

Appendix B: Selected Site Inventory with Details

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1. Belview Depot and Museum

- a. **Location/GPS:** Belview ()
- b. **Description:** Historic depot and museum
- c. **Interpretive Significance:** railroad depot

Current Theme and Media: Cultural History

Current Status: Open one day a year.

Land Manager: Joanne Aamothe, 507-938-4335

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- Update collections & display policy.
- Expand hours.

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Develop & implement an interpretive plan.

2. Big Stone County Museum



(photo credit: www.mntreasures.com, John Atchley)

- a. **Location/GPS:**
985 US 12, Ortonville
(45° 17.900', -96° 26.381')
- b. **Description:** County historical society & wildlife exhibit overlooking Ortonville and MN River Headwaters at Big Stone Lake
- c. **Interpretive Significance:** Minnesota River Headwaters

Current Theme and Media: Natural History

Storylines: Ice Age, Native American Settlement, Settlement, Industrial Agriculture, Shifting Use/Perspectives

The predominant topic is the local history of Big Stone County. The museum displays local artifacts, mostly dating to the first half of the 20th Century. Signage outside the museum gives information about the natural history of the Minnesota River Valley.

Current Status: The museum is operated in conjunction with the Charles Hanson North American Wildlife collection and is open daily.

Land Manager: Big Stone County Historical Society

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- Create floor plan for interior space that improves visitor access to display content
- Develop & implement a collections plan
- Improve exterior signage

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Develop & implement an interpretive plan
- Include interpretive information about the natural history of the region inside the museum.
- Include interpretive displays covering local history in the 17th, 18th, 19th and 21st centuries.

Proposed Theme & Media

Theme: Natural History, Cultural History

This bountiful glacial basin that forms the headwaters of the Minnesota River has been home to many kinds of life and many different lifestyles.

Storylines: Ice Age, Native American Settlement, Settlement, Industrial Agriculture, Shifting Use/Perspectives; Dakota Settlement, Treaties & Reservation Era, Separation/Assimilation/Perseverance, Reconciliation.

The Big Stone County Museum should offer walking tours of the historic district in Ortonville and boat tours of the lake.

Other Recommendations

The Big Stone County Museum could and should play an important role along the byway. The headwaters create a natural draw; this is where bike & boat tours originate, and it often hosts fishing tournaments. Big Stone County Museum should use its local story to frame a regional narrative.

3. Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge



(photo credit: www.minnesotaseasons.com)

a. Location/GPS:

Odessa, MN

(45° 15.016', -96° 21.326')

b. Description: National Wildlife Refuge dedicated to providing habitat for migratory birds, and especially to support ground-nesting for water fowl. Recreation opportunities are also supported.

c. Interpretive Significance: Natural History & Ecology

Current Theme and Media: Natural History

Storylines: Ice Age, Shifting Use/Perspectives

Natural History, Migratory Bird Habitats, Ground-Nesting, Controlled Burns, Water Management, Hunting, Fishing, Environmental Education

Current Status: Open to the public all year

Land Manager: National Wildlife Refuge System (US Fish & Wildlife)

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- Acquire more land.

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Continue to develop interpretive programming.

Other Recommendations

This is a beautiful site that offers interpretive tours and programming for young visitors.

4. Big Stone Lake State Park

a. Location/GPS:

35889 E. Meadowbrook, Ortonville

(45° 23.309', -96° 30.791')

- b. **Description:** State park on the MN/SD border. The northern section of the park, called the Bonanza Area, provides a picnic area, boat launch and a primitive group camp for guests. The area also includes the Bonanza Education Center which provides a place to discover the past and ways to preserve it. The southern section of the park, called the Meadowbrook Area, contains a campground, swimming beach and hiking trails. Geocaching Demo park.
- c. **Interpretive Significance:** Big Stone Lake feeds the MN River; shared glacial origins

Current Theme and Media: Natural History

Storylines: Ice Age, Shifting Use & Perspectives

Current Status: Open Year Round

Land Manager: MN State Parks

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Continue to develop natural history programming
- Consider adding [improving?] an interpretive center or display

Proposed Theme and Media

Theme: Natural History

Storylines: Natural History, Native American History

Other Recommendations

Partner with the town of Ortonville and the Big Stone County Museum.

5. Birch Coulee Battlefield



(photo credit: Wikipedia Commons)

a. Location/GPS:

Highway 18, Morton

(44° 34.528', -94° 58.507')

- b. **Description:** Interpretive signs and walking paths at the site of 1862 battle.
- c. **Interpretive Significance:** Site of 1862 battle, striking landscape

Current Theme and Media: Cultural History

Storylines: Dakota Settlement, Treaties & Reservation Era, Separation/Assimilation/Perseverance, Reconciliation

Dakota Life in the MN River Valley, Battle of Birch Coulee, Dakota War

Current Status – Open daily, May-October

Land Manager – MHS

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- Improve & clarify directional signage leading to this site

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Continue to develop existing themes in conjunction with other MHS sites in the region.

Proposed Theme and Media - MHS manages and interprets this site in a very effective way.

Other Recommendations

The meditative quality shared by MHS walking-path sites is especially powerful at Birch Coulee. The site also provides an impressively complete history of the 1862 War. Signs should direct visitors to Birch Coulee from anywhere close to Morton.

6. Blue Devil Valley SNA

- a. **Location/GPS:** Southwest of Granite Falls, Township 115N, Range 39W, Sec 04
(44.801424, -95.550574)

- b. **Description:** Scientific & Natural Area
- c. **Interpretive Significance:** Relates to the natural history of the region

Current Theme and Media: Natural History

Storylines: Ice Age, Shifting Use/Perspectives

Current Status: Accessible Year-Round

Land Manager: Minnesota DNR

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- Add Interpretive Signage

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Develop & implement an interpretive plan.

Proposed Theme and Media – Natural History

Proposed Storylines: Ice Age, Water, River Prairie Ecology, Shifting Use/Perspectives

7. Blue Earth County Heritage Center



(photo credit: Blue Earth County Historical Society, www.bechistory.com/museum)

a. Location/GPS:

524-526 South 5th Street, Mankato

(44° 9.664', -94° 0.123')

b. Description: The county history museum in downtown Mankato.

c. Interpretive Significance: Execution site, bend in the river

Current Theme and Media: Cultural History, Natural History

Storylines: Ice Age, Native American Settlement, Settlement, Industrial Agriculture, Shifting Use/Perspectives; Dakota Settlement, Treaties & Reservation Era, Separation/Assimilation/Perseverance, Reconciliation

Currently the museum focuses on three stories. 1) Native American history in the Mankato area; 2) The execution of 38 Dakota in 1862; 3) Historic Main Street in Mankato

Current Status: Open Tuesday-Saturday; Main Street exhibit is new in 2013.

Land Manager: Blue Earth County Historical Society

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- Plan an expansion if one is not already planned. Even many smaller displays would benefit if they enjoyed their own dedicated space.

- Expand hours.
- Move to Main Street.

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Include robust interpretation of Mankato’s history, including natural history, history as a commercial center for the Minnesota River Valley, and the city’s role in the Dakota War.
- Exhibits are good quality, but scope is too limited.
- Develop & Implement an interpretive plan.

Proposed Theme and Media

Theme: Life on the Minnesota: Community, Conflict and Commerce

Storylines: Natural History, Native American History, Settling Mankato, Dakota War, Commercial History, Mankato in the 70s

Other Recommendations

Mankato is the biggest city on the byway, and it markets its history. Blue Earth County Heritage Center should endeavor to make itself the centerpiece.

8. Joseph R. Brown Minnesota River Center



(photo credit: Joseph R. Brown Heritage Society)

a. Location/GPS:

600 Main Street, Henderson
(44° 31.681', -93° 54.508')

b. Description: Museum dedicated to Joseph R. Brown, MN River Ecology & Geology, History of Henderson & MN Valley region.

c. Interpretive Significance: Joseph R. Brown was an Indian agent in Minnesota who married a Dakota member. He founded Henderson. The Center also includes interpretation of regional ecology.

Current Theme and Media: Cultural History, Natural History

Natural History, Dakota Life, Colonizing Minnesota, Dakota War

Storylines: Native American Settlement, Settlement, Industrial Agriculture, Shifting Use/Perspectives; Dakota Settlement

1850s Land Office, Brown's Steamwagon, Dakota Life (Tipi Display), MN Riverboats, Joseph Brown Family, Nature & Wildlife, MN River Table (interactive display)

Current Status: Open Tuesdays in May; Open Tuesdays & Sundays from May-September

Land Manager: Joseph R. Brown Heritage Society

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- Expand hours!
- Develop & implement a strategic plan

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Continue to build on existing themes and programming.
- Collaborate with Ney Environmental Learning Center when possible.
- Develop & implement an interpretive plan

Proposed Theme and Media – *More research required*

Other Recommendations

This museum features excellent content, including an interactive model of the MN River Valley that every byway visitor should see in order to better understand the landscape. Unfortunately, the site has very limited hours. With some strategic and interpretive planning this site can become a cornerstone for the region's natural history story.

9. Brown County Historical Museum



(photo credit: Wikipedia Commons)

a. Location/GPS:

2 North Broadway, New Ulm
(44° 18.754', -94° 27.637')

b. Description: The Brown County Historical Museum includes an excellent exhibit interpreting the 1862 Dakota War with a focus on the battles in New Ulm. The second floor features a Wanda Gag exhibit.

c. Interpretive Significance: 1862 battle site; Historic river town

Current Theme and Media: Dakota War, Wanda Gag

Storylines: Ice Age, Native American Settlement, Settlement, Industrial Agriculture, Shifting Use/Perspectives; Dakota Settlement, Treaties & Reservation Era, Separation/Assimilation/Perseverance, Reconciliation

The third floor exhibit is one of the best and most concentrated interpretations of the events of 1862 in Minnesota. Almost all of these storylines are represented within that exhibit.

Current Status – Open Tuesday-Sunday

Land Manager – Brown County

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- Only, make the first two floors as excellent as the third.

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Develop a more robust narrative of Brown County history (and Minnesota River Valley History) to balance the 1862 story.

Proposed Theme and Media

Theme: Cultural History, Natural History

Storylines: Ice Age, Native American Settlement, Settlement, Industrial Agriculture, Shifting Use/Perspectives; Dakota Settlement, Treaties & Reservation Era, Separation/Assimilation/Perseverance, Reconciliation

One should include “The Future in New Ulm.”

Other Recommendations

There is a lot left unsaid in New Ulm. The third floor exhibit started to fill-in the blanks. Brown County Historical Museum should continue the process.

10. Camp Release Memorial Monument

a. **Location/GPS:**

Outside Montevideo (44°56'8"N 95°44'50"W)

- b. **Description:** The Camp Release Monument was dedicated on July 4, 1894, commemorating the release of 269 captives and the surrender of about 1200 Dakota people at the end of the conflict. The four faces of the 51-foot granite monument are inscribed with information about the battles that took place along the Minnesota River during the conflict, the surrender that occurred, and the creation of the monument. The marker is part of a wayside. There are four new interpretive panels that were installed by the Byway in 2012.
- c. **Interpretive Significance:** Dakota War interpretation, first land added to state park system.

Current Theme and Media: Cultural History

Storylines: Dakota War

Current Status: Accessible year-round (monument)

Land Manager: Montevideo

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- This 1998 report recommends some repairs to the site:
- <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/roadsides/historic/files/iforms/LP-CAM-003.pdf>

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- [Potential for an expanded trail?]

Proposed Theme and Media

Theme: Cultural History

Storylines: Dakota War

Other Recommendations

This site was recently updated with four new signs.

11. Chamberlain Woods Scientific & Natural Area

a. **Location/GPS:**

380th St., LeSueur

(44.399124, -93.944863)

- b. **Description:** 302 acre Scientific & Natural Area

- c. **Interpretive Significance:** Relates to the natural history of the region.

Current Theme and Media: Natural History

Storylines: Ice Age; Shifting Use & Perspectives

Current Status: Accessible Year-Round

Land Manager: Minnesota DNR

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- Add Interpretive Signage

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Develop & implement an interpretive plan.

Proposed Theme and Media – Natural History

- Proposed Storylines: Ice Age, Water, Big Woods Ecology, Shifting Use/Perspectives

12. Continental Divide

a. **Location/GPS:**

(N 47° 19.188 W 092° 28.211)

- b. **Description:** Historical marker noting the location of 3-way continental divide in northern Minnesota
- c. **Interpretive Significance:** Relates to the natural history of the region.

Current Theme and Media: Natural History

Storylines: Ice Age

Current Status: Accessible Year-Round

Land Manager: US Department of Agriculture

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- Add Interpretive Signs

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Develop & implement an interpretive plan.

Proposed Theme and Media: Cultural History, Natural History

- Proposed Storylines: Ice Age, Water, Big Woods Ecology, Shifting Use/Perspectives

13. Flandrau State Park



(photo credit: www.panoramio.com, Tom Cooper)

a. Location/GPS:

1300 Summit Ave, New Ulm
(44° 17.639', -94° 27.568')

- b. Description:** State park with a sand-bottom pool also features hiking trails, camping and picnic spots.
- c. Interpretive Significance:** Flandrau is an excellent place to interact with the natural features that make the MN River Valley unique.

Current Theme and Media: Natural History, Cultural History

Storylines: Ice Age, Native American Settlement, Settlement, Industrial Agriculture, Shifting Use/Perspectives, Dakota War

The park itself displays the region's natural beauty. Plaques give a biography of Charles Flandrau, who is credited with successfully defending New Ulm against the Dakota in 1862.

Current Status – Open year-round

Land Manager – MN State Parks

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- As accessible as possible
- As little intrusion as possible.
- Facilities are good. Add grills where possible.

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Consider creating a small natural history interpretive area, possibly modeled on MHS' sites at Birch Coulee and Traverse des Sioux.

Proposed Theme and Media

Theme: Natural History, Cultural History

Storylines: Ice Age, Native American Settlement, Settlement, Industrial Agriculture, Shifting Use/Perspectives, Dakota War

Other Recommendations

Flandrau is like Mankato in the sense that, even though it plays an important role in a regional narrative, most people who visit are there for another reason. They want to feel removed, whether that means a few hours at the pool, a day on trails or a night in a tent. If there is a way to include a Natural History Center of the sort featured at parks like Gooseberry Falls, or include a short self-guided interpretive walk, that would be most to consider.

14. Fort Renville, Lac Qui Parle Mission



(photo credit: Minnesota Historical Society)

a. Location/GPS:

Cerro Gordo Township, MN
(45° 1.402', -95° 52.074')

- b. **Description:** Fort Renville is the site of a former fur-trading post established by Joseph Renville and built in 1826. It is located a half mile from the site of the Lac qui Parle Mission. There are walking paths and interpretive signage.
- c. **Interpretive Significance:** Site of early encounters between Dakota and European fur traders and missionaries.

Current Theme and Media: Cultural History, Natural History

Storylines: Native American Settlement, Settlement, Dakota War, Treaty & Reservation Era

Fur Trade, Missionaries, Dakota Language, WPA

Current Status: Open Daily May-Labor Day

Land Manager – MHS

Mission Site Manager – Chippewa County Historical Society

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- Improve & clarify directional signage leading to this site.
- Consider expanding hours

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Continue to develop existing themes in conjunction with other MHS sites in the region.

- Consider adding interpretation related to the WPA and other New Deal initiatives in the region if it is not already included (and if there is an interesting story to tell).
- Consider training interpretive guides.

Proposed Theme and Media – Because MHS manages and interprets this site in a very effective way, more research would be needed before proposing changes to theme or presentation.

Other Recommendations

One important feature shared by all of the MHS walking path sites is their meditative quality. It is a feature worth preserving even as they welcome more and more visitors. One way to do this could be to begin training tour guides.

15. Fort Ridgely State Park, Cemetery, Monuments, and Historic Site



(photo credit: Wikipedia Commons)

a. Location/GPS:

72404 County Road 3, Fairfax
(44° 26.900', -94° 43.611')

- b. Description:** The Fort Ridgely historic site, south of Fairfax, features a museum and preserved building foundations that tell the history of nineteenth century relations between the U.S. government, the Dakota, and new settlers to Minnesota. There is a museum, commissary building, and walking paths with interpretive signage around fort ruins. A cemetery and monuments honor individuals who died during the war. They are located in Fort Ridgely State Park, which offers plentiful recreation including a nine-hole golf course, hiking and horseback riding trails, volleyball and softball fields, fishing, and camping.

- c. Interpretive Significance:** Colonizing Minnesota; role during Dakota War; post war consequences

Current Theme and Media: Cultural History

Storylines: Dakota Settlement, Treaties & Reservation Era, Separation/Assimilation/Perseverance, Reconciliation

Origins as a peacekeeping station & center of economic activity, 1862 attacks on the fort, Dismantling of the fort

Current Status – Open Fri-Sun Memorial Day through Labor Day; Saturday & Sunday Labor Day through October.

Land Manager – MHS/MN State Parks

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- Expand hours. This could be a year-round site.

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Continue to develop existing themes in conjunction with other MHS sites in the region.
- Consider developing interpretation of natural history.

Proposed Theme and Media - MHS manages and interprets this site in a very effective way.

Other Recommendations

One important feature shared by all of these MHS walking path sites is their meditative quality. It is a feature worth preserving even as they welcome more and more visitors. One way to do this could be to begin training tour guides.

16. Gneiss Outcrops Scientific and Natural Area

a. Location/GPS:

near Granite Falls,
Chippewa County
(N44 46.461, W95 30.357)

b. Description: 241 acre SNA. No maintained trails or facilities.

c. Interpretive Significance: Natural History

Current Theme and Media: Natural History

Comments/Recommendations: Create signs and trails.

17. Harkin Store



(photo credit: Wikipedia Commons)

a. **Location/GPS:**

66250 County Road 21, New Ulm
(44° 23.247', -94° 36.210')

b. **Description:** 1870s General Store featuring original inventory

c. **Interpretive Significance:** Life in the Minnesota River Valley post 1862

Current Theme and Media: Natural History

Storylines: Settlement

History of West Newton, The Harkin Store: 1867-1901, Railroad Shaping Settlement Original building & inventory, General Stores in rural Minnesota, Railroads Shaping Settlement

Current Status – Open Tues-Sunday in the summer, weekends in May, September and October

Land Manager - MHS

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- Expand parking space if possible without compromising landscape.
- Create better connection to the river (walking paths and signage)
- Offer weekend hours in the winter.

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Continue to develop existing themes in conjunction with other MHS sites in the region.
- Consider offering winter programming.
- Consider adding interpretive sign related to natural history of the region near parking pull-out overlooking the river.

Proposed Theme and Media - MHS manages and interprets this site in a very effective way. Ideally, the site would have better connections to the natural history story.

Other Recommendations

One of the best features of the Harkin Store is the way it is advertised and promoted with signage along the byway. This makes it more likely that visitors will stop at this high quality site. The store's proximity to a scenic bend in the river may be an underutilized feature.

18. Historic Chippewa City

a. **Location/GPS:**

151 Arnie Anderson Dr, Montevideo
(44.9483, -95.7443)

b. **Description:** Recreated late 1800s village featuring 24 buildings, such as shops, bank, church, log cabins, and school.

c. **Interpretive Significance:** Preserved/restored/recreated late 1800s village

Current Theme and Media: Settlement history

Storylines: Settlement, Industrial Agriculture

Current Status: Open Monday-Sunday during summers; Monday-Friday in September. Main Street exhibit is new in 2013. Self-guided tour brochures are available.

Land Manager: Chippewa County Historical Society

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- Nothing notable

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Continue to develop programming, begin to offer guided tours and demonstrations
- Develop or review an interpretive plan

Proposed Theme and Media

Theme: Cultural History, Natural History

Storylines: The wide variety of buildings allows for a wide variety of stories.

Other Recommendations

This collection of buildings replicates a late 1800s village. Better connection to the Byway's themes could help contextualize these buildings.

19. Kasota Prairie Scientific & Natural Area and Kasota Prairie Conservation Area

a. **Location/GPS:**

Township Road 140, Kasota
(44° 15.920', -94° 0.165')

b. **Description:** The SNA is 42-acre area that contains virgin prairie and areas that were changed by grazing have returned to their natural state through careful management. The Conservation Area is 90 acres of native prairie, plus 30 acres of restored prairie on land previously mined and still owned by Unimin Corporation. The Unimin site also includes 120 acres of woods, marsh, grassland and a large beaver pond between the Prairie bluffs and the Minnesota River. The Unimin site has parking and a mown grass path.

c. **Interpretive Significance:** It, along with a few other parcels, are some of the largest remaining mesic/tallgrass prairies in this region.

Current Theme and Media: Natural History

Storylines: Native American Settlement, Settlement, Shifting Use/Perspectives

Current Status: Permitted access year-round

Land Manager: Minnesota DNR

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- Consider a developing a trail or bird-watching platform at the SNA or Conservation Area

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Consider creating interpretive signage

Proposed Theme and Media

Theme: Natural History

Storylines: Ice Age, Shifting Use/Perspectives

Other Recommendations

There are no trails and no restrooms at the SNA, but there is comfortable access for birders.

20. Lac qui Parle County History Center

a. **Location/GPS:**

250 8th Avenue South, Madison

(45° 0.641', -96° 11.753')

b. **Description:** The county history museum on US highway 75, south of Madison.

c. **Interpretive Significance:** Natural History

Current Theme and Media: Doll exhibit, military history, pioneer buildings, agriculture, school house, wildlife, salt and pepper shakers, townships, and Robert Bly studio.

Current Status: Open Monday through Saturday, May-October. Open T-W-Th-F November-April.

Land Manager: Lac qui Parle Historical Society

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- Review or develop collections plan

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Review or develop an interpretive plan
- Review or develop signage

Proposed Theme and Media

Theme: Cultural History, Natural History

Storylines: Ice Age, Native American History, Settlement, Dakota War, Separation/Assimilation/Perseverance, Industrial Agriculture, Reconciliation, Shifting Use/Perspectives

Other Recommendations

This museum could become an anchor site, with additional development of theme-related exhibits or programs. This would be especially important for the development of this section of the byway.

21. Lower Sioux Agency



(photo credit: Minnesota Historical Society)

a. Location/GPS:

32469 County Highway 2, Morton
(44° 31.479', -94° 57.789')

b. Description: Established in 1853 by the U.S. government as the administrative center of the newly created Dakota reservation and the site of the first organized attack in the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862. A history center exhibit explores the Dakota story before, during and after the War. Self-guided trails take visitors to the restored 1861 stone warehouse and the Redwood Ferry crossing. Interpretive center & self-guided walking paths to restored agency buildings.

c. Interpretive Significance: Dakota history before, during and after the 1862 War. Redwood Ferry.

Current Theme and Media: Cultural History

Storylines: Dakota Settlement, Treaties & Reservation Era, Separation/Assimilation/Perseverance, Reconciliation

Dakota History Pre & Post European Settlement, First attack of the Dakota War, Agricultural Traditions

Current Status: Open daily, Memorial Day-Early October

Land Manager – MHS/Lower Sioux Indian Community

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- Improve & clarify directional signage leading to this site
- Consider expanding hours

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Continue to develop existing themes in conjunction with other Dakota sites in the region.
- Consider developing interpretation of natural history.

Proposed Theme and Media – This site is effectively managed.

22. Marsh Lake

a. Location/GPS:

(45.212601, -96.163894)

b. **Description:** Lake on the MN River formed by Army Corps of Engineers Dam

c. **Interpretive Significance:** Relates to the natural history of the region.

Current Theme and Media: Natural History

Storylines: Ice Age; Shifting Use & Perspectives

Current Status: Accessible Year-Round

Land Manager: Minnesota DNR

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- Add Interpretive Signage

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Develop & implement an interpretive plan.

Proposed Theme and Media – Natural History

- Proposed Storylines: Ice Age, Water, River Prairie Ecology, Shifting Use/Perspectives

23. Minnemishinona Falls

a. Location/GPS:

Belgrade, MN

(44.169658, -94.085044)

b. **Description:** 42' Waterfall in county park with no facilities

c. **Interpretive Significance:** Relates to the natural history of the region

Current Theme and Media: Natural History

Storylines: Ice Age, Shifting Use/Perspectives

Current Status: Accessible Year Round

Land Manager: Blue Earth County

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- Add Interpretive Signage

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Develop & implement an interpretive plan.

Proposed Theme and Media – Natural History

- Proposed Storylines: Ice Age, Water, Big Woods Ecology, Shifting Use/Perspectives

24. Minneopa State Park & Learning Center/Seppman Mill



(photo credit: Elizabeth Nemmers [Flickr])

a. **Location/GPS:**

54497 Gadwall Road, Mankato

(44° 8.775', -94° 5.761')

- b. **Description:** State park featuring original 1864 windmill, railroad depot, WPA buildings and a waterfall
- c. **Interpretive Significance:** Life in the MN River Valley after 1862

Current Theme and Media: Natural History

Storylines: Settlement, Industrial Agriculture, Shifting Use/Perspectives;

Colonizing Minnesota, Railroad History, New Deal in Rural Minnesota, Seppman Mill Story, Railroad Depot, Grasshopper Plagues

Current Status: Open year-round

Land Manager: MN State Parks

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- More research required

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Develop & implement interpretive plan for historic structures
- Continue to develop interpretive programming

Proposed Theme and Media –

Existing themes and storylines are appropriate

Other Recommendations

WPA buildings offer an opportunity to tell a story about the New Deal in the Minnesota River Valley that is not covered at many other sites in the region.

25. Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area



(photo credit: MN Bike Trail Navigator)

- a. **Location/GPS:**
Between Belle Plaine and Shakopee
(44.663814, -93.707920)

- b. **Description:** The state recreation area is a 5,490-acre (2,222 ha) unit of the Minnesota state park system. The park is not continuous but is composed of waysides, four of which are strung along the Minnesota River between Shakopee and Belle Plaine. The various waysides are interspersed with units of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.
- c. **Interpretive Significance:** Natural History and Cultural History.

Current Theme and Media

The recreation area offers a wide variety of trails, interpretive panels, naturalist-led programs and activities.

Current Status: Open year-round.

Land Manager: DNR and USFWS

Comments: The Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area and Wildlife Refuge are extremely large areas spread across a long stretch of the river. Almost all of these areas are located outside of the Byway, though a few sections of dis-continuous land are included in the Byways's area.

26. Morton Outcrop

a. Location/GPS:

NE corner of US Hwy 71 and MN Hwy 19, Morton
(44.551002, -94.992313)

- b. **Description:** Morton Outcrop SNA is on a massive, high bedrock knob along the Minnesota River that contains one of the best examples of specialized plants adapted to rock outcrop remaining in Minnesota. Between 150 and 200 species of plants occur in these small areas. Seven rare plant and animal species have been documented on the site including the federally threatened prairie bush clover and the state endangered lichen *Buellia nigra*. This is the locality from which the rock type "Morton Gneiss" was first described. It is one of the oldest known rocks in the world, dating to over 3 billion years ago.
- c. **Interpretive Significance:** MN River Ecology

Interpretive Programs/Services: No signage at present, but DNR SNA program reports they will be writing and erecting a sign soon. This site has no maintained trails or other recreational facilities.

27. Ney Environmental Area and Learning Center



(photo credit: Josh Reinitz, www.neycenter.org)

a. **Location/GPS:**

28238 Nature Center Ln, Henderson
(44° 31.963', -93° 52.983')

b. **Description:** The Ney Nature Center is a 446-acre Environmental Learning Center and Le Sueur County Park located on the bluffs of the Minnesota River. The property is adjacent to the old East Henderson depot and village site, which has public access to the Minnesota River. It is open to the public for hiking, birdwatching, and X-C skiing.

c. **Interpretive Significance:** MN River Ecology

Current Theme and Media: Natural History

Storylines: Ice Age, Industrial Agriculture, Shifting Use/Perspectives

Current Status: Open to public year round; group education programs may be scheduled

Land Manager: LeSueur County Parks

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- Create/Improve Walking paths

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Increase programming; add events especially in winter months

Proposed Theme and Media

Theme: Natural History

Storylines: Ice Age, Industrial Agriculture, Shifting Use/Perspectives

Settling and farming the land, glacial river, shifting biomes

Other Recommendations

This is one of only a few sites that offer interpretation of the MN Valley's natural ecosystem. The Alliance should be sure to promote these sites to help visitors develop a balanced sense of life in the region.

28. Ottawa Bluffs Preserve

a. Location/GPS:

Ottawa Road, Kasota
(44.363513, -93.935031)

b. Description: 62 acre nature preserve

c. Interpretive Significance: Relates to the natural history of the region; especially noteworthy for presence of oak savannas

Current Theme and Media: Natural History

Storylines: Ice Age,

Current Status: Accessible Year-Round.

Land Manager: Nature Conservancy

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- Add Interpretive Signage

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Develop & implement an interpretive plan.

Proposed Theme and Media – Natural History

- Proposed Storylines: Ice Age, Water, Big Woods Ecology, Shifting Use/Perspectives

Other Recommendations

29. Rasmussen Woods and Elk Nature Center

a. Location/GPS:

555 Stoltzman Road, Mankato
(44.145127, -94.009006)

b. Description: 150 Acre Park with a shelter that can host school visits and other events.

c. Interpretive Significance: Relates to the natural history of the region.

Current Theme and Media: Natural History

Storylines: Ice Age; Shifting Use & Perspectives

Current Status: Accessible Year Round

Land Manager: City of Mankato

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- Add Interpretive Signage

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Develop & implement an interpretive plan.

Proposed Theme and Media – Natural History

- Proposed Storylines: Ice Age, Water, Big Woods Ecology, Shifting Use/Perspectives

30. Regional River History & Info Center

a. Location/GPS:

101 South Front St, New Ulm
(44° 18.891', -94° 27.142')

- b. Description:** Off campus research center for river data that also includes regional historical interpretation and environmental education programs. Modest exhibits.
- c. Interpretive Significance:** Offers data & education related to the region.

Current Theme and Media: Natural History

Storylines: Ice Age, Native American Settlement, Settlement, Shifting Use & Perspectives

Current Status: Open Memorial Day to Labor Day / Thursday and Friday 11:00am to 3:00pm and Sunday 12:00 to 3:00pm. Other dates by appointment. Call 507-354-8367.

Land Manager: Regional River History & Info Center

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- Expand hours

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Consider developing & implementing an interpretive plan

Proposed Theme and Media

Theme: Natural History

Storylines: Ice Age, Native American Settlement, Settlement, Industrial Agriculture, Shifting Use & Perspectives

Other Recommendations

The MN River Valley would benefit from more museum sites that interpret the Natural History of the region.

31. Renville County Historical Museum



(photo credit: www.lakesnwoods.com/morton)

a. **Location/GPS:**

441 North Park Drive, Morton
(44° 33.298', -94° 59.035')

b. **Description:** County historical museum including a display for each town in the county and extensive resources detailing the U.S.-Dakota Conflict of 1862, which began in this area. Other buildings on the site include a log cabin dating back to 1869, a country school, machine shed, woodshed, St. Johns church, and a schoolhouse that has been converted into a showcase of glassware.

c. **Interpretive Significance:** Dakota War, Settlement,

Current Theme and Media

Storylines: Settlement, Dakota War.

Current Status: Open Tuesday-Friday between Labor Day and Memorial Day; Tuesday-Sunday between Memorial Day & Labor Day

Land Manager: Renville County

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- Better signage

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Updated interpretive plan, new exhibits, expanded programs

Proposed Theme and Media

This county historical society could fill the need to balance the Dakota War histories expressed at other sites.

Other Recommendations

Renville County Historical Society is making good progress on preserving its buildings and interpreting its collection.

32. Sibley County Historical Museum

a. Location/GPS:

700 Main Street, Henderson
(44° 31.681', -93° 54.508')

b. Description: County Historical Museum located in 1885 home on National Register of Historic Places

c. Interpretive Significance: Relates the history of Sibley County to the history of Minnesota

Current Theme and Media: Natural History

Storylines: Settlement

Emilie & August F. Poehler, Historic artifacts from Sibley County

Current Status: Open on Sundays from Memorial Day through October.

Land Manager: Sibley County

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- Update collections & display policy.
- Expand hours.

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Develop & implement an interpretive plan.

Other Recommendations

SCHM houses a wide range of artifacts in their historic building. Their priority should be to develop an interpretive plan that lets these artifacts support a cohesive thematic narrative, and to be open more hours.

33. Swan Lake Wildlife Management Area

Location/GPS:

Nicollete (44.285897, -93.992885)

a. Description: Swan Lake in central Nicollet County is one of the largest prairie potholes in the contiguous United States, formed over 10,000 years ago as the glaciers retreated and left their melt waters in a series of glacial depressions. Once twice the size it is now, Swan Lake was Minnesota's largest marsh-wetland ecosystem before being drained for agriculture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

b. **Interpretive Significance:** Natural History

Current Theme and Media: Natural History

Current Status: Open year round.

Land Manager: MN DNR

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- Create trail

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Create interpretive signage on birds or history of mine.

34. Treaty Site History Center, Nicollet County Museum, Traverse des Sioux Historic Site



(photo credit: Nicollet County Historical Society)

a. **Location/GPS:**

1851 N. Minnesota Street,
St. Peter
(44° 20.917', -93° 56.952')

b. **Description:** The Traverse des Sioux was frequently used path of the Dakota, a fur trade site, and the location of an 1851 treaty between the U.S. and the Dakota. There is an interpretive center & walking trails with interpretive signs

c. **Interpretive Significance:** Dakota History, fur trade, explanation of 1851 treaty, discussion of MN River's role in trade.

Current Theme and Media: Cultural History, Natural History

Storylines: Ice Age, Shifting Use/Perspectives; Dakota Settlement, Treaties & Reservation Era, Separation/Assimilation/ Perseverance, Reconciliation

Dakota Culture, Treaties & Consequences, Natural History

Current Status: Trails & Treaty Site History Center are open daily

Land Manager: Nicollet County Historical Society/MHS

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- None

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Continue to develop existing themes in conjunction with other MHS sites in the region.

Proposed Theme and Media - This site is managed in a very effective way.

35. Upper Sioux Agency State Park



(photo credit: Brian Prom, www.campsiteports.com)

a. Location/GPS:

5908 Highway 67, Granite Falls
(44° 44.088', -95° 27.413')

b. Description: State Park with interpretive visitor center on site of Upper Sioux (Yellow Medicine) Agency

c. Interpretive Significance: Former agency site, diverse wildlife

Current Theme and Media: Cultural History, Natural History

Storylines: Ice Age, Native American Settlement, Shifting Use/Perspectives; Dakota Settlement, Treaties & Reservation Era, Separation/Assimilation/Perseverance, Reconciliation

Current Status – Park is open year round; Visitor center open daily Memorial Day through Labor Day; weekends after Labor Day

Land Manager – MN State Parks

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- Improve & clarify directional signage leading to this site.

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Increase interpretive programming.

Proposed Theme and Media

Theme: Cultural History

Storylines: Ice Age, Native American Settlement, Settlement , Shifting Use/Perspectives; Treaties & Reservation Era, Separation/Assimilation/Perseverance, Reconciliation

Dakota Life in the Minnesota River Valley, Missionaries, Dakota & European Traders, Dakota War, 20th Century Dakota Life, 21st Century Dakota Life

36. Wadsworth Trail

a. Location/GPS:

(N 45° 35.856 W 096° 50.328)

b. **Description:** An original pioneer trail blazed in 1864 between St. Cloud and Ft. Sisseton, SD.

c. **Interpretive Significance:** Relates the history of Browns County to the history of Minnesota

Current Theme and Media: Cultural History, Natural History

Storylines: Treaty & Reservation Era, Ice Age

Current Status: Accessible Year-Round

Land Manager: Browns County

Site Objectives – Physical Development

- Add Interpretive Signs

Interpretive Program/Services Objectives

- Develop & implement an interpretive plan.

Proposed Theme and Media: Natural History

- Proposed Storylines: Ice Age, Water, Big Woods Ecology, Shifting Use/Perspectives

37. Yellow Medicine County Historical Society

Location/GPS:

Granite Falls, Yellow Medicine County (44.806396, -95.553113)

- a. **Description:** Museum displays tell a story of the geology and archaeology of the Minnesota Valley, Native American history, and pioneer life in the county.
- b. **Interpretive Significance:** Natural History and Cultural History

Current Theme and Media: Natural History and Cultural History

Current Status: May 1st through Nov 1st, Wed - Fri 9am - 5pm, Thr 1pm - 9pm, Sat & Sun 11am - 5pm

Comments/ Recommendations: This museum could become an anchor site, with additional development of theme-related exhibits or programs.