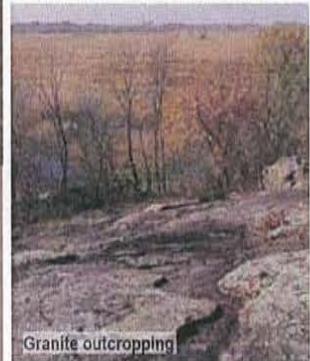


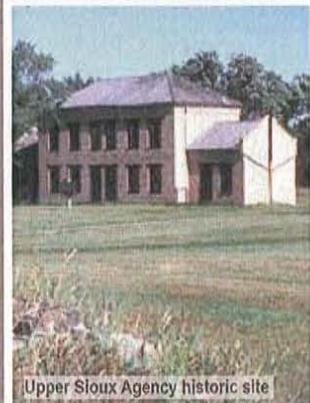
Scenic Minnesota River valley



American white pelicans



Granite outcropping



Upper Sioux Agency historic site

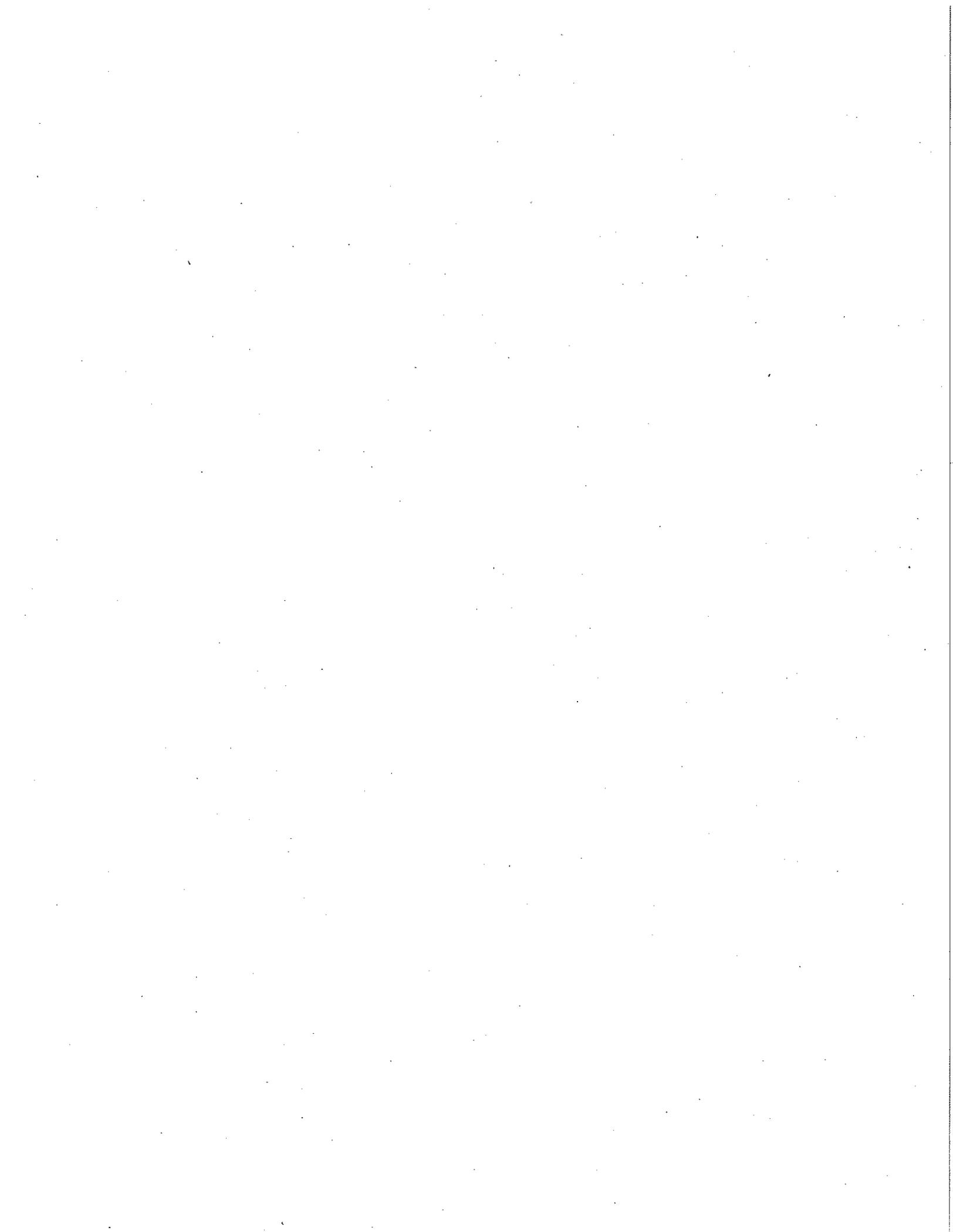
Minnesota River State Trail Master Plan

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Division of Trails Waterways

February 2008





Minnesota River State Trail Master Plan



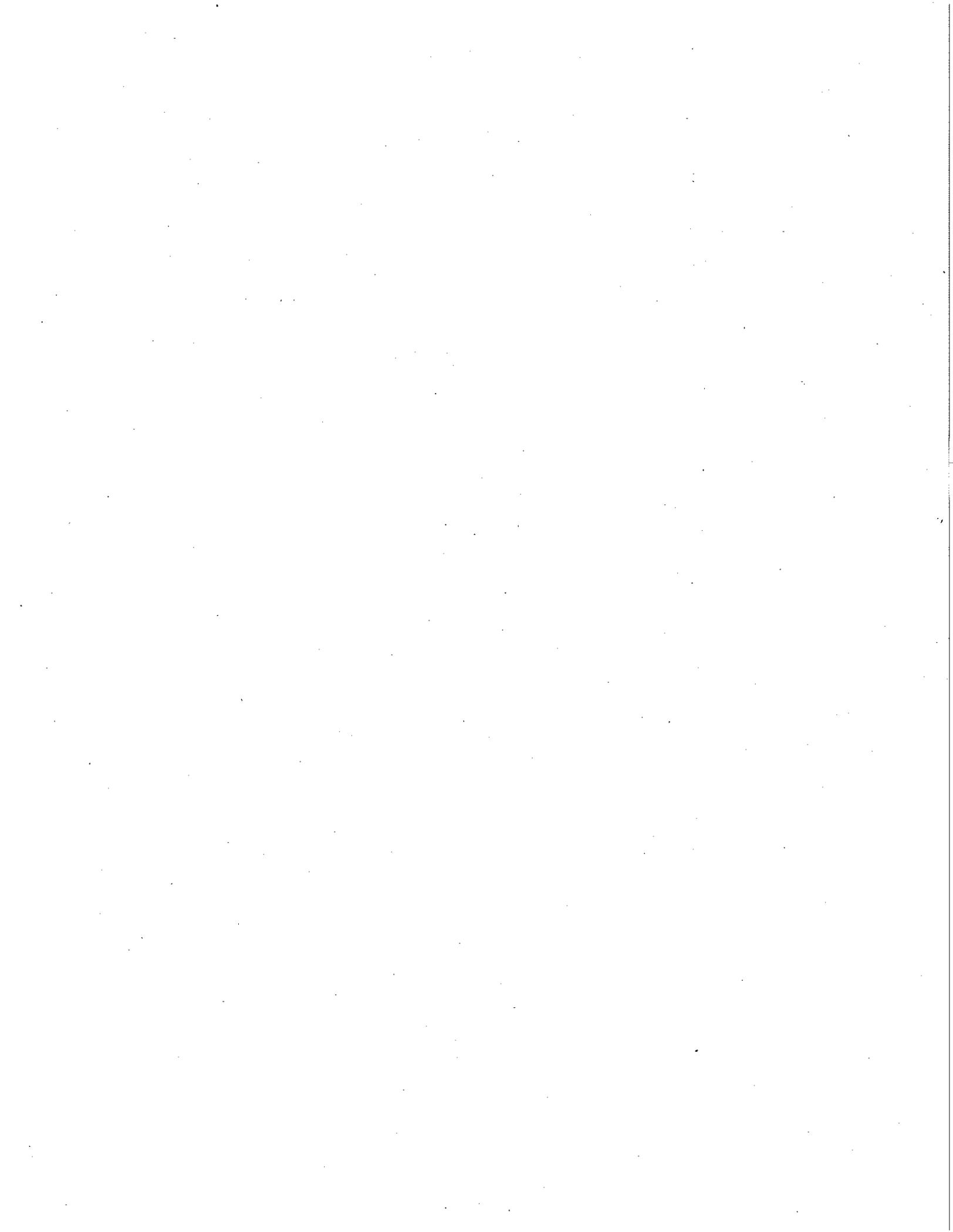
Master Plan prepared by:
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Division of Trails & Waterways
500 Lafayette Road, Box 52
St. Paul, MN 55155

February 2008

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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Trail Alignment

The Minnesota River State Trail is a legislatively authorized state trail which when complete, will connect Big Stone Lake State Park to LeSueur. This document addresses the trail between Big Stone Lake State Park and Franklin. The trail will connect the communities along the Minnesota River. In some segments, it is envisioned that the Minnesota River Trail will be located on one side of the river, in other segments, a loop concept with a segment on both sides of the river is envisioned.

For purposes of planning, the trail has been divided into five segments:

1. Big Stone Lake State Park to Ortonville
2. Ortonville to Appleton
3. Appleton to Montevideo
4. Montevideo to Joseph R. Brown Wayside Rest
5. Joseph R. Brown Wayside Rest to Franklin

A specific alignment has not been determined for the trail except for the three mile segment from Ortonville to the Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge, the segment from Montevideo to Wegdahl, and the segment from Milan to Milan Beach.

The plan identifies a corridor in which specific alignments will be sought. Points that should be connected by the trail are identified. Criteria for a trail alignment is also identified for each segment. The goal is to work with willing landowners and road authorities to acquire trail right-of-way that showcases features of the Minnesota River Valley landscape.

In the future, when a specific alignment has been determined for a segment, DNR will host a public workshop to provide information about the alignment and address issues and concerns.

The trail will be developed with an asphalt surface, 10 feet wide to accommodate bicyclists. There may be some segments where an aggregate surface is necessary, such as within Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge. A natural surface will be provided for horses.

Recommended/Allowable Uses

Following are the recommended trail uses: Bicycling, hiking and walking, running/jogging, in-line skating/skate skiing, access for fishing, horseback riding, environmental education /interpretation, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling. Hunting is allowed on state trails, except where discharge of firearms is regulated by community ordinance or state park rules and regulations. Trail development will be accessible to people with disabilities wherever possible.

Trail Management

The plan contains recommendations for maintenance, enforcement, and interpretation of natural and cultural resources. The plan recommends that an adequate level of enforcement be provided via a multifaceted approach to help maintain a safe and secure trail environment and to encourage trail users to understand and obey trail rules and respect other trail users and adjoining properties. Interpreting the natural and cultural features along the trail is recommended.

Natural and Cultural Resources

The trail will be acquired, developed, and managed to minimize impacts on natural resources. Native grasses, flowers, trees and shrubs will be planted and managed within the trail corridor.

Introduction

The Minnesota River Trail – A state trail created by grassroots efforts

For more than a decade, trail advocates have been advancing the concept of a trail along the Minnesota River from idea to reality. The vision, the growing momentum and support, and the development of trail miles on the ground, are due to the efforts and accomplishments of local trails groups, communities, and counties in the Upper Minnesota River Valley. Widespread public and private support has developed for the trail over the years and is underscored by the amount of written documentation (which exists in the form of numerous letters and resolutions) and organized trail events.

The Minnesota Trails Initiative (MTI), a citizen based non-profit organization has provided much support for the effort to date including an aerial survey and preliminary studies for the Wegdahl to Granite Falls segment. Chippewa County has constructed 4.8 miles of trail connecting Montevideo to Wegdahl. Chippewa County has also developed a three mile trail between Milan and Milan Beach. Big Stone County has spearheaded the development of a portion of the Minnesota River Trail from Ortonville to the Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge. The Tatanka Bluffs group comprised of business and community leaders in Redwood and Renville counties has incorporated the Minnesota River Trail into one of their five focus areas for development (Recreation) essential to maximizing the economic viability and quality of life in these two counties. Community trail systems are being planned and developed in Appleton, Granite Falls, Redwood Falls, Montevideo, and Ortonville. The Upper Minnesota River Valley Development Commission has inspired and supported trail initiatives in the region.

Planning History

The idea of a trail along the Minnesota River has been around for a long time. Following are examples of plans that have played a significant role in advancing the idea of a trail along the river and building support for it.

Recreation Trail System, Le Sueur to Ortonville in the Minnesota River Valley (1971)

In 1971, The Department of Natural Resources completed a study entitled, *Recreation Trail System, Le Sueur to Ortonville in the Minnesota River Valley*. The purpose of the study was “To provide a preliminary recreational trails plan in the Minnesota River Valley from Le Sueur to Ortonville including the desirability and feasibility of this work with the expressed purpose of preserving, developing, and using the natural attributes of the Minnesota River Valley (p.1). The study made the following recommendation “ In our opinion extending the recreational trail System from Le Sueur to Ortonville along the Minnesota River Valley is feasible and desirable” p.1).

Minnesota River Watershed Comprehensive Recreational Guidance Document and Trail Corridor Concept Plan (1998)

In 1996, the Minnesota Legislature directed the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to work with communities to develop a plan for capital budget purposes concerning recreation facilities and opportunities, including a trail, along the Minnesota River. The purpose of this document was to provide a tool for managing and enhancing the quantity and quality of recreation opportunities in the Minnesota River Watershed. The Department of Natural Resources worked in cooperation with the Minnesota River Basin Joint Powers Board, Barton-Aschman Associates, Inc. and Bolton & Menk, Inc.

The plan, entitled, *Minnesota River Watershed Comprehensive Recreational Guidance Document and Trail Corridor Concept Plan (1998)*, included an inventory of existing facilities, goals and objectives, a list of recreation needs, implementation strategies, and trail corridor concept plan. "Need #5: Develop a multi-use trail or greenway corridor to connect the recreational, historic, cultural and scenic resources within the region" (p. 4-2).

Southwest Minnesota Regional Trail Plan

In 1999, The Southwest Regional Development Commission established a committee and prepared a nine county regional trail plan, which identified trail corridors for the region. Redwood County was part of this planning effort.

Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission Trail Planning Guide (2001)

The Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission developed a regional trail planning document for the five county region that includes the counties of Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift, and Yellow Medicine. The purpose of the plan is to provide guidance for the development of trails in the region.

Regional Recreational Trail Framework Plan for the Middle Minnesota River Valley University of Minnesota 2004

Students from the University of Minnesota, Department of Landscape Architecture, studied the Minnesota River Valley from a point 55 miles downstream from the Chippewa County Highway 20 bridge southwest of Watson to the Nicollet County Highway 24 bridge southeast of New Ulm. The corridor was approximately 10 miles wide. The students conducted a landscape assessment phase that included an inventory of landscape character and scenic value, recreational resources, historical and cultural resources, suitability of the valley landscape for locating different types of trails, distribution of habitat quality and diversity for forest, wetland, grassland and riparian land, and susceptibility of surface water resources to contamination. The report includes maps of their inventory and assessment work. Students also identified some potential trail corridors.

Regional Recreational Trail Framework Plan for the Lower Minnesota River Valley

Students from the University of Minnesota, Department of Landscape Architecture studied the Minnesota River Valley from a point 100 miles downstream from the Redwood River to the northern LeSueur County boundary. Similar to the above study, students conducted a landscape assessment and conceptual designs.

Linking Communities: The Minnesota River Trail

The purpose of this report is to promote recreation, natural resource protection, tourism and community livability through designs for the Minnesota River State Trail. The Center for Changing Landscapes, an interdisciplinary design center of the University of Minnesota College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture and the College of Natural Resources worked with DNR and local community groups. The project produced maps of the ecology of the trail's landscape, projection of future development and land use trends, trail alignment options, and trailhead design options for Granite Falls. Funding for this project was recommended by the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources from the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund in ML 2003, Chapter 128, Article 1, Section 9.

Linking Communities: The Minnesota River Trail

In 2005, additional funding was recommended by the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources for the University of Minnesota, Center for Changing Landscapes, to continue their work in the Minnesota River Valley. Recommendations for how Redwood Fall, New Ulm and St. Peter could integrate the Minnesota River Trail into their communities were developed. Recommendations for trail alignments and designs for trailheads are included in their report.

These studies and plans have informed this master plan.

Goals and Objectives of the Planning Process

The goals and objectives of the master planning process are:

Goal 1: to develop a unified, coordinated vision for the trail to serve as a blueprint to guide the development of the trail through the process of right-of-way acquisition, development, and maintenance.

This goal will be achieved through the following objectives:

- Identify potential interpretive themes;
- Outline basic design concept; and
- Identify allowable trail uses and user groups.

Goal 2: to identify opportunities and constraints for the trail and to address any potential conflicts or problems through an open, fair, public participation process.

This goal will be achieved through the following objectives:

- Hold public meetings, circulate copies of the draft plan, and solicit comments from potential trail users, residents of the communities it passes through, landowners, and government officials;
- Assess the impacts of the trail in order to inform the decision-making process; and
- Support outreach efforts, partnerships, and processes that will help to carry out the plan.

Goal 3: to inventory and to organize information on existing conditions on and around the trail area to help trail supporters make the project a reality.

This goal will be achieved through the following objectives:

- Inventory the natural and cultural resources;
- Assess demographic information relating to potential user groups;
- Assess demographic information relating to economic development and tourism;
- Identify potential connections to other recreational opportunities, present and future;
- Identify community trail plans so the trail can be integrated into communities.

Goal 4: to identify potential corridors so that the process of securing the trail alignment can begin.

This goal will be achieved through the following objective:

- Using aerial photography, property ownership information, field visits, community meetings, public workshops, and the resource inventory, identify opportunities and constraints to outline potential corridors for each segment.

Goal 5: to provide a clear, compelling rationale for funding and constructing the trail.

This goal will be achieved through the following objective:

- Explain how the Minnesota River State Trail meets the criteria for trails outlined in Minnesota Statutes 86A.05, Subdivision 4.

Master Planning Process for the Minnesota River Trail (Big Stone Lake State Park to Franklin)

Who's Involved

- Trail User Groups
- Minnesota Trails Initiative
- Regional Development Commission
- DNR Resource Managers
- Community Leaders
- Scenic Byways
- Elected Officials
- Other Agencies
- Citizens
- Tribal Communities
- University of Minnesota
- Adjacent Landowners

Steps in the Process

- Information Gathering
 - Natural and Cultural Resource Inventory
- Issue Identification
 - Opportunities and Constraints

Develop

- Vision for the Trail
- Goals for the Trail
- Design Concept

Formulate Trail Alignment, Trail Development and Management Recommendations

- Draft Plan Written
- Draft Plan Review

Trail Plan Adopted –
Implementation Begins

Public Workshop for Each Segment
After Alignment Is Determined and
Before Construction Begins

Evaluation and Adjustment

Compliance with Legislative Authorization

The Minnesota River State Trail was legislatively authorized in 2002. (Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 85.015, Subd. 22). The map on the next page illustrates the legislatively authorized state trail system.

“Subd. 22. **Minnesota River Trail.** The trail shall originate at the entrance to Big Stone Lake State Park and extend along the Minnesota River Valley to connect to the Minnesota Valley Trail at the city of Le Sueur.”

In 2007 Subdivision 22 was amended to include the following addition:

“The trail shall include a loop between Fort Ridgely State Park and the cities of Redwood Falls and Sleepy Eye. A segment shall be established connecting the cities of Granite Falls and Montevideo.”

State trails are one unit of Minnesota’s outdoor recreation system established by the Legislature. In 1975, the Legislature enacted the Outdoor Recreation Act (ORA; Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 86A.05, Subdivision 4, and Chapter 85.015). This act established an outdoor recreation system classifying all state-managed recreation lands into eleven components or “units”. The ORA requires that the managing agency prepare a master plan for the establishment and development of each unit. This master plan fulfills that mandate.

The Minnesota River Trail satisfies all of the criteria set forth by the Legislature in Minnesota Statutes Chapter 86A.05, Subdivision 4. These criteria include:

1. Permits travel along a route which connects areas or points of natural, scientific, cultural and historical interest;

There is a rich diversity of natural, scientific, cultural, and historical resources in the Minnesota River Valley. The significance of the route the trail will follow is underscored by the fact that it is designated as a National Scenic Byway. The sampling below illustrates the variety of natural and cultural resources in the valley.

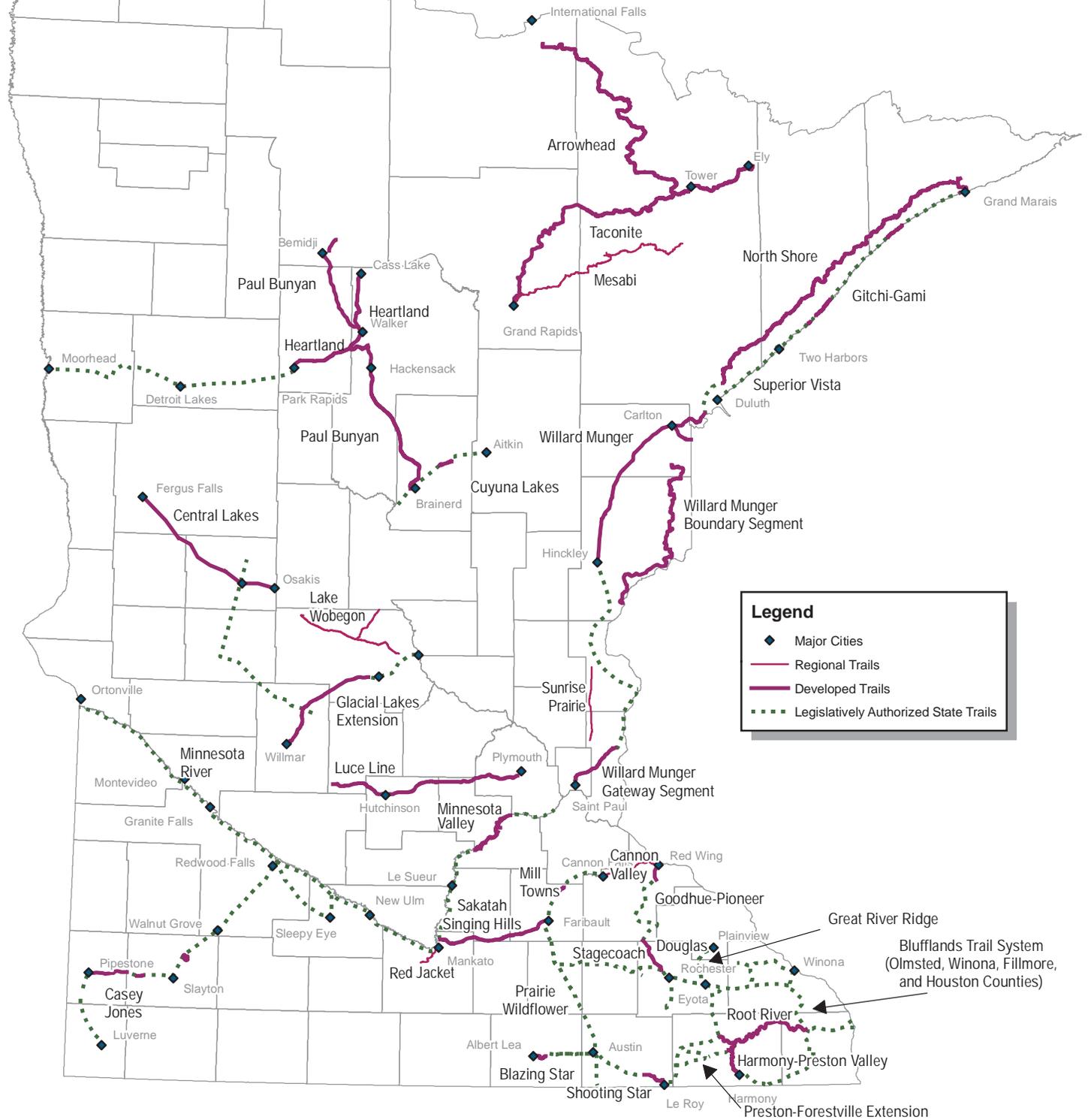
Big Stone Lake State Park to Ortonville

Big Stone Lake State Park – Views and access to Big Stone Lake, prairie, and wetlands are significant features of this park

Bonanza Scientific and Natural Area – Significant prairie community

Big Stone Lake – headwaters of the Minnesota River and fishing and boating opportunities

Minnesota's State Trail System



Ortonville to Appleton

- Granite outcroppings - Scenic features and unique habitat for rare plants and animals
- Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge – Significant plant communities and wildlife habitat
- Plover Prairie – High quality prairie site owned by the Nature Conservancy
- Marsh Lake – a man-made reservoir on the Minnesota River. A white pelican nesting colony is located here.
- Lac Qui Parle Wildlife Management Area – Significant waterfowl and other wildlife habitat.

Appleton to Montevideo

- Lac Qui Parle – scenic amenity and significant waterfowl habitat
- Lac Qui Parle State Park –recreational opportunities – camping, hiking, picnicking
- Lac Qui Parle Wildlife Management Area – 23,976 acres including wetland and prairie habitat
- Chippewa Prairie - a high quality prairie managed by the Nature Conservancy
- Fort Renville Site – location of Joseph Renville’s fur trading post established in 1822 at a Wahpeton Dakota Village.
- Lac Qui Parle Mission State Historic Site – reconstructed mission

Montevideo to Joseph R. Brown State Wayside

- Camp Release State Monument – site where 259 Dakota captives were released during the U.S Dakota War of 1862
- Milwaukee Road Heritage Center Depot – historic structure
- Historic Chippewa City – turn of the century village
- Granite outcroppings – significant for scenic reasons and for the rare plant and animal habitat they provide
- Memorial Park – Granite Falls Park with granite outcroppings. Recreational opportunities located adjacent to the river
- Yellow Medicine County Museum – historical displays
- Upper Sioux Agency State Park – historic, natural and recreational resources

Joseph R. Brown State Wayside to Franklin

- Alexander Ramsey Park – scenic waterfall and recreational opportunities
- Beaver Falls County Park – scenic resources and recreational opportunities
- Lower Sioux Agency State Historic Site – interprets Dakota history and culture
- Renville County Historical Museum – historical displays
- Morton Monuments – historic site associated with the U.S Dakota War of 1862
- Birch Coulee Battlefield State Historic Site – site of a battle between U.S. soldiers and Dakota Indians
- Cedar Mountain Scientific and Natural Area – significant for scenic reasons and for the rare plant and animal habitat located here

2. Permits travel through an area which possesses outstanding scenic beauty;

The diverse topographic features of the Minnesota River Valley (steep slopes, terraces, riverbank, and floodplain) create a scenic, beautiful landscape. The steep slopes, terraces, riverbanks, and floodplain provide diverse perspectives from which to appreciate the scenic beauty. Long vistas across the valley from blufftop to blufftop, views from a river terrace within the valley, and up close views of the river from the riverbank provide outstanding scenic beauty. Wooded bluffs, granite outcroppings, prairie, and wetlands are scenic features of this area. The pastoral, rural, agricultural landscape offers an additional scenic amenity that will be appreciated by trail users. The main streets and architecture of many of the communities are also scenic amenities.

3. Permits travel over a route designated to enhance and utilize the unique qualities of a particular manner of travel in harmony with the natural environment;

The design guidelines of this plan were developed with slower modes of travel (walking, cycling, jogging, in-line skating, horseback riding), in mind. Features such as carefully designed vistas and views, variations in horizontal and vertical alignment, and attention to trailscape detailing will all be incorporated to enhance the trail user's interaction with the natural environment.

4. Permits travel along a route which is historically significant as a route of migration, commerce, or communication;

The Minnesota River Valley was an extremely significant travel corridor throughout the state's history. It was used by American Indians as a travel route and the valley is rich with archaeological resources. The river was used by early explorers and fur traders. Segments of the Red River Oxcart Trail paralleled the river. Steamboats traveled on the river in the 1850s facilitating settlement and western expansion of the state. Railroads also paralleled the river and were significant to the growth and development of the area.

5. Travel between units of the state outdoor recreation system or the national trail system;

The Minnesota River Trail will connect many units of the outdoor recreation system. It will connect three state parks: Big Stone Lake State Park, Lac qui Parle State Park, and Upper Sioux Agency State Park. Six Scientific and Natural Areas are located in the corridor: Bonanza Prairie, Clinton Prairie, Swedes Forest, Blue Devil Valley, Gneiss Outcrops, and Cedar Mountain. In addition there are numerous wildlife management areas and state water access sites. Segments of the Minnesota River are designated under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Program. Three state historic sites are located in the corridor: Birch Coulee, Lac Qui Parle Mission, and the Lower Sioux Agency.

6. Utilizes to the greatest extent possible consistent with the purposes of this subdivision, public lands, rights-of-way, and the like;

The majority of land in the Minnesota River Valley is privately owned. This poses a significant challenge to assembling a contiguous trail corridor. Public land will be used when trail development is compatible with management objectives of the administering agency. State, county, and township road rights-of-way may also be used.

7. Provides maximum potential for the appreciation, conservation and enjoyment of significant scenic, historical, natural or cultural qualities of the areas through which the trail may pass;

The research conducted for the inventory section of this plan is the basis for the development of the design guidelines and interpretive themes that will ensure that overlooks, trailheads and other features of the trail enhance understanding and appreciation of the natural, scenic and cultural features along the route.

8. Takes into consideration predicted public demand and future use;

This plan evaluates and uses current research on existing trail use, demand for trail opportunities, demographic data, and recreational trends. An assessment of employment centers gives important information about potential trail use because they are important sources of trail users. Information gathered at public meetings and through other public participation techniques are also considered.

Vision Statement and Goals

The Vision

The Minnesota River Trail will link the natural, cultural, and historical jewels of the valley focusing state and regional attention on Minnesota's "namesake" river. The trail will link river valley communities engendering new partnerships. The trail will provide a way to a healthier lifestyle for valley residents and their guests; tell the stories of the people who have come and gone and the stories of those who live here today. The trail will bolster the rural economy, catalyzing new economic opportunities and stability in rural Minnesota. Trail users will benefit physically, psychologically, and spiritually from learning about and experiencing the resources of this landscape.

This vision will be achieved through the following goals for the trail. The trail:

Will adhere to the guiding principles for sustainable trails as listed in the *Trail Planning, Design, and Development Guidelines*, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Trails and Waterways Division, 2006, quoted below;

- Guiding Principle #1: Avoid sensitive ecological areas and critical habitats.
- Guiding Principle #2: Develop trails in areas already influenced by human activity.
- Guiding Principle #3: Provide buffers to avoid/protect sensitive ecological and hydrologic systems.
- Guiding Principle #4: Use natural infiltration and best practices for stormwater management.
- Guiding Principle #5: Provide ongoing stewardship of the trail and adjoining natural systems.
- Guiding Principle #6: Ensure that the trails remain sustainable.
- Guiding Principle #7: Formally decommission and restore unsustainable trail corridors

Will serve many different types of users throughout all seasons of the year;

Will increase awareness of the natural and cultural features of the Minnesota River Valley, including the significance of the Minnesota River to the growth and development of the state; native plant communities, especially prairie; bird populations and other wildlife; geological history of the valley and the impact of the Glacial River Warren on the landscape seen today; geological formations such as the outcroppings of gneiss; and history of the Dakota people,

Will preserve and protect environmental resources

Will promote economic growth in the area by increasing tourism, attracting and retaining businesses, and linking tourist attractions.

Will provide a fun, safe, recreational resource for residents of all ages and interests, thereby benefiting their health and improving their quality of life

Will serve as an alternate means of transportation in the region, connecting rural areas to town centers, commercial districts, parks and schools and reducing vehicle trips, thereby improving the environment

Will connect to the existing and future trail network

Will provide a new link between cities and townships, and will connect local, county and state parks and conservation areas and

Will showcase the unique cultural themes of the Minnesota River Valley including settlement history, Dakota culture, and agriculture

Trail Uses

Recommended Trail Uses

Some segments of the trail will be developed as a single treadway with compatible multiple uses such as walking, bicycling, and in-line skating or a natural surface treadway for horseback riding. Other segments will be developed with two treadways – a paved treadway for bicycling, walking and in-line skating and natural surface treadway for horseback riding. Not all uses will be able to be accommodated on all segments of trail due to limitations of right-of-way width and resource constraints. The exact number of treadways and mix of uses will be determined on a segment by segment basis.

Bicycling. Bicycling is recommended as a use along the entire trail. An asphalt surface is recommended for bicycling. There may be segments where an aggregate surface is appropriate, such as in the Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge.

Hiking and Walking. Hiking and walking are recommended as uses along the entire length of the trail.

In-line Skating, Skate skiing. These uses are recommended wherever an asphalt surface is developed as part of the trail.

Horseback riding. There are a significant number of owners of horses in the Minnesota Valley and several active and organized riding clubs. An interconnected horse trail system in the Minnesota Valley is the vision for horse trails. Development of this system should begin at those locations where there are already existing horse trails and campgrounds. The system could thus build and expand from those locations, focusing on the development of loop trails first, which then could be connected by a linear trail. These horse trail hubs are:

- Upper Sioux Agency State Park with a connection to Skallbekken County Park
- Beaver Falls County Park
- Fort Ridgely State Park

Other focus areas for horse trail loops are:

- Lac qui Parle County Park area
- Hawk Creek area

A segment with an alignment suitable for carriage riding should be identified.

As trail segments are acquired, the provision of a horse treadway should be considered as part of the acquisition.

Snowmobiling. Snowmobiling should be considered as a use as trail alignments are acquired. Segments of the Minnesota River Trail could be a valuable addition in the existing snowmobile trail system. Scenic, permanent alignments would be desirable additions to the snowmobile system in the Minnesota River Valley region.

Fishing. Fishing is a popular activity in the Minnesota River and tributaries. The trail should be designed to connect anglers to fishing opportunities.

Environmental Education and Nature Study. Use of the trail for environmental education and nature study whether for individual trail users or for groups, is encouraged. Nature photography is also a popular activity.

Hunting. Current state trail regulations allow hunting within the trail right-of-way, except where restricted by local ordinance. The regulation states, "No firearm or bow and arrow shall be

discharged within the trail at any time, except for the purpose of lawful hunting during the period from September 15 to March 30 only. No rifle, shotgun with slug, or bow and arrow shall be discharged upon, over, or across the trail treadway at any time. "If communities restrict firearms or bow and arrow discharge by ordinance, these ordinances take precedence over state trail regulations.

Cross-country skiing. Cross-country skiing will be allowed on segments of the trail.

Trail Alignment

Trail Alignment

For purposes of planning, the trail has been divided into five segments:

- Big Stone Lake State Park to Ortonville
- Ortonville to Appleton
- Appleton to Montevideo
- Montevideo to Joseph R. Brown Wayside Rest
- Joseph R. Brown Wayside Rest to Franklin

This section of the plan includes the following:

- A description of the highlights of each trail segment listed above, key connections, criteria for the location of the trail, and a description of conceptual trail corridor alternatives
- A map illustrating the trail corridor alternatives
- A description and map of each community the trail will connect
- A description and map of each state park the trail will connect

Segment 1: Big Stone Lake State Park to Ortonville

Trail Highlights

Views and vistas of Big Stone Lake and connections to the lake are highlights of this segment. Trail users will be able to access the shore of the lake at Big Stone Lake State Park and Ortonville. Also, there are opportunities to observe prairie at Big Stone Lake State Park.

The Bonanza Prairie Scientific and Natural Area is located within Big Stone Lake State Park. Bonanza Prairie contains undisturbed dry hill prairie. A spectacular view of the South Dakota prairie landscape can be experienced from a hilltop. Dry prairie, mesic prairie, and bur oak savanna plant communities thrive on the west facing slopes with gravelly, well-drained soils. Prairie plants include little bluestem, purple coneflower, prairie thistle, silverleaf scurfpea, and big bluestem.

Key Connections

Big Stone Lake State Park (Bonanza Unit and Meadowbrook Unit)
Bonanza Prairie Scientific and Natural Area
Big Stone Lake
Ortonville

Criteria for Alignment

Provide views and vistas of Big Stone Lake
Provide access to the lake
Locate the trail so that trail users will appreciate the beauty of the area
Connect the Bonanza and Meadowbrook Units of Big Stone Lake State Park

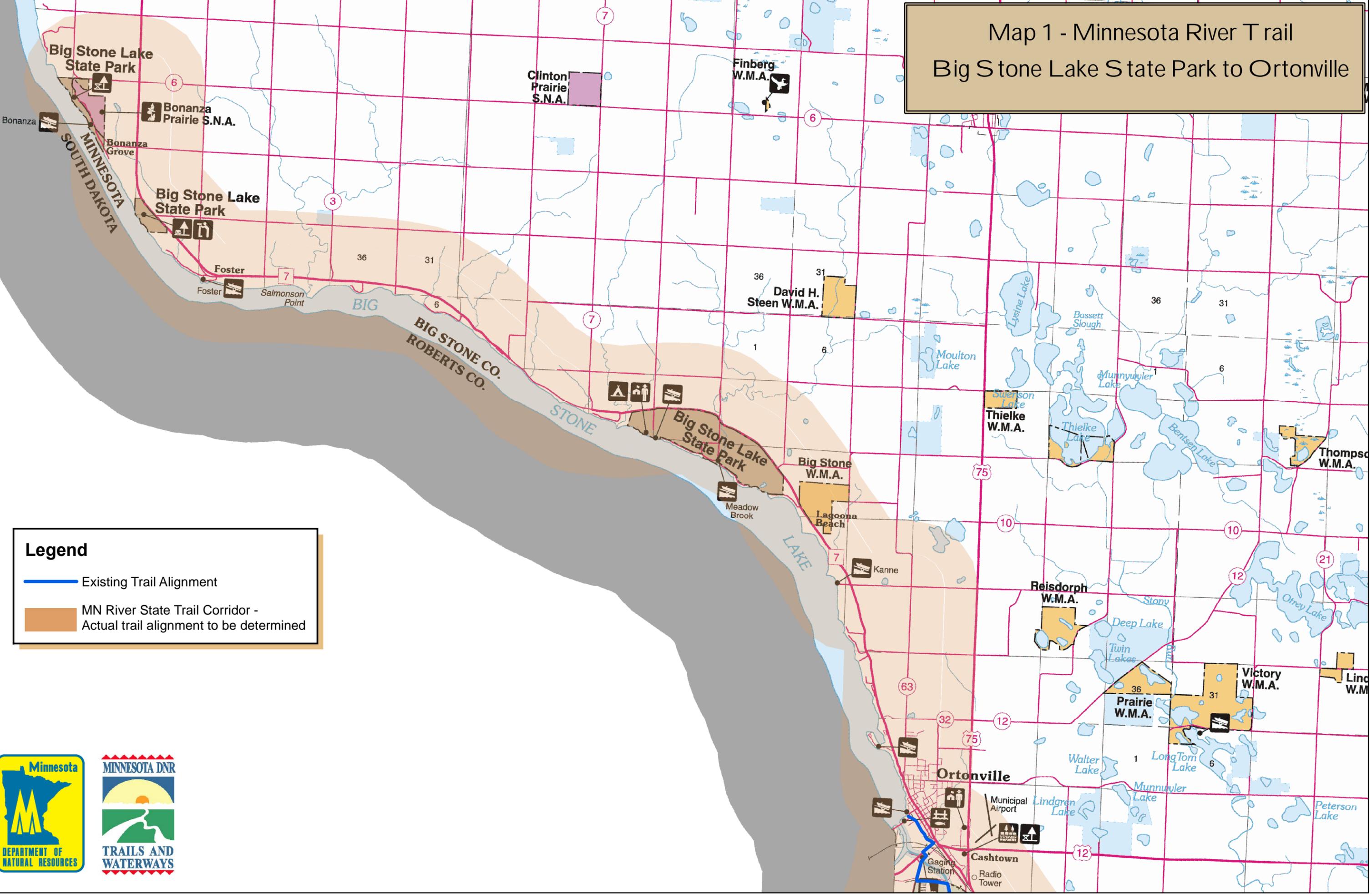
Potential Trail Alignments

The trail corridors illustrated on these maps represent "search area" locations for specific trail alignments. Generally, they follow road corridors. However, it is not envisioned that the Minnesota River Trail will be entirely located in road rights-of-way. The goal is to find alignments that take trail users off road rights-of-way providing access to natural and cultural amenities and providing scenic routes that showcase the Minnesota River Valley Landscape.

The trail will begin in the Bonanza Area of Big Stone Lake State Park. It will generally follow the TH 7 corridor south. Big Stone Lake State Park provides an opportunity for the trail to leave road right-of-way. However, the location of a specific alignment through the park has not been determined. Another suggestion made during the planning process was to search for trail right-of-way on top of the bluff overlooking the lake.

The topography directly north of Ortonville along TH 7 is a constraint for trail development. A corridor along County 63 is an option.

Map 1 - Minnesota River T rail
Big Stone Lake State Park to Ortonville



Legend

-  Existing Trail Alignment
-  MN River State Trail Corridor - Actual trail alignment to be determined



Big Stone Lake State Park

Park Highlights

Big Stone Lake and prairie are the key highlights of this 986 acre park. The park is comprised of three separate areas located along Big Stone Lake.

The Meadowbrook Area is the largest and located the closest to Ortonville. It is located eight miles northwest of Ortonville on Highway 7. A 37-site campground, a swimming beach, picnic area, small playground, boat launch, and half mile of trail are located in this area. A 20-acre prairie restoration project is occurring in the Meadowbrook Area.

The Overlook Area is located ten miles northwest of Meadowbrook. It is a small rest area overlooking Big Stone Lake and provides a scenic vista of the lake.

The Bonanza Area is located one mile northwest of the Overlook Area. A waterfall, picnic area, rustic group camp, interpretive center operated by local school districts, boat ramp, and 2 miles of trail are located in this area. The 115-acre Bonanza Prairie Scientific and Natural Area is located within the boundaries of the Bonanza Area. The Bonanza Prairie is significant because it contains undisturbed glacial till hill prairie with a rich diversity of species including little bluestem, purple coneflower, prairie clover, silverleaf scurfpea, and grama grasses.

Role of the Park

The park will serve as a trailhead for the Minnesota River Trail. The park provides the opportunity for the trail to leave the road rights-of-way and provide views of and access to Big Stone Lake. The park will be a destination for trail users on the Minnesota River Trail because of the scenic and recreational amenities located there. Also, the park will serve as a destination for local trail users from Ortonville.

Criteria for Location of the Trail Alignment

The following objectives were identified to guide the location of the trail alignment through the park:

Provide a paved corridor

Provide parking for trail users.

Provide a rest area for trail users

Provide trail and park orientation information

Provide a connection to the campground

Protect archaeological resources

Minimize impact to wetlands

Use existing corridors whenever possible

Avoid severing plant communities

Avoid impacts to native plant communities and listed species

BIG STONE LAKE STATE PARK

FACILITIES AND FEATURES

- 37 semi-modern campsites, 10 with electricity
- Showers & flush toilets
- Primitive group camp (20 capacity) at Bonanza Area
- 3 picnic sites
- Swimming beach
- 3 boat ramps
- 2 miles of hiking trail
- Trailer dump station
- Public telephone
- Playground

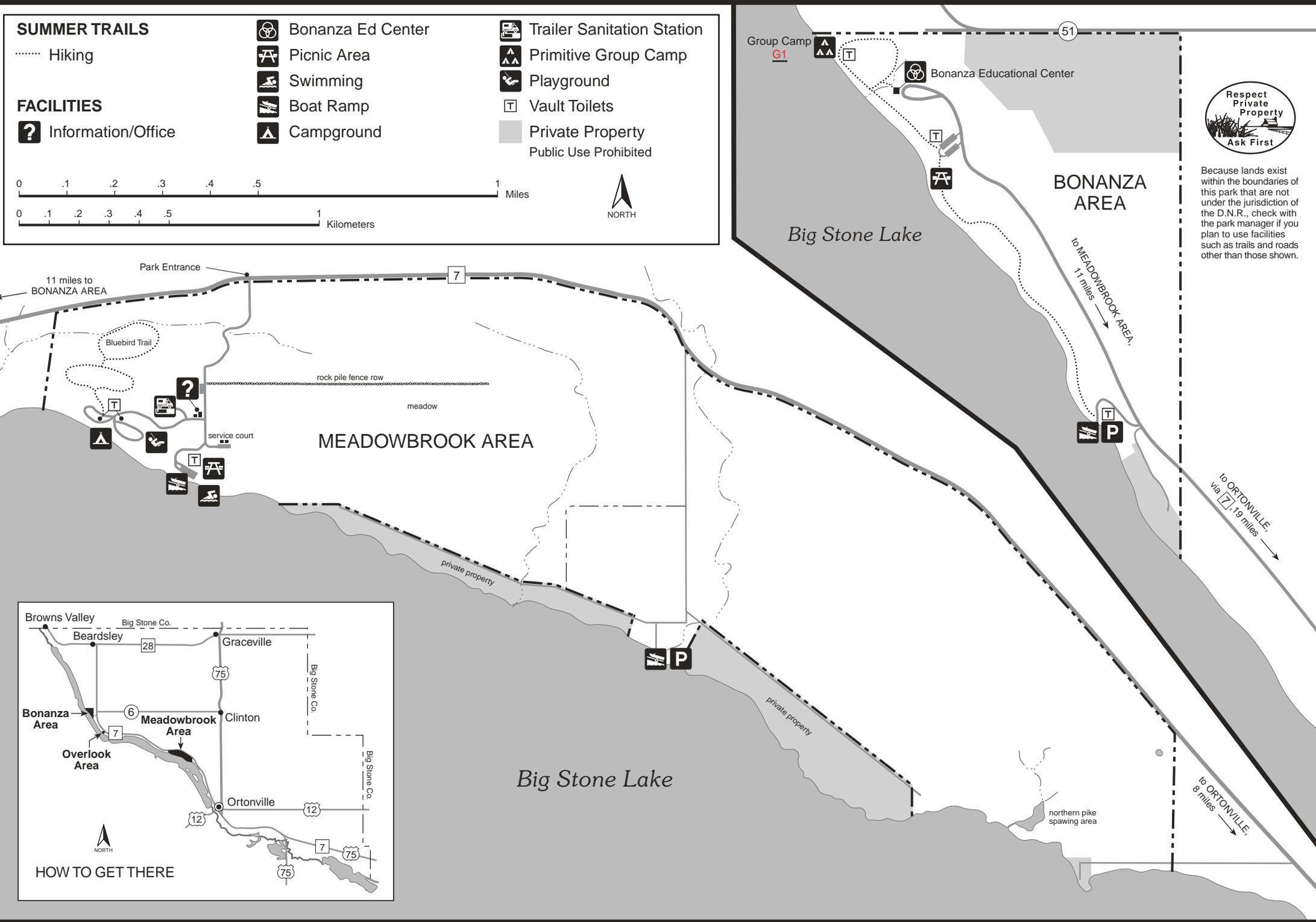
VISITOR FAVORITES

- Hiking the Bluebird Trail
- Swimming
- Picnicking
- Fishing for walleye
- Camping by the lake
- Visiting the Bonanza Area Scientific & Natural Area (SNA)

LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION ?

The DNR has mapped the state showing federal, state and county lands with their recreational facilities.
Public Recreation Information Maps (PRIM) are available for purchase from the DNR gift shop, DNR regional offices, Minnesota state parks and major sporting and map stores.

Check it out - you'll be glad you did.



Ortonville

History

The community of Ortonville was named for Cornelius Knute Orton, the town's Norwegian founder. He served in a variety of capacities including banker, postmaster, merchant, and county commissioner. The village became a city in 1881. The first train arrived in 1879. The courthouse was built in 1902.

The Community Today

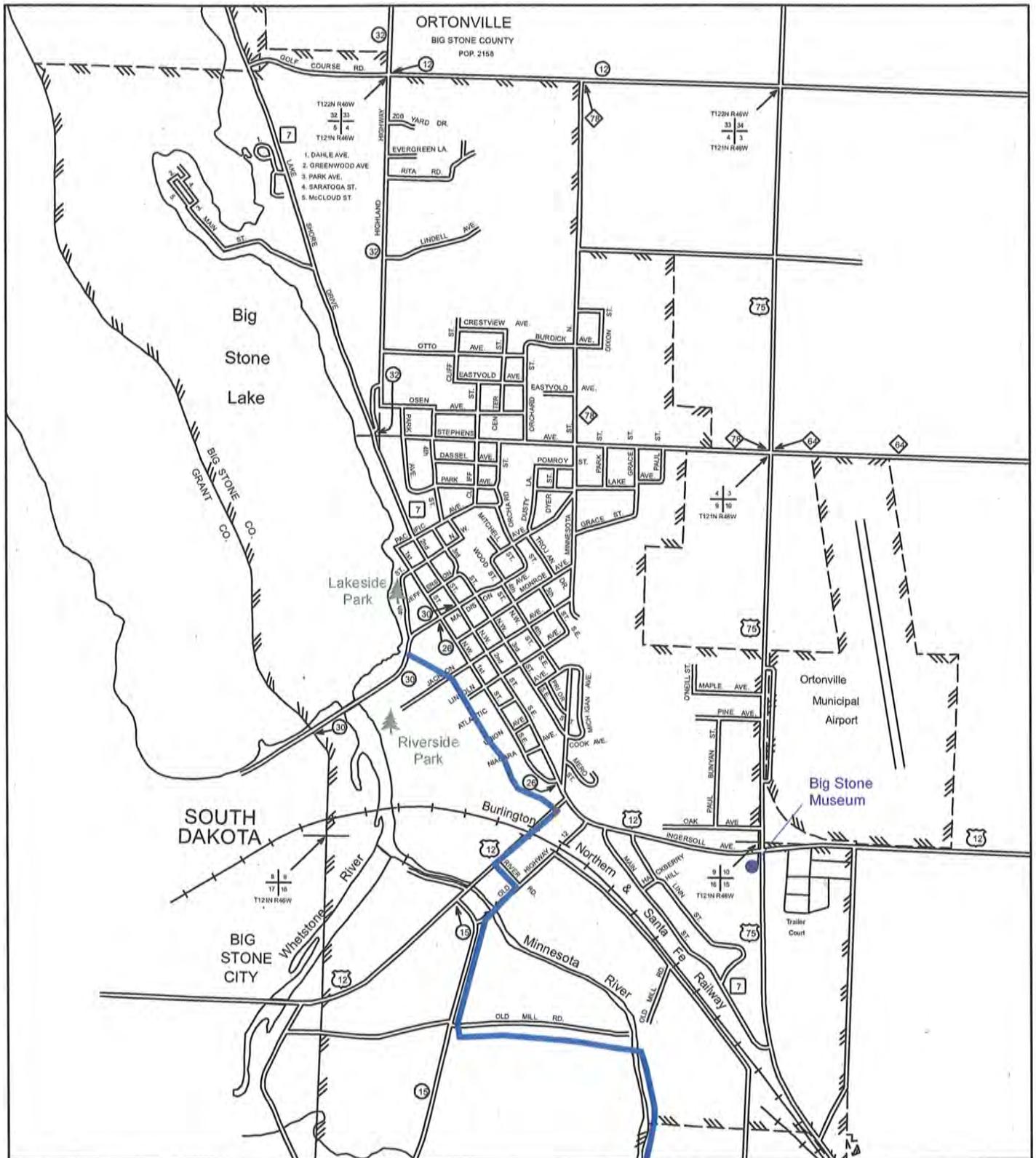
Ortonville, population 2,096, is the gateway to the 12,610 acre Big Stone Lake separating Minnesota and South Dakota. Fishing, boating, swimming and birdwatching are the primary activities on the lake. The predominant land use around Ortonville is agriculture. Ortonville is a service center for the surrounding farms, resorts, and residences on the lake.

Outcroppings of granite just outside Ortonville give a clue to the community's past and present. Granite quarrying began in 1886. Today, granite mining is an important industry in the area, yielding a red granite known as Mahogany granite.

The Big Stone County Museum has displays from the area's past including a historic boat that traveled Big Stone Lake, and the Charles Hanson North American Wildlife Collection housed in the Artichoke Lake General Store. This collection includes 500 waterfowl from around the world. Other recreational amenities include an 18 hole public golf course and two city parks on the shores of Big Stone Lake - Lakeside Park and Nielson Park.

Trail Alignment

A specific alignment has been determined for the first segment of trail that will connect the foot of Big Stone Lake with Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge. See the map on the next page. This project begins at the foot of Big Stone Lake and travels through the southern part of Ortonville. It crosses the Minnesota River and exits the community in the southeastern corner. The trail then parallels TH 75 until it connects with the Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge where it will connect with the refuge's 5.5 mile auto tour route.



Ortonville

Legend

-  Existing Trail
-  Planned City Trail
-  Museum
-  Parks



Segment 2: Ortonville to Appleton

Trail Highlights

Prairie chickens, geese, waterfowl, prairie, granite outcroppings, Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge, Lac qui Parle Wildlife Management Area, and Marsh Lake define this segment of trail.

Key Connections

Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge
Odessa
Plover Prairie
Louisburg
Marsh Lake Dam
Pomme de Terre River
Appleton
Minnesota River

Criteria for Alignment

Provide views and vistas of the broad, shallow valley
Strive to locate the trail close to the river
Connect to the Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge

Potential Trail Alignments

The trail corridors illustrated on these maps represent "search area" locations for specific trail alignments. Generally, they follow road corridors. However, it is not envisioned that the Minnesota River Trail will be entirely located in road rights-of-way. The goal is to find alignments that take trail users off road rights-of-way providing access to natural and cultural amenities and providing scenic routes that showcase the Minnesota River Valley Landscape.

The trail alignment concept for this segment can be described in two parts – a loop around Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge and then, east of the refuge, potential alignments on the south or north sides of the river to the foot of Marsh Lake, connecting to Appleton.

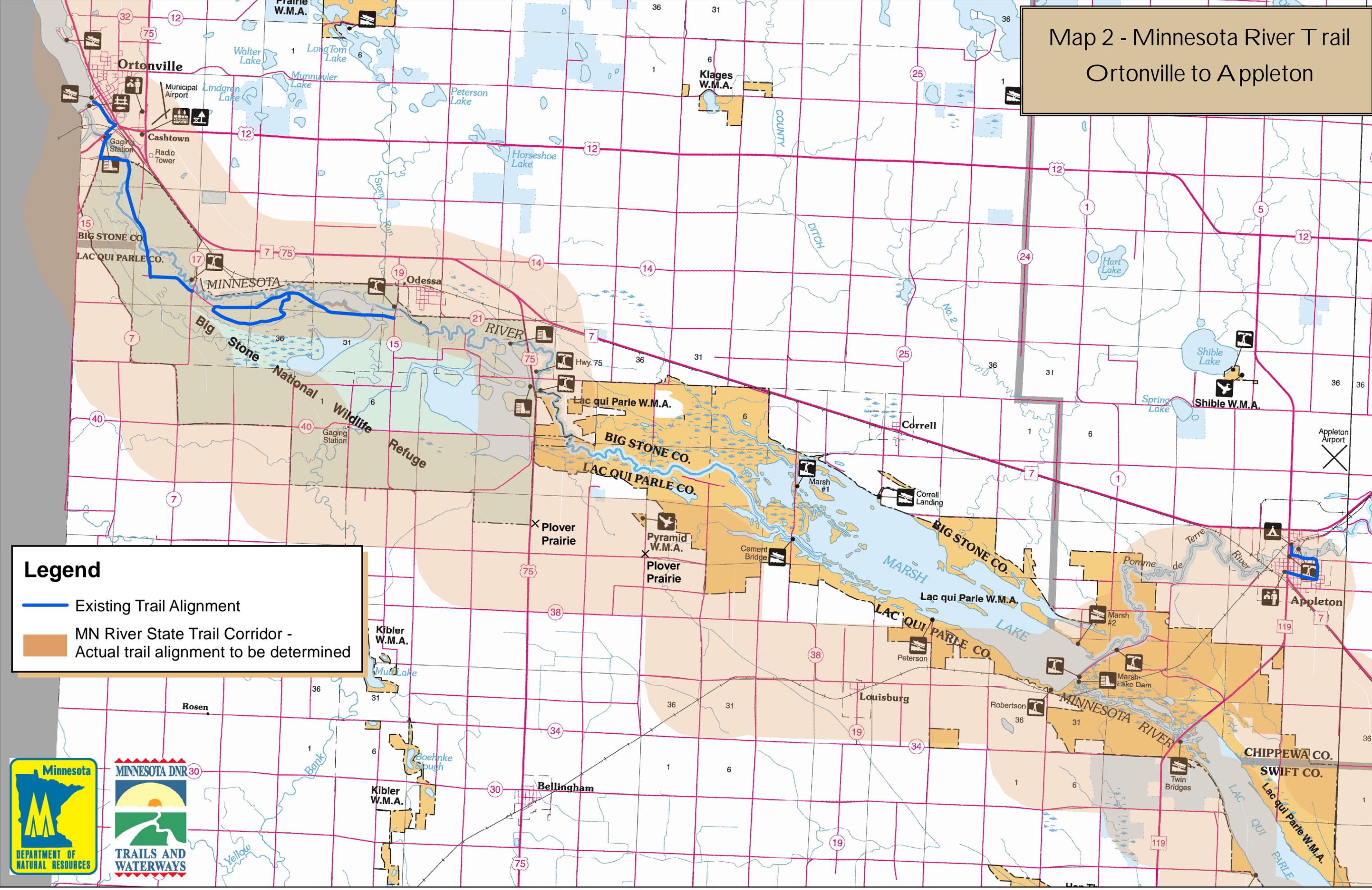
A specific alignment has been determined for the first segment of trail connecting the foot of Big Stone Lake with the Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge. This project begins at the foot of Big Stone Lake and travels through the southern part of Ortonville. It crosses the Minnesota River and exits the community in the southeastern corner. The trail will connect with the Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge and with the Refuge's 5.5 mile auto tour route.

DNR and the refuge will cooperate in providing an aggregate trail from the east side of the auto loop to CSAH 15. The trail would veer north and connect to Odessa. From Odessa, it would go east to TH 75. The trail would then go south following the TH 75/refuge boundary corridor. There is an opportunity to use the dike managed by the Corps of Engineers for the trail alignment along the eastern refuge boundary. This alternative has the advantages of providing scenic vistas of the lake and removing trail users from highway rights-of-way.

Map 2 - Minnesota River T rail
Ortonville to Appleton

Legend

-  Existing Trail Alignment
-  MN River State Trail Corridor - Actual trail alignment to be determined



The concept for the southern portion of the loop around the refuge, is to find an alignment along the southern boundary connecting back north to Ortonville. Assembling a corridor from willing sellers and using road rights-of way is the strategy for this piece of trail. This alignment will provide trail users with views of the shallow, broad valley in this area.

East of TH 75, the trail would use the township right of way bordering the Plover Prairie, a 655 acre wet prairie managed by the Nature Conservancy. Small white lady's slippers, prickly pear cactus, prairie chicken, upland sandpiper, and marbled godwit can be observed here. The trail would then travel southeast to connect to Louisburg, travel east to the foot of Marsh Lake, and then northeast to connect into Appleton.

Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge

The 11,521-acre Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge, established in 1975, was named for the lichen-covered granite outcrops located here. The refuge is comprised of wetlands and 6,000 acres of grassland, including native prairie. According to the refuge website, "The primary management focus of the refuge is to maintain and restore native prairie grassland habitat and, in so doing, provide optimum nesting cover for waterfowl and other grassland nesting birds." The refuge is a resting, nesting and feeding habitat for waterfowl and other migratory birds. Seventeen species of ducks and 23 species of shorebirds can be observed during spring and fall. Mallards, blue-winged teal, northern shoveler, and Canada geese can be seen. Shorebirds include least and semipalmated sandpipers, and lesser yellow legs. It is also home to a diversity of seasonal, resident wildlife including great-blue heron, common egrets, and several species of ducks. A population of reintroduced river otters can be observed. The refuge serves as an important wintering area for white-tailed deer.

The lichen covered granite outcrops are not only scenic amenities, they are habitat for unique plants such as cactus. Ball cactus is one species that can be observed in the refuge.

Recreational opportunities on the refuge include hunting; fishing; wildlife observation; cross-country skiing and snowshoeing; canoeing; and hiking. An interpretive hiking trail provides visitors with an opportunity to learn about the refuge's prairie, granite outcrops, wildlife, and river meanders.

Appleton

History

Addison Phelps and family settled at the mouth of the Pomme de Terre River in 1868. Other settlers soon followed, including A.W. Lanthop and W.V. Lanthop, two brothers and Civil War veterans. The Lanthop brothers built a flour mill on the banks of the Pomme de Terre River, harnessing the available water power. The W.J. Jennison Flour Mill succeeded the Lanthop Flour Mill and operated until the late 1960s.

Settlement of the area continued, eastern Americans, Germans, and Scandinavians established farms and businesses. In 1872, a township was established and named Phelps, after Addison Phelps. Phelps later requested that the name be changed to Appleton, in honor of Appleton, Wisconsin where he grew up. The village of Appleton, population 633, was formed in 1880.

All 33 streets in Appleton are named after fallen war heroes. Appleton has the distinction of being the only town in the country to do so. In 1947, Appleton renamed its streets in honor of World War II veterans who lost their lives in the war. Subsequently, the names of veterans who lost their lives in the Korean and Vietnam wars were added.

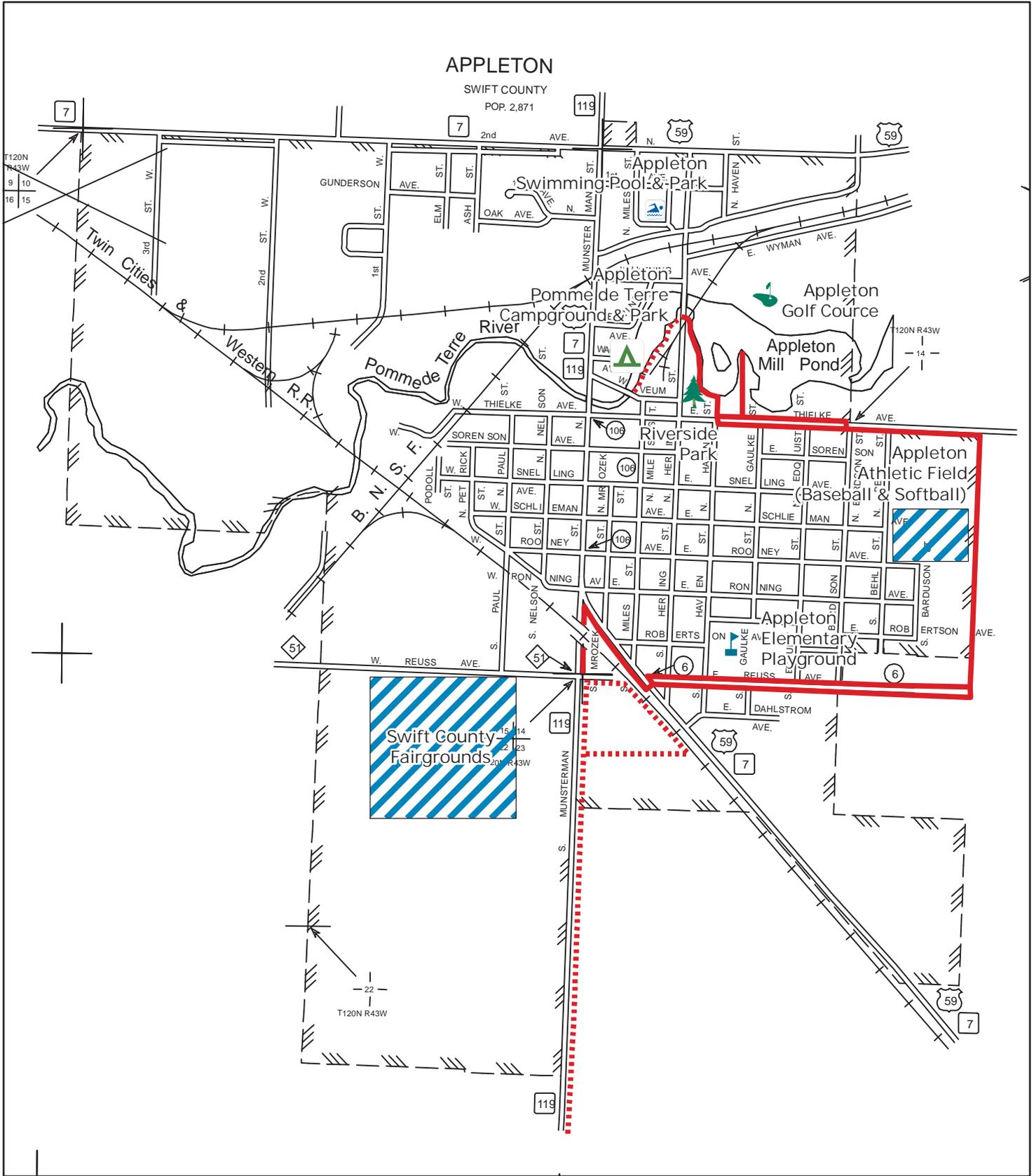
The Community Today

The 2005 population based on the 2000 census is 2,940 and is projected to grow to 3,733 by 2020.

The Pomme de Terre River flows through Appleton from east to west. Trail users will be able to find food and lodging services in Appleton as well as other recreational amenities. Food is available at several restaurants and convenience stations in the community. A hotel is located in town. The Pomme de Terre Campground and Park, located on the banks of the Pomme de Terre River, provides camping facilities.

Other recreation amenities include the Appleton swimming pool and park, Riverside Park, Appleton Golf Course, Appleton Athletic Field, and Appleton Elementary playground. The Swift County Fairgrounds is located in the southwestern part of town. The Appleton OHV Park is another recreational amenity in the area. Located 1 mile east of Appleton off Highway 59, the 100 acre park includes trails for all terrain vehicles and off-highway motorcycles. There are also hiking trails and snowmobile trails located in the park.

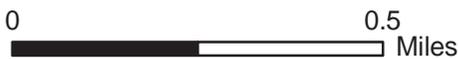
Appleton has developed a community trail system that will connect to the Minnesota River Trail. One end point of the trail is at Hering Street and Riverside Park. The trail follows the banks of the Pomme de Terre River, east along Thielke Avenue, skirts the Appleton Athletic Field, Appleton Hospital and Nursing Home and assisted living complex on the east end of town and connects back into town west to TH 7 via Reuss Avenue. It runs off-road along TH 7 to TH 119 and south out of town under the TC&W Railroad through the TH 199 viaduct. The Minnesota River Trail will connect into Appleton in the northwest quadrant of the city and exit along a corridor following TH 119 in the southwest quadrant.



Appleton

Legend

-  Golf Course
-  Park
-  Camp Grounds
-  School Grounds
-  Swimming Pool
-  Existing City Trail
-  Planned City Trail



Segment 3: Appleton to Montevideo

Trail Highlights

Pelicans, geese, birdwatching, prairie chickens, and prairie

Key Connections

Appleton

City Park

Chippewa Prairie

Milan

Milan Trail

Lac Qui Parle

Lac Qui Parle State Park and Wildlife Management Area Headquarters

Lac Qui Parle Mission State Historic Site

Fort Renville State Historic Site

Lac Qui Parle State Park campground

Army Corps of Engineers Lac Qui Parle Project

Watson

Watson Sag – glacial river channel now part of a flood control system. Connects the lower Chippewa to Lac qui Parle Lake above the dam. During period of floods on the Chippewa, waters are diverted into the Watson Sag, decreasing floodwaters in the lower Chippewa and the Minnesota Rivers.

Criteria for Trail Alignment

Provide views and vistas of Lac Qui Parle

Provide access to the shore of Lac Qui Parle

Provide access to Lac qui Parle State Park

Potential Trail Alignments

The trail corridors illustrated on these maps represent “search area” locations for specific trail alignments. Generally, they follow road corridors. However, it is not envisioned that the Minnesota River Trail will be entirely located in road rights-of-way. The goal is to find alignments that take trail users off road rights-of-way providing access to natural and cultural amenities and providing scenic routes that showcase the Minnesota River Valley Landscape.

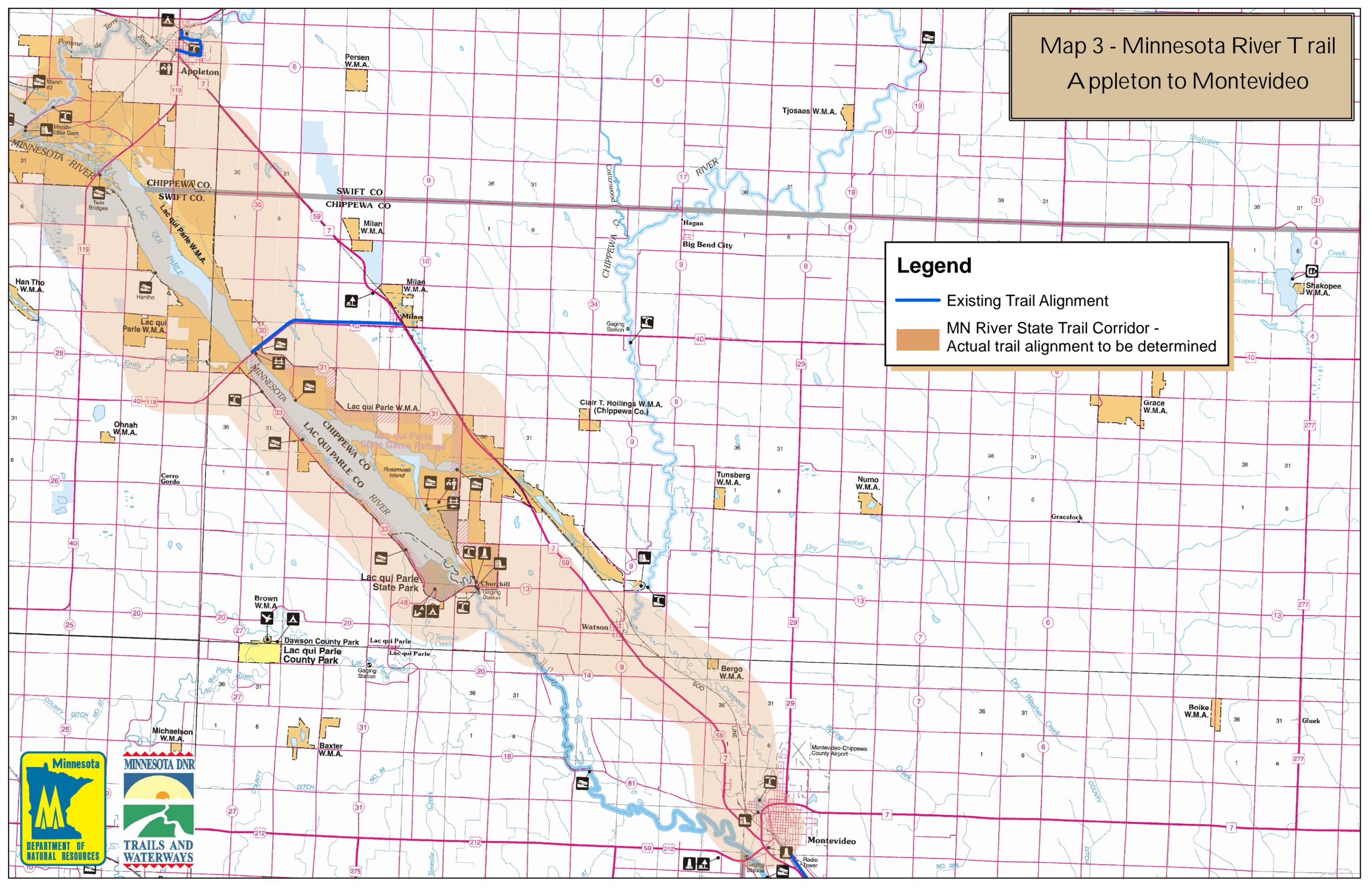
Lac qui Parle Wildlife Management Area

The Lac Qui Parle Wildlife Management Area is the feature that dominates the context for the trail in this map segment. The purpose of this wildlife management area is to manage and preserve a prairie pothole landscape. This 23,976 acre wildlife management area includes the 5,600 acre Lac qui Parle Lake and 5,000 acre Marsh Lake. A nesting colony of white pelicans is located on Marsh Lake. There are large tracts of prairie and wetland areas. Hunting opportunities include deer, small game pheasant, and waterfowl. Wildlife observation opportunities include wetland and prairie species.

Map 3 - Minnesota River T rail
Appleton to Montevideo

Legend

-  Existing Trail Alignment
-  MN River State Trail Corridor - Actual trail alignment to be determined



The loop

A trail loop concept around Lac qui Parle was identified during the planning process. From Appleton, the trail corridor follows 119, skirts the Chippewa Prairie on the east side, and follows CSAH 30 south, intersecting the Milan Trail at TH 40. The trail corridor then follows the boundary of the wildlife management area following the CSAH 31 corridor to the state park and wildlife management headquarters. The historic sites - Fort Renville and Lac qui Parle Mission - will be connected in this segment of trail. The Army Corps of Engineers Lac Qui Parle Project is located at the southern tip of Lac qui Parle Lake. This area would serve as a rest area for trail users. Pelicans are frequently spotted at this site. The trail would continue through Lac qui Parle State Park. The trail corridor would then follow CSAH 33 adjacent to the lake on the west side, connecting back into Appleton. The feasibility of bringing the trail alignment up the bluff to overlook the lake on the west side should be explored when the specific alignment is being determined. A contiguous alignment would need to be acquired from willing sellers for this concept.

Lac qui Parle State Park to Montevideo Connection

There are two trail corridors that could make this connection. One potential trail corridor runs from the south end of Lac qui Parle to Watson and then parallels the TH 7 corridor into Montevideo. A second potential corridor that parallels the Minnesota River could also be used.

Milan and the Milan Trail

This 3 mile paved trail connects Milan Beach Resort on Lac qui Parle Lake to Milan. The small town of Milan, population 326, is known for its connection to the arts. Art classes are taught at the Milan Village Arts School. A mural depicting historic themes is displayed on Main Street. Other attractions in Milan and the Milan area include the unique Norwegian stabbur (pantry), and the Arv Hus Museum.

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Lac Qui Parle State Park

Park Highlights

Wildlife and water are highlights of this 1,057 acre state park. The park is located on the south end of Lac qui Parle Lake. The 33,000 acre Lac qui Parle Wildlife Management Area is directly adjacent to this park. The name Lac qui Parle is a French translation of the Dakota words that mean "the lake that speaks". There are two explanations of how the lake "speaks". One possibility is that echoes bounce off the hillsides around the lake. Another is that it is named after the sound ice makes as it breaks up and moves on the lake during winter and spring thaws. The lake also "speaks" as thousands of Canada geese and other waterfowl migrate through the area in spring and fall. The wildlife management area and state park are excellent places to birdwatch year round.

There are two campgrounds located in the park. A newly developed upper campground has a diversity of campsites including RV sites, cart-in-sites for tents, side-by-side double sites, and pull through sites for trailers. Some sites have electric hook-ups and some have water, sewer, and electric hook-ups. The lower campground is open year round. Water and showers are available in the summer. Day use facilities include a swimming beach and picnic area. A boat launch is located in the park, on Lac Qui Parle Lake. A canoe launch is located on Lac qui Parle River. Trail opportunities include six miles of hiking trails, five miles of horseback riding trails, and five miles of cross-country ski trails. Paved shoulders along County 32 connect the upper and lower portions of the park and can be used for biking.

The Lac Qui Parle Area DNR headquarters facility is located a short distance north of the upper campground. This facility includes interpretive displays, educational and informative brochures, a nature store, and restrooms.

Two historic sites are located very near the park, Fort Renville and Lac qui Parle Mission. Dr. Thomas Smith Williamson and Alexander Huggins founded the Lac qui Parle Sioux Mission in 1835 designed to educate and convert the Indians. The missionaries translated portions of the Bible and hymns into the Dakota language.

Criteria for the Location of the Trail Alignment

The following objectives were identified to guide the location of the trail through the park:

- Provide a paved corridor
- Provide parking for trail users
- Provide a rest area for trail users
- Provide trail and park orientation information
- Provide a connection to the campground
- Protect archaeologic resources
- Minimize impact to wetlands
- Use existing corridors whenever possible
- Avoid severing plant communities
- Avoid impacts to native plant communities and listed species

LAC QUI PARLE STATE PARK

FACILITIES AND FEATURES

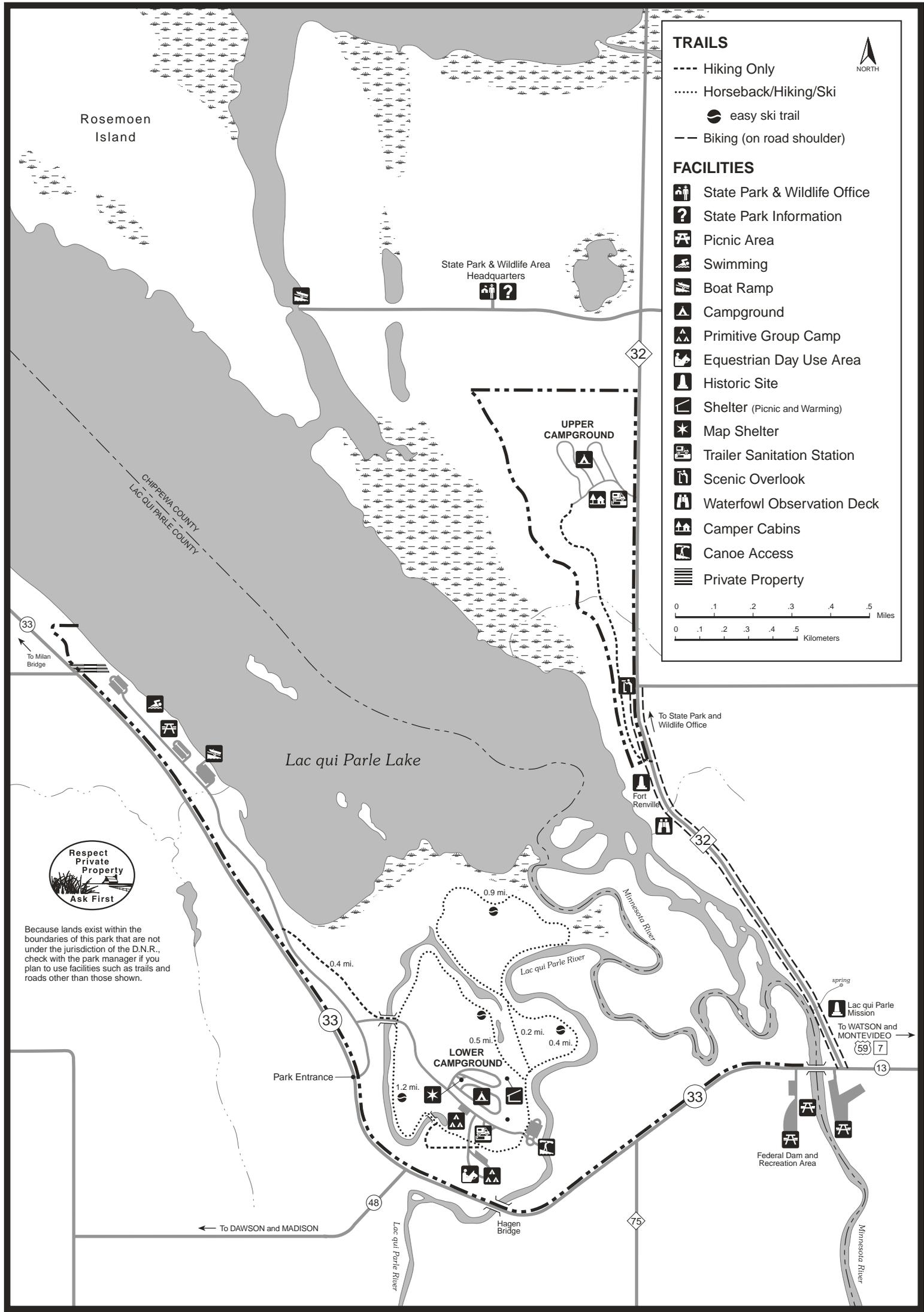
- Upper Campground (showers and flush toilets)
- Lower Campground (showers but no flush toilets)
- 3 Camper Cabins
- Primitive group camp (50 capacity) in lower unit
- Horseback riders day-use area
- 20 picnic sites
- Swimming beach
- Drive in boat launch to Lac qui Parle Lake
- 5 miles of hiking trail
- 5 miles of horseback riding
- 5 miles of ski trail
- 2 trailer dump stations
- Canoe access to Lac qui Parle River
- Public telephones

LOOKING FOR MORE INFORMATION?

The DNR has mapped the state showing federal, state and county lands with their recreational facilities. Public Recreation Information Maps (PRIM) are available for purchase from the DNR gift shop, DNR regional offices, Minnesota state parks and major sporting and map stores.

Check it out - you'll be glad you did.

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Because lands exist within the boundaries of this park that are not under the jurisdiction of the D.N.R., check with the park manager if you plan to use facilities such as trails and roads other than those shown.

Montevideo

History

Montevideo means "from the mountain I see" in Latin and was given to the community by Cornelius Nelson, an early settler and president of the village in 1881 and 1885-1887, because of the views overlooking the valleys. He named the community after Montevideo, Uruguay.

The Community Today

Montevideo, the Chippewa County seat is located at the confluence of the Minnesota and Chippewa Rivers. Hills and valleys of the surrounding landscape create interesting views and vistas. The community has a lot to offer trail users including services, recreational opportunities, and educational opportunities. A variety of food and lodging services are available. Camping is available at Lagoon Park. The Chippewa County-Montevideo Hospital is located in Montevideo. The main street in Montevideo offers shopping, including an antique shop. Artigas Plaza, located in the center of downtown honors Jose Artigas, Uruguayan independence hero. A bronze statue presented by the people of Montevideo, Uruguay is located here.

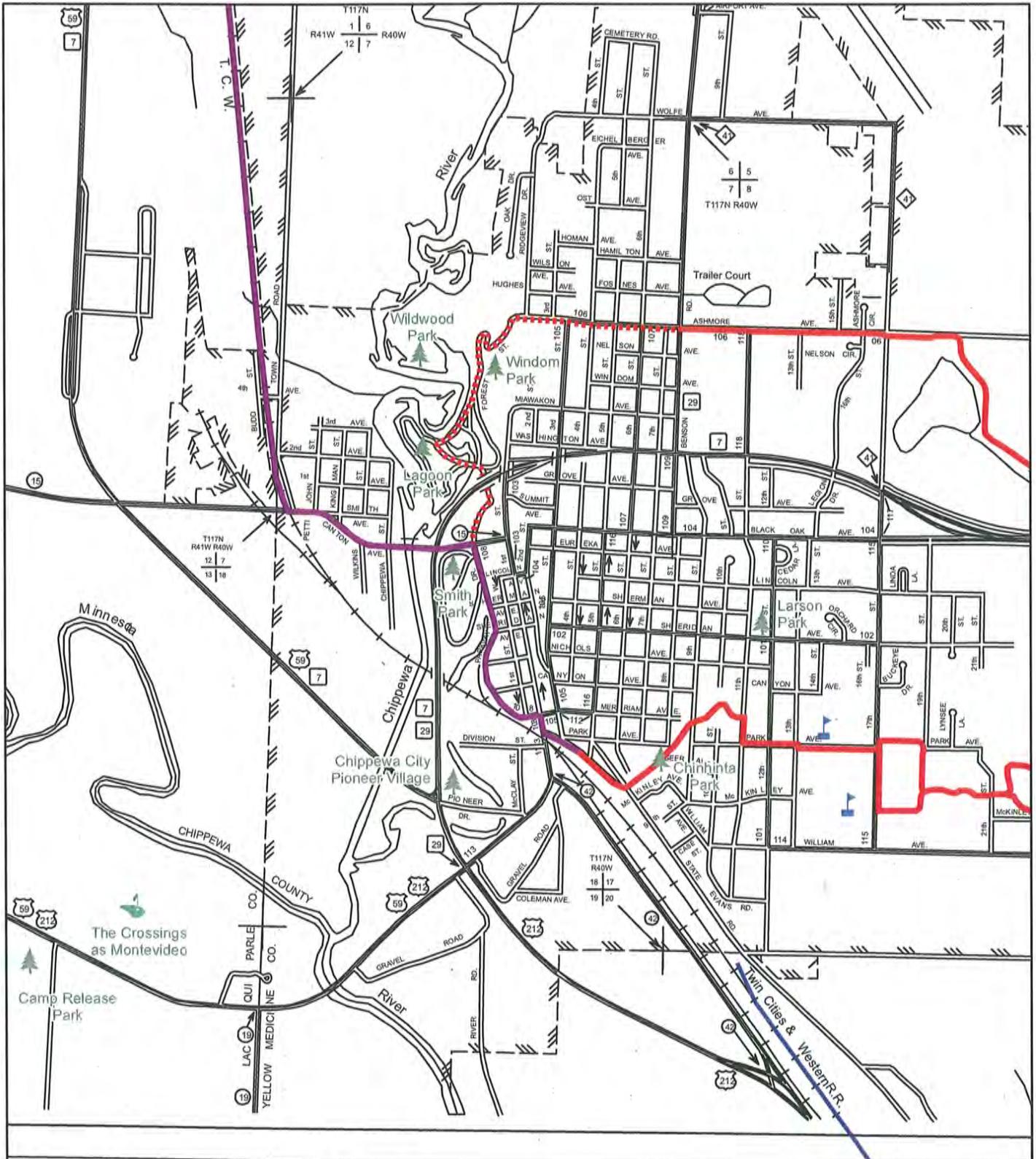
There are twelve city parks in Montevideo totaling 115 acres. Nine of these are neighborhood parks serving residential neighborhoods. Three parks, Smith, Lagoon and Wildwood are located along the Chippewa River. Smith Park provides picnicking, playground equipment, volleyball and horseshoe courts. Three historic WPA-constructed log buildings are located in the park. Lagoon Park has 10 campsites and modern bathroom facilities. Wildwood Park features nature trails that parallel the Chippewa River. The 25-acre Windom Park has six tennis courts, a baseball field, sand volleyball court, basketball court, playground equipment, a picnic shelter and paved hiking trail. An outdoor water park with waterslide is located here.

Montevideo is developing a paved trail system. Three miles of trail are in place. The city's trail system connects to the Montevideo to Wegdahl trail, developed by the county in cooperation with Minnesota Trail Initiatives, a local trail advocacy group. This segment is envisioned to be part of the Minnesota River Trail.

Several historic sites offer insights into the past. The Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad Depot, built in the early 1900s, is being restored as a railroad museum. This striking building can be seen on 1st Street as you enter the community from the south. Chippewa City Historical Park is also located on the south end of town. Operated by the Chippewa County Historical Society, 23 historic structures are preserved here including a pioneer church, school, and historical homes. Tours and demonstrations are part of this facility's interpretive program. The Swensson Farm Museum located six miles from Montevideo is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Trail Alignment

It is envisioned that the Minnesota River Trail will follow a corridor north out of Montevideo along the TC&W-TH 59/7 or Minnesota River corridors.



Montevideo

Legend

- Existing City Trail
- - - - - Planned City Trail
- Conceptual State Trail Route
- Existing Trail
-  Golf Course
-  Park
-  School Grounds



Segment 4: Montevideo to Joseph R. Brown State Wayside

Trail Highlights

Granite outcroppings. History

Key Connections

Granite Falls

Memorial Park

Downtown

Yellow Medicine Historical Museum

Depot

Upper Sioux Agency State Park

Skallbeken County Park

Minnesota River

Criteria for Trail Alignment

Provide vistas of the valley

Potential Trail Alignments

The trail corridors illustrated on these maps represent "search area" locations for specific trail alignments. Generally, they follow road corridors. However, it is not envisioned that the Minnesota River Trail will be entirely located in road rights-of-way. The goal is to find alignments that take trail users off road rights-of-way providing access to natural and cultural amenities and providing scenic routes that showcase the Minnesota River Valley Landscape.

There is a specific alignment for the Minnesota River Trail between Montevideo and Wegdahl - the existing segment of paved trail built on an abandoned railroad grade by Chippewa County.

At Wegdahl, it is envisioned that the trail would follow a corridor on the north side of the river to Granite Falls. The city of Granite Falls is using its power of eminent domain to acquire a trail easement along the outer edge of right-of-way owned by the Twin Cities & Western, Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway, and Canadian Pacific railroads on an 8.2 mile corridor between Granite Falls and Wegdahl. It is the city's intent that this alignment become part of the Minnesota River Trail.

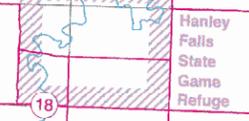
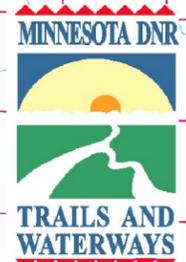
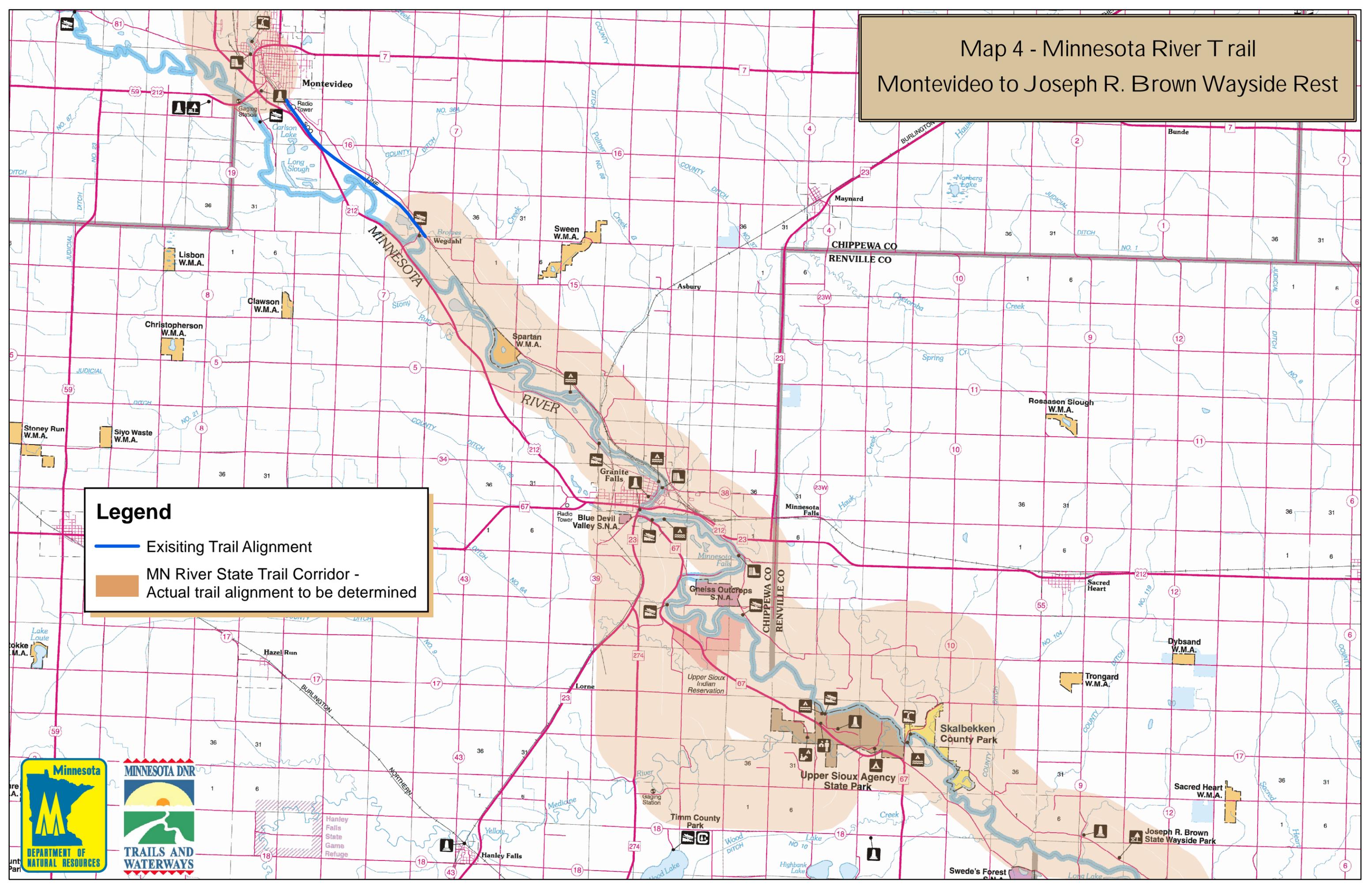
Between Granite Falls and Skallbekken County Park, a loop is envisioned. From Granite Falls, the trail will go south and connect to Upper Sioux Agency State Park. The exact alignment is not known at this time. A specific alignment will be pieced together by identifying willing sellers and working with road authorities. A specific alignment through the park has been determined during the master planning process for Upper Sioux Agency State Park. The trail would then cross the river back north to Skallbekken, then travel northwest to Granite Falls.

DNR will work with Renville County to find a specific alignment through Skalbekken. The trail will then stay on the north side of the river to Joseph R. Brown State Wayside.

Map 4 - Minnesota River T rail Montevideo to Joseph R. Brown Wayside Rest

Legend

-  Existing Trail Alignment
-  MN River State Trail Corridor - Actual trail alignment to be determined



Swede's Forest

Granite Falls

History

Because the river drops 18 feet at Granite Falls, a source of water power attracted settlement. Milling was one of the early industries in the community. The Pillsbury family milling business started here.

The Community Today

Trail users will connect with history, geology, and the Minnesota River in Granite Falls. Granite Falls is unique along the trail because it is located within the riverbed of the Glacial River Warren and downtown is located right on the river. A historic WPA-constructed overlook provides a scenic view of the river.

Memorial Park, 100 acres in size, is significant for both its natural and historical resources. The park contains granite outcroppings, the oldest exposed rock in the nation. These rock outcroppings provide habitat for unique plant and animal species. The park is located adjacent to the Minnesota River and people can walk along the river. Many of the structures in the park were built by the WPA with local granite as building material. Stone riprapping, stone retaining walls, stone steps, the main picnic shelter, and the entrance gates are built from local granite. The Yellow Medicine County Museum is located in Memorial Park and houses displays from the county's past.

Another historic structure of note is the Andrew J. Volstead House and Museum, dedicated to U. S. Congressman Andrew J. Volstead who was from Granite Falls. He is known for the Volstead Act, also known as prohibition. He is also known for the Capper-Volstead Act, (Cooperative Act) that allowed farmers to join together and market their products. These market cooperatives allowed farmers to market and sell their products at a fair price. He also served the Granite Falls area in other ways including as mayor, Yellow Medicine County Attorney, and Granite Falls Board of Education.

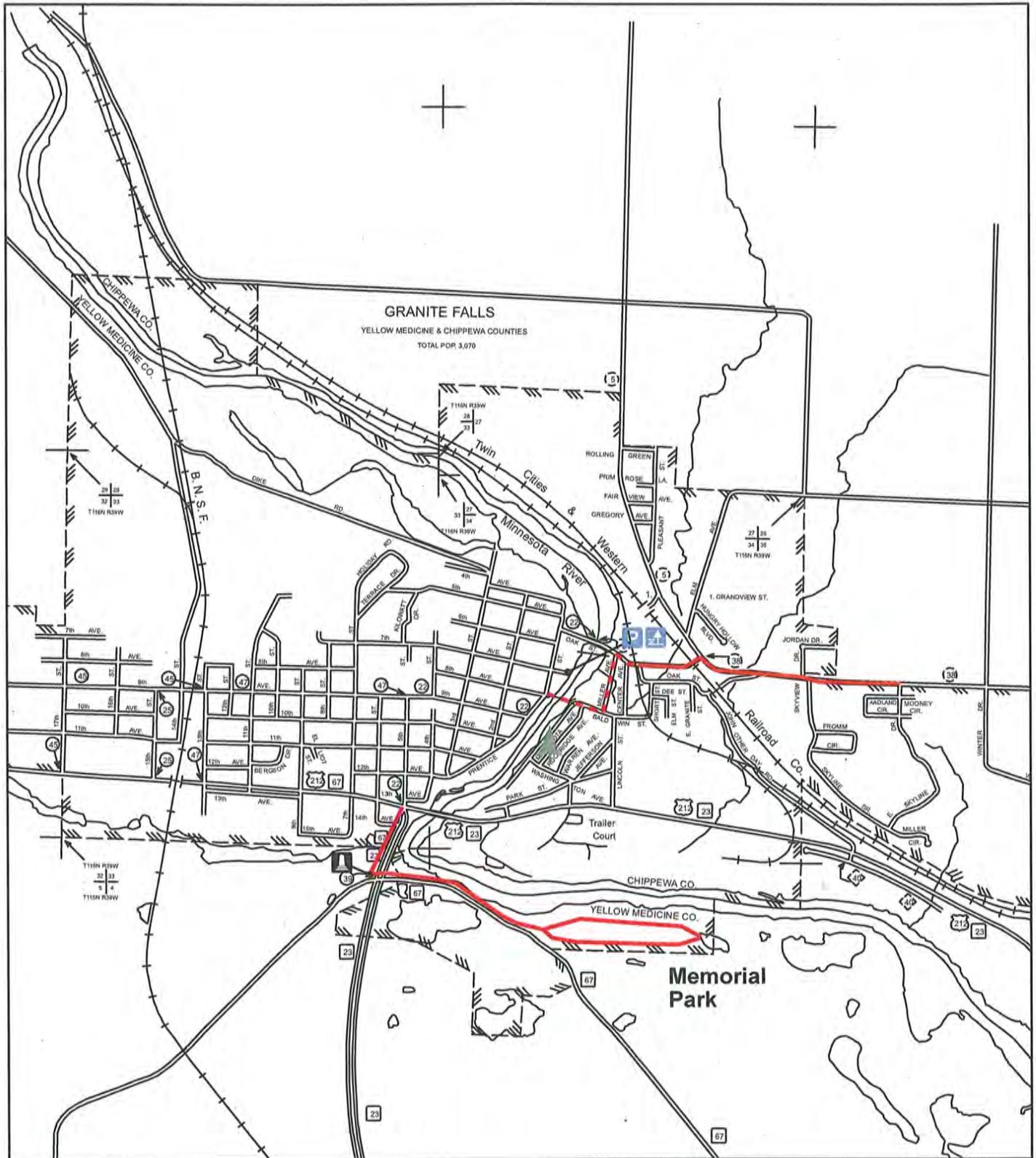
The railroad was important to the growth and development of Granite Falls and the Burlington Northern Depot signifies the importance of the railroad's legacy. The Yellow Medicine County Historical Society is working to move the depot from its existing location, to the downtown trailhead area. Plans are to use this building for a trail center and museum.

Rice Park is located on the east bank of the Minnesota River and is connected to the downtown riverfront by a pedestrian bridge. Fishing and picnicking are uses of Rice Park.

Granite Falls had undergone major changes due to past flooding. They have purchased and demolished residences in the floodplain. They are also planning the downtown area to reduce flood damage potential in the future. A trailhead facility is envisioned as part of the redesign of downtown. The Center for Changing Landscapes from the University of Minnesota designed two alternative trailheads for the community. These designs are contained in the report cited in the reference section (University of Minnesota; Center for Changing Landscapes).

Trail Alignment

A specific alignment for the Minnesota River Trail has not been determined through Granite Falls at this time. The general concept is that the trail will enter the community on the north side of the river, following along the river corridor. The trail would then cross the river to the downtown trail head. From downtown, the trail would connect to Memorial Park and travel south. Another key trail segment connects the downtown trailhead going east on the north side of the river connecting to Skalbekken County Park.



Granite Falls

Legend

- Existing City Trail
- - - Proposed City Trail
-  Park
-  Historic Site
-  Proposed Trailhead



0 0.5
Miles

Upper Sioux Agency State Park

Park Highlights

Natural Resources

Upper Sioux Agency State Park contains important historical resources, a diversity of natural resources and a wide variety of recreational and educational opportunities. The Minnesota River forms the northern boundary of this 1,280 acre park. The Yellow Medicine River flows through the park and joins the Minnesota River at the park's northeastern boundary. Views and vistas of the rivers and river valleys are scenic amenities in this park. There are significant riverine and prairie resources along the Minnesota and Yellow Medicine Rivers. Prairie knolls, wooded bluffs, scattered bur oak trees, wetlands and riverbanks are home to a variety of birds and mammals. Ongoing resource management projects include prairie reconstructions and restoration and oak savanna restoration.

Historic Resources

The Upper Sioux or Yellow Medicine Indian Agency Historic Site is located within the park. The 19.3 acres containing the agency site was transferred to the Minnesota Historical Society in 1969. The Upper Sioux Agency was one of two established to administer the terms of the treaties and teach the Dakota People the European/American way of life. The Lower Sioux Agency is located 30 miles downriver, near Redwood Falls. The agency sites were also focal points for the U. S. Dakota War of 1862. One building of the Upper Sioux Agency remains and the foundations of other buildings are found within the park. The one remaining building was an employee duplex and has been reconstructed by the Minnesota Historical Society. Because the Minnesota River was an important transportation corridor and contained a wealth of natural resources, people have lived and traveled through the valley since the close of the ice age. Thus, the park also contains a number of archaeological resources from the Paleoindian period of 8,000 – 12,000 years ago to the agency period of the 1850s.

Recreation Opportunities

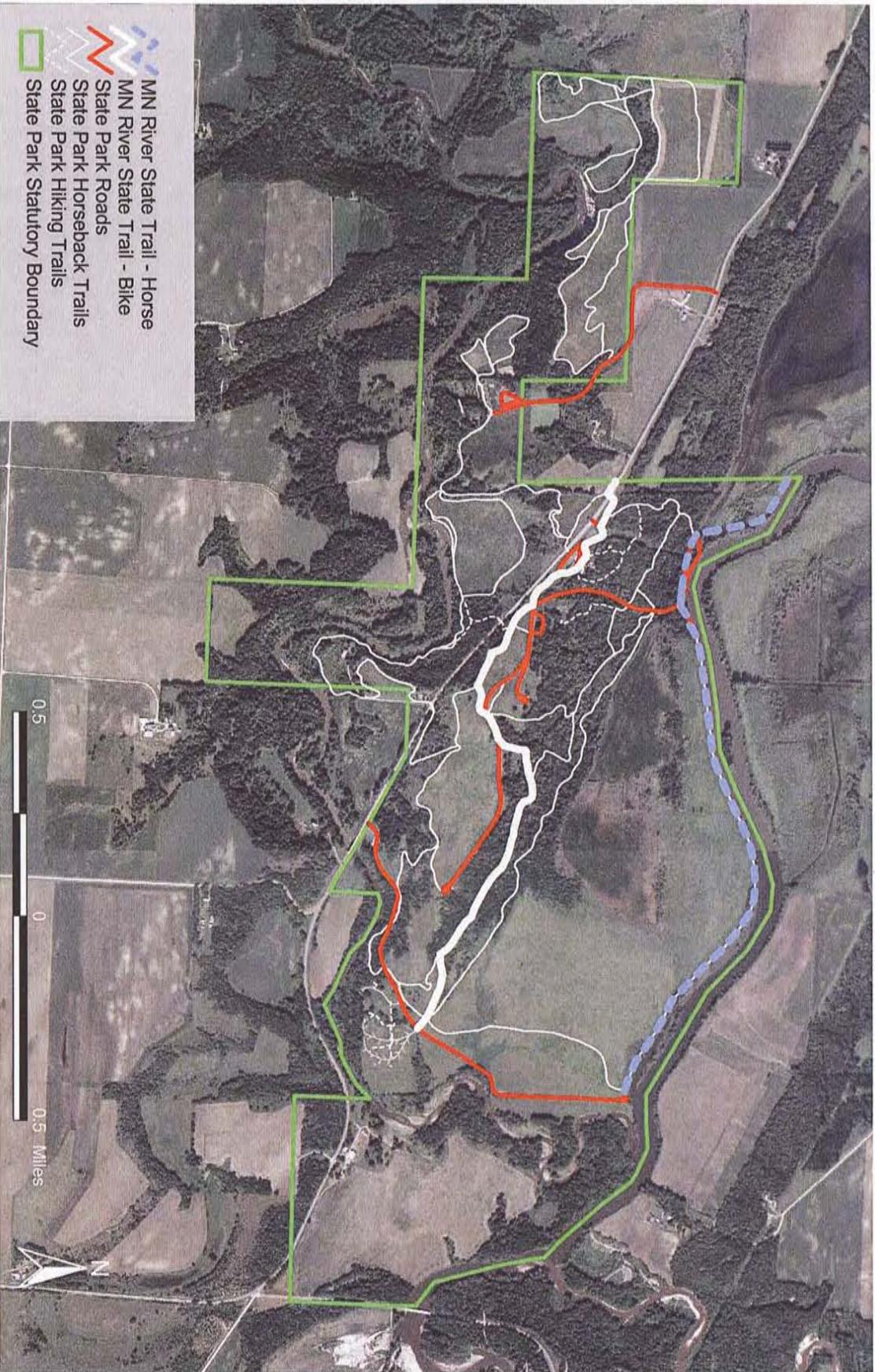
Three campgrounds are located in the park. The 31-site Yellow Medicine River Campground is located in the southeast corner of the park adjacent to the Yellow Medicine River. This campground has 14 electrical campsites; 12 non-electrical sites; 2 tipis for rent; and 3 walk-in sites. The 38-site horse campground is located on the southwest of TH 67 and has 5 electric sites and 33 non-electric. The Rustic Riverside Campground is located on the Minnesota River and has six sites with fire rings and picnic tables.

There are 18 miles of hiking trails; 16 miles of horse trails; 2 miles of cross-country skiing trails; and 14 miles of snowmobile trails. The Minnesota River is a designated Canoe Route and borders the park on the north.

A variety of day use opportunities exist in the park including visiting the Upper Sioux Agency Historic Site; picnicking; canoeing, kayaking, and boating on the Minnesota River (a boat access is located on the Minnesota River); fishing; sliding in winter; and nature observation.

Upper Sioux Agency State Park Map

Proposed Minnesota River State Trail through Upper Sioux Agency State Park



Educational Resources

A visitor center located near the park entrance houses interpretive displays on the Minnesota River Valley. There are self-guided signs at the historic site. The Pezuta Zizi Cultural and Environmental Learning Center is also based in the park and provides educational resources. It is managed by a private non-profit organization that provides programming and equipment loans for the purposes of environmental education. The Upper Sioux Community uses the park for an annual Tribal Community Wacipi (pow-wow). Park visitors can observe this traditional community celebration.

Role of the Park

Upper Sioux Agency State Park will serve as a trailhead for the Minnesota River Trail. Because of the diversity of camping facilities, the park will be an ideal location for overnight stays and as a base for trail users to begin and end their trip on the Minnesota River Trail. Also, because of the variety of natural and cultural resources, the park provides a destination for trail users. Also because of its proximity to Granite Falls, it is anticipated there will be significant use of the trail by community residents for family outings or group events.

Trail Alignment

A specific alignment for the Minnesota River Trail through the park was identified during the planning process for the park that was completed in 2004. The map on the next page illustrates the alignment through the park. The Minnesota River Trail will leave the park at its western boundary, cross the Minnesota River and connect to Skallbeken County Park.

A loop trail concept emerged during the planning process that would connect Granite Falls to Upper Sioux Agency State Park following a route on the south side of the Minnesota River, pass through the park, cross the river back north, connect to Skalbekken County Park and then loop back to Granite Falls.

Segment 5: Joseph R Brown State Wayside to Franklin

Trail Highlights

Views of the valley, granite outcroppings, history, Dakota culture, wildlife

Key Connections

Minnesota River	Birch Coulee County Park
Minnesota River Canoe Route	Birch Coulee Battlefield State Historic Site
Scenic Byway	Beaver Falls County Park
Joseph R. Brown Historic Site	Hawk Creek
Patterson Rapids	Windtowers
Vicksburg County Park	Morton Gneiss
Schwandt Memorial	Rudi Memorial
Goldmine/Goldmine Bridge	Carvings – County Road 12
Cedar Rock	Seed Company
Camp Pope	Kaolin mining
Redwood River	Nickel mine – west of Redwood
Redwood Falls	Quarries
Ramsey Park	Redwood Ferry Site
Community Center	Granite mining
Downtown	Gneiss Outcrops
Redwood County Museum	Indian Camps
Sears Birthplace	Lower Sioux Agency History Center
Gristmill	Lower Sioux Indian Reservation
Riverside Steamboat Landing	Whipple Mission Historic Site
Morton	Cedar Mountain Scientific and Natural Area
Morton Monuments	Franklin
Casey Jones State Trail	

The Cedar Mountain Scientific and Natural Area is located approximately three miles south of Franklin on County Road 5. Cedar Mountain lies on bedrock knobs and ridges that, at 3.4 billion years old, include some of the oldest rocks known to occur in North America. These knobs were once islands in Glacial River Warren, the huge river that drained Glacial Lake Agassiz at the end of the last glacial period and cut the valley now occupied by the Minnesota River. The central knob in the area includes two rock types known only from this site; Cedar Mountain Gabbro and Cedar Mountain Granodiorite. The SNA supports areas of native dry and mesic prairie, rock outcrop, flood plain forest, and oak woodland habitats. The high quality prairies and rock outcrops of Cedar Mountain are uncommon in Minnesota and becoming increasingly rare due mostly to human activities.

Criteria for Alignment

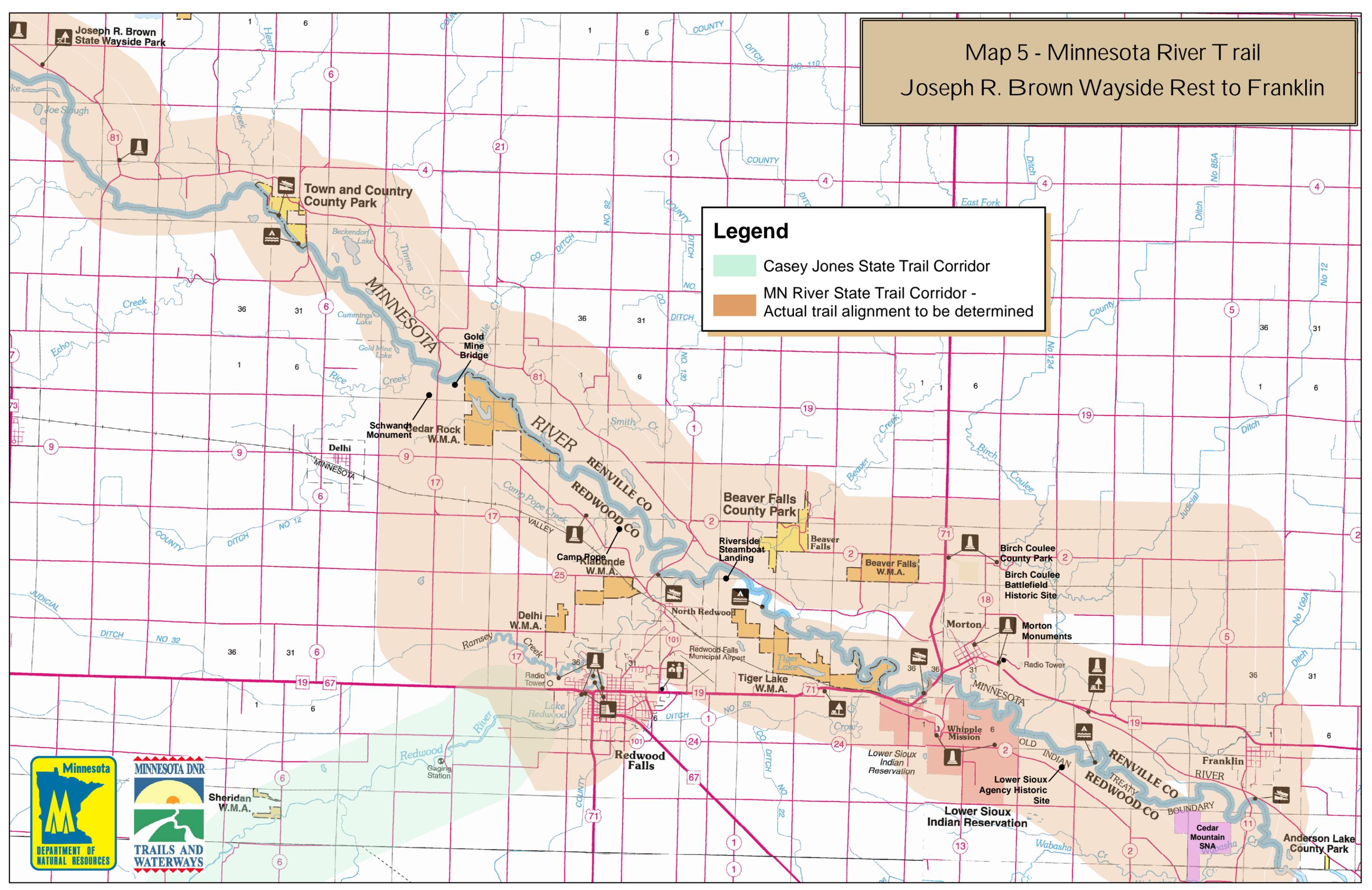
Connect the diversity of cultural and historic features

Connect to and provide views of Ramsey Park

Map 5 - Minnesota River T rail Joseph R. Brown Wayside Rest to Franklin

Legend

-  Casey Jones State Trail Corridor
-  MN River State Trail Corridor - Actual trail alignment to be determined



Sheridan W.M.A.

Anderson Lake County Park

Trail Alignment

The trail corridors illustrated on these maps represent "search area" locations for specific trail alignments. Generally, they follow road corridors. However, it is not envisioned that the Minnesota River Trail will be entirely located in road rights-of-way. The goal is to find alignments that take trail users off road rights-of-way providing access to natural and cultural amenities and providing scenic routes that showcase the Minnesota River Valley Landscape.

The preferred alternative for a paved trail between Joseph R. Brown State Wayside and the Gold Mine Bridge (7 miles downstream) would be on the north side of the river. The trail will connect to Vicksburg County Park approximately 4 miles downstream from Joseph R. Brown Wayside. DNR will work with Renville County to find an alignment for the trail through the park. A paved trail loop was envisioned in the segment between the Gold Mine Bridge and Franklin. From the Gold Mine Bridge, the trail would go southeast to connect to Redwood Falls. There are two alternatives for the connection between Gold Mine Bridge and Redwood Falls. One alternative would follow the CSAH 17 corridor south to TH 19, then east into Redwood Falls. The other would follow the river corridor southeast to Redwood Falls. Going southeast out of Redwood Falls, the trail would connect to the Lower Sioux Reservation, the Lower Sioux Agency Historic Site, Cedar Mountain Scientific and Natural Area, and then north across the river to Franklin. From Franklin, there are two alternatives for a trail alignment back northwest. One alternative would follow along CSAH 5 north to CSAH 2 to Birch Coulee and Beaver Falls county Park. The trail would then follow the CSAH 81 corridor to the Gold Mine Bridge. The second alternative would follow the TH 19/river corridor to Morton. Segment 5 Map

Redwood Falls

History

Redwood Falls is named after the Redwood River, the banks on which the community is located. The Redwood River falls 140 feet here and descends in rapids the last three miles before it joins the Minnesota River. Redwood Falls was settled by Col. Samuel McPhail, and J.S.G. Honner in 1864. It was platted in 1865, incorporated as village in 1876, and as a city in 1891.

The Community Today

Natural resources, historical resources and recreational opportunities abound in the Redwood Falls area.

There are seven community parks and three regional facilities in Redwood Falls. The crown jewel in the system is Alexander Ramsey Park, a scenic 217 acre park. Ramsey Park is the largest municipal park in the state and highlights include two waterfalls, a campground, zoo, picnic areas, playground and trails. The Redwood Area Community Center offers a variety of recreational programs and facilities including a field house gymnasium, civic arena, conference meeting center, and health and fitness center. Memorial Athletic Complex includes football and baseball fields, tennis courts, basketball courts, and a municipal outdoor swimming pool. Two golf courses are also recreational amenities.

Redwood Falls has an active bike and hike commission that has developed a trail plan for the community and is working to integrate the Minnesota River Trail into the community. Their first trail project will be constructed along CSAH 101 between Valleyview Road and Front Street.

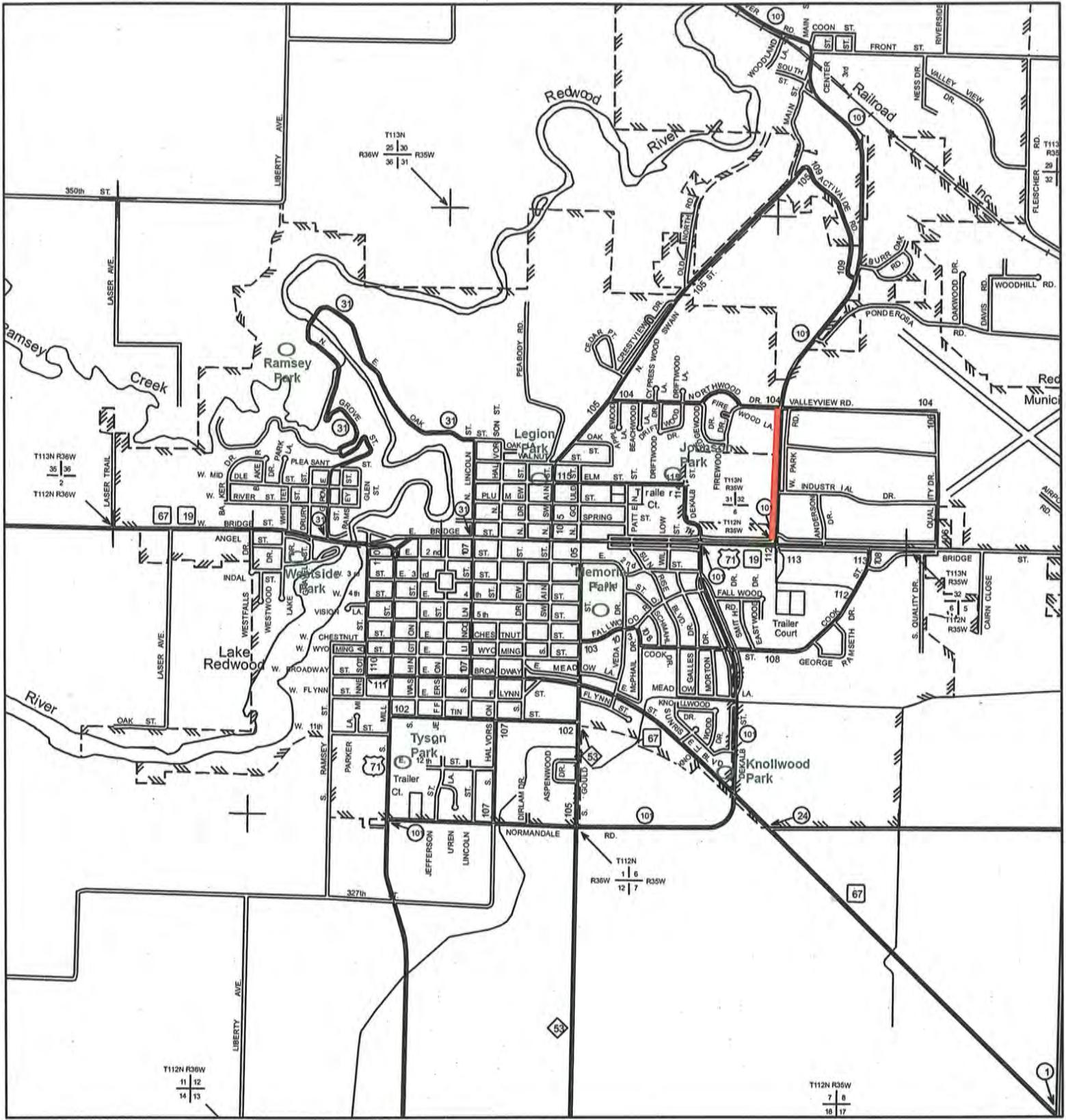
A variety of historic sites are located in Redwood Falls - the Redwood County Museum formerly the Redwood County Poor Farm Museum houses historical displays. The list of historic sites includes the birthplace of Sears, Camp Pope, Grist Mill Site, and Riverside Steamboat Landing

Several wildlife management areas nearby offer hunting and birdwatching opportunities. Fishing is another popular activity in this area. The Minnesota River near Redwood Falls is designated as a Wild and Scenic River.

The Lower Sioux Indian Reservation and Lower Sioux Agency Historic Site are located five miles away.

Trail Alignment

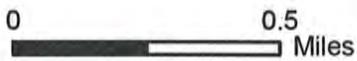
The trail is envisioned to enter the community in the northwest, connecting to Ramsey Park. It will then connect to downtown Redwood Falls which has been identified as the trailhead location. It is envisioned that the Casey Jones State Trail will also connect at this point. From downtown the trail will proceed east out of town. Siting a trail through Redwood Falls is challenging because of the three highways that intersect the community, the rivers, and terrain.



Redwood Falls

Legend

- Existing City Trail
- Park



Morton

History

Morton, incorporated in 1887, was named for a railroad conductor named Morton. The Morton community of approximately 450 people today is located on the southern border of Renville County in the Minnesota River Valley. Beautiful hills and rugged natural scenery can be found in all directions from Morton. It is surrounded also by rich farmland, running streams and natural woods. The rock outcrops visible in the community are 3.6 billion years old, some of the oldest bedrock on the surface of the Earth.

Early writers state that Morton, sprang to life overnight and in 1890 was Renville County's largest community with 453 inhabitants. Morton is within walking distance of many historic sites which date from early Native people that inhabited the area 10,000 years ago to the fur trading era, to settlement, and the U. S. Dakota War of 1862. Two granite monuments erected in memory of the Battle of Birch Coulee overlook the village,

The Community Today

Morton is located in south central Minnesota at the junction of State Highways 19 and 71. The community is rich in history and has an abundance of natural beauty year round with access to the Minnesota River. A unique prairie site and rock outcropping are located at the junction of 19 and 71. Morton Gneiss, which is among the oldest rocks on Earth can be seen here. This coarse-grained, banded metamorphic rock is about 3.6 billion years old. There are also many birding sites and opportunities to view wildlife in the area. Morton is a part of the Minnesota River Scenic Byway.

Many community festivities are held in Morton throughout the year. Spring is celebrated with the Spring Garden Party (April), where local retailers celebrate the end of winter and a fresh start to a new season. The Independence Day Celebration (July) has softball and volleyball tournaments, kids' games, bingo, flag presentation ceremony, and more. The Scarecrow Festival (September) celebrates fall with horse and buggy rides, crafts, flea markets, and store specials. The Beneath the Village Wreath (November) and Mistletoe Madness (December) celebrations. include holiday music, decorations, Santa visits, cookie baking contest, kids' games, and much, much more.

A number of historic sites are located in and near the community. Birch Coulee Battlefield, located three miles north of Morton, was the site of a battle of the U.S. – Dakota War. The Dakota kept the U.S soldiers under siege for 36 hours before relief arrived from Fort Ridgely. A self-guided trail through recreated prairie provides information about the battle. Guide posts pinpoint where the U.S. soldiers were camped and the positions the Dakota took while surrounding the U.S. soldiers. The Lower Sioux Agency Historic Site is located four miles northwest of Morton. The Lower Sioux Agency is at the site of the first organized Indian attack in the 1862 U.S.-Dakota War. During your visit, explore Dakota life before the reservation era and discover how the reservation system changed traditional Dakota ways of living. The Renville County Historical Museum is located in town.

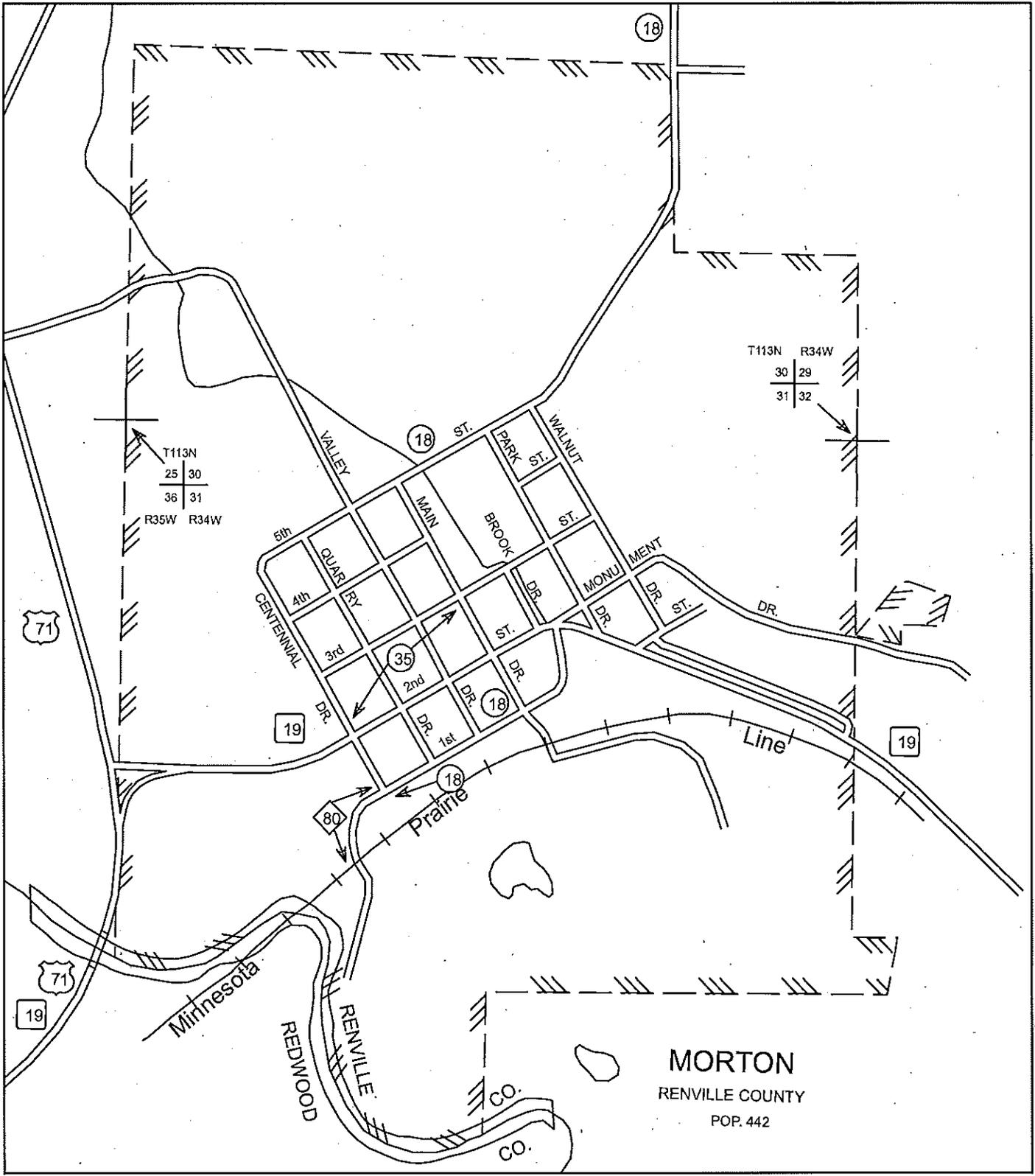
Two parks provide camping and other recreation amenities. Adjacent to the battlefield is Birch Coulee County Park (once a State Park), which has a stonework arch bridge built by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Birch Coulee offers a modern shelter with a fireplace, picnic areas, camping facilities with electrical hookups, and two restroom buildings. Approximately five miles northwest of Morton is Beaver Falls County Park offering camping and horseback riding, with three shelters,

playground equipment, two cement block bathroom facilities, and hitching posts for horse riders. There is a city park within Morton as well.

Trail users will be able to find food and lodging in Morton. A hotel and gas station/convenience store are open 24 hours and offer high speed internet broadband service. A restaurant is located on the main street. Jackpot Junction Casino and Hotel is located three miles south of Morton. Many unique gift and antique shops offer shopping opportunities.

Trail Alignment

The community continues to develop a local trail plan and envisions the State Trail entering from the North on County Hwy 18, winding by the Renville County Museum and Park into the downtown shopping area where a local Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway kiosk will be constructed featuring local and regional historic and recreational information. The trail could then wind down to the Minnesota River Canoe landing, then proceed east near an old quarry and follow along a corridor of Hwy 19 providing wonderful views of the two large granite monuments, proceeding east to Renville County 51 to Franklin.



Morton



MORTON
 RENVILLE COUNTY
 POP. 442

Franklin

History

The city of Franklin presently has about 500 residents. It was incorporated in 1882 and is the oldest surviving town in Renville County. Franklin was named after Benjamin Franklin and the first places of business included a post office, 2 general stores, a blacksmith shop and a hotel. Many of the early settlers in Bandon Township, northeast of Franklin, were Finnish immigrants. About one hundred families of Finnish descent lived in the area around 1900, most were of the Finnish Apostolic Faith. In 1884, several church members signed a note to borrow \$150 for the purpose of building a church in Bandon Township, and the Finnish Cemetery was purchased in 1868 and is located one mile east of the church.

Franklin is located in the Minnesota River Valley and a Finnish settlement nearby on the river, referred to as Finn Town, was host to a hotel where guests arrived on the steamboats on the Minnesota River. There are also many Irish that settled north of Franklin, affiliated with St. Patrick's Cemetery in Birch Cooley Township; and there were also many Germans, Norwegians, and Swedish people that settled around Franklin.

The Community Today

Franklin is located on State Highway 19 overlooking the Minnesota River Valley and is known as Minnesota's "Catfish Capital." Franklin is a part of the Minnesota River Scenic Byway.

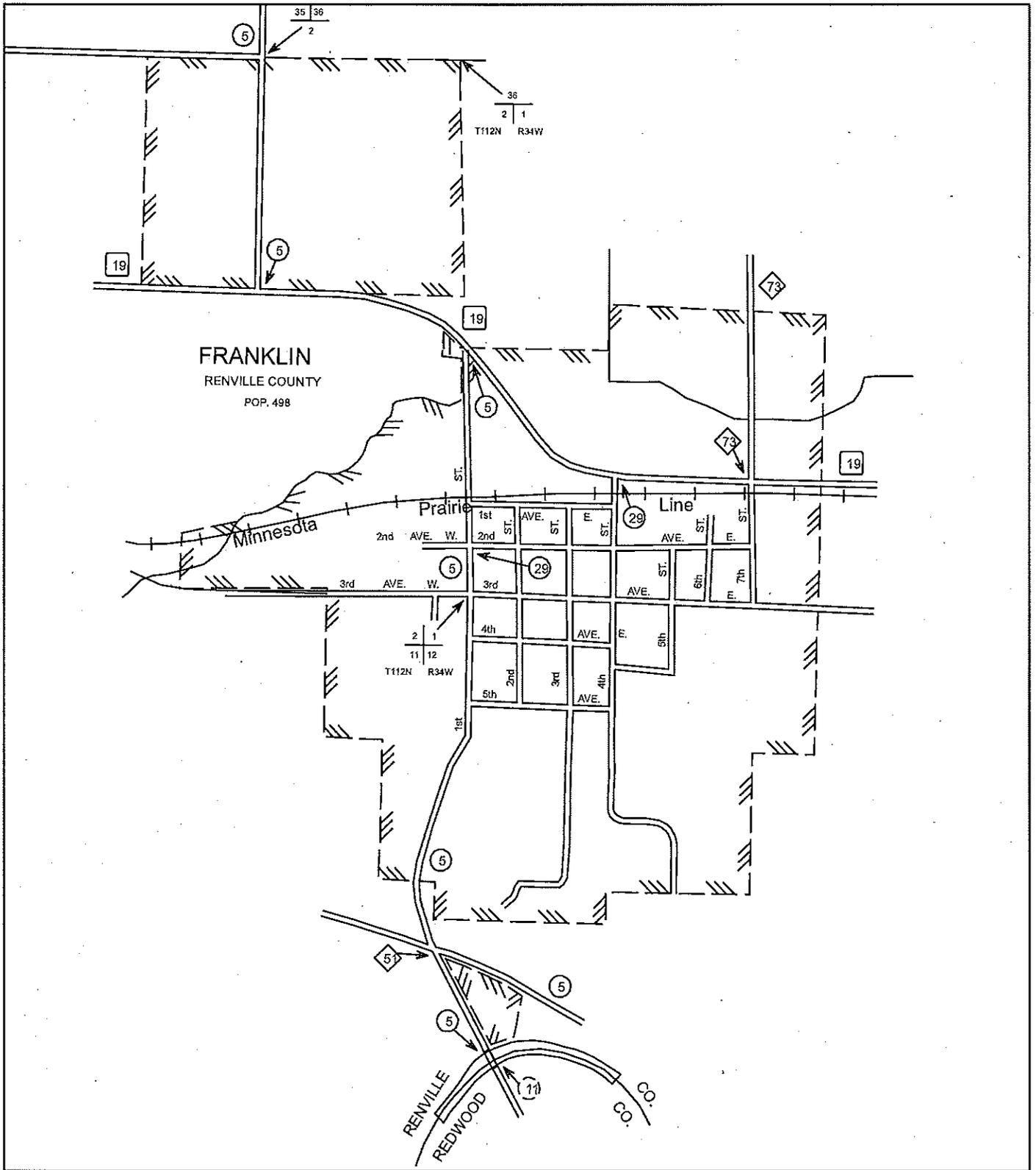
Catfish Derby Days is Franklin's annual three-day celebration held each year on the fourth weekend in July. Events include a fishing contest, street dance, square dance, parades, co-ed volleyball tournament, men's 12-team softball tournament, 3 on 3 co-ed basketball tournament, queen contest/variety show, chess tournament, "Kiss the Catfish" contest, music in the park, kids pedal tractor pull, raffle, football player auction, church services, and Fire Department water fight.

Lake Anderson County Park and Mack Lake County Park are both accessible from the Minnesota River Scenic Byway Road or County Road 5 southeast of Franklin, as well as the Franklin Boat Landing area within the southern city limits. Lake Anderson's main attraction is shorefishing. Mack Lake's shallow, spring fed lake provides excellent fishing. There is easy access to the Minnesota River for shorefishing off of a sandbar at the end of the park road. The park provides overnight rustic camping with water, restroom facilities, and a picnic shelter located near the old Nesselth log farm that still stands on the site. The park is also home to the area's only black granite deposit.

Camping is available in Franklin at the Boat Landing and Ball Park sites. The Boat Landing is located just south of Franklin on County Road 5 and is adjacent to the Minnesota River access site, offering primitive camping, with access to the river, a picnic area, and a shelter. The Ball Park site is located on Second Avenue and offers public restrooms, showers, and electricity.

Trail Alignment

It is envisioned that the Minnesota River Trail would enter from from the south, following the Renville County 51 corridor, then to a corridor following County Road 5 north, through the downtown area then loop back down to County Road 5 (River Road) and proceed past Renville County Parks Anderson and Mack Lake, connecting to Fort Ridgely State Park and the Fair Ridge Trail that offers approximately 6.3 trail miles of biking, hiking, jogging, or in-line skating. Currently the trail connects the City of Fairfax (located 9 miles east of Franklin) to Fort Ridgely State Park.



Franklin



Tatanka Bluffs

The Minnesota River Trail is a vital component of the regional vision of Tatanka Bluffs, which encompasses Redwood and Renville counties. The Tatanka Bluffs group is comprised of community and county interests working together cooperatively to build economic viability and sustainability within Redwood and Renville counties.

There are five areas of focus in the Tatanka Bluff's vision.

1. Outdoor recreation
2. Education Opportunities
3. Tourism Routes
4. Economic Development
5. Gaming/Entertainment/Community celebrations/Special events.

Connections with the five focus areas will contribute to the success of the state trail. And vice versa, the state trail can help these focus areas achieve their goals. DNR will cooperate with this group to ensure that trail planning, development, and management is coordinated with the comprehensive efforts of Tatanka Bluffs and what they're trying to achieve.

