

Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway Alliance Annual Report for 2015

Welcome to the Minnesota River Valley! The MNRVNSB Alliance currently has 33 members along the Minnesota River corridor. We are proud of our new mobile friendly website at www.mnrivervalley.com. It is about a year old and we continue to plan improvements to the website. All of our efforts are aimed at continued byway awareness and enticing visitors to travel the byway.

Kristi Fernholz, the MRVMSB Coordinator, has had many byway projects this year. Along with the alliance, she continued to work on the Corridor Management Plan and Marketing Plan. She completed a planning grant from Minnesota Department of Transportation, and represented the byway at the Explore Minnesota Tourism conference in February 2015.



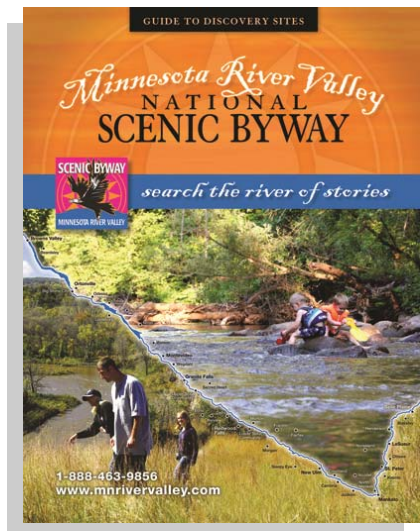
The Minnesota Historical Society has been a great partner and we continue to work with them to market the Byway Mobile Tour. The US - Dakota War of 1862 and the Dakota story are one of our two major themes along with the unique geology of the valley. Both are unique reasons for people to travel along the Minnesota River.

The beautiful Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway Visitors Guide features several discovery sites for you to explore. This year we started working on a new byway visitors guide to be completed in early 2016. Our printed guide is published every two to three years. An important part of our work is to distribute the byway guides. The guide continue to be popular with chambers and visitor centers along the valley as well as in the Mall of America.

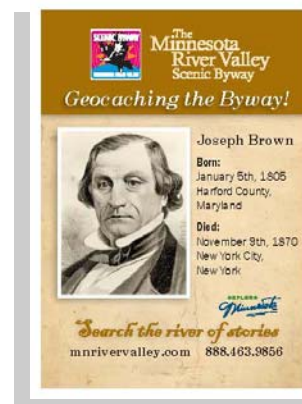
This is the third year of the ongoing geocaching project called "Who's Who in the U.S. – Dakota War of 1862" which continues to be popular with visitors.



New mobile friendly website!



Current Visitors Guide



Geocaching card



Social media is a growing part of our marketing; our facebook page now has 584 followers! We just started an Instagram page with the hashtag #MNRiverValley. We're excited about creating a series of videos to use in marketing the byway; six videos will be finished in June 2016 by Flying Buttress Media of New Ulm. These will be a variety of themes with one longer video highlighting the entire byway. They will be posted on youtube, facebook and available for byway members to use.

The third annual byway long garage sale was held in May 2015. This project has been a good way to get our cities along the byway to work together on coordinating their city-wide garage sales. In 2016, we plan to promote individual city-wide sales instead of a byway long sale.

We completed the 2015 Annual Byway Calendar featured "Transportation Along the Byway" photographs and byway events. We do not plan to continue with the calendar for 2016. Both the calendar and byway long sale have been extremely valuable in the past, but it is good to try new things.

Four alliance members, Mary Gillespie, Nicole Elzenga, Terri Dinesen and Kristi Fernholz attended the State Byway conference in Detroit Lakes in November. They came back with new ideas and information to use going forward. Sharing ideas with other byways in Minnesota is a benefit to everyone and the alliance wants to continue this process and encourage more state wide coordination of the byways.

The Alliance is a dedicated group of volunteers who love the Minnesota River Valley and want to see more visitors enjoy its beauty. Come and search the river of stories!



Mary Gillespie
Mary Gillespie
2015 Byway Vice Chairperson
Granite Falls Area Chamber and CVB Executive Director