

Minnesota Trunk Highway 16  
Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway

Corridor Management Plan

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Draft

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## Acknowledgements

Public participation in the corridor management planning process was critical, both for creating a well-informed and implementable plan and for fostering stewardship of the Byway and its resources. The Corridor Management Plan also provides recommendations for ongoing public participation to facilitate implementation of the Plan and monitoring of Byway conditions and issues. Community leaders throughout the byway area supported nomination of the byway for national status and are committed to future cooperation to enhance the byway.

Co-chairs of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Study Committee were Marlene Schultz of Houston and Deb Staley of Spring Valley. Members of the committee were Mark Bishop, Harmony; Brian Brown, Rushford; Jan Christopherson, Spring Valley; Joyce Jacobson, Harmony; Beverly Jiardina, La Crescent; Sharon Liudahl, Spring Grove; Robert Pederson, Chatfield; Jon Pieper, Lanesboro; Jane Schiltz, Caledonia; Ted Tweito, Spring Grove; and Rosalie Kruegel, Spring Valley. The Minnesota Department of Transportation, especially Scenic Byways Coordinator Mark Anderson, provided invaluable assistance, as did Beth Bartz and Jennifer Schulz of SRF Consulting Group and Will Stark of I06 Group, Ltd. Historic Bluff Country Executive Director Kathy Hartl also provided leadership for both the Corridor Management Plan and the national nomination.

Many individuals throughout the region worked hard to complete the processes, assure broad participation, and provide support for developing the Plan and nominating the byway for national status. Thank you to all of them, even though they may not be specifically named here. The following communities and organizations provided support:

Caledonia Chamber of Commerce  
City of Caledonia  
City of Chatfield  
City of Fountain  
City of Harmony  
City of Houston  
City of La Crescent  
City of Lanesboro  
City of Peterson  
City of Preston  
City of Rushford  
City of Spring Valley  
City of Wykoff  
Fillmore County Commissioners  
Harmony Economic Development Authority  
La Crescent Chamber of Commerce  
Minnesota Department of Transportation  
Minnesota Representative Gregory M. Davids, Preston  
Minnesota Senator Kenric Scheevel, Preston  
Minnesota: Representative Michelle Rifenberg, La Crescent  
Prairie Visions Group  
Southeastern Minnesota League of Municipalities  
Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation  
Spring Valley Chamber of Commerce  
Spring Valley Community Historical Society, Inc.  
U. S. Senator Mark Dayton, U. S. Congress  
U. S. Senator Paul Wellstone, U. S. Congress

Continued cooperation to implement the goals and objectives of the Corridor Management Plan will allow travelers to continue to be intrigued by the dramatic bluffs, sinkholes, caves, and carved river valleys as they explore the history and culture of the small communities of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Corridor, discovering unique hometown stories.

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# Chapter One – Introduction

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## PURPOSE OF PLAN

The Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway passes through dramatic hills and rolling prairie, historic river towns of quaint character, and boundless outdoor recreational opportunities of all kinds. The Byway is a special place to visit, work, or call home. For this reason, the Corridor Management Plan was developed with the purpose of presenting a widely acceptable approach to improve and maintain the Byway – an approach intended to highlight the Byway’s distinctive characteristics while ensuring the qualities that make this place special are protected.

The Corridor Management Plan was prepared to help implement the goals, interpretive message, and economic strategies established by the Scenic Byway Study Committee and participating organizations and individuals. This document provides an assessment of the Byway’s intrinsic qualities and resources as well as recommendations for creating a balance between promotion and protection. Resource management strategies are made to ensure that the quality of life in the Historic Bluff Country is not compromised.

The Corridor Management Plan is also a necessary piece of the application for National Scenic Byway designation. The Plan is designed to convey potential for further investment into the existing Historic Bluff Country State Scenic Byway and portray the corridor’s national significance. Included in the Plan is guidance for interpretive development and marketing of Byway resources, as well as recommendations for implementation and protection of community character.

The combination of many intrinsic qualities of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway make this area a destination of local, regional and national significance. The ultimate objective of this plan is to strengthen Historic Bluff Country communities by enhancing their economic base and creating a closer connection to the area’s unique natural resources and exceptional history and culture through interpretive development. This objective would be further enhanced by national designation. With the strategies outlined in this Corridor Management Plan, the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway can encourage investment in the region’s economy, enhance recreation and interpretation, and maintain the integrity of the distinct qualities and character of the area.

## THE BYWAY CORRIDOR

The Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway follows Minnesota Trunk Highway 16 through southeastern Minnesota’s picturesque Root River Valley and was designated a State Scenic Byway in 1995. The 88-mile route extends from Interstate 90 (I-90) on the west (just west of Dexter) to La Crescent on the east, where it meets again with I-90. As Highway 16 virtually parallels I-90, it therefore functions as a convenient alternative route to travelers on the interstate.

This Corridor Management Plan also addresses issues concerning connecting routes to Highway 16 to the degrees that they provide access to the Byway or supporting resources of the Byway.

A corridor extending 12 miles to either side of Highway 16 was considered in the preparation of this Plan.

The Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway links together some of the most scenic, historic, cultural, natural and recreational resources in the area. Traveling through the small towns and quaint communities along the Byway, visitors find attractions that include restaurants, art galleries, theaters, antique shops, historic homes and sites, state parks, and lodging opportunities from B&B's to motels to camping. Visitors also encounter a variety of outdoor recreational opportunities, including canoeing, hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, and trout fishing. The Root River offers water-related recreation while the Root River and Harmony-Preston Valley State Trails offer miles of trail for a variety of users. Three state parks and an extensive state forest reside within Historic Bluff Country, offering a diverse number of activities and experiences. Additionally, interpretive centers like the Eagle Bluff Learning Center, Houston Nature Center, Rushford Southeastern Minnesota Railroad Museum, and Peterson Depot Museum provide educational opportunities related to the surrounding landscape and wildlife, as well as the history of the area.

#### STUDY COMMITTEE & ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

A critical part of a successful Corridor Management Plan is the presence and effort of a strong community-based organization representing the interests of Byway residents, businesses and governments. The Southeastern Minnesota Historic Bluff Country, Incorporated – a regional convention and visitors bureau established in 1985 – has assumed that role for this Byway. The Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Study Committee was created by Historic Bluff Country, Inc. to oversee the development of a Corridor Management Plan for the Byway which would promote area resources and attractions, support local businesses, preserve the character of communities along the Byway and support nomination of the Byway to the National Scenic Byway program.

The Study Committee recognized how the region's resources – when connected by a distinctive Scenic Byway – could provide visitors and residents with a unique and meaningful way to explore the Historic Bluff Country. With investment into new interpretation and visitor services, the Byway would stimulate economic development for the area's communities, offer an enhanced appreciate for the land and history of the area, and maintain a quality of life that first attracted residents to the bluff country.

Historic Bluff Country, Inc. and the Scenic Byway Study Committee represent area member organizations of the following categories:

- Local city governments
- B&Bs, hotels, motels and inns
- Banks
- Historical societies and museums
- Convention and visitor bureaus
- Tourism offices
- Theaters and art galleries
- Restaurants and bars
- Grocery stores and markets
- Campgrounds
- Tourist attractions
- Communication and telephone companies
- Electric cooperatives
- Country clubs and golf courses
- Outfitters and recreational interests
- Retail businesses
- Nature and learning centers
- State parks
- Zoos

## HISTORIC BLUFF COUNTRY SCENIC BYWAY STUDY COMMITTEE GOALS

The Study Committee established the following goals for the Byway at the beginning of the Corridor Planning process:

- 1) Increase the level of tourism to the area.
- 2) Promote stewardship, interpretation and visitation of key resources in the area.
- 3) Protect the character of the community.
- 4) Provide safe facilities for enjoying the Byway corridor by car, bus, motorcycle, bike and canoe.
- 5) Foster enthusiasm and support for the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway and National Scenic Byway designation.

## WHAT IS A CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN?

The Corridor Management Plan is a community-based strategy for balancing the management and protection of the Byway's intrinsic qualities with public use and enjoyment of the area's resources. Planning allows communities to identify and evaluate ways these resources should be used and ways to share these resources with visitors. The ultimate goal is to create a balance between preservation and promotion in a manner that maintains the integrity and value of the Byway's intrinsic qualities and character of the communities.

The goals of the Corridor Management Plan are as follows:

- 1) Identify key Byway resources and assess strengths of the Byway's intrinsic qualities.
- 2) Identify a strategy for maintaining and enhancing the Byway's intrinsic qualities.
- 3) Develop interpretive strategies that benefit both visitors' and local residents' understanding of local history and culture.
- 4) Balance visitor promotion with character protection throughout the corridor in alignment with the desires of local communities.
- 5) Develop marketing strategies for the region to promote the area's attractiveness as a place to visit, work, and live.
- 6) Assure safe and enjoyable travel along the Byway for both area residents and visitors.
- 7) Develop a plan for ongoing public support and participation.
- 8) Encourage community participation throughout the planning and implementation of this strategy.

## HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

This plan is not a regulation, policy, or law. Rather, it is a blueprint – goals identified here provide structure and direction. However, it is the responsibility of government officials, private business owners and community residents to implement the marketing, interpretation, resource

management, tourism development and other investments that are part of making this plan a reality.

*Byway Study Committee* – the Corridor Management Plan should be used for further planning and solicitation of funding for implementation of Corridor Management Plan recommendations.

*Owners/Managers of Byway Resources* – the Corridor Management Plan should be consulted when planning for management, interpretation, and stewardship of resources.

*City and County Planning and Community Development Departments* – the Corridor Management Plan should be consulted when considering modifications to land use policies or evaluating development plans.

*Mn/DOT, County and City Public Works Departments, DNR trail and canoe access managers* – the Corridor Management Plan should be consulted during the planning of improvements to roadways, waysides, trail systems and canoe access areas.

#### NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY DESIGNATION

The National Scenic Byways Program was established under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, and reauthorized in 1998 under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Under the program, the U.S. Secretary of Transportation recognizes certain roads as National Scenic Byways or All-American Roads based on the significance of their intrinsic qualities. There are 72 such designed byways in 32 states. Minnesota has three National Scenic Byways and one All-American Road. The Federal Highway Administration promotes the collection as America's Byways and provides resources to help manage the intrinsic qualities within the broader byway corridor.

Designation as a National Scenic Byway would include the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway in this national promotion and potentially make the corridor eligible for additional federal and state funding. To be designated as a National Scenic Byway, a road must possess at least one of six intrinsic qualities (archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational and scenic) significant throughout the multi-state region. Preparation of a Corridor Management Plan is also a prerequisite to nomination to the National Scenic Byways Program.

Insert Corridor Map here.

## Chapter Two – Public Participation

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Public participation in the corridor management planning process is critical both from creating a well-informed and implementable plan and from fostering stewardship of the Byway and its resources. The Corridor Management Plan will also provide recommendation for ongoing public participation to facilitate implementation of the Plan and monitoring of Byway conditions and issues.

### PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

Early in the Corridor Management Plan process, a Public Involvement Strategy was developed to identify key groups of stakeholders and decision makers, the objective for soliciting their involvement, and strategies to inform them about the process and gain their input and support. (See Appendix A for a copy of the Public Involvement Strategy.) Key stakeholder groups were identified as follows:

- Policy Makers
- Residents of the Historic Bluff Country Area
- Landowners adjacent to the TH 16 Byway
- Visitor-oriented businesses within the Scenic Byway corridor
- Amish community
- Visitor facility owners/operators

Direct mailing of information regarding the Byway and the Corridor Management Plan to specific property owners proved to be problematic due to inability to obtain mailing lists through the County tax records. However, information was provided through the local news media (newspaper and radio) and invitations extended to stakeholder meetings and open houses as described below.

### STUDY COMMITTEE

As previously mentioned, the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Study Committee was a valuable piece in developing an effective Corridor Management Plan for Highway 16. Committee Members included volunteers from various government agencies, local businesses, and non-profit organizations. All had a similar interest – to improve the attractiveness of Scenic Byway and increase attention to tourism and activities in the area. The desires of the local communities to retain the existing quality of life was also at the heart of each meeting. The Study Committee met regularly to develop different sections of the Corridor Management Plan. Members kept contacts in their own communities informed and helped facilitate the open houses held in the Autumn of 2001.

## PUBLIC INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

Public Information packets were mailed to Historic Bluff Country, Inc. members including businesses, community non-profits, and local government representatives in addition to city, township and county governments located within the Byway corridor. These packets contained information regarding the history of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway, the work of Study Committee, and future plans involving management and national nomination for the Scenic Byway. The packet specifically outlined the purposes of the study and the Corridor Management Plan and benefits of National Scenic Byway designation.

Press releases and the information packets were also sent to the local news media and covered in several local newspapers and on local radio stations. An article was also placed in the Historic Bluff Country, Inc. newsletter.

Updates and invitations to public open houses were also mailed to this group.

## STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Two meetings were held early in the planning process to discuss the project with stakeholders who may be affected by changes, development, and increased attention to the Byway. Stakeholders were asked for their input on existing attractions in the area and current visitor information services. Other topics discussed included physical improvements the Byway needs, challenges to the goals of the project and agencies interested in supporting national designation. Key findings of these stakeholder meetings were as follows:

- The Root River Bike Trail, Caves, Amish, and downtown Lanesboro are current primary visitor attractions.
- Numerous other activities including community festivals support the visitor experience.
- Preservation of, and visitor appreciation for, the “small town” character of the area is important – “ We can best serve our visitors by serving ourselves – building a town we want to live in.”
- The visitor audience is primarily recreationists, families and retirees – the “relaxed” tourist.
- The internet is becoming a primary information source for potential visitors.
- Signage on I-90 directing travelers to TH 16 is important, as is directional signage within the Byway corridor.

Memos summarizing these meetings can be found in Appendix B.

In addition, public agency stakeholders were interviewed by phone and included individuals affiliated with area state parks, state forests, management of the Root River and state trails, and local trout streams and fisheries. These stakeholders were asked to identify influences between Byway travelers and the use of public lands. Suggestions were solicited for how improvements to the Byway could benefit public facilities and what challenges exist when considering increased tourism.

Specific comments included:

- Improved signage to area resources from Highway 16 (Beaver Creek Valley State Park was mention specifically) would be very helpful to visitors. Highway signage policies regarding placement and funding for such signage need to be examined.
- More “pull-offs” and scenic overlooks from Highway 16 would improve the visitor experience.
- Promotion and interpretive development of the Byway would compliment use of public lands.
- Over-development could potentially damage or destroy the scenic and natural qualities of the area. Groundwater sensitivity to contamination due to the karst terrain in the area was mentioned as a specific concern.

A summary memo of these comments can be found in Appendix B.

## PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES

Six public open houses were held between the months of October and November in 2001. The open houses were located in the communities of Spring Valley, Preston, Lanesboro, Rushford, Houston, and La Crescent—communities expected to be the potentially affected by any changes in development or designation of the Byway. The open houses were advertised through notices in local papers, direct mailings to Historic Bluff Country, Inc. members and participants of previous meetings, and local flyers.

Materials presented at the open houses included summary information about the Byway corridor, national designation, corridor resources identified, the corridor theme, options for interpretation, roadway amenities, potential for marketing, and implementation strategies. (See Appendix C for a summary of these materials.)

A total of approximately 60 people attended the six open houses. Written and verbal comments were received from each of the meetings. Key comments expressed included:

- Designation as a National Scenic Byway would be monumentally significant to southeast Minnesota by possibly bringing substantial economic impacts to the communities along Highway 16.
- There are many educational, recreational, and tourism opportunities for all ages in the area that could be promoted through a National Scenic Byway.
- Since the interstate [I-90] bypasses the area, national designation for Highway 16 would be a wonderful way to bring tourism back—we need this.
- With national designation, respect should be given to private land owners where public recreationists utilize Byway amenities.
- One benefit of greater interpretation is that local people will be able to learn much more about their area.

## Community Support for the National Scenic Byway nomination

Local communities, townships and county governments were asked to provide support for the National Scenic Byway nomination through official board actions and financial support to match state implementation funds. To date, support has been received from the following communities (copies of government actions can be found in the Appendix D):

- City of Caledonia
- City of Chatfield
- City of Fountain
- City of Harmony
- City of La Crescent
- City of Lanesboro
- City of Peterson
- City of Spring Valley
- City of Wykoff
- Fillmore County

In addition, support has been received from the following individuals and organizations:

- Caledonia Chamber of Commerce
- Harmony Economic Development Authority
- Prairie Visions Group
- Southeastern Minnesota League of Municipalities
- Spring Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Spring Valley Community Historical Society, Inc.
- Representative Gregory M. Davids, Preston
- Representative Michelle Rifenberg, La Crescent
- Minnesota Senator Kenric Scheevel, Preston
- U.S. Senator Mark Dayton
- U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone
- And 19 additional community leaders and businesses

## Ongoing Public Involvement

Historic Bluff Country, Inc., and the Scenic Byway Study Committee will provide continuing public support for the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan. These organizations will provide coordination of activities by member organizations including local government, non-profit organizations and owners and operators of visitor facilities and attractions.

Public participation will be encouraged through local government processes as well as ongoing public events to inform the public about Byway activities and solicit implementation assistance.

## Chapter Three – The Byway Theme

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Understanding the story of a Byway is critical to determining what resources are significant to the Byway as well as how they should be interpreted and protected. The Byway Theme also provides guidance for marketing themes and strategies and can be used throughout promotion materials. Appreciation for the story of the area promotes stewardship and pride by local residents and attracts visitors to the area.

Development of the theme for the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway was shaped both by the beauty of the area and local pride in the small town character of their communities. The dramatic bluffs, sinkholes, caves and carved river valleys juxtaposed against the surrounding rolling agricultural fields first awe then intrigue travelers throughout the corridor – why are they here? Why is this so different from the surrounding landscape? Conversations with local residents during the planning process revealed considerable pride, not only for this natural beauty, but for the comfortable and tight-knit communities in which they live. The story of the inter-relationship between the land, and the people who inhabit it, can be found not only today, but also in the history of the people residing in Historic Bluff Country from early Native Americans to the Swedes, Norwegians and Scots of the 19th century, and the much later arrival of the Amish.

### HOMETOWN STORIES FROM THE GLACIER'S EDGE: HISTORIC BLUFF COUNTRY SCENIC BYWAY

#### The Lay of the Land

The unique and dramatic land formations of the Root River Valley were formed over millions of years of geological activity. The resulting landscape is a region full of deep river valleys, sinkholes, caves and steep limestone bluffs.

The layers of sandstone, shale, dolomite and limestone formed the region's bedrock some 2 to 545 million years ago. The natural erosion of the river bluffs and the man-made cuts to construct the highway make the geological history visible to today's traveler. While a large glacier covered most of Minnesota 25,000 to 12,000 years ago (during the Late Wisconsinian period), southeast Minnesota remained untouched. As a result, the geology, topography and scenery of this area are very different from the rest of Minnesota. This area is referred to as the "driftless area," meaning it is free of the glacial "drift" or deposits from the Wisconsinian glacier that cover most of Minnesota and the Dakotas. The rushing waters cut wide river valleys from the underlying rock. As the temperatures rose and plant life began to form, the erosion slowed. The sediments that were left behind filled in the vast valleys, and resulted in the terraces and steep banks seen today.

A few oddities remain in the valley as a result of relatively recent geological activity (within the past 10,000 years). Freestanding rock columns that can be found scattered through the river valley are made of resistant calcareous bedrock that remained when the surrounding rock eroded away. Giant sinkholes and caverns, formed in calcareous bedrock by acidic groundwater, known as "karst terrain," are particularly numerous in the Fountain area. Because the driftless area has relatively little overlying till and topsoil, the underlying bedrock is close to

the surface and the karst terrain is exposed, offering the opportunity for frequent glimpses into these intriguing geological formations.

## Making a Home, Making a Life

### First Americans

For millennia, people have been drawn to the fertile land, rushing rivers, and towering bluffs of the Root River Valley and the surrounding region, with communities now connected by Trunk Highway (TH) 16 from Dexter to La Crescent, Minnesota. Ancient villages, hunting sites, stone quarries, lookouts, earthworks, burial mound groups, and effigy mounds are evidence of the Native Americans who occupied the area for over 10,000 years. The distinctive topography of the Root River Valley provided resources and shelter for the native people of what is now southeastern Minnesota. Known to the Dakota as HUTA WAKPA (Root River) and to the Winnebago as CAHHEOMONAH (Crow River), the importance of this waterway is reflected in the large number of Native American cultural sites located within the river's watershed. TH 16 passes by many of these locations as it winds through this region and therefore the Scenic Byway provides the opportunity to tell the story of this area's deep cultural heritage.

### Living off the Land

The same features that attracted early Americans – abundant wildlife, vast prairies, and scenic vistas – also attracted European settlers and continue to bring tourists and travelers to the area today. Since the European settlement of the region in the mid-1800s, the valley has been a home to many new people who industriously created houses, barns, businesses, railroads, and highways so they could live, and make a living. Although the Scenic Byway corridor is dotted with many small towns, each is unique and may owe its birth and life, and occasionally demise, to a variety of reasons.

The communities that grew up in the valleys and plains were small, by design, primarily serving as agricultural outposts where farmers could bring their crops to be processed, purchased or transported, and where supplies and implements could be obtained. The Root River Valley and the surrounding areas provide a setting to observe a diverse range of crops, and also to learn about the changing agricultural practices and patterns over time. The broad prairies, after which the town of Grand Meadow was named, had been a fertile hunting ground for Native Americans for centuries, and later European fur traders and hunters. In the 1850s, the first white settlers began plowing up the soil to grow wheat, a crop that helped turn Minneapolis into the "Flour City." After a devastating crop failure in 1878, farmers in the Root River Valley found it was best not to rely on a single crop for their livelihood and began to diversify their sources of income by growing a variety of crops and raising dairy cows and hogs as well.

On the east end of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway, another type of crop was developed – apples. Although several attempts had been made to grow apples in Minnesota's cold climate, in the 1850s and 1860s, John S. Harris of La Crescent experimented and developed varieties of apples that were hardy enough to be grown in Minnesota. Known as the "Godfather of the Minnesota State Horticultural Society," Harris has a memorial marker located in the John S. Harris Memorial Park on North Elm Street in La Crescent.

Farms are not the only places where agricultural-related activities took place. Small, rural towns played an important role in farming commerce. Merchants in the town sold the necessary supplies, farm implements, and other items to the farmers. The farmers would take their grain and crops to town to be temporarily stored in the local grain elevator, or to be shipped to larger markets. Many of the towns in the Root River Valley were small, but prosperous. Spring Valley is a good example of this type of town, which had an economy based on the farm trade. Its prosperity is reflected in the grand, Queen Anne architecture of its homes and the substantial public buildings.

A newer community of farmers has now settled in the area, but is using old farming methods. The Amish community began to move to Harmony and Canton townships of Fillmore County in the 1970s from Wayne County, Ohio. The affordable, small farms of southern Minnesota, with plenty of wooded timber areas for fuel and building, and springs for water and cooling milk, were ideally suited to re-establish their community. Their traditional farming practices, such as using horses instead of tractors, offer a glimpse into how the earliest settlers to this area may have used the land.

### Getting Down to Business

Evidence of small, historical industries can be seen all along the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway, illustrating the area's successful and not-so-successful efforts in developing a variety of businesses. The earliest industries focused on processing materials and supplying them to the local settlers who were working hard to establish their farms. These industries included grist mills and saw mills. Some of these early efforts formed into successful flour mills and furniture factories. Even breweries, such as the one in Preston, built in 1859, were among the first industrial buildings constructed in the area. The Rushford Wagon and Carriage Company built sturdy and functional farm wagons used throughout Minnesota and the Upper Midwest. Although automobile and farm implements began replacing wagons in the early-twentieth century, the Rushford Wagon Company did not cease production until 1939.

The stone dam in Lanesboro is a pristine relic of the small town's industrial past. The dam provided water power for Lanesboro's three flour mills. The mills burned down by the mid-1890s, but the village built a hydro-electric generating plant on the site of one of the mills shortly thereafter. The construction of the dam and the power it supplied, along with the introduction of the railroad, helped to spur the development of Lanesboro's commercial core from the 1870s through the 1890s. Many of the buildings from this period remain present today.

Although the paths of the railroad and the automobile are apparent in this area, the Historic Bluff Country is also the home of more "high flying" pursuits. Bernard Pietenpol, known as "the father of the homebuilt aircraft movement in the United States," began designing and building small, lightweight airplanes from his workshop and garage in the small village of Cherry Grove from the 1920s until 1975. The early planes used Ford Model A and Model T engines. Pietenpol received some notoriety when he flew his automobile engine plane from Cherry Grove to Minneapolis. His garage and workshop are still in Cherry Grove, and one of his planes can be viewed in a hangar at the Fillmore County Historical Society in Fountain.

## The Railroad Comes to Town

With the dawning of new, modern railroad transportation, farmers and businesses were suddenly provided with a more efficient means of shipping out raw materials and receiving supplies in and out of the major population centers, like Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Chicago.

When the railroads were first constructed through this part of the state in the 1870s, the railroad companies wielded much power, since their placement could make or break a town. Once a railroad came to a town and had a scheduled stop, it meant the town had a chance for survival, even prosperity. Wykoff, a town that was platted by the Southern Minnesota Railroad Company in 1871, exists solely because of the presence of the railroad, much to the detriment of the Village of Fillmore, about five miles north. Fillmore, settled nearly 20 years earlier, had originally been the area's main commercial center, but its access to the old stage road could not compete with Wykoff's access to the railroad. Many businesses shifted their operation to the new railroad town from Fillmore.

For some towns, if a railroad chose to by-pass it, it meant the death knell. Forestville and Carimona are both good examples of towns that struggled to make it after the railroad chose not to pass through.

## Small Towns, Home Towns

Within the natural scenic beauty of the Root River Valley lies the seen and unseen evidence of human habitation and enjoyment of this extraordinary area. First Americans made their home along the route of the Scenic Byway, as is illustrated by the broad array of archaeological sites. The simple architecture of the residential, agricultural and industrial buildings symbolize the area's early beginnings, as settlers struggled to survive as they made a life on the rugged frontier. The elegant and rich architectural monuments of the late nineteenth century, matched only by the valley's natural beauty, are a testament to those residents' pride of their accomplishments and their ability to prosper and thrive.

The many communities set within the dramatic scenery of the Root River and the broad plains to the west offer people opportunities to live in and to understand Minnesota's small-town life as it existed in the past, and continues today. Travelers who choose this scenic route, thankfully bypassed by extensive modern development when the federal interstate highway system was constructed, will find a smaller community lifestyle. Instead of driving the massive Interstate 90 highway to the north, where dining, shopping and scenic opportunities resemble those on any stretch of America's interstate highways, drivers on the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway have the opportunity to stop at a local café for cinnamon rolls, a choice of homemade pies, old-fashioned home cooking, purchase handcrafted goods made by local artisans, spend the night in a historic home, paddle a canoe through a valley of dramatic bluffs, imagine the thunder of bison treading on the western plains, fish for prized trout, and participate in events, like the Apple Festival and county fairs, along side local residents. Unlike the big cities where so many visitors come from, the towns in this region consider it a "traffic jam" when five cars are waiting at the town's single traffic light. But in towns where the sidewalks roll up at sundown, visitors can easily find other forms of entertainment, whether it is a community theater production, a concert at the park gazebo, a seasonal festival, or simply sitting on the front porch and saying hello to neighbors as they take an evening stroll. The drive along the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway offers many opportunities to learn, understand, and experience the magic and simplicity of life in small town Minnesota, both yesterday and today.

## Chapter Four – Byway Resources and Intrinsic Qualities

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The key features of a Scenic Byway represent the intrinsic qualities of the region. The Federal Highway Administration's National Scenic Byway Program identifies six intrinsic qualities for which byways may be designated: archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, scenic, and recreational. It further defines intrinsic qualities as "features that are considered representative, unique, irreplaceable, or distinctly characteristic of the area". This section of the Corridor Management Plan provides an assessment of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway's intrinsic qualities and the resources supporting them.

While the Historic Bluff Country possesses characteristics representing all six categories of intrinsic qualities, its strongest qualities lay in the natural, scenic, historic and recreational categories. Native Americans, European settlement and, more recently, the Amish were all attracted to the area for various reasons, but one reason these groups had in common was the land itself. The unique geological history of the Bluff Country has created topographical features that have proven to be visually pleasing while providing the fertile elements for developing lasting communities. The presence of these groups has left physical imprints of their history on the land while the characteristic topography has translated into an abundance of natural, scenic, and recreational resources that people still enjoy today. (Appendix E includes an inventory of the Byway resources, locations, and attributes.)

### NATURAL RESOURCES

*Natural quality applies to those features in the visual environment that are in a relatively undisturbed state. These features predate the arrival of human populations, and may include geological formations, fossils, landforms, water bodies, vegetation and wildlife.*

The natural resources found throughout the Historic Bluff Country owe much of their distinctiveness to the geologic history of the region. The deep river valleys, sinkholes, caves and limestone bluffs are products of geological processes unique in the Midwest. The resulting topography provides a basis for all other resources along the Byway and is the reason for the scenic and recreational opportunities of the region. The distinguishing landscape has repeatedly attracted people to settle in the Root River Valley and extending prairie, creating the numerous archaeological, historic, and cultural resources found today.

This area is known as the "driftless" area, referring to the absence of glacial drift, or debris, from the Wisconsinian glacier which covered most of Minnesota and Wisconsin but did not extend to this area. Bluff Country rivers and streams represent older and more developed drainage systems than areas with more recent glaciations. This older topography has preserved pre-Wisconsinian area not otherwise found in the region. As described by the Minnesota DNR:

*"The relative old age of these areas results in landforms and pocket plant communities that open a window into earlier biological systems. For example, Wykoff Balsam Fir Scientific and Natural Area in Fillmore County contains several steep talus slopes with cold air drainage, creating a specialized community usually found well north of Minnesota. Rushford San Barrens Scientific and Natural Area contain bedrock exposures from an earlier glacial period, when glacial winds formed the sand savanna for which the SNA is named."*

The Root River provided a major drainage system during the Late Wisconsinan period from the edge of the glacier to the River Warren, predecessor to the Mississippi River. Today, it provides a backbone of natural features for the Historic Bluff Country. Its central channel creates the Root River Valley, which splits off into several branches and resulting valleys. The Root River is surrounded by steep limestone cliffs and bluffs that were formed when streams cut down through layers of glacial till, outwash, alluvium and bedrock. Several large creeks also serve as tributaries to the Root River and have beautiful features of their own, such as Thompson Creek that flows over Como Falls in Hokah, and the Yucatan Valley south of Houston. The resulting dramatic landscape creates a picturesque setting for the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway which lies above the Root River valley in its western segment and transitions to the valley floor in Lanesboro.

The presence of Karst terrain adds to the geological interest of the area. Evidence of karst terrain can be found throughout the area including sinkholes, underground streams, and caves. Rainwater, acidified as it drains through organic decaying matter of the top soil, dissolves the calcite-dominated limestone found in this area as it makes its way through cracks and fissures in the bedrock creating the karst features. Sinkholes form when acidic groundwater dissolves bedrock, causing overlying till and topsoil to collapse into the holes. Similarly, underground streams carved out underlying limestone and dolomite, creating large caverns and caves. Two large caves, Mystery Cave and Niagara Cave, are open for public tours and are good representations of the geologic processes that have created the terrain of the Historic Bluff Country. The City of Fountain, just north of the Scenic Byway, promotes itself as the “Sinkhole Capital of the United States” due to the large numbers of this feature in its vicinity.

Much of the Root River Valley is encompassed within the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forest. The state-designated forest is a irregular assembly of land parcels roughly extending from as far north as Red Wing to the border of Iowa, and as far west as Preston to the Mississippi River. Nearly all of the land within the state forest boundaries is privately owned. However, small blocks of state-owned public land are scattered throughout the forest as well and offer recreational opportunities such as horseback riding trails, mountain biking, bird watching, and spectacular touring of fall colors. The forest consists of various types of hardwoods including Maple, Oak, and Birch.

Additionally, small areas throughout Historic Bluff Country have been preserved by the DNR as Scientific and Natural Areas (SNA). Each SNA possesses characteristics unique to the natural communities present. SNAs provide valuable insight into the natural landscape, wildlife, and ecology of the region but access can be limited depending on location and restrictions.

Resources supporting the natural qualities are the area are discussed below:

- **Root River**

The Root River winds its way through Southeastern Minnesota, with its main channel passing through the cities of Hokah, Houston, Rushford, Peterson, and Whalen. West of Whalen, the main channel splits into the Middle Branch and South Branch of the Root River. The Middle Branch curves north and west to the community of Fillmore where it then splits into smaller creeks and streams. The North Branch stems north from the Middle Branch near County Road 5 and travels north through Chatfield and into Olmstead County. The South Branch extends from the main channel southwest through Lanesboro, Preston and Forestville/Mystery Cave State Park where it begins splitting into tinier streams. Finally, the South Fork leaves the main channel near Houston and winds its way southwest through the Yucatan Valley. Six canoe

accesses are located along the Byway and another three are found throughout Historic Bluff Country. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) provides some interpretation of the Root River at these access points, as well as within area state parks.

- **Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forest**

The RJ Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forest consists of scattered pieces of designated land throughout southeastern Minnesota. Within the Historic Bluff Country, it is contained mostly within Fillmore and Houston Counties. The majority of the forest is privately owned. However, tracks of public land are divided into Forest Units, including the Isinours, Vinegar Ridge, Brightsdale, Reno, Gribben Valley, Oak Ridge, Money Creek and Diamond Creek.

- **Niagara Cave**

Located 2 miles south of Harmony, Niagara Cave is one of the largest caves in the Midwest and a prime example of the unique geology of the region. The cave is privately owned and interpretation is handled through tours given on a seasonal basis.

- **Mystery Cave**

Mystery Cave is part of Forestville/Mystery Cave State Park and maintained by the DNR. Like Niagara Cave, it offers an opportunity to see karst geology that characterizes the area from a different perspective – underground. Interpretation is given through guided tours and literature distributed by the park. The cave is open seasonally.

- **Mound Prairie Scientific and Natural Area**

The Mound Prairie Scientific and Natural Area (SNA) is located on both sides of Highway 16, approximately 2 miles west of Hokah. The site consists of goat prairies surrounded by oak forests and ancient streambeds. These goat prairies support a diverse plant community that includes rare plant and mammal species. Managed by the DNR, the SNA is helping to restore the original habitat of these rare species. Currently, little interpretation exists for this site.

- **Wykoff Balsam Fir Scientific and Natural Area**

The Wykoff Balsam Fir SNA is located about five miles from Spring Valley off County Highway 8. The SNA is a unique site due to its steep, north-facing talus slopes and cold air drainage. These features create a micro-climate that provides habitat for a variety of pines and hardwoods, woodland wildflowers and rare plant species. In particular, the SNA is home to several rare land snails that can only be found among the special conditions of steep slopes and cold air drainage. Therefore, the steep slopes are closed to visitors, except for those with research permits.

- **Rushford Sand Barrens Scientific and Natural Area**

The Rushford Sand Barrens SNA consists of 230 acres and is located approximately 2 ½ miles west of Rushford off Highway 16. The site, nestled among the Root River Valley within the RJ Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forest, was spared by the last period of glaciation. There are at least 13 rare plant species that occur at the site as well as one endangered and three threatened natural communities – the SNA works to preserve the biological diversity of these species and communities.

- **Pin Oak Prairie Scientific and Natural Area**

Located along the Middle Branch of the Root River, four miles southwest of Chatfield, the Pin Oak Prairie SNA possesses three distinct natural communities: extremely rare wet meadow, dry prairie, and sloping oak forest. The Pin Oaks of this area probably grew up among open brush land, and with the absence of the fire, quickly grew to form a closed forest canopy.

- **Mount Tom**

Mount Tom in the City of Hokah is located just south of the Root River and east of Highway 16. The markedly pointed bluff stands out as a landmark to local residents, but is not utilized as a recreational resource. Mount Tom also borders along Como Park, a city park where Thompson Creek flows over Como Falls and eventually flows into the Root River.

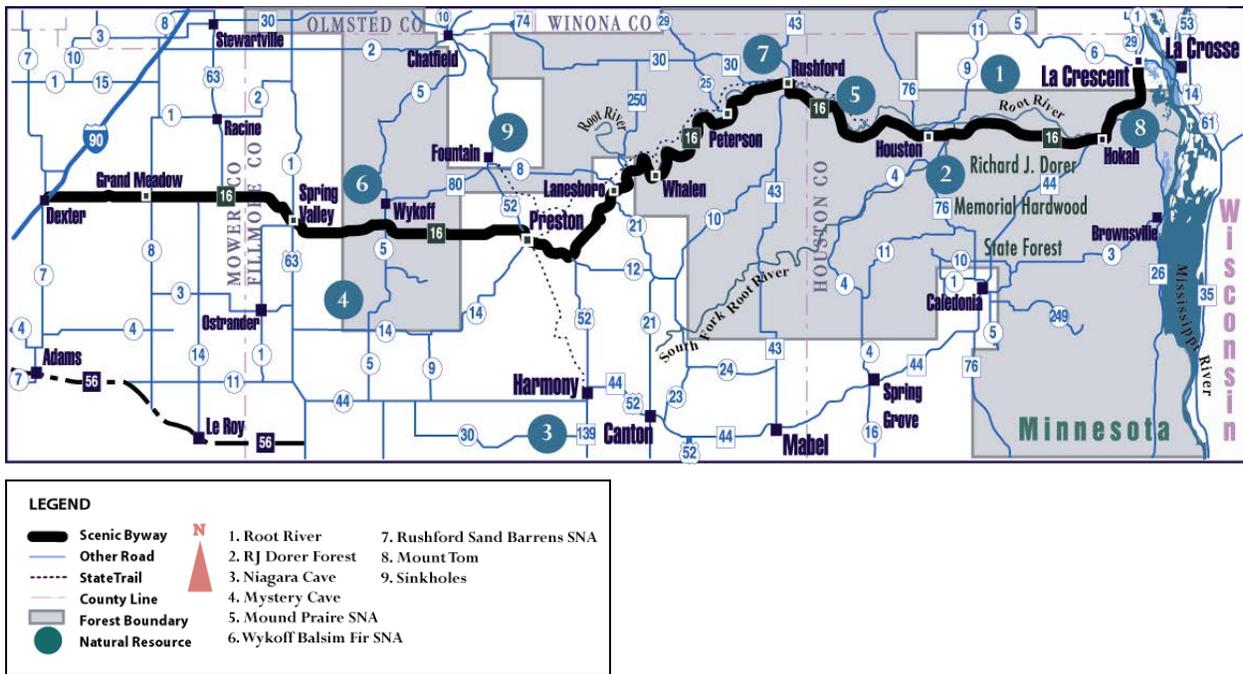
- **Sinkholes**

Hundreds of sinkholes can be found throughout Historic Bluff Country. A few of these have been selected for greater tourist attention near the City of Fountain. Two sinkholes in particular are outlined and marked— one is near the City sign and one is near the trailhead of the Root River State Trail.

- **Lanesboro DNR Fish Hatchery**

The Lanesboro DNR Fish Hatchery works to manage trout populations in regional trout streams, as well as improving trout habitat quality, stream access, and monitoring. The site of the hatchery also includes an interpretive trail where visitors can learn about trout populations and habitat.

Natural Resource Location Map –



**SCENIC RESOURCES**

*Scenic quality is the heightened visual experience derived from the view of natural and manmade elements of the visual environment.*

The Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway winds for nearly 90 miles through beautiful rolling farmland, prairie, and river valley. Traveling west to east, the landscape unfolds from gentle fields to breathtaking bluffs carved by an ancient Root River. The resulting topography offers visitors outstanding vistas to appreciate with every turn in the road.

Scenic resources identified along the Byway include waterfalls, rock formations, river valleys, bluff-top overlooks, and historic waysides perched above quaint towns or along streams. Views of (or from) these resources take in the diverse character of the land and the culture of the region.

The western part of the Byway holds scenic views of the area's prairies that were historically altered by settlement and agriculture. Among these are still found places of native grasses and wildflowers. The charm of the small towns within the prairie and farmlands adds to the visual experience.

The central and eastern parts of the Byway differ distinctly from the western part. Agriculture still influences the appearance of the land; however, the steep cliffs of the Root River Valley replace the rolling prairie. From the hardwood forests that blanket the bluffs to the river and streambeds of the valley floor, the Byway winds through the unique vistas, passing picturesque small towns along the way. During autumn months, this section of the Byway offers the chance for viewing incredible fall colors.

- **Como Falls**

Como Falls is located within a municipal park in Hokah, at the east end of Falls Street. It is a short but picturesque waterfall on Thompson Creek, just before the creek meets the Root River. The park includes a newly established sign with a history of Como Falls, Thompson Creek, and the immediate area where Edward Thompson – founder of Hokah – established a dam and saw mill.

- **Grand Meadow Wayside**

The Grand Meadow Wayside is located east of Grand Meadow along Deer Creek and is connected to Pine Lawn Park. The wayside is well-signed and highly visible from the roadway. Besides providing restroom facilities and picnic areas, the wayside offers views of the rolling rural landscape and serenity of the winding creek.

- **Preston Wayside**

The Preston Wayside is located just east of the City of Preston, on a bluff terrace along the south side of Highway 16, overlooking the fairgrounds, town and surrounding Root River Valley. The historic wayside is eligible for the National Register. Built in 1937, the wayside is historically significant as one of seven sites suspected to have been built under the FERA/SERA program. The design of the wayside includes an attractive curvilinear stone wall that edges the overlook and was built of rock quarried at the site. The wooded hillside drops sharply on the outer side of the wall. A six-foot wide flagstone walkway lines the inner side of the wall. A grassy island is located in the center of the semicircular bay and is surrounded by limestone curbing.

- **Inspiration Point**

Built in 1934, Inspiration Point is another historic wayside eligible for the National Register and is located 2 miles southeast of the junction of Highway 16 and County Highway 21. The wayside is situated at the top of a bluff and overlooks the surrounding rolling landscape and the City of Lanesboro in the distance. The wayside consists of a complex site design with stone overlook walls, a stone fireplace, and stone picnic tables and benches. This wayside is also historically significant as it is one of seven properties suspected to have been built by FERA/SERA. It is one of more than 60 sites designed by prominent landscape architect Arthur R. Nichols.

- **Magelssen Park**

Magelssen Park is located on the top of a bluff overlooking the City of Rushford. The bluff on which the park rests dominates the northern view from Highway 16 when entering the town from the west. Mature trees frame scenic views of Rushford and the Root River Valley. The park also contains the fifth largest tree in the state of Minnesota – a Burr Oak tree – that is 175 to 200 years old.

- **Rock Columns and "Pulpit Rock"**

A number of significant rock columns – in particular one named Pulpit Rock – can be found just off the Root River State Trail, north of Preston, at the Isinours Junction connecting the Harmony-Preston Valley and Root River State Trails. These smaller scaled rock formations were created by the same erosion processes that formed the larger surrounding bluffs as rushing waters melted away softer rock, leaving the column-like structures in place.

- **Yucatan Valley**

County Road 4 winds its way through the steep walls and bluffs of the narrow Yucatan Valley extending southwest of Highway 16 near Houston. The valley is noted for its beautiful views of the rolling natural landscape and is also known as an area of historic Native American activity.

- **Bluff Views**

Dramatic views of the steep river bluff topography can be viewed throughout the corridor of Highway 16, particularly east of Spring Valley.

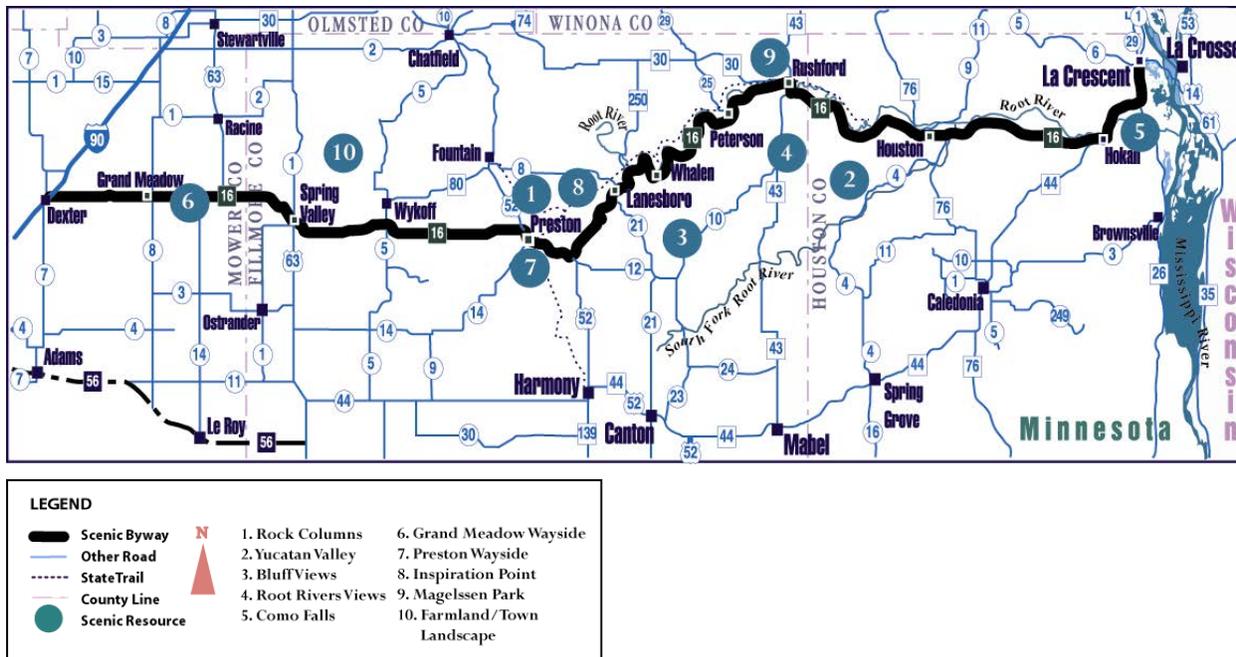
- **Root River Views**

The Root Rivers travels through most of the cities along the Byway east of and including the City of Preston and in the cities of Fountain and Chatfield, north of the Byway. Ideal views can be observed in these cities, in Forestville/Mystery Cave State Park, and from the Root River State Trail.

- **Farmland and Small Town Landscape**

Southeastern Minnesota Historic Bluff Country is most known for its picturesque landscape and quaint communities. Views of this landscape and small town life can be found throughout the Byway corridor.

Scenic Resource Location Map –



RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

Recreational quality involves outdoor recreational activities directly associated with, and dependent upon, the natural and cultural elements of the corridor's landscape.

Recreational resources within the Historic Bluff Country abound. Visitors and residents alike can find a variety of recreational opportunities year-round, including hiking, biking, canoeing, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, fishing, snowmobiling and more.

Two state trails facilitate recreation for hikers and bikers. The Root River State Trail extends from Fountain on the west to Houston on the east, offering over 40 miles of trail. The Harmony-Preston State Trail stretches for about 18 miles from north of Preston to Harmony and connects with the Root River State Trail at the Isinours Forest Unit, approximately 2 miles north of Preston. Trails for other uses can also be found along the Byway. The RJ Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forest has several forest units with trails for horseback riding and off-road vehicles.

The Root River, with its several branches and many tributaries, provides prospects for those seeking canoeing, kayaking, and fishing. Numerous public canoe accesses are found along the Byway and within the small communities the river flows through. Local outfitters supply visitors with equipment and necessary information.

The Historic Bluff Country has particularly distinguished itself as a prime location for trout fishing. The southeast is laced with small, spring-fed creeks that course through deep valleys beneath timbered ridges and limestone bluffs. After land-use practices in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century nearly destroyed trout streams, conservation practices started in the 1940s helped restore the streams. Now, these productive waters support a surprising abundance of trout. The steep-hilled region now contains more trout, more miles of trout water, and bigger trout than at any other time in history. (*Fish & Wildlife Today*, Spring 1999)

Two state parks located off Highway 16, Forestville/Mystery Cave State Park and Beaver Creek Valley State Park, encompass acres of scenic hardwood forests and bluffs providing opportunities to picnic, camp, hike, bike, fish, view wildlife and ride horses. Numerous privately-owned campgrounds along the Byway also provide similar recreational services.

Forestville/Mystery Cave offer a more unique form of recreation – cave exploration. Mystery Cave is one of two large caves located in the Historic Bluff Country. The second cave, Niagara Cave, is located a few miles south of Harmony and is considered one of the largest caves in the Midwest. Both caves are open seasonally.

Resources supporting the recreational quality of the Scenic Byway include:

- **Root River Canoe Accesses**

Along the Byway, signs to the canoe accesses are found in the following towns: Houston, Rushford, Peterson, Lanesboro, Preston and Chatfield. Another is also located on Highway 16 just west of Whalen. At most access points, signage provided for by the Minnesota DNR offers a map of the river, stipulations, and general information.

- **Root River State Trail**

The Root River State Trail is a multiple-use trail, mostly used by bicyclists and pedestrians, that extends for 42 miles through the cities of Fountain, Lanesboro, Whalen, Peterson, Rushford and Houston. The trail roughly parallels the Root River and Highway 16. Parking, rest rooms and interpretation can be found at trailheads located in Houston, Rushford and Fountain, as well as at the Root River State Trail Visitor Center in Lanesboro.

- **Harmony-Preston Valley State Trail**

The Harmony-Preston Valley State Trail is a multiple-use trail, 18 miles long that connects the communities of Harmony and Preston and connects to the Root River State Trail just north of Preston. The trail follows or crosses Watson Creek, the South Branch of the Root River, and Camp Creek, and cuts cross country through wooded areas and farmland.

- **Forestville/ Mystery Cave State Park**

The primary entrance to Forestville/Mystery Cave State Park is located approximately 4 miles south of Highway 16 off County State Aid Highway 5. In addition to camping opportunities and recreational trails, including horse trails, the park contains the historic town of Forestville where interpretation is relayed to visitors through character role-play and literature. Mystery Cave, located a few miles southwest of the main park, provides group tours directed by park guides.

- **Beaver Creek Valley State Park**

Beaver Creek State Park, located off County State Aid Highway 76, just west of Caledonia, is known for its trout streams that are home to brown and native brook trout. The location of the park, nestled in the midst of the blufflands, is also attractive for migratory songbirds, such as the Acadian flycatcher, Cerulean warbler, and Louisiana waterthrush. Visitors can take advantage of the park's camping opportunities and hiking trails that follow along streams and through hardwood forest.

- **Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center**

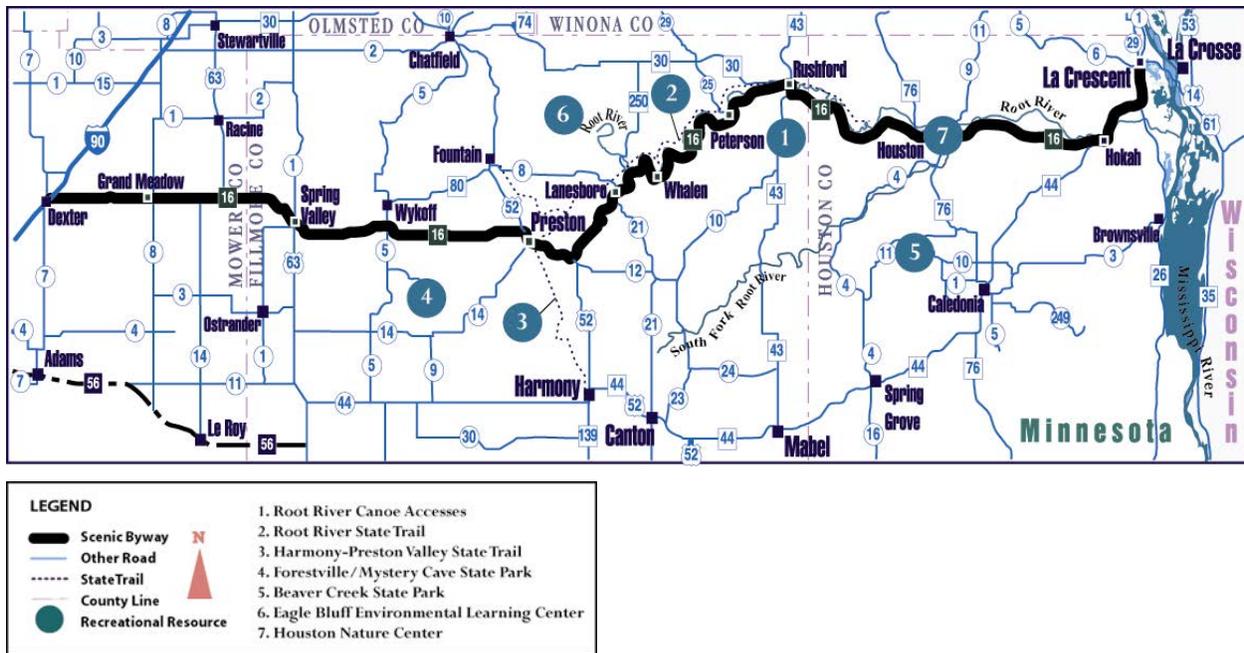
The privately-owned Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center offers a variety of programs for groups of all ages and is open to the public. The center is located north of Lanesboro off County

Road 21 and is open year-round. Eagle Bluff focuses its program on a variety of topics, some of which include wildlife ecology, outdoor skills and survival, wildflowers, karst geology, pond studies, conservation, and sustainable agriculture. Recreational programs also include snowshoeing, rock climbing, canoeing, archery and orienteering.

- **Houston Nature Center**

The new Houston Nature Center is located at the Root River State Trail trailhead in Houston. Programs provide interpretation of the region, natural surroundings, and wildlife.

*Recreational Resource Location Map –*



## HISTORICAL RESOURCES

*Historic Quality encompasses legacies of the past that are distinctly associated with physical elements of the landscape, whether natural or manmade, that are of such historic significance that they educate the viewer and stir an appreciation for the past. The historic elements reflect the actions of people and may include buildings, settlement patterns, and other examples of human activity. Historic features can be inventoried, mapped, and interpreted. They possess integrity of location, design, setting, material, workmanship, feeling and association.*

It's not hard to find, see and understand the historical roots of the communities, farms and industries along the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway. With more than 150 properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places within ten miles of the route, evidence of the past is palpable. The historic commercial buildings, public buildings, barns, mills, dams and bridges all help to illustrate the origins of the small communities that arose in southeastern Minnesota.

Evidence of the region's agricultural heritage and the communities that were built to serve the farmers are clearly apparent to the travelers along the Scenic Byway. Barns, windmills, and silos, more frequently found on the western portion of the Byway in Mower County, are literal signs of the region's agricultural past. The modern addition of metal pole barns and alternative silage storage systems are simply the evidence of the continual evolution of farming practices. The

Allis Barn, now the Old Barn Resort, offers visitors a closer look at an old “cathedral of the plains.”

The many towns along the Byway also contribute to the visitor’s understanding of the area’s agricultural past. The small villages served as places for farmers to congregate, sell their crops, and purchase supplies and implements. The Milwaukee Elevator Company Grain Elevator in Preston is a prime example of the symbiotic relationship of the town and country. This grain elevator, a primary economic draw for any agricultural town, now serves as a rest station for users of the Root River Trail. Some towns, such as Spring Valley, particularly prospered as a result of the services they could offer to regional farmers. Spring Valley’s a rich collection of elaborate late-nineteenth-century homes, fine commercial district listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Carnegie Library, and Spring Valley Methodist Episcopal Church, featuring exquisite stained glass windows, are all examples of the wealth generated in the town from servicing the agricultural economy. The Washburn-Zittleman House, located across the street from the church, is open to the public and is used as an interpretive site that helps to explain the area’s heritage. Grand Meadow’s Exchange State Bank is another example of superb architectural achievement in a small town.

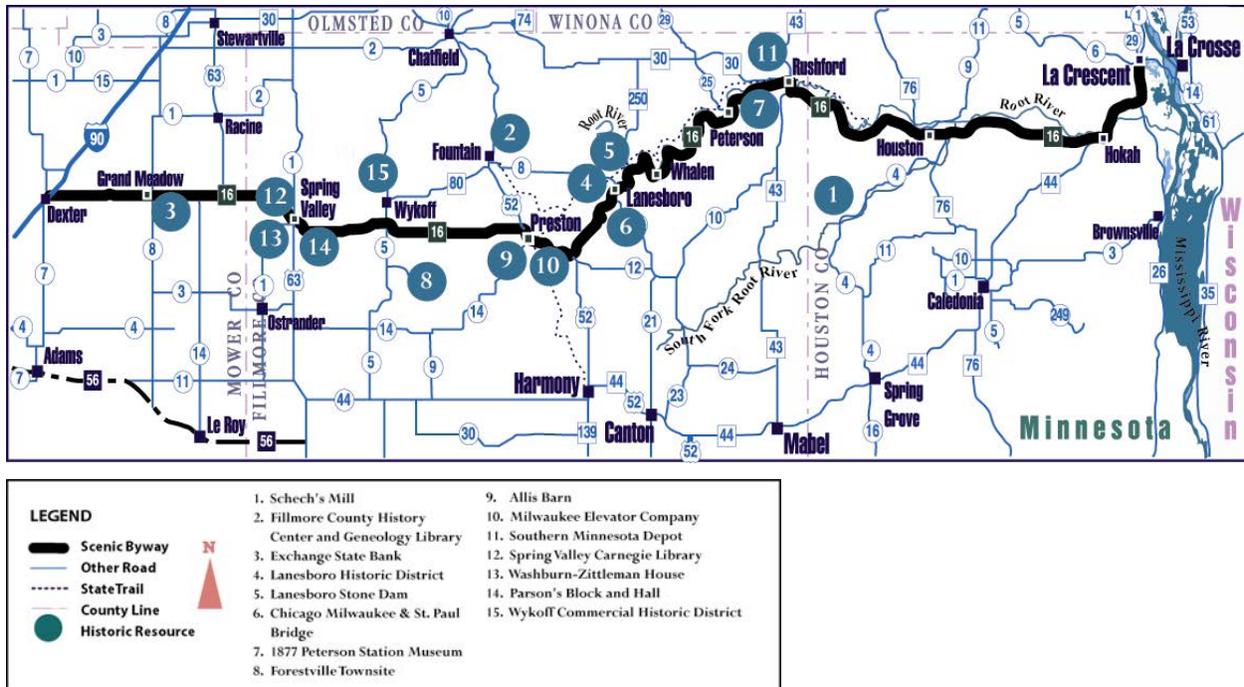
Industries, such as flour mills, arose from the agricultural resources, but expanded the area’s base of economic activity. Schech’s Mill, in Caledonia Township, is a particularly scenic image of this small industry. The property is privately owned, but open to the public by appointment. The Lanesboro Stone Dam, with the picturesque falls spilling over the top, is the literal driver of Lanesboro’s historic industry. Although the three flour mills it had provided power to burned long ago, the dam remains viewable from a local park. Lanesboro’s historic, and attractive commercial core dates from the 1860s through the 1920s and is the result of the city’s industrious past. Now, many of the brick commercial buildings cater to visitors by offering restaurants, shops and other visitor amenities.

Although railroads are no longer the vital link for goods and people to travel to points beyond the valley, the remnants they left behind can be used to interpret the tremendous impact this mode of transportation had on the valley’s physical and economic development. Much of the Southern Minnesota Railroad’s former bed has been converted to use for the Root River Trail. Even the National Register-listed Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Bridge in Lanesboro has been pressed into service as an interpretive site, with panels informing the visitors about town’s history. Other buildings along the Byway, which parallels the old railroad for much of its course, serve as public examples of the railroad’s historic presence. The 1877 Peterson Station Museum is open on weekends to display memorabilia, artifacts and photographs of local interest. The Southern Minnesota Depot in Rushford, built in 1868, serves as a trail center. In some cases, entire towns testify to the impact of the railroad. Wykoff, which has a National Register of Historic Places-listed commercial district, was entirely platted and formed when the railroad passed through the area. Conversely, the hamlet of Forestville was entirely by-passed by the rail lines. Historic Forestville, now a state historic site, serves as witness to the reliance of small towns on rail connections in the nineteenth century and the consequences of not being connected to the railroad network. Costumed guides portray actual residents in their daily activities and assist the visitor in imagining what life was like in this small town.

Several facilities along the route are specifically organized to interpret the history of their community. The Houston County Historical Society Museum Complex, located on the country fair grounds in Caledonia, has a collection of historic buildings and a display on early life in Houston County. The Fillmore County History Center and Genealogy Library features museum

displays on the history of Fillmore County, agricultural displays and a Pietenpol airplane and hangar. The facility is open seven days a week during the summer and Monday through Friday during the rest of the year. Similarly, the Historic Preservation Museum in Lanesboro interprets the city's history through artifacts and memorabilia.

Historical Resource Location Map –



## CULTURAL RESOURCES

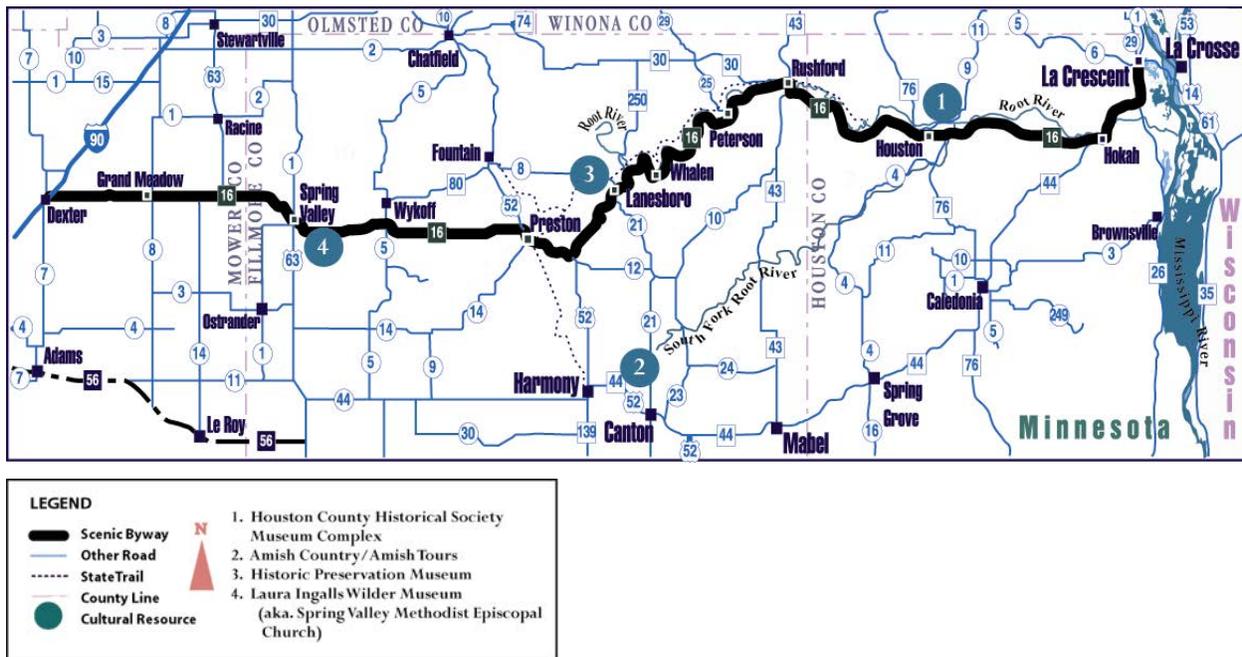
*Cultural Quality is evidence and expressions of the customs or traditions of a distinct group of people. Cultural features including, but not limited to, crafts, music, dance, rituals, festivals, speech, food, special events, vernacular architecture, etc., are currently practiced. The cultural qualities of the corridor could highlight one or more significant communities and/or ethnic traditions.*

Fillmore County is home to a sizable Old Order Amish population, a community of people who, due to religious convictions, have separated themselves from the world at large by living without electricity, automobiles, and other modern conveniences. Seeing people in traditional, simple clothing riding in horse-drawn buggies is the tell-tale clue that you are in Amish Country. Amish buggies are most frequently seen in the Preston-Lanesboro-Harmony-Canton area and Highway 52 between Preston and Harmony is designated as an Amish Byway providing a “buggy lane” in the shoulder of the roadway. Amish families occasionally sell their homemade wares along the Scenic Byway and area stores and restaurants promote Amish goods. While the farms belonging to the Amish are strictly private property, several tour operators in Harmony and Lanesboro and can give visitors tours of farms at the invitation of Amish families. At the farms, and in several retail outlets, tourists can purchase crafts, baked goods and handmade furniture made by Amish craftsmen.

Clues of other ethnic groups that settled in the area, such as the Norwegians and the Germans, remain in the festivals and cultural events that are celebrated annually. Spring is marked by the tradition of Syttende Mai in Spring Grove, Gammel Dag is celebrated each June in Peterson, while Oktoberfest ushers in the autumn in Lanesboro. Other festivities offer recognition to the early settlers of the communities, such as Western Days in Chatfield, Buffalo Bill Days in Lanesboro, Frontier Days in Rushford and Founder’s Day in Caledonia.

The cultural history of Native Americans who once resided in this area has very little present-day evidence along the Byway, but is an important story nonetheless. Understanding how early Americans understood this dramatic landscape can provide a deeper appreciation for the scenic and natural qualities of the area. Through consultation with area Indian tribes, traditional Native American sites in the Root River Valley appropriate for interpretation may also be identified. Beyond archaeological resources, many cultural places and traditions remain significant to native peoples, who continue to be a living culture. Identification of cultural resources most appropriate for public interpretation, if any, should be conducted in consultation with tribes who have historically occupied the lands.

Cultural Resource Location Map –



## ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

*Archaeological Quality involves those characteristics of the scenic byways corridor that are physical evidence of historic or prehistoric human life or activity that are visible and capable of being inventoried and interpreted. The scenic byway corridor’s archaeological interest, as identified through ruins, artifacts, structural remains, and other physical evidence have scientific significance that educate the viewer and stir an appreciation for the past.*

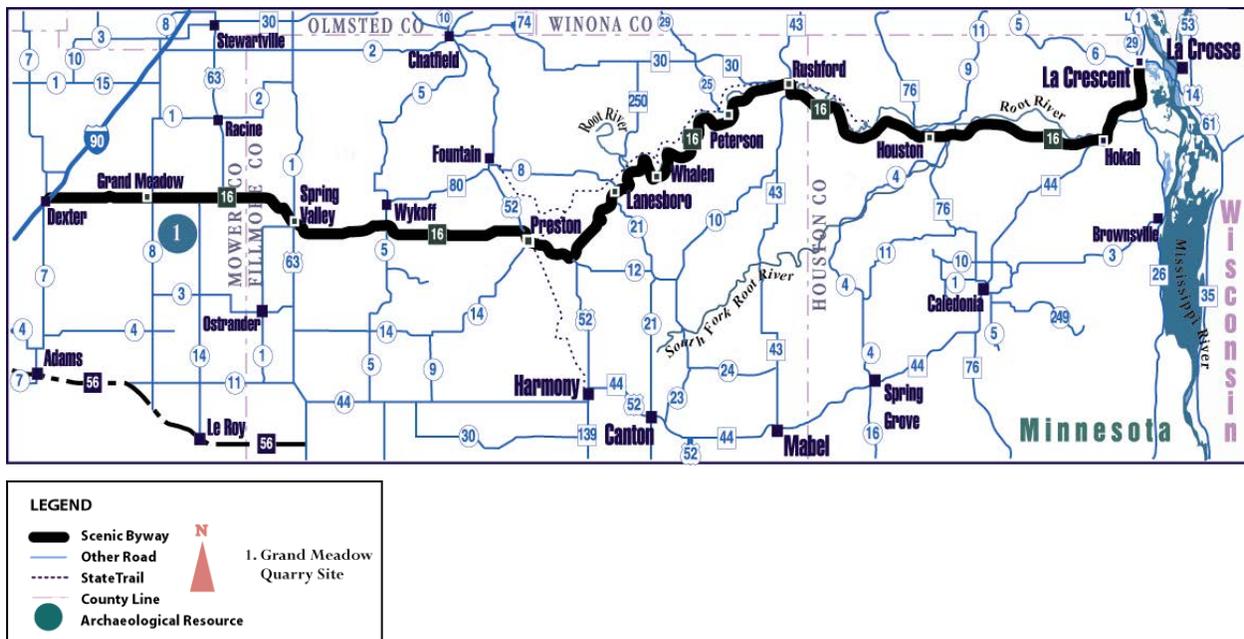
The distinctive topography of the Root River valley provided resources and shelter for the native people of what is now southeastern Minnesota. Known to the Dakota as HUTA WAKPA (Root River) and to the Winnebago as CAHHEOMONAH (Crow River), the importance of this waterway is reflected in the Native American cultural sites located within the river’s watershed.

The Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway passes by many of these locations as it winds through this region and therefore provides the opportunity to tell the story of the area’s Native American cultural heritage through its archaeological resources.

Types of Native American cultural sites located along, or proximate to, the Byway include villages, hunting sites, stone quarries, lookouts, earthworks, burial mound groups, and effigy mounds. Each of these site types represents part of a larger synergistic whole consisting of a yearly cycle of native lifeways. While an individual site can tell a portion of this story, it is the entirety of these sites and their relationship to one another, as well as to the geology and environment of the region that is significant. Because the presence of Native American sites is so closely tied to the natural resources of the region, both the archaeological and natural intrinsic qualities can and should be understood and interpreted together.

While the presence of these sites is known to archaeologists, only one site is potentially accessible to the public and possesses high interpretive potential. The Grand Meadow Quarry Site in Mower County has a high potential to interpret the relationship of the region’s natural resources with Native American lifeways. This site is one of 170 owned by The Archaeological Conservancy, a national organization dedicated to acquiring and preserving the best of the nation’s remaining archaeological sites. This site has been quarried for chert by Native Americans for the past 10,000 years. Although it is not open to the public and its location is kept confidential out of concerns for looting, there is potential for limited public interpretation of the site consistent with the Archaeological Conservancy’s mission for public education.

*Archaeological Resource Location Map –*



### CONNECTIONS TO NEARBY SCENIC BYWAYS

The Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway has important connections with other nearby scenic byways that add to the visitor experience to the area. These byways are discussed briefly below:

## Great River Road

The Great River Road is a designated National Scenic Byway that follows the route of the Mississippi River. Beginning at the headwaters, the Byway winds through the small towns of northern Minnesota and through the Twin Cities, and continues south along TH 61 to La Crescent, then south to Iowa on TH 26. The Great River Road offers travelers an opportunity to experience of the Mississippi River Valley, Minnesota's lakes and forests, dramatic bluff lands, a variety of outdoor recreation and wildlife and the enchantment of small town and metropolitan life found along the Mississippi.

## Apple Blossom Scenic Drive

The Apple Blossom Scenic Drive looks down upon the beautiful Mississippi River Valley while winding its way through bountiful apple orchards that blanket hillsides. Located in the northeast section of Historic Bluff Country, this Minnesota State Scenic Byway is 17 miles long and follows Highway 29 from La Crescent, Dakota, and Nodine. In the Spring, the apple blossoms fill the air with flowery fragrance and picturesque views. Autumn offers unique opportunities for viewing the scenic fall colors, as well as roadside apple stands, apple picking, cider, Indian corn, and pumpkins.

## Shooting Star Wildflower and Historic Route Scenic Byway

Mn/DOT and the DNR collaborate to manage wildflowers and native grasses along the route of the Shooting Star Wildflower and Historic Route Scenic Byway, one of the first designated wildflower routes in the state. In the southwestern part of Historic Bluff Country, the route follows TH 56, passing through rich agricultural land and small rural towns that offer historical, recreational, and scenic experiences of their own. Additionally, Lake Louise State Park is located along the Byway where visitors and area residents can enjoy the Minnesota Prairie.

## Amish Buggy Byway

A portion of TH 52 in Fillmore County has been designated by the State of Minnesota as the Amish Buggy Byway. This Byway stretches from TH 16 near Preston to TH 44 near the city of Prosper. The Amish community of approximately 700 residents is concentrated in the area around Canton and Harmony and are frequent users of this route. Most of the Amish farmsteads are located off the highway on country roads; however, the Byway offers an opportunity to witness the old-time lifestyle of the Amish. The 55 mile-per-hour speed limit and special signs marking the Byway are intended to help accommodate the safety of Amish travelers along TH 52.

## Laura Ingalls Wilder Historic Highway

The Laura Ingalls Wilder Historic Highway allows travelers to follow the route of Laura across the northern states, linking sites where she and her family lived in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and South Dakota. Within Historic Bluff Country, this historic route takes visitors to Spring Valley where Laura lived with her husband, Almanzo, and daughter, Rose from 1890 to 1891.

## STRATEGIES FOR MAINTAINING INTRINSIC QUALITIES

Strategies for maintaining significant byway resources and intrinsic qualities include plans for enhancing and promoting as well as preserving these properties.

*Preservation strategies* can include purchase of key resources by public agencies, protection through zoning or development regulations, and purchase of scenic easements or development rights.

Specific strategies may include:

- Prohibition of billboards along the Highway 16 corridor and adjoining local roadways
- Creation of heritage preservation districts in Spring Valley, Chatfield and other communities and designation of isolated historic resources to encourage preservation of these resources
- Prohibiting development of bluff tops

*Enhancement strategies* can include restoration of a resource previously damaged through development or agricultural use, or investment in the surrounding area to place the resource in an improved context.

Specific strategies may include:

- Planned removal of non-conforming billboards
- Establishment of design guidelines for historic districts and Main Street areas to encourage restoration of historic character
- Judicious vegetative clearing at overlook structures to provide better views of the surrounding landscape.

*Promotion strategies* include providing improved access to the resource, providing increased knowledge of the presence of the resource, and improving interpretation of the significance of the resource.

Specific strategies may include:

- Improved directional signage throughout the Scenic Byway corridor.
- Improved signage at canoe access areas.
- Increased interpretation at canoe access areas, waysides, overlooks and historic areas.
- Increased information about, and improved access to, local parks.

## Chapter Five – Interpretive Plan

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### WHAT IS INTERPRETATION?

As people walk, drive, cycle, or paddle through scenic Historic Bluff Country, they are able to experience a wondrous assortment of natural, historical, and cultural treasures. Some of these sites can be fully appreciated in their raw, unadulterated form. Others beg for more information to enhance the visitor's understanding and experience, requiring a guiding hand to make the experience more profound and provide a more lasting impression. This guiding hand is known as "interpretation." As applicable today as it was when he wrote it in 1957, pioneer of interpretive philosophy, Freeman Tilden, defined interpretation as:

*"An educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information."*

– Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, 1957

The purpose of interpretation is to heighten the visitor's experience, by providing meaning to the experience. In order to achieve this, the interpretation must somehow relate to the visitor's personality or experience. More than mere information, the interpretive experience must also reveal to the visitor a new level of meaning and understanding not previously attained regarding the subject. Once the experience is revealed, it should provoke the visitor, leading them to further thought, and further action.

### INTERPRETIVE PLAN PURPOSE

This plan is intended to provide direction for the future interpretation of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway. It recommends goals to be accomplished by interpretation, as well as the means to achieve those goals. With the understanding that the interpretive goals will not be achieved in a brief period of time, this document should direct community members and stakeholders on the incremental steps and a variety of strategies that should be taken in order to achieve the overarching goals. While intended to be a basis for planning for years hence, the plan should not be considered static. The goals, strategies, and resources of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway will change over time. As a result, this document will need to be revisited, revised, and reconsidered as conditions change.

As means and funds become available, it is important that Historic Bluff Country Inc. have in place a coordinated plan for the thoughtful interpretation of the resources along the corridor so interpretation is developed under unifying themes and with comprehensive goals in mind. This plan will facilitate future grant proposals, funding campaigns, and partnerships for interpretive services as such opportunities become available. The plan will help to ensure that the implementation of future interpretation techniques is part of a comprehensive, coordinated effort designed to meet the overall goals of the Byway plan.

## INTERPRETIVE GOALS, STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES

The Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway can be understood as a linear corridor, linking the many sites, experiences, and attractions that can be found in the Historic Bluff Country. Many of the most prominent features of the region are already being interpreted by private and public organizations. The Byway can serve as an organizing framework or connecting device that will focus on the larger themes of the region and lead people to the specific interpretation of the site or subject. The following goals, strategies and techniques are recommendations for how the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway can serve as the larger framework and connect people to the area's unique sites and experiences.

### INTERPRETIVE GOALS

If the interpretive plan is to be effective, it should be used as a tool to accomplish specific goals, rather than being an end in itself. The proposed goals of the interpretive plan are listed below.

1. Share the unique story of the Historic Bluff Country
  - Develop themes that tell the story of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway's people, communities, and geological history. The themes will be used to interpret and market the Byway.
  - Provide meaning to the various sites and features along the Byway to enhance the experience of visitors.
  - Offer opportunities for public understanding of resources that are fragile or culturally sensitive.
  - Suggest ways that the stories of valuable resources may better be interpreted to meet the needs of visitors and community residents.
  
2. Entice visitors to all areas of the Historic Bluff Country through interpretive activities
  - Inform visitors of the wide array of interests and activities in the region to encourage them to stay longer.
  - Make the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway a compelling destination for travelers on I-90.
  - Provide reasons for visitors to return to the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway.
  - Direct the visitation patterns of travelers to areas that are prepared for, and desire, increased tourism.
  - Provide interpretive strategies and techniques that will help to increase tourism throughout the year.
  - Spread the interpretive opportunities to all parts of the Byway.

3. Enhance community relationships by developing partnership and fostering stewardship of area resources

- Offer interpretive direction for the communities and resources that are not yet prepared for increased tourism.
- Increase the visitor and local community awareness of, and stewardship for, the identified historical, archaeological, cultural, natural, scenic, and recreational resources.
- Suggest opportunities for public involvement and cooperative partnerships with other organizations, governmental agencies, and cultural institutions.
- Preserve the way of life of residents and the small town character of the region, while thoughtfully increasing tourism and visitor traffic.

SENSITIVE INTERPRETIVE APPROACHES

- A number of Native American archaeological sites are located along the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway. While these are valuable resources in interpreting the lifeways of early Americans, most of these sites are underground and are not visible to passing travelers, limiting their usefulness for public interpretation. Furthermore, identifying the location of these sites could result in the loss of the resources through looting and would also be considered an intrusion on the significant heritage sites of Native American cultures. Non-site-specific interpretation of Native American culture should be done in consultation with tribes who previously or currently occupy these locations, such as the Dakota, Winnebago, and Ho Chunk people.
- Area citizens have expressed concern that increased tourism will lead to increased traffic and a loss of the traditional way of life that helps to form the character of the region. These issues are valid from a number of perspectives. Development of future tourism activity and interpretation should not be undertaken in communities where increased visitation is not desired by the citizens, business leaders and the local government. Interpretive sites and directional material should be directed away from these locations, and towards places that have planned for increased tourist activity. At the same time, communities and natural resources that are “overrun” with tourists can experience a loss of character and authenticity. This phenomenon is of special concern when the overall theme emphasizes small town and scenic beauty.
- Some of the resources selected for interpretation are privately owned, either as private homes or as private businesses. The interpretative plan must be designed to respect the privacy of homes and business owners and to discourage visitors from trespassing or otherwise intruding upon private property. The privately owned Amish tour companies are an example of how this has been done successfully. They have sought permission from selected Amish farmers to escort visitors in guided tours on the farms of Amish families. The Amish, in turn, are able to sell their furniture, crafts, and baked goods to the tourists. The Amish tours can be used as one model for interpretation of privately held property.

- Local zoning regulations should keep in mind the valuable historic and scenic resources of the Byway. Placement, scale, and style of billboards and new developments must be taken into consideration where they are visible from the Byway or are located near a resource being interpreted on the Byway.
- Preservation plans for communities along the corridor can assist in identifying the historic assets of the town and seek ways to preserve the unique heritage of the community. A preservation plan may call for a review of all alterations to historic properties, design guidelines for new construction, and/or regulation of billboards and other intrusive elements.

## INTERPRETIVE STRATEGIES

The interpretive strategies consist of specific management actions that can be taken to implement the interpretive goals and themes.

### 1. Collaborate and form partnerships

- Collaborate with nearby scenic byways (the Shooting Star Wildflower Route, the Apple Blossom Drive, the Great River Road, the Amish Byway, and the Laura Ingalls Wilder Historic Highway) to draw drivers off of interstate highways by giving them a choice of alternate routes. Rather than competing against each other, each of the byways can market themselves to visitors by emphasizing the various experiences they will encounter on the different routes and the differing travel destinations of the drivers. Resources can be pooled for combined, efficient marketing approaches.
- Form strategic partnerships with local governments, government agencies, non-profit organizations, businesses, chambers of commerce, American Indian tribes, local citizens, and private landowners to develop interpretive opportunities that are mutually beneficial.
- Approach the interpretation of Native American archaeological sites only after consultation with appropriate American Indian tribes.
- Solicit the participation of the owners, board of directors, and/or management of the various selected interpretive sites to provide interpretive information on their own sites, and to share the planning and costs of interpretative techniques and marketing of their site.
- Involve the local residents and business leaders in the interpretation process to enhance their understanding of the value of the resources within their community.

### 2. Develop a connected interpretive system

- Analyze the existing interpretation of the Byway's resources and identify interpretive gaps or opportunities for enhanced interpretation that will provide greater meaning and return visitation.
- Connect interpretive sites with other sites to lead and encourage visitors to go from one site to others.

- Strategically place gateways and focus interpretative information and funding to direct traffic and visitors to locations and sites where increased tourism is desired and can be accommodated.
  - Develop a consistent thematic and marketing message along the Byway that is clearly identified with the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway.
3. Preserve resources and regional character
- Use Heritage Preservation Commissions (HPCs) and zoning boards to identify and preserve important historical and natural resources associated with the region.
  - Analyze each community and recommend techniques that can be used to determine how to preserve the small town character and historical authenticity in the face of increased tourism.
4. Support efforts to increase year-round tourism levels
- Develop year-round attractions on the Byway by forging relationships with regional cultural and recreational organizations, and by creating activities, festivals, and fairs during the off-season.
  - Emphasize the visitor's experience on the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway, in addition to the place. People are more likely to return to repeat an *experience* than to see a *place*.
5. Monitor and re-evaluate over time
- Consider the interpretive plan as an evolving document. Analyze the effectiveness of the plan and the thematic approach, and continue to revise as necessary.

## INTERPRETIVE TECHNIQUES

Interpretive techniques are the specific tactics that are recommended to accomplish the interpretive strategies, which can include the message, style, location, and medium of the interpretation. Interpretation can take many forms, but two broad categories cover most types: non-personal and personal.

Non-personal interpretation is communicated in written, audio, or video messages via a medium other than live persons. Examples of non-personal interpretation include the following:

- Roadside signs
- Plaques and markers
- Brochures and trail guides
- Books
- Audio and video recordings
- Indoor and outdoor exhibits
- Web sites
- Interactive computer programs and kiosks

Many of the recommended interpretive techniques in the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway plan are non-personal. Non-personal interpretation offers an efficient way to enhance the interpretive experience of the Byway to large numbers of visitors at lower costs, with fewer management commitments, and can generally provide exposure to a broader audience. Because non-personal interpretation is self-directed (e.g. the visitor chooses whether or not to participate in the experience), it is often the preferred choice of many visitors.

Personal interpretation can be and is offered, usually through private organizations, for specific interpretive sites along the Byway. Personal interpretive experiences are usually more focused and rely on greater guidance from an interpreter. With personal interpretation, a person (such as a historian, naturalist or other guide) communicates directly with the visitors. Examples of personal interpretation are listed below.

- Guided bus, car, cycling, walking, boat or horseback tours
- Lectures and talks
- Theatrical, musical, and artistic performances
- Demonstrations of crafts or scientific experiments
- Costumed guides portraying historical figures
- Staffed visitor centers
- Cultural events, traditional ceremonies and rituals

#### NON-PERSONAL INTERPRETIVE TECHNIQUES

- Interpretive materials (brochures, booklets, signs, computer kiosks) should have a consistent design, tone, and voice along the entire Byway. This includes the graphic designs, as well as the text message. The consistent approach will assist travelers in following the route, and will also help make the connection of interpretive sites along the corridor.
- Utilize historic images, such as photographs, maps or paintings, to compare and contrast historical settings with the way they look today in a “then and now” format.
- Develop maps, brochures, and kiosks that illustrate and describe the extensive Native American archaeological sites in the Root River Valley in close consultation with local tribes. The brochure would emphasize the intensity, longevity, and variety of the Native American presence along the Byway through a map plotted with the location and type of sites located within one mile of the route. Previous uses of these types of maps have proven to be a very visual and engaging means of conveying the extensive Native American presence along the rivers. Text in the brochure would discuss the variety of site types, their role in Native American lifeways, and how they relate to the natural topography of the region. A select number of sites that summarize these points could be further interpreted through the use of kiosks and their general location identified on the brochure map. Themes for these kiosks might include effigy mounds and outlook sites – both of which are tied to the landscape of the area. Together, the brochure and sites would convey the importance of the Native American presence within the Root River Valley while sensitively interpreting and protecting vulnerable cultural resources.

- Design driving tours of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway, each following a different theme or interest category. The tours can be delivered in cassette tape, CD, or written brochure formats. Possible tour themes include:
  - Pioneering in southern Minnesota;
  - Railroads of the Root River Valley;
  - First Americans;
  - Geological features and oddities of southern Minnesota; and
  - Tours designed to interest and entertain children.

#### PERSONAL INTERPRETIVE TECHNIQUES

Many personal interpretive opportunities are currently available along the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway and are provided by private tour companies or other specialized organizations, such as the Houston Nature Center or the Minnesota Historical Society. The private efforts of such specialized, personal interpretation should be supported and promoted by the Byway organization, but need not be duplicated.

- Service staff at local hotels, restaurants, bed and breakfasts, and tourism information centers is often on the front line of visitor contact and can greatly influence the visitor experience of the Historic Bluff Country. Training should be provided to those working in the hospitality industry and who have regular contact with tourists to inform them of the full extent of attractions, features, and tourist opportunities throughout the region. Through the use of the themes and stories of the area, the *meaning*, not just the data should be conveyed to those in the hospitality industry. This will provide visitors with a deeper experience in the Historic Bluff Country and appreciation for what the region has to offer.
- Support the development of specialized interpretive activities for groups with varied interests that can be experienced year-round.
  - Create activities for spelunkers and rock hounds.
  - Promote indoor activities, such as pumpkin carving, Christmas crafts, antiquing and other shopping.
  - Organize festivals and events focused on winter themes.
  - Consider farm “dude ranches” that allow visitors to experience a week or a weekend on a real historic farm, where they can milk a cow, use a wood stove, and ride horses.
  - Offer tours off the Byway that are personalized and cater to special interests, such as canoe tours, bicycle tours, nature hikes, and archaeological tours.

#### RECOMMENDED INTERPRETIVE PLAN

The Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway interpretive plan is comprised of a network of interpretive locations and interpretive media. This network is designed to enhance the visitor’s experience and to form a unifying look and style that tells the unique story of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway.

- A **Byway Guide** (printed brochure) should include map to indicate the route of the Byway, its relationship to the I-90, and locations and brief descriptions of each of the Byway Experience Sites.
  
- Four **Byway Gateways** sites are recommended as conceptual and physical entrances to the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway. Conceptually, they should introduce the traveler to the fact that they are entering the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway and should immediately orient them to the themes of the Byway, give them a taste of what they are about to experience, and what they should be looking for. There should be a clear physical presence to the entry of the Byway, utilizing thematic, indigenous materials that are sympathetic to the surrounding landscape. The gateways would likely have a larger physical presence than the intervening interpretive sites. The following information should be provided at the gateway sites:
  - The visitors are entering the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway.
  - The themes of the Byway (small, historic towns; unique geology; and scenic valleys) that the visitors are about to encounter and should be watching for.
  - The length of the Byway and how long it will take to drive it.
  - A map of the Byway, indicating the location of interpretive sites, where and how the traveler can get back on to I-90 at the termination of the Byway, and other major routes that cross the Byway.
  - The Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway runs east-west and is fortunate to connect with I-90 at its east and west terminals, making two primary gateways at **Dexter** (the junction of I-90 and TH 16) on the west and **La Crescent** (at the junction of I-90 and Highway 61, leading to TH 16) on the east end. Eastern and western gateways should emphasize the Byway's easy accessibility from I-90.
  - The Byway can easily be approached by several other routes from the north and south. The most direct route from the Twin Cities and Rochester is U.S. 52. U.S. 52 is also a major connector from Iowa into Minnesota. Therefore, two other Byway gateways are recommended along U.S. 52 that are off of the Byway, but within the Historic Bluff Country Region. **Chatfield**, about 12 miles north of TH 16 is recommended as the northern gateway, and **Harmony**, about 10 miles south of TH 16, is recommended as the southern gateway.
  
- Ten **Byway Experience Sites** are recommended to be located on or near the Byway. Byway Experience Sites are stopping places on or nearby the Byway that provide a focal point for interpretation of one particular element of the Byway theme and guidance to thematically or geographically related sites. The location of Byway Experience Sites is driven by the location of the interpretive subject, with the additional consideration of evenly distributing interpretive sites along the Byway so they are not clustered in one place and can be experienced at fairly regular intervals. Information at the Byway Experience Sites should not duplicate information on Byway Guide, but instead offer further information to provide the viewer with a deeper understanding of the subject matter. The following elements and features should be incorporated into the Byway Experience Sites.
  - Signage panels providing Byway maps that indicate to the visitor "you are here", the main interpretive theme of the site, and a list or map of other resources along the Byway that are also related to this theme;

- “Beyond the Byway,” showing the location of other resources located geographically nearby; and
- Locations of Byway information centers.
- Parking adjacent or nearby the interpretive site.

Byway Experience Sites are recommended to have a consistent design theme that is clearly identified with the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway and sympathetic to the scenic and historical surroundings. The style and materials of the two WPA-era waysides are recommended to be used as a thematic style for newly developed interpretive sites. These historic sites, with their low, limestone walls with matching benches, picnic tables, and other features provide a historic style and theme for future interpretive sites. The native limestone materials fit in well with the surroundings and reflect the natural materials present in the river bluffs and the intriguing karst terrain. Wherever possible, interpretive sites should be located on or near the Byway route and their subject matter should be relevant to that site. Interpretive sites not located on the Byway should have directional signs visible from the Byway.

The ten proposed locations and major themes of the Byway Experience Sites are as follows:

1) Grand Meadow Wayside (Pine Lawn Park)

The interpretive subject matter for the Grand Meadow interpretive site is the 10,000-year-old chert quarry, known as the Grand Meadow Quarry site (listed on the National Register of Historic Places) and the glacial terrain visible in the surrounding flat countryside. This archaeological site demonstrates the dependence of the American Indians on the land and its geology. The site is now owned by The Archaeological Conservancy, a national organization dedicated to acquiring and preserving the best of the nation’s remaining archaeological sites. While the site is not open to the public and its location is kept confidential due to concerns over looting, its interpretation will assist in the visitors’ understanding of both the geology and Native American lifeways. Although interpretation of this site cannot be conducted at the quarry location, the Grand Meadow wayside will give the visitor a sense of the significant place and its setting. Additional interpretation will include a discussion of the surround flat lands, not a usually appreciated land feature to travelers, as an indication of the glaciated area and how this contrasts with the “driftless” area to the east.

*Beyond the Byway:* Area sites off of the Byway can include the Exchange State Bank and the Grand Army of the Republic Hall, both located in the town of Grand Meadow.

2) Spring Valley Proposed Wayside – The Town That Agriculture Built

The interpretive site along the Byway in Spring Valley should focus on the impact that the agricultural economy had on the birth, growth, and prosperity of agricultural towns, such as Spring Valley. Signage can designate a walking or driving tour of Spring Valley from the interpretive site, highlighting the impressive architecture of the homes and businesses in the town. One possible site location is the proposed wayside near Spring Valley. Other possible sites might include one on the Byway as it passes through the town, or near the grain elevator.

*Beyond the Byway:* Other featured sites in and around Spring Valley should include the Carnegie Library, the Methodist Episcopal Church (a.k.a. Laura Ingalls Wilder Site), the Washburn-Zittleman House, the Richard Sears house, the Parson's Block downtown, and the Mausoleum.

### 3) Downtown Wykoff – The Town Built by Railroads

Although located a couple of miles off the Byway, this quaint town is key to the interpretation of a railroad town. Interpretive discussion can include the impacts of the railroad to the region, the influence of topography on the selection of railroad alignments, and methods that the railroad companies typically used to lay out the towns they built. The emergence of Wykoff can be contrasted with the demise of Forestville, an abandoned river town to the south that did not receive rail service and is now interpreted by the Minnesota Historical Society. The site should be located on the main street of Wykoff where the development pattern can be observed. Directional signage to Wykoff from TH 16, indicating that Byway interpretation can be found there, should be installed.

*Beyond the Byway:* Other sites beyond the Byway should include Forestville/Mystery Cave State Park, particularly Historic Forestville and Mystery Cave. Thematic connections with numerous other railroad resources along the Byway, such as old depots, bridges, and bicycle trails converted from rail beds can be highlighted at this location.

### 4) Fountain Wayside – Geological Formations of Southern Minnesota

Although the City of Fountain is several miles off of the Byway, it is located along U.S. 52, a primary feeder from the Twin Cities to the area and located between the gateway in Chatfield and the hub in Preston. Fountain is an ideal place to interpret the geological peculiarities, specifically the karst terrain, of the region. The sinkhole at the Fountain Wayside near US Highway 52 would be an appropriate place to interpret these geological phenomena, although issues of parking and facilities would need to be addressed. Further interpretation can be done in conjunction with the Fillmore County History Center, where Fillmore County history is actively interpreted.

*Beyond the Byway:* Visitors can be directed to the geological features of the Rock Columns and Pulpit Rock (via the bicycle trail), as well as Mystery Cave and Niagara Cave.

### 5) Preston Wayside – Byway Crossroads

Preston is considered to be the hub at the crossroads of the TH 16 Byway and Highway 52 and is therefore recommended not only as a Byway Experience Site, but also as a key orientation site, similar to the gateways. This site should orient visitors approaching the Byway from U.S. 52, and introduce them to the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway. Interpretation and way finding signage can be arranged at the WPA-era Preston Overlook, one mile south of Preston, utilizing sympathetic restoration and rehabilitation techniques. Being located near the Amish Byway leading toward Harmony, this is an appropriate location to interpret the Amish community of Fillmore County, indicating that a side trip to Harmony will provide opportunities for interaction with and

interpretation of the Amish community. Any interpretation of the Amish should be done in consultation with this community.

*Beyond the Byway:* Regional attractions should be highlighted in all four directions to include the geological interpretation in Fountain to the north, industry in Lanesboro to the east, Amish interpretation and the Amish Byway leading south, and the plains and Spring Valley to the west, as well as local sites, such as the Preston grain elevator and the Allis barn. The Root River and the Root River Trail should also be highlighted.

6) Inspiration Point: Lanesboro – An Industrious Town

The town of Lanesboro, focusing on its origins as a small industrial town, with its mills and dam, and its scenic qualities can be interpreted from the historic Inspiration Point, a wayside two miles west of Lanesboro. Information can also be provided about the origins of the historical WPA-era wayside.

*Beyond the Byway:* Other sites off of the Byway include the Root River Trail and the Eagle's Bluff Learning Center. Special note should be given to Lanesboro's historic district and the Lanesboro Historic Preservation Museum, where visitors can learn even more about the town.

7) Peterson Wayside – The Meandering Root River

An existing but underdeveloped wayside in Peterson, with access to the Root River, is an appropriate site for a site interpreting the river itself. The location should ensure that its placement would not have an adverse effect on the scenic quality of the valley or the Byway. Interpretation should focus on the Root River and its valley, with attention paid to its origins and to the contemporary environmental issues.

*Beyond the Byway:* Visitors should be directed to the Root River Trail and the various canoe access points, the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest, as well as other scenic views of the river and the bluffs. The small towns of Whalen and Peterson (with the 1877 Station and Museum) also offer resources to the visitors.

8) Rushford Depot- Small Town Business

Interpretation at Rushford Depot can further discuss the effects that the railroad had on the Root River Valley's physical and economic development. Additional interpretation can address the "driftless" terrain, as contrasted with the glacial terrain to the west.

*Beyond the Byway:* Sites beyond the Byway include the Root River and Magelssen Bluff Park in Rushford.

9) Houston Nature Center – Back to Nature

The Houston interpretive site should provide insight into the wildlife found in and around the Root River Valley. The Houston Nature Center is the most appropriate location to interpret this theme.

*Beyond the Byway:* Visitors can be directed to travel along the scenic drive of the Yucatan Valley, where they should be encouraged to visit the Beaver Creek State Park, Schech's Mill, and the Houston County Historical Society Museum Complex in Caledonia. Other highlighted sites would include the Root River Trail and the Root River.

#### 10) Hokah City Park – Native American Presence in the Root River Valley

Mount Tom and Como Falls, both located in the City of Hokah, make this an excellent location to interpret the Native American presence in the Root River Valley, since both of these sites were or are likely significant sites for regional tribes. Many types of Native American cultural sites are located along, or proximate to, the Byway including villages, hunting sites, stone quarries, lookouts, earthworks, burial mound groups, and effigy mounds. Interpretation can be in the form of a stylized map, illustrating the types of sites found in the valley, and text, offering visitors to a greater understanding of the American Indian presence in the area.

*Beyond the Byway:* Other resources to be highlighted include the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest, as well as the drive to Caledonia through the scenic Yucatan Valley, and the Houston County Historical Society Museum Complex located in Caledonia. Beyond Caledonia are Schech's Mill and the Beaver Creek State Park.

- **Byway Information Centers**, such as tourist information centers, already exist along the Byway corridor and provide valuable information to the travelers. These centers should have signage consistent with the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway style and should be designated on the Byway maps. Visitors will be able to select from the array of brochures for sights, attractions, lodging, and shopping and consult with the staff at these locations.
- **Community-based walking tours** can be designed to get people walking about the towns and natural areas. These can be done by either developing brochures to guide visitors, or stationary site markers can be installed directing walkers from place to place. Lanesboro has recently established a program to get visitors walking through the town by installing artistic medallions. Other towns have brochure-based walking tours.
- **Thematic tours** that guide travelers on tours focused on a central theme are recommended. These tours may take several forms, including walking tours, bus tours, self-guided auto tours, or personally escorted auto tours. Currently, several independent private auto or bus tours of the Amish country. Possible thematic tours include:
  - Railroads of the Historic Bluff Country;
  - Agricultural Life in Southern Minnesota;
  - Historic Bluff Country: Geological Oddities and Curiosities; and
  - First Americans: Native Americans in the Historic Bluff Country.

#### INTERPRETIVE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SELECTED INTRINSIC RESOURCES

Recommendations for developing the interpretative potential of individual Byway resources can be found in Appendix F.

## Chapter Six – Roadways, Waysides and Rest Areas

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Minnesota Trunk Highway 16 provides the primary access to, and route through, this scenic and historic portion of Southeastern Minnesota. The character of this roadway frames the experience of the traveler through the Scenic Byway corridor and shapes the character of communities along the route. Roadway amenities such as rest areas and roadways provide picnicking and restroom facilities for travelers and provide an opportunity to view and learn about the surrounding landscape and adjacent resources safely. Signage provides critical information to the traveler regarding availability, routes and distances to visitor destinations and also shapes the character of the roadway.

This chapter assesses the present conditions along Trunk Highway 16 and summarizes plans for future improvements. Current condition and planned improvements for adjoining roadways is also summarized as they provide critical access points to and from the Scenic Byway corridor. Information regarding conditions at I-90 rest areas is also provided as key locations for information regarding the Scenic Byway corridor.

### TRUNK HIGHWAY 16

Trunk Highway 16 is a two-lane state highway crossing southeast Minnesota from Dexter to La Crescent. The alignment of the road's western section extends on a generally straight alignment east through rather flat agricultural terrain. The Middle and South branches of the Root River lie north and south, respectively, of the roadway in this area leaving the roadway alignment quite flat. The character of the road begins to change at Preston as the alignment encounters increasing topographic changes as the road climbs the bluff just south of Lanesboro. At Lanesboro the road alignment become quite curvy, following the path of the Root River to La Crescent.

Throughout the corridor the roadway maintains a rural cross-section except where the roadway passes directly through communities where an urban section is typically used. Shoulders are quite narrow and do not provide sufficient width for bicycles. Posted speeds vary between 30 and 55 mph throughout the corridor, with many posted curves throughout its eastern section. The roadway surface is generally in good condition. Current Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) volumes are between 1500 and 3000 vehicles per day, well below the capacity of a 2-lane highway. Increased volumes resulting from additional promotion of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway are not anticipated to increase volumes beyond the capacity of this roadway.

Mn/DOT's District 6 Long Range Plan identifies Trunk Highway 16 as a "minor arterial" and as a "Support Highway Planning Corridor." The majority of the corridor received a "preservation" designation regarding planning improvements, suggesting that only minor repairs are anticipated along the corridor. The exception to this designation is the segment between Hokah and La Crescent which is recommended for possible expansion. The Plan notes that any expansion plans should be coordinated with the Root River Trail. A potential bypass of Spring Valley in the segment conjoined by U.S. 63 is also identified in the District 6 Plan, although this is recommended only under the strategy unconstrained by budget limitations. Throughout the

corridor, the District 6 Plan recommends access control improvements (e.g. consolidation of access points, use of frontage roads) when possible.

In addition, plans are currently underway to replace the TH 61/16 bridge over the Canadian Pacific railroad in La Crescent. The bridge is experiencing significant deterioration and must be replaced near term. However, this bridge lies to the north of the perceived “gateway” to the Scenic Byway at the southern edge of La Crescent. Five additional bridges are noted in the District 6 plans as possible candidates for replacement, but none of the bridges are noted as being in particularly poor condition, and will likely not be replaced near term.

### Safety and Accident Review

Review of accident data did not reveal any critical segments of Highway 16 in need of improvement. However, Mn/DOT District 6 engineers do recommend the following minor improvements in the corridor:

- Inclusion of right turns lanes at all public roads in the corridor where they are not presently provided.
- Installation of overhead lights at the intersections of Trunk Highway 16/ Trunk Highway 80 (south of Wykoff) and Trunk Highway 16/ Fillmore County State-Aid Highway 21 (south of Lanesboro).
- Improvements to substandard guardrails (twisted end treatments on plate beam installations and two-cable guardrails) throughout the corridor.

### Pedestrians and Bicycles

Pedestrian and bicycle travel along Highway 16 is generally not recommended due to narrow shoulders and curvilinear alignment except where sidewalks or bicycle paths/routes adjacent to the highway are provided in Byway communities. The Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway is unique, however, in that a parallel bicycle and pedestrian facility, the Root River Trail, is provided between Fountain and Houston. Many visitor facilities and interpretive opportunities are either currently located or recommended to be located at trailheads for this facility, providing similar experiences for bicyclists and motorists alike.

### Trunk Highway 16 State-Owned (Mn/DOT) Waysides

Four state-owned waysides sit adjacent to the Scenic Byway - the Preston Overlook located within the community of Preston, the Preston wayside located just east of Preston, Inspiration Point located immediately south of Lanesboro, and the Peterson wayside located east/west of Peterson.

Inspiration Point, the largest of the facilities, overlooks to the Lanesboro area to the north. Depression-era-constructed stone walls frame the edges of the site and stone picnic tables and benches provide opportunities for travelers to eat and rest. A Mn/DOT report on “Historic Roadside Development Structures on Minnesota Trunk Highways” recommends Inspiration Point as eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. This wayside is well-used and its structures are in need of repair.

The Preston Overlook was also identified as being eligible for the National Register and exhibits similar stone wall edges. The Overlook is much smaller than Inspiration Point, providing only an area for vehicles to pull off the road and park while travelers enjoy the view of the Fillmore County Fairgrounds. The Overlook structure has deteriorated and is in need of rehabilitation. The Preston wayside is a little-used gravel pull off area approximately one mile east of the Preston Overlook. A wooden fence surrounds the wayside. A private gated driveway with a “No Trespassing” sign extends south from the gravel drive.

An unnamed wayside is located adjacent to TH 16 west of the community of Peterson. The wayside consists of a bituminous parking lot with capacity for 10-12 vehicles surrounded by concrete J-barriers. Trees line the northern edge of the parking lot to the river’s edge. Canoe access to the Root River is provided at this location.

A fifth state-owned site, the Cushion Peak Overlook, between Rushford and Houston has been abandoned and overgrown. Past issues regarding impacts to adjacent private property contributed to the closure of this site.

### TH 16 Planned Rest Areas

The District 6 Plan recommends a Class II Rest Area at TH 63/TH 16 in Spring Valley. Mn/DOT currently owns a piece of property purchased for the Rest Area north/south of Racine for this purpose, but it is not ideal due to periodic wet conditions. Other options could be considered in the Spring Valley area.

## **GATEWAY ROADWAYS TO THE TH 16 SCENIC BYWAY**

Understanding how the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway can be accessed from I-90, a national route, is important for planning methods to educate and encourage visitors to the Byway. Likewise, understanding the routes used by visitors from the Minnesota metropolitan areas of Minneapolis–Saint Paul and Rochester and the Iowa metropolitan areas of Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, and Dubuque provides a framework for placement of visitor centers and recommendations to make the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway more accessible.

### Interstate 90

The Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway is easily accessed by travelers on I-90. Direct access from I-90 to the Scenic Byway (TH 16) is provided at the western end of the corridor at Dexter. Access to the Scenic Byway at the eastern end is somewhat indirect via Minnesota Highway 61. Visitors seeking Minnesota Highway 16 must pay careful attention to routing signs through this area to reach the Scenic Byway, and can be quite distracted by the dramatic visual quality of this area located high above the Mississippi River Valley among the river bluffs. Improvements to Highway 61 through this area are currently in the planning stage.

### I-90 Rest Areas

Five rest areas serve the I-90 corridor between Austin, Minnesota and La Crosse, Wisconsin.

East bound facilities are located just west of Austin (Hayward Rest Area), east of Dexter (Highforest Rest Area) and west of the TH 43-Rushford exit (Enterprise Rest Area). West bound facilities are located just north of La Crescent (Dresbach Travel Information Center) and just east of TH 52 (Marion Rest Area). These rest areas provide rest rooms, vending and picnicking facilities as well as opportunities for visitor information and interpretation. This information is displayed in locked glass cases within the building lobby.

The Enterprise Rest Area includes a large outdoor interpretive sign discusses the unique “driftless area” geology of southeastern Minnesota and directs visitors to the overlook behind the building to learn more about the old town of Enterprise. A trail leads to the overlook of the former town site; unfortunately the interpretive plaques have been removed from the overlook area. Long range plans include improvements to visitor parking.

The Dresbach Rest Area serves as visitor information center and “gateway” to Minnesota for travelers entering from Wisconsin on I-90. In addition to the typical facilities, this rest area also includes a riverside walkway that provides opportunity for observing the lock and dam, just slightly upstream from the rest area. The rest area site also serves as a station for the US Fish Wildlife Service’s (USFWS) Upper Mississippi National Wildlife Refuge. A road leading south from rest area facilities ends at a well-developed public boat landing. Large interpretive signs are located around the rest area and include information about the Great River Road, the Upper Mississippi National Wildlife Refuge, and Minnesota History. While managed by Mn/DOT, the rest area is staffed regularly by agents of the Minnesota Office of Tourism. A wide range of visitor literature can be found within the building, including information on the area’s scenic byways. Long range plans include improvements to the information center and visitor parking.

### Other Access Routes from Nearby Metropolitan Areas

U.S. 52 serves as a major gateway to the Scenic Byway, providing the most often used access to the area from Rochester and the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Historic Bluff Country stakeholders identified this segment as a “dangerous” route due to the narrowness of the road, numerous curves and confusing I-90 interchange at the north end of the segment. The Mn/DOT has programmed replacement of U.S. 52 from Preston to Fountain for 2003/2004; the segment from Fountain to the south city limits of Chatfield are currently planned for reconstruction in 2006/2007. Replacement of the remaining corridor of U.S. 52 is also possible within the context of the long-range plan. The District 6 Plan further notes that improvements to U.S. 52 should provide for bicyclists and pedestrians, particularly within the communities of Chatfield and Preston. A wayside is provided in the community of Fountain.

U.S. Highway 52 also acts as a major entry point into Historic Bluff Country from the south. No improvements are planned in the Minnesota portion of this corridor. A visitor information center with rest room facilities is provided in the community of Harmony. The segment between Harmony and Preston is identified as an “Amish Byway” with buggy lanes provided in the roadway shoulders.

Although not a major entry point into Historic Bluff Country, U.S. 63 provides an alternative access point to the Scenic Byway for motorists who did not choose to exit at Dexter, and provides access from Cedar Falls/Waterloo, Iowa to the south. No improvements to this corridor are currently programmed. A new Class II Rest Area has been recommended and funded along the roadway near Spring Valley; however, Mn/DOT would like to find an area

partner to assist with operations before constructing the facility. Mn/DOT recommends coordinating with local governments to provide for pedestrians and bicycle traffic.

### Additional access routes from I-90

Minnesota Highway 76 also provides access from I-90 to the Houston portion of Highway 16 and provides access from Iowa to the south. An extremely scenic route through the Yucatan Valley, the segment between Houston and Caledonia to the south curves frequently and climbs many steep grades in response to the area topography. Shoulders are very narrow (2 feet) and would not support bicyclist or pedestrian use. No major improvements are planned for this corridor.

Minnesota Highway 43 is the second most direct access to Historic Bluff County from greater Minnesota, and is the only I-90 exit specifically marked as access to the Root River Trail. No major improvements are planned for this corridor, although replacement of Bridge #5239 in Rushford is recommended.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Roadways

- Improvements to Highway 16 in the La Crescent to Hokah segment should include consideration for placement of a Scenic Byway “gateway” in the area.
- No capacity improvements are needed on the Byway at this time.
- Consideration for the minor roadway improvements listed above should be programmed as appropriate.
- Additional directional signage to major Byway resources should be provided on Highway 16 (see discussion in following chapter).
- Bicycle and pedestrian traffic through the rural sections of the Scenic Byway should be discouraged and redirected to trail facilities found throughout the area.

### Highway 16 Waysides

- Restoration of the WPA-era Preston Overlook and Inspiration Point Waysides should be completed according to the Secretary of the Interiors Standards for Rehabilitation to maintain their historic integrity.
- Interpretive facilities should be provided at the Preston Overlook and Inspiration Point Waysides as discussed in the Interpretive Plan.
- The Preston Wayside should be closed as the facility is unwelcoming due to the presence of “No trespassing” signs and lack of visitor facilities.
- A plan for improvements to the Peterson Wayside should be developed including interpretative activities as discussed in the Interpretive Plan (Chapter \_\_).
- No recommendations are made for re-opening the Cushion Peak Overlook at this time.

### I-90 Exits and Rest Areas

- U.S. 52, U.S. 63, and TH 76 and TH 43 exits should also be considered for signage noting access to the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway.
- Information regarding the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway should be provided at the Dresbach, Enterprise, Marion, Highforest and Hayward Rest Areas.

### Access Routes

- The Scenic Byway should support efforts to reconstruct TH 52 between Rochester and Preston. Reconstruction efforts, however, should take care to preserve the scenic quality of this corridor and the character of communities it passes through, including Chatfield, Fountain and Preston. Plans for a gateway to the Scenic Byway, as discussed in the Interpretive Plan (Chapter 5), should be included. Parking and signage for the Fountain Wayside should be improved. “Pull off” areas in the Preston area currently use by the Amish for informal sale of goods should be retained if possible.
- The new Spring Valley Rest Area should be located so that it can be accessed and used by travelers on the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway as well as travelers on U.S. 63. Planning for the design of this Rest Area should include opportunities to present information on the Scenic Byway as well as the interpretation recommended in the Interpretive Plan (Chapter 5). Historic Bluff Country, Inc., should assist Mn/DOT in finding an appropriate partner for this facility.
- New bridges and other roadway improvements through Historic Bluff Country should consider preservation of scenic views, use of native materials, and preservation of local community character in their design.

Signage along a Scenic Byway can be both a blessing and a curse — a blessing as it directs Byway travelers to interesting and informative stops along the Byway route; a curse in that a proliferation of signs, billboards in particular, can block scenic views and create visual chaos.

Discussions during the Corridor Management Planning process raised concerns on both counts. While roadway identification signs, particularly of county routes, were reported to have improved, signs directing visitors to area resources were found to be lacking. Operators of private attractions noted difficulties obtaining approvals from Mn/DOT for directional signs along Highway 16 and expressed concerns over charges for these signs. One operator has resorted to using billboards to direct visitors to his attraction.

This chapter will address these concerns regarding signage and provide recommendations for improving signage in the corridor.

### HISTORIC BLUFF COUNTRY SCENIC BYWAY IDENTIFICATION SIGNS

Identification signs for the Scenic Byway can be found throughout the corridor adjacent to most of the highway identification signs.

### DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE

Directional signage provides information to visitors unfamiliar with the area information “trailblazing” routes (which road to take, which direction to turn) to area destinations and distance between destinations. Policies regarding the placement and payment for directional signage is established by the public agency responsible for the roadway on which the signs are placed — FHWA regulates signage on Interstate routes, Mn/DOT regulates signage on state highways, counties regulate signage on county roads, and local governments control signage on local streets. Typically signage policies seek to limit the number of signs placed on a roadway to reduce driver confusion and distraction, limit physical hazards adjacent to the roadway, and manage maintenance costs.

Requests for additional signage along the corridor should be made through local government agencies (e.g. cities or counties) to Mn/DOT and should respect the above goals. Directional signage should be used to direct travelers to an area where a number of Byway resources can be found (e.g. “Downtown Preston”) rather than provide individual signs for individual businesses or attractions. Priority should be given to primary Byway resources that directly support the Byway theme.

Recommendations for directional signage are listed below for TH 16 and local routes.

## Minnesota Trunk Highway 16

The Mn/DOT Traffic Engineering Manual provides guidance for the types of signs permitted along state trunk highways. Following is a summary of the information of signage types pertinent to TH 16:

### 1) Guide Signing

These green and white signs provide direction and distance for particular upcoming destinations. Normally, these destinations include the nearest city to the route; however, it can also include destinations that are not cities. Only one destination in a particular direction may be signed. Similarly, only one distance sign is allowed on a trunk highway when leaving an intersection or municipality.

### 2) Specific Service Signs

Blue and white specific service signs are intended to display service information to motorists at the intersection or interchange of a trunk highway with another trunk highway, a controlled access road, or a local road. Examples of these signs include: rural agricultural businesses, tourist-oriented businesses, gas stations, motels/hotels, places of worship, restaurants, resorts, and camping areas. Special criteria must be met before installing one of these signs and special restrictions apply.

### 3) Minor Traffic Generator Signs (Public or Private)

These brown and white informational signs are used to direct non-local travelers to facilities (both public and private) that generate minor traffic. These signs usually include distance, unless the facility is less than one mile from the roadway. All signing costs are paid for by the generator being signed. Trailblazing on local roads between the trunk highway and the generator is the responsibility of the sign requester and must be in place before a minor traffic generator sign is installed on the route.

Directional signage from Highway 16 is recommended for the following visitor destinations (Requests for signage must be made through local governments to Mn/DOT.):

- Communities and downtown areas located just off of Highway 16. Several communities (e.g. Wykoff and Rushford) or their downtown areas (e.g. Spring Valley, Preston, Lanesboro, Hokah) are located a short distance away from the highway. Directional signage on Highway 16 should identify routes to these destinations.
- Brown and White Information signs should be used to direct travelers to key resources related to the Byway theme from Highway 16. Destinations to be signed should include: Forestville and Beaver Creek State Parks, Niagara Cave, Houston Nature Center, Dorer Memorial Forest Units, and Root River Trail facilities.
- “Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Information Center” signage should be placed on Highway 16 alerting travelers to upcoming opportunities for visitor information. (See Chapter 5, Interpretive Plan, for additional information.)

- “Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Interpretive Site” signage should be incorporated into signage for Grand Meadow, Fountain, Preston, Lanesboro and Peterson wayside signage. Independent signage will be required for the Spring Valley, Wykoff, Rushford, Houston, and Hokah interpretive sites. When possible this signage should be coordinated with signage for downtown locations or destinations.

### Local (City and County) Roads

Cities and Counties should provide additional directional or trailblazing signage as needed to direct visitors to Scenic Byway resources. Trailblazing signs on local routes are required to be in place before Mn/DOT will install brown informational signs on any state highway.

Local signage should be provided for the following sites:

- Root River Trail facilities (existing signage fairly comprehensive)
- Root River canoe access facilities
- Dorer Memorial Forest units
- Sinkhole sites in Fountain
- Niagara Cave
- Beaver Creek State Park
- Houston Nature Center
- Peterson, Rushford and La Crescent Information Centers
- Mount Tom/Como Falls, Hokah
- Magelssen Park, Rushford
- Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center

### OUTDOOR ADVERTISING CONTROLS

Through a permit process that is governed by Minnesota Statutes Chapter 173, billboards are allowed along Minnesota Trunk Highways in zoned commercial or industrial areas or in areas that have not been zoned by state or local law, regulation or ordinance that are commercial or industrial in nature. The Intermodal Surface Transportation Equity Act of 1991 (ISTEA) prohibits States from allowing the erection of new outdoor advertising (billboards) on highway on the old Federal-aid primary system or National Highway System which is designated a Scenic Byways.

The State designation of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway addressed this issue by “gapping” or removing from the designation, the sections of Highway 61 within local corporate limits as the emphasis for this Scenic Byway designation was on the scenic quality of the natural environment which is not present within these segments. Opportunities to remove existing billboards or to change local land use controls to prohibit construction of new billboards is encouraged.

## Chapter Eight - Marketing and Promotion

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### INTRODUCTION

The intrinsic resources of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway offer multiple opportunities for increasing leisure travel in its corridor. At the same time, a number of actions need to be undertaken to manifest the market potential of the Byway. The current image and market status of the Byway is typical for many rural byways in the Midwest and the perceived weakness and threats can be managed when a coordinated approach to market development is applied. Market segments that are most likely matched to the resources of the Byway include people who live within 4 to 6 hours driving time of the Byway; enjoy local history, visiting small towns, and viewing the countryside; and have unhurried schedules. A number of recommended actions need to be followed to connect prospective customers of the Byway with its experiences and benefits.

### PROPOSED MARKETING GOALS

Supporters of other national scenic byways have successfully used broad market development goals to communicate a vision for effectively connecting a byway's collection of resources with its users and stakeholders.

Market development goals for the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway are:

- Develop partnerships and beneficial relationships among the diverse groups and individuals, including public and private stakeholders, along the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway.
- Maintain a corridor and byway program that encourages the development of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway into a state, national, and international destination.
- Provide a byway that offers a menu of diverse programs and opportunities for a variety of user groups.
- Inform users on protection and enhancement of the cultural and natural resources within the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway corridor.
- Recognize and promote the resources throughout all segments of the Byway.
- Promote economic development in the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway communities through tourism and related business.
- Increase recognition of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway as a significant component of Minnesota's and the nation's heritage.
- Provide a user and visitor friendly orientation to the Byway.
- Create and maintain a unique and comprehensive Byway identity.
- Encourage ongoing user and visitor assessments to monitor the effectiveness of the Byway programs in regards to education, tourism, and economic development.

- Unify counties along the corridor in joint tourism efforts with each other and other state entities for mutual benefit, including Mower and Olmsted Counties as well as Fillmore, Winona and Houston Counties.
- Promote the Byway as a destination for travelers on I-90 and I-35.
- Encourage community vitality.

## CUSTOMER PROFILES

Responding to the general characteristics and interests of customers and users is a vital cornerstone of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan.

While the scope of work involved in preparing this Corridor Management Plan for the Historic

Bluff Country Scenic Byway did not include conducting primary research of specific traveler segments on the Byway, this plan benefits from research and planning work recently conducted for the National Scenic Byway program as a whole. In their work for the National Scenic Byway program, Strategic Marketing and Research, Inc. and Bates Midwest identified six potential travel segments that relate to scenic byways. These are:

### History Buffs

- Historic sites
- Museums and culture
- Archeological sites
- Educational attractions & activities
- Natural activities and beauty
- Enjoy nostalgia
- Scenic beauty
- Enjoy local flavor
- Memorable attractions

*The Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway intrinsic resources offer the characteristics listed above.*

### Outdoor Enthusiasts: Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

- Water or beach activities
- Adventure
- Natural beauty and scenery
- Seasonal variations

*The trails, rivers, and parks of the regional are a significant attractor.*

### Perpetual Shoppers

- Shopping
- Nightlife

- Interesting dining
- Locally produced goods

*Numerous shopping opportunities exist throughout the corridor.*

#### Variety Seekers

- Period of time to travel
- Unique experiences
- Variety of things to do
- Events

*The Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway offers many small towns and rural countryside within relatively short driving distances of major population centers.*

#### Classic Relaxers

- Unhurried pace
- Chance to relax

*Touring scenic byways offers the traveler control over the amount of time to spend at any site.*

#### Child-Oriented

- Cost
- Things children will enjoy

**\*Source: Strategic Marketing and Research, Inc. and Bates Midwest**

From these six travel segments, those that appear to match well with the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway are **History Buffs, Outdoor Enthusiasts, Perpetual Shoppers, Variety Seekers, and Classic Relaxers.**

Another way to understand customers and users, and how to target market development of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway, is to think of users in degrees of familiarity or proximity to the Byway. From this perspective, promotion and market development can reach travelers, customers, and users in these categories:

- Local residents living near the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway who have little or no familiarity with the history or existence of the Byway. Market development for this segment would emphasize an introductory orientation to the overall theme of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway.
- Local residents living near the Byway who already know and appreciate the importance of local sites and stories. Market development for people in this group might develop the five sub themes or encourage travel along the Byway to visit other sites beyond the local area.
- Minnesota state residents. A primary motivation for people in this group would be to recognize the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway as an important and fascinating historic resource of the state's history.

- Scenic Byway enthusiasts—people who seek out designated scenic byways as leisure travel destination—will benefit from market development that relates the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway to other historic byways of the United States.
- State visitors who are the focus of market development programs of the state of Minnesota and local tourism groups. Market development of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway for state visitors can and should complement travel experiences that are intended to attract non-resident tourism.

A third way to improve market development effectiveness of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway is to recognize special needs of customers and users in these categories:

- People visiting friends and families
- Retired seniors
- Organized tours
- School groups
- Volunteers

## MARKET DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Market development strategies form a foundation for specific market development recommendations. Six key strategies are suggested for the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway:

- Intrinsic Resource Protection and Development: Resources identified for protection in the Corridor Management Plan offer the ‘supply’ of experience that visitors seek. These resources need proper protection and development.
- Target Customers: Market development efforts should focus on the various market segments identified above.
- Sell benefits offered through experiencing the Byway: not the real estate of the corridor: Leisure travel consumers desire experience and positive memories. The benefits offered by the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway include:
  - Authenticity
  - Access to history
  - Small town charm
  - Relaxed lifestyle
  - Hospitality
  - Family roots, traditions, and heritage
  - Local arts, crafts, unique and ethnic foods
  - Good value
  - Scenery
  - Outdoor recreation
  - Rural heritage and agricultural prominence
  - Educational experiences
  - Natural resources interpretation
  - Family values

- Integrated Promotion: Developing the market for the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway will involve integrating and expanding various existing promotion programs to present a larger whole destination vs. smaller individual attractions.
- Hospitality Training: Services that customers receive is central to providing a positive travel experience and successful market development of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway will rely on providing continuously high levels of hospitality throughout the Byway's corridor. Webinars are useful in providing training, especially over a large geographic area.
- Building local awareness and support: Political and financial support for the protection, development, interpretation, and promotion of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway needs to be developed and sustained.

## HOW WILL THE HISTORIC BLUFF COUNTRY SCENIC BYWAY BE POSITIONED FOR NATIONAL MARKETING?

The answer to this question comes in two areas:

1. ***What will the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway contribute to the National Scenic Byway program?*** The Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway provides a rare set of intrinsic resources that tell stories of the American rural Midwest and its beautiful natural resources and ethnic culture.
2. ***What will the National Scenic Byway program contribute to the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway?*** National Scenic Byway designation will increase state, national, and international recognition of the area as well as increase access to various travel markets.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Periodically assess market development indicators.

As the saying "If we don't know where we're going, any road will take us there" applies to good planning, a similar thought applies to market development for the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway. "If we don't know that we're on the right road we won't know when we reach where we're going."

In order to sustain support for the promotion of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway and hence the Byway itself, it is very important that certain indicators be measured, recorded and analyzed on a regular repetitive basis.

- Inquiries made by prospective visitors and the number and type of responses provided by local organizations
- Trips made to the area that can be attributed to promotional materials
- Customer satisfaction levels with the available experience
- Local spending by travel parties using the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway

Several Minnesota organizations assist local communities for implementing local assessments of tourism market growth.

2) Confirm and promote designated sources of information for the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Travelers should be able to obtain information and interpretive materials for the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway from several different types of sources. These include:

- **Walk-in locations** such as existing visitor information centers. Historic Bluff Country enjoys the benefit of having a large number of Visitor Information Centers associated with many of its communities. Consistent information for each walk-in type center should be established for each location: name of center, telephone number, address, mailing address if different, and hours of operation. Website and e-mail address would be optional. Each walk-in location should have attendants who can provide accurate travel information about the Byway.
- **Telephone number** offering recorded information and prompt access to a person who is trained to provide the caller with accurate and responsive information. A telephone source of information should be a toll-free for the caller.

In addition to the individual telephone numbers of the walk-in locations, a specific toll-free number should be established for the callers interested primarily interested in the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway. This number may be the same number as that of the Historic Bluff Country.

- **Official website** for the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway. An effective website for the Byway should provide these features:
  - 'What to do' information;
  - Downloadable maps and discovery guides;
  - An array of interpretive presentations about stops on the Byway;
  - General tourism information;
  - Information on the FHWA National Scenic Byway Program;
  - History of the area;
  - Overview of the Historic Bluff Association;
  - Calendar of events;
  - Feedback opportunities; and
  - Links to related sites.

Updating the existing [www.bluffcountry.com](http://www.bluffcountry.com) site to provide the features listed above also offers the opportunity to expand user awareness of the existing site. The successful re-launch of an updated website is largely related to the amount of promotion that is given to its launch. The efforts required to support a successful website should be divided roughly into equal thirds:

- Initial content development and design
- Promotion
- Updating of content to keep the site current

- Official postal and delivery mailing address as well as e-mail address. To assure consistency and efficiency, a single postal and delivery address should be established for Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway,

3) Coordinate all market development and promotional materials to include reference to Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway.

There are numerous tourism promotional materials that are annually produced for attractions and communities in the Historic Bluff Country region. Many of these brochures do an excellent job of presenting subject matter in the context of the Historic Bluff Country overall theme and identity. The effectiveness of these materials will be increased by also establishing an identity related the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway. This can be accomplished by these activities:

- Including the artwork or logo of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway;
- Illustrating the location of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway on printed maps;
- Including copy that relates to the beauty, accessibility and experiences that are also available with the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway; and
- As the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway may achieve National Scenic Byway designation, an additional 'seal of approval' and identity will be available to area attractions and communities in their promotional activities identity.

Other ways that marketing of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway can be integrated with the promotion of existing attractions include:

- Posting a directory of small-town services in each town, such as bakeries, cafés, markets, ice cream shops, gift stores, churches, festivals and special events to encourage passing travelers to participate in the unique character that helps to define a small town.

4) Prepare and distribute upon request Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Media Packs.

A Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway media package should be prepared for distribution to coach tour planners and operators; the news media; travel writers; local public and corporate officials; and organizations that have potential interest in promoting the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway for the benefit of their members. The media kit should include the following types of information:

- A description of the benefits and experiences that are available in the region
- Travel services including lodging, meals, shopping, etc.
- Suggested itineraries or packages of the activities and events
- Mapping of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway and attendant features
- Services that Historic Bluff Country provides for travel planners
- Discounts on local services and products
- Descriptions of seasonal events

5) Target a limited number of potential organizations to recruit travel to the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway.

Develop and update a roster of organizations that have potential interest in the benefits and experiences that the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway offers and regularly communicate with representatives of each organization to encourage travel to the Historic Bluff Country region using the Byway as a compelling reason. In addition to public and private travel related organizations, special interest groups and clubs; corporations; education agencies; economic development organizations; churches; and others should be included as prospective generators of travelers and visitors to the area.

6) Target promotional development in the I-90 and I-35 corridors.

Special focus should be given to attracting travelers in the I-90 and I-35 corridors to consider traveling the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway. The primary focus should be given to the interstate rest areas that are located within an hour's drive of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway since these locations represent the best opportunity to present the benefits of the Byway to travelers on the interstate system.

8) Emphasize the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway in annual advertising and trade shows campaigns.

The benefits of traveling the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway should be a focus of annual advertising and travel trade shows attended by Historic Bluff Country. Use of the Byway's logo and mapping as well as a presentation of its intrinsic qualities will add value to the promotion of the region's other benefit for leisure travel.

9) Coordinate with related interpretation recommendations for the Byway.

All market development and promotion efforts associated with the TH 16 should be integrated with and support the interpretation of the intrinsic resources of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway. Content and themes, mapping, graphic design, photos, and images should be consistent among promotional materials and interpretive media. In addition to providing consistency of image and message for prospective visitors and actual visitors, considerable efficiency and cost saving can be realized by 'getting the most mileage' from materials prepared to meet the needs of promotion as well as interpretation.

10) Use existing programs and resources to support the promotion of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway.

A number of resources and services exist to support local and rural tourism development for Minnesota Byways and local efforts should take advantage of these and other programs:

- Services and grants offered by the Minnesota Office of Tourism and its affiliates
- Travel development services of the University of Minnesota and the Extension Service
- Information and programs offered through the National Scenic Byways Foundation

## Chapter Nine – Implementation Plan

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### INTRODUCTION

This implementation plan provides a summary of the suggested improvements developed in the Corridor Management Plan and recommends priorities, timelines and responsibilities for implementing those improvements. Potential funding sources and implementation strategies are also discussed.

### SCENIC BYWAY IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE

Implementation of the Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan recommendations will require the cooperative efforts of Historic Bluff Country, Inc. and its member organizations, public agencies such as MnDOT, the DNR, local government staff, and Fillmore, Houston and Mower counties. Private owners and operators of Byway resources and visitor services can also play a role in Plan implementation. We recommend that the Scenic Byway Study Committee be expanded to include representatives of all organizations required to implement the Plan recommendations. In addition, this Implementation Committee should be charged with monitoring changing Byway conditions and making recommendations for amendments to the Corridor Management Plan or additional study if needed. The Historic Bluff Country Board of Directors will manage the Byway and call in additional members as needed.

### BYWAY INVESTMENT STRATEGIES

The following projects are recommended to recreate a well-organized and connected framework of resources supporting the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway. This framework assists visitors to make thematic as well as geographic connections to area resources during their visit. A brief description of each item as well as anticipated cost is included. For further details, see Chapters Four (Management of Intrinsic Resources), Five (Interpretive Plan), Six (Roadways, Waysides and Rest Areas), Seven (Signage) and Eight (Marketing and Promotion).

- 1) Develop, print and distribute a Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Guide.

This Scenic Byway Guide would provide a summary of the Byway Theme as well as a map and description of key Byway resources and local information centers. The Guide could be distributed by Historic Bluff Country, Inc., Minnesota Tourism, and local information centers.

- 2) Design and provide signage directing visitors to and identifying local information centers as “Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Information Centers”

A uniform signage system identifying local information centers as part of Scenic Byway efforts and improved direction signage to information centers would assist visitors traveling the Scenic Byway. The six information centers located on or immediately adjacent to Highway 16 should receive the Scenic Byway sign: Spring Valley, Preston, Lanesboro, Peterson, Rushford and La Crescent. The Highway 52 information centers at Chatfield and Harmony could also be considered for this signing.

- 3) Provide information regarding the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway at I-90 Rest Areas. Restore interpretive information at the Enterprise Rest Area.

Visitors to the five I-90 Rest Areas near the Historic Bluff Country corridor would be alerted to the scenic quality and attractions of the Scenic Byway. Information could consist of printed panels installed within glass cases, or as printed “fronts” for beverage vending machines.

Interpretive information previously provided at the Enterprise Rest Area is directly related to the intrinsic qualities of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway and could entice visitors to explore the Byway further. These interpretive panels at the Rest Area overlook should be replaced.

All Rest Area improvements would require further coordination with MnDOT.

**Anticipated cost:** Vending machine panels may be provided through a cooperative program between the Minnesota Office of Tourism and MnDOT; Installation of additional cases panels would need to be coordinated with MnDOT Safety Rest Area staff.

- 4) Assist in the promotion and training of volunteers to staff local information centers. Provide training for staff in hospitality businesses if desired.

Recruiting, maintaining and training volunteers or minimally-paid individuals to staff local information centers can be a challenge for local communities. Area businesses and tourism organizations should assist communities in recruiting and training information center staff and can assist in thanking them for their efforts.

Training of area hospitality staff (restaurant, hotel and attractions employees) would also be valuable in promoting the Scenic Byway and area facilities.

**Anticipated cost:** Minimal if donated.

- 5) Identify specific locations for four Scenic Byway gateways and design gateway elements and install additional directional signage to attractions and resources of the Scenic Byway.

Specific locations need to be identified for the 4 Scenic Byway gateways identified in the Interpretive Plan. Again, public owned locations with existing parking and access would be preferred.

Construction plans for kiosks themselves as well as text and graphic design for the information and interpretation panels must be developed.

Finally, a signage program directing visitors to the kiosks should be developed and implemented.

Area attractions have requested assistance in providing improved directional signage to businesses to assist visitor and avoid proliferation of billboards and other signage. Working with MnDOT for appropriate placement, types of signage and financial assistance provided to public and non-profit organizations.

**Anticipated cost:** \$10,000 -\$20,000 for a substantial monument sign; If interpretive information provided as well, costs could increase up to \$50,000+ per gateway sign; more if land acquisition and provision of parking facilities need to be included; Roadway signage cost \$1000 -\$2000 per sign

- 6) Provide technical assistance to Byway resources desiring to increase their “visitor preparedness.”

Some Byway resources will require additional planning to facilitate increased visitation, either through interpretive or organization planning or by improving access and parking. A program to assist the owners and/or managers of these facilities could be organized by the Scenic Byway Implementation Committee. Interpretation and promotional advice could be provided by operators of successful attractions in the community. Assistance with access and parking issues could be provided by local or county public works departments. Extensive assistance may require hiring a professional consultant.

**Anticipated cost:** Minimal if provided on a volunteer basis or by public or non-profit organizations. Costs for assistance by a private consultant would vary considerably depending on the extent of assistance needed.

- 7) Improvements to Root River access points.

A number of Root River access points are not well marked and are difficult for first-time visitors to locate. Improved signage would assist with awareness of and wayfinding to these access points. These access points could also serve as potential interpretation locations. Improvements to river access points must be coordinated with the Department of Natural Resources.

**Estimated cost:** \$2,000 - \$3,000 per sign.

8) Historic preservation planning and designation of historic districts and sites.

Efforts to preserve and enhance the historic character of Historic Bluff Country communities would be assisted by the development of historic preservation plans. These plans typically provide discussion of local history, identify significant historic and architectural sites associated with that history and make recommendations as how to best preserve, restore and enhance the historic character of the community. Recommendations may include the local designation of historic sites or districts under state law or nomination for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Historic planning efforts can be assisted by, and potentially funded through, the State Historic Preservation Office.

**Estimated cost:** \$10,000+ per community.

9) Community planning efforts to preserve area character.

Development not in keeping with the scenic quality of Historic Bluff Country or the historic character of its communities is the largest threat to the intrinsic qualities of the Scenic Byway. Community and county planners should examine current development ordinances to ensure that bluff lands, riverbanks and community main streets are protected, and preferable enhanced. Ordinances prohibiting billboards and excessive signage, protecting bluff views, maintaining water quality, fostering appropriate riverbank development and preserving historic small town character of commercial and residential developments are encouraged.

**Estimated cost:** Supported by the work of local government staff and planning commissions.

10) Website and Online Presence

The development of an easily-navigated and comprehensive website will benefit all the communities and businesses of the Scenic Byway region. Many travelers use smart phones for searching information rather than the more traditional maps and promotional brochures. The mobile site allows visitors to access the most current information.

**Estimated Cost:** The Byway presence already exists in the Historic Bluff Country website. Updating costs associated: \$500-\$1000 per year.

## APPLICATION TO THE NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAYS PROGRAM

Throughout the Corridor Management Planning process, the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Study Committee has discussed nomination of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway to the National Scenic Byways Program administered by FHWA. This Corridor Management

Plan recommends that such nomination be pursued due to the unique regional character of Historic Bluff Country and significance of the Byway's scenic, natural, historic and recreational qualities. Expressed support for nomination to the national program has come from area communities and residents and business owners along the Byway. The designation of Bluff Country Scenic Byway as a National Byway occurred in 2002. Many thanks for the individuals and organizations, as well as the communities along the byway which supported this designation.

## FUNDING SOURCES

The Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Implementation Committee will need to utilize a wide-range of funding sources to implement the recommendations of this Corridor Management Plan. A critical initial step in identifying implementation funds is fostering the support and enthusiasm for investment in the Scenic Byway from area communities and local leadership. Community leadership must understand and desire the long-term value created by a successful Scenic Byway effort, not only to promote tourism, but also to nurture community pride and stewardship of Byway resources.

Public funding for scenic byway development, while available, will be limited and competitive. Well-planned and targeted use of scenic byway funds should be used when possible to leverage funding from other public and private sources. Development of partnerships is critical to successful funding strategies—the most well-received funding proposals will not propose to serve Byway goals, but other community or agency goals as well. Creative use of donated materials and volunteer time can not only further Scenic Byway goals, but build community as well.

The following funding strategies are recommended:

- 1) Apply for designated Scenic Byway funding when available.

The federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) allocated over \$23 million for assistance to designation National Scenic Byways and State scenic byways. Completion of this Corridor Management Plan places the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway in a good competitive position to receive grants for improving overlooks and waysides, constructing interpretive facilities, improving river access points, protecting scenic, historic and natural resources, and developing promotional and interpretive material for the Byway. The State Scenic Byway Office can also apply for funds directed toward larger program development efforts such as technical assistance, public participation and research concerning economic impacts of Byways. Historic Bluff Country should continue work with the MnDOT Scenic Byways Coordinator to identify

opportunities for funding through this and other programs like TAP (Transportation Alternative Program).

- 2) Continue to work with MnDOT to identify implementation opportunities available through their work programming.

Reconstruction of the Highway 52 corridor from Rochester to Preston and the Highway 61 corridor from La Crescent to Harmony may present opportunities to implement Scenic Byway gateways or interpretive facilities. Funding for improvements to waysides or rest areas may be available through other programming areas. Continued communication with the District 6 and Central Offices will facilitate identification of share opportunities for implementing these recommendations.

- 3) Communicate regularly with other state agencies to identify implementation opportunities.

Again, ongoing communications may result in the identification of shared opportunities for Byway development. Agencies to contact include:

- Dept. of Natural Resources (especially for trailhead and canoe access area improvements)
- Minnesota Office of Tourism –Marketing Opportunities program
- Minnesota Historical Society –History/Cultural Grants program
- University of Minnesota –Extension Services & Tourism Center

- 4) Encourage Community Initiatives

Local communities or civic organizations, either individually or cooperatively, are well-equipped to implement portions of this Corridor Management Plan. Volunteer efforts could also reduce the costs of any items with donated labor, equipment and supplies. Implementation efforts should continue to reach out to these groups to solicit their participation and support.

- 5) National, State and Local Foundation Support

A number of foundations include rural development, historic preservation, ecotourism, and sustainable development among the activities supported by their funding criteria. Both the Kellogg and Ford Foundations have supported similar efforts in the past. The Corridor Management Plan should be used as a tool to demonstrate local support and thoughtful planning efforts to solicit foundation support for Byway efforts.

## TIMELINES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A key step in implementing any plan or achieving any goal is identify which tasks need to be done first, which should be planned for in the near future, and which should be worked toward for later phases of the project. This section provides recommendations for initial, near term and future steps for completing this master plan, and suggested organization responsibilities for implementing those steps.

### INITIAL STEPS (NEXT 1-2YEARS)

Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Study Committee responsibilities Projects to be funded by existing \$85,000 in project funds:

1. Design, print and distribute a Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Guide. (\$20,000)  
Coordination required: If MnDOT funds are used, coordination with MnDOT to ensure project is in compliance with program standards.
2. Provide information regarding the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway at I-90 Rest Areas. Restore interpretive information at the Enterprise Rest Area. (Rest Area information: \$0 -\$1000; interpretive panels approx. \$1000)  
Coordination required: MnDOT Safety Rest Area staff.
3. Design and implement a uniform signage system for Historic Bluff Country Information Centers. (2 signs at 8 visitor centers= approx. \$16,000)  
Coordination required: If MnDOT funds are used, coordination with MnDOT to ensure project is in compliance with program standards. While it is anticipated that the roadway signs will simply replace existing visitor information signs along Highways 16 and 52, permits will need to be coordinated with MnDOT.
4. Design Historic Bluff Country Interpretive Kiosks. Determine final locations and cost estimates. Construct as many kiosks as finances will allow. (\$5000 minimal design @ 10 locations = \$50,000)  
Coordination required: If MnDOT funds are used, coordination with MnDOT to ensure project is in compliance with program standards. Kiosk construction will also require permission of owner of property on which kiosk will be located.

If minimal design approaches are used, the current \$85,000 of funding available may be able to cover all of the above items. If more elaborate design treatments are desired, additional funds will be required to implement the above items.

Additional coordination items to be considered for implementation of Next Steps:

5. Work with Mn/DOT to develop an appropriate signage type and cost sharing policy for signage to Historic Bluff Country attractions and visitor facilities from Highway 16.
6. Identify potential partner for development of Spring Valley wayside.

MnDOT responsibilities:

1. Work with Historic Bluff Country and area communities in the planning and design of improvements to Trunk Highway 16/61 and Trunk Highway 52 to identify opportunities for implementing this Corridor Management Plan.
2. Assess ability to program funding for restoration of Preston Overlook and Inspiration Point waysides.

NEXT STEPS (3-5YEARS):

1. Seek funding for and construct Historic Bluff Country Interpretive Kiosks.
2. Identify an individual or organization willing to organize information center staff and hospitality staff training.
3. Install additional directional signage to attractions and resources of the Scenic Byway
4. Install “alternative route” signs to the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway along I-90.
5. Identify specific locations for four Scenic Byway gateways and design gateway elements.
6. Provide technical assistance to Byway resources desiring to increase their “visitor preparedness.”
7. Historic preservation planning and designation of historic districts and sites.
8. Community planning efforts to preserve area character.

Future Projects:

1. Improvements to Root River access points.
2. Construction of Scenic Byway gateways.
3. Development of community walking tours and thematic driving tours

Updated: Historic Bluff Country Annual Meeting 2016  
April 14, 2016

## Chapter Ten – Monitoring and Evaluation

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### INTRODUCTION

Conditions and priorities will likely change in Historic Bluff Country over time and this Corridor Management Plan should be continually reviewed and amended to reflect these changes. This chapter recommends policies and procedures for continued monitoring and evaluation of the Corridor Management Plan.

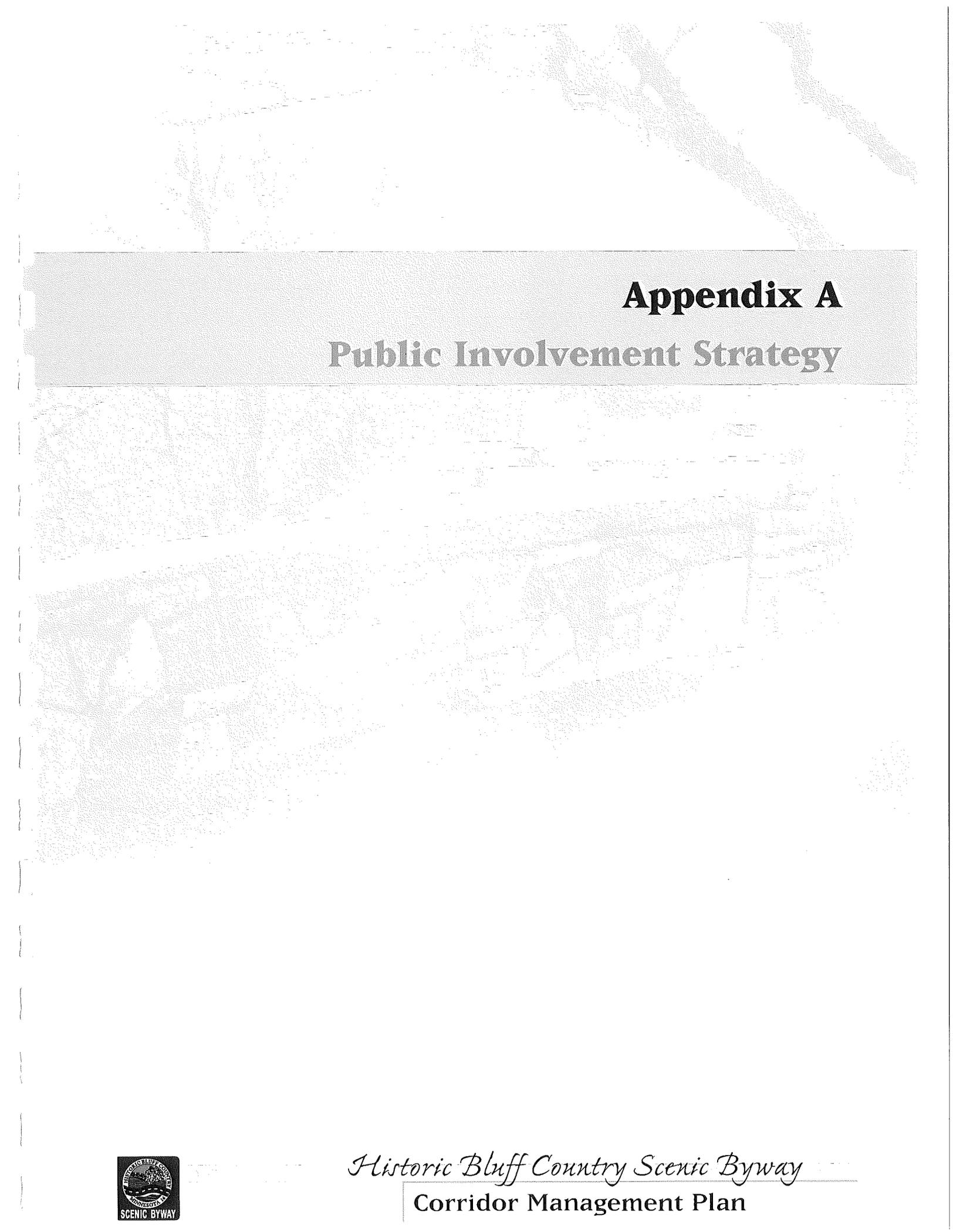
### SCENIC BYWAY IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Implementation Committee should be charged with monitoring changing Byway conditions and making recommendations for amendments to the Corridor Management Plan or additional study if needed. At minimum the recommendations of this Corridor Management Plan should be reviewed on an annual basis and amended as appropriate. This annual review should include the following components:

- **On-going review of priorities and implementation responsibilities:** Implementation priorities and responsibilities should be reviewed and reassigned, if necessary, on an annual basis. This review should also include a strategic assessment of current and potential funding and should assess organizational capacities to follow through and complete assignments.
- **Continuing community participation:** Ongoing community participation will be critical in maintain support for the Scenic Byway goals. A public open house should be held on an annual basis to report (and celebrate!) Byway accomplishments of the previous year and solicit input regarding goals and priorities for the coming year. The Scenic Byway Implementation Committee should also consider offering Scenic Byway information at community events to increase awareness of the Byway and its resources. In addition, the membership of the Scenic Byway Implementation Committee should be re-assessed annually to determine if all key stakeholders and implementation organizations are appropriately represented.
- **Assessment of intrinsic resources:** The Scenic Byway Implementation Committee should sponsor periodic assessment of Scenic Byway resources to identify potential opportunities for further promotion of these resources and to identify threats to resource quality. This assessment should be used to amend implementation strategies and priorities as appropriate.
- **Evaluation of visitors:** A system for collecting data regarding visitor trips should be established including data on reason for visit, length of stay, and source of information regarding the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway. This data should be used to determine the effectiveness of Scenic Byway promotion materials and make adjustments to Byway goals and priorities.

Historic Bluff Country  
(National) Scenic Byway  
Appendices

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# **Appendix A**

## **Public Involvement Strategy**



*Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway*  
**Corridor Management Plan**

**TH16 Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway  
Public Involvement Strategy**

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SRF No. 0014195

**1. Policy Makers**

*Objective: inform about study, seek support*

County Boards: Mower, Fillmore, Houston

Town Boards: Grand Meadow, Clayton, Frankfort, Bennington, Spring Valley, Bloomfield, Fillmore, Forestville, Fountain, Carimona, Carrolton, Preston, Holt, Arendahl, Harmony, Norway, Money Creek, Yucatan, Houston, Sheldon, Mound Prairie, Union, La Crescent, Hokah.

City Councils: La Crescent, Caledonia, Houston, Rushford, Peterson, Lanesboro, Preston, Harmony, Spring Valley, Grand Meadow.

1. Project information packet to be sent to jurisdiction administrator to be shared with Board or Council; cover letter to provide name and phone number of Scenic Byway Study Committee member whom they can call for more information.

*Timeline: July*

2. Individual invitation to project open house mailed to Councils and Boards with summary of project to date.

*Timeline: September*

3. Request to all Councils and Boards to provide a resolution of support for the National Scenic Byway nomination.

*Timeline: October*

**Residents of the Historic Bluff County area**

*Objective: Inform about the study; generate participation in the project open house*

1. Press release submitted to area newspapers and radio stations announcing project including definition of a scenic byway, objectives of study, and approximate timeline for open house.

*Timeline: July*

2. Press release announcing project open house and summarizing project to date.

*Timeline: October*

3. Newspaper ad announcing project open house.

*Timeline: October*

4. Press release announcing nomination for National Scenic Byway designation.

*Timeline: December*

### **Landowners adjacent to the TH16 Byway**

*Objective: Clarify benefits and consequences of Scenic Byway designation; Dispel myths or misperceptions regarding byways; Identify corridor issues and potential concerns regarding byway improvements.*

1. Provide information packet discussing the purposes of the scenic byway designation and the corridor management study. Include return comment card to identify issues/concerns.

*Timeline: August*

2. Individual invitations to public open house. Encourage property owners adjacent to the Byway to complete comment cards at the open house.

*Timeline: October*

### **Visitor-oriented businesses within the Scenic Byway corridor.**

*Objective: Inform about the study; seek support for the National Scenic Byway nomination; Identify corridor resources, issues and potential concerns regarding byway improvements.*

1. Provide individual chambers of commerce or economic development organizations with an information packet regarding the project. Encourage them to discuss project in chamber publications or at chamber meetings. Provide them with the name of a Scenic Byway Study Committee member to contact for further information.

*Timeline: August*

2. Provide project updates in the HBC newsletter.

*Timeline: August, October, December*

3. Provide chambers and economic development organizations with invitations to project open house.

*Timeline: October*

4. Request letter supporting National Scenic Byway nomination from chambers and economic development organizations:

*Timeline: October*

### **Amish community**

*Objective: Inform the Amish community about the development of a corridor management plan; seek input regarding corridor issues.*

1. Provide letter to Amish bishops describing the project; ask for input regarding any corridor issues including those associated with the Amish byway.

*Timeline: July*

**Visitor facility owners/operators**

Mn/DOT District 6, County engineers

Businesses/ Chamber of Commerce

Local Historical Societies

State agencies providing recreational facilities – DNR and MHS

*Objective: As potential implementers of corridor management plan recommendations, seek early input regarding corridor issues, develop “buy-in” to potential solutions, develop support for corridor management plan and National Scenic Byway nomination.*

1. Hold stakeholder meetings with potential implementers to identify issues early in the development of the plan.

*Timeline: August*

2. Invite stakeholders to participate in Scenic Byway Study Committee meetings when appropriate; continue to seek input regarding measures to address issues.

*Timeline: ongoing*

3. Provide individual invitations to project open house.

*Timeline: October*

4. Provide stakeholders with initial draft of corridor management plan and ask for comments.

*Timeline: November*

5. Request letters of support from stakeholder organizations for National Scenic Byway nomination.

*Timeline: November*

6. Develop ongoing mechanism to facilitate implementation of corridor management plan recommendations.

*Timeline: November*

## MEMORANDUM TO FILE

FROM: Beth Bartz  
Senior Associate

DATE: September 25, 2001

RE: SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER MEETING AT HOUSTON; AUGUST 13, 2001

**Purpose:** To obtain input from local governments, area merchants and visitor service providers, and local chambers of commerce and tourism organizations regarding perceptions of visitor experience to the area and how improvements to the TH 16 Scenic Byway could improve that experience.

**Present:** Ron Witt, Tri-County Record  
Larry Bartelson, City of Rushford  
Al Morken, City of Rushford  
Kathy Hartl, HBC  
Mark Anderson, Mn/DOT  
Terry Wolf, Minnesota Meeting Planner  
Marlene Schultz, HBC  
John Prinzler, Houston County News  
Beth Bartz, SRF

Ms. Bartz provided a summary of the Corridor Management Plan process and explained the purpose of this meeting in that process.

Mark Anderson, Mn/DOT Scenic Byways coordinator, explained that TH 16 became a state scenic byway in 1996-1997 and explained that the purpose of the Scenic Byways program is to give more exposure to roadways with scenic qualities.

The following observations and concerns were shared by the group:

### Historic Bluff Country attractions

- TH 16 used to be the main route from Chicago to the Black Hills and Yellowstone. Need to get tourists off I-90 and back down here. TH 16 has been rerouted, but old portion of TH 16 still exists near Houston.
- “Silk Stocking Avenue” in Rushford has a great collection of turn-of-the-century homes.
- Rushford depot another source of community pride. It’s the oldest depot in the area (1867) remaining in its original location.
- Bike trail usage is increasing during the week.

- Lefse Factory, open in the fall, is another potential visitor attraction. They will give tours by arrangement. (Two factories in the area – Blaire and Rushford.)
- Other Rushford attractions include the 1876 stone brewery and the 1876 Old Mill.
- 300 miles of snowmobile trails are available in the area.
- Could TH 16 become Minnesota’s “Wall Drug?”
- Native American history could also be a draw. Rushford has mounds.
- Genealogy is also an attraction.
- Many nice golf facilities in the area – Ferndale (outside of Rushford) is a very nice 9-hole course.
- Rice Pharmacy in Caledonia has a nice collection of old post cards.
- Pederson has a beautifully restored depot and nice B&B rooms.
- “Pie Wars” – pie in Pederson competing with pie in Whalen.

### Visitor information

- Visitors are looking for more area attractions. Hard to make connections to attraction.
- Would like visitors to come back in the off-season, but need places for them to stay and spend money.
- Estimates are that it takes about an hour longer to take TH 16 instead of I-90 from La Crescent to Dexter.
- Sturgis cyclers also use TH 16.
- Growing segment among more mature tourists is the “soft adventure” – canoeing, Eagle Bluff Learning Center.
- A “writer’s” tour, aimed at magazine writers, may develop interest in the area. Maybe one focused on golf courses.
- Fifty percent of tourism tends to come from within state, visits from friends and relatives. Need to market to local community as well. A trip organized to familiarize local people with local attractions may be beneficial as well.
- Motorcoach tours require a 22- to 25-room facility for overnight stays. Prefer double-double rooms. Also like handicap rooms, valet service, light refreshments, and things to walk to.
- Motorcoach tour operators look for a variety of attractions and availability of alternative transportation modes to facilitate options for individuals on the tour. History/nostalgia themes often attractive to motorcoach tourists.

### Physical improvements

- Rushford is as guilty regarding bad signage as anyone, especially to Magelssen Park.
- Signage is a big problem. Would also like to see consistency in signage types and styles.

### Challenges

- Biker’s don’t spend at the same level as snowmobilers.
- Key is finding balance between visitor facilities and preserving small town character.

- Houston has a 6-8 B&B limit; Lanesboro maybe overemphasizes B&Bs.

### Community Support for National Scenic Byway designation

- Rushford is potentially a source of support for the National Scenic Byway nomination. They are interested in obtaining copy of resource spreadsheet, possibly for posting on the web.
- SE Minnesota League of Municipalities is another potential source of support for Scenic Byway nomination.

## MEMORANDUM TO FILE

FROM: Beth Bartz  
Senior Associate

DATE: September 25, 2001

RE: SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER MEETING AT PRESTON; AUGUST 13, 2001

**Purpose:** To obtain input from local governments, area merchants and visitor service providers, and local chambers of commerce and tourism organizations regarding perceptions of visitor experience to the area and how improvements to the TH 16 Scenic Byway could improve that experience.

**Present:** Jan Christopherson, The Historical Society  
Rosalie Kruegel, S.V. Historical Society  
Lois VanderPlas, Maple Springs Campground  
Kathy Hartl, SE ME Historical Bluff Country  
Robert Pederson, City of Chatfield  
Barbara Hoyhtya, City of Lanesboro  
Jill Underwood, Commonwealth Theatre Company  
Verdon Hasleiet, Visitor  
Donald Eickhoff, CITY OF WYKOFF  
Clarence Quanrud, City of Preston  
Mark Anderson, Mn/DOT  
Beth Bartz, SRF

Ms. Bartz provided a summary of the Corridor Management Plan process and explained the purpose of this meeting in that process.

Mark Anderson, Mn/DOT Scenic Byways coordinator, explained that TH 16 become a state scenic byway in 1996-1997 and explained that the purpose of the Scenic Byways program is to give more exposure to roadways with scenic qualities.

The following observations and concerns were shared by the group:

### Historic Bluff Country attractions

- Bike trail is the area's largest draw. "How far are you from the bike trail?" is a common question.
- Forestville, Mystery Cave and downtown Lanesboro are also favorite attractions.
- Amish, caves and camping are big draws to the area.
- Laura Ingalls Wilder sites draw both national and international visitors. Visitors have lots of interest in highway signage.
- Community festivals also draw visitors in. (One Arizona couple attending recent Chatfield festival noted how much they enjoyed the bluffs.) County fair is also a draw.
- Growing informal use of TH 16 area for Classic Car tours.

- Forestville State Park contains 145 species of birds – a draw for those who like to bird watch.
- Chatfield’s concerts in the park on Thursday evening are a popular visitor activity.
- Potential for a farm interpretive activity was raised, although it was also noted that liability insurance is often an issue.
- Agricultural tourism could be a draw for the area. Financial support for barn restoration would help preserve rural character.
- Chatfield is an important gateway community to the area. Poppen Young museum is moving to Chatfield (executive offices have always been there.)
- Wykoff’s museum was recently featured on national TV.
- Quaintness, beautiful old homes and community cleanliness are also a draw – preservation of a way of life.
- “We can best serve our visitors by serving ourselves – building a town we want to live in.”

### Visitor information

- Seventy-five percent of visitors come from the metro area. Austin and Albert Lea are also sources of visitors.
- Mayo Clinic is also a large source of visitors, particularly on afternoons and weekends between appointments. These visitors have special needs – they often don’t have independent transportation. Rochester Express bus line does make some runs to Historic Bluff Country.
- Visitor audience are primarily families and retire people; the relaxed tourist.
- “Word of mouth” is an important source of visitor information. “Word of mouth” is best supported by “hospitality” – need to encourage more smiling, engaging visitors by merchants and service providers.
- Distribution of materials, magazine articles reinforce “word of mouth.”
- “People” bring people back.
- Return business is important, and hospitality is important for encouraging return business.
- Good feedback has been received regarding HBC’s driving tours.
- The internet is mentioned by visitors as one of their primary information sources and should be considered an “entry point.” The Lanesboro web site is a “big help.”
- “Backroads” publication a good resource for visitor information.
- Northfield Theater has been running an audience survey all summer to determine why attendees are coming to the area.
- Visitor centers have staffing challenges. Chatfield uses volunteers to staff the information center, but does pretty well in offering a range of hours. Lanesboro and Harmony have paid staff. Chatfield has at most 8-10 visitors a day stopping at their information center (even though 8,600 cars a day pass on TH 52.) Most know where they want to go in the area before they get there. How might businesses support visitor centers?

## Physical Improvements

- Signage is critical. Signs on I-90 directing visitors to the area would be very helpful. Historic Bluff Country had previously paid for a billboard on I-90 outside of Austin, but was discontinued due to cost. Would an “alternate route” sign be a possibility?
- Scenic Byway map should be extended to I-90 to reinforce connection to this visitor source. (State information centers should also be shown.)
- Many out of state visitors complain about signage. Many back roads are not well marked, although the County roads now are. Township roads rarely have signage.
- Preston signage to Forestville State Park was taken down because the County did not want traffic directed to a gravel road.
- Signage is needed from TH 16 to smaller communities (e.g. Wykoff).
- TH 52 corridor is dangerous – narrow and winding with minimal shoulders. Scheduled to be redone in 2003.
- Small rest areas near Preston and Pederson, canoe launch areas are opportunities for improvements.
- DNR did a nice job with handicap accessibility improvements below dam in Lanesboro. Can signage for accessibility be improved?

## Challenges

- Tourism to the area is very weather dependent. Recreation (biking, hiking, trout fishing, snowmobiling) is a focus of visitor activity. Poor weather conditions dramatically decrease number of visitors. Flooding, and metro area reports overstating the impacts of the flooding, dramatically reduced visitor numbers several years ago.
- Gas prices also affect numbers of visitors.
- Visitors also complain about shops not being open at night. Many merchants do not want to be open at night. Communities agree – would be detrimental to “small town character.” Owners have a hard time finding staff for stores. Often owners are the only ones to tend the store and therefore can only offer limited hours. Often cannot find staff during the non-summer seasons to keep shops open at night or seven days a week. On off-season Mondays, restaurants are often not open.
- “For Sale” signs on “Main Street” also put visitors off.
- Interchange at TH 52 and I-90 is confusing and dangerous.
- Farmers don’t want people driving through farms.
- Visitor improvements must be paid for by the City; the burden is born by property owners as the area has minimal industrial tax base.
- Weekend or second-home buyers from the metro area are driving home and land prices up.
- Counties are trying to address development issues by trying to prohibit development on the bluffs. Townships are getting very protective.

### Community Support for National Scenic Byway designation

- Representatives from Preston, Chatfield and Lanesboro expected support from their communities.
- Merchant support was not well represented by the group.

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Beth Bartz  
Senior Associate

FROM: Jen Schulz  
Environmental Planner

DATE: September 13, 2001

SUBJECT: TH 16 SCENIC BYWAY, PUBLIC STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

Generally, visitors and public-land managers would like to see more signs posted on TH 16 – some specifically stated that mileage on signs would be helpful. Due to the Mn/DOT sign policy, some lands are not allowed to have signs where they feel would be most helpful. (e.g. Beaver Creek State Park does not have any signs directing visitors off TH 16 to the park.) Also, it was repeated that Mn/DOT now charges the DNR and other agencies for installing the signs on the highway – some do not have budgets for this.

Few stakeholders identified road conditions or facilities as a problem, with the exception of the Forestville State Park manager, who stated that CSAH 5 leading into the park does not meet current standards. Public land managers felt that facilities were mostly adequate for serving current visitors and accommodating resources for maintenance. One comment was made concerning the need for more pull-offs and scenic overlooks. It was noted that the USFWS is installing viewing platforms and pull-offs along Hwy 26 for the Mississippi Valley; similar facilities would enhance both the scenic opportunities and safety of TH 16.

Most did not feel that further promotion of the Byway would result in a significant increase in visitor rates. Some said that designation would probably minimally increase visitor numbers, but parks, trails, rivers and streams are destinations significant enough for attracting visitors themselves. However, the overall feeling was that promotion and interpretive development of the Byway would only compliment use of public lands.

Feelings were split in regard to negative concerns or impacts. Some noted a concern for potential over-development with further promotion attracting more people to the area and more economic opportunities for businesses. “We don’t want to see another Wisconsin Dells here.” Over-development could threaten the sensitive landscape (karst terrain), groundwater quality, and resource protection. Others didn’t think that promotion would cause enough growth in visitor rates to cause significant negative impacts.

All stakeholders felt that any promotion, development, or further program enhancement along the Byway may be met with some opposition or difficulty due to so much of the region’s land being privately owned.

# Appendix C

## Open House Summary Materials

### Open House Schedule

#### October 23, 2001

La Crescent/Hokah 7:00-9:00 p.m., La Crescent Community Center

#### October 25, 2001

Rushford 5:00-7:00 p.m., Tenburg Center

#### October 30, 2001

Spring Valley/Grand Meadow 6:00-8:00 p.m., Spring Valley Library

#### November 6, 2001

Preston 6:00-8:00 p.m., Jailhouse Inn

#### November 8, 2001

Lanesboro 4:30-6:30 p.m., Lanesboro Community Center

Houston 5:00-7:00 p.m., Houston Community Center



# **Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway**

## **—BYWAY THEME AND RESOURCES—**

### **"Home Town Fun in the Bluffs"**

(working title)

#### **—THE LAY OF THE LAND—**

The unique and dramatic land formations of the Root River Valley were formed over millions of years of geological activity. The resulting landscape is a region full of deep river valleys, sinkholes, caves and steep limestone bluffs.

The layers of sandstone, shale, dolomite and limestone formed the region's bedrock some 2 to 545 million years ago. The natural erosion of the river bluffs and the man-made cuts to construct the highway make the geological history visible to today's traveler. While a large glacier covered most of Minnesota 25,000 to 12,000 years ago (during the Late Wisconsinan period), southeast Minnesota remained untouched. As a result, the geology, topography and scenery of this area are very different from the rest of Minnesota. While northern Minnesota has vast plains and many lakes, this area is called the "driftless area," an area where the melting glacier washed away the till deposited by the previous glaciers and formed gigantic drainage systems, like the Mississippi and Root rivers. The rushing waters cut wide river valleys from the underlying rock. As the temperatures rose and plant life began to form, the erosion slowed. The sediments that were left behind filled in the vast valleys, and resulted in the terraces and steep banks found today.

A few oddities remain in the valley as a result of relatively recent geological activity (within the past 10,000 years). Freestanding rock columns that can be found scattered through the river valley are made of resistant calcareous bedrock that remained when the surrounding rock eroded away. Giant sinkholes and caverns, formed in calcareous bedrock by acidic groundwater, known as "karst terrain," are particularly numerous in the Fountain area. Because the driftless area has relatively little overlying till and topsoil, the underlying bedrock is close to the surface and the karst terrain is exposed, offering the opportunity for frequent glimpses into these intriguing geological formations.

#### **—MAKING A HOME, MAKING A LIFE—**

For a millennia, people have been drawn to the fertile land, rushing rivers, and towering bluffs of the Root River Valley and the surrounding region, a community now connected by Trunk Highway (TH) 16 from Dexter to La Crescent, Minnesota. Ancient villages, hunting sites, stone quarries, lookouts, earthworks, burial mound groups, and effigy mounds are evidence of the Native Americans who occupied the area for over 10,000 years. The distinctive topography of the Root River Valley provided resources and shelter for the native people of what is now southeastern Minnesota. Known to the Dakota as HUTA WAKPA (Root River) and to the Winnebago as CAHHEOMONAH (Crow River), the importance of this waterway is reflected in the large number of Native American cultural sites located within the river's watershed. TH 16 passes by many of these locations as it winds through this region, and therefore, the scenic byway provides the opportunity to tell the story of this area's rich cultural heritage.

## -LIVING OFF THE LAND-

The same features that attracted those early Americans – abundant wildlife, vast prairies, and scenic vistas – also attracted European settlers and continue to bring tourists and travelers to the area today. Following the European settlement of the region in the mid-1800s, the valley has been a home to many new people who industriously created houses, barns, businesses, railroads and highways so they could live, and make a living. Although the scenic byway corridor is dotted with many small towns, each is unique and may owe its birth and life, and occasionally demise, to a variety of reasons.

The communities that grew up in the valleys and plains were small, by design, primarily serving as agricultural outposts where farmers could bring their crops to be processed, purchased or transported, and where supplies and implements could be obtained. The Root River Valley and the surrounding areas provide a setting to observe a diverse range of crops, and also to learn about the changing agricultural practices and patterns over time. The broad prairies, after which the town of Grand Meadow was named, had been a fertile hunting ground for Native Americans for centuries, and later European fur traders and hunters. In the 1850s, the first white settlers began plowing up the soil to grow wheat, a crop that helped turn Minneapolis into the "Flour City." After a devastating crop failure in 1878, Minnesota farmers found it was best not to rely on a sole crop for their livelihood. Farmers later began to diversify their sources of income by growing a variety of crops and raising dairy cows and hogs, as well.

On the east end of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway, another type of crop was developed – apples. Although several attempts had been made to grow apples in Minnesota's cold climate, in the 1850s and 1860s, John S. Harris of La Crescent experimented and developed varieties of apples that were hardy enough to be grown in Minnesota. Known as the "Godfather of the Minnesota State Horticultural Society," Harris has a memorial marker located in the John S. Harris Memorial Park on North Elm Street in La Crescent.

Farms are not the only places where agricultural activities took place. Small, rural towns played an important role in farming commerce. Merchants in the town would sell the necessary supplies, farm implements and other items to the farmers. The farmers would take their grain and their crops to town to be temporarily stored in the local grain elevator or to be shipped to larger markets. Many of the towns in the Root River Valley were small, but prosperous. Spring Valley is a good example of this type of town, which had an economy based on the farm trade. Its prosperity is reflected in the grand architecture of its homes and public buildings.

A newer community of farmers has now settled in the area, but use old farming methods. The Amish community began to move to Harmony and Canton townships of Fillmore County in the 1970s from Wayne County, Ohio. The affordable, small farms of southern Minnesota, with plenty of wooded timber areas for fuel and building, and springs for water and cooling milk, were ideally suited to re-establish their community. Their traditional farming practices, using horses instead of tractors, offer a glimpse into how the earliest settlers to this area may have used the land.

## -GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS-

Evidence of small, historical industries can be seen all along the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway, illustrating the area's successful and not-so-successful efforts in developing a variety of businesses. The earliest industries focused on processing materials and supplying them to the local settlers who were working hard to establish their farms. These industries included grist mills and saw mills. Some of these early efforts formed into successful flour mills and furniture factories. Even breweries, such as the one in Preston, built in 1859, were among the first industrial buildings constructed in the area. The Rushford Wagon and Carriage Company built sturdy and functional farm wagons used throughout Minnesota and the Upper Midwest. Although automobile and farm implements began replacing wagons in the early-twentieth century, the Rushford Wagon Company did not cease production until 1939.

The stone dam in Lanesboro is a "virtually unaltered" relic of the small town's industrial past. The dam provided water power for Lanesboro's three flour mills. The mills burned down by the mid-1890s, but the village built a hydro-electric generating plant on the site of one of the mills shortly thereafter. The construction of the dam and the power it supplied, along with the introduction of the railroad, helped to spur the development of Lanesboro's commercial core from the 1870s through the 1890s. Many of the buildings from this period are present today.

The Historic Bluff Country isn't only a place of trains and automobiles. Bernard Pietenpol, known as "the father of the homebuilt aircraft movement in the United States," began designing and building small, lightweight airplanes from his workshop and garage in the small village of Cherry Grove from the 1920s until 1975. The early planes used Ford Model A and Model T engines. Pietenpol received some notoriety when he flew his automobile engine plane from Cherry Grove to Minneapolis. His garage and workshop are still in Cherry Grove, and one of his planes can be viewed in a hangar at the Fillmore County Historical Society in Fountain.

## -THE RAILROAD COMES TO TOWN-

With the dawning of new, modern railroad transportation, farmers and businesses were suddenly provided with a more efficient means of shipping out raw materials and receiving supplies in and out of the major population centers, like Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Chicago.

When the railroads were constructed through this part of the state in the 1870s, the railroad companies found they could wield much power, since their placement could make or break a town. Once a railroad came to a town and had a scheduled stop, it meant the town had a chance for survival, even prosperity. Spring Valley was one such town that benefited tremendously from the arrival of the railroad, making possible many of the stately mansions and public buildings of the late-nineteenth century that are still standing today.

Wykoff, a town that was platted by the Southern Minnesota Railroad Company in 1871, exists solely because of the presence of the railroad, much to the detriment of the Village of Fillmore, about five miles north. Fillmore, settled nearly 20 years earlier, had originally been the area's main commercial center, but its access to the old stage road could not compete with Wykoff's access to the railroad. Many businesses shifted their operation to the new railroad town from Fillmore.

For some towns, if a railroad by-passed it, it meant the death knell. Forestville and Carimona are both good examples of towns that struggled to make it after the railroad chose not to pass through.

## -SMALL TOWNS, HOME TOWNS-

Within the natural scenic beauty of the Root River Valley lies the evidence of human habitation and enjoyment of this extraordinary area. Homes made by the first Americans line the route of the scenic byway and are illustrated by the broad array of archaeological sites. The simple architecture of the residential, agricultural and industrial buildings symbolize the area's early beginnings, as settlers struggled to survive as they made a life on the rugged frontier. The elegant and rich architectural monuments, paralleled only by the valley's natural beauty, are a testament to those residents' pride of their accomplishments and their ability to prosper and thrive.

The many communities set within the dramatic scenery of the Root River and the broad plains to the west offer visitors opportunities to live and to understand Minnesota's small-town life, as it existed in the past, and lives today. Travelers who choose this alternative route, thankfully bypassed by extensive modern development when the federal interstate highway system was constructed, will find an alternative lifestyle. Instead of driving the massive Interstate 90 highway to the north, where dining, shopping and scenic opportunities resemble those on any stretch of America's interstate highways, drivers on the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway have the opportunity to stop at a local café for fresh donuts and coffee, purchase handcrafted goods made by local artisans, spend the night in a historic home, paddle a canoe through a valley of dramatic bluffs, imagine the roar of bison treading on the western plains, fish for prized trout, and participate in events, like the Apple Festival and county fairs, along side local residents. Unlike the big cities, where so many visitors come from, the towns in this region consider it a "traffic jam" when five cars are waiting at the town's single traffic light. But in towns where the sidewalks roll up at sundown, visitors can easily find other forms of entertainment, whether it is a community theater production, a concert at the park gazebo, a seasonal festival, or simply sitting on the front porch and saying "hello" to neighbors as they take an evening stroll. The drive along the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway offers many opportunities to learn, understand and experience the beauties and wonders of life in small town Minnesota in a drive back through time.

## -RESOURCES-

The study has identified over 200 natural and cultural resources of note within Historic Bluff Country. The following resources have been determined to be the resources most supportive of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway. Resources were chosen for their accessibility by the public as well as their value in telling the Scenic Byway story.

### **NATURAL**

Root River  
Niagara Cave, Harmony  
Mystery Cave, Forestville Township  
Mt. Tom, Hokah  
Sinkholes, Fountain area  
Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forest  
Mound Prairie State Natural Area, Mound Prairie  
Township

### **SCENIC**

Como Falls, Hokah  
Grand Meadow Wayside, Grand Meadow  
Preston Wayside, Preston  
Inspiration Point, Lanesboro  
Magelssen Park, Rushford  
Yucatan Valley, Houston County  
Bluff and valley views, central and eastern  
corridor  
Root River views, central and eastern corridor  
Farmland and small town landscape, western  
corridor  
Rock columns and formations, Carrolton  
Township  
Apple Blossom Scenic Byway, La Crescent

### **RECREATIONAL**

Root River State Trail  
Harmony-Preston Valley State Trail  
Root River Canoe Accesses  
Forestville/ Mystery Cave State Park  
Beaver Creek State Park  
Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center,  
Lanesboro  
Houston Nature Center, Houston  
Trout Streams  
DNR Fish Hatchery

### **HISTORIC**

Schech's Mill, Caledonia Township  
Exchange State Bank, Grand Meadow  
Lanesboro Historic District, Lanesboro  
Lanesboro Stone Dam, Lanesboro  
Chicago Milwaukee & St. Paul Bridge, Lanesboro  
1877 Peterson Station Museum, Peterson  
Forestville Town site, Forestville State Park  
Allis Barn (Reliance Stock Farm), Carrolton  
Township  
Milwaukee Elevator Company Grain Elevator,  
Preston  
Spring Valley Carnegie Library, Spring Valley  
Wykoff Commercial Historic District, Wykoff  
Parson's Block and Hall, Spring Valley  
Washburn-Zittleman House, Spring Valley  
Southern Minnesota Depot (Restored Railroad  
Depot), Rushford

### **CULTURAL**

1877 Peterson Station Museum, Peterson  
Houston County Historical Society Museum  
Complex, Caledonia  
Amish Community/Amish Tours, Harmony,  
Lanesboro  
Historic Preservation Museum, Lanesboro  
Laura Ingalls Wilder Museum (Spring Valley  
Methodist Episcopal Church), Spring Valley  
Fillmore Country History Center and Genealogy  
Library, Fountain  
Southern Minnesota Depot (Restored Railroad  
Depot), Rushford

### **ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

Grand Meadow Quarry Site, Grand Meadow  
Township  
Yucatan Fort, Yucatan Township

# **Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway**

## **—NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY DESIGNATION—**

### *What is a National Scenic Byway?*

To be designated as a National Scenic Byway, a road must possess at least one of six intrinsic qualities (archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational and scenic). The significance of the features contributing to the distinctive characteristics of the corridor's intrinsic qualities must be recognized throughout the multi-state region. Travelers and visitors are intrigued by the story that these qualities tell about the byway. People leave with an appreciation for the byway and the area they visited.

### *What is the National Scenic Byways Program?*

The National Scenic Byways (NSB) Program was established under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, and reauthorized in 1998 under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Under the program, the U.S. Secretary of Transportation recognizes certain roads as National Scenic Byways or All-American Roads based on their intrinsic qualities. There are 72 such designed byways in 32 states. The Federal Highway Administration promotes the collection as America's Byways and provides resources to help manage the intrinsic qualities within the broader byway corridor.

### *Who Nominates?*

Anyone may nominate a road for possible designation by the Secretary, but the nomination must be submitted through a state's official scenic byway agency and include a corridor management plan designed to preserve and enhance the unique qualities of the byway.

The byways are typically supported through a network of individuals who volunteer their time and effort. It is a bottom-up, grassroots oriented program. Local communities create the vision for their byway, identify the resources comprising the intrinsic qualities, and form the theme or story that stirs the interests and imagination of visitors about the byway and its resources. Local citizens and communities decide how best to balance goals, strategies, and actions for promoting the byway and preserving its intrinsic qualities. The vision, goals, strategies and actions for the byway are laid out in the corridor management plan required for the byway.

### *Benefits of National Scenic Byway Designation*

- Promotion of the corridor through the America's Byways materials
- Access to funding for marketing of the Byway
- Access to funding for physical improvements to the Byway
- Services and technical assistance through the National Scenic Byways Resource Center
- Increased local pride and awareness

# Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway

## —PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET—

The Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway extends 88 miles along Minnesota Trunk Highway (TH) 16 from Dexter to La Crescent. The Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) designated the corridor a State Scenic Byway in 1995 to encourage state travelers to enjoy the scenic beauty, recreational facilities, and cultural attractions along the route.

Currently, Mn/DOT and the Southeastern Minnesota Historic Bluff Country, Inc. have teamed up to complete a Corridor Management Plan for the existing State Scenic Byway. The overall project is guided by a Study Committee formed by various members of Historic Bluff Country, Inc. and Mn/DOT. The consultant team is led by SRF Consulting Group, Inc. and assisted by The 106 Group, Ltd., a cultural resources firm, and Shive-Hattery, Inc. of Des Moines, experts in byway marketing. Information from the Corridor Management Plan will be used by Historic Bluff Country, Inc. to nominate the corridor to the National Scenic Byways program in January, 2002.

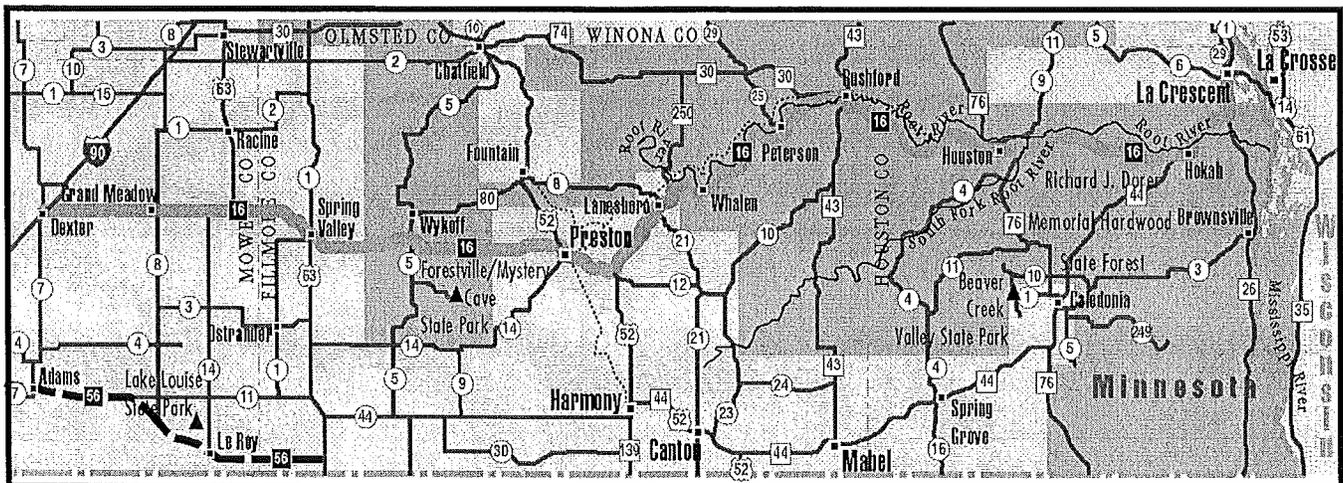
The purpose of the project is to:

- Enhance interest in the scenic byway among communities along the highway
- Identify, prioritize, and encourage additional investment in byway features
- Improve interpretation and marketing along the byway
- Improve safety along the route for the mix of byway users
- Encourage traffic from I-90 to explore the route along the byway
- Produce a corridor management plan for the byway that would support efforts in pursuing national scenic byway designation

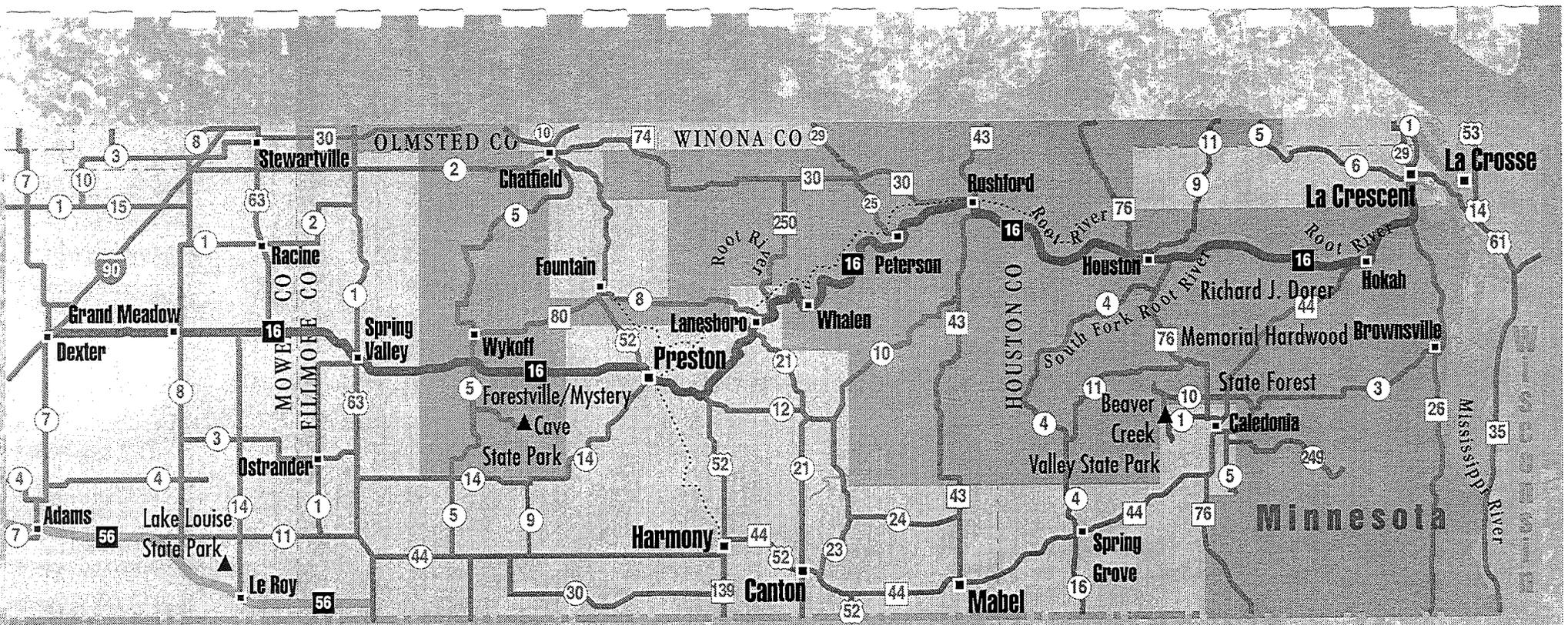
Community Support is a critical component for acceptance in the National Scenic Byways program. Communities within the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway corridor have been asked to show their support through resolutions and financial contributions.

Letters of support from other organizations and individuals are welcomed and encouraged. Letters should be sent to:

Kathy Hartl, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
Historic Bluff Country, Inc.  
P.O. Box 609  
Harmony, MN 55939



Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Corridor



**Key** Total mileage: 43 miles

- Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway
- Shooting Star Scenic Byway
- Other Roads
- Waterways
- State Park
- Hardwood Forest
- County Line
- State Line
- State Trail
- Minnesota Trunk Highway
- U.S. Highway
- County Road

**MILES**

**Historic Bluff Country**  
*Scenic Byway*

**Corridor Map**



**T**he Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway extends 88 miles along Minnesota Trunk Highway (TH) 16 from Dexter to La Crescent. The Minnesota Department of Transportation designated the corridor a state scenic byway in 1995 to encourage state travelers to enjoy the scenic beauty, recreational facilities, and attractions along the Byway. The western third of the route showcases Minnesota's rich and rolling farmland. The eastern two-thirds of the route winds toward the Mississippi River along the scenic Root River, a beautiful trout stream and canoe route, through spectacular hardwood-covered limestone bluffs. This valley was untouched by the glacier and has weathered gradually over time to create a magnificent pastoral setting dotted with small towns.



Root River



Farmland



Downtown Main Street, Chatfield

**Historic Bluff Country**  
*Scenic Byway*

***The Existing Scenic Byway***



## **Purpose of This Study**

*This study will result in the development of a Corridor Management Plan, a pre-requisite for nomination of the corridor to the National Scenic Byways Program.*

## **What is a Corridor Management Plan?**

*A Corridor Management Plan identifies the resources in the area most supportive of the Byway "story" and most attractive to visitors and recommends opportunities for interpreting and marketing those resources and the Byway to the public. The Plan also examines public facilities such as roadways, waysides, and signage along the corridor and makes recommendations for improvements.*

## **Benefits of National Scenic Byway Designation?**

- *Promotion of the corridor through the America's Byways materials*
- *Access to funding for marketing of the Byway*
- *Access to funding for physical improvements to the Byway*
- *Services and technical assistance through the National Scenic Byways Resource Center*
- *Increased local pride and awareness*

## **What is a National Scenic Byway Destination?**

*The National Scenic Byways Program was established under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) administers the program and currently lists 72 designed byways in 32 states. FHWA promotes the collection as America's Byways and provides resources to help manage the intrinsic qualities within the broader byway corridor.*

## **Nominations to the National Scenic Byway Program must include the following :**

- *Evidence that the corridor has archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational or scenic significance*
- *A Corridor Management Plan*
- *Evidence of broad local support for the Byway*



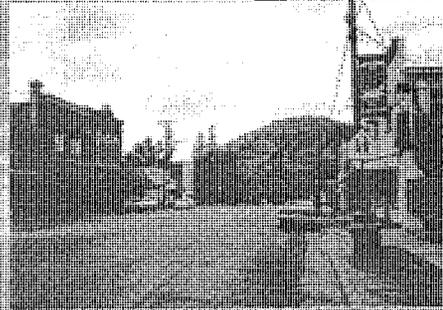
## Byway Theme & Supporting Resources

### "Home Town Fun Among the Bluffs"

(working title)

The many communities set within the dramatic scenery of the Root River and the broad plains to the west offer visitors opportunities to live and to understand Minnesota's small-town life, as it existed in the past, and lives today... In towns where the sidewalks roll up at sundown, visitors can easily find other forms of entertainment, whether it is a community theater production, a concert at the park gazebo, a seasonal festival, or simply sitting on the front porch and saying "hello" to neighbors as they take an evening stroll. The drive along the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway offers many opportunities to learn, understand and experience the beauties and wonders of life in small town Minnesota in a drive back through time.

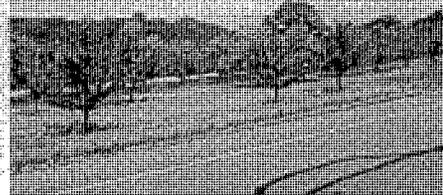
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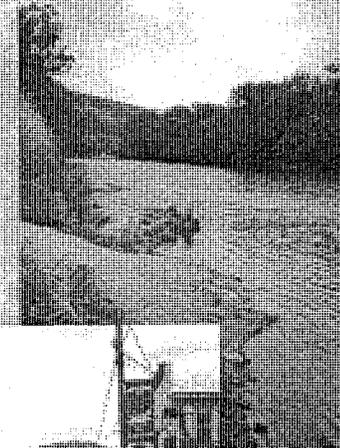
Mt. Tom, Hokah



Bluff Views



Apple Blossom Scenic Byway, La Crescent



Root River

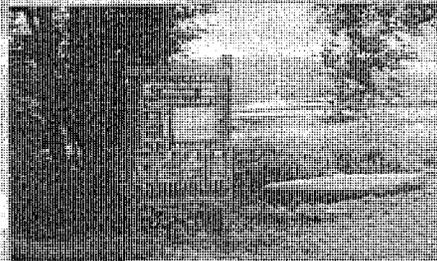
## Natural

### Root River

- Mague Cave, Hartman
- Mystery Cave, Appleton Township
- Mt. Tom, Hokah
- Siskiyew, Fountain area
- Stanley J. Dorer, Maitland's Heronwood Forest
- Mount Prairie State Natural Area, Mount Prairie Township

## Scenic

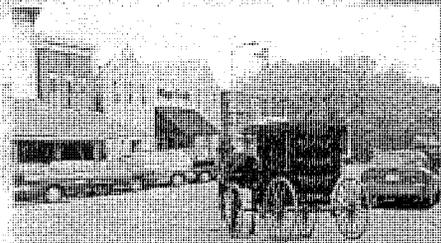
- Como Lake, Forest
- Grand Meadow, Harrison, Grand Meadow
- Greenway, Preston
- Ingraham Point, Lanesboro
- Magdalen Park, Rushford
- Marston Valley, Houston County
- Bluff and Valley views, central and eastern corridor
- Root River views, central and eastern corridor
- Farmland and small town landscapes, western corridor
- Rock Columns and "Paper Rock", Carleton Township
- Apple Blossom Scenic Byway, La Crescent



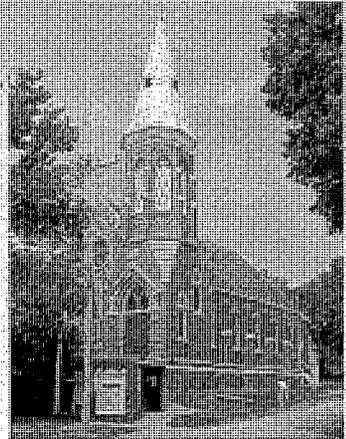
Dance Access, Peterson



Root River State Trail Trailhead, Lanesboro



Amish Buggy, Lanesboro



Laura Ingalls Wilder Museum, Spring Valley

### Recreational

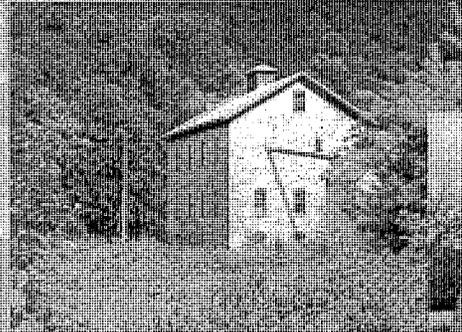
- Root River State Trail
- Lanesboro-Peterson State Park
- Root River State Access
- Forestville Mystery Cave State Park
- Center Creek State Park
- Root River Environmental Learning Center, Lanesboro
- Houston Festivity Center, Lanesboro
- Great Streams
- DNR Fish Hatchery, Lanesboro

### Cultural

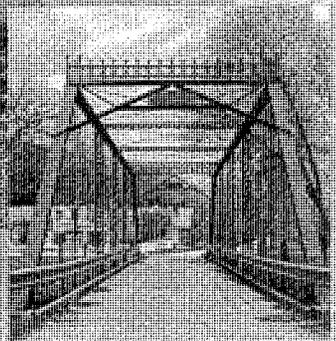
- Bluff Country History Center and Genealogy Library, Houston
- Houston County Historical Society Museum Complex, Caledonia
- Amish Community/Amish Tours, Houston, Lanesboro
- Historic Preservation Museum, Lanesboro
- Laura Ingalls Wilder Museum (Spring Valley Methodist Episcopal Church), Spring Valley
- 1877 Peterson Station Museum



Wykoff Commercial Historic District, Wykoff



Schuch's Mill, Caledonia Township



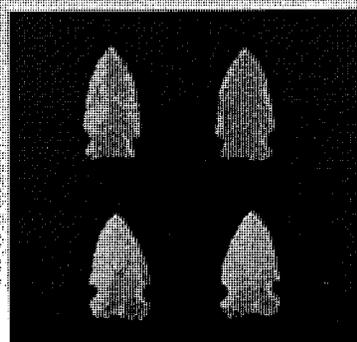
Forestville Township, Forestville/  
Mystery Cave State Park

### Historic

- Schuch's Mill, Caledonia Township
- Exchange State Bank, Grand Meadow
- Lanesboro Historic District, Lanesboro
- Lanesboro Stone Dam, Lanesboro
- Chicago Millwright & St. Paul Bridge, Lanesboro
- Caledonia Township, Forestville Stone Park
- Alta Farm (Mystery Cave Farm), Cornelia Township
- Michigan Elevator Company Grain Elevator, Preston
- Southern Wisconsin Depot
- Restored Railroad Depot, Houston
- Spring Valley George Library, Spring Valley
- Wykoff Commercial Historic District, Wykoff
- Parson's Book and Mail, Spring Valley
- Blackburn-Zimmerman House, Spring Valley
- Commerce State Street, Caledonia

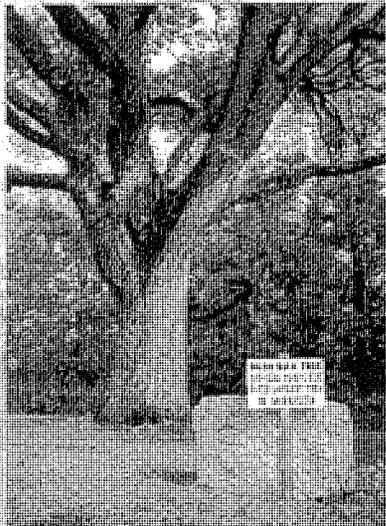
### Archaeological

- Grand Meadow Quarry Site, Grand Meadow Township
- Yucatan Fort, Yucatan Township



Native American Artifacts Made of Chert





Magnolia Park, Houston

## Interpretive Plan

### Goals

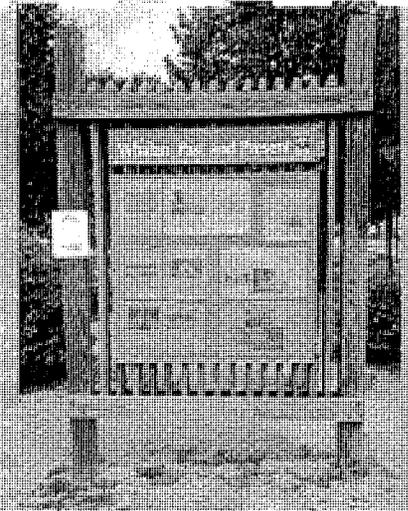
- Provide meaning to the various sites and features along the byway
- Encourage visitors to stay longer or plan a return visit
- Make the Byway a compelling detour to travelers on I-90
- Preserve the way of life of residents and the small town character
- Direct the visitors to areas that are prepared for, and desire, increased tourism
- Increase tourism throughout the year through interpretive techniques
- Spread the interpretive opportunities to all parts of the Byway
- Identify opportunities for public involvement and partnerships

### Strategies

- Collaborate with nearby scenic byways - Shooting Star Wildflower Route, Apple Blossom Drive, Great River Road, and Laura Ingalls Wilder Historic Highway
- Form strategic partnerships that are mutually beneficial
- Develop a consistent thematic and marketing message along the Byway
- Connect interpretive sites with other sites to lead visitors from one site to others
- Emphasize the visitor's experience on the Byway, rather than just the place
- Strategically place interpretation in locations where increased tourism is desired and can be accommodated
- Recommend techniques to preserve the small town, historical character in the face of increased tourism



Wayside and Overlook on TH 26



Vinton Trail Access



Enterprise Rest Area, I-90



## Roadway Amenities and Signage

The key component of any scenic byway is, of course, the road itself. Assessment of the roadway facility, including safety concerns, is a component of the Corridor Management Plan. Roadway amenities such as rest areas and waysides can provide rest room and picnic facilities for travelers as well as opportunities to enjoy scenic view or interpretation of Byway resources.

### Minnesota Highway 16

Current plans include bridge replacement and intersection improvements in La Crescent and possible expansion of the roadway to Hokah. The remainder of the corridor is designated as a "preservation" route, meaning only maintenance activities are planned.

Waysides along Highway 16 include Pine Lawn Park in Grand Meadow, the Preston Overlook, a second wayside just west of Preston, Inspiration Point in Lanesboro and the Peterson Wayside. Mn/DOT closed an additional wayside, the Cushion Park Overlook, several years ago. Mn/DOT funding is available for an additional wayside in Spring Valley, but a local partner is desired to support maintenance activities.



Wayside in Preston

### Other Rest Areas/ Waysides

Rest Areas along I-90 are opportunities to provide visitor information for Historic Bluff Country. Additional state and local waysides throughout the area can provide opportunities for visitor information and interpretation.

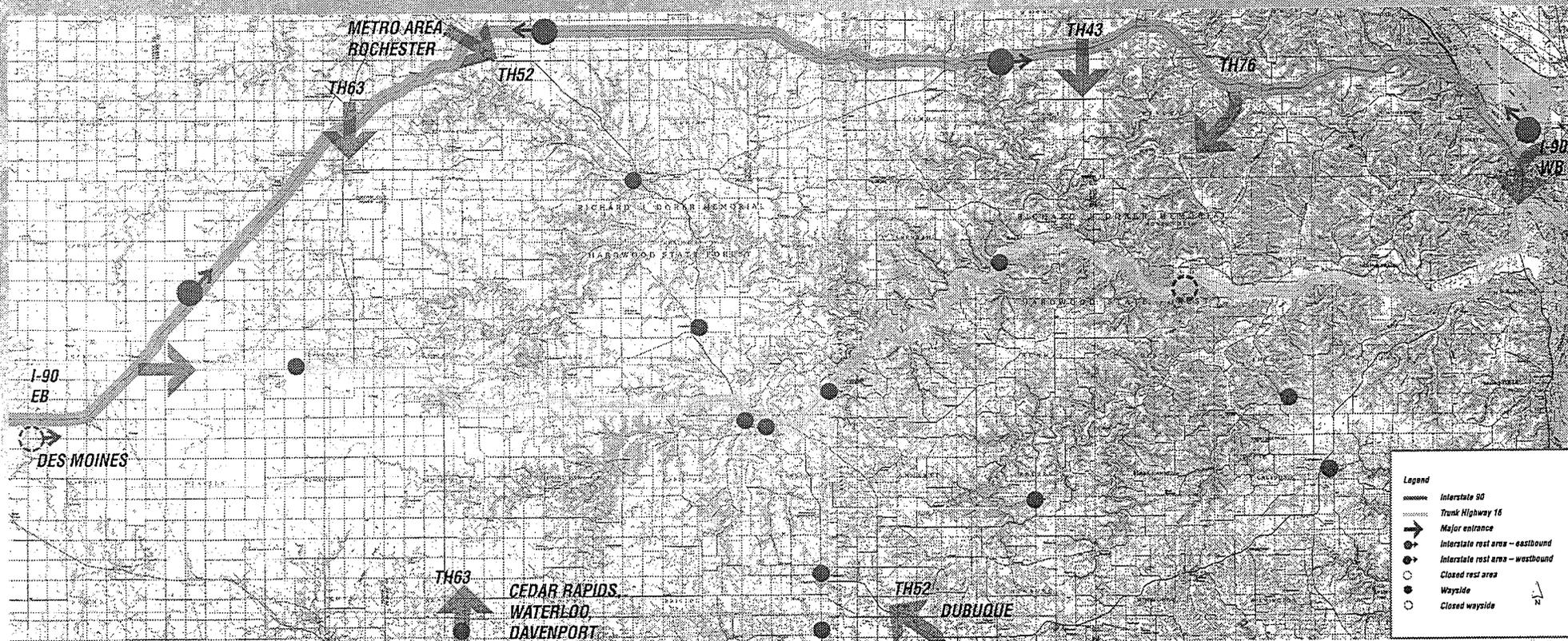
### Gateways

Gateways into Historic Bluff Country are important when planning for locations for visitor information, signage and additional roadway improvements.

Key Minnesota gateways include the Dexter exit from I-90, Highway 52 from Rochester and the Twin Cities, and the La Crescent exit from I-90. Iowa visitors may also enter from Highway 52 and Highway 63. Other I-90 exits between Dexter and La Crescent provide additional opportunities for entry into Historic Bluff Country.



Inspiration Point, Lanesboro



## Marketing a Scenic Byway

Marketing of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway provides a collaborative opportunity for communities and businesses across the Byway to provide potential visitors information about a complete Bluff Country experience, rather than just a single destination. A marketing component will be included in the Corridor Management Plan.

Assessment of the corridor indicates the following types of visitors are most likely to be attracted to the Byway:

- History Buffs
- Outdoor Enthusiasts
- Shoppers
- Classic Relaxers
- Variety Seekers

Information about the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway should be directed to:

- Local residents
- People visiting friends and relatives
- Schools and organizations
- State residents
- Out-of-state visitors
- Byway enthusiasts

Effective communications methods include:

- Positive and proactive word of mouth
- Web site enhancements
- Local public relations programs
- Targeted promotions
- Gateway access points including I-35 and I-90 Rest Areas
- Designated information outlets
- Wayfinding signage
- On-site information and interpretation

Marketing Objectives:

1. Connect Users and Customers with Historic Bluff Country Resources, Experiences, and Benefits
2. Provide Overall Positive Economic Return
3. Provide Effective Communication Media
4. Protect and Enhance the Byway's Resources



Hennepin County Road 5



Southern Minnesota Depot, Rushford

## What's next?

### Schedule

- December, 2001: Draft of Corridor Management Plan completed
- January, 2002: Nomination for National Scenic Byways designation submitted
- February 2002: Corridor Management Plan finalized

### Community Support

Community Support is a critical component for acceptance in the National Scenic Byways program. Communities within the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway corridor have been asked to show their support through resolutions and financial contributions.

Letters of support from other organizations and individuals are welcomed and encouraged.

Letters should be sent to:

Kathy Hart, PhD  
Executive Director  
Historic Bluff Country, Inc.  
P.O. Box 609  
Harmony, MN 55939

### Implementation

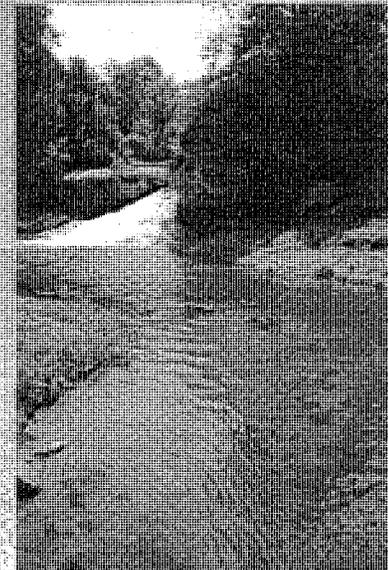
An additional \$85,000 in grant funding from the Minnesota Department of Transportation is available to implement the recommendations of the Corridor Management Plan.

Possible improvements include:

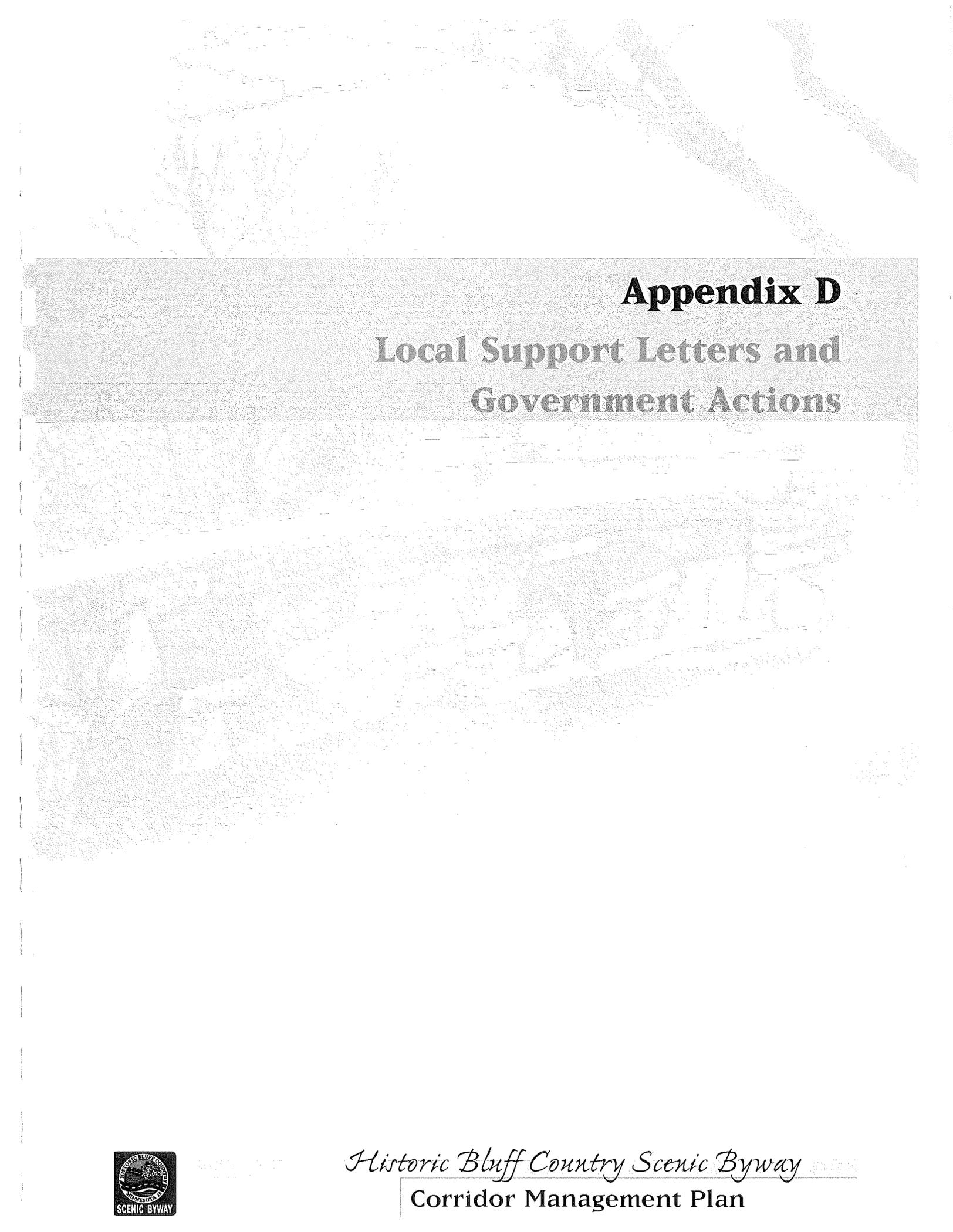
- Signage at Byway entry points
- Additional directional signage within the corridor
- Wayside improvements
- Marketing displays and materials at I-90 Rest Areas and local information centers
- Interpretive displays and materials
- Other ideas?



Houston County Road 243



Comp Falls, Hokah



**Appendix D**  
**Local Support Letters and**  
**Government Actions**



***Resolutions and Letters of Support***

*Regarding*

*TH 16 National Scenic Byway Nomination*

*from*

***Regional Constituents***



Minnesota Department of Transportation

---

MEMO

District 6 - Operations  
2900 48<sup>th</sup> Street N.W.  
Rochester, MN 55901-5848

Office Tele: 507/285-7374  
Fax: 507/281-7780

January 16, 2002

To: Mark Anderson  
Scenic Byway Program Coordinator

From: Mark Krebsbach   
Acting District Engineer

Subject: TH 16 Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan

The Minnesota Department of Transportation District 6 has reviewed the TH 16 Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan. We find this document represents a significant effort by the Historic Bluff Country to define the merits of designating Highway 16 as a National Scenic Byway. Given appropriate local concurrence, this planning document meets with the approval and support of the District office.

The District appreciates the support that has been given to this process from community leaders, citizens and stakeholders. We look forward to reviewing the endorsements from each of the local jurisdictions along the corridor, whose support will be especially important in pursuing the policy recommendations of this study.

The District appreciates continued discussion and involvement with the Scenic Byway program, the Historic Bluff Country and communities to achieve our mutual planning objectives.

cc: Kathy Hartl, Historic Bluff Country, Inc.  
Fred Sandal  
Dale Maul  
File

MK:FS:mc  
Fred Sandal

**Resolution Adopting Key Concepts and Recommendations  
of the TH 16 Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway  
Corridor Management Plan**

**Whereas**, the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Study Committee has worked with the Minnesota Department of Transportation and a consultant team led by SRF Consulting Group, Inc., to develop a Corridor Management Plan for the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway; and

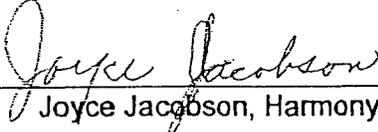
**Whereas**, a Draft (January 2002) Corridor Management Plan has been submitted to the Southeastern Minnesota Historic Bluff Country, Inc. Board of Directors for adoption and approval of key concepts and recommendations included in the Plan; and

**Whereas**, adoption of the Corridor Management Plan is necessary for nomination of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway to the National Scenic Byways program;

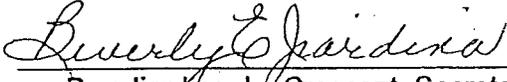
- **Now, therefore, be it resolved:** that the Southeastern Minnesota Historic Bluff Country Board of Directors hereby adopts the recommendations of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan.

**Be it further resolved** that the Study Committee is hereby directed to prepare the Final Corridor Management Plan for the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway.

Adopted by unanimous vote on January 14, 2002.

  
Joyce Jacobson, Harmony, President

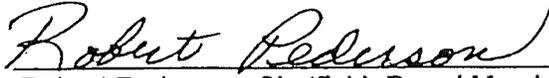
  
Jane Schiltz, Caledonia, Vice President

  
Bev Jardina, La Crescent, Secretary

  
Ted Tweito, Spring Grove, Treasurer

  
Mark Bishop, Harmony, Board Member

Not Present  
Brian Brown, Rushford, Board Member

  
Robert Pederson, Chatfield, Board Member

stern Minnesota League of Municipalities

noie - Houston - Mower - Olmsted - Wabasha - Winona

January 10, 2002

Selection Committee:

As President of the Southeastern Minnesota League of Municipalities, I am very pleased to formally document our organization's support of the national designation of Minnesota Highway 16 as a Scenic Byway. The segment proposed represents a core area of our League membership, and many of our members would see direct benefits from the designation. Regionally, the positive impact should reach even further to more cities in the six counties.

The SMLM provides a regional network format for cities in the six counties of Fillmore, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Wabasha, and Winona. Both local and regional legislative issues are addressed for member cities. By joining on common issues, we can achieve much more than as individual cities.

Our primary purpose is to be a grassroots lobby group. Our 2002 Legislative Policy Statements cover many topics, including economic development and transportation. The Minnesota Highway 16 designation represents the regional type of economic development supported by the SMLM.

Members of the SMLM voted to provide this document of support at the November 20, 2001, General Membership meeting in Rochester, Minnesota. Documentation of the vote is in the possession of the Secretary/Treasurer of the SMLM.

Sincerely,



Brenda Johnson  
SMLM President  
Chatfield City Council



SOUTHERN MINNESOTA

# Initiative Foundation

January 18, 2002

Norman Y. Mineta, Secretary  
United States Department of Transportation  
400 Seventh Street  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Mr. Mineta:

This letter is in support of designation of Minnesota Trunk Highway 16 as a National Scenic Byway. Currently identified as a Minnesota Scenic Byway, the road invites visitors to explore the prairies and river valleys and to visit the historic communities along the way. The area has many interesting activities to offer travelers.

The Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Study Committee has worked with the Minnesota Department of Transportation and a consultant team led by SRF Consulting Group, Inc., to develop a Corridor Management Plan for the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway; and to involve area communities in the planning.

Tourism is an active part of the economies of the area, and the small communities in the area are prepared to welcome additional visitors while still retaining the small town atmosphere. The scenic beauty, small-town friendliness, home-style food, variety of lodging opportunities, and many recreational opportunities combine to offer visitors a unique experience.

Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation has been investing in the economic vitality of this important region of Minnesota for over 15 years. We believe the value of the tourism industry and community based businesses will be enhanced by this important designation. We urge designation of Minnesota Trunk Highway 16 as a National Scenic Byway.

Sincerely,

  
Trixie Ann Golberg  
Executive Director

*Communities in Cooperation*



City of Rose Creek  
507-437-6105  
PO Box 236  
Rose Creek, MN 55970

City of Adams  
& Taopi  
507-582-3601  
PO Box 357  
Adams, MN 55909

City of LeRoy  
507-324-5707  
PO Box 359  
LeRoy, MN 55951

Adams, Minnesota  
October 15, 2001

Historic Bluff Country, Inc.  
15 2<sup>nd</sup> St. NW  
Harmony, MN 55939

To Whom It May Concern:

Prairie Visions heartily endorses the National Scenic Byway designation of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway. The Shooting Star Scenic Byway corridor management which is monitored by the Prairie Visions organization, is located a short distance from the western edge of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway. Both routes are avenues of great historical nature and showcase the rich and rolling farmland of the most extreme area of southern Minnesota.

Historic Bluff Country is rich in natural beauty, from the heights of limestone bluffs to the gently rolling prairie which precludes the Oak Savannah Landscape of Shooting Star Scenic Byway.

During the colorful seasons of summer and fall, many tourists from bordering states travel through the byway area, participate in the festivals and events and spend time camping and biking in one of the many areas located within the boundaries of Bluff Country. The dedication of local promotional groups, business organizations and volunteers all lend to excellent tourism credits for this area. A mixed population of both old and new life styles lend to a most picturesque atmosphere.

We urge your acceptance of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway to national status.

Sincerely,

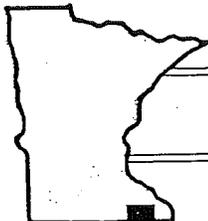
***Resolutions and Letters of Support***

*Regarding*

*TH 16 National Scenic Byway Nomination*

*from*

***Elected Officials***



# FILLMORE COUNTY

COURTHOUSE • P.O. BOX 466 • PRESTON, MINNESOTA 55965  
KAREN BROWN • POLICY COORDINATOR • (507) 765-4566

Date: January 8, 2002

To: Historic Bluff Country  
RE: Highway 16 becoming a National Scenic Byway

We, the Fillmore County Board of Commissioners, do hereby support and endorse the project involving designation of Minnesota Highway #16 as a National Scenic Byway and hope that it will receive approval. This letter of support is being sent with the understanding that it does not obligate Fillmore County to any financial commitment for the project.

Duane Bakke

Duane Bakke, Chair and Commissioner 4<sup>th</sup> District

Marc Prestby

Marc Prestby, Vice Chair and Commissioner 5<sup>th</sup> District

Helen Bicknese

Helen Bicknese, Commissioner 2<sup>nd</sup> District

Randall T. Dahl

Randall Dahl, Commissioner 1<sup>st</sup> District

[Signature]

**MARK DAYTON**  
MINNESOTA

COMMITTEES  
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION,  
AND FORESTRY  
ARMED SERVICES  
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2305

**METRO OFFICE:**

FEDERAL BUILDING  
1 FEDERAL DRIVE, SUITE 298  
FORT SNELLING, MINNESOTA 55111  
(612) 727-5220  
(888) 224-9043  
FAX: (612) 727-5223  
Health Care Help Line: (866) 296-4319

January 9, 2002

The Honorable Norman Y. Mineta  
Secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation  
400 Seventh Street  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I offer my enthusiastic support of the designation of Minnesota Trunk Highway 16 as a National Scenic Byway.

This highway is currently identified as a Minnesota Scenic Byway and invites visitors to explore the prairies and river valleys along the way. This area has several historic communities and offers fun activities for locals and travelers, alike.

Tourism is an active part of Minnesota's economy, and the small communities along Trunk Highway 16 are prepared to welcome new visitors while still maintaining the small-town atmosphere. The scenic beauty, variety of lodging venues, and many recreational opportunities combine to offer travelers a unique Minnesota experience.

I urge you to designate this section of Minnesota's highway system as a National Scenic Byway.

My best regards.

Sincerely,



**KENRIC SCHEEVEL**

Senator, District 31  
Assistant Minority Leader  
129 State Office Building  
100 Constitution Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55155-1206  
(651) 296-3903  
Home:  
R.R. 2, Box 227  
(507) 937-3433



## Senate

State of Minnesota

November 28, 2001

To whom it may concern,

I wish to voice my support for designating Hwy 16 from Dexter, MN to LaCrescent, MN as a national scenic byway. This designation with appropriate federal funds would provide increased tourism opportunities for South East Minnesota and the corresponding economic benefits.

The communities along the proposed highway are supportive of such a designation and believe it will provide a more scenic alternative to Interstate travel alone. Thank you for your interest in this matter. I will be awaiting your action on this issue.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kenric".

Kenric Scheevel  
State Senator  
District 31

**Gregory M. Davids**  
State Representative

District 31B  
Fillmore, Mower, Winona  
and Olmsted Counties



# Minnesota House of Representatives

CHAIR-COMMERCE, JOBS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
COMMITTEES: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM DIVISION;  
JOBS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FINANCE; REGULATED INDUSTRIES; ETHICS

January 8, 2002

Re: Support for Federal Designation of MN Hwy 16 as a National Scenic Byway

To Whom it May Concern:

I would like to lend my support to Historic Bluff Country's application for Federal designation of Minnesota Highway 16 as a National Scenic Byway from Dexter, Minnesota to LaCrescent, Minnesota.

The small towns of Minnesota are the jewels of our state. Because it runs parallel to Interstate 90, it will serve as an excellent alternative for travelers and will boost our local economy. Not only will the region benefit from the tourism it will create, but the visitors will benefit from experiencing the beautiful bluff country of Southeastern Minnesota, its history and culture.

I believe Historic Bluff Country has created an effective management plan and I fully support its efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Greg Davids".

Gregory M. Davids  
State Representative

**Michelle Rifenberg**  
State Representative  
District 32B  
Houston, Winona and Fillmore Counties



# Minnesota House of Representatives

COMMITTEES: VICE CHAIR, REDISTRICTING; AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY;  
PROPERTY TAX DIVISION; REGULATED INDUSTRIES; TAXES

Norman Y. Mineta, Secretary  
Department of Transportation  
400 Seventh Street  
Washington, D.C. 20590

January 14, 2002

*copy*

Dear Secretary Mineta;

I would like to support the work of Historic Bluff Country and all the communities in Southeastern Minnesota along Minnesota Trunk Highway 16 in their request to designate this route as a National Scenic Byway. This highway is currently identified as a Minnesota Scenic Byway. The national designation will enhance our areas ability to further welcome visitors to enjoy the natural beauty of the streams and bluffs along Highway 16. The designation will provide the opportunity for the historic communities along the route to diversify and strengthen their economies through tourism.

The Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Study Committee has worked diligently with the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the area communities to make this designation a reality.

The small towns of Southeastern Minnesota anxiously await the opportunity to welcome Americans from across the country to experience our areas beauty, recreational opportunities, and most of all, experience the good life. The National Scenic Byway designation will be the open door and welcome sign to all vacationers to come and visit us.

Thank you for your consideration and support for Southeastern Minnesota.

Sincerely,

***Resolutions and Letters of Support***

*Regarding*

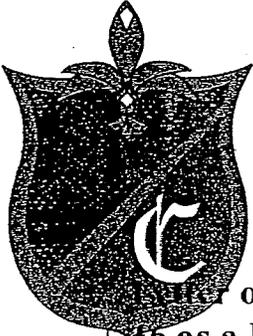
*TH 16 National Scenic Byway Nomination*

*from*

***Community of Caledonia***

# CITY OF CALEDONIA

231 East Main Street  
P.O. Box 232  
Caledonia, MN 55921



## Order of Resolution in Support of Designation of Minnesota Trunk Highway 16 as a National Scenic Byway

Norman Y. Mineta, Secretary  
United States Department of Transportation  
400 Seventh St.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

January 14, 2002

This resolution is in support of the designation of Minnesota Trunk Highway 16 as a National Scenic Byway. Currently identified as a Minnesota Scenic Byway, the road invites visitors to explore the bluffs, prairies and river valleys and to visit the historic communities along the way. This area has many interesting activities and events to offer and attract travelers.

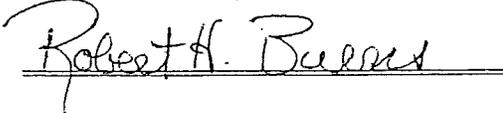
The Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Study Committee has worked with the Minnesota Department of Transportation and a consultant team led by SRF Consulting Group, Inc., to develop a Corridor Management Plan for the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway; and to involve area communities in the planning.

Tourism is a very active part of the economies of this area. The small communities in this area are prepared to welcome additional visitors while still retaining the small town atmosphere.

The scenic beauty, small-town friendliness, home-styled food, variety of lodging opportunities, and many recreational opportunities combine to offer visitors a unique experience.

We urge designation of Minnesota Trunk Highway 16 as a National Scenic Byway.

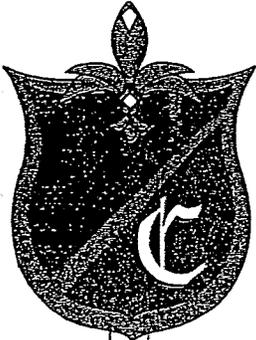
Adopted **January 14, 2002.**

  
\_\_\_\_\_

Robert Burns  
Mayor, City of Caledonia

Signatures of the City of Caledonia Council Members:





**Caledonia Chamber of Commerce**  
P.O. Box 24  
Caledonia, MN 55921

**Letter of Support of Designation of Minnesota Trunk Highway 16 as a  
National Scenic Byway**

Norman Y. Mineta, Secretary  
United States Department of Transportation  
400 Seventh St.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

January 15, 2002

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The scenic beauty, small-town friendliness, home-styled food, variety of lodging opportunities, and many recreational opportunities combine to offer visitors a unique experience.

The Caledonia Chamber of Commerce urges the designation of Minnesota Trunk Highway 16 as a National Scenic Byway.

Sincerely,



AMERICINN® OF CALEDONIA  
508 North Kruckow Avenue  
Caledonia, MN 55921  
Phone: (507) 725-8000

## **Letter of Support of Designation of Minnesota Trunk Highway 16 as a National Scenic Byway**

Norman Y. Mineta, Secretary  
United States Department of Transportation  
400 Seventh St.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

January 15, 2002

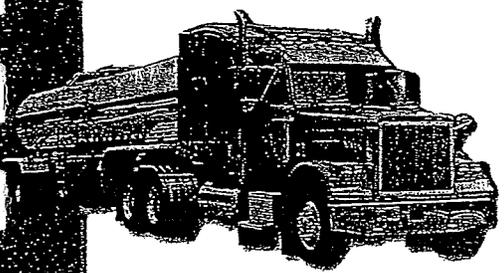
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The scenic beauty, small-town friendliness, home-styled food, variety of lodging opportunities, and many recreational opportunities combine to offer visitors a unique experience.

Our Lodging facility urges the designation of Minnesota Trunk Highway 16 as a National Scenic Byway.



## Caledonia Haulers, Inc.

P.O. Box 31 ■ Caledonia, MN 55921  
Phone: 507-725-9000 ■ 800-325-4728  
Office Fax: 507-725-9015 ■ Dispatch Fax: 507-725-9010

### Letter of Support of Designation of Minnesota Trunk Highway 16 as a National Scenic Byway

Norman Y. Mineta, Secretary  
United States Department of Transportation  
400 Seventh St.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

January 15, 2002

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Our Company urges the designation of Minnesota Trunk Highway 16 as a National Scenic Byway.

## **JOHN ESCH CONSTRUCTION**

---

322 N. 2nd. St. ~ Caledonia, MN 5521

### **Letter of Support of Designation of Minnesota Trunk Highway 16 as a National Scenic Byway**

Norman Y. Mineta, Secretary  
United States Department of Transportation  
400 Seventh St.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

January 15, 2002

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Our Company urges the designation of Minnesota Trunk Highway 16 as a National Scenic Byway.

***Resolutions and Letters of Support***

*Regarding*

*TH 16 National Scenic Byway Nomination*

*from*

***Community of Chatfield***

01/09/02 10:22 8

CHATFIELD CITY

002



## CITY OF CHATFIELD

*Thurber Community Center • Chatfield Municipal Building*  
21 Second Street Southeast • Chatfield, Minnesota 55923 507-867-3810

### RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE DESIGNATION OF MINNESOTA TRUNK HIGHWAY 16 AS A NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY

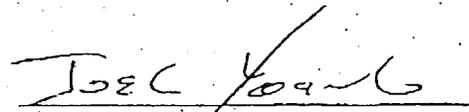
Whereas, the City of Chatfield supports designation of Minnesota Trunk Highway 16 as a National Scenic Byway. Currently identified as a Minnesota Scenic Byway, the road invites visitors to explore the prairies and river valleys and to visit the historic communities along the way. The area has many interesting activities to offer travelers.

Whereas, the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Study Committee has worked with the Minnesota Department of Transportation and consultant team led by SRF Consulting Group Inc., to develop a Corridor Management Plan for the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway; and to involve area communities in the planning.

Whereas, tourism is an active part of the economies of the area, and the small communities in the area are prepared to welcome additional visitors while still retaining the small town atmosphere.

Whereas, Highway 16 does not go through Chatfield, the City of Chatfield believes it would benefit our City, and we urge the designation of Minnesota Trunk Highway 16 as a National Scenic Byway.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Gregory A. Forbes, Mayor

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Joel A. Young, City Clerk

01/09/02 16:19

CHATFIELD CITY

002

## Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway — OPEN HOUSES —

### Comment Sheet

Name:

Paula Bessingpas - Bulwark Apts

Address:

204 S. Main St - Chatfield

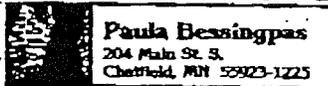
Phone:

507-867-3076

Comments:

As a business owner in the area of the proposed Hwy 16 - National Byway I think it would be beneficial to my business and businesses in the city of Chatfield. We need all the help in a forum that we can get.

Paula Bessingpas



NOTE: Deadline for mailed comments is Friday, November 16, 2001.

01/09/02 10:23

CHATFIELD CITY

003

# Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway

—OPEN HOUSES—

## Comment Sheet

Name: CLC Flooring & Amish Furniture, Inc.  
Address: 205 South Main St., Chatfield, MN 55923  
Phone: 507-867-9082

Comments:

We at CLC feel that it would be in the best interest of our area for Hwy 16 to become a National Byway. It would most likely increase tourism.

NOTE: Deadline for mailed comments is Friday, November 16, 2001.

**Main Identity**

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**From:** <Valalodge@aol.com>  
**To:** <hbc@means.net>  
**Sent:** Friday, January 11, 2002 2:19 PM  
**Subject:** National Byways.....

To whom it may concern: We at the VAL A Lodge think it would be wonderful and most beneficial to everyone in the surrounding communities if Hwy# 16 would be designated as a National Byways. Please help us accomplish this much desired goal. Call me if you need more information, suggestions or ideas. Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely, Alice •• (507-867-3066)

***Resolutions and Letters of Support***

*Regarding*

*TH 16 National Scenic Byway Nomination*

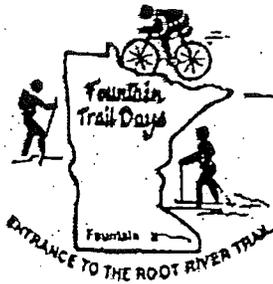
*from*

***Community of Fountain***

JAN-10-02 09:28 AM CITY of FOUNTAIN

507 268 4313

P.02



## City of Fountain

P.O. Box 115 104 Main St  
Fountain, MN 56935  
507-268-4923  
FAX 507-268-4313

JANUARY 10, 2002

RE: A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF DESIGNATION OF MINNESOTA TRUNK HIGHWAY 16 AS A NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY.

THIS LETTER IS IN SUPPORT OF THE DESIGNATION OF MINNESOTA TRUNK HIGHWAY 16 AS A NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY. CURRENTLY IDENTIFIED AS A MINNESOTA SCENIC BYWAY, THE ROAD INVITES VISITORS TO EXPLORE THE PRAIRIES AND RIVER VALLEYS AND TO VISIT THE HISTORIC COMMUNITIES ALONG THE WAY. THE AREA HAS MANY INTERESTING ACTIVITIES TO OFFER TRAVELERS.

THE HISTORIC BLUFF COUNTRY SCENIC BYWAY STUDY COMMITTEE HAS WORKED WITH THE MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND A CONSULTANT TEAM LED BY SRF CONSULTING GROUP, INC., TO DEVELOP A CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE HISTORIC BLUFF COUNTRY SCENIC BYWAY AND TO INVOLVE AREA COMMUNITIES IN THE PLANNING.

TOURISM IS AN ACTIVE PART OF THE ECONOMICS OF THE AREA, AND THE SMALL COMMUNITIES IN THE AREA ARE PREPARED TO WELCOME ADDITIONAL VISITORS WHILE STILL RETAINING THE SMALL TOWN ATMOSPHERE. THE SCENIC BEAUTY, SMALL TOWN FRIENDLINESS, HOME-STYLE FOOD, VARIETY OF LODGING OPPORTUNITIES, AND MANY RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES COMBINE TO OFFER VISITORS A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE.

THE FOUNTAIN CITY COUNCIL URGES THE DESIGNATION OF MINNESOTA TRUNK HIGHWAY 16 AS A NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY.

ADOPTED, DECEMBER 6, 2001. ALL VOTED IN FAVOR THEREOF.

SHARON SPEER  
DEPUTY CITY CLERK

***Resolutions and Letters of Support***

*Regarding*

*TH 16 National Scenic Byway Nomination*

*from*

***Community of Harmony***

# **CITY OF HARMONY**

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January 9, 2002

Historic Bluff Country, Inc.  
PO Box 609  
Harmony, MN 55939-0609

Good Day:

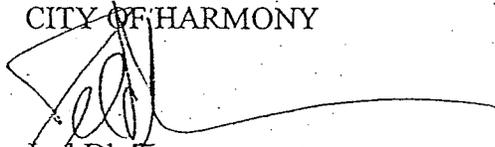
The City of Harmony, along with its Economic Development Authority, endorses the designation of Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway as a National Scenic Byway. This designation would be of monumental significance to southeastern Minnesota. The possible economic impact to communities not only along the scenic byway, but also throughout the whole region, would be substantial.

Historic Bluff Country has a great deal to offer in the way of historic, cultural and scenic attractions. From the beauty of fall foliage to the quaintness of an Amish farm there is much for the traveler to enjoy and experience in our part of this great country.

We encourage the designation of the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway as a National Scenic Byway and are assured that it will be a vital asset to the National Scenic Byway System.

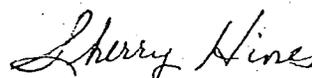
Sincerely,

CITY OF HARMONY



Joel Dhein  
City Administrator

HARMONY ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY



Sherry Hines  
President

## Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway

—OPEN HOUSES—

### Comment Sheet

Name:

Carol & Ralph Beaström

Address:

140 Center St E Harmony, MN 55939

Phone:

507 886-2200

Comments:

Even us that are not on the Byway can see a economic benefit to the entire area of Southeast Minnesota. We would expect that those travelling on the Byway will want to get off the byway and explore the region farther. We feel that in time, ~~we~~ we will feel the economic benefit to businesses on the corridors both directly & indirectly.

As new residents to the area, we feel that exposing the National driving public to the historic sites and geological beauty of this area will be beneficial to the traveling public.

## Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway

—OPEN HOUSES—

### Comment Sheet

Name:

Mark Bishop

Address:

Harmony, MN

Phone:

507 886 6606

Comments:

The designation of Hwy 16 as a National Scenic Byway would be of monumental significance to SE MN. It would be comparable to bringing in the railroad in years past or more recently the interstate highway. The possible economic impact of these communities and businesses along and adjacent to Hwy 16 would be substantial. Not only would the designation be an asset to the area, the area would also serve as an asset to the National Scenic Byways System.

## Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway

—OPEN HOUSES—

### Comment Sheet

Name:

Joyce A. Jacobson - President of Historic Bluff Country

Address:

Harmony, MN. 55939

Phone:

507-886-2515 Country Lodge Motel

Comments:

Topic - National Scenic By-Way Highway 16

What wonderful attractions, scenery, food and lodging facilities we have here in Southeastern MN. Historic Bluff Country to share with the world !!

How do we get all these people here?

We must entice them off the Interstates for at least a couple of hours, especially to travel along Highway 16 from Dexter to La Crescent, MN.

What a wonderful opportunity for these visitors to find solitude and peace in our beautiful Bluff Country!

I strongly urge the approval of Highway 16 to become a National Scenic By-Stay. The marketing, maps, publicity and helps from this approval would make this happen.

***Resolutions and Letters of Support***

*Regarding*

*TH 16 National Scenic Byway Nomination*

*from*

***Community of Houston***

RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FOR DESIGNATION OF US 16  
TO STATUS AS NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY

WHEREAS, the City Council is the governing body of the City of Houston, Minnesota,  
and

WHEREAS, the Tourism Industry is a vital component of the City of Houston's  
economy, and

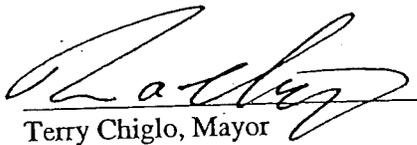
WHEREAS, there is an effort to obtain national scenic byway designation for highway  
16, and

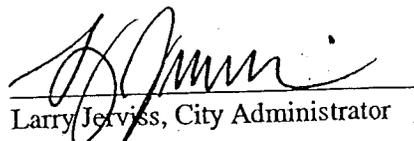
WHEREAS, national scenic byway designation of highway 16 would increase the  
promotional opportunities for Houston area businesses, and

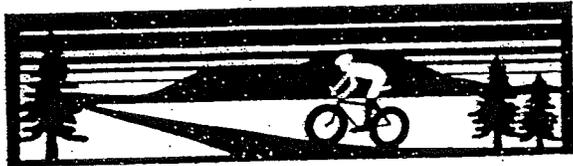
WHEREAS, resolutions of support are requested for national scenic byway designation  
of highway 16.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Houston City Council does hereby  
support application for National Scenic Byway Designation highway 16 from LaCrescent,  
Minnesota to Dexter, Minnesota.

We certify that the foregoing resolution was duly presented and acted upon by a vote of  
4 for, 0 against, 1 absent, at a regular meeting of the Houston City Council, quorum being  
present, held on January 14, 2002, at Houston, Minnesota.

  
Terry Chiglo, Mayor

  
Larry Jerviss, City Administrator



**ClassCycle Bikes of Houston, Inc.**

113 West Cedar Street  
Houston, Minnesota 55943  
Phone: 507 • 896 • 9433

To Whom It May Concern:

I believe that MN Hwy 16 should be designated a Federal Scenic Byway because it encompasses the very best the upper Midwest has to offer. The pace here in southern Minnesota is relaxed and the scenery is breathtaking. From towering limestone bluffs along winding river valleys, sleepy hamlets and century old farms of the southeast to the vast prairies of the beloved Laura Ingalls Wilder stories made famous by "the Little House on the Prairie" TV series, its all here, parallel to Interstate 90, yet a world away.

Throw in "Minnesota Nice" (its more than a phrase!) and an economy that has learned to gear itself to graciously serving a growing tourism industry as farm prices have not kept up with the cost of production, and you have the perfect formula to be enjoyed by travelers from all parts of the globe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cj Robinson". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light background.

Cj Robinson



Independent School District #294  
306 West Elm Street, Drawer D  
Houston, Minnesota 55943  
(507) 896-3376  
Fax: (507) 896-3452

January 16, 2002

To Whom It May Concern,

Designating Minnesota State Trunk Highway 16 as a Federal Scenic Byway would "*harken back to the days of yore.*" As a teenager in the mid to late 1960s I worked as a waitress in a small family owned restaurant, *Belle's Café*, on Highway 16 in Houston, Minnesota, (this was prior to the construction of I-90). Many fond memories are recalled of serving families from the east coast who were driving west on their summer vacations. I particularly remember a rather large family from New York who exemplified the families who were "traveling through." They were truly astonished with the peace, tranquility, friendliness and arresting beauty of the Root River Valley, and continually expressed their amazement and enjoyment of what they were unexpectedly experiencing as a family.

This portion of Minnesota State Trunk Highway 16 travels through Houston County which has the largest biodiversity of all eighty-seven counties in the state of Minnesota. Houston County lies completely within the non-glaciated area of Minnesota giving it the arresting natural beauty of its hills and valleys with six hundred feet of relief. Scenery carpeted by the widest array of native flora and fauna available in the entire state of Minnesota makes for a fabulous visual experience. Root River Valley is noted for the finest raptor-viewing in the Tri-State area (Iowa, Minnesota & Wisconsin). The abundant wildlife provide visual excitement at every turn, whether on the land or in the sky.

People who take the time to stop and get out of their cars have the opportunity to enjoy numerous outstanding golf courses, hiking, horseback riding, bicycling, snowmobiling, and cross-country skiing trails, as well as some of what have been designated as the finest trout fishing streams in the entire state, literally within minutes of the highway.

Minnesota State Trunk Highway 16 parallels Interstate 90, therefore, basically no mileage of any consequence is actually added to your trip, but the enhancement and enjoyment of your traveling experience is magnified beyond the ability of mere words to describe. Thank you for giving all due consideration to designating Minnesota State Trunk Highway 16, from La Crescent to Dexter, Minnesota, a Federal Scenic Byway.

Most Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marilyn Bayer", written over a horizontal line.

## Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway

—OPEN HOUSES—

### Comment Sheet

Name:

Larry Jerviss

Address:

Bx 292 Houston MN 55943

Phone:

Comments: Traffic through Houston has noticeably diminished since 1970 when I-90 was built. Designation as a National Scenic Byway would be a wonderful way to bring tourists back. We need this!

## Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway

—OPEN HOUSES—

### Comment Sheet

Name:

Karla Kinstler

Address:

19268 Perkins Valley Dr, Houston

Phone:

507-896-3436

Comments:

Sounds like a great idea! People can get off the interstate, but still keep going where they were going.

## Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway

—OPEN HOUSES—

### Comment Sheet

Name:

Marlene Schultz

Address:

Box 38 Houston MN 55943

Phone:

507-896-2080

Comments:

Hwy 16 would be a great asset to our community if it would receive Federal Scenic-By-Way designation. We have much to offer visitors of a small town atmosphere - scenery - history - nature center and most important people who love their community.

# Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway

—OPEN HOUSES—

## Comment Sheet

Name:

Shirley Van Gundy

Address:

P.O. Box 575 Houston, MN. 55043

Phone:

507-896-3875

Comments:

The By-Way is a great idea & we need to promote it in this S.E. MN. region however we can. There is much educational value for all ages in this area as well as tourism & recreation.

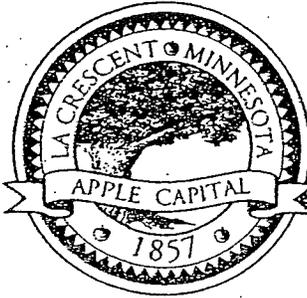
***Resolutions and Letters of Support***

*Regarding*

*TH 16 National Scenic Byway Nomination*

*from*

***Community of La Crescent***



**C**ITY OF LA CRESCENT  
315 MAIN STREET  
P.O. BOX 142  
LA CRESCENT, MN 55947

507-895-2595  
FAX: 507-895-8694  
E-MAIL: [cityoflacrescent@centurytel.net](mailto:cityoflacrescent@centurytel.net)

September 20, 2001

**Southeastern Minnesota Historic Bluff Country**  
15 2<sup>nd</sup> Street NW  
P. O. Box 609  
Harmony, MN 55939

**Dear Historic Bluff Country**

Enclosed is Resolution 9-01-03 approving La Crescent's donation of \$1,000 for development of the corridor management plan to designate the Southeastern Minnesota Historic Bluff Country scenic byway route a national byway.

As addressed in the resolution, Council will be forwarding the monies upon notification that the required \$17,000.00 has been committed from the various cities.

Please keep us abreast of your successes and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Phyllis Feiock".

**Phyllis Feiock**

Jack Miller

Yes

and none voted against the same. The motion was declared duly carried and the resolution duly passed and adopted.

Council also requested information on Chapter 429 to better enable them to determine the City's involvement in the proposed development.

### ITEM #3.2 HISTORIC BLUFF MEMBERSHIP

Bev Jiardina, Executive Secretary for the La Crescent Chamber of Commerce, addressed the Council with a request for \$1,000.00 to the Southeastern Minnesota Historic Bluff Country to enable Southeastern Minnesota Historic Bluff Country to fund the development of the Corridor Management Plan. This plan is designed to have the Southeastern Minnesota Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway route designated as a national byway, of which La Crescent is a part. Following discussion, Member Dawes introduced the following resolution and moved its passage and adoption.

#### RESOLUTION NO. 9-01-03

#### RESOLUTION APPROVING THE CITY OF LA CRESCENT'S DONATION OF \$1,000.00 TO THE SOUTHEASTERN MINNESOTA HISTORIC BLUFF COUNTRY FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE CORRIDORE MANAGEMENT PLAN TO DESIGNATE THE SOUTHEASTERN MINNESOTA HISTORIC BLUFF COUNTRY SCENIC BYWAY ROUTE, PROVIDING \$17,000.00 CAN BE RAISED BY SOUTHEASTERN MINNESOTA HISTORIC BLUFF COUNTRY TO INITIATE THIS MANAGEMENT PLAN

WHEREAS, the Council has received a request from the Southeastern Minnesota Historic Bluff Country to contribute a one time donation of \$1,000.00 for the development of the Corridor Management Plan to enable them to work with the MNDOT to nominate Southeastern Minnesota Historic Bluff Country as a nation Scenic Byway, and

# CREST Precast Inc.

609 KISTLER DRIVE LA CRESCENT, MN 55947-1721 Phone (507) 895-2342 FAX (507) 895-2377  
WEB: [www.crestprecastconcrete.com](http://www.crestprecastconcrete.com) EMAIL: [crestpc@presenter.com](mailto:crestpc@presenter.com)

NORMAN Y. MINETA, SECRETARY  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
400 SEVENTH STREET  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

JAN. 17, 2002

THIS LETTER IS IN SUPPORT OF THE DESIGNATION OF MINNESOTA TRUNK HIGHWAY 16 AS A SCENIC BYWAY. CURRENTLY IDENTIFIED AS A MINNESOTA SCENIC BYWAY, THIS IS A LOVELY ROAD THAT INVITES YOU TO STOP AND DISCOVER THE BEAUTY AND THE HISTORY OF OUR AREA, AND TO EXPLORE THE PRAIRIES AND RIVER VALLEYS AND THE BEAUTIFUL SCENIC BLUFFS. THIS AREA HAS MANY INTERESTING AND BEAUTIFUL COMMUNITIES THAT HAVE A LOT TO OFFER VISITORS.

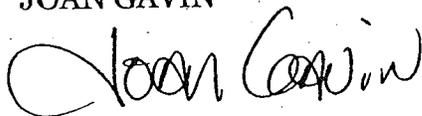
THE HISTORIC BLUFF COUNTY SCENIC BYWAY STUDY COMMITTEE HAS WORKED WITH THE MINNESOTA DOT AND SRF CONSULTING GROUP, INC., TO DEVELOP A CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE HISTORIC BLUFF COUNTY SCENIC BYWAY, AND INVOLVES AREA COMMUNITIES IN THE PLANNING.

TOURISM IS AN ACTIVE PART OF THE ECONOMIES OF THIS AREA, AS THERE IS NOT A LARGE FOCUS ON INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT, SOME IN-PART BECAUSE OF THE NATURAL TOPOGRAPHY, AND BEAUTY. BUT OUR COMMUNITIES ARE ALWAYS READY TO OPEN OUR ARMS AND WELCOME VISITORS. WE ENJOY SHARING OUR HERITAGES AND TREASURES ALONG WITH OUR SMALL TOWN CHARMS OF FRIENDLINESS, LODGING, DOWN HOME COOKING, AREA SPECIALTIES, RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND MANY MORE.

THIS AREA (HWY 16 FROM LA CRESCENT TO DEXTER, MINNESOTA) HAS MANY UNIQUE AND WONDERFUL QUALITIES THAT OFFERS A BOUNTY OF TREASURES TO EXPERIENCE.

I URGE YOU TO CONSIDER MINNESOTA HWY 16 TO BE DESIGNATED AS A NATION SCENIC BYWAY.

SINCERELY,  
JOAN GAVIN



ALSO PLANT AT: 8158 INDUSTRIAL DRIVE BARNEVELD, WI 53507 Phone (608) 924-1455



## Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway

—OPEN HOUSES—

### Comment Sheet

Name:

Beverly Jardina

Address:

101 N. Oak St., La Crescent, MN 55947

Phone:

507-895-4080

Comments:

Highway 16 from La Crescent to Dexter is mid America at its best & would make an opportunity for Interstate travelers to enjoy the beautiful scenery and small towns along the way. The fact that Highway 16 runs parallel to I-90 makes it easy for folks to leave the interstate, enjoy sights & shopping on 16 and return to the interstate without a long time delay. Lodging & food are also available as they travel everything from B+B's & motels to camping and large supper clubs to quaint tea rooms. I support this nomination!!

## Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway

—OPEN HOUSES—

### Comment Sheet

Name:

Alicia Johnson

Address:

327 N. 2<sup>nd</sup> St., La Crescent, MN 55947

Phone:

507/ 895-6915

Comments:

I really appreciated the posters. They made the details of the project plain, both the method of obtaining the designation of National Scenic Byway and the benefits that would follow.

One of the serendipitous benefits is that the local people will be able to learn much about their area they were unaware of.

January 18, 2002

Norman Y. Mineta, Secretary  
United States Department of Transportation  
400 Seventh Street  
Washington, DC 20590

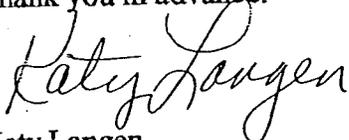
Dear Secretary Mineta,

This is a letter in support of designation of Minnesota Trunk Highway 16 as a National Scenic Byway. I was on the committee that submitted the initial Scenic Byway application and was very pleased you recognized the beauty of our area at that time.

Highway 16 allows visitors to explore the bluffs, scenery, and the rural communities along the way and the return to the Interstate. Tourism is a very important part of our economy in this area and we welcome all visitors. We have a lot to offer.

We strongly urge the designation of Minnesota Trunk Highway 16 as a National Scenic Byway.

Thank you in advance.



Katy Langen  
Former Chamber of Commerce Secretary and  
Interested citizen.

315 So. 1st St.

La Crescent, MN 55947

***Resolutions and Letters of Support***

*Regarding*

*TH 16 National Scenic Byway Nomination*

*from*

***Community of Lanesboro***

THE HISTORIC . . .

**CITY OF LANESBORO**

Phone 507-467-3722  
Fax 507-467-2557

Box 333, 202 Parkway So.  
Lanesboro, MN 55949

January 16, 2002

Norman Y. Mineta, Secretary  
United States Department of Transportation  
400 Seventh Street  
Washington, DC 20590

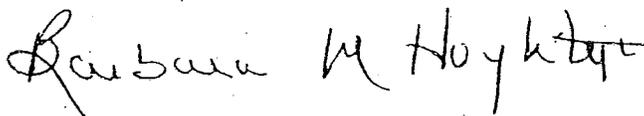
Dear Mr. Mineta,

The Lanesboro City Council is in support of designating Minnesota Trunk Highway 16 as a National Scenic Byway. Currently identified as a Minnesota Scenic Byway, the road leads visitors to explore the wondrous landscapes and waters of our area.

Tourism is a vital part of the Lanesboro community. We welcome thousands of visitors to our town and the area. The drive into Lanesboro from the bluffs is breath taking. We enjoy sharing our corner of the state with anyone who chooses to venture our way.

We would like you to consider the designation of Minnesota Truck Highway 16 as a National Scenic Byway.

Sincerely,



Barbara M. Hoyhtya

***Resolutions and Letters of Support***

*Regarding*

*TH 16 National Scenic Byway Nomination*

*from*

***Community of Peterson***

## City of Peterson

Tree City, USA

118 Fillmore St.

January 12, 2002

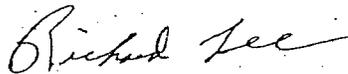
This letter is in support of Minnesota Trunk Highway 16 as a National Scenic Byway. Currently identified as a Minnesota Scenic Byway, the road invites visitors to explore the prairies and river valleys and to visit the historic communities along the way. The area has many interesting activities to offer travelers.

The Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Study Committee has worked with the Minnesota Department of Transportation and a consultant team led by SRF Consulting Group, Inc., to develop a Corridor Management Plan for the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway, and to develop area communities in the planning.

Tourism is an active part of the economies of the area, and the small communities in the area are prepared to welcome additional visitors while still retaining the small town atmosphere. The scenic beauty, small-town friendliness, home-style food, variety of lodging opportunities, and many recreational opportunities combine to offer visitors a unique experience.

I urge designation of Minnesota Trunk Highway 16 as a National Scenic Byway.

Sincerely yours,



Richard Lee, Mayor  
City of Peterson  
Peterson, MN 55962

***Resolutions and Letters of Support***

*Regarding*

*TH 16 National Scenic Byway Nomination*

*from*

***Community of Preston***



# CITY OF PRESTON

P.O. Box 657, 210 Fillmore Street West  
Preston, MN 55965

Telephone: 507-765-2153

Fax: 507-765-2794

January 16, 2002

Norman Y. Mineta, Secretary  
United States Department of Transportation  
400 Seventh Street  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Mr. Mineta:

This letter is in support of designation of Minnesota Trunk Highway 16 as a National Scenic Byway. Currently identified as a Minnesota Scenic Byway, the road invites visitors to explore the prairies and river valleys and to visit the historic communities along the way. The area has many interesting activities to offer travelers.

The Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Study Committee has worked with the Minnesota Department of Transportation and a consultant team led by SRF Consulting Group, Inc., to develop a Corridor Management Plan for the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway; and to involve area communities in the planning.

Tourism is an active part of the economies of the area, and the small communities in the area are prepared to welcome additional visitors while still retaining the small town atmosphere. The scenic beauty, small-town friendliness, home-style food, variety of lodging opportunities, and many recreational opportunities combine to offer visitors a unique experience.

I urge designation of Minnesota Trunk Highway 16 as a National Scenic Byway.

Signature

John M. Gartner  
Mayor Pro-tem

***Resolutions and Letters of Support***

*Regarding*

*TH 16 National Scenic Byway Nomination*

*from*

***Community of Rushford***



*City of Parks, Trees and Trails*

## CITY OF RUSHFORD

101 N. Mill Street  
P.O. Box 430  
Rushford, MN 55971-0430

Phone: 507-864-2444  
Fax: 507-864-7003

January 18, 2002

Mr. Norman Y. Mineta, Secretary  
United States Department of Transportation  
400 Seventh Street  
Washington, D.C. 20590

**Subject: Letter of Support of Minnesota Trunk Highway 16 as a National Scenic Byway**

Dear Secretary Mineta:

On behalf of the City of Rushford, Minnesota and the Rushford City Council this letter is written in support of the efforts to designate Minnesota State Trunk Highway 16 as a National Scenic Byway.

Tourism is an important part of the economies of southeastern Minnesota and our community. Small communities like Rushford welcome visitors while we continue to retain the small rural town atmosphere. The scenic beauty, small-town friendliness, home-style food, variety of lodging opportunities, and many recreational opportunities combine to offer visitors a unique and enjoyable experience.

TH 16 is currently identified as a Minnesota Scenic Byway. This beautiful stretch of rural Minnesota highway welcomes visitors to explore the prairies and river valleys while visiting the historic sites of communities along the way.

The Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway Study Committee has worked with the Minnesota Department of Transportation to develop a Corridor Management Plan for the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway. The City of Rushford has been involved in the planning process and enthusiastically supports the designation of Minnesota TH 16 as a National Scenic Byway. We hope you agree and will support this effort.

Sincerely,

Ted Robertson  
Mayor

Cc: File, Historic Bluff Country

# Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway

—OPEN HOUSES—

## Comment Sheet

Name:

Norman Ebner

Address:

214 Jessamine St. P.O. Box Rushford, Mo.

Phone:

864 721 7

Comments:

Rushford also had a brewery <sup>D. Phifer</sup> ~~Phifer~~

we still have the cellar

# Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway

—OPEN HOUSES—

## Comment Sheet

Name:

*Al Morken*

Address:

Phone:

Comments:

*Rushford*

*The new name of Depot is  
Rushford Depot & Gleason - 1867  
Best Depot in State.*

***Resolutions and Letters of Support***

*Regarding*

*TH 16 National Scenic Byway Nomination*

*from*

***Community of Spring Valley***

Jan 08 02 01:58p

City of Spring Valley

507-346-7249

P. 1



# City of Spring Valley, MN

January 7, 2002

Kathy Hartl, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
Historic Bluff Country, Inc.  
P. O. Box 609  
Harmony, MN 55939

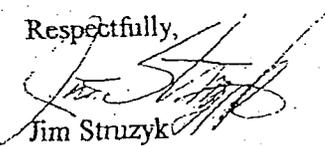
Dear Dr. Hartl,

I have reviewed the materials on the Scenic Byway proposal for Minnesota Trunk Highway 16. I look at the designation as a very positive move for the entire community of Spring Valley.

You have my complete support in this project. Anything I can do to assist your efforts will be a pleasure.

Thank you for your hard work and diligence on this very important project.

Respectfully,

  
Jim Struzyk  
Mayor  
City of Spring Valley

JS:mtc

Jan 09 02 12:59p

City of Spring Valley

507-346-7249

p.2



# City of Spring Valley, MN

January 8, 2002

Dear Kathy Hartl,

Thank you for your contribution in getting Highway 16 designated as a Scenic Byway. Residents of this area take for granted what an asset we have. This area possesses a wide variety of recreational, scenic, historical and cultural places and activities. It will be wonderful to share this experience with visitors to our area.

The City of Spring Valley supports your efforts and is crossing our fingers for the official designation.

Sincerely,

Deb Zimmer  
City Administrator

Jan 09 02 12:59p

City of Spring Valley

507-346-7249

p. 1

Spring Valley Chamber of Commerce  
PO Box 13  
Spring Valley, MN 55975

January 8, 2002

Dear Kathy Hartl,

The Spring Valley Chamber of Commerce appreciates the efforts of your organization in your efforts to get Highway 16 designated as a Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway. Your efforts will help the local economy by bringing increased visitors to our area. These tourists in turn will get a chance to see and share our recreational, scenic, and cultural areas.

We look forward to the official designation and the opportunity to share our assets with visitors.

Sincerely,



Deb Zimmer  
Spring Valley Chamber Secretary

Roy and Jan Christopherson

1117 South Broadway

(507) 346-2698

To Whom it May Concern:

We wish to support the designation of Highway 16 from Dexter, Minnesota to LaCrescent, Minnesota as a National Scenic Byway. This would promote our local town and the other towns along the Byway.

There are many interesting places to visit and explore.

Thank you.

Yours truly,

*Jan Christopherson*  
*Roy Christopherson*  
Jan Christopherson

Roy Christopherson

Spring Valley Community Historical Society, Inc.  
Spring Valley, Minnesota 55975  
507-346-7659

Washburn-Zittleman House  
220 West Courtland St

Church Museum  
221 West Courtland St.

January 7, 2001

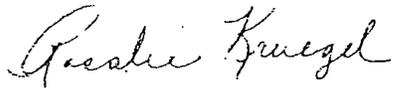
To Whom it May Concern,

On behalf of the Spring Valley Historical Society Executive Board  
I would like to express our support for the National Scenic By-Way  
on Hi-way 16 from Dexter, MN to LeCrescent, MN.

There are so many unique places to visit in the little towns along  
that route. Each town has its own special attraction, and the nice  
thing is that one can leave the Interstate near Dexter, drive the  
length of Hiway 16 and catch the Interstate again at the end of the  
route.

This is a beautiful area and deserving of a National designation.

Sincerely,



Rosalie Kruegel  
Historical Society Director

***Resolutions and Letters of Support***

*Regarding*

*TH 16 National Scenic Byway Nomination*

*from*

***Community of Wykoff***

01/08/2002 18:04 5073522415

WYKOFF CITY

PAGE 01



CITY OF  
**Wykoff**

217 NORTH GOLD STREET ■ PO. BOX 218 ■ WYKOFF, MN 55990-0218 ■ 507-352-4011

January 8, 2002

Kathy Hartl, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
Historic Bluff County, Inc.  
PO Box 609  
Harmony MN 55939

RE: HISTORIC BLUFF COUNTRY SCENIC BYWAY

Dear Kathy,

The City of Wykoff supports the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway corridor and the City Council has voted to contribute \$500.00 toward the implementation of the Corridor Management Plan. Southeastern Minnesota has many unique qualities to offer to tourists. The many historic small towns and the beautiful scenery are just a couple of them.

Sincerely,

## HISTORIC BLUFF COUNTRY SCENIC BYWAY RESOURCE INVENTORY

Name	Location (Address)	City/ Township	County	Nearest Town	NRHP ?	Open to Public?	Root River Trail Access	Root River Access	Distance from TH 16	Description/Notes
<b>NATURAL RESOURCES</b>										
Root River	n/a	n/a	Mower, Fillmore, Houston	n/a	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a	Includes the North, Middle, and South Branches and South Fork of the Root River.
Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forest	Central and East parts of bluff country	Mound Prairie Twp, Hokah Twp, Mayville Twp, Crooked Creek Twp, Winnebago Twp, Jefferson Twp, Brownsville Twp	Fillmore, Houston	n/a	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a	Includes the following Forest Units: Reno, Oak Ridge, Isinours, Brightsdale, Vinegar Ridge, Gribbon Valley, Diamond Creek, and Money Creek. Forest Unit Offices are located in Preston and Caledonia.
Niagara Cave	PO Box 444 Harmony 55939	Harmony Twp	Fillmore	Harmony	n/a	Yes	No	No	5-10 miles	2 miles south of Harmony; 2 miles west of hwy 139; Significant feature- good education of area geology
Mystery Cave	Approx. 2 miles west of CR 5	Forestville Twp	Fillmore	Preston	n/a	Yes	No	No	5-10 miles	Located within Forestville/ Mystery Cave State Park
Mound Prairie Scientific and Natural Area	west of Hokah	Mound Prairie Twp	Houston	Hokah	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	0-2 miles	Area of native prairie preservation and restoration- managed by the DNR.
Wykoff Balsam Fir Scientific and Natural Area	Off CR 8, northwest of Wykoff	Wykoff	Fillmore	Wykoff	n/a	Yes	No	No	2-5 miles	Unique micro climate of steep north- facing slopes and cold air drainage. Special conditions support rare species. Managed by the DNR. Research area is open only to those possessing special research permits.
Rushford Sand Barrens Scientific and Natural Area	Off TH 16, west of Rushford	Rushford	Fillmore	Rushford	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	0-2 miles	Complex of rare natural communities, 1 endangered and 3 threatened. Thirteen rare plant species and other rare species reside there. Managed by the DNR.
Pin Oak Prairie Scientific and Natural Area	4 miles SW of Chatfield	Chatfield	Fillmore	Chatfield	n/a	Yes	No	Yes	5-10 miles	Contains 3 natural communities: wet meadow, dry prairie, and oak forest. Botanically diverse. On banks of Middle Branch Root River.

Name	Location (Address)	City/Township	County	Nearest Town	NRHP?	Open to Public?	Root River Trail Access	Root River Access	Distance from TH 16	Description/Notes
<b>RECREATIONAL RESOURCES</b>										
Mount Tom	Near junction of TH 16 and CR 7	Hokah	Houston	Hokah	n/a	Yes	No	Yes	0-2 miles	Natural landmark in the town of Hokah, adjacent to Thompson Creek.
Lanesboro DNR Fish Hatchery	Off TH 16, just south of Lanesboro	Carrolton Twp	Fillmore	Lanesboro	n/a	Yes	No	No	0-2 miles	DNR Hatchery - works to manage trout populations in regional streams. Produces stock. Includes interpretive trail where visitors can learn about trout populations and habitat. Adjoining fishery mgt office also manager habitat, access, and monitoring.
Sinkholes	Major ones located near trailhead and city sign	Fountain	Fillmore	Fountain	n/a	Yes	No	Yes	2-5 miles	Fountain considered "Sinkhole Capital of the USA" - identified sinkholes near Fountain trailhead and sign; no parking or good pull-offs or interpretation near them
Root River Canoe Accesses	see description/ notes	Chatfield, Houston, Preston, Rushford, Lanesboro, Peterson and west of Whalan	Fillmore, Houston	n/a	n/a	Yes	Yes (some)	Yes	n/a	Located in the following towns: Houston, Rushford, Peterson, Lanesboro, Preston and Chatfield - also one on TH 16 just west of Whalan.
Root River State Trail	53 miles between Rushford and Fountain	n/a	Fillmore, Houston	n/a	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	0-2 miles	Trailheads located in Fountain, Rushford, and Houston.
Harmony-Preston Valley State Trail	17.8 miles between Harmony and Preston	n/a	Fillmore	n/a	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	0-2 miles	Trailheads at Harmony & Preston; Junction with Root River State Trail north of Preston at Isinours Forestry Unit.
Forestville/ Mystery Cave State Park	Approx. 4 miles south of Hwy 16, on Hwy 5	Forestville Twp	Fillmore	Preston	n/a	Yes	No	No	2-5 miles	State park with natural cave and historic town of Forestville within borders. Also offers visitors hiking, camping, trail riding, picnicking.
Beaver Creek State Park	CSAH 76 near Caledonia	Caledonia	Houston	Caledonia	n/a	Yes	No	No	2-5 miles	State park offering visitors camping, hiking, trout fishing, picnicking.
Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center	Rt 2 Box 156A, 55949	Lanesboro	Fillmore	Lanesboro	n/a	Yes	No	Yes	0-2 miles	Offers a variety of programs for groups of all ages that included topics on wildlife, ecology, outdoor skills, and outdoor recreation.
Houston Nature Center	At Trailhead in Houston	Houston	Houston	Houston	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	0-2 miles	New facility located at the Root River Trailhead in Houston.

Name	Location (Address)	City/Township	County	Nearest Town	NRHP?	Open to Public?	Root River Trail Access	Root River Access	Distance from TH 16	Description/Notes
<b>SCENIC RESOURCES</b>										
Como Falls	Falls St. just east of Main St.	Hokah	Houston	Hokah	n/a	Yes	No	No	0-2 miles	Located within Como Fall Park which includes some short trails at falls, along Thompson Creek and immediate area.
Grand Meadow Wayside	north side of TH 16	Frankford Twp	Fillmore	Grand Meadow	n/a	Yes	No	No	0-2 miles	Located along Deer Creek. Facilities include restrooms, playground, picnic tables and shelter. Some camping nearby.
Preston Wayside	south side of TH 16 on northeast side of town	Preston	Fillmore	Preston	n/a	Yes	Yes	No	0-2 miles	Old WPA project. Stone walls, good condition. No facilities. Overlooks town and valley, but views are limited by large trees
Inspiration Point	At switchback in TH 16, just west of Lanesboro	Carrolton Twp	Fillmore	Lanesboro	n/a	Yes	No	No	0-2 miles	Old WPA project. Stone walls, good condition. Facilities include benches and picnic tables. Overlooks valley and Lanesboro in distance, but views are limited by large trees
Magelssen Park	On top of bluff, access north side of TH 30	Rushford	Fillmore	Rushford	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	0-2 miles	Small winding gravel access road; scenic overlook; nice parking facility; pit toilets; old stone wall; picnic shelter; narrow vista due to trees; no signs until nearly outside of town. Views show results of processes when prehistoric streams cut down through layers of glacial till and bedrock, leaving level bluffs and steep valley sides.
Bluff Views	Along the central and eastern segment of byway	n/a	Fillmore, Houston	n/a	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a	Dramatic views as roadway winds through and over bluffs.

Name	Location (Address)	City/Township	County	Nearest Town	NRHP?	Open to Public?	Root River Trail Access	Root River Access	Distance from TH 16	Description/Notes
<b>SCENIC RESOURCES (continued)</b>										
Root River Views	Along the central and eastern segment of byway	n/a	Fillmore, Houston	n/a	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a	Byway criss-crosses Root River, where the main branch is located more on the eastern half of the corridor.
Rock Columns and "Pulpit Rock"	Off Root River Trail near Isinours Junction	Carrolton Twp	Fillmore	Lanesboro	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	0-2 miles	Isolated columns of resistant carbonate rock left when surrounding rock was eroded away.
Yucatan Valley	West of Houston on CR 4	Yucatan Twp	Houston	Caledonia	n/a	Yes	No	Yes	0-2 miles	Dramatic and historic landscape.
Farmland and Small Town Landscape	Throughout corridor	n/a	Mower, Fillmore, Houston	n/a	n/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a	Entire byway winds through quaint small towns and rolling farmland.
<b>ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES</b>										
Grand Meadow Quarry Site	1 mile NW of Grand Meadow	Grand Meadow	Mower	Grand Meadow	Yes	No?	No	No	0-2 miles	10,000 year old chert quarry pits, now owned by the Archaeological Conservancy
Yucatan Fort Site	Off CR 4 southwest of Houston	Black Hammer Township	Houston	Houston	Yes	Yes	No	No	5-10 miles	Small grouping of earthworks believed to be associated with the Oneota people who occupied the area from 1400 A.D. to 1650 A.D. Provides insight into the importance of agriculture to Native American groups in the Upper Mississippi River Valley. Also illustrates how the availability of a more stable food source that agriculture provided allowed for the creation of larger villages and settlements.

Name	Location (Address)	City/Township	County	Nearest Town	NRHP?	Open to Public?	Root River Trail Access	Root River Access	Distance from TH 16	Description/Notes
<b>CULTURAL RESOURCES</b>										
Houston County Historical Society Museum Complex	104 History Lane	Caledonia	Houston	Caledonia	No	Yes	No	No	5-10 miles	Log Home, early school house, church, agriculture building, town hall and other displays of early life in Houston County; open year round M, T & W 10-4; and Sat & Sun 1-4 June-Sept.
Amish Country/Amish Tours	Canton/ Harmony		Fillmore	Harmony	n/a	Yes	Yes	No	5-10 miles	Several tour operators in Harmony and Lanesboro provided guided tours of Amish farms and countryside
Historic Preservation Museum	Lanesboro	Lanesboro	Fillmore	Lanesboro	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	0-2 miles	Open M-SU 10am-5pm; City history and artifacts. Located on the Root River Trail in downtown Lanesboro.
<b>HISTORICAL RESOURCES</b>										
Schech's Mill	off Co. Hwy. 10 (Beaver Creek Valley State Park) T102N, R6W, NW-NW-SE Sec. 5	Caledonia Twp	Houston	Caledonia	Yes	Yes	No	No	5-10 miles	Phone 896-3481; Open to public for mill tours; privately owned, but located within Beaver Creek State Park; tours usually by appointment only.
Fillmore Country History Center and Genealogy Library	Hwy. 52 & Co. Rd. 8	Fountain	Fillmore	Fountain	No	Yes	Yes	No	2-5 miles	Features museum displays on history of Fillmore County, agricultural displays, Pietenpol Airplane and hangar; genealogy library. Open 7 days during summer; Open M-F during winter.
Exchange State Bank	NW corner Main St. & 1st St.	Grand Meadow	Mower	Grand Meadow	Yes	Yes	No	No	0-2 miles	Architecturally significant and attractive bank building in downtown.

Name	Location (Address)	City/Township	County	Nearest Town	NRHP?	Open to Public?	Root River Trail Access	Root River Access	Distance from TH 16	Description/Notes
<b>HISTORICAL RESOURCES (continued)</b>										
Lanesboro Historic District	vicinity of Kirkwood St. , Coffee St. and Parkway St.	Lanesboro	Fillmore	Lanesboro	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	0-2 miles	Grouping of commercial buildings dating from 1868 to 1929. Mostly commercial businesses directed to tourists, includes museum, theater, art gallery.
Lanesboro Stone Dam	off Kirkwood St. on Root River, T103n, R10W, SW-SW-SE Sec. 13	Lanesboro	Fillmore	Lanesboro	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	0-2 miles	Historic dam is viewable from public park, offering a scenic place by the water
Chicago Milwaukee & St. Paul Bridge	off Parkway St. over Root River	Lanesboro	Fillmore	Lanesboro	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	0-2 miles	Bicycle trail uses bridge; interpretive signs about Lanesboro and the Milwaukee Road are located near bridge; Museum is near bridge.
1877 Peterson Station Museum	Peterson	Peterson	Fillmore	Peterson	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	0-2 miles	Open SA-SU 11am-4pm; Established in 1974 after Community of Peterson moved the former CMStP Railroad Station to its present site; local memorabilia, artifacts, photographs of local interest; original depot authorized in 1876 and built in 1877;
Forestville Townsite	Off Co. Rd. 12 (Forestville State Park) T102N, R12W, Sec. 12, 13	Forestville Twp	Fillmore	Preston	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	5-10 miles	Includes 8 properties listed on the National Register. MHS historical site, open to the public. Closed in winter.
Allis Barn (Reliance Stock Farm)	off Co. Hwy. 17	Carrolton Twp	Fillmore	Preston	Yes	Yes	No	No	2-5 miles	The Old Barn Resort has as much or as little as you would like. Tucked away in a scenic Southeastern Minnesota valley, you'll find a National historic site, the Allis Barn. Built in 1884-85 and re-built in 1988-90, the Barn is the centerpiece of the property

Name	Location (Address)	City/Township	County	Nearest Town	NRHP?	Open to Public?	Root River Trail Access	Root River Access	Distance from TH 16	Description/Notes
<b>HISTORICAL RESOURCES (continued)</b>										
Milwaukee Elevator Company Grain Elevator	NW corner Fillmore St. & Center St.	Preston	Fillmore	Preston	No	No	Yes	Yes	0-2 miles	Located at rail parking lot and rest area with public restrooms.
Southern Minnesota Depot (Restored Railroad Depot)	Elm St. & Pickle Alley	Rushford	Fillmore	Rushford	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	0-2 miles	"Oldest depot in Minnesota" now serves as the trail center. Built 1868.
Spring Valley Carnegie Library	201 Broadway S.	Spring Valley	Fillmore	Spring Valley	Yes	Yes?	No	No	0-2 miles	1904 Carnegie Library "representative of the educational aspect of Spring Valley' prosperity and progressive aspirations at the turn of the century."
Spring Valley Methodist Episcopal Church (a.k.a. Laura Ingalls Wilder Site)	221 Courtland St. W.	Spring Valley	Fillmore	Spring Valley	Yes	Yes	No	No	0-2 miles	Built 1876. Includes museum with a Wilder Photo Display, Religious Artifact Collections, Conley Camera Collection, Old-time Country Store, Local Pioneer Business Artifacts and Displays, Richard Sears Exhibit, 1874 Wooden Fire Wagon.
Washburn-Zittleman House	220 W. Courtland St.	Spring Valley	Fillmore	Spring Valley	No	Yes	No	No	0-2 miles	1865 Home & artifacts, 2 floors; 12 exhibit areas; also carriage house ag. Building, history hall, Fillmore County Veterans Memorial; jointly run with Wilder Site church.
Parson's Block and Hall	112 Broadway S.	Spring Valley	Fillmore	Spring Valley	Yes	Yes?	No	No	0-2 miles	1871 High Victorian Italianate commercial block illustrating the town's prosperity.
Wykoff Commercial Historic District	100 Gold St. S. - 123 Gold St. N.	Wykoff	Fillmore	Wykoff	Yes	Yes	No	No	0-2 miles	District includes 18 individual structures; mostly commercial structures, some have businesses related to tourists.

## SCENIC RESOURCES

### Grand Meadow Wayside

The Grand Meadow Wayside is located east of Grand Meadow along Deer Creek and is connected to Pine Lawn Park. The wayside is well signed and highly visible from the roadway. Besides providing restroom facilities and picnic areas, the wayside offers views of the rolling rural landscape and serenity of the winding creek. No interpretation of the wayside, park, or area is currently located there.

*Recommendations:* This is a critical location for interpretation, since it is near the western terminus of the Byway and in a location with few readily apparent resources. Several interpretive opportunities could be exploited at this wayside. This wayside is recommended as a key interpretive site, interpreting the nearby Grand Meadows Quarry, with interpretive panels discussing the significance of the quarry site and American Indian lifeways. Further notes at this wayside should indicate what could be seen in Grand Meadow, to lead travelers to that location.

### Farmland and Small Town Landscape

What the Southeastern Minnesota Historic Bluff Country is most likely known for is its picturesque landscape and quaint communities. Views of this landscape and small town life can be found throughout the Byway corridor. However, to date, interpretation that addresses these main traits as a whole is not found along the highway.

*Recommendations:* These types of resources are conveyed in the overall theme of the Byway and will be interpreted by a variety of means and in various locations. The overall tone, logo, and graphics of all interpretation should reflect image and feeling of the small towns along the Byway.

### Rock Columns and "Pulpit Rock"

A number of significant rock columns – in particular one named Pulpit Rock – can be found just off the Root River State Trail, north of Preston, at the Isinours Junction, where the Harmony-Preston and Root River State Trails connect. Little, if any, interpretation is being conducted at this site.

*Recommendations:* These geological formations are part of what makes this region unique. Interpretation should focus on the geological origins and development of these features. Directions to views of these features, accessible only by trail, should be found on the “Beyond the Byway” panel on the Fountain interpretive site.

### Preston Wayside

The Preston Wayside is located just east of the City of Preston, on the south side of TH 16, overlooking the fairgrounds and town. The historic wayside was built in the 1930s, and although it is constructed with attractive stone overlook walls, no facilities or interpretation exist at the site.

*Recommendations:* This is an excellent opportunity to utilize and enhance an existing WPA-era byway amenity at the hub of the Scenic Byway and has been recommended as a key interpretive site and gateway. The site should be used as an orientation to the Byway and can direct people to attractions in all four directions. Interpretation at this site can include enticements to visit Preston and experience the small town, as well as a discussion of the Amish community and the Amish Byway. Because this property is considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, funds may be available for its sympathetic restoration and rehabilitation.

### **Lanesboro Wayside (Inspiration Point)**

Inspiration Point is another historic wayside built in the 1930s and is located 2 miles southeast of the junction of Highway 16 and County State Aid Highway 21. The wayside is situated at the top of a bluff and overlooks the surrounding rolling landscape and the City of Lanesboro in the distance. The wayside consists of stone overlook walls, a stone fireplace, and stone picnic tables and benches. A metal marker was placed in 1997 discussing “Minnesota’s Norwegian Americans.”

*Recommendations:* Like the Preston Wayside, this historic wayside can also benefit from increased use and investment and is recommended as a key interpretive site. The WPA-era features should be restored and rehabilitated. The site is already interpreted with a metal marker near the road. Additional interpretation can discuss the development of Lanesboro as an industrial town. Any interpretation should be certain not to detract from the scenic beauty or historical character of the wayside.

### **Root River Views**

The Root River travels through most of the cities along the Byway east of, and including the City of Preston and in the cities of Fountain and Chatfield, north of the Byway. Ideal views can be observed in these cities, in Forestville/Mystery Cave State Park, and from the Root River State Trail. Nearly all public canoe accesses are signed off Highway 16. Some information about the Root River can be found at Forestville/Mystery Cave State Park, however, there is not a particular location that provides interpretation of the river itself.

*Recommendations:* The Root River is largely responsible for the formation of the special and scenic environment that visitors are experiencing. Interpretation of the river at is recommended at the Peterson Wayside, accessible from the Byway, the river and the trail. Interpretive panels can discuss the forces of the river, the environmental concerns, and recreational opportunities, like fishing.

### **Bluff Views**

Dramatic views of the steep river bluff topography can be viewed throughout the corridor of Highway 16, particularly east of Spring Valley. Currently, there is no site that provides information or interpretation of the history of the land or formation of the bluffs.

*Recommendations:* Interpretation on the geological formation of the valley should be discreetly placed so as not to compete with or obscure the scenic views of, or from the valley bluffs. Modest facilities or picnic grounds will enhance the experience for visitors. Hiking trails with

scenic vistas would further allow visitors to experience the environment. Such scenic views need little further in interpretation.

### Yucatan Valley

County Road 4 winds its way through the Yucatan Valley southwest of Houston. The valley is noted for its beautiful views of the rolling natural landscape, and is also known locally as an area of historic Native America activity. Signs directing visitors to the Yucatan Valley are not located on Highway 16, and no interpretation of the valley exists along County Road 4.

*Recommendations:* This drive through a scenic valley should be part of a driving tour and appropriately marked from the Byway. It can be used to access other resources, such as the Schech's Mill. Regulations regarding signage and other intrusions should be considered to protect the scenic beauty of this valley.

### Magelssen Park

Magelssen Park is located on the top of a bluff overlooking the City of Rushford. Scenic views are somewhat limited by mature trees. No interpretation exists at the park, and way finding from Highway 16 is difficult due to lack of signage.

*Recommendations:* Interpreted walking trails would make this park a desirable recreational resource in Rushford.

### Como Falls

Como Falls is located within a municipal park in Hokah, at the east end of Falls Street. It is a short but picturesque waterfall on Thompson Creek, just before the creek meets the Root River. The park includes a newly established sign with a history of Como Falls, Thompson Creek, and the immediate area where Edward Thompson – founder of Hokah – established a dam and saw mill. Unfortunately, the park is not well-signed from Highway 16, and travelers unfamiliar with the area have difficulty finding it.

*Recommendations:* The Como Falls, recommended as a key interpretive site, can be coordinated with Mt. Tom and should emphasize the human interaction with nature and interpret the American Indian presence in the Root River valley.

## **HISTORICAL RESOURCES**

### Exchange State Bank, Grand Meadow

This architecturally significant bank, designed by well-known Minnesota architects William Gray Purcell and George Grant Elmslie in 1910, features stylized decorative ornaments in terra cotta, glass, mosaic and wood. This was the first among many small distinguished banks designed by the architect duo. The building still operates as a bank.

*Recommendations:* Since this is still a place of business, interpretive plans must be done in cooperation with the current owner. However, this is among the few attractions at the western end of the corridor and illustrates the prosperity of agricultural towns as reflected in their

architecture. The property should be included on driving and architectural tours of the corridor. The stylized terra cotta panel can serve as a graphic marker or theme for the Grand Meadow area.

### Spring Valley Methodist Episcopal Church (a.k.a. Laura Ingalls Wilder Site), Spring Valley

Built in 1878, this church includes a museum with a Wilder photo display, religious artifact collections, the Conley camera collection, a country store, local pioneer business artifacts and displays, an exhibit on Richard Sears (founder of Sears & Roebuck), and a wooden fire wagon. It is open daily June, July and August and on weekends in September and October.

*Recommendations:* This historic site can capitalize not only on its association with Laura Ingalls Wilder, but also with its connections to Spring Valley's other impressive architectural properties. The church can be key to a variety of community festivals and events that might also be appealing to Byway visitors. The church can host pioneer-related programs, events, and activities targeted to specific interested groups. The church could be included on a walking tour of Spring Valley.

### Washburn-Zittleman House, Spring Valley

The 1865 house is open to public tours of its turn-of-the-century furnishings, quilts, and toys. The museum complex also includes an agricultural exhibit building and a workshop. It is run in cooperation with the Spring Valley Methodist Episcopal Church across the street.

*Recommendations:* This site already interprets small town and agricultural life in the nineteenth-century Spring Valley region through personal guided tours. The already well-established program should be expanded to provide visitors with other memorable experiences to take away with them. Children and parents would enjoy experiencing pioneer life by churning butter, riding farm equipment, reading by kerosene light, and cooking on a wood stove.

### Spring Valley Carnegie Library, Spring Valley

The 1904 Carnegie Library in Spring Valley is a symbol of the community's prosperity and aspirations at the turn of the twentieth century. Although the library recently moved from this building, it remains in public hands and now serves as city offices.

*Recommendations:* As public property, this facility retains a certain level of accessibility. At a minimum, it should be included on a walking tour of Spring Valley that highlights other structures that illustrate the town's prosperity at the turn of the century.

### Parson's Block and Hall, Spring Valley

The 1871 High Victorian Italianate commercial block illustrates Spring Valley's prosperity through its elaborate architecture in its downtown.

*Recommendations:* Preservation of this block, and other historic structures around it, should be considered a high priority. The continued use of the first floors for unique retail shopping will allow visitors to experience the historic building as originally intended and to bring business downtown. The building should be included on a walking tour of Spring Valley.

### Wykoff Commercial Historic District, Wykoff

This historic district in downtown Wykoff includes 18 individual properties, mostly commercial. The town was platted by the railroads when they were established in the area. Some of the existing downtown businesses offer establishments of interest to tourists.

*Recommendations:* Wykoff, with its picturesque Gold Street of brick-faced commercial buildings, illustrates the type of town that arose following the arrival of the railroad and is recommended as a key interpretive site. The town's history can be contrasted with Forestville, which declined once it was bypassed by the railroad. Visitors should be encouraged to compare and contrast the experience and look at each of the towns. Businesses that would be of interest to tourists should be encouraged to capitalize on the charming downtown area. The Historic Wykoff Jail Haus bed and breakfast is a good example of the type of business that successfully utilizes, and interprets, a historic property. Ed's Museum, a private museum on Gold Street with a collection of Jack Sprat grocery items and memorabilia, has the potential to offer visitors the small-town, historic experience. The museum could perhaps be combined with a "real" general store where gifts and other items could be purchased.

### Forestville Townsite, Forestville State Park

This property is a state historic site, managed by the Minnesota Historical Society. Costumed guides portray member of the Meighen family and other residents in their daily activities. The site is open Tuesday through Sunday in the summer and on weekends in September and October. It is located within Forestville State Park between Preston and Spring Valley, near Mystery Cave.

*Recommendations:* Many opportunities exist for interpreting this resource to a variety of audiences with the confluence of the historic, recreational, and scenic and natural resources. Management by the Minnesota Historical Society ensures that interpretation of the Forestville Townsite will be active and engaging. Nearby communities, such as Preston and Spring Valley, should coordinate with the Forestville management and marketing activities so special programs can be extended beyond the historic site. If individuals or groups are drawn to Forestville for specific programs or events, local towns should further accommodate them with complimentary activities, events, and accommodations.

### Downtown Chatfield

Downtown Chatfield offers a scenic main street experience north of the Byway with handsome brick-faced commercial buildings and schools facing U.S. 52, a major north-south route.

*Recommendations:* Chatfield is recommended as a major gateway to the Byway, although it is about 12 miles north of TH 16. The TH 52 route, however, is the quickest and most direct way to get to the Historic Bluff Country Scenic Byway from the Twin Cities. Interpretation should focus not only on the resources of Chatfield, but also provide an introduction to the entire Scenic Byway. The city park along Chatfield's main street provides a highly visible venue, with parking for interpretive information on the Historic Bluff Country and Chatfield for travelers heading south toward the Byway. The development and implementation of a historic preservation plan with design guidelines for its Main Street will do much to enhance the look and feel of Chatfield.

### Milwaukee Elevator Company Grain Elevator, Preston

This Preston grain elevator, a monumental structure typical of many small towns in grain-producing country, is located along the rail tracks, near the river, and near the Root River Trail. It currently serves as a trailhead for the Root River Trail with public restrooms.

*Recommendations:* This property is a prominent visitor stop in Preston and should be noted on the key interpretive site and gateway at the Preston Overlook. Interpretation at this site should focus on the role of central communities, and grain elevators, in rural regions. An opportunity to see or experience the function of grain elevators and how they work would help to reinforce the understanding.

### Allis Barn (Reliance Stock Farm), near Preston

The historic Allis Barn, constructed in 1884 and 1885, is used as a centerpiece of the Old Barn Resort, which offers a hostel, camping, restaurant, and recreational facilities. The resort, near Preston, is open April 1 through October 31. Although this is a privately owned resort, the public restaurant and bar (located in the barn) make this a good opportunity for visitors to view the inside of the massive building and appreciate its architecture and history.

*Recommendations:* Opportunities exist for the proprietors to host tours focused on agriculture and local history. Groups visiting the area can lodge or dine at this historic property and learn more about agricultural history in an inspiring setting.

### Lanesboro Historic District, Lanesboro

The Lanesboro Historic District is a grouping of commercial and industrial buildings and structures dating from 1868 to 1929 in the heart of Lanesboro. Most of the downtown section, primarily along Parkway, continue to serve as commercial properties, many of them catering to the thriving tourist trade, including shops, restaurants, a museum, a theater, and an art gallery. Some stores provide for tourist activities, such as bicycles rentals.

Lanesboro has recently installed a series of sculptural medallions throughout Lanesboro showcasing different aspects of the community and environment. This program is called “Discover Sculpture – Explore Lanesboro” and will be enhanced with a brochure that will allow visitors to walk from one medallion to another, encouraging them to explore Lanesboro.

*Recommendations:* Lanesboro is not only the geographical center of the Byway, but also a hub of cultural, historical and tourist activity, and therefore a tremendous tourist draw. A Byway Information Center should be located in Lanesboro to market the Byway to the visitors who come to the area only to see Lanesboro. This center can provide information, such as literature and signage that will introduce tourists to other opportunities in the region and draw them east and west along the Byway.

### Lanesboro Stone Dam, Lanesboro

This historic dam can be seen from public property and is considered to be a scenic, as well as historic site. It offers a pleasant location to sit or eat by the waterside and listen to the rushing water fall over the dam. Handicap fishing access is provided.

*Recommendations:* Use this scenic setting as a place for visitors to relax by the waterside by providing picnic tables and other amenities. An interpretive maker would be helpful to explain the history of the dam and its significance in the industrial development of Lanesboro.

### **Chicago Milwaukee & St. Paul Bridge, Lanesboro**

This railroad bridge is situated just off of Parkway, Lanesboro's main street, and is now incorporated into part of the Root River bicycle trail. Interpretive panels about the Milwaukee Road railroad are located on the bridge.

*Recommendations:* This bridge is currently being well-utilized as an appropriate interpretive tool describing the railroad's presence in Lanesboro. It is located near the Lanesboro Historic Preservation Museum and is easily accessible to cyclists and pedestrians.

### **1877 Peterson Station Museum, Peterson**

This museum, located in the 1877 Peterson train depot, was established in 1974 after the community moved the train station to the present site. Local memorabilia, artifacts, and photographs of local interest are on display. The museum is open Saturday and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

*Recommendations:* This building and museum is one of several properties valuable in interpreting the railroad's contribution to the region, in addition to the history of Peterson. Further interpretation of its holdings, along with expanded hours, is recommended to introduce visitors to historic Peterson.

### **Southern Minnesota Depot, Rushford**

The Southern Minnesota Depot in Rushford, built in 1868, serves as a Root River Trailhead, providing parking and public restrooms. A display of historic materials is also located within this building.

*Recommendations:* The old depot, among the oldest in Minnesota, is ideal to serve as an interpretative site for railroads, with good access to the Byway and to the Root River Trail. Possible interpretive experiences include hands-on displays of working in a depot, information on the railroad's influence on Rushford's development and growth, and a starting point for walking tours of historic Rushford.

### **Schech's Mill, Caledonia Township**

The Schech's Mill, located on private property within Beaver Creek Valley State Park in Caledonia Township, is a particularly scenic image of the once-important milling industry. The mill is known as the state's last direct-drive, water-powered mill run with its original equipment. The property, which can still function, is generally open to the public on weekends, May to October, or by appointment. The mill is located off of a winding gravel road, about a 10-mile drive from the Byway.

*Recommendations:* Schech's Mill faces several interpretive challenges. This mill is well known regionally and is a cherished historical resource. Although the private owner is committed to preserving the property, he is reluctant to open it to regular tours. The DNR has expressed

interest in obtaining it, and potentially operating it as a historic site, but the current owners intend to keep it in private hands. The family has sought a \$400,000 grant from public sources for restoration work to the mill, dam, sluice, and bridge, but was not eligible because the property was privately held.

Several steps must be taken before Schech's Mill can be interpreted and accommodate more tourists. The property must establish increased and reliable hours for public tours. Sufficient signage must be erected to direct visitors to the isolated location. The mill must be integrated into, and promoted by, interpretive literature in order to draw people the extra distance to visit the site.

Communication with the owners should be established to seek ways to benefit the public and accommodate their financial and restoration needs. Opportunities to collaborate with the Beaver Valley State Park's programs and funding potential should be considered and pursued.

## NATURAL RESOURCES

### Sinkholes, Fountain

Hundreds of sinkholes can be found all around southeastern Minnesota. A few of these have been selected for greater tourist attention near the City of Fountain. Two sinkholes in particular are outlined and marked- one is near the City sign and one is near the trailhead of the Root River State Trail. Unfortunately, both of these noted sinkholes are without any formal interpretation.

*Recommendations:* Sinkholes provide an intriguing and delightful curiosity in this part of the state. Visitors would be pleased to know more about the unique formations and Fountain is recommended as a key interpretive site to address this subject. Interpretive discussions of the two identified sinkholes should discuss their geological origins. Further information about the geological formations can be provided at the Fillmore County History Center and Genealogy Library in Fountain. Regional interpretation and marketing should be done in cooperation with Mystery Cave and Niagara Cave.

### Niagara Cave , near Harmony

Located 2 miles south of Harmony, Niagara Cave is one of the largest caves in the Midwest and a prime example of the unique geology of the region. The cave is privately owned and interpretation is handled through tours given on a seasonal basis.

*Recommendations:* This resource is being successfully interpreted. Future interpretation and marketing should be done in conjunction with other regional sites and resources, especially those with appeal to rock hounds and spelunkers, such as the sinkholes near Fountain and Harmony.

### Mystery Cave, Forestville State Park

Mystery Cave is part of Forestville/Mystery Cave State Park and maintained by the Minnesota DNR. Like Niagara Cave, it offers an opportunity to see karst geology that characterizes the area from a different perspective. Interpretation is given through guided tours and literature distributed by the park. The cave is open seasonally.

*Recommendations:* Like Niagara Cave, interpretation and marketing should be coordinated with other geological sites and resources in the area.

### Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forest

The R.J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood Forest consists of scattered pieces of designated land throughout southeastern Minnesota. Within the Historic Bluff Country, it is contained mostly within Fillmore and Houston counties. The majority of the forest is privately owned. However, tracks of public land are divided into Forest Units and include the Isinours, Vinegar Ridge, Brightsdale, Reno, Gribben Valley, Oak Ridge, Money Creek, and Diamond Creek.

*Recommendations:* Posted nature trails and guided tours through publicly owned portions of the forest could illuminate visitors to the natural flora and fauna of the area. Trail signs can be adjusted seasonally to note the changing life cycles of the plant and animals. Emphasizing nature's activities during the winter will help to draw snow-shoers and cross-country skiers during the off season.

### Root River

The Root River winds its way through Southeastern Minnesota, with its main channel passing through the cities of Hokah, Houston, Rushford, Peterson, and Whalen. West of Whalen, the main channel splits into the Middle Branch and South Branch of the Root River. The Middle Branch curves north and west to the community of Fillmore where it then splits into smaller creeks and streams. The North Branch stems north from the Middle Branch near County Road 5 and travels north through Chatfield and into Olmstead County. The South Branch extends from the main channel southwest through Lanesboro, Preston and Forestville/Mystery Cave State Park where it begins splitting into tinier streams. Finally, the South Fork leaves the main channel near Houston and winds its way southwest through the Yucatan Valley. Some interpretation is provided by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) at some of the canoe accesses and the state park.

*Recommendations:* Not only is the Root River a natural resource, but also a well-used recreational and scenic resource. Paddlers enjoy many spans of the river, which can be considered a second "byway." Interpretive media can be provided to river users to watch for the many resources that are passed along the way, such as the towering bluffs, mills, and railroad beds and bridges.

### Mound Prairie State Natural Area

The Mound Prairie State Natural Area is located adjacent to Highway 16, approximately two miles west of Hokah. The purpose of the natural area is to restore the original prairie land that once existed in the region. Mound Prairie State Natural Area is managed by the DNR, however, little interpretation currently exists for this site.

*Recommendations:* Mound Prairie provides an excellent opportunity to inform visitors about native prairie vegetation and animal life and what the restoration process means. With the resources, travelers will be able to envision the way the countryside looked in its natural state. This can be contrasted with their visual experiences of the cultivated areas.

### **Mount Tom**

Mount Tom, in the City of Hokah, is generally located just south of the Root River and east of Highway 16. The markedly pointed bluff stands out as a landmark to local residents, but is not utilized as a recreational resource. Therefore, little interpretation currently exists for the distinct peak. Mount Tom also borders along the Como Park, a city park where Thompson flows over Como Falls and eventually dumps into the Root River.

*Recommendations:* The interpretation of Mount Tom, along with Como Falls, should emphasize human reaction to, and interaction with, the land, and special land formations. A location with a view of the bluff can include the interpretation of American Indian, as well as Euro-American, responses to prominent land formations, and in particular to Mt. Tom.

## **CULTURAL RESOURCES**

### **Amish Country/Amish Tours, Harmony and Lanesboro**

Several private tour operators in Harmony and Lanesboro provide guided tours of the Amish farms and countryside. These enterprises interpret the Amish ways and coordinate with specific families who invite visitors onto their farm. Visitors have the opportunity to purchase handmade furniture, crafts and baked goods. Visitors who do not take the tours may also experience Amish families selling goods on waysides, may be invited to a farm, and will frequently see horse-drawn buggies traveling in shoulder lanes.

*Recommendations:* This is an experience that many visitors take great pleasure in, especially since they can have a cultural exchange with Amish families and bring home handmade, unique souvenirs of their experience. The Amish experience is a strong attraction to this region, but it should be sensitively interpreted and not exploited, thereby risking a loss of authenticity.

### **Fillmore County History Center and Genealogy Library, Fountain**

The museum features displays of Fillmore County, agricultural displays, and a genealogy library. The story of Bernard Pietenpol, “the father of the homebuilt aircraft movement in the United States,” is interpreted at this site with display of one of his airplanes and a hangar. It is open seven days a week during the summer, and Monday through Friday during the winter.

*Recommendations:* The history center can serve as a source and location for history-related events and meetings, as well as a point for visitors to receive information on the variety of resources along the Byway. Further interpretation of the nearby sinkholes and karst terrain would also be appropriate at this site. Changing the winter schedule to Tuesday through Saturday would give better access to weekend visitors during the winter season.

### Lanesboro Historic Preservation Museum, Lanesboro

The Historic Preservation Museum, Lanesboro's history museum, is located in downtown Lanesboro, just off the Root River and the Root River Trail. It offers interpretive displays of Lanesboro's history and artifacts and is open daily from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

*Recommendations:* The museum's proximity to the Byway, the river, and the trail, combined with Lanesboro's central location on the Byway, make this an excellent location from which to distribute interpretive information about the Byway, to direct visitors to other nearby resources, and to familiarize people with the wide range of resources beyond Lanesboro.

### Houston County Historical Society Museum Complex, Caledonia

This complex includes a collection of early settlement structures, such as a log home, schoolhouse, church, agriculture building, and other displays interpreting early life in Houston County on the grounds of the Houston County Fair in Caledonia. The museum is open year-round Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. from June through September.

*Recommendations:* This site can serve as a hub of interpretation activity for the southeastern portion of the corridor. It can host a variety of historical experiences, especially those focused on children who would particularly enjoy the hands-on experience available at the museum. Consideration should be given to weekend hours during the winter, with events scheduled on winter weekends, to draw more visitors year-round.

### Festivals and Cultural Experiences

The Historic Bluff Country is home to many local festivals, celebrations and other cultural events that visitors find highly enjoyable. These seasonal events can and should be considered cultural events themselves. Examples include Western Days, an Old Fashioned Fourth of July, Fall Foliage Festival, Holiday Fest, Art in the Park, Buffalo Bill Days, and Oktoberfest to name a few.

*Recommendations:* Festivals and events are excellent resources to attract return business, as visitors are more likely to experience such an event a second time, since no experience is ever the same. No further interpretation is necessary, but notification of these events should be promoted to potential first time and return visitors through newsletters, web sites, e-mail notification and other means. A visit for a special event is likely to lead to other visitation and further experiences in the area.

## RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

### Forestville/ Mystery Cave State Park

The main part of Forestville/Mystery Cave State Park is located approximately four miles south of Highway 16 off County State Aid Highway 5. The park contains the historic town of Forestville where interpretation is relayed to visitors through character role-play and literature.

Mystery Cave is a few miles southwest of the main park. Interpretation there is provided through group tours through the cave given by park guides.

*Recommendations:* The interpretive and marketing plans for Forestville/Mystery Cave State Park can benefit from the combination of the natural, recreational and historical sites located within its boundaries. Thematic events can be coordinated to take advantage of existing interpreted experiences at the Mystery Cave and the historic site, along with on-site camping facilities. This location, in fact, is the epitome of the small town in a spectacular natural setting, a theme used throughout the Byway. Events could include such themes and settling on the plains, pioneers days, and address environmental issues on making our mark lightly upon the earth.

### Harmony-Preston Valley State Trail

The Harmony-Preston Valley State Trail is an 18-mile multiple-use trail that connects the communities of Harmony and Preston and connects to the Root River State Trail just north of Preston. The trail follows or crosses Watson Creek, the South Branch of the Root River, and Camp Creek, and cuts cross country through wooded areas and farmland. Some interpretation can be found at the trailheads in Preston and Harmony, but it is not very comprehensive.

*Recommendations:* Like the Root River State Trail, the Harmony-Preston Valley State Trail is a recreational resource that also serves as an alternative byway. Interpretation in the areas near the trail should be made accessible to those using the trail to enhance this experience.

### Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center, near Lanesboro

The Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center offers a variety of programs for groups of all ages and is open to the public. The center is located north of Lanesboro off County Road 21. Interpretation is provided by facilitators and volunteers of the center.

*Recommendations:* This interpretive center should be considered a focus of the natural resource sites, along with the Houston Nature Center. It should be included on a driving tour of other nature-oriented sites along the Byway. Furthermore, this organization can help to coordinate the interpretation of natural resources along the entire Byway by developing specialized brochures, guided walking and driving tours, and contribute to interpretive signage.

### Root River Canoe Accesses

Along the Byway, signs to the canoe accesses are found in the following towns: Houston, Rushford, Peterson, Lanesboro, Preston, and Chatfield. Another is also located on Highway 16 just west of Whalen. At most access points, signage provided for by the Minnesota DNR offers a map of the river, stipulations, and general information.

*Recommendations:* Paddling the Root River by canoe is but one way to experience the resources along the river. Interpretive sites should be accessible by river users where resources are visible from the river.

### Root River State Trail

The Root River State Trail is a multiple-use trail that extends for 42 miles through the cities of Fountain, Lanesboro, Whalen, Peterson, Rushford, and Houston. Some interpretation can be

found at trailheads and at the Root River State Trail visitor center in Lanesboro. Some interpretation at trailheads is available and accessible to users and non-users of the trail.

*Recommendations:* The Root River State Trail should not only be considered a recreational resource, but also an alternative travel route, or a walking/cycling byway. Future interpretation should continue to be made accessible to users and non-users of the trail.

### Houston Nature Center, Houston

The new Houston Nature Center is located at the Root River State Trail trailhead in Houston. Programs provide interpretation of the region, natural surroundings, and wildlife.

*Recommendations:* With the Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center, the Houston Nature Center can serve as a primary point of interpretation of natural resources along the Byway. Furthermore, it can help to coordinate the interpretation of natural resources along the entire Byway by developing specialized brochures, guided walking and driving tours, and contribute to interpretive signage.

### Beaver Creek State Park, Caledonia Township

Beaver Creek State Park is located off Highway 76, just west of Caledonia. Interpretation is handled by the Minnesota DNR and park programs.

*Recommendations:* This state park lends itself to natural and environmental interpretation. Existing interpretation includes organized walks through the state park and spring wildflower tours. These types of seasonal events emphasize the experience and encourage travelers to come for repeat visits. To appeal to a wider audience, interpretation and marketing should be done in coordination with the Schech's Mill.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

### Grand Meadow Quarry Site, near Grand Meadow

The 10,000 year-old chert quarry, known as the Grand Meadow Quarry site and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, demonstrates the dependence of Native Americans on the land and its geology. The site is now owned by The Archaeological Conservancy, a national organization dedicated to acquiring and preserving the best of the nation's remaining archaeological sites. While the site is not open to the public and its location is kept confidential due to concerns over looting, the Conservancy does occasionally provide student tours.

*Recommendation:* This resource is critical to the interpretation for the west end of the corridor, where resources are few. Coordination with The Archaeological Conservancy will be necessary to interpret the site at the nearby wayside as one of the key interpretive sites. An interpretive panel can describe the site without revealing the specific archaeological site. The Archaeological Conservancy is a possible source of funding, and interpretation is consistent with its mission for public education. The site should be included on an overall map of Native American sites in the region, and might also be included on specialized archaeological tours.

### Yucatan Fort Site, Black Hammer Township

The Yucatan Fort is a small grouping of earthworks that is believed to be associated with the Oneota people, who occupied the area from 1400 A.D. to 1650 A.D. This National Register of Historic Places-listed site provides insight into the importance of agriculture to Native American groups in the Upper Mississippi River Valley. It also illustrates how the availability of a more stable food source that agriculture provided allowed for the creation of larger villages and settlements.

*Recommendations:* This significant archaeological site should be included on the general Native American interpretive map and also on specialized archaeological tours. Possible interpretive signs in this area could include comments regarding the geological formations of the region and the Native American use of the land.