



Upper Minnesota Valley
**REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION**

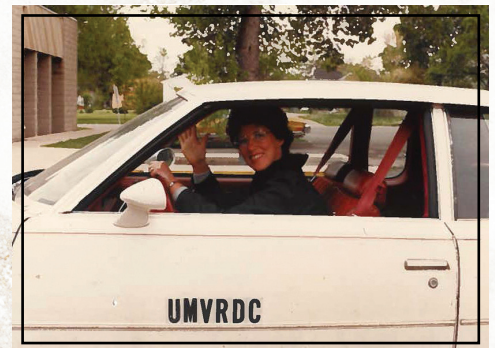
Helping Communities Prosper

50 *Years* ANNIVERSARY 1973-2023

UMVRDC FY23 Annual Report

July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023

50TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION



Serving the region for 50 years!

Message from the Executive Director

Dawn Hegland



I am honored to write this as we celebrate the golden milestone of our organization’s 50th anniversary. I have enjoyed the opportunity to research the history of the UMRDC and all those people and projects that have contributed to our rich history. It allowed for reflection, gratitude, and celebration of the remarkable journey we have embarked upon together.

Over the past five decades, our organization has left an indelible mark on the region. We have developed and supported a diverse list of projects that have contributed to the social, economic, and physical structure of communities thanks to the dedication, talent, and unwavering commitment of each and every individual who has been part of this incredible journey.

As we look back on the past 50 years, we cannot help but feel a deep sense of gratitude towards the Minnesota RDC Act and the local elected officials whose vision and determination in the early 1970’s laid the foundation for our success. Their unwavering belief in the mission of our organization continues to inspire our work to this day.

As we commemorate this occasion, let us take a moment to honor the memories, stories, and achievements that have shaped our organization’s rich history. I hope you enjoy reading about both past and current efforts of our organization in this year’s special edition annual report.

In recognition of our 50th anniversary, we have planned a series of events and initiatives that will not only celebrate our past but also lay the foundation for an even brighter future. In the coming year, we will initiate a new strategic plan, add new

employees to our team, and elect new board members as leaders for our organization. At our July 2023 Annual Meeting we will honor past board members, chairpersons, and employees, and express our gratitude to all those who have contributed to our success.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to all the past and present employees, board members, and partners who have contributed their skills, expertise, and unwavering support throughout the years providing invaluable contributions to our organization’s journey. It is through your collective efforts that we have been able to contribute time and talent to locally identified issues, projects and needs. It is because of your contributions that we stand tall today, ready to embrace the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Together, let us carry the spirit of our organization’s 50th anniversary into the future, fueled by a shared vision and unwavering determination to create a better region. Thank you for being an integral part of our organization’s success, and here’s to the next 50 years of continued growth, innovation, and impact!

With gratitude, *Dawn E. Hegland*

Message from the Board Chair

Ben Bothun



As I look back at my 2nd year as Chairman of the UMRDC I am proud of what we have accomplished and am excited about the opportunities coming down the pipeline. This year we added new board members and said goodbye to a few long-standing ones. Board turnover will allow for new ideas and opinions.

The Commission will be embarking on a new strategic plan process this year and I look forward to working with staff and board members to see what we identify as important issues to try to tackle in the next five years. In our region, childcare, housing, attracting and retaining workforce

continue to be the big issues that come up from our past annual surveys and I’m hopeful we can help our area with these issues.

I’d be remiss if I didn’t acknowledge the 50th Anniversary of the UMRDC. I want to give a big thank-you to all the past staff, board members, and local government partners that have worked to help make big changes in our area the past 50 years. I’m not sure if it’s even measurable, but the direct and indirect economic impact that the Commission has had on our region is incredible!

Lastly, I’m proud to call Western Minnesota my home and I am honored to be chair of an organization that is making it an even better place to live.



In memory of...

Kay Koosman

Kay was one of the first employees hired by the UMRDC in 1974. She served the organization as office manager until her retirement in 2008. We are thankful for her contributions to the organization for more than 34 years of service!

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Thank you for 50 years - photos throughout the decades!

Meet our team!



Dawn Hegland
Executive Director
dawn.hegland@umvrdc.org
320.289.1981 x 101



Matt Moe
Finance Director
matt@umvrdc.org
320.289.1981 x 114



Kristi Fernholz
Planning Director
kristi.fernholz@umvrdc.org
320.289.1981 x 106



Melissa Streich
Communications Manager
melissa@umvrdc.org
320.289.1981 x 105



Kevin Ketelsen
Community Development Specialist
kevin@umvrdc.org
320.289.1981 x 111



Bernice Robinson
Grant Administration Specialist
bernice@umvrdc.org
320.289.1981 x 103



Dalen Roe
Loan Specialist
dalen@umvrdc.org
320.289.1981 x 102



Jordan Hulscher
Program Assistant
jordan@umvrdc.org
320.289.1981 x 104



Jackie Sigdahl
Administrative Assistant
jackie.sigdahl@umvrdc.org
320.289.1981 x 100

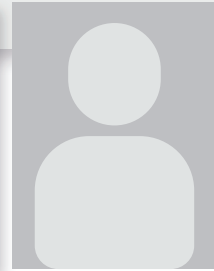


Commission Board Members

Big Stone County



Chad Zimmel
County Commissioner



Vacant
Big Stone Municipalities



Harold R. Dimberg
Ortonville Township

Chippewa County



Bill Pauling
County Commissioner



Erich Winter
Montevideo Municipalities



Jim Schmaedeka
Louriston Township

Lac qui Parle County



Ben Bothun
County Commissioner
(Chairman)



Jeff Olson
Dawson Municipalities



Jann Oellien
Hamlin Township

Swift County



Gary Hendrickx
County Commissioner



Aaron Koosmann
Hegbert Township



Vacant
Swift County Municipalities

Yellow Medicine County



John Berends
County Commissioner

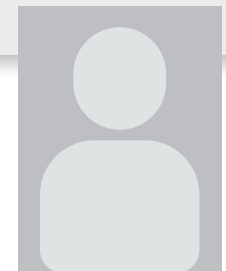


Denise Hanson
Canby Municipalities



John Cole
Fortier Township

Tribal Community



Vacant
Upper Sioux Community

Public Interest



Carrie Bendix
SW MN Private Industry Council



Diane Kepner
Prairie Five CAC, Inc. Board



Scott Marquardt
Southwest Initiative Foundation



Linda Pesch
MN West Community & Technical College

School Board



Brett Buer
Dawson-Boyd School Board



Bill McGeary
Benson School Board

Financial Report

Expenses

	FY23	FY24
Salaries/Fringe	992,165	1,142,805
Commissioner's Expense	19,200	23,100
Audit	15,500	16,800
Contract for Services	28,280	63,100
Copy Charge/Xerox lease	4,000	3,600
Depreciation	7,200	5,700
Dues	5,000	7,000
Insurance	1,300	1,300
Legal Fees	700	2,000
Miscellaneous	10,000	1,000
Office Rent	12,210	21,600
Postage	3,500	3,500
Printing/Advertising	4,500	4,500
RDC Marketing	2,000	2,000
Registration	4,000	4,000
Repairs/Maintenance	2,200	2,000
Software	9,150	8,650
Sub./Publications	2,300	2,000
Supplies	3,000	3,500
Telephone/Internet	5,000	5,000
Staff Travel	15,000	20,000
Morale	500	2,000
Wellness	1,000	2,000
Web Hosting/Maintenance	3,500	3,500
Byway Guide	12,500	
EDA Cares	38,420	
Meander	29,000	20,000
Prairie Waters Ads	23,700	15,000
	\$1,254,825	\$1,385,655

Pass through

Revenues

	FY23	FY24
Contractual Services	827,848	922,800
Levy	351,700	362,000
Reserves	74,580	96,000
Interest	2,000	5,000
	\$1,256,128	\$1,385,800

FY23 Ending Account Balances

General Checking	444,919
Money Market	22
CD	369,836
Scenic Byway	20,491
Auto	54,002
Equipment	21,790
RLF Available for Lending	1,133,094

\$16,167,611

The amount of money invested in our region as a result of the UMRDC's Work in FY23

\$902,428

Contractual services the UMRDC provided to the region

+

\$15,265,183

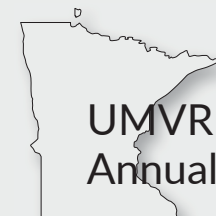
Funds brought to the region as a result of our work

The FY22 audit was conducted by Dana F. Cole & Company out of Montevideo, Minnesota. The auditor's report expresses an unmodified opinion on the General Purpose Financial Statements of the UMRDC. The audit report is available online at www.umvrdc.org.

DID YOU KNOW?



Lac qui Parle is the French translation of the Dakota name, "Lake that speaks."



UMVRDC Regional Annual Survey

The UMRDC conducted an annual survey in December 2022 to find out what the biggest issues and needs are for the region. The top ten most important issues that need attention are listed below.

1. **Planning to Retain and Increase Childcare**
2. Expose Youth to Local Career Opportunities
3. Develop Local Financial Support Solutions for Childcare
4. Increase Road/Bridge Funding
5. Development of new Rental Housing
6. Marketing & Promoting our Community/Area to Attract New Residents, Visitors, and Workforce.
7. Development of new Single Family Housing
8. Fixing up Commercial/Retail/Industrial Property
9. Demolition of Dilapidated Housing
10. Fixing up Homes/Apartments

The list above drives our workplans each year, which you'll see examples of throughout this report.

Throughout the years...

1973

The UMRDC was established on September 10, 1973, by local governments following the RDC ACT.

1975

The Six West Regional Development Commission was organized September 10, 1973, and is one of the 13 official substate regions authorized by State Legislation to receive planning grants. In accordance with the State Legislation establishing Regional Development Commissions, a comprehensive development plan will be prepared. The commission can review the comprehensive plans of local government, independent agencies, and all local government applications for Federal and State aid programs.

Other responsibilities the Commissions have been given are 1) to collect, exchange and disseminate regional data and information; 2) identify regional problems and needs

1974

Bylaws were developed, a board was created, the first office site was selected, and the staff was hired on July 15, 1974.

and propose policies to solve them; 3) help the out-state regions compete with the metro area for job opportunities; 4) act as spokesman for member governments in regional matters through committees such as Power Plant Siting Committees, State Transportation Advisory Committee, Regional Manpower Advisory Committee, Education Service Areas, Commission on Minnesota's Future and Rural Development Council. The commission enables local people to do regional planning rather than leaving planning in the hands of the State and Federal government. The Commission also provides technical assistance to local governments in the areas of planning a development, and in seeking State and Federal funds.

1975 Commission Board Members

Big Stone County

- Ray Buls
County Board
- Eugene Kashmark
City
- Alfred Schirm
Townships

Chippewa County

- Thomas Johnson
County Board
- Vernon Thorstad
City
- Ernest Dalen
Townships
- Father Henry
Public Interest Group

Lac qui Parle County

- Palmer Grinager
County Board
- Ronald Stone
City
- Forrest Dessonville
Townships

Swift County

- John Langan
County Board
- John Thompson - Chairman
City
- Wallace Larson
Townships
- Harold Heinecke
School Board
- Kathy Cavanaugh;
Joel Lee
Public Interest Group

Yellow Medicine County

- LuVerne Grinager
County Board
- Mervin Eischens
City
- Patrick Miller
Townships
- Donald Erickson
School Board

1975 First Accomplishments

- In May, EDA designated Region 6W an "Economic Development Provisional District and the RDC began development of a regional Overall Economic Development Plan.
- Advocated for a Region 6 Library District that included all counties in RDC 6E and 6W vs a much larger district.
- Advocated to MPCA that the high emphasis on population made smaller communities less of a priority for funding for city treatment facilities.
- Petitioned the Governor to formalize a regional review process for all federal and state grants and loans made in this region
- Worked on a regional comprehensive plan that included housing, land use, manpower, transportation, open space and recreation.
- Advocated for criminal justice planning money for RDC 6E, 6W, and 8.
- Participated in planning for a high voltage power line siting from Canada to the twin cities and as a result no recommendations for suitable corridors were recommended in the region.
- Provided planning and grant writing assistance to: Big Stone County, Beardsley, Correll, Ortonville, Odessa, Chippewa County, Milan, Watson, Clara City, Maynard, Montevideo, Bellingham, Boyd, Marietta, Louisburg, Dawson, Madison, Appleton, Holloway, Benson, Danvers, DeGraff, Swift County, Murdock, Clontarf, Kerkhoven, Porter, Granite Falls, Eacho, St Leo, Clarkfield, Hanley Falls, Wood Lake, Canby, Upper Sioux Reservation

1975 UMRDC Staff

- Dennis Dahlen
Executive Director
- Thomas Jorgens
Regional Planner - Land Use, Housing and Manpower
- Roy Lende
Regional Planner - Recreation, Open Space, and Grant Review
- Ruth Ray
Regional Planner - Environment and Transportation
- Nancy Carlson
Cartographer (part-time)
- Nancy Sletten
Secretary
- Kay Koosman
Bookkeeper/Typist (part-time)

1976
Began providing planning services to the Regional Manpower Advisory Committee who started regionally allocating funds for job training and employment opportunities for disadvantaged, un-employed or under-employed individuals.

1978
Developed a Regional Natural Resources Management Plan that used vast amounts of computerized data to detail current land use and established policies for future development.

1980
Telecommunications Task Force was formed to examine the telecommunications infrastructure and identify new possibilities. Worked with the Governors Council on Rural Development and KWCM-TV to broadcast a live TV panel discussion on rural issues where home viewers could call in their questions.

1982/1983
The UMRDC's Area on Aging funds home delivered meals and 14 senior nutrition site locations. It serves 14,315 people over 65, or 1/4 of the region's population.

1985
Working with area growers, shippers, bankers and the Pomme De Terre Sands Irrigators Association on a feasibility study to develop a direct export marketing organization for the area's agriculture exports. The study looked into several innovative approaches to transporting high value and specialty commodities from the Upper Mn Valley to the Pacific Northwest for shipment to the Pacific Rim.



1984

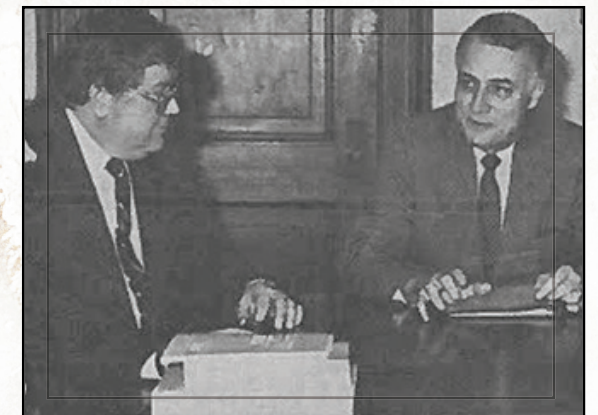
1977
Began to develop a cooperative agreement with Regions 8 and 6E to establish the Southwest Area Agency on Aging.

1979
After local concern about state and federal agencies seeking new wildlife lands, the Commission's Wildlife Task Force met to adopt plans that outlined the revenue impacts of converting land to wildlife habitat. These documents were influential in increasing state in-lieu-of payment process.

1981
Due to concern about proposed railroad line abandonment in the region, RDC staff engaged in a study to look at the formation of a short line railroad extending from Madison to Hanley Falls.

1984
Developed a regional Small Business Advisory Committee of resource providers who recommended the development of a revolving loan fund to provide long-term, below-market interest rate loans.

1986
Export trade mission to Asia included RDC staff and regional delegates to connect with potential trade partners in Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. The region started working with AgVise of Benson to identify area growers who were interested in trail crop development including edible beans, high protein grains, and certain oil seeds. The results of these trails would be presented to buyers in East Asia.



1986

DID YOU KNOW? 

Our region boasts the oldest exposed rock in the world - formed from layers of quartz, mica and similar materials over 3.8 billion years ago!



1987
After designation as an Economic Development District from EDA in May 1997 the RDC received their first \$50,000 EDA planning grant and developed an EDA workplan focusing on international trade, recreational resources planning and development and infrastructure planning and development.

1989
WesternMN RLF formed as non-profit with Big Stone, Swift, Chippewa as the first eligible counties; UMRDC conducts inventory and analysis of transit in region with the intent of creating a transit coordination program.

1991
The UMRDC's Area Agency on Aging continues to fund and promote services to older persons. Funding supports local transit, chore programs, information and referral services, leadership, and home delivered and meal site options.

1993
The UMRDC worked with MnDOT to functionally classify all roadways in the region as part of a statewide study. This included ranking the economic centers in the region according to classifications identified by the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs.

1995
UMVRDC co-sponsored the Value Added Products conference in Montevideo. The goal was to explore ideas for value-added agricultural products and processing.

1988
After organizing the region's first regional tourism coalition the year before, the group developed their first regional tourism guide published and branded "Land of the Prairie Waters"

1990
A grant from the Legislative Committee of Minnesota Resources will be used to fund some research, through the University of Minnesota, to investigate feedstock cost in the manufacturing of a biodegradable plastic.

1992
UMVRDC submitted an application to EDA to expand the WesMN RLF (the original name of the UMRDC's RLF fund) from Big Stone, Chippewa and Swift to now include Lac qui Parle and Yellow Medicine Counties making the fund cover the entire 5 county region; Prepared an application for the city of Appleton to EDA and the MN Economic Recovery Program for infrastructure improvements to support the development of a 494 bed medium security prison.

1994
The UMRDC awarded eight industrial development grants totaling \$40,000 to businesses in Big Stone, Chippewa, and Swift Counties. The money is to rehabilitate and develop vacant and underutilized properties.

1996
Submitted a capacity building grant on behalf of local housing and redevelopment authorities for education and training that would support housing needs of the region.

1997
Provided significant grant writing and support to communities affected by wide spread flooding in the region impacted homes, businesses, and infrastructure. Hired a regional flood coordinator to assist with recovery coordination; The MN River Valley Scenic Byway Alliance was formed and coordinated by the UMRDC.

1999
The UMRDC formed the Geographic Information Service Bureau for the region to provide maps, data and analysis of geographic information for many local and regional projects.

2001
Started a fully staffed regional tourism program with funding from local governments.

2003
Began assisting counties with Hazard Mitigation Plans after the passing of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 required plan to access FEMA funding.

2005
The Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging consolidated aging programs from four regional development commissions in SW MN.


1998
The UMRDC was a Minnesota pilot project for developing community-based plans integrating sustainability principals.

2000
Aging program continues into fourth season of the Senior Linkage TV series, a locally produced TV program about senior issues.

2002
After significant flood and tornado impacts, and loss of jobs due to major employer closures, applied for additional disaster recovery revolving loan funds to assist in the recovery.

2004
Coordinated regional application for Job Opportunity Building Zones (JOBZ). Businesses worked with subzone communities in the region to expand or start new businesses with the assistance of the JOBZ program; Coordinated first annual Meander Art Crawl.

2006
The WesMN RLF made loans totaling \$242,000 to new and expanding businesses in the region, leveraging nearly \$2 million in other public, private and owner funds for projects that created new business and job growth. These loans will result in 34 jobs being created and nine retained.

DID YOU KNOW? 

Chippewa County boasts one of the largest Cottonwoods in Minnesota

50 *Years*



1988



1989



1991



1999



2003

2007
UMVRDC develops outmigration study completed in southwestern Minnesota after ongoing population loss over last 30 years.

2009
Started working on broadband issues in the region: wrote an application to expand broadband in Appleton; completed inventory of regional providers; and established need and use by businesses.

2011
Developed region's first locally developed public transit human service coordination plan to identify transit needs for older adults, those with disabilities, and people with low income.

2013
UMVRDC created set of demographic summaries for cities, counties and the region that summarize results of the newly available census information.

2015
UMVRDC authored a \$3.9 million grant for fiber to premise broadband development in Big Stone County to the new Minnesota Border to Border Program.

2008
Conducted a series of renewable energy forums looking at wind energy potential in the region.

2010
Worked with University of MN Extension to develop research paper and marketing strategies to attract newcomers to the region.

2012
Assisted five school district with the first Safe Routes to School Plans that outline opportunities to encourage more children to bike or walk to school.

2014
Following the Rural Arts Summit in 2013, the RDC followed up with communities interested in public art in the region and started creating a toolbox of ideas and resources.


2016
Began providing staff support to the West Central Region's Clean Energy Resource Team to help identify and implement local clean energy ideas.

2017
Authored "Charting the Future of Local Foods" study completed with 58 action steps to expand local foods capacity.

2019
Supported multiple efforts to look at housing and redevelopment in the region: hosted a regional forum to share how communities address dilapidation, completed a system for local housing condition inventory, and authored multiple grants for rehabilitation and redevelopment.

2021
Completed first inventory of vacant and underutilized properties in the region and worked with five communities to develop conceptual redevelopment at select locations.

2023
Completed a two year grant to address COVID related recovery in the region. The project included a redevelopment feasibility plan, study business retention and expansion efforts, broadband and childcare work, regional marketing, digital commerce training, developable property inventory updates.

DID YOU KNOW? 

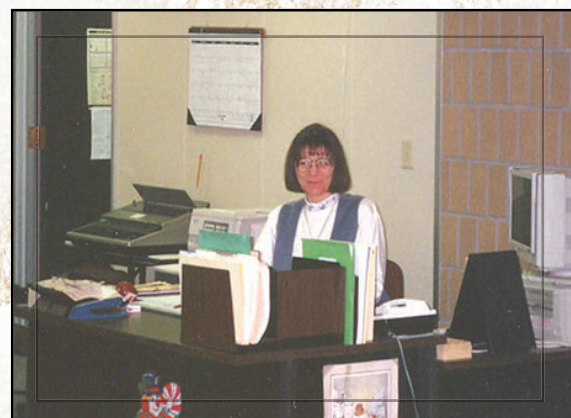
Red River Trail – 150-year-old ox cart ruts are still visible in the prairie soil near the Lac qui Parle village site.

50 Years

2018
Began following the childcare issue in our area and started developing childcare case studies to showcase how different communities are collaborating on childcare facilities and programs.

2020
Developed multiple master plans and grant applications to enhance recreation infrastructure in the region including projects for Swift and Lac qui Parle County, Granite Falls.

2022
Wrote successful grants for the City of Appleton and Madison to install broadband infrastructure main fiber lines within city limits.



2008



2012



2016




2018




2022

Improving our Region's Infrastructure

DID YOU KNOW? 

Brad Rheingans is an Appleton native known for his Olympic honors in Greco-Roman wrestling, and was a member of the 1980 U.S. Olympic team.



Chippewa County Border to Border Broadband Grant Awarded

In December, the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development announced that Farmers Mutual Telephone Company (FMTC) was the recipient of \$4,728,186 in grant funding for a large broadband project in northern Chippewa County through the Border-to-Border program. The UMRDC partnered with Chippewa County and FMTC to prepare the successful application for the \$10.5 million project last summer. Local matching funds in the amount of \$5,778,894 are being provided by the County, FMTC, and Rosewood and Louriston Townships.

This last mile project will provide fiber to the premise service to 636 unique locations across 10 townships in rural portions of Chippewa County. 577 of these locations are unserved and 59 are under-served. The locations served include 15 community institutions like township halls, churches, or other public property; 10 rural businesses; 256 farms and 355 residential locations. Building this fiber-to-the-premise network that provides advanced, high-speed broadband services will position Chippewa County for the future.

Together, Farmers Mutual Telephone Company, Chippewa County, Louriston and Rosewood Townships and the State of Minnesota will share the cost to provide 300 megabits per second symmetrical or 1G symmetrical service throughout the project area, exceeding Minnesota's 2026 state speed goal. The project area has little or no current access to consistent and reliable broadband. This lack of access prevents the locations in this grant from participating in a digital economy, tele-health, e-learning, precision agriculture, integrating smart technologies into the homes and buildings, and participating in social, civic and recreational online activities. Broadband access will also help attract and retain residents and businesses in the county that supports the local economy and tax base. Building a fiber-to-the-premise network that provides advanced, high-speed broadband services will position Chippewa County for the future.

\$4,728,186

Grant Awarded

MnDOT Planning Grant Assists in Transportation Infrastructure

The UMRDC provides transportation planning assistance to the region through a contract with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT). The RDC serves as a member of two different MnDOT Area Transportation Partnerships (ATPs). They review and prioritize federally funded road, bridge, public transit, and transportation alternative projects. This involvement ensures local feedback is considered when planning the projects, ensuring the best investment for our region. Over the next five years, the five-county region will see an investment of more than a \$4 million to area roads, bridges and other transportation infrastructure.

In 2021, Federal legislation passed the IIJA/BIL Bill which created a significant increase of funding earmarked for transportation. For this region, success will depend on forward thinking leadership aligning the critical needs of our region with these funds. Examples of local projects that benefited

from an increase in funding and new programs include three Transportation Alternative projects were awarded \$1.34 million in Chippewa County including the reconstruction of the Milan to Lac qui Parle Lake trail, the reconstruction of the Highland Park Trail in Granite Falls, and the installation of a HAWK (high intensity activated crosswalk) beacon at the intersection of Minnesota Highway 7 and 24th Street in Montevideo. Lac qui Parle was successfully awarded a \$553,656 PROTECT (promoting resilient operations for transportation efficient, and cost saving transportation) grant to stabilize the riverbank of the Lac qui Parle River adjacent to County State Aid Highway 31 and Big Stone County Highway Department will lease an electric vehicle through the Carbon Reduction Program.

Transportation Investments

\$4,320,623

Broadband Grants Provide New Options in Appleton and Madison

The UMRDC wrote and is administering two federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act grants.

\$3,699,000

City of Appleton

Appleton is completing the installation of a city-wide fiber broadband network for residents and businesses within the City of Appleton. The grant also included a commercial rehabilitation component for at least 12 businesses to update new or repair heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems with good ventilation and safe air circulation. The total project

\$2,560,000

City of Madison

cost for Appleton is \$5,774,000 and includes a grant request of \$3,699,000.

Madison is nearing completion of the installation of broadband infrastructure to residential and non-residential properties within the city limits. The total project cost for Madison is \$4,560,000 and includes a grant request of \$2,560,000.



Granite Falls Trail Improvements

The Highland Park Trail connecting downtown Granite Falls with Highland Park serves as a critical connection for recreation, safe routes to school, and connects the Highland Park neighborhood to downtown Granite Falls. The trail was built in 1999 and funded by a Transportation Enhancement grant written by the UMRDC. After 20 plus years of useful life, the trail needed replacement.

Working with the City of Granite Falls, the UMRDC wrote a successful Transportation Alternatives grant application for \$244,600. The project will be completed in 2027.

Grant Awarded

\$244,600





Swift County Implements OHV Park Improvements

In January 2022, the UMRDC assisted Swift County in submitting an application to the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) competitive grant programs. Swift County applied for funding under the ARPA Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Program for improvements to the Appleton Area Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Park. The County requested funding to carry out many of the identified projects listed in their 2021 Appleton Area OHV Park Master Plan, such as the creation of a day use beach area, walking trails, improved parking areas, permanent

restroom facilities, new wells, vehicle wash stations, and improved signage.

Swift County was notified in August that they were awarded \$1,034,196 in federal funds to carry out the proposed improvements. The total project cost is estimated to be \$1,477,423. The UMRDC is now assisting the County with grant administration services including recently procuring an engineering firm to design the project and oversee construction activities. Construction is expected to begin in 2024.

Grant Awarded
\$1,034,196

Benson Protects Critical Infrastructure

The UMRDC wrote a federal EDA grant for \$1.4 million for the City of Benson to construct flood protection that will protect and enhance the reliability and resiliency of critical wastewater treatment services in the city. The UMRDC is currently working as the grant administrator for the project.

Grant Awarded
\$1,400,000

Granite Falls Seeks Improvement to Electrical Network

The UMRDC is currently assisting the City of Granite Falls with a grant application for improvements to its electrical grid system. The application is for funding through the Economic Development Administration's (EDA) FY23 Disaster Funding which is in response to the natural disasters of 2021 and 2022. To be eligible, applicants must be located in counties that were included in the Presidentially-Declared major natural disaster areas across the country. All five of our counties are included as a result of the May 2022 windstorms. This funding will help communities devise and implement long-term economic recovery strategies to recover and become resilient to future disasters through a variety of construction and non-construction projects.

Memorial Park Continues to Make Improvements

The UMRDC continues to assist the City of Granite Falls with improvements to Memorial Park, which was designated a regional park in 2016 by the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission. The UMRDC has helped with funding requests, environmental review, and master planning process. The UMRDC continues to assist Granite Falls in implementing their master plan.

This past year, the UMRDC assisted with the environmental review for Phase IV of the master plan, which will rehab the entrance gates, add amenities to the picnic area, and complete the trail around the wetland. This grant for \$569,973 is expected to be completed in 2023.

Grant Awarded
\$569,973

Plans for our Region's Future

DID YOU KNOW? 

Chad Greenway, former MN Viking is a strong promoter of Grey Duck Vodka made at CVEC in Benson.

50 Years

EDA Planning Grant

Through a planning grant provided by the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA), the UMRDC develops and maintains the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the region, as well as carries out economic development activities. The CEDS was recently updated in 2022 and in January, we submitted an annual performance report which provides the EDA with a summary of accomplishments over the past year related to the goals of the CEDS. In addition to the report, UMRDC staff convenes a group of economic development professionals from the region on a quarterly basis to share ideas, hear from speakers, and network with each other. This group is currently working together to host a workforce summit this fall for the region's employers. The event will provide employers with information on resources, current trends, and successful examples to address workforce shortages.

Madison Comprehensive Plan

The City of Madison contracted with the UMRDC to begin work on updating its 2003 Comprehensive Plan. A comprehensive plan is a tool that presents a community's vision and policies for the long-range future by incorporating public input and goals gathered through a robust planning process. The plan will cover such topics as Land Use/Zoning, Housing, Public Infrastructure/Facilities/Services, Transportation, Economic Development, Parks/Recreation/Natural Resources, and Community Vitality. In addition, the plan serves as a legal basis for zoning and provides guidance for elected officials and other decision makers when considering future development and expenditures.

The planning process kicked off in December with a community survey which yielded over 300 responses! In February, the UMRDC and City staff facilitated a community meeting with over 125 residents in attendance. Work continues on the plan as the UMRDC and a local planning task force committee meet to develop goals and strategies to guide the City over the next 10-20 years.



Upper Sioux Community All-Hazard Mitigation Plan Update

As a result of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requires that local units of government must first have in place a multi-hazard mitigation plan to be eligible for Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funds. The UMRDC was contracted in the spring of 2021 to complete the update for the Upper Sioux Community (USC).

From March 2021 through May 2022, ten planning meetings were held with USC staff to update all plan information. All data and historical information needed to be updated. New hazards needed to be cataloged. All changes and completed strategies were documented. New strategies were developed based on changes in climate or other new local conditions to mitigate and negative impacts of those hazards. These strategies were prioritized.

A public review process was held in July-August 2022. FEMA reviewed and approved the plan, and the plan was adopted by the USC Tribal Council in October 2022.

Chippewa County Hazard Mitigation Plan

The UMRDC is currently working with Chippewa County Emergency Management to update the County's Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan. Hazard mitigation planning helps identify strategies and projects to prevent or lessen the impacts of disasters on communities, infrastructure, and natural environments, making them more resilient against future disasters and thus reducing the costs of recovery. Jurisdictions with plans in place are also eligible to apply for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) hazard mitigation grant funding. Hazard Mitigation plans are required by FEMA to be updated every five years. The UMRDC and County Emergency Management met with local committees in each of the communities, as well as a County committee to collect information and update their strategies. The plan is nearing completion and should be done in fall 2023.



Swift County Solid Waste Plan

Swift County contracted with the UMRDC in May to assist in updating its 2013 Solid Waste Management Plan. UMRDC staff and the Swift County Environmental Department will work to develop a policy-based road map for how the County intends to reduce waste, increase recycling, and divert waste from landfills. These plans are required by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to be updated every ten years. Work on the plan has just begun with completion anticipated by February 2024.

Big Stone County Solid Waste Plan

Big Stone County contracted with the UMRDC to assist in updating its 2012 Solid Waste Management Plan. UMRDC staff and the Big Stone County Environmental Department worked to develop a policy-based road map for how the County intends to reduce waste, increase recycling, and divert waste from landfills. These plans are required by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to be updated every ten years. Big Stone County's plan was completed in February, approved by the MPCA, and adopted by the County Commissioners in May.

Upper Sioux Community Emergency Operations Plan

The UMRDC recently contracted with the Upper Sioux Community to update their Emergency Operations Plan. The basic purpose of an Emergency Operations Plan is to provide a guide for emergency operations. The plan is intended to assist key Reservation officials and emergency organizations to carry out their responsibilities for the protection of life and property under a wide range of emergency conditions and scenarios. Work on the plan has just begun and is anticipated to be completed in fall 2023.

Safe Routes To School

The Clinton-Graceville-Beardsley (CGB) School District was awarded \$38,515 from MnDOT to create Safe Routes to School plans for Clinton and Graceville. Through public outreach and assessment of current infrastructure and programs, the Safe Routes to School team was able to identify a list of potential infrastructure and non-infrastructure solutions to help more children walk and bicycle safely to school.

The Safe Routes to School plan for each community can be found on the UMRDC website.

The CGB School District also received \$5000 from MnDOT to pay for bike racks and a bike fix-it station to be installed in the summer of 2023.

Grant Awarded

\$38,515

DEED Digital Inclusion Mini-Grant

In March, the UMRDC was designated as a Digital Connection Committee by the DEED Office of Broadband Development (OBD). The UMRDC convened key stakeholders in the region and provide information to the State as they develop the statewide digital equity plan to understand what the digital inclusion needs and goals are in Minnesota.

The UMRDC received a mini-grant to assist in the development of the state's digital equity plan, by collecting input and information in three ways. In May and June, staff:

- Collected information on issues such as technology access/use at home, barriers to broadband access, and using technology through a regional public survey
- Conducted a focus group discussion
- Inventoried the available technology assets/services in our region and identified gaps/needs in those areas through a targeted survey

This work concluded at the end of June with the UMRDC submitting its survey results and focus group meeting findings to the OBD to be included in the state's digital equity plan.

DID YOU KNOW?

The city of Kerkhoven's name is Dutch, meaning church cemetery.



Local Human Services – Transit Coordination Plan

The UMRDC worked in partnership with Prairie Five Community Action Council to update the region's Local Human Services - Transit Coordination Plan. This plan is completed every five years to assist stakeholders as they determine ways to improve transportation for non-drivers and others with transportation challenges, especially seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income people. It serves as a blueprint for regional transportation coordination. The plan describes demographic conditions, gives an updated inventory and highlights gaps in unmet needs.

Responding to Critical Issues

EDA CARES Supplemental Grant

The UMRDC received a Supplemental Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) grant through the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) in 2020 to work on a variety of projects addressing the economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. All of the work covered under this grant was completed by December 31, 2022.

Comprehensive Planning with a Focus on Resiliency

CARES funds were used to build staff understanding and knowledge around community resiliency/sustainability concepts - a relatively new area of expertise to the UMRDC. New connections were made with experts and other Economic Development District staff in this field to gain knowledge and examples of work that could be implemented in the region. An internal informational document was created for all UMRDC staff, as well as a new Resiliency Resource web page for stakeholders and communities. With this added capacity, the UMRDC plans to actively seek out communities ready to implement a resiliency plan or project.

Digital marketing/E-commerce webinars

Many small businesses were severely impacted by disruptions and closures during the pandemic. The UMRDC partnered with a local marketing firm to offer 15 online webinars covering a wide range of helpful topics for small businesses such as hiring, marketing, and social media. Recordings of the webinars are now available on the UMRDC website, below are a few examples:

- Speed Up Your Hiring Process & Fill Your Open Positions
- Facebook: Dominating the World #1 Social Media Platform
- Google Ads for Small Budgets
- Getting Found Online & On Maps
- Understanding Google My Business

Deb Brown Visit

The UMRDC and the Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF) partnered to bring nationally known speaker Deb Brown to the region to talk about the redevelopment of underutilized spaces in communities. Deb met with economic development professionals from southwestern Minnesota and brainstormed specific examples, followed by a presentation. This event supports the redevelopment potential of properties in our developable properties inventory and the resulting community visioning that UMRDC staff completed with Dawson, Madison, Montevideo, Benson, and Ortonville on one property in each of their communities. The event also is in alignment with one of the goals in the recent CEDS to support and grow the number of businesses in our region by emphasizing redevelopment opportunity areas to provide places for entrepreneurs to open businesses.

Regional Demolition Fund Feasibility Study

UMVRDC used CARES funding to work on a new and creative approach to addressing the long-standing issue of vacant and dilapidated properties in the region. The first step in this work was working with the University of Minnesota Extension to have them investigate and prepare research on existing regional demolition/redevelopment funds. Staff surveyed local governments and the results showed that property demolition funding should be the focus prior to further investigation into redevelopment funding. The UMRDC sent out a Request for Proposals and ultimately selected Ehlers Public Finance Advisors to develop a feasibility report for demolition of properties. Ehlers study recommended having interested counties form a multi-county Housing and Redevelopment Authority in order to have taxing capabilities which would provide a continuous source of funding for the program.

Upon completion of the report, UMRDC and Ehlers presented the findings of the study to county partners to gauge interest in the recommended actions. UMRDC staff also plan to continue discussion with Ehlers on the idea of doing a similar redevelopment fund feasibility report. A copy of the report and a recording of the presentation can be found on the UMRDC website on the Redevelopment Resources page.



Childcare Public Outreach

The UMRDC partnered with Southwest Initiative Foundation to create a series of articles highlighting the challenges with child care at the national and local levels. The articles include shocking data that is a concern for the current and future of our workforce. On a brighter note, there are numerous employers, cities and counties who have shown financial support to local centers. The targeted audience for this campaign is local residents, employers and elected officials – showcasing why child care is a broken system and strategies to help overcome the issue. Below are the three topics from the outreach campaign:

- The Domino Effect
- The Financial Rollercoaster
- Regional Community Efforts

A copy of the articles can be found on the UMRDC website.

UMVRDC assists Lac qui Parle County with Business Loan Program

Following the UMRDC's assistance in writing the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Business Development Grant application Lac qui Parle County Economic Development Authority received \$100,000 in grant funds to establish a Revolving Loan Fund. Those grant dollars, paired with local matching funds provide a resource for funding new or expanding businesses. The UMRDC provides support to the County by working with applicants, managing loan payments, and working with a local loan review committee to review applications.

Currently, the County has two active loans, Hilltop Bar and Grill in Dawson and The Sticks in Madison.



DID YOU KNOW?

On Dec. 8, 1982, the City of Madison was named the Lutfisk Capital of the United States.

Helping our Region's Businesses

UMVRDC Revolving Loan Fund

A combination of 30 full and part time jobs were created or retained as a result of the 2 new business loans closed by the UMRDC during this last year. In total, the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) lent \$450,000 to businesses in the five-county region. Loans for the businesses listed below were approved for equipment, inventory, fixed assets, and real estate.

A total of \$450,000 of RLF funds along with additional public and private dollars were spent on these two projects. Financial partners in the projects include local banks, Southwest Initiative Foundation, Granite Falls Economic Development Authority, and the Benson Economic Development Authority.

\$150,000

Winter Family Enterprises, Inc. - Montevideo

\$300,000

Donner Manufacturing Inc. - Clara City

UMVRDC Revolving Loan Fund Portfolio
as of 6/30/23

\$4M
Total loan Funds

Total Receivables | **\$2,863,141**
Loans in portfolio | **41**
Total Lending Available | **\$1,133,094**

Revitalizing our Communities

Small Cities Development Program Grant Management

UMVRDC staff continue to author grant applications and provide general administration of the MN Department of Employment and Economic Development Small Cities Development Program (SCDP) which helps cities and communities with funding for housing rehabilitation for owner occupied and single-family rental homes along with multi-family rental unit rehabilitation, public infrastructure, and commercial rehabilitation projects. A shortage of contractors, especially those bidding on projects continues to challenge the program along with material delays and high materials costs.

Granite Falls and **Clarkfield** completed their grants this fall after being extended for one year. Granite Falls rehabbed 10 owner-occupied homes along with four single family rental homes and six commercial properties. Almost \$900,000 in project funds will provide a significant amount of impact throughout the community.

The Clarkfield \$1,104,520 grant rehabbed 11 owner-occupied homes and five commercial properties. The grant also included \$600,000 for the water tower project. The water tower is part of the \$23.4 million dollar infrastructure projects in Clarkfield.

Milan and **Watson** received a yearlong extension last year and will be ending at the end of September 2023. Milan and Watson's total improvements will be close to \$1.1 million. The grant will rehab 10 owner-occupied homes along with eight multi-family rental units and four commercial properties.

Canby also received a yearlong extension last year and will be ending at the end of September 2023. Grant funds will allow 11 owner occupied homes and eight commercial businesses to receive needed rehabilitation totaling over \$1 million.

Appleton is in the last year of their grant and will close at the end of September. Appleton's goal is to rehab 18 owner occupied homes and 5 commercial properties, totaling \$1,057,530 in improvements.

Clara City is in the last year of their grant and will close at the end of September. Clara City's goal is to rehab 10 owner occupied homes, eight single-family rental homes and four commercial properties. The total funds that will impact the city is \$902,209.

Benson is in the second year of their grant and plans to rehab 20 owner occupied homes and 10 commercial properties. Benson's total project will impact the community by \$1,194,700.

Dawson is in the second year of their grant and plans to rehab 18 owner occupied homes and four commercial properties. The total impact to the community is \$769,300.

Ortonville is in the first year of their grant. The grant will rehab 16 owner-occupied homes and seven commercial properties. The total project will be over \$900,000. 23 projects will make a huge impact on the community.

Clarkfield SCDP Project Income Administration

The UMVRDC provides project income administration for the City of Clarkfield for their recent Small Cities Development Program. The UMVRDC tracks and services loans and serves as the contact for borrowers. The UMVRDC is working with the city to develop a policy to administer the relending of the funds.



Maynard Bank Building

The UMVRDC continues to assist the City of Maynard with their historic Maynard State Bank building on implementing the conditions assessment and preserving this historic building. Staff wrote a successful grant to the Minnesota Historical Society in early 2022 for a Historical and Cultural Grant for \$155,260 to replace the roof in 2023.

Gra-Mar Court Administration

The UMVRDC is also providing general administration of the SCDP funds for Gra-Mar Court Multi Family Rental property located in Kerkhoven. The Swift County Housing and Redevelopment Authority recently purchased the building, and the project will extensively renovate the 16-unit building. The SCDP funds include \$230,000 that will be used towards the total rehabilitation costs of over \$1,000,000. Other sources of funds for the project includes USDA Rural Development, Minnesota Housing Finance Authority Rental Rehabilitation Deferred Loan Program (RRDL), Federal Home Loan Bank, Swift County and the Swift County Housing and Redevelopment Authority.

DID YOU KNOW?

Dawson has an entire park filled with gnome statues that have meaning for different people in the town, making Dawson Gnometown USA!



Promoting our Region's Assets

Arts Meander

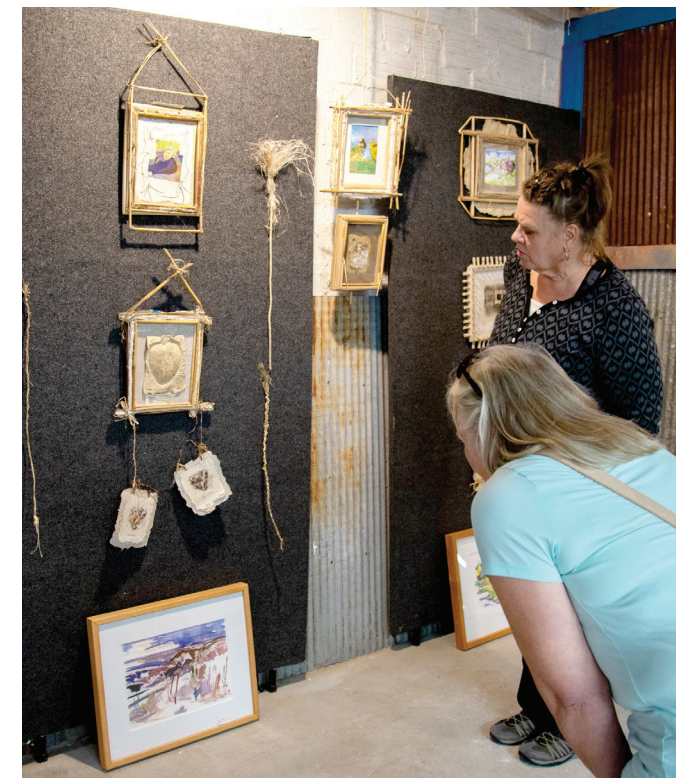
2022 marked the 19th annual Meander Art Crawl which continues to be a successful event in the region. The UMVRDC continues to provide technical and financial management for the Meander since its inception and is pleased to see continued growth and support for the event.

In 2022, there was a total of \$131,357 art sales throughout the weekend. Event goers came from near and far to visit the 41 artists located throughout Big Stone, Swift, Lac qui Parle, Chippewa, and Yellow Medicine counties. The Meander provides a great opportunity to showcase the area and provides a large economic boost the small businesses.



- 83% of customers said the quality of the art was excellent
- 86% Customers spent an average of \$48 on food/gas
- \$3,402 Average reported art sales per artist
- Customers visited 12 studios on average
- Customers spent an average of \$24 on shopping outside of the Meander art

\$131,357
Meander Art Sales





Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway

The UMRDC has been providing staffing and fiscal services to the byway since 1996. The Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway (MRVSB) is a partnership of committed individuals from the 287-mile byway corridor, representing a variety of interests including chambers of commerce, various attractions and historic sites, state parks, local and state governmental bodies, private businesses, and concerned individuals.

The Byway plays an important role in linking and promoting historical sites and stories to better tell the history of the Minnesota River Valley through a variety of efforts, including its programs, website, roadside signs, brochures, and other marketing materials.

- Advertised in the Minnesota State Visitors Guide.
- Advertised videos on Pioneer Public TV and KSMQ Public TV.
- Worked on three Byway Orientation Maps.
- Continue to update the byway website and Facebook Page.
- Continue to work on the Byway Partnership Grant to complete itineraries.
- Completed three itineraries featured in the new visitors guide: Dakota Language Tour, Wacipi Guide, and Ice, Rock, and Water

Western Minnesota Prairie Waters Regional Marketing

Western Minnesota Prairie Waters is a regional marketing effort promoting the four counties of Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Yellow Medicine, Swift, and their communities. The purpose is to promote the area as a great place to visit, work, and live by highlighting the region's natural, cultural, scenic, historic assets, and lifestyle. The program is managed by the UMRDC and is funded by counties, cities, chambers, and economic development organizations in the region.

The 2023 Prairie Waters Members include Chippewa County, Montevideo/CVB, Milan, Swift County, Benson, Kerkhoven, Appleton, Lac qui Parle County, Dawson, Madison, Yellow Medicine County, Canby, Clarkfield, and Granite Falls/EDA.

DID YOU KNOW? 

Downtown Montevideo you'll find José Artigas, the national hero of Uruguay who has stood guard over this small Minnesota town for 62 years.

50 *Years*

Regional Website: www.prairiewaters.com The website is a one-stop-shop that includes information on employment opportunities, housing, education, healthcare, child care, things to do, etc.

Co-sponsored Community Events: Worked with the Madison Chamber to sponsor four Christmas movies throughout the month of December at the Grand Theater in Madison. Worked with the City of Dawson in sponsoring a Christmas event – sponsored hot dogs, smores, and hot chocolate.

Advertising: Prairie Waters received a \$10,000 grant in 2022, and a \$2,500 grant in 2023 through Explore Minnesota Tourism to spend locally on advertising our communities and events.

Live & Work Here: The Prairie Waters website and social media pages highlight the region's lifestyle with information on the following: housing, healthcare, education, child care, cost of living, and things to do. The website also includes information on employment opportunities, technology/ broadband services, site selector, start/expand a business, and more.

Guide Distribution: Distributed guides through the communities to businesses, chambers and encouraged employers to utilize the guides for workforce recruitment. The guides are also displayed in the visitor kiosk at the Mall of America, and available in a digital format.

Job Listings



Search Keywords
Enter Keywords

Filtering

Clear Filters

By Company

By Location

- Appleton, MN
- Bellingham, MN
- Benson, MN
- Boyd, MN
- Canby, MN
- Clara City, MN
- Clarkfield, MN
- Clontarf, MN
- Danvers, MN

Maintenance Technician - PURIS Proteins - Dawson, MN

PURIS Proteins | Dawson, MN | Posted 3 months ago

Ability to understand and work from complex mechanical and electrical diagrams, drawings, schematics, specifications, and flow diagrams and interpret them to...From Indeed - Tue, 08 Mar 2022 06:25:15 GMT - View all Dawson, MN jobs

View Listing

Conditions Based Monitoring (CBM) Lead - PURIS Proteins - Dawson, MN

PURIS Proteins | Dawson, MN | Posted 3 months ago

Manage or deploy technology based on EMP, field inspections, data collection, and analysis as applicable, in accordance with best practice standards.From Indeed - Fri, 04 Mar 2022 18:33:37 GMT - View all Dawson, MN jobs



Get Rural Workforce Recruitment

Created a toolkit that includes lifestyle information for an employer to send to a potential new employee as a welcoming package.

Created a new widget on the Prairie Waters website that pulls local employment opportunities from multiple different online job boards and local employers to one location where a user can filter by keywords, employer, and/or location. In addition, we launched a four-month Google Adwords marketing campaign to drive users to the new web page.

Learn more about the region at <https://prairiewaters.com/>



We thank you for celebrating 50 years of service with us!



Upper Minnesota Valley
**REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION**

Helping Communities Prosper

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

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