

# Chapter 10 - Segment 3

## Granite Falls to Mankato

### Implementation Program

Communities: Granite Falls, Upper Sioux Community, Redwood Falls, Lower Sioux Community, New Ulm, Cambria, Mankato and many other smaller communities

Counties: Yellow Medicine, Redwood, Renville, Nicollet, Brown, Blue Earth

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

##### Character of the area

- From Granite Falls the main route follows TH67, connects with CR81 and then connects with CR15 into Redwood Falls. An alternate route is also available along gravel roads from Granite Falls to the junction with CR81 following CR's 40, 52, 37 and 10. Heading south from Granite Falls on TH67, the route leaves the edge of the community and passes through lightly settled residential/previously agricultural landscape. The namesake of the community -- granite -- can be seen everywhere and is much more pronounced than on any other portion of the byway. The paved route continues through a pleasant, hilly landscape through the Upper Sioux Community, past the Upper Sioux Agency State Park to the junction with CR81.



Blue Earth County  
Courthouse

This segment has the first Natural Preservation Route encountered on the byway, if traveling from the north/west. The landscape shifts to being even with wide, actively farmed fields. The road becomes gravel at the junction with CR10. The road is beautiful as it moves along the edge of the bluffs and into the valley. At the junction with CR81, the road shifts back to a paved surface, but continues to be very scenic and a fun drive as the road curves through the farming landscape. The byway moves onto CR15, a gravel road and travels through a similarly scenic landscape to the edge of Redwood Falls. Overall, this segment is one of the most scenic and intimate of the byway.



- From Redwood Falls to New Ulm, along TH19 and CR's 5 and 21, the byway presents the second of its most appealing landscapes as the route follows paved and gravel roads directly within the river valley along river bottom farms. The route is treed, with gentle changing topography as one moves up and down the bluffs at the edge of the river. The section of this route immediately south of Redwood Falls on TH19 is somewhat less appealing visually as it is a much wider road. The village of Morton is interesting for its historic appeal and the nearby presence of the Renville County Museum.
- When the byway passes through New Ulm, it passes through the most tourism-oriented community on the byway. The community's German theme is evident from both roadside advertising, its many themed events and from the architectural and retail character of the downtown. The northern gateway to the community is pleasant. The southern gateway is being developed commercially and needs guidance to improve its appearance.
- From New Ulm to Mankato, the route follows TH68, a two-lane, paved road that moves through a mixed farming and residential landscape. Though the highway does not pass through any towns, it does pass near the hamlets of Cambria and Courtland. The character is similar to the other portions of the byway that lie above the river valley: an even landscape, with treed fence rows, larger farms, and the occasional residential area. The southern portion of this segment has several sand and gravel extraction operations within view.
- Mankato is the largest community on the byway. Its northern gateway is mixed commercial and industrial. US169 passes along the edge of the community and provides fast movement through Mankato while giving easy access to the city center and other areas.



Teepee from Lower Sioux Agency State Historic Site

### Intrinsic qualities present

- **Archeological:** Peterson Bison Kill site, near Granite Falls
- **Cultural:** There are several major cultural qualities in this segment, including the Upper Sioux Agency State Park and community as well as the Lower Sioux Agency State Historic Site, Wood Lake Battlefield, Birch Coulee site and Lower Sioux Community. Both Granite Falls and Redwood Falls offer interesting small town architecture. New Ulm offers its German history and German tourism theming. Of particular interest in New Ulm is the August Schell Brewery a historic beer producer on a splendid historic property. Other sites of cultural value include the Gilfillen Estate and Farmfest Site, St.



Cornelia's Church, the Minnesota Machinery Museum and the Enestvedt Seed Company facility.

- **Historic:** The segment has important stories to convey regarding the U.S./Dakota Conflict relative to the attack on New Ulm, the Lower Sioux Agency Historic Site and community, and Mankato's role in the trial and execution of 39 Dakota men after the conflict -- the largest mass execution in U.S. history. Other historical resource sites include: Union Depot, Brown County Historical Museum, Blue Earth County Historical Society, Harkin Store, the Renville County Historical Museum, Redwood County Historical Museum, ruins of Joseph R. Brown's house, the Morton Monuments, the Birch Coulee Battlefield State Historic Site, the Wood Lake Battlefield, the Depot Museum and Sleepy Eyes Monument and various historic homes in each of the communities.
- **Natural:** The ancient rock outcroppings in Granite Falls, Alexander Ramsey Park in Redwood Falls, Upper Sioux Agency State Park, Lower Sioux Agency State Historic Site's scenic overlook, Flandrau State Park, Fort Ridgely State Park, Minneopa State Park, Lake Crystal, the double falls at Minneopa State Park, several state scientific and natural areas, the many county parks and the river are the dominant natural intrinsic qualities.
- **Recreational:** All the state parks, Lower Sioux Agency Historic Site offer recreational facilities. In addition, the Renville County Parks system along the river offer exceptional opportunities to explore the river valley.
- **Scenic:** The portion from Granite Falls to New Ulm is highly scenic, perhaps the most scenic segment of the entire byway.



Schwandt Memorial

### Intrinsic qualities of regional significance

- Upper Sioux State Park
- Ruins at the Joseph R. Brown State Wayside Park
- Lower Sioux Agency State Historic Site
- City of New Ulm, the premier German-American community in America
- Mankato Trial and Hanging Site
- Wood Lake Battlefield and Birch Coulee state historic site
- Harkin Store
- Alexander Ramsey Park in Redwood Falls



- The double falls at Minneopa State Park

### Character management challenges and objectives

1. The gravel roads provide much of the character to this segment of the byway, therefore, careful management will be necessary to balanced travel efficiency with scenic character. A particularly important aspect of the gravel roads is that the gravel surface slows down the traveler and this results in a closer connection between the visitor and the landscape. The Natural Preservation Routes are important allies in maintaining the character of this segment's roads.
2. The small farms along this part of the byway are crucial to its character. If they were replaced with suburban, low density residential development, the feel of the byway would change dramatically.
3. Fringe development at the edges of Granite Falls, Redwood Falls, New Ulm and Mankato present challenges. Given the long length of the byway, these commercial areas are not significant detractors from the overall byway's character, but they are areas which if improved would make the byway experience more appealing. It is at times jarring to drive from a bucolic rural landscape into poorly designed fast food restaurants and cluttered signing.
4. The gravel and sand extraction operations south of Granite Falls and north of Mankato are not highly intrusive and they are certainly necessary economic operations. The challenge is to find ways to buffer the sites when appropriate, safely sign them and seek interpretive opportunities related to geology or the local economy when possible.



Lind House in Mankato



## II. Tourism Marketing and Product Development

### Major products for the visitor

- Exceptional scenic drives
- New Ulm and its events, attractions and downtown.
- Granite Falls and Redwood Falls - historic towns with services and shopping
- Mankato, the major urban center in this part of the state
- Dakota Sioux history and history associated with U.S./Dakota Conflict
- State park and historic site museums, camping and outdoor recreation
- County park outdoor recreation directly adjacent to the river
- River recreation - fishing and canoeing
- County historical museums and the Minnesota Machinery Museum
- Hunting
- Casinos
- Gilfillan Farm Estate and Farmfest site

### Strengths of current visitor experience

- Scenic quality of the byway is very high. The driving experience is very intimate. People come in close contact with the many farms along the route.
- There are five state parks/historic sites in this segment. The draw of camping and outdoor recreation is a major strength.
- There are a number of established attractions and historic sites along this segment of the byway.
- The main towns on the byway route all offer a modest range of lodging and dining options. Services are easily attainable along this portion of the route.



Andrew Volstead House in  
Granite Falls

### Primary existing target markets

- German-American culture enthusiasts
- Native American history
- Camping and state park recreation
- Casino visitors



### Potential new target markets for area

- Additional scenic driving fans -- the route needs to be better promoted
- Birding enthusiasts, as the Audobon Trail makes its way through this area
- Minnesota and western history buffs. The number of county museums and historic sites is significant.
- Agritourism visitors
- Geology buffs

### Target geographic markets

- Twin Cities: 2-4 hour drive
- Southern Minnesota cities - one day getaway to a very scenic drive
- Target states: Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota

### Marketing and Product Development Challenges

1. One challenge is getting the driving public onto the byway at its southern end. The signing and overall landscape outside of Mankato do not help people see that there is a great drive on the way to New Ulm. There are other routes that are more direct and more prominently signed to New Ulm and points north (e.g., 5 and 14). The segment from New Ulm to Mankato faces real challenges due to these factors and its relatively lower scenic quality and fewer attractions.
2. The basic message about this segment's high quality scenic drives needs to be promoted. The gravel roads in this segment offer a real get-away-from-the-developed world experience just a short distance from the Twin Cities. This is a straight-forward problem that can be solved through strategically placed articles.
3. The various historic sites and history museums need to be brought together into some type of packaged experience. The same is true of the agritourism experiences. Now they are a somewhat separated collection of tourism products. Either through tours, sequential events, interpretation or other means, linkages must be built between these sites so that they



have more appeal and impact for the traveler.

4. Redwood Falls, Granite Falls and New Ulm all offer nice small town, downtown experiences. While ideally, in the long run, more shops will open and thus diversify the shopping offered, even now, they each offer pleasant shops and interesting architecture. These towns need to be packaged and promoted more heavily as the *base camps* from which one can explore the byway.
5. The Dakota history and cultural information available within this segment is significant. This segment clearly has the strongest Native American resources of the byway. Means should be sought to take these resources, and the experience they offer, to a higher level so that the byway is known as one of the major, informative Native American experiences in the Midwest.

### III. Tourism Infrastructure and Visitors Services

#### Roadways

- As noted previously, this segment is composed of a mixture of gravel and paved roads. The gravel segments lie between Granite Falls and New Ulm. The road south of New Ulm is all paved. All the road surfaces are suitable for travel in most seasons. The bridge north of Redwood Falls on CR15 is not suitable for tour buses.

#### Commercial areas and gateways

- The northern gateways to Granite Falls, Redwood Falls and New Ulm are all quite pleasant and in keeping with the character of the byway and of the communities. The southern commercial gateways in each community are more problematic with numerous curbcuts, a general lack of landscaping on commercial properties and cluttered signing. All the main roads into Mankato have been commercially or industrially developed to an extent where there is little connection between the overall feel of the byway and the level of commercialization at Mankato's borders.





## Visitor centers

- Chambers of commerce and/or visitors centers are present in Granite Falls, Redwood Falls, New Ulm and at the CVB in Mankato. Granite Falls is part of the Prairie Waters group that is seeking state legislative funding for three new Traveler Information Centers, one of which would be placed in Granite Falls.

## Signage

- The major signage challenge facing this segment is the need for directional byway signing -- the wayfinding signs placed on the route do not offer the traveler any warning of upcoming directional changes. There are dozens of intersections along this segment where the byway route changes or where it is unclear how the byway proceeds. The lack of directional signing poses a major problem for the unfamiliar traveler. Of particular importance is that once a traveler becomes lost, there are very few signs along the county roads, very few recognizable landmarks and many county roads are not indicated on state road maps. This is a potentially highly frustrating experience for byway visitors.

## Parking

- Parking is adequate within the towns. It is often inadequate at historic sites such as Harkin Store and the Joseph R. Brown State Wayside Park. This is particularly the case for tour buses.

## Tourism Infrastructure and Visitor Services Issues and Challenges

1. A visitors center in Granite Falls is clearly needed.
2. More signing is needed along the entire route.
3. Cities should give more consideration to streetscape and road edge improvements that can be made at their municipal and commercial gateways.
4. Larger parking areas are needed at some sites and attractions.





## 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**

Generally, this segment is the heart of the Dakota story. Given the presence of both the history that occurred in this area along with the state parks/historic sites and their interpretation and the presence of the tribal communities, this segment offers numerous ways of the visitor to learn about the Dakota heritage and the community's future. Upper and Lower Sioux Agencies, Fort Ridgely, the Joseph R. Brown State Wayside Park, New Ulm's various stories and Mankato's role in the Conflict also provide good interpretive material that will complement the Dakota story.

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

This segment offers many, many farms, but also many other ways to interpret agriculture: the Minnesota Machinery Museum, the future Agriculture Innovation Center, the seed farms and farm co-operatives, ag tours, machinery dealers and innumerable farm structures that offer an avenue for teaching about farming. In addition, the falls and milling structures could be interpreted.

#### **Natural: Legacy of the River**

The rock outcroppings in Granite Falls and the water falls in various areas are obvious choices for natural history interpretation. In addition, the following concepts should be explored: river bottom geology via the sand and gravel extraction sites, geology of the river bluffs, and the ecology of the river valley via the county parks and wildlife populations that live there. The entire topic of prairie ecosystems and prairie management is also ripe for interpretation.



## 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. Granite Falls settlement and history
2. Joseph R. Brown history
3. Establishment of the tribal communities, life in the communities past and present
4. Aspects of the U.S./Dakota Conflict of 1862 including President Lincoln's deliberations over Mankato's trial and hangings.
5. Interactions between Indians and EuroAmericans during the conflict: friendship and aggression.
6. New Ulm and Fort Ridgely attack and related stories.
7. Ferries across the river at various points.

### Food for a Nation Topics

1. Development of cooperative system in the U.S. Andrew Volstead of Granite Falls helped establish legislation for co-ops.
2. Seed and general agricultural research - past and present.
3. Explanation of different types of farms and different growing environments adjacent to the river and on the plateau.
4. The science of soil and the types of soil that are common in the Valley.
5. Farm machinery - past and present. The Minnesota Machinery Museum offers good interpretation on this topic.
6. The development and structure of farming communities. Why were they placed where they are? How many people did they/do they serve?

### River's Legacy Natural Topics

1. Granite Falls rock outcroppings - How do they figure out the



- age of a rock?
2. Geology of a river valley - sedimentary layers, intrusion of other types of rocks, impact of the glaciers, etc.
  3. Eco-zones within the river valley -- various habitats past and present. Special emphasis might be placed on the prairies.
  4. A view of the Valley past and present - changes in forestation and vegetation, the impact of farming on the Valley's ecology.

## Recreational Topics

1. Development of the state parks system
2. Horseback riding and camping interpretation
3. 19th recreational pursuits of the Dakota and EuroAmericans
4. Recreating on the rivers
5. Hunting and fishing the valley
6. Snowmobiling
7. Golfing

## Interpretive Challenges and Issues

1. Seeking and obtaining funding for interpretation design and construction along the byway will be the critical challenge.
2. Expanding the amount of interpretation in the villages will be critical as they will often be the base camps and/or service nodes the visitor. Due to the large amount of area covered by the byway, visitors should be able to get a sense of what there is to see and do from the village centers before then venture forth.
3. Existing interpretation does exist in the state parks, although funding is needed to upgrade the quality and content of most of those sites.
4. New interpretation should largely support and be connected to



the existing interpretive facilities.

### ***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 for Granite Falls to Mankato**

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 the Rivers Legacy.

#### **1. Small Interpretive Kiosks or Wayside Signage Exhibits**

- Location: Granite Falls** - Yellow Medicine County Museum, site of proposed new Tourist Information Center - funding needed for new outdoor interpretation

Topics:

1. RL: History of community, river and falls
2. What types of homes did the early settlers construct? Also architecture of the downtown
3. RL: Oldest exposed rock

- Location: Granite Falls** - Andrew Volstead House

Topics:

1. FFAN: What part did Volstead play in Minnesota and national history?

- Location: Granite Falls** - Granite Falls Dam

Topics:

1. RL: There are two natural waterfalls on the entire system of the Minnesota River (Granite Falls and Minnesota Falls. How has this community harnessed the power of the water to create electricity for the community?
2. Pelicans are more common today than 50 years ago. This flock of mallards is missing a few feet.

- Location: Granite Falls** - Meridian Quarry

Topics:

1. How was this bedrock exposed?
2. How is granite quarried?
3. How is quarried granite used?

•**Location: Granite Falls** - Peterson Bion Bill Site (southwest of Granite Falls)

Topics:

1. How did ancient people hunt bison?
2. How were bison used in daily life?
3. What evidence of this way of life was found at this site?

•**Location: Scientific Sites** Blue Devil Valley Scientific and Natural Area (south of Granite Falls), Gniess Outcrop SNA, Swede's Forest SNA. The SNA program is working on placing interpretation at each site. Each site needs to be placed on local maps and additional interpretation may be useful on topics such as the following:

Topics:

1. Why is this area reserved for the five lined skunk?
2. How did the skink get its interesting name?
3. What is the evidence on these rocks that Glacial River Warren carved the river valley?
4. How are these sites being managed to protect sensitive species?

• **Location: Upper Sioux Agency State Park**

1. Funds needed to update displays in visitors center.
2. The Minnesota River Valley was formed by water draining from glacial Lake Agassiz.
3. What is a prairie? How does fire preserve a grassland?
4. Alien plant species have altered the park's plant communities.
5. How do changes in land use in the Yellow Medicine and Minnesota Rivers' watersheds affect the flow and life of the river?
6. How do birds of prey use the state park?
7. Which reptiles and amphibians can be observed in the park? What fish can be caught in the rivers?
8. Why are wetlands important to water quality? What plants and animals can be commonly found in a wetland community?
9. How did the Dakota people live on the prairie?

- 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 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

10. The Treaty of Traverse des Sioux in 1851 changed the Dakota's way of life forever. The purpose of the Upper Sioux Agency was to administer the terms of the treaties and to teach the Dakota people a new way of living. What role did the Sisseton and Wahpeton people play in the U.S./Dakota Conflict of 1862? What happened to the Dakota people after the Conflict? How do Dakota people feel today about the events of the last 150 years?

#### **• Location: Joseph R. Brown State Wayside Park- Sacred Heart**

1. SFAH: More interpretation needed on site and about the Brown family.
2. What different roles did Brown play in the settlement of the River Valley?

Brown built a mansion on a cut granite in the valley for his family to live in. The home was barely finished when it was destroyed in the U.S./Dakota Conflict of 1862. What happened to the Brown family during and after the Conflict?

#### **• Location: CR15 near gravel extraction operation**

1. RL: Gravel extraction
2. RL: Valley geology

#### **• Location: Riggs Mission Site/Doncaster Cemetery**

1. SSFH: Why was this cemetery established? Civil War Veterans, a Dakota chief and Indian Scouts are buried next to pioneer settlers.
2. SSFH: Why did Stephen Riggs establish a mission here? What part did the Sisseton and Wahpeton people play in the Conflict of 1862? Riggs wrote the first book in Dakota language for the purpose of teaching the Dakota the English language.

#### **• Location: Williamson Mission**

1. SSFH: Williamson dedicated his whole life to the Dakota people. What purpose did the Williamson mission play in the conversion of the Dakota People to European ways? What happened to the Williamsons and other staff from the mission during the Conflict of 1862?
2. Were the Dakota people the first and only Indian Peoples to inhabit this valley? There is a fortified village ruin on the site.



- **Location: Upper Sioux Tribal Community**

1. SSFH: What is the history of this small village?
2. SSFH: How is this tribal community working to retain its heritage?

- **Location: Sorlien Mill**

1. The Sorlien Mill ground grain into flour for the early settlers for twenty-two years. The Yellow Medicine River drops 16 feet in this unique loop in the river.

- **Location: Roaring Cloud Site**

1. How did the Spirit Lake Massacre affect the Dakota people living in this quiet village on the bluffs of the Yellow Medicine River valley?
2. How did this event impact the eruption of the U.S./Dakota Conflict of 1862?

- **Location: Skalbekken Park - County Park**

1. SSFH: The Skalbekken family moved this original dovetail home from their homestead to this park?
2. SSFH: How did settlers construct their homes?
3. SSFH: Mr. Skalbekken worked to preserve beautiful places in the valley for all to enjoy.

- **Location: Schwandt Memorial**

1. SSFH: The U.S./Dakota conflict tore apart many families. How did it happen?
2. SSFH: How was the Schwandt family affected by the conflict?

- **Location: Rudi Memorial**

1. SSFH: Interpretation on the homestead and early settler life

- **Location: Vicksburg Cemetery**

*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.*





1. SSFH: Civil War cemetery - What were the connections between the U.S./Dakota Conflict of 1862 and the Civil War?

• **Location: Belview**

1. Interpret history of community and why Odeon Theatre, Land and Load Office, depot and Gimmestad home are located there.

• **Location: Redwood Falls** - location to be determined, best site would be at new visitors center

Topics:

1. RL: History of falls and community
2. Architecture of the downtown. Who designed and built the original library and the courthouse?
3. What was the purpose of Camp Pope?
4. Review the beginning of the Sears retail chain in North Redwood.

• **Location: Redwood Falls - Alexander Ramsey Park**

1. Who was Alexander Ramsey and what part did he play in Minnesota history?
2. What part did he play before, during and after the Conflict of 1862?
3. What is the history of the park?
4. What is the history of this waterfall?

• **Location: Redwood Falls - Near Kibble Equipment**

Topics:

1. FFAN: Sign on farm machinery, pick up farm machinery identification brochure
2. Redwood County Museum
3. FFAN: local seed company information

• **Location: South of Redwood Falls at wayside rest near US71 and TH19**

Topics:



1. RL: Ferries and historic river traffic
2. SFAH: Lower Sioux Agency interpretation and invitation

•**Location: Morton**

Topics:

1. History of the town
2. History and information on murals
3. Renville County Museum - review inventions of Joseph R. Brown (e.g., three different steam engines.)

•**Location: Lower Sioux Community**

Topics:

1. SFFH: St. Cornelias Church - who built the church and what is the history of its membership?
2. SFFH: Who are the members of the Lower Sioux Community?
3. SFFH: What is the history of the original school? Who attended? What were children taught in this school?

•**Location: Renville County Parks**

Topics:

1. RL: Floodplains and river ecosystems
2. RL: Describe the county park system

•**Location: Harkin Store**

Topics:

1. SFAH: Trading in the 1800's with both EuroAmericans and Dakota
2. What's a Natural Preservation Route?
3. River valley architecture

•**Location: New Ulm** - general need for more pedestrian interpretive signs in and around village. Perhaps also signs indicating entrance into "historic downtown"

•**Location: North of Mankato on TH68**

Topics:

1. RL: Earth removal industry, use of materials for



everyday life

2. RL: Geology of the valley

•**Location: Village of Cambria**

1. This village is immediately on the rail line running from Mankato and offers an opportunity to talk about the rail road in the Valley's history.
  2. FFAN: Railroad towns and getting farm products to market
  3. The history and lore of Minnesota's cafes
2. Small Interpretive Kiosk for 24 Hour Visitor Info Center

•**Location: Cambria**

1. Byway Orientation and what in each direction

•**Location: Location near entrance to byway corridor along Highway 14 on north side of river at road comes from Mankato**

1. Byway Orientation and what's ahead
3. Tour guides/printed brochure

•**Theme: New Ulm History Tour**

Topics:

1. History of town
  2. Agricultural tours
  3. Dakota conflict sites
  4. Unique shopping
  5. Bicycling
4. Activity Booklet

•**Location: Story**

Topics:

1. Agriculture architecture
  2. Crop identification
  3. Birding list
  4. Plant identification
5. Audio Tape Tours

•**Theme:**

Topics:

1. Dakota conflict sites



## 2. Agriculture

## 6. Self-Guided Trail

### •Location:

Topics:

1. Bicycling
2. Dakota conflict sites
3. “Get Out of the Car” experiences for picnics, birding, canoeing, finding wildflowers and other experiences.

## 7. Road Signage

### General Need for Reassurance signing

- Location: Along all portions of the byway once it rises onto the plains and the landmarks are few, the unmapped county roads many and the towns few and far between

### Granite Falls to Redwood Falls

- Location: At junction of CR15 and 240, very confusing
- Location: CR15/6 junction
- Location: CR15/12 junction

Wayfinding Sign: There is a general need for a wayfinding sign and for an alternate route graphic that clearly indicates that option

### Redwood Falls to New Ulm

- Location: Renville County Parks all along route - better warning, directional and welcome signs needed
- Location: Directional signing at TH15/14 - not an intuitive intersection
- Location: Directional signs at TH21/US14 junction

### New Ulm to Mankato

- Location: Directional signing at TH68/TH15 junction. Not clear when entering New Ulm from the south.
- Location: At US169 and TH68 junction southwest of Mankato - directional warning signs needed in both directions
- Location: Warning signs for interpretive kiosks and signage all along route.



## 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. 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 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. Devise strategies to improve the commercial gateways into the segments cities and towns.
5. Keep the segment's gravel roads unless there are significant safety or tourism visitation problems. The gravel roads are one of the segment's appealing features.
6. Market the segment using a nodal strategy. That is, encourage visitors to start and end their visits in one of the towns and villages. Provide high quality information on the side trips and tours from the villages. Given the beauty of the roads in this segment, strongly market the concept of staying in a village and leisurely exploring the countryside.
7. Market the area as one of the premier scenic drives in the state. Develop a series of themed tours for scenic drive visitors.
8. Find funding to build new visitor centers and related facilities



in Granite Falls and Redwood Falls.

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 and route.
11. Find funding to design and develop interpretive sites along this segment and in the segment's communities.
12. Work to encourage economic health and revitalization in towns and for the Valley's farmers.
13. Support the development of new tourism and education facilities and attractions in the Valley.
14. Encourage agritourism in this segment and along the entire Valley.
15. Encourage alternative transportation routes that encourage economic renewal and which support Valley residents in their work and business.



## 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. Please note that summaries of the relevant objectives related to each action are located in the sidebars.

### Resource Management

*Objective 5: Keep the segment's gravel roads unless there are significant safety or tourism visitation problems.*

1. **Gather county highway engineers to discuss the best management strategies for the segment's gravel roads.** Roads should be maintained as gravel whenever possible. Engineers should be gathered together once a year to discuss byway maintenance issues, including gravel roads. Cost: \$0. Resources: Coordination by RDC with cooperation from county engineering offices.

*Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4: Devise growth management strategies to protect historic areas, important landscapes, gateways and to encourage economic health.*

2. **Participate in the design guidelines project with Browns Valley and the organization selected to prepare that document.** Define guidelines for this segment's communities that can help to improve the commercial gateways. Cost: \$0. Resources: Coordinate with RDC and selected assistance entity.

*Objective 12: Work to encourage economic health and revitalization in towns and for the Valley's farmers.*

3. **Work with local farms along the byway to identify ways that visitors can economically help the farms, or at the very least, identify management strategies that will ensure that visitors do not interfere with farm operations.** Use the Alliance as another avenue for Cooperative Extension to offer periodic workshops on ag tourism and direct marketing. Cost: \$0. Resources: Staff and cooperative extension performing outreach to local farmers.

### Marketing Program

*Objective 6: Market the segment using a nodal strategy.*

4. **Develop a segment-oriented, cooperative marketing program between Granite Falls, Redwood Falls and New Ulm.** This program should focus on product development and subsequent marketing to attract visitors to this segment. As the byway's media marketing program evolves, the targets and programs noted below could be featured for this segment. For the first three years, it is recommended that the following targets be pursued:





- **Develop a multi-faceted birding program** that includes press tours around the birding theme, defining specific state and county parks that birders will enjoy, 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. Please note that while this segment does not offer the same type of birding experience that Lac qui Parle or Big Stone Lake offer, the river valley in this part of the byway has rich birding opportunities. Birders will enjoy the more secluded, scenic driving experience of this segment. Cost: \$10,000. Resources: State tourism matching funds. Raise match through towns and counties.

*Objectives 6 and 7: Market the segment using a nodal strategy and market the area as a scenic drive and a series of themed tours.*

- **Target Twin Cities residents with an Off the Beaten Path strategy** that focuses on attracting visitors to the scenic drives in this segment. Travel articles placed in Twin Cities publications combined with periodic association-targeted events (e.g., birders, history buff road rally, etc.) will effectively promote this resource. Cost: The costs noted above in the birding bullet should be sufficient to assist with this effort as well. Resources: See above.

*Objectives 6 and 7: Market the segment using a nodal strategy and market the area as a scenic drive and a series of themed tours.*

- **Develop a series of three or four theme-based driving tours that extend from the towns of Granite Falls, Redwood Falls and New Ulm.** These tours should capture the drive-by visitor or the visitor attending one of the segment's festivals or events. The tours should offer 2, 4 and 8 hour explorations into the intimacy of this segment and its history. Potential themes are Dakota history, Minnesota Civil War history, agricultural tourism, and birding and wildlife. The current self-guided ag tours brochures by Prairie Waters is a good step in this direction. Cost: \$5000 for brochure and map printing. Resources: Byway marketing grant.

*Objectives 6 and 7: Market the segment using a nodal strategy and market the area as a scenic drive and a series of themed tours.*

- **Develop a Grab the Campers strategy.** The segment's state parks attract tens of thousands of visitors each year. This strategy should seek to encourage them to venture out into the Valley more extensively or to return for a repeat trip at another time of year. Offer incentives on meals, admission and lodging to grab the campers. Cost: \$5000 in marketing materials funds. Resources: Byway marketing grant and local businesses and governments.

*Objectives 6 and 7: Market the segment using a nodal strategy and market the area as a scenic drive and a series of themed tours.*



## Tourism Product Development

*Objective 8: Find funding to build new visitor center and related facilities in Granite Falls and Redwood Falls.*

*Objective 14: Encourage agritourism in this segment and along the entire Valley.*

*Objective 14: Encourage agritourism in this segment and along the entire Valley.*

*Objective 13: Support the development of new tourism and education facilities and attractions in the Valley.*



5. **Construct a visitor information center in Granite Falls.** This concept is described in the Year 2000 legislative package presented by the Prairie Waters coalition and then resubmitted in 2001. Cost: \$1 million. Resources: Legislative funds and local government.
6. **Create an Ag Tourism Initiative and AgTourism Fund for the byway.** Expand upon and refine the recommendations from this strategy into a targeted ag tourism initiative. Obtain financial backing from farmers, coops, banks and other sponsors. Build the program around the Food to a Nation theme. Develop a logo and marketing materials that can be used to promote this part of Minnesota as the center of agriculture interpretation and education. The Prairie Waters ag-tourism brochure and their ag-tourism workshops are good models to continue. As noted below, the Ag Innovation Center could become the center of this effort in the future. In the short term, this Fund can help make the case that this region is 100% behind developing the ag tourism product. Cost: \$25,000 to start the program, develop materials. Resources: Local firms, farms, banks, coops and other organizations who will contribute. See funding from USDA, Cooperative Extension and state agriculture department for support monies.
7. **Build the Agritourism product along the byway.** Create a greater number of driving tours, develop special packages for 1/2 day experiences on some of the farms, promote 1 and 2 day packages that integrate farm tours with coop tours with great food and some outdoor recreation activities (e.g., picnic by the river, sleighride across the fields, hayrides, horseback riding, etc.). Encourage more farms to offer some type of lodging on site. Explore offering loans to encourage the construction of guest cabins/yurts/teepees on farms. Again, the Prairie Waters ag-tourism efforts to date offer a good model for the rest of the byway. Cost: Use above the AgTourism Fund to pay for marketing materials and marketing outreach labor. Resources: Local AgTourism Fund and USDA grants for diversification
8. **Support the development of the Agriculture Innovation Center in Olivia.** This center will become a well-known focal point for agriculture tourism. The center could act as the anchor for the overall Agriculture Tourism Initiative. Cost: \$2 million. Resources: The AIC project is seeking funding from a variety of sources.

## RiverStory Interpretation

9. **Seek funding to improve interpretive materials and facilities within the segment's county and state parks.** While the basic state park product is exceptional, more funding is needed to update and improve the quality of interpretive materials in the parks. Part of the byway's interpretive plan should be a more detailed inventory of interpretive needs in the parks. Cost: Overall cost is unknown, but will be determined in byway interpretive plan. Resources: Seek byway and enhancement funding.

*Objective 11: Design and develop interpretive sites along this segment and in the segment's communities.*

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.

*Objective 11: Design and develop interpretive sites along this segment and in the segment's communities.*

11. **Of particular relevance for this segment is the development of interpretation on agriculture.** As the interpretive plan is developed, or assuming funding is found, as a part of the AgTourism Initiative, the region should design innovative ways for visitors to experience and learn about farming. The potential is endless. The most important step will be obtaining funding to pursue an interpretive program that is either part of the overall byway effort or part of the AgTourism Initiative. Cost: Unknown. Resources: Seek USDA or foundation funding for a plan and implementation of ag interpretation.

*Objectives 11 and 14: Design and develop interpretive sites along this segment and in the segment's communities. Encourage agritourism.*

## Valley Ventures Business Development

Business development in this section of the byway should focus on a long term assertive plan to enhance retail and services in Granite Falls, Redwood Falls and New Ulm. Each has a good collection of retail buildings to work with, but there is a need to drive more customers into the villages and to also market to potential entrepreneurs to "move to the Valley and start a new life." Following are recommendations aligned with this goal.

12. **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.

*Objective 12: Work to encourage economic health and revitalization in towns and for the Valley's farmers.*



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13. **Develop a series of RiverTown events with all the events combining downtown activities and festivals with river oriented activities.** The three communities might be linked for a 2-3 day RiverFest wherein visitors could sample each of the communities over the weekend. There are many potential event concepts that might work, but the key is to get the three communities together to find common ground so that they can market themselves as a connected destination. Cost: Planning will require facilitation by local chambers of commerce. Resources: Time and financial support from local chambers.
14. **Consider some form of Artists in Residence or Artists Retreat program for each of the villages.** This is a long term strategy, but one of the most successful ways to encourage new shops and new investment in a place is to seed it with artists. They provide an image for a place that can then attract other newcomers/entrepreneurs. They often volunteer extensively in the community and bring fresh ideas and a new perspective to the table. Cost: \$50,000 to explore the idea. Resources: Seek foundation funding to examine this concept. Perhaps work with a university arts extension program or find an arts development consultant.
15. **Develop a RiverTowns Main Street Program with assistance from the National Main Street Center.** This could be staffed by a circuit rider type position -- i.e., someone who works with three or four towns at a time. The objective would be on Main Street marketing efforts, innovative retail attraction and other activities. Cost: Raise \$50,000 in matching funds and seek foundation or National Trust grants for the additional amount.
16. **Develop a targeted tourism marketing program toward the specialty shopkeepers in the Twin Cities or other urban areas:** In other words, try to attract these people to come to the area for a visit with the hopes that one or two will open a branch store in the future. Perhaps sponsor a village retail renewal conference for Valley communities and try to get several of these shopkeepers to attend as speakers. Cost: \$5000 for expenses to support the trips. Resources: Seek foundation funding or raise money locally.



## Transportation Investments

17. **Work with Mankato on a project to bring excursion rail service into the Valley from Mankato.** That line would run through this segment and should have the active involvement of representatives of this segment. Cost: \$2 million feasibility study. Resources: Federal transportation funding.
18. **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.
19. **Expand the parking area at Harkins Store.** There is a need for more parking near the store. Cost: Unknown. Resources: Byways grant.
20. **Expand the parking area at Joseph R. Brown State Wayside Park.** There is a need for more parking and for toilets on the site. Cost: Unknown. Resources: Byways grant.

*Objective 15: Encourage alternative transportation routes that encourage economic renewal and which support Valley residents in their work and business.*

*Objective 9: Determine locations and erect new signage to support the byway.*

*Objective 13: Support the development of new tourism and education facilities and attractions in the Valley.*

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## Recreation Investments

21. **Improve bicycling trails and signage throughout the segment.** Work with existing regional and county recreation development plans and seek funding to improve trails. Cost: Seek \$150,000 for finalized plan with construction conceptual designs. Seek \$3,000,000 for trail improvement in this segment. Resources: Enhancement program, national and state trail funding
22. **Seek funding to improve signing, visitor facilities and infrastructure in the county park system along the river.** These are exceptional parks, but additional funding should be obtained to at least make the parks more accessible to the general traveling public. Cost: Unknown. Resources: Federal recreation funding.

*Objective Proceed with plans to provide more multi-use trails.*

*Objective 9: Determine locations and erect new signage to support the byway.*



