

Chapter 10 - Segment 1

Browns Valley to Ortonville

Implementation Program

Communities: Browns Valley, Beardsley, Ortonville

Counties: Traverse, Big Stone

I. The Segment's Character and Resources

Character of the area

- Big Stone Lake is the dominant physical feature and defining quality of this area. Historically and today, the primary reason to come to this area is the lake and its surrounding landscape.
- The wide open prairies, grasses, wetlands and the fields and farmlands provide a vast and beautiful backdrop for the lake and river.
- Geologic action exposed large deposits of beautiful red granite. The prehistoric landscape edges of the Ancient River Warren Valley is clearly identifiable.
- The headwaters of the Minnesota River are located in this segment.
- The historic town of Browns Valley and Ortonville's historic commercial district contribute to the historic character of the region. This is reinforced by the history of the Brown Family and its role in establishing the EuroAmerican settlement of the area.



View of Big Stone Lake at wayside rest between Browns Valley and Ortonville

Intrinsic qualities present

- Archeological: Browns Valley Man (10,000 year old skeleton found) represents a significant archeological find and topic for interpretation.
- Cultural: This area has been a regional tourism destination since the early 1900's, drawing annual visitors from throughout the Midwest to recreate at the lake.
- Historic: Big Stone Lake has a rich history as an early 1900's tourism destination, with lakeside and island hotels, and steam boat transportation up and down the lake. The Brown family's role in early frontier settlement of this region is



significant, including Samuel Brown's Ride.

- Natural: Glacial activity formed Lake Agassiz, the ancient River Warren, and finally Big Stone Lake. One of the largest tracts of native prairie still exist in Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge. Migration of waterfowl make this area highly popular for hunting and wildlife viewing.
- Recreational: Some of the most competitive fishing tournaments in the region are held on Big Stone Lake.
- Scenic: The drive offers pleasing views of the lake and dramatic prairie landscapes.

Intrinsic qualities of regional significance

- Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge (nationally recognized wildlife area and only pelican rookery in State).
- Big Stone Lake State Park (state-designated park area).
- Browns Valley Man (one of oldest skeleton remains in US)
- Granite quarries near Ortonville (mahogany granite shipped worldwide).
- Wadsworth Trail (ruts of this historic travel route still visible outside of town).
- Samuel Brown's Cabin (restored cabin used as trading post).



Along the Minnesota

Character management challenges and objectives

1. Haphazard new development could dilute the integrity of downtown Ortonville and Browns Valley. That is, Ortonville must be wary of new development along TH75 that pulls business from the downtown. Browns Valley should be cautious to ensure that new buildings enhance rather than detract from the town center's character.
2. There are several important historic structures in this segment of the byway that may be considered "at risk" and should be stabilized until appropriate use can be determined (e.g., Browns Valley: Main Street Church, Carnegie Library; and Ortonville: Columbian Hotel).
3. Residents of Browns Valley have concerns that development along TH27 will erode the visual quality of that lakeside landscape. Consideration should be given to extending the byway along TH27 to provide additional support and tools for



local officials to manage that corridor.

4. The byway Alliance structure should be used to continually strengthen the many partnerships that exist and to create new partnerships.
5. Along with protection of sites and structures related to human history, equal effort should be placed on the protection of natural habitats and landscapes along the byway. These landscapes are critical qualities to the long term appeal of the byway.
6. Gateways are critical to both the overall image of communities and to the degree that visitors can easily see that they have entered places worth lingering in. Both of Browns Valley's gateways are visually pleasing but need signage to announce the community and its significance and interest. Ortonville's downtown area is defined by the historic lighting and commercial area. Northern and southern entrance needs welcome signage.



Columbian Hotel in Ortonville



II. Tourism Marketing and Product Development

Major products for the visitor

- The area's communities- their history, their shopping, their general appeal for walking around
- Hunting and fishing
- Wildlife viewing experiences
- Lakeside vacationing and recreation
- Water-based recreation
- Historic sites and attractions
- Continental Divide
- Samuel J. Brown's influence- Cabin and Museum
- Historic Wadsworth Trail
- Browns Valley Man Historic Site
- Ortonville Historic Commercial District
- Big Stone County Museum
- Charles Hanson North American Wildlife Collection
- Big Stone Lake
- Big Stone Lake State Park
- Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge
- Headwaters of the Minnesota River
- Granite quarries
- Apple orchards north of Ortonville

Strengths of current visitor experience

- Visitors enjoy outstanding natural resources, including water, wildlife, natural vegetation.
- The area is unspoiled and retains a character that is largely unchanged from 20 years ago.
- Its relatively isolated location from metropolitan areas make the region uncrowded and give it an undiscovered feeling.
- The area provides visitors with good financial value.



Primary existing target markets

- Hunting and fishing enthusiasts
- Watchable wildlife enthusiasts
- Family vacationers at resorts and government lands
- Boaters

Potential new target markets for area

- Birding enthusiasts.
- Off-season return visits by anglers and hunters and their families.
- Boating packages (canoeists, sailing)
- Farm stay packages
- History buffs
- Botany clubs, horticulture and gardening clubs
- Bicyclists

Target geographic markets

- Twin Cities is a 4-5 hour drive from area
- Twin Cities market will largely focus on highly committed outdoor market (e.g. fishing tourney's, hunters) and long week-end vacationers
- Focus on the multi-day nature oriented traveler
- Sioux Falls is a weekend market
- People traveling across Minnesota toward the Badlands, Mount Rushmore, and Yellowstone
- Target states: Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota

Marketing and Product Development Challenges

1. This segment, as with the other segments, must convey to the traveling public a fuller and richer story about the area and why it is an appealing destination. Ads alone will not tell the full story. Efforts must be made to obtain written coverage about the byway in regional and national publications. There are interesting and compelling stories to be told about the lakes history, geology, waterfowl and other natural history topics and the lake and its recreational opportunities.



2. The PrairieWaters marketing coalition is a perfect example of how multiple counties can cooperate for tourism marketing. The challenge for this portion of the byway is to use that structure to focus on a few specific marketing targets each year and to encourage the construction of facilities and infrastructure that support marketing. In addition, consideration should be given to including Browns Valley in the coalition.
3. As noted later in the infrastructure section there is a critical need for a new multi-use visitors center in Ortonville. The marketing implications of this center are great. With a new, more visible center at the intersection of TH75/112 combined with improved signage, the community will likely capture and hold a greater percentage of visitors moving through the area. The facility is critical to telling the broader tourism story to those tourists who visit the lake, but may not be aware of other activities that would encourage a return trip. A multi-use facility with an educational/class component has the potential to enrich the marketing story that the area can tell to prospective travelers.
4. There is a need for a greater number of tools and experiences that will help people enjoy this portion of the byway. Issues to be addressed include the following:
 - As the gateway to the western end of the byway, more material must be produced and placed in Browns Valley. Browns Valley is not listed, mentioned, or located in State 2000 Travel Guide. This must be changed. There are no printed materials on this community or its role in the beginning of the byway.
 - More itineraries and packaged experiences are needed. For example, there are opportunities to create themed tour itineraries with half-day and full day activities, hubbing out of Ortonville. There are a variety of interesting sites both east and west of byway, including South Dakota. Tours can be based on history, shopping, and nature and should offer opportunities for interpretation and hands-on experiences. Explore options for tours of working granite quarries.
 - More events focused on the waterfowl and birding opportunities of the region must be sponsored. Targeting the birding market offers great opportunities for the area.
 - All distinctive shopping opportunities need to be highlighted and promoted. The same is true for all lodging opportunities.



III. Tourism Infrastructure and Visitors Services

Roadways

- From the west, the byway is paved with good sight distances. Close to Ortonville, the road begins to wind and the roadside is heavily wooded.
- There is a need for several pull-offs with interpretation to keep the traveler actively engaged. The byway route becomes confusing south of Ortonville as the traveler has three route options to travel southeast along the river.
- Consideration should be given to a roadside interpretive stop between Beardsley and Browns Valley overlooking the river valley.
- Additional interpretation needs to be added at existing roadside pulloff between Beardsley and Ortonville.
- Biking route designation should be considered from the Alternative Byway Route around Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge to Odessa, around the 8 mile auto-tour route at the N.W.R., and toward Louisburg (limited gravel).

Commercial areas and gateways

- The communities of Browns Valley and Ortonville have the largest commercial areas along this segment of the byway. Both towns have businesses serving local residents and tourists, with many visitors coming to camp or stay at local lake resorts. Ortonville offers most of the services that visitors would need during a multi-day stay. Browns Valley is well suited for a day trip, but does not offer lodging in the town.

Visitor centers

Ortonville has the most established visitor center located at the Big Stone County Museum and lots of information available at the Chamber Office in the downtown area. There are plans for building a new Travel Information Center at the museum site and it is recommended that this concept be expanded to include an educational component and a tourism business incubator. Browns Valley needs some type of formal visitor center to distribute information about the resources of the immediate area and to serve as a gateway for the northern end of the byway.

Signage

There is sufficient signage along the byway for visitors to comfortably follow the route. Generally speaking, there is still a need for the following types of signage:



- signage that announces sites and attractions
- signage to visitor centers, kiosks and chamber offices
- signs with arrows that announce turns for sites
- signs needed to clarify Byway routes south of Ortonville
- advance turning signage with arrows for byway route
- confirmation or assurance signing after turns
- Browns Valley: Improved signage needed to Sam Brown Historic Park
- Browns Valley: Signage on TH28 from Morris does not offer option to head south at junction of TH7/28
- Ortonville: Need for signage to Chamber of Commerce

Parking

Each community along this segment of the byway has adequate parking designed for traditional automobiles. Most of these parking areas can also handle oversized vehicles such as those towing trailers, recreational vehicles and motor coaches.

Tourism Infrastructure and Visitor Services Issues and Challenges

1. There is a need to create new and compelling visitors centers in Ortonville and Browns Valley to serve as portals to this area. Visitors need more information to encourage them to stay and revisit the area. There is also room for such centers to serve other community development purposes such as economic development promotion and local continuing education.
2. There are other support infrastructure investments that are needed including improved signage and more interpretation.
3. Plans to create a natural area/interpretive area at the south end of the lake in Ortonville, along with plans for a connected bike trail, should both be strongly pursued. Each of these concepts will offer important interpretive, education and recreational experiences for visitors.
4. A long term challenge is to encourage the development of more lodging and resort options on the Minnesota side of Big Stone Lake. Resorts along Minnesota side do not open until May, and then are limited till full summer season. Obviously, this situation is due to market demand, but as byway marketing and resulting visitation increase, the byway Alliance should be encouraging lodging properties to extend their season when feasible.



IV. Interpretation

Stories supporting the themes

There are a number of segment-specific aspects of the full byway's interpretive themes that should be targeted in local interpretation.

Historic: Struggles for a Home

Early traders, settlers and military established new trails into this area, often following trails used by Native Americans. The Fort Wadsworth Trail, which left Sauk Center and headed straight west through present-day Glenwood and Browns Valley, became an important transportation route. Forts were established to provide protection and distribute supplies. These were difficult times for the EuroAmerican settlers, with new settlements far from any major populations. Everything had to be brought across the prairies in wagons or cart trains. The indigenous people were feeling the pressure of growth, making them very unsettled and anxious. Today, the less developed nature of this segment of the byway, offers an opportunity to educate visitors on how what it was like for the Dakota to live in this part of the river valley and to also explore how EuroAmericans may have felt as they tried to establish a home in the area.

Cultural: Food for a Nation

The great glacial River Warren carved the Minnesota River Valley and left behind rich top soil along its riverbed establishing some of the finest farmlands in the world. Northern European immigrants with farming traditions moved to this area to clear the land, move the glacial rocks that were strewn across the landscape and develop farming techniques that resulted in the development of winter wheat crops growing throughout most of the river valley.

Natural: Legacy of the River

The river valley was shaped primarily by geological events related to the great ice age and evidence of these ancient events is still very visible along this stretch of byway. Interpretation will be needed to make the average visitor aware of this evidence and the story it has to tell. The Minnesota River Valley watershed in this region provides for diverse habitats for plants and animals, particularly waterfowl and shorebirds. Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge has 10,795 acres of diverse habitat for wildlife, an eleven-stop auto tour, foot trail and canoeing. All of these features add up to an exceptional natural history interpretive theme.



Specific topics for this segment

Here are some of the specific interpretive topics that can be explored in interpretation in this segment. Each of these topics represent the subjects around which a specific interpretive site might be designed.

Struggles for a Home Topics

1. Ft. Wadsworth and later Ft. Sisseton had a large role in expanding the frontier.
2. Other Native American tribes (mound builders) made this area their homelands before the Dakota.
3. The Dakota Conflict eventually de-populated this region, with settlers abandoning their homes.
4. The restricted, boudry-based reservation of land 10 miles to the south side of the Minnesota River did not work for the Dakota who used a much larger amount of land to support their tribes.
5. Native Tribes found the environment supported abundant wildlife and this provided an ample resource base from which to survive.
6. Standing Buffalo's Village is said to have been located near Browns Valley.

Food for a Nation Topics

1. Many crops failed in the Red River Valley because of the harsh winters, causing pioneers to plant spring wheat.
2. The arrival of the railroads (St. Paul and Pacific Railroad) into nearby Breckinridge created an increase in immigration into the region.
3. Farmers began to diversify into dairy, beef, sheep and hogs after many years of strickly wheat farming, partially because they had worn out the soil.

Archeology Topics

1. Browns Valley Man left evidence of life in this region 8000-12,000 years ago. It is a mystery regarding the skeletal remains of Browns Valley Man. The Native American Repatriation Act can be discussed as it relates to archeology and early settlement theories.
2. Sharks teeth have been found in and around Ortonville.



Cultural Topics

1. Big Stone Lake became a tourism destination in the early 1900's, flourishing with steamboats and hotels located all along the Lake.

Historic Topics

1. Life as an army scout on the western frontier for Sam Brown and his family was both dangerous and exciting.
2. Joseph R. Brown was a significant landowner, businessman, military officer, state senator, newspaperman, inventor and developer.
3. A log home was a prized possession and often moved instead of being abandoned. The cabins in Browns Valley and in Ortonville at the museum offer examples of this type of structure.

Natural Topics

1. The natural dam on the south end of Lake Agassiz near present day Browns Valley broke causing a catastrophic event that carved the River Valley.
2. Wetlands, elevation and exposed granite bedrock often kept areas of native prairies from being turned into farmland.
3. Some of the finest granite in the world is quarried near Ortonville.
4. The River Warren was over 250' deep as it spilled out from the south end of Lake Agassiz.
5. Within miles of each other, the Red River runs north and the Minnesota River runs south, demonstrating the continental divide found along this segment.
6. Giant boulders the size of cars can be found sitting isolated in an empty field.

Recreational Topics

1. Conservation efforts have resulted in Big Stone Lake becoming a premier destination for fishing.
2. Bird watching enthusiasts from across the country are discovering the diversity of wildlife in this region.
3. Recreational activities in the early 1900's were different than they are today.

Interpretive Challenges and Issues

1. Seeking and obtaining funding for interpretation design and construction along the byway will be the critical challenge.



Interpretive Techniques for the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway

The interpretive media discussed in this strategy include the following:

- Small Interpretive Kiosks
- Optional: Small Interpretive Kiosk modified for 24 Hour Visitor Info Center
- Wayside Signage Exhibits
- Printed guides/ brochures
- Low frequency radio transmission system
- Activity Booklet
- Audio Tape Tours
- Self-Guided Trail
- Step-On Guide Service in each Community
- Byway Passport Program

Small Interpretive Kiosks

This plan outlines numerous sites for interpretive kiosks. Each of these sites will have four panels, 2 large (42" x 30") and 2 small (42" x 16") interpretive panels. Each small kiosk will have an orientation panel and at least one activity-oriented panel that will encourage visitors to take part in some activity along the Byway and one panel that will be directed to children, relating the exhibit theme to activities children will enjoy.

Each panel provides detailed interpretive information on site specific subjects and any unique local history.

The kiosks should conform to the following guidelines:

- Each text block section should contain less than 50 words.
- The main interpretive concept is communicated in 15 seconds.
- Provocative headlines and graphics are used to draw attention to the interpretive message.



Detailed Interpretive Project Concepts from Browns Valley to Ortonville

Please note that "SFAH" refers to the interpretive theme, Struggles for a Home. "FFAN" refers to the interpretive theme Food for a Nation. "RL" refers to Rivers Legacy.

1. Small Interpretive Kiosks

•**Location: At existing wayside rest/pull-off on SR-7**
Topics:

1. RL: Formation of the Minnesota River Valley
2. RL: Formation of Big Stone Lake
3. SFAH: Indian Tribes of Area: Mound Builders, Dakota, Chippewa
4. RL: Unique watersheds of area, elevations
5. FFAN: Early Commercial Fishing on Big Stone

2. Small Interpretive Kiosk for 24 Hour Visitor Info Center

•**Location: Downtown Browns Valley**
Topics:

1. SFAH: Browns Valley: Early Frontier Town
2. SFAH: Brown Family Story
3. FFAN: Farming in Browns Valley: King Wheat
4. SFAH & FFAN: Hutterite Farming Colony in Graceville
5. Byway Orientation: Parks, historic sites, trails, services

•**Location: Big Stone County Museum or Downtown Site**
Topics:

1. RL: Headwaters of Minnesota River
2. Byway Orientation: Parks, historic sites, trails, services
3. RL: Boating on Big Stone Lake
4. RL: Early tourism in area and on lake

3. Wayside Signage Exhibits

•**Location: Samuel Brown Memorial Park, Browns Valley**
Topics:

1. SFAH: Sam Brown– Paul Revere of the Frontier
2. SFAH: Last Buffalo Hunt in MN-1867
3. SFAH: Where Did All the Wildlife Go?
3. SFAH: The Log Building– Frontier Architecture

4. Tour guides/printed brochure

•**Location: Browns Valley**
Topics:

1. SFAH: Historic site tour, cemetery tour

•**Location: Ortonville**

Topics:

1. RL: Granite world-known; shipped all over, sites
2. SFAH: Walking and Driving Tour of Historic Sites

•**Location: Browns Valley to Montevideo**

Topics:

1. RL: Best birding sites of region
2. FFAN: Loss of important wildlife habitat due to farming

5. Low frequency radio transmission system

•**Location: Between Beardsley and Browns Valley**

Topics:

1. Welcome to MR Valley
2. Info on Scenic Byway
3. FFAN: Interpretation–Grain Elevators

•**Location: Between Beardsley and Ortonville**

Topics:

1. RL: Story of Ancient River Warren
2. RL: Lake resort history on Big Stone
3. Intro to Byway Themes: FFAN & SFAH
4. Info on Ortonville, Beardsley
5. Info on BS State Park, Bonanza Unit

•**Location: Between Odessa and Louisburg on Alt. Rt.**

Topics:

1. SFAH: Trader story by Baboo
2. RL: Info on local Big Stone NWR
3. RL: Wildlife Viewing throughout region

•**Location: Between Louisburg and Watson on Alt. Rt.**

Topics:

1. FFAN: History of Louisburg
2. SFAH: School building in Louisburg
3. Watson: Goose Capital of Minnesota
4. RL: Lac qui Parle SP and WMA intro
5. Activities: Biking, Milan, Montevideo

6. Activity Booklet

•**Location: For distribution from Browns Valley to Ortonville**

Topics:

1. SFAH: History of Browns Valley
2. RL: Lakes Agassiz, Traverse and Big Stone

- All written labels should be written at a 5th grade vocabulary level.
- Byway logo should be included.
- A limited color palette of 8 to 10 colors should be chosen for each segment of the Byway, with some overlap to tie the panels together.

The written text should conform to the following guidelines:

- All sentences are short, simple sentences.
- Unfamiliar and technical terms are avoided unless explained.
- Active verbs are used in writing text.
- Text includes descriptions of experiences visitors can have on the site.
- Colorful language and images are used to stimulate interest and visitor involvement.

Optional panels and 24 Hour Visitor Info Centers

Communities that do not have a formal visitor information center, or wish to have information available to visitors when their centers, chambers, and cvb's are closed, may wish to construct a similar kiosk design, preferably in a visible location on the Byway in the downtown area. These kiosks can be easily modified to include a small roof to shelter brochure racks that can contain information on the Byway and surrounding communities.

Wayside Signage Exhibits

Wayside exhibits are recommended for sites along the Byway where specific interpretation messages are important to the story yet there is no need for visitor orientation.



Mounting and framing should be the same color as that on the kiosks and panel colors should be complimentary to the landscape. Wayside exhibits are often low-profile, to give visitors a view and perspective of the site. Panels should be 36"x24".

Low frequency radio transmission system

Messages can be transmitted along the Byway to travelers through their vehicle radios via radio transmissions. This approach should be utilized along stretches of the Byway where there is limited opportunities for other interpretive media and a need to keep the visitor engaged in the Byway's message.

Activity Booklet

An Interpretive Activities Booklet/ Self-Guiding Tour Book would be full of interesting information and activities designed for families with children, domestic or international travelers. The Interpretive Activities Booklet would build upon the existing interpretive messages and give visitors more to think about and do.

Audio Tape Tours

An audio taped tour should be developed for the segment of the Byway that has the highest density of historic sites related to the Dakota Conflict. These tapes should be available at visitor centers, gift shops and chamber of commerce offices. Tapes can either be sold outright or rented for a nominal fee. This project should become the prototype for other themed Audio Tape Tours such as organic farming, life of women on the prairie, geology of the Minnesota River Valley, watchable wildlife (starting with birding).

- 3. RL: Geology of Region
- 4. SFAH: Brown Valley Man, Native Americans, European
- 5. FFAN: Native Prairie
- 6. SFAH: Historic forts, trails

•Location: Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge

Topics:

- 1. School curriculum for K-12 utilizing Prairie

7. Self-Guided Trail

•Location: At pulloff on SR-7 (same site as Rec #1)

Topics:

- 1. See topics on Recommendation #1

•Location: Walk along Little Minnesota River in Browns Valley

Topics:

- 1. SFAH: Flooding
- 2. RL: Drainage systems of area
- 3. RL: Canoeing the Minnesota River
- 4. FFAN: Early Browns Valley farming

8. Step-On Guide Service in each Community

•Location: Need for guide from Browns Valley

9. Byway Passport Program

•Location: Need site verification in Browns Valley

•Location: Big Stone County Museum

•Location: Big Stone NWR



V. Objectives

1. Anticipate the long term growth potential of this area and devise growth management strategies to ensure that this area will always have the feel of communities enveloped by nature. Managing and protecting the special character of this area is a good investment for long term economic health. Allowing the area to look like and feel like “Anywhere, USA” will not result in a community with any competitive advantages from a community character perspective.
2. Devise strategies to allow for growth within established communities but to protect historic areas in towns and also outlying areas from poorly designed new development.
3. Identify critical landscapes and find ways to protect these landscapes in ways that meet the needs of property owners.
4. Strengthen the economies of Big Stone Lake resorts, Ortonville and nearby areas in ways that are sustainable for the businesses and to the environment.
5. Create tourism activity experiences and packages that allow visitors to get into the vastness of prairie.
6. Create new ways for visitors to see, hear and experience the magnitude of the area’s wildlife populations and develop a greater respect for these ancient natural systems.
7. Work locally and regionally to market the segment in a manner that both builds from existing visitation and events, and creates new visitor profiles. Market the area in a way that tells a fuller story about the segment and its qualities.
8. Find funding to build new visitor centers and associated uses in both Ortonville and Browns Valley.
9. Determine the locations for and find funding to erect signage along this segment. Types of signage needed include identification, advance warning, directional, assurance, sites-of-interest, and interpretive.
10. Proceed with plans to provide more multi-use trails.
11. Find funding to design and develop interpretive sites along this segment and in the segment’s communities.
12. Encourage Browns Valley to bolster its tourism economy and link tourism economic development with overall community development.
13. Encourage through-travelers to select the byway as part of their overall travel route.



VI. Implementation Program

This section is organized by the seven-point structure used for the full byway's RiverStories program: 1) resource management, 2) marketing, 3) tourism product development, 4) interpretation, 5) business development, 6) transportation investments, and 7) recreation investments. The objectives that relate to each action are summarized in sidebars.

Resource Management

Objective 12: Encourage Browns Valley to bolster its tourism economy and link tourism economic development with overall community development.

1. **Convene a planning process in Browns Valley to heighten local awareness on the issues of tourism and historic resource protection as economic development and character management tools.** Include discussion on management options for the TH27 corridor. Cost: \$0. Resources: Center for Small Towns or Regional Development Commission.
2. **Write a manual/workbook on design guidelines for development at the gateways and in the center of Browns Valley and Ortonville.** Provide property owners with a clear set of "do's" and "don't's" regarding new development in these areas. Cost: \$15,000. Resources: Center for Rural Design or similar non-profit community design organization funded through a byways grant. Product should be a model for other byway communities.

Objectives 1 and 2: Devise growth management strategies and protect historic areas from poorly designed development.

Marketing Program

Objectives 5 and 6: Create tourism activity packages related to the prairie and find new ways for visitors to experience the area's wildlife systems.

3. Participate in the PrairieWaters marketing efforts and along with the ongoing efforts to market to the angling and hunting markets, also encourage a three-year focus on the following target markets:
 - **Develop a multi-faceted birding program** that includes upgrades to the wildfowl collection, press tours around the birding theme, enhancing the Big Stone Birding Fest and the Salt Lake Birding Festival, developing tours and experiences for birders, encouraging local lodging properties to participate in offering birding packages and special promotions and full participation in the Audobon's Minnesota River Valley Birding Trail project.
 - **Target Twin Cities residents with an *Explore the Prairie* strategy** that combines scenic drives around the lake and into Browns Valley, loop tours into the countryside, educational programs on the native prairie and the National Wildlife



Refuge and special lodging deals. A special culinary experience needs to be developed as a part of this program. It could be an outdoor BBQ, a special church dinner or a special dinner offered by a restaurant. But in any case, it must be novel and well-prepared so that it becomes a feature experience of the Getaway.

- **Develop a Fun-on-the-Lake Program** that includes offering easy and affordable access to canoes, kayaks, sea kayaks, small sail boats, windsurfers, paddle boats and rowboats and anything else that will allow people to go out and explore the lake. Sponsor some type of novel sailing event that can draw participants from target urban areas for a competition. This will help to get the word out that the lake offers an undiscovered sailing destination.

Tourism Product Development

4. **Construct a new multi-purpose visitors center in Ortonville -- The Lake Area Discovery Center.** This project is based on an expanded version of the Traveler Information Center proposal sought from the Legislature in 2000. Cost: \$3 million for total package. Resources: Mixture of funding sources including the State Legislature, City, County, the Blandon Foundation, land management agencies, state economic development office and federal highway sources such as the byways program and the transportation enhancements program.
5. **Work with local residents in Browns Valley to create a new visitors center in the town,** perhaps using the existing log cabin and a public-private partnership to develop the site and structure. Cost: Unknown, but probably less than \$20,000. Resources: National Byways Program and County.
6. History enthusiasts will enjoy the distinctive community and family cemeteries that dot the landscape along the byway. **Create a self-guided historic cemetery tour brochure** that identifies the origins, history and ethnic backgrounds of each site. Respectfully highlight any important, colorful or tragic individuals and suggest ways for visitors to appreciate the history that can be learned from dates, surnames, and design of these monuments to the past. Cost: \$5000. Resources: Byways grant.

Objective 8: Find funding to build new visitors centers.

Objective 8: Find funding to build new visitors centers.

Objective 5: Create visitor experience packages.



Objective 13: Encourage through-travelers to select the byway as part of their overall travel route.

Objective 7: Market the segment in ways that build from existing and new travel opportunities.

Objective 7: Market the segment in ways that build from existing and new travel opportunities.

Objective 7: Design and develop interpretive sites.

7. **Create Interstate 29 Scenic Byway Alternative Route brochure** for north/south travelers. Exit and entrance points would be SD THR10 near Sisseton into Browns Valley for the southbound travelers and US 212 near Watertown into Montevideo for the northbound travelers. Create a tour itinerary with times and stops for this segment of the byway and seek cooperative exchange with Sisseton and Watertown visitor centers. Cost: \$5000. Resources: Byway grant.
8. **Identify and market guided tour opportunities** for the area. Create a brochure rack that has the summer on one side and winter on the other and identify guides that would provide visitors with experiences in ice fishing and snowmobiling in the winter and fishing, birding, and boating tours in the summer and history presentations year round. This region has Brent Olson and Judy Drewicke as outstanding local characters that can lead tours and Ron Cole from the Big Stone NWR. Individuals can establish hourly/daily rates. Cost: \$5000. Resources: Byway grant.
9. **Create weekend bicycling packages** with lodging establishments that include lodging, discounts at dining establishments, a special tour at museum, and distinctive guided tour or speaking engagement by one of the local docents all for one price. Cost: minimal. Market through Prairie Waters programs. Resources: local participation from businesses.

RiverStory Interpretation

10. More roadside interpretive sites need to be developed between the longer stretches of Byway. Please see Section IV of this document for detailed recommendations on interpretive projects in this segment of the byway.



Valley Ventures Business Development

Business development in this section of the byway should focus on modest retail growth in Browns Valley and Beardsley, strengthening of the resort and lodging sector along the lake, and a diversified strategy for Ortonville.

11. **Browns Valley:** Through the planning process noted under Resource Management #1, Browns Valley businesses and elected officials should create a Browns Valley Business Opportunities brochure and associated information. This package should focus on the historic structures, the oncoming tourism promotional efforts that will be pursued and profile one or two local businesspeople that moved from an urban area to create a new life for themselves. It should also profile the properties that are for lease or for sale with a historic preservation/nostalgic tone, whenever possible. The target market here are romantic urban dwellers with the financial resources to move to a small town, start a business and have the life they've dreamed of out on the plains. This need not be extensive or expensive, but it should be well-designed and professional looking. Cost: \$5000. Resources: byway or state tourism grant.

Objective 12: Encourage Browns Valley to bolster its tourism economy and link tourism economic development with overall community development.

12. **Lake Businesses:** While it was not within the purview of this project to delve into the specifics of the resort industry on the lake, it would be well worth the Alliance's time to sponsor a Lake Area Tourism Development workshop to explore the needs of this sector. This 1/2 to 1 day session could bring resort operators and other tourism businesses together to clarify the types of investments that will be needed to expand the season and generally increase business. One purpose of this session will be attempting to get their resorts to financially support the tourism marketing and development effort for the area.

Objective 4: Find ways to strengthen the economies of Big Stone Lake, Ortonville and nearby areas.

13. **Diversified strategy for Ortonville:** Business development, as it relates to this byway effort, should proceed along a variety of fronts.
 - Tourism-oriented development in Ortonville should be partially public-sponsored through the creation of a **tourism business incubator** built as part of the Lake Area Discovery Center. This facility should provide operational and promotional space for a number of small tourism businesses that can directly serve the visitor from the Discovery Center. Shared office space, shared computer equipment, outside

Objective 4: Find ways to strengthen the economies of Big Stone Lake, Ortonville and nearby areas.



storage for recreational equipment and out-front display space should all be incorporated into the design. Tenants would be given time-limited leases after which they sink or swim on their own and other entrepreneurs can then take advantage of the facility. Cost: part of \$3 million package discussed previously. Resources: local Chamber of Commerce or similar organization will need to manage facility.

- Support corridor-long efforts to establish a **Valley Ventures Tourism Business Revolving Loan program**. Use this program to seed new businesses in this byway segment. Cost: Political support and lobbying for the USDA, EDA or SBA funding. Resources: Support the Alliance and local entities of government in establishing this fund.

- In addition to this effort, Ortonville should also use the Discovery Center to promote other business resources in the area, including the new industrial park area, the airport, natural resource business opportunities and downtown business potential. **Create a display on the region featured in the Discovery Center that promotes the Area's business development opportunities**. Cost: Part of overall development package. Resources: Use assistance from state economic development office to conceptualize and design display.

- **Locate the Chamber of Commerce in the Discovery Center** in order to give it a high visibility location. Cost: Moving costs for Chamber. Resources: All partners will need to cooperate to ensure this arrangement.

- **Establish a downtown beautification program**, assist with window dressings for small businesses located on Main Street, Costs: See Community Development Block Grant or other similar funds to start a Main Street Program. Seek technical assistance from the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Program. Cost: grant writing and local supporters' time to arrange initial meetings. Resources: State Historic Preservation Office, National Main Street Program.

- **Pursue the development of a bike trail from the Discovery Center to the river and also a trail along the river from the lake to the wildlife refuge**. Cost: \$1 million. Resources: National Trails Program through the TEA-21 Act and State DNR trail grants.

- **Encourage the development of more small lodging properties: B&B's, cabins, or small inns. Stoke the entrepreneurial fires by providing interest-generating and educational startup workshops** for these and other small tourism business opportunities. Cost: Minimal. Resources: Cooperative Extension, state tourism office.



Transportation Investments

14. **Consider extension of the byway north along Highway 27** to lengthen the formal lakeside byway experience and to provide support for citizens to manage development along Lake Traverse. Cost: Alliance or RDC time to prepare byway designation amendment. Resources: Local support and Alliance assistance. *Objective 3: Identify and protect critical landscapes.*
15. **Create a signage plan.** Working with a team of local highway engineers and local businesses, hold a mobile workshop to tour this section of the byway and identify specific locations for needed signing. This will then become the signage plan for this segment of the byway. Specific signage sites are needed as noted below. Costs: No costs for mobile workshop other than time from participants. Resources: Alliance and RDC organize. *Objective 9: Erect signage along this segment.*
- Downtown visitor information centers must be signed and visible with blue info sign (Ortonville).
 - Signage to tourism resources (parks, campgrounds, lodging) should be added all along the segment.
 - As interpretive kiosks and roadside pull-offs are developed, signage needed to both announce and direct travelers to correct side of the road.
 - Byway should establish Points of Interest Signage Program along total length of route. This signage program will identify the POI along route with distinctive logo, arrows and mileage.
16. **Improve bicycling options along the segment.** Costs: New trail projects are discussed previously. Resources: State DNR Trails grants. Transportation Enhancement program. *Objective 10: Provide more multi-use trails and routes for bicycling.*
- Find funding to create new multi-use trails as noted above.
 - Loop tour bicycling routes on suitable roads should be identified around the Ortonville area, connecting the NWR auto tour route with biking/hiking paths of Ortonville.
 - The Alternative Byway Route should be considered a biking route, especially the loop around the National Wildlife Refuge and back to Ortonville. Touring may be limited due to gravel portions, however mountain biking should be encouraged.



Recreation Investments

Objective 10: Provide more multi-use trails and routes for bicycling.

17. Create new bicycling trails and routes. (See recommendations under other categories.)

Objectives 5, 6 and 7: Create new experience packages for visitors.

18. Encourage greater recreation on Big Stone Lake by promoting small craft boating. (See recommendations under other categories.)

Objectives 5, 6 and 7: Create new experience packages for visitors.

19. Encourage more environmental tourism, specifically birding. (See recommendations under other categories.)

