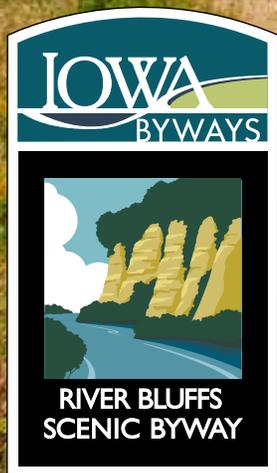


RIVER BLUFFS SCENIC BYWAY INTERPRETIVE MASTER PLAN



March 2017

Front cover: Motor Mill Historic Site is a byway attraction on the Turkey River.

Facing page: The byway offers vistas of contoured farm fields.

RIVER BLUFFS SCENIC BYWAY INTERPRETIVE MASTER PLAN

Submitted to:



**Northeast Iowa Resource
Conservation & Development**

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The Civilian Conservation Corps built a picnic shelter and other structures in the 1930s at Bixby State Preserve near Edgewood.



A rusted tractor is part of the agricultural history on display at Heritage Farm Park near Clermont.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Chapter 1: Introduction | 1 |
| River Bluffs Scenic Byway Map | 3 |
| Establishing the Byway | 6 |
| Scope of Work..... | 7 |
| The Planning Process..... | 8 |
| | |
| Chapter 2: Vision and Mission | 11 |
| Vision Statement..... | 12 |
| Mission Statement..... | 13 |
| Goals | 13 |
| | |
| Chapter 3: Byway Travelers | 19 |
| Visitor Data at Key Attractions | 21 |
| Visitor Demographics and Interests | 24 |
| Target Audiences..... | 27 |
| Staging Experiences..... | 28 |
| | |
| Chapter 4: Interpretive Resources | 33 |
| Resource Categories..... | 34 |
| River Bluffs Scenic Byway Regions | 34 |
| Byway Regions Map..... | 35 |
| Mississippi River Region | 36 |
| Marquette..... | 38 |
| McGregor | 41 |
| Monona | 43 |
| Turkey River Region | 44 |
| Guttenberg..... | 46 |
| Garber..... | 50 |
| Garnavillo..... | 51 |
| Elkader | 52 |
| St. Olaf..... | 54 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Gunder | 54 |
| Elgin..... | 55 |
| Clermont..... | 56 |
| West Union | 62 |
| Volga River Region..... | 64 |
| Osborne..... | 66 |
| Edgewood..... | 67 |
| Strawberry Point..... | 68 |
| Volga..... | 69 |
| Wadena..... | 69 |
| Fayette..... | 70 |
| Chapter 5: Themes and Messages..... | 73 |
| Defining Themes and Messages | 74 |
| Primary Theme..... | 75 |
| Sub-Theme 1 & Messages: Origin of the Driftless Region | 76 |
| Sub-Theme 2 & Messages: Shared Landscape and Culture..... | 78 |
| Sub-Theme 3 & Messages: Natural Communities | 80 |
| Sub-Theme 4 & Messages: Prehistoric People and Native Americans | 82 |
| Sub-Theme 5 & Messages: Northeastern Iowa History | 84 |
| Chapter 6: Interpretive Media | 89 |
| Existing Interpretive Media..... | 91 |
| Improve Wayfinding..... | 95 |
| Build on the River Bluffs Sense of Place | 96 |
| Plan Media Holistically | 97 |
| Create a Distinctive Visual Identity..... | 98 |
| Unified Design Standards..... | 99 |
| Interpretive Experience Hubs | 102 |
| Byway Entry-Point Experience Hubs..... | 104 |
| Community-Specific Experience Hubs | 110 |
| Recommended Hub Sites..... | 111 |



The Larrabee family’s Montauk mansion overlooks the village of Clermont.



Mississippi River fish are on display at the Guttenberg Hatchery and Aquarium.



Trails at Effigy Mounds National Monument lead to Native American mounds and views of the Mississippi River valley.

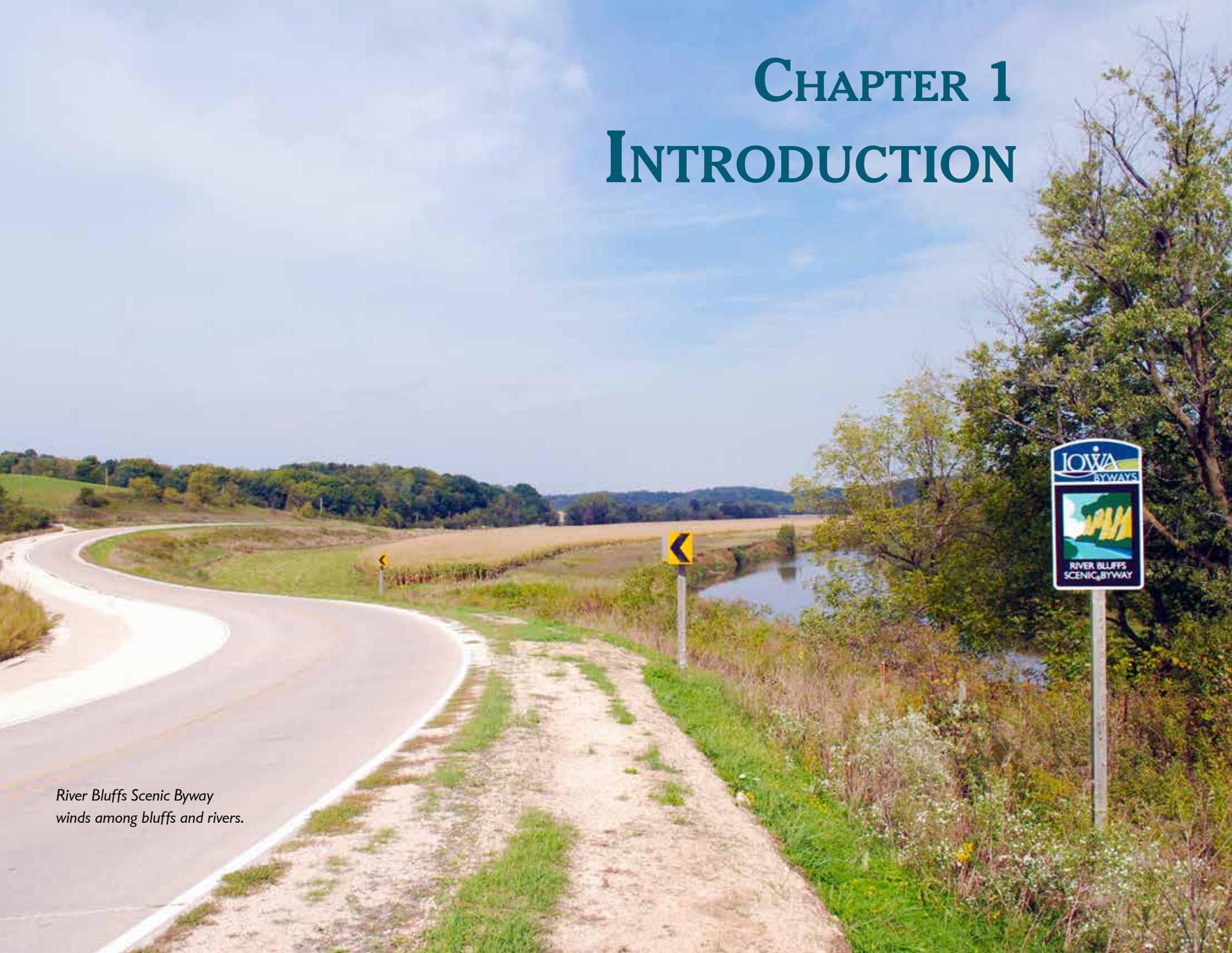


The Burger Barn in Elkader is open seasonally.

| | |
|---|------------|
| Site Orientation Signs | 116 |
| Recommended Site Orientation Sign Sites | 120 |
| Wayside Exhibits | 126 |
| Recommended Wayside Exhibit Sites | 130 |
| Welcome/Visitor Center Exhibits | 134 |
| Byway Artwork | 136 |
| Sculptures | 137 |
| Murals | 138 |
| Online Media | 140 |
| Byway Website..... | 140 |
| Social Media | 143 |
| Mobile Digital Media..... | 144 |
| Audiovisual Tours..... | 144 |
| Audiovisual Tour Apps..... | 146 |
| QR (Quick Response) Codes..... | 147 |
| Recommendations for River Bluffs Byway | 148 |
| Publications..... | 150 |
| General Byway Brochure | 150 |
| Travel Guide Booklet | 154 |
| Family Activities | 157 |
| Iowa Byways Junior Explorer Program | 157 |
| Explorer Discovery Pack | 158 |
| Children’s Byway Audio Tour | 158 |
| Family Passport Book | 159 |
| Thematic Play Areas | 159 |
| Buechel Hill Trail Improvements..... | 161 |
| Media Development Cost Estimates | 162 |
| Appendix | 163 |
| Visioning Meeting Results | 164 |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION



*River Bluffs Scenic Byway
winds among bluffs and rivers.*

Driftless Region Map



Source: Natural Resources Conservation Service
Driftless Area Landscape Conservation Initiative

INTRODUCTION

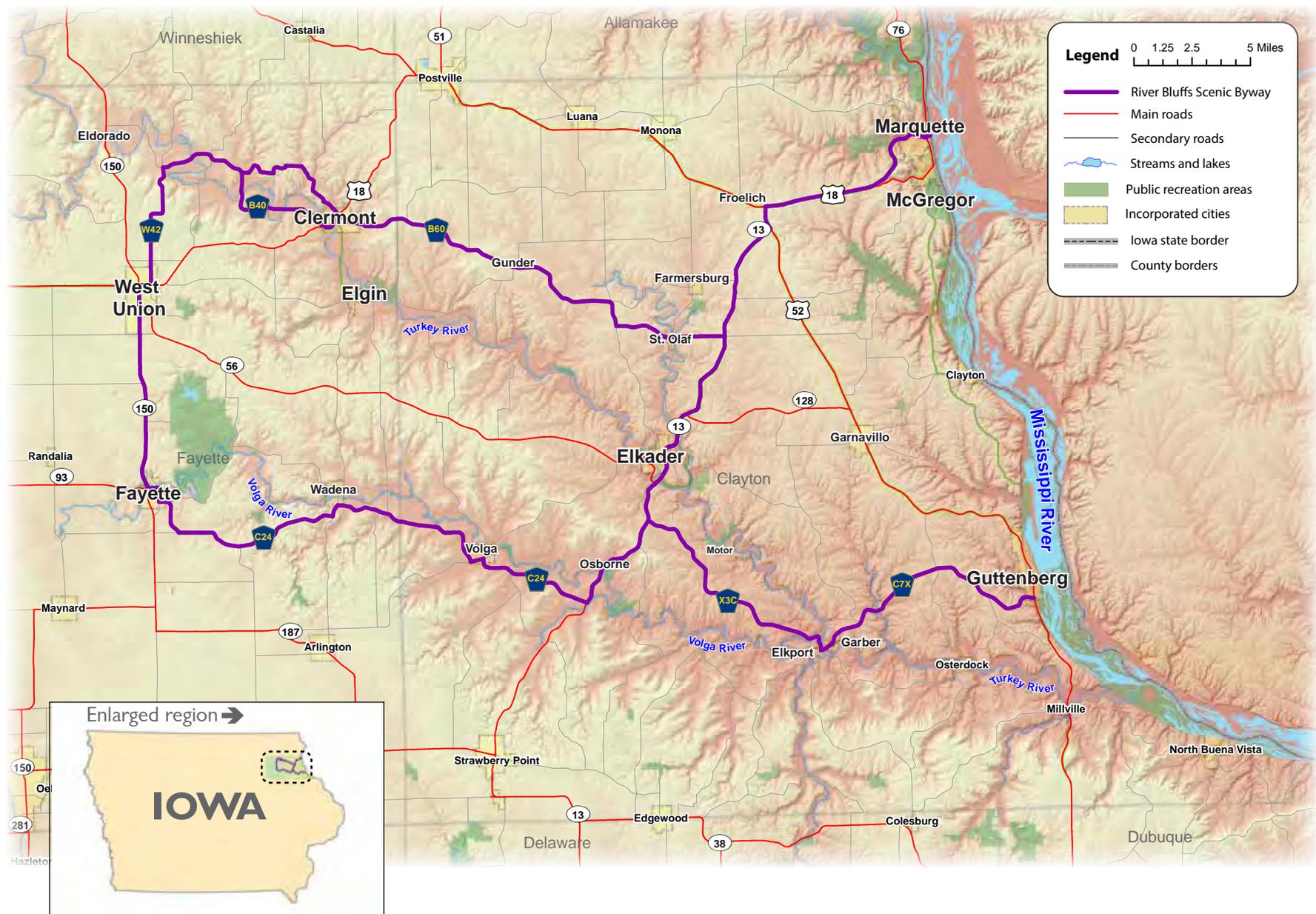
River Bluffs Scenic Byway traverses the Driftless Region, a 24,000-square-mile landscape island once surrounded but never touched by giant ice sheets during the last glacial period. This area, also called the Paleozoic Plateau, has evolved over thousands of years to reveal its unique terrain—rocky bluffs, deeply carved river valleys and more than 600 cold-water springs and creeks.

River Bluffs Scenic Byway loops 109 miles through Fayette and Clayton Counties. It passes through 13 towns, many of which are located on the Turkey, Volga, and Mississippi Rivers. Pikes Peak State Park and Effigy Mounds National Monument are noted for their spectacular overlooks of the Mississippi River valley.



Pikes Peak State Park provides dramatic views of the Mississippi River valley.

RIVER BLUFFS SCENIC BYWAY MAP





Montauk, built in 1874, was the Clermont home of Gov. William Larrabee.

A Stream-Carved Landscape

Along the River Bluffs Scenic Byway, the Mississippi, Turkey, and Volga Rivers have carved through the land to create limestone bluffs and rich bottomlands. The Turkey River is a designated water trail popular for canoeing and kayaking. Spring-fed trout streams flow into the Volga and Turkey Rivers and offer excellent brook, brown and rainbow trout angling. The backwaters of the Mississippi River National Wildlife and



The Elkader Whitewater Park is a new development on the Turkey River in downtown Elkader.

Fish Refuge can be explored by guided tour boat, or by houseboat, fishing boat, or canoe.

A Rich History

The towns, villages, and country churches along the byway offer connections to the history and culture of the area. Many communities celebrate their ethnic and cultural roots with festivals, historic sites, and museums. Mississippi River towns were the first settlements in what would become the state of Iowa. Guttenberg, Marquette and McGregor are charming river towns with much pre-Civil War architecture. Of special interest are Motor Mill and Montauk historic sites on the Turkey River.

Living with the Land

The people of the Driftless Region are bound together by their shared landscape, creating a culture that values small farms and locally grown food. With its hills and modest parcels of tillable land, much of the Driftless Region has remained in small-scale agriculture. The region has a history of innovation in sustainable agriculture. The recognition that the Driftless area's soils, climate, and geography influence the flavor and quality of products is becoming

widely accepted. Driftless Region wines, artisan cheeses, heritage apples, and grass-fed meats and dairy are gaining in recognition and market share. Farm cooperatives, community supported agriculture (CSA) operations, and food co-ops flourish in the region.

A Haven for Nature

The Driftless Region is a landscape carved by rivers into high bluffs and deep valleys. More of the land is preserved by national, state, county, and local agencies and nonprofits than

anywhere else in Iowa. Private farmland is a mosaic of cropland, pastures, forests, and stream valleys. Byway visitors come here to watch birds and wildlife, hike, bike, paddle, ride, camp, and tour river bluffs and backwaters.

The Driftless Region is known for its sustainable agriculture practices, including contour farming on hillsides.





These Iowa Scenic Byway signs marked the byways from 1993 to 2011.

ESTABLISHING THE BYWAY

The Iowa Byways program began in 1993 when the Iowa Department of Transportation designated four routes as Iowa Scenic Byways to encourage tourism. Six additional state byways were added later. The byways are:

- Grant Wood, 1993
- **River Bluffs, 1993; additional segments, 2000**
- Western Skies, 1993
- Woodlands (renamed Historic Hills), 1993
- Iowa Valley, 1998
- Loess Hills, 1998 (designated a National Scenic Byway, 2000)
- Driftless Area, 2000
- Glacial Trail, 2000
- Delaware Crossing, 2002
- Lincoln Highway, 2006 (designated as an Iowa Heritage Byway)

Initially, uniform Iowa Scenic Byway signs were placed along these routes. However, the byways lacked local

support and promotion. There was little or no information provided to tourists about what to see and do.

The Iowa Byways Sustainability Project (IBSP) began in 2008 as a response to this need. The IBSP is a collaborative effort between the Iowa Department of Transportation and Resource Conservation and Development Councils (RC&D) across Iowa to preserve, protect, interpret and promote Iowa's scenic byways. Northeast Iowa RC&D serves as the lead entity for the River Bluffs, Driftless Area, Grant Wood, and Delaware Crossing scenic byways. In the intervening years, much has been accomplished in this mission to interpret and promote the byways.

SCOPE OF WORK

In January 2012, Golden Hills RC&D, based in Oakland, Iowa, was awarded a Transportation Enhancement Grant through the Iowa Department of Transportation to complete interpretive master plans for ten Iowa byways. Additional funds were awarded for the Loess Hills National Scenic Byway plan and the Western Skies Scenic Byway plan through the Iowa West Foundation.

A request for proposals was issued in early 2013, seeking interest from firms to provide professional services to develop long-range interpretive master plans for Iowa's byways. Four firms were interviewed in August 2013. In February 2014, a professional services agreement for the ten interpretive master plans was entered into between Golden Hills RC&D and Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.

Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters agreed to develop one interpretive master plan for each of the following scenic and historic Iowa Byways: Delaware Crossing, Driftless Area, Glacial Trail, Grant Wood, Historic Hills, Iowa Valley, Lincoln Highway, Loess Hills, River Bluffs, and Western Skies.

The work is divided into three phases, with Loess Hills and Western Skies completed in the first phase. Phase one interpretive master plans were delivered in 2015. Phase two included interpretive master plans for Driftless Area, River Bluffs, Grant Wood, Delaware Crossing, and Iowa Valley scenic byways, with delivery in 2016 and 2017.

Each interpretive master plan is based on the following tasks:

- Task 1: Inventory and Analysis of Byway Resources
- Task 2: Stakeholder Coordination and Public Input Process
- Task 3: Development of Interpretive Themes and Conceptual Interpretive Plan
- Task 4: Finalization of Interpretive Plans with Recommendations and Design of Interpretive Elements
- Task 5: Reporting



Motor Mill Historic Site

THE PLANNING PROCESS

Interpretation is defined as a communication process that guides visitors in their search for meanings in objects, places, and landscapes. We adhere to the philosophy that interpretive planning is a process of consensus development—of achieving a shared perspective by all stakeholders of why interpretation is needed, who it will serve, and what significant stories it will tell. Effective planning answers the following questions, which can be illustrated by the Planning Triangle:

Who?

Determine who the byway visitors are and the experiences that they are seeking. This includes activities and visitor groups that are not currently being targeted.

Chapter 3: Byway Travelers

Why?

Confirm and/or further define the purpose, vision, and goals of developing a master plan for the River Bluffs Scenic Byway.

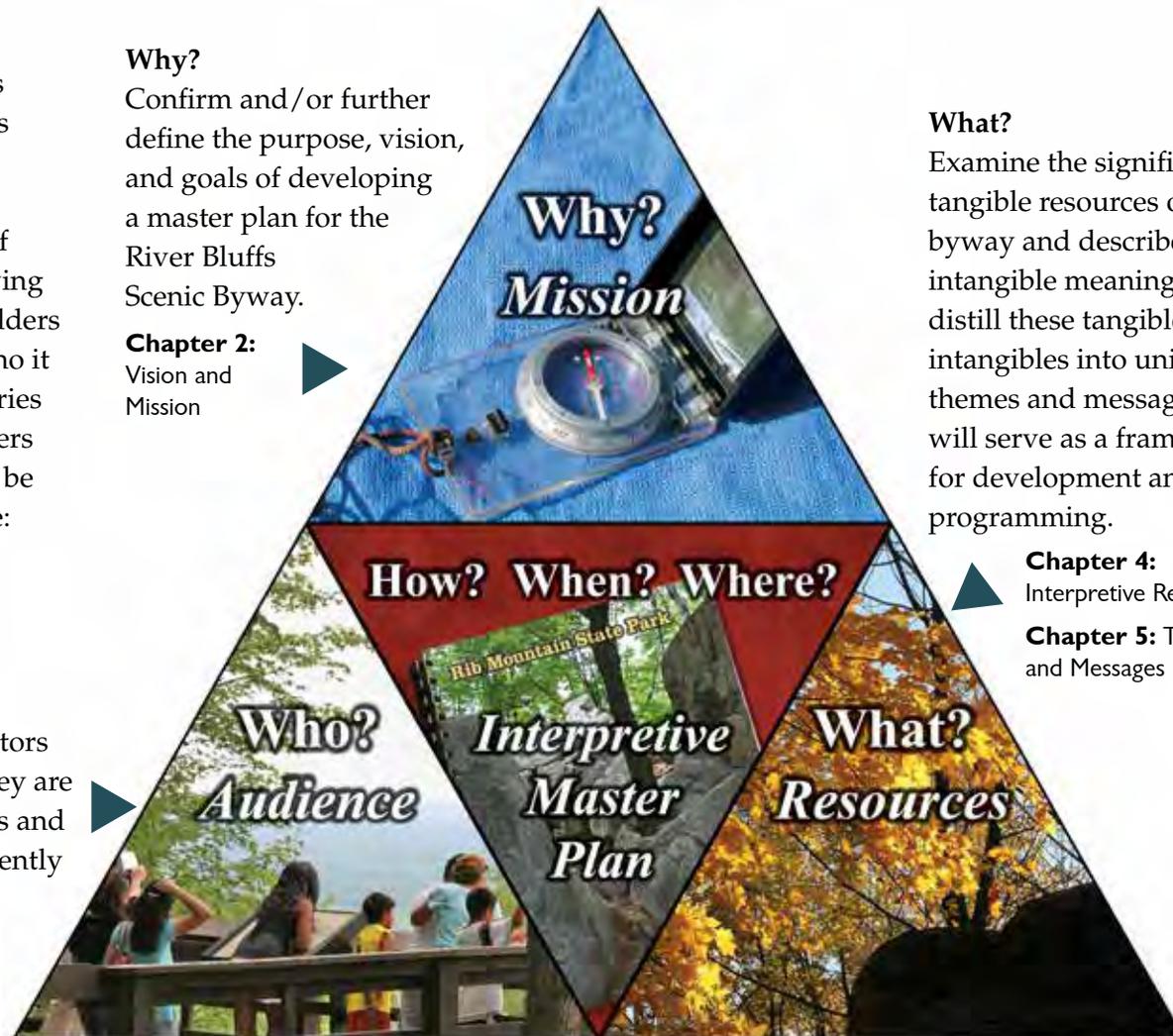
Chapter 2:
Vision and
Mission

What?

Examine the significant tangible resources of the byway and describe their intangible meanings. Then, distill these tangibles and intangibles into unifying themes and messages that will serve as a framework for development and programming.

Chapter 4:
Interpretive Resources

Chapter 5: Themes
and Messages



Where? When? How?

Based on the why, who, and what, develop a plan for interpretive facilities, media, and programs that best facilitate visitor-resource connections within the parameters of the mission and vision of the River Bluffs Scenic Byway.

Chapter 6: Interpretive Media

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- ▶ U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service. Driftless Area Landscape Conservation Initiative. Retrieved from <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/tx/home/?cid=stelprdb1117519>



Pikes Peak State Park has beautiful trails to explore nature.

CHAPTER 2

VISION AND MISSION

River Bluffs Byway provides expansive views of forests interspersed with farms.



Hikers explore Big Springs Nature Park near Guttenberg.

VISION, MISSION AND GOALS

Strong vision and mission statements supported by established values and goals are necessary to guide future planning, management, and implementation efforts for interpretation of the River Bluffs Scenic Byway.

Vision

A vision statement answers two fundamental questions:

1. What are the values or beliefs about the significance of this place that inform your work? Why should people visit?
2. What do you ultimately hope to accomplish as a result of your efforts?

The significance statement was derived from Northeast Iowa RC&D descriptions of the byway in its publications and online materials. The vision statement incorporates concepts developed for the River Bluffs Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan (Section Three: Mission, Vision, and Goals) and expresses them as the vision for developing interpretation on the byway.

River Bluffs Scenic Byway Vision Statement

Interpretive media and programs will be developed to enhance the recreational experience for all byway travelers. Concerted efforts to market this enhanced byway experience will increase tourism and result in economic vitality for the byway communities. Increased knowledge, awareness, and value of the byway by residents will engender a strong sense of place and will motivate citizens to maintain and preserve their unique scenic, natural, recreational, and archaeological resources.

Mission

The mission statement answers two questions:

1. How do you plan to work toward this broad vision?
2. For whose specific benefit does the organization exist?

The mission statement incorporates concepts developed for the River Bluffs Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan (Section Three: Mission, Vision, and Goals).

River Bluffs Scenic Byway Mission Statement

Implementation of the interpretive and corridor management plans developed for the River Bluffs Scenic Byway will enhance the experience for visitors, the quality of life for residents, and the economic vitality of the byway communities while preserving and improving the corridor's unique scenic, natural, recreational, and archaeological resources.

Interpretive Goals and Actions

Goals support the vision and mission. They are ambitious, broad statements of desired conditions. The goals are meant to be translated into actions (programs and projects) that the byway organization, partners, and supporters will strive to implement.

Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters conducted an Interpretive Master Plan Visioning Meeting on June 23, 2015, at

Northeast Iowa RC&D in Postville. Ten River Bluffs Scenic Byway byway board members and staff attended.

Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters asked: **“What is your vision of success for improving the visitor experience on your scenic byway?”**

The responses to this question are grouped into three interpretive goals. The actions to accomplish each goal are derived in part from the byway's Corridor Management Plan (Section Three: Mission, Vision, and Goals):



An interpretive master plan visioning meeting was held in June 2015 at the Northeast Iowa RC&D office in Postville.



A sign notes access for the Turkey River Water Trail in Gouldsburg Park northwest of West Union.

Goal 1

Develop quality interpretive media that guides visitors in their search for meaningful experiences on the byway.

Responses related to Goal 1:

- Kiosk or hub in every byway community
 - Wayside exhibits
 - A number of kiosks or plaques along the byway, detailing the Native American history
 - More website presence about specific features
 - Short videos to tell past, present, future
 - Relate signage to different elements (history, nature, recreation, etc.)
 - A longhouse or interpretive museum on the hill overlooking Wadena along the byway would be wonderful.
 - Eye Spy project that tells a story and is a tour guide, for places without cell reception
- Etching of Emma Big Bear or another subject on a bluff in the Marquette area
 - Signage and interpretation
 - Highlight character or theme or story for each community (Emma Big Bear, etc.)
 - Unified interpretation at historic sites and natural areas—easily accessible and professional
 - Large interactive artwork in each community to engage everyone (eagle nest, etc.)
 - Period dress at historical locations
 - Statues of icons
 - Safari program
 - Photo props, photo opportunities
 - Mobile/digital technology
 - Supplying information in more tangible ways. Drawing them in with eye-catching displays.

- Creating an app/game for the byway, which could really increase awareness of all of the activities and attractions on the byway, and might attract other audiences to the byway. More could be done to make the byway appeal to families/multi-generational groups of travelers—a game might help with this, along with increasing education and awareness of the byway through collaboration with businesses and attractions located along the byway.
- Target younger audience (interactive, digital technology) especially historic stories
- Blog stories
- Local bus trips to tell the region’s stories (bank tours)



White-tailed deer graze on the lawn at the Pikes Peak State Park overlook.

Goal 1 Actions:

- Secure grants and other sources of funding to implement this interpretive master plan
- Interpret the byway’s intrinsic qualities through stories, places, and features that make the byway corridor unique
- Develop interpretive and educational opportunities for residents and visitors through thematic audio tours, interpretive panels, wayside exhibits, art, experience hubs, mobile/digital media, exhibits, audiovisual programs, and publications
- Record and use oral histories as part of interpretive displays, downloadable files or CDs, and on social media, so tourists may access them before, during, or after their visit

Goal 2

Enhance wayfinding to improve the visitor experience and assist travelers in finding attractions and information.

Responses related to Goal 2:

- Wayfinding for sites/attractions
- Road signs to get to attractions
- More signage is needed—wayfinding—perhaps use of wayfinding system such as Dubuque (theirs is by districts in town). One could be developed for a breakdown such as history, recreation, etc.
- More/better signage is needed for attractions along the byway.

Goal 2 Actions:

- Develop and distribute updated wayfinding tools to ensure travelers have access to the most current travel information at a variety of locations
- Work with and empower byway stakeholders about how to work with public and private partner entities that inform travel decisions, route planning and selection, and wayfinding
- Conduct an annual byway signage inventory and work with cities, counties, and the Iowa Department of Transportation to replace or repair byway signage as needed
- Work with local partners to ensure that local wayfinding to byway attractions is implemented at the highest standards through a coordinated effort



Marion Lutheran Church and Cemetery in Gunder.

Goal 3

Develop a comprehensive marketing plan for the byway.

Responses related to Goal 3:

- Local buy-in
- Get into the schools: Create units, assist with field trips
- Local bank bus trips to tell our stories
- We want the visitor to experience and enjoy the byway in a memorable and world-class manner. These experiences should spawn repeat visits or extended visits. Encourage the visitor to spend dollars in the local economy, which will expand local support for continued byway marketing efforts. The byway should be a critical catalyst for the health and economic welfare of northeast Iowa.
- Hospitality incentives/training and resources for businesses
- Customer service

Goal 3 Actions:

- Educate stakeholders and partners about traveler demographics in general and demographics of specific targeted subgroups so they can target their resources appropriately



A farmer plants corn in a field along the River Bluffs Scenic Byway.

- Provide hospitality incentives, training, and resources for businesses to provide visitors with information about what the byway has to offer
- Develop, print, and distribute publications that educate travelers about the byway, that promote and cross-market the byway's intrinsic qualities, small businesses, events, and visitor amenities collectively or as part of the byway experience
- Develop and market programs, events, and other experiences
- through social media, conferences, mass media, and other venues that maximize visual interaction and one-on-one outreach to targeted groups
- Develop and utilize high-quality accurate maps for byway and partner publications
- Identify and secure partnerships, grants, and contributions for the byway and partners to fund development and distribution of marketing materials that reach audiences of all demographics



Osborne Conservation and Welcome Center has a Pioneer Village with several historic buildings, including this one-room school.

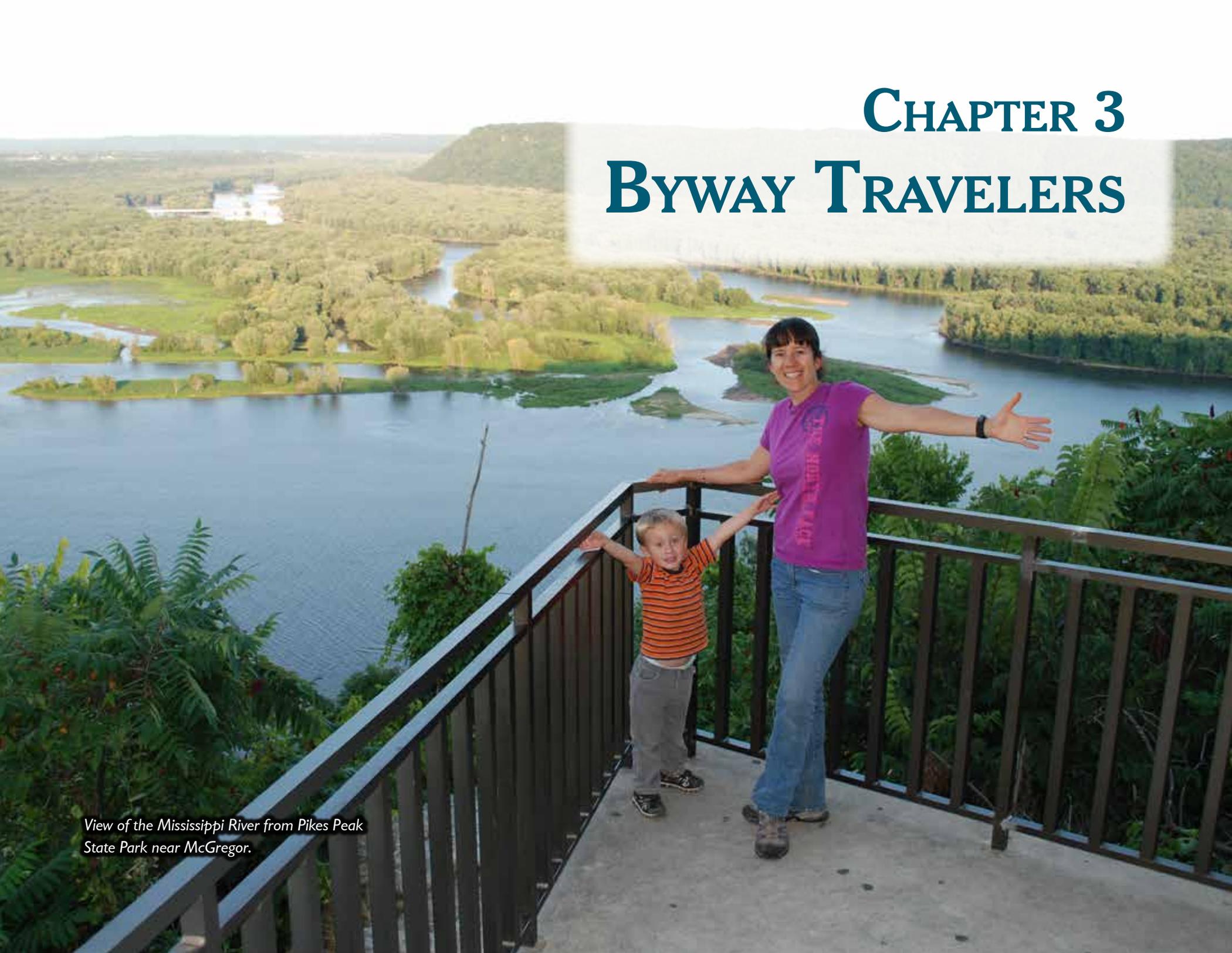
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- ▶ River Bluffs Scenic Byway Interpretive Master Plan Visioning Meeting, Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development office, Postville, Iowa, June 23, 2015.
- ▶ River Bluffs Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan, Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development, 2016.

CHAPTER 3

BYWAY TRAVELERS

*View of the Mississippi River from Pikes Peak
State Park near McGregor.*





Travelers check out the exhibits at the Marquette Depot Museum and Information Center.



Keystone Arch Bridge in Elkader

BYWAY TRAVELERS

As one of the most scenic byways in the state, River Bluffs draws visitors to panoramic vistas, river recreation, unique geology, and historic sites offering a peek into the past. This area is locally known as Iowa's "Little Switzerland." The byway intersects with the Turkey, Volga, and Mississippi Rivers at several historic towns where visitors can enjoy local attractions and amenities.

Visitor Data at Key Attractions

Natural and Scenic Attractions

Volga River State Recreation Area is a 5,700-acre park near Fayette that has hiking, camping, picnicking, boating, fishing, and equestrian trails. In 2011, over 100,000 visitors enjoyed this site.

Gilbertson Nature Center, near Elgin, offers a range of recreational and cultural opportunities. The site offers cultural museums, a petting zoo, hiking and equestrian trails, a corn maze, camping, kayaking, snowshoeing, and skiing. According to their environmental education coordinator, nearly 4,000 visitors come out to enjoy these activities every year.

Pikes Peak State Park features a 500-foot bluff overlooking the Upper Mississippi River and is one of the most photographed places in Iowa. This park draws the most visitors in October due to the vibrant fall colors. Visitation was almost 300,000 in 2011.

Fifteen miles south of River Bluffs Scenic Byway is **Backbone State Park**, Iowa's first state park that was dedicated in 1920. Named for the steep bedrock



The overlook at Pikes Peak State Park is a popular stop for travelers.

carved by the Maquoketa River, the highest point in northeastern Iowa can be found here. The park features a Civilian Conservation Corps museum, along with a variety of outdoor recreational activities. Over 315,000 visitors explored this state park in 2011.

Effigy Mounds National Monument welcomes approximately 80,000 visitors annually. According to staff, about one fourth of the visitation is school groups.

Staff report that visitors come from all over the country and world to explore the collection of animal-shaped mounds built by prehistoric Native Americans. In addition, the Effigy Mounds-Yellow River area became Iowa's first globally important bird area in 2014. One visiting birder claimed, "The best day of warbler watching that I ever had was near here on the river overlooks."



Motor Mill Historic Site

Historic and Cultural Attractions

Froelich General Store and Tractor Museum in Froelich highlights the 1892 invention of the first successful gasoline tractor. Visitors are invited to explore an 1890 village to view a tractor replica, a general store, an 1866 one-room school, blacksmith shop, railroad depot, and vintage barn. According to statistics collected by the Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area office, over 1,500 travelers visited this attraction in 2014.

Motor Mill Historic Site in Elkader offers tours two weekends a month during the summer to share the story of this flour mill that became operational in 1869, as well as other buildings on site. According to staff at the Clayton County Conservation Board, “the incredible scenic beauty and rich history in such a remote location is what draws visitors to the Motor Mill Historic Site. Visitors literally leave the modern world behind here. Visitors range from history buffs to outdoor enthusiasts seeking the serenity



A guide leads a tour group at Froelich General Store and Museum.

and historic beauty of Motor Mill. The site averages about 1,000 visitors for formal tours of the mill from the region and up to 20 different states and often a few foreign countries. About a dozen groups annually request a special tour including schools, summer youth camps, bus tours, and area civic organizations and clubs like the Red Hat Ladies, questers, car clubs, equestrian trail rides, paddling groups, and tractor-cades. The site sees a much larger number of visitors who casually visit to camp, hike, paddle, or just out for a scenic drive, likely a few thousand casual visitors a year.”

History buffs can tour the historic home of Iowa's 12th governor, William Larrabee, at the **Montauk Historic Site** in Clermont. Visitors can enjoy a guided tour of the home, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The site includes the Union Sunday School and the Clermont Historical Museum for tours as well. According to Montauk Historic Site staff, an average annual tour visitation to all three attractions is over 3,300, with more travelers that stop but do not take the tour. They estimate that "nearly 40 percent of our visitors are from out of state, traveling from nearly every state, and often have guests from a few different countries annually."

Osborne Conservation and Welcome Center

Osborne Welcome Center anchors the south-central entry to the byway on Highway 13. Visitor log statistics for 2015 are as follows:

- 7,369 individuals visited the center, an increase of 5.63% from 2014. Groups averaged 3.67 people.
- This total includes 6,414 Iowa visitors from 71 counties.
- Out-of-state visitors included 904 individuals from 32 states.



An outdoor play area at Osborne Conservation and Welcome Center is geared toward younger visitors.

- International visitors accounted for 51 individuals from 13 countries.

It would be useful to survey a sample of these visitors to better understand their interests, especially those related to the byway and its attractions. Osborne Welcome Center could participate in the Travel Iowa Welcome Center Survey, a standard survey instrument that must be administered to 200 visitors to be included in the Travel Iowa Welcome Center Survey Report.



Interpretive panels throughout the grounds of Montauk describe the history of the governor's mansion and farm.



Visitors check out the livestock at Heritage Farm Park in Clermont.



A sculpture of an eagle's nest near Elgin is an experiential stop for visitors.

Visitor Demographics and Interests

Four recent Iowa tourism surveys provide demographic information and insight into visitor interests:

- Travel Iowa 2015 Welcome Centers Survey Report:** Provides data from eleven Iowa welcome centers collected in 2015. The nearby Dubuque Welcome Center surveyed 214 of its 14,510 visitors (a minimum of 200 were required from each center).
- Iowa Great River Road 2013 Visitor Survey:** Provides data from surveys conducted between June and October 2013, from visitors at selected locations or participating in selected events on the Great River Road. Iowa residents completed 428 surveys and out-of-state visitors completed 430.
- Iowa Tourism Office 2015 Trip Planning Survey:** Provides data from an online survey completed by 15,659 individuals who ordered an Iowa Travel Guide. About 3,489 respondents were Iowans and 5,384 were from the surrounding states of Illinois, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.
- Iowa Tourism Office 2015 Follow-up Surveys:** Provides data from 1,074 individuals who ordered the Iowa Travel Guide. Data includes whether the individual took a trip, how long the trip was, their spending in Iowa, their state of origin, and how they arrived at the website.

Key Findings of the 2015 Iowa Welcome Center Survey Report

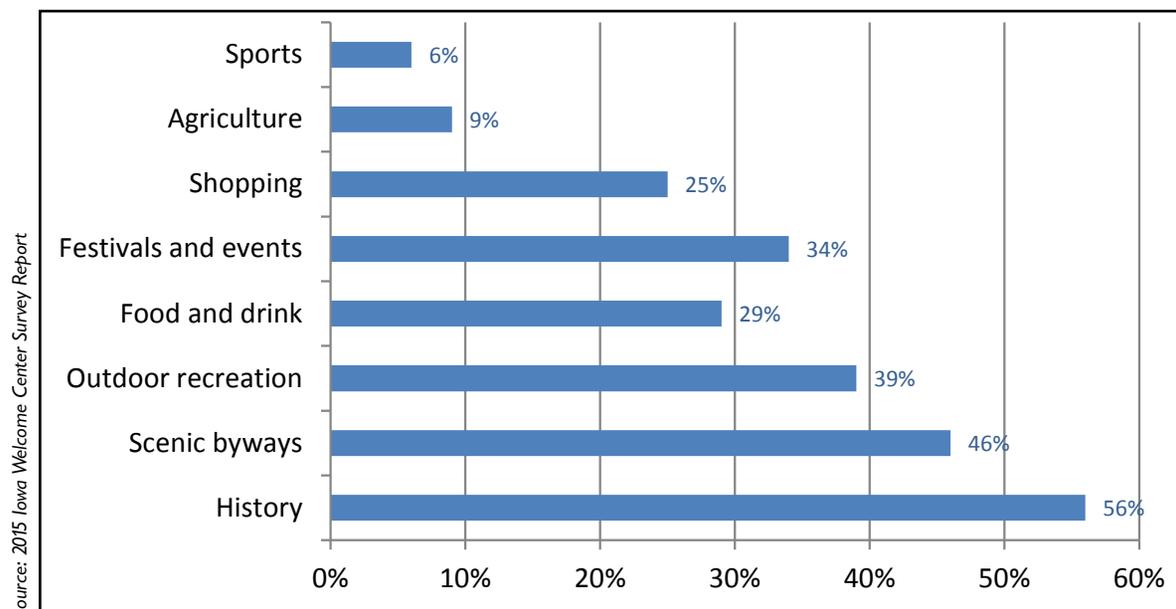
- Travelers spent an average of 3.6 days in Iowa and made an average of 3.1 trips to Iowa.
- The travel counselors influenced 36% of the travelers to stay longer; 63% of those travelers stayed an additional day or longer.
- The average travel party size was 2.5 people.
- The average spending per day by travel parties was \$276.20.
- The welcome centers served out-of-state travelers from Minnesota (11%), Illinois (5%), Missouri (4%), Nebraska (4%), and Wisconsin (4%). Only 15% of travelers were Iowa residents.
- The traveler's primary destination was Iowa (39%), followed by Minnesota (10%), Nebraska (7%), and South Dakota (5%).

- Iowa Welcome Centers primarily served adult travel parties (75%) with the average age of 57. The vast majority were on vacation, taking a leisure trip (54%), or visiting family or friends (30%).
- Over half of the travelers were interested in history (57%). Other popular interest areas were scenic byways (53%), outdoor recreation (42%), food and drink (35%), festivals and events (32%), shopping (31%), agriculture (20%), and sports (10%).
- Specific to the Dubuque Welcome Center survey results, 46% of visitors listed scenic byways as their main interest. Other primary interests include historical attractions (56%), outdoor recreation and parks (39%), festivals and events (34%), and agricultural attractions (9%).

Key Findings of the 2013 Iowa Great River Road Survey

- The average age of respondents was 65.3.
- 67% are either retired or work in management/professional fields.
- Scenery and scenic views ranked highest in importance of various factors in their decision to visit the area.

Main Area of Interest at Dubuque Welcome Center



- 75% plan to stay overnight along the river.
- 52% were couples.
- 97% report their trip met or exceeded their expectations.
- From the 24% of visitors and 55% of residents who felt additional tourism services or visitor amenities were needed, the most requested were: guide signs and attractions signs; bicycle trails and paths; maps; expanded advertising and marketing of local attractions; and public restroom facilities.

Key Findings of the 2015 Trip Planning Survey and 2015 Marketing Follow-up Survey

- 60% travel during June, July, and August, with July the peak month.
- At the time of ordering, 93% of Iowans and 81% of travelers from surrounding states say they are “already planning a trip,” or are “very likely” to take a trip to Iowa.
- 74% of trip planners were female.
- 78% of travel parties were adults without children.
- Average age of travelers from Iowa was 55; surrounding states was 58.



The Riverwalk in downtown Elkader follows the Turkey River.

Implications of Survey Data for the River Bluffs Scenic Byway

The most striking statistic is the high level of interest in Iowa scenic byways in general, and in the specific historic, outdoor recreation, festivals and events, and other attractions offered on the byways. The River Bluffs Scenic Byway offers almost everything tourists are seeking.

Marketing approaches for the River Bluffs Scenic Byway should focus on how the byway provides what the resident or out-of-state traveler is seeking. This can take the form of booklets, brochures, and touch-screen exhibits provided at welcome and visitor centers, and website and Facebook connections that can be easily accessed by target audiences.

Demographically, Iowa's typical resident and out-of-state tourist is well educated, affluent, and mature. Families with children are a minority audience that will require special marketing efforts to identify and promote family-oriented byway excursions. This might include a focus on more active pursuits such as fishing, camping, hiking, and canoeing. Other recommendations for meeting the interests of children are provided in Chapter 6: Interpretive Media.

Gilbertson Nature Center near Elgin includes a petting zoo.



Target Audiences

An interpretive master plan visioning meeting was conducted by Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters on June 23, 2015, at the Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development office in Postville. Eight River Bluffs Scenic Byway stakeholders attended. The following is a list of their responses to the question, "Who are the primary target audiences for interpretive media on this byway?" The responses have been organized into five categories:

Adults and Senior Citizens

- Adults
- Tourists traveling the byway
- Park and recreation venue users who would have limited knowledge of the site being interpreted
- Retirees
- Young adults
- Travelers 40 and older: many who visit are interested in history, architecture, and the river
- Retirees with more disposable income

Families with Children

- Young families



The Backbone Trail at Backbone State Park near Dundee features prominent rock escarpments.

School Children and Youth Groups

- Children
- Our youth

Local Residents

- Local citizens who also may have some limited knowledge of the sites being interpreted

Special Interest Groups

- Historians

- Young geocachers
- Bicyclists, campers, hikers (providing them more information on trails, campgrounds, and other outdoor activities)
- Visitors' special interests often include scenic beauty, nature, wildlife, history, and recreational activities. Art and culinary experiences are becoming more popular for visitors as well.

Staging Experiences

In their book *The Experience Economy*, B. Joseph Pine II and James Gilmore contend that in the “progression of economic value,” the American economy has progressed as follows:

Extracting commodities



Making goods



Delivering services



Staging experiences

As an example, they describe the four-stage evolution of the birthday cake:

“In an agrarian economy, mothers made birthday cakes from scratch, mixing farm commodities (flour, sugar, butter, and eggs) that together cost mere dimes. As the goods-based industrial economy advanced, moms paid a dollar or two to Betty Crocker for premixed ingredients. Later, when the service economy took hold, busy parents ordered cakes from the bakery or grocery store, which, at \$10 or \$15, cost ten times as much as the packaged ingredients. Now, in the time-starved new millennium, parents neither make the birthday cake nor even throw the

party. Instead, they spend \$100 or more to “outsource” the entire event to Chuck E. Cheese’s, the Discovery Zone, the Mining Company, or some other business that stages a memorable event for the kids, and often throw in the cake for free.

The implications of this economic progression are clear for Driftless Region travelers: if planners stage themed immersion experiences, the road will grow as a popular tourist getaway.

It is important to distinguish between experiences and services. As Pine and Gilmore point out, “Experiences are a distinct economic offering, as different from services as services are from goods.” The idea is to intentionally use services as the stage, goods as props, to engage Driftless Region tourists in a way that creates a memorable event. Goods are tangibles, services intangible, and experiences memorable. Goods and services are external to the tourist. Experiences are inherently personal, existing only in the mind of an individual who has been engaged on an emotional, physical, intellectual, or even spiritual level.



Pinky the Elephant in Marquette is an iconic roadside attraction and a photo opportunity.

Pine and Gilmore's Nine Keys to Staging Experiences and Applications to the River Bluffs Scenic Byway

1. **Create a rich portfolio of experiences—create a series of related experiences that flow one from another.**

Develop descriptions of attractions, activities, and events that incorporate the resources of the corridor and its communities. Organize these experiences into categories of related experiences. Market the experiences through electronic, print, and on-site interpretive media so visitors can easily choose those that provide the experiences they seek.

2. **Use experience hubs in locations where people naturally congregate.**

Place experience hub kiosks, site orientation signs, and interpretive panels at strategic locations and attractions on the byway and travel crossroads where motorists stop.

3. **Create a flagship location—a single place where you stage the very best, most dynamic experience.**

Develop visitor centers that have rewarding media experiences. They should have state-of-the-art



Fayette County Tourism Center in Fayette welcomes visitors and provides information.

audiovisual programs and exhibits and quality personal services that feature the unique attractions of northeastern Iowa and provide orientation and incentives to visit specific sites and attractions on the byway. Potential sites include Osborne Conservation and Welcome Center, the Marquette Depot Museum and Information Center, the Driftless Area Wetland Centre in Marquette, the Guttenberg Welcome Center, and the Fayette County Tourism Center in Fayette.

4. **Integrate physical and virtual experiences.**

Use the website as an interactive venue for holistically exploring the byway and its experiences, and to help people plan their getaway on the corridor. Promote the website on all media. Develop mobile apps and other interactive multimedia/audio tours.



McGregor is an old Mississippi River town that showcases its heritage.

5. **Theme the experience. The theme must drive all design elements and staged events of the experience toward a unified story line that wholly captivates the customer.**

Using the interpretive themes developed in this plan (Chapter 5: Themes and Messages), create thematic experience packages that integrate tours (self-guided or conducted), interpretive media, special events and festivals, programs, shopping, dining, and sleeping accommodations. Feature

sites that already provide meaningful experiences related to the theme.

6. **Harmonize impressions with positive cues—render the experience with indelible impressions. Impressions are the “takeaways” of the experience; they fulfill the theme.**

Create a strong identity for byway communities, which might include murals to celebrate the history and culture of each community and thematic kiosks with panels that interpret the human stories,

buildings, and artifacts found there.

7. **Eliminate negative cues. Ensure the integrity of the customer experience by eliminating anything that diminishes, contradicts, or distracts from the theme.**

Each community must be committed to enhancing the visual character of the corridor. Enhancing wayfinding to principal attractions must be a priority. All interpretive and wayfinding media should use unified graphics and other cues.

8. **Mix in memorabilia and photo opportunities. Certain goods have always been purchased primarily for the memories they convey—a physical reminder of the experience.**

A range of byway-related memorabilia should be sold at tourist attractions. Patches, buttons, books, local crafts, local foods, and other goods help reinforce the experience.

9. **Engage the five senses.**

Plan areas that excite the senses and create “get-out-of-the-car” activities for visitors. Hiking trails, scenic overlooks, river cruises or tubing, interactive museums, farmers’ markets, festivals or just a walk through a historic river town await their exploration.

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A park ranger presents a children's program at Effigy Mounds National Monument.

CHAPTER 4

INTERPRETIVE

RESOURCES



Downtown West Union

INTERPRETIVE RESOURCES

This inventory of interpretive resources documents the natural and cultural attractions along the River Bluffs Scenic Byway. It serves as a foundation for the interpretive themes and messages in Chapter 5 that connect tangible resources with intangible meanings. Interpretive media are developed from these themes and messages to engage visitors in meaningful experiences along the byway.

The interpretive planning team sought input during a stakeholder visioning session on June 23, 2015, in which the following questions were posed:

- What are the important attractions along this byway that visitors should experience?
- What compelling stories and messages can visitors experience that make the byway unique?
- Who are key people we should interview and what are the documents we should acquire to learn about your byway?

The planning team used results from this meeting, byway publications, and other documents to experience each resource. Staff at various attractions were interviewed to gain further insight.

Resource Categories

The U.S. Department of Transportation Scenic Byways Program identifies six intrinsic qualities that define and describe a scenic byway. This plan lists each core interpretive resource in these categories, combining Scenic and Natural, and Historic and Archaeological. Core resources are located on or near the byway and offer travelers the opportunity to explore and experience the intrinsic qualities of the River Bluffs area. Intrinsic quality categories are:

Scenic and Natural

Resources related to geology, nature, or overlooks with scenic views.

Historic and Archaeological

Resources with artifacts or other tangible evidence of prehistoric or historic people and events.

Cultural

Resources that provide insight into the Driftless Region culture and sense of place.

Recreational

Resources for camping, picnicking, hiking, fishing, or canoeing.

River Bluffs Regions

This resource inventory is organized into three regions:

- **Mississippi River Region:** This region encompasses the Mississippi River corridor from Effigy Mounds National Monument to just north of Guttenberg. It includes the historic river towns of Marquette and McGregor and the nearby small towns of Froelich and Monona.
- **Turkey River Region:** This central region of the byway begins in the Guttenberg area, including the area around where the Turkey River joins the Mississippi River, and includes the upstream Turkey River valley communities of Garber, Elkader, St. Olaf, Gunder, Elgin, Clermont, and West Union.
- **Volga River Region:** The southern region of the byway encompasses the Volga River and the communities on its banks: Elkport, Osborne, Volga, Wadena, and Fayette, as well as the nearby towns of Edgewood and Strawberry Point.



McGregor has many old brick buildings nestled against the river bluffs.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER REGION

This region includes the river towns of Marquette and McGregor, as well as towns a bit farther inland such as Monona and Froelich. Byway travelers coming across the Mississippi River from Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, or those traveling the Great River Road in Iowa can easily connect with the River Bluffs Scenic Byway.

The Mississippi River towns are the earliest Euro-American settlements in Iowa. These historic towns are rich in stone architecture and human stories of the river. Today these river crossroads are still alive with barge traffic and busy railroad lines.

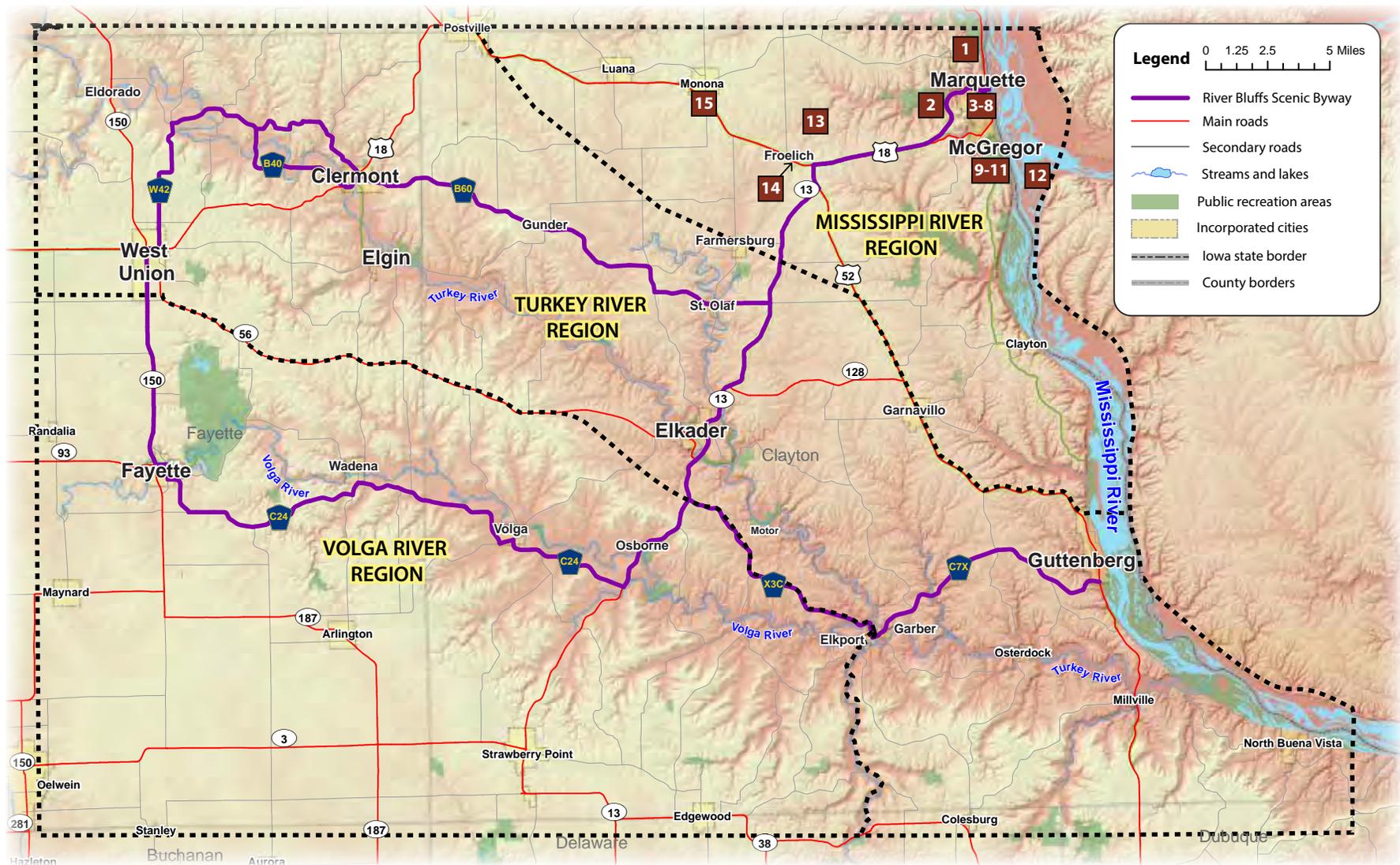
This region provides many opportunities for panoramic vistas of the Mississippi River valley, including at Pikes Peak State Park and Effigy Mounds National Monument. The river is a recreational gem, attracting hunters, fishers, nature lovers, and boating enthusiasts.

Attractions such as the Driftless Area Wetland Centre in Marquette and Spook Cave in McGregor encourage exploration of the region's unique biology and geology.

At Effigy Mounds, visitors can walk among more than 200 sacred Native American mounds, the largest concentration remaining in the U.S.



The Marquette-Joliet Bridge in Marquette connects Iowa with Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin.



- | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| 1 Effigy Mounds National Monument | 5 Mississippi River Trail | 9 McGregor Historical Museum | 13 Spook Cave |
| 2 Bloody Run County Park | 6 Marquette Depot Museum and Information Center | 10 McGregor Historic District | 14 Froelich Village and Tractor Museum |
| 3 Pinky the Elephant | 7 Driftless Area Wetland Centre | 11 Pikes Peak State Park | 15 Monona Historical Museum |
| 4 Eagle's Landing Winery | 8 Marquette Scenic Overlooks | 12 Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge | |



A ranger leads a hike at Effigy Mounds.

Marquette

Marquette was known as North McGregor until it was renamed in 1920 to honor Father Marquette, who with Louis Joliet paddled here on June 17, 1673, the first Europeans to enter the Upper Mississippi. A Spanish land grant, one of only three in Iowa, was awarded to Basil Giard in 1800. The town is noted for the world's largest railroad pontoon bridge that spanned the Mississippi from 1874 to 1961. For more than a century, Marquette/McGregor was a major railroad hub for shipping grain.

1 Effigy Mounds National Monument

Located on the Yellow River just north of Marquette, Effigy Mounds is the only national monument in Iowa and preserves more than 200 effigy and conical mounds built by Native Americans during the Late Woodland period (A.D. 300-1000). It is the largest concentration of mounds remaining in the U.S.

Orientation to the monument begins at the visitor center, which offers exhibits and an introductory film. Two-mile



Bloody Run County Park

guided hikes are offered to Fire Point, culminating with a panoramic view of the Mississippi River Valley, or visitors can use the "Fire Point Trail Guide." Adventurous visitors can access steep hiking trails that lead to additional mound groupings and vistas. Rangers present guided tours and prehistoric-tool demonstrations from mid-June to Labor Day.

2 Bloody Run County Park

A 135-acre county park is located along Bloody Run Creek near Marquette and upstream from the Bloody Run State Wildlife Management Area. The creek is stocked with catchable trout throughout the summer. Primitive campsites and restrooms are available.

3 **Pinky the Elephant** 

This iconic roadside attraction first adorned a motel and supper club. The owner, a gifted promoter, even had the elephant water ski during a visit by President Jimmy Carter. Pinky has been adopted as a symbol of the city and still presents a popular photo opportunity in front of Lady Luck Casino.



Pinky the Elephant

4 **Eagle's Landing Winery** 

Located in the heart of Marquette, the winery produces 29 award-winning wines and was named the Iowa "winemaker of the year" in 2014.



Eagle's Landing Winery

5 **Mississippi River Trail**  

This bicycle route spans 3,000 miles through 10 states from Lake Itasca in Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico, often following the Great River Road. Some trail segments are on the highway, while others use designated bicycle paths.

6 **Marquette Depot Museum and Information Center** 

The Marquette Depot Museum shares Marquette's 150-year railroad history with historic photos and artifacts, including a caboose, and a yearly festival. The museum is well located to serve travelers as a visitor information center and gift shop.



Marquette Depot Museum and Information Center combines visitor information with a railroad-history museum.



Driftless Area Wetland Centre in Marquette



Emma Big Bear Trail Scenic Overlook

7 Driftless Area Wetland Centre

The Driftless Area Wetland Centre opened in 2013 on Highway 18 on the west side of Marquette. It offers environmental education and community programs. The center's site has a storied railroad history. In 1920, the site was home to the largest railroad roundhouse in Iowa, with more than 400 employees. In its early days the railroad dumped coal ash and other waste, creating a brownfield, or an area potentially contaminated by hazardous waste. A prairie is now growing on this site. The Centre also has a newly constructed wetland and wetland viewing platform, educational exhibits, and it serves as the trailhead for the Mississippi River Trail.

8 Marquette Scenic Overlooks

The city recently completed the Emma Big Bear Trail Scenic Overlook and Shelter, along with a River Boardwalk that stretches 130 feet out over the Mississippi. Both overlooks provide dramatic views of the river and Marquette-Joliet Bridge. The Emma Big Bear Overlook includes a series of panels interpreting the history of Marquette.

McGregor

This river town was founded as MacGregor's Landing by Alexander MacGregor, a descendant of the famous Scottish MacGregor clan. He operated a ferry across the Mississippi from Prairie du Chien beginning in 1837 and platted the town, which incorporated in 1857, the same year the Milwaukee and Mississippi Railroad was completed to Prairie du Chien. The town grew into the busiest railroad hub west of Chicago for shipping Iowa and Minnesota grain, and the population soon grew to more than 5,000. Railroad cars were ferried across the river until the North McGregor pontoon bridge was built in 1874. No longer important as a railroad hub, the population had declined to 871 in the 2010 census, but the town still retains its historic charm catering to tourists.

9 McGregor Historical Museum

A local historian began collecting artifacts in 1936 and displayed them at the McGregor Public Library. In 1982, a museum was opened to interpret the community's colorful history. Exhibits highlight Emma Big Bear, the last Winnebago Indian to live in northeastern Iowa, including some of her handmade baskets; the Ringling Brothers circus; and the pontoon bridge and ferry that once made the city a major railroad hub.

10 McGregor Historical District

McGregor's architecture reflects the history of this river town. An illustrated 51-page walking-tour guide to McGregor's history can be purchased or downloaded from the Northeast Iowa RC&D website.



McGregor Historical Museum



McGregor's downtown has many historic buildings.



Johnson Slough Canoe Area is located in the Sny Magill Unit of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

11 Pikes Peak State Park

Pikes Peak State Park features overlooks that offer expansive views of the Mississippi River valley. After the Louisiana Purchase, the U.S. government sent explorer Zebulon Pike in 1805 to explore the Mississippi River valley for locations that would be suitable for military posts. Pike recognized the park as an important site, but the government chose the prairie around Prairie du Chien. Several years later Pike was sent west again, where he named Pikes Peak in Colorado. Iowa's Pikes Peak includes camping and hiking trails, a spring-fed Bridal Veil Falls, and Native American mounds.



The sun rises over Mississippi River bluffs at Pikes Peak State Park near McGregor.

12 Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge

This 240,000-acre refuge in the Mississippi River floodplain extends 261 miles through Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and Illinois, and encompasses northeastern Iowa. Established in 1924 as a refuge for fish, wildlife, and plants, it offers fishing, boating, canoeing, hiking, and panoramic views from bluffs above the river. Several boat landings are available near the River Bluffs Scenic Byway. The Sturgeon Slough Hiking Trail and wildlife-observation deck can be accessed between the Mississippi bridges on Highway 18 in Marquette. The Johnson Slough Canoe Area is accessed from the Sny Magill Unit of Effigy Mounds National Monument just south of Pikes Peak State Park.

13 Spook Cave

This privately run family attraction offers unique underground boat tours through Spook Cave. Early settlers heard strange noises coming from a spring at the base of a bluff and called it Spook Hole. A local resident blasted into the bluff in 1953 and discovered the flowing water that made the sound and opened the cave to tours. The guided tour allows visitors to experience the geology of the area and view stalactites and other formations.

14 Froelich Village and Tractor Museum 

The museum and village honors John Froelich's 1892 invention of the self-propelled gasoline tractor, later sold to John Deere. Several 19th century buildings are included in daily guided tours. A Fall-Der-All festival is held each September to celebrate early farm life.

Monona

Monona, a Clayton County town of more than 1,500, is called the "Garden City of Iowa" to promote its small-town living. The first farmers arrived by way of the military road from Fort Crawford to Fort Atkinson in the 1840s and the town was platted in 1851. Its place as a commercial center in rural Iowa was cemented with the arrival of the railroad in 1864.

15 Monona Historical Museum 

Housed in a circa-1900 Victorian home, the museum has several rooms with period furnishings. Collections include works of local artists, kitchenware, war relics, and small farm equipment. An addition houses the Elmer F. Marting woodcarving display, featuring "the world's largest known display of hand-carved chains."



Spook Cave



Froelich Village and Tractor Museum



*Monona
Historical
Museum*



Downtown West Union

TURKEY RIVER REGION

This distinct area is linked by the 153-mile-long Turkey River, which flows through Clermont, Elgin, and Elkader, and enters the Mississippi south of Guttenberg. The deeply eroded river valley provides a dramatic natural corridor for roads, water routes, and biking and hiking trails.

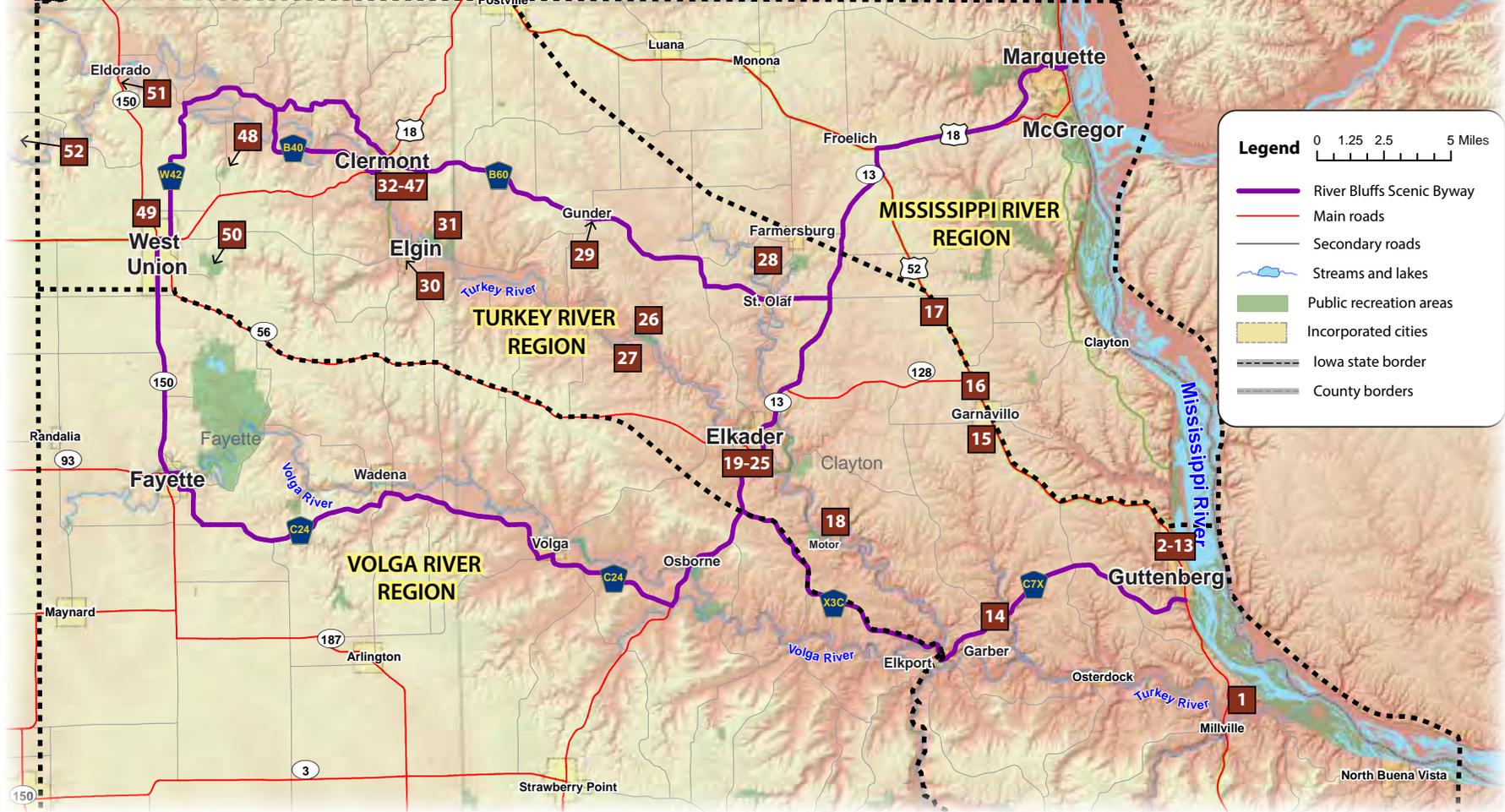
The communities in this scenic region are collaborating to provide unified recreational experiences that invite travelers to explore this area by water and land. Elkader has embraced its riverfront with the creation of a whitewater park in downtown. Clermont and Elgin are joined by a land trail. The Turkey River Water Trail is 98 miles long with over 20 access points along its route.

One of the long-range goals of the Turkey River Recreational Corridor is to make this passageway the backbone trail of northeastern Iowa that connects Minnesota's trails to the Mississippi River Trail.

A few of the key attractions in the Turkey River Region of the byway include the Montauk mansion of Gov. William Larrabee in Clermont, a lockmaster's house in Guttenberg, and the historic Motor Mill that ground wheat into flour.



Elkader's Riverwalk along the Turkey River



- | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| 1 Cassville Car Ferry | 11 Buechel Hill Trail | 22 Turkey River Park | 33 Riegel Blacksmith Shop | 44 Historic Band Shell |
| 2 Guttenberg Welcome Center | 12 Big Springs Nature Park | 23 George Maier Rural Heritage Center | 34 Heritage Farm Park | 45 "The Straight Story" Lawnmower |
| 3 Gutenberg Bible Facsimile | 13 Guttenberg Roadside Overlook | 24 Historic Elkader | 35 Clermont Train Depot | 46 Hart-Parr Tractor |
| 4 St. Mary's Catholic Church Historic District | 14 Plagman's Barn Museum | 25 Keystone Bridge | 36 Stone Jail | 47 Turkey River Recreational Corridor |
| 5 Frenchtown Park | 15 Buck Creek Park | 26 Big Spring Fish Hatchery | 37 Flour Mill and Power Plant | 48 Dutton's Cave Park |
| 6 Guttenberg Historic Buildings | 16 Garnavillo Historical Museum Complex | 27 Frieden's Park | 38 Larrabee School | 49 Fayette County Historical Center |
| 7 Lockmaster's House Heritage Museum | 17 Sherman Swift Tower | 28 St. Olaf Tap | 39 David B. Henderson Statue | 50 Echo Valley State Park and Glover's Creek Fishing and Wildlife Area |
| 8 Guttenberg Aquarium and Fish Hatchery | 18 Motor Mill Historic Site | 29 The Irish Shanti | 40 Episcopal Church of the Savior | 51 Goeken Park |
| 9 Ingleside Park Riverwalk | 19 Elkader Opera House | 30 Elgin Historical Society and Museum | 41 Union Sunday School | 52 Gouldsburg Park |
| 10 Upper Mississippi Bottomland Forest Interpretive Trail | 20 Carter House Museum | 31 Gilbertson Conservation Education Area and Nature Center | 42 Clermont Opera House | |
| | 21 Pony Hollow Trail | 32 Montauk State Historic Site | 43 Lincoln Park and Statue | |



A historical marker in downtown Guttenberg.

Guttenberg

Guttenberg owes its existence to the narrow floodplain suitable for settlement and the creeks that allowed access through the bluffs to the prairies west of the Mississippi. A seasonal trading village for Sauk and Meskwaki tribes was noted here in the 1820s. After the Blackhawk Treaty of 1833 opened the area to Euro-American settlement, a small village was platted and named Prairie la Porte, meaning “the door to the prairie.” In 1844, the Western Settlement Society, which aided German settlers,

purchased the tiny settlement and 460 additional acres. The first German settlers arrived in 1845 and by 1856 the town had grown to 1,500, most of whom were German immigrants. It was renamed Guttenberg after the inventor of movable type. By 1860, over 100 stone structures had been built, which today gives it the nickname “Limestone City.” The town’s economy was initially sustained by river commerce, with steamboats depositing passengers and merchandise and picking up farm produce, milled flour, and lead. The railroad came in 1871. Sawmills built to process logs floated downriver from northern pine forests sustained local employment. In the early 20th century, three pearl-button factories, a sweet corn canning plant, and an excelsior plant were major employers. Later, improvements in transportation brought tourists and river recreationists as major contributors to the local economy. Downtown Guttenberg is designated as a National Register Historic District.



Downtown Guttenberg

1 Cassville Car Ferry

This Mississippi River car ferry served Cassville, Wisconsin beginning in 1833, and continues today as the first ferry service in Wisconsin. The ferry lands near Millville, Iowa.

2 **Guttenberg Welcome Center** 

This center, sponsored by the Guttenberg Chamber of Commerce and Development, is a good place to begin a visit to the town and region. It is also an ideal location for a future River Bluffs Scenic Byway kiosk.



Guttenberg Welcome Center

3 **Gutenberg Bible Facsimile**  

A facsimile of the Gutenberg Bible, one of only 300 produced in 1913, is on display in the Guttenberg Public Library. It was purchased from the Gutenberg Museum in Mainz, Germany, after World War II, and has some fire damage from Allied bombing raids.



Guttenberg Bible Facsimile

4 **St. Mary's Catholic Church**  
Historic District

This parish was established in 1851, dating to the earliest German settlement. The National Register Historic District includes the church, rectory, convent, and school. The Gothic Revival church has twin bell tower spires that rise 146 feet above the town.



St. Mary's Church Historic District

5 **Frenchtown Park** 

A boat ramp provides access to the Upper Mississippi River National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, three miles north of Guttenberg. It offers three primitive campsites.



Lockmaster's House Heritage Museum



Historic buildings in downtown Guttenberg



Guttenberg Fish Hatchery

6 Guttenberg Historic Buildings

Guttenberg has dozens of buildings on the National Register of Historic Places, including the Gutenberg Haus and Court House Inn. A walking-tour guide is being developed.

7 Lockmaster's House Heritage Museum

The museum is located in the former house of the lockmaster and assistant lockmasters of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers lock-and-dam system. Constructed in 1938, this is the last remaining lockmaster house on the Upper Mississippi River and it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Period 1938 furnishings fill the interior. Historic photos of Guttenberg are displayed in the basement. Near the house, an observation platform provides viewing of barges and riverboats moving through Lock and Dam #10.

8 Guttenberg Aquarium and Fish Hatchery

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources Aquarium and Fish Hatchery on River Park Drive displays live Mississippi River fish and turtles, as well as trout found in local streams. Exhibits interpret invasive species and shell buttons once made in Guttenberg.

9 Ingleside Park Riverwalk 

Guttenberg's scenic Riverwalk is a paved path that follows the river for nearly the entire length of town through the historic downtown. Gazebos make the park ideal for a picnic. Benches lining the path are good places to watch boats and barges pass through Lock and Dam 10.



Ingleside Park Riverwalk

10 Upper Mississippi Bottomland Forest Interpretive Trail 

Adjacent to the DNR South Boat Landing is a 20-minute trail loop through a natural wetland where birders enjoy killdeer, warblers, and great blue herons.



A series of interpretive panels can be found along the Upper Mississippi Bottomland Forest Trail.

11 Buechel Hill Trail  

Buechel Hill Trail ascends the bluff above Guttenberg, with access from Herder Street. It features panoramic views of the town and the Mississippi River valley. The German name "Buechel" is pronounced "beakle," like "beagle" with a "k." The trail could be enhanced for visitors by adding a trailhead at the bottom and a viewing platform at the top.



View of Guttenberg from the Buechel Hill Trail.



Big Springs Nature Park



Guttenberg Roadside Overlook



Plagman's Barn Museum

12 **Big Springs Nature Park**  

A cold-water spring in this 11-acre natural area cascades down a series of limestone formations. The water's total vertical drop within the park is more than 100 feet. A "Discover Guttenberg's Natural Treasure" panel interprets how this feature is representative of the Driftless Area. This city park is just north of town on County Highway X56.

13 **Guttenberg Roadside Overlook** 

An overlook south of town on the Great River Road (Highway 52) rises 297 feet above the river, offering a view of the town and river valley. A large Iowa State Historical Society marker interprets the geology of the Mississippi River valley.

Garber

Garber is typical of many small farm communities in Iowa, with a 2010 population of 88.

14 **Plagman's Barn Museum** 

A 1924 barn on this farm near Garber was built as a dance hall and meeting space. It is home to the Northeast Iowa Farm & Antique Association and draws several thousand attendees for the annual Plagman's Barn Show Days in September, the only time the site is open to the public.

Garnavillo

The name Garnavillo is derived from Latin words translated as “beautiful village.” The farming community of 750 is described as the “Gem of the Prairie,” so named because of the rich prairie soil.

15 Buck Creek Park

This 100-acre forested park three miles north of Garnavillo provides access to the Buck Creek Trout Stream.



Settler's log cabin at the Garnavillo Historical Museum

16 Garnavillo Historical Museum Complex

The museum is in a historic church and displays area artifacts. Old manuscripts include one of only two known newspapers announcing the death of George Washington. The museum complex in the adjacent City Park includes a settler's cabin with period furnishings and a historic Mason lodge.

17 Sherman Swift Tower

This chimney swift tower is a replica of one built in 1915 by ornithologist Althea Sherman. She was nationally known for her studies of the elusive swift bird. A marker at the site and an audio recording interpret the history, and a monitor allows viewing of swifts on their nest. The site is located in National, six miles north of Garnavillo on Highway 52.



A replica chimney swift tower in National was built in honor of ornithologist Althea Sherman.



Motor Mill is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is open summer weekends for tours.



Elkader Opera House

Elkader

The town was platted in 1846 and named for an Algerian hero who led the resistance to French colonialism. Elkader is surrounded by the hills of the beautiful Turkey River valley and is known for its Keystone Bridge over the river and its many historic sites.

18 Motor Mill Historic Site

A flouring mill was built in the 1860s downstream from a dam on the Turkey River, southeast of Elkader. The six-story limestone mill is nearly 90 feet tall and is said to be the tallest structure of its kind in the Midwest. Insect damage to the state's wheat crop in the late 1800s spelled the beginning of the end for Motor Mill, which closed in the 1880s. Several other historic structures are on site, including a cooperage, an inn, a stable, an ice house, and a replica of the original 1895 bridge spanning the river.

19 Elkader Opera House

Built as a replacement for Turner Opera House, which was destroyed by fire in 1902, Elkader Opera House has been central to the social and civic life of the city. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1976 and has been restored to its 1903 appearance but with modern facilities.

20 Carter House Museum 

This 1850s home of the Carter brothers displays 18 rooms of decor and artifacts from 1845 to 1920. Described as the finest Greek Revival home in Iowa, it is open weekends from May to September.

21 Pony Hollow Trail 

This 4-mile hiking, biking, snowmobile, and equestrian trail follows an old railroad bed along the Turkey River and Roberts Creek. It is accessed from Elkader City Park.

22 Turkey River Park 

Accessed from Highway 13 on the east edge of Elkader, this park offers access to the Turkey River for float trips to Motor Mill (two hours) or Garber (six hours).

23 George Maier Rural Heritage Center 

George Maier's vast collection of artifacts from rural Iowa (mid-1800s to 1950) is displayed in a 1919 restored sales barn. It is open weekends April to October.

24 Historic Elkader 

Elkader has many historic homes, structures, and sites of interest along or near the Turkey River. A "Historic Tour of Scenic Elkader" booklet features 27 of the town's historic sites.



Carter House Museum in Elkader



George Maier Rural Heritage Center



Keystone arch bridge in downtown Elkader



Big Spring Fish Hatchery



St. Olaf Tap

25 Keystone Bridge

This magnificent double-arched keystone bridge was built from local limestone in 1889. It is a focal point in downtown Elkader and remains the principle connection for crossing the river in town.

26 Big Spring Fish Hatchery

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources rears rainbow and brook trout to catchable size at Big Spring Fish Hatchery on the Turkey River. The facility is fed by the largest freshwater spring in Iowa. Stocked pond and river fishing areas are provided, including one for children. Panels interpret the Turkey River, the Big Springs watershed, and hatchery operations.

27 Frieden's Park

Located across the Turkey River from Big Springs Fish Hatchery, this small park provides canoe access, picnicking, and primitive camping.



The Irish Shanti in Gunder

St. Olaf

This small town was founded in 1872. West of town, the Norway Settlement Lutheran Church, built in 1857, was part of a parish established in 1851 by the first Norwegian immigrants to Clayton County. In 1939, the Works Progress Administration built the St. Olaf Auditorium, a two-story limestone community center that is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

28 St. Olaf Tap

This classic bar and grill is known for the “largest pork tenderloin sandwich in Iowa.” The loin is fresh-cut daily.

Gunder

This tiny town of 28 is known for the massive “Gunderburger.” It is also home to Marion Lutheran Church, one of the Turkey River Norwegian Parishes, which was built in 1870.

29 The Irish Shanti

The Shanti serves up a 1-pound “Gunderburger” made from local beef and is a regional favorite.

Elgin

This community of about 700, proud of its Swiss immigrant history, bills itself the “Little Switzerland of Iowa.” Soon after the removal of the Winnebago tribe and closing of the Neutral Ground and Fort Atkinson in 1848, the first homes and mills were established between the Turkey River and Otter Creek. The small settlement was first named Shin Bone Valley, so named because of the many Sauk Indian graves in the valley. The town was platted in 1851-52 and the surveyor named it Elgin after his hometown of Elgin, Illinois.

The City of Elgin recently completed a streetscape improvement project and enhancements to the City Park located downtown. Music is played daily from the historic Swiss Clock Tower located in City Park.



Maize Maze at Gilbertson Nature Center

30 Elgin Historical Society and Museum

“School Days,” “Home and Family,” and other exhibits document more than 100 years of Elgin’s history. The museum is open by appointment.

31 Gilbertson Conservation Education Area and Nature Center

This 550-acre park is along the Turkey River. It has camping, multi-use trails, river access for canoeing, and a seasonal petting zoo. Gilbertson Nature Center features educational displays. The Dummermuth Farm Museum houses farm antiques and memorabilia, and the Dummermuth Historical Home depicts a farm home from the late 1800s and early 1900s. Gilbertson hosts the Maize Maze, a corn maze that each summer depicts some aspect of Iowa agricultural history.



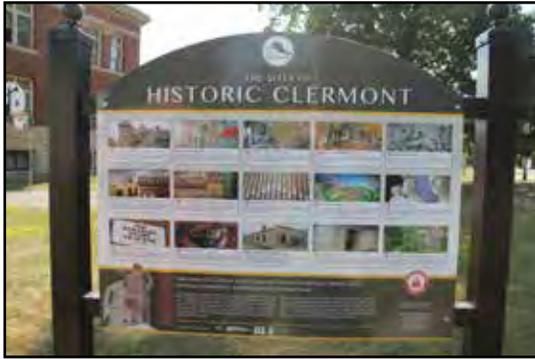
Petting zoo at Gilbertson Nature Center



Downtown Elgin



Elgin Historical Society and Museum



An interpretive panel in Clermont points out the historic sites that can be seen on a walking tour of the village.

Clermont

This picturesque town on the Turkey River has many historic attractions, owing mainly to the philanthropy of William Larrabee and his family. Larrabee was the 12th governor of Iowa from 1886 to 1890. The town is known as “Brick City” because of its many structures built from bricks kilned in Clermont. The brickyards were the largest employer in the region between 1855 and 1942.



Montauk State Historic Site

A Historic Walking Tour developed by the Clermont Historical Society and Northeast Iowa RC&D guides visitors to 18 sites. The following descriptions were excerpted from this guide.

32 Montauk State Historic Site

Iowa’s 12th governor, William Larrabee, served from 1886 to 1890. In 1874, the Larrabee family built Montauk, a mansion on a hill overlooking Clermont and the Turkey River Valley. Larrabee’s wife, Anna, named the mansion for the lighthouse at the eastern end of Long Island, New York, that guided her father home from his whaling voyages. The home includes many original furnishings from the Larrabee family, who lived there until 1965. Statues of Civil War heroes surround the mansion. The 46-acre park-like grounds include more than 100,000 pine trees that Larrabee planted. Montauk was also a working farm with barns, farm animals, an orchard, and crop fields.

33 Riegel Blacksmith Shop

Burkard Riegel, a native of Germany, moved to Clermont in 1931 and set up a blacksmith shop that he operated until the 1970s. Riegel was known for his workmanship, especially in horseshoeing. One of his most notable jobs was shoeing singer-performer Gene Autry's horse Champion before an appearance at the Fayette County Fair. After his death in 1990, the Clermont Historical Society obtained the building for use as a living-history museum.



Riegel Blacksmith Shop



Heritage Farm Park

34 Heritage Farm Park

Heritage Farm Park offers activities that allow visitors to experience what life was like in the 18th century. This 106-acre park features 10 miles of wooded trails, a petting zoo, campsites, and historical attractions. Weekend tours and wagon rides are available June through August.

35 Clermont Train Depot

This historic depot was originally built by the Burlington, Cedar Rapids and Minnesota Railway in 1872 and later served the Rock Island division in 1903. For more than 100 years, the depot was a hub for passenger and freight service. Tours are available. Messages carved by railway passengers can be seen in the red brick.



Clermont Train Depot



Flour Mill and Power Plant

36 Stone Jail 

Built in 1852, the stone jail was used until the 1920s. The tiny jailhouse featured one holding cell with two beds. Although people were detained for crimes, the jail was mostly frequented by town drunks looking for a free place to spend the night.

37 Flour Mill and Power Plant 

One of the most significant buildings in Clermont’s history, this structure built in 1854 served as a grinding mill for the best wheat markets in the country. The mill was converted to a power plant in 1909, bringing electricity and heat to a major segment of northeastern Iowa. Although the Clermont plant closed in 1966, the

company expanded to neighboring communities and became Interstate Power Company, now Alliant Energy.

38 Larrabee School 

Larrabee School was a gift to Clermont from Gov. William Larrabee, who as Iowa’s leader lobbied for the value of public education. Larrabee and his wife, Anna, spent years studying school buildings before designing plans for an “ideal school” in Clermont. Groundbreaking on the \$100,000 brick building began in 1912. It was built to state-of-the-art specifications, with exceptionally thick walls and modern heating and ventilation systems. The school remained in use until 1990, and now serves as the Clermont Public Library and Clermont Historical Society Museum. Tours are available by appointment.



Larrabee School



Stone Jail



Episcopal Church of the Savior and David B. Henderson Statue

39 **David B. Henderson Statue** 

This longtime resident of Clermont was a Congressman and Civil War hero. He was the first Speaker of the House (1899-1903) to represent a state west of the Mississippi River. The life-sized bronze statue was created by famous Scottish sculptor J. Massey Rhide in 1902.



40 **Episcopal Church of the Savior** 

Built in 1867, this house of worship is one of three churches donated by Mrs. Frances Dyer Vinton in memory of her two children. Believing in the biblical phrase “Thy praise shall ring from shore to shore,” Vinton built churches in Providence, Rhode Island, San Gabriel, California, and Clermont. Clermont was selected for being in the geographical center of the United States. Services are still held every Sunday morning.

41 **Union Sunday School** 

The school houses the world’s largest pneumatic Kimball pipe organ. Built in 1896, this organ was donated to the historic 1863 Union Sunday School as a gift from Gov. Larrabee to his daughter. A musician, Anna served as the church organist for 60 years until her death in 1965. This historic treasure continues to attract national and local organ enthusiasts. Concerts are held on the last Sunday of the month from April to November.



Clermont Opera House

42 Clermont Opera House 

Constructed in 1912, Clermont’s hub for entertainment served as host to silent movies, concerts, plays, and dances until the mid-1940s. Today, the building is available for special events and features a backdrop with historical sites of Clermont painted on it. Tours are available by appointment.

43 Lincoln Park and Statue 

A bronze statue of Abraham Lincoln, sculpted by George E. Bissell and erected in 1902, serves as a tribute to the soldiers and sailors of the Civil War during 1861-1865.



Historic Band Shell

44 Historic Band Shell  

Clermont City Park is home to a historic band shell made of Clermont brick. Maple trees have been planted to form an X with the band shell centered in the middle. The quaint park also features sheltered picnic areas, grills, and a new playground.



Lincoln Park and Statue

45 “The Straight Story” Lawnmower 

A 1966 John Deere self-propelled lawn mower used in the movie “The Straight Story” is displayed in a storefront exhibit on Mill Street. Inspired by the true story of Alvin Straight, the movie depicts a man who learns his brother has suffered a stroke and wishes to make amends. Not having a driver’s license, the 73-year-old decides to make the 240-mile journey across Iowa on his riding lawn mower.

including a pedestrian and bike bridge across the Turkey River, and a walk-through iron sculpture of an eagle’s nest scaled near Elgin. This is a segment on the 98-mile **Turkey River Water Trail** that begins at Gouldsburg Park west of Clermont and ends at the confluence of the Mississippi River.

46 Hart-Parr Tractor 

Displayed in a simple wooden building with large plate-glass windows, this restored 1927 Hart Parr tractor was built in Charles City, Iowa and was used in northeastern Iowa. The manufacturer of the tractor, Hart Parr, is famous for having coined the term “tractor” when the company shortened the old name for the machines originally known as “gasoline traction engines.”



Restored Hart-Parr Tractor



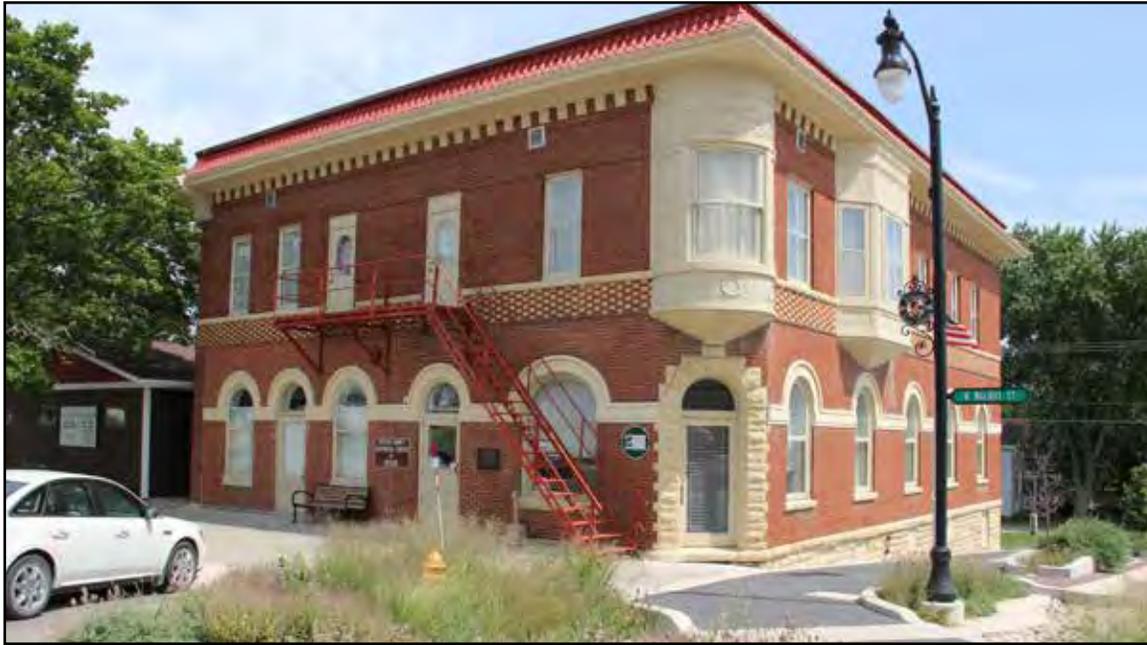
The lawnmower from “The Straight Story”

47 Turkey River Recreational Corridor 

Both land and water trails connect Clermont, Elgin, and Elkader to provide recreation opportunities for those enjoying the scenic beauty of the Turkey River. Maps and guides are available. Recent developments include river access enhancements, trail developments



A bridge over the Turkey River on the Turkey River Trail between Clermont and Elgin



Fayette County Historical Center in West Union



Dutton's Cave Park

West Union

Originally called Knob Prairie, West Union's first settlers arrived in 1848 after the Neutral Ground was opened up for settlement. The town was founded in 1849 by William Wells, who named it for his hometown in Ohio. He donated land for a public square on condition that it be used for a county seat, which it is to this day.

48 Dutton's Cave Park

This 46-acre wooded Fayette County park features a 50-foot vertical limestone wall directly above a cave opening. The cave is closed to prevent the spread of white-nose syndrome in bats. Trails and camping are available. The park is named for Lorenzo Dutton, who discovered the cave in 1848. It was described in 1910 as "for many years a favorite resort for people seeking a day's outing wherewith they might combine a view of nature's freaks, with a pleasant time."

49 Fayette County Historical Center

This local history center, housed in a three-story 1903 brick building that first served as a hospital, contains genealogical information and historic artifacts. Tours of this West Union attraction are available by request.

50 Echo Valley State Park and Glover's Creek Fishing and Wildlife Area  

This 100-acre state park features several structures built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, including a dam, a keystone archway, a lime kiln, and a shelter building. The park includes trails, primitive camping, and trout fishing in Otter and Glover's creeks. The 187-acre Glover's Creek Fishing and Wildlife Area adjacent to the park offers fishing and hunting.



Echo Valley State Park



Gouldsburg Park

51 Goeken Park  

This Fayette County roadside park offers a panoramic view of the Turkey River Valley. Limited camping is available.

52 Gouldsburg Park  

Located west of the byway near Douglass, this 64-acre Fayette County park is located at the confluence of the Little Turkey River and Crane Creek. These streams provide good fishing, tubing, and canoeing. The 98 mile-long Turkey River Water Trail begins here.



Goeken Park



Volga is known for its annual Volga City Truck Cruise, which features a cruise and competitions.

VOLGA RIVER REGION

The southern leg of the byway is defined by the Volga River. The 80-mile-long stream flows beneath forested ridges and through deep valleys on its way to merge with the Turkey River, which then joins the Mississippi River.

The route passes through Fayette, Wadena, Volga, Osborne, and Elkport. Travelers can detour easily to nearby attractions in Strawberry Point and Edgewood.

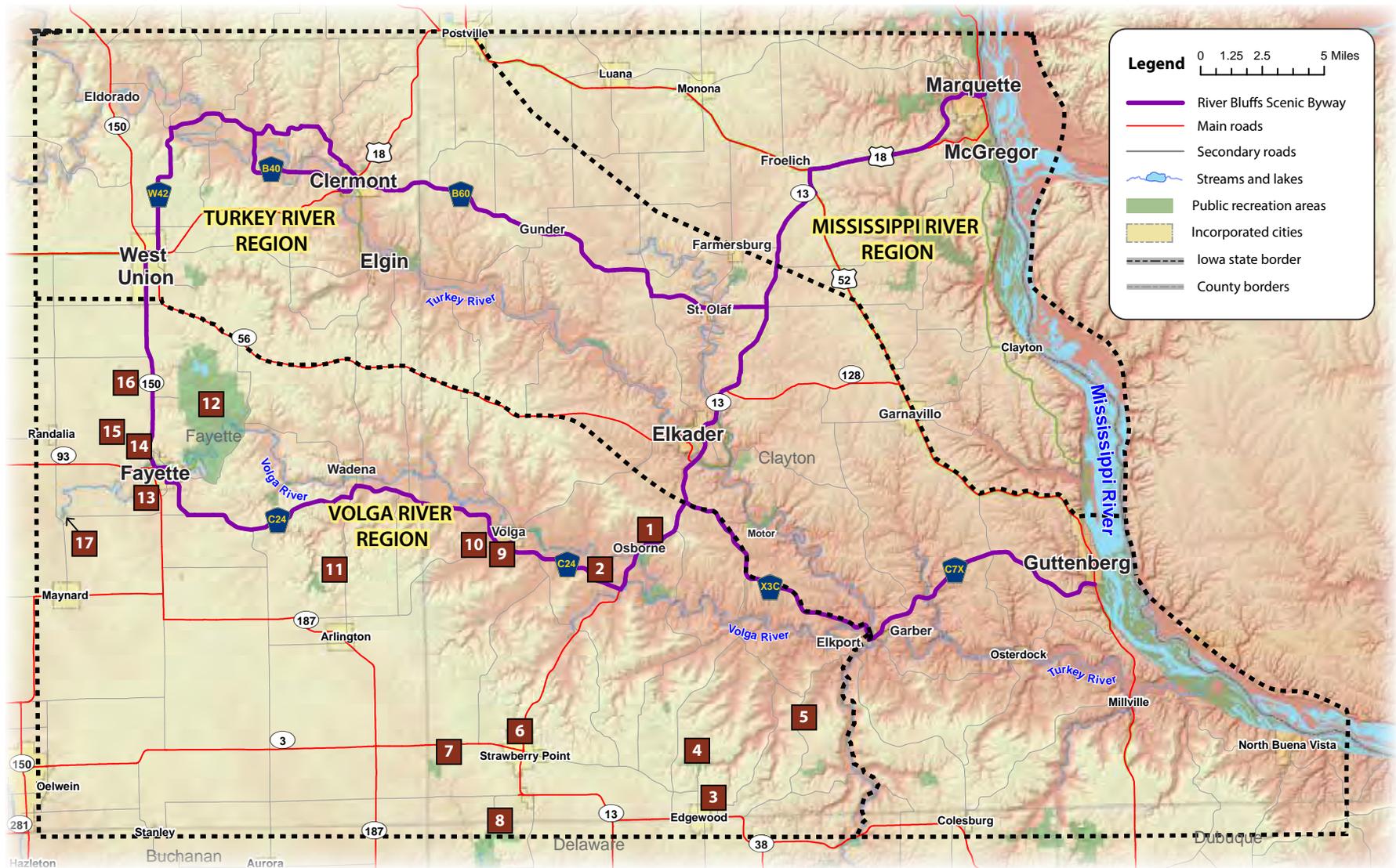
This region is bountiful in natural

resources like Backbone State Park and Volga River State Recreation Area, where hiking and water-recreation opportunities abound.

Nature centers at Osborne and Fayette interpret the environment and orient visitors to the area. Scenic overlooks such as Chicken Ridge give travelers a panoramic view of the dramatic landscape. This region invites leisurely exploration of its many natural areas and small towns.



The Volga River can be experienced at the Volga River State Recreation Area near Fayette.



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|--|---------------------------------|---|---|
| 1 Osborne Conservation and Welcome Center | 5 Amish Country | 9 Volga City Opera House | 13 Fayette County Tourism Center |
| 2 Chicken Ridge Overlook | 6 Wilder Memorial Museum | 10 Old Stone School | 14 Klock's Island Park |
| 3 Womens Christian Temperance Union drinking fountain | 7 Joy Springs Park | 11 Brush Creek Canyon State Preserve | 15 Stone Man |
| 4 Bixby State Preserve | 8 Backbone State Park | 12 Volga River State Recreation Area | 16 Wildwood Nature Center |
| | | | 17 Twin Bridges County Park |



Osborne Conservation and Welcome Center



Chicken Ridge Overlook

Osborne

Osborne's name comes from Thomas Osborne, who moved to this area in 1865. In 1878, Osborne began selling plots to form the town of Osborne. By 1880, Osborne had 50 residents, a hotel, a blacksmith shop, a general store, and a railroad depot. It is unincorporated today and is most known as the site of the Osborne Conservation Center.

1 Osborne Conservation and Welcome Center



This Iowa Welcome Center offers traveler information and also is the Clayton County Conservation Center. It includes a nature center and exhibits, a gift shop, and hiking trails. Live animals such as a wolf, a black bear, and owls are in outdoor enclosures. A Pioneer Village includes a depot, a general store, a blacksmith shop, and a one-room schoolhouse.

2 Chicken Ridge Overlook



This new county conservation overlook offers panoramic views of Elkader, rolling farmland, and the Turkey River Valley. Three wayside exhibits were installed in 2016 that focus on conservation and agriculture.

Edgewood

Edgewood, a town of 900 on the Clayton and Delaware County line, celebrates Edgewood Rodeo Days the last full week of each June.

3 Women's Christian Temperance Union drinking fountain

A Women's Christian Temperance Union drinking fountain on the corner of East Madison and North Washington Streets connects back to 1884 when these fountains were installed by the WCTU in towns all over the country to discourage men from drinking alcohol. One of few remaining in the country, the fountain was fully restored in 2015.

4 Bixby State Preserve

This 184-acre natural area was designated a geological and biological



Hilltop Groceries and Bulk Foods near Edgewood

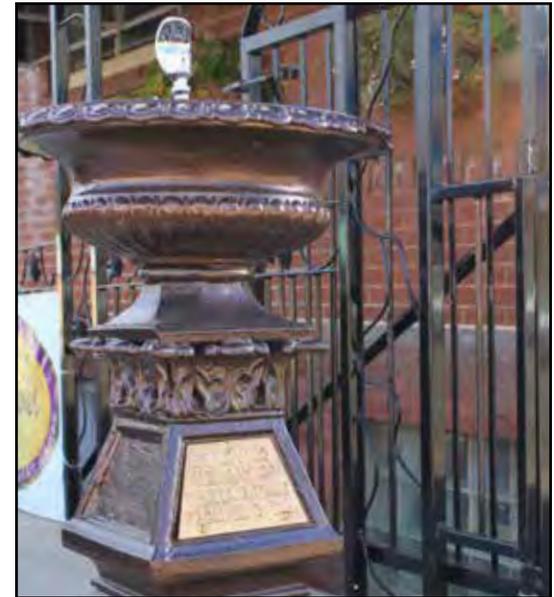
state preserve in 1979 to permanently protect its unique geological formations of sinkholes, algific talus slopes, ice cave, and springs. It offers protection for several endangered plants and animals. Visitors can hike, picnic, or photograph while enjoying the natural beauty of the park. Bear Creek is a small trout stream that winds through the park on its way to the Turkey River.

5 Amish Country

A small community of Amish farmers lives on County Road C7X between Edgewood and Garber. Hilltop Groceries and Bulk Foods, about 7 miles northeast of Edgewood, sells food and crafts.



Bixby State Preserve



Women's Christian Temperance Union drinking fountain in Edgewood



Backbone State Park

Strawberry Point

The town is located on the Old Mission Road, which was the military wagon road established by the territorial government in 1841 between Dubuque and Fort Atkinson. As the army moved 2,900 Winnebago Native Americans from Wisconsin to the Neutral Ground along the Turkey and Upper Iowa Rivers, they made camp near a spring in a point of timber abundant with wild strawberries. Each mile of the road was marked with a stake, and the one at this campsite was

inscribed "Strawberry Point." Mission Street, which runs through town, was part of Old Mission Road. Today the town is marked by the "world's largest strawberry." Strawberry Days is celebrated the second weekend in June with a variety of family activities.

6 Wilder Memorial Museum

The museum was built in 1970 to house 500 heirloom dolls belonging to local sisters Blanche Baldrige and Gladys Keneally. With funds from the Mary & Frank Wilder estate, the city of



Wilder Memorial Museum

Strawberry Point purchased land and built the museum. The museum has since been expanded and rededicated with a wide range of historical and cultural exhibits.

7 Joy Springs Park

Joy Springs is a trout stream that flows into the Maquoketa River as it courses into Backbone State Park. In addition to fishing, the 90-acre park offers a shelter and primitive camping

8 Backbone State Park

Iowa's first state park, dedicated in 1920, was named for a narrow, steep ridge of dolomite called Devil's Backbone. The park's wooded 2,000 acres are home to campsites, trails, and many structures built by the Civilian Conservation Corps, including bridges, shelters, and dams. An Iowa Civilian Conservation Corps Museum is located within the park.

Volga

Located on the Volga River, town promoters cite this scenic valley as a place to camp, canoe, hike winding river trails, fish for smallmouth bass, and attend the Volga City Truck Cruise.

9 Volga City Opera House

Opening in 1914, the opera house was noted as “one of the finest opera houses in the state for a city of Volga City’s size.” It could hold 250 people, matching the entire population of the town. The building was damaged in a 1999 flood and by a leaking roof and is under renovation. An annual “Volga City Truck Cruise” was organized beginning in 2009 to raise funds for the renovation.



Volga City Opera House

Today this small village on the Volga is noted for Barney’s Tavern, “home of the Barney burger.”

11 Brush Creek Canyon State Preserve

Brush Creek Canyon is a 217-acre preserve south of Wadena featuring a rugged forested gorge. It was dedicated as a state preserve in 1968. Spectacular bluffs and cliff slump blocks result were formed by natural stream erosion in the Brush Creek valley. The preserve protects 270 plant species and 67 breeding bird species. It is popular for hiking, birdwatching, and photography.



Old Stone School near Volga

10 Old Stone School

The Old Stone School was built in 1868 and held classes until 1943. Recently, a wooden school was moved to the site and a stone addition was added so it could serve as a retail Quilt Shop and Tea Room.



Brush Creek Canyon State Preserve

Wadena

Before establishment of Wadena in 1857, this was the site of a Native American trading post known as Culver’s Post.



Volga River State Recreation Area



Wildwood Nature Center



Fayette County Tourism Center

Fayette

The town, which was established in 1855, was named after the Marquis de la Fayette, French hero of the American Revolutionary War. Fayette is home to Upper Iowa University, which began as Fayette Seminary in 1856 under the patronage of the Methodist Church. It became independent of the church in 1928. Alexander-Dickman Hall was built in 1855 to house the university.

12 Volga River State Recreation Area

The Volga River bisects this 5,500-acre state recreation area. Canoeists can access the Volga River and spend hours winding past steep bluffs and wooded hillsides, traveling only a few miles as the crow flies. Other features include 25 miles of multi-use trails, equestrian and modern camping, and fishing in Frog Hollow Lake. Hunting is allowed in season.

13 Fayette County Tourism Center

Known as the “Little Red House Tourism Center,” this is a key information center for byway travelers. On the grounds is an exhibit about the historic Stepp Melon Farm, which had stands in several nearby towns, and a pioneer log cabin.

14 Klock's Island Park 

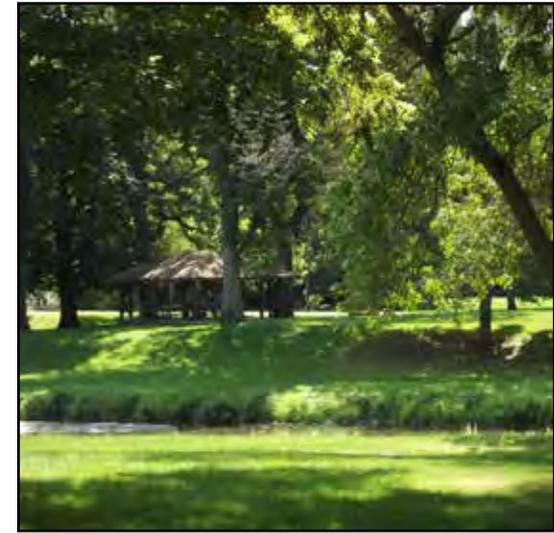
This city park offers access to the Turkey River, walking trails, picnic shelters, and camping with electrical hook-ups and modern restrooms.

15 Stone Man 

In 1883, a local farmer discovered a large granite boulder in the shape of a man. It was located on the Old Mission Road on the boundary of the Neutral Ground. A theory is that the military at Fort Atkinson placed it there to mark entry to the Neutral Ground. It is currently located one mile east of Fayette at the intersection of M Avenue and 152nd Street.



Stone Man rock formation north of Fayette



Twin Bridges County Park

16 Wildwood Nature Center 

This Fayette County Conservation nature center features a live-animal and raptor exhibit, while the nature center has displays and wildlife mounts.

17 Twin Bridges County Park 

This small park is divided by the South and West branches of the Volga River and offers fishing, picnicking, primitive camping, and a playground. It is located three miles southwest of Fayette on Neon Road (W25).



Klock's Island Park



Members of the Amish community travel along a highway near Edgewood.

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CHAPTER 5

THEMES AND MESSAGES



Rural landscape along the River Bluffs Scenic Byway

THEMES AND MESSAGES

An interpretive theme creates a framework for planning and places resources and events into a meaningful context for visitors. Themes are the important ideas that organize the messages that we wish to communicate about the River Bluffs Scenic Byway. Once these important concepts are identified, decisions can be made about what site resources and media are most appropriate to tell these stories.

The theme statement, which is the main idea of an interpretive opportunity, should contain **universal concepts**. A universal concept is an intangible meaning that has significance to almost everyone. Universal concepts are the ideas, values, challenges, relationships, needs, and emotions that speak to the human condition.

Compelling interpretive themes link a tangible resource to visitors' interests. Interpretation is most effective when media and other interpretive opportunities allow visitors to grasp the meanings expressed in themes and relate them to their own lives. Visitors may not be able to repeat the themes we write, but if they are provoked, inspired, or can relate the information to something within themselves, we have succeeded.

Organization of Themes and Messages

- A **primary theme** expresses the main idea that ties together the stories of the River Bluffs Scenic Byway. To provide a cohesive visitor experience, all interpretation should relate to this holistic theme.
- **Sub-themes** split the primary theme into several more specific and workable ideas. These broad story lines guide visitors to discover deeper meanings and relationships with the byway's resources.
- **Messages** break down the broad sub-themes into specific, discrete stories that can be told with interpretive media and programming.



Flowers bloom in summer at Ballard Bluff in the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

PRIMARY THEME

The Mississippi, Turkey, and Volga Rivers and their tributaries carved deep valleys in the driftless landscape of the River Bluffs Scenic Byway, shaping the region's history and lifestyles, and creating a scenic topography where residents can enjoy outdoor recreation and charming villages.

Driftless Region Map

Source: Natural Resources Conservation Service



SUB-THEME 1

The River Bluffs Scenic Byway is located in the Driftless Area, a region of rugged terrain untouched by glaciers that leveled the surrounding landscape.

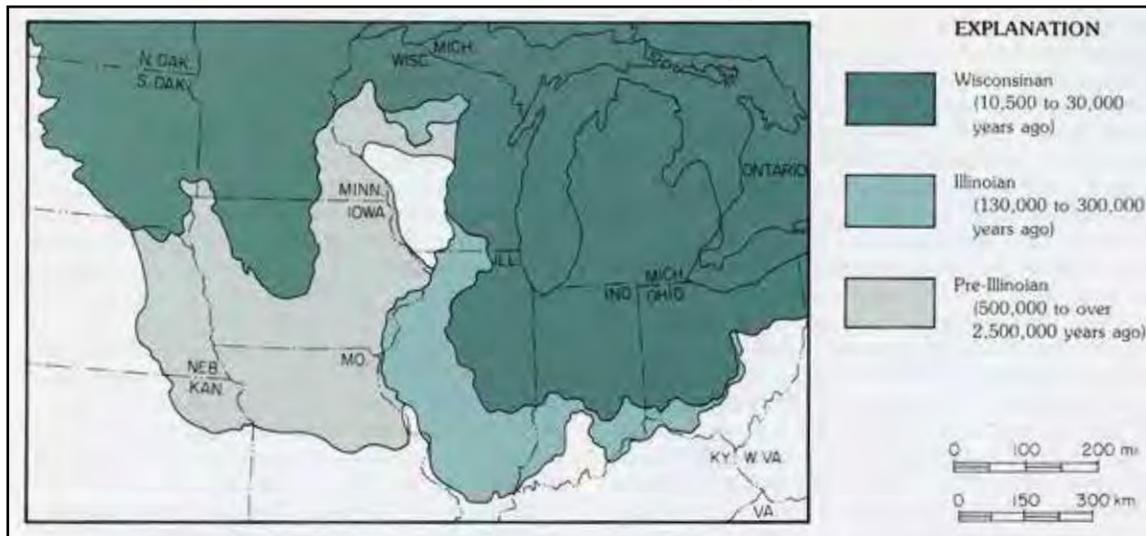
Messages:

- 1.1 Northeast Iowa is part of the 240,000-square-mile Driftless Area that includes regions of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Illinois, with the Mississippi River flowing through the heart of it.
- 1.3 "Drift" is a term derived from early writings that describe deposits

on the landscape believed to have "drifted" on the waters of the Biblical flood. This concept changed in the mid-19th century when geologist Louis Agassiz provided evidence that these deposits were from continental glaciers. The term now refers to material deposited by a glacier or glacial meltwater.

- 1.3 This region is called the Driftless Area, which implies that it was untouched by the "glacial drift" of Pleistocene glaciers. However, southwestern Wisconsin is the only true unglaciated area. Pre-Illinoian glaciers from more than 500,000 years ago did cover the remainder of the area, including Iowa. Glaciated and unglaciated landscapes in the Driftless Area are virtually indistinguishable today because streams have cut so deep into the bedrock. (Jean Prior, *Landforms of Iowa*)

Limits of Major Glacial Advances in the Upper Midwest



Source: Jean Prior, *Landforms of Iowa*

- 1.4 The karst landscape of the region evolved over millions of years as water dissolved the dolomite and limestone bedrock. Sinkholes, caves, and underground streams that surface as cold-water springs run into streams that flow to the Mississippi River. Prominent bluffs line these rivers as they approach the Mississippi.
- 1.5 Pleistocene streams of rushing meltwater from glaciers north of this Driftless Region carved deep valleys into the bedrock, scouring away resistant limestone, dolomite, and sandstone cliffs, pinnacles, ledges, and bluffs.
- 1.6 The deeply carved scenic landscape was described by 19th century geologist Samuel Calvin as the "Switzerland of Iowa."
- 1.7 Spook Cave provides a dynamic example of the effects of karst topography and the workings of carbonic acid dissolving the calcium carbonate of limestone into caverns. Rainwater picks up carbon dioxide as it falls through the air and as it flows through leaves and soil and seeps into cracks and fissures in the bedrock.



A view of the Mississippi River Valley from Effigy Mounds National Monument



The Driftless Area is federally designated as the Upper Mississippi River Valley Viticultural Area, which winemakers may officially use in marketing. It is the largest American Viticultural Area in the nation.

SUB-THEME 2

The people of the Driftless Region are bound together by a shared landscape and culture, which is reflected in their agriculture, recreation, and arts.

Messages:

- 2.1 There is a distinct sense of place in the Driftless Area, which is manifested in an appreciation for nature, local arts, wholesome foods, and lifestyles compatible with small-scale farms and diversified land use.
 - 2.2 The region's steep bluffs cannot support highly mechanized commercial agriculture and as a result dairy farming and alternative agricultural practices on a family farm scale flourish here.
 - 2.3 The Driftless Area is a landscape well suited to the Amish way of life. Amish farmers began settling here more than 160 years ago. Affordable land still draws Amish immigrants seeking to maintain their traditional ways. Many welcome tourists to their shops and farmers' markets.
 - 2.4 The limestone soils are conducive for fruit and viticulture. Wineries flourish in the region. Honeycrisp and RiverBelle apple varieties were developed specifically for the region. The distinctive flavor and fruit quality result from these soils.
 - 2.5 Food co-ops, community-supported agriculture (CSA) operations, and other outlets offer grass-fed meats and dairy and organic produce from the many small or sustainable-agriculture farms in the region.
- “The Driftless area naturally produces a co-operation between nature and people because with the steep bluffs and the fertile valleys and hilltops you have this combination of wild spaces. It's too steep to farm. You can't just set your plow down, drive a mile, turn around and come back... You have these fingers of nature interspersed with fields and agriculture. Nature is part of life here.”
Stephen J. Lyons, *Going Driftless*, (pg. 133)

- 2.8 The roads of northeastern Iowa meander through the hills with few direct roads between places. This encourages a slower pace appropriate to the rural landscape.
- 2.9 The economy of the region is bolstered by tourism. Trout fishers, canoeists, and roadway tourists are attracted by the beauty and diverse recreational opportunities in the two-county area. Charming old Mississippi River towns and villages offer backwater boating and fishing and scenic views of the Mississippi River gorge.



*Eagle's Landing
Winery in
Marquette*



Fishing in Gouldsburg Park

Photo by Mdf, Cerulean Warbler (*Dendroica cerulea*), Rondeau Provincial Park, Ontario, Canada, licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported



Cerulean warblers, a federal species of concern, breed in the Effigy Mounds-Yellow River State Forest area.



Geologic features can be explored at Pikes Peak State Park.

SUB-THEME 3

The Driftless Region's streams, valleys, forested bluffs, prairies, and migratory flyways offer a biologically diverse and beautiful landscape.

Messages:

- 3.1 Iowa's highest quality forest remnants and freshwater streams are found in the Driftless Area. The deeply carved landscape has made development difficult, preserving much of the region's natural heritage.
- 3.2 Bluff overlooks invite spectacular views of the Mississippi River valley. Notable byway overlooks include Pikes Peak State Park and Effigy Mounds National Monument.
- 3.3 The Effigy Mounds-Yellow River State Forest is designated as a Globally Important Bird Area and includes a breeding population of Cerulean Warblers, a federally listed species of concern. The area is also recognized as an Iowa Bird Conservation Area, boasting one of the state's best bird habitats.
- 3.4 The abundant wet forests of the Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge support one of the largest breeding populations of bald eagles in the lower 48 states. In 2011, there were 96 active nests in Pool 9, the highest concentration in the refuge.
- 3.5 Ice caves have been described as a "cave of paradox" because they contain ice in summer but not in winter. Cold winter air is drawn into the cave and warmed and exits through chimney-like fissures. In the process, the rocks are super-cooled. In the summer, this air flow reverses, and the now frozen rocks cause moist air to condense and freeze. An accessible ice cave near the River Bluffs Scenic Byway is in Bixby State Preserve near Edgewood.

- 3.6 Algific talus slopes are analogous to ice caves. The rush of cold summer air exiting from fissures on the slopes creates a boreal microclimate supporting relic snail and plant species left over from the Ice Age. Bixby State Preserve protects diverse algific talus slopes.
- 3.7 The Mississippi River forms the core of one of North America's great flyways for waterfowl and neotropical bird migrations.
- 3.8 Abundant cold-water streams in the Driftless Area provide habitat

for wild brook trout and introduced brown and rainbow trout and sustain Iowa's most important cold-water fishery.

- 3.9 The Driftless Region is a great place to experience caves, limestone canyons, and sinkholes. Weathering karst topography takes time, and this large area of limestone bedrock has been eroding into dramatically deep caves without being disrupted by glaciation, which erases the spectacular sculpting of the landscape.



Examining stalactites in Spook Cave



Courtesy of The Nature Conservancy



An interpretive sign describes fish found in the Turkey River.



Emma Big Bear features prominently in the Native American culture of the region.

SUB-THEME 4

Numerous sites along River Bluffs Scenic Byway provide insight into prehistoric people and the clash of European and native cultures in historic times.

Messages:

- 4.1 About 3,000 years ago, Native American cultures began adopting new tools and life ways that are known as the Woodland Culture. The Woodland tradition is identified by the innovations of pottery, burial mounds, cultivated plants, and the bow and arrow. Conical mounds built by Middle and early Late Woodland people (100 B.C. to A.D. 650) can be seen at Effigy Mounds National Monument near Harpers Ferry and Turkey River Mounds State Preserve near Guttenberg. The late Woodland Effigy Mound Culture created animal-shaped mounds that were probably used more for ceremony than for burial. Effigy Mounds National Monument has one of the largest representations of these mounds. Turkey River Mounds has a single effigy mound, a 98-foot panther.
- 4.2 French fur traders first encountered the Ioway Indians in their villages along the Upper Iowa River. The Ioway were a Siouxan speaking people affiliated with the Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) who occupied large territories on the Wisconsin and Fox Rivers.
- 4.3 The 17th to the 19th century was a time of upheaval for Native American tribes in the northeast. Tribes such as the Ojibwa, Sauk, and Meskwaki (Fox) were pushed into the Great Lakes region, fleeing the Iroquois Beaver War expansion westward and the encroachment of settlers. Many tribes aligned with the British against the United States in the Revolutionary War and War of 1812. When peace was made in 1814, the area was seized by the United States. A series of treaties were forced upon the tribes for their lands and most were removed to lands west of the Mississippi River.

- 4.4 A few Indians, including a group of Meskwaki on the Iowa River, returned to Iowa and purchased tribal lands.
- 4.5 Emma Big Bear, a descendant of Winnebago (Ho-Chunk) people, is noted as the last full-blooded Native American to live in Clayton County. She lived a traditional life among the Euro-Americans in the McGregor–Marquette–Prairie du Chien area. She died in 1968 at age 99. The Emma Big Bear Foundation keeps her legend alive with public events. Museums in the area include exhibits with artifacts that tell her story, and a life-sized statue portraying her is in the Mississippi River Sculpture Park in Prairie du Chien.



Effigy Mounds National Monument protects one of the largest representations of Native American mounds found in the United States.



St. Mary's Catholic Church, Guttenberg

SUB-THEME 5

The rivers of this region were arteries of transportation and settlement, bringing new residents and industry into northeastern Iowa.

Messages:

- 5.1 Mississippi River towns are the oldest Euro-American settlements in Iowa. The communities initially focused on serving river travelers. Later, these towns' economies depended on railroad and barge transport of farm commodities, commercial fishing, and clamming.
- The convergence of railroad bridges and barge channels represents a rich history of American growth and settlement that unfolded as conflicts on the Mississippi River in Iowa. Abe Lincoln and Jefferson Davis were the players in this largely forgotten drama between railroads and steamboats.
 - Marquette, first named North McGregor, is named after Father Marquette. He and Louis Joliet were the first Euro-Americans to enter the Upper Mississippi River from the Wisconsin River in 1673.
 - Marquette is sited on the Giard tract, one of only three Iowa Spanish land grants awarded in 1800.
 - For more than a century, Marquette was a major railroad hub and had the largest pontoon railroad bridge that spanned the Mississippi from 1874 to 1961. The Marquette Depot Museum interprets this history.
 - MacGregor's Landing was established in 1837 as a ferry hub by Alexander MacGregor of the famous Scottish MacGregor clan. A town was incorporated in 1857 as McGregor and, along with North McGregor, became the busiest railroad hub west of Chicago, with a population of 5,000.
 - Guttenberg was first established as Prairie La Porte (door to the prairie) when the Blackhawk

Treaty of 1833 opened up land for settlement. In 1844, the Western Settlement Society (which aided German immigrants), purchased the town and surrounding land. The first German settlers arrived in 1845, and, by 1856 grew to 1,500. The town was renamed for the German inventor of movable type. Over 100 stone buildings were constructed, and the town became known as “Limestone City.”

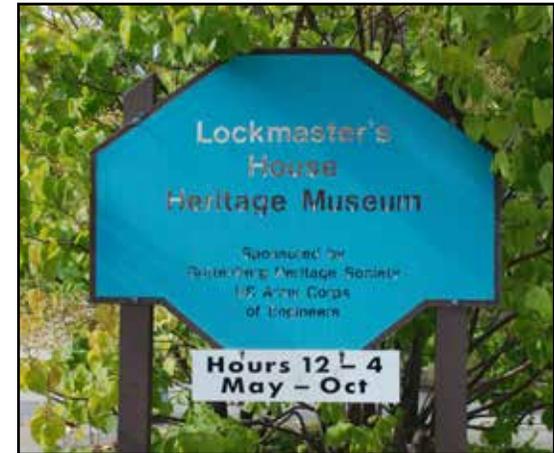
- St. Mary’s Catholic Church was established in 1851, dating to the earliest German settlement in Guttenberg. The National Register Historic District includes the church, rectory, convent, and school. The Gothic Revival church has twin bell tower spires that rise 146 feet above the town.
- As the last remaining lockmaster’s house on the Upper Mississippi, the Lockmaster’s House at Lock and Dam 10 in Guttenberg tells a story of barge navigation on the river when individuals were personally involved in the operation of each lock.



Guttenberg has a sizeable historic district.



Guttenberg has many historic stone buildings.



Lockmaster’s House Heritage Museum in Guttenberg interprets the last remaining such house on the Upper Mississippi.



Froelich Farm Museum features a one-room school.



Heritage Farm Park in Clermont

5.2 Immigrant farmers (primarily Norwegian, Swiss, and German) settled Clayton and Fayette counties soon after Native American tribes relinquished the land in the 1840s. This farm heritage is celebrated in museums and festivals in the region.

- Iowa's agricultural heritage includes the invention of the first gasoline propelled tractor in 1892. The Froelich Village and Tractor Museum honors the inventor and celebrates the evolution of Iowa farming.
- Iowa's rural life and agricultural heritage is ever changing and evolving. The early heritage is documented at Heritage Park in Clermont, which includes a restored 19th century barn, a one-room school, and a settler's log cabin.
- Iowa farm families experience agriculture in physical and sensory ways. Gilbertson Conservation Center provides visitors with opportunities for discovery on an experiential level as they can meet farm animals, navigate a corn maze, and visit a historic farm house.

- Vintage barns have a charm and allure and provide examples of agricultural evolution. Old farm machinery catches interest because their historic functions challenge people to guess their purpose and solve mysteries. Places like George Maier Rural Heritage Center in Elkader houses a vast collection of artifacts in an old barn. Plagman's Barn Museum near Garber celebrates an annual festival in September that also provides opportunities to see farm artifacts.
 - Crop varieties are constantly changing as agricultural markets fluctuate. Crops fail and new products are introduced. Motor Mill on the Turkey River is an example of a beautifully constructed flour mill that lost its purpose when wheat farming moved from Iowa.
- 5.3 County and community historical museums preserve tangible connections to local heritage. Byway travelers with a special interest in local history can visit these museums and numerous structures, many of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

- Iowa history can be seen through the examples of a few prominent people. The 12th governor of Iowa, William Larrabee, had a lasting impact on Clermont that is still visible today. His home and farm estate, Montauk, provides a personal link to the formative years of Iowa's development. The walking tour of Clermont provides concrete examples of the things that society valued during Larrabee's era.
- Iowa has long been a place where immigrants settled. Often whole communities would be settled by a single nationality that sought community in their common language and shared values. The town of Elgin celebrates its Swiss heritage, as seen in exhibits in the Elgin Historical Society Museum.
- Iowa has been home to many prominent naturalists and scientists. Ornithologist Althea Sherman's work with chimney swifts is interpreted at National, near Garnavillo, through a replica Sherman chimney swift tower.
- Communities in northeastern Iowa have preserved many

of their historic downtown areas, which provide visitors with insights into their history and growth. Some have been designated National Historic Districts, such as downtown Elkader. The town also has numerous examples of historic buildings that provide a more complete historic picture of community development.

- Many place names contain meanings and stories that give insights into a region's history. Strawberry Point was sited on the Old Mission Road, a military wagon road established in 1841 connecting Dubuque to Fort Atkinson. The town is named for a campsite on the road near a point of timber with abundant wild strawberries.
- Evidence of social movements on national and even worldwide scales are still seen in some areas of this scenic byway. A Women's Christian Temperance Union drinking fountain in Edgewood was installed to discourage men from drinking alcoholic beverages.



A pioneer settler's cabin at Garnavillo's Historical Museum Complex.



Strawberry Point celebrates its name through an iconic statue in town.



Travelers take in a view of the river from an old bridge in the Volga River State Recreation Area.

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CHAPTER 6

INTERPRETIVE MEDIA



A wayside exhibit south of Wadena interprets wetland restoration.



In addition to panels and publications, interpretive media also can include artwork. This mosaic walkway with a bear design on the California Pacific Coast Highway was fabricated by Creative Edge in Fairfield, Iowa.

INTERPRETIVE MEDIA

Heritage interpretation is a communication process that guides visitors in their search for meanings in objects, places, and landscapes.

The River Bluffs Scenic Byway has a rich natural and cultural heritage. The stories associated with the byway are expressed in greater detail in Chapter 5: Themes and Messages. The techniques used to communicate interpretive messages to byway visitors are referred to as interpretive media.

Well-planned interpretive media can open windows of revelation to visitors who seek personal connections and meanings in these resources. Part of the reward in traveling a beautiful scenic byway is the sense of discovery in exploring a new and exciting place and the feeling of growing emotionally and intellectually in the process of this discovery.

Interpretive media takes many forms. Wayside exhibits, trail signs, brochures, websites, audio tours, apps, and visitor center exhibits are some of the ways we attempt to help visitors find their way and enjoy their experiences. Visitors' lives are enriched as they discover personal meanings regarding these resources.



The Dixie Truck Stop in McLean, Illinois, has been an Illinois Route 66 enterprise since the beginning of the Mother Road. A silhouette statue and wayside exhibit interpret this iconic gas station. (Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters design)

EXISTING INTERPRETIVE MEDIA

A variety of interpretive media exists along the byway. Parks, museums, and other organizations interpret aspects of the River Bluffs region. The existing media is mostly site-specific. Media proposed in this plan will thematically unify the visitor experience and brand the byway through unified design.

Welcome/Visitor Centers

Several existing visitor-information centers distribute byway tear sheets and brochures, and staff are available to answer questions about the byway. The Osborne Conservation and Welcome Center, Fayette County Tourism Center, Marquette Depot Museum and Information Center, and the Guttenberg Welcome Center are located at byway entrance points. Additional byway interpretation, such as experience hub kiosks and byway touch-screen exhibits, could be provided at these key locations.

Museums and Nature Centers

Many community museums are open upon request or on weekends. Those that have more regular hours best serve byway travelers. Primary staffed facilities that are open daily include



Fayette County Tourism Center

Effigy Mounds National Monument, Montauk Historic Site, Gilbertson Nature Center, Driftless Area Wetland Centre, Froelich Tractor Museum, Mississippi River Aquarium and Fish Hatchery, Lockmaster's Heritage House Museum, and Spook Cave.



Osborne Welcome and Conservation Center is a key information stop on the byway.



Wayside exhibit panels recently installed at the Marquette Scenic Overlook interpret the natural and cultural history of the city and the river.

Kiosks and Wayside Exhibits

Several facilities provide panels and kiosks that interpret the natural and cultural history of a specific resource or site. Others could benefit visitors with additional on-site media.

Many byway attractions in Clayton County are listed on the series of “Clayton County Bluff Country” panels, which were sponsored by Clayton County Development Group.



A kiosk at Pikes Peak State Park displays several panels interpreting the park, including things to do, the Mississippi River, and archaeology.



An interpretive panel in Elkader describes the history of the Keystone Arch Bridge over the Turkey River.

Conservation Innovation Grant Panels

Wayside exhibits were developed in 2015 through a Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) interpretive panels project. The goal of the project was to develop a cohesive, statewide set of interpretive panels along 10 of Iowa's byways to describe how Iowa's agricultural producers are utilizing conservation systems.

Panel designs for the wayside exhibits were based off concept designs that Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters created as part of its Iowa Byways Interpretive Master Plans project.

Six CIG panels for the River Bluffs Scenic Byway were installed in several locations. Three panels were placed at Chicken Ridge Overlook south of Elkader. Two separate panels were placed on private properties south of Wadena. And one panel is located at Goeken Park.



Conservation Innovation Grant wayside exhibits interpret the landscape that can be viewed from Chicken Ridge Overlook near Osborne Conservation and Welcome Center.



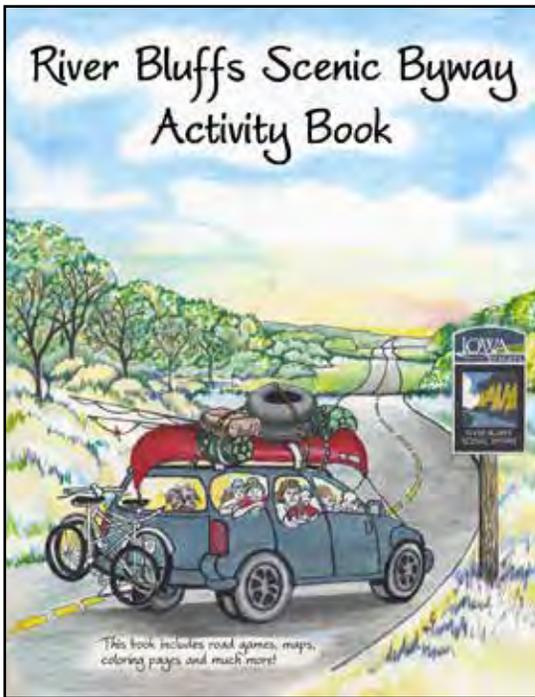
A CIG wayside exhibit was installed at Goeken Park near Eldorado. It interprets the region's topography and history.



The CIG panels for Iowa's Byways use byway logos and colors to create a unified design.



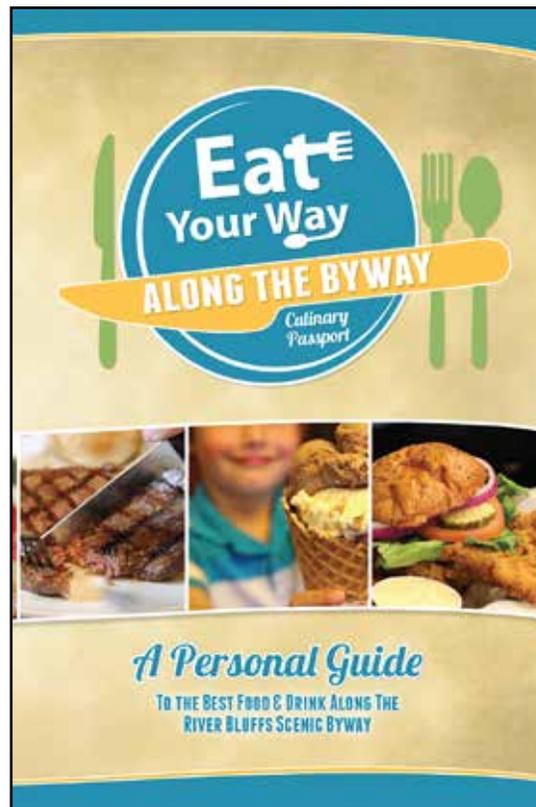
A tabloid-size (11"x17") tear-sheet map of the byway, with color-coded descriptions of attractions on the back side, is available at sites along the byway.



A 40-page children's activity book for the byway includes road-sign bingo, word searches, matching games, and mazes, all related to byway attractions.



River Bluffs Scenic Byway web page, part of the Travel Iowa website.

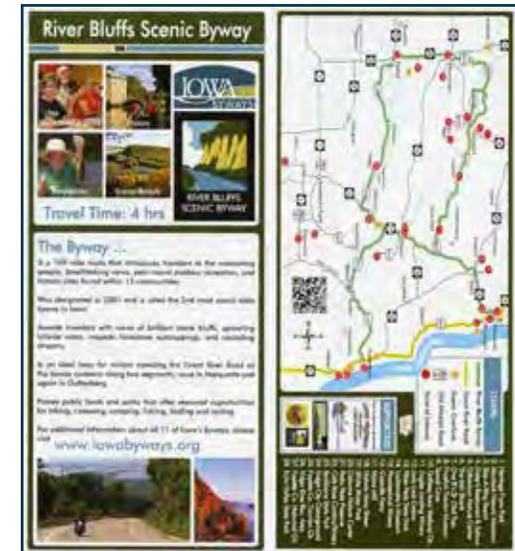


The River Bluffs Scenic Byway Culinary Passport encourages travelers to collect stamps at 16 restaurants and shops along the byway.

Digital and Print Media

Many byway attractions have their own websites, although of varying quality. The River Bluffs Scenic Byway website is part of the Travel Iowa website.

Brochures and booklet guides are provided at many sites. Northeast Iowa RC&D has produced several byway-related publications, including a tear-sheet map that lists all byway attractions on the back; a rack card with a byway map and a description of the route; a culinary passport guide to restaurants; a children's activity book; and historic walking tour guides to McGregor and Clermont.



A two-sided rack card promotes the byway with a map of attractions and a description of the route.

IMPROVE WAYFINDING

Wayfinding, a traveler's ability to follow the byway and find destinations, is the foundation of a positive visitor experience. Without effective wayfinding, travelers will not be able to access interpretive messages and may become frustrated with their entire trip.

Travelers look for directional signs, but also navigate using other visual cues along the roadway. A thorough analysis of the whole byway with an eye to trouble spots and opportunities for assisting travelers should be undertaken every few years as the route changes.

The River Bluffs Scenic Byway is easy to follow with its attractive and prominent road signs containing both the byway's logo and the Iowa Byways logo. However, certain byway attractions can be more difficult to find, especially when they are located off the main route.

Recommendations for enhancing River Bluffs Byway wayfinding include:

- Add "Byway Information" signs to the bottom of byway road signs to direct travelers to information centers, experience hubs, wayside exhibits, and other sites where they can find more information or

interpretation about the byway.

- Similarly, a secondary sign attached to the byway road sign could direct travelers to attractions. For example, a sign could say "Motor Mill Historic Site" with an arrow to help travelers turn at the right location.
- It is important to direct travelers where to turn to visit scenic overlooks, such as the Highway 13 overlook at Chicken Ridge (currently unmarked).
- Include directional information and maps in online media such as websites, mobile websites, and apps.
- As the byway route evolves, optional loops should be adequately marked.
- Place easily recognized experience hubs in prominent locations along the corridor. These hubs will serve as focal points to draw the attention of travelers and provide orientation.
- Develop a travel guide that includes detailed maps and directional information to attractions.
- Place the byway website address and QR code on all media such as experience hubs, wayside exhibits, brochures, and travel guides.



An "Information" sign added to the bottom of the standard River Bluffs Scenic Byway sign can direct travelers to visitor centers, experience hubs, wayside exhibits, or hard-to-find attractions.

BUILD ON THE BYWAY'S SENSE OF PLACE

Sense of place is defined by the *Oxford Dictionary of Geography* as “either the intrinsic character of a place, or the meaning people give to it, but, more often, a mixture of both. Places said to have a strong sense of place have a strong identity and character that is deeply felt by local inhabitants and by many visitors.”

The following is a partial list of elements that define the intrinsic character of the region and the meaning people give to it. This sense of place must be reflected in the design of interpretive media.



- The River Bluffs region, part of the Driftless Area, is marked by dramatic rock outcroppings; deep, narrow valleys with cool, fast-flowing springs and streams; and shallow limestone bedrock laced with caves, sinkholes, and underground streams. This landscape is in sharp contrast with the rest of Iowa.
- The wide Mississippi River gorge cuts through the Driftless Area with historic river towns nestled along its bluffs.
- Winding roads offer motorists panoramic views of what many consider to be the most beautiful landscape in Iowa. It has been described as “the Switzerland of Iowa.” These sinuous roads encourage a slower pace appropriate to this rural landscape.
- The region’s steep bluffs are not conducive to highly mechanized agriculture. Family farms thrive here, producing fruits, wines, dairy products, and organic produce. It is a region well suited to the Amish way of life.
- Picturesque towns and rural churches reflect the Norwegian-Lutheran, German-Catholic, and other ethnic groups who settled this region and whose old-world traditions are celebrated more than 150 years after their arrival.
- This is Iowa’s “trout country.” Abundant cold-water streams beckon anglers.
- This is a canoeing and kayaking hot spot, where cold, fast rivers and streams cascade beneath bluffs, cliffs, palisades, and chimney rocks.
- Nature is interspersed with fertile farms and is a part of life here. Abundant forests, prairies, and streams provide for a rich natural diversity of plants and animals.

“If Iowa’s landscape had to be divided into only two regions, one would be northeastern Iowa and the other would include everything else.” —Jean C. Prior, “Landscapes of Iowa”

PLAN MEDIA HOLISTICALLY

A trip on the River Bluffs Scenic Byway is an opportunity to discover meaningful cause-and-effect relationships between natural and cultural events that have influenced the land and people. While most visitors enjoy their casual journey, many more appreciate understanding the forces and stories that create the sense of place found in the region.

By their physical presence, media such as signs and other structures along a roadway command attention. They offer immediate information and orientation. Several things should be considered in order to develop a comprehensive approach to media:

Brand and Unify the Experience:

Visually coordinate the color palette, type fonts, and other design elements to create immediate recognition by travelers. All media should be cross-referenced so a reader can access information that will connect them to related stories, resources, and media. For instance, publications should direct readers to websites, wayside exhibits, and audio tours.

Diversify Delivery Techniques: Multiple delivery approaches are required to communicate successfully with travelers

of many ages, interests, backgrounds, and motivations. Weather and seasons require that alternative forms of media be offered.

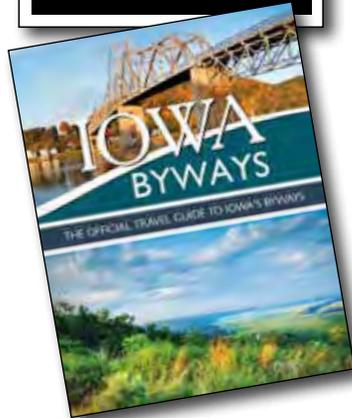
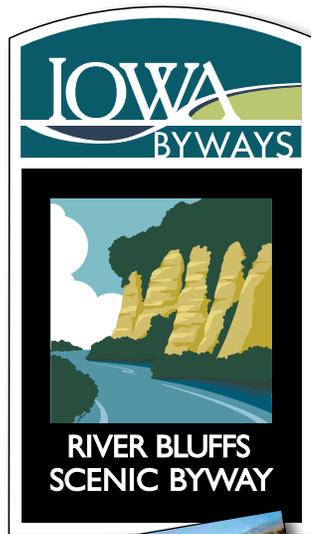
Be Accessible: To communicate with the greatest number of people, incorporate a full spectrum of learning styles such as auditory, visual, and tactile. Media should be developed to connect with a variety of travelers including tourists, bus tours, resident commuters, and families.



In addition to tours, Montauk State Historic Site in Clermont has a variety of interpretive media throughout the site that tells the story of the life and times of William Larrabee.



Montauk offers free daily tours from Memorial Day through Labor Day and on weekends in fall.



Following a set of design guidelines, as has already been done for the Iowa Byways, creates a family of media that is instantly recognizable as belonging to the state's scenic routes.

CREATE A DISTINCTIVE VISUAL IDENTITY

The complex landscape of any road corridor has conflicting visual components that distract travelers from the byway experience. To be successful, interpretive efforts should capitalize on the recognizable icons and strong features of the area's sense of place.

The colors and curves of the media graphics, the selected construction materials, and even the type fonts of the messages need to be unified to each other and reflect the character of the ridges, valleys, and villages of the byway. What may seem like redundant design elements to the planning team will be reassuringly familiar to a byway traveler.

The Iowa Department of Transportation already has developed a strong identity for the River Bluffs Scenic Byway and the Iowa Byways program. Road signs installed across the state in their artistic style. An accompanying Iowa Byways guide creates a unified family of byways. The website follows with the same look, reassuring travelers that the Iowa Byways program is well planned and executed. The media recommendations that follow aim to build on the pre-existing design work to further the byway's interpretive goals.

Visual Identity Through Design

- The colors used on the byway logo should serve as the palette for other media.
- The River Bluffs and Iowa Byways logos should be replicated on all publications, interpretive signs, and online media for optimal exposure and recognition.
- Apply unified design standards to all frames and supports for signs, experience hubs, and wayside exhibits.
- Apply consistent graphic elements such as type style and sizes, color palette, and artistic approaches.

Unified Design Standards

To increase recognition and to provide a more cohesive experience for travelers, all media should be graphically and visually unified. The use of unified and repeated colors, fonts, logos, and other graphic elements will combine media into a family of recognizable byway features. The following suggestions should be considered in the design of future media.

Color Palette

A standard set of colors unites media, highlights important messages, and evokes feelings about a site or an organization.

In 2010, the Iowa Department of Transportation Office of Media and Marketing established logos and color palettes for all Iowa byways and for the overall Iowa Byways brand. Brand descriptions and regulations are described in the “Iowa Byways Brand Guidelines” documents prepared for each byway. “The brand is ultimately the program’s public identity intended to create awareness of the program and its benefits and to encourage and enhance the visitor’s experience on Iowa’s scenic byways,” according to the document.

The color palette established as part of the logo designs should be repeated in byway media. The blues, greens, and yellows of the River Bluffs Scenic Byway palette reflect the spectacular scenery along the route. The bright colors are somewhat limiting when designing media, so consider adding colors to the palette that fit with the family but provide more flexibility for attractive design. Various lighter or darker shades of these colors can be used while still unifying the look of media with the byway’s identity.

| River Bluffs Color Palette for Media | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
|  <p>Green 1 CMYK= 100,80,100,0</p> |  <p>Green 2 CMYK= 100,90,100,0</p> |  <p>Black CMYK= 0,0,0,100</p> |  <p>White CMYK= 0,0,0,0</p> |
| Curved header, titles, drop caps, tint box borders | Subtitles | Lettering on large blocks of text over light backgrounds | Text over dark backgrounds, picture borders |
|  <p>Blue 3 CMYK= 70,30,30,0</p> |  <p>Blue 4 CMYK= 100,70,50,0</p> |  <p>Yellow 1 CMYK= 10,10,60,0</p> | |
| Curved header | Titles and subtitles, drop caps | Curved header, tint boxes | |

Recommended Typography

CHELTENHAM BT

Main titles and headings

Brushtiptravis

*Headings and subheadings,
handwriting (quotes, photos)*

Garrison Sans

Main text

Garrison Sans Italic

Photo captions

Garrison Sans Italic

Photo credits

Typography

The design and selection of letter forms creates the personality and readability of blocks of type on interpretive media. Each typeface expresses personality and sets a tone that reflects the organization or the message that is being interpreted, so it should be selected purposefully.

Combinations of various styles can add an interesting hierarchy to the media design and help create specific personalities for each message. Fonts can appear lighthearted and fun, informal, businesslike, old-fashioned, rustic, or legalistic. They can seem difficult to wade through or look easy to read.

Stylized fonts attract attention for titles and short headings but can be burdensome to read in longer texts.

On the Iowa Byways logo, the typeface for “IOWA” is a derivative of Cheltenham BT set in all caps. The original typeface was manipulated to blend with the abstract graphic representations of hills and valleys. The recommended font for main titles and headings on byway media is **Cheltenham BT Bold**, evoking the timeless nature of the River Bluffs area and creating consistency between media.

Brushtiptravis is an informal script font that provides contrast to the more formal fonts. It serves a similar purpose as the “Brilliant stone bluffs” script font used alongside the curving line in the Iowa Byways guide. These types of fonts welcome viewers and invite them to explore interpretive media. Brushtiptravis is recommended for some headings such as on wayside exhibits, for subheadings, and to emulate handwriting. It can add style to photographs or quotes where handwritten messages may be appropriate.

Simple, familiar fonts work best for longer texts that require more reading. **Garrison Sans** is recommended for the main text on byway media. Garrison Sans is used in the Iowa Byways publication, and it is also similar to Gill Sans, which is the font used on the byway logos. It is a sans serif font that is easy to read. Garrison Sans also works well for photo captions and credits.

A **hierarchy of type sizes** is also important to emphasize the relative significance of various messages. Typically, a main title is the largest size, followed by subheadings, main text, captions, and credits.

Repeating Graphic Elements

Another important factor that contributes to a unified design style is the use of repeating graphic elements. These elements, in combination with the color and typography schemes, develop a unique identity for the byway.

The River Bluffs Scenic Byway and Iowa Byways logos are essential graphic elements that should be included on all byway media, from interpretive signs and publications to digital websites and apps. They provide a unified brand for the byway and for the Iowa Byways program.

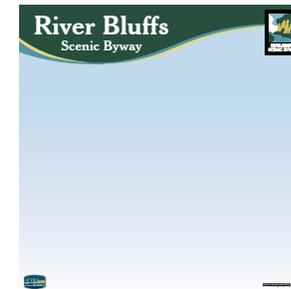
According to the Iowa DOT, “the colors and curves in the Iowa Byways logo are an abstraction of the undulating Iowa landscape. Individual logos for the individual byways in the Iowa Byways program were developed in an intentionally simple graphic style so as to appear as a recognizable and memorable graphic theme, descriptive of the character and experience of the byway, and as a safe and effective wayshowing tool when displayed on signage.”

Other repeated graphic elements on future interpretive media will reinforce the already existing design identity. These may include:

- Curving header bars comprised of gently interwoven contrasting dark, medium, and light colors from the River Bluffs color palette. The curve is reminiscent of the wave pattern in the Iowa byways logo.
- Faded light blue backgrounds with a gradient on interpretive media.
- White, snapshot-style borders for photos, with feathered edges, tilted slightly, and with drop shadows.
- Tint boxes with rounded corners and drop shadows.
- Large focal point images to draw attention.
- Byway website addresses and QR codes that link to the Iowa Byways website.



The River Bluffs and Iowa Byways logos are essential graphics elements to include on all media.



Curved header with faded blue background.



Snapshot photo effect with white feathered borders, caption, tilt, and shadow.

Tint box with feathered edge, rounded corners, and shadow.

INTERPRETIVE EXPERIENCE HUBS

The River Bluffs Scenic Byway can be accessed through multiple entry points. It is important to welcome and orient travelers at various places along the route.

Experience hubs are thematic kiosk structures designed to orient travelers to the attractions and stories of a byway. They consist of multiple signs that provide maps, information, and interpretation. Unlike staffed visitor centers, they are available 24 hours a day year-round. Experience hubs present an opportunity to introduce the byway to motorists who pass by serendipitously.

Although visitors rely on navigation devices or maps to assist them in orientation, unified kiosk structures that are easily seen on the landscape are reassuring guides. They have enough mass and character to attract attention and to support the byway identity. The most successful hubs are prominently sited at key byway entry points and at areas of high traveler use such as welcome centers, visitor centers, and significant attractions.

Experience Hub Design

The experience hub structures and signage are an opportunity to create an artistic repetition that unifies and identifies the byway experience. The experience hub should represent the River Bluffs byway's landscape with graceful curves and muted colors. Each kiosk structure should:

- Exhibit a unified design with all other interpretive media.
- Reflect regional themes through unique graphics cut into the steel frame and through the messages included on each panel.
- Be highly visible to travelers, but not overpower existing agency and site entry signs at welcome centers, parks, and attractions.
- Appear rustic and durable in rural sites but be formal enough to fit into urban settings.
- Appear elegant but be economically produced.

- Be easily replaced, modified, or repaired.
- Be vandal-resistant.

Construction elements, such as wooden timbers, weathering steel, and limestone block, bring a substantial feel and authenticity to the structure. The strong combination of wood and metal appears organic but is vandal-resistant and maintenance-free. The limestone base connects to the prominent bedrock and bluffs of northeastern Iowa.

A curved steel header at the top of the hub presents a graceful rustic look and provides a surface for cut-out symbols and scenes to interpret the stories of the River Bluffs Scenic Byway. Each hub can have its own unique cut-out designs.

Byway Entry Point Experience Hub: Overview and Community Panels

(Fayette County Tourism Center)





Experience hubs can be created to thematically match the look and feel of a byway, such as this hub on iconic Route 66 in Illinois. (Schmeeckle Reserve Interpreters design)

Byway Entry Point Experience Hubs

Two types of experience hubs are recommended for the River Bluffs Scenic Byway—Byway Entry Point Experience Hubs and Community Experience Hubs.

The **Byway Entry Point Experience Hubs**, placed in five entry point communities, will introduce travelers to the byway and orient them to the route’s attractions and stories. When possible, these hubs should be placed near information centers where travelers can get personalized information to assist them in exploring the byway.

Interpretive Signage

Each entry point experience hub will contain four interpretive panels—two panels on each side of the structure:

1. The first panel introduces the byway and explains what makes it unique. It includes a map of the byway, photos, and brief text to describe the character of the byway.
2. The second panel features a map of the community where the hub is located, including nearby attractions. Photos with captions describe the significant local resources.
3. The third panel, located on the back

of the hub, describes the natural and recreation-based attractions of the byway and includes a map and photos of key resources.

4. The fourth panel, adjacent to “Natural Wonders,” interprets the historic and cultural resources of the byway and includes a map and photos of key attractions.

The panels are sized at 36 inches by 36 inches and would be produced with 1/2-inch-thick high-pressure laminate. This affordable material allows for full-color, high-resolution signs, and the panels require minimal attention and are resistant to damage and vandalism. A 10-year warranty against fading and delaminating is standard.

Curved Steel Header

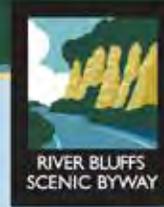
The steel header cut-outs on the entry point experience hubs thematically represent the byway. Byway icons—such as kayakers paddling through river rapids and turkey vultures and eagles soaring over limestone bluffs help enhance the identity of the byway.

Byway Entry Point Experience Hub: Natural and Cultural Panels

(Fayette County Tourism Center)



River Bluffs Scenic Byway



Welcome to Bluff Country

This 109-mile byway traverses "Bluff Country." While glaciers scoured most of the surrounding area, this region was left as an island known as the Driftless Area. Over eons, water carved through limestone bedrock creating bluffs and deep valleys laced with caves and fast-flowing streams.



Pikes Peak State Park offers grand vistas of the Upper Mississippi River valley.



Explore the Byway
Follow winding roads with panoramic views of farms and bluffs along the Turkey and Volga river valleys. Thirteen communities showcase their rich history. The beauty and unique geology of "Bluff Country" can be explored in numerous parks, preserves, trails, and trout streams.



36"

Overview Panel Concept Design

The main panel of each experience hub will provide an overview of the River Bluffs Scenic Byway and its unique characteristics. A map displays the entire byway with a "You are here" symbol. This panel would be duplicated on each entry-point and community experience hub.

Community Panel Concept Design

(Fayette County
Tourism Center)

The second panel on each experience hub will interpret the particular community in which it is located, including its unique characteristics and some of the “must-see” attractions with photos and captions. A large map of the community and surrounding area shows the primary interpretive resources and uses a “You are here” symbol. These panels would be unique on each entry point experience hub and on each community experience hub.

Explore Fayette

In Fayette, history and nature are on display. Established in 1855, the town was named after the Marquis de la Fayette, French hero of the American Revolutionary War. The community is home to Upper Iowa University, which began as Fayette Seminary in 1856. Explore nature in the many parks and preserves in the picturesque Volga River valley.

Klock's Island Park
Kayakers paddle the Volga River past Klock's Island Park in Fayette. The city park offers camping, trails, and river access for paddlers.

Wildwood Nature Center
The center displays a collection of native wildlife. A live animal and reptile exhibit features Iowa mammals and birds of prey.

Stone Man
Discovered by a farmer in 1883, this granite, glacial erratic once marked a geological trail.

Twin Bridges County Park
Small park at the confluence of the South and West Branches of the Volga River, perfect for picnics, camping, and boating.

Upper Iowa University
Alexander Dickman Hall opened in 1857 as Fayette Seminary. In 1858, it was renamed Upper Iowa University.

Fayette Opera House
This historic opera house has been lovingly restored by local volunteers and hosts community events.

Volga River State Recreation Area
This 5,500-acre park offers water recreation on Frog Hollow Lake and the Volga River. Enjoy horseback riding, hiking, fishing, mountain biking, and camping.

Brush Creek Canyon State Park and Preserve
This 217-acre rugged forested gorge was preserved for its biological and geological treasures. It is popular for hiking, bird watching, and photography.

Fayette Area Byway Attractions

Legend: State Park, Trail, Other, Public Recreation Area, Miscellaneous Other

Natural Wonders

Explore three great rivers along the byway: the Turkey, Volga, and Mississippi. The Turkey River Water Trail and Upper Mississippi Fish and Wildlife Refuge are ideal for fishing, paddling, and boating. Bluff-top overlooks offer grand vistas, and cave-laced parks protect nature's gems. Cold, fast-flowing, trout streams are a beacon to anglers.



Chicken Ridge Overlook
This overlook provides panoramic views of Elkader, rolling farmland, and the Turkey River valley.



Volga Three Strips Recreation Area
The Volga River meanders through limestone bluffs in this 1,700-acre facility. Equestrian and hiking trails invite exploration and the lake and river attract paddlers and fishers.



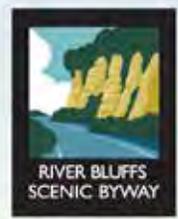
Deerfoot Cave Park
A deep, forward-raine grotto in a 40-foot vertical limestone wall directly above the cave opening.



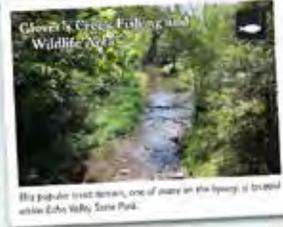
Emma Big Bear Trail Scenic Overlook and Shelter
The City of Margaretta ridge-top shelter provides commanding views of the Allegheny River valley. Forest trails access about 100 historic river towns.



Big Springs Nature/Recreation
This Guttenberg park features a cold-water stream cascading down limestone bedrock. A trail leads to the springs and forest the stream.



RIVER BLUFFS SCENIC BYWAY



Glover's Green Fishing and Wildlife Area
The popular trout stream, one of many on the byway, is located within Echo Valley State Park.



Brush Creek Canyon State Preserve
This 257-acre rugged forested gorge was preserved for its biological and geological treasures. It is popular for hiking, bird watching, and photography.



Turkey River Water Trail
This 26-mile water trail flows southward through Riparian and Ozarkian forests toward the Mississippi River. Paddlers can enjoy beautiful scenery and numerous historic landmarks.



Natural Wonders Panel Concept

The natural history panel interprets the geological, ecological, and outdoor recreational themes of the byway, with a map identifying scenic overlooks, trails, streams, fishing and wildlife areas, parks, and preserves where visitors can explore the outdoors. This panel would be repeated on all entry-point experience hubs.

Cultural Treasures Panel Concept

The cultural panel interprets the communities, historic sites, and the sense of place experienced along the byway, with an accompanying map of attractions. This panel would be repeated on all entry-point experience hubs.

Cultural Treasures

The rich history of Clayton and Fayette counties is revealed in museums, historic walking tours, and cultural sites along the byway. Rural towns and villages proudly celebrate their settlement, farming, and river heritage.

Motor Mill Historic Site
This site on the Turkey River features a six-story limestone flouring mill and four related stone buildings dating from the late 1840s.

Montauk Historic Site
This historic mansion was the home of Iowa's 21st Governor William Linn Benton. Linn Benton spent time traveling from the Linn family farm on this rural estate from 1824 to 1845.

Gilbertson Conservation Education Area
The Hans Gustavsen with Filson of Native Americans original farmsteads of ca. 1800-1825 farmstead.

Clatsop Conservation Center
Several historic buildings are featured that date to the town of Clatsop in the mid to late 1800s. Clatsop's Heritage Days are celebrated the second weekend in October.

Keystone Arch Bridge, Elkader
Built of locally quarried limestone in 1869, this limestone arch bridge is the longest of its type west of the Mississippi River.

Amish Country
A community of Amish farmers use their single file bicycles along the Garber Road between Edgewood and Garber. The Wood Hill County Store on the road sells Amish foods and crafts.

McGregor Friends Walking Tour
McGregor's self-guided historic tour is a great way for walkers, cyclists, and drivers to learn about the town's rich historic past.

Lockmaster's Home Touring
This is of the last remaining Lockmaster's homes on the Mississippi River. It contains furnishings from the 1700s and 1800s when lock masters operated the locks and dams.

Sherman Swift Tower
This replica of architect Abner Sherman's chimney will soon house the historic studies of the white bird which she began in 1915. Signs and audio messages tell the history.



Community Experience Hubs

A second type of hub, the **Community Experience Hub**, would interpret resources specific to the community in which it is located. These hubs, strategically placed in five communities, will introduce travelers to the byway and nearby attractions. The community hub is similar to the entry point hub but is essentially half the width, with one panel on the front and another on the back.

Interpretive Signage and Steel Headers

The first panel is the same as the byway overview panel on the Entry Point Hub. It introduces the byway using a map, photos, and brief text to describe the character of the route.

The second panel, similar to the sample Fayette panel on the entry point hub, features a map of the community, including nearby resources.

Like the entry point hubs, the panels are 36 inches by 36 inches and would be produced on 1/2-inch-thick high-pressure laminate.

The cut-outs on the steel headers would highlight that community, for example the Keystone Bridge in Elkader.

Recommended Experience Hub Sites

An adequate number of experience hubs should be installed along the byway to offer orientation and interpretation for travelers. The hubs should be placed in highly visible areas where travelers already gather—where they look for amenities and at sites where there are significant stories and historic structures that entice visitors to stop. It is essential

that road signs be installed to alert travelers as they approach these kiosks.

A total of 10 experience hub sites are proposed along the byway route.

Byway Entry Point Experience Hubs

Five Byway Entry Point Experience Hubs would be located at major byway entry



The most effective experience hubs are those installed in highly visible areas where visitors naturally gather, like this one on the Green Circle Trail (Schmeeckle Reserve Interpreters design).

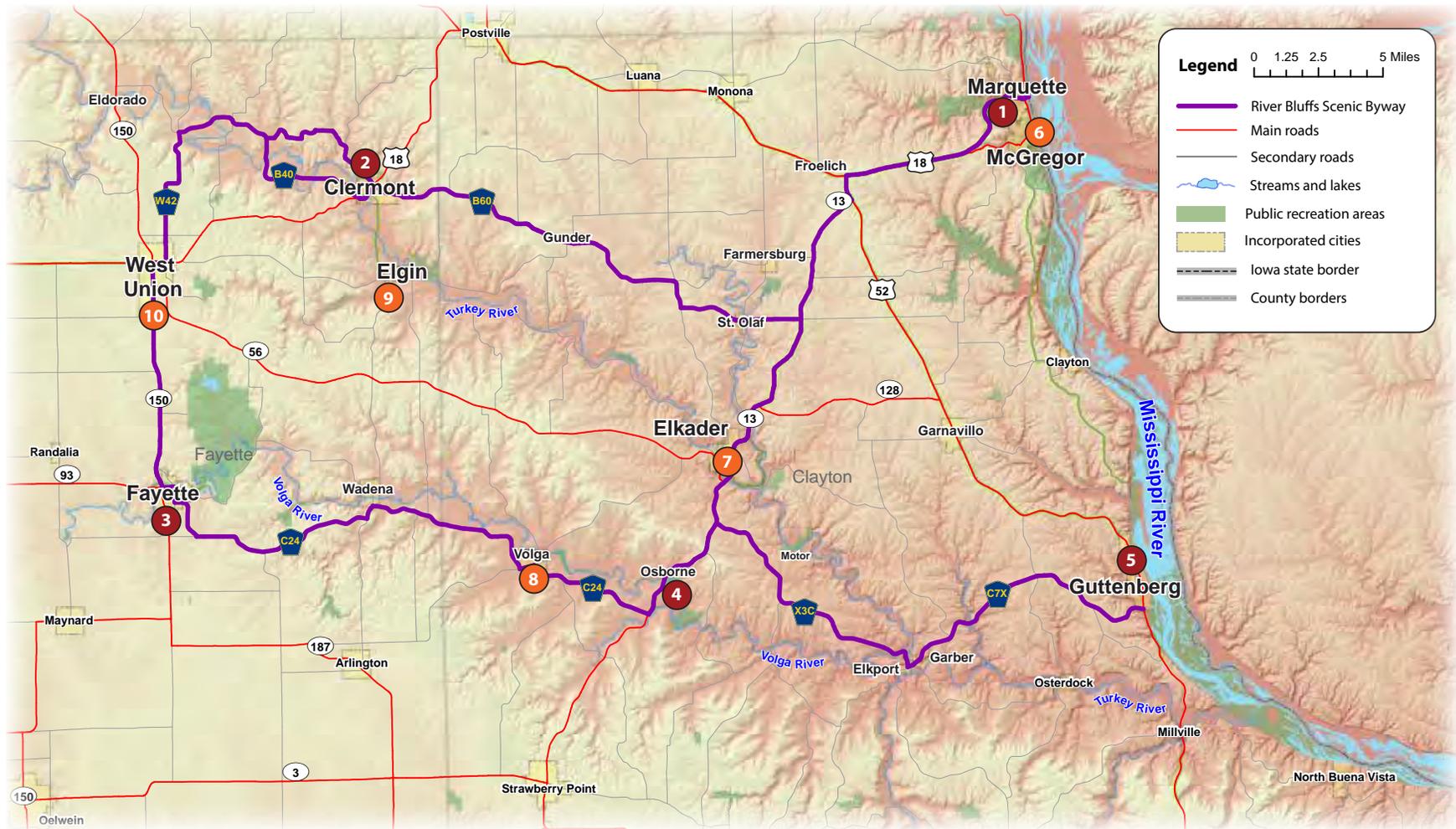
points or junctions: Marquette, Clermont, Fayette, Osborne, and Guttenberg.

Community Experience Hubs

Five Community Experience Hubs would be located at other major attractions and stopping points: West Union, Elgin, Volga City, Elkader, and McGregor.



Door County Coastal Byway experience hub (Schmeeckle Reserve Interpreters design).



Recommended Byway Entry-Point Experience Hubs

- 1** Marquette: Marquette Depot & Information Center
- 2** Clermont: Lincoln Park
- 3** Fayette: Fayette County Tourism Center
- 4** Osborne: Osborne Welcome and Conservation Center
- 5** Guttenberg: Guttenberg Welcome Center

Recommended Community Experience Hubs

- 6** McGregor: Triangle Park
- 7** Elkader: Keystone Park
- 8** Volga: Intersection of Canoe Road and Bell Road
- 9** Elgin: Elgin City Park or Gilbertson Conservation Area campground
- 10** West Union: Rotary Park

Entry Point Experience Hubs

1 Marquette

The **Marquette Depot Museum and Information Center** is an ideal location as it is located at the foot of the Marquette-Joliet Bridge, drawing travelers on Highway 18 as they enter Iowa from Wisconsin. The community-specific interpretive panel should include Pikes Peak State Park, Spook Cave, Froelich Museum, and attractions in McGregor.



Marquette Depot Museum and Information Center is a popular spot for tourists.



Lincoln Park in Clermont is on the byway and an ideal starting point to host an experience hub describing attractions in this region.

2 Clermont

Clermont is a major hub for attractions in the Turkey River Region. **Lincoln Park** is at the intersection of Highway 18 and the B40/B60 byway route, across from the historic depot. This is a good location to draw visitors seeking information about the byway.



An experience hub at Fayette County Tourism Center would orient visitors to attractions in the Volga River Region.

3 Fayette

Fayette is a hub for attractions in the Volga River Region. The **Fayette County Tourism Center** is on Highway 150, an excellent location to attract visitors.

A River Bluffs Scenic Byway sign with “information” and an arrow should be added to the entrance sign for Osborne Welcome and Conservation Center. An experience hub should be added at the center.



4

4 Osborne

The **Osborne Welcome and Conservation Center** is a designated Iowa Welcome Center located on Highway 13. This is the southern entrance to the byway. The community panel should include Elkader to the north and Amish Country, Bixby State Preserve, and Edgewood to the south.

5 Guttenberg

In Guttenberg, the Great River Road intersects with River Bluffs Scenic Byway (Highway 52). An ideal location for this hub would be the **Guttenberg Welcome Center**.



5

An experience hub could be placed outside the Welcome Center in downtown Guttenberg.



6

An experience hub in Triangle Park in McGregor would interpret this river town for visitors.

Community Experience Hubs

6 McGregor

Main Street is alive with tourists in the summer. **Triangle Park** is a recommended site for a community hub that will introduce the byway to a segment of tourists that might otherwise overlook the opportunity to explore the region. The community panel should include Marquette attractions, Froelich Tractor Museum, and Pikes Peak State Park.

7 Elkader

Keystone Park, on the southeast corner of Main Street and Bridge Street next to the Keystone Bridge in downtown Elkader, is an ideal location for a community experience hub. In addition to the many Elkader attractions, area attractions such as Motor Mill and Big Spring Fish Hatchery should be included on the community attractions panel.

8 Volga

The byway **intersection of Canoe Road and Bell Road** on the southern edge of the city would be an ideal location for a byway experience hub. The Old Stone School and the Volga Opera House are community attractions. Strawberry Point and Backbone State Park are nearby attractions to include.

9 Elgin

The **Elgin City Park** is a possible location, although it may not have adequate space for an experience hub or be visible to visitors. An alternative would be the entrance to the **Gilbertson Conservation Area campground** on the Turkey River on Agate Road on the east entrance to Elgin. A kiosk here could serve as an orientation to the many attractions at Gilbertson as well as an introduction to the community of Elgin.

10 West Union

The byway traverses the community on Highway 51, Highway 18, and County Road W42. **Rotary Park**, located on W42, is the only public area directly on the byway through West Union. The experience hub would be visible from the byway if placed near the park entrance and parking lot. The community attractions panel should include area attractions such as Echo Valley State Park, Dutton's Cave Park, Gouldsburg Park, and Goeken Park.



A community hub in Keystone Park in downtown Elkader would orient travelers to local attractions.



The Volga experience hub should be placed where it is visible from the byway adjacent to the city entrance sign.



An experience hub would be installed in Elgin City Park.



A site orientation sign at a fishing-access area such as Grovers Creek can inform travelers that they are visiting a River Bluffs Scenic Byway attraction.



Echo Valley State Park could be interpreted on a site orientation sign that would include a park map with trails marked.

SITE ORIENTATION SIGNS

Site orientation signs have four functions:

- They orient visitors to a site or attraction
- They interpret the site to reveal its significance and meaning
- They communicate that the site is part of the byway
- They provide a map and descriptions of other similar attractions

Site orientation signs are recommended at sites that fit within three categories:

- Fishing-access areas
- Hiking/natural areas
- Historical attractions

At attractions within each of these categories, the site orientation signs will let visitors know about other similar attractions, fostering thematic experiences for byway travelers.

Panels: Site orientation sign panels are similar to the experience hub panels and in size are 36 inches by 36 inches and would be produced on half-inch thick high-pressure laminate.

One panel will interpret the specific site where the site orientation sign is located. Concise text and attractive photos will encourage visitors to explore the site. For recreational and natural areas, the panel will include a site map that shows trails, fishing-access areas, and other orientation information. Other sites, such as well developed historical areas, should include a site map as well.

The back panel will include a byway map that marks the locations of similar sites.

Structures: Structures should match the style of the experience hubs and wayside exhibits so they are readily identified as part of the byway's family of signs. This should include:

- Powder-coated steel supports with thematic cut-outs similar to the experience hubs.
- River Bluffs and Iowa Byways logos.
- Replication of colors, font styles, and graphic elements

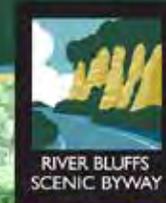
To distinguish site orientation signs from experience hubs, the site orientation sign will use wooden supports without the limestone base.

Site Orientation Sign Concept: Site-Specific Panel

(Brush Creek Canyon State Preserve)



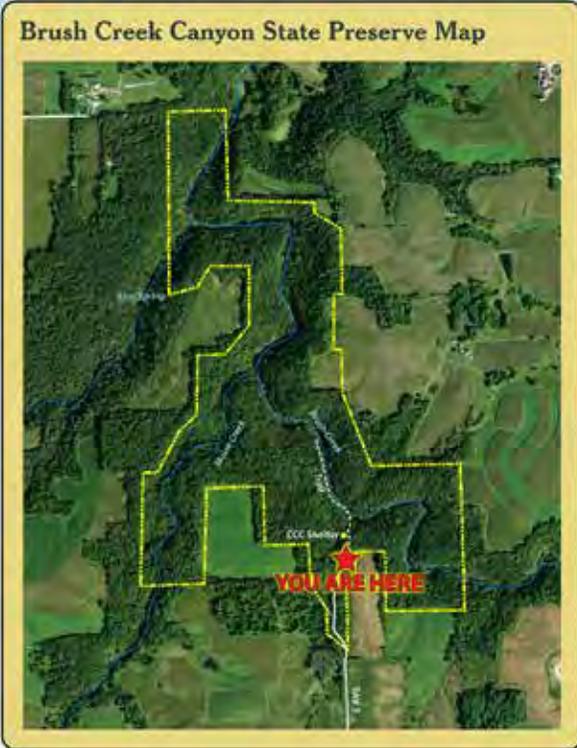
River Bluffs Nature Gems



Brush Creek Canyon State Preserve

Brush Creek Canyon owes its dramatic landscape to its location on the Silurian Escarpment, a 150-foot tall outcrop of dolomite limestone formed 435 million years ago in shallow seas. The escarpment marks the edge of the Paleozoic Plateau, which we know today as the Driftless Area.

Follow a trail along the escarpment that winds past a historic stone shelter and down to Brush Creek.



Exploring Nature

This rugged topography supports diverse habitats for plants and animals. A total of 270 plant species and 75 bird species call the preserve home. In spring, watch for ephemeral flowers that blanket the sunny forest floor until the trees leaf out.



Dutchman's Broom is one of many spring ephemeral flowers in the preserve.



The American Redstart, which nests here, requires large tracts of unbroken forest for breeding.

Site Orientation Sign Panel Concept

(Brush Creek Canyon State Preserve)

Front panel

The front panel on each site orientation sign will interpret the particular attraction in which it is located, including its unique characteristics and a site map if applicable. Attractive graphics and active writing will interpret the resource. These panels would be unique on each site orientation sign.

36"

36"



Bloody Run Creek west of Marquette is stocked with trout throughout the fishing season.



Big Spring Fish Hatchery near Elkader offers public fishing on the Turkey River.



Glover's Creek can be accessed for trout fishing in Echo Valley State Park near West Union.

Recommended Site Orientation Sign Locations

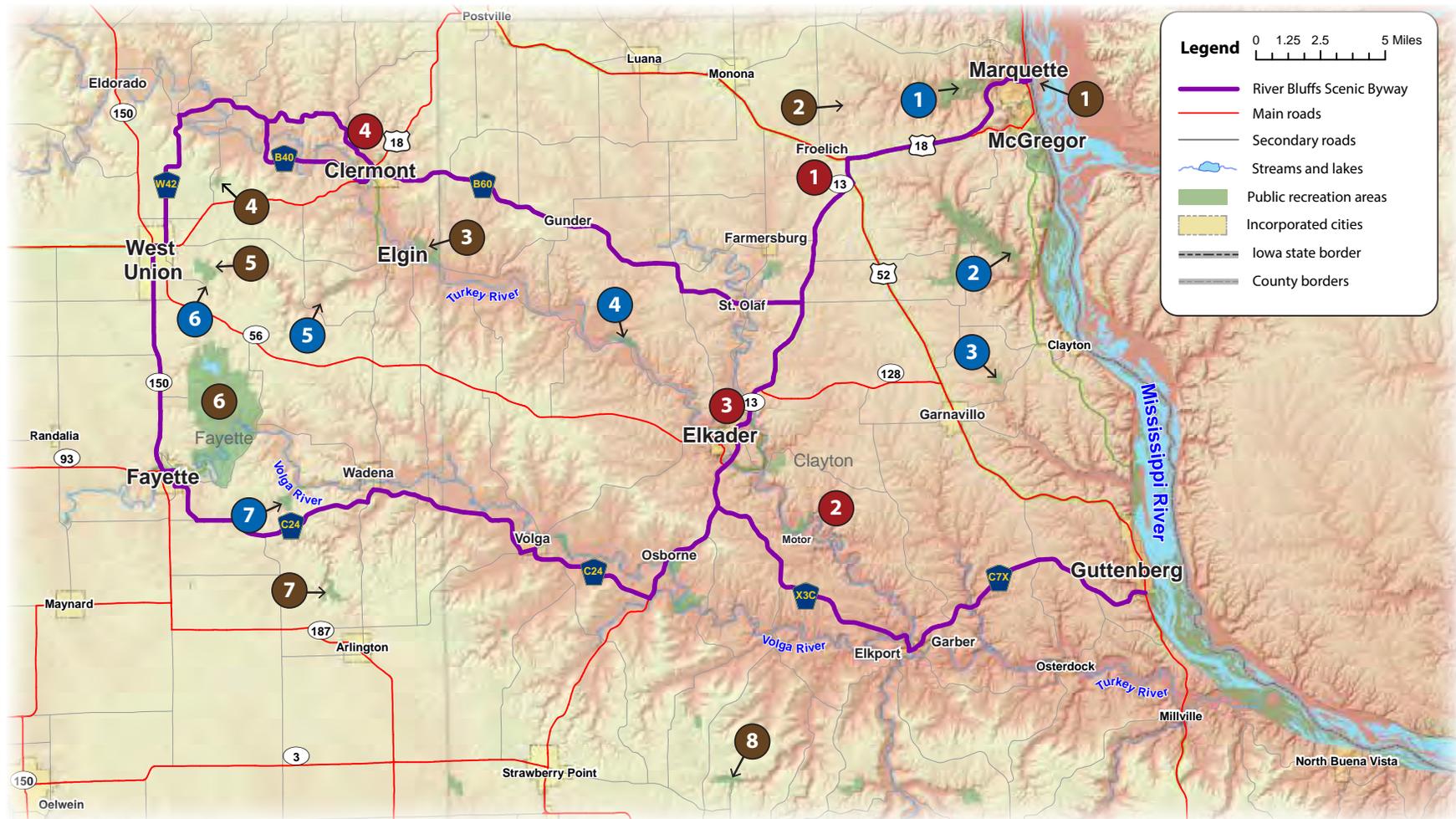
Fishing Access Areas

Clayton and Fayette counties are known for their cold-water streams and thriving trout fishery. There are many fishing spots where a site orientation sign would introduce the byway to a new audience and where interpretation would enhance visitors' appreciation of the resource.

Panels: The front panel will include a map of that particular stream and its access points and it will interpret the waterway. The back panel will include a map of other fishing-access areas on the byway. Interpretation will focus on the Driftless Area and karst topography that has produced the trout fishery in Iowa.

Recommended fishing-access area site-orientation sign locations:

- 1 Bloody Run Creek
- 2 North Cedar-Sny McGill Creek
- 3 Buck Creek Park
- 4 Big Spring Fish Hatchery
- 5 Otter Creek
- 6 Glovers Creek
- 7 Grannis Creek



Recommended Site Orientation Sign Sites

Fishing Access Areas

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 Bloody Run Creek | 5 Otter Creek |
| 2 North Cedar-Sny McGill Creek | 6 Glovers Creek |
| 3 Buck Creek Park | 7 Grannis Creek |
| 4 Big Spring Fish Hatchery | |

Hiking and Nature Areas

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Sturgeon Slough Trail | 5 Echo Valley State Park |
| 2 Spook Cave | 6 Volga River State Recreation Area |
| 3 Gilbertson Conservation Education Area | 7 Brush Creek Canyon State Preserve |
| 4 Dutton's Cave Park | 8 Bixby State Preserve |

Historical Sites

- | |
|---|
| 1 Froelich Tractor Museum |
| 2 Motor Mill Historic Site |
| 3 George Maier Rural Heritage Center |
| 4 Heritage Farm Park |



Spook Cave offers boat tours through a cave.

Hiking and Nature Areas

On these site orientation signs, interpretation will describe the significance of each site. Visitors also will discover other places where they can pursue their interest in nature.

Panels: The front panel will display a map of the park or natural area and interpret the site's significance. The back panel will include a map of other significant hiking and natural areas along the byway. Interpretation will focus on the karst topography that shaped the

landscape and the plants and animals that can be found there.

Recommended Locations

(Note: *Pikes Peak State Park and Effigy Mounds National Monument are excluded because these parks already have kiosks and wayside exhibits consistent with their design standards.*)

1 Sturgeon Slough Trail, Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge

This site orientation sign would interpret the ecology of river backwaters and bottomland forests. The panel can use photos and text to encourage visitors to look for wildlife such as deer, bald eagles, and great blue herons.

2 Spook Cave

A site orientation sign will introduce the byway to a new audience and will interpret the geology of the region as described in Sub-Theme 1. This will enhance visitors' experience on the boat tour into the cave.

3 Gilbertson Conservation Education Area

This panel would interpret the Turkey River and the streams that feed into it, as well as the stream's limestone bluffs.



A hiker takes the Sturgeon Slough Trail in the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

4 Dutton's Cave Park

Walking trails at Dutton's Cave Park near West Union end at a vertical limestone wall and cave opening. The interpretive panel would tell the story of Lorenzo Dutton, who discovered the cave in 1848.

5 Echo Valley State Park

This natural area near West Union is known for its historic Civilian Conservation Corp structures, which would be described on an interpretive panel. The local trout fishing also could be interpreted.

6 Volga River State Recreation Area

A site orientation sign here would interpret the winding Volga River and the fish that can be found in it.

7 Brush Creek Canyon State Preserve

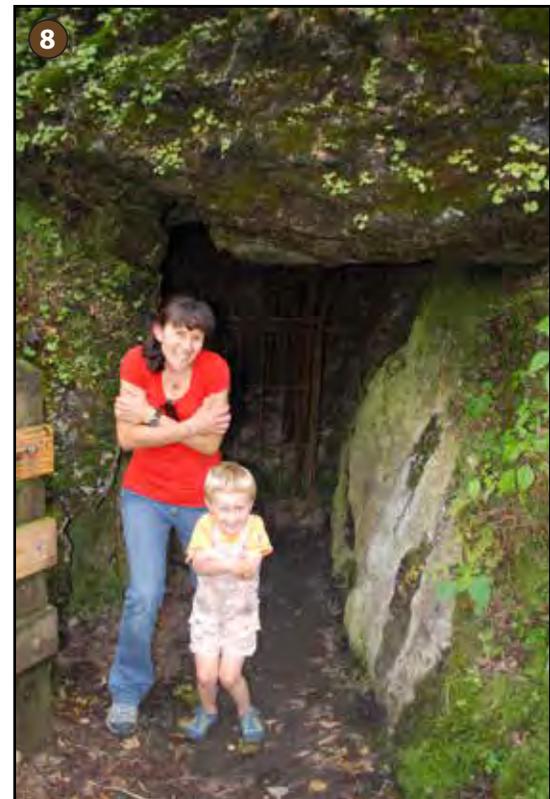
A panel would interpret the geological formation of this rugged valley and the role of state preserves in protecting rare plants and birds.

8 Bixby State Preserve

The Bixby State Preserve site sign would interpret unique features like algific talus slopes, sinkholes, and the ice cave.



Brush Creek Canyon State Preserve hiking trail



Exploring the ice cave at Bixby State Preserve



Hiking at Volga River State Recreation Area

Site Orientation Sign Concept: Natural Attractions Panel

(Brush Creek Canyon State Preserve)



See the front view of this site orientation sign on Page 117.

Historical Attractions

These site orientation signs will interpret the historic significance of each site. Visitors also will discover other places where can they pursue their interest in history.

1 Froelich Tractor Museum

The front panel will include a map of the Froelich Tractor Museum, which includes several historic buildings, and a brief description of each. It will interpret the significance of the village's role in the invention of the first self-propelled gasoline tractor. Images in the metal framework of the structure could depict this tractor.

2 Motor Mill Historic Site

The front panel will include a site map and historical information about the mill. Interpretation will focus on the historic development of mills on the Turkey River with a map of all of the early mill sites. Metal cut-out images could include a view of the bridge and mill from the river.

3 George Maier Rural Heritage Center

The front panel will interpret Maier's vast collection of artifacts and place them in a context of farm history in northeastern Iowa. Historic photos will illustrate farm life in the region. Metal cut-out images could include an auctioneer and sales ring with cattle.

4 Heritage Farm Park

The front panel will include a map of the park's attractions and information about what visitors can experience there. Interpretation will focus on the unique aspects of farming in the Driftless Area and the lifestyles of 1800s and early 1900s settlers. The metal framework images could include a windmill and barns.



A guide is available for tours at Froelich Tractor Museum. A site orientation sign could provide orientation and interpretation when the facility is not staffed.



Motor Mill Historic Site includes several historic buildings in addition to the mill. A site orientation sign could help orient visitors and provide interpretation for the entire grounds.



George Maier Rural Heritage Center in Elkader has many artifacts that show how rural life has changed in the Midwest.



Heritage Farm Park in Clermont has many historic attractions, including this caboose.



This wayside exhibit along a trail at Lorraine Creek Nature Center in Arkansas involves visitors through push-button audio clips of frog calls.

WAYSIDE EXHIBITS

Wayside exhibits are interpretive panels placed along roads and trails to help visitors understand stories and meanings behind a resource or landscape. Photos, illustrations, and concise messages attract and hold a viewer's attention as they learn the stories of a site.

Wayside exhibits are an effective medium to communicate with travelers because they are always available regardless of time of day or weather. When installed next to the objects or sites that they interpret, they can immediately answer a viewer's questions. They are a straightforward, non-intimidating way to connect visitors with significant stories on the byway.

Wayside exhibits can visually convey a byway's personality. Historic photos show what a place looked like in the past. Wayside exhibits share site-specific stories of a community, placing them into a broader context and connecting with universal meanings. They can show views from space or magnify tiny objects. They can showcase flowers blooming through a prairie summer or rarely seen wildlife.

Today's technology offers a range of opportunities to enhance interpretive panels. Panels can be cut into different shapes. Digital audio recordings can be incorporated to add dramatic first-person stories, bird calls, or other audio. Touchable and interactive elements can be affixed to the panels for added visitor involvement. QR codes can connect visitors to websites, video, and audio.



Wayside exhibits, like this one on the Great River Road in Prescott, Wisconsin, can connect visitors to site-specific stories. (Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters design)

Wayside Exhibit Design Recommendations

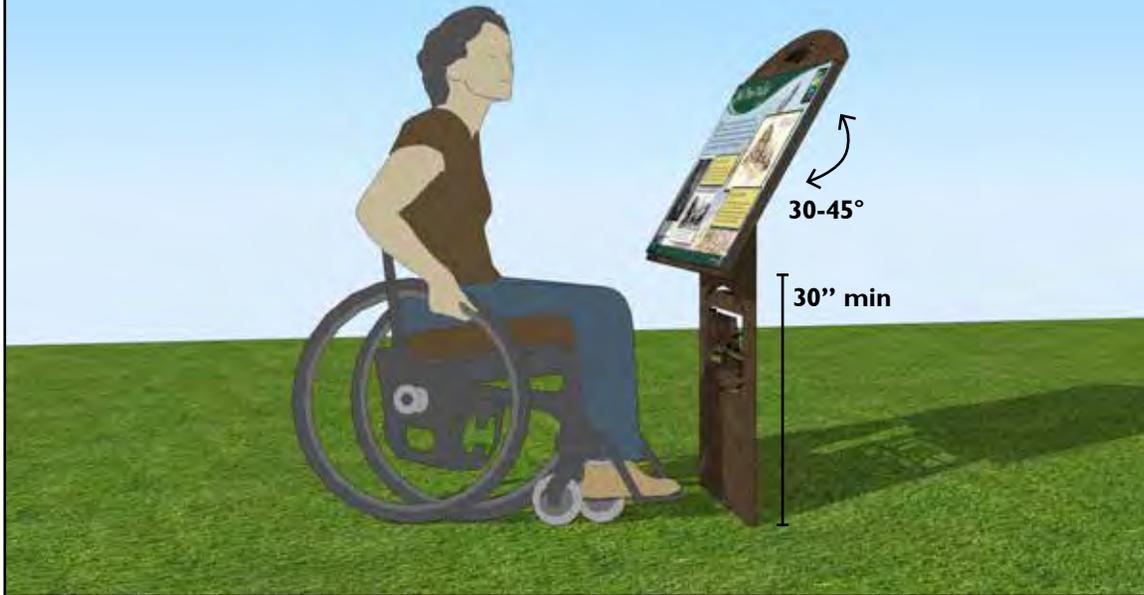
Wayside exhibit panels developed for the River Bluffs Scenic Byway should incorporate the following design elements:

Unified design: Structures should match the same style of the experience hubs and site orientation signs so they are readily identified as part of the byway's family of signs. This should include:

- Weathering steel supports with thematic cut-out graphics similar to the experience hubs. The Iowa Byways logo should be used on the supports to unify these wayside exhibits with those installed as part of the Conservation Innovation Grant panels project fabricated in 2015.
- River Bluffs and Iowa Byways logos.
- Replication of colors, font styles, and graphic elements used on experience hub and site orientation sign panels.
- Website addresses and QR codes to connect visitors to online content.



Well-designed wayside exhibits provide access for everyone.



Creating an Effective Message

1. Communicate visually with photos and graphics.
2. Most visitors will look at an interpretive panel for only a few seconds. Apply the 3-30-3 Rule, a hierarchy that provides 3-second, 30-second, and 3-minute message levels.
3. Use simple words, concise sentences, and short paragraphs.
4. Describe with concrete nouns and active verbs. Avoid adverbs and adjectives.
5. Relate to the reader with familiar terms, personal pronouns, metaphors, and quotes.
6. Provide multisensory involvement with tactile and audio devices.

Keep messages short: As a rule of thumb, use no more than 60 to 70 words for the main message of a panel. See the “Creating an Effective Message” sidebar for more design and writing recommendations.

Panel materials: High-pressure laminate (HPL) material is a durable plastic material that allows for full-color, high-quality images and text. It is resistant to graffiti and scratches. Fabrication companies typically offer a 10-year warranty against fading and delaminating.

Size: Wayside exhibit panels should be large enough to be noticeable and easily read, but not too large that they detract from the landscape. A recommended size of 36 inches wide by 24 inches high can be used with either non-framed or framed support styles.

Installation: Wayside exhibit panels should be installed at a 30 to 45 degree angle to the ground, which offers the best view to a standing or sitting person. They should be placed high enough above the ground, a minimum of 30 inches at the lowest edge, to allow a person in a wheelchair to get close.

Wayside exhibit concept design (Shin Bone Valley, Elgin)

Shin Bone Valley



Across the river, the community of Elgin was originally known as "Shin Bone Valley." This was the site of a former Sauk and Fox village. The name came from scattered human bones found on this side of the river, remnants of a native burial ground. The settlement of Elgin grew at the confluence of Otter Creek and the Turkey River.

Portrait of Keokuk by Thomas M. Easterly, 1847



Chief Keokuk ceded to the U.S. all of the Sauk and Fox lands in Iowa in a series of treaties. The tribes were removed to Kansas in 1845, opening up these lands to settlement.

Sauk and Fox Village

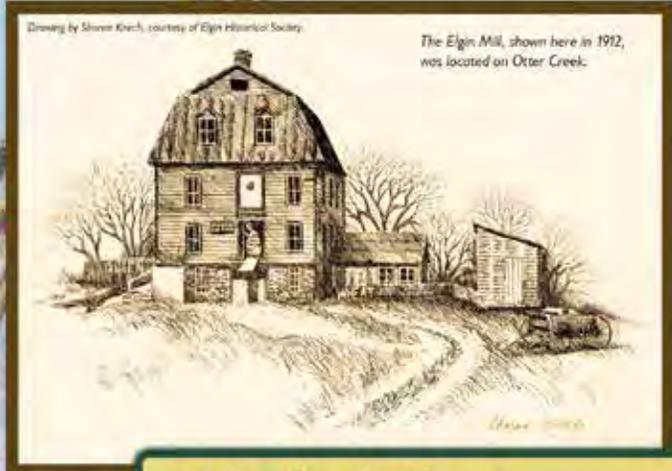
The Turkey River provided food and transportation to the Fox and Sauk who lived here until 1845. According to Samuel Connor, wigwams lined the shores of the river along with "large heaps of discarded fish bones."

Sauk and Fox cemetery in Nebraska, 1902, courtesy of Sauk and Fox Nation of Missouri Tribal Museum



The Sauk and Fox buried their dead in shallow graves covered by "spirit houses." Bark was laid in the bottom of a grave and the body was wrapped in blankets. After burial, a plank house was constructed above the grave.

Drawing by Sharon Knech, courtesy of Elgin Historical Society



The Elgin Mill, shown here in 1912, was located on Otter Creek.

Early Elgin Settlement

This valley was first settled in the summer of 1848 when a party led by Samuel Connor bought land and built a sawmill just downstream from here at the mouth of Otter Creek. In 1852, Connor laid out the town of Elgin and the first hotel, post office, and grist mill were established.



www.iowabyways.org



36"

24"

Recommended Wayside Exhibit Sites

The draft River Bluffs Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan lists 27 sites that merit a wayside exhibit.

Wayside exhibits as part of the Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) program were installed at four of those sites: Brush Creek roadside pull-off, wetland roadside pull-off, Goeken Park, and Chicken Ridge Overlook (See CIG panels on Page 93).

Several of the recommended sites have existing interpretive panels or are included in other interpretive media:

- Montauk State Historic Site: Existing waysides and interior exhibits
- Union Sunday School, Clermont: “Historical Walking Tour of Clermont” brochure
- Four sites listed in Elkader: “Historic Tour of Scenic Elkader” brochure

Other recommended wayside exhibit locations are museums or commercial establishments rather than resources suitable for interpretation or sites where wayside exhibits are an appropriate medium. These facilities are best included in byway publications or web-based media. In some cases—such as Heritage Farm Park, Turkey River State Preserve Archaeological District,

and the Froelich Tractor Museum—a site orientation sign would be more appropriate.

The following are recommended sites where wayside exhibits would be appropriate to connect visitors with important stories and meanings:

1 Cassville Car Ferry, Millville

This Mississippi River car ferry served the early settlement of Cassville, Wisconsin, beginning in 1833, and continues today as the oldest operating ferry service in Wisconsin. The ferry lands in Iowa at the Turkey River boat landing near Millville, which is south of Guttenberg. A wayside exhibit here would use historic photos of the ferry and let travelers know about the byway.



Cassville Car Ferry



Recommended Wayside Exhibits

- | | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 Cassville Car Ferry, Millville | 3 Women's Christian Union Temperance fountain, Edgewood | 5 Stone Man, Fayette | 7 Shin Bone Valley, Elgin |
| 2 Lockmaster's House Heritage Museum, Guttenberg | 4 Volga Opera House, Volga | 6 Neutral Ground, Elgin | |



2

2 Lockmaster's House Heritage Museum, Guttenberg

Lock and Dam 10 was completed in 1937. Between 1938 and 1973, lockmasters were required to live on-site. This is the last lockmaster house on the Mississippi still on its original location. The Guttenberg Heritage Society operates it as a museum interpreting the lock and dam construction and Guttenberg history. A panel would interpret this site when the museum is closed.

Lockmaster's House Heritage Museum



3

3 Women's Christian Temperance Union water fountain, Edgewood

The Edgewood Chapter of the Women's Christian Temperance Union was organized in 1894 to discourage drinking alcohol and to improve community morality. WCTU installed water fountains throughout the country to provide clean water and dissuade alcohol consumption. The fountain in Edgewood was built in the early 1920s as a memorial to the first local chapter president, Thera B. True, who died in 1922. It was placed in front of the bank to intercept thirsty men headed to downtown locations that served harder drinks. The fountain was restored in 2015.

Temperance Union drinking fountain in Edgewood



4

Volga Opera House

4 Volga Opera House, Volga

This classic community opera house, built in 1914, served as a performance venue, a reception hall, a restaurant, and a meat locker. It could seat all 250 residents of the town. Each year the Volga City Truck Cruise raises funds for the restoration of this landmark.

5 Stone Man, Fayette

In 1883, a local farmer discovered a large granite boulder in the shape of a man. It was located on the Old Mission Road on the boundary of the Neutral Ground. A theory is that the military at Fort Atkinson placed it there to mark entry to the Neutral Ground. It is currently located one mile east of Fayette at the intersection of M Avenue and 152nd Street.

6 Neutral Ground, Elgin

In the early 1800s, Sioux and Sauk/Fox tribes were engaged in constant conflict over control of northeastern Iowa. The 1830 Neutral Ground Treaty between the tribes and the U.S. government established a 40-mile-wide zone extending 200 miles from the Mississippi River to the Des Moines River to separate the tribes. In 1842, the Winnebago tribe of Wisconsin was removed to the Neutral Ground. Fort Atkinson was built to protect them. Only six years later, in 1848, the Winnebago were removed to Minnesota, and all of this land was opened to settlement. This history would be interpreted on a wayside exhibit at the Turkey River canoe landing that is part of Gilbertson Conservation Area, on the eastern edge of Elgin.

7 Shin Bone Valley, Elgin

See the panel concept design on page 129. The wayside exhibit interpreting Shin Bone Valley would be installed next to the Neutral Ground wayside exhibit at the Turkey River canoe landing in Gilbertson Conservation Area, on the eastern edge of Elgin.

Courtesy of National Park Service



The 40-mile-wide Neutral Ground between the Sioux and the Sauk/Fox tribes began in 1832.



Stone Man rock formation north of Fayette



Welcome center touch-screen computer exhibits with associated printed media, like at the Great River Road Visitor Center in Prescott, Wisconsin, provide trip planning and interpretive opportunities for byway travelers.

WELCOME/VISITOR CENTER EXHIBITS

Welcome and tourist information centers are important sites where byway information should be prominently displayed. In addition to brochures and booklets, an interactive exhibit in the form of a touch-screen computer should be considered at these locations to alert travelers to the existence of the byway and to help them plan trips to byway attractions.

River Bluffs Scenic Byway tourist information centers that could host this exhibit include:

- Osborne Conservation and Welcome Center, Osborne
- Fayette County Tourism Center, Fayette
- Marquette Depot and Information Center, Marquette
- Guttenberg Welcome Center, Guttenberg

The purpose of the byway exhibit is to:

- Make visitors aware of the byway and its attractions.
- Facilitate impromptu planning for visitors.

- Heighten people's expectations with dramatic visuals of scenic attractions and dynamic events such as festivals and parades.
- Introduce the "byway brand" through its logo and characteristic fonts and colors. This prepares travelers to recognize attractions like experience hubs and wayside exhibits as they drive the byway.

A touch-screen computer is an ideal tool to achieve these purposes because:

- They take up little space in already crowded information centers.
- They are easy to use. Reaching out and touching symbols on a screen comes naturally to many people. This empowers visitors to seek their own information rather than asking staff who may be busy or simply aren't informed about the entire byway.
- Touch screens offer a durable, widely used technology.
- Information is presented using icons and symbols that are more universally understood than words.

Design Recommendations

The exhibit will be designed small enough to fit inside welcome centers where space is limited, yet large enough to attract attention.

- The exhibit will be topped with sculptural metalwork similar to the experience hub kiosks.
- A large map of the byway can be placed below the color header and logo to introduce the byway and its main attractions. The map should welcome travelers to the byway and include a “You are here” symbol. Iconic photographs of landscapes and attractions with short captions encourage further discovery.
- A rack installed next to the map will hold byway brochures and travel guide booklets.
- Below the map, a durable touch-screen computer housing will provide digital information about the byway that can be updated easily. For a unique perspective, the byway route can be placed over an air photo, and users can press arrows to fly over the landscape and discover more about attractions.



Byway touch-screen exhibit concept design



A steel silhouette on Route 66 in Elkhart, Illinois, re-creates the day when child star Shirley Temple stopped for lunch. A wayside exhibit interprets this notable event. (Schmeckle Reserve Interpreters design)

BYWAY ARTWORK

Public art can be created for many reasons: to express civic values, beautify communities, or to inform the public about local history and culture. Public art is for everyone, as it is a form of collective community expression.

Public art is placed strategically for viewing by a large number of people. It tends to be large-scale and visible from a distance. The media may be three-dimensional such as a sculpture, or two-dimensional such as a mural. Public art is usually made to last but may be

ephemeral to celebrate a community event, or simply a form of artistic expression like a chalk or sand painting.

Scenic byways invite visitors into their region and communities. Public art can offer visitors insights into the history and culture of those communities and provide a welcoming aesthetic quality to town and village streetscapes.

River Bluffs Byway Art

The River Bluffs Scenic Byway and its communities already display many public art pieces, and more will be developed in the future.

In 2015, Northeast Iowa RC&D was awarded a \$75,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to support the development and construction of public art in communities along Iowa's scenic byways. This grant is a great incentive for Iowa's byway communities to invest in public art. Guttenberg and Elkader on the River Bluffs Scenic Byway have been selected to receive public art under this grant.



Visitors can step inside an eagle's nest sculpture on the Turkey River Recreational Corridor near Elgin.

Sculptures

We interact with sculptures in a different way than with two-dimensional art. Sculptures are tactile—one can touch them and feel their various textures and forms. Looking at a sculpture is a dynamic activity: the work changes as the viewer moves around it or at different seasons and time of day. Sculptural pieces can be realistic or abstract concepts that express a community's sense of place.

Thematic sculptures that travelers can interact with present excellent opportunities to focus attention on the byway's unique qualities.

Recommendations

Motor Mill Historic Site is dominated by solid-rock buildings and an iron bridge. The site is remote and unstaffed, so vandalism is a possibility. Durable iron statues would be an appropriate way to interpret the mill's history and give visitors a sense of "life" at this quiet place. A mill worker holding a flour bag visually identifies the mill's original purpose. A life-size figure depicting a skilled stone mason holding a hammer or trowel can introduce the legend of the four proud German stonemasons who each completed one wall of this venerable mill. In front of the inn, the

Sculpture Concept Design (Mill worker, Motor Mill Historic Site, Elkader)



aproned figure of an innkeeper holding a tray of mugs would identify this building's function.

Riegel Blacksmith Shop in Clermont could be more inviting to visitors with a dynamic figure of a blacksmith hammering out a horseshoe on an anvil at the building's entry. He is "on duty" day and night even when the building is closed so people have an intuitive

understanding of the building's historic purpose.

Another significant building is the Larrabee "Ideal School" that was funded by the governor and his wife. Iron cutouts of children seated in a circle on the lawn listening to a silhouette of a teacher reading to them hints of the building's past use as a school and its current function as a library.

Statue Concept Design (Riegel Blacksmith Shop, Clermont)



At National, an iron cutout of Althea Sherman, with binoculars around her neck, could be holding her hands to the sky as she releases a chimney swift.

The Lockmaster's Heritage House Museum in Guttenberg could introduce the "owner" by installing an iron cutout of a man shading his eyes with one hand as he looks to the river, with a pocket watch clutched in his other hand.

Consider creating artwork that entices visitors to take photos. A metal vulture with wings spread to their full six feet provokes comparisons to a person's arm span. Utilitarian sculptures like fish-shaped bicycle racks can complement fishing themes.

Each sculpture should highlight the River Bluffs Scenic Byway. For example, the logo might be included as part of



A mural in downtown Guttenberg is titled "The Delta Queen." It is 40 feet by 20 feet and is on the side of the Esser building. It was painted by artist Carl Homstad of Decorah.

a metal cut-out design, reinforcing the identity of the byway. Wayside exhibits in association with the sculptures can enhance the interpretive value of the artwork by providing thematic background and the story of the artist(s).

Murals

Many towns and villages have historic buildings with unfinished walls, either on the end of a block or where an adjoining structure was razed. These large exteriors can be converted to artistic expressions of the community's sense of place.

Murals can provide simple decoration, but more often they illustrate local history or provide social commentary. These "through-the-windshield" interpretive pieces are a great way to make the past come alive or to introduce the personality of a community.

Mural Concept Design (Historic Elkader Main Street)



Existing Byway Murals

Several murals can be viewed along the byway. A mural in downtown Guttenberg re-creates a river scene with a steamboat chugging along the Mississippi. A map mural in Elgin celebrates the region's nickname as "The Little Switzerland of Iowa" and the immigrants who settled the area.

Recommendations: River Bluffs Scenic Byway communities should be encouraged to identify "canvas" walls for murals. Mississippi River towns can illustrate a romanticized view of steamboats, lumber rafting, and other scenes from the past.

Historic happenings can be brought back to life on a grand scale, and even prehistoric events like the scouring of the

deep Mississippi River Valley by icebergs and glacial meltwater can be dramatically re-created on the wall of an old building.

Towns like Elkader are filled with historic buildings, so a mural created from historic photographs can show people how these same streets appeared more than 100 years ago.



Effective byway websites, like the Sandhills Journey Scenic Byway in Nebraska and the Coastal Connection Scenic Byway in Alabama, convey a thematic personality. They provide attractive design, obvious navigation, dramatic focal-point images, and concise writing.

ONLINE MEDIA

Most travelers begin researching online when deciding where to visit. A strong, well-developed online presence is imperative for sharing information and interpretive messages about the River Bluffs Scenic Byway.

River Bluffs Scenic Byway Website

The River Bluffs Scenic Byway has an online presence through the statewide Iowa Byways website, iowabyways.org, which now redirects to a Travel Iowa website focused on the state's scenic byways.

The River Bluffs web page includes links to other Travel Iowa web pages focused on the byway's communities, hotels, attractions, and wineries and breweries. A Google map shows the byway route. The River Bluffs Scenic Byway tearsheet map can be downloaded.

Recommendations

River Bluffs Scenic Byway—in addition to Iowa's other byways—should consider redesigning its Iowa Byways web page. A redesign could enhance the web page navigation and create opportunities to

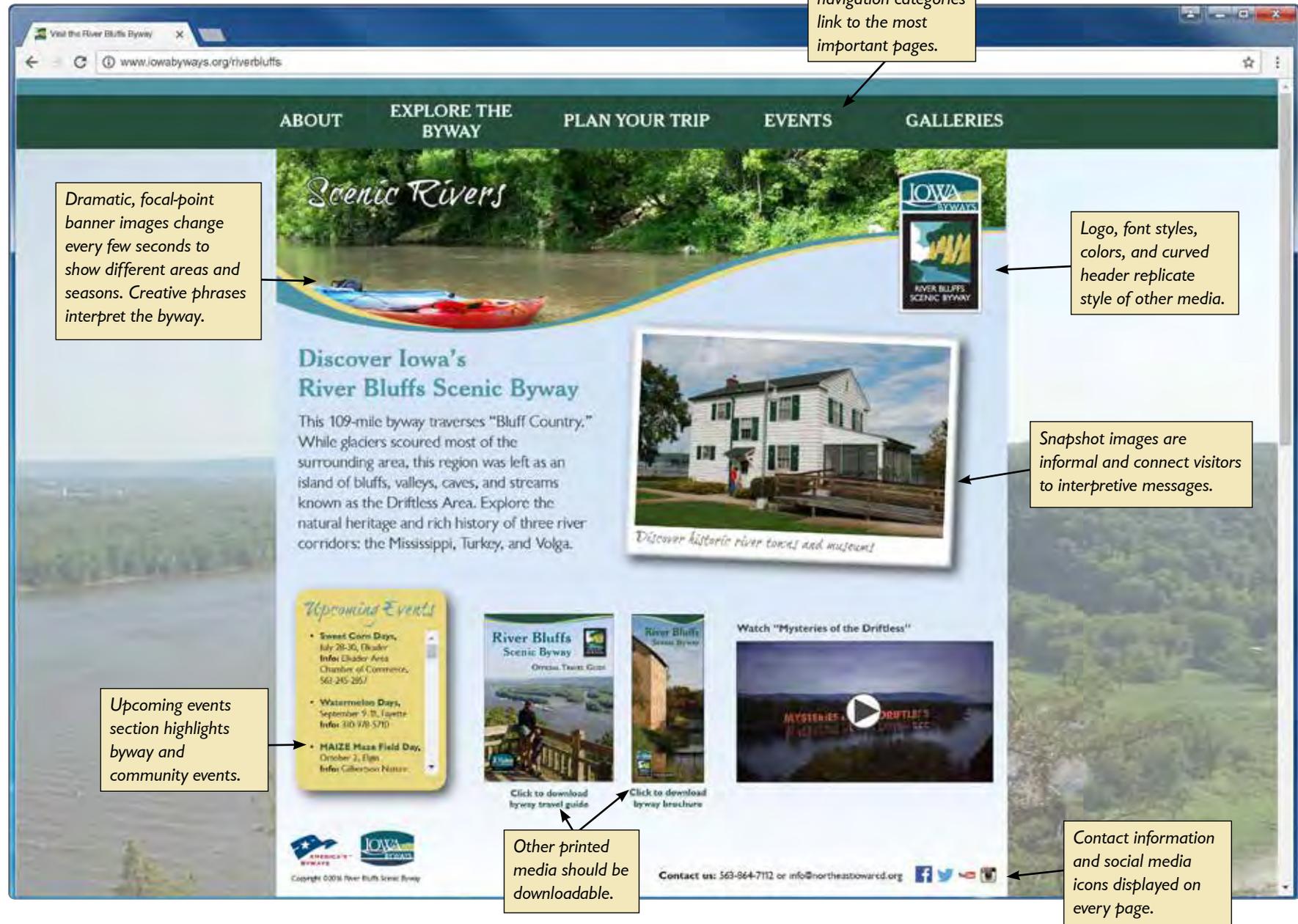
interpret the cultural and natural stories of the byway, using the overall theme and sub-themes in this master plan.

Design Recommendations

The **website navigation** should be obvious and should include links to pages that are most important to visitors planning a trip. Main navigation links include:

- **About:** Drop-down menu items under About can include a **general overview** of the byway, a **brief history** of its development, a list of **byway board members**, and **contact information**.
- **Explore the Byway:** Drop-down menu items under this heading can include links to explore more about each of the **byway communities**; and the **resource categories** (scenic and natural attractions, historic and archaeological attractions, cultural attractions, and recreational destinations).
- **Plan Your Trip:** Includes an interactive **byway map** to be used for planning and while driving the byway. Different icons can show

River Bluffs Scenic Byway Website Concept Design



Clear and obvious navigation categories link to the most important pages.

Dramatic, focal-point banner images change every few seconds to show different areas and seasons. Creative phrases interpret the byway.

Logo, font styles, colors, and curved header replicate style of other media.

Snapshot images are informal and connect visitors to interpretive messages.

Upcoming events section highlights byway and community events.

Other printed media should be downloadable.

Contact information and social media icons displayed on every page.

Mobile Website Concept Design



The River Bluffs Scenic Byway website should accommodate mobile devices' smaller screens. The messages and photos are reduced to a single column. To reduce clutter, the navigation menu is hidden under the green and white icon in the upper left. When clicked, a menu appears with large buttons showing different navigation categories.

the location of attractions and categorize them by topic. When a user clicks on an icon, they see a concise description and photo of the attraction, with a link to a more detailed description elsewhere on the site or directly to the attraction's website. This section also can include **suggested itineraries** based on topics (attraction categories). It also should offer options to download the **Byway Guide, Request Information, Iowa Road Conditions, Iowa Welcome Centers, Lodging Options** (hotels, motels, cabins, camping), and **Dining Options**.

- **Events:** Includes news stories and events that are specific to the byway or its communities. It is important to keep this updated to show that the byway is actively supported.
- **Gallery:** This heading links to various **photo albums** showcasing the byway's communities and attractions by category.

The **website design** should be updated to encourage discovery and to reflect the unified design standards recommended in this plan. This would include:

- Unified font styles, colors, and graphic elements (like the curved header) reinforce the visual identity of byway media.

- Incorporate dramatic and engaging photographs of byway scenery and attractions.
- On the home page, a rotating banner can switch photos every few seconds to represent different communities and seasons along the byway. A creative phrase superimposed over each image can reinforce the interpretive themes.
- Social media options, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram, should be available in the same place on each web page on the site. This encourages sharing and interaction.
- Contact information also should be available on every page of the site, providing opportunities for travelers to seek more information.
- Other engaging media, such as videos, experience hub locations, and travel guides should be highlighted to encourage exploration.
- Design for viewing on mobile devices, which are increasingly used by travelers, both at home and on the road.

Social Media



Along with using more traditional travel websites to research destinations, tourists also are turning to social media.

In a 2014 Google travel survey, about 83 percent of respondents said they use social networking, video, and photo sites to be inspired about travel destinations.

An active social media presence allows the River Bluffs Scenic Byway to spread the word about current events and to interpret the byway's resources, while also serving as an information-gathering tool for the byway board and staff to stay in tune with travelers' needs.

River Bluffs Scenic Byway has a social media presence on Facebook and Pinterest (allows users to “pin” images to boards). Other opportunities exist with Twitter (sharing text messages limited to 140 characters), YouTube (sharing videos) and Instagram (sharing square photos with filters applied).

The major challenge with social media sites is keeping them updated and pertinent, but they can be well worth the time invested. They are inexpensive to communicate through, are instantaneous, and are easy to change or alter.



The River Bluffs Scenic Byway Facebook page includes regular postings and updates.



Trail users on a bike trail in Rapid City, South Dakota use smartphones to scan QR codes on interpretive panels.



Cell phone tour for “Looking for Lincoln” sites in the Springfield, Illinois area.

MOBILE DIGITAL MEDIA

The number of people who own mobile devices such as smartphones and tablet computers continues to increase in the U.S. According to 2015 Pew Research Center data, nearly two-thirds of adults (68%) own a smartphone, up from just 35% in 2011. For people ages 18 to 29, 86% own a smartphone. About 45% of adults own a tablet computer, up from 10% in 2011.

Travelers expect to stay connected and find information through social media sites, Internet searches, GPS navigation, apps, and other technologies that are constantly evolving. Scenic byways like River Bluffs should plan innovative solutions for connecting with visitors who are using mobile technologies. The proliferation of personal mobile devices opens up a vast world of opportunities for sharing interpretive messages.

Audio Tours

Audio tours have always been an effective method for interpreting messages along a scenic byway. Interpretive audio provides short clips of narration, sound effects, and music themed to specific sites along the byway.

Benefits of audio tours include:

- Hearing a human voice adds a personal character to the tour, something difficult to accomplish with other forms of media.
- Music and sound effects are powerful connections to different times and places.
- Travelers on scenic byways often have long stretches of time driving from one point to another, an ideal scenario for listening to interpretive audio messages.

Audio tours have evolved from cassette tapes and CDs, with the Internet now providing a means for sharing audio (and even video) tours with a much wider audience through the use of mobile devices. Several forms of distribution are available, each with its own advantages and disadvantages.

Cell Phone Audio Tours

Developed before the increase in smartphone ownership, a traditional cell phone tour is a system where visitors call into a centralized phone number, enter a specific tour code, and listen to the interpretive message.

Benefits of a cell phone tour:

- The vast majority of U.S. adults today own a cell phone, 92% according to the 2015 Pew Research Center survey. The technology is very accessible to most people.
- It is easy to update audio messages in a centralized database as resources and events along the byway change.
- It allows for tracking visitors for marketing purposes. How many people are accessing messages? Which messages are they accessing? Where are they accessing them from?

Limitations of a cell phone tour:

- It requires a cell phone signal in order to work. Rural areas away from cell towers are not the best places for inclusion in the tour.
- Requires monthly hosting fees.
- May cost the user minutes depending on their cell phone plan.

Podcasting/Downloadable Tours

A less expensive method for distributing audio tour files is offering them online for users to download. This can be done through a podcasting feed (a user subscribes for automatic downloads

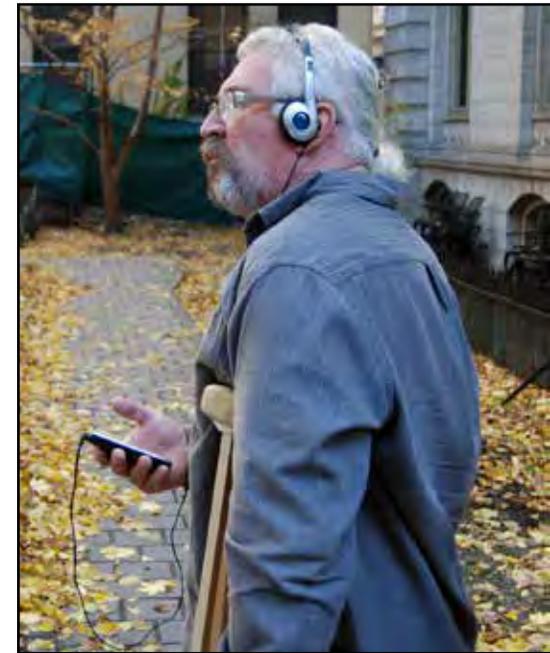
and updates of the files) or posted on a website for manual downloading. These audio files are then transferred to a personal audio device, like an iPod or MP3 player, or a mobile device that plays sound, like a smartphone or tablet.

Benefits of a downloadable audio tour:

- Messages can be downloaded before the trip for planning purposes.
- Depending on the size, files can usually be provided on an existing website for free (no monthly maintenance fee beyond normal web-hosting costs).
- Messages can be recorded in-house and easily updated on the website.

Limitations of a downloadable tour:

- Users must be knowledgeable about how to download and transfer files from a computer to the device.
- Audio and video files can take up large amounts of precious space on a mobile device, which may limit their use.
- Users typically will need advance planning to download the files before the trip; not a good choice for serendipitous travelers.



The Freedom Trail Audio Tour in Boston, Massachusetts can be downloaded to a mobile device prior to the visit.



The Illinois River Road mobile tour website at illinoisriverroad.org/mobile includes customizable searches for interests by community and a GPS-enabled “What’s Near Me?” feature.



Alabama’s Coastal Connection Scenic Byway has a free app that includes videos, events, a list of attractions, and a byway map.

Audiovisual Tour Apps

Using the power of personal smartphone and tablet devices, audiovisual tours combine sound, images, video, text, and interactive components to create rich and diverse interpretive experiences. They are ideally suited to byways, providing directions to nearby attractions and offering interpretation during long drives.

Mobile Tour Websites

Mobile websites are similar to regular websites but designed specifically for the smaller touch screens of mobile devices. As tours, they can incorporate text, visual, audio, and interactive components (like buttons and links) that provide an engaging experience.

Benefits of a mobile tour website:

- Encourages interactive participation.
- Works with all brands of web-enabled mobile devices; just requires an Internet browser.
- Does not require any downloading of files; all pages, sound, and video are streamed directly through the Internet when viewed.
- Easy to create and update using common website editing tools.

- Services can be added to the website to track visitor usage.

Limitations of a mobile website tour:

- Requires access to the Internet; a strong cellular signal or Wi-Fi connection is needed.
- Website programming has some limitations in terms of visual layout, responsiveness, and tools. They don’t look or react as slick as apps.
- Must design for multiple Internet browsers, as some will display content differently than others.

Native Tour Apps

Native device apps are small digital programs distributed through online stores like the Apple App Store or Google Play Store. An app is downloaded to a mobile device, providing quick and easy access to content. Like mobile websites, apps incorporate text, visual, and audio components and encourage interaction. An app can tell a story through photos, narration, music, video, games, demonstrations, and other techniques.

Benefits of a native tour app:

- Encourages interactive participation.
- Provides nearly unlimited options for design and techniques.

- Can use the GPS feature of a mobile device to automatically trigger site-specific messages or show attractions near the user’s current location.
- Typically much faster and responsive than web-based media.
- Does not require Internet access to run (although some features of the app may require this).

Limitations of a native tour app:

- Apps must be downloaded and installed onto mobile device. Depending on content, this may take up a considerable amount of space.
- Multiple apps must be developed to reach the largest number of users. They are specific to a mobile device’s operating system.
- Apps must be updated every time a mobile device’s operating system is updated; high maintenance costs.

QR (Quick Response) Codes

QR (Quick Response) codes are matrix bar codes that quickly link mobile devices to online media such as websites, audio clips, and videos. They can be incorporated into publications, interpretive panels, and even artifacts along the byway. A traveler uses the

camera on their mobile device to scan the QR code with an app, which decodes the information and uses other apps on the device to show the interpretive content.

Benefits of QR Codes:

- Quickly connects mobile devices to online resources without needing a URL.
- Can be created and printed on media for free.
- Online resources can easily be developed, changed, or updated at minimal cost.
- Different QR codes can be generated to link to different messages. A wayside exhibit might have one QR code for adults and one for children.

Limitations of QR Codes:

- QR codes require access to the Internet (cellular signal or Wi-Fi).
- Traditional QR codes are composed of black and white squares, often an unattractive design for media.
- Once created, a QR code will always link to the URL address that it is encoded with. If the online address changes, the QR code on all media will also need to be changed.



Visitors to J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife refuge scan QR codes on signs to view videos along an innovative “iNature Trail.”



Each iNature Trail panel at J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge is thematic and features two QR codes: one that links to a video geared toward adults and the other geared toward children.

Tour App Concept Design



A River Bluffs Scenic Byway tour app would provide a flexible way of sharing audio and visual interpretive messages with travelers based around an interpretive theme.

Mobile Digital Media Recommendations

The byway has great potential for tapping into the mobile devices that most travelers bring with them on their journey. Cellular coverage can be spotty in some rural areas along the byway. Fortunately, there are digital media options that can be downloaded before the trip that do not require on-demand Internet access.

1. Create an audiovisual byway tour

An audiovisual tour is an ideal way to introduce travelers to the stories of the byway. Once developed, it can be distributed in multiple ways to reach the largest audience. Some ideas for development include:

- **Set a clear theme for the tour**, which will assist in the collection of stories and interviews. “Discovering Bluff Country” would be an animated geologic story that zooms above and through this ancient landscape of dolomite and limestone, dotted with sinkholes, caves, and underground streams. “Three Rivers Region” would describe how the winding Turkey, Volga, and Mississippi rivers define the commerce and recreation

of this area. “Emma Big Bear” can use video, images, and sound to tell the story of this Ho-Chunk woman and her life in the Marquette area.

- **Edit the messages down to their essence.** Choose messages that relate to universal concepts, those beliefs and ideas that mean something to all of us (love, family, tragedy, survival, etc.). These make the most interesting and engaging stories for visitors. Keep the messages short. Travelers will likely not listen to anything more than 3 minutes. Short, intriguing messages will encourage visitors to choose more messages.
- **Record oral histories and interviews** with people who lived and worked along the byway, and those who have special expertise based on the theme. High-quality video recordings will provide the most flexibility for producing an audiovisual tour.
- **Find music and sounds** that will help bring the stories of the River Bluffs region to life. These make the tour more interesting and engaging.
- **Create a narrative storyline.** Narrators are often necessary to tell the story in a concise way and introduce the various oral histories and interviews.

2. Develop a Native Tour App

A native app provides a great deal of flexibility for presenting the audiovisual tour. Messages can be offered in an audio or video format. If only audio is available, photos can be shown to enhance the message (for example, historic photos of the community). The app should provide a map with tour locations indicated and be linked to the user's current GPS location. It can also be programmed to read a GPS location and automatically offer site-specific messages.

3. Develop a Mobile Tour Website

To maximize the audience base, a mobile tour website also should be created. Once an app is developed, it will be easy to take the text, audio, photos, and video from specific messages and make them available in other formats. A web page with links to the audio or video files provides options for users to either download the tour before their trip onto a mobile device or stream the messages while traveling (as long as a cellular signal is available).

4. Add QR Codes to media

Once a mobile tour website is up and running, QR codes can link directly to specific online attraction web pages and audio/visual tour files. A user can simply scan a QR code with their mobile device, and interpretation will be streamed automatically to the device (again dependent on a cellular signal). QR codes can be added to experience hub or wayside exhibit panels, travel guide and map publications, or welcome center exhibits to provide a more in-depth and interactive experience.



DISCOVER BLUFF COUNTRY

A tour of geology along Iowa's River Bluffs Scenic Byway.

Scan the code with your phone or tablet to discover this region's geological wonders.

QR codes, like the sample above, can be added to existing media or made into separate signs. They link directly to the byway tour website or to an app download.

Cost Estimates for Mobile Tour Websites and Apps

Costs for developing audiovisual tours vary considerably, but they are typically quite expensive. A more affordable option is to use an existing app system that allows users to enter customized content.

OnCell, a company that specializes in tour apps, offered the following cost estimates in March 2016:

- **Lite Tour Website or Native App:** \$199/mo or \$280/mo for both
Includes text, audio, images, GPS-enabled maps, social media, geo-alerts, analytics

- **Pro Tour Website or Native App:** \$399/mo or \$499/mo for both
Includes everything in Lite version plus photo gallery, video, surveys, favorites page, RSS feed, custom color themes, and Scavenger Hunt Game.

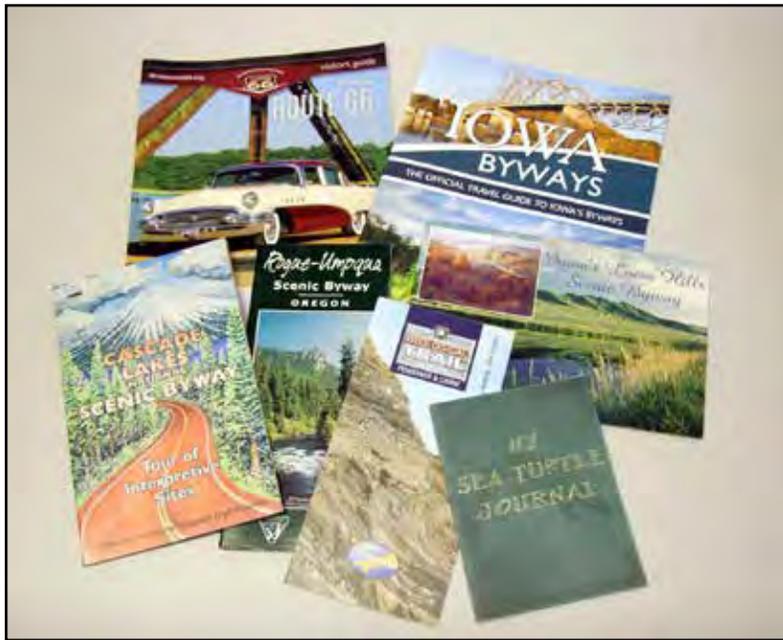
These prices reflect the user entering the content. OnCell can also **build the app** with supplied content for \$3,700–\$7,000 based on the number of pages.

OnCell also offers **additional custom designs:** \$1,000 for custom colors, buttons, and splash screens, or \$5,000 for complete customization.

PUBLICATIONS

While many travelers prepare for their trips using the Internet, there are many reasons to develop printed publications.

Although smartphone use is increasing, not everyone has one or prefers to use one as their primary means of planning a trip and navigating. A significant number of people like to have a printed publication that can be tucked in their pocket and is not limited by spotty cell phone coverage or low batteries.



Interpretive publications can take many different formats, including brochures, maps, travel guides, and kids' activity booklets.

Publications have take-home value and serve as placeholders and keepsakes of an adventure. They often are shared with others and have a longer life than digital media that pass fleetingly over a screen.

General Byway Brochure

Brochures are a cost-effective marketing tool for byways because they reach casual travelers who are unaware of the byway. There are many travelers who do not plan a road trip in advance but look forward to a serendipitous adventure as they travel a new route.

A basic byway brochure should not attempt to do more than stimulate people to access more in-depth information online or at welcome centers. It should be bold and concise with a simple, clean design and dramatic images that highlight significant attractions and other byway media.

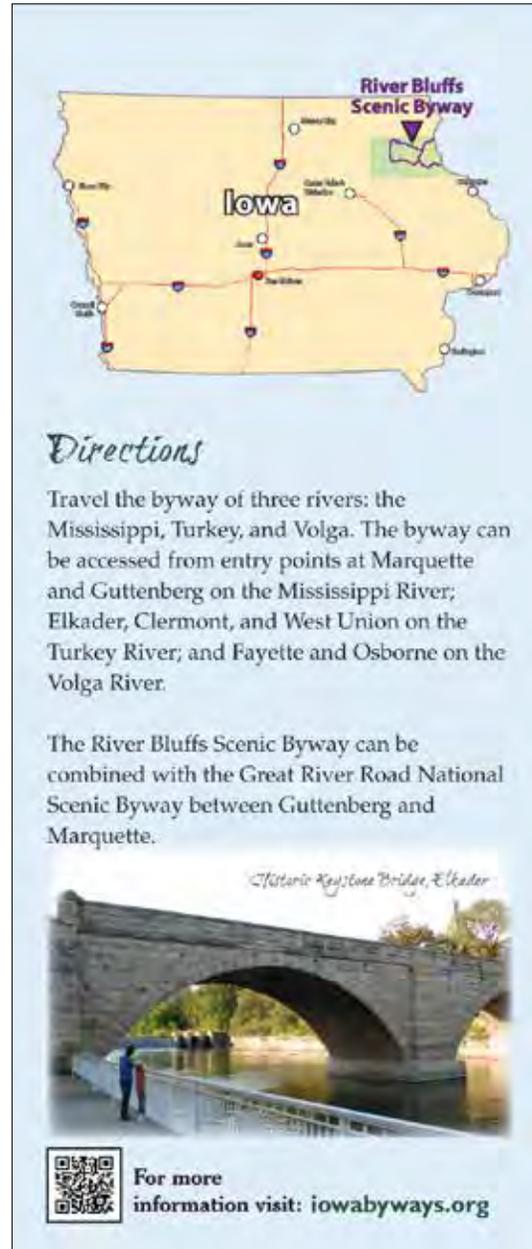
Design Recommendations:

- **Size and folds:** An 11-inch-by-17-inch panel leaflet brochure is an effective layout for introducing the byway.
- **Design elements:** Colors, font styles, and graphic styles should be unified with other byway media (see “Unified Design Standards”).
- **Front Cover:** Needs to be designed to be noticed in a rack with other brochures. An obvious “River Bluffs Scenic Byway” title should be visible above the rack holder. A dramatic focal-point photograph that represents the byway, like the view of Motor Mill and the Turkey River, encourages readers to open the brochure. The byway logo should be added to unify with other media.
- **Back Cover:** The back cover would be an ideal place to include a map of Iowa showing the location of the byway. Contact information will also be important here.
- **First Reveal:** When a reader first opens the brochure, another dramatic image draws the eye to a concise and active description of the byway.

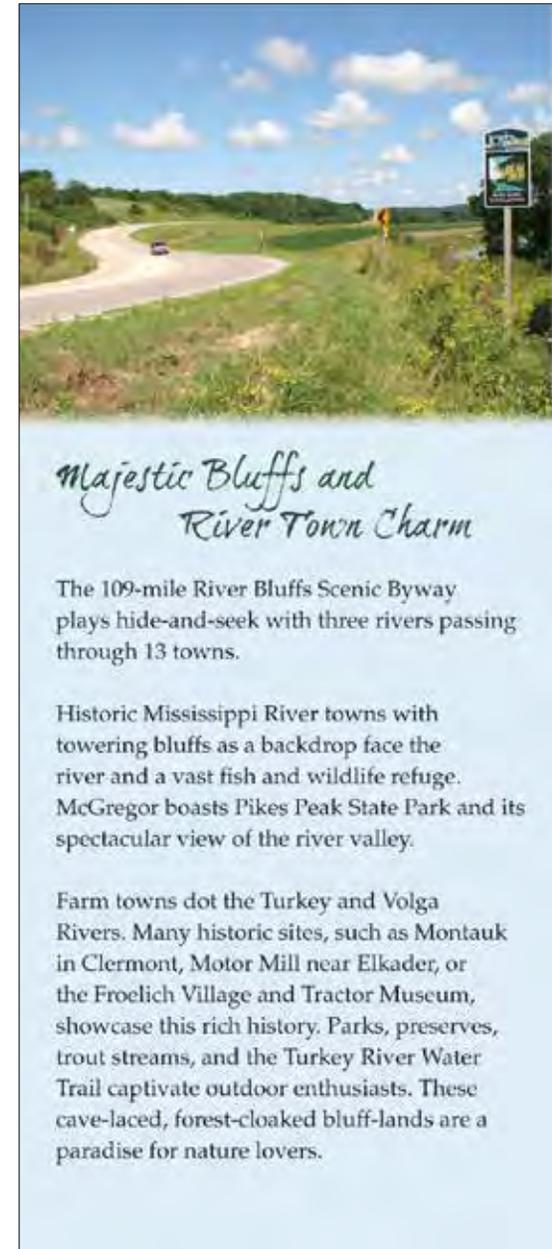
River Bluffs Scenic Byway Brochure Concept Design



Front Cover



Back Cover



First Reveal

Mississippi River

The River Bluffs Scenic Byway begins and ends at the Mississippi River. Here, the Great River cuts through limestone bluffs, creating magnificent views of the river valley and backwater areas. Enjoy scenic vistas at Effigy Mounds National Monument, Pikes Peak State Park, two overlooks in Marquette, and three overlooks in Guttenberg.



Touring the Froelich Tractor Museum

Follow historic walking tours to discover the rich river heritage of McGregor and Guttenberg. Explore a historic depot in Marquette. Visit the Froelich Village and

Tractor Museum where the first gasoline tractor was invented. And see a replica of the first Chimney Swift tower built by Althea Sherman just north of Garnavillo in 1915.



Effigy Mounds National Monument

Turkey River

Much of the scenic byway follows the Turkey River as it meanders toward the Mississippi. Limestone and dolomite cliffs and ledges tower above the stream.



Turkey River Water Trail

The Turkey River Water Trail and Recreation Corridor is the primary attraction for paddlers, fishers, bicyclists, and hikers. Several parks and nature preserves feature caves, bluffs, and trout streams.

Elkader, Elgin, and Clermont showcase their heritage. Tour Montauk, just north of Clermont, the historic mansion of Iowa's 12th governor. Motor Mill, a beautiful stone flour mill, is a must-see historic site southeast of Elkader.



Montauk Historic Site

Chimney Swifts

Volga River

The south leg of the scenic byway follows the Volga River, a tributary of the Turkey River. The 5,750-acre Volga River State Recreation Area provides a wide range of land and water-based outdoor activities.

Nature enthusiasts can enjoy spring flowers and songbirds while hiking bluff-side trails at Brush Creek Canyon and Bixby State Preserves.

Side trips to Amish Country on the Edgewood-to-Garber Road, or Strawberry Point offer opportunities to explore rural culture and history.

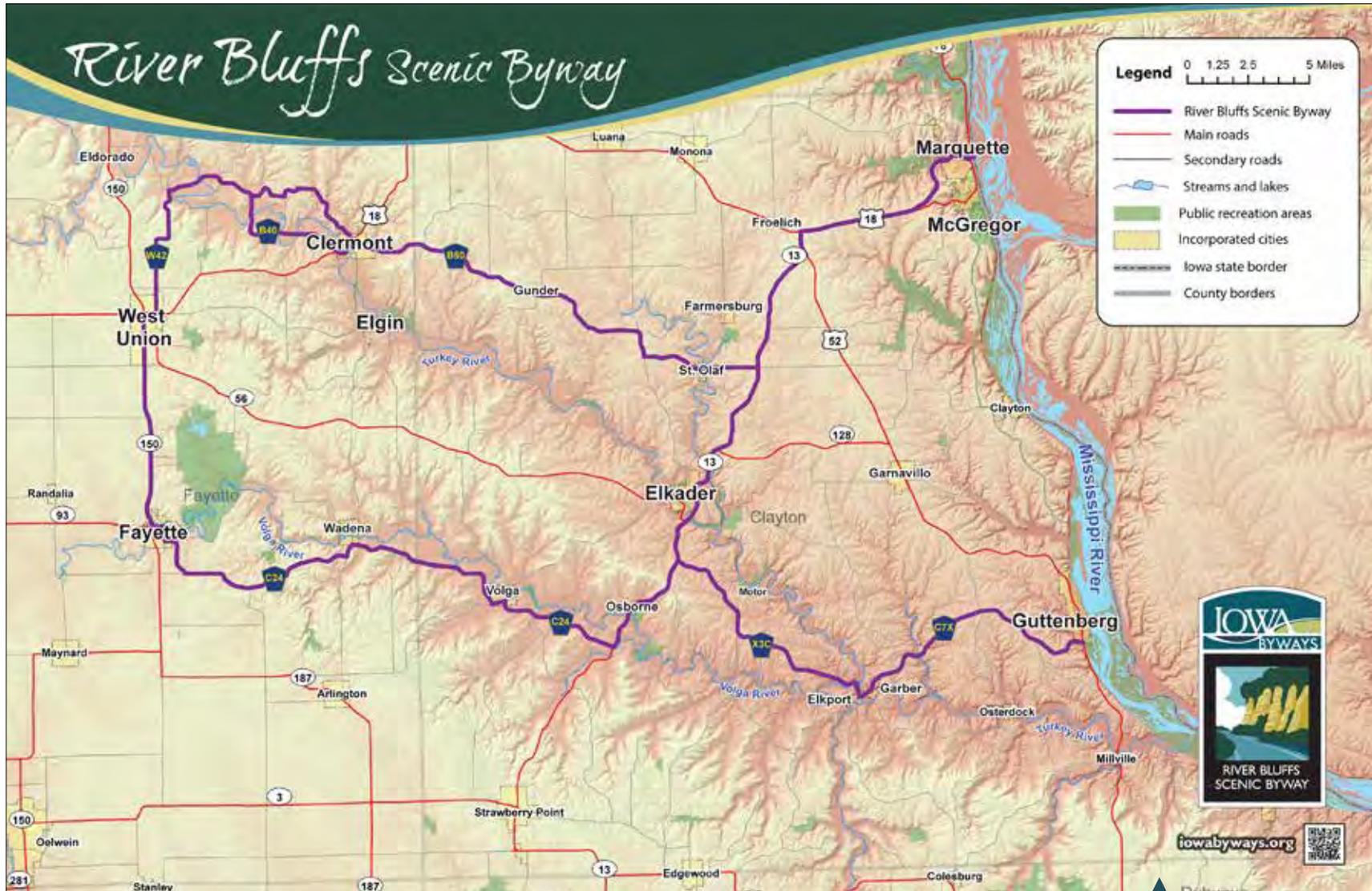


Amish Country



Kayaking on the Volga River

Second Reveal: Regional Descriptions



- **Second Reveal (3 panels):** As the reader continues to open the brochure, three adjacent panels will highlight the three regions of the byway, based

on the three rivers. A description of the characteristic features of each region and some key attractions will pique the visitor's interest.

- **Full Reveal Inside (6 panels):** The inside of the brochure features a map of the byway with the byway route clearly marked.

River Bluffs Byway Guide

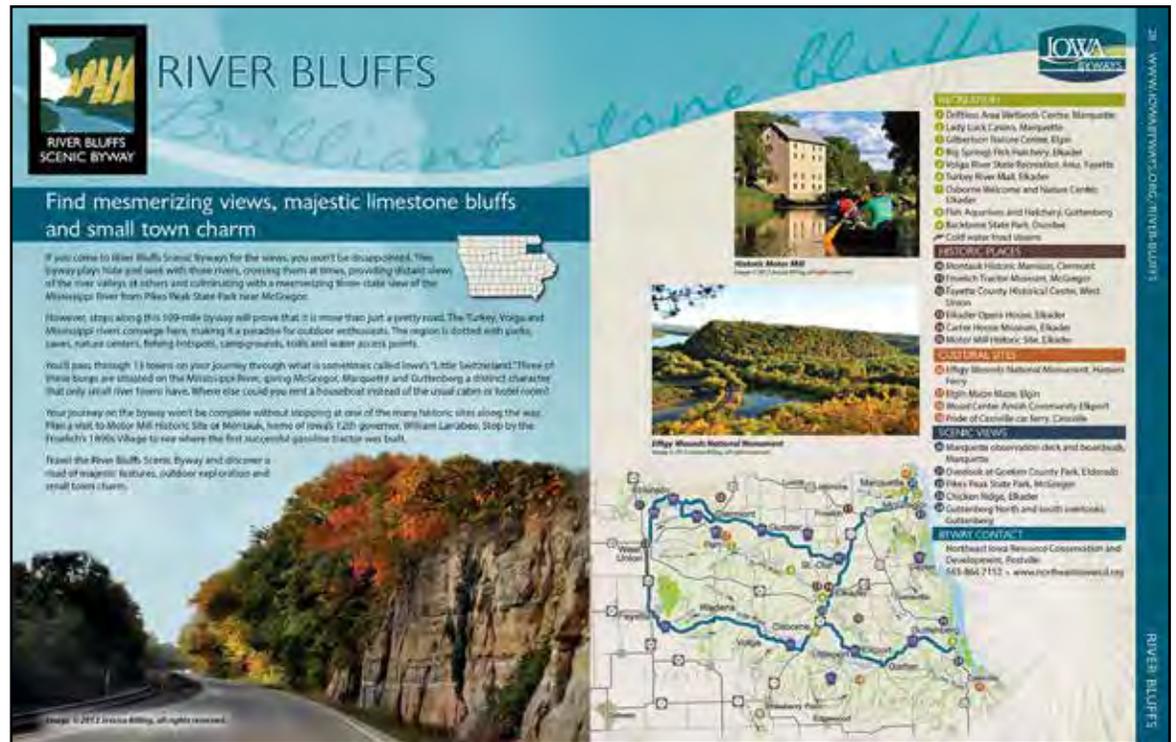
The River Bluffs Scenic Byway is included in “Iowa Byways: The Official Travel Guide to Iowa’s Byways,” a full-color, 32-page booklet that measures 8.5-inches-by-11-inches. This guide is an essential resource for visitors traveling Iowa’s byways.

The guide is organized by byway in a user-friendly format. The two pages devoted to the River Bluffs Scenic Byway feature photos, a concise, creative description of the route, a map, and a brief list of attractions. The guide is attractive and is unified with other media, including road signs and the Iowa Byways website.

While the guide provides an excellent overview of the byway, it is not well-suited for traveling the route. The map and resource listings are not detailed, making it difficult to use the booklet for navigation or to better understand the attractions.

Recommendations

The River Bluffs Scenic Byway should develop its own standalone byway-specific travel guide. Such a guide would add greater depth to visitors’ understanding of the byway, extending



The River Bluffs Scenic Byway is featured in the “Iowa Byways: The Official Guide to Iowa’s Byways” booklet.

their visits and their connections to the resources.

Organize the guide by community:

Byway visitors may have limited time, with perhaps only a few hours or a day to explore the route. Organizing the byway guide by community will allow visitors to quickly and easily determine where to spend their time or to better understand the location where they have serendipitously arrived.

Theme the attractions within the region:

Many visitors have specific interests. Byway attractions within each region can be further grouped into the categories developed in this plan: Scenic and Natural; Historic and Archaeological; Cultural; and Recreational. Themed itineraries that address visitor interests would provide focus to their trip-planning.

Design the guide to be consistent with Iowa Byways design standards: The design should use the logos, fonts, and colors consistent with those described in this plan and with other interpretive media.

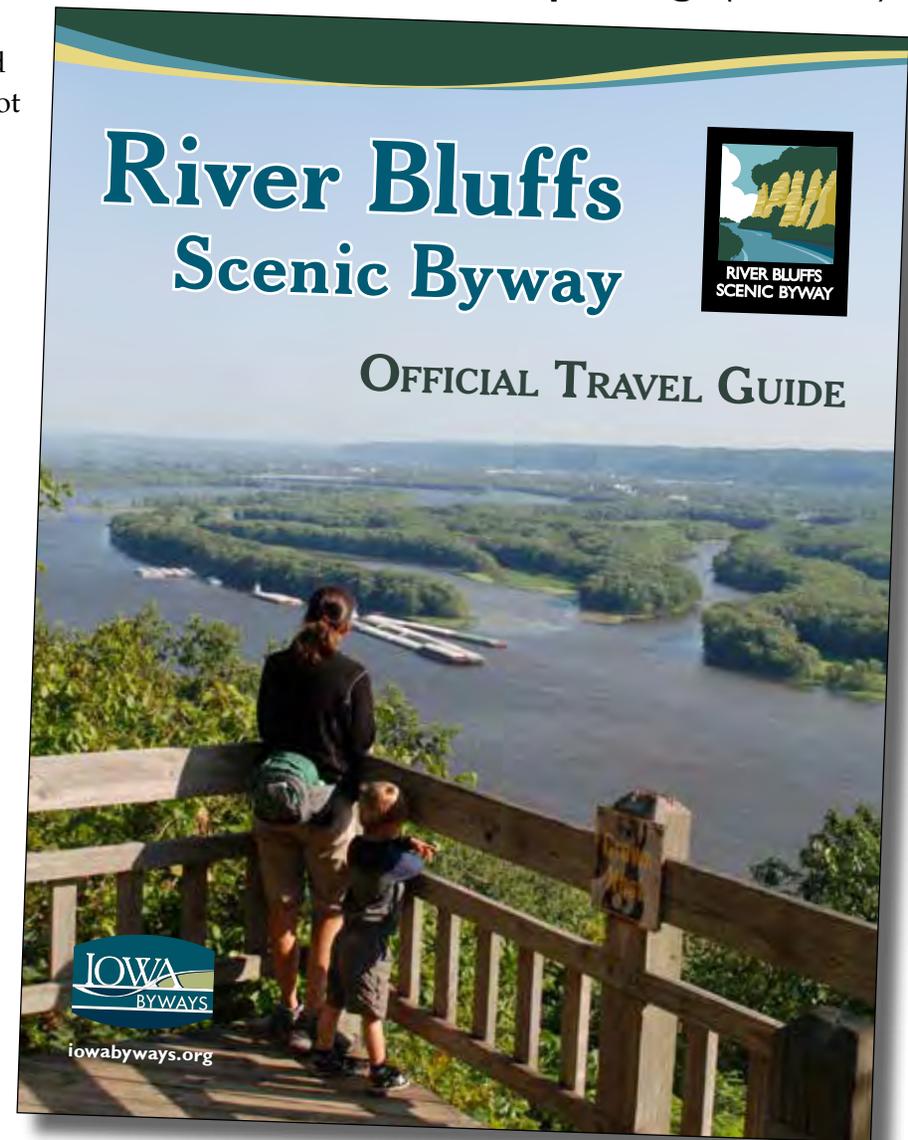
Include maps of attractions that are more than approximations of their locations: This would require adding specific roads that lead to each attraction. Currently, travelers must use an Iowa road map or GPS in addition to the guide or tearsheet to locate many of the attractions, and even then it can be difficult.

In the revised guide, each community should be developed in the following format:

- An introduction to the community that expresses its unique natural and cultural character.
- Maps that mark visitor centers, experience hub kiosks, and wayside exhibits in the community.
- Two or more pages (as many as needed) for maps and descriptions of that community's attractions in each of the themed categories: Scenic and Natural; Historic and Archaeological; Cultural; and Recreational.

- Concise, lively descriptions of each attraction, with websites and phone numbers where visitors can find more information.
- Strong, focal point photos and informal snapshot photos of other attractions.

River Bluffs Byway Guide Concept Design (front cover)



River Bluffs Byway Guide Concept Design (Clermont historical attractions)

Historical Treasures

Historical Attractions in Clermont

Legend

- 0 0.5 1 1.5 Miles
- 0.5 1 1.5 Miles
- River Bluffs Scenic Byway
- State route
- Secondary road
- Watershed (blue)
- Public recreation area
- Unimproved farm

Clermont

Explore the past at Clermont's historic sites

This picturesque town on the Turkey River has an abundance of historic sites, owing greatly to the philanthropy of William Larrabee, Iowa's 12th governor who served from 1886 to 1890. Other historic sites celebrate the advent of the word "tractor," the world's largest pneumatic Kimball pipe organ, and the blacksmith trade.

- Heritage Farm Park:** Experience life in the 18th century at this 100-acre park. Tour the historic barn, school houses, and blacksmith shop and see antique farm equipment. Weekend tours and wagon rides June through August. 26411 Harding Road. Info: 563-419-8534.
- Montauk Historic Site:** Tour Gov. Larrabee's Italianate mansion perched on a hill overlooking town. This rural estate showcases 100 years of family life and technological advancement. Open noon to 4 p.m., daily Memorial Day to Labor Day. 26226 Hartling Road. Info: 563-423-7173
- Lincoln Park and Statue:** A bronze statue of Abraham Lincoln, sculpted by George E. Bissell and erected in 1902, serves as a tribute to the soldiers and sailors of the Civil War during 1861-1865.
- Larrabee School:** Clermont's state-of-the-art school was a gift from Gov. Larrabee and was open from 1912 to 1990. It is now the public library and historical society. Tours by appointment: 563-423-5561.
- Hart Parr Tractor:** Displayed in a wooden building with glass windows, this restored 1927 tractor was built in Iowa. Manufacturer Hart Parr coined the term "tractor" as shorthand for these "gasoline traction engines." Mill Street.
- Union Sunday School:** Built in 1896, the world's largest pneumatic Kimball pipe organ is housed in this school. It was a gift from Gov. Larrabee to his daughter. 406 Larrabee St. Info: 563-423-7173.
- Riegel Blacksmith Shop:** Burkard Riegel, a German, operated a blacksmith shop in Clermont from the 1930s to the 1970s. It is now a living-history museum. Open daily in summer. 210 Mill St. Info: 563-423-7295.

6 Union Sunday School houses a unique organ

3 Lincoln Park statue in honor of Civil War soldiers

1 Historic barn at Heritage Farm Park

2 Montauk mansion

4 Larrabee School

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Families are a significant audience for the River Bluffs Scenic Byway. Thematic activities that engage parents and children will create meaningful experiences that last a lifetime.

Iowa Byways Junior Explorer Program

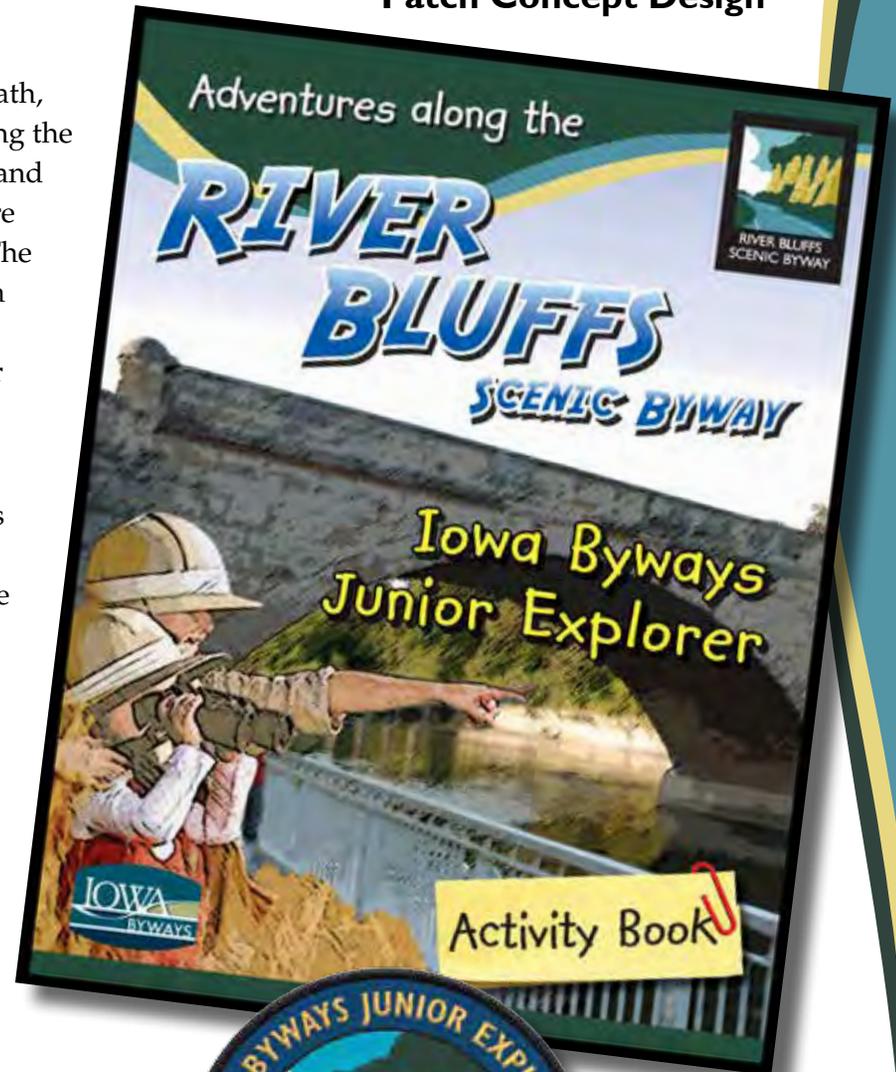
Similar to the Junior Ranger programs found in many parks, an Iowa Byways Junior Explorer program would be an activity-based experience with the purpose of encouraging families to explore the state's scenic byways.

Each byway would develop a kid-friendly activity guide that reveals the natural and cultural resources of a byway. The activities would be completed while traveling the byway. The guides would be made available at key locations along the byway, such as information centers and major attractions.

When children—with the help of parents or guardians—complete a certain number of activities, they would turn in their book at a designated information center, where a byway representative would look over the activities and talk to the children about what they learned. The

children would then take an oath, promising to continue exploring the state's scenic byways, respect and protect the resources, and share their experience with others. The children would receive a patch (or other item) declaring them an official Iowa Byways Junior Explorer.

River Bluffs Scenic Byway has already developed a children's activity book that could be easily updated to be part of the proposed statewide byways Junior Explorer Program. The existing book includes word searches, coloring pages, scavenger hunts, signs bingo, and other engaging activities. This book can serve as a prototype for other byways.



Explorers Discovery Pack

In association with the Iowa Byways Junior Explorer program, “Discovery Packs” filled with equipment and resources for young explorers could be made available to encourage more in-depth discovery along the byway.

The packs could be borrowed from and returned to designated information centers.

Items in the packs could include: binoculars, hand lens, bug magnifying box, bug net, field guides, regional songs CD, stargazing chart, field journal, and other essential exploration tools.



A River Bluffs Scenic Byway Junior Explorer Discovery Pack would be filled with hands-on tools and resources for exploring the byway as a family.

Children’s Byway Audio Tour

An audio tour geared toward children is a unique way to tell the stories of the byway. When children provide the lively narration, it creates a personal connection with kids as they tour the byway. The son of a Mississippi River commercial fisherman might tell about living on the river, harvesting mussels for buttons, and hauling them to market. A girl might tell what it was like to walk to her country school, where all eight grades studied in one room, a pump was used for water, and an outhouse was the school bathroom.

Singer-songwriters could be recruited to record a CD or downloadable compilation of children’s songs about Mississippi River folklore, Driftless hills and valleys, and the corner of Iowa untouched by the last glaciers.

Family Passport Book

The River Bluffs Scenic Byway has already developed an attractive Culinary Passport guide to the best food and drink along the byway. Building on this foundation, a Family Passport booklet would encourage exploration of family-friendly attractions.

A passport book provides motivation to visit places that may otherwise be passed by or overlooked. The incentive to fill up the passport with stamps creates a goal for the family. Adults and children alike are engaged in the scavenger hunt to find the next stamping location. The booklet has take-home value, and each stamp represents a memory from the trip, an important connection to the byway experience.

The passport booklet is itself an interpretive opportunity. It should be written in concise, personal, kid-friendly language that reveals the stories behind the River Bluffs byway resources.

A unique stamp design should be developed for each attraction that rewards travelers for their effort. Ideally, stamps would be located at attractions where people are available to answer questions and watch over the passport

stations. However, self-service passport stations could also be developed for those who visit sites during closed hours.

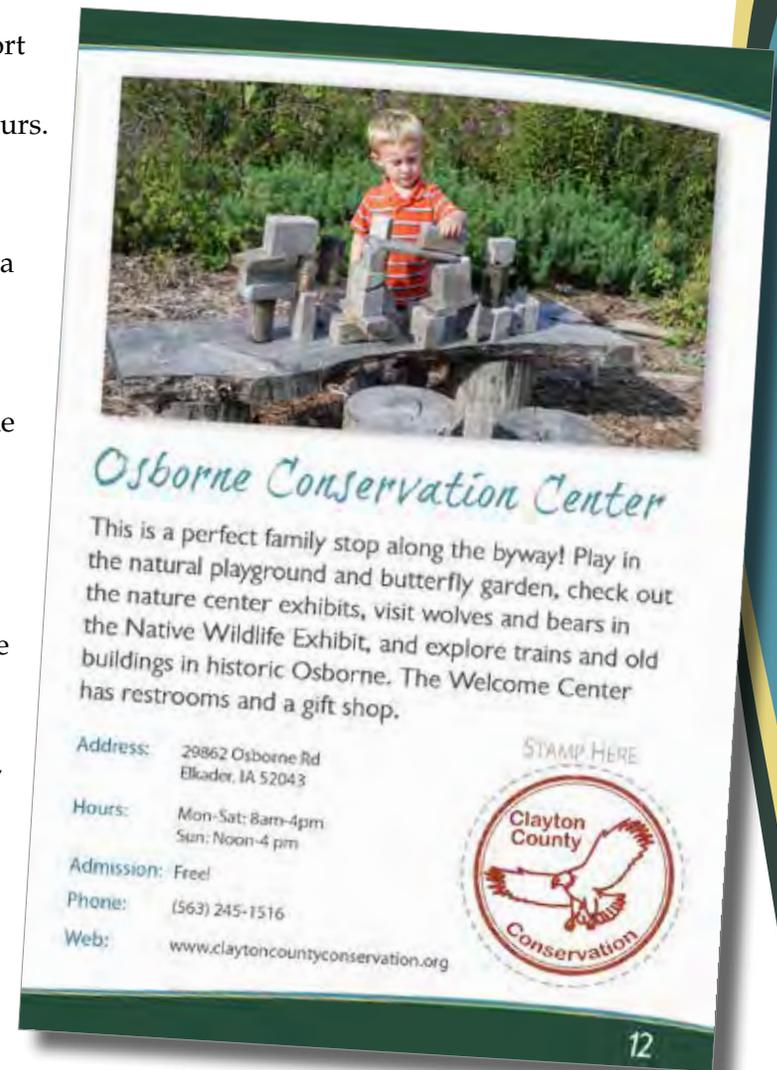
Thematic Play Areas

As any parent who has traveled with a child knows, finding play areas along the route is a major priority. Byway travel involves long periods of sitting in a vehicle. Kids need breaks from the car ride to run and play. For families, play areas serve as focal points for stretching legs, eating snacks and meals, and using restrooms.

Typically, play areas along byways are serendipitous, standard playground equipment often associated with municipal parks. These are untapped, potentially powerful resources for engaging families with the stories of the byway.

The River Bluffs Scenic Byway should consider developing interpretive play/rest areas along the route that reinforce the themes of the byway. Some examples:

- A climbing wall replicates the limestone bluffs of the region and tells the geological story.
- A sand box encourages children to



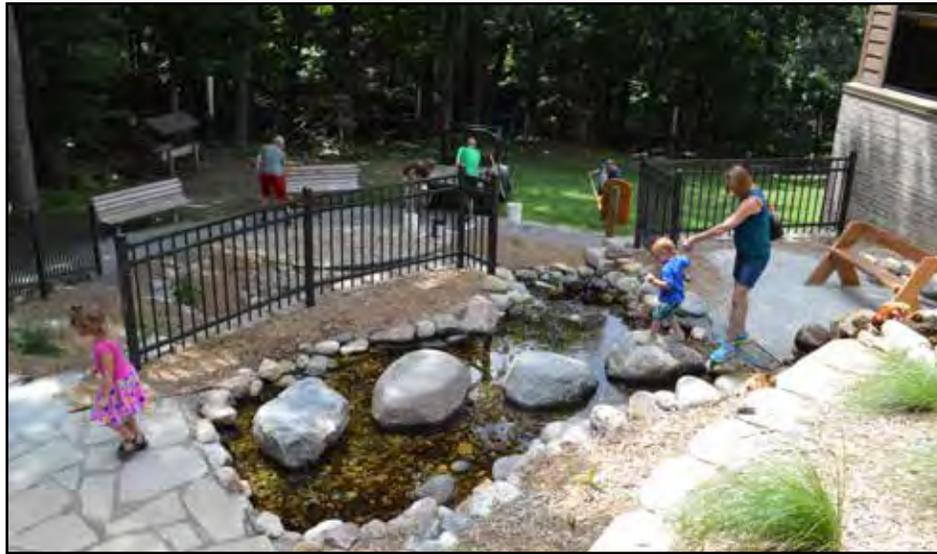
**Family Passport Book:
Concept Design (Osborne page)**

dig to find replica prehistoric artifacts left by the Effigy Mound builders.

- A climbing tube is designed to look like an ice cave that was carved through the limestone.
- The curves and meanders of the Turkey or Volga rivers are re-created as channels in concrete. Major sites are highlighted like a map. Water flows through the channels to encourage wading.

Play areas don't necessarily need to incorporate expensive manufactured equipment. Natural playgrounds are landscapes where children play with natural materials, such as logs, sticks, wooden blocks, boulders, stepping stones, gravel, sand, and water. This encourages children to use their imaginations while directly interacting with the landscape. The Osborne Conservation and Welcome Center, for example, has developed a natural play area within a butterfly garden that includes stepping tree cookies, butterfly sculptures, and rustic building blocks.

Concise interpretive signs incorporated into the play area can provide ideas for families to explore each play space together, along with related byway stories.



Natural playscapes, like at Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center, Sioux City (left) and Osborne Conservation and Welcome Center can reinforce a byway's themes while providing a natural creative outlet for children.



BUECHEL HILL TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS

Buechel Hill Trail is a path that ascends a bluff in Guttenberg. The walk takes about 30 minutes and rewards visitors with panoramic views of the town and Mississippi River. Both the byway and the town of Guttenberg promote the trail as an attraction.

The following recommendations will improve accessibility and visitor enjoyment of this trail:

Establish a trailhead

The trail entry is obscure and uninviting. A utility building and overhead wires imply that the area is closed to the public. In the summer of 2016, a ditch and rubble pile cut across the trail entrance, making it difficult to access.

A simple bridge built across the ditch is essential. A prominent trailhead marker will invite people to take the path. A panel describing the trail should be placed next to the marker and should be unified in design with the “Guttenberg: Historic Rivertown” panels found at other attractions and trails in town.

Create scenic openings

The dark, forested trail cuts straight up

the side of the bluff, resulting in minimal interest. One opening midway up breaks the monotony. Additional openings to provide vistas would enhance the visitor experience and would encourage them to hike up this rather steep incline.

Install a viewing deck

A public viewing deck cantilevered over the edge of the bluff would enhance the view and reassure visitors that the trail is public. Currently several nearby houses give the impression that the overlook is private property. An interpretive panel could interpret key features, such as the spires on St. Mary’s Church, Lock and Dam 10, and other notable features. This panel should match the “Historic Rivertown” panels in Guttenberg.



Buechel Hill Trail’s entrance could be improved to reassure visitors that the path is open to the public.



Wayside exhibit panels would be designed to match existing panels in Guttenberg.



A viewing deck and interpretive panels would enhance the view from the top of the trail.

MEDIA COST ESTIMATES

These cost estimates were developed in March 2016 based on quotes from multiple companies. They include

research, design, and fabrication/printing. The estimates are listed as broad ranges and should be used only for the

purposes of planning and fundraising. Actual prices will vary considerably based on the specifics of each project.

| Media Type | Info | Rationale | Cost Estimate |
|---|-------------|---|---|
| Experience hubs | pp. 102–115 | Highly visible way to orient travelers to regional attractions. Cost-effective where attractions are not routinely staffed. | \$15,000–\$20,000 each (stone, metalwork, timbers, 4 HPL panels) |
| Site orientation signs | pp. 116–125 | To assist visitors in finding locations and to interpret the byway and that specific site. | \$7,500–\$10,000 each (timbers, metal with cut-outs, 2 HPL panels) |
| Wayside exhibits | pp. 126–133 | Best way to communicate must-tell stories at significant sites along the byway where no other tools are available. | \$2,500–\$3,000 each (metal base with cut-out, 1 HPL panel) |
| Welcome/visitor center touch-screen computer kiosk exhibits | pp. 134–135 | Valuable in alerting travelers to the byway’s existence and for trip-planning; small size appropriate for existing centers. | \$15,000–\$25,000 each |
| Byway artwork | pp. 136–139 | Highly visible way to focus attention on a significant story or event on a roadside scale. | Highly variable based on type and artist. Steel silhouette statue: \$1,500 average Wall mural: \$10–\$35/sq. ft. average |
| Website design and social media development | pp. 140–143 | Essential planning tool that reaches a large audience; is easily updated. | \$10,000–\$25,000 for development plus monthly hosting/maintenance. |
| Byway mobile tour website or native tour app | pp. 144–149 | Ideal tools for incorporating sound and visuals to make stories come alive; convenient, easy to use, and encourage interaction. | \$8,000–\$50,000 for development plus monthly hosting/maintenance. See pg. 149 for monthly plan options. |
| General byway brochure | pp. 150–153 | Small publication that can be widely distributed to promote awareness of the byway. | \$1,500–\$2,000 per 10,000 copies (tabloid size, full-color) |
| Travel guide booklet | pp. 154–156 | A physical method for visitors to navigate the byway and discover its stories; not dependent on cellular service. | \$12,000–\$15,000 per 10,000 booklets (32 pages, 8.5"×11" size, full-color) |
| Byway Junior Explorer booklets | pp. 157 | Keeps families engaged in the byway’s interpretive themes and encourages discovery. | \$8,000–\$12,000 per 10,000 booklets (20 pages, 8.5"×11" size, full-color) |
| Family passport books | pp. 159 | Provides motivation to visit specific sites along the byway and has take-home value. | \$5,000–\$8,000 per 10,000 booklets (20 pages, 6"×6" size, full-color) |

APPENDIX



*Volga River running through Volga River
State Recreation Area near Fayette*

RIVER BLUFFS BYWAY VISIONING MEETING RESULTS

On June 23, 2015, Schmeeckle Reserve Interpreters conducted a visioning meeting with the River Bluffs Scenic Byway staff and board members at the Northeast Iowa RC&D office in Postville. The purpose of the meeting was to gather information about the places, activities, and stories that should be interpreted along the byway.

Participants were:

- Lynette Sander, City of McGregor
- Carrie Davis, Fayette County Economic Development & Tourism
- Jenna Pollock, Clayton County Conservation
- Rod Marlatt, Fayette County Conservation
- Vicki Rowland, Fayette County Board of Supervisors
- Darla Kelchen, Clayton County Development Group
- Lynn Kelck, West Union Chamber of Commerce
- Jared Nielsen, Northeast Iowa RC&D (byway coordinator)
- Lora Friest, Northeast Iowa RC&D
- Mallory Marlatt, Northeast Iowa RC&D

During this meeting, participants were asked to respond to the following questions:

1. **Attractions:** What are some important attractions along this byway that visitors should experience?
2. **Stories and Messages:** What compelling stories and messages can visitors experience that make your byway unique?
3. **Audience:** Who are the primary target audiences for interpretive media on this byway?
4. **Vision:** What is your vision of success for improving the visitor experience on your scenic byway?
5. **Research Recommendations:** Who are some key people we should interview and what are some documents we should acquire to learn about your byway?

The responses were recorded, organized, and sent to Northeast Iowa RC&D for review and dissemination. The final results are included below.

Attractions

What are some important attractions along this byway that visitors should experience?

- Blacksmith shop
- Painted stage curtain
- Larrabee School
- Montauk
- Fayette County Historical Society, West Union
- White pines on the Volga River
- Gilbertson Nature Center (large recreation and education complex, historical museums, maze, petting zoo, trails, campgrounds, etc.)
- Indian mounds/Neutral Zone (the area of ground the U.S. designated as “neutral” for Indian tribes) (Winnebago/Sioux)
- Wadenafest (Iowa’s Woodstock, one of the largest rock festivals in history)
- Turkey River
- Volga River
- Volga Lake and Park/Recreation Area
- TRRC: Turkey River Recreation Corridor
- Limestone features cataloged in Clayton

- Limestone bluffs, structures, bridges
- Historic churches
- Historic sites, natural sites, and small-town businesses
- The eagle's nest on the Turkey River Recreation Corridor
- Lincoln Statue, Clermont
- The Maize, Elgin
- The view from "Gunder Mountain"
- Heritage Farm Park, Clermont
- Riegel Blacksmith Shop
- Elkader Theater
- Brick City (Historical Clermont)
- City of Elgin ("Little Switzerland of Iowa: Topography, Norwegian and Swiss Immigration")
- Upper Iowa University (Fayette)
- West Union (new streetscape, one of two Green Pilot Communities in Iowa)
- Turkey River Water Trail (probably the best organized and scenic water trails in Iowa)
- Backbone Trail System
- Recreational trails (Dick Jensen Trail)
- Winemaking (Eagles Landing)
- Guttenberg Landing (Button factory)
- Architecture
- Public art
- Volga Opera House
- Railroad history
- Dutch Murphy Bridge (Henry Grannis)
- Elgin Brewery
- Lover's Leap, Elkader
- Volga City Truck Cruise
- Elkader Sister City (Algeria)
- Heritage Museum, Elkader
- Virgin Em
- Diamond Joe Reynolds
- Big Springs Fish Hatchery
- Native vegetation (Pheasants Forever)
- Lima Church
- Birding, fishing, clamming
- Cemeteries (Steve Story)
- McGregor (Andrew Clemens)
- "Straight Story"
- Paint Rock (Guttenberg)
- Temperance Fountain (Edgewood)
- Amish
- Driftless Area Wetlands Center
- Maiden Voyage Boat Tour, McGregor
- Dutton's Cave (Lorenzo Dutton, 1st Fayette Co. settler)
- Jesse James, McGregor
- Sherman Swift Tower
- Barber Bros.
- Cultural festivals
- Caves, Karst topography
- County parks
- Fish and wildlife refuge
- Pikes Peak: Zebulon Pike on his trek westward (trails, overlooks, camping)
- Effigy Mounds: mound builders
- McGregor Historical Museum
- Andrew Clemens, sand bottles on display, local artist who used sand from caves along the river (many colors)
- Motor Mill site
- Osborne
- Lockmaster house, Guttenberg
- Watch barges in the locks
- Sightseeing tours with Mississippi River Charters stationed out of Winegar Works Marine
- Shepherd Gallery & Creative Center features locally made art
- DNR Fish Aquarium, Guttenberg
- Promiseland Winery and Cassville Car Ferry, south of Guttenberg
- Kann Imports, imports from all over the world, downtown Guttenberg
- Overlooks north and south of Guttenberg

Stories and Messages

What compelling stories and messages can visitors experience that make your byway unique?

- Echo Valley State Park, Pikes Peak, CCC Story, retention dams
- Pheasants Forever, native plantings (Both Clayton and Fayette counties two of strongest PF chapters)
- Big Spring Fish Hatchery (helps understand Driftless Area)
- Diamond Joe Reynolds, early trade baron, steamboats, and Virgin Em (husbands came up missing), McGregor
- Elkader and Algeria connection (sister city, food)
- Lorenzo Dutton's cave, a settlement, West Union
- Volga City Truck Cruise, annual event
- Sherman Swift Tower, by National
- Paint Rock near Guttenberg, a dragon, a bluff landmark
- Froelich Museum (1st John Deere tractor)
- Driftless Wetland Centre
- Maiden Voyage Boat Tour of the Mississippi River
- Flooding stories, towns lost
- Temperance Fountain, Edgewood (one 2 left in state of Iowa)
- Amish, Garber and Clermont
- Cultural Festivals, German, Irish settlers, permeated local foods, hot potato salad
- Native American stories (Chief Wadena, Clermont's Chief Pappakena, Turkey River Valley, Highway 18 an old Indian Trail leading to Mississippi River)
- Clermont and Gov. Larrabee
- Emma Big Bear Story, house still stands, Marquette, and Eagles Landing Winery
- Recreation - river, land & water trails, hunting, very accessible
- Little Switzerland of Iowa (Elgin)
- Civil War history in Fayette Co. (Upper Iowa University has exhibit materials), David B. Henderson statue, first speaker of House west of Mississippi, Lincoln Statue in Clermont, Upper Iowa Univ. has flag that women sewed
- Motor Mill, Elkader
- Plagman's Barn, Garber
- Farm display, ag tools, Elgin, West Union, Gilbertson Park
- Millard Gilbertson, Mr. Dummermuth
- Transformation of agriculture, Heritage Farm, Clermont
- Dutch Murphy Bridge, story of Henry Grannis
- Cemeteries - pioneer, older sections, artistic designs (Lima, Clermont Pioneer Row, all over)
- Volga's Opera House (people came together to build things and now to restore things)
- Wadena Fest (Woodstock of area, 1970, 50,000 people, destroyed a whole farm)
- World Birding Area, fishing, clamming in Guttenberg
- Lima Church and other churches
- McGregor, importance of Mississippi River, trails west, characters that lived along it, communities it developed, fur trade, river boats, railroad
- Evolution of the landscape, river bluffs, geologic development, karst topography, caves (Spook Cave)
- Stories of early Iowa (stone man, early trails, stories of 1850s)
- Ringling Bros. family circus start in McGregor, house still stands, featured in Postville mural
- Limestone! (claytoncountystonestructures.com)

- Wildlife, birding, migration
- Lover’s Leap, Elkader
- Architecture (especially McGregor, three blocks of brick buildings, but elsewhere too)
- The Landing, button factory
- Winemaking in area (Eagles Landing)
- Jensen Trail, rails to trails
- Heritage Museum/copper Prohibition still, Elkader
- Jesse James, visited McGregor day before he was shot, Log Cabin, Mossy Glen, Strawberry Point
- Barber Bros., small-time outlaws
- Unsolved Fayette Co. crimes
- “Straight Story” tractor, movie filmed in Clermont
- One-room schools, Larrabee School an ideal model school
- Elgin Brewery (history, archaeology studies; brewery in floodplain and will not be restored but should be interpreted)
- River Bluffs Scenic Byway travels through a diverse landscape of small farms, primarily dairy/settlement patterns unique, respecting natural resources, incorporating the land)
- McGregor artistic characters (e.g. Andrew Clemens)

- History of railroads, lots of dead ends, places they couldn’t go: Railroad Depot, Marquette, Oelwein History
- Public art/murals, giant eagles nest near Clermont
- Neutral ground (relate to Fort Atkinson) People don’t realize they live in it!
- Coldwater trout streams

Audience

Who are the primary target audiences for interpretive media on this byway?

- Adults
- Children
- Our youth
- Tourists traveling the byway
- Park and recreation venue users who would have limited knowledge of the site being interpreted
- Local citizens who also may have some limited knowledge of the sites being interpreted
- All age groups
- Historians
- Young geocachers
- Young families

- Retirees
- Young adults
- Travelers 40 and older. Many who visit are interested in history, architecture, and the river.
- Bicyclists, campers, hikers (providing them more information on trails, campgrounds, and other outdoor activities)
- Retirees with more disposable income
- Visitors’ special interests often include scenic beauty, nature, wildlife, history, and recreational activities. Art and culinary experiences are becoming more popular for visitors as well.

Vision

- Local buy-in
- More website presence about specific features
- Short videos to tell past, present, future
- Relate signage to different elements (history, nature, recreation, etc.)
- Target younger audience (interactive, digital technology) especially historic stories
- Kiosk or hub in every community
- Highlight character or theme or story

- for each community (Emma Big Bear, etc.)
- Unified interpretation at historic sites and natural areas -- easily accessible and professional
- Large interactive artwork in each community to engage everyone (eagle nest, etc.)
- A number of kiosks or plaques along the byway, detailing the Native American history.
- A longhouse or interpretive museum on the hill overlooking Wadena along the byway would be wonderful.
- Wayside exhibits
- Get into the schools! Units, assist with field trips
- Local bus trips to tell our stories, “offered by the banks” kind of tours
- We want the visitor to experience and enjoy the byway in a memorable and world-class manner. These experiences should spawn repeat visits or extended visits. Encourage the visitor to spend dollars in the local economy, which will expand local support for continued byway marketing efforts. The byway should be a critical catalyst for the health and economic welfare of Northeast Iowa.
- Wayfinding for sites/attractions
- Hospitality incentives/training and resources for businesses
- Eye-Spy that tells a story and is a tour guide, for places without cell reception
- Etching of Emma Big Bear or another subject on a bluff in Marquette area
- Safari Program
- Signage and interpretation
- Blog stories
- Photo props, photo opportunities
- Mobile/digital technology
- Customer service
- Period dress at historical locations
- Large engaging interactive in each community
- Road signs to get to attractions
- Kiosks with stories of each location
- Statues of icons
- Videos for public to watch
- Supplying information in more tangible ways. Drawing them in with eye-catching displays.
- More signage needed—wayfinding—perhaps use of wayfinding system such as Dubuque (theirs is by districts in town). Could one be developed for a breakdown such as history, recreation, etc.
- More/better signage is needed for attractions along the byway. At a

previous meeting, we discussed the possibility of creating an app/game for the byway, which could increase awareness of all of the activities and attractions on the byway, and might attract other audiences to the byway. I think more could be done to make the byway appeal to families/multi-generational groups of travelers -- a game might help with this, along with increasing education and awareness of the byway through collaboration with businesses and attractions located along the byway.

Research Recommendations

Who are some key people we should interview and what are some documents we should acquire to learn about your byway?

- Arlene Davison, Clermont Historical Society
- Elaine Follon, Volga City Council
- Julie Zittergruen, Guttenberg City Clerk
- Everett Rowland (Vicki Rowland’s husband) has many history books of Fayette County with Native American history
- Larry Popenhagen of Wadena
- Henry Follett (85) of Clermont has written 2 books about history and

- Native Americans in Clermont area
(former historian at Montauk)
- Stories of the 1850s at West Union Historical Center (a rich resource center)
 - My husband and I (Vicki Rowland) have a box full of signed script, photos, objects from the Straight Story filming in Clermont.
 - Emma Big Bear folks (Halvorson family, Terry Langgard)
 - Rod Marlatt, director, Fayette County Conservation Board
 - Robin Bostrom, former Main Street director for West Union
 - Ken and Harriet Blockhus (Elgin Historical Society)
 - Fayette County Historical Museum, West Union
 - History of Fayette County book
 - Echoes of the Valley (documentation of Elgin oral history)
 - Elgin Then and Now (book)
 - Dawn Amundsen, Gilbertson
 - Phyllis Holstrom, Fayette Historical Center
 - Chamber directors
 - Michelle Pettit, McGregor Librarian, has put together a wonderful archive of stories
- Maureen Wild, McGregor Museum, knows many stories about the area's past, Andrew Clemens, and others
 - Business people
 - Chamber of commerce
 - Robert Vavra, Maiden Voyage Boat Tour captain, for river stories, fishing, and clamming industry

