the overall story of the immigration for many European families. The broader story of the "Wild West" with all its mythology and character is one that began in places like the Minnesota River Valley. For those traveling across Minnesota on their way westward, the River Valley would be a good launching point, a place where travelers would develop a better sense of the origins of the people who moved into the Far West. It is not likely that these types of travelers consider beginning their Western tour along the Valley. Marketing and education regarding these themes are needed.



**Strategies:**

1. Work with university faculty to host educational symposiums and field trips on Dakota history.
2. Encourage tribal involvement in all events regarding Native American history along Byway. Work with the State Historic Sites to cooperate on festivals, events and activities.
3. Identify local historical societies develop a two-day package for them to participate in programs and activities.
4. Place article on Dakota Conflict history and Byway in in-flight magazine of Northwest Airlines or invite travel writers that traditionally write for history-based publications.
5. Targeted Geographic Markets: Cedar Rapids- Waterloo- Dubuque, Des Moines-Ames, Fargo-Valley City, La Crosse-Eu Claire, Madison, Mankato, Mpls-St. Paul, Rochester-Mason City, Sioux City, Sioux Falls-Mitchell

**Minnesota History Enthusiast**

The Minnesota River has an impressive set of stories that have played an important role in the history of the state and in the colonization of the Western U.S., but this story is not easily available for visitors. Many Minnesota residents with an interest in state history would enjoy traveling the Valley if the story were more accessible. A strong interpretive program will be very appealing to this market segment that fully describes the two interpretive themes, *Struggle for a Home* and *Food for a Nation*.

**Strategies:**

1. Identify local historical association chapters and create tour packages to market to these groups.
2. Market packages to senior citizen groups and to banking institutions that provide travel services to clients.
3. Package study tours, cultural tours, and folklore pilgrimages that include lodging, ethnic meals, and tour guides for area.
4. Work with MN Historical Society to package these products and promote through their statewide network.
5. Targeted Geographic Markets: La Crosse-Eu Claire, Madison, Mankato, Mpls-St. Paul, Rochester-Mason City, Sioux City, Sioux Falls-Mitchell

**European Heritage Enthusiasts**

The Germanic and Scandinavian heritage of many of the River Valley communities and the living culture that can still be found along the Valley could be further strengthened as a tourism theme and marketing tool. New Ulm is an obvious example of how successful this strategy can be. To a lesser degree, communities



such as Milan, Granite Falls, and Madison also target this market. These communities should be linked and integrated into a Valley Cultural Tour Program.

**Strategies:**

1. Work with Office of Tourism to package tours for international group tour meetings, ITB, Swiss Visit North America Seminar, national POW WOW, and to promote Byway as destination at all international sales calls, particularly Germany and Scandanavia.
2. Work with Office of Tourism to create packages to present to the Great Lakes of North America group for sales.
3. Work with Office of Tourism to ensure Visit USA Committees to Sweden, Norway and Finland have packages and promotions.
4. Work with Office of Tourism ongoing partnership with Icelandairs's trade shows and promotions and create custom itineraries that package the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway.
5. Target historical societies in Wisconsin, Iowa and Illinois and South Dakota for direct mail packages to visit Byway.
6. Targeted Geographic Markets: Cedar Rapids- Waterloo-Dubuque, Des Moines-Ames, Fargo-Valley City, La Crosse-Eu Claire, Madison, Mankato, Mpls-St. Paul, Rochester-Mason City, Sioux City, Sioux Falls-Mitchell

**Agri-Tourists**

The Minnesota River Valley's rich agricultural heritage and the evidence of that richness today make it a candidate for agri-tourism. The state cooperative extension office is encouraging farmers to consider this as an income supplement. The growing movement of sustainable and organic farming along the River Valley has lead to a new, exciting farm fresh product movement.

The Valley would be appealing to both traveling farm families and others with an interest in farming. Groups such as Farm Bureau and co-ops often organize tours for their members to go to other areas and tour farms and generally sight see. The Valley should consider how it might be able to develop an integrated and educational farm tour program that could be marketed to specialty and mass markets. In addition, non-farmer travelers have a great interest in farming. This is especially the case for families with children. Part of the overall farm-marketing program should be a component that offers visitors the chance to safely get up close and personal with aspects of farming.



**Strategies:**

1. Complete the Agri-tour guides and further develop farmstay and/or tour programs.
2. Target senior citizen groups, many who at one time lived or worked on a farm in their early years.
3. Research the farmstay programs that are highly successful in Iowa and New Zealand.
4. Targeted Geographic Markets: Indianapolis, Kansas City, Mankato, Mpls-St. Paul, Rochester-Mason City, Sioux City, Sioux Falls-Mitchell

**Gardening and Botany Enthusiasts**

The most obvious Valley resource of interest to people who are plant lovers and students would be the natural and reestablished populations of short and tall grass prairies. These plant populations and the experience they offer would be of interest to almost any traveler, but those with an affinity for botany or gardening would stay an extra day or two to fully experience these places. Initiatives such as the Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Preservation Area as well as locally and state designated prairie preserves, scientific and natural areas, and prairie pothole restorations are bringing back the outstanding natural resources that once flourished along the Byway.

In addition, it is likely that the farms along the Valley offer a good selection of gardens that could be integrated into a tour. The emergence of alternative agriculture means that the small farms and market gardeners have interesting stories to tell of how they are cultivating their crops. Bringing tourists to these farms will also increase on-farm sales. All of this could be synthesized into a set of tours that would be appealing to garden clubs, horticulture clubs, arboretum members and similar organizations.

**Strategies:**

1. Targeted Publications: *Country Living Gardener, Family Circle Easy Gardening, Horticulture, National Gardening, Sunset Garden Guide, The Old Farmer's Almanac Gardener's Companion, Woman's Day Gardening and Outdoor Living.*
2. Targeted Mailing Lists: *American Horticulture Society, Birds and Blooms (Reiman Publications), Canadian Gardening, Gardening Life Magazine, National Wildlife Federation Gift Catalog, Plow and Hearth, Smithsonian Magazine Gardening Enthusiasts, and Sunset Magazine Subscribers.*
3. Targeted Geographic Markets: Cedar Rapids- Waterloo- Dubuque, Des Moines-Ames, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Madison, Mankato, Mpls-St. Paul, Rochester-Mason City, Sioux City, Sioux Falls-Mitchell



## General Tourists Seeking Novel Lodging Experiences

The presence of the tipis in Upper Sioux State Park is the beginning of what could be a much larger strategy to develop alternative rustic lodging throughout the byway. Tipis, sod houses, yurts, stubburs and other alternative shelters could be developed by private owners at relatively low costs and thus offer travelers with an inclination toward camping a variety of interesting outdoor experiences. This would also fit well with the “Struggles for a Home” interpretive theme.

### **Strategies:**

1. Encourage the development of alternative lodging opportunities through conducting workshops and offering technical assistance and funding for increased B & B’s, farmstays, the development of more stubburs, sod homes and tipi sites.
2. Many farms have additional farm houses that are often rented out during hunting season. Encourage farmers to consider adding additional opportunities for guests to stay on a farm in these homes.
3. Targeted Publications: *Car and Travel*, *Country Inns Bed and Breakfast*, *AAA Midwest Traveler*, *Midwest Magazine Network*, *The Motorist*, *Northwest Airlines World Traveler*, and *Midwest Express Magazine*.
4. Targeted Mailing Lists: same as above
5. Targeted Geographic Markets: Cedar Rapids- Waterloo- Dubuque, Des Moines-Ames, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Fargo-Valley City, La Crosse-Eu Claire, Madison, Mankato, Sioux City, Sioux Falls.

## Scenic and Pleasure Driving

One of Americans predominant travel experiences is scenic driving. Clearly, this is a central reason why the National and State scenic byway programs exist. The Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway needs to find ways to get the message out on its scenic drives and provide the necessary shopping and short excursion experiences that the scenic drive market is seeking. Having to drive a long way to then go on a scenic drive is not a workable situation. The Valley needs to package its scenic driving product with other interpretive, educational or recreation experiences that make the two to three hour drive worthwhile for the Twin City resident. In addition, scenic drives need to be offered as side excursions to people visiting the Valley for other reasons.

### **Strategies:**

1. According to the MOT Strategic Marketing Plan, advertising with the MOT for scenic byways for 2000 includes: *Family*



*Motor Coaching, Good Age, Highways, Mature Outlook, Trailer Life, Home & Away, and Midwest Living.* Consider working with MOT to purchase a small ad space marketing the byway.

2. Continue to develop the web site and offer virtual tours of specific sections, based on themes such as wildlife viewing, Native American and European History, outdoor recreation and distinctive shopping and dining.
3. Tap into market groups representing car rallies, antique car shows, and motorcycle tours. These groups are always looking for new routes, services and friendly hospitality along the way.
4. Targeted Geographic Markets: Fargo-Valley City, Mankato, Sioux Falls-Mitchell

## Fishing

While Big Stone Lake and Lac qui Parle are well positioned and deeply tapping into the year round lake fishing market, including ice fishing, the stream fishing market does not seem to be as evident. The overall perception of the Minnesota River as being polluted may have some impact on this. Conversations with local tackle shops suggest that there are some areas of great fishing along the River and this market has growth potential, including a growing number of catfishing opportunities along the River.

### Strategies:

1. Contact fishing and flyfishing shops throughout Midwest with a direct mail advertising campaign that packages fishing at several locations within the Byway Corridor.
2. MOT currently purchases advertising in *In-Fisherman*, *North American Fisherman*, *Walleye Insider*, and *Walleye Guide*, *Bass Guide*. Consider working with this campaign to promote fishing along the Minnesota.
3. Targeted Publications: *Dakota Country*, *Dakota Outdoors*, *Fly Tyer*, *Fly Rod and Reel*, *Flyfishing Retailer*, *Flyfishing and Tying Journal*, and *Walleye Guide*, *Walleye In-Sider*, *Fish and Game Finder Magazine*, *Midwest Outdoors*.
4. Targeted Mailing Lists: *Cabela's Current Buyers and Catalogue Request*, *Cabela's Package Insert Program*, *Crappie World*, *Walleye In-Sider*, *Fly Fishing Specialists/The Angler's Journal*, *Minnesota Waterfowl*, *Midwest Outdoors Active Subscribers*, *Nebraska Big Game*, *North American Fishing Club*, *Iowa Conservationists Magazine Subscribers*, *Wisconsin Outdoor Journal*, and *Warmwater Flyfishing*.
5. Targeted Geographic Markets: Cedar Rapids- Waterloo-Dubuque, Des Moines-Ames, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Madison.



## Canoeists and Kayakers

This market consists of two submarkets. The first is the adventure canoeist who seeks to conquer the next mountain, canoe the great rivers, experience stretches not yet paddled; the second are families or others who seek moderate white water or placid flat water canoeing. The Minnesota River and its tributaries clearly meet the needs of the second group. It is unclear whether it can meet the needs of the first group at some times during the year. Again, as with the fishing marketing, the image of the River as polluted has some impact on the degree to which people in the state and market area consider the Minnesota River a canoeing option. Again, this market is beginning to emerge and there are a growing number of outfitters along the western stretches of the river.

### Strategies:

1. Create canoe packages with canoe outfitters, marketing the packages to youth groups, church groups, summer recreation community programs for cities throughout southern Minnesota. Packages should include lodging, canoe rentals, some meals, shuttle and showers. Market different segments of the river so they come back to complete the circuit.
2. Work with MOT to pursue partnership to acquire mailing lists from Ely and Grand Marais's canoe outfitters.
3. Targeted Publications: *Canoe and Kayak Magazine*, *Sea Kayaker*, *Backpacker*, *Outdoor Guide Magazine*, and *Wisconsin Outdoor Journal*.
4. Targeted Geographic Markets: Cedar Rapids- Waterloo- Dubuque, Des Moines-Ames, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Mankato, Rochester-Mason City, Sioux City, Sioux Falls- Mitchell.

## Bicyclists

The existing road system as well as the gradually growing bike path system offers a largely untapped tourism opportunity. Bicycling is a steady and popular sport. The key to success in this market is getting on the radar screens of cycling clubs, cycling shops and cycling enthusiasts. Bicycling is an ideal adjunct experience for those who are driving the area; however, bicycle rental operations are critical for this market to bloom. At present, there are limited bike rental operations along the river.

### Strategies:

1. Purchase participant lists from large annual biking events throughout Minnesota, Iowa and South Dakota for direct mail advertising.





2. Create bicycling along the Minnesota River publication that identifies bicycling paths, routes and events.
3. Targeted Publications: *Cycling; Bicycling USA, and Bike.*
4. Targeted Mailing Lists: *Bike Magazine Active Subscribers.*
5. Targeted Geographic Markets: Indianapolis, Kansas City, Sioux Falls-Mitchell

### **Gamblers**

The presence of the Firefly Casino and Jackpot Junction allows the Byway to offer a more diverse set of experiences than most scenic byways around the country. The Byway marketing effort should work closely with the casino managers to devise ways to integrate gambling and non-gambling programming at the casinos with the activity and experience packaging occurring along the Byway.

#### **Strategies:**

1. Work closely with the Tribes at both Firefly and Jackpot to collaborate on strategies that would benefit return visits and/or longer stays through packaging alternative activities for non-gaming members of the party or for those interested in other activities.
2. Work with both Casinos to identify their current marketing approach and how both the casino and surrounding communities might benefit from cooperative marketing strategies and the sharing of market data.
3. Targeted Publications: *Casino Player, Lottery and Casino News, Midwest Players, Win Magazine, and Winning!*
4. Targeted Geographic Markets: Indianapolis, Sioux Falls-Mitchell

### **Festivals and Special Events Go-ers**

Communities on or near the Byway host a number of interesting annual events and programs. These key events can draw visitors who enjoy community-based festivals that celebrate local history, culture, arts and recreation. The Byway marketing plan can coordinate these events to attract additional visitors.

#### **Strategies:**

1. Coordinate festivals and events that are currently occurring during the same weekend and create a festival package that include lodging, admissions, ethnic food and itinerary of events for each of the festivals that includes driving time along Byway to each event.
2. Identify which local festivals and events are drawing the largest attendances and work with nearby Byway Communities to offer additional services and attractions that will encourage longer stays or return visits.



## Speciality Shopping Along the Byway

There are unique shops, including antiques, speciality shops, home crafts and art galleries located along the Byway. Several antique and gift shop brochures have been created to list the wonderful offerings throughout the region.

### **Strategies:**

1. Create a logo that identifies shops that have local crafts for sale.
2. Consider a Byway-wide crafts cooperative (possibly juried) that identifies quality handmade crafts venues along Byway.
3. Establish an home-cooking and ethnic restaurant guide that identifies the finest home-cooking restaurants and restaurants with authentic ethnic offerings available.
4. Obtain mailing lists from successful arts and crafts fairs that are hosted in Minnesota, Iowa and South Dakota.

