

Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway Marketing Plan

Marketing, Branding and Action plan for the Byway

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1 | Introduction

The Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway's main purpose is to link together the Minnesota River as a tourism destination to create economic development for the region. A large portion of the byway's work, then, is marketing our byway.

Interpretation, signage, wayshowing are all ways to help our visitors enjoy the byway that we are marketing to the public.

Our approach

This plan is to help the Alliance work towards keeping a consistent message that helps the public see the byway as a unique and important destination. The strategies will be designed to fit the unique intrinsic qualities of our byway.

There are two themes the byway has identified to be unique on a national level. We, as a national scenic byway, will prioritize these national stories and themes in our marketing strategies. But we also recognize the local stories and assets along our byway and will identify marketing strategies to promote these unique local sites as well.

Our hope is to align this marketing plan with partner initiatives, existing marketing endeavors and other projects in order to join forces and create a stronger message for the byway region. By simplifying our message and strategies, we hope to make marketing the byway easy and effective.

Our goal

While ultimately the byway seeks to increase visitors to the byway to create an economic impact, the goal of this marketing plan is to increase awareness of the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway.

This can be achieved by packaging the assets, stories and products the byway has available to visitors so the byway alliance and its partners can share and promote the byway.

Our Product

Our byway is a 287 mile corridor along the Minnesota River. We have identified over 150 discovery sites that we want visitors to know about when they visit. There are 20 towns and two tribal nations directly on the byway route. The byway corridor is defined as ten miles on both sides of the Minnesota River from Browns valley to Belle Plaine. There are an additional 40 towns in the byway corridor.

The National Story

The Alliance has spent a considerable amount of time determining what sets our byway apart, and what experience and story it offer that you cannot find anywhere else. We identified two main themes that set the byway and this river corridor apart from any other. See **Appendix 1** for the messaging for each theme.

- **A River's Legacy: The Geology of the Minnesota River Valley**
- **A Place to Call Home: The U.S. – Dakota War of 1862.**

The Local Story

When you arrive to learn about these national stories, you will find a local flavor here that is unique to this place. Wineries, prairie, agriculture, adventure, bed and breakfasts, museums all work to make this river valley a fun place to visit. These sites will be promoted differently than our two main themes. These notable local sites will be marketed as Discovery Sites.

Discovery Sites

The byway has worked hard to identify sites along the byway that help tell the story.

In 2014, the byway recategorized our list into the following:

Destination Sites

Destination Sites are the visitor's guideposts when they travel through the Minnesota River Valley. These sites should be a public place where visitors could expect visitor information, staffing, and public

restrooms especially in the summer season and shoulder seasons. The site should merit the visitor to seek out the site for its national or statewide significance. The site should be related to our two major interpretive themes for the byway.

Historic Towns

For historic cities, towns, and villages to be included as a Historic Town Destination, they have a relationship to one or both of the themes (U.S.– Dakota War and Natural History). They also include at least one site that offers personal interpretation (guided tours, staff, programs, events) or high-quality non-personal interpretation (self-guided tours, exhibits, signs).

Discovery Sites

Discovery Sites should be a public place where visitors could expect limited visitor information. The site should merit the visitor to seek out the site for its statewide or local significance. The site may be related to our major themes for the byway but not necessarily.

Sites not included

Sites that are not included on our list do not offer any interpretation, or their connections to the themes are weak. New sites may be considered for inclusion in the Discovery Sites list if interpretation or other improvements are added. **Appendix 2** is the application for adding a location as a discovery site.

Terms used throughout the MRVSB plans:

Destinations = Anchor sites

Historic Towns = Anchor sites/Historic district

Discovery sites = Secondary sites, Notable sites, and Other sites.

Segments

Segments can be used to help make the byway manageable for certain items. The following

segments are used on our website mapping. All future segments should stay the same for consistency:

- Browns Valley to Ortonville
- Ortonville to Montevideo
- Montevideo to Granite Falls
- Granite Falls to Redwood Falls
- Redwood Falls to New Ulm
- New Ulm to Mankato
- Mankato to Belle Plaine

Symbols have been used with these segments as well: fish segment (Browns Valley to Ortonville), goose segment (Ortonville to Montevideo), canoe segment (Montevideo to Granite Falls), tipi segment (Granite Falls to Redwood Falls), falls (Redwood to New Ulm), beer stein (New Ulm to Mankato) and river boat (Mankato to Belle Plaine).

Character of the Byway by Segment

Appendix 3 offers a good look of the entire byway. The 287 miles are defined by prairie and old rock near Browns Valley, and bluffs and woodlands from Granite Falls to Belle Plaine. This appendix offers the character of the byway of each segment and the products of each segment. Most of the products are already destination or discovery sites, but it includes a comprehensive list with local businesses and other assets.

Themes and Messaging

The following text will be used on the website, in the visitors guide and in general marketing materials.

Messaging

The Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway traverses the ancient remnants of what was once one of the largest rivers to ever exist. Along the way, it uncovers stories from the U.S. Dakota War of 1862 that left hundreds dead and exiled a nation. Today travelers wind their way through vibrant small towns, Dakota communities, historic sites and scenic overlooks.

Historical Theme

The U.S. – Dakota War of 1862.

The Minnesota River Valley played a crucial role in the conflicts that erupted between Euro-American settlers and the Dakota people as they struggled to call this land “home.” The U.S.–Dakota War of 1862 was a significant event for the region and for our nation— a tragic chapter that foreshadowed wars to come, and permanently shaped the cultural identity of the Minnesota River Valley.

More detail:

In 1862, the Minnesota River Valley region erupted in war when a contingent of Dakota akic̄ita (warriors), frustrated by broken treaty promises, encroachment onto reservation lands and corruption that left them starving, attacked traders and government employees and a warehouse full of food at the Lower Sioux Agency. More were killed on all sides in the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 than Minnesota lost in combat deaths during the Civil War. As a result of the war, Governor Ramsey called for all Dakota people to be exterminated or driven from the state.

Thousands fled the state and those that did not were separated into two groups. Women, children and mostly older men were imprisoned at Fort Snelling before being removed from the state in May 1863. The akic̄ita that were not executed at Mankato were imprisoned at Davenport Iowa. In March 1866 the surviving prisoners were released to join their families in exile.

Decades later small groups of Dakota eventually started to return to their homelands in the late 1800s, and lived in small communities near where the Upper and Lower Sioux Agencies had been. Nearly 50 years later these small groups were organized into what is now the Upper and Lower Sioux Dakota Communities.

Natural Theme

A River’s Legacy: The Geology of the Minnesota River Valley

The Minnesota River Valley has a national story to tell about some of the oldest exposed rock on the face of the earth. This region was carved from dramatic and massive floodwaters that resulted from the overflow of glacial Lake Agassiz scouring a jagged path across Minnesota and uncovering ancient bedrock outcrops.

More detail:

The Minnesota River travels through rich wetlands, prairies, granite outcroppings, wooded hills, farm fields, villages and small cities. Over millennia, the river valley’s people, plants, and animals have interacted in a complex and unique ecosystem. Throughout the valley, evidence of the interactions between these species can be seen. Today, the valley’s natural features offer a fascinating number of interpretive opportunities.

Our History

The list of accomplishments by the byway is long. A comprehensive list of accomplishments is in Appendix _____. Below are some of the highlights:

Marketing Accomplishments

- 1996 Grand Opening celebrate the linking of the three segments
- 1997 The Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway Alliance was formally organized as a Minnesota nonprofit corporation (according to Minnesota Statute Chapter 317A) in February 1997
- 1998 Developed large map brochure, reprinted in 2002 and 2004
- 1998 Develop a Byway Information Kiosks and Welcome Signs paper and designs
- 1998 Developed promotional videos
- 1998 Cosponsored Run, Ride and Row along Byway
- 2000 Byway VHS 6 minute video by Dahlquist
- 2001 Published in National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Stories Across America: Opportunities for Rural Tourism”

2001	Won a Travel Marketing Award at the Minnesota Governor's Conference on Tourism	2009	Byway banners made
2001	Developed byway website (Voyageur Web), phase 2 in 2003, updated in 2006	2009	Brochure and business cards created for TRAM
2002	National Scenic Byway Designation	2010	Star Tribune Email Blast
2002	Worked on a Media Marketing Program (FAM, etc), not successful in getting enough funding	2012	Geocaching the byway: Who's who in 1862 (project through 2014)
2002	Fall Explorer ad	2012	Started Facebook page managed by volunteer
2003 – 2015:	compiled a byway calendar with annual events.	2012	Flyer for Interpretive panels created
2003	Grand Opening/Celebration of National Designation (See Americas Byway's by Trains, Planes, and Automobiles, Fairfax MN). Minnesota River Rumble (motorcycle) tour.	2012	Assisted with the U.S. –Dakota War Bike Ride event
2003	MN Travel Guide Ad	2013 - 2015	Annual Byway long-garage sale
2003	Fall Explorer ad, Spring Explorer ad	2013	MN Trails ad
2004	Created Byway Book Marks	2013	New updated Visitors Guide
2006	Southern Minnesota Byway s- postcard, multi-byway, direct mail	2013	Minnesota Historical Society U.S.- Dakota War of 1862 Oral History Tour along our byway.
2006	Mn Trails ad	2014	MN Trails ad
2007	MN Trails ad	2014	New Byway Website (Vivid Web Inc.)
2007	MN Moments ad	2016	New updated Visitors Guide
2007	Field Trips MN ad	2016	Created new Byway Videos
Various articles in MN Trails Magazine, Southern MN guide, Field Trips MN		2016	Created new Byway window clings
2005	Visitors guide. Updated version in 2009, 2013	2017	Developed partnerships that allowed us to create Dakota content for the website and Visitors Guide
Distribution of Visitors Guides, including Mall of America		2018	New Updated Visitors Guide
2005	FAM tours: 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010,	2018	Completed updated Corridor Management Plan and Marketing Plan
2005	Byway bookmarks		
2007	Created monthly facts and sent out as press releases		
2007	Advertised in Field Trips, MN		
2007	Editorial in AAA Mag, Explore Southern Minnesota, Minnesota Golfer, and Explorer newspaper.		
2008	Advertised in Minnesota Moments and Field Trips Minnesota.		
2008	Byway DVD with photos		
2008	Created Byway pins		
2008	Byway pins		
2008	Created a direct mail piece with Prairie Waters, sent to 11,000 households		
2009	Byway temp tattoos created		

2 | Target Audience

Situation Analysis

A complete analysis of the target audience is located in the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway Interpretive Plan, 2014. The byway's current main visitors are likely older, wealthy and white and without children. The reason for travel is mostly vacation and personal and likely stay overnight. Most visitors are already from Minnesota. Most use the internet to plan their trips.

Although minorities do not currently make up a large percentage of visitors in the Minnesota River Valley, the overall population of minority populations make up the largest area of growth in the tourism industry.

The top attractions along our byway are:

Popular Sites and Annual Attendance		
1	Prairie's Edge Casino	600,000 – 720,000
2	Flandrau State Park**	234,047
3	Jackpot Junction Hotel	150,000
4	Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area**	145,332
5	Minneopa State Park**	141,221
6	Lac Qui Parle State Park**	96,873
7	Fort Ridgley State Park**	65,424
8	Upper Sioux Agency State Park**	45,406
9	Big Stone Lake State Park**	37,358
10	Schell's Brewery**	35,000
11	Morgan Creek Vineyards	19,800
12	Brown County Museum	10,890
13	Harkin Store	10,000

In 2013 -2014, Explore Minnesota Tourism conducted a study to determine the 15 top things that visitors want then they come to Minnesota.

Top 15 Hot Buttons

1. A fun place for a vacation.
2. Lots of things to see and do.
3. Must-see destination.
4. An exciting place.
5. Unique vacation experience.
6. A vacation there is a real adventure.
7. Great for an adult vacation.
8. Popular with vacationers.
9. Children would enjoy.
10. Good place to relax.
11. Interesting small towns/cities.
12. Interesting festivals/fairs/events.
13. Truly beautiful scenery.
14. Excellent resorts/cabins/cottages
15. First class hotels

Based on this information, the byway should consider marketing to these target audiences:

- Motorcycle drivers
- Active people looking for outdoor adventure
- Middle aged couples who enjoy history
- Families looking for easy trips to discover facts and history about Minnesota.
- Younger people are coming too! The 20-year-old age category are taking 3-day trips to see the river, history and are interested in the stories.

This target audience should be updated as demographics change.

Target Audience by Subject

How we present our byway will depend on what our target audience is looking to do. The traveler who rides motorcycle may see the designated roads as a good place to travel. Others may see the towns as destinations and the byway is a way to get from town to town.

The following are categories of target markets that the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway should consider:

- Birdwatchers
- History Enthusiasts
- European Heritage Enthusiasts
- Agri- Tourists/Foodies
- Prairie Enthusiasts
- General Tourists Seeking Novel Lodging Experiences (Tipi, yurt, sod houses, etc)
- Gamblers
- Fishing
- Hunters
- Paddlers
- Festivals and Special Events
- Specialty Shopping Along the Byway
- Outdoor Adventurists – zip line, disc golf, mountain biking
- Winter Adventures
- Scenic and Pleasure Driving
- Bicyclists
- Motorcyclists
- Camping and state park recreation
- Watchable wildlife enthusiasts

See strategies for Target Audience by subject in the Appendix 4. Included is also a list of potential new target markets

- Kansas City

Target Audience by Geography

The byway message also depends on the geographic markets. The following are markets to consider. This is especially useful for creating itineraries and distributing materials.

Consider originating itineraries from Minneapolis/St. Paul, St. Cloud, Fargo, Rochester or Mankato.

Consider these geographic markets for byway efforts:

Twin cities

- Depending on location, Twin Cities is a 2-4 hour drive from area
- Twin Cities marketing can focus on weekend and long weekend targets
- Twin Cities market will largely focus on highly committed outdoor market (e.g. fishing tourney's, hunters) and long week-end vacationers
- Twin City visitors seeking day trips
- People traveling across Minnesota toward the Badlands, Mount Rushmore, and Yellowstone

Target states: Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota

Target cities:

- Southern Minnesota cities - one day getaway to a very scenic drive
- Cedar Rapids- Waterloo-Dubuque
- Des Moines-Ames
- Fargo-Valley City
- La Crosse-Eu Claire
- Madison
- Mankato
- Mpls-St. Paul
- Rochester-Mason City
- Sioux City
- Sioux Falls-Mitchell
- Indianapolis

3 | Resources

Media options

Media channels in 2015 are numerous and continually changing. Media options currently include:

- Press Release
- Public Relations
- Radio
- Television
- Byway website
- Newspapers and Print
- Social Media
- Newsletters, eNewsletters
- Email Blasts
- Mobile Apps
- Online tours – oral history tour
- Video
- Programs and events
- Collateral materials
- Byway media marketing

Guidelines for using media options

Press release

- Make sure the press release is well edited
- Supply a photo with the press release
- Potential times to put together a press release:
 - National Trails Day – 1st week in June
 - National Get Outdoors day – 2nd Sat in June
 - 1st day of new season
 - Leading into holiday weekends: Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day.
 - Magazines need press releases four months ahead

Distribution contacts for Press Releases:

- Editors
- Outdoor columnists
- Facebook and other social media
- All chamber and CVB in byway
- Add to Byway website
- Calendar of events
- Public Relations contacts

Public Relations

Publications have travel writers looking for story ideas. We need to capture their attention among hundreds of emails each day so they will write an article about our destination.

- Subject line needs to be good. What is it and who cares?
- Consider the big “get”, the idea that captures attention.
- Highlight facts and give an overview, not an article.
- Lead needs to be on the top as likely only the top paragraph will be read before a decision is made.

Distribution contacts for Public Relations:

- Family columnists (Maja Beckstrom, Pioneer Press)
- Travel Writer – Kerri Westernberg, Star Tribune
- Outdoors Weekend Section – Christy DeSmith, Editor, Star Tribune

Radio

- looks for sound bites

Television

- Looks for photo op between 10-2 pm
- Get story to them around 9:00 that day, and only one day ahead.

Website

- Utilize a Filtered map
- Responsive – utilize on different size mobile devices.
- Connect to Explore Minnesota Website
- Connect to Minnesota Department of Natural Resources websites
- Utilize history from Minnesota Historical Society

Social Media

- Facebook (byway started in 2012 by volunteer). Added feed to byway website.
- Other social media could be considered (Twitter, Instagram, Flickr, etc)

Online tours – oral history tour

- Connect with the Minnesota Historical Society. MNHS created an oral history tour in 2012.

Programs and events

Another potential marketing tool for the byway are specific programs to further the goals of the byway. Examples of this are the Byway-long Garage Sale and the Geocaching program.

When starting a program, utilize these steps:

- Identify Audience
- Address barriers
- Develop goals and objects
- Plan ahead and prepare
 - Research
- Promote
- Evaluate
- Improve and do again

All byway events and programs should consider the following:

- Press release
- Paid Advertising
- Mobile App – consider only for repeat events

Collateral materials

The byway has created many products for marketing purposes. Here is a general list of products that can be used to help market the byway:

- Maps
- Itineraries
- Visitors Guide
- Posters
- Display
- Calendar
- Rack cards/direct mail piece
- Brochure rack for just byway-only brochures
- T-shirts, bags, various items
- Interpretive products (guidebooks, passports, activity books, kids kits)
- Give-aways: pins, key chains, note cards, etc.

Byway Media Marketing

Media marketing is the process of promoting through the writers and other media professionals and subsequently the publications/programs that publish their stories and shows.

A Media Marketing program utilizes many of the media options, programs and collateral materials to create a press package. This press package should make it easier for travel writers to research and write stories about the byway.

Byway Media Marketing Program

Media marketing is the process of promoting through the writers and other media professionals and subsequently the publications/programs that publish their stories and shows.

It is more cost effective than advertising in that whereas advertising buys a one-page -- or less -- concise graphic with a little text, a travel article provides up to several pages of in-depth coverage. It will allow the Byway to target a variety of audiences and tell many different stories.

The media marketing effort would accomplish a variety of actions for the byway including the following:

- Create a **Public Relations/Press Package**. A public relations package would be prepared for use to promote the Byway to group tour operators, travel writers, trade magazines and news outlets. This press package should include: (1) photographs of all seasons; (2) news releases describing important winter and summer recreational resources and events; (3) key area brochures and publications; (4) special stories on activities that may improve exposure of the area during shoulder seasons; (5) local tourism contacts that can help travel writers with stories (business owners, managers, guides and consultants).
- Expand and Work all **Press Contacts**. The Alliance should work with the Office of Tourism and local tourism offices to develop press contacts (Minnesota and surrounding states) to market the Byway.
- **Host Press Tours**. Several press tours each year would be hosted for travel writers.

Existing Partnerships

The Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway Alliance takes a very active role in working with regional and local tourism marketing entities to pool resources and ideas to promote the Byway.

Look to **Appendix 6 in the Corridor Management Plan** to see a current list of all the partnerships.

Additional partners can be found as part of the Discovery Sites in **Appendix 11 in the Corridor Management Plan** and the updated mailing lists.

Assets of the byway

Appendix 3 describes the byway character in depth by segment. It also lists all the products the byway has to offer. Many of these products are discovery sites, but many are not.

In addition, the byway's partners listed in the previous section also includes assets that should be considered when determining the communications plan.

4 | Style Guide

Brand

Vision

The marketing vision of the byway is to create more awareness of the Minnesota River Valley.

Promise

The promise is the essence of the Minnesota River Valley Byway experience. It captures what people will get by coming here.

As you drive through the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway's rich wetlands, prairie, granite outcroppings and wooded hills, you'll have the opportunity to learn more about the U.S. – Dakota War of 1862.

Personality

The personality encapsulates what the experience feels like. The positive tension between these characteristics are what make this an interesting place that offers something unlike anywhere else nationally, and anywhere else in Minnesota. "Only in MN can you _____".

See sites of the U.S. – Dakota War of 1862.

Position

The positioning expresses why this experience is unlike any other. It is the point of differentiation that visitors are looking for to help them convey why they choose to spend their valuable time in this place

Brand of the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway

"Visit the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway to discover the River of Stories. This unique valley formed by ancient glaciers is where you can learn about the important U.S.-Dakota War of 1862."

Taglines

The current tagline is:

Discover the river of stories.

Messaging

The byway will use the interpretive messaging as the basic style and voice of the byway.

Message:

Discover the Minnesota River Valley and unlock a piece of American history.

The Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway traverses the ancient remnants of what was once one of the largest rivers to ever exist. Along the way, it uncovers stories from the U.S. Dakota War of 1862 that left hundreds dead and exiled a nation. Today travelers wind their way through vibrant small towns, Dakota communities, historic sites and scenic overlooks.

A River's Legacy:

The Geology of the Minnesota River Valley

The Minnesota River Valley has a national story to tell about some of the oldest exposed rock on the face of the earth. This region was carved from dramatic and massive floodwaters that resulted from the overflow of glacial Lake Agassiz scouring a jagged path across Minnesota and uncovering ancient bedrock outcrops.

More detail:

The Minnesota River travels through rich wetlands, prairies, granite outcroppings, wooded hills, farm fields, villages and small cities. Over millennia, the river valley's people, plants, and animals have interacted in a complex and unique ecosystem. Throughout the valley, evidence of the interactions between these species can be seen. Today, the valley's natural features offer a fascinating number of interpretive opportunities.

A Place to Call Home:

The U.S. – Dakota War of 1862.

The Minnesota River Valley played a crucial role in the conflicts that erupted between Euro-American settlers and the Dakota people as they struggled to call this land “home.” The U.S.–Dakota War of 1862 was a significant event for the region and for our nation— a tragic chapter that foreshadowed wars to come, and permanently shaped the cultural identity of the Minnesota River Valley.

More detail:

In 1862, the Minnesota River Valley region erupted in war when a contingent of Dakota akicȋta (warriors), frustrated by broken treaty promises, encroachment onto reservation lands and corruption that left them starving, attacked traders and government employees and a warehouse full of food at the Lower Sioux Agency. More were killed on all sides in the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 than Minnesota lost in combat deaths during the Civil War. As a result of the war, Governor Ramsey called for all Dakota people to be exterminated or driven from the state.

Thousands fled the state and those that did not were separated into two groups. Women, children and mostly older men were imprisoned at Fort Snelling before being removed from the state in May 1863. The akicȋta that were not executed at Mankato were imprisoned at Davenport Iowa. In March 1866 the surviving prisoners were released to join their families in exile.

Decades later small groups of Dakota eventually started to return to their homelands in the late 1800s, and lived in small communities near where the Upper and Lower Sioux Agencies had been. Nearly 50 years later these small groups were organized into what is now the Upper and Lower Sioux Dakota Communities.

Potential storylines are located the Interpretive Plan, 2014

The Message

(source: *Marketing your Byway, America’s Byway Resource Center*)

The byway story is a theme based on an **intrinsic quality**, qualified through descriptive and compelling statements or subthemes.

Match your theme and subthemes to your **target audience**.

A **theme** is a single idea expressed in a complete sentence.

Supporting statements (subthemes) build an emotional or intellectual connection to help people understand the meaning of the resource.

1. Identify the Intrinsic Quality
2. Identify the Target Audience
3. Develop the Theme
4. Develop supporting statements (subthemes)

Logo, Font and Colors

The logo was created by the Minnesota Department of Transportation in 2000. A logo use policy should be created.



	PMS PROCESS BLUE C
	PMS 021C ORANGE
	PMS PROCESS MAGENTA C
	PMS PROCESS BLACK
	WHITE

Fonts:

Droid Serif

Poppo-Laudatio Bold

Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway

Examples of ads

Work on media kit and examples as time allows.

Photographs

Many photos have been given to the byway. The byway will receive permission from the photographer to use the photos in marketing purposes. The byway will always try to give credit to the photographers when possible.

5 | Action Plan

Marketing Challenges and issues

Visiting the byway can be challenging because of its scale. Our byway follows the Minnesota River along 287 miles. It can be hard to follow the route because of the many roads and discovery sites may be difficult to find. Tourism information centers sometimes have limited hours.

The U.S. – Dakota War is a significant and distinctive story that happened along our byway. Currently, it is challenging to visit one or two sites and really learn about what happened. We need to find ways to make it easier for the visitor to learn about the at story while they are visiting our byway.

People are interested in Dakota culture and history. However that culture is not very accessible to the general tourist.

The Minnesota River itself has an image issue. The river has a polluted past that lingers today. And although the health has improved, it is still viewed as a river that passes through urban areas and vast farmland that continues to pollute. The river's health has improved and using and enjoying the river will increase future efforts to continue to clean up the river.

Services along the byway can be hard to find. Some cities along the byway do not have many food, lodging or shopping options. There are few outfitters and rental services along sections of the byway. Cell phone coverage is spotty in the valley.

Awareness of what the byway is and is trying to do is challenging. Because of the long byway and many possible partners, it is difficult to make sure all partners are up to date.

Because the byway is long and includes many cities, marketing efforts can be complicated and challenging. One challenge is to both offer the byway as the centerpiece product in some cases and as the backdrop product in other cases. The byway must take a supporting or complementary role rather than a lead product role. There are many partners to coordinate which takes time for good communication.

It is difficult to find funding for marketing projects

Marketing Actions

The main purpose of the byway is to link together the Minnesota River as a tourism destination to create economic development for the region. The overall goal of the marketing plan is to increase the number of visitors to the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway, and therefore increase visitor expenditures for tourism businesses along the Byway route.

The following are actions for the byway marketing plan.

Action 1: Help make the byway more accessible to the visitor.

- Revise and Promote Regional Itineraries and packaged experiences
 - Create basic Anchor Site itineraries. – 2-3 nights only

- All Itineraries Should Originate in Minneapolis/St. Paul, St. Cloud, Fargo, Mankato or Rochester.
- Change itinerary themes to fit our new brand
 - Dakota Life and Culture
 - Antiquing
 - Biking
 - Fine Art and Fine Wine
- Develop gateway sites and full-service destination sites. Consider Visitors Centers
 - anchor/destination sites can become byway information centers.
- Signage is needed to help with the many different roads, routes and discovery sites along the byway.
 - Work with state and county road authorities to keep byway signage up to date and expand signage where possible.
 - Pursue funding to expand the Byway's signage system
 - This is a critical action. More signs of a variety of types are needed to make visitors aware of the byway and to direct their travels.
- Create and distribute good maps.
- Develop projects and messaging based on target audiences.
 - Update target audience as demographics change
- Use segments on the website and in marketing materials to help divide the byway as needed: fish segment (Browns Valley to Ortonville), goose segment (Ortonville to Montevideo), canoe segment (Montevideo to Granite Falls), tipi segment (Granite Falls to Redwood Falls), falls (Redwood to New Ulm), beer stein (New Ulm to Mankato) and river boat (Mankato to Belle Plaine).
- Review and update discovery site content and list.
- Develop partnerships when connecting the byway. The byway is a connector between places. It can be, along with the river, the tourism product that encourages multi-town exploration and longer stays. Work with similar groups to come together for ideas in marketing to a target audience via itineraries and marketing messages.

Action 2: Develop the U.S. –Dakota War of 1862 and Natural History themes for the byway visitor.

- Consider visitors center, itineraries, additional interpretation and the website to further develop this story.
- Work with the Dakota communities to find ways to develop the U.S. –Dakota War of 1862 story in a sensitive way.
- The planning document done on the U.S.-Dakota War in 1862 was created in 2010 and updated in 2012. This document should be updated on a regular basis to identify how to proceed with interpretive projects based on this this theme.

- Work with natural history experts to come up with the overall story in the formation of the valley and old rock.

Action 3: Update the river's image.

- Show a message of people using and enjoying the river. As the river becomes less polluted, continue to update that image.
- Use the marketing program to raise the general awareness of corridor communities as good areas for investment and to dispel lingering negative images of the Minnesota River.

Action 4: Work with residents, business owners and organizations to encourage them to provide services and experiences to byway visitors.

- Encourage improved cell phone coverage.
- Support additional lodging, food, shopping options along the byway, especially those that are distinctive.
- Encourage more outfitters and rental services of canoes, kayaks, bikes and recreational services. Help them work together along the river.
- Work to develop and encourage more trails.
- Promote local artists and folk-arts of the region. Byway enthusiasts are looking for that one-of-a kind experience. For example, if any community promotes an ethnic image, work with local restaurants to offer at least one ethnic dish on their menu.
- Promote hospitality training that cross-markets communities and resources up and down the River Valley.
- Encourage and promote events.
- Encourage a new site for the Encampment at Traverse des Sioux.

Action 5: Increase awareness of the byway.

- Increase byway awareness and interest among corridor residents and elected officials.
- Increase byway awareness and interest among Minnesota residents and businesses.
- Increase byway awareness and interest among residents of adjoining states, Minnesota's major visitor origin states and among national travelers.
- Work with Explore Minnesota Tourism.
- Find Funds for and then Implement a Byway Media Marketing Program
- Educate the Industry. Work to educate individuals, travel information centers, travel agencies and related businesses, and organizations that are part of the travel industry who do not know about the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway

Action 6: Coordinate marketing efforts with partners.

- Use partnerships to market the 287 miles. The byway structure can be used to continually strengthen the many partnerships that exist and to create new partnerships.
- Participate in a supporting role in marketing efforts driven by byway marketing partners such as Prairie Waters and the various community chambers and CVB's.
- Take the lead in other marketing efforts in which the byway will be seen as the primary product.
- Work with Explore Minnesota Tourism to collaborate on byway marketing efforts.
- Keep a marketing project list for the Alliance and partners to review each year to decide current marketing projects.
 - Use and enhance the website as our main marketing tool.

Action 7: Find ways to fund marketing projects of the byway, including staff time.

- Market in partnership with Byway tourism organizations, communities, businesses, services and attractions to save money.
- Develop relationships with partners for membership dues and contributions.
- Work with Explore Minnesota Tourism grants.
- Research grant opportunities.

Action 7: Create SMART goals for marketing the byway.

Review the actions in this plan and create the Marketing Work Plan based on the principles of SMART Goals: S.M.A.R.T. goal is defined as one that is specific, measurable, achievable, results-focused, and time- bound.

Appendix 3 and 4 includes in depth issues, objects and actions for character management, marketing, products, infrastructure, visitor services, signage, roadways, parking and facility investments by segment.

The Marketing Work Plan

A marketing work plan will help the byway focus its efforts. At the beginning of each year, the Alliance should review their marketing work plan and consider the following sequence.:

1. Identify the target audience. This can be by subject or by geography. For example:
 - Motorcycle drivers
 - Active people looking for outdoor adventure
 - Couples who enjoy history

- Families looking for easy trips to discover facts and history about Minnesota.
 - Younger people are coming too! The 20-year-old age category are taking 3-day trips to see the river, history and are interested in the stories.
2. Identify five to ten sources of information or communication channels about that interest area. Prioritize down to the top three and get costs associated to them.
 3. Identify budget constraints.
 4. Identify partners that may be able to be involved.
 5. Create a timeline and overall budget.

Criteria to use:

- 1) Timeline:
 - a) Immediate
 - b) Medium-Term
 - c) Long-Term
- 2) Best media to use
- 3) Budget
- 4) Do they address the marketing goals from above?

The overall project list is located in Appendix __. This should be updated and prioritized on an annual basis.

Evaluation

1. Document all marketing efforts in the History of accomplishments and add to the overall project list in Appendix ____.
2. Calculate measurements as possible. How many people attended? How many brochures given out?
3. Analyze results. If possible, determine return on marketing investment. This will depend on finding out the dollars that were actually spent in response to the marketing campaign. It is easy to find out the cost of advertising, but it is more difficult to find out the response to the marketing campaign. Who saw the marketing campaign and who actually came because of it? What did travelers spend by responding to advertising?

Economic Impact

The America's Byways Resource Center created an Economic Impact Tool for byways to use. Once data has been collected, the byway could use this tool to develop future goals and strategies.

Appendix 1

Themes and Messaging

The following text will be used on the website, in the visitors guide and in general marketing materials.

Messaging

You cannot understand American history without knowing about the Minnesota River Valley. The Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway traverses the ancient remnants of what was once one of the largest rivers to ever exist. Along the way, it uncovers stories from the U.S. Dakota War of 1862 that left hundreds dead and exiled a nation. Today travelers wind their way through vibrant small towns, Dakota communities, historic sites and scenic overlooks.

Historical Theme: The Fight for a Home

The U.S. – Dakota War of 1862.

The Minnesota River Valley played a crucial role in the conflicts that erupted between Euro-American settlers and the Dakota people as they struggled to call this land “home.” The U.S.–Dakota War of 1862 was a significant event for the region and for our nation— a tragic chapter that foreshadowed wars to come, and permanently shaped the cultural identity of the Minnesota River Valley.

More detail:

In 1862, the Minnesota River Valley region erupted in war when a contingent of Dakota akic̄ita (warriors), frustrated by broken treaty promises, encroachment onto reservation lands and corruption that left them starving, attacked traders and government employees and a warehouse full of food at the Lower Sioux Agency. More were killed on all sides in the U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 than Minnesota lost in combat deaths during the Civil War. As a result of the

war, Governor Ramsey called for all Dakota people to be exterminated or driven from the state.

Thousands fled the state and those that did not were separated into two groups. Women, children and mostly older men were imprisoned at Fort Snelling before being removed from the state in May 1863. The akic̄ita that were not executed at Mankato were imprisoned at Davenport Iowa. In March 1866 the surviving prisoners were released to join their families in exile.

Decades later small groups of Dakota eventually started to return to their homelands in the late 1800s, and lived in small communities near where the Upper and Lower Sioux Agencies had been. Nearly 50 years later these small groups were organized into what is now the Upper and Lower Sioux Dakota Communities.

Natural Theme: A River’s Legacy

The Formation of the Minnesota River Valley

The Minnesota River Valley has a national story to tell about some of the oldest exposed rock on the face of the earth. This region was carved from dramatic and massive floodwaters that resulted from the overflow of glacial Lake Agassiz scouring a jagged path across Minnesota and uncovering ancient bedrock outcrops.

More detail:

The Minnesota River travels through rich wetlands, prairies, granite outcroppings, wooded hills, farm fields, villages and small cities. Over millennia, the river valley’s people, plants, and animals have interacted in a complex and unique ecosystem. Throughout the valley, evidence of the interactions between these species can be seen. Today, the valley’s natural features offer a fascinating number of interpretive opportunities.

Appendix 2

New Discovery Site Application Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway

Your site will be determined by the quality of site and how it fits with the goals of the byway. We will be able to add your site quickly if all information is included in this application.

Please type and send electronically.

Site information

Discovery Site name	
Site Address	
Phone number	
Email address	
Website	
Latitude	
Longitude	
County	
Directions	

Site Ownership Contact information

Site Owner Name	
Address	
Phone number	
Email address	

Site Manager/Organization if different than the owner

Site Manager/Organization Name	
Address	
Phone number	
Email address	

Describe your site:

Does your site have the following:	Yes	No	If yes, describe:
Directional signs/markers to help get to your site			
Interpretation (audio, panels etc)			
Parking lot			How many cars?
Parking for large vehicles (coaches, motor homes)			
ADA accessibility			
Restrooms			

Staff or volunteers (on-site or available)			
ADA Accessible?			

Discovery Site Narrative – Please type a brief narrative about the site. This narrative will be used as the narrative on our website and in marketing materials. If applicable, please share how the sites is related to one of the byway’s main themes: The U.S.- Dakota War of 1862 and/or Natural History of the Minnesota River.

Please indicate the type interpretative information about the following topics and whether it is available ON-SITE, ONLINE OR A BROCHURE.

U.S. – Dakota War	
Natural history of the MN River Valley	
Agriculture	
Other themes/topics	

Please indicate if your site has any of these things to do:

Museum	
Biking	
Birding/Wildlife	
Camping	
Eating	
Fishing/Hunting	
Hiking/Skiing	
Geocaching	
Golfing	
Disc Golf	
Paddling	
Shopping	
Waterfall	
Other categories	

Does this site have the following? Yes/No

Map	
High quality digital photos	

Please attach high quality photos with this application

Send to: kristi.fernholz@umvrdc.org or kristi.fernholz@umvrdc.info

Destinations, Historic Towns and Discovery sites on mnrivervalley.com

Sites on the website will be categorized by Destination sites and Discovery sites. In an effort to clarify to Byway visitors which sites are the primary or “don’t miss” sites vs the remaining discovery sites, byway the alliance categorized the list of over 100 sites into two main categories, so the list is not so daunting to the byway visitor.

Destination Sites

Destination Sites should be a public place where visitors could expect visitor information, staffing, and public restrooms especially in the summer season and shoulder seasons. The site should merit the visitor to seek out the site for its national or statewide significance

Destinations will be the visitors’ guideposts throughout the Minnesota River Valley. These are the sites that are “visitor-ready,” and offer clearly articulated messages and thoughtful services. These are the sites to promote most prominently by the Byway to the broadest audience—travelers from the outside the region.

- They have a relationship to one or both of the themes (U.S.–Dakota War and Natural History)
- They have national or state significance (listed on national or state registry of historic places, national or state park or refuge)
- They are accessible to the public beyond the summer season
- They offer personal interpretation (guided tours, staff, programs, events) or high-quality, non-personal interpretation self-guided tours, exhibits, signs), and that interpretation includes the relationship to the theme.
- Ideally, they offer visitor services such as restrooms, staff or volunteers, and information about the area.

Some exceptions:

- Some sites may become destinations if they are a crucial part of one of the themes (U.S.–Dakota War and Natural History) but offer fewer services.
- Some sites may become a Destination if offers outstanding services to the public and can offer that guidepost experience for the visitor to help them find additional sites. Work should be done to add interpretation related to our two themes.

Historic Towns (also categorized as a Destination)

For historic cities, towns, and villages to be included as a Historic Town Destination, the following criteria had to be met:

- They have a relationship to one or both of the themes (U.S.–Dakota War and Natural History).
- They have national or state significance (buildings or districts listed on national or state registry of historic places, or “Main Street” program).
- They include at least one site that offers personal interpretation (guided tours, staff, programs, events) or high-quality non-personal interpretation (self-guided tours, exhibits, signs).
- They are accessible to the public beyond the summer season.
- They offer visitor services such as public restrooms, food services and information about the area.

Discovery Sites

Discovery Sites should be a public place where visitors could expect limited visitor information. The site should merit the visitor to seek out the site for its statewide or local significance. These sites serve as “cherries on top” and are fun places to check out while you are visiting a destination.

Sites not included

Sites that are not included fail to offer any interpretation, or they lack connections to the themes. Examples of sites that are not included:

- County parks unless they have interpretation or a tie with one of our two themes.
- City parks unless they have interpretation or a tie with one of our two themes.

Appendix 3

Character of the Byway by Segment

Our byway follows the Minnesota River along 287 miles. Many different roads are used to create the byway route. We are defined by prairie and old rock near Browns Valley, and bluffs and woodlands from Granite Falls to Belle Plaine.

The following is a look at the character and major products of the byway by segment. The byway's segments are:

- Browns Valley to Ortonville
- Ortonville to Montevideo
- Montevideo to Granite Falls
- Granite Falls to Redwood Falls
- Redwood Falls to New Ulm
- New Ulm to Mankato
- Mankato to Belle Plaine

Browns Valley to Ortonville

Communities: Browns Valley, Beardsley, Ortonville

Counties: Traverse, Big Stone

Character of the area

This area is rich in geology with the Continental Divide, large granite deposits, and the edges of the Ancient River Warren Valley ridges in the landscape.

The historic town of Browns Valley and Ortonville's historic commercial district contribute to the historic character of the region. This is reinforced by the history of the Brown Family and its role in establishing the EuroAmerican settlement of the area.

Big Stone Lake is the dominant physical feature and defining quality of this area. Historically and today, the primary reason to come to this area is the lake and its surrounding landscape.

The headwaters of the Minnesota River are located in this segment.

The wide open prairies, grasses, wetlands and the fields and farmlands provide a vast and beautiful backdrop for the lake and river.

Its relatively isolated location from metropolitan areas make the region uncrowded and give it an undiscovered feeling.

Geologic action exposed large deposits of beautiful red granite. The prehistoric landscape edges of the Ancient River Warren Valley is clearly identifiable.

Major products for the visitor

(Destination and Discovery sites are bolded)

- The area's communities- their history, their shopping, their general appeal for walking around
- Hunting and fishing
- Wildlife viewing experiences
- Lakeside vacationing and recreation
- Water-based recreation
- Historic sites and attractions
- Independently Speaking, Brent Olson. Author, historian and storyteller.
- **Continental Divide**
- **Samuel J. Brown's influence- Cabin and Museum**
- **Historic Wadsworth Trail**
- **Browns Valley Man Historic Site**
- **Ortonville Historic Commercial District**
- **Big Stone County Museum**
- Charles Hanson North American Wildlife Collection
- Ortonville Free Library
- Big Stone County Courthouse
- Big Stone Lake
- Headwaters of the Minnesota River
- **Big Stone Lake State Park**
- Bonanza Education Center
- **Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge**
- Bouldering/Climbing
- Granite quarries

- Apple orchards north of Ortonville – Big Stone Apple Ranch
- Visitors enjoy outstanding natural resources, including water, wildlife, natural vegetation.
- The area provides visitors with good financial value.
- Meander Art Crawl in October
- Organic farms and local foods

Ortonville to Montevideo

Communities: Odessa, Correll, Louisburg, Watson, Montevideo

Counties: Big Stone, Swift, Lac qui Parle, Chippewa

Side Trips: Appleton, Milan, Madison, Dawson

Character of the area

The immediate presence of the Minnesota River, Chippewa River, Pomme de Terre River, Lac qui Parle River, Lac qui Parle lake and refuge, and the communities along the segment are the dominant qualities of this portion of the route.

The wide open prairies, grasses, wetlands and the fields and farmlands provide a vast and beautiful backdrop for the lake and river.

Its relatively isolated location from metropolitan areas make the region uncrowded and give it an undiscovered feeling.

Communities celebrate their cultural identities and offer some distinctiveness in cultural character, especially Milan, and Montevideo.

Major products for the visitor

(Destination and Discovery sites are bolded)

Generally, the products are hunting and fishing, wildlife viewing experiences, water-based recreation, Montevideo’s resources, and historic sites and attractions. The specific products include the following:

- **Arv Hus Museum - Milan**
- **Norwegian Stabbur**

- **Plover Prairie and Chippewa Prairie Nature Conservancy Preserves**
- Appleton’s OHV park
- Meander Art Crawl in October
- Trail from Milan to Lac qui Parle Lake
- Milan Village Arts School
- Lac qui Parle Lake
- Watson Hunting Camp and other hunting packages
- **Lac qui Parle National Wildlife Refuge and State Park**
- **Lac qui Parle County History Center**
- Salt Lake Area Wildlife Management Area
- **Marsh Lake**
- Lac qui Parle Village and Cemetery
- **Lac qui Parle Mission and Ft. Renville Historic Site**
- **Downtown Montevideo**
- **Historic Chippewa City**
- **Camp Release Monument**
- Trails within Montevideo
- Hinterlands Winery in Clara City
- Organic farms and local foods
- Chicago Milwaukee & St. Paul RR Depot in Montevideo
- River recreation- Visitors can directly access the river via kayaking and canoeing from many communities including Appleton, Montevideo and Dawson
- Bike rental and trails in Montevideo and Wegdahl trail.
- Packages:
- Wildlife: Lac qui Parle State Park and WMA, Marsh Lake, Salt Lake WMA,
- Native Prairie: Chippewa and Plover Prairie Preserves
- Rural: Landscapes, farmsteads, small towns
- Ethnic Settlements: Milan, Lac qui Parle Village

Montevideo to Granite Falls

Communities: Wegdahl, Granite Falls

Counties: Chippewa, Yellow Medicine

Character of the area

This segment runs right along the Minnesota River bottoms and is especially scenic. Granite Falls is a River town that has created a beautiful connection between its downtown and the river.

Major products for the visitor

(Destination and Discovery sites are bolded)

- **Swensson Farm Museum**
- Meander Art Crawl in October
- Canoeing on the Valley's rivers
- **Trail from Montevideo to Wegdahl,**
- Wegdahl County Park
- **Downtown Granite Falls**
- **KK Berge Building and Art Center**
- **Granite Falls Footbridge**
- **Andrew J. Volstead House Museum**
- **Fagen Fighter's Museum near Granite Falls**
- **Yellow Medicine County Historical Museum**
- Bison kill site - Peterson
- **Blue Devil Valley and Gneiss Outcrop SNA**
- Granite Falls geologic site (exposed, ancient gneiss)
- Yellow Bank Hills Scientific & Natural Area

Granite Falls to Redwood Falls

Communities: Upper Sioux Community, Redwood Falls

Counties: Yellow Medicine, Redwood, Renville

Side trips: Hanley Falls, Echo, Belview, Delhi, Sacred Heart

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.

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.

The area offers a good mixture of settled Minnesota River Valley experiences (e.g., downtowns and historic sites) and natural wildlife settings (e.g., wildlife areas) all within close proximity. Overall, this segment is one of the most scenic and intimate of the byway.

Major products for the visitor

(Destination and Discovery sites are bolded)

- **Minnesota Machinery Museum in Hanley Falls**
- **Wood Lake Monument and Battlefield**
- Exceptional scenic drives
- Dakota history and history associated with U.S. - Dakota War
- **Prairie's Edge Casino**
- **Upper Sioux Agency State park and historic site museum, camping and outdoor recreation**
- River recreation - fishing and canoeing
- Hunting
- **Sacred Heart Area Museum**
- **Belview Depot and Museum**
- Grandview Valley Winery near Belview

- County park outdoor recreation directly adjacent to the river: Renville County Parks
- Joseph R. Brown State Wayside Rest, Enestvedt Seed Corn Company, Rudi Memorial, Schwandt Memorial
- Redwood Falls - historic town with services and shopping
- Birthplace of Sears, Minnesota Inventor Hall of Fame
- Alexander Ramsey Park and Zoo
- Redwood Falls County Historical Museum
- Gilfillan Farm Estate and Farmfest site

Redwood Falls to New Ulm

Communities: Lower Sioux Community, Morton, New Ulm

Counties: Redwood, Renville, Nicollet, Brown

Side trips: Morgan, Sleepy Eye

Character of the area

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.

Major products for the visitor

(Destination and Discovery sites are bolded)

- Renville County Museum
- Morton Monuments
- Lower Sioux Agency
- St. Cornelias Church
- Jackpot Junction Casino
- Fort Ridgely State Park, Cemetery, Monuments and Historic Site
- Sleepy Eye Historic Buildings
- Chief Sleepy Eye Monument
- Sleepy Eye Depot Museum
- St. Mary's Catholic Church
- W.W. Smith Inn (B & B)
- Sleepy Eye Stained Glass (business)
- Sleepy Eye 3.12 mile Bike/walking path
- Sleepy Eye Lake
- Harkin Store
- **Milford Monument and Evacuation of New Ulm to Mankato Route Marker**
- **Flandrau State Park with its recreation and swimming beach**
- **New Ulm and its events, attractions and downtown.**
- **Hermann Monument, Glockenspiel, Wanda Gag House, John Lind House, Shell Brewery Museum, Minnesota Music Hall of Fam, Regional River History Center and Info Center**
- **Brown County Historical Museum**
- Morgan Creek Vineyard
- Organic farms and local foods

New Ulm to Mankato

Communities: Cambria, Judson, Mankato, North Mankato

Counties: Nicollet, Brown, Blue Earth

Side trips: Courtland

Character of the area

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.

Major products for the visitor

(Destination and Discovery sites are bolded)

- **Swan Lake Wildlife Management Area**
- **Minneopa State Park and Falls**
- **Minnesmishinona Falls**
- **Mankato, the major urban center in this part of the state**
- **Hubbard House, Betsy-Tacy House,**
- **CityArt Walking Sculpture Tour**
- **Carnegie Art Center, Mankato**
- **Fort LeHillier Marker and Landing**
- **Akota Wokiksuye Makoce (Land of Memories) Park, Mahkato Wacipi (Pow Wow)**
- **Blue Earth County Heritage Center**
- **Reconciliation Park, Winter Warrior and Memorial Marker**
- **Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota**
- **Kasota Prairie Scientific & Natural Area and Kasota Prairie Conservation Area**
- **Rasmussen Woods and Elk's Nature Center**
- **Bouldering in Rasmussen Woods, Mankato, Centennial Park, North Mankato**
- **Mount Kato Ski Area and Mountain Biking, Mankato**
- **Local outfitters for hiking etc in Mankato including Gander Mountain, Scheels, Flying Penguin Outdoor sports.**

- **Local outfitters for Paddling: A to Z Rentals, Bent River Outfitters, Kato Canoe and Kayak.**
- **Local Outfitters/Rentals/Event Coordinators for Biking: In Mankato: Broken Spoke, Flying Penguin Outdoor Sports, Nicollet Bike Shop, Bobber Shop Fishing, Bush Garden Products, Nicollet South Bike Shop, 4-Seasons Athletics, Milltown Cycles, Martin's Cycling & Fitness, Ardies Athletic, Tiger City Sports, Dave's Bike Salvage & Service.**

Mankato to Belle Plaine

Communities: Ottawa, St. Peter, Kasota, Le Sueur, Henderson

Counties: Blue Earth, Nicollet, Le Sueur, Sibley, Scott

Character of the area

Agricultural: distinctive farm environments, barns, farmhouses, outbuildings, silos.

Woodland areas: striking ribbons of hardwood trees scattered along route.

River basins: wide and flat river bottoms, meandering river, riparian zones

Historic towns: buildings and homes dating from the mid-1850's to 1940's.

Heritage: early European settlements and conflicts with Native Americans.

Mankato is the regional urban hub for the Valley.

Ottawa has no commercial district; nor do its residents likely want one.

St. Peter is a regional commercial hub for the area and offers a large and healthy downtown.

Le Sueur is a significant community due to the historic events that occurred here related to agriculture and medicine. The agri-business connection still exists with the numerous food processors based in the town. The commercial area can and does serve visitors, but it is not pedestrian oriented. Signage is needed.

Henderson is a small village with a nice historic commercial area with buildings that will lend themselves to renovation. Henderson has oriented toward making the village a visitor destination.

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.

Major products for the visitor

(Destination and Discovery sites are bolded)

- **St. Peter Historic District**
- **Gustavus Adolphus Arboretum and Sculpture Garden**
- **E. St. Julien Cox House**
- **St. Peter Regional Treatment Center Museum**
- **Treaty Site History Center and Nicollet County Museum, Traverse des Sioux Historic Site**
- **Ottawa Bluffs Preserve**
- **Ottawa Village Historic District**
- **W.W. Mayo House**
- **Le Sueur Museum and Green Giant Room**
- **Henderson Historic District**
- **Ney Nature Center**
- KCT Kerfoot Canopy Tours (Zipline) in Henderson
- **Sibley County Historical Museum**
- **Joseph R. Brown Heritage Society and Minnesota River Center**
- **Belle Plaine Historic Main Street**
- **Minnesota River State Water Trail**
- Hoper – Bowler – Hillstrom House, Belle Plaine
- Belle Plaine Historical Mural
- Seven Mile Creek Park, St. Peter- Bouldering
- Chamberlain Wood Scientific & Natural Area
- Rush River State Wayside
- Sibley County Museum
- Blakely Wayside (MN Valley SRA, Belle Plaine)
- River and ecosystem natural history
- Settled landscape
- Joseph R. Brown and associated river history Henderson Cemetery – Joseph R. Brown-(large monument) and most of his family is buried here above Henderson
- Birding and Henderson Feathers
- Agri-industry in Le Sueur
- Valley history and valley settlement in St Peter
- Pleasant scenic drive along the byway. The route passes through a varied landscape.
- Significant historic sites and structures in Henderson, Le Sueur, St. Peter and Mankato.
- Charming hamlet of Ottawa with associated stone quarries
- Close to Twin Cities
- History: churches, farmsteads, historic mining and river towns
- Recreation: parks, trails
- Cultural: museums, Treaty Center, local festivals
- Scenic: old bridges, distinctive wetlands, broad valleys, scattered farmsteads on expansive rolling terrain, woodlands

Appendix 4

Target Audience by subject

How we present our byway will depend on what our target audience is looking to do. The traveler who rides motorcycle may see the designated roads as a good place to travel. Others may see the towns as destinations and the byway is a way to get from town to town.

The following are categories of target markets that the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway should consider:

- Birdwatchers
- Native American and Western History Enthusiasts
- Minnesota History Enthusiasts
- European Heritage Enthusiasts
- Agri- Tourists/Foodies
- Prairie Enthusiasts
- General Tourists Seeking Novel Lodging Experiences (Tipi, yurt, sod houses, etc)
- Gamblers
- Fishing
- Hunters
- Paddlers
- Outdoor Adventurists – zip line, disc golf, mountain biking
- Winter Adventures
- Scenic and Pleasure Driving
- Bicyclists
- Motorcyclists
- Camping and state park recreation
- Watchable wildlife enthusiasts
- Potential new target markets

Birdwatchers

This is a growing segment of the environmental tourism market and one that Big Stone National Wildlife Reserve, Lac qui Parle Wildlife Management Area, and other public lands along the river area are attracting in growing numbers. It is likely that this market could be a steady and year-round source of revenue for local tourism businesses. Of particular

importance, however, is to provide quality and distinctive lodging options that these consumers are looking for. Members of this market will seek out Bed & Breakfasts and inn-type lodging experiences over camping, RVing and motels.

Locations and resources to note:

- Henderson Feathers – a non-profit group in Henderson
- Wildlife Management Area and Refuges (many)
 - Big Stone National Wild Refuge
 - Salt Lake WMA near Marietta (off the byway but an important site)
 - Swan Lake WMA near St. Peter
- Big Stone County Museum – Charles Hanson North American Wildlife Collection
- Six State Parks along the Byway
- Many County Parks along the byway
- Many SNAs along the byway
 - Kasota Prairie SNA near St. Peter

Birdwatching Strategies:

1. Work with Big Stone and Madison to promote Salt Lake event in such publications as *Bird Watcher's Digest*, and *Birder's world*.
2. Create birdwatchers' tools, such as bird-lists, self-guided birding tours of hot spots, and a list of local bird guides for hire.
3. Create a website for birding along the Minnesota River.

History Enthusiasts

The Minnesota River has an impressive set of stories that have played an important role in the history of the state and in the colonization of the Western U.S., but this story is not easily available for visitors. Many Minnesota residents with an interest in state history would enjoy traveling the Valley if the story were more accessible.

Locations and resources to note:

- The Byway has created maps to help the traveler find important locations.

There are many museums and historic locations along the byway, but here are some important ones:

- Historic Chippewa City, Montevideo
- Renville County Historical Museum, Morton
- Harkin Store, near New Ulm
- Regional River History Center & Info Center, New Ulm
- Treaty Site History Center and Nicollet County Museum, St. Peter
- Joseph R. Brown Heritage Society and Minnesota River Center, Henderson

Strategies:

1. Package study tours, cultural tours, and folklore pilgrimages that include lodging, ethnic meals, and tour guides for area.
2. Work with MN Historical Society to package these products and promote through their statewide network.
3. Work with university faculty to host educational symposiums and field trips on Dakota history.
4. Encourage tribal involvement in all events regarding Dakota history along Byway. Work with the State Historic Sites to cooperate on festivals, events and activities.
5. Identify local historical societies develop a two-day package for them to participate in programs and activities.

European Heritage Enthusiasts

The Germanic and Scandinavian heritage of many of the River Valley communities and the living culture that can still be found along the Valley could be further strengthened as a tourism theme and marketing tool. New Ulm is an obvious example of how successful this strategy can be. To a lesser degree, communities such as Milan, Granite Falls, and Madison also target this market. These communities should be linked and integrated into a Valley Cultural Tour Program.

Locations and resources to note:

- New Ulm
 - Hanska is 13 miles south

- Milan
- Granite Falls (Prohibition story)
- Madison

Strategies:

1. Work with Office of Tourism to package tours for international and national group tour meetings.
2. Target historical societies in Wisconsin, Iowa and Illinois and South Dakota.

Agri-Tourists/Foodies

The Minnesota River Valley's rich agricultural heritage and the evidence of that richness today make it a candidate for agri-tourism. The growing movement of sustainable and organic farming along the River Valley has led to a new, exciting farm fresh product movement.

The Valley would be appealing to both traveling farm families and others with an interest in farming. The Valley should consider how it might be able to develop an integrated and educational farm tour program that could be marketed to specialty and mass markets. In addition, non-farmer travelers have a great interest in farming. This is especially the case for families with children. Part of the overall farm-marketing program should be a component that offers visitors the chance to safely get up close and personal with aspects of farming.

Locations and resources to note:

- Three wineries along the byway: Grandview in Belview, Morgan Creek near New Ulm and Chankaska in St. Peter.
- One brewery: August Schell Brewery
- Some of the organic farms in the byway corridor:
 - Earthrise Farm near Madison (Yurt stay)
 - Moonstone Farm near Montevideo
 - Valley Veggies near Minneopa State Park
- Sites that showcase the history of farming:
 - Le Sueur Museum and Green Giant, Le Sueur

- Minneopa State park and Steppman Mill, Mankato
- Gillfillan Estate, Redwood Falls
- Enesvedt Seed Corn Company, Sacred Heart
- Minnesota Machinery Museum, Hanley Falls
- Olof Swensson Farm, Montevideo

Strategies:

1. Create Agri-tour guides and further develop farmstay and/or tour programs.
2. Create tour for the winery and vineyards along the byway.
3. Help additional breweries develop in the byway.
4. Create list of places that serve local foods in the byway.
5. Work with Renewing the Countryside, Green Routes and Land Stewardship to develop agri-tourism and green tourism.
6. Target senior citizen groups, many who at one time lived or worked on a farm in their early years.
7. Research the farmstay programs that are highly successful in Iowa and New Zealand.

Prairie Enthusiasts

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

Strategies:

1. Create a prairie tour that helps visitors learn more about the prairie along the Minnesota River Valley

2. Work with the DNR and state parks to promote the prairie in the Minnesota River Valley.

General Tourists Seeking Novel Lodging Experiences

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

Locations and resources to note:

- Upper Sioux Agency State Park: Tipi
- Earthrise Farm: Yurt stay
- Moonstone Farm: Brodio Farm Stay
- Treusten Gallery: Norwegian Art Gallery B&B

Strategies:

1. Encourage the development of alternative lodging opportunities through conducting workshops and offering technical assistance and funding for increased B & B’s, farmstays, the development of more stubburs, sod homes and tipi sites.
2. Many farms have additional farm houses that are often rented out during hunting season. Encourage farmers to consider adding additional opportunities for guests to stay on a farm in these homes.
3. Target Publications such as *Car and Travel*, *Country Inns Bed and Breakfast*, and *AAA Midwest Traveler*.

Gamblers

The presence of the Prairies’ Edge Casino and Jackpot Junction allows the Byway to offer a more diverse set of experiences than most scenic byways around the country. The Byway marketing effort should work closely with the casino managers to devise ways to

integrate gambling and non-gambling programming at the casinos with the activity and experience packaging occurring along the Byway.

Strategies:

1. Work closely with the Tribes at both Prairies' Edge and Jackpot to collaborate on strategies that would benefit return visits and/or longer stays through packaging alternative activities for non-gaming members of the party or for those interested in other activities.
2. Work with both Casinos to identify their current marketing approach and how both the casino and surrounding communities might benefit from cooperative marketing strategies and the sharing of market data.

Fishing

While Big Stone Lake and Lac qui Parle are well positioned and deeply tapping into the year round lake fishing market, including ice fishing, the stream fishing market does not seem to be as evident. The overall perception of the Minnesota River as being polluted may have some impact on this. There are also opportunities to promote river fishing.

Conversations with local tackle shops suggest that there are some areas of great fishing along the River and this market has growth potential, including a growing number of catfishing opportunities along the River.

Locations and resources to note:

- Watson Hunting Camp

Strategies:

1. Contact fishing and flyfishing shops throughout Midwest with a direct mail advertising campaign that packages fishing at several locations within the Byway Corridor.
2. Work with river advocacy groups to update the public on the actual state of the Minnesota River and pollution levels. The river has improved and hopefully will continue to improve.

Hunters

Hunting is important all along the byway. There are thousands of acres of public lands that are open to hunting along the Minnesota River. This is an important market, especially in the fall, but there are also some seasons in other times of the year, including turkey hunting in the spring and bow hunting (deer) and pheasant into the winter.

Locations and resources to note:

- Watson Hunting Camp

Strategies:

1. Hunting is more than just a sport, it is a vacation and people bring their families. Work with companion outings for the whole family for people who come to the byway to hunt.

Paddlers

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

Urban canoeing has become more popular in recent years thanks to groups such as Wild River Academy showcasing the value of trips. This type of canoeing may appeal to the adventure canoeist as well as the environmentalist who is interested in learning more about the water and energy systems along the Minnesota River. School groups have also canoed the Minnesota River.

The Minnesota River has also been marketed as quieter than the Boundary Waters as it is a less busy waterway. As the water quality improves, marketing this river and its tributaries becomes easier.

Locations and resources to note:

- Outfitters in Mankato and Montevideo.
- Wild River Academy will be taking a Minnesota River Tour in 2015 and will host future tours.

Strategies:

1. Create canoe packages with canoe outfitters, marketing the packages to youth groups, church groups, summer recreation community programs for cities throughout southern Minnesota. Packages should include lodging, canoe rentals, some meals, shuttle and showers. Market different segments of the river so they come back to complete the circuit.
2. Work with MOT to pursue partnership to acquire mailing lists from Ely and Grand Marais's canoe outfitters.
3. Work to help cities attract outfitters along the Minnesota River.
4. Work with Wild River Academy, Wilderness Inquiry and other groups as they organize canoe trips on the Minnesota River.
5. Work to get school groups canoeing the river to learn more about their own back yard.
6. Targeted Publications: *Canoe and Kayak Magazine*, *Sea Kayaker*, *Backpacker*, *Outdoor Guide Magazine*, and *Wisconsin Outdoor Journal*.

Festivals and Special Events

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

Locations and resources to note:

- Minnesota River History Ride (mid-July) Bike and history.

Strategies:

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

Specialty Shopping Along the Byway

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

Locations and resources to note:

- Byway long garage sale the first weekend in May started in 2013.

Strategies:

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

Outdoor Adventurists

Zip line and Climbing

The Kerfoot Canopy Tour is an outdoor adventure company in Henderson. This attraction **offers zip line adventures.**

- **Climbing Locations:** Bouldering in Rasmussen Woods. Mankato: Centennial Park, North Mankato; 7 Mile Creek Park, St. Peter, Bouldering at the Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge.

Disc Golf is another outdoor adventure that almost every city offers. The PDGA websites shows all the course along the Minnesota River: www.pdga.com.

Mountain biking has become more popular in the Minnesota River Valley and could be expanded and marketed even further. There are numerous wonderful county parks along the byway, giving access to the beautiful Minnesota River Valley.

Stand-Up Paddle Boarding has become a new water adventure. There are currently few outfitters that offer paddleboards.

All-terrain vehicles have become popular for recreational riding. There are some great locations for ATVing, but not all areas in the Minnesota River Valley are good for ATVs. There is an ATV park in Appleton which is within the byway corridor.

Strategies:

- Market the Kerfoot Canopy Tours.
- Establish Disc Golf events and help market the disc golf courses.
- Work with State Parks to offer Paddle Boards for rent.
- Market the ATV park in Appleton.

Winter Activities

Skiing/Snowshoeing

The six state parks have trails and rental to accommodate cross country skiing, skate skiing and snowshoeing. Additional trails can be found at selected county and regional parks.

- **Local Outfitters/Event Coordinators: In Mankato:** Scheels All Sports, Play It Again Sports, Flying Penguin Outdoor Sports, Flandreau State Park, Upper Sioux Agency

- **Good Trails:** Fort Ridgely, Upper Sioux Agency, Sakatah Singing Hills State Trail, Flandreau State Park, Lac Qui Parle State Park, Mount Kato Ski Hill.

Icefishing

Icefishing is a big sport. The Watson Hunting Camp started an event in 2014 that brings in thousands of people for an icefishing contest on Lac qui Parle Lake.

Locations and resources to note:

- Watson Hunting Camp rents ice houses on Lac qui Parle Lake.

Strategies:

- Work to promote events in the winter along the byway.
- Create publication for trails and outfitters for winter activities along the byway.

Scenic and Pleasure Driving

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

Strategies:

1. Work with MOT to develop and market scenic driving.
2. Continue to develop the byway website and offer virtual tours of specific sections, based on themes such as wildlife viewing, Native American and European History, outdoor recreation and distinctive shopping and dining.

3. Tap into market groups representing car rallies, antique car shows, and motorcycle tours. These groups are always looking for new routes, services and friendly hospitality along the way.

Bicyclists

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

- **Outfitters** in Mankato, Montevideo and Watertown.
- **Organized Tours/Events:** Mankato River Ramble Bike Tour (early October), High School Series Race (Mankato, late October), Minnesota River History Ride (mid-July)
- **Good Trails:** Flood Wall Trail (Mankato), Minnesota Valley Trail (Montevideo to Wegdahl, future expansions planned), Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area, State Parks, Ortonville Headwaters.

Strategies:

1. Purchase participant lists from large annual biking events throughout Minnesota, Iowa and South Dakota for direct mail advertising.
2. Create bicycling along the Minnesota River publication that identifies bicycling paths, routes and events. Work with Have Fun Biking.
3. Targeted Publications: *Have Fun Biking Bike/Hike Guide, Cycling; Bicycling USA*, and *Bike*.
4. Targeted Mailing Lists: *Bike Magazine Active Subscribers*.

Motorcyclists

Motorcyclists are an important segment in the tourism industry. This complements the Scenic Driving section.

Strategies:

1. Create maps that show all gravel roads along the byway.
2. Work to pave important roads that are currently gravel.
3. Create an event for motorcyclists to bring more awareness to the byway.

Camping and state park recreation

Looking at the byway's target audience, you can see a majority of visitors are coming to our six state parks. Working with the state parks is important for the byway to promote both the parks, but all points in between.

Locations and resources to note:

- Big Stone Lake State Park
- Flandrau State Park
- Fort Ridgely State Park and History Center
- Lac qui Parle State Park
- Minneopa State Park
- Upper Sioux Agency State Park

Strategies:

1. Keep a list of campgrounds.

Watchable wildlife enthusiasts

This target audience is closely related to many of our other topics: Camping, Scenic and Pleasure Driving, Birdwatchers, Hunting, and Prairie Enthusiasts, and even Paddlers.

Locations and resources to note:

- Wildlife Management Area and Refuges (many)
- Six State Parks along the Byway
- Many County Parks along the byway

Many SNAs along the byway

Potential new target markets

The following is a list of potential markets that could be explored:

- Geology buffs

- A broader range of outdoor recreationalists including birders, canoeists and bicyclists. Packages should be offered for bicycling on the Wegdahl trail or canoeing on one of the rivers.
- People less familiar with wildlife and birds who can have a first and memorable experience at a place like Lac qui Parle
- Heritage Tourism Markets, for example offering an ethnic discovery package (research, folk art classes and ethnic lodging such as a stubbur or sod house)
- Railroad enthusiasts
- Working farm stays (horseback riding, feed the chickens, mend fences, bail hay, etc.)
- Regional golf package with a tour of small courses
- History tours—encampments
- Architecture buffs (Ottawa and St Peter)