

# Chapter 10 - Segment 2

## Ortonville to Granite Falls

### Implementation Program

Communities: Odessa, Correll, Louisburg, Milan, Watson, Montevideo, Wegdahl, Granite Falls  
Side Trips: Appleton, Madison, Dawson  
Counties: Big Stone, Swift, Lac qui Parle, Chippewa

#### I. The Segment's Character and Resources

##### Character of the area

- The immediate presence of the Minnesota River, Chippewa River, Pomme de Terre River, Lac qui Parle River, Lac qui Parle lake and refuge, and the communities along the segment are the dominant qualities of this portion of the route.
- The segment has an abundance of farmland and agrarian architecture.
- There is a growing organic farming movement and the area now has many such farms and growers.
- Efforts have been made and continue to be made to protect and restore native prairie lands within this segment.
- Communities celebrate their cultural identities and offer some distinctiveness in cultural character.



Lac qui Parle Mission near Montevideo

##### Intrinsic qualities present

- Cultural: Communities of Appleton, Montevideo, Milan and Granite Falls.
- Cultural: The Lac qui Parle Mission tells the story of early missionary work.
- Cultural: Milan Village Arts School teaches traditional folk arts
- Historic: The Swensson Farm Museum and Chippewa City are both active historical sites protecting aspects of late 19th and early 20th century life in the Valley.
- Natural: Lac qui Parle National Wildlife Refuge and State Park and Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge
- Natural: Restored prairie lands in Plover Prairie and Chippewa Prairie sites



- Recreational: One of the largest sections of canoeable river and tributaries in the region exist here.
- Scenic: The most dramatic part of the drive is along Lac qui Parle lake. The ability to see bald eagles in great numbers is a significant visual experience.

### **Intrinsic qualities of regional significance**

- Lac qui Parle Mission and Ft. Renville (State Hist. Society Site)
- Lac qui Parle State Park
- Plover Prairie and Chippewa Prairie Preserve (protected prairie lands) and Nature Conservancy lands
- Salt Lake Area Wildlife Management Area (important breeding and migration habitats for shorebirds and other species)
- Milan Village Arts School (distinctive folk arts school)



Norwegian Stubbbar near Milan

### **Character management challenges and objectives**

1. Efforts must continue to restore and revitalize downtowns within this segment. Montevideo and Granite Falls are both good examples of towns that are regaining economic health through a mixture of retail, service and arts-related uses. The recent streetscape improvements have helped greatly toward this objective.
2. The small villages of the segment that do not have formal downtowns also need to look carefully at guiding development and change in order to improve their gateways and overall visitor appeal. Pedestrian amenities (e.g., sidewalks and benches), parking, interpretation and greater range of small businesses will all be needed in most villages.
3. Lac qui Parle Wildlife Refuge and State Park is a spectacular resource. Efforts should be made to ensure that the roads and facilities near this site are managed carefully so as to support and enhance the overall character of the area.
4. The byway Alliance structure should be used to continually strengthen the many partnerships that exist and to create new partnerships. Efforts should be made to more heavily involve the smaller towns and villages in this segment. In particular, the Alliance should work with these communities to clearly define the type of experience each community wishes to offer to the visitor.
5. Continual effort should be placed on the protection of natural habitats and landscapes that lie outside of public protection. While some development will occur in these areas, the overall farming and natural qualities of these landscapes are critical to the long term appeal of the byway.



## II. Tourism Marketing and Product Development

### Major products for the visitor

- Generally, the products are hunting and fishing, wildlife viewing experiences, water-based recreation, Montevideo's resources, and historic sites and attractions. The specific products include the following:
- Downtown Montevideo and Granite Falls
- Arv Hus Museum - Milan
- Norwegian Stabbur
- Milan Village Arts School
- Lac qui Parle Lake
- Lac qui Parle National Wildlife Refuge and State Park
- Lac qui Parle County Historical Center
- Lac qui Parle Village and Cemetery
- Lac qui Parle Mission and Ft. Renville Historic Site
- Fort Renville Wayside Rest
- Chippewa City, Chippewa County Museum and Camp Release Monument
- Swensson Farm Museum
- Chicago Milwaukee & St. Paul RR Depot in Montevideo
- Canoeing on the Valley's rivers
- Trail from Montevideo to Wegdahl, trails within Montevideo, and trail from Milan to Lac qui Parle Lake
- Plover Prairie and Chippewa Prairie Nature Conservancy Preserves
- Yellow Bank Hills Scientific & Natural Area
- Salt Lake Area Wildlife Management Area
- Marsh Lake
- Yellow Medicine County Historical Museum
- Granite Falls geologic site (exposed, ancient gneiss)
- Bison kill site - Peterson



Chippewa City near Montevideo

### Strengths of current visitor experience

- Generally, the area offers a good mixture of settled Minnesota River Valley experiences (e.g., downtowns and historic sites)



and natural wildlife settings (e.g., wildlife areas) all within close proximity

- River recreation- Visitors can directly access the river via kayaking and canoeing from many communities including Appleton, Montevideo and Dawson
- Wildlife: Lac qui Parle State Park and WMA, Marsh Lake, Salt Lake WMA,
- Native Prairie: Chippewa and Plover Prairie Preserves
- Rural: Landscapes, farmsteads, small towns
- Ethnic Settlements: Milan, Lac qui Parle Village
- Montevideo's downtown and events
- Numerous state and county historic sites including Chippewa City, Swensson Farm and Lac qui Parle Mission
- Many festivals and events throughout the region
- Hunting packages
- Dawson's Swedish Inn
- Six golf courses (Ortonville, Appleton, Benson, Madison, Granite Falls and Dawson)
- Montevideo to Wegdahl multi-use trail



Canoe rentals near Lac qui Parle mission

### Primary existing target markets

- Hunting and fishing enthusiasts
- Watchable wildlife enthusiasts
- Canoeists
- Native Prairie viewers, wildflower viewers

### Potential new target markets for area

- A broader range of outdoor recreationalists including birders, canoeists and bicyclists. Packages should be offered for bicycling on the Wegdahl trail or canoeing on one of the rivers.
- People less familiar with wildlife and birds who can have a first and memorable experience at a place like Lac qui Parle
- Heritage Tourism Markets, for example offering an ethnic discovery package (research, folk art classes and ethnic lodging such as a stubbur or sod house)
- People interested in Native American History
- Railroad enthusiasts



- Working farm stays (horseback riding, feed the chickens, mend fences, bail hay, etc.)
- Regional golf package with a tour of small courses
- History tours—encampments
- Montevideo’s retail mix is diversifying and more unusual shopping opportunities will evolve. The potential for the arts community to have a stronger presence could help Montevideo to establish a distinct tourist appeal.
- Organic farming consumers

### Target geographic markets

- Twin Cities is a 3 hour drive from area
- Twin Cities marketing can focus on weekend and long weekend targets
- Festivals and multiday marketing could also target areas to the south
- Target states: Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota

### Marketing and Product Development Challenges

1. Providing deeper experiences within existing activity categories (e.g., ethnic experiences or farming experiences). Now, the initial hook is there in the form of one site or one activity, but the deeper, longer experiences that connect with the hook are absent.
2. A part of this process will be creating multi-day packages that will draw visitors from greater distances. The key will be offering experiences that link to the core experience.
3. More lodging, shopping and dining diversity will be important for visitors. For example, regionally distinctive shopping is largely missing in the area as are obvious ethnic dining traditions (German, Scandanavian).
4. 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



Tolkheim Pottery near Dawson



are interesting and compelling stories to be told about the natural history, geology, waterfowl and the Native American/ EuroAmerican interactions.

5. Montevideo and Granite Falls are clearly the dominant communities for this segment. Both communities need a more significant tourism hub to draw all visitors, disseminate information and encourage longer stays. This concept is at the core of the year 2000 effort to obtain legislative funding for a Travel Information Center. That effort should be repursued with vigor. A new, well designed and compelling facility in each town would serve an important role of anchoring the visitors experience to this segment.
6. 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.



Alternate byway route between  
Louisburg and Correll

### III. Tourism Infrastructure and Visitors Services

#### Roadways

- This majority of this segment of the byway has paved surfaces and the roads are in good condition. The alternate route south of Wegdahl is gravel but in good condition. It offers one of the more scenic drives in the segment.

#### Commercial areas and gateways

- Odessa consists of a one-block downtown with tavern. Consideration by locals should be given as to how and whether the community will benefit from increased tourism. A welcome sign announces its role as gateway to Big Stone Wildlife Refuge.
- Milan is a pleasant village. Plans should be made for potential additional visitor and commercial activity. The folk arts center is an important resource that should be expanded upon.

#### Visitor centers.

- Watson: Gateways are clean as farming land comes right up to the edge of town. There is one café, one tavern, no lodging, and one gas station off Main Street. Watson has an abandoned





24 hour kiosk in center of town that could serve the byway and community. They have not established a community visitor center.

- Montevideo has an intact downtown area with minimal vacancies and good pedestrian environment. The recent streetscape program has greatly improved the community. The downtown is very pleasant with many stores having nice fascades and curb appeal. Most businesses are geared towards local markets (furniture store, fitness center, coffee shop, restaurants.) The old Milwaukee Railroad Depot anchors one end of Downtown.
- Gateway along US 59 into Montevideo is visually pleasant as it is surrounded by farmland and crosses the Chippewa River. It does have several national chain billboards that are somewhat intrusive. The US 59 gateway does not establish a distinctive “you’ve arrived” experience, although the Chippewa City area begins to make that statement. Entrance from Alternative Route 15 from South is rural and residential in nature and brings you up to commercial strip on north end of town (WalMart). Montevideo has a new Country Inns property and several other motel properties.
- Montevideo’s commercial strip has developed on the north end of town on TH 7/29. Better signage is needed to indicate to the unfamiliar traveler that there is an interesting downtown just off the state highway.
- Granite Falls has an excellent northern gateway from the alternate route. The bridge and absence of strip commercial development makes this entryway very pleasant and in keeping with the character of Granite Falls. The other gateways are adequate given that they are major commercial areas for the community. As with Montevideo, improvements could be made in landscaping and signage.



The Barn Antiques Shop in  
Madison

## Signage

- The byway signage for the area is adequate, although more reassurance signs could be helpful, especially outside of Watson. Montivideo has an alternative route (County 15) and additional signage should be used to mark this option more clearly. Informational signage to visitor centers, chambers and downtown areas could also be strengthened. Odessa has a well designed welcome sign at its gateway.
- Need improved signage for Swensson Farm Museum (worn and missing if coming from south)
- No signage to Visitor Center or Chamber Offices in communities



- Alternative routes for scenic byway can be confusing (visitors must ask themselves, “What do I miss if I take this route over another?”)

## Parking

- Watson and Milan have adequate parking for modest numbers of visitors. Increased visitation could pose a problem.
- Montevideo has a combination parallel and diagonal parking on its one-way Main Street district, along with larger public parking lots 1/2 block away.
- All communities can accommodate tour buses.

## Tourism Infrastructure and Visitor Services Issues and Challenges

- Montevideo has wide variety of chain restaurants, but lacks ethnically anchored dining (e.g., an “Ole and Lena” or other ethnic dining experience)
- Milan needs distinctive lodging options for its Arts School guests. Milan also has distinctive shopping (CNS Creation, Heritage Art Gift Shop, Shear Country).
- As noted above, there are plans to build new Travel Information Center in Montevideo at intersection of US 212, TH 59 with pedestrian connections to Chippewa City and alongside a restored oxbow river channel of Chippewa River. This is an important project to pursue.
- There is a need for better signage to the area’s existing chambers.
- In Odessa, consideration should be given to developing a visitor info kiosk to more closely connect the wildlife refuge to the town in the minds of visitors.
- Milan and Wegdahl both need to develop visitor kiosks.





## 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 for this segment.

#### **Historic: Struggles for a Home**

The struggle to maintain/establish a way of life was clearly evident in this area as the EuroAmerican settlers moved forward with western expansion and the Dakota found their traditional hunting grounds being taken by both word (treaties) and deed (new communities, railroads, homesteads). There is a history of events that describe this struggle for survival along this stretch of byway including both peaceful co-existence and later skirmishes that ultimately led to the events such as those surrounding Camp Release.

#### **Cultural: Food for a Nation**

Family farms dot the landscape along the entire length of the Minnesota River Valley, and this segment offers interesting perspectives on historic farming techniques and new trends in farming. The Swensson Farm Museum offers the Valley's best in-person experience of historic farming methods ranging from breaking of the prairie with oxen to the introduction of steam-powered threshers to the modern farm equipment seen in the yards of farms today. More recently, some farmers in this region, are organizing and implementing sustainable and organic farming practices. To date, 24 farms along the Valley are managing themselves in this way and the majority of those farms are in this segment.

#### **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. Lac qui Parle Wildlife Refuge and State Park is an exceptional facility for natural history interpretation.



## Specific topics for this segment

Here are some of the specific interpretive topics that can be explored 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. Native Americans lived along this section of the River. Their first interactions with Europeans were with French traders.
2. The dual cultures had different views of land ownership.
3. The near extermination of the bison had a major impact on the Dakota.
4. There are stories of cooperation and care among the Dakota and settlers.

### Food for a Nation Topics

1. Native Americans also raised crops successfully along the river banks.
2. Ethnic groups often established their farmstead in the same way they did in their motherland.
3. The railroad provided an efficient way to get the crops to market.
4. The Swensson Farm grew in size and productivity as farming practices turned from horse and ox power to steam.
5. Farming practices that benefit the customer and the environment.

### Cultural Topics

1. Most Native Americans could not accept the teachings of the missionaries as an new way of life.
2. Immigrants from many countries brought traditions that are still practiced in homes and communities along the River Valley.
3. Milan, Madison and Dawson celebrate their Swedish and Norwegian heritage. Area potters have created wheel-thrown stoneware pottery and sculpture in the Scandanavian traditions since 1971.

### Historic Topics

1. Chippewa City provides a glimpse of early homestead architecture.



2. Ft. Renville played an important role in the expansion of the Minnesota Frontier.
3. Many Dakota risked their lives for the personal safety of the white hostages that were finally released at Camp Release.
4. This segment of the byway was part of the reservation set aside as part of the 1851 Treaty of Traverse des Sioux.

### Natural Topics

1. Hunting is an important strategy in the overall management of wildlife in the Lac qui Parle WMA.
2. The re-establishment of wetlands and prairies, along with new farming techniques throughout this segment of the byway are resulting in an increase in wildlife and a cleaner stream environment and watershed.
3. Communities along this segment of the byway are involved with important preservation and conservation efforts to improve the local environment.

### Recreational Topics

1. The system used in originally surveying the land created a grid of roadways with intersections every mile. These roadways provide for outstanding bicycling opportunities throughout the countryside.
2. Both hunting and watchable wildlife strategies are important in maintaining the diversity and abundance of wildlife found in this region.
3. The canoeing in the Valley is excellent with several rental locations on the River and its tributaries.

### Interpretive Challenges and Issues

1. There is a need to create stronger interpretive connections between the byway, its immediate attractions and attractions that lie off the byway some distance.
2. Interpretation of agriculture needs to be realistic and not romantic. The challenges of modern rural life and agriculture must be fully told.
3. 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.



## **Detailed Interpretive Project Concepts from Ortonville to Granite Falls**

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 the interpretive theme of the River's Legacy.

### **1. Small Interpretive Kiosks**

#### **•Location: Watson**

Topics:

1. RL: Wildlife: Canadian Geese
2. RL: The role of hunting in conservation
3. FFAN: Wind erosion
4. Byway Orientation: Parks, historic sites, trails, services
5. SFAH: Early Fur Trading Companies

#### **•Location: Dawson (east US212 traffic entering Byway)**

Topics:

1. Byway Orientation: Parks, historic sites, services
2. Travel Options: Byway Loop Route North or South
3. Regional info on Dawson, Madison, Montevideo, Milan Granite Falls
4. RL: Wildlife Viewing
5. SFAH: Ft. Renville, LqP Mission
6. SFAH: Scandanavian Heritage of this area

#### **•Location: Chippewa City**

Topics:

1. Outdoor kiosk interpreting creation of Chippewa City
2. Byway Orientation: Parks, historic sites, trails, services
3. SFAH: Rural architecture

### **2. Small Interpretive Kiosk for 24 Hour Visitor Info Center**

#### **•Location: Montevideo in downtown area**

Topics:

1. History of Montevideo
2. Downtown architecture
3. Byway Orientation: Parks, historic sites, trails, services

4. FFAN: Role of the railroad in agriculture
5. SFAH: Role of railroad in settlement patterns
6. Byway Orientation: Parks, historic sites, services
7. RL: River access
8. Joseph Nicollet Expeditions

•**Location: Appleton in downtown or Highway Park Area**

Topics:

1. RL: River restoration efforts
2. Trail system
3. Byway Orientation: Parks, historic sites, trails, services
4. FFAN: Modern-day farming techniques, sustainable, organic farming techniques
5. Appleton has a Historic/Veterans Memorial and is the only city in the nation that named all its streets after military veterans.

•**Location: Milan in downtown**

Topics:

1. SFAH: Norwegian Heritage
2. Milan Village Arts School
3. Byway Orientation: Parks, historic sites, trails, services

### 3. Wayside Signage Exhibits

•**Location: Along Alternative Route around Big Stone NWR**

Topics:

1. RL: Intro to Prairie Preserves along Byway
2. RL: Wildlife viewing opportunities

•**Location: Louisburg at old school building**

Topics:

1. Environmental issues of Marsh Lake and Lac qui Parle lake
2. Byway Orientation: Parks, historic sites, services

•**Location: Madison at museum**

Topics:

- *Provocative headlines and graphics are used to draw attention to the interpretive message.*
- *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*

1. Madison History: History of fires, schools, architecture, Salt Lake birding opportunities, Lutefisk Capital of US
2. Local writers: Carol and Robert Bly
3. Byway Orientation: Parks, historic sites, trails, services

## **4. Tour guides/printed brochure**

### **•Location: Montevideo area**

Topics:

1. Biking routes around Montevideo
2. RL: Canoe routes on Minnesota and tributaries

## **5. Audio Tape Tours**

### **•Location: To be determined**

(use Mankato Chamber Brochure, U.S. Dakota Conflict Self-Guided Tour)

Topics:

1. SFAH: Historic sites of the Dakota Conflict
2. SFAH: Camp Release Story
3. SFAH: LqP Mission and the Dakota Alphabet
4. SFAH: Location of major Indian Villages along Byway
5. SFAH: Chronology of Dakota Conflict

## **6. Self-Guided Trails**

### **•Location: Incorporate interpretive signage along existing trail system and scenic pull-offs**

Topics:

1. SFAH: Historic trails–Red River Trails, Old Fort Road
2. FFAN: Croplands, crop-rotation, farming architecture

### **•Location: At Lac qui Parle SP and WMA**

Topics:

1. RL: Wildlife management: Goose populations
2. RL: Prairie Chicken reintroduction project
3. RL: Seasonal migrations: Spring and Fall
2. SFAH: Trading and trapping history



## 7. Step-On Guide Service in each Community

- Location:** Montevideo–Staff from C of C, LqP SP and WMA
- Location:** Milan– Staff from Museum, School
- Location:** Madison–Staff from C of C, Museum

## 8. Byway Passport Program

- Location:** Arv Hus Museum
- Location:** Lac qui Parle SP or WMA Visitor Center
- Location:** Chippewa City
- Location:** Downtown Montevideo or Depot
- Location:** Madison, Appleton and Dawson (optional site off Byway)

## V. Objectives

1. Create an image and visitor experience for this segment that integrates its rich resources with an overall theme of sustainable living and use of the land. The market that image and those product assertively.
2. Integrate the organic farming and back-to-the-land aspects of the segment's character into the overall byway strategy. Use the byway to strengthen local agriculture. Use the byway to educate people about agriculture.
3. Interpret past, current and future planned efforts to restore the river's health and to make Minnesotans more aware of the role of this river in the state's natural and cultural history and the importance of returning it to good health.
4. More fully interpret the Native American history of this segment and the relationship with the EuroAmerican immigrants.
5. Devise growth management strategies to ensure that this area will always have the feel of communities enveloped by nature. This is not to say that high growth levels are imminent or that growth should be discouraged, but rather that all incremental growth should be managed carefully to protect the area's character. 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 competitive advantages.

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).

### **Self-Guided Trails**

Whenever feasible, the creation of trails or walkways on which visitors travel along and messages are communicated through the use of brochures, wayside exhibits or other media should be built. This gives visitors an opportunity to get out of their vehicles and experience the landscape firsthand.





6. Work to find appropriate ways for the smaller communities in this segment to benefit from the byway.
7. Identify critical landscapes and find ways to protect these landscapes in ways that meet the needs of property owners.
8. Create tourism activity experiences and packages that allow visitors to explore the river and its tributaries.
9. Create creative 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.
10. 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.
11. Proceed with plans to provide more multi-use trails and routes. Continue efforts to develop biking, walking snowmobiling and canoeing trail systems and experiences that integrate with the overall interpretive and resource protection strategies.
12. Find funding to design and develop interpretive sites along this segment and in the segment's communities.
13. Develop new travel information centers and related visitor service facilities in communities in this segment.
14. Support business development along the byway that meshes with the byway's vision and objectives.



## VII. 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. Summaries of the segment's byway objectives are presented in a sidebar next to each action.

### Resource Management

1. **Perform an inventory of landscapes important to the maintenance of the segment's visual character.** Followup that process with community meetings to receive input and determine the degree to which the landscapes can be managed in way that supports community character management for tourism as well as meeting the property owner's needs. Cost: \$500. Resources: Regional Development Commission and/or volunteer subcommittee from Alliance. Assistance might be sought from a university landscape architecture or planning graduate studio.
2. **Using the design guidelines workbook/manual prepared under a project in the Browns Valley/Ortonville area (See Resource Management Action #2 in Segment 1), facilitate a process in this segment to review how each community can improve its gateways and overall appearance of commercial areas.** As noted in the Browns Valley project, the purpose of the workbook is not to create new regulations, but to provide property owners with a clear set of advisory "do's" and "don't's" regarding new development in these areas. Cost: \$500 for facilitation and meeting costs. Resources: Facilitated by either local regional development commissions or other similar entities with the Alliance as a sponsor.

*Objective 5: Devise growth management strategies.*

*Objective 5: Devise growth management strategies.*



## Marketing Program

*Objective 8 and 9: Create visitor experience packages.*

*Objective 1: Develop an image for the Valley and then market the image assertively.*

3. **Participate in the Prairie Waters marketing efforts** and along with the ongoing efforts to market to the angling and hunting markets, also encourage a three-year focus on the markets noted under action #6, below.
4. Support an effort to fund a major **media marketing program** for the byway with the topics and packages discussed here being some of the topics that should be covered in the ensuing articles. Cost: \$200,000. Resources: National Byway grant with Alliance as sponsor.

## Tourism Product Development

*Objective 13: Develop new travel information centers in the segment.*

*Objective 8: Develop visitor experience packages.*

5. **Construct new Travel Information Centers in Montevideo and in Granite Falls with an emphasis on natural history, geology, local agriculture, and local arts.** This project assumes participation from the Legislature, as requested during the 2000 session. Cost: \$2.5 million for total package. Resources: State and local funding with the majority from the Legislature.
6. **Develop four new packaged experiences for the visitor.** Cost: \$20,000. Resources: Byway grant for marketing materials and expenses.
  - Develop a **multi-faceted birding program** that includes investment in the Ortonville wildfowl collection, press tours around the birding theme, expanding the Big Stone Birding Fest and 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. Promote through the Audobon project, on the web site and through travel articles.
  - Target Twin Cities residents with an **Explore the Prairie** strategy that combines scenic drives within the segment with other experiences. For this segment, along with Lac qui Parle's wildlife attractions, develop a theme around local small scale agriculture and local artisan-ship. Promote via travel writers and website.
  - Create a marketing package for this area around the **ethnic culture theme**. Tie in Milan Arts school and other local artisans and artists. Promote to Scandanavian target audiences (e.g., international, Minnesota ethnic clubs, etc.)



- Prepare a map and packaged experience for **bicyclists** that builds on the existing trails and other suitable roads and trails in the area. Promote to bike clubs and families with this part of the state and through the web site.

## RiverStory Interpretation

7. 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.

*Objective 12: Develop more interpretation along the segment.*

## Valley Ventures Business Development

Business development in this section of the byway should focus on creating a clearer retail strategy for each small community, continuing streetscape improvements in the towns and then participating in regional efforts to attract visitors and businesses.

8. 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 and to support downtown marketing activities. Cost: Raise \$1 to \$2 million for the program. Resources: Political support and lobbying will be needed for the USDA, EDA or SBA funding. Support the Alliance and local entities of government in establishing this fund.
9. **Montevideo and Granite Falls:** Support efforts by these communities to attract new business. Act as a partner in efforts related to tourism. These are some of the several critical downtowns that, if restored to health, will play a critical role in offering visitors a distinctive experience. Cost: Use funds from the Valley Ventures program to support downtown marketing. Resources: fundraising and donations.
10. **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. Costs: No costs for mobile workshop other than time from participants. Resources: Alliance and RDC organize.

*Objective 14: Support business development along the byway that meshes with the byway's vision and objectives.*

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*Objective 10: Develop a system of signage along the segment.*

## Recreation Investments

11. **Create new bicycling trails and routes** and continue to lengthen the Montevideo-Wegdahl and Milan routes.

*Objective 11: Support trail development along the segment.*



