



## Minnesota Valley River National Scenic Byway Alliance Interpretive Plan, 2014

Prepared by Bluestem Heritage Group, St. Paul  
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## Part I: Background

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### Purpose of the National Scenic Byways Program

The Minnesota River Scenic Byway is a designated byway with the Federal Highway Administration's National Scenic Byways Program. The vision of the Federal Highway Administration's National Scenic Byways Program is "To create a distinctive collection of American roads, their stories and treasured places."

The National Scenic Byway Program provides resources to the byway community to create a unique travel experience and enhanced local quality of life through efforts to preserve, protect, interpret and promote the intrinsic qualities of designated byways.

The National Scenic Byways (NSB) Program was established under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, and reauthorized in 1998 under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Under the program, the U.S. Secretary of Transportation recognizes certain roads as National Scenic Byways or All-American Roads based on their archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational and scenic qualities. One hundred fifty such roadways in forty-six states are designated Byways. The Federal Highway Administration promotes the collection as "America's Byways."

### History of the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway

The Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway was fully designated in 1996 by the Minnesota State Scenic Byway Commission. The byway was nominated by many groups and individuals including:

- Western Minnesota Prairie Waters Tourism Coalition
- Minnesota River Valley Task Force
- Region 9 Development Commission
- Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission
- Affected counties, cities, townships, and state agencies along the byway.

The Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway Alliance was formally organized as a Minnesota nonprofit corporation (according to Minnesota Statute Chapter 317A) in February 1997. The Alliance continues to meet monthly to "promote and develop the scenic byway along the Minnesota River."

The Minnesota Scenic Byway parallels the length of the river 287 miles from its headwaters at Big Stone Lake to Belle Plaine. The boundaries of the byway expand irregularly into the adjoining counties, approximately 10 miles on either side of the river. Included in the byway are sections of the following counties and all of the following cities:

- **Traverse;** Browns Valley
- **Big Stone;** Beardsley, Barry, Clinton, Ortonville, Odessa, Correll,
- **Swift,** Appleton, Holloway
- **Lac qui Parle;** Louisburg, Bellingham, Madison, Dawson, Boyd
- **Chippewa;** Milan, Watson, Montevideo, Maynard
- **Yellow Medicine;** Granite Falls, Clarkfield, Hazel Run, Hanley Falls, Echo, Wood Lake
- **Renville;** Sacred Heart, Renville, Morton, Franklin, Fairfax
- **Redwood;** Belview, Delhi, Redwood Falls, Morgan
- **Brown;** Evan, Sleepy Eye, Hanska, New Ulm
- **Nicollet;** Lafayette, Nicollet, Courtland, North Mankato, St. Peter
- **Blue Earth;** Lake Crystal, Good Thunder, Skyline, St. Clair, Madison Lake, Eagle Lake, Mankato
- **Le Sueur;** Kasota, Cleveland, Le Center, Le Sueur
- **Sibley;** Henderson, Arlington, Green Isle
- **Scott;** Belle Plaine
- 

Today the Byway Alliance remains the only organization working to promote the Minnesota River Valley on a regional scale.

In pursuit of this objective, the Byway Alliance has assumed four general responsibilities: (1) developing and distributing marketing materials; (2) seeking-out partner organizations; (3) educating visitors; and (4) securing funding for byway projects. These goals are broad because they support an ambitious, regional objective.

### Previous Planning Efforts

A Corridor Management Plan was developed in March 2001 with the help of Whiteman and Tainter, a consulting firm. The Corridor Management Plan included an Interpretive Planning component. This section established three interpretive themes: *Struggles for a Home*, *Food for a Nation*, and *The River's Legacy*. This Interpretive plan and the broader Corridor management plan helped guide efforts for more than a decade. Annual work plans created by the Byway Alliance helped to prioritize these efforts. An Interpretive Committee created an interpretive panel guideline document in 2006 that helped during the creation of a series of Dakota War-related panels in 2012.



## **Purpose and Goals of this Interpretive Plan**

The purpose of this Interpretive Plan is to provide a vision for the future (5-10 years) of interpretation, education and visitor experience opportunities along the Byway. This plan is based on a careful analysis of the valley's historic and natural strengths, the Byway's capabilities, its market niche and the audience's expressed desires.

For an Interpretive Plan to be successful, it must define primary interpretive themes or a central message that helps tie together the information and stories that are presented to the audience. The best interpretive themes or central messages describe ideas that are significant, unique, compelling, transformative (inspiring a new conceptual understanding), and marketable. Beneath that, specific storylines or topics can help organize the message into more manageable pieces.

The goal of this Interpretive Plan is to support the work of the Byway – to help create a unique travel experience and enhance the local quality of life through efforts to preserve, protect, interpret, and promote the intrinsic qualities of designated byways. For different audiences, this document promotes different goals.

### **Byway Alliance Goals**

Establish and confirm the broad appealing themes and effective strategies that will help market the entire Byway and increase visitor and community awareness, interest, knowledge and stewardship of the natural, cultural, and historic resources being featured.

### **Community Goals**

Enhance community involvement by stimulating co-sponsored events, materials or other cooperative partnerships. Generate awareness, support and funding for resource protection and preservation efforts. Generate significant positive economic and tourism impacts. Increase awareness and understanding of the Byway's goals and role.

### **Site Goals**

Help expose the managers of historic sites to best practices in interpretative planning, managing, and evaluation. Encourage the site managers to better contextualize and promote their site within the broader Byway's interpretive identity. Promote coherent, coordinated, and effective methods of marketing between sites. Promote the preservation of historic resources. Increase awareness and understanding of the Byway's goals and role.

### **Visitor Goals**

Increase visitor awareness, interest, knowledge and stewardship of the natural, cultural, and historic resources in the Minnesota River Valley. Provide

opportunities for a variety of firsthand experiences with natural, cultural and historic resources.



## Part II: Existing Conditions

In order to create an effective Interpretive Plan, the Byway must review its resources, audience, services, and context. The following sections review what the valley's inherent cultural and natural attributes are, reviews the existing status of interpretive efforts, explores what the audience's demographics, needs and expectations are, and introduces the external issues the Byway must confront.

### Historic and Natural Strengths and Challenges of the Byway

The identification and articulation of a compelling narrative is fundamental to all Interpretative Plans. This section reviews the broad cultural and natural opportunities that are available within the valley.

The Minnesota River Valley weaves its way through the geographic and historic heart of Minnesota. The valley and its inhabitants have played a central and significant role in the broader region's development. Since the last Ice Age, the valley has served as a conduit for animal and human transportation, and soon after that, as a nexus for human settlement. As climate and biomes shifted, the valley became a connector between different biomes and different human cultures. This fundamental role of the valley as an east-west corridor has defined it for millennia. It has shaped both natural and human life, as well as being shaped by nature and humans.

### Significant Historic Epochs

Today, the record of this thousands-year-old history is still evident in the valley, and opportunities for visitors to uncover it abound. Though each of the following epochs is significant to the valley, not every epoch has attracted equal attention. The Minnesota River Valley represents 10,000 years of history over 6,000 square miles.

**The Glacial Age (Pre 8000 BCE)** The story of the Minnesota River Valley begins with the last glacial age. As the glaciers retreated, and glacial Lake Agassiz formed and overspilled its banks, the river valley was created. The retreating glaciers left a complex ecosystem that supported prehistoric life. Different prairie, lowland, and highland wooded biomes developed in response to soils, elevation, precipitation and temperature. This history is evident throughout dozens of natural history sites such as granite outcroppings, fossil beds, cliffs and valleys, waterways, wetlands, and soils.

**Native American Settlement (Pre 1700)** As the glaciers retreated, Native Americans entered the region, using and altering the natural resources to their advantage. The river valley was a rich environment used for hunting

and agriculture. The river itself was a transportation system for people and animals, and a conduit between different biomes. This history is present through numerous pre-contact sites, such as burial mounds, villages, and other habitation sites, as well as through Dakota oral histories.

**Explorers, the Fur Trade, and Missions (1700-1837)** The first contact between Dakota tribal communities and Europeans came when explorers and fur traders travelled here. Because most traders spent long periods of time away from home, tribes and traders often established symbiotic, even familial, relationships. Missionaries soon followed, introducing and promoting western beliefs, ideas, and technology. This history is evident at fur trade posts, missions, and Dakota village sites, and through Dakota oral histories and written evidence available from explorer, missionary, and fur-trade documents.

**The Treaties and Settlement Era (1837-1880)** As Euro-American settlers followed fur traders and missionaries, the river and valley underwent a transformation. The U.S. Government and Dakota negotiated a series of treaties in order to transfer the land. Settlers and the Dakota valued different aspects of the natural resources, and conflict about the control and use of the land sparked war. (See more on the war below.) After the war, with nearly all the Dakota removed from the land, and their lands confiscated, settlers intensified their use of the river, the forests and the prairies. By the end of this era, most farmers had transitioned from subsistence to market farming. The animals and plants were significantly impacted. This history can be found in origins of towns along the eastern half of the Byway, the establishment and elimination of the reservations, and in the historical documents of treaties, and accounts of Dakota, settlers, missionaries, and government agents.

**U.S.–Dakota War (1862-1863)** The U.S.–Dakota War of 1862 permanently shaped the cultural identity and ecology of the Minnesota River Valley. During the fall of 1862, a combination of drought and human-made decisions led to the eruption of a war between the Dakota and Minnesota settlers. Within Dakota and settler communities, opinions about the war were not uniform. This dramatic and tragic event led to the deaths of hundreds, the banishment of most Dakota from the valley, and the complete transformation of most remaining natural land into agriculture. This history can be found in origins of towns along the entire Byway, the establishment of the reservations, the sites of battles, in the historical accounts of Dakota, settlers, and missionaries, and government documents.

**Industrial Agriculture (1880-1914)** As agricultural practices changed and land-based transportation routes developed, the river and valley's natural landscape was drastically altered. Railroads and the access they offered

to distant markets further encouraged the shift to market farming and cash crops. Ditching and irrigation practices altered the course and flow of the river. This history is evident in the growth of small towns, the presence of railroads, the transformation of waterways, the creation of cooperatives, and the wealth and historic architecture of the small towns. During this period, waves of immigrants from Europe continued to arrive and settle Minnesota, and individual and groups of Dakota returned.

**Bigger Markets, Bigger Farms, Smaller Towns (1915-1980)** The arrival of the interstate freeways system revolutionized the transportation of goods and ideas. Post-war technologies and fertilizer practices allowed fewer people to cultivate more land. Consequently, the size of farms increased, and the number of farms decreased. As the number of farms decreased, many valley residents moved with their families to small towns or cities. Fertilizer run-off affected the aquatic life. Cultivation and monocrops eliminated critical natural habitat. This history is evident in the history of small towns, school districts, churches, freeways and newspapers.

**Contemporary Life (1981-Today)** In the last part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, many residents became more aware of the interconnections between global economic forces and local communities. Immigrants now come from Central America, as well as from Africa and Southeast Asia. The farm crisis of the 1980s further intensified the demographic and agricultural changes that had been occurring. The growth of casinos brought economic power to the Dakota. Floods, pollution, and global warming illustrated the effects on the natural environment. Today, residents are beginning to better understand the consequence of past and present decisions. Efforts to restore and preserve native habitat have led to success stories. New ideas, technologies, and practices continue to improve river and valley health. This is evident in the efforts of small towns, the work of environmental advocacy groups and individuals, municipal efforts such as the St. Peter reverse osmosis water-treatment plants, and the increasing rates of tourism.

### Cultural and Natural Resource Challenges

The Minnesota River Valley has been a corridor for the movement of animals, people and ideas for thousands of years. As a regional thoroughfare for ideas, the Valley has often been an “early adopter” of new ideas, practices, or technologies, and it has a resulting abundance of cultural and natural treasures. However, these same qualities have also made it susceptible to negative trends and influences.

Culturally, the Valley’s inhabitants still grapple with the legacy of the U.S.–Dakota War. For decades, the history and meaning of the U.S.–Dakota War was told

through the eyes of the settlers and their descendants. Historically, the monuments, road-side signs, exhibits and programs often reflected the biases of the people who made them and reflected the common attitudes and beliefs of the dominant culture. Many of these monuments remain as prominent landmarks in the valley. Today, though the broader culture has shifted toward a more nuanced understanding of the war, and though there have been efforts to expand the number of perspectives and voices in the valley, the sheer number and prominence of these earlier historical efforts still overshadows more recent efforts.

Descendants of settlers and descendants of the Dakota often struggle to articulate how they fit into the history of the war, and how to best manage the responsibilities of representing their heritage. For decades, the Dakota were at worst treated with hostility and at best ignored. For a period, the Dakota and their culture were romanticized and even appropriated for tourism purposes. Today, local Dakota culture and Dakota people are often associated with the casino, which creates new and often equally complex and mistaken assumptions. As best it can, the Minnesota River Byway Alliance must reach out to the Dakota, individually and through the community leaders, and incorporate Dakota history, perspectives, and contemporary life into programs, interpretation, and events. The Dakota are not separate from the broader Valley, the Dakota are a part of the Valley.

The health of the actual Minnesota River is another difficult topic for the local community. The River has been identified as one of the 20 most polluted rivers in the Nation, and is a contributor to the hypoxic zone in the Gulf of Mexico. Over the past two decades, awareness of the down-stream damage caused by phosphorus, nitrogen, and sediment has increased. Awareness of the negative impact of a poor-quality river on local tourism has also increased. Initially, a perceived conflict between agricultural uses and tourism uses for the river caused tensions and rifts. Today, a deeper understanding of the complexities of the issues and a greater spirit of cooperation are developing. The Minnesota River Byway Alliance should promote education efforts that help increase awareness of the importance of the river to tourism and tourism to local economic development.

## Present Status of Interpretive Efforts

### Interpretive Themes

Presently, the Byway's interpretive efforts are built around three thematic experiences, all of which support the region's identity as "A River of Stories."

- **Historic: Struggles for a Home.** Primarily addresses the U.S.–Dakota War, but originally sought to include the broader history of settlement and the concept of manifest destiny, and the struggles that individual plant and animal communities had to adapt to changes in the environment.

- **Cultural: Food for a Nation.** Promotes the story of the agricultural development of the valley and the related transportation development and land stewardship issues.
- **Natural: The River's Legacy.** Promotes the development and interconnections of the river's ecosystem.

## Existing Sites

Site 1: Continental Divide	Site 40: Joseph R. Brown State Wayside (Site)
Site 2: Samuel J. Brown Memorial Park	Site 41: Rudi Memorial
Site 3: Wadsworth Trail	Site 42: Sacred Heart Area Museum
Site 4: Browns Valley Man	Site 43: Natural Preservation Route
Site 5: Big Stone Lake	Site 44: Schwandt Memorial
Site 6: Big Stone Lake State Park	Site 45: Birch Coulee Battlefield State Historic Site
Site 7: Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge	Site 46: Redwood County Poor Farm Museum and Minnesota's Inventor Hall of Fame
Site 8: Ortonville Free Library	Site 47: Birthplace of Sears
Site 9: Ortonville Commercial Historic District	Site 48: Alexander Ramsey Park
Site 10: Big Stone County War Memorial	Site 49: Beaver Falls County Park
Site 11: Big Stone County Courthouse	Site 50: Morton Monuments
Site 12: Big Stone County Museum	Site 51: Renville County Historical Museum
Site 13: ARV-Hus Museum	Site 52: Gilfillan Estate (Farmfest Site)
Site 14: Norwegian Stabbur	Site 53: Lower Sioux Community
Site 15: Plover Prairie Nature Conservancy Preserve	Site 54: Lower Sioux Agency State Historic Site
Site 16: Lac qui Parle County Historic Center	Site 55: Fort Ridgely State Park and Historic Site
Site 17: Marsh Lake	Site 56: Little Rock Trading Post Site
Site 18: Chippewa Prairie Preserve	Site 57: Depot Museum and Sleepy Eye's Monument
Site 19: Red River Trails	Site 58: Harkin Store
Site 20: Lac Qui Parle Village	Site 59: Flandrau State Park
Site 21: Lac Qui Parle WMA and Refuge	Site 60: New Ulm Monuments
Site 22: Lac Qui Parle Lake ("lake that speaks")	Site 61: Glockenspiel
Site 23: Lac Qui Parle State Park	Site 62: Wanda Gag House
Site 24: Fort Renville State Historic Site	Site 63: John Lind House
Site 25: Lac Qui Parle Mission Site	Site 64: August Schell Brewery Museum and Gardens
Site 26: Camp Release State Monument	Site 65: Brown County Historical Museum
Site 27: Canoeing the Minnesota River	Site 66: City of New Ulm
Site 28: Milwaukee Railroad Heritage Center Depot (Chicago Milwaukee and St. Paul Depot)	Site 67: Swan Lake Wildlife Management Area
Site 29: Historic Chippewa City	Site 68: Lincoln Park Area
Site 31: Olof Swensson Farm Musuem	Site 69: R.D. Hubbard House
Site 32: Yellow Medicine County Historical Museum	Site 70: Blue Earth County Heritage Center
Site 33: Andrew J. Volstead House	Site 71: Williams Minneopa Learning Center
Site 34: Minnesota's Machinery Museum	Site 72: Minneopa State Park
Site 35: Gneiss Outcrop Scientific and Natural Area	Site 73: Flood Wall Trail
Site 36: Blue Devil Valley Preserve	Site 74: Judge Lorin P. Cray Mansion
Site 37: Wood Lake Battlefield/Monument	Site 75: Winter Warrior Sculpture
Site 38: Upper Sioux Agency State Park	Site 76: Old Main Village
Site 39: Belview Depot Museum	

Site 77: Carnegie Art Center  
 Site 78: Mankato Union Depot  
 Site 79: Fort LeHillier Marker  
 Site 80: Blue Earth County Courthouse  
 Site 81: Red Jacket Trail  
 Site 82: Akota Wokiksuye Makoce (Land of Memories) City Park  
 Site 83: Kasota Prairie Scientific & Natural Area  
 Site 84: Kasota Stone  
 Site 85: Seven Mile Creek County Park  
 Site 86: City of Kasota  
 Site 87: Gustavus Adolphus College Arboretum and Sculpture Garden  
 Site 88: E. St. Julien Cox House  
 Site 89: Traverse des Sioux Treaty Site History Center  
 Site 90: Traverse Des Sioux Park  
 Site 91: City of St. Peter Historic District  
 Site 92: Riverside Park  
 Site 93: St. Peter Regional Treatment Center Museum  
 Site 94: Minnesota Square Park  
 Site 95: Greenlawn Cemetery  
 Site 96: Norseland General Store  
 Site 97: Trout Ponds  
 Site 98: Ottawa Bluffs Preserve (Bluffs and Fen)  
 Site 99: UNIMIN Silica Mines

Site 100: Burr Oak Park  
 Site 101: Ottawa Village Historic District  
 Site 102: Chamberlain Woods Scientific & Natural Area (DNR)  
 Site 103: River Park  
 Site 104: W.W. Mayo House  
 Site 105: Le Sueur Museum and Green Giant Room  
 Site 106: Green Giant Marker  
 Site 107: Mayo Park and Arboretum  
 Site 108: Rest Area  
 Site 109: River Lakes  
 Site 110: Sibley County Rush River Park  
 Site 111: Ney Nature Center and Environmental Learning Center  
 Site 112: East Henderson  
 Site 113: Sibley County Museum  
 Site 114: Joseph R. Brown Minnesota River Center and Joseph R. Brown Research Library  
 Site 115: Henderson Historic District  
 Site 116: High Island Scenic Area and County Park  
 Site 117: Jessenland Town Hall  
 Site 118: St. Thomas Catholic Church  
 Site 119: Avenue of Trees to Blakeley Bridge  
 Site 120: Sand and Gravel Pits

### Typical Site Services, Programs and Events

As discussed more deeply in the second section, the Byway currently promotes 120 Discovery Sites. These sites run the gamut from high-quality, visitor-friendly, professionally managed, open-year-round sites to a seasonal rest stop. More typically, Discovery Sites are modest, county-run history museums, state parks, state historic sites, and roadside signs. A majority of these sites do not offer staffed information booths, restrooms, food, or gift shops. Most are located somewhat remotely from other Discovery Sites or local services. Most sites are open during the summer season, and the larger sites offer a variety of related programs and events throughout the summer.

### Existing Byway-Wide Efforts

Presently, there are five region-wide efforts for public outreach and promotion, and interpretation.

- A. Website. The Upper Minnesota River National Scenic Byway website is the best resource available for comprehensive information about the region. In addition to lists and descriptions of Discovery Sites, the site features suggested itineraries, maps and regional event calendars. It is a

useful feature for visitors who are relatively familiar with the region and who understand how they want to travel.

- B. Byway Guide. The Byway Guide is produced and distributed each year. The 2013 guide offers a simple map that shows the Byway and the 13 U.S.–Dakota War sites. Over the next four pages, 51 Discovery Sites are listed, and particular towns are featured along with their dining and lodging options and other unique attractions. The Alliance should update the guide after designating Anchor Sites and adopting new thematic messages, and the website should remain at least as up-to-date as the hardcopy guide.
- C. Geocaching. The ongoing Geocaching projects along the Byway can also serve as a model for the Byway’s long-term promotional efforts. Geocaching functionalizes the core process of interpretation by inviting people to visit a site so they can create their own meaning. So far, only the most popular Discovery Sites host Geocaches.
- D. Calendar and Annual Report. The Byway produces and distributes a calendar and Annual Report each year for promotional purposes. Photographs and annual events highlight some of the unique attributes of the Valley.
- E. U.S.–Dakota War Mobile Tour. The Minnesota Historical Society created a 13-stop mobile tour that describes the history of the war and related sites.

### Local Festivals and Fairs

Throughout the Byway, individual communities host seasonal festivals and fairs. Some of these are particularly successful, such as New Ulm’s Oktoberfest.



## Visitor Demographics, Preferences, and Behaviors

Though no specific study on visitors to the Minnesota River Scenic Byway has been conducted, there are a variety of related studies and data that help suggest likely general trends. Ideally, a study would identify exactly who is coming, where they are coming from, why they are coming, when they are coming, how long they'll stay, and what they like to do.

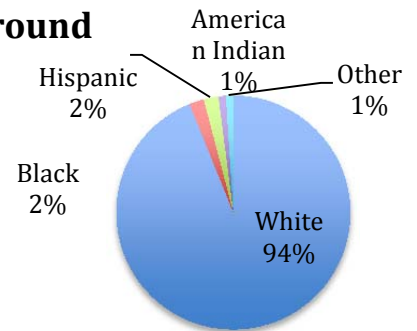
The material in this section is extracted from "Top Minnesota Attractions by Tourism Region, 2010," University of Minnesota Tourism Center, and "The Economic Impact of Expenditures by Travelers on Minnesota's Southern Region and the Profile of Travelers June 2007 – May 2008" by Davidson & Peterson Associates.

### Visitor Age, Wealth, Race and Groupings

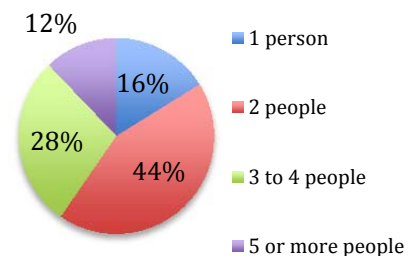
Studies show that most travellers to similar sites in Minnesota travel in groups of two or more, and are generally older, wealthy, and white. Seventy-three percent of groups do not have children in their party. Visitors are nearly equally male and female.

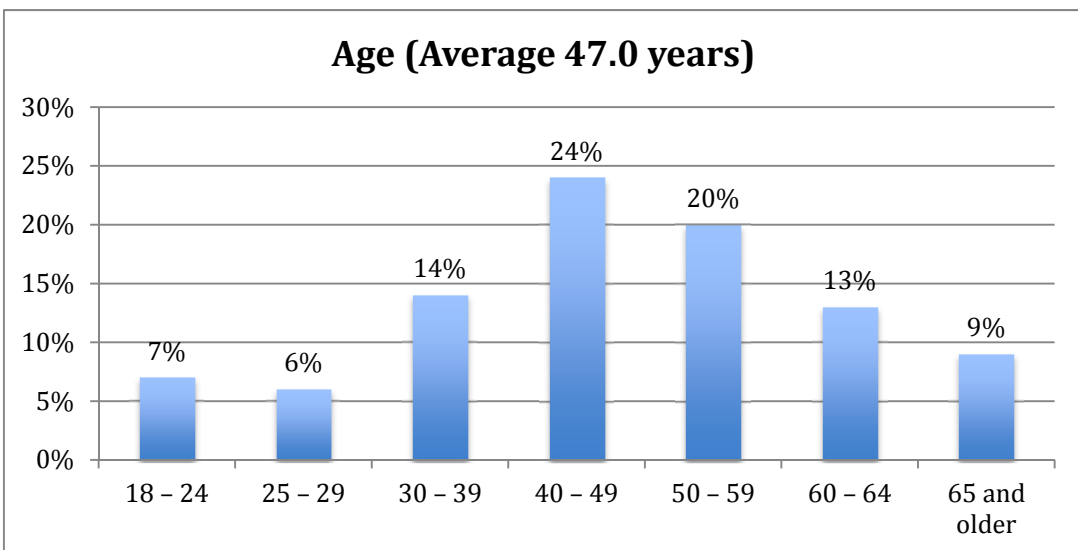
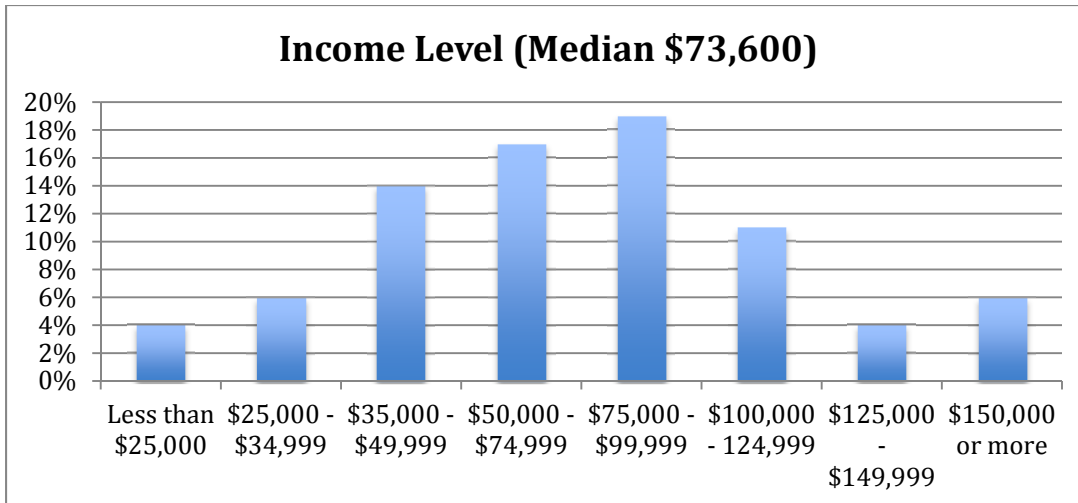
Proportionately, more whites and fewer blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians are represented when compared to the trends at a state level. These patterns may reflect the availability of leisure time and disposable income that develops later in life, and the demographic trends of that older population.

**Racial/Ethnic Background**



**Travel Party Size (average 2.6)**





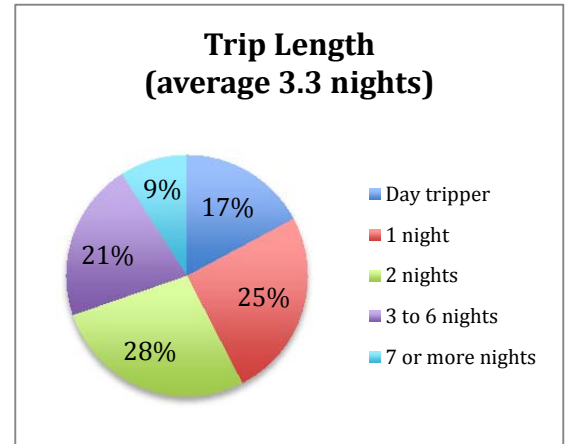
### Visitor Reasons for Travel

Almost half (45%) of the visitors to Southern Minnesota are travelling for vacation or pleasure. A third are travelling for personal reasons, to visit friends or family. The remaining visitors are coming for business/work (15%) or convention/conference purposes (10%). Within the Byway, this data would likely shift more towards vacation and personal, as the venues for conventions or conferences are limited.

### Visitor Trip Length and Lodging

Most visitors to Southern Minnesota stay in the area over night. Just 17 percent are day-trippers. Of those that stay overnight:

- 59% stay at a hotel, motel or historic inn
- 12% stay at the home of family or friends
- 6% stay in an RV at a campground
- 3% stay in a tent at a campground
- 1% stay at a Bed & Breakfast
- 1% stay at a resort



### Visitor Frequency

Over 80 percent of visitors to Southern Minnesota are repeat visitors, with approximately half having made more than five visits within the last five years. This is likely because 47 percent of visitors are from Minnesota. The # of MN Trips visitors made in Last 5 Years:

- 27% More than 10
- 21% 5 to 10
- 23% 2 to 4
- 9% 1 only
- 17% None

### Visitor Travel Planning Sources

Most visitors use the Internet to plan their visits to Southern Minnesota. With the rise of mobile tech devices, it is likely that visitors will increasingly conduct trip research and planning while en route. This data emphasizes the importance of effective Internet marketing.

Internet	40%
Friends/relatives/co-workers	45
Brochure/travel guide	8
Newspaper/magazine	7
Local tourism bureau	3
TV/radio	2
Airline/travel agency	2
Visitor/welcome center	1
State Travel Office	*
Other	21

## Visitor Residence

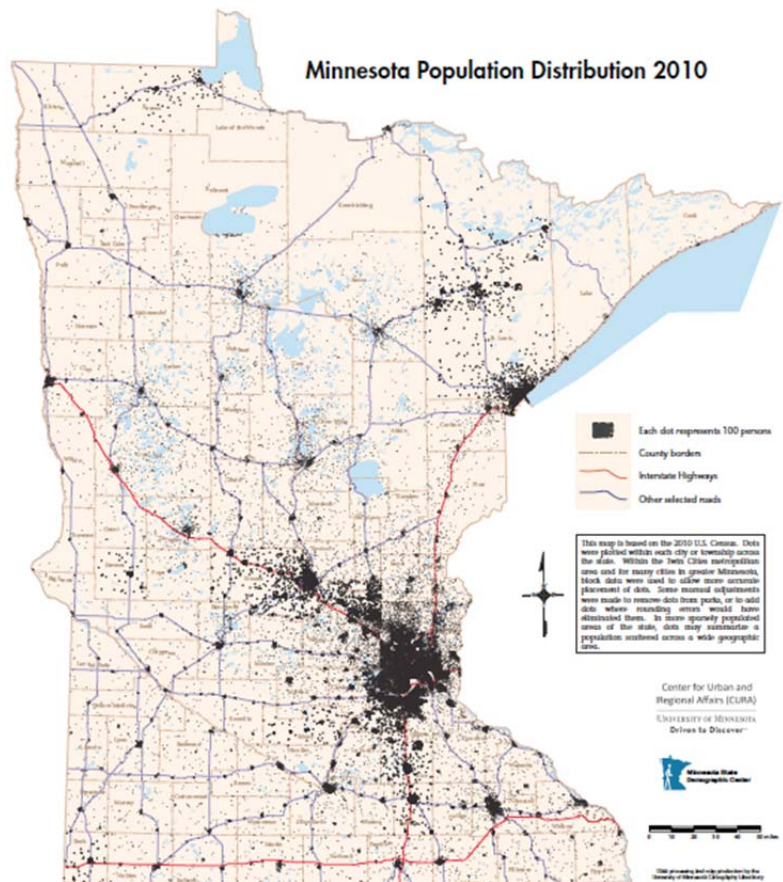
Nearly half (47%) of the visitors to sites in all of Southern Minnesota are from Minnesota, with 10 percent from Iowa, 8 percent from Wisconsin, 3 percent from South Dakota, 3 percent from Illinois, and 12 percent from other states. Within the Minnesota River Scenic Byway, visitors are even more likely to be from Minnesota and the Dakotas, and less likely to be from Iowa and Wisconsin.

Historic, geographic, and cultural patterns are significant factors for tourism in the Minnesota River Scenic Byway. A series of maps show some of the ways in which the Byway is uniquely situated.

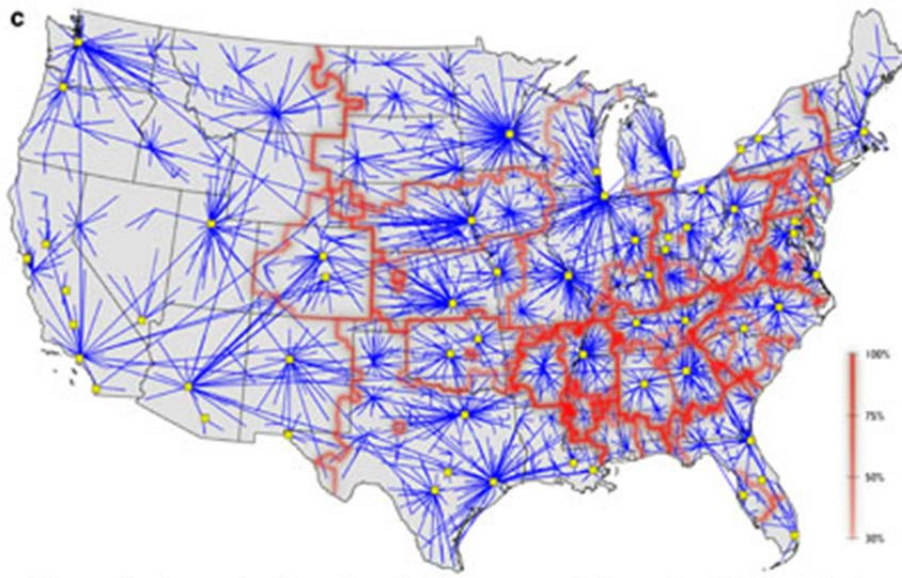
Approximately 60 percent of Minnesota's population lives in the Twin Cities. Outside of the metro, settlements along major trade routes (originally rivers, then railroads, then highways) have grown, while those not along the routes have shrunk. With the development of the Interstate Highway System, this pattern has intensified. The Minnesota River and its Scenic Byway is unfortunately caught between the two major east-west interstate freeways, I-90 and I-94. The 2010 Population Map shows the resulting pattern between transportation paths and population, and the sparse population along the Minnesota River.

At the eastern edge of the Minnesota River Scenic Byway, population along highway 169 is denser, and this hypotenuse line from the Twin Cities towards the southwest corner of the state may be a likely corridor for growth in population or transit over the next decade.

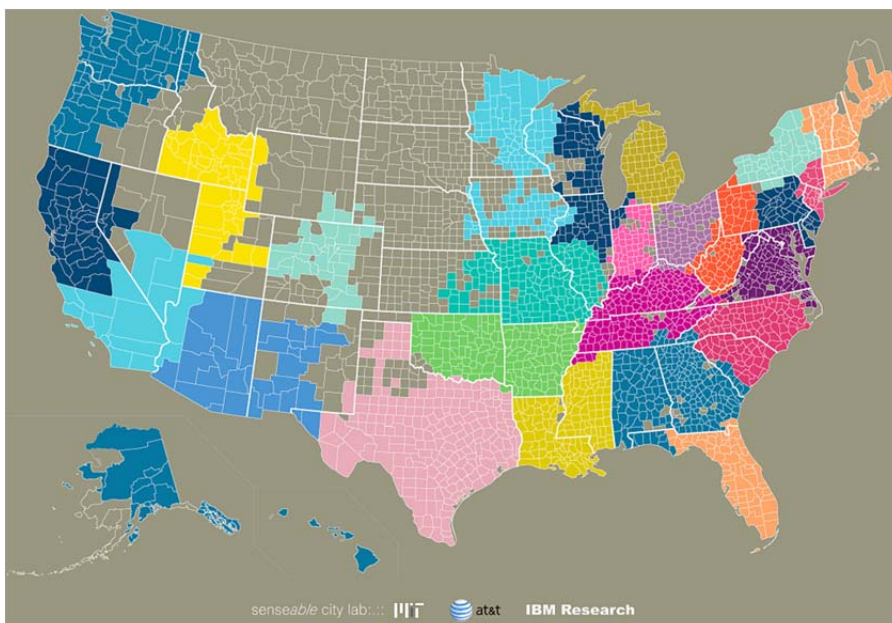
Beyond Minnesota, visitors are likely to come from South Dakota, North Dakota, Iowa, and western Wisconsin. Recently, broader travel and economic patterns have been studied by Dirk Brockmann, who used data about the movement of actual dollar bills to create the following map. This map shows that the Twin Cities is the center of a



broader economic region that includes North and South Dakota, western Wisconsin, and pieces of northern Iowa.



The map below helps show a cultural pattern that is interesting to compare to the economic one. IBM and MIT studied the likelihood that someone would call another person within an area, or outside of that area. This map suggests that Minnesotans, people in western Wisconsin and most of Iowa share information quite easily, and that word-of-mouth marketing to the audiences may spill easily to the other.





## Where Visitors Go in Southern Minnesota

Southern Minnesota and the Minnesota River Valley have many popular tourist attractions.

Popular Sites and Annual Attendance		
1	<b>Prairie's Edge Casino</b>	600,000 – 720,000
2	Whitewater State Park	256,218
3	<b>Flandrau State Park**</b>	234,047
4	<b>Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area**</b>	145,332
5	<b>Minneopa State Park**</b>	141,221
6	Forestville/Mystery Cave State Park	117,276
7	Myre-Big Island State Park	113,105
8	Lake Shetek State Park	112,715
9	Frontenac State Park	110,463
10	LARK Toys and Carousel	100,000
11	<b>Lac Qui Parle State Park**</b>	96,873
12	Blue Mounds State Park	87,812
13	Sakatah Lake State Park	86,762
14	Pipestone National Monument	72,421
15	<b>Fort Ridgley State Park**</b>	65,424
16	<b>Upper Sioux Agency State Park**</b>	45,406
17	<b>Big Stone Lake State Park**</b>	37,358
18	<b>Schell's Brewery**</b>	35,000
19	<b>Morgan Creek Vineyards</b>	19,800
20	<b>Brown County Museum</b>	10,890
21	<b>Harkin Store</b>	10,000
22	Jeffers Petroglyphs	5,778

Locations marked in **Blue** are within the Upper Minnesota River Scenic Byway. Data marked with \*\* was for 2012, supplied by the DNR via email in 2013. Pipestone data for 2007, pulled from their Long-Range Interpretive Plan, 2008. Jeffers for 2011-2012, provided by Sunnie Hergin of MHS via phone, July 9, 13. Morgan Creek Vineyards, and Brown County Museum for 2012, provided by Terry Sveine, New Ulm Chamber, via email, July 12, 2013. Schell's Brewers provided by Terry Sveine via email, November 5, 2013. Prairie's Edge Casino from conversation with Prairie's Edge Event Manager, October 24, 2013. Harkin Store data provided by Ben Leonard of MHS, March 11, 2014. All other data from "Top Minnesota Attractions by Tourism Region, 2010," University of Minnesota Tourism Center.





## What Visitors Like to Do

<u>General (checked one or more below)</u>	<u>81%</u>
Dining out	69
Sightseeing or driving for pleasure	22
Taking in city sites	14
Driving on designated scenic byways	12
Nightlife or evening entertainment	11
Casino gaming	8
Viewing fall colors	6
<u>Shopping (checked one or more below)</u>	<u>46%</u>
General or mall shopping	23
For gifts or souvenirs	22
Arts, crafts, or antiques	14
Outlet shopping	11
At the Mall of America	7
<u>Participating In (checked one or more below)</u>	<u>37%</u>
Pool swimming	11
Hiking	8
Biking	6
Fishing	6
Wildlife viewing or bird watching	5
Lake/river swimming	3
Golfing	3
Motor boating/water skiing	2
Canoeing	2
Downhill skiing or snowboarding	1
Hunting	1
Ice fishing	1
Off-road ATV driving	1
Jet skiing	*
Cross-country skiing	*
Snowmobiling	*
Other activity	10
<u>Visiting (checked one or more below)</u>	<u>49%</u>
Friends or relatives	27
Historic sites	13
State or national parks	10
Other museums	9
Art museums	7
Amusement parks or carnivals	5
Indian areas	5
Outdoor water parks	5

Indoor water parks	4
Other attraction	9
<u>Attending (checked one or more below)</u>	<u>35%</u>
Fairs or festivals	9
Amateur sporting events	8
Popular music concerts or shows	4
Theater performances	4
Professional sporting events	2
Classical music concerts	1
Other events	13

### Likely Visitor Seasonal Patterns

Though formal data has not been collected on this topic, anecdotal evidence suggests general patterns of seasonal travel for the broader state and the Minnesota River Scenic Byway.

**Winter:** Minnesotans travel to winter-activity destinations, such as ski resorts, ice-fishing lakes, and snowmobile trails.

**Spring:** Minnesotans travel to locations associated with spring events, such as bird watching and the fishing opener. Spring Breaks for students over March and April increase overall visitation. Many seasonal sites open around Memorial Day.

**Summer:** This is the heaviest tourist season for the state, as families are most available for travel. Locations associated with outdoor summer activities such as camping, boating, swimming, biking, climbing, and hiking are popular. Cultural events such as music, theater and dance performances increase. Local, county and state fairs occur.

**Fall:** Families often travel for MEA/Education Minnesota weekend in October. Hunting season draws people for the duck, pheasant and deer opener. Leaf peeping is popular along routes with good topography and good color. Many seasonal sites close soon after Labor Day.

## External Issues

### Directional Signage

For visitors unfamiliar with the Minnesota River Valley, it can be very easy to feel lost when driving around the region. This is especially true if those visitors are trying to also appreciate the Byway's many scenic qualities. Because major intersections are often several miles apart, unlucky visitors may drive ten or twenty extra miles because of one missed sign. Certain travelers will find some charm to this, but even they will be disappointed to arrive at, say, the Harkin Store after closing because of a wrong turn.

Discovery Sites are also easily missed. The interpretive experience of following the Minnesota River Scenic Byway is one that requires visitors to pay attention to lots of information aside from their navigation. They are likely admiring the vistas outside their windows and internalizing recently learned content from their last site as they drive. The Byway's interpretive experience demands so much attention at sites that the Byway must ensure that the locations of the best interpretive sites are well-marked for drivers. When visitors see a sign that says "Harkin Store 7 Miles" they will be prepared to stop when they see the sign for the Harkin Store parking lot. In contrast, if visitors are gazing out the wrong window at an intersection, they might drive right past Fort Ridgely.

### Services

The Byway Alliance is not a Chamber of Commerce, yet the Alliance mission identifies the promotion of economic development in the Minnesota River Valley as its primary objective. This means that the fact that growing tourism is the Alliance's primary mechanism for promoting economic development creates a paradox: Those towns already best prepared to welcome tourists will also benefit the most from tourism-based development. The most important role for the Alliance in resolving this paradox is to fairly promote quality interpretive sites along the byway, and to help educate nearby municipalities about the type and quality of infrastructure they should develop in order to attract even more visitors.

To attract more tourists, and more economic development, most towns will need to develop four main service industries:

- i. Lodging. Many towns feature no advertised lodging in downtown areas, and in some towns the only hotels are miles away from the city center. To attract more business, towns should build hotels in the best locations possible; and the Alliance should be clear about stating where the existing hotels, motels, and B&Bs are located.

- ii. Food. Dining options in many river towns is limited to fast food, pizzerias or sports bars. Towns should promote these with pride, but they should also recognize that adding additional options would give tourists a reason to spend the night in their town as opposed to any other. Restaurants that feature locally grown foods, locally produced wines or beer, ethnic heritage food or four-star meals would be attractive to tourists from the Twin Cities.
- iii. Shopping. Most river towns feature charming main streets and some have several historic commercial blocks for visitors to explore. Unfortunately, many of the shops in these towns close early or keep irregular hours. Shops that promote wares that are attractive to tourists will do well. Recreational outfitting stores could sell equipment for hunters, hikers, bicyclists, canoers and campers. Motorcycle shops would serve seasonal motorcyclists. Art galleries, pottery shops, ice cream shops, coffee shops, antiques stores, gift shops, and cooking supply stores would do well.
- iv. Cell Phone Coverage. Spotty cell-phone coverage is a common problem throughout the Minnesota River Valley. The Alliance should continue to support efforts to bring improved cell service to the region and should make efforts to prepare visitors for pockets of poor reception.

## Part III: Interpretive Recommendations

Our evaluation of the Minnesota River Scenic Byway as an interpretive experience has been guided by three questions.

1. *Which sites most effectively communicate the Byway's current (Summer/Fall 2013) interpretive messages?*
2. *Which sites provide the best quality experiences for visitors?*
3. *Which sites are most effective in helping visitors to forge an emotional connection to the Minnesota River Valley?*

Each of the following recommendations relates back to these questions. Answering them as a working group has helped us to determine the best interpretive strategies for the Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission to undertake in order to attract more visitors to the Byway.

### Strengthening the Message

Presently, the Byway's interpretive efforts are built around three themes, all of which support the region's identity as "A River of Stories."

- **Historic: Struggles for a Home.** This theme primarily addresses the U.S.–Dakota War, but originally sought to include the concept of Manifest Destiny, the growth of agriculture, and the struggles that individual plant and animal communities had to adapt to changes in the environment.
- **Cultural: Food for a Nation.** This theme promotes the story of the agricultural development of the valley and the related transportation development and land stewardship issues.
- **Natural: The River's Legacy.** This theme promotes the development and interconnections of the river's ecosystem.

Certainly, these existing themes are accurate and legitimate. There are a "river of stories" to tell, and the Dakota War, agricultural history, and natural history of the river are significant. However, we believe that when these themes are measured by our goal, to create *high quality interpretation that is significant, unique, compelling, transformative, and marketable*, they are not as successful as they should be. In fact, only one of these existing themes is currently interpreted in a way that encourages a visitor to develop a meaningful connection to the Minnesota Valley.

The Byway Alliance currently promotes 120 Discovery Sites to interpret these three thematic narratives. Approximately 25 percent of the Discovery Sites interpret the U.S.–Dakota War and another 25 percent interpret the natural

history of the river valley. Only 5 percent of Discovery Sites interpret the agricultural story, but most dramatic is the fact that **45 percent of Discovery Sites have no strong relationship to any existing interpretive message.** These include sites like the Birthplace of Sears, where the site's story simply is not connected to the Byway's larger story. The same 45 percent also includes a "Rest Area" outside of Le Sueur, and a sand and gravel pit. These sites may be pragmatic and/or unique, but they should not have the same classification as a site like Fort Ridgely.

These numbers do not account for the quality of a visitor's interpretive experience. When we asked *Which sites provide the best quality interpretive experiences for visitors?* a very clear pattern emerged. The Discovery Sites that offer the best interpretive experience for visitors are almost uniformly devoted to interpreting the Dakota War. This is not a surprise; three recent separate initiatives (geocaching, mobile audio tour, and signs) led by the Minnesota Historical Society and Byway Alliance have supported these interpretive efforts, and efforts to preserve, analyze, and interpret the history of that era have been going on for generations. As a result, **"Struggle for a Home" is the only existing interpretive theme that offers important pieces of a connected narrative at multiple points throughout the Minnesota River Valley.** Within many state and local parks and natural areas, effective natural history interpretation is occurring. However, it rarely helps develop a broader narrative.

Emphasizing broader regional narratives, as opposed to collections of isolated local stories, is the best way to encourage new visitors to forge an emotional connection to the region as a whole. Presently, the Valley's most compelling state parks tend to increase a visitor's appreciation for the region's natural beauty, but they do relatively little to show why a particular site is significant to the Valley's broader ecology. By finding opportunities to interpret more of these sites as pieces of a regional narrative about the Valley's ecological development and function, the Byway will create more opportunities for visitors to develop deep and emotional connections to the region's history, character and significance.

To visitors who are otherwise unfamiliar with the Minnesota River Valley, interpretive experiences that have not been developed as a part of a regional narrative can seem like distractions. Right now this is the primary challenge behind supporting the "Food for a Nation" theme. It is also the problem caused by promoting Discovery Sites unrelated to the region's thematic narratives. A tourist from Minneapolis, for example, may be glad to see Ortonville's courthouse, but his experience is not especially reinforced or broadened by his other interpretive experiences on the Byway. Even a site that is related to the Byway's other two interpretive messages (natural history and agriculture) must deliver high-quality interpretation for a visitor to appreciate its importance to the region. At best such unrelated sites function as extremely engaging *non sequiturs* like the Harkin Store that lend dimension and context to the region without directly supporting a regional narrative. At worst they are confusingly indistinguishable from one

another, and contribute to a perception of the Minnesota River Valley as a nebulous but dully homogenous region.

The Minnesota River Valley is emphatically *not* a dully homogenous region, but the best way for a new visitor to appreciate its enduring spirit and rich history is by following a story. Only these broader, regional narratives provide enough context for a new audience to appreciate the subtly shifting relationships and differences among the communities living together on the river. And if these stories are well-told – if the narratives are enduring and engaging – then a new audience will return to hear a few more. **We recommend strengthening the Byway's interpretive message so that it clearly reflects the interpretive experience that visitors presently enjoy.**

Today, the Minnesota River serves as a quiet backdrop to a rural life dominated by agriculture and bejeweled with a series of small towns and cities. While recreational travellers seek out the river for fishing, hiking, and paddling, its central role as the backbone and soul of the valley is often overlooked. We propose shifting the interpretive message to refocus on the central role of the river itself – yes, its natural heritage, but also its historic role in triggering a national story, and its significance to the Dakota and to the settlers. This is a natural story, but also a national story.

#### **Interpretive Message, Expanded:**

The Minnesota River Valley is a unique, beautiful, historic, and vibrant part of our country.

The Minnesota River Valley is a special region unlike any other. At the end of the last glacial period, the river was born in a series of dramatic and massive floods that resulted from the overflow of glacial Lake Agassiz. The river winds its way from the top of the continental divide to join with the Mississippi, and as it travels, it passes through some of the most fertile lands on earth, as well as rich wetlands and forests, and shifts between two major native biomes: the prairie and the Big Woods. In its valley, many animals, plants, and people have interacted to create a unique place.

The Minnesota River Valley was both the cause and the stage for the U.S.–Dakota War. This lush valley offered the rich natural resources that both the settlers and the Dakota needed — it was a valley worth fighting for. The U.S.–Dakota War was a significant event for our region and our nation—a tragic chapter in the United States/Indian wars that foreshadowed the wars that were to come.

#### **Condensed Interpretive Message:**



*The Minnesota River Valley is a unique natural space, formed by the plants, animals and people who live here. The Dakota War was a significant event for our region and our nation—a tragic chapter in the United States/Indian wars that foreshadowed the wars that were to come. The U.S.–Dakota War of 1862 permanently shaped the cultural identity of the Minnesota River Valley.*

In order to strengthen the Byway, we propose *a modest shift in the focus and a more dramatic shift in the language* of the Valley's interpretative themes. At the detail level, we propose focusing on the following two themes:

### **Primary Theme I: River's Legacy (Natural History)**

The Minnesota River Valley is a unique natural space. The Minnesota River's headwaters are born of the Little Minnesota River's headwaters near Veblen, South Dakota, coalescing in a valley remnant of the last Ice Age at Browns Valley. From this western edge, the 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.

Within this theme, specific storylines can better articulate this message. Potential storylines include:

#### **Storyline 1: Ice Age, Geology, and Soils**

The last glacial age left its mark on this river. As the glaciers retreated and melted, glacial Lake Agassiz formed. In a series of sudden and dramatic ruptures, the lake broke through its southern bank and scoured out a large river valley – the cradle to the much more modest Minnesota River. From the western to eastern ends of its valley, the Minnesota River cuts through a variety of different soils, tills and geological strata. The glacier age deposited rich till layers, but the underlying bedrock tells stories of more ancient geological events. These exposed soils, tills, bedrock, fossils, waterfalls and boulders illustrate these dramatic tales.

#### **Storyline 2: Water (River, Watersheds, Wetlands, and Rain)**

Water is the backbone of the Valley. The valley was carved by a surging flood, and life within the valley is dependent on water today. As the outlet for a major watershed, the Minnesota River water discharge fluctuates significantly throughout the year in response to regional temperatures, rains and droughts. The plants and animals have adapted to these cycles. Humans have altered those patterns through tilling, ditching, irrigation, levees, and dams.

#### **Storyline 3: River Prairie Ecology (Animals and Plants)**

The western two-thirds of the Valley was originally prairie, and this area developed diverse, complex and native plant and animal ecosystems. Flood plain wetlands, oxbow lakes, broad upland marshes and shallow lakes create attractive habitats for local and migrating wildlife. Rare species continue to live in this ecology.

#### **Storyline 4: Big Woods Ecology (Animals and Plants)**

The eastern one-third of the Valley was originally Big Woods, and this area also developed diverse, complex and native plant and animal ecosystems. Various species migrated and evolved to succeed in the wooded upland and lowland conditions. Rare species continue to live in this ecology.

#### **Storyline 5: Shifting Uses and Perspectives**

Throughout time, people have viewed and used the land in different ways. Today, residents are beginning to better understand the consequence of past and present decisions. Efforts to restore and preserve native habitat have led to several success stories. New technologies and practices continue to improve river and valley health.

### **Primary Theme II: Struggles for a Home (The U.S.–Dakota War)**

The Minnesota River Valley has a significant role in the national story of the settlement of the West, particularly the dramatic and tragic era of treaties, reservations, policies, war, and banishment. Within the Valley, the stories of the U.S.–Dakota War represent broadly shared patterns of experience for many prairie tribes. The underlying causes of the war – cultural conflict, socio-political motivations, and human failings – are universal. The lasting consequences of the war are stamped permanently in the minds, hearts and landscape of the valley.

Within this theme, specific storylines can better articulate this message. Potential sub-themes include:

#### **Storyline 1: The Treaty and Reservation Era (1837-1862)**

In 1837 and 1851, the Dakota responded to pressure from the United States to exchange almost 24 million acres of land for treaty annuities and promises. After the treaties were enacted, Dakota land in Minnesota was restricted to a 20-mile by 70-mile reservation along the Minnesota River. Another treaty in 1858 cut the reservation in half. The Dakota were forced to alter their land-use practices, strongly encouraged to adapt white customs and religion, and prohibited from their traditional hunting grounds. Within the Dakota community, different groups responded in different ways to these pressures. Beyond the reservation, new settlers arrived, creating additional tensions and increased competition for natural resources.

**Topics:** Treaty of Traverse des Sioux (1851), 1858 treaty, Agency sites, settlement villages, settler's farms, missions, Dakota villages, central people.

### **Storyline 2: U.S.–Dakota War (1862)**

During the fall of 1862, a combination of annuity delays, natural disaster-related strain, and human-made decisions led to the eruption of a war. Within Dakota and settler communities, opinions about the war were not uniform. A series of battles occurred along the valley, resulting in the deaths of settlers and Dakota, and destruction of crops and homes. By December, the war had concluded, and many Dakota had fled to Dakota Territory. A series of hasty trials led to the execution of 38 Dakota and the imprisonment of others.

**Topics:** annuities, Acton, agencies, battle sites, forts, camps, Camp Release, trials, banishment routes, prison sites, Mankato hangings, central people.

### **Storyline 3: Banishment and Recovery (1863-1900)**

At the conclusion of the war, thousands of Dakota fled to Dakota Territory. Over the winter of 1862-1863, a large group of non-combatant Dakota were initially transferred to a concentration camp outside Fort Snelling, then transferred out of Minnesota. Many Dakota soldiers were imprisoned in Mankato, then later Iowa. General Sibley led a series of battles in Dakota Territory in 1863 and 1864. The U.S. government confiscated the remaining Dakota land. In western Minnesota, occasional raids by Dakota occurred, and bounties were offered to settlers for Dakota scalps. Within the Valley, settlers and approximately 200 Dakota returned to re-establish their lives as best they could. By the late 1880s, additional Dakota had returned, establishing the basis for the Upper and Lower Sioux communities.

**Topics:** banishment routes, confiscation of Dakota land, memorials, raids and bounties, return of settlers and Dakota, re-establishment of communities, central people.

## **Relationship of Sites to Interpretive Themes**

At present, the **1862 U.S.–Dakota War** is the only enduring and engaging regional narrative being effectively interpreted along the Byway. **It is also the only narrative supported by sites that allow visitors to forge emotional connections to the region.** It also happens to be the narrative with the greatest national prominence. This suggests an immediate strategy as well as several opportunities for long-term growth. To attract visitors over the next two years the Byway should promote its most compelling sites, and make it a point of pride that so many of these are related to the U.S.–Dakota War. At the same time, the

Byway should make investments in developing the regional narrative around other thematic messages so that these will be clearly understood by visitors over the next five years. This approach does not require stripping any high-quality interpretive site of its Discovery Site status, it only requires **recognizing the interpretive experiences that visitors to the Byway are *already* finding most meaningful.**

At present, the Byway lists 120 “Discovery Sites.” In addition, this planning process uncovered an additional 76 sites worth reviewing. This plan proposes re-categorizing these sites by evaluating them for their connections to the new themes, their national, state, or local significance, their quality of service, and the hours they are open. This results in the following:

- 19 Anchor Sites – “must see” places visitors should visit
- 12 Historic Towns or Districts — notable for their historic qualities
- 6 Secondary Sites – seasonal “cherries on top”
- 17 Notable Sites – state or locally significant full-service treasures
- 53 Other Sites – state or locally significant

And, in addition, another 89 sites were identified as potential sites for future inclusion.

A rubric on page 35 helps clarify the categorization standards.

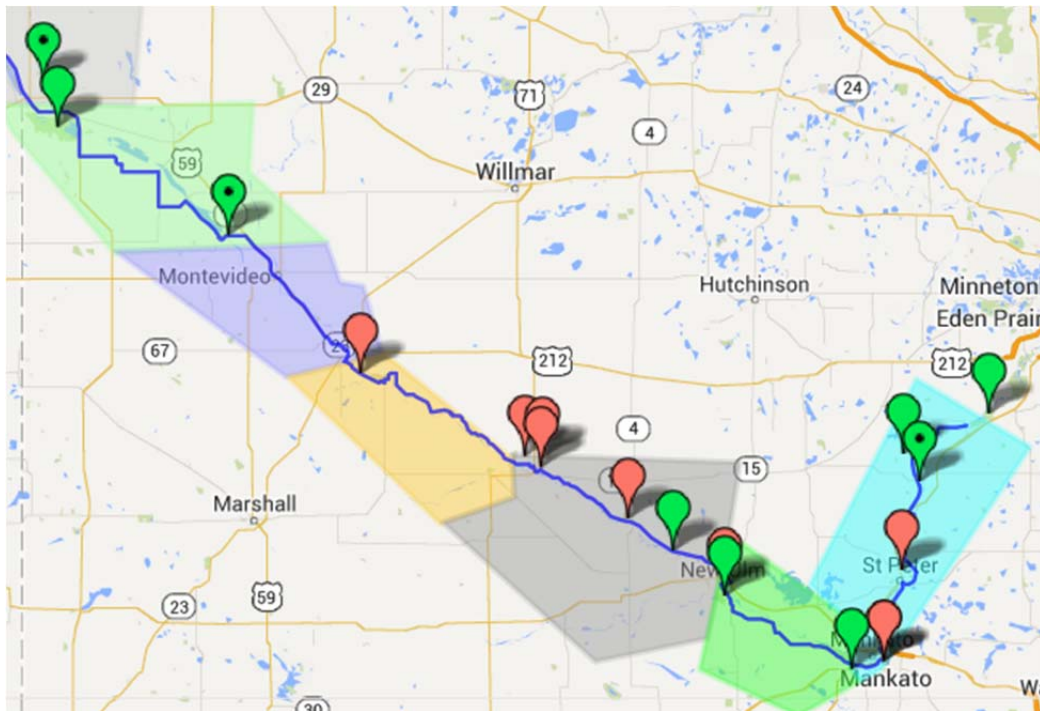
### Identifying Anchor Sites

The first strategy for implementing this approach is to adopt a system of site classification. To ensure that a visitor’s experience on the Byway is both meaningful and memorable the Byway should make it a priority to specifically promote its best interpretive experiences by designating them as “Anchor Sites.”

Anchor sites will be the visitors’ guideposts throughout the Minnesota River Valley. Any of these sites will provide a high-quality interpretive experience, and they will also contribute to a regional narrative that helps a tourist develop a more sophisticated understanding of the 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 — travellers from the outside the region. Locally, they are the sites that should be consistently promoted throughout the year, through the website, brochures, and clear signage showing their direction and distance from the Byway itself. Most importantly, they are the sites that will provoke an emotional connection to the region from new visitors, and will serve to further strengthen the valley’s identity and brand.

Anchor sites were identified by the following qualities.

- 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)
- Ideally, they offer visitor services such as restrooms, staff or volunteers, and information about the area.



Green = Natural History, Red = U.S.– Dakota War History, Green with dot = both

### **“Historic Districts” and “Main Street” Communities**

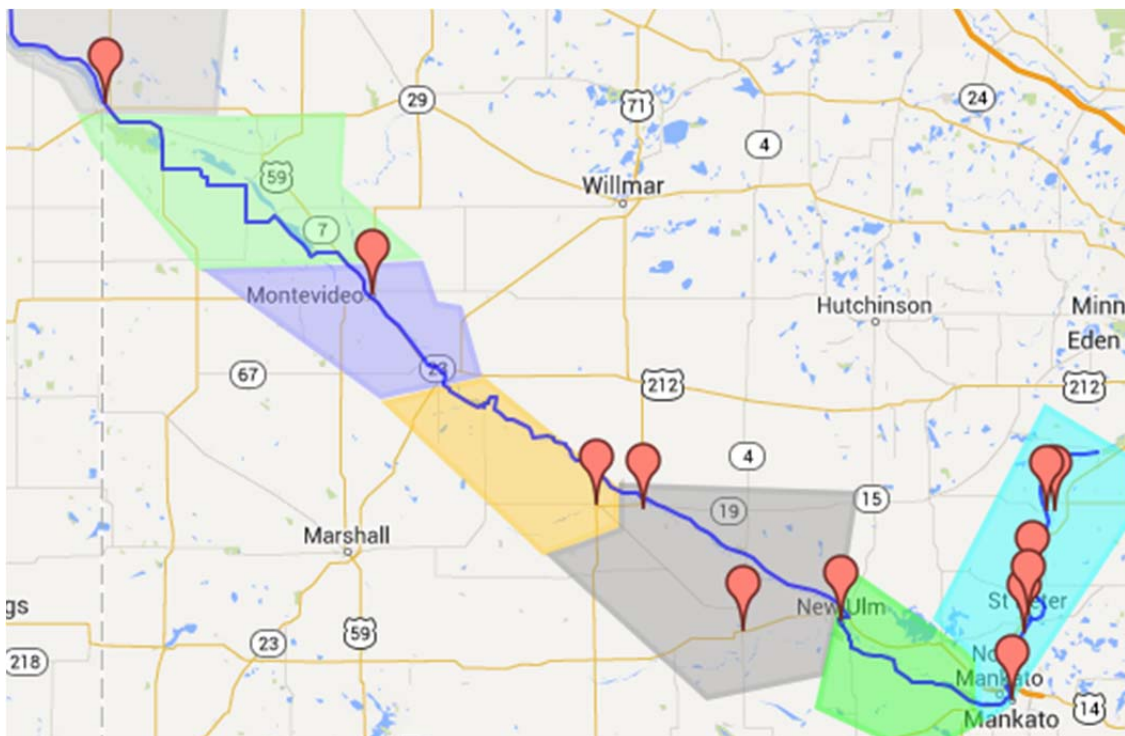
The Minnesota Valley has many charming villages, towns and cities. Within some of these communities, specific areas have been identified as “Historic Districts” by the National Registry of Historic Places, and are worthy of particular preservation, interpretation, and marketing efforts. Because of the historic era when most of these communities were established, there is usually a significant relationship between the historic district and the Byway’s two interpretive themes. However, not every historic site within a historic district has this connection to the interpretive theme. In addition, the National Trust for Historic Preservation (through the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota) has designated four downtown areas within the valley that qualify as “Main Street” communities, worthy of



preservation, promotion, and organization efforts intended to help bring economic revitalization. The identified “Main Street” communities are Redwood Falls, New Ulm, Mankato and Belle Plaine.

For most visitors, these types of distinctions are not particularly meaningful. Fundamentally, what most visitors would like to know is: Is there a cute historic downtown? Are there enough interesting things there to make it worthwhile to stop? For historic cities, towns, and villages to be included as Anchor sites, 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.



Historic Towns and Districts

For practical purposes, in national marketing efforts, all theme-related sites with minimal interpretation within a historic city, town, or village should be integrated in the listing for a historic city, town or village, regardless of whether they are

actually located within the designated historic district. All sites that do not meet minimal interpretation or have thematic connections should not be included or promoted at the national level, but can continue to be promoted locally.

For example, New Ulm's many previous discovery sites would be handled as follows: the "New Ulm Historic District" would be listed as an Anchor site on the web and in all national marketing efforts. The New Ulm description could say:

"New Ulm Historic District: This vibrant city honors its past as the location of two major sieges during the U.S.–Dakota War. Come explore the history of these battles through a self-guided walking tour of the historic district, buildings, monuments and cemetery."

Then, when a visitor inquires further, they could find detailed information about the Roebbecke Mill Plaque, Brick Wall Sculpture, Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, Defenders Monument, Erd Building, Kiesling Haus, Glockenspiel, Heritage Tree, Hermann Monument, Melges Bakery, Pioneer Memorial, Turner Hall, Waraju Distillery and cemetery.

The Wanda Gag House, which does not have any connection to the themes, would remain as a separate "Notable Site," promoted at the local level.

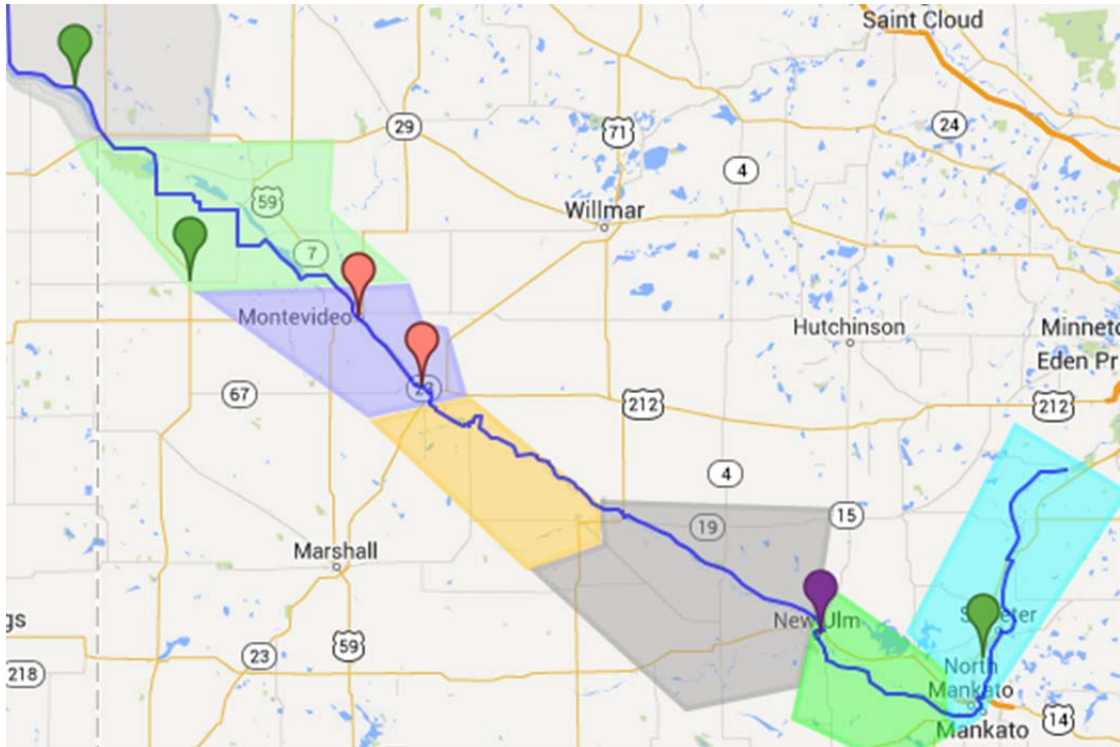
### Secondary Sites

Secondary sites include places that offer minimal interpretation, or are only open during brief periods of time. These sites serve as "cherries on top" of the anchor sites — offering unique opportunities to explore the local flavor and character of the valley. These sites are suited to travellers who are happy to get off the beaten path, take charge of their own experience and are satisfied with minimal services. These are sites to promote at a local level through brochures and other marketing efforts.

Secondary sites were identified by the presence of the following qualities:

- They have a relationship to one or both of the themes (U.S. –Dakota War and Natural History).
- They have national, state, or local significance.
- They offer non-personal interpretation (self-guided signs, brochures, audio-tours, etc.).





Green = Natural History, Red = U.S. -Dakota War, Purple = both

### Notable Sites

There are many wonderful sites within the Valley that do not presently have any significant connection to the Byway's themes, but are visitor-friendly and offer high-quality interpretive programs or services. Notable sites should be promoted through local paid advertising or word-of-mouth. With additional development of thematic connections, some of these sites could be added to the list of Anchor or Secondary Sites.

- They have national or state significance.
- They offer 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.

### Other Sites

Thousands of appealing, significant, historic or interesting sites are located within the Byway. Each county has a dozen or more buildings listed on the National Register; each bend in the River offers a beautiful view. However, while these

sites are valuable resources for the Byway, and certainly add immeasurably to the quality and tone of the valley, they do not rise to the level of Anchor, Secondary, or Notable sites. Typically, these sites have no interpretation, or very minimal signage, offer no visitor services, are open infrequently, and have only local significance. With the additional development of thematic connections, interpretive support, accessibility, and/or visitor services, some of these could be added to the list of Anchor or Secondary Sites.

### **Potential Sites in the Future**

In order to clarify the interpretive message, and strengthen the brand and experience for the visitor, sites that do not meet the outlined criteria should not be presently included as sites in the Byway's efforts. These sites presently fail to offer any interpretation, or their connections to the themes are weak.

With the creation or significant improvement of interpretation, many of these sites can be upgraded to "Secondary," "Other," or "Notable" status.

Site Classification Rubric					
	Do Not Include	Other	Notable	Secondary	Anchor
Hours & Accessibility	Limited Hours.	Accessible during the summer season	Accessible to the public beyond the summer season	Accessible during the summer season	Accessible to the public beyond the summer season
Level of Service	None	None or Minimal	High: public restrooms, information about the area, and food services	Minimal: public restrooms and information about the area	High: public restrooms, information about the area, and food services
Level of Interpretation	None	Self-Guided signs	Full Service: Self-guided signs, trails, exhibits, or audio-tours; And staff-guided tours, programs, or events	Limited Service: self-guided signs, trails, exhibits, or audio-tours. Occasional programs.	Full Service: Self-guided signs, trails, exhibits, or audio-tours; And staff-guided tours, programs, or events
Connection to Byway Theme	No relationship to either Byway theme	No relationship to either Byway theme	No relationship to either Byway theme	Must have a relationship to one or both of the themes (U.S.–Dakota War and Natural History)	Must have a relationship to one or both of the themes (U.S.–Dakota War and Natural History)
Local, State, or National Significance	May or may not have local or state significance	Have local or state significance	Must have local, state, or national, significance	Must have local, state or national, significance	Must have state or national significance

## Reach out to Target Audiences

Travellers enjoy the Minnesota River Valley. As described earlier, over 80 percent of tourists to southern Minnesota are repeat visitors. This is an impressive and compelling endorsement of the interpretive experience offered by some of the Byway's most popular sites. If the Alliance can attract a new visitor to Flandreau State Park, Fort Ridgely or Upper Sioux Agency, that person is extremely likely to return and to explore the rest of the valley.

The region's existing audience is predominantly comprised of groups of two to three people and families taking overnight vacations. Just 27 percent of visiting groups include children. Elderly couples account for a significant percentage of Byway visitors and niche interests – birding, cycling, and historic tours – are broadly represented. This snapshot suggests several opportunities for promoting the Minnesota River Valley among new audiences.

### Reach out to The Metro

Most of the Minnesota River Valley is close to the Twin Cities metro area, and the metro is home to 60 percent of Minnesota's population. Any serious effort to attract a new, broader audience must include specific appeals to metro residents. In many cases this will be as simple as expanding existing marketing strategies to reach the metro audience. The Byway Alliance should find opportunities to help festivals and other regional events draw metro participants. The Alliance should also undertake more general "Visit the Valley" campaigns that promote the region as a specific destination.

### Reach out to Business Travellers

Business travellers already visit the region for conferences in Mankato and New Ulm; the Byway Alliance should find opportunities to partner with the event centers in these cities to promote nearby discovery sites. The Alliance could even work with local event centers to coordinate special promotional tours for conferences interested in adding networking excursions to their events. Even if business travellers do not extend their business trips, promotions like this will increase their familiarity with the region and they will be more likely to return for a recreational visit.

### Target Niche Audiences

Within the broader group above, specific audiences could be reached through effective marketing. Groups such as gamblers, hunters, birders, agri-tourists, art buffs, cyclists, paddlers, bikers, golfers, beer geeks, wine snobs, U.S. –Dakota-War buffs, music-lovers, rock hounds, and

bibliophiles could be reached through interest magazines, radio spots, newspaper ads, billboards, website banner ads, and other efforts.

### **Reach out to Event Coordinators**

Many tourists enjoy travelling to participate in specific events, and the Minnesota River Valley already hosts a variety of tours and festivals that appeal to this kind of traveller. Bike tours and birding tours operators are already established along the Byway; the Byway Alliance should help events like this find opportunities to increase and improve their marketing outside the region. The Alliance should also partner with events like New Ulm's Oktoberfest, the Meander (Upper Minnesota River Art Crawl), the Mankato Mahkato Wacipi Pow Wow, and Mankato Marathon, and Henderson Sauerkraut Days that already successfully attract large numbers of attendees. Such events offer opportunities to develop coordinated promotional efforts; the objective should be to convince tourists already planning to visit the region to spend an extra day or two.

### **Reach out to Travel Writers**

Tourism stories continue to be popular topics for regional newspapers, magazines and websites. Direct contact with editors and writers to promote the Valley and support their visits will likely result in increased coverage, and subsequent visitors.

### **Reach out to Other Regional Organizations**

The Byway Alliance is the only organization working specifically to promote tourism and economic development throughout the entire Minnesota River Valley, but many organizations are working on projects that will or could impact other aspects of regional vitality. Several of these efforts, especially river health initiatives, will inspire supporters even if they are otherwise unfamiliar with the region. The Byway Alliance should help regional organizations engaged in ecological and cultural projects find opportunities to involve supporters who do not live in the Minnesota River Valley.

## Strengthen Infrastructure to Support Tourists

As the Byway Alliance works to attract new audiences to the Minnesota River Valley they must also prepare to support visitors who are less familiar with the region. A visitor's interpretive experience will be interrupted, frustrated or even abandoned if he or she becomes confused or uncertain about how to reach a planned stop or where to find an evening meal. The Byway Alliance should take steps to ensure that visitors enjoy a curated experience, both as they plan their trip and as they make their visit.

### Establish Gateway Sites

At present, there is an "affiliate travel info center" and "Byway Information Site" system, where info booths offer information about the Byway. Unfortunately, many of these sites are closed on weekends. The Anchor sites for each area (or most popular secondary site) should become "Gateway Sites," that offer additional information on local sites and services.

### Improve Directional Signage

This is the simplest improvement that will have the most significant impact on a visitor's experience. With very few other landmarks in the Minnesota River Valley it is easy for new visitors to find themselves lost. Even when following the Scenic Byway itself, it is surprisingly easy to drive right past significant, high-quality discovery sites. The Byway Alliance should add:

- "Scenic Byway" signs at every intersection indicating the direction in which the Byway continues along with a directional indicator (for example, "Scenic Byway South to New Ulm").
- Signs on routes proximate to the Byway indicating how to travel to the "Scenic Byway" (for example, "To Scenic Byway .5 miles").
- Signs indicating direction and distance to Anchor Sites within 10 miles (for example, "Historic Harkin Store, 2 miles").

### Update and Clarify Website

The website should be revised and updated to reflect the changes suggested in this Interpretive Plan. After that, it should be frequently updated with new events. All revisions to the site should allow for easy downloading and viewing through hand-held mobile devices.

## Revise & Promote Regional Itineraries

One of the most valuable features on the Alliance website is a collection of eleven different itineraries, each one tailored for a specific audience. For travelers who know they wish to go birding or see historic sites and Norwegian towns during their vacation, these itineraries are essential resources. For other travelers, however, using these effectively will require a familiarity with the Minnesota River Valley that many do not possess. To ensure that Byway Itineraries are effective tools for every visitor to the region, the Alliance should take the following steps:

- 1. Create an Anchor Site Itinerary.** Many visitors to the Minnesota River Valley will not know exactly what they want to do. To support these visitors the Alliance should create a “basic” itinerary that features only the best-quality Anchor Sites and includes specific dining and lodging recommendations for each stop. Even if most travelers will end up modifying the schedule to suit their needs, promoting a basic itinerary will help create a stronger sense of regional identity by giving an immediate and specific answer to the question, “What would we *do* there?” The current collection of itineraries and Discovery Sites answers that question by responding, “There’s tons to do here!” An Anchor Site Itinerary will provide an example that helps first-time visitors to actually imagine their trip. It will also advertise the region’s best interpretive sites.
- 2. Make All Itineraries Two or Three Nights.** The Minnesota River Valley’s target audience is weekend travelers. Create itineraries that will support a weekend visit, but include options for extending the trip.
- 3. All Itineraries Should Originate in Minneapolis/St. Paul, St. Cloud, Fargo, or Rochester.** One objective for any itinerary featured on the Alliance website is to reinforce the fact that the Minnesota River Valley is extremely accessible. These itineraries (and other marketing materials) should remind potential visitors that most Minnesotans can reach the Scenic Byway in under three hours.
- 4. Refine Existing Itineraries to Include More Information about Where to Stay and Where to Eat.** Many current itineraries limit discussion around dining and lodging. To make these itineraries more useful tools for unfamiliar travelers the Alliance should ensure that they include suggestions beyond, for example, “dinner in Montevideo.” This does not necessarily require promoting specific restaurants or hotels, but visitors should have a sense for what kind of food and lodging are available in each town. “Grab a burger with the locals at the sports bar on Main Street or belly-up to the seafood buffet at Prairie’s Edge



Casino.” Itineraries should also indicate which hotels are most proximate to downtown historic and waterfront districts and which are on the outskirts of the town.

5. **Revise, Update, Expand and Reformat Itinerary Themes.** There are presently eleven itineraries posted on the Byway website. They offer a variety of suggestions for visitors interested in natural, historic, scenic and activity-based travels through the valley. These itineraries need to be updated with new content and reformatted to fit the Byways marketing brand. Additional itineraries should be created, focusing on topics and themes that would serve the audience. Suggestions include:

- Dakota Life and Culture
- Antiquing
- Biking
- Fine Art and Fine Wine

6. **Develop Interactive Trip Planner Tool for Website.** The most useful itinerary tool would be an interactive trip planner that allows travelers to build their own itineraries based on their travel dates and their interests. As the Alliance creates and refines featured Byway itineraries they should do so with the intention of using them eventually to support this interactive tool.

### Promote Recreational Venues and Businesses

There is a wide array of attractive venues for recreational activities throughout the Valley. These opportunities run the gamut from low-effort/low planning activities such as walks through county parks, to high-effort/high planning activities such as multi-day canoe trips along the river. For most visitors, basic information on roadside short hiking trails or parks will suffice. More adventurous travellers will seek deeper information about local outfitters, trail conditions, permit regulations or unique seasonal events. These “adventure” travellers are likely to spend more time and more money in the Valley. In order to attract these types of visitors, the Scenic Byway should develop additional information on these recreational categories:

Hiking:

**Local Outfitters/Event Coordinators:** In Mankato: Gander Mountain, Scheels All Sports, Flying Penguin Outdoor Sports  
**Good Hiking Trails:** Flandrau State Park, Mazomani Trail (Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge)

Birding:

**Local Event Coordinators:** Henderson Feathers, State Parks  
**Good viewing sites:** Big Stone Lake State Park, Big Stone Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Chamberlain Woods Scientific and Natural Area

Canoeing/Kayaking/Paddleboarding:

**Local Outfitters/Event Coordinators:** In Mankato: A to Z Rentals, Bent River Outfitters, and Kato Canoe and Kayak. In Watson: Mitlyng's Bait & Tackle. In Montevideo; Clean up the Minnesota River.  
**Good Launch Sites:** Lac Qui Parle State Park, Flandrau State Park and Minnesota Valley Recreation Area. Yellow Medicine River and Hawk Creek have whitewater.  
**Permitting:** Minnesota Department of Natural Resources requires a boat permit on all watercraft.

Biking:

**Local Outfitters/Rentals/Event Coordinators:** 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. In Montevideo: Midtown Bicycle Repair. In Watertown, SD: Bikes & Board  
**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.

Skiing/Snowshoeing:

**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.  
**Permitting:** Minnesota Department of Natural Resources requires ski passes. Daily (\$6), seasonal (\$20) and three-year (\$55) passes are available from the DNR's website.

Hunting/Fishing/Icefishing:

**Local Outfitters/Event Coordinators:** In Mankato: Gander Mountain, Scheels All Sports, Flying Penguin Outdoor Sports. In Ortonville: D&R Enterprises, Bud's Bait. In Montevideo; Clean up the Minnesota River.  
**Hunting Grounds & Fishing Holes:** Minnesota Valley National Wildlife

Refuge. State Parks (Fishing; Limited Hunting). Northern Migration offers goose hunting on private land in Lac Qui Parle.

**Permitting:** Hunting and Angling licenses are required. They are available from the DNR's website.

Climbing/Zip Line:

**Local outfitters/Event Coordinators:** KCT Kerfoot Canopy Tours (zip line) in Henderson,

**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.

## Develop Partnerships

The Byway Alliance excels at bringing together organizations to support cultural, ecological and economic initiatives throughout the region. Since 2003, Alliance partnerships have been organized around educating visitors and securing funding to support educational efforts. Most Alliance partnerships and marketing efforts have also supported these initiatives. As a result, the Minnesota River Valley is home to a significant number of high-quality interpretive sites that help a visitor develop an understanding of the region's history and an appreciation for the valley's distinct culture.

To attract more visitors to these sites, and to strengthen the valley's regional identity, the Byway Alliance must continue to develop partnerships with other organizations in the region. Often these partnerships will involve the creation of events, marketing efforts, educational programs or interpretive experiences, but it is essential that these be developed as part of a regional narrative. Because the Byway Alliance's province is the entire Minnesota River Valley, the stories it promotes should be those most significant to the region.

In practice this will mean a shift toward reaching out to organizations that are already engaged in regional initiatives and to find out if the Alliance can support those efforts by securing funding, developing educational or interpretive programs, or creating additional marketing opportunities. At the same time, the Alliance should continue to encourage Discovery Site applications while imposing stricter interpretive standards on applicants. Existing Discovery Sites should be encouraged to develop their sites so that they can be featured as Anchor sites and advertised along the Byway itself.

There are many organizations that manage single, individual properties, but the following three organizations oversee more than one site and should become central partners to the Byway.

### Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

The Minnesota DNR oversees the vast majority of natural resource locations within the valley, including state parks, scientific and natural areas (SNA), and wildlife management areas (WMA).

### Minnesota Historical Society (MHS)

The Byway and MHS have previously partnered on a mobile tour project. The MHS oversees many of the most significant U.S. –Dakota War-related sites in the valley.

### The Upper and Lower Sioux Communities

It is critical that the Byway Alliance develop strong partnerships with the Upper and Lower Sioux communities.<sup>1</sup> Not only are these groups central to the valley's history—they are central to its present and future. As this Interpretive Plan recognizes, the history of the U.S. –Dakota War is the most widely recognized and nationally significant aspect of the Valley's history. It is what most visitors are aware of and what many visitors come for. It is also the focus of most of the high-quality interpretive sites in the Valley, and the fundamental rationale for the creation of the Minnesota River Scenic Byway.

The history of this war and its consequences continue to affect life in the Valley today. As the Byway Alliance seeks to “to preserve, protect, interpret, and promote” the intrinsic qualities and history of the Minnesota Valley, it will certainly continue to develop programs, support interpretation, and conduct marketing efforts that focus on the U.S. –Dakota War. Therefore it is important to acknowledge the importance of developing a strong partnership with the Dakota Communities, to incorporate Dakota perspectives in all Dakota-related initiatives, and to outline a process for doing so.<sup>2</sup>

### Establish a Relationship

The Byway should seek to establish a long-term relationship with the communities that will help the Dakota understand the Byway's goals and efforts, and help the Byway understand the culture, perspectives, history, and present concerns of the Dakota. Ideally, the development of this fundamental relationship should occur before any specific Dakota-related Byway initiative is defined or in process.

- Efforts to develop this relationship should include contacting the Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO), where possible, in addition to the Tribal Council. At present, the following people are in these positions:
  - Upper Sioux Tribal Chair: Kevin Jensvold
  - Lower Sioux Tribal President: Denny Prescott
  - Lower Sioux THPO: Grace Goldtooth-Campos

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<sup>1</sup> Note that many locations in the Minnesota River (and all U.S.–Dakota-War-related sites) certainly have religious and cultural significance for the Upper and Lower Sioux Communities. This does not mean to imply that there are no other tribes who have cultural and religious ties to this area. The Sisseton-Wahpeton and Lakota tribes have deep historical ties to the Valley, as do other groups such as the Assiniboine. Depending on the situation, outreach to those additional groups may be appropriate. When considering Dakota-related projects, collaboration with the Upper and Lower Sioux is always appropriate.

<sup>2</sup> Not only is consultation with tribes the ethical thing to do, in some cases, it is also required by law. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1992 requires that federal agencies consider the effects of their actions on historic properties (those listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Properties) and consult with the relevant tribes. Though these regulations would not normally apply to Byway efforts, awareness of these issues will be an asset should the Byway take a role in a larger, more complex initiative.

Once the Communities are contacted, they may designate a staff member who may serve as the contact, or prefer to have a larger group involved.

- Members of the Communities should be invited to serve on the Byway Alliance or its committees.
- In addition, the establishment of a Dakota Affairs Coordinator position within the Byway may be appropriate. This coordinator would be responsible for building the relationship between the Byway and the Communities, organizing and hosting meetings, identifying opportunities for collaboration, and strengthening communications.

### **Commit to Incorporating Dakota Perspectives**

The Byway should commit to including Dakota perspectives in any Dakota-related initiative.

- All Dakota-related new initiatives should be commenced with opportunity for Dakota to comment on prioritization. All Dakota-related initiatives should move forward with opportunity for Dakota and to offer input on the goals and to review the content.
- Work plans and timetables should always account for sufficient time to allow Dakota input.
- Budgeting for reimbursable costs (travel, meals, lodging) and expertise (historical consulting and review) by Dakota may be appropriate.

### **Establish a Process for Integrating Dakota Perspectives**

The consultation process must provide the Dakota a reasonable opportunity to identify their concerns about Byway efforts, advise on the identification and prioritization of Byway efforts, articulate views on the Byway's efforts, and participate in the development of those efforts.

- Suggest a process for consultation and discuss it with the Communities. Collaborate in a way that accommodates tribal protocols and schedules. A possible process might be:
  - Identify potential ideas for projects
  - Prioritize what projects the Dakota would prefer
  - Identify what resources the projects would require (appropriate expertise, professional consultation, funding, research, time).
  - Gather those resources and begin research
  - Review initial ideas for project. Revise as needed.
  - Review initial draft of project. Revise as needed.

- Review and approve final version of project.
  - Begin production phase.
- Different projects may require developing different approaches. Each Community may prefer a different approach.



### **Develop New Interpretive Methods and Media**

Recently, the Byway produced and installed new interpretive panels on the Dakota War. Due to this experience, knowledge about the process and required effort is high, and it may be easiest to simply build on that knowledge by creating more panels. However, there are many other interpretive methods and media that should be considered.

### **Create or Promote Travelling Exhibits**

Create a series of temporary travelling exhibits about the Valley's history. Organize a schedule for the exhibits to different county museums and other sites. Topics could include:

- Our Minnesota River: Life in Pre-Contact Times
- Our Minnesota River: The Last Glacial Age
- Our Minnesota River: Connecting the Biomes
- Our Minnesota River: Transporting the Past and the Future (water-based transportation systems)
- Our Minnesota River: When the Waters Rise (historic and modern floods)
- Our Minnesota River: Preserving the Past, Protecting the Future (pollution control efforts)
- Our Minnesota River: Sacred Homeland (human connection to land)

### **Create Guidebooks Focused on Specific Topics**

Produce a series of attractive guidebooks, suitable for reference use or as souvenirs or gifts.

- "Minnesota: Exploring Dakota History and Culture in the Minnesota River Valley"
- "Millions of Years in Hundred of Miles: Uncovering the Natural History of the Minnesota River Valley"
- "By Foot or Wheel: Hiking and Biking Trails in the Minnesota River Valley"
- "For the Birds: Birding Opportunities in the Minnesota River Valley"

### **Activity Booklet for Children Ages 2-9**

Create a simple booklet for children, based on the central interpretive themes. Offer short descriptions and line-art drawings of anchor sites. Include activities appropriate for younger children, such as coloring pages, word-finds, crosswords, color-by-numbers, dot-to-dots.

### **Passport Book for Children Ages 10-14**

Create a passport book for middle school children. The book would include short descriptions of anchor sites and illustrations, with space for children to "stamp" each site as they visit it.

### **Mark the Anniversary of Significant Events in the Valley**

Coordinate the development of programs, events, concerts, lectures and other Byway efforts around significant anniversaries.

- 1699/1700 – First European explorer enters the Valley (Charles Le Sueur). Celebrate in 2024/2025.
- 1823 – Beltrami and Long expedition. Mark in 2023.
- 1835 – Establishment of Lac Qui Parle Mission. Mark in 2015
- 1838 – Joseph Nicollet travels up the River. Mark in 2018.
- 1849 – Minnesota Territory founded. Mark in 2024.
- 1851 – Treaties of Mendota and Traverse des Sioux. Mark in 2026.
- 1852 – Establishment of Pajutazee Mission. Mark in 2027
- 1853 – Establishment of Fort Ridgely. Mark in 2028.
- 1854 – Establishment of Hazelwood Mission. Mark in 2014
- 1858 – Minnesota Statehood. Mark in 2026.
- 1860 – Establishment of Williams/Zoar Mission. Mark in 2015.
- 1862 – U.S.–Dakota War. Mark in 2022.
- 1881 – Major Flood. Mark in 2031.
- 1938 – Re-establishment of the Upper and Lower Sioux Reservations. Mark in 2013
- 1945 – Minnesota Water Pollution Control Commission established. Mark in 2020.
- 1965 – Major floods. Mark in 2015.
- 1997 – Major floods. Mark in 2017.

### **Tear-off Maps**

Tear-off maps should be created to help orient travellers within the Byway and promote the themes. These maps would highlight anchor sites, secondary sites, and advertisers.

### **Creation of New Interpretive Panels**

One of the Byway's most visible efforts has been the creation of Interpretive Panels, most notably the creation of six new signs for the 2012 season. These particular signs focused on the history of the U.S.–Dakota War, and were the second significant panel project by the Byway (the first was completed in 2009, and included 15 signs). The 2012 signs were effective at garnering attention by the public and media and were meant to fill a need for new and additional material on the war in time for the sesquicentennial. Though those goals for the project were met, the process also highlighted the difficulty of these types of projects.

As part of the research for this Interpretive Plan, the following needs were identified for interpretive signage:

1. More signage about the Dakota before and after 1862. There is little information about Dakota life and culture outside of the war (with the exception of Lower Sioux Agency). Topics for future signs could include:
  - a. Dakota Life during the Fur Trade
  - b. Dakota and the Missionaries
  - c. Treaties and Treaty Rights
  - d. Dakota Transportation in the Valley
  - e. Dakota Hunting and Agriculture in the Valley
  - f. Boarding Schools
  - g. Pow-Wows and Honoring Ancestors Today
  - h. Dakota Music and Art
  - i. Casinos
2. More signage about pre-historic life in the Minnesota River
  - a. Geology and climate
  - b. Animals and plants
  - c. Human settlements and lifestyles
3. More signage about hydrology (aquifers, water flow, watersheds, etc.)
4. More signage about human impacts on river (army corps of engineers, individuals, municipal efforts)
5. More signage about changes in climate, animal, and plant populations
6. More information about native and non-native and invasive species
7. More information on glacial era and connection to present geography and soil conditions.

### **Creation of Kiosks**

Kiosks are usually larger, roofed structures that offer information about more than one topic. As the Minnesota River Trail extends, the Byway should consider developing kiosks along the route to help direct and inform travellers. These kiosks would include interpretive information about that location, as well as broader orientation information and directional signage to other nearby sites. These kiosks can help draw bikers from the path to local communities and anchor sites.

### **Expand the Mobile Tour**

The present mobile tour covers 13 different locations related to the U.S.–Dakota War. Consider expanding this program to add a series of stops about the natural history of the Valley or other issues in Dakota life.

### **Expand and Promote the Geocaching Program**

Consider expanding the geocaching program every other year, in conjunction with other efforts, such as Byway-wide anniversaries of significant events. For example, create geocaches at Mission sites to coordinate with the anniversary of the founding of the earliest missions.

### **Establish a Minnesota Valley Visitor Center**

Many visitors would appreciate a large, attractive visitor center that introduces the exciting history and nature of the Valley. This space could be a year-round destination and offer exhibits, films, nature programs, and general guidance on the valley's many offerings. Initially, the Alliance could establish or partner to create smaller exhibits within existing sites, and build momentum for a large, stand-alone visitor center.

## Part IV: Prioritization and Guidelines

The Minnesota River Byway represents a geographically large area, and the Byway Alliance is made up of many diverse members with various needs and capacities. The Byway Alliance exists “to promote and develop the scenic byway along the Minnesota River.” To do that, the Byway has developed this Interpretive Plan within a broader Corridor Management Plan that establishes and confirms the broad appealing themes and effective strategies that will help market the entire Byway and increase visitor and community awareness, interest, knowledge and stewardship of the natural, cultural and historic resources being featured.

In a simplified way, the Byway’s overarching goals are:

1. Attract more visitors to the Minnesota River Valley.
2. Ensure that current visitors to the Minnesota River Valley enjoy a high-quality experience.
3. Share the story of the Minnesota River Valley (Natural History and U.S.–Dakota War)

When these overarching goals are calibrated with prioritization rationale, the following projects are identified as higher priority:

Byway’s Overarching Goals		
Goals	Prioritization Rationales	Promising Projects
1. Attract more visitors to the Minnesota River Valley.	1. Projects that attract new audience and increase attendance (marketing)	1. Website, ad campaigns, media coverage
2. Ensure that current visitors to the Minnesota River Valley enjoy a high-quality experience.	2. Projects that improve the experience (infrastructure and interpretation)	2. Road signs, tear-off maps, orientation maps, itineraries, gateway sites...
3. Share the story of the Minnesota River Valley. a. Natural History b. Dakota War	3. Projects that create a memorable impact (interpretation)	3. Festivals, tours, exhibits, interpretive efforts...

### Criteria For Prioritizing New Interpretive Efforts

As the second and third category shows, the Byway Alliance has a leadership role in the development of interpretive efforts within the Valley. Though individual sites must continue to analyze their specific market niche and develop their own responses to perceived needs, the Byway is tasked with promoting Valley-wide efforts that will strengthen the Valley's brand and most effectively attract additional audiences.

In order to help prioritize these efforts, the following criteria are recommended:

Interpretation		
Goals	Prioritization Rationales	Promising Projects
1. Increase visitor awareness, interest, knowledge and stewardship of the natural, cultural, and historic resources.	1. Introduce, expand, or significantly improve a storyline or correct a historical imbalance in the interpretation of the Natural Resources or U.S.-Dakota War themes.	1. Natural History stories (all). U.S.-Dakota War stories (1837-1862, or post 1863).
2. Increase visitor access to these stories.	2. Serve a new audience or underserved section of the Valley.	2. Locations in western part of Valley, or serve unique audience (kids), or broaden base audience.
3. Provide opportunities for a variety of firsthand experiences with natural, cultural, and historic resources.	3. Introduce, expand, or significantly improve a new method of interpretation.	3. Guidebooks, travelling exhibits, activity booklets for kids, tear-off maps, geocaching, mobile tour, new visitor center.
4. Create interpretation that is relevant and responsive to new opportunities and partnerships.	4. Projects that address a significant anniversary, piggyback on other efforts, respond to audience demand, or help build a relationship	4. Missions, Upper or Lower Sioux Community-partner projects

Within the category of Interpretation, there are many different methods that can effectively convey the story and serve the audience. In the past, the Byway has focused its efforts on creating roadside interpretive panels. This plan has

recommended a variety of different projects. When each of those reviewed by our criteria, the following results occur.

### **Suggested Interpretive Projects**

On March 6, 2014, the Alliance reviewed the proposed ideas for interpretive projects outlined on pages 52-55, and evaluated them by the prioritization rationales established on the previous page. The following projects were identified as High, Medium, or Low priorities:

#### **High Priorities**

- Guidebook
- Upper or Lower Sioux–Partner Projects
- Expand the Mobile Tour
- Expand and Promote the Geocaching Program

#### **Medium Priorities**

- Passport Book for Children Ages 10-14
- Travelling Exhibit
- New Interpretive Panels (roadside signs)

#### **Low Priorities**

- Activity Booklet for Children Ages 2-7
- Kiosks (orientation and interpretive)
- New Visitor Center

The Alliance concluded that Tear-off maps were not an effective project.



### Suggested Panel Projects

Within the category of interpretive signage projects, the following table illustrates how to prioritize which sites ought to be first developed.

Panels		
Goals	Prioritization Rationales	Promising Projects
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase visitor awareness, interest, knowledge and stewardship of the natural, cultural, and historic resources.</li> <li>2. Create signs that are effective (historically accurate, aesthetically pleasing, inspiring, contextualizing, affordable).</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Site must have little or no existing interpretation, or outdated or inaccurate information.</li> <li>2. Site must be directly adjacent to the byway route.</li> <li>3. Sites must fill a gap in our themes and be easily integrated into our main byway themes.</li> <li>4. Sites owners must be willing to have signs posted, or not be owned by MHS or municipalities.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Wadsworth Trail Kasota Prairie River Park Continental Divide Mankato Trail Rasmussen Woods and Elk Nature Center Chippewa Prairie Preserve LQP Wildlife Marsh Lake Plover Chamberlain Ottawa Bluffs Swan Lake Minnemishona Wadsworth Blue Devil Sleepy Eye Lake Mankato Parks Kasota Stone Trout Ponds Bluff Park Flood Water Trail St. Peter Parks High Island Rush River Sand and Gravel Gneiss River Lakes Renville Co. Parks. <a href="#">[Natural history sites or 1837-1862 or post 1863 War sites.]</a></li> <li>2. Wadsworth Trail River Park Continental Divide Rasmussen Woods and Elk Nature Center Marsh Lake Chamberlain Ottawa Bluffs Minnemishona Blue Devil Sleepy Eye Lake Mankato Parks Kasota Stone Trout Ponds Bluff Park Flood Water Trail</li> </ol>

		<p>St. Peter Parks High Island Rush River Sand and Gravel Gneiss, River Lakes, Renville Co. Parks.</p> <p>3. All those listed in 1 and 2.</p> <p>4. Wadsworth Trail, Continental Divide Rasmussen Woods and Elk Nature Center, Marsh Lake Chamberlain Ottawa Bluffs Minnemishonas Blue Devil Kasota Stone Trout Ponds Rush River Sand and Gravel, Gneiss, River Lakes.</p>
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## Appendix A: Interpretive Panel Guidelines for Partners

### Introduction: Purpose of these Guidelines

The Minnesota River Valley Byway Alliance is responsible for providing information to Byway visitors. In many cases, the Byway Alliance works with numerous partners in the Minnesota River Valley to developing interpretive signage: cities; counties; museums; historic, cultural, recreation, and scenic sites; private businesses and non-profit organizations; and interested citizens. The goal of these guidelines is to create a standard for the creation and production of new signs. The use of these standards will serve these critical purposes:

- Ensure the creation of a consistent look, feel, and language between interpretive panels and other marketing efforts (websites, brochures, etc.)
- Ensure effective cross-promotion and contextualization within the broader Byway system and interpretive themes
- Meet user expectations for high-quality interpretive content and design

### Purpose of Interpretative Signs

Richard F. Ostergaard (Center of Design and Interpretation, Rocky Mountain Region, USDA – Forest Service) offers the following as part of his publication *Sign Sense – Principals of Planning, Design, Fabrication, and Installation*.

“Interpretive signs are what most people think of when they hear ‘interpretation.’ They are the single most popular form of interpretation. It is important to have a basic understanding of what interpretation is and how it applies to interpretive signs. One definition is:

“A communication process designed to reveal meanings and relationships of our cultural and natural heritage to the public. It tells a story and brings meaning and interest of a subject for the enjoyment of the visitor.”

The communication process should be based on enduring interpretive principles, which state that interpretation must:

- Provoke the attention and curiosity of the public. Grab interest quickly and keep it.
- Relate your message to the everyday life of your audience. Why should it matter to them personally?
- Reveal the essence of your subject through a unique viewpoint, a different way.
- Address the whole. Show the connection of an object to a theme or storyline.
- Strive for message unity. Use a variety of repetition of the subject to create or build the mood, feeling or atmosphere.

A well-designed interpretive sign will:

- Encourage resource understanding, respect, awareness, and ethical behavior of the visitor. What do you want the visitor to know, understand, value, think about, and remember once they have left?
- Answer questions that visitors have about a site.
- Direct the attention of visitors to features or natural relationship.
- Explain the cultural significance of a site. What happened here?
- Communicate across languages and cultures.
- Increase visitor enjoyment through appreciation and understanding.

### **Byway Interpretive Themes**

Central to any new interpretive initiative by the Byway is the promotion of the Byway's two primary themes. The Alliance believes that these messages will be powerful and compelling narratives that help advocate for the protection of the character of our Valley and help strengthen the economic health of our communities. The following is a brief summary of the themes of the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway.

### **Condensed Interpretive Message:**

*The Minnesota River Valley is a unique natural space, formed by the plants, animals and people who live here. The U.S.-Dakota War was a significant event for our region and our nation—a tragic chapter in the United States/Indian wars that foreshadowed the wars that were to come. The U.S.-Dakota War of 1862 permanently shaped the cultural identity of the Minnesota River Valley.*

### **Primary Theme I: River's Legacy (Natural History)**

The Minnesota River Valley is a unique natural space. The Minnesota River's headwaters are born of the Little Minnesota River's headwaters near Veblen, South Dakota, coalescing in a valley remnant of the last Ice Age at Browns Valley. From this western edge, the 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.

Within this theme, specific storylines can better articulate this message. Potential storylines include:

#### **Storyline 1: Ice Age, Geology, and Soils**

The last glacial age left its mark on this river. As the glaciers retreated and melted, glacial Lake Agassiz formed. In a series of sudden and dramatic ruptures, the lake broke through its southern bank and scoured out a large

river valley – the cradle to the much more modest Minnesota River. From the western to eastern ends of its valley, the Minnesota River cuts through a variety of different soils, tills and geological strata. The glaciers deposited rich till layers, but the underlying bedrock tells stories of more ancient geological events. These exposed soils, tills, bedrock, fossils, waterfalls, and boulders illustrate these dramatic tales.

### **Storyline 2: Water (River, Watersheds, Wetlands, and Rain)**

Water is the backbone of the Valley. The Valley was carved by a surging flood, and life within the Valley is dependent on water today. As the outlet for a major watershed, the Minnesota River water discharge fluctuates significantly throughout the year in response to regional temperatures, rains and droughts. The plants and animals have adapted to these cycles. Humans have altered those patterns through tilling, ditching, irrigation, levees and dams.

### **Storyline 3: River Prairie Ecology (Animals and Plants)**

The western two-thirds of the Valley was originally prairie, and this area developed diverse, complex and native plant and animal ecosystems. Flood plain wetlands, oxbow lakes, broad upland marshes and shallow lakes create attractive habitats for local and migrating wildlife. Rare species continue to live in this ecology.

### **Storyline 4: Big Woods Ecology (Animals and Plants)**

The eastern one-third of the Valley was originally Big Woods, and this area also developed diverse, complex and native plant and animal ecosystems. Various species migrated and evolved to succeed in the wooded upland and lowland conditions. Rare species continue to live in this ecology.

### **Storyline 5: Shifting Uses and Perspectives**

Throughout time, people have viewed and used the land in different ways. Today, residents are beginning to better understand the consequence of past and present decisions. Efforts to restore and preserve native habitat have led to several success stories. New technologies and practices continue to improve river and valley health.

## **Primary Theme II: Struggles for a Home (The U.S.-Dakota War)**

The Minnesota River Valley has a significant role in the national story of the settlement of the West, particularly the dramatic and tragic era of treaties, reservations, policies, war, and banishment. Within the Valley, the stories of the U.S.-Dakota War represent broadly shared patterns of experience for many prairie tribes. The underlying causes of the war – cultural conflict, socio-political motivations, and human failings – are universal. The lasting consequences of the war are stamped permanently in the minds, hearts, and landscape of the valley.

Within this theme, specific storylines can better articulate this message. Potential sub-themes include:

**Storyline 1: The Treaty and Reservation Era (1837-1862)**

In 1837 and 1851, the Dakota responded to pressure from the United States to exchange almost 24 million acres of land for treaty annuities and promises. After the treaties were enacted, Dakota land in Minnesota was restricted to a 20-mile by 70-mile reservation along the Minnesota River. Another treaty in 1858 cut the reservation in half. The Dakota were forced to alter their land-use practices, strongly encouraged to adapt white customs and religion, and banished from their traditional hunting grounds. Within the Dakota community, different groups responded in different ways to these pressures. Beyond the reservation, new settlers arrived, creating additional tensions and increased competition for natural resources.

**Topics:** Treaty of Traverse des Sioux (1851), 1858 treaty, Agency sites, settlement villages, settler's farms, missions, Dakota villages, central people.

**Storyline 2: U.S.-Dakota War (1862)**

During the fall of 1862, a combination of annuity delays, natural disaster-related strain, and human-made decisions led to the eruption of a war between the Dakota and settlers. Within Dakota and settler communities, opinions about the war were not uniform. A series of battles occurred along the valley, resulting in the deaths of settlers and Dakota, and destruction of crops and homes. By December, the war had concluded, and many Dakota had fled to Dakota Territory. A series of hasty trials led to the execution of 38 Dakota and the imprisonment of others.

**Topics:** annuities, Acton, agencies, battle sites, forts, camps, Camp Release, trials, banishment routes, prison sites, Mankato hangings, central people.

**Storyline 3: Banishment and Recovery (1863-1900)**

At the conclusion of the war, thousands of Dakota fled to Dakota Territory. Over the winter of 1862-1863, a large group of non-combatant Dakota were initially transferred to a concentration camp outside Fort Snelling, then transferred out of Minnesota. Many Dakota soldiers were imprisoned in Mankato, then later Iowa. General Sibley led a series of battles in Dakota Territory in 1863 and 1864. The U.S. government confiscated the remaining Dakota land. In western Minnesota, occasional raids by Dakota occurred, and bounties were offered to settlers for Dakota scalps. Within the Valley, settlers and approximately 200 Dakota returned to re-establish their lives as best they could. By the late 1880s, additional Dakota had

returned, establishing the basis for the Upper and Lower Sioux Communities.

**Topics:** banishment routes, confiscation of Dakota land, memorials, raids and bounties, return of settlers and Dakota, re-establishment of communities, central people.

In order to better manage the creation of new signs, the Byway has established the recommendations are in the following areas:

- Process for Sign Development
- Content Guidelines
- Graphic Design Guidelines
- Production Guidelines
- Installation Guidelines
- Time and Budget Considerations

### Process for Sign Development

The following steps can be followed when considering and developing interpretive signage. This will ensure critical items will be considered in an appropriate order.

1. Recognize locations in need of interpretive signage. Identify gaps in valley's interpretation, by geography, era or theme.
2. Review site to confirm it is appropriate.  
Is there an appropriate location for sign? Will a sign enhance or detract from the visual landscape? Are there other better methods for interpretation at this site such as brochures, audio, or personnel? Will this be the only interpretation at the site? Will the site be ADA accessible? Will the site remain stable over the next five years? Who owns the site and will they allow a sign? Is there adequate lighting, security, and parking or pull-off space? How viable is it to create the infrastructure to support a new sign?
3. Establish agreements and partnerships, identify potential funders.  
  
Clarify who will own and maintain the sign. Identify and contact likely stakeholder groups and develop a committee. Research and identify potential funders, sponsors, and grant opportunities.
4. Develop sign idea, launch project.  
Develop goals with committee. What is the important story to tell at this site? Determine number, location, and general topic of signs. Establish a work plan, timeline, and budget. Identify contractors and solicit bids, as



needed.

5. Conduct research.  
Identify persons or firms with expertise in the field. Conduct research to uncover interpretive story resources and opportunities. Review initial ideas with committee.
6. Draft, Edit, and Review Text.  
Allow adequate time for stakeholder and external review.
7. Graphic Design  
Prepare and transfer all digital resources to graphic designer. Review and approve work. Coordinate transfer of digital files to printer.
8. Sign Production  
Conduct press check, if appropriate.
9. Sign installation  
Install signs. Host “opening,” if appropriate. Promote new signs. Assume lifespan is 10 years, and periodically review sign’s status and effectiveness.

### Sign Prioritization Guidelines

The byway corridor has many opportunities for interpretation. The following criteria can be used to identify high-priority sites that need interpretive signs:

1. Site must have little or no existing interpretation, or out-dated or inaccurate information.
2. Site must be directly adjacent to the byway route.
3. Sites must fill a gap in our themes and be easily integrated into our main byway themes.
4. Sites owners must be willing to have signs posted.

### Research Guidelines

For most new projects, the Byway commission will have to rely on outside expertise. For projects related to natural history-related initiatives, identifying those experts with knowledge of the content will be fairly straightforward and non-controversial. For cultural history projects, especially Dakota-related ones, this will be a more complex task.

The definition for the Secretary of the Interior and the National Park Service for qualifications for a historian are below:

*The minimum professional qualifications in history are a graduate degree in history or closely related field; or a bachelor's degree in history or closely related field plus one of the following:*

1. *At least two years of full-time experience in research, writing, teaching, interpretation, or other demonstrable professional activity with an academic institution, historic organization or agency, museum, or other professional institution; or*
2. *Substantial contribution through research and publication to the body of scholarly knowledge in the field of history.*

This standard is often cited and required in projects funded by the Minnesota Cultural Heritage Grants office. However, this standard alone is not enough to ensure someone has adequate familiarity with the history of the region. More significantly, this definition of qualifications would eliminate many Dakota elders – the people most qualified to comment on Dakota history. Because of these gaps, an additional qualification for a historian for the Byway may be:

3. *Demonstrated familiarity with the history of the Dakota and the Minnesota Valley.*

## **Content Guidelines**

### **Create content that is historically or scientifically accurate:**

- Conduct adequate research in archives, libraries, and with experts. Have content reviewed by outside experts.
- Where possible, rely on primary resources.
- When possible, use direct quotes from sources, particularly when articulating Dakota perspectives.
- Take care to represent multiple perspectives (in history) and recent discoveries (in science).
- Give topics their appropriate due. Do not improperly over-emphasize or under-emphasize certain issues. Seek fair representation at a macro and micro level.
- Acknowledge when ideas are controversial or when facts are not fully known.
- Be as specific as possible about details. (Clarify specific bands, not general “Dakota.”)

### **Create content that is respectful:**

- Assume your readers are smart – just not familiar with the topic.
- Assume readers are not from local area and content represents local perspectives respectfully.
- Periodically review and update, and always use the style guide that sets a standard for Dakota names and terms. Use equivalent titles for equivalent roles in different cultures. (For example, spell Dakota names accurately with Dakota characters, say “soldiers” rather than “warriors,” “Taoyateduta” rather than “Little Crow.” Confirm preference for Native Americans, First

- People, American Indians, Indigenous People, or other term.)
- Switch between using “she/her” and “he/his” for generic singular pronouns.
- Name both individuals in a married couple, and acknowledge contributions of both parties (“Edna and John Smith were farmers” instead of “John Smith was a farmer. His wife was Mrs. Smith.”)
- Do not use inflammatory language or terms.

### **Create content that is interesting and easy to read:**

- Keep the “3-30-3” rule in mind (3 seconds to catch attention, 30 seconds to convince them to read more, 3 minutes to read entire sign).
- Use catchy headlines and descriptive decks.
- Focus on one topic per sign.
- Keep the tone informative and invitational (i.e., “See if you can find these wildflowers”).
- Keep the signs short: approximately 300 words for “Large” sign, and 100 for “Small.”
- Write in English at an eighth-grade level. Use clear language and thoughtful transitions.

### **Create content that is meaningful:**

- Connect the site to the broader Byway themes.
- Make connections to the viewer’s intellectual and emotional world. (“Compare this landscape to a prairie.” “Imagine a streambed without fish.”)
- Seek to transform the reader with new ideas or new perspectives. Inspire them to ask questions, explore meanings, and develop their own personal connections with the site.

## **Graphic Guidelines**

In order to establish a consistent design across the Byway, the following graphic design guidelines are listed.

### **Signage Sizes**

Though individual locations may require unique sign sizes, the general standard for sizes are:

“Large”: 24 inches by 36 inches  
 “Small”: 18 inches by 20 inches

### **Maps, Images, and Photos**

Photographs and artwork are important elements of any sign.

- Signs should include at least one large image, and up to four total. Do not

- use only black and white images – use color whenever possible.
- Include a map of the site marking resources such as a trail, if appropriate. Locate map on sidebar.
  - Include Byway logo.
  - Use high-resolution images (over 600 dpi or more).
  - Contact Byway staff for examples of recent signs.

## **Color Palette**

Three colors were chosen to represent the initial three themes of the Byway. Each color has five variations shown in this guide. This was the result of needing some flexibility depending other images and graphics that may be used within a sign. See Attachment 3 for color swatch samples.

### **Green: Food for a Nation (Retired fall 2013)**

Pantone Process 293-1  
Pantone Process 297-3  
Pantone Process 296-5  
Pantone Process 295-6  
Pantone Process 290-8]

### **Blue: A River's Legacy**

Pantone Process 195-3  
Pantone Process 198-4  
Pantone Process 197-6  
Pantone Process 192-6  
Pantone Process 203-8

### **Orange: Struggles for a Home**

Pantone Process 39-2  
Pantone Process 47-4  
Pantone Process 34-5  
Pantone Process 29-4  
Pantone Process 32-7

Byway Color Palette for Interpretive Signs  
Pantone Process Colors



Font Type and Size  
Main captions

Blackadder

ITC

90pt<sup>3</sup>

Sub-headings and Theme Heading

Blackadder ITC 48pt

Main Text and Theme Text

Century Schoolbook 30pt

Secondary Text

Century Schoolbook 24pt

Captions

*Century Schoolbook italic 20pt*

Photo credits

*Century Schoolbook italic 18pt*

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<sup>3</sup> Note: these two Blackadder samples are not actually in Blackadder.

## Production Guidelines

Signs should be created from a durable material that is resistant to fading and weathering. At this point, digital high-pressure laminate (phenolic resin/plastuc) is a popular material, but digital ImageLoc on .125 aluminum with a uv-resistant coating is also becoming more frequently used. As technology changes, periodic review of new materials or techniques is appropriate.

- 24" by 36", 1/8" or 1/4" width.
- Digital high pressure laminate (or similar method)
- Pre-drilled

### Gopher Sign

Digital ImageLoc on .125 aluminum  
Brad Smith  
1310 Randolph Ave,  
St. Paul, MN 55105  
(651) 698-5095  
[www.gophersign.com](http://www.gophersign.com)

### Fossil Industries, Inc

Digital High Pressure Laminate  
Howard de Cesare  
44 Jefryn Boulevard  
Deer Park, NY 11729  
800-244-9809  
[www.fossilinc.com](http://www.fossilinc.com)

### Franz Reprographics

Digital High Pressure Laminate  
Brenda Johnsen  
2781 Freeway Blvd,  
Brooklyn Center, MN 55430  
(763) 503-3401  
[www.franzrepro.com/](http://www.franzrepro.com/)

### Pannier

fiberglass embedment  
Robin Heddaeus  
345 Oak Road  
Gibsonia, PA 15044-9805  
724-265-4900  
[www. panniergraphics.com](http://www. panniergraphics.com)

### Folia

Digital High Pressure Laminate  
Tom Gille  
3509 Lilac Lane  
Minnetonka, MN 55345  
952-449-0144 phone  
[www.folia.ca](http://www.folia.ca)

### iZone

Digital High Pressure Laminate  
Scott McCallum  
505 South General Bruce Drive  
Temple TX 76504  
888-464-9663  
[www.izoneimaging.com](http://www.izoneimaging.com)

## Installation Guidelines

Wherever possible, signs should be located in highly visible areas – particularly the introductory sign in a series or on a trail.

- Signs should *not* detract from a vista. They should *not* be installed on any historic structure, but preferably should be freestanding.



- Signs should be held by metal (preferred) or wooden frames, solidly secured to the ground. If held in place by concrete footings, confirm this will not disturb any archaeological evidence.
- “Reading Rail” – type signs should be installed between 2.5 feet and four feet high, with a 30 or 45 degree tilt.
- In Spring 2014, the signs were 40” high. Corner posts were 4” by 4” by 40” tall, with hardware to attach to signs. All metal was powder coated with NPS brown. Two 5/16"-18 X 5" bolts are used to attach posts to base in ground.
- Wherever possible, should be accessible to people in wheelchairs (not located on rough ground or steep slope).

### Time and Budget Considerations

The time and effort to research, write, review, edit, design, produce and install a panel are considerable. Bunching signs into groups of three to six can create efficiencies in researching, designing, and reviewing while preventing the risk of “overwhelming” staff, volunteers or partners. Though each situation will be unique, a general estimate of four to six months (including Dakota review) is appropriate for sign content development. Budget estimates are offered for each sign at spring 2014 prices:

Content Development	\$750-\$1000
Graphic Design, Digital Photo Procurement	\$300-\$600
Sign Fabrication	\$200-\$400
Sign Frame and Posts	\$600
Sign installation (labor, concrete)	\$300-\$500

## Appendix B: Selected Site Inventory

Appendix B includes an extended description of the following selected sites.

- Bellview Depot Museum
- Big Stone County Museum
- Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge
- Big Stone Lake State Park
- Birch Coulee Battlefield
- Blue Devil Valley SNA
- Blue Earth County Heritage Center
- Joseph R. Brown Minnesota River Center
- Brown County Historical Museum
- Camp Release Memorial Monument
- Chamberlain Woods SNA
- Continental Divide
- Flandreau State Park
- Fort Renville, Lac Qui Parle Mission
- Fort Ridgley State Park, Cemetery, Monuments, and Historic Site
- Gneiss Outcrops SNA
- Harkin Store
- Historic Chippewa City
- Kasota Prairie SNA and Conservation Area
- Lac Qui Parle County History Center
- Lower Sioux Agency
- Marsh Lake
- Minnemishinona Falls
- Minneopa State Park & Learning Center and Seppman Mill
- Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area
- Morton Outcrop
- Ney Environmental Learning Center
- Ottawa Bluffs Preserve
- Rasmussen Woods and Elk Nature Center
- Regional River History & Info Center
- Renville County Historical Museum
- Sibley County Historical Museum
- Swan Lake WMA
- Treaty Site History Center, Nicollet County Museum, Traverse des Sioux  
Historic Site
- Upper Sioux Agency State Park
- Wadsworth Trail
- Yellow Medicine County Historical Society

## **Appendix C: Sites Re-Categorized**

A list of all sites reviewed for this plan. See separate document attached.

## 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 Aamoth,  
507-938-4335

#### **Site Objectives – Physical Development**

- Update collections & display policy.
- Expand hours.

#### **Interpretive Program/ Services Objectives**

- Develop & implement an interpretive plan.

- 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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

### 2. Big Stone County Museum



(photo credit: [www.mntreasures.com](http://www.mntreasures.com),  
John Atchley)

- 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 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> 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](http://www.minnesotaseasons.com))

- Location/GPS:**  
Odessa, MN  
(45° 15.016', -96° 21.326')
- 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.
- 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](http://www.bechistory.com/museum))



- a. **Location/GPS:**  
524-526 South 5<sup>th</sup> 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:**  
380<sup>th</sup> 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](http://www.panoramio.com), Tom Cooper)

- Location/GPS:**  
1300 Summit Ave, New Ulm  
(44° 17.639', -94° 27.568')
- Description:** State park with a sand-bottom pool also features hiking trails, camping and picnic spots.
- 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/Persevera  
nce, 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**

- Location/GPS:**  
near Granite Falls,  
Chippewa County  
(N44 46.461, W95 30.357)
- Description:** 241 acre SNA. No maintained trails or facilities.
- Interpretive Significance:** Natural History

**Current Theme and Media:**  
Natural History

**Comments/Recommendations:**  
Create signs and trails.

**17. Harkin Store**



(photo credit: Wikipedia Commons)

- Location/GPS:**  
66250 County Road 21, New Ulm  
(44° 23.247', -94° 36.210')
- Description:** 1870s General Store featuring original inventory
- 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 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, Madison  
(45° 0.641', -96° 11.753')

- b. Description:** The county history museum in downtown 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.

**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/Persevera  
nce, 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)

- Location/GPS:**  
32469 County Highway 2, Morton  
(44° 31.479', -94° 57.789')
- 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.
- 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/Persevera  
nce, 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])

- Location/GPS:**  
54497 Gadwall Road, Mankato  
(44° 8.775', -94° 5.761')
- Description:** State park featuring original 1864 windmill, railroad depot, WPA buildings and a waterfall
- 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.

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.

**31. Renville County  
Historical Museum**



(photo credit:  
[www.lakesnwoods.com/morton](http://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,



### **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.campsitereports.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, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Dakota Life, 21<sup>st</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup>, 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.

Discovery Site	County	Present Status	Dakota War			Natural History					Service Quality					Proposed Status	Column1	Notes
			Treaties and Reservation	1862 War	Banishment and Return	Glaciers, Soils, Geology	Water	River	Prairie	Big Woods	Preservation (Agriculture)	Full Service	Limited Service	Sign	Nothing			
Big Stone County Museum	Big Stone	existing				•						•				anchor	1	
Big Stone Lake State Park	Big Stone	existing				•	•	•					•			anchor	1	
Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge	Big Stone	existing				•						•				anchor	1	
Blue Earth County Heritage Center	Blue Earth	existing		•								•				anchor	1	
Minneopa State Park and Learning Center / Seppman Mill	Blue Earth	existing					•	•			•	•				anchor	1	
Brown County Historical Museum	Brown	existing	•	•								•				anchor	1	
Flandrau State Park	Brown	existing					•					•				anchor	1	
Fort Renville, Lac Qui Parle Mission, and Lac Qui Parle Lake and State Park	Lac Qui Parle	existing	•				•	•				•				anchor	1	
Ney Nature Center	Le Sueur	existing				•	•				•	•				anchor	1	
Fort Ridgely State Park, Cemetery, Monuments and Historic Site	Nicollet	existing		•								•				anchor	1	Do not list individually
Harkin Store	Nicollet	existing										•				anchor	1	
Treaty Site History Center and Nicollet County Museum, Traverse des Sioux Historic Site	Nicollet	existing	•									•				anchor	1	
Lower Sioux Agency (Redwood Ferry Crossing)	Redwood	existing	•	•								•				anchor	1	
Birch Coulee Battlefield State Historic Site	Renville	existing		•									•			anchor	1	
Renville County Historical Museum	Renville	existing		•								•				anchor	1	
Minnesota Valley State Recreation Area	Scott							•				•				anchor	1	
Joseph R. Brown Heritage Society and Minnesota River Center	Sibley	existing	•				•	•				•				anchor	1	
Upper Sioux Agency State Park (Chief Mazomani Marker)	Yellow Medicine	existing	•	•								•				anchor	1	
Ortonville Historic District	Big Stone	existing														anchor - historic district	1	(Library, Big Stone Courthouse)
																		(Blue Earth County Courthouse, Memorial Marker, Lincoln Park, Union Depot, Reconciliation Park, Winter Warrior
Mankato Historic Districts	Blue Earth	existing		•												anchor - historic district	1	
New Ulm Historic District																		(Roebbecke Mill Plaque, Brick Wall Sculpture, Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, Defenders Monument, Erd Building, Kiesling Haus, Glockenspiel, Heritage Tree, Hermann Monument, Melges Bakery, Pioneer Memorial, Turner Hall, Waraju Distillery, and cemetery)
	Brown	existing		•												anchor - historic district	1	
																		(Depot Museum, Monument, Sleepy Eye Grave, St. Mary's Catholic Church)
Sleepy Eye Historic Buildings	Brown	existing														anchor - historic district	1	
Montevideo Historic Buildings	Chippewa	existing												•		anchor - historic district	1	(Milwaukee Depot. Library)
City of Kasota Historic Buildings	Le Sueur	existing														anchor - historic district	1	
Ottawa Village Historic District	Le Sueur	existing											•			anchor - historic district	1	the buildings made with the Ottawa stone.
St. Peter Historic District	Nicollet	existing														anchor - historic district	1	
																		Birch Coulee School, St. Cornelia's Church, Bishop Whipple School, Trading Post
Lower Sioux Historic District, Morton	Redwood	existing	•	•	•											anchor - historic district	1	
Redwood Falls Historic Main Street (Carnegie Library)	Redwood															anchor - historic district	1	
Henderson Historic District	Sibley	existing												•		anchor - historic district	1	

Discovery Site	County	Present Status	Dakota War			Natural History					Service Quality		Sign	Nothing	Proposed Status	Column1	Notes
			Treaties and Reservation	1862 War	Banishment and Return	Glaciers, Soils, Geology	Water	River Prairie	Big Woods	Preservation (Agriculture)	Full Service	Limited Service					
Regional River History & Info Center, New Ulm	Brown						•					•			Secondary	2	
Historic Chippewa City (Chippewa Co. Historical Society)	Chippewa	existing		•								•			Secondary	2	Has good hours, food nearby
Lac Qui Parle County History Center	Lac Qui Parle	existing						•				•			Secondary	2	Has good hours
Lac Qui Parle County Park	Lac Qui Parle						•								Secondary	2	
Kasota Prairie Scientific & Natural Area and Kasota Prairie Conserve	Le Sueur	existing						•					•		Secondary	2	
Yellow Medicine County Museum	Yellow Medicine	existing		•								•			Secondary	2	Has a byway panel. Has good hours.
Betsy Tacy House Museums	Blue Earth											•			Notable	3	
August Schell Brewery Museum, New Ulm	Brown	existing									•				Notable	3	
Wanda Gag House Museum, New Ulm	Brown	existing										•			Notable	3	
Olaf Swensson Farm Museum	Chippewa	existing								•	•				Notable	3	Has a byway panel
Le Sueur Museum and Green Giant Room	Le Sueur	existing								•	•				Notable	3	
W.W. Mayo House	Le Sueur	existing		•							•				Secondary	2	
Carnegie Art Center, Mankato	Nicollet	existing											•		Notable	3	
Norseland	Nicollet	existing		•								•			Notable	3	
Arts Center of St. Peter	Nicollet														Notable	3	
Jackpot Junction Casino (Lower Sioux) Morton	Redwood														Notable	3	
Alexander Ramsey Park and Zoo (Swayback Bridge)	Redwood	existing										•			Notable	3	
Gilfillan Estate (FarmFest)	Redwood	existing								•		•			Notable	3	
Redwood County Historical Society (Poor Farm Museum)	Redwood	existing								•	•				Notable	3	
Andrew J. Volstead House Museum	Yellow Medicine	existing									•				Notable	3	
Minnesota Machinery Museum	Yellow Medicine	existing								•	•				Notable	3	
Fagen Fighters World War II Museum	Yellow Medicine										•				Notable	3	
Prairie's Edge Casino (Upper Sioux) Granite Falls	Yellow Medicine														Notable	3	
Minnesota River State Water Trail	All						•						•		other	4	
Continental Divide	Big Stone	existing				•							•		Other	4	
Mankato Biking and Hiking Trails: Red Jacket Trail, Sakatah	Blue Earth	existing							•				•		other	4	
Singing Hills, Mount Kato, Seven Mile Creek	Blue Earth	existing										•			Other	4	
R.D. Hubbard House Museum	Blue Earth	existing										•			Other	4	
Riverview Park, Mankato	Blue Earth	existing					•						•		Other	4	
CityArt Walking Sculpture Tour, Mankato	Blue Earth											•			other	4	
Rasmussen Woods and Elk's Nature Center	Blue Earth								•			•			Other	4	
Lind House Museum, New Ulm	Brown	existing										•			Other	4	
Army Recruitment Band Wagon Marker	Brown	existing		•									•		Other	4	
Leavenworth Rescue Expedition Marker	Brown	existing		•									•		Other	4	
Milford Monument	Brown	existing		•									•		Other	4	
Evacuation of New Ulm to Mankato Route Marker	Brown												•		Other	4	
Minnesota Music Hall of Fame, New Ulm	Brown											•			Other	4	
Arv Hus Museum	Chippewa	existing										•			other	4	
Chippewa Prairie Preserve	Chippewa	existing						•					•		Other	4	
Norwegian Stabbur	Chippewa	existing											•		Other	4	
Minnesota River Valley Trail - Montevideo to Wegdahl	Chippewa								•				•		other	4	
Camp Release Memorial Monument	Lac Qui Parle	existing		•									•		Other	4	Has a byway panel
Lac qui Parle Wildlife Management Area	Lac Qui Parle	existing						•					•		Other	4	DNR headquarters shares space with LQP state park, open to public
Marsh Lake	Lac Qui Parle	existing						•					•		Other	4	
Burr Oak Park	Le Sueur	existing											•		Other	4	
Chamberlain Woods SNA	Le Sueur	existing							•				•		Other	4	
Green Giant Marker	Le Sueur	existing								•			•		Other	4	
Mayo Park and Arboretum	Le Sueur	existing							•				•		Other	4	
Ottawa Bluffs Preserve	Le Sueur	existing				•	•						•		Other	4	
River Park	Le Sueur	existing					•						•		Other	4	
Cox House	Nicollet	existing										•			Other	4	
Fort LeHillier Marker	Nicollet	existing		•									•		Other	4	
Gustavus Adolphus Arboretum and Sculpture Garden	Nicollet	existing							•				•		Other	4	
St. Peter Regional Treatment Center Museum	Nicollet	existing										•			Other	4	
Minnemishinona Falls	Nicollet						•	•					•		other	4	
Belview Depot and Museum	Redwood	existing											•		Other	4	



Discovery Site	County	Present Status	Dakota War			Natural History						Service Quality		Sign	Nothing	Proposed Status	Column1	Notes
			Treaties and Reservation	1862 War	Banishment and Return	Glaciers, Soils, Geology	Water	River Prairie	Big Woods	Preservation		Full Service	Limited Service					
Birthplace of Sears	Redwood	existing												•		Other	4	
MN Inventor Hall of Fame (Housed in Community Center)	Redwood														•	other	4	
Joseph Brown Ruins - State Wayside Rest	Renville	existing		•									•			Other	4	
Little Rock Trading Post Site Marker	Renville	existing												•		Other	4	
Morton Monuments	Renville	existing		•									•	•		Other	4	Has a byway panel
Rudi Memorial	Renville	existing		•										•		Other	4	Has a byway panel
Sacred Heart Area Museum	Renville	existing											•			Other	4	
Schwandt Memorial	Renville	existing		•										•		Other	4	Has a byway panel
Belle Plaine Historic Main Street	Scott													•		other	4	
Hooper-Bowler-Hillstrom House	Scott												•			other	4	
East Henderson	Sibley	existing														Other	4	
Jessenland Town Hall	Sibley	existing												•		Other	4	
Joseph R Brown Monument	Sibley	existing		•										•	•	Other	4	
Sibley County Historical Museum	Sibley	existing											•			Other	4	
Mini Birding Science Museum	Sibley								•	•				•		other	4	
Browns Valley Man	Traverse	existing												•		Other	4	
Samuel J. Brown Memorial Park	Traverse	existing											•			Other	4	
Wadsworth Trail	Traverse	existing			•									•		Other	4	
Blue Devil Valley Scientific and Natural Area	Yellow Medicine	existing							•					•		Other	4	
Gneiss Outcrop SNA	Yellow Medicine	existing				•									•	other	4	
Wood Lake Monument and Battlefield State Park	Yellow Medicine	existing		•										•		Other	4	
Hazelwood Mission Marker (Riggs Mission)	Yellow Medicine		•	•										•		other	4	
Pajutazee Mission Marker (Williamson Mission site)	Yellow Medicine		•	•										•		other	4	
Big Stone County Courthouse	Big Stone	existing												•		delete- include in historic district	5	
Ortonville Free Library	Big Stone	existing														<b>delete- include in historic district</b>	5	
St. Thomas Catholic Church	Sibley	existing												•		delete- include in historic district	5	
Milwaukee Heritage Depot	Chippewa	existing													•	delete- include in historic district (an	5	
Big Stone County War Memorial	Big Stone	existing													•	do not include	5	
Big Stone Apple Ranch	Big Stone										•					do not include	5	
Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge	Big Stone									•					•	do not include	5	
Judge Lorin P. Cray Mansion, Mankato	Blue Earth	existing												•		<b>do not include</b>	5	
Normal School/Old Main	Blue Earth	existing												•		<b>do not include</b>	5	
Cambria WMA	Blue Earth					•	•	•								do not include	5	
Hubbard Mill	Blue Earth										•			•		do not include	5	
Mankato Parks: Kiwanis, Sibley Park, Dakota Wokiksuye Makoce	Blue Earth									•				•		do not include	5	
Prison Site – Mankato	Blue Earth			•										•		do not include	5	
Riverfront Drive	Blue Earth													•		do not include	5	
Schmitt Home (Sinclair Lewis Summer Home)	Blue Earth														•	do not include	5	
River Valley WMA	Brown							•	•						•	do not include	5	
Brown County Veterans Memorial	Brown													•		do not include	5	
Sleepy Eye Bike Paths	Brown													•		do not include	5	
Sleepy Eye Lake	Brown							•							•	do not include	5	
Sleepy Eye Stained Glass	Brown													•		do not include	5	
W.W. Smith Inn (B&B)	Brown													•		do not include	5	
Way of the Cross	Brown													•		do not include	5	
Spartan WMA	Chippewa								•						•	do not include	5	
Plover Prairie Nature Conservancy Preserve	Lac Qui Parle	existing							•						•	do not include	5	Has a byway panel
Camp McPhail	Lac Qui Parle			•										•		do not include	5	
Government Road remnant near Camp Release	Lac Qui Parle			•											•	do not include	5	
Huggins Site	Lac Qui Parle		•	•	•									•		do not include	5	
Red Iron Summer Village Site	Lac Qui Parle		•	•											•	do not include	5	
Spirit Walker's Village	Lac Qui Parle		•	•											•	do not include	5	
Kasota Stone	Le Sueur	existing				•									•	do not include	5	
Rest Area	Le Sueur	existing													•	<b>do not include</b>	5	
Trout Ponds	Le Sueur	existing					•								•	<b>do not include</b>	5	

Discovery Site	County	Present Status	Dakota War			Natural History						Service Quality		Sign	Nothing	Proposed Status	Column1	Notes
			Treaties and Reservation	1862 War	Banishment and Return	Glaciers, Soils, Geology	Water	River/Prairie	Big Woods	Preservation (Agriculture)		Full Service	Limited Service					
UNIMIN Silica Mines	Le Sueur	existing														• do not include	5	
Chankaska Creek Ranch and Winery	Le Sueur															• do not include	5	
Drive a Tank	Le Sueur											•		•		do not include	5	
Ottawa WMA	Le Sueur						•		•							• do not include	5	
Greenlawn Cemetery	Nicollet	existing		•												• do not include	5	
Swan Lake Wildlife Management Area	Nicollet	existing						•								• do not include	5	
Bluff Park, North Mankato	Nicollet					•			•				•			do not include	5	
Church of the Holy Communion	Nicollet															do not include	5	
Flood Wall Trail	Nicollet						•							•		do not include	5	
Fritsche WMA	Nicollet								•							• do not include	5	
Minnriver WMA	Nicollet						•	•								• do not include	5	
Old Traverse des Sioux Cemetery	Nicollet		•											•		do not include	5	
Save Mor Jewelry, Mankato	Nicollet													•		do not include	5	
Spring Lake Park, North Mankato	Nicollet													•		do not include	5	
St. Peter & Paul's Catholic Church	Nicollet															• do not include	5	
St. Peter Parks (Riverside Trail, Minnesota Square)	Nicollet								•					•		do not include	5	
Twin Rivers Center for the Arts	Nicollet											•				do not include	5	
Fort Ridgely to Henderson Trail/The Old Fort Road	Nicollet-Sibley		•	•										•		do not include	5	
Cedar Mountain SNA and Cedar Mountain WMA	Redwood					•		•								• do not include	5	
Cedar Rock SNA and Cedar Rock WMA	Redwood					•		•								• do not include	5	
Klabunde WMA	Redwood								•							• do not include	5	
Tiger Lake WMA	Redwood								•							• do not include	5	
Beaver Creek Settlement	Redwood			•												• do not include	5	
Big Eagle Village	Redwood		•	•												• do not include	5	
Holmberg Orchard	Redwood															• do not include	5	
Little Crow's Village	Redwood		•	•	•									•		do not include	5	
Red Middle Voice Village	Redwood		•	•												• do not include	5	
Rice Creek Village	Redwood		•	•												• do not include	5	
Shakopee's Village	Redwood		•	•												• do not include	5	
St. Cornelias Church	Redwood				•									•		do not include	5	
Cedar Rock WMA	Renville							•								• do not include	5	
Kietzmann Party	Renville			•										•		do not include	5	
Natural Preservation Route	Renville ?	existing							•							• do not include	5	
Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge	Scott					•		•								• do not include	5	
Avenue of Trees to Blakley Bridge	Sibley	existing							•							• do not include	5	
High Island Creek County Park	Sibley	existing						•								• do not include	5	
Rush River State Wayside	Sibley	existing					•									• do not include	5	
Sand and Gravel Pit	Sibley	existing				•										• do not include	5	
Brown Cemetery, Henderson	Sibley			•										•		do not include	5	
Appleton Area Recreational OHV Park	Swift													•		do not include	5	
Doncaster's Cemetery	Yellow Medicine			•										•		do not include	5	Burial place of Big Eagle
Granite Falls Footbridge	Yellow Medicine													•		do not include	5	
Roy Lenzin WMA	Yellow Medicine							•								• do not include	5	
Swede's Forest SNA	Yellow Medicine							•								• do not include	5	
Yellow Medicine County Courthouse	Yellow Medicine													•		do not include	5	
Yellow Medicine County Veterans Memorial	Yellow Medicine													•		do not include	5	
Children's Museum of Southern Minnesota	Blue Earth															do not include - does not exist yet	5	
Mahkato Wacipi (Pow Wow)	Blue Earth	existing		•	•											• do not include - event	5	
Le Sueur County Historical Society and Museum	Le Sueur															do not include - not in byway	5	
Scott County Historical Society	Scott															do not include - not in byway	5	
River Lakes	Sibley	existing					•									• do not include - primarily private lan	5	
Meyer Home	Renville			•										•		do not include - private land	5	
Lac qui Parle Village	Lac Qui Parle	existing														• do not include - unclear what is ther	5	
Red River Trails	Lac Qui Parle	existing	•													• do not include until signage created	5	
Morton Outcrops SNA	Renville					•		•				•				• do not include until signage created	5	
Renville County Parks: Skalbekken, Vicksburg, Beaver Falls , Birch Coulee, Anderson Lake, Mack Lake	Renville	existing		•				•								Secondary - do not list individually		