

UMVRDC

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MINNESOTA
VALLEY
REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION



Annual Report

BIG STONE COUNTY

Brent Olson, Clinton
County Board

Shirley Finberg, Clinton
Municipalities

Harold Dimberg, Ortonville
Townships

CHIPPEWA COUNTY

Jim Dahlvang, Montevideo
County Board

Ron Anderson, Milan
Municipalities

Rudolph Larson, Montevideo
Townships

LAC QUI PARLE COUNTY

Merril Johnson, Dawson
County Board

Greg Thole, Madison
Municipalities

Tim Patzer, Marietta
Townships

SWIFT COUNTY

Richard Hanson, Clontarf
County Board

Ron Ronning, Appleton
Municipalities

Warren Rau, Appleton
Townships

YELLOW MEDICINE COUNTY

Gary L. Johnson, Montevideo
County Board

Dan Jahn, Clarkfield
Municipalities

Erling Albin, Hanley Falls
Townships

SCHOOL BOARDS

Paul Pillatzki, Dawson
Dawson/Boyd

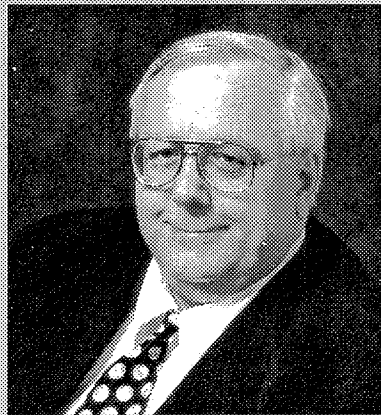
TRIBAL COUNCIL

Teresa Peterson
Upper Sioux Community

PUBLIC INTEREST

Jaunita Lauritsen, Milan
WorkForce Council

Bruce Swigerd, Ortonville
Prairie Five CAC



Ron Anderson, 2005 Chairperson

As chairperson of Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission, Region 6W, I found this past year rewarding, demanding and concerning. Due to federal and state funding cuts, programs and staffing provided by Region 6W were adversely affected. The staff has had to "reinvent the wheel" continuously and efficiently to service our clients and fulfill our mission. The possibilities of acquiring additional funding sources and maintaining current funding levels are doubtful. Consequently, Region 6W's fine staff will have to cooperate, coordinate, and communicate even more efficiently than before; it can and will be done.

Our staff is multi-talented and multi-faceted. The multitude of programs and services offered to our region's citizens and local units of government (LUGs) have been and will continue to be professionally and expeditiously delivered. Services available to Region 6W's citizens include: aging, housing, economic development, transportation, grant application, grant administration, GIS technology, advocacy and assorted others. Citizens in Region 6W derive direct benefit from Region 6W's mission and service delivery.

Region 6W's commission members are comprised of an elected township official, municipal representative, and a county commissioner from each member county which includes Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift and Yellow Medicine. The remaining commissioners are appointed by and from local non-profits, school boards, and the Upper Sioux Nation (Native American). This board strives to work together for the maximum benefit of the region and its citizens. Survival and, hopefully, success is premised on mutual cooperation, collaboration and communication. WE NEED EACH OTHER!

My vision as chair will be based on further cooperation, collaboration and communication. As representatives of LUGS, WE have to set the example. Costs of government services will diminish and provide a better return on the investment if WE effectively share services, staff, equipment, and mutual respect and affection of OUR LUGS.

In summary, WE had a "great year"! Adversity was encountered and conquered! There is more to life than just survival; "It should be enjoyed, not endured"!

Ron Anderson



FINANCIAL REPORT

UPPER MN VALLEY REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE COMPARISON CURRENT FY 2005 AND PROPOSED FY 2006

	FY 2005 CURRENT BUDGET	FY 2006 PROPOSED BUDGET		FY 2005 CURRENT BUDGET	FY 2006 PROPOSED BUDGET
REVENUES:			EXPENDITURES:		
Agency Revenues			Salaries/Fringe	\$595,375	\$623,313
Interest/Levy/Misc.	210,000	273,500	Commissioners Expense	25,600	26,100
Aging	140,677	139,792	Audit	10,620	10,000
Grants Administration	48,689	70,500	Copy Charge/Xerox Lease	7,000	7,000
EDA/Community Development	186,438	122,628	Computer Technical Assistance	6,000	6,000
GIS Contracts	56,890	41,760	Contract for Services	2,000	2,000
Regional Tourism	71,000	71,000	Depreciation	13,000	14,400
Transportation/Natural Resources	64,300	88,200	Dues	6,500	6,500
TOTAL REVENUE	\$ 778,454	\$807,370	Equipment	0	1,000
			Insurance	3,500	3,500
			Lease/Service Agreement	4,000	4,000
			Legal Fees	1,500	1,500
			Miscellaneous/Employee Morale	4,000	4,000
			Office Rent	9,200	9,200
			Postage	11,000	11,000
			Printing/Advertising	5,000	5,000
			Registration	3,500	3,500
			Repairs/Maintenance	1,000	1,000
			Software/Software GIS	6,000	6,000
			Subscrip./Publications	1,000	1,000
			Supplies	8,000	8,000
			Telephone	8,000	8,000
			Tourism Trade Shows/Ads	15,000	15,000
			Training/Training GIS	2,200	3,000
			Travel (Staff)	25,000	25,000
			TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$773,995	\$805,513
			EXCESS REV.		
			OVER (UNDER) EXP.	\$ 4,459	\$ 1,857

The latest audit of finances performed October 2004 by the firm of Lee & Berner, LTD covered the Fiscal Year 2004 finances. No negative findings were reported in that audit.

COMMUNITY/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Current JOBZ Activity in Region 6W

There were four businesses that used the Job Opportunity Building Zone (JOBZ) program in Region 6W the past year. These businesses are located in Madison, Milan, Montevideo and Granite Falls. The largest JOBZ project was the Granite Falls Energy, LLC ethanol plant project in Granite Falls. When completed, this \$55 million plant will employ 30 - 35 people.

The JOBZ program provides tax incentives to new or expanding business that locates on JOBZ approved land. The tax incentives include exemption from sales tax, property tax (for buildings only) and income

tax for owners. Job creation and retention is a requirement of a business that uses the JOBZ program. The JOBZ program is for manufacturing, technology and other businesses that pay higher wages. JOBZ cannot be used for

UMVRDC assists the JOBZ subzone communities with their administrative responsibilities, working with the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) on

JOBZ administration and assisting with regional JOBZ marketing efforts.

If you are interested in learning more about the JOBZ program, visit DEED's website at

Region 6W Communities with JOBZ Approved Land

Big Stone County

- City of Ortonville (including Ortonville Township)

Chippewa County

- City of Milan
- City of Clara City
- City of Montevideo
- City of Maynard
- City of Granite Falls

Lac qui Parle County

- City of Madison
- City of Dawson

Yellow Medicine County

- City of Granite Falls
- City of Clarkfield
- City of Porter
- City of Canby (including Hammer and Norman Townships)

Swift County

- City of Appleton
- City of Danvers
- City of Murdock
- City of Kerkhoven
- Torning Township
- Clontarf Township

retail development. The JOBZ program started January 1, 2004 and runs for 12 years until December 31, 2015.

The UMVRDC continued serving as the Job Opportunity Building Zone (JOBZ) administrator for Region 6W.

As JOBZ administrator, the

<http://www.deed.state.mn.us/bizdev/jobz.htm>. If you have questions about the program, please contact Ryan Krosch at 320.289.1981.



Benson and Watson Receive Small Cities Grants

The Department of Employment and Economic Development announced in early April that the cities of Watson and Benson were awarded Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) grants. Both cities received the SCDP grant in their first attempt of submitting an application. SCDP grant applications are very competitive as only one-third of the applications in the state are typically funded each year. The UMVRDC prepared both applications.

Benson received \$868,200 in SCDP funds. The SCDP grant combined with

Benson EDA and other matching funds will be used to rehabilitate owner housing, rental housing and commercial buildings in targeted areas of the community.

Watson received \$968,800 in SCDP funds to do owner occupied housing rehabilitation and construct a new wastewater treatment facility and distribution system. USDA Rural Development grant and loan funds will also be used to help pay for the wastewater part of the project.

In addition to preparing both grant applications, the UMVRDC will also do the gen-

eral administration for the grant. Prairie Five Community Action Council, Inc. will be doing the project administration for the housing project in Watson and the commercial rehabilitation in Benson. The Swift County HRA will be handling the housing project administration for the Benson project.

COMMUNITY/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Community & Economic Development Services and Assistance

The Community and Economic Development Division of the UMRDC is able to provide local units of government with a wide variety of services in a cost-effective manner. The following is a list of community development services the UMRDC staff can provide:

- Community profile and website design to use for an informational resource, communi-

ty marketing, economic development and other activities;

- Economic development authority creation;
- Meeting facilitation services;
- Revolving loan fund administration;
- Comprehensive plan creation or updates;
- Land use planning activities including establishing future land use plans, urban growth boundary identification and annexation procedures;
- Goal, objective and policy development for guiding local government decision-making processes;
- Ordinance creation or updates;
- Grant and loan applications and fiscal administration for projects including water, sewer, single-family and rental housing rehabilitation, new housing development, commercial building rehabilitation, community facilities and others;
- Special studies/plans including housing,

economic development, business retention/expansion, natural resources, downtown planning, community needs assessment, agriculture, technology, population, demographic analysis and other topics;

- Survey creation, distribution and analysis;
- Business loan funds available for new or expanding businesses;
- Business consulting services (provided by Southwest Minnesota Small Business Development Center) including information for new business start-ups and expansions, business assessments, business plans, financial analysis, loan packaging and marketing; and
- Mapping projects including maps identifying parcel information, land use, zoning, sewer/infrastructure and addresses.

Please feel free to contact the UMRDC to find out more about the community development services that can be provided.

Available at the UMRDC!

MINNESOTA SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER (SBDC)
One-on-One Business Consulting

Consultants are available to meet with you at the UMRDC office in Appleton. Call the SBDC at 1-800-642-0684 Ext. 7386 to schedule an appointment!

Free Business Consulting Services!

SBDC CONSULTING SERVICES INCLUDE:

Business Information, Business Assessment, Business Plan, Financial Analysis, Loan Packaging, and Marketing

The Western Minnesota Revolving Loan Fund

Revolving Loan Fund dollars are available through the Western Minnesota Revolving Loan Fund (WesMN RLF) for new or expanding businesses in Region 6W. The WesMN RLF is a gap financing lender that requires local bank financial participation with each loan made. Secured loans ranging in size from \$5,000 to \$100,000 may be made for fixed assets and working capital. The maximum WesMN RLF participation rate is 33 percent on manufacturing projects and 20 percent on all other types of loans.

The emphasis of the WesMN RLF is to help finance business start-ups and expansions with a priority given to industrial/manufacturing businesses. Commercial/retail business projects, while eligible for WesMN RLF financing, must fulfill a local need for essential goods and services. Job creation is the

first priority of the WesMN RLF dollars while job retention is the second priority. The WesMN RLF has portfolio standards of one job created or saved for every \$10,000 of WesMN RLF funds loaned and a minimum of two private dollars borrowed to every one WesMN RLF dollar loaned.

In Fiscal Year 2005, the WesMN RLF made \$150,000 in loans to new and expanding businesses in Region 6W. These WesMN RLF loan dollars helped leverage an additional \$815,000 in private lending and owner investments for projects that created new business and job growth. These loans will result in over 30 jobs being created and eight retained.

Loans are made by the WesMN RLF Loan Board with staff support coming from the UMRDC.

Region 6W CEDS Updated

During the summer and fall of 2004 the UMRDC completed a comprehensive economic development strategy (CEDS) annual update for Region 6W.

A CEDS is required to qualify the region for United States Department of Commerce - Economic Development Administration (EDA) grants under its public works, economic adjustment and most planning programs. EDA funding supports the formulation and implementation of economic development programs designed to create or retain full-time permanent jobs, reduce unemployment and under-employment, and increase incomes in areas of economic distress.

CEDS is the result of a local planning process designed to guide the economic growth of an area. A CEDS process will help create jobs, foster more stable and diversified economies, and improve living conditions. It provides a mechanism for coordinating the efforts of individuals, organizations, local governments, and private industry concerned with economic development.

All-Hazard Mitigation Planning

Counties are vulnerable to a number of different natural and man-made hazards that can threaten life and health, cause extensive property damage and have dramatic economic impacts to the county as a whole. In preparing the plans, historical research was done to identify hazards that the counties have experienced over time. The impacts of these hazards on residents, public facilities, businesses, and private property can be minimized through hazard mitigation planning.

In the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, FEMA requires that any town-ship, city or county wanting access to future Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funds must have in place or be in the process of completing an all-hazard mitigation plan by November 2004 or be currently working on a plan. The program is meant to control federal costs of disaster assistance and streamline administration of disaster relief.

A FEMA grant was awarded to the coun-

ties in Region 6W to complete multi-jurisdictional countywide all-hazard mitigation plans. All cities and townships elected to participate in the county plan. The UMRDC contracted with each of the counties to assist in the writing of the plans.

The plan identifies strategies that can be done by both government and the private sector to minimize the negative impacts caused by hazards and reduces the cycle of hazard - repair - hazard - repair. It will not reduce, control, or eliminate hazards from happening. This is, unfortunately, out of human control. It can, however, improve preparedness and reaction to these hazards to reduce risk and damage.

Each county assembled a task force made up of representatives from all participating jurisdictions to assist in the planning process. Each plan was submitted to the Minnesota Department of Public Safety - Division of

Homeland Security and Emergency Management for review before submitting to FEMA for final approval. FEMA approved four county plans April 2005 and county adoption of the plans took place in May 2005. Jurisdictions must adopt the plan to apply for FEMA funds directly rather than under the umbrella of the county.

All-hazard mitigation plans were required to include an extensive public participation process and hazard risk assessment of the county and all its communities. Several public meetings were held in each county to meet this requirement and provide valuable input into the planning process.

The UMRDC has contracts to assist Swift County and the Upper Sioux Community to complete plans in 2005. For more information about the hazard mitigation requirements and planning process, please contact Ryan Krosch at 320.289.1981.



Community & Economic Development Projects in FY 2005

Some of the community development projects completed by UMRDC staff in Fiscal Year 2005 included:

- Prepared successful Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) applications for the cities of Benson and Watson.
- Started working on a comprehensive plan for Yellow Medicine County.
- Completed a zoning and subdivision ordinance for the city of Madison.
- Completed All-Hazard Mitigation Plans for the counties of Big Stone, Lac qui Parle, Chippewa, and Yellow Medicine, and the Upper Sioux Community. The UMRDC also started work on an All-Hazard Mitigation Plan for Swift County.
- Provided technical assistance to the city of Granite Falls on flood mitigation activities.

- Prepared a successful Job Opportunity Building Zone application for 16 cities and two townships in the region.
- Assisted the city of Holloway with securing a \$536,000 loan and grant from USDA - Rural Development to do repairs and improvements to the community's water system.
- Co-sponsored with the Private Industry Council and Minnesota Small Business Development Center business planning and marketing workshops in March - April 20045 (see related article in this report).
- Served as JOBZ Administrator for the UMRDC JOBZ.
- Organized quarterly meetings of the economic development professionals in Regions 6W and 6E.

Business Workshops Well Attended — More to be Held

The UMRDC, Southwest Minnesota Private Industry Council and Southwest Minnesota Small Business Development Center (SBDC) co-hosted three business workshops from March - May 2005. The workshops were attended by several existing businesses and by people wanting to start a new business. The workshop topics were focused on business planning, record keeping using computer software and providing customer service. The SBDC presented the information at each workshop.

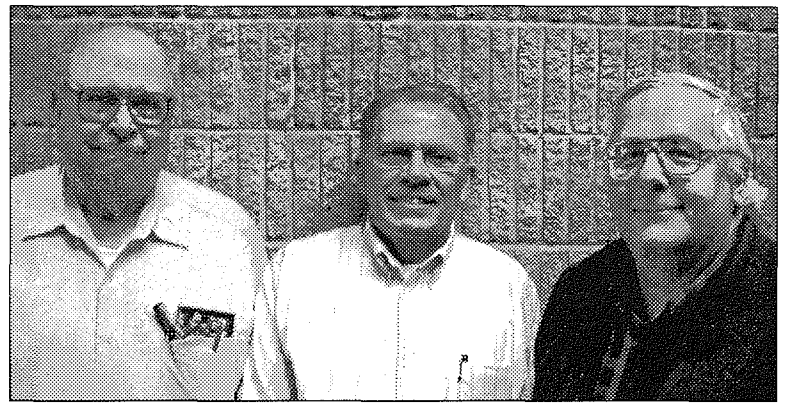
Plans are being made to hold additional business workshops in the coming year. Watch future UMRDC newsletters and mailings and for information in your local newspaper for the dates and locations of these workshops.

- Began working with the city of Odessa on a USDA Rural Development application for funds to repair the city's wastewater system.

UMVRDC COMMISSIONERS



Big Stone County (left to right)
 Bruce Swiger, *Prairie Five CAC*; Shirley Finberg, *Municipalities*; (Not pictured: Brent Olson, *County Board*; Harold Dimberg, *Ortonville Townships*)



Chippewa County (left to right)
 Rudolph Larson, *Ortonville Townships*; Jim Dahlvang, *County Board*; Ron Anderson, *Municipalities*



Lac qui Parle County (left to right)
 Greg Thole, *Municipalities*; Merrill Johnson, *County Board*; (Not pictured: Tim Patzer, *Townships*)



Swift County (left to right)
 Richard Hanson, *County Board*; Ron Ronning, *Municipalities*; Warren Rau, *Townships*



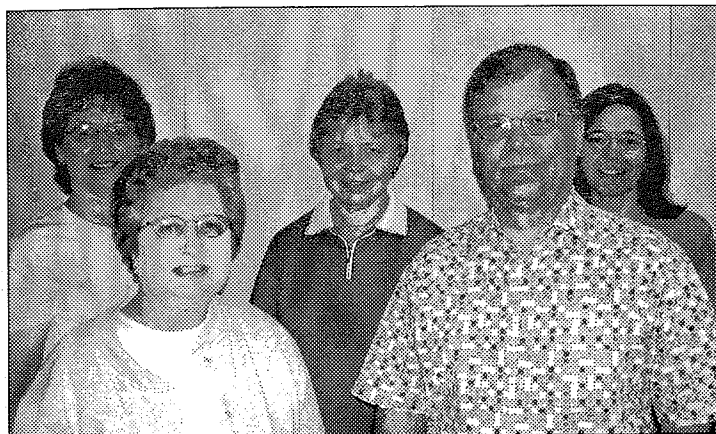
Tribal Council/School Board/Public Interest (left to right)
 Jaunita Lauritsen, *WorkForce Council*; Paul Pillatzke, *School Board*; (Not pictured: Teresa Peterson, *Upper Sioux Community*)



Yellow Medicine County (left to right)
 Gary L. Johnson, *County Board*; Dan Jahn, *Municipalities*; Erling Albin, *Townships*

UMVRDC STAFF

(As of June 30, 2005)



Back row, left to right

Arlene Tilbury, *Division Director, Financial*
arlene.tilbury@umvrdc.org

Barb Jordahl, *Planner, Financial*
barb.jordahl@umvrdc.org

Connie Stotesbery, *Secretary*
connie.stotesbery@umvrdc.org

Front row, left to right

Kay Koosman, *Office Manager*
kay.koosman@umvrdc.org

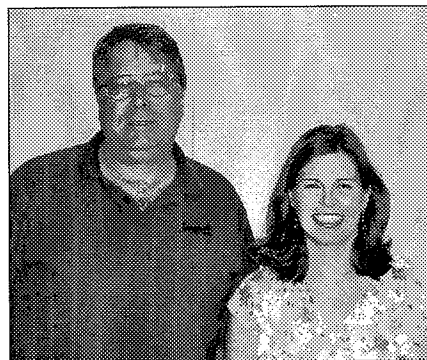
Paul Michaelson, *Executive Director*
paul.michaelson@umvrdc.org



Left to right

Berit Skurdahl, *Planner, Aging*
berit.skurdahl@umvrdc.org

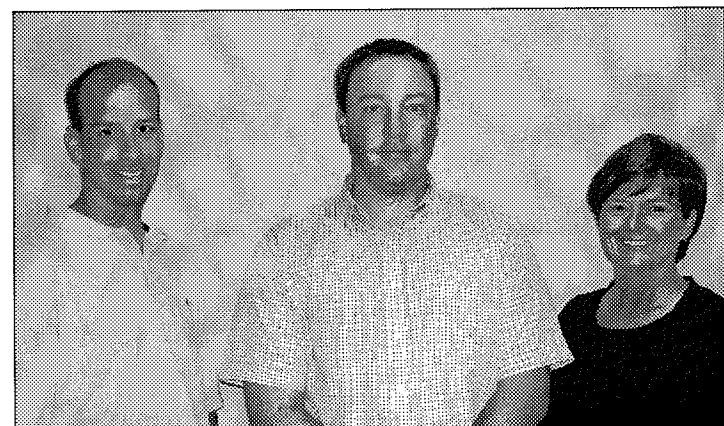
Michelle Bouta, *EDP Senior Planner, Aging*
michelle.bouta@umvrdc.org



Left to right

Tom Watson, *Regional Tourism Planner*
prairiewaters@umvrdc.org

Dawn Hegland, *Division Director, Transportation/
Natural Resources/Tourism*
dawn.hegland@umvrdc.org



Left to right

Scott Conn, *GIS Coordinator*
scott.conn@umvrdc.org

Ryan Krosch, *Division Director, Community/Economic
Development*
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Connie Nygard, *Senior Planner, Community Development*
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TOURISM, TRANSPORTATION & RECREATION

Tourism Effort Continues to Grow in Prairie Waters Area

The tourism projects at Western Minnesota Prairie Waters continue as scheduled: ad placements were placed in AAA/Home and Away, Midwest Living, Minnesota Monthly and other midwest-focused magazines. In addition, participation in several regional consumer travel shows were completed as part of the State of Minnesota's trade show marketing campaign. Prairie Waters participated in the Great Northwest Sports and Travel Show and the Milwaukee Sentinel Travel Show as members of the State of Minnesota's Explore Minnesota Tourism booth.

In December, Tom Watson was hired as the new regional tourism coordinator for Prairie Waters. Tom's background includes over 20 years of tourism development and marketing at local, regional and state levels.

Prairie Waters successfully applied for a \$5,000 tourism development grant from the Southwest Foundation that enables Prairie Waters to conduct a series of sessions in tourism capacity building, tourism education and strategic planning. Those sessions are being conducted over a four-month period that began in late April.

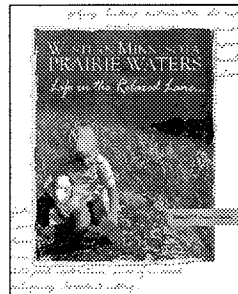
Prairie Waters is also assisting again this year with the Upper Minnesota River Meander Art Crawl, Sept. 30 - Oct. 2. We facilitated meetings, designed the brochure and are han-

dling marketing and mailings. This is a growing event and we are proud to be part of it.

Prairie Waters continues to track responses from regional advertising in the form of inquiries requesting our visitor guide and other information. As of June 1, 2005, inquiries for the first half of 2005 are nearly 1,000 ahead of inquiries from last year. Our visitor guide and other regional promotional pieces are sent in response to these growing inquiries.

The Prairie Waters Tourism Advisory Committee was established this year to offer suggestions and input to the Prairie Waters Board of Directors. Composed of volunteers from throughout the five-county region, the advisory committee suggests programs, courses of action, and other ideas to the board for further consideration. They also form ad hoc committees as specific projects dictate.

In addition to programs related specifically to our five-county region, Prairie Waters is also involved in the marketing of the entire southern Minnesota region through our participation in programs offered by the Southern Minnesota Tourism Association, a regional division of Minnesota's state tourism office.



The current Board of Directors for Prairie Waters is: Chair - Gary Hendrickx/Swift Co., Louis Sherlin/Yellow Medicine Co., Donna Halvorson/Chippewa Co., Susan Lee/Lac qui Parle Co., Brent Olson/Big Stone Co., Aimee Watkins/city of Granite Falls, Jackie Herfurth/city of Montevideo, and at-large members Mavis Gustafson, Maynard Meyer, June Lynne and Lori Evenstad.

The current Tourism Advisory Committee is: Charlotte Haugen/Lillehaugen B&B, Benson; Joan Fust/Cenex C-Store, Appleton; Luanne Fondell/Dawson Chamber and Dawson-Boyd Arts Association; Jan Pederson/Mecca, Canby; Ann Lundberg/Big Stone Co. Museum, Ortonville; and Steve Dragt/Lake Shore RV Park, Ortonville.

Western Minnesota Prairie Waters CVB continues to market the entire regional area as opportunities arise. Future projects include the 2006 Visitors Guide, the development of self-guided tour pieces for wildlife viewing/birding, heritage and a region-wide hospitality education program for front line clerks.

A major key to the successful future of the regional tourism programs will be the level and duration of sustainable funding dedicated to those programs.

Transportation Planning Assistance

The UMRVDC continues to provide local transportation planning assistance to the region through a contract with the MN Department of Transportation. The region's Transportation Advisory Committee meets quarterly to review, discuss and recommend transportation projects including the prioritization of millions of dollars worth of road, bridge, rail crossing, public transit and trail projects. Recommendations are given to the UMRVDC and to Area Transportation Partnerships (ATPs). ATPs develop prioritized lists of transportation projects for a multi-county area. Region 6W participates in two ATPs, each of which encompass a different 12-county area.

Transportation issues continue to be critical issues for our rural, agrarian region. We

rely heavily on the existing transportation system to get to work, school, medical appointments, vacation, and to get commodities into and out of the region. The UMRVDC would like to assist the local units of government to ensure its people and businesses of this region are adequately served by all modes of transportation.

Some of the transportation projects that were included in FY 2005:

- Participated on ATPs 4 and 8 as technical staff and as alternate voting members;
- Provided information to MnDOT on the statewide freight study;
- Compiled the sixth annual Transportation Data Report for transportation and demographic characteristics in the region;

- Assisted Yellow Medicine and Big Stone Counties, Appleton, Dawson and other cities as requested regarding trail planning;
- Participated on the ATP 8 Transportation Enhancement Committee;
- Participated on the ATP 4 Transportation Enhancement, Discretionary, and Safety Committees;
- Compiled the annual Region 6W Transportation Survey;
- Hosted four Transportation Advisory Committee meetings; and
- Coordinated with other RDCs on transportation issues.

If you have a transportation related comment or concern, we would love to hear it! Contact Dawn Hegland at 320.289.1981 or dawn.hegland@umvrld.org.

Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway

The Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway continues to work toward the goal of encouraging economic development through the promotion, preservation and protection of the historic, cultural, and natural qualities of the Minnesota River Valley. The Byway Alliance had representatives from chambers of commerce, CVBs, historical societies, economic development associations, elected officials and state agencies. The Byway Alliance collaborates with other organizations to promote the valley and work on projects to improve access and information distribution about its wonderful attractions and resources.



The **Interpretive Committee** assembled experts from the Minnesota Historical Society, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and other resource people to discuss interpretive panel design. They set guidelines for logo placement, byway maps, colors, photographs/graphics and sign sizes. These guidelines will be implemented by the Byway and to anyone wishing to create interpretive panels. The guidelines help tie our three themes together into a cohesive message and brand to create more awareness for the Byway.

The **Marketing Committee** created a new visitor's guide with more detailed information about the Byway. The group sought out a publishing partner who would sell the ads and print the product. Itineraries Minnesota, a publisher who recently completed the Southern

Minnesota Tour Guide was selected. The new 24-page full color guide will be out in summer or early fall 2005 and has local advertisers as well as editorial, site listings and maps of the Byway.

Byway members attended various **workshops and meetings** during the year. Members were sent to the Art of Interpretive Writing Workshop, the National Byway Power Workshops, the MN Byway Workshop, Explore MN Tourism Conference, and our Byway coordinator, Dawn Hegland was asked to be part of a national panel on byway sustainability and attended a workshop in Rochester, New York in November with other byway leaders from around the country to discuss ways to sustain a byway's membership, volunteers, staff and

funding. Members are also planning on attending the National Byway conference in Cleveland, Ohio in October 2005. These opportunities are very valuable opportunities to learn from other byways, or learn more about how to effectively manage our byway and ongoing projects.

Our annual **business membership drive** continues in its third year. Membership funding supports general byway projects. We appreciate the continued support of our members and hope that this will grow each year.

Future goals:

- Secure 2005 Byway federal funds to fabricate interpretive panels in 2006.
- Secure 2005 Byway federal funds to sustain staff coordination in 2006.
- Host a Byway familiarization tour for local officials, media and citizens in fall 2005.
- Distribute the new byway guide in fall 2005.
- Revise Byway website www.mnrivervalley.com.
- Increase private byway membership to help fiscally sustain the Byway.
- Recruit more active members from west of Montevideo and east of New Ulm.
- Increase byway signage in key locations.

I would like to wrap up this annual report by once again thanking everyone who has supported the Byway over the years. To the many individuals, chambers, CVBs, EDAs, counties, cities, historical societies and businesses who have given their time, money or other resources to help promote the Minnesota River Valley, you have my sincere thanks. You are all very important to our success, and we cannot do it without you. **THANK YOU!**

For more information about the Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway contact Dawn Hegland at 320.289.1981 or dawn.hegland@umvrdc.org.



New Regional Tourism Planner

Tom Watson was hired in December 2004 as the regional tourism planner for Western Minnesota Prairie Waters Convention & Visitors Bureau. Tom's main responsibility is to help plan and coordinate a region-wide tourism marketing strategy in conjunction with ongoing efforts within each community and county.

Tom's tourism background includes tourism journalism at various weekly news-

papers including the Twin Cities Reader and the Alaska Journal of Commerce. He is a freelance writer/photographer, published author and a 15-year active member of the Outdoor Writers Association of America.

Tom's tourism experience includes being the executive director of the Kodiak Island Convention & Visitors Bureau in Kodiak, Alaska, and a board member of the Alaska Visitors Association and the Alaska

Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Marketing Association.

Please feel free to contact Tom at 1.866.866.5432 or www.prairiewaters.com if you have any questions about Prairie Waters or would like to receive information about the region.

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

The Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging (MnRAAA) has been operating since January 1, 2005. It is a planning and service area of 27 counties, including the Economic Development Areas of Regions 6E, 6W, 8 and 9. It basically encompasses the southwest corner of the state. Offices are maintained in Appleton, Willmar, Slayton and Mankato. The Slayton office has the Call Center where all Senior LinkAge®

Line calls are answered, and the Mankato office was authorized to be the administrative and fiscal agent. The Mankato office is also authorized to do the grants management duties.

The MnRAAA Joint Powers Board, consisting of two commissioners from each Regional Development Commission (RDC), a non-voting chair and an ex-officio member from each Advisory Council on Aging locat-

ed within each RDC, is the designated Area Agency on Aging.

Roles of the MnRAAA include administration of federal and state dollars for elderly services through grants or contracts, providing people with information and assistance, advocacy and program development and coordination.

ACA Advisory Committee

The Advisory Council on Aging (ACA) is a volunteer committee that provides an essential service to the UMRVDC. The members assure that Region 6W Economic Development Area (EDA) provides a continuum of care for elders by combining the Title III Older Americans Act dollars with other public and private aging service dollars. Primary functions of the ACA

involve serving as an advisory body to the UMRVDC on matters related to the Area Plan, make formal recommendation to the UMRVDC, identify the needs, concerns and issues of older adults (people 60+) in the counties within the 6W EDA, consider alternatives and develop goals to address identified needs of older adults, assist in awarding Older Americans Act funding

and advocate on behalf of older adults at the local, state and federal levels.

ACA current members include: Erling Albin, Ron Anderson, Judy Dahl, Sheri Hansen, Gail Jerve, Barbara Lunde, Barb Nelson, Herb Rotunda, Eva Stacey, Dave Torgerson and Dick Wambeke.

MN River Area Agency on Aging Information & Assistance

On January 1, 2005, the AAAs in Regions 6E, 6W, 8 and 9 became the Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging (MnRAAA). Each region continues to maintain their local office as well as the Senior Outreach Services. The Senior LinkAge Line® continues to be answered by the call center staffed by the MnRAAA office located in Slayton.

This past year we received grants to complete outreach sessions and one-on-one assistance regarding the Medicare Savings Programs and the Medicare Approved Drug Discount Card. Staff also began implementing the Medication Management project which recruits local pharmacists to con-

duct informational sessions and provide one-on-one counseling on prescription drug issues such as drug interactions and herbal remedies.

We continue to maintain and staff our senior outreach sites in Montevideo and Granite Falls and are looking to expand into other communities as well. The Health Insurance Counseling program currently has seven active volunteers who are always looking to assist seniors with their Medicare and/or health insurance questions as well as everyday paperwork.

In early 2005, staff received training on the implementation of the prescription drug benefit to Medicare also known as

Medicare Part D. We have been going strong ever since by doing joint community presentations and one-on-one assistance with the Social Security office in Marshall. We plan to continue this outreach as everyone who is on Medicare will need to make a decision regarding Medicare Part D.

If you have questions about the Information and Assistance programs of MnRAAA, contact Berit Skurdahl, Senior Outreach Specialist at 1-800-333-2433.

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

ElderCare Development Partnerships (EDP)

ElderCare Development Partnerships (EDP) marked its seventh year (2004) in Region 6W. This project was formerly known as Senior Agenda for Independent Living (SAIL). EDP is a collaborative funded by a state grant through the Minnesota Board on Aging (MBA) that provides technical assistance to local providers to develop and implement service delivery models in line with long-term care systems, rebalancing to ensure efficient and quality service, to promote consumer choice and to maximize local resources.

A priority activity for EDP is to work with counties and other long-term care service providers to collaboratively develop sustainable proposals for systems change, accessing the state's Community Services/Service Development (CS/SD) grant funds and/or other resources as appropriate.

Funding for the current EDP contract ends June 30, 2005, but it is anticipated another contract period will begin July 1, 2005. Region 9 AAA had been the lead agency with the Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging now taking over as lead.



Title III Older Americans Act Grant Dollars

1/1/04 - 12/31/04

Title III-B

Prairie Five RIDES	\$ 30,500
Western MN Legal Services	\$ 22,000
Yellow Medicine East Chore	\$ 11,243
Prairie Five HOME	\$ 27,580
Monte Friendly Visiting/Chore	\$ 6,000

Title III-C1

Prairie Five Congregate Dining	\$125,111
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Title III-C2

Prairie Five Home Delivered Meals	\$ 48,222
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Title III-D

Prairie Five NAPIS	\$ 10,568
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Title III-E

AAA Information & Assistance	\$ 22,897
Prairie Five Project CARE	\$ 75,000

State Nutrition Award

Prairie Five Congregate Dining	\$ 55,315
Prairie Five Home Delivered	\$ 11,053

USDA

Prairie Five Nutrition	\$ 75,266
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GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS

The Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Service Bureau has been busy working on numerous projects for the region. We have been in the process of finishing the digital versions of the ditch maps for Yellow Medicine and Swift Counties. In this project, all of the paper maps are being digitized into a digital format while adding all the information that pertains to each ditch. The end result will be that the county will be able to use the information with other digital products that we have provided, such as the parcel-based map. Along with this, we have been turning the ditch profiles for Swift County into a digital format to be linked to each ditch. This will allow quicker access to all the ditch information without having to pick up a paper map.

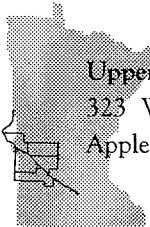
Other projects that the GIS Service Bureau finished were parcel updates for Chippewa and Swift Counties. This gives the counties an updated version of their parcel map, allowing for any new parcels or any splits over the past few years. We also are finishing up a database merging for Chippewa County ditches. This will provide them with the history of a ditch and all the associated costs, repairs, and construction of a ditch system.

Both Yellow Medicine County and the city of Benson received a digital version of their zoning. This entailed drawing out each entity's zoning district and creating a digital version on it for each one. This will allow for easy reproduction and updates to the zoning.

The GIS Service Bureau applied for and received a Metadata grant. This entails providing a detailed summary of each data layer that the GIS Service Bureau has created over the past six years.

The coming year looks to be a good one so far. Both Swift and Yellow Medicine Counties have signed up for a two-year contract for parcel updates, which will allow for more up-to-date information for the county departments. We will also be creating a parcel map for the city of Canby and finishing the Metadata grant.

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