

2013

Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Trails Plan

A guide to trail planning and development in the Upper Minnesota Valley Region.



Preface

In 2002 the Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission created a Trail Planning Guide to provide guidance and how-to information for the development of trails in the UMRDC region. At that time, many trail groups were interested in trail development, but few trails had actually been built in the region, which is still the case in 2013. The 2002 Trail Planning Guide served two main purposes or needs; first, local trail planning entities needed guidance in how to begin planning a trail, connect with resources (both technical and fiscal), how to identify and connect with stakeholders and what to plan for in terms of cost from the first planning stage to construction and maintenance; and second, trail funding organizations and agencies were and still are, looking for trails that have gone through a well thought out planning process and for trails that are often part of a larger overall project or plan.

Since the completion of the 2002 Trail Planning Guide, some trails in the region have been built, but many remain in the planning stages or have simply been identified as a potential trail location. Additionally many local units of government including municipalities, counties and school districts in the region have been interested in active transportation planning in general, including Safe Routes to School and trails are certainly a component of the active transportation movement.

With much interest around active transportation options and alternatives (and because MnDOT is the source for the majority of the funding for creating this plan), the focus of the update and the bulk of the 2012 Regional Trails Plan is on multi-use paved trails in the region and compiling an inventory of existing trails, identifying potential trails and creating a prioritized list of potential trail projects in the region.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Introduction

In 1973, the Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission (UMVRDC) was organized by the area's local elected officials as authorized by the Minnesota Regional Development Act of 1969. Regional development commissions throughout the state were formed with the purpose "to insure the orderly and harmonious coordination of state, federal and local comprehensive planning and development programs for the solution of economic, social, physical and governmental problems of the state and its citizens by providing for the creation of regional development commissions." The Upper Minnesota Valley Region includes five counties, Big Stone, Chippewa, Lac qui Parle, Swift and Yellow Medicine, 37 cities, ten school districts and one tribal government.

Today, the UMVRDC continues to serve as a regional planning agency to coordinate among state, federal and local units of government, assisting local units of government to enable the region to thrive. To that end, the UMVRDC has a planning assistance contract with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to provide assistance, information and technical support for transportation issues affecting the region. This planning assistance contract with MnDOT allowed UMVRDC staff to develop the update to the regional trails plan.

The original Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission Trail Planning Guide, completed in 2002, was designed to inventory all of the trails in the region and provide assistance to those wanting to develop trails. The Trail Planning Guide set broad priorities for trail types, but mostly served as a resource for local units of government and trail groups looking for more information on how to go about trail development. It provided a recommended process for planning trails, described the benefits of trails, described trail operation and maintenance concerns, provided funding sources and provided contact information for technical assistance and supporting plans and documents.

The 2013 Update of the UMVRDC's Regional Trails Plan keeps much of the resource information, but provides an update to the trails inventory, including new maps that can be used as trail guides as well as a prioritized list of trail types with specific potential trail projects listed for each trail type category.

This plan outlines for local elected officials, other policy makers and trail groups the importance of trails and outdoor recreation facilities and the role they can play in local communities and the region. They can be economic generators, attract new residents to a community, build community among residents and contribute to a more active and healthy community. Many communities in the region are interested in attracting and retaining residents and workforce and trails and outdoor recreation amenities can aid in that effort.

There are many guides, plans and documents from a number of agencies and organizations regarding trails and trail planning. Some offer design standards or specifications and other technical assistance, while others offer policy guidance and set priorities throughout the State of Minnesota for trail development. This plan combines elements from statewide plans such as technical guidance and recommendations and guidelines for development; however this plan also provides an inventory of existing and identified future trails and prioritizes the list of identified future trails in the region.

While statewide plans and guidance influenced this plan, this document is meant to reflect the priorities and state of trail planning in the Upper Minnesota Valley Region. Chapter Seven, Planning Your Trail, goes into more detail of where to find statewide plans and guidance for trail planning and development.

Background

The purpose of the original Regional Trails Plan completed in 2002, called the *Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission Trail Planning Guide*, was to provide guidance for the development of trails in the UMRDC region. At that time many entities within the region were beginning to plan and construct trails. At that time, as is true today, the UMRDC was often involved with grant writing or administration of these trails, or involved with the grant selection process in the case of the old Transportation Enhancement Program under previous Federal Transportation bills.

In the early 2000s, it became clear that there were several needs for trail development in the region. At that time, local trail planning entities needed guidance in how to begin planning a trail, connecting with resources (both technical and fiscal), how to identify and connect with stakeholders, and what to plan for in terms of cost from the first planning stage to construction to maintenance. The need for guidance in trail planning still remains today and the original Trail Planning Guide, with a few updates, still meets the needs for providing trail planning guidance. Therefore, the update to the Regional Trails Plan focuses more on identifying existing and potential trails and the priorities of future trails. Another impetus for the Plan is that trail funding organizations and agencies were and still are looking for trails that have gone through a well thought out planning process and for trails that are often part of a larger overall project or plan.

The 2012 Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Trail Plan update was completed with assistance from the Minnesota Department of

MnDOT's Vision for bicycle safety: Minnesota is a place where bicycling is a safe and attractive option in every community. Bicycling is accommodated both for daily transportation and for experiencing the natural resources of the state.

MnDOT's Mission for bicycle transportation: MnDOT will safely and effectively accommodate and encourage bicycling on its projects in Minnesota communities, plus in other areas where conditions warrant. MnDOT will exercise leadership with its partners to similar results on their projects.

Transportation (MnDOT) through the UMVRDC's annual planning grant/contract to update the trail inventories and revisit the regional priorities with an emphasis on developing a list of prioritized projects that could aid in grant funding decisions for trails in the broader region into the future. This update also largely focused on multi-use paved trails as they have increased in popularity and many stakeholders in the region thought more guidance was needed for that type of trail.

There have previously been other planning efforts in the region regarding multi-use paved trails and recreation amenities. The following is a list of planning documents that have been developed regarding trails in Region 6W:

- Minnesota River State Trail Master Plan (DNR, 2007)
- Minnesota River Trail/Skunk Hollow Regional Park Concept Plans (SRF, 1998)
- Minnesota River Trail Preliminary Design and Engineering Study (SRF, 1998)
- Lac qui Parle County River/Trails Plan
- 1998 Minnesota River Watershed Comprehensive Recreational Guidance Document & Corridor Concept Plan

CHAPTER 2: PLANNING FRAMEWORK

UMVRDC Regional Trails Plan Planning Process

The previous Trails Planning Guide included a robust stakeholder engagement and participation process to develop the baseline for the region's trails plan. For this update, the focus was on data gathering, reviewing previous plans and contacting communities in the region about their desires for future trail development. As part of this process, public participation was still important to discern priorities in the region related to trails and future trail development. A Steering Committee was formed to help guide the planning process. Steering Committee members were instrumental in developing the vision and goals for the plan as well as developing guiding principles for trail development and determining trail priorities in the region based on the guiding principles. Two Regional Trails Steering Committee meetings were held, one on May 30th, 2012 and the second on July 18th, 2012.

Steering Committee Members

The following were invited to participate in the Regional Trails Plan Steering Committee. The end product would not have been possible without the commitment, hard work and guidance from those who participated. This group represented diverse communities and trails interests in the region.

Name	Organization
Andy Sander	Swift and Yellow Medicine County Engineer
Steve Kubista	Lac qui Parle and Chippewa County Engineer
Nick Anderson	Big Stone County Engineer
Jarrett Hubbard	MnDOT District 8 Planner
Kristy Rice	DNR
Ed Picht	Montevideo Citizen
Andy Stock	Dawson Police Chief
Jim Massee	Appleton Citizen
Gary Hendrickx	Swift County Commissioner
Steve Jones	Montevideo City Manager
Loren Hacker	Canby Schools Superintendent
Nick Johnson	Canby City Manager
Rob Wolfington	Benson City Manager
Alice Hanely	Big Stone Wildlife Refuge
Geoff Hathaway	Montevideo Citizen
Terri Dinesen	Upper Sioux Agency State Park
Jeremy Losinski	Lac qui Parle State Park
Windy Block	Clara City City Manager
Vicki Oaks	Ortonville EDA
Chris Klaven	City of Milan
Steve Schaub	Yellow Medicine County Assistant Engineer
Dennis Larson	Montevideo Citizen
Dave Smiglewski	Granite Falls Mayor

In addition to the Steering Committee, each community in the region was asked to report, via email, on existing trails in their community as well as any plans for future trails—in any stage of development—in their community. Therefore, the list of projects may or may not be fully encompassing of all desired trail projects in every community in the region, however this is a fluid document and as trail projects become known, they can be added to the list.

The draft plan was then distributed, via email, to the Steering Committee, the UMRDC Board, cities and counties in the region as well as other stakeholders such as MnDOT and the DNR for review and to allow for comments.

Vision and Goals

Planning begins with vision. The vision focuses on what a desirable future would include. It depicts, in words and images, what the community or region seeks to become—how it will look, how it will function, how it might be different or better twenty plus years from now. A simple definition of a vision might be a statement articulating the best possible future based on an understanding of current reality and anticipated future change.

As such, a vision statement must combine idealism and pragmatism. It should express our highest hopes for what the citizens want their community to become while taking into account the realities of where the community is at and the direction it is currently going.

The Regional Trails Steering Committee had the opportunity to express their vision for the future of trails in the region. It is upon this vision and accompanying ideals that this plan is based and to which its goals and policies strive to achieve.

Part of the job of the Steering Committee was to develop a vision and determine goals for the Regional Trails Plan. The following vision statement and goals help set the framework to determine good quality trail projects that are wanted in the region and help to support the priority areas that the Steering Committee developed.

Regional Trails Vision Statement:

Region 6W's Trail System will provide, to a diverse range of residents and visitors, a well-maintained non-motorized and motorized trail system that enables trail users to safely access communities and natural areas within and outside the region.

The goals listed below are intended for this plan—not as goals for the trails in each community. Each community in the region should bring together community stakeholders to develop goals for trails and other alternative modes of transportation and recreational opportunities within their community. The goals for the plan however do support the region's goals for a trail system.

Goals for the Regional Trails Plan:

1. Serve as a Regional Trails guide, with a complete inventory of trails and attractions in the region that can be used as a tourism and marketing tool.
2. Establish a thoughtful process for identifying regional priorities for future trail development and to create an ongoing list of prioritized regional trail projects.
3. Promote the regional trail system as an economic tool to encourage community and economic revitalization by creating and enhancing trails that draw visitors, improve property values and enhance quality of life.
4. Provide local trail groups and municipalities with the resources and knowledge needed to implement the regional trail plan.
5. Build public support and awareness of trails in region 6W.

6. Maximize the use of scarce resources through the coordination of planning and implementation efforts between local governments, counties, special districts, state and federal agencies and potential funding sources.
7. Develop a comprehensive, interconnected system of trails that will serve as a vital component of our region's transportation and recreation network.
8. Increase safe access to recreational opportunities for people of all ages, ethnicities and levels of mobility to encourage physical activity and healthy lifestyles.
9. Promote the enjoyment, use and conservation of recreational facilities, historic and cultural sites, scenic vistas, landscapes, wildlife habitat and open space through a connected system of trails.

CHAPTER 3: WHY TRAILS ARE IMPORTANT TO THE REGION

TRAIL TRENDS & DEMAND

There is a strong desire for increased recreational amenities, especially trails, of all types, throughout the State of Minnesota. Take the passage of the Legacy Amendment in 2008 as proof that Minnesotans value outdoor recreational experiences.

The desire for trails—specifically paved trails for bicycle or pedestrian use—is a consistent request seen when communities in the region are surveyed about community facilities. Demand for greater bicycle and pedestrian amenities are not seen only within the UMVRDC region or even the State of Minnesota; the demand for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure is a nationwide trend. This section of the plan outlines the local, statewide and national trends associated with alternative transportation and recreational options as well as the many economic, community, personal, health and environmental benefits associated with all trail types.

The benefits of trails are numerous and wide ranging from alternative transportation options to healthy recreational activities.

Demand for trails (bicycling and walking) and alternative transportation options

Americans are driving less. And increasingly, many Americans are choosing alternative modes of transportation for a variety of reasons, whether environmental, health or purely fiscal. For several years, the data on vehicle miles traveled (VMT) has been trending downward. In May of 2013, the Federal Highway Administration released its monthly travel-volume trend summary, which showed that for the first quarter of 2013, aggregate national VMT was down 0.8 percent and per-capita VMT was down 1.5 percent compared to the same quarter of 2012. Additionally, rolling 12-month figures were also down in both categories.

What this means is that even with population increases, Americans are driving less than they were a decade ago. These national trends can have a big impact on demand for alternative transportation infrastructure.

In Minnesota, we are seeing increased demand for trails of all types, but especially multi-use paved trails, as grant requests and grant-in-

“In 2002, the national Highway Transportation Safety Administration surveyed Americans on their behaviors and attitudes towards bicycling and walking. Seven in ten said that they would like to bike more than they do now. But less than half of those surveyed were satisfied by how their communities were designed for bicycling. The most popular changes for bicyclists were additional bike lanes, paths and trails, followed by improvements to existing facilities” (League of American Bicyclists and Alliance for Biking and Walking from NHTSA National Survey of Bicyclist and Pedestrian Attitudes and Behavior).

"The 2009 National Household Travel Survey indicates that biking and walking trips make up almost 12 percent of all trips made in the U.S., which is a 25 percent increase from 2001 at 9.5 percent. The potential for more biking and walking trips is large, as 28 percent of all trips are one mile or less, 40 percent of all trips are two miles or less and 50 percent of all trips are three miles or less."

Although it is likely that automobile travel will continue to be a leading mode of transportation in the region, many communities are still seeing demand for trails within their community. Many communities in our region are a great size for walking and biking anywhere one needs to go. For example as part of Clara City's Comprehensive Planning process, when residents were asked: "*What services and/or recreational facilities would most add to the quality of life in Clara City?*", biking, walking, trail and path were words most often cited by residents as the wordle below indicates.



Benefits of Trails and Outdoor Recreation Facilities: *economic benefits | health benefits | environmental benefits*

The benefits of all types of trails are numerous and wide ranging, from economic to health and environmental to social well-being. Trails are a year-round attraction in Minnesota from skiing or snowmobiling in the winter to canoeing, horseback riding or bicycling in the summer. Trails have positive impacts on the quality of life in Minnesota and our region and contribute to vibrant and attractive places.

As this Regional Trail Plan update focuses on multi-use paved trails, the benefits of bicycling and walking, specifically, are well documented and innumerable. Bicycling and walking have positive impacts on personal and public health, congestion mitigation, the environment, personal and public finances, tourism, economic development, land use patterns and sprawl, livability, personal well-being and many more aspects of our daily lives.

The benefits of trails and outdoor recreation can be broken down into five main categories of benefits: economic, community, personal, health and environmental.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS: *personal and community savings | economic growth and jobs | tourism revenue | business acquisition and retention | increased property values*

Bicycling and walking can save individuals, communities and regions money if people are driving less and choosing to walk and bicycle more. Additionally, bicycling and walking, and specifically bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and amenities, can also become revenue generators for a community and a region, drawing in tourists and creating vibrant and active communities.

Bicycling or walking as a means of transportation can mean substantial savings for individuals as well as the public. On a personal level, AAA's Your Driving Costs estimates that owning and operating a vehicle costs \$7,834 per year compared to \$120 for a bicycle (League of American Bicyclists) and walking is nearly free. As a community, bicycling and walking infrastructure is less expensive than automobile infrastructure. The World Watch Institute found that, "a mile's worth of urban highway can cost \$20-80 million, and often more, compared to a few thousand dollars or up to one million dollars for biking infrastructure. Similarly, bike parking is some 30 to 300 times cheaper than car parking."

Bicycling and walking are not only money savers for individuals, communities and regions, they, and all types of trails, can be revenue generators for communities and regions as well.

Bicycling and walking are not only money savers; they can also be revenue generators. Regions investing in bicycling have seen positive economic impacts. Below are examples from around the country.

- *Bicycling has contributed a total of \$1 billion to the State of Colorado's economy as of 2000. This includes bicycle manufacturing, retail, tourism and bicycle races (Colorado Department of Transportation).*
- *Bicycling has contributed \$556 million and 3,418 jobs in the State of Wisconsin (Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin and Wisconsin Department of Transportation).*
- *The State of Maine benefits from bicycle tourism in the amount of an estimated \$66 million each year (Maine Department of Transportation).*
- *The town of Outer Banks, North Carolina invested \$6.7 million on bicycle facilities and reports a nine to one return on investment, generating \$60 million from bicycle tourism (North Carolina Department of Transportation, Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation).*

**League of American Bicyclists and Alliance for Biking and Walking, The Economic Benefits of Bicycle Infrastructure Investments*

Tourism is a large part of the economy in Minnesota and trails of all kinds from the Root River Trail in Lanesboro to the Cuyuna Mountain Bike Trails near Brainerd and in our region, the Swift County OHV Park in Appleton, are increasingly becoming major tourist attractions. According to Explore Minnesota Tourism, in 2011, 239,855 private sector jobs were directly related to tourism and tourism contributed \$768,815,193 in sales tax to the Minnesota economy. In the Upper Minnesota Valley Region, in 2011, tourism contributed 1,070 local private sector jobs and \$2.7 million to our local economy. See the chart below for the numbers by county in the Upper Minnesota Valley Region.

Figure 3.1: Economic Impact from Tourism in Region 6W

Tourism Economic Impact by County, 2011

County	Gross Sales	Sales Tax	Private Sector Employment
Big Stone	\$3,949,420	\$287,489	140
Chippewa	\$15,631,426	\$1,089,963	387
Lac qui Parle	\$3,822,219	\$273,731	85
Swift	\$8,706,526	\$622,524	250
Yellow Medicine	\$19,109,119	\$490,538	208
UMVRDC Total	\$51,218,710	\$2,764,245	1,070

The following excerpt from *Why Parks and Trails are Important*, the Foundation for Preserving a Minnesota Legacy 2010 speaks to the importance of robust and well maintained outdoor recreation systems and their impacts on state and local economies.

In 2001, spending associated with visiting the Minnesota State Park System was \$218 million and supported nearly 3,400 jobs (MN DNR, 2002). Similarly, 2008 trail users in Minnesota spent \$3.3 billion, contributed \$2.8 million in local taxes and accounted for 43,000 jobs (Venegas, 2009). Although economic impact from parks and trails is a small component of Gross State Product (GSP), it is often concentrated in smaller communities where the impact is larger. Many of Minnesota's rural communities have come to rely on nature-based tourism as a significant portion of their economic health. Opportunities for outdoor recreation can attract new business and talented workers and help keep established businesses competitive. Small business owners have cited quality of life as a key reason for choosing a location (Crompton, Love & Moore, 2007). High quality of life makes it easier for businesses to attract and maintain a highly educated professional workforce and has been shown in at least one instance to be a bigger draw than a favorable business climate (Crompton, 2007). Park, recreation, and open space amenities are among the most important components of quality of life. Furthermore, providing and promoting quality outdoor recreational opportunities can be a more sustainable way of attracting and retaining businesses than offering tax or other cash incentives. Companies that relocate to an area for tax incentives alone will likely continue seeking out other tax incentives and move on when they are able. High-quality outdoor recreational opportunities cannot be so easily replaced. Another economic benefit of parks and trails are increased property values for homes nearby. Local and national studies have shown that the market values of properties near parks, trails, or open spaces frequently exceed those of comparable properties elsewhere (Anton, 2005; Crompton, 2007b). Increased property values also benefits communities by increasing real estate tax revenue.

Bicycle tourism, specifically, is an emerging trend that many savvy communities are capitalizing on by building infrastructure, providing bicycle amenities and promoting themselves as bicycle friendly. Minnesota as a whole is, in many ways, on the leading edge of bicycle friendliness, however many communities have a long way to go.

Many communities and states, including Vermont, Wisconsin, Maine, New York and more recently, Minnesota, are embracing bicycle tourism as they realize the economic benefits of a wider tourism market.

The State of Maine has been tracking the economic impacts of bicycle tourism throughout the state. The study, *Bicycle Tourism in Maine—Economic Impacts and Marketing Recommendations*, found that, “in 1999, direct spending in Maine by over 2 million bicycle tourists is estimated to have totaled \$36.3 million.”

Trail users' equipment needs, such as bicycles, skis and snowmobiles, have positive effects on manufacturers and retailers of these goods. According to the document, *The Outdoor Recreation Economy*, by the Outdoor Industry Association, outdoor recreation product sales totaled \$120.7 billion; this includes apparel, footwear, equipment, vehicles, accessories and services. Additionally, trips and

Characteristics of Bicycle Tourists:

- Primary age = 30 to 55
- Professional, white collar jobs with annual income of over \$60,000
- Enjoy eating out, canoeing, camping, hiking, theater, shopping, museums, historic sites, water sports, swimming, and beaches

What will attract them:

- Bicycle friendly streets and paths
- Access to scenic roads, natural areas, waterfronts, cultural and historic attractions
- Good restaurants
- Accommodations (campsites, bed and breakfasts, inns) with a hearty breakfast provided, or nearby
- Bicycle repair shops and other interesting stores (prefer local stores and restaurants over chain)
- Theater, music and art festivals
- Route maps and effective advertising

*Reprinted courtesy of Bike ONTOurs, Ontario Canada, Route Guides for Bicycle Touring- Consulting,
<http://www.bikeontours.on.ca>*

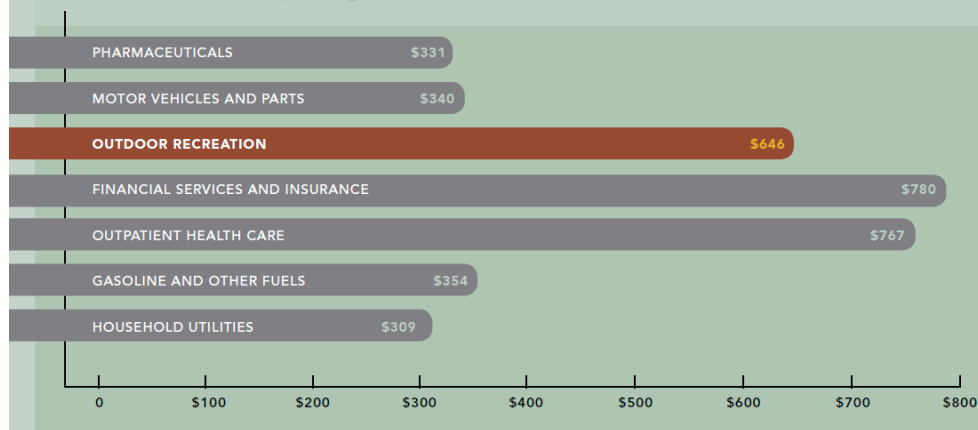
"Trails are the most desired community amenity that homeowners seek when buying a home" (National Association of Home Builders 2008).

travel related spending for outdoor recreation totaled \$524.8 billion; this includes food/drink, transportation, entertainment/activities, lodging, and souvenirs/gifts. This totals \$646 billion in direct sales related to outdoor recreation activities.¹

More than 140 million Americans make outdoor recreation a priority in their daily lives – and they prove it with their wallets. Each year, Americans spend \$646 billion on outdoor recreation.

An Overlooked Economic Giant

Annual Consumer Spending, in Billions



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Personal Consumption Expenditures by Type of Product, based on available 2010 data.

From The Outdoor Recreation Economy by the Outdoor Industry Association, 2012.

In addition to the many economic benefits already described, there is a growing body of research linking bicycle and pedestrian amenities to increased property values in nearby neighborhoods. According to *The Economic Benefits of Bicycle Infrastructure Investments* by the League of American Bicyclists and Alliance for Biking and Walking, “by mapping real estate transactions, researchers have been able to show that bike facilities can have positive, statistically significant impacts on home values.”

¹ http://www.outdoorindustry.org/pdf/OIA_OutdoorRecEconomyReport2012.pdf

HEALTH BENEFITS: *improved personal physical health | improved personal mental health | increased public health | lower healthcare costs*

Outdoor recreation, including trail use of any kind, is good for both our physical and mental health. These health benefits can be extruded from personal health to public health. Bicycling and walking specifically, are healthy recreational activities and transportation options and their health benefits have been well documented.

Despite the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' recommendation of at least 150 minutes of activity per week, inactivity among adults and youth remains high throughout the country. A more complete and accessible trail network would provide opportunities for residents in our region and visitors to be active. The healthcare implications of inactive Americans are problematic not only for public health officials, but due to rising healthcare costs, they have financial implications for communities and also for all Americans or tax payers.

Outdoor recreation opportunities can potentially decrease medical expenses. In 2000, medical costs in Minnesota associated with physical inactivity were \$495 million (Minnesota Department of Health, 2002). Recreation opportunities have been shown to decrease these expenses. For example, a 1.0 percent increase in trail or off-trail related activity is associated with a 0.07 percent decrease in overweight (Rosenberger, Bergerson & Kline, 2009). Further, just one additional day of physical activity per week has been found to reduce medical charges by 4.7% (Pronk, Goodman, O'Connor & Martinson, 1999).²

Obesity in America:

- 66% of American adults are overweight or obese
- 75% of American adults will be overweight or obese by 2015
- \$117 Billion – Annual cost due to people being overweight or obese in the US
- \$76.6 Billion – Potential annual healthcare savings if Americans were more active

Projected Healthcare Costs in Minnesota:

"A 2008 study for the state of Minnesota shows that healthcare costs are 12 percent higher for overweight people and 37 percent higher for obese people, relative to those for people of normal weight. By 2020, the cost of treating an obese person will be 61 percent greater than that of treating an average-weight person, if current trends continue. The study also notes that nearly 31 percent of the overall increase in healthcare costs between 2005 and 2020 will be due to the projected increases in obesity and overweight. The two conditions are projected to add \$3.7 billion to Minnesota's annual healthcare costs by 2020." World Watch Institute

² From *Why Parks and Trails are Important*, the Foundation for Preserving a Minnesota Legacy, 2010.

60 percent of the pollution created by automobile emissions happens in the first few minutes of operation, before pollution control devices can work efficiently. Since “cold starts” create high levels of emissions, shorter car trips are more polluting on a per-mile basis than longer trips” (League of American Bicyclists).

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS: *ecosystem services | environmental protection | sense of stewardship | environmental awareness | political/community involvement in environmental issues | reduced carbon footprint*

Trails of all types bring people to nature to foster a greater appreciation of the environment. Non-motorized trails such as those used for walking, bicycling, running, skiing, horseback riding, canoeing or kayaking offer even greater environmental benefits as they do not produce pollution and may even replace an automobile trip.

Bicycling and walking are the most popular environmentally friendly forms of transportation and could play a large role in helping Americans reduce their carbon footprint and auto dependence. Although automobiles are a necessary mode of transportation, especially in rural regions, like the Upper Minnesota Valley Region, there is still great potential for mode shift from automobiles to walking or bicycling for short trips. This is especially true within communities, as most of the communities in the region are relatively small in area and quite walkable and bikeable.

On a national level, according to a U.S. Department of Transportation survey, half of all trips in the United States are three miles or less—a distance easily traversable by bicycle. However, 72 percent of those trips are made in cars and less than two percent are made by bicycle. Additionally, trips of a mile or less are reached by automobile 60 percent of the time. Switching to a more environmentally friendly mode choice, like bicycling or walking, for these short trips can make the most environmental impact as short automobile trips cause the most pollution per mile driven.

CHAPTER 4: REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Chapter five is the meat of the Regional Trails Plan as it outlines the trail priorities that the Steering Committee came to consensus around. The previous version of the Regional Trails Plan identified regional priorities for trails. These priorities did not rank individual trail projects, rather they grouped like trail types together and prioritized these trail types based on what was most needed or wanted in the region. The Steering Committee working on the 2013 update to the plan took the same approach as it is impossible to develop a hard and fast ranked list of specific trail projects for the entire region. This is difficult to do because of the vast perspectives regarding trail development in the region and each community values their own trail projects over other communities', but also because trail projects are in varying levels of development from simply wishing for a trail, to those that have secured funding, but have not yet been built. Due to these realities, prioritizing trail types and listing specific trail examples within those types was the way the group chose to provide rankings.

The priorities outlined in this chapter are intended to support grass roots trail efforts that are occurring in this region. Granting agencies will often ask if an application is supported by a larger master plan. This plan can serve as support for applications to develop trails identified in this plan. Trail initiatives are largely grass roots citizen-driven efforts, and this plan recognizes that the development of trails may rise or fall due to funding opportunities, political support, and volunteers. When the climate is right for trail development, trail enthusiasts and supporters can use this document to guide them through a process that will ensure a successful project from start to finish. This plan provides a culmination of resources and information that cannot be expected to be known by first-time trail enthusiasts, while also recognizing that this plan is only a snapshot of what has occurred to our knowledge up until the date of this plan's publication. Therefore a plan modification process is included as Chapter 6.

DEFINING REGIONAL MULTI-USE PAVED TRAIL PRIORITIES

To get a sense of past priorities and to understand how the updated priorities were shaped, the priorities from the last plan are included here with the description of what each trail type would be, but without specific community examples.

2002 Regional Trail Priorities

Regional Priority # 1:

Develop intra-city trails since few trails currently exist in the region. It was determined that intra-city trails would serve the largest portion of the population. The regional trails committee discussed the priority segments of an intra-city trail system.

- A. Residential area connecting to downtown area.
- B. Residential area connecting to school.
- C. Residential area connecting to city parks and other recreation areas.
- D. Residential area connecting to other area.

The committee felt it would be important to connect the residential area to the downtown area first for potential economic growth. Next to connect the residential area to the school for a safe access for children to use to and from school. Next to connect the residential area to the parks for access for recreational use. Lastly, to connect the residential area to other trailheads in the community.

Regional Priority # 2:

Develop inter-city trails. This would provide access to more potential users from the communities. In addition, an inter-city trail would draw potential non-resident users.

Regional Priority # 3:

Connect a community with a rural destination (state park, county park, historical site, etc.). Many tremendous resources/trailheads exist in rural areas that would draw trail users. In this region, four state parks, a state and national wildlife refuge, county parks, historical sites, and many other natural resources are located in rural areas. These potential trailheads often have the necessary support facilities to justify a rural trail terminus.

Regional Priority # 4:

Connect several rural destinations. It was felt that although these trailheads might have all the necessary support facilities by having at least one terminus in a community, the trail would have higher usage.

After looking at the previous trail type priorities, as an addition to the update of this plan, the Steering Committee decided to include guiding principles for trail development. It was helpful to develop a list of criteria that trails of any type should address to ensure good trail projects that can withstand scrutinizing grant application reviews and be easily constructed if a grant was awarded. As stated previously, trail development in this region is largely led by grass roots citizen-driven efforts. Therefore the Steering Committee felt strongly that if a trails group could meet the guiding principles, that trail project would rise to the top in terms of regional priority.

The following guiding principles for trail development provide criteria that make for successful trail projects. They are not intended to provide a ranking for a specific trail project, rather to help local units of government, communities and trail groups create successful trail projects in the region. The guiding principles however, were used in combination with the broad regional priorities to develop the list of specific trail project priorities in the plan. The specific trail project priorities list is a new addition to the Regional Trails Plan as part of the update and is meant to help guide future investment in the region.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

Connectivity: trail projects that connect to multiple destinations including:

- Schools
- Parks
- Employment Areas
- Commercial and Downtown Districts
- Neighborhoods
- Natural Areas
- Recreation Areas
- Other Activity Areas or Local Attractions



Continuity: trail projects that connect to an existing trail or trail system; complete a larger project, concept or plan; or secure a critical piece of a trail system.

Safety: trail projects that help alleviate health or safety concerns and trail problems that solve safety concerns such as removing pedestrians from busy highways.

Financial Commitment: trail projects that have secured funding, including the local match, and/or have identified and are pursuing compatible funding opportunities.

Political Support: trail projects that have the support of the local units of government and the local community.

Definitive Routes: trail projects that have the land, right of way, or easements needed to determine a specific viable route.

Tourism: trail projects that have the potential to draw tourists and add to the region's tourism industry.

Other entities have made similar guideline lists as this, such as the DNR in their Parks and Trails Legacy Plan developed in 2011. These priorities may be helpful in trail planning as well, especially if a community is seeking funding from the DNR. Their priorities are as follows:

Guidelines for Improving Trails of State and Regional Significance:

These criteria should be used to prioritize acquisition, development and expansion investment in trails:

- *Connects to communities (schools, work opportunities, central business districts).*
- *Connects with existing state or regional trails.*
- *Connects with high-quality natural resources or recreation areas.*
- *Connects to multiple destinations.*
- *Fills a critical gap in an area with a recreation opportunity shortage.*
- *Secures a critical piece of a trail system.*
- *Secures a unique opportunity or experience.*
- *Has a financial commitment from the agency or organization proposing the investment.*
- *Fills a critical gap for commuting.*

Taken from the Parks and Trails Legacy Plan

This plan *does not* provide project specific recommendations but general recommendations that may be applicable to any trail that is being considered. Users of this plan can determine where their proposed trail fits in the list of regional priorities by determining what their trail connects to. Determining the location of trailheads with support facilities is an early step in Phase 1 of the trail planning process which is outlined in Chapter 6.

After looking at the previous trail priority groups and taking into account the new trail development guidelines the Steering Committee developed, the group reached a consensus about the prioritization of the types of trails in the region. Developing this prioritized list was extremely difficult, as the group supports any trail type in any community that has the political and financial support and is ready to begin construction. The Steering Committee felt strongly that both local community trails and regional trails were important to communities in the region and the region as a whole.

During this planning process, the trail categories were simplified *into local or community trails, the regional Minnesota River State Trail and all other regional trails*. These categories are similar to the old categories; however in this update, there is a distinction among the regional Minnesota River State Trail that runs through the heart of the region and all other regional trails. These categories combined the previous priorities three and four into all other regional trails.

Additionally, in this plan, the Steering Committee was asked to identify specific potential trail projects for inclusion of the ranking. While the group did not rank specific trail projects within each category—because they felt that any trail project that met the guiding principles for trail development and was ready, would rise to the top—examples of specific potential trail projects are listed below each category of trail type to give a sense of where potential trails would fit into the regional priorities. Listed below are the priorities by trail type and examples of potential trail projects that would fit under each category.

General Prioritized List of Trail Project Types

1. Local and Community Trails
2. The Regional Minnesota River State Trail
3. Other Regional Trails

Trail Priority 1: Local and Community Trails

- Canby, city loop and cross town trails
- Clara City, trail from city park to winery northeast of the city limits
- Benson, trails around the athletic fields on the north side of town
- Benson pedestrian bridge across the Chippewa River
- Granite Falls, trails within the city
- Ortonville, trail from existing trail along US Hwy 12 to the museum
- Dawson, trails within the city
- Milan, SRTS trail or sidewalk along 4th Street

Trail Priority 2: Trails that are Part of the Minnesota River State Trail

1) Main Stems of the MN River Trail

- Big Stone Lake State Park to existing trail segment in Ortonville
- Ortonville's existing trail segment in the Wildlife Refuge to Odessa
- Odessa to Correll
- Correll to Appleton
- Ortonville to Louisburg
- Louisburg to MN River Spillway
- Appleton to MN River Spillway
- MN River Spillway to existing Milan Beach Trail
- Milan to Montevideo
- Wegdahl to Granite Falls
- Granite Falls to Upper Sioux Community and Upper Sioux Agency State Park along MN Hwy 23 or MN Hwy 67
- Granite Falls south to Redwood Falls and beyond (outside Region 6W)

2) Stems from the MN River Trail

- Montevideo to Clara City along MN Hwy 7
- Granite Falls to Maynard and Clara City along MN Hwy 23
- From MN River (and Mn River Trail when constructed) to Lac qui Parle State Park and Lac qui Parle County Regional Park

Trail Priority 3: Other Regional Trails

- Trail from Montevideo along US Hwy 212 to Camp Release then to Dawson
- Railroad right of way trail from south of Dawson to Boyd, Clarkfield, Hazel Run, Hanley Falls, Wood Lake and then Echo
- Canby: trail through Stone Hill Regional Park to Del Clark Lake, would connect to existing trail

- Canby: to Porter then to Marshall along MN Hwy 68
- Canby: Multi County Buffalo Ridge Trail along MN 68 to South Dakota
- Canby to MN River Trail—need clarification
- Canby to King of Trails National Scenic Byway Hwy 75—need clarification

Note that this planning process focuses mostly on multi-use paved trails. The group may wish to expand and update the Plan to specifically address other types of trails in the future. The snowmobile and water trails listed in the existing conditions section are from the DNR and are current as of summer 2012 and may need to be revisited in the future.

CHAPTER 5: EXISTING CONDITIONS

This section of the plan describes current conditions related to the demographics and people of the region as well as existing trail inventories, including maps of the different types of trails present in the region.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND REGIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

The Upper Minnesota Valley Region has seen an overall decrease in population since 1960 and often, the population began decreasing prior to 1960. Over the past 50 years, that decrease has been over 20,000 residents. Population projections show the region decreasing in population into the future, however less dramatically than in the previous 50 years. Chippewa County is the only county showing potential population gain. Swift and Lac qui Parle Counties show the most dramatic projected losses at 6.76% and 6.05% respectively.

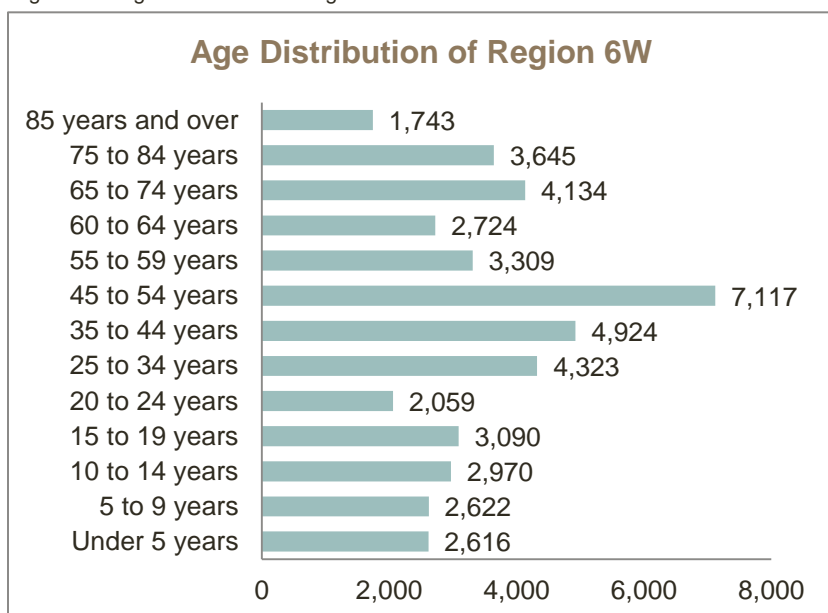
Figure 4.1: Population in Region 6W

Historical Population Comparison from 1960 to 2010							
	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	% Change
UMVRDC Region	69,063	61,806	59,822	50,845	50,011	45,190	-34.57%
Households	4,647	4,565	NA	4,607	4,439	4,292	-7.64%
Big Stone County	8,954	7,941	7,716	6,285	5,820	5,269	-41.15%
Chippewa County	16,320	15,109	14,941	13,228	13,088	12,441	-23.77%
Lac qui Parle County	13,330	11,164	10,592	8,924	8,067	7,259	-45.54%
Swift County	14,936	13,177	12,920	10,724	11,956	9,783	-34.50%
Yellow Medicine County	15,523	14,415	13,653	11,684	11,080	10,438	-32.76%

Source: US Census Bureau

While trails are a nice option for those who choose to drive less, there are a number of residents in the region who may not have that choice due to age. The region's demographics indicate that 44 percent of the region's population is either 17 or under or 65 or over and could potentially benefit greatly from alternative transportation options based on age. This does not take into account income or socioeconomic levels which could make this

Figure 4.2: Age Distribution in Region 6W



number even greater. Approximately 23 percent of the region's population is under 17, making safe routes for walking and biking to school, parks, the library, downtown and other community attractions a necessity. On the other end of the spectrum, approximately 21 percent of the region's population is 65 or older. Nationally, 21 percent of people 65 or older do not drive. Therefore providing alternative transportation options to this segment of the population is also important.

For the rest of the population, some in the region do walk or bicycle to work as the Census data below indicates. Nearly seven and a half percent of Swift County residents walk to work which is much higher than the national average of 2.8 percent and that of the State of Minnesota at 2.9 percent. All five counties in the region have higher percentages of residents who walk to work than the national or state averages. The same is not true for bicyclists, however. Chippewa County has 1.1 percent of workers commuting by bicycle, which is higher than the national average of .5 percent and the state average of .7 percent, however Yellow Medicine County is the only other county in the region with higher averages than the state or nation. This could be due to lack of bicycle infrastructure in the region.

Figure 4.3: Means of Transportation to Work in Region 6W

Means of Transportation to Work

	Big Stone	Chippewa	Lac qui Parle	Swift	Yellow Medicine
Drove alone	70.4%	79.9%	71.9%	74.6%	74.6%
Carpooled	9.6%	8.9%	9.2%	8.2%	12.0%
Public transportation	3.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%
Walked	4.3%	3.8%	6.3%	7.4%	4.1%
Bicycle	0.5%	1.1%	0.4%	0.4%	0.8%
Taxicab, motorcycle, or other means	1.1%	0.7%	0.4%	1.0%	0.4%
Worked at home	11.0%	5.4%	11.6%	8.3%	7.9%
Total Workers 16 and older	2,556	6,364	3,584	4,501	5,319

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2006 - 2010

Socioeconomic status also plays a large role in whether residents use walking and bicycling as means of transportation or recreation. For residents living below the poverty level, bicycling or walking may be the only forms of transportation available at any given moment. And as seen in the table below, the residents who are more often living below the poverty level are also those who may be less likely to drive due to age—those under 18 and over the age of 65. Therefore, it is important to provide safe and effective transportation options to these residents.

Figure 4.4: Poverty Status in Region 6W

Poverty Status						
	Minnesota	Big Stone	Chippewa	Lac qui Parle	Swift	Yellow Medicine
Under 18	14.0%	14.0%	13.4%	11.4%	9.1%	23.4%
18 to 64	10.3%	11.0%	9.4%	8.2%	8.5%	11.5%
65 and older	8.3%	9.3%	11.7%	9.1%	11.0%	8.4%
Total population	11.0%	11.2%	10.8%	9.1%	9.2%	13.8%

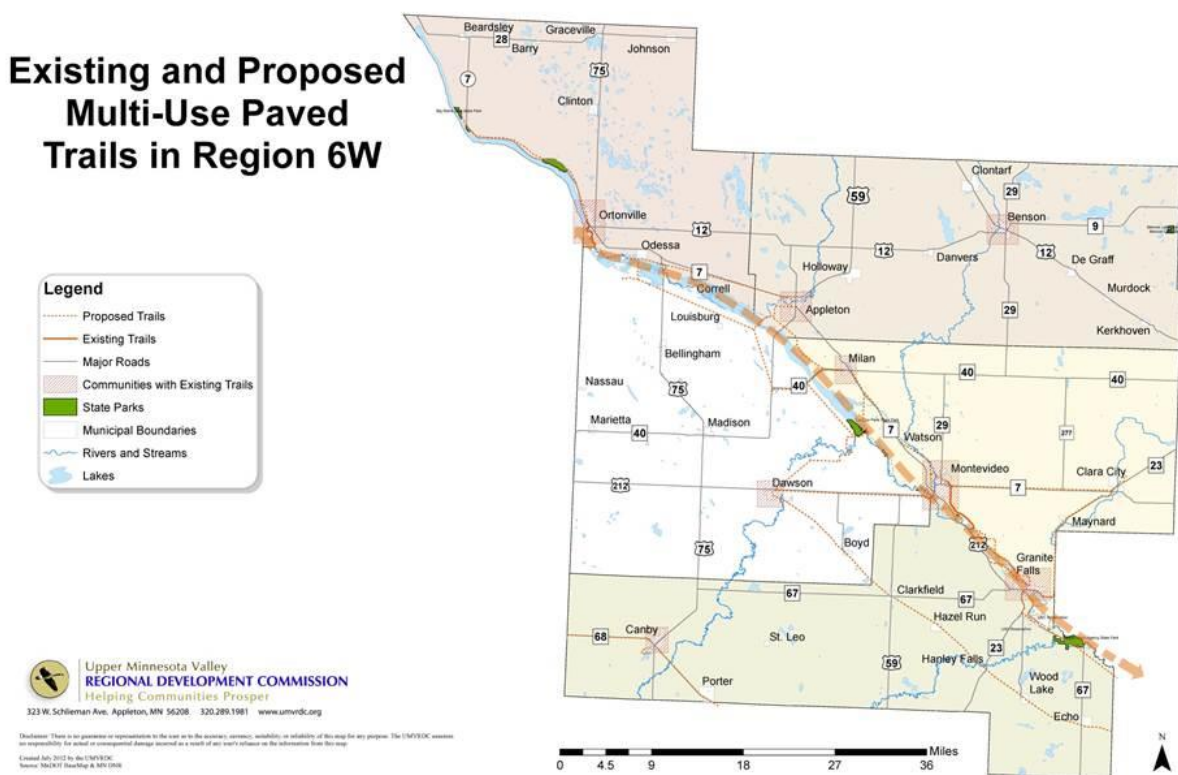
Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2007 - 2011

EXISTING AND PROPOSED TRAIL INFRASTRUCTURE

There are many types of existing public trails in the Upper Minnesota Valley Region including multi-use paved trails, water routes, snowmobile trails, unpaved trails of many types, cross country ski trails, and motorized, off-highway vehicle trails. The following are maps showing the existing trail systems in the region for multi-use paved trails, snowmobile trails and water trails.

MULTI-USE PAVED TRAILS

Currently, the following communities have multi-use paved trails: Appleton, Benson, Canby, Dawson, Granite Falls, Milan, Montevideo and Ortonville. However, there are a growing number of communities and residents that want trail infrastructure. Below is a map depicting existing, as well as proposed, multi-use paved trail facilities in the region. It should be noted that proposed trails marked with dashed lines could be in any phase of development from having funds and exploring route alternatives to simply a community's wish for a trail. The location of a trail located on the following maps often is more a general depiction of where trails can connect specific community assets rather than an exact trail route location. Most often the marking of proposed trails is purely conceptual.



A larger map is available in Appendix C-1.

WATER TRAILS

There are 33 State Water Trails in Minnesota with 4,529 miles of mapped routes. On these routes, users can enjoy canoeing, kayaking, boating and camping. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) oversees these water trails and more information about each trail including grant opportunities, recreation programs, maps, river level reports and much more can be found on their website.³ The Upper Minnesota Valley Region is home to three State Water Trails: the Chippewa, Minnesota and Pomme de Terre Rivers, as seen in the map below.

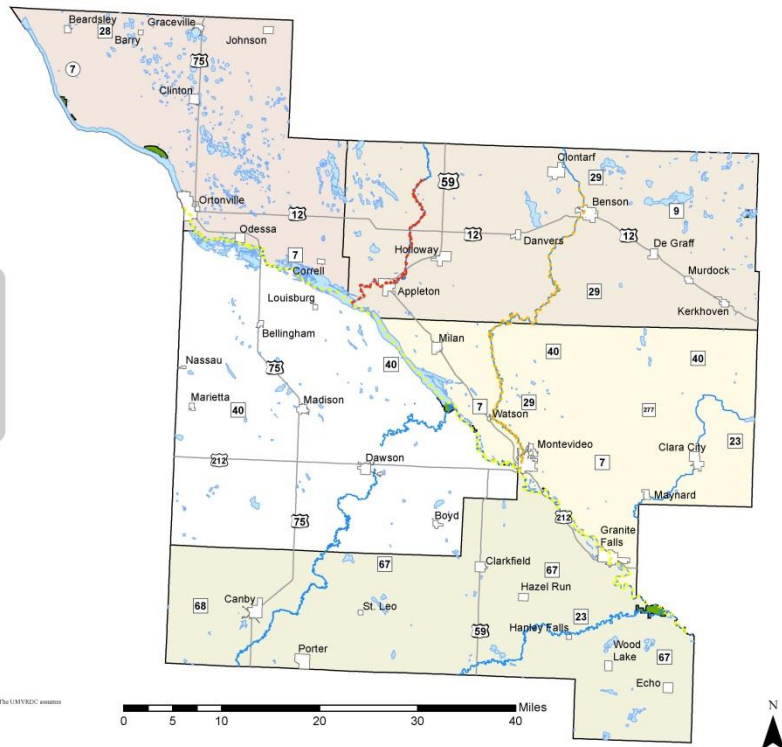
Existing Water Trails in Region 6W



Upper Minnesota Valley
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
Helping Communities Prosper

323 W. Schlieman Ave., Appleton, MN 56208 320.289.1981 www.umnvdc.org

Disclaimer: There is no guarantee or representation to the user as to the accuracy, completeness, suitability, or reliability of this map for any purpose. The UMNVRDC assumes no responsibility for actual or consequential damage incurred as a result of any user's reliance on the information from this map.
Created July 2012 by the UMNVRDC.
Source: NOAA/COT Planning & M&A Unit



A larger map is available in Appendix C-2.

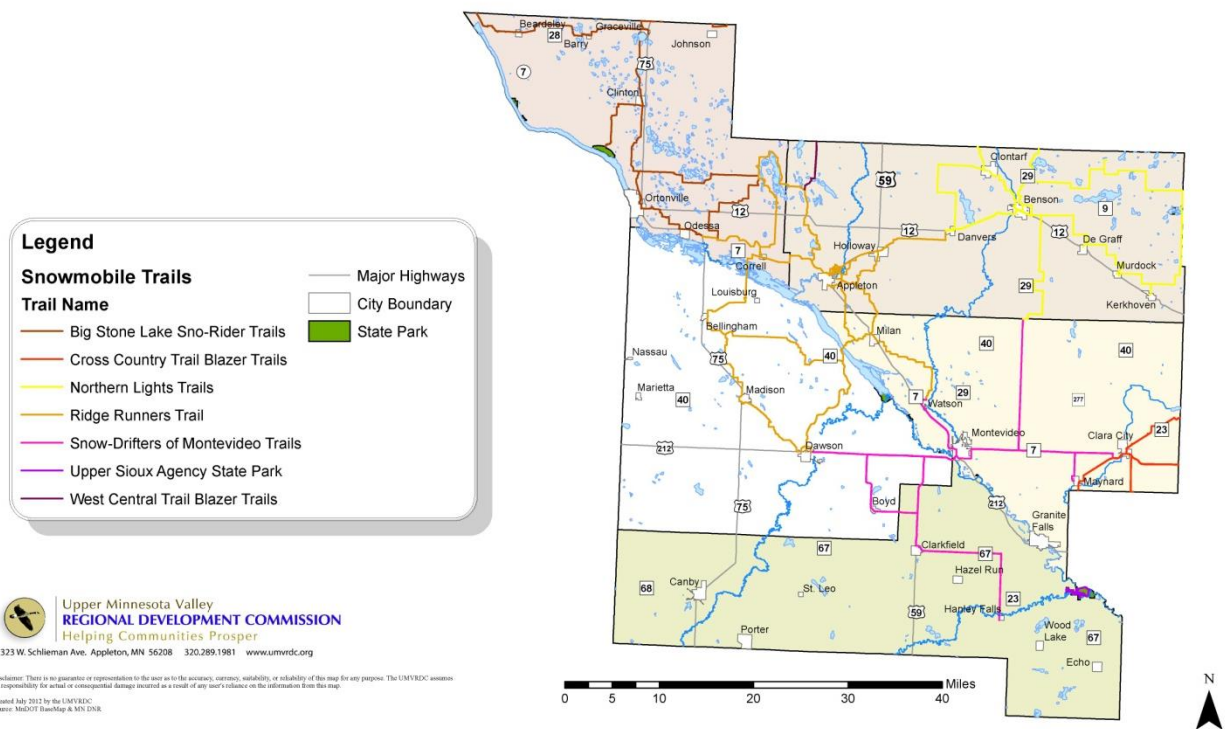
³ <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/watertrails/index.html>



SNOWMOBILE TRAILS

There are over 22,000 miles of groomed snowmobile trails in Minnesota and over 21,000 miles are maintained by local snowmobile club volunteers. There are seven snowmobile trail systems in the Upper Minnesota Valley Region: Big Stone Lake Sno-Rider Trails, Cross Country Trail Blazer Trails, Northern Lights Trails, Ridge Runners Trail, Snow-Drifters of Montevideo Trails, Upper Sioux Agency State Park Trails and West Central Trail Blazer Trails. More information about snowmobile trails in the region and across the state as well as information about snow and trail conditions, registration and fees, maps, regulations and more can be found on the DNR's website.⁴

Existing Snowmobile Trails in Region 6W



A larger map is available in Appendix C-3.

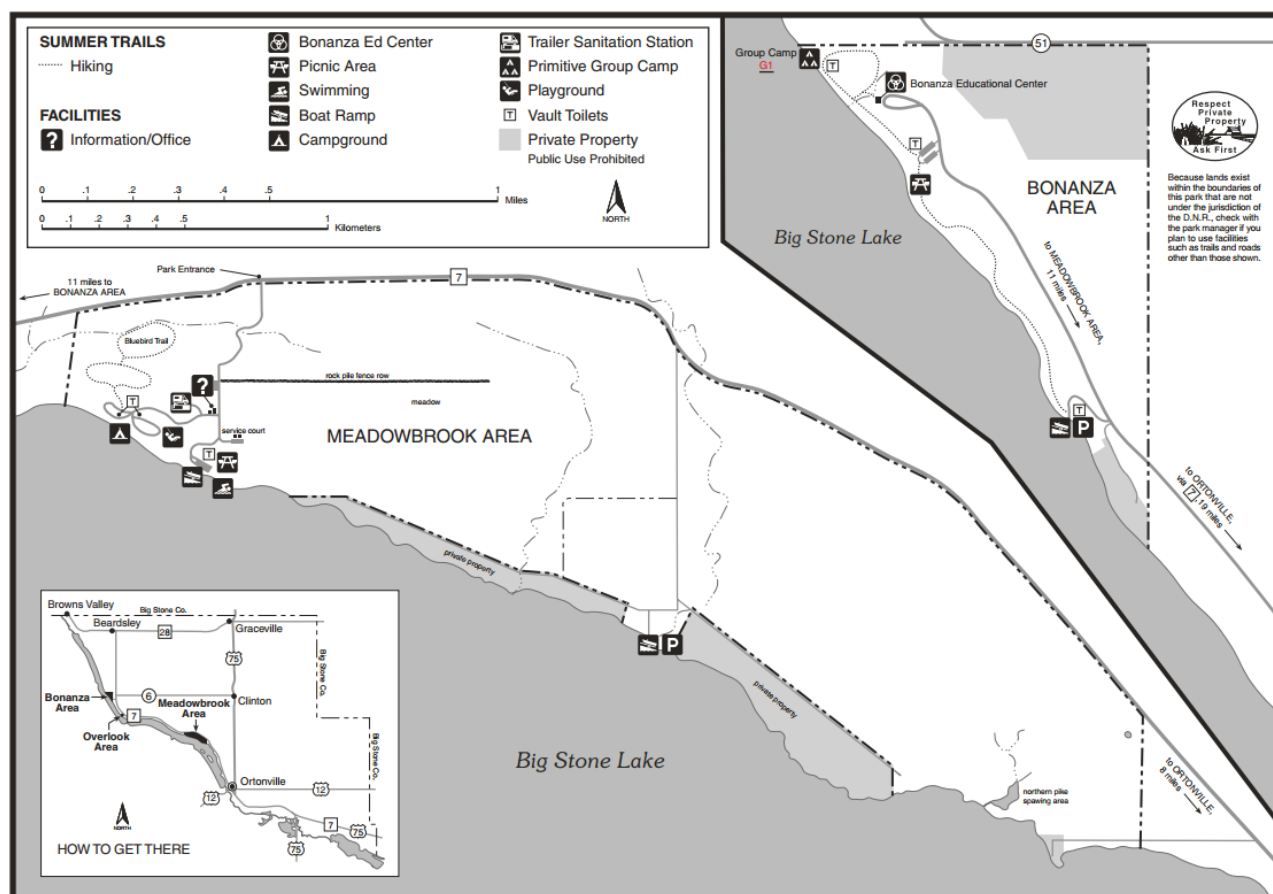
⁴ <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/snowmobiling/index.html>

CROSS COUNTRY SKI, HORSE AND OTHER TRAILS IN STATE PARKS

There are four state parks within the Upper Minnesota Valley Region that offer excellent outdoor recreation and trail opportunities. The four state parks include: Big Stone Lake, Lac qui Parle, Monson Lake and Upper Sioux Agency State Parks. Trail types that can be found within these parks include nature/hiking, horse, cross country ski, snowmobile and snowshoe trails. More information about the state parks in the region and throughout the state can be found at the DNR's website.⁵

Big Stone Lake State Park

Big Stone Lake State Park offers three miles of hiking trails with opportunities to view wildflowers in the prairie, Big Stone Lake and sheltered wooded areas. Snowshoeing is also allowed anywhere in the park during the winter. Below is a map of Big Stone Lake State Park and a complete map brochure for the park can be found in Appendix C-4. More information about Big Stone Lake State Park can also be found on the DNR's website.⁶

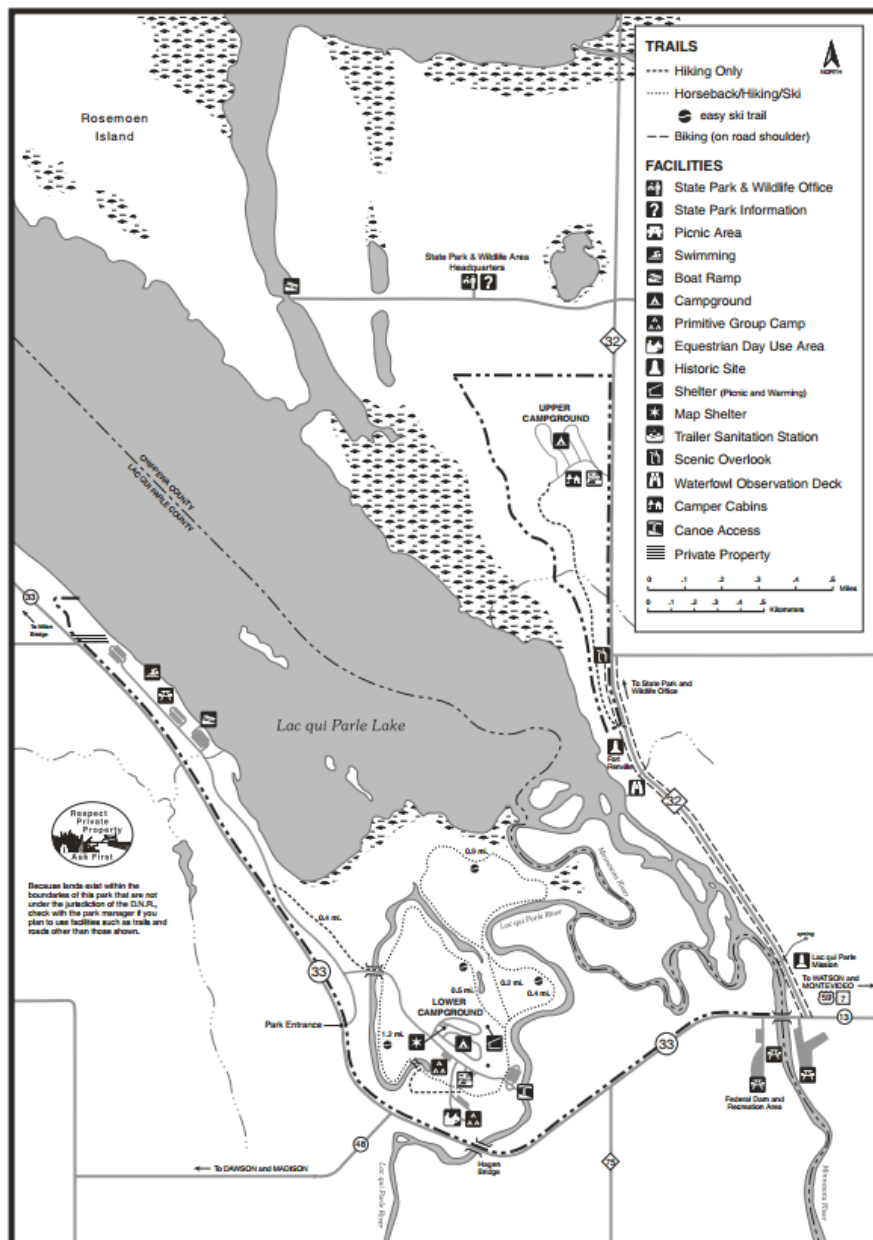


⁵ http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/index.html

⁶ http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/big_stone_lake/index.html

Lac qui Parle State Park

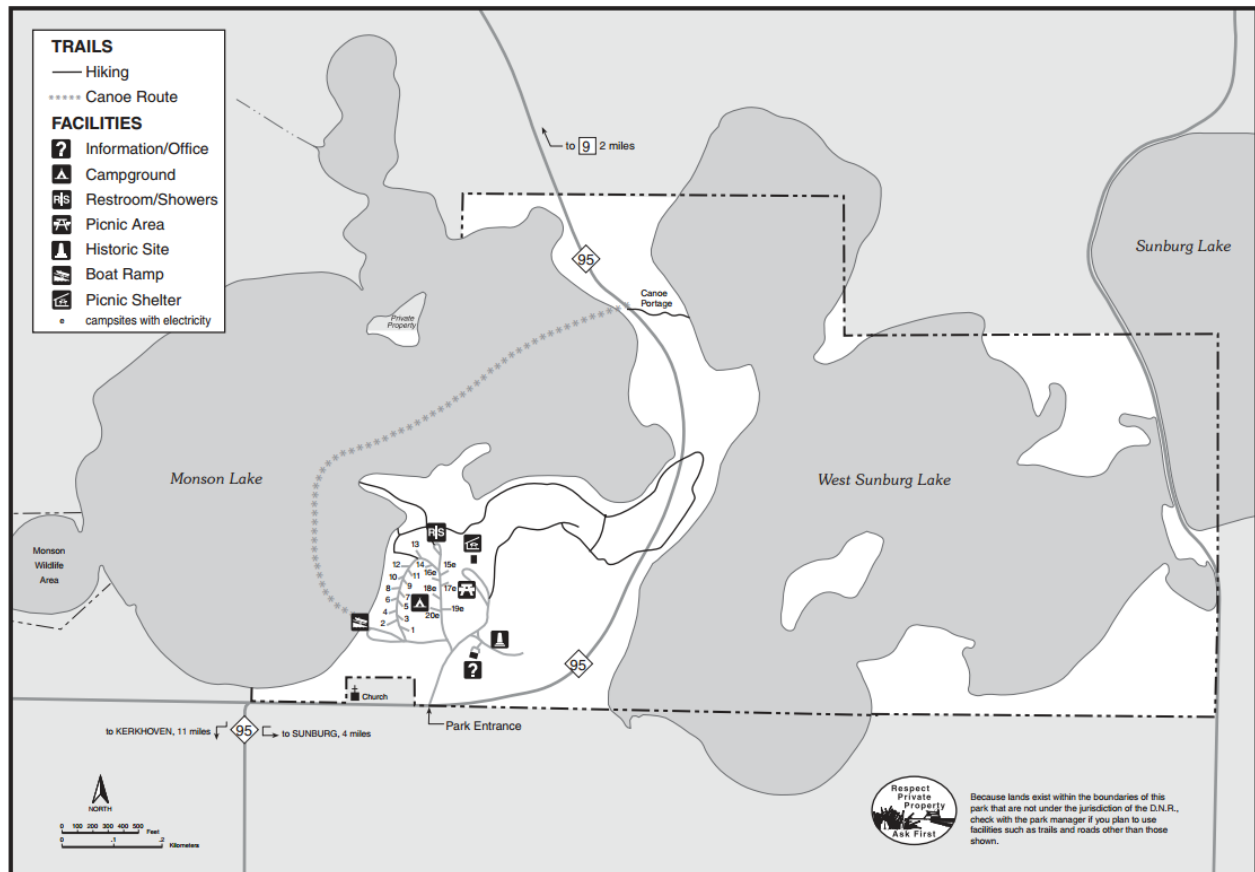
Lac qui Parle State Park offers summer trails including seven miles of hiking trails, located in the upper and lower units of the park with opportunities for good bird watching and wildlife observation as well as five miles of horse trails located in the lower unit of the park. The horse trails are flat and allow for easy riding. In the winter, Lac qui Parle State Park offers five miles of groomed cross country ski trails and snowshoeing is allowed anywhere in the park except for on groomed trails. Below is a map of Lac qui Parle State Park and a complete map brochure for the park can be found in Appendix C-5. More information about Lac qui Parle State Park can also be found on the DNR's website.⁷



⁷ http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/lac_qui_parle/index.html

Monson Lake State Park

Monson State Park offers 1.2 miles of hiking trails, with views of Monson and West Sunburg Lakes. The trails are wooded and provide opportunity for bird watching and wildlife observation. There is also a canoe route that crosses Monson Lake. Below is a map of Monson Lake State Park and a complete map brochure for the park can be found in Appendix C-6. More information about Monson State Park can also be found on the DNR's website.⁸

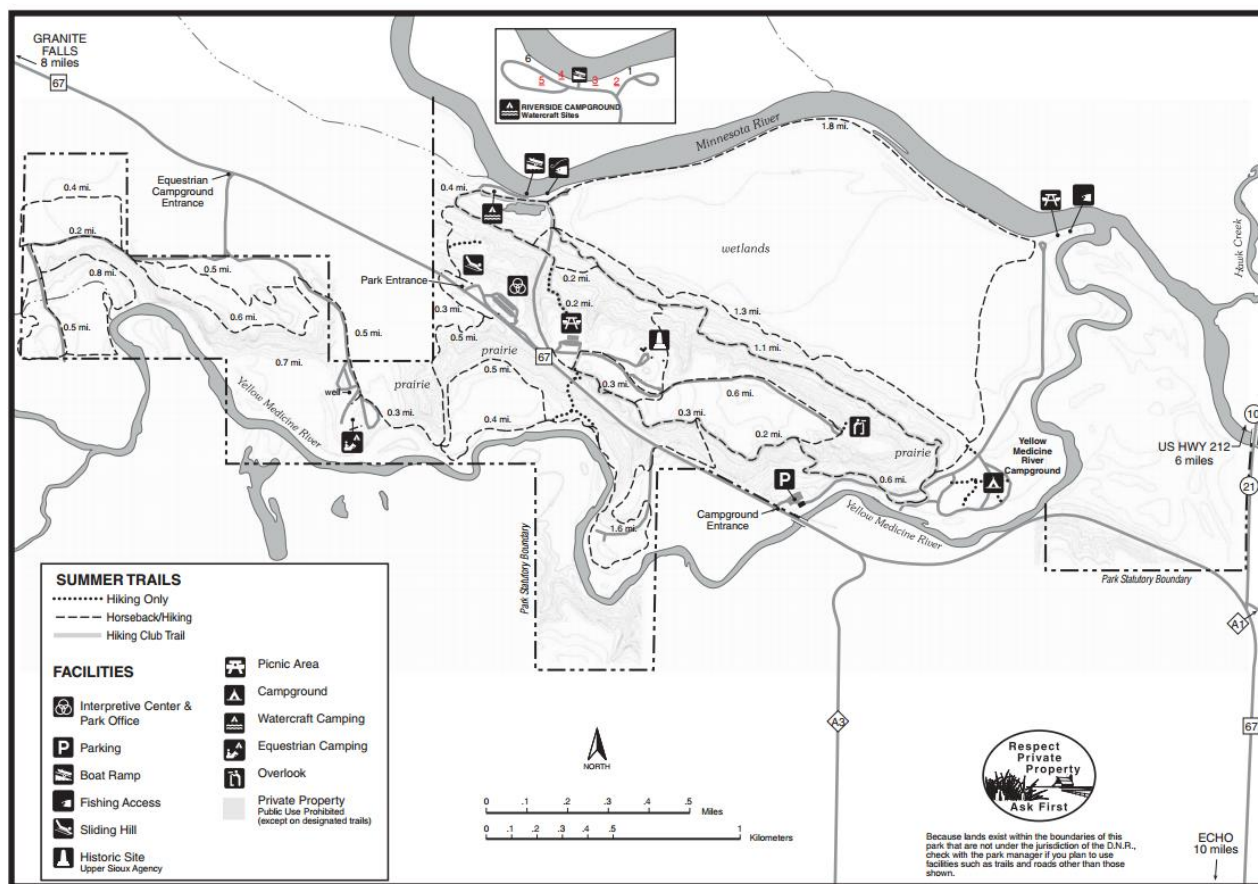


⁸ http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/monson_lake/index.html

Upper Sioux Agency State Park

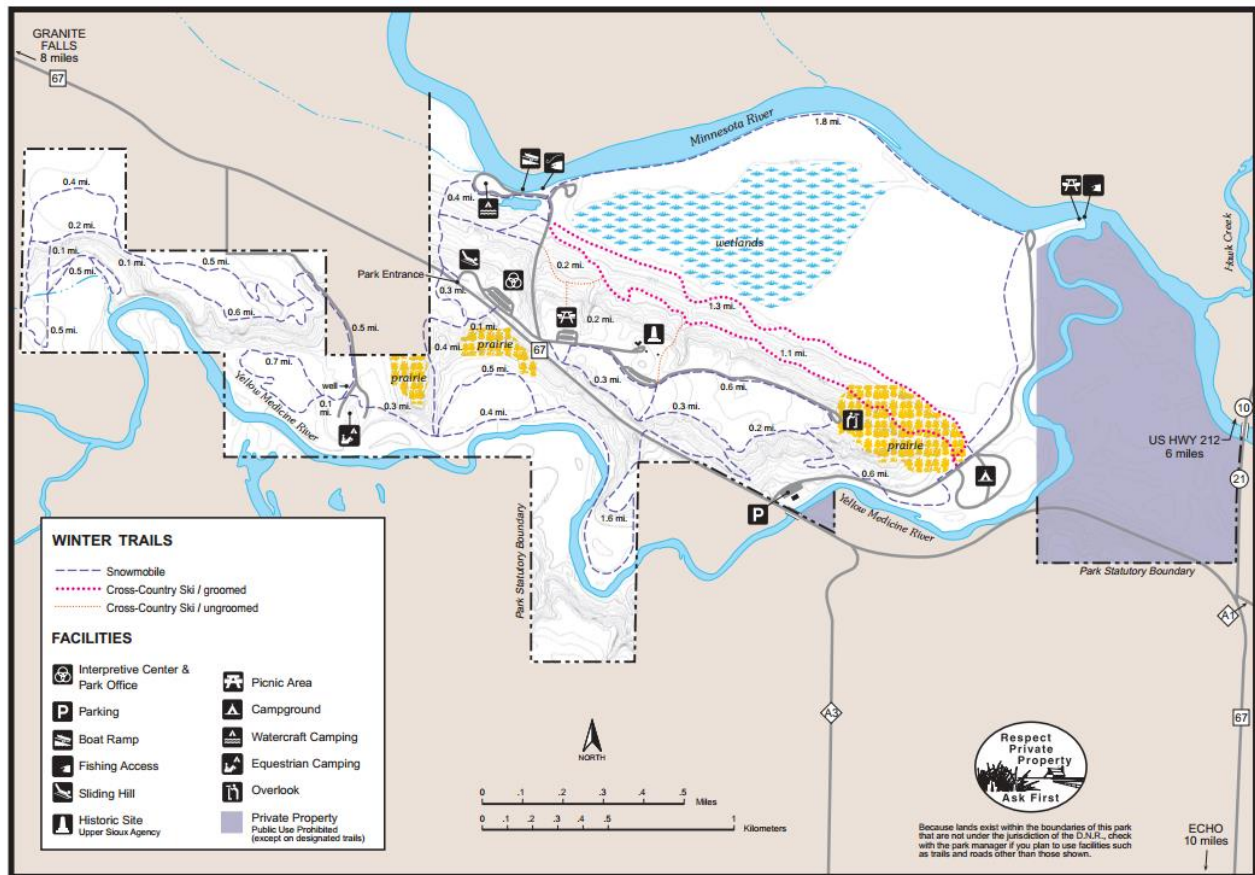
Upper Sioux Agency State Park offers summer trails including 18 miles of easy to moderate hiking trails that take you along the Yellow Medicine River Valley offering lots of variety including prairie areas, wooded forests, wetlands and river bottoms. The park also offers 16 miles of horse trails that are also shared with hikers. In the winter, Upper Sioux Agency State Park offers 2 miles of easy to moderate groomed cross country ski trails and snowshoeing is allowed anywhere in the park except for on groomed trails. Additionally the park is home to 14 miles of snowmobile trails, which are also listed on the snowmobile map in this plan. Below are summer and winter maps of Upper Sioux Agency State Park and a complete map brochure for the park can be found in Appendix C-7 and C-8. More information about Upper Sioux Agency State Park can also be found on the DNR's website.⁹

Upper Sioux Agency State Park Summer Map:



⁹ http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/upper_sioux_agency/index.html

Upper Sioux Agency State Park Winter Map:



CITY TRAILS

Eight communities in the Upper Minnesota Valley Region currently have existing multi-use paved trails: Appleton, Benson, Canby, Dawson, Granite Falls, Milan, Montevideo and Ortonville. This section of the plan provides maps for each of those communities showing existing trail infrastructure—for all types of trails in the community, not only multi-use paved trails. It also shows proposed or desired future trails in the community; however these proposed trails focus solely on multi-use paved trails.

For the individual community maps, UMVRDC staff worked with the Steering Committee and individual communities to determine the communities' existing trail network and desires for future trails. Although multiple types of existing trails are shown on the maps, the conversations regarding future trail development focused on multi-use paved trails. There may be a need in the future to update this trails plan for all types of community trails.

It should be noted that proposed trails marked with dashed lines could be in any phase of development from having funds and exploring route alternatives to simply a community's wish for a trail. The location on the map often is more a general depiction of where trails can connect specific community assets rather than an exact trail route location.



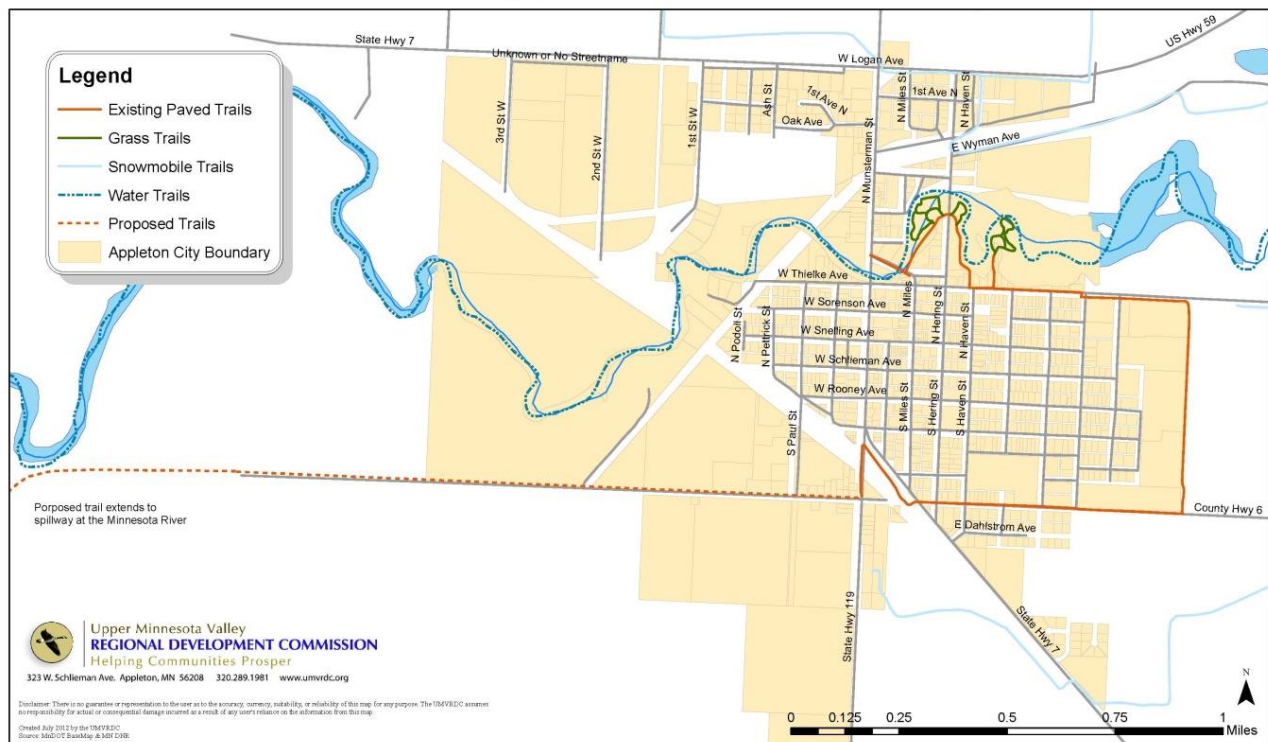
Trail in Appleton.

Appleton:

The City of Appleton is currently home to a variety of trails including: snowmobile, water, nature/unpaved and a multi-use paved trail. Trail groups within the community would like to see expanded trails in Appleton that link the community to the Minnesota River and the proposed state trail that will run along the Minnesota River Valley.

Currently a local trail group has funding from the DNR to extend the trail in Appleton toward the Minnesota River, however the trail development has yet to reach construction phases as they have run into wetland issues with the preferred route and are now trying to find a suitable alternative route. Therefore the proposed trail depicted in the Appleton map is purely to show the connection to the Minnesota River as the exact route has not yet been defined.

Appleton Trails



A larger map is available in Appendix C-9.



Benson:

The City of Benson is currently home to a variety of trails including: snowmobile, water, nature/unpaved and multi-use paved trails. Other trails within the community to connect community assets are desired. There could also be future potential to connect the city trails with other regional trails in the area.

Benson Trails



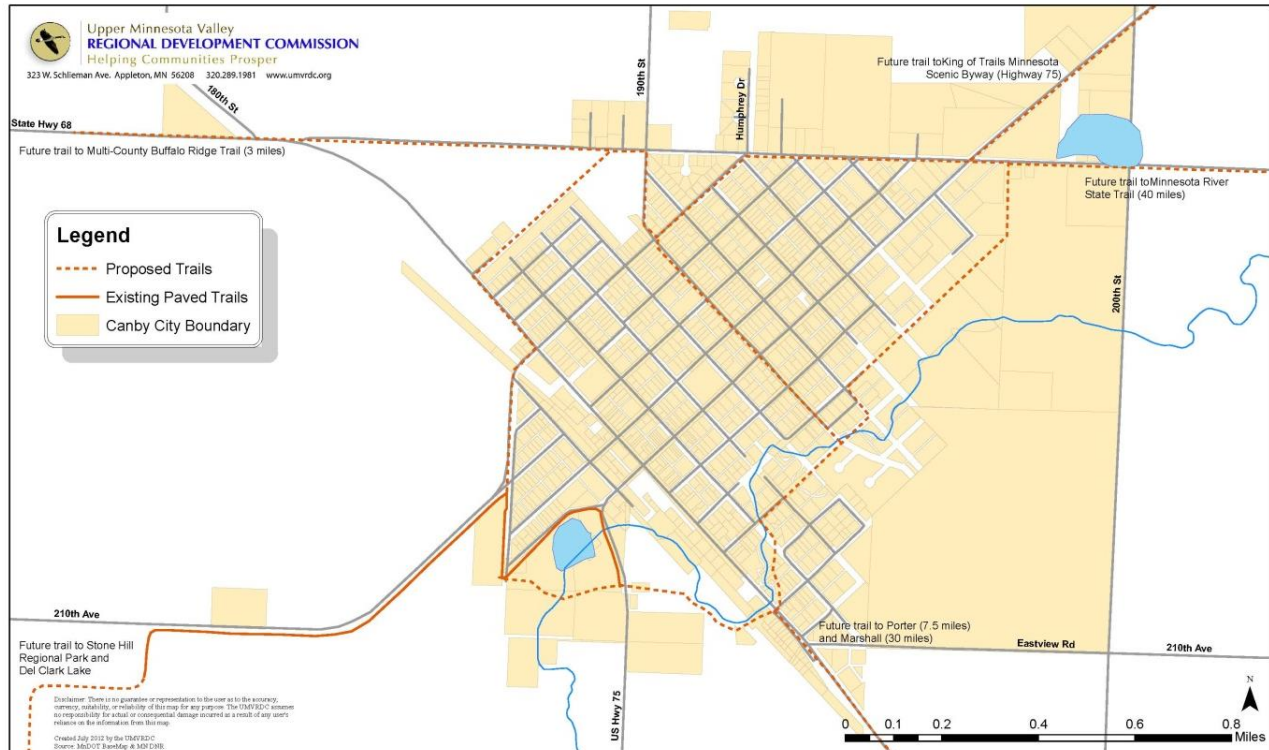
A larger map is available in Appendix C-10.



Canby:

Canby is currently home to a multi-use paved trail that connects the city with the regional Del Clark Lake Park that is managed by the watershed district to the southwest of the city. There is a strong desire in the community to expand the trail network so that children and other residents can safely get to school and other places in the community and to provide healthy recreational opportunities.

Canby Trails

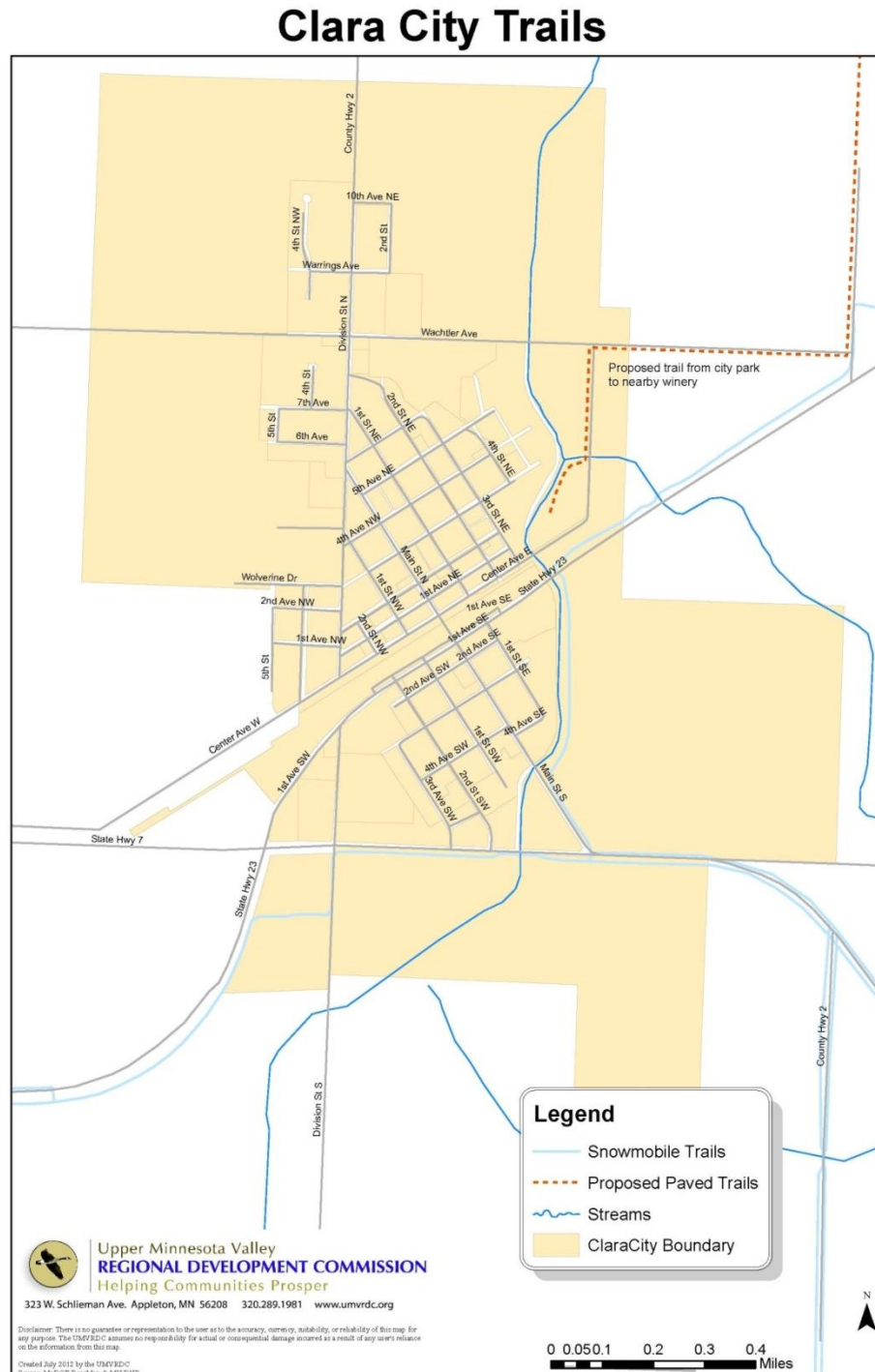


A larger map is available in Appendix C-11.



Clara City:

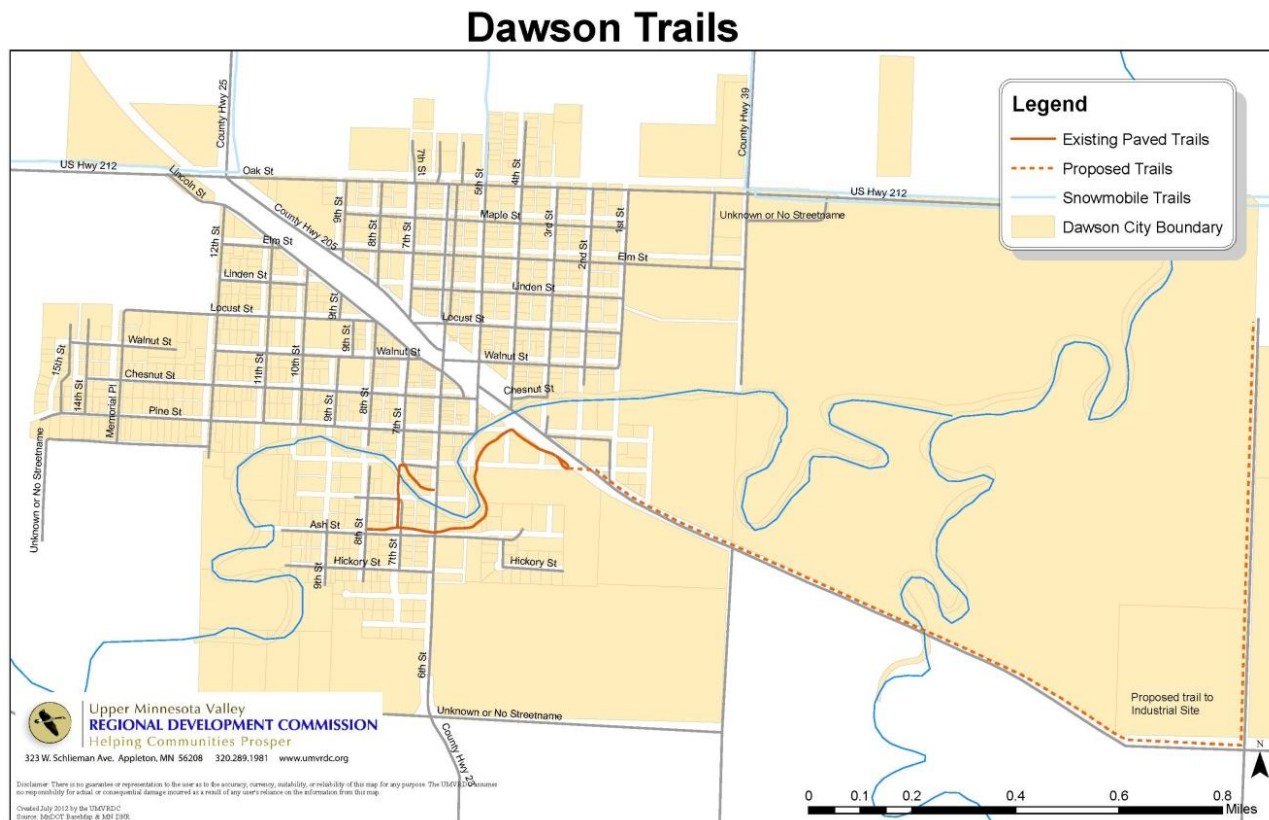
Clara City currently does not have any existing multi-use paved trails, however there is a desire for a trail connection from town to the Hinterlands Winery northeast of the city.



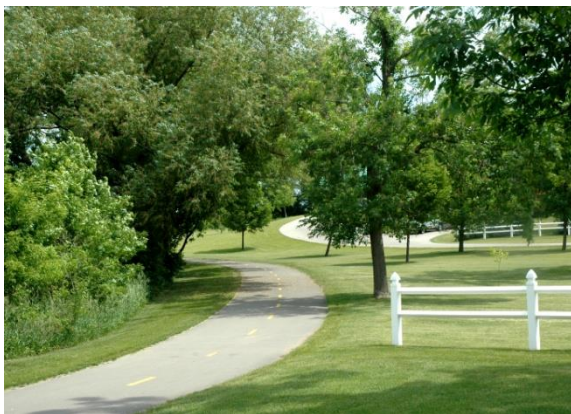
A larger map is available in Appendix C-12.

Dawson:

Dawson is currently home to snowmobile trails and a multi-use paved trail that crosses and follows the west branch of the Lac qui Parle River. There has also been an identified need for a trail that connects the city with its industrial park on the east edge of the city. It has been observed that people do walk or bike out to the industrial park for work and a safer environment for walking and bicycling is needed. Additionally, it would add to the recreation amenities in the city.



A larger map is available in Appendix C-13.



Granite Falls:

The City of Granite Falls is currently home to a variety of trails including: water, nature/unpaved and multi-use paved trails. Trail groups within the community and community members would like to see expanded trails in Granite Falls that link the community north to the portion of the existing Wegdahl trail that runs south out of Montevideo which is a portion of the proposed Minnesota River State Trail that runs along the Minnesota River Valley. Additionally, the community would like to see trail connections to the south of the city that would connect with the Upper Sioux Agency State Park.

In addition to regional trail connections, there is a desire for trails that link places within the community. That is shown with the proposed loop trail within the city. This is a conceptual route and is only meant to convey the message that trails that connect community assets are important to Granite Falls.



A larger map is available in Appendix C-14.



Milan:

Milan is currently home to snowmobile trails as well as a multi-use paved trail that connects to Milan Beach at Lac qui Parle Lake to the southwest of the city. There is a desire for greater connections to the proposed Minnesota River State Trail, which is depicted with the proposed trail southeast of the city. Additionally, there is a need for a safe place for students to walk and bicycle along 4th Street which is where the old school is located and where students board the bus to go to Appleton/Milan Elementary School in Appleton or the Lac qui Parle Valley Middle and High School several miles west of town on MN Highway 40.

Milan Trails



A larger map is available in Appendix C-15.



Montevideo:

Montevideo is currently home to a variety of trails including: snowmobile, water and multi-use paved trails. Montevideo has the largest existing network of multi-use paved trails in the region and there is a desire among residents to add to that trail network. Connections to regional trails such as the proposed Minnesota River State Trail and cultural assets like Camp Release are the most important.

Montevideo Trails



A larger map is available in Appendix C-16.

Ortonville:

Ortonville is home to snowmobile, water and multi-use paved trails. There has been some interest among community members to extend a trail from the existing trail at the southern edge of downtown, up the hill to the east, along US Highway 12 past the Museum and to connect to businesses on top of the hill at the corner of US Highways 12 and 75.

Ortonville Trails



A larger map is available in Appendix C-17.

DNR State Trails

Below is a map of all designated state trails throughout Minnesota from the Minnesota DNR. The Minnesota River trail is the only state trail in the region and much of it has yet to be built. It is intended to run the length of the Minnesota River, however exact locations are yet to be determined and many communities within the region have desires to connect to this designated state trail even if they are located miles away from it.

Minnesota State Trails



Other Related Initiatives Taking Place in the Region

Safe Routes to School

In the fall of 2012, several communities in the region, Appleton, Benson, Canby, Dawson, Granite Falls and Madison, were awarded Safe Routes to School (SRTS) grants from MnDOT to either develop a SRTS plan or begin implementing SRTS strategies. Additionally, in the spring of 2013 two more communities in the region, Clarkfield and Montevideo were awarded SRTS grants to develop SRTS plans. The first round of SRTS plans will be available in the fall of 2013 and the second round available in the fall of 2014 and can be found on the Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission website.¹⁰

The SRTS plans examine the physical and social infrastructure in each community to assess how well it supports students walking or biking to school. After the assessment process recommendations are made on how to enhance the physical and social infrastructure to better support walking and biking to school.

Safe Routes to School is a national program administered by the Federal Highway Administration through each state's department of transportation. The Safe Routes to School program aims to help kids walk and bicycle to school more often through infrastructure improvements as well as education and promotional activities. Safe Routes to School is a comprehensive strategy to instill lifelong habits that support physical activity and health. Walking and bicycling to school helps families stay active and healthy, and kids arrive focused and ready to learn. A comprehensive and effective SRTS initiative can help create a healthier community for generations to come. For more information on Minnesota's Safe Routes to School Program, contact the Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission or visit MnDOT's SRTS webpage.¹¹



¹⁰ www.umvrdc.org

¹¹ <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/saferoutes/index.html>

Parks and Other Recreational Areas in the Region

Parks are often the bedrock of a strong outdoor recreation system. Parks support the trails in our region and vice versa. Often many trails run through or are contained in the region's state, county and local parks. The following pages are an inventory of parks in the region organized by county.

Big Stone County

Big Stone County is home to a number of state, county and local parks. Big Stone Lake State Park is located in Big Stone County. It is situated in two locations along the western edge of the county bordering Big Stone Lake, which divides Minnesota and South Dakota. Big Stone Lake State Park offers the following summer and water amenities shown to the right and more information about Big Stone Lake State Park can be found on the DNR's website.¹²

Big Stone County is also home to the regional park, Toqua Park located just south of

Graceville. The park has 12 campsites with electricity and restrooms with showers are available in the park. Additional amenities include playground equipment, a swimming beach, two softball fields, a volleyball court and a picnic shelter. The roads surrounding the park have been widened to accommodate biking and walking and there is a golf course nearby that is open to the public. For more information regarding Toqua Park, see Explore Minnesota Tourism's website.¹³

Recreation Facilities

Summer | Water Facilities

Summer

Picnic Area	<i>2 Main Areas - no shelters.</i>
Both areas are lakeside. One area has a grill and is near the swimming beach.	
Playground	<i>Near Campground</i>
Sand box and slide.	
Horseshoes	<i>Near Campground</i>
Pick up equipment at park office.	
Golf Course	<i>Within 8 Miles</i>
One golf course in Ortonville.	

Water Facilities

Water Source	<i>Big Stone Lake</i>
Fishing	<i>Big Stone Lake</i>
Swimming Beach	<i>Within the park</i>
Boat Access	<i>Drive-in</i>



¹² http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/big_stone_lake/index.html

¹³ <http://www.exploreminnesota.com/places-to-stay/627/big-stone-county-toqua-park/details.aspx>

The Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge is also partially located in Big Stone County—and partially located in Lac qui Parle County. The Big Stone Refuge serves as the “keeper of the prairie” by working to maintain and restore native prairie habitat while providing optimum nesting cover for waterfowl and other grassland nesting birds. 1,028 of the refuge’s 11,521 acres are in Big Stone County, the rest are in Lac qui Parle County.

A six-mile auto tour route traverses through upland and wetland habitat occurring on the refuge, offering visitors panoramic views of the Minnesota River Valley and northern tallgrass prairie habitats. The auto tour also winds through a system of granite outcrops located near the Minnesota River that may be one of the most interesting habitats on the refuge. These areas support the most diverse assemblage of native plants occurring on the refuge. The high outcrops provide excellent views of large portions of the refuge and its wildlife residents.

The self-guided, auto tour route has a leaflet with numbered stops keyed to interpretive information. There is also a self-guided, one-mile foot trail on the refuge that meanders through granite outcrops, prairie habitats, and river bottoms. Interpretive leaflets are available at the refuge headquarters, auto tour route entrance, and the beginning of the hiking trail.

There is no entrance charge for the wildlife refuge and it is located at 44843 County Road 19 in Odessa, MN 56276.

Many municipalities in Big Stone County also have parks with varying amenities. The following is a list of local parks and their amenities for cities in Big Stone County.

Beardsley: The city park is located at 210 Main Street South. Amenities include a picnic shelter, restrooms, playground equipment, horseshoe pits and a sand volleyball court.

Graceville: Lake View Park is located at 509 West 5th Street. Amenities include playground equipment, a tennis court and skateboard equipment.

Ortonville: Lakeside Park abuts Big Stone Lake on the southwest edge of Ortonville. Amenities include a swimming beach, boat launch, fishing piers and shelters. Central Park is located along 3rd Street NW at the terminus of Jefferson Avenue. It consists of open space, but no formal amenities. Cliffs Park is located on Minnesota Street and consists of open space, but no formal amenities. Nielson Park is located on Park Avenue North and amenities include playground equipment and a shelter. Northside Park is located on Roy Street and amenities include a baseball and softball field. Peninsula Park is located on McCloud Street and abuts Big Stone Lake. The park consists of open space, but no formal amenities. Sioux Historic Park is located on Lake Shore Drive to the north of the city. It consists of open space, but no formal amenities. Lake Shore RV Park is located on Lake Shore Drive to the north of the city and offers campground space. There is also a public swimming pool located on Otto Avenue and public golf course located on Golf Course Road.

Chippewa County

Chippewa County is home to the Wegdahl County Park located along the Minnesota River between Montevideo and Granite Falls. Amenities include a picnic shelter, fire pit and there are future plans for a campground.

Many municipalities in Chippewa County also have parks with varying amenities. The following is a list of local parks and their amenities for cities in Chippewa County.

Clara City: Clara City's Community or Lion's Park is located on the western edge of the city near the High School between Second and Third Avenues and First Street Southwest and Division Street North. Amenities include two shelters, a variety of playground equipment, a skate park, concrete bleachers, horseshoes, picnic tables and four baseball/softball fields. This park is home to many of the events that take place in Clara City such as Prairie Fest Days. Willms Park is located on the east edge of Clara City on



Center Avenue East and abuts Hawk Creek. Amenities include public restrooms, a picnic shelter, playground equipment and a skating rink and warming shelter in the winter months. South Side Park is located on the south side of the city between Second and Third Streets S.W. and Fourth Avenue Southwest and Minnesota State Highway 7. Amenities include swings and a basketball court. Additionally, Clara City has a public outdoor swimming pool located next to the Community/Lion's Park on Wolverine Drive and Division Street.

Maynard: Maynard Lions Park is located across Highway 23 to the south on Vardis Street. Amenities include a shelter with kitchen facilities, playground equipment, camping with electrical hookup (free will donation). The Lions Club usually monitors the camping. There is a stage for programs with electrical hookups, picnic tables (yellow wooden tables are available for rental and contact is Gerald Kleene 320-367-4000). Additionally, there is a small park on south side of town located at 131 Minnie Street. Amenities include a small playground area with slide and basketball hoop.

Milan: Milan's Lion's Park is located along Minnesota State Highway 7 on the northeast side of the city and amenities include restrooms, picnic tables, electricity and overnight RV parking. Burns Parks is located in the center of Milan on North Third Street between Washington and Lincoln Avenues. Park amenities include playground equipment, a shelter with picnic tables, a basketball court and open space for games.

Montevideo: The City of Montevideo has nine parks offering different amenities. Smith Park located at Parkway Drive and Canton Avenue has picnic shelters and playground equipment. Lagoon Park located on Parkway Drive offers camping and disc golf. Windom Park located on North Third Street offers a pool, trails and ball fields. Larson Park located on Eleventh Street and Sheridan Avenue has playground equipment and a skating rink in the winter months. Sheridan Park located on Sheridan Avenue and Seventh Street has playground equipment. Hillcrest Park located on Sixth Street and Park Avenue has playground equipment. Central Park located on Third Street and Sherman Avenue has playground equipment and soccer fields. Wildwood Park located on Parkway Drive has primitive nature trails. Chinhita Park located on Ninth Street and Park Avenue has trails. Additionally, Camp Release is located to the west of the city on US Highway 212.



Lac qui Parle County

Lac qui Parle County is home to Lac qui Parle State Park located on Lake Road on the south end of Lac qui Parle Lake. The park offers a wide variety of both summer and winter recreational amenities listed to the right, including numerous water activities.

Lac qui Parle County is also home to a regional county park. Amenities include playground equipment and open space.

Many municipalities in Lac qui Parle County also have parks with varying amenities. The following is a list of local parks and their amenities in Lac qui Parle County.

Bellingham: The Bellingham city park is located two city blocks east of Highway 75 on Second Street North. There are two covered shelters, picnic tables, playground equipment, restrooms, a baseball/softball field and plenty of running room for yard games such as volleyball.

Boyd: The Boyd City Park is located at the corner of Park Street and Scandia Avenue. Amenities include a ball field and concession stand, playground equipment, newly remodeled bathrooms with showers and electrical hookups.

Dawson: The City of Dawson has three parks and a campground site located off US Highway 212. Swimming Pool Park, located on East Oak Street, has amenities including an outdoor swimming pool, band shelter, playground equipment, a volleyball court, tennis courts as well as softball and baseball fields. Theodore Christensen South Park is located at 921 Sixth Street. Amenities include playground equipment and a scenic location near the river. Veterans Park is located along the south side

Recreation Facilities

[Summer](#) | [Winter](#) | [Water Facilities](#)

Summer

Picnic Area	<i>On Lac qui Parle Lake</i>
Tables and fire rings available in area. Picnicking is available at various locations in the park.	
Picnic Shelter	<i>2 Open Shelters</i>
Shelters are located near the Lower Unit Campground. One shelter has electricity. Can be reserved by calling the park office.	
Horseshoes	<i>Lower Unit Campground</i>
Check at park office for equipment.	

Winter

Warming House	<i>Lower campground</i>
In winter, the picnic shelter, located near the lower unit campground, is used as a warming house. The shelter is enclosed and contains fireplace.	

Water Facilities

Water Source	<i>Minnesota River and Lac qui Parle Lake</i>
Fishing	<i>Lac qui Parle Lake</i>
Excellent fishing for walleye and catfish.	
Swimming Beach	<i>Within the park</i>
Sandy beach located in a scenic, rocky area on the west side of Lac qui Parle Lake. No lifeguard.	
Boat Access	<i>Near the Beach</i>
There are several boat access sites throughout the Lac qui Parle Lake area.	
Boating Restrictions	<i>Lac qui Parle Lake</i>
No jet skis allowed. Lake is located within Lac qui Parle Wildlife Management Area. Rules governing lake use vary with the season. Check at the park headquarters for current information and regulations.	
Canoe Access	<i>On Lac qui Parle River Near Lower Campground</i>
Canoe access is open and available.	



of the west branch of the Lac qui Parle River. Amenities include a 1.1 mile paved loop trail with benches to take in the view of the river.

Madison: Madison has home to six parks with different amenities. Centennial Park located on First Street (Minnesota State Highway 40 East) has a shelter and playground equipment (swings and slide). JF Jacobson Park located at 226 Eighth Avenue South (US Highway 75 South) has amenities that include camper parking areas, a wayside rest area and restrooms. Madison Recreation Field located at 601 Eleventh Street offers softball fields, bleachers, lights, restrooms, concession stand, a shelter and playground equipment. Madison Square Park located at Sixth Street and Seventh Avenue has swings and basketball hoops. Memorial Athletic Field located at 223 Second Street East has a baseball field, dugouts, grandstand, scoreboard, lights, concession stand and restrooms. Lastly, Sien Park is located at 611 Evergreen Avenue and offers an outdoor swimming pool, pool house, basketball court, sand volleyball court, tennis courts, restrooms, two picnic shelters and playgrounds equipment.



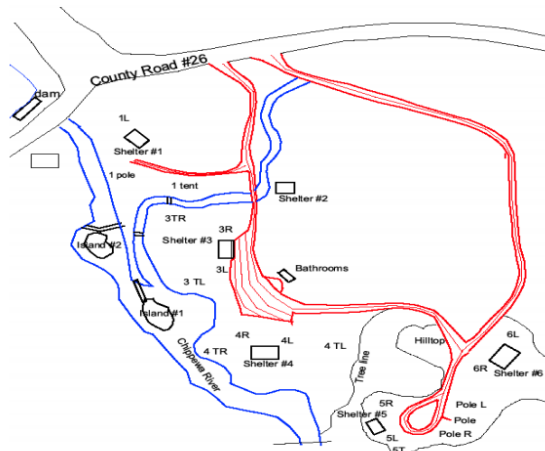
Marietta: Marietta has one park located on the corner of Minnesota State Highway 40 and Third Avenue North (Main Street). Amenities include a shelter with picnic tables, a modern restroom (flushable), jungle gym, basketball court, swings and a sandbox.

Nassau: The City of Nassau's park has amenities that include picnic tables, a basketball court and a swing set.

Swift County

Swift County is home to Monson Lake State Park is located on 170th Avenue Northeast in the northeast corner of Swift County between Monson and West Sunburg Lakes. The park offers a wide variety of both summer and winter recreational amenities listed to the right, including numerous water activities.

Swift County is also home to two county parks, Swift Falls Park located in Swift Falls and the Swift County OHV Park located in Appleton.



Recreation Facilities

[Summer](#) | [Water Facilities](#)

Summer

Picnic Area

The shaded picnic area offers tables, fire rings, and a horseshoe court. There is also a large, open space for play.

Picnic Shelter

Open Shelter

An open-aided, stone picnic shelter is available on a first come, first served basis, for small groups. The shelter has electricity and a large fireplace. Wheelchair accessible.

Horseshoes

Water Facilities

Fishing Pier

Swift Falls Park includes the following amenities: campsites, picnic shelters, hiking trails, fishing electric and water hookups are available, modern restrooms and showers that are handicapped accessible. For more information, visit Swift County's website.¹⁴

The Appleton OHV Park boasts free admission and there is no cost to ride. Park amenities include challenging trails to accommodate all OHV skill levels from beginner to advanced. The park features 10 miles of truck trails, 15 miles of ATV/OHV trails, 1.5 miles OHV practice track,

three enduro tracks, a youth ATV training course, youth OHV practice track, groomed snowmobile trails, hiking path, jumps, play areas, sand dunes, shelter/picnic area. All OHVs must be registered with license plate visible and all riders under 16 must have the appropriate safety certificate. Any questions contact Mike Johnson at (320) 843-5341. For more information, visit Swift County's website.¹⁵

Many municipalities in Swift County also have parks with varying amenities. The following is a list of local parks and their amenities in Swift County.

Appleton: The City of Appleton has seven parks with a range of amenities. The following parks offer green space for recreation, but have no other added amenities: Veterans Park located at West Sorenson Avenue and Miles Street and Cozy Park located at West Sorenson Avenue and Miles Street.

¹⁴ http://www.swiftcounty.com/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={098908E3-1049-4B1F-8C3E-AEA12A6F47E9}

¹⁵ http://www.swiftcounty.com/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={BA308AAB-A53D-49C0-902B-0E794F198961}

Below is a listing of other parks in Appleton and their amenities:

Riverview Park—North Hering Street

- Picnic Shelters with Electricity
- Porto Potties
- Playground Equipment for Children
- Covered Bandstand
- Abutting Bike Trail



Riverside Park—North Munsterman Street and West Veum Avenue

- Abuts the Pomme de Terre River
- Handicapped Fishing Pier
- Picnic Shelter with Electricity
- Campsites for Vehicle Campers
- Water & Electricity Hookups
- Cooking Grills
- Bathrooms with Showers
- Dump Facility for Vehicle Campers
- Primitive Camping area for Tenters
- Fish Cleaning House



West Nature Park—West Pomme de Terre River

- Primitive Nature Area
- Grass trails

City Nature Park—West Pomme de Terre River and North Hering Street

- Primitive Nature Area
- Abutting Bike Trail
- Primitive Walking Paths
- Fishing Areas along Pomme de Terre River



Flags of Honor—South Musterman Street

- Military with USA Flags displayed on Holidays
- Abutting Bike Trail

Benson

Benson Park: golf course

Lathrop Park: basketball court, playground equipment and shelter

Brock Field: softball and baseball fields and trails

Hoiland Park: playground equipment and basketball court

Northside Rec. Area: open space

Ambush Park: campground, picnic shelters, restrooms, trails



Kerkhoven: The City of Kerkhoven has two parks; Pillsbury Park is located at 205 Parkwood Avenue and has a seasonal pool, playground, rest stop that includes a picnic shelter area and bathrooms. Centennial Park is located at North Thirteenth Street and has a softball field and a small playground.

Yellow Medicine County

Yellow Medicine County is home to Upper Sioux Agency State Park located on MN Highway 67 southeast of Granite Falls. Upper Sioux Agency State Park offers the following summer and water amenities shown to the right and more information about Upper Sioux Agency State Park can be found on the DNR's website.¹⁶

Yellow Medicine County is also home to two regional county parks. Oraas Park, located along US Highway 59, seven miles south of Clarkfield or nine miles west of Hanley Falls, offers a relaxed setting for neighborhood gatherings, family camping, and convenient wayside rest for travelers. The park has a shelter for picnics and a children's playground. Primitive, free camping is available with 110-volt electrical hookups. Water is supplied by Lincoln Pipestone Rural Water.



Recreation Facilities

Summer | Winter

Summer

Picnic Area	<i>2 Areas</i>
The smaller picnic area is located at the confluence of the two rivers. The larger picnic area is off the main entrance. Facilities include picnic shelter at the main picnic area.	
Picnic Shelter	<i>Open Shelter</i>
Located in main picnic area. Shelter has electricity, tables, one standing grill, and additional firerings that are located near the shelter. 2 vault toilets nearby. Running water also available in this area. The shelter has 14 picnic tables in the shelter and can accommodate about 100 people. The shelter can be reserved by calling the park.	
Playground	<i>In Picnic Area</i>
Swingset.	
Volleyball	<i>Main Picnic Area</i>
Pick up equipment at the park office.	
Horseshoes	<i>Main Picnic Area</i>
Pick up equipment at park office.	
Golf Course	<i>Public Course</i>
On Hwy 67 before you get to the town of Granite Falls.	

Winter

Warming House	<i>Visitor Center</i>
Sliding Hill	<i>At Main Entrance</i>
This is a challenging hill...definitely not a bunny hill.	

Timm Park is located just off of County Road 18, three miles north of the City of Wood Lake or seven miles south of Granite Falls.

This popular park, located on the north shore of Wood Lake, offers a recently developed campground with water and 110-volt electrical service to each site, a picnic shelter, swimming area, boat ramp and dock. Fishing includes crappies, bullheads, and walleyes. Camping fees are \$15 per night for campers and \$7 per night for tents. Fees are required for each night the camper or tent is left in place at the park.

There are no reservations taken for camping, but the picnic shelters at both parks can be reserved for large functions (but no open dances or bands). Both parks are closed to four-wheelers, dirt bikes, and hunting.

¹⁶ http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/upper_sioux_agency/index.html

For more information about the county parks, contact Parks Director Ryan Meehan at 320-313-3013, or by email at ryan.meehan@co.ym.mn.gov, or visit Yellow Medicine County's website.¹⁷

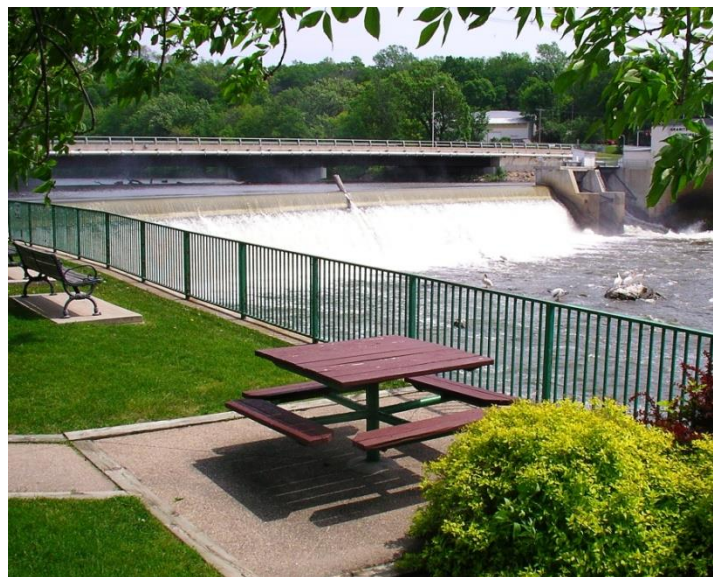
Stone Hill/Del Clark Lake Park is owned and operated by the Lac qui Parle Yellow Bank Watershed District and is located approximately one mile southwest of the City of Canby. A trail connects the city to the park. Amenities include 64 campsites with electricity, water and sewer hookups at most sites and primitive camping is also available. There are modern restrooms and showers as well as recreational amenities including a basketball court, playground equipment, park shelters and a swimming beach.

Many municipalities in Yellow Medicine County also have parks with varying amenities. The following is a list of local parks and their amenities in Yellow Medicine County.

Canby: The parks in Canby include Lake Sylvan Park, with the following amenities: a walking trail, playground equipment, ball field and fishing dock. Central park has playground equipment, a shelter and lots of open space for games. Triangle Park located in the northeast corner of the city has an unpaved trail, a shelter and open space.

Clarkfield: There are two parks in Clarkfield. North Park has amenities that include tennis courts, a swimming pool and bathhouse, a shelter, open space and a ball field. Vahalla Park has an unpaved walking path, shelter and playground equipment.

Granite Falls: Granite Falls has a number of parks and other areas with athletic facilities. Memorial Park is located on Highway 67 and amenities include: three shelters, a trail, a boat landing, a volleyball court, playground equipment, restrooms with showers, three primitive camping sites and 12 camper sites with hookups and grills. Rice Park is located on Minnesota Avenue along the Minnesota River and amenities include: a shelter, grills, playground equipment, a nine-hole disc golf course, benches and a portable restroom. Winter Park is located at Eighth Avenue and Eleventh Street and



amenities include a shelter, grills, playground equipment, a basketball court and a portable restroom. Regal Heights Park is located at County Road 5 and Gregory Avenue and it has playground equipment. Highland Park is located at County Road 38 and Skyline Drive and amenities include a shelter, grill, playground equipment, ball field, portable restroom, horseshoe pits, basketball court and parking. There are athletic amenities including tennis courts and softball and baseball fields located on Recreation Drive on the north side of the city near the

¹⁷ http://www.co.ym.mn.gov/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC={CCB40494-C89A-4500-B7D4-65C4FC51C8BE}

Minnesota River. Additionally tennis courts can be found at Oak Street and Short Street as well as at Fifth Avenue and Kilowatt Drive

Wood Lake: There is a park located on Fourth Avenue that is home to a baseball field.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This plan lays the groundwork for a successful trails network throughout the region—focusing on bicycle and pedestrian trails. It is a living document meant to guide the development of trails in the region by defining a broad vision and goals for trails that contribute to tourism, recreation and even alternative transportation options for residents and visitors in the region.

The plan gives funders a guide to the priorities in our region and gives trail enthusiasts information and guidance for the trail development process.

The creation of a regional trails plan that identifies routes, projects and priorities allows trail development to happen at the most opportune time, for example when a community is undergoing a road construction project, and allows for coordination among trail projects to increase connectivity. It is our hope that communities will use this document as they begin planning for trails and that it will provide them with many of the resources they need as they embark on that process.