



Upper Minnesota Valley

**REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION**

This document is made available electronically
by the Minnesota Legislative Reference Library
as part of an ongoing digital archiving project.
<http://www.leg.state.mn.us/lrl/lrl.asp>



2015 Annual Report



Helping



Communities



Prosper

Message from the Executive Director

Location Matters...

Realtors often say “Location, location, location!” when trying to evaluate places. In rural Minnesota, we frequently compare what our communities have to what other places in Minnesota have, and what we don’t have. Communities throughout Minnesota have remarkable similarities (population profiles, number and type of businesses, cultural values, recreational facilities, good roads, good schools, and friendly people) as well as drastic differences (diversity, unemployment, crime, economic growth, number and variety of business and industry, amount of green space and community resources). As our communities compete for new businesses, new investment, new employees, new residents, new housing, our communities need to be able to share these similarities and differences to prospective businesses and residents.

Often, in the work that the UMRDC completes in the region, we help local community members map their local assets and try to tactfully challenge them to find the truly unique items that make their locale stand apart from others near and far. During the conversations we have with our communities, UMRDC employees train their ears to listen and identify the assets and the needs of the region. We know that resources to address these needs are not always available and the UMRDC plays a key role in connecting our regions needs to what resources are available. And if the resources to address our region’s needs are not available, we advocate to state and federal agencies regarding the needs and resources.

Throughout this report you will find examples of projects the UMRDC worked on this year that helped the region with some of the things on their local “to-do” list. Big Stone County received significant investment to create better broadband services in the county. Ortonville, Canby, and Appleton are all updating their local ordinances and or zoning to address changing needs in their towns.

Numerous schools and community leaders worked together to identify and promote safe and active ways to get to school. Montevideo implemented a new mural to beautify their downtown. The RLF assisted new and expanding businesses. New marketing materials for both the byway and the region were developed and promoted to show off locally unique assets and to attract visitors.

None of these projects would be initiated or completed if it were not for the many hours of service and dedication by our local leaders and community volunteers. Every single community has opportunities that could use more financial, physical, and philosophical help from members of the community.



“ Be local, give local, help local, promote local. Be proud of your location, with all its similarities and differences. I know the UMRDC is proud to work on sustaining and improving the region, and we look forward to working on new projects and with new community leaders in the years to come. ”

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dawn E. Hegane". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mission:

Enable the region to thrive through assisting local governments

Message from the Board Chair

Twenty years ago, our family moved to Appleton. I saw a lot of opportunity to raise a family in an area that I hoped was reinvigorating itself. The region went through a significant decline in the 1980's with low ag prices followed by businesses closing, and schools consolidating. I believe since that time, people philosophically have changed their attitudes from "Life will go on" and "whatever happens, happens" to "We must step up to new challenges."

Appleton built a prison, a very novel idea to bring in employment. Many towns turned towards manufacturing or towards economic development like never before. Communities have learned that they can make things happen. Opportunity doesn't just show up on your doorstep. This transformation has taken place and it must continue for the region to be sustainable. I am proud to say that I am from the Upper Minnesota Valley region and that our communities have rediscovered themselves and they are determined to position themselves toward the future.

The Upper Minnesota River Valley Regional Development Commission has been a part of the community's transformation. Today the agency is in a great position with hard working dedicated staff to work with all communities enhancing their future.



Gary Hendrich

“ Let's work together for a more vibrant tomorrow ”



COMMISSION BOARD MEMBERS

Big Stone County

Chippewa County



Brent Olson
County Board



Scott Rixe
Municipalities
Graceville City Council



Harold R. Dimberg
Townships
Ortonville Township



Jim Dahlvang
County Board



Jim Schmaedeka
Townships
Louriston Township



Debra Lee Fader
Municipalities
Montevideo Mayor

Lac qui Parle County

Swift County



Graylen Carlson
County Board



Jeff Olson
Municipalities
Dawson City Council



Mark Bourne
Townships
Hamlin Townships



Gary Hendrickx
County Board



Mike Fugleberg
Municipalities
Benson City Council



Warren Rau
Townships
Hegbert Township

UMVRDC STAFF

**DAWN
HEGLAND**
Executive Director

**ARLENE
TILBURY**
Financial Director

**RANDY
LARSON JR.**
Loan Officer

**KRISTI
FERNHOLZ**
Community Development
Senior Planner

**JACKI
ANDERSON**
Community Development
Senior Planner



Public Interest

School Board



Juanita Lauristen
Work Force Council
Private Industry Council



Vicki Oakes
Ortonville EDA



Bruce Swigerd
Prairie Five CAC, Inc.



Brett Buer
Dawson-Boyd School



Kathi Thymian
Ortonville School

Yellow Medicine County



Gary L. Johnson
County Board



Scott Peterson
Municipalities
Granite Falls City Council

(Photo not available)

Gene Stengel
Townships
Yellow Medicine

**EMILY
ZANDT**

Community Development
Planner

**ERIN
SMITH**

Community Development
Planner

**BARRETT
VOIGT**

Community Development
Planner

**MELISSA
CARRUTH**

Communications
Coordinator

**JACKIE
SIGDAHL**

Administrative Assistant



\$5,059,234

RLF Loans (\$400,000) Grants awarded (\$4,476,685)
 Meander art sold (\$108,207) Prairie Waters marketing (\$74,342)

Financial Report

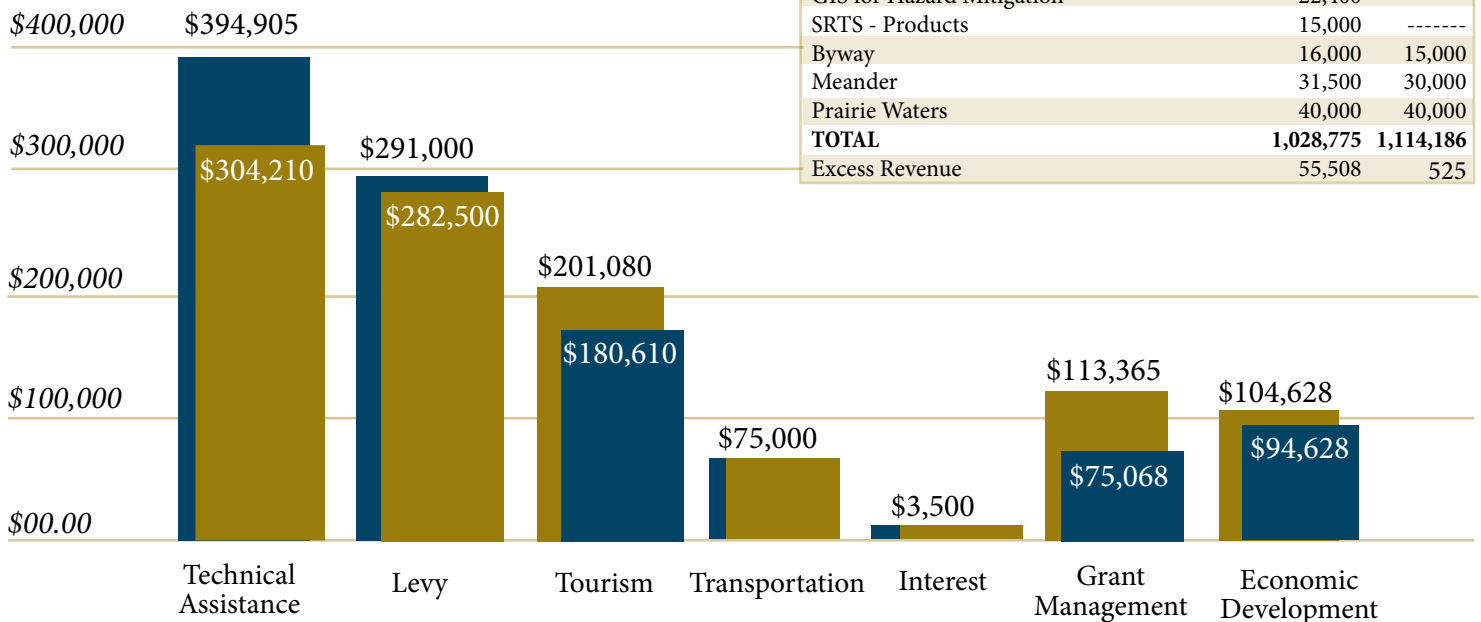
Revenue and Expenditure Comparison
 Current FY15 and Proposed FY16

FY15 Ending Account Balances

General Checking	\$268,285
Money Market	\$310,309
CD	\$250,000
Scenic Byway	\$6,903
Auto	\$27,441
Equipment	\$25,184
RLF Available for Lending	\$400,581

Revenue

2016 Revenue = \$1,114,711
 2015 Revenue = \$1,084,283



Expenses

FY15 FY16

Salaries/Fringe	713,465	829,956
Commissioner's Expense	28,000	30,000
Audit	13,000	13,500
Contract for Services	10,000	-----
Intern	-----	2,000
Strategic Planning	-----	10,000
Computer Support	12,000	10,000
Email	-----	1,560
Virtual Server	-----	2,760
Copy Charge/xerox lease	8,500	5,000
Depreciation	11,000	10,000
Dues	5,000	5,000
Insurance	1,200	1,200
Legal Fees	2,000	2,000
Miscellaneous	3,000	1,000
Office Rent	12,210	12,210
Postage	7,000	7,000
Printing/Advertising	8,000	8,000
RDC Marketing Item	2,000	2,000
Registration/Program Specific	4,000	4,000
Repairs/Maintenance	2,000	2,000
Software GMS/GIS/General	6,000	6,000
Publications	2,000	2,000
Supplies	6,000	6,000
Telephone/Internet	4,000	6,500
Travel	34,000	30,000
Training	6,000	12,000
Morale	-----	2,000
Wellness	-----	2,000
Web Hosting/Maintenance	3,500	3,500
GIS for Hazard Mitigation	22,400	-----
SRTS - Products	15,000	-----
Byway	16,000	15,000
Meander	31,500	30,000
Prairie Waters	40,000	40,000
TOTAL	1,028,775	1,114,186
Excess Revenue	55,508	525

Revolving Loan Fund

Since 1998, the UMRDC's RLF has partnered with financial institutions and other gap lenders to grow and retain the work force in our five county region. When a financial institution is unable to finance the entire project, businesses and entrepreneurs have the ability to gain access to funds that are necessary to see their project come to fruition. The UMRDC's RLF is designed to aid in the creation and retention of jobs in the region. This past fiscal year, revolving loan fund financed \$400,000 in loans for the businesses listed below for equipment, fixed assets, inventory, working capital, and real estate.

- Bluegrass Proteins, Inc., Dawson - **\$200,000**
Fixed Assets - New Business
- West Central Powder Coating, Inc., Benson - **\$100,00**
Real Estate - New Business (Photo below)
- Kay's Processing LLC/Kay's Naturals, Clara City - **\$100,000**
Working Capital - Existing Business/Expansion

A combination of 91 jobs were created or retained as a result of these business start-up and retention projects. A total of \$19,347,000 was leveraged in public and private funds. Financial partners involved with these projects included local banks/financial institutions, Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF), Lac qui Parle EDA (MIF), Benson Industrial Development Corporation (BIDC), and the Clara City EDA.

For more information contact Randy Larson at 320.289.1981 x 102
Randy.Larson@umvrdc.org.



Inside of West Central Powder Coating, Inc., located in Benson



"We have made **\$5.95 million** in business loans since the loan fund started in 1990."

"We've leveraged almost **\$146.2 million** in other funding for beginning and expanding local businesses in the region!"

FY15 Revolving Loan Fund

Total Funds	\$1,779,345
Loans Current	31
Loans Delinquent	0
Loans Deferred	1
Loans Default	2
Total Receivables	\$1,378,764
Funds Committed	\$0
Total Available for Lending	\$400,581

Hedgehog Grant



The UMRDC mission statement directs us to "enable the region to thrive by assisting units of government". We know through our recent survey that local governments have a lot of needs but are having a hard time paying for them. Those needs prompted the creation of the Hedgehog Grant to help subsidize the cost of our grant writing and planning services.

In FY15, the UMRDC has subsidized the following work:

- \$4,358** for the Dawson Sidewalk Plan
- \$5,000** for the Upper Sioux Community
- \$5,000** for the Granite Falls Memorial
- \$5,000** for an Appleton Technical Assistance Contract

This year we used \$19,358 to leverage an additional \$125,915 in new revenue. Applications and more program details are available on our website.

To talk about potential projects that might be eligible for the Hedgehog Grant, please contact Dawn Hegland, Executive Director at 320-289-1981 ext 101.

Grant Writing & Management

Rehab of Historical Pedestrian Bridge

Work is under way to rehabilitate a pedestrian bridge that has been an historical part of the City of Granite Falls since 1888. The rehabilitation will include cleaning and painting of the bridge, replacement of the concrete bridge decking, repair of structural deficiencies, replacement and upgrading of metal railings, lighting, and repairs and restoration of the bridge vault. UMRDC staff assisted the city in securing funds from the Minnesota Historical Society for \$512,000 and an additional \$512,000 from state bonding dollars through the DNR to partially cover the cost of the project. Staff is also assisting the city by handling grants administration duties.



Broadband Development

The UMRDC authored a successful application to the new state Border to Border grant program. It awarded Federated Telephone Cooperative \$3.9 million to deploy fiber to the premise in the northern half of Big Stone County where a majority of the area is unserved or significantly underserved. The two year project will deploy fiber to over 1,000 structures. The grant is part of an \$8M investment by Federated that includes a partnership with Big Stone County who is providing a \$4M loan to Federated to enable the project to move forward.

It's exciting when we see the region becoming a leader in broadband availability. Fiber creates new opportunity to market to new businesses and residents - it assures them that they can live and do business in our region while enjoying natural amenities that they can't find in an urban setting. There is a lot more work to do to make the entire region a leader in broadband but there is no doubt that our communities and elected leaders understand the importance of broadband. We will continue to work with local and regional partners to ensure future broadband availability.



For more information contact Jacki Anderson at 320.289.1981 x 111 Jacki.anderson@umvrdc.org.

Volstead Museum

The City of Granite Falls received a \$153,990 grant from the Minnesota Historical Society to rehab the Andrew John Volstead House Museum. In 1976 the Volstead House was designated as a National Historic Landmark. The work to be accomplished includes stabilization and restoration of the foundation. The city has contracted with the UMRDC to monitor prevailing wage requirements.

Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) - Grant Writing

The City of Appleton received a grant for residential and commercial rehabilitation from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development Small Cities Development Program. The grant award is just under \$600,000 and will assist at least 20 homes and 5 businesses with needed repairs that address safety, energy efficiency and façade improvements. The total investment into the community as a result of this grant is anticipated to be nearly a \$1,000,000 when including the owner investments. Improvements are targeted towards Appleton's oldest neighborhoods that border the downtown, school and areas near the hospital. This grant application was made more competitive by housing assessments completed by community volunteers and mapped by UMRDC. The UMRDC has been able to accomplish all of this work through an on-going technical assistance contract with the city.

Small Cities Development Program - Grant Management

The UMRDC is currently assisting with grants management for two Small Cities Development Program grants that must be complete by December 31 2015. In 2013 UMRDC successfully secured funding for the Cities of Benson and Ortonville for the following activities:

Benson - \$597,940 to rehabilitate 24 owner-occupied homes and 5 rental units

Ortonville - \$552,000 to rehabilitate 20 owner-occupied homes and 5 commercial properties

UMVRDC staff authored a successful SCDP application that was awarded in July of 2014 to Clara City in the amount of \$613,295. UMRDC staff is managing the fiscal administration and technical reporting obligations of the grant. Clara City received this funding for the rehabilitation of the following: Nine Owner-Occupied Homes, one 14 unit rental, five single family units, four commercial properties

Technical Assistance

Our technical assistance helps cities, counties and schools solve local and regional issues, including addressing the fundamental building blocks needed to sustain resilient and competitive communities and economies. Technical assistance focuses on real issues and specific opportunities, not general topics. Our technical assistance is customized to meet the needs and priorities of the community. The following represent a small sample of technical assistance projects that we have completed in the last year.



Milan Housing

The City of Milan has been working with the UMRDC to coordinate efforts to help the Micronesian population learn how to buy and own a home. UMRDC staff brought together the Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership, city officials and 35 Micronesian community members in January where they talked about the type of house they would like to buy and what challenges they need to overcome in order to purchase a home. Many expressed interest in participating in programs that would help. The first program is a home stretch course that will be offered in Milan.

For more information contact Kristi Fernholz at 320.289.1981 x 106
Kristi.fernholz@umvrdc.org



Hazard Mitigation

After a full year of hazard mitigation planning in Big Stone, Chippewa, and Yellow Medicine Counties, the 2015 plan updates are in review by Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) and FEMA. Upon final approval, UMRDC staff and county emergency managers will take the plans to each county and city for adoption.

The 2015 plan updates focused on safety during violent storms, added erosion and climate change as additional hazards, and put particular emphasis on preparation and training for hazardous material spills. The planning process for each of these counties has brought to light a number of strong implementation projects to pursue in the region.

For more information contact Emily Zandt at Emily.zandt@umvrdc.org
320.289.1981 x104



Canby Zoning

UMVRDC staff is working with the City of Canby to update their zoning ordinances. After reviewing their Comprehensive Plan, Canby found their zoning ordinances were not consistent with the needs and vision identified in their planning process. To ensure better consistency for future planning and land use, Canby decided to work with the UMRDC to update their zoning ordinances to better reflect the vision of the community and staff.

Ortonville Zoning

The City of Ortonville has contracted with the UMRDC to update their zoning ordinances. This process will include an organizational update of the plan with a focus on clarifying the permitting and enforcement processes. The work plan also includes an opportunity for public education on zoning and public input on the ordinance updates. We look forward to working with the city and its residents on this project.

For more information on Zoning contact Erin Smith at Erin.smith@umvrdc.org
320.289.1981 x 110

The UMRDC has been selected as the "Community and Economic Development Partner Region" by the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development. The goal of this partnership is to increase awareness of resources available to further economic development within the Upper Minnesota Valley Region, ensuring the sustainability of its communities well into the future. In coordination with USDA staff, UMRDC is working to identify opportunities in support of local and regional projects.

— Colleen Landkamer | State Director
Rural Development





Public Art Project

There is a new mural behind the Jose Artigas Statue in the heart of main street Montevideo. The community formed the Montevideo Arts Project (MAP) in 2014 and their first project has come to life in time for the community's Fiesta Days Celebration in June 2015.

MAP is a volunteer driven group of local citizens, business owners, city staff, elected officials, and chamber of commerce staff. The group has a goal of creating one public art piece per year. The UMRDC has a contract to help with the coordination, grant writing and facilitation of this project that started in June 2014.

The mural was painted by Shawn McCann, an accomplished mural artist from Crystal, MN, and celebrates the relationship between the City of Montevideo and Montevideo, Uruguay. McCann and his design was selected from 10 different artists by the citizen members of MAP, and funding for the mural was provided by the Southwest Minnesota Arts Council, the City of Montevideo, Montevideo Chamber, the Convention and Visitor's Bureau, and community donations.

Region 6W Public Art Planning:

The UMRDC received a small planning grant from the Southwest Minnesota Arts Council in 2014 which was completed this past year. The grant was to explore a regional public art project. Two surveys were sent out: one to gather top city/county needs, and one to gather project ideas. The most universal project identified was the beautification of the downtown and trails.

The UMRDC solicited and received ideas from 10 different artists, and received many ideas to consider. Three artists were chosen to create a design and to further develop their idea: sculpture based on local objects, parklets for vacant spaces, and a series of sculptures along trails based on book pages. The UMRDC intends to work in the next two years to complete one of these projects.

For more information on Public Art Planning contact Kristi Fernholz kristi.fernholz@umvrdc.org 320.289.1981 x 106



Develop MN

In order for Greater Minnesota to succeed and prosper there must be a strong, collective and credible voice that can create and advance a common agenda. Toward this end, the Minnesota Association of Development Organizations is in the process of creating a greater Minnesota development strategy called Develop MN. The document will highlight common development opportunities and identify strategies that will accelerate business growth and job creation in rural Minnesota including all counties outside of the seven county metro areas.

The group has built consensus around four areas; and has been collecting and reviewing statewide data regarding the changes in these areas.

Human Capital	Economic Competitiveness
Community Resources	Foundational Assets

Blandin

The UMRDC was named one of 13 alumni Blandin Broadband Communities to continue to work on broadband issues in the region. A stakeholder meeting was held in October 2014 where several projects were identified.

The UMRDC is working with the Blandin Foundation on three projects: a feasibility study for a regional fiber ring to all public sector buildings within the five county region; a regional online branding campaign; and convening IT professionals throughout the region for resource sharing and increased collaboration. A grant was submitted to the Blandin Foundation for the feasibility study and \$25,000 was awarded, and matched by \$25,000 from the five counties, and two of the grants requests are currently awaiting a decision by the Foundation.

Bellingham's Website

The City of Bellingham contracted with the UMRDC to update their website. The project included a new layout, updated information and new photographs highlighting the city's assets. The City of Bellingham now offers an events calendar, links to local utilities, and ordinance information for its current and future residents. The importance of a strong online presence is continuing to increase. Easy access to important information is not only helpful for current residents but it is particularly beneficial to cities looking to recruit new residents and businesses. Check it out!

Bellinghammn.com

Appleton Technical Assistance

The City of Appleton has retained the UMRDC to assist with community and economic development efforts. To fund the technical assistance, Appleton matches planning funds from Swift County and a Hedgehog Grant from the UMRDC.

A few accomplishments from the first technical assistance contract include:

1. Completed a project prioritization process with council.
2. Completed a community-wide housing survey/analysis and mapped the results.
3. Coordinated, authored and submitted a successful SCDP application for \$591,250 in state funds for the rehabilitation of 20 homes and five businesses.
4. Submitted a successful Countryside Public Health SHIP grant for \$3,500 to look at city sidewalk priority routes and financing (work will be completed summer 2015).
5. Submitted USDA RLF application to establish a city economic development revolving loan fund.
6. Initial research and issues identification for the zoning ordinance update.

A new contract in the coming year will work on a zoning ordinance update and will include new work sessions with the council to develop project priorities for this next year.



Aquatic Invasive Species

Aquatic invasive species (AIS) are threatening Minnesota waters. These nonnative species harm fish populations, water quality, and water recreation. Our five counties have been charged to create a plan to prevent the spread of AIS. The UMRDC coordinated with our five counties to explore common issues and strategies to work together to contain AIS in our region and implement their County Program Aid Grants for AIS prevention.

For more information contact Kristi Fernholz at 320.289.1981 x 106 Kristi.fernholz@umvrdc.org.

Memorial Park Master Plan

The UMRDC has been working with Granite Falls on developing a Master Plan for Memorial Park. A task force along has been working with the UMRDC to develop project ideas and strategies to make improvements to the park infrastructure and programming. The Master Plan includes a vision for the park as well as goals to make the park a destination for visitors and residents of Granite Falls. Memorial Park was named a Regional Park by the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission and work will continue to secure grant funding for projects.

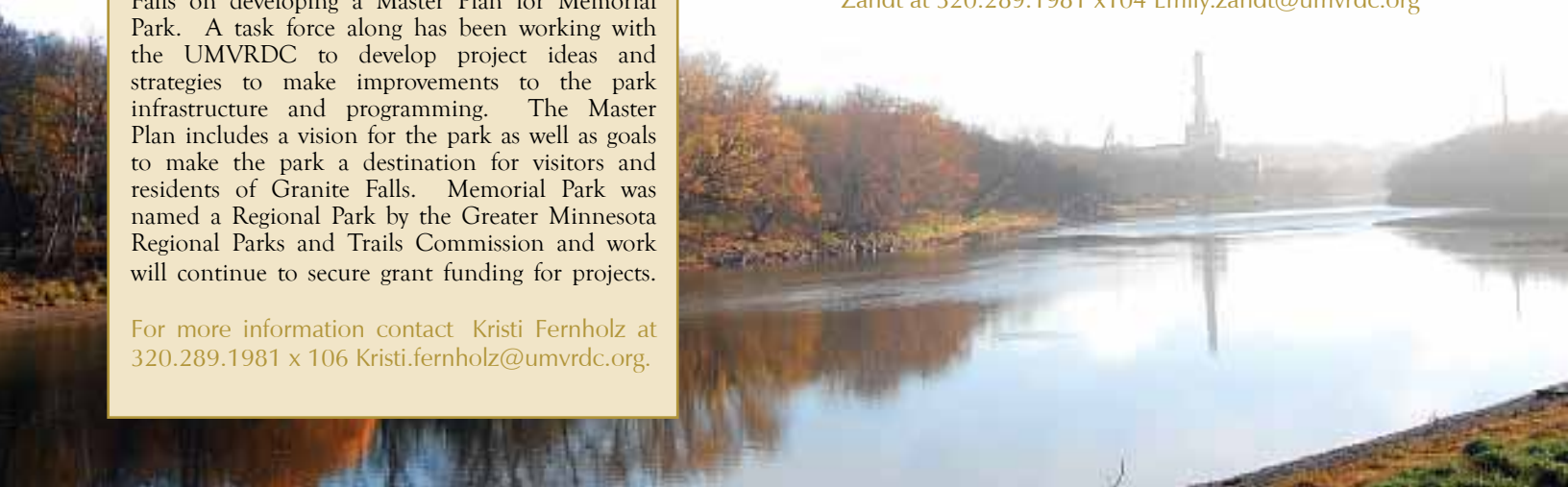
For more information contact Kristi Fernholz at 320.289.1981 x 106 Kristi.fernholz@umvrdc.org.

Dawson Sidewalk Plan

Creating a walkable community is a top goal in many of our cities in the Upper Minnesota Valley. The City of Dawson partnered with Countryside Public Health to contract with the UMRDC to create a sidewalk plan for the Dawson community. The goal of the sidewalk plan is to identify primary destinations and priority pedestrian routes in the city in order to strategically plan for future sidewalk investments.

The planning process took into consideration the Stevens Elementary Safe Routes to School Plan as well as future infrastructure projects planned by the City of Dawson, Lac qui Parle County, and MnDOT (Minnesota Department of Transportation). The document offers a work plan that identifies possible funding opportunities as well as sidewalk policy considerations for creating an ordinance that supports the plan. The Dawson Sidewalk Plan is a great example of aligning multiple plans in order to approach future projects as efficiently as possible.

For more information on sidewalk planning contact Emily Zandt at 320.289.1981 x104 Emily.zandt@umvrdc.org



Safe Routes to School

With help from the UMRDC, both Montevideo Public Schools and Clarkfield Area Charter School completed a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Plan. The SRTS model takes a comprehensive approach to addressing safety issues that prevent children from walking and biking to school by looking at the barriers through the 5 E's of bicycle and pedestrian planning: Evaluation, Education, Encouragement, Engineering, and Enforcement.

The UMRDC has also been providing technical assistance to schools in the region through a grant from MnDOT for Safe Routes to School Implementation. Through this work, walk/bike to school day events, bike rodeo, and other education and encouragement events and activities were held. Walk audits were also completed at KMS Elementary School in Murdock and at the Ortonville Public School.

Four schools (Clarkfield Area Charter School, Ortonville Elementary, KMS Elementary in Murdock, Stevens Elementary in Dawson) applied for and received MnDOT's Mini Grants for additional SRTS implementation funds. These funds were used for bike rodeo giveaways, additional incentive prizes, safety patrol equipment, as well as to pay for 15 students from our region to attend Legionville School Safety Patrol Camp over the summer.

For more information contact Emily Zandt at emily.zandt@umvrdc.org 320.289.1981 x104



.....
1,430 students

Impacted by Safe Routes to School Implementation Funding

Transportation



Transportation Planning

The UMRDC continues to provide local transportation planning assistance to the region through a contract with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT). Transportation issues continue to be critical for our region to get to work, school, appointments, vacation, and to move commodities into and outside of the region.

Staff participated in the West Central and Southwest Minnesota Area Transportation Partnerships (ATPs) in MnDOT Districts 4 and 8 respectively. The ATP review and rank federal fund applications for transportation projects that include roads, bridges, trails, public transit, and transportation alternative projects. The total federal transportation investment for projects using federal funds in Region 6W for the 2016 to 2019 is \$53,523,790.

In addition to serving on the two ATPs, other transportation planning work done by staff this year includes:

- Participation in the Southwest Regional Toward Zero Deaths and Southwest Safe Communities Coalition committees, both aimed at reducing fatalities and serious injuries on our roadways.
- Working with local communities to develop Transportation Alternatives projects such as trails, scenic turn outs and overlooks, Safe Routes to School (SRTS) projects and other projects that enhance the transportation system for a wider variety of users.
- Representing the RDCs throughout Greater Minnesota on the statewide Safe Routes to School Steering Committee to direct policy, programming and planning efforts for the SRTS program in Minnesota.
- Assisting MnDOT with various statewide planning such as the Bicycle System Plan, the Highway Safety Improvement Plan and the Minnesota State Highway Investment Plan.
- Communicating with local communities in Region 6W about state and federal transportation opportunities and programs to help them improve their transportation system.
- Initiating a regional trails interest group for sharing information and resources on trail planning and development.

For more information on Transportation contact Barrett Voigt at Barrett.voigt@umvrdc.org 320.289.1981 x 107

Programs

Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs)



CERTs is a statewide partnership with a shared mission to connect individuals and their communities to the resources they need to identify and implement community-based clean energy projects



For more information on CERTS contact Erin Smith at erin.smith@umvrdc.org 320.289.1981 x 110

Erin Smith is a UMVRDC staff that also serves as the West Central area CERTs coordinator. CERTs works to empower communities and their members to adopt energy conservation, energy efficiency, and renewable energy technologies and practices for their homes, and local institutions.

What does CERTs do?

- Works to advance projects identified as priorities by our regional teams;
- Offers tools for energy efficiency implementation through outreach campaigns;
- Helps people learn about and implement solar, wind, and biomass projects;
- Shares successes and lessons learned on our MN Energy Stories Blog;
- Connects individuals and organizations to clean energy financing tools; and
- Provides limited financial assistance to projects through Seed Grants.

Projects from the West Central Region upcoming this year:

- Worked with electric cooperatives to increase program outreach to cooperative members and to create more consistency across the region for opportunities.
- Provided information about community solar projects throughout the region.
- Promoted LED Street lighting upgrades
- Completed GreenStep City outreach and assistance for cities

Meander Art Crawl

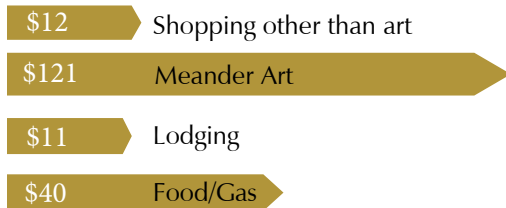
The 11th Annual Meander held in October 2014 was another success! The UMVRDC coordinates the Meander Art Crawl through planning, financial management, grant writing, marketing, distribution and communication of the event. Funding for the advertising and organization of the event comes from a grant from the Southwest Minnesota Arts Council, artist fees and the many wonderful sponsors and supporters of the Meander. The event has an economic impact on our region, which is shown below.

\$108,200

Art sales were brought in from the Meander



Average Expenditures per Customer



97-1400 Reported total number of customers at individual studios for the entire weekend.

81% plan to attend again next year

\$2,576 Average reported art sales per artist. (12% increase from 2013!)

76% Money raised to organize the Meander through sponsors and artists was spent on products or services (printing, paper, advertising, graphic design, staffing) Meander spent over \$10,000 on advertising in 2014.

Where customers came from

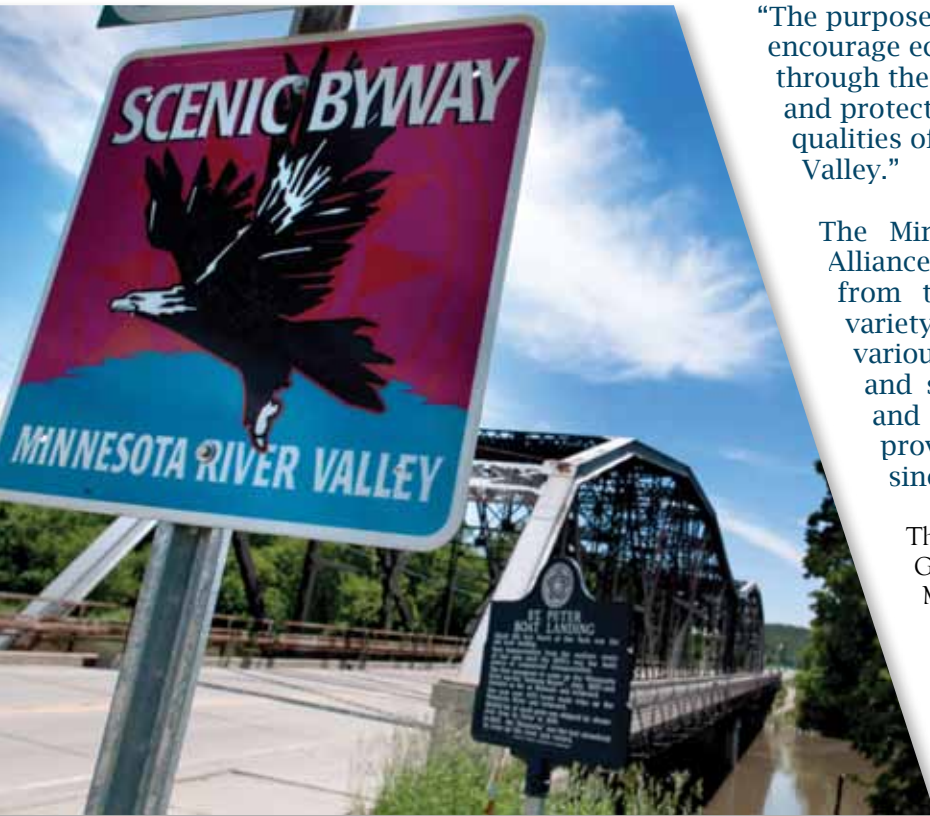
- 25%** Outside 5-County Area
- 36%** Within 5-County Area
- 20%** Metro area
- 19%** Out of State



Join us for the 2015 Meander October 2-4!

Artsmeander.com

Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway



“The purpose of the Alliance is to encourage economic development through the promotion, preservation and protection of the intrinsic qualities of the Minnesota River Valley.”

The Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway Alliance (MRVSBA) is a group of committed individuals from the 287-mile Byway Corridor representing a variety of interests including Chamber of Commerce, various attractions and historic sites, State Parks, local and state governmental bodies, private businesses, and concerned individuals. The UMRVDC has been providing staffing and fiscal services to the Byway since 1996.

This is the fourth year of the Federal Highway Administration Grant the byway received to update the Byway's Corridor Management Plan (CMP), create an interpretive plan, and develop new interpretive panels. Of these activities, the interpretive plan is complete and the CMP is in final draft form. We will be finishing designed new interpretive panels in late summer 2015.

Other projects from this past year include:

- Distribution of the new Byway Guides (printed summer 2013) to Byway businesses and attractions, the Mall of America, Travel Information Centers on the state's southern borders, as well as fulfilling visitor requests by phone and website
- NEW byway website: Mnrivervalley.com
- Organized the third annual Byway Long Garage Sale.
- Completion of a MnDOT planning grant to create a list of project along the byway, some that may utilize MnDOT Transportation Alternatives Program funding.
- Maintenance of the Byway Facebook page - this is a dynamic resource for the happenings along the Byway!



For more information contact Kristi Fernholz at kristi.fernholz@umvrdc.org 320.289.1981 x 106

Western Minnesota Prairie Waters Regional Tourism

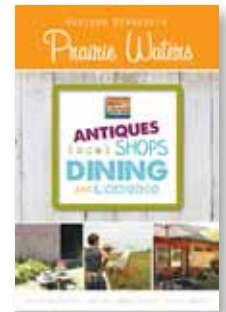
The purpose of Western Minnesota Prairie Waters is to promote our area as a great place to visit, live and work by highlighting and showcasing our natural, cultural, scenic and historical assets. Prairie Waters serves as a tourism destination marketing organizations for the four county area of Lac qui Parle, Swift, Yellow Medicine, and Chippewa.



NEW Logo!

The following are some of the highlights from the past year:

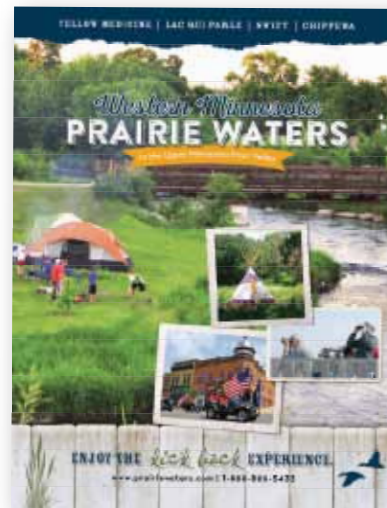
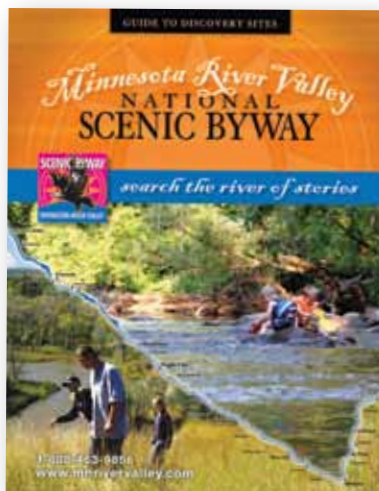
- Hosted the Annual Gathering in Granite Falls, alongside the Minnesota River. Over 50 people attended the event and participated in minnow racing and casting contests, listened to a presentation from the DNR on fishing, received door prizes, and learned about the efforts and importance of the Prairie Waters program.
- Printed the NEW 2015-2016 Regional Visitor's Guide. These guides are distributed to chambers, cities and businesses throughout the region; Travel Information Centers across the state and at the Mall of America; and are sent out upon requests through the toll free number or website. The guide is also used as a regional tool for attracting new comers to our area. In 2015 Prairie Waters responded to over 8,000 information requests.
- Wrote a successful grant to Explore Minnesota Tourism procuring \$8,000 for advertising our region.
- Launched a NEW website and logo: *Prairiewaters.com*
- Promoted the area and highlighted events on the Facebook fan page. There currently are over 4,230 followers that Prairie Waters markets to with weekly updates, photos, and links to stories about the region.
- Collaborated with Have Fun Biking Guide to promote biking in the Prairie Waters region. The guide contains maps showing bike trails, routes for road biking, and low-traffic roads that are suitable for biking.
- Created and placed numerous ads in our region's newspapers, statewide, and in out-of-state publications such as Midwest Living, AAA Home & Away, Explore Southern Minnesota and Outdoor News.
- Continue to distribute Antiques, Local Shops, Dining and Lodging Guide. This full-color guide is a comprehensive listing of shops, restaurants and accommodations available in the Prairie Waters region. It is a collaborative effort between Prairie Waters and participating Chambers of Commerce.



Local Shops Dining and Lodging Guide

For more information contact Melissa Carruth at melissa.carruth@umvrdc.org 320.289.1981 x 105

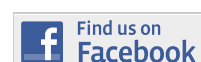
Request a FREE Guide!



Mnrivervalley.com || Prairiewaters.com



866.866.5432





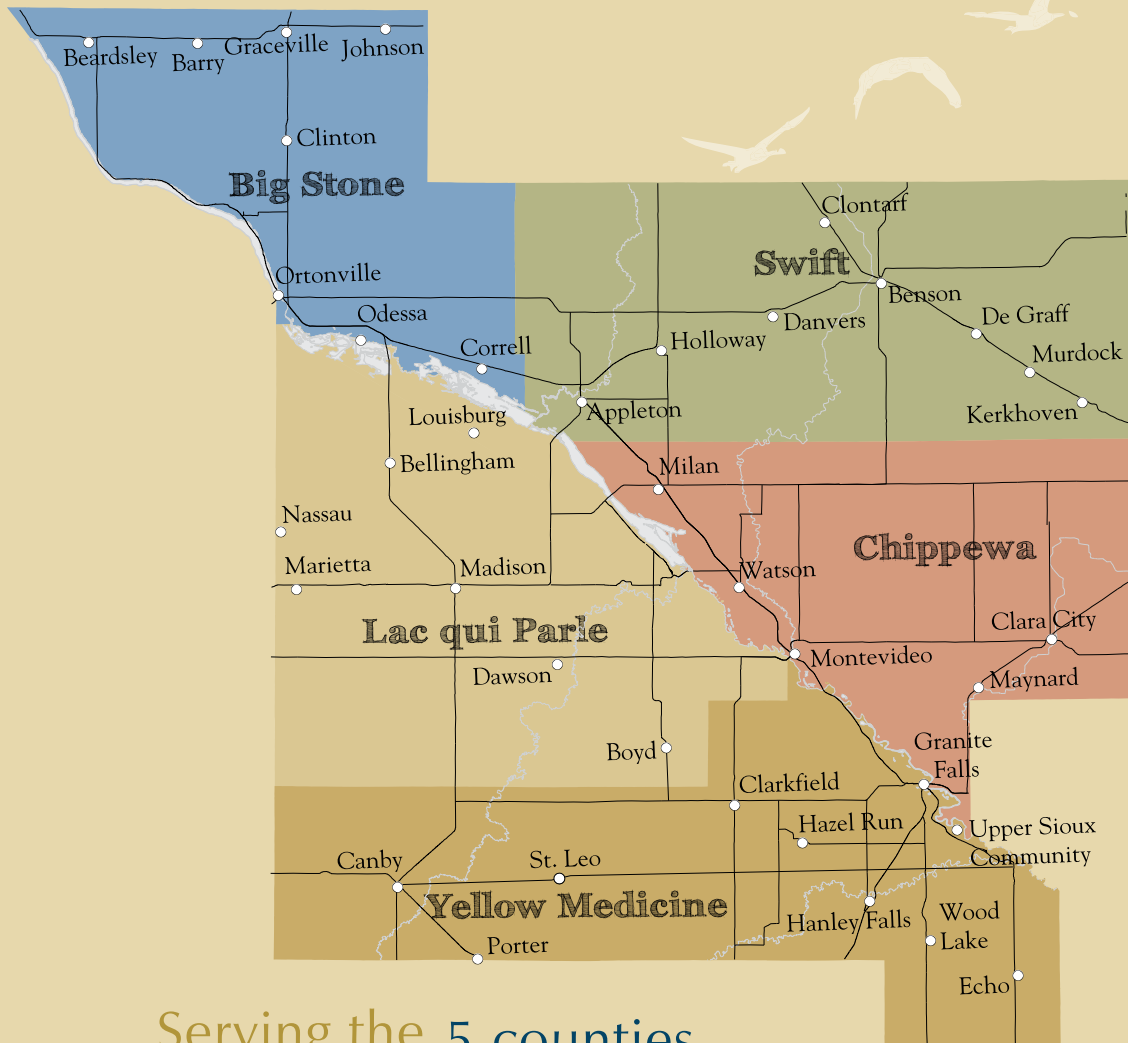
Upper Minnesota Valley
**REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION**

Helping Communities Prosper

323 W. Schlieman Ave. Appleton, MN 56208
320-289-1981

www.umvrdc.org

PRST STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT 63
APPLETON, MN



Serving the 5 counties
37 communities
1 tribal nation
94 townships
10 school districts
in the Upper Minnesota River Valley

