



# Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway

## **2020 Corridor Management Plan**

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Compiled by the East Central Regional Development Commission through a contract with the Minnesota Department of Transportation, in cooperation with the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission and Region 5 Development Commission.



**Section One.** Introduction to the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway

## 1.1 Executive Summary

The Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway (LMLSB) Corridor Management Plan (CMP) offers a comprehensive evaluation of the byway's intrinsic qualities – scenic, historic, natural, cultural, recreational, and archaeological resources. These intrinsic qualities define the byway's character and serve as an enduring guide for the protection, enhancement, and management of those qualities.

This CMP also identifies and prioritizes strategies and projects related to comprehensive wayshowing, interpretation, strategic marketing, and economic development with the LMLSB corridor into the future. Developed from a locally-driven process where significant collaboration amongst LMLSB committee members, local citizens, and public agencies offered insight for the future of the byway. This CMP focuses on strategies to enhance the route and preserve its unique resources.

The LMLSB guiding intention “To work together to understand, protect, enhance, and promote the byway through cooperative efforts”, offers a framework for the implementation of the strategies and projects identified within the CMP. Expected outcomes of the efforts include the following:

<b>EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF STRATEGIES AND PROJECTS IDENTIFIED IN THE CMP</b>
<b>1. Help aid in the development of strong partnerships and planning efforts.</b>
<b>2. Preservation of the route's unique intrinsic resources, including visual resources.</b>
<b>3. Improving roadway safety.</b>
<b>4. Build cohesive route marketing.</b>
<b>5. Identifying ways to enhance the visitor experience through interpretation.</b>
<b>6. Diminishing environmental and scenic impacts.</b>
<b>7. Developing amenities and infrastructure benefitting both visitors and residents alike.</b>
<b>8. Explore multi-modal transportation options.</b>

While the CMP's development follows the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) guidelines, local input and priorities guided the document. The CMP does not limit any activities on private lands by local planning, zoning, or environmental requirements as a regulatory document does. It does however, look to identify, celebrate, enhance, and protect the byway's characteristics to ensure these qualities remain at the forefront of future generation's enjoyment.

## **1.2 Byway Description**

The 68-mile driving route known for its natural and scenic attractions circles Lake Mille Lacs—one of Minnesota’s largest lakes at 132,000 acres. Located at the southern edge of Aitkin County, it also straddles the northern most reaches of Mille Lacs County, and takes in a nibble of the southeast corner of Crow Wing County in Central Minnesota.

The LMLSB ring of roadways takes in the natural body of water that features sand beaches, open horizons, islands, and scenic surrounding forests. Small communities, resorts, camping and lodging, two State Parks, several public water access points, a casino/resort, a tribal history museum, and unique waysides take residence along the lake’s shore in Mille Lacs, Crow Wing, and Aitkin Counties.

Located within 100 miles from three metropolitan areas of Duluth, Saint Cloud, and the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul—the large lake historically draws from those populations, where anglers come in all seasons to catch walleye, Minnesota’s State Fish, prized for its white, flaky filets. Many of the area’s tourism related businesses focus their facilities to serve traditional anglers—basic lodging, boat marinas, bars, restaurants, and ice fishing house rentals. As an effort to diversify the tourism infrastructure mounts, fishing promotions and services focusing on smallmouth bass and muskies continue the shift beyond the walleye. The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe diversified the area’s offerings by operating a casino/hotel/movie theatre within their community on the lake’s southwest shore. The area currently offers a variety of baseline tourist related infrastructure such as golf courses, coffee shops, gift shops, fuel/convenience stores, and sporting good retail and rental.

The LMLSB offers a unique blend of explorations and stories for those who visit as the place where the region’s recreational opportunities and scenic beauty merge.

## **1.3 Background**

The LMLSB became a State of Minnesota designated Minnesota Scenic Byway on July 16, 2018, the culmination of a two-year designation study that examined the feasibility of designating the route around Lake Mille Lacs as the state’s 22 scenic byway. Led by a steering committee of local stakeholders, and guided by three regional development commissions (East Central, Arrowhead, and Region 5), the study reviewed route possibilities, features, and public interest in seeking a State Scenic Byway designation.

Upon designation, a ribbon cutting ceremony took place November 2, 2018, attended by over 100 dignitaries and local champions of the new byway. By Spring of 2019, 26 signs paid for and placed around the route by MnDOT, began to show travelers the way around the scenic big lake, via the LMLSB.

Then in July of 2019, the East Central Regional Development Commission secured funding through MnDOT to create and implement this Corridor Management Plan (CMP). The resulting document reflects the collaborative work with MnDOT to preserve, protect, interpret, and promote all of Minnesota’s byways. This multi-regional effort aligned the residents of the byway communities, agency partners at the local, regional, state, and federal level to chart a course for the future of the LMLSB through development of the goals, strategies, and commitments laid out in this CMP.

## 1.4 Purpose of a Corridor Management Plan

The purpose of a Corridor Management Plan offers the LMLSB a way to foster visitor-related economic development and authentic experiences that provide further use and enjoyment for the byway through enhancement, responsible stewardship, and interpretation of the byway corridor for a safe and pleasurable visitor experience.

The CMP contains no new laws, regulations, or ordinances. Instead, this plan draws on existing land use plans relying heavily on continued recommendations by property owners and stakeholders, to assist in protection and promotion of the byway and its corridor. As a working document, its review should occur annually, and revisions made with new information as needed.

Three key benefits for the byway come by way of completion of this CMP. First, this plan can help identify and rank community improvement projects within the corridor. Second, the plan will help stakeholders strategize plans for how to implement these projects and identify available funding sources. Third, as a helpful tool, the CMP becomes a solid reference when pursuing grant funds for projects related to the byway. Other benefits may include:

<b>Additional CMP Benefits</b>
<b>1. Qualify the byway for national and state funding sources that require a plan.</b>
<b>2. Identifying how preservation and enhancement of the byway’s intrinsic resources will occur.</b>
<b>3. Articulates a public vision and goals for the byway.</b>
<b>4. Builds partnership and “buy in” with and between disparate public and private interests to the byway functions as a singular tourism attraction and economic development engine.</b>
<b>5. Engage LMLSB communities and counties in a multi-faceted, widely beneficial, planning process.</b>
<b>6. Guide local decisions for how to allocate scarce financial and volunteer resources for the byway.</b>
<b>7. Provide a marketing communications plan for the byway.</b>
<b>8. Educate stakeholders about the byway’s intrinsic qualities that define its character and give it a sense of place.</b>
<b>9. Recognize the need to promote the byway and increase coordination of tourism and marketing efforts between byway communities.</b>
<b>10. Define the current economic impact of the byway and identify strategies for how to increase its economic benefits to area communities.</b>
<b>11. Analyze the safety conditions of the byway roads, sites, and amenities.</b>

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

Much more than just a section of road leading from one place to another, a scenic byway, rather, offers unique viewsheds for the traveling public and access to authentic experiences in treasured places. Whether witnessing magnificent scenery, or fascinating historic sites, or learning about the natural and historical features of the landscape, Minnesota's scenic byways remain much more than just transportation routes. They introduce the visitor to places and riches within Minnesota that may otherwise get passed by. Certainly, a road itself and the transportation it allows gives permission for a roadway's existence; but the many stories and significant places along the roadways make these truly distinctive characteristics and transformative places worthy of a designation as a scenic byway.

Some byways meander through natural settings of specific landscapes. Others follow short or long pathways following a cultural theme (Amish Country) or prominent geography (Mississippi River). Scenic byways have no set length. The LMLSB, coming in at 68 miles forms a tidy loop around the big lake, with one additional section of road connecting the significant Kathio State Park to the City of Onamia—the largest community on the route. All of LMLSB resides within a rural setting, though some scenic byways “call home” their urban or suburban routes/roots. The State of Minnesota or in some cases the Federal Highway Administration believes a road corridor conveys special “intrinsic qualities” about the region through which the road passes. A byway's “intrinsic qualities” include scenic, historical, archaeological, recreational, cultural, and natural attributes.

## **1.6 Minnesota's Scenic Byway Program**

The Minnesota Scenic Byways Program, launched by a 1992 memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Minnesota Office of Tourism (Explore Minnesota), and the Minnesota Historical Society establishes partnerships with communities, organizations, and government agencies to match resources with grassroots marketing and economic development efforts. The program exists to: 1) identify highway routes of exceptional interest; 2) promote travel and recreation on those routes, and 3) enhance and provide stewardship for the features that distinguish those routes. Through this MOU, sustainment of the 22 scenic byways continues via the Scenic Byways Commission by MnDOT's Scenic Byway Coordinator, conducting annual technical workshops and advocating for byways within their member agencies.

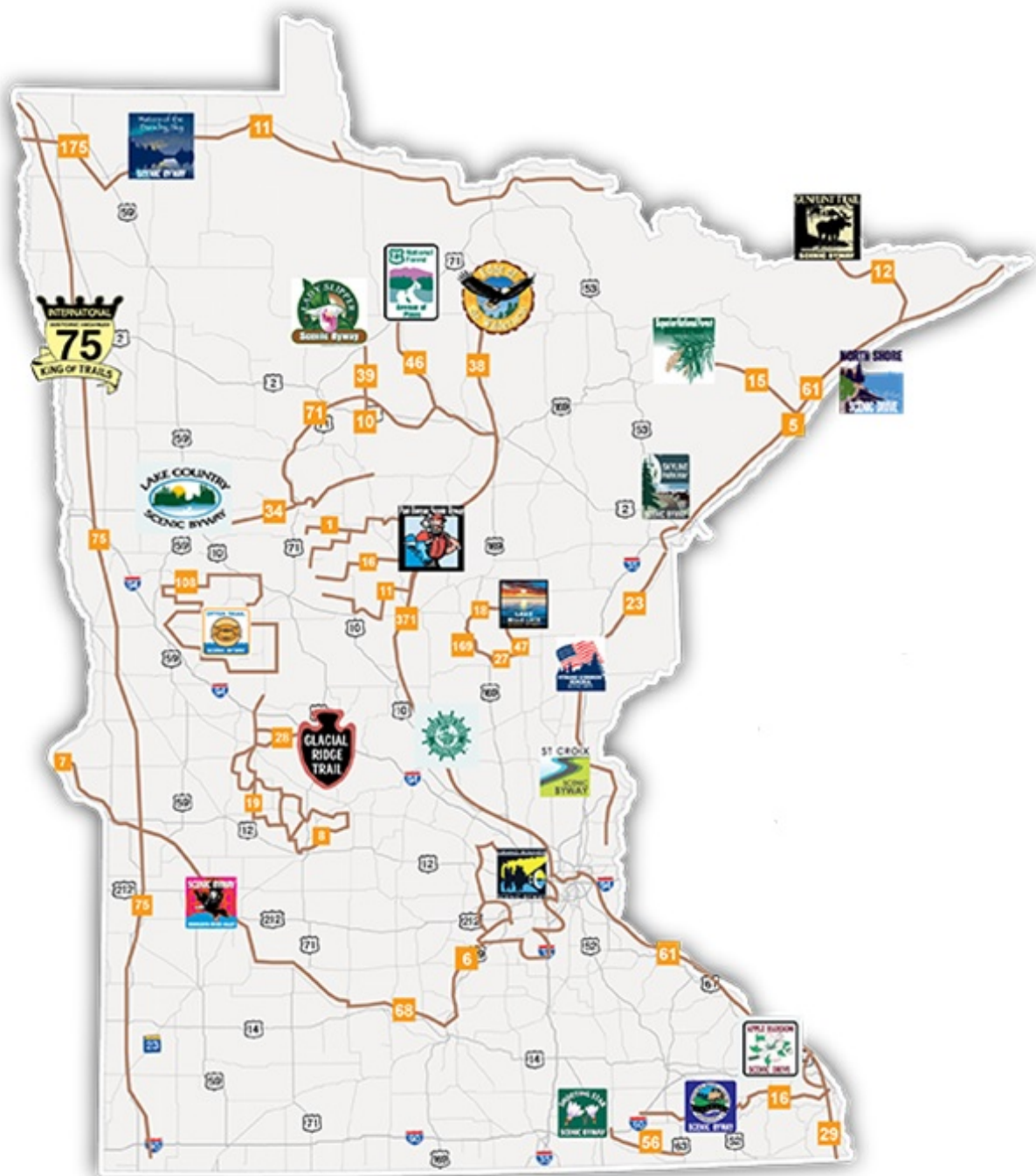
In the Spring of 1994, the first scenic byway nomination took place. Today, 22 designated byways totaling 2,948 miles collectively completed almost 200 projects valued at over \$17M in specific scenic byway funds offered through the federal government between 1992 and 2012. Since 2012, scenic byway projects receive funding through a new competitive funding stream offered by MnDOT. The Transportation Alternative program (TA) provides funding for programs and projects defined as transportation alternatives, including a wide variety of efforts. With the change in funding, also came a change in Federal Highway Administration goals related to scenic byways. Current specific goals include: 1) transportation choices; 2) improved transit; 3) improved pedestrian and bicycle networks; and 4) improved access to transportation by special needs populations. These goals do not always align easily with scenic byways efforts. LMLSB will need to evaluate their interest in these goals, organize



accordingly, and engage in partnerships to this end, and possibly redefining who they are and what they do.

As an example of the economic impact of scenic byways, studies conducted by the University of Minnesota on behalf of the Paul Bunyan National Scenic Byway and Lake Country Scenic Byway showed travelers spent \$21.6 M and \$29.3M respectively in 2010.

Please note the map on the next page highlighting the name and general location of the Minnesota's 22 designated scenic byways.



## **1.7 Byway Designation**

The LMLSB official designation did not identify the byway under a specific category within the six intrinsic qualities. The identification of a primary intrinsic quality will emerge through the process of developing this CMP and subsequent exploration.

## **1.8 Benefits of Byway Designation**

Similar to all of Minnesota's Scenic Byways, the designation of the LMLSB as a state byway opened the door for communities to benefit in many different ways. The designation provides the region with an opportunity to develop a roadmap for the future; a way for stakeholders to determine what they like about their community; and finally, a time to begin planning for ways to preserve, maintain, protect, and enhance these resources and intrinsic qualities while utilizing the byway to spark economic development and tourism.

Other benefits of a byway designation include: 1) serves as a protector and promoter of the byway and the area's intrinsic resources; 2) supports economic development and tourism in towns along the byway; 3) strengthens community pride; 4) promotes partnerships between businesses, local governments, public groups and community leaders; and 5) leads to the creation of unique and ongoing promotional efforts that enhance the marketability of the scenic byway area.

## **1.9 LMLSB Route Description**

The LMLSB route directions from the perspective of a traveler going north from Onamia, then traveling clockwise around Lake Mille Lacs as described.

- From downtown Onamia, the byway goes west on Minnesota Highway (MN) 27, then turns north, following Mille Lacs County Road (CR) 26 through Mille Lacs Kathio State Park.
- Turning north on US169, the byway continues through the communities of Vineland and Garrison.
- Continuing north on US169 through the community of Garrison, the byway turns east on MN18, traversing the north shore of Lake Mille Lacs, reaching the community of Malmo, and the intersection of MN47.
- Turning south on MN47 at Malmo, the byway proceeds south to the community of Isle at MN47/MN27 intersection.
- Continuing west on MN27 through the communities of Isle and Wahkon the byway continues to the MN27/US169 intersection north of the community of Onamia.
- At the MN27/US169 intersection the byway proceeds north on US169 turning west at the intersection of CR26 and US169.
- Traveling south on CR26 to MN27, the byway turns east on MN27, returning to Onamia where it began.

The distance of the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway route totals 68 miles.



### **1.10 Byway Corridor**

The Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) policy for the National Scenic Byways Program defines a corridor as "a roadway or highway right-of-way and the adjacent area that is visible from and extending along the highway. The distance the corridor extends from the highway could vary with the different intrinsic qualities."

For the purpose of this Corridor Management Plan, the LMLSB identifies the primary corridor of one mile beyond the edge of the byway and include each community along its route; or other distance to comply with federal policies to prevent exclusion of significant resources, towns, or sites that do not directly have a location on the byway.

Further delineation includes: 1) areas, views, and sites visible from the byway itself; 2) archaeological, cultural, history, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities as well as points of interest, establishment, and attractions directly related to the byway and involve the use of the byway to reach its location; 3) byway communities and neighboring towns located in other yet-to-be determined areas; 4) city, county, state, and federal roadways that comprise the LMLSB; 5) displays, hubs, kiosks, panels, collections, and other forms of interpretive media; 6) welcome, identification, approach, and district wayfinding signage; 7) infrastructure as well as; 8) land and water trails.

### **1.11 Types of Scenic Byways**

Several tiers of byway designations exist, and build upon each other. A State Byway Designation, the first level, has twenty-two such roadways in the State of Minnesota. The second level, designation as a National Scenic Byway requires that a byway must be a State Scenic Byway prior to this national designation, and that the road must possess at least one of the six intrinsic qualities and be regionally significant. These roads often get dubbed "the roads less traveled". The third level of byway designation, the "All-American Road", requires both state and national designation before consideration to elevate the roadway/route to this level. The nationally significant roads have one-of-a-kind features that do not exist elsewhere. These roads, a "destination unto itself" provide an exceptional traveling experience, so recognized by travelers that they would make a drive along the highway a primary reason for their trip. These roads must possess multiple intrinsic qualities for this designation.

The National Scenic Byway Program (part of the US Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration—FHWA, established in Title 23, Section 162 of the United States Code under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 and reauthorized and expanded significantly in 1998 under TEA-21, and again under SAFETEA-LU in 2005, the program as a grass-roots collaborative effort established to help recognize, preserve, and enhance selected roads throughout the United States. FHWA's May 18, 1995 interim policy provides the criteria for the National Scenic Byways Program. This policy sets forth the procedures for the designation by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation of certain roads as National Scenic Byways or All-American Roads based on their six intrinsic qualities. Up until the NSBP's dissolution in 2012, the program provided millions of dollars for small communities, counties, and other public partners to develop overlooks, wayside parks, directional signage, interpretive centers, rest areas, wayside exhibits, and many other infrastructure projects and

amenities in the hope that visitors would travel on scenic routes and increase tourism throughout the United States.

THE NSBP funding provided programs and projects that did more than construct or maintain highways—the first occasion that federal legislation did this. It not only recognized specific transportation corridors as significant, it supported planning, interpretation, and infrastructure projects that looked to improve the byway visitor's experience. Although the NSBP no longer receives federal funding, National Scenic Byways and All-American Roads remain federally designated roadways of national significance. In the fall of 2020, the FHWA reopened the nomination/application processes for federal designation, with no additional funding secured for grant programs as in the past.

Approximately 31 All-American Roads, 120 National Scenic Byways, and 490 State Scenic Byways exist in 46 states.







## Section Two. Planning & Public Participation

## 2.1 Introduction

Development of the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway (LMLSB) Corridor Management Plan included a variety of organized and organic planning sessions to gain input from the public. City and county representatives participated, as did individuals, community leaders from local organizations, and businesses. The public participated in many ways through open houses and on committees. Overall, each section of this document came about via significant involvement from the LMLSB Committee and the citizenry of the route.

## 2.2. Leadership

The LMLSB Committee provides leadership for the byway, and consists of a group of volunteer that represent the interests of the LMLSB towns, the counties, the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, private and public LMLSB organizations, businesses, and LMLSB property owners, residents, and visitors. These committee members serve as the voice of the LMLSB.

The LMLSB Committee formed in response to interest in seeking state designation of the LMLSB in 2016. The committee guided the designation assessment process, and remains the centerpiece of the planning and implementation efforts of the newly launched byway.

NAME	ROLE/INTRINSIC QUALITY	REPRESENTING
Steve Dubbs	Wahkon Business Owner	Lake Mille Lacs Business Community
Marge Agnew	Mayor	City of Onamia
Loren Larson	Mayor	City of Garrison
Karrie Roeschlein	Clerk	City of Wahkon
Tim Bray	Engineer	Crow Wing County
Michael Wimmer	Economic Development	Mille Lacs County
Jessie Dehn	Engineer	Mille Lacs County
Ross Wagner	Economic Development	Aitkin County
Tina Chapman	Director	Mille Lacs Tourism
Mike Moilanen	Community Development	Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
Vivian LaMoore	Communications	Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
Travis Zimmerman	Historic	Mille Lacs Indian Museum
Kris Erickson	Natural	Kathio State Park
Tom Edgeton	Natural	Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources
Evangeline Moen	Natural	Isle Community Member
Tory Schmidt	Communications	Wahkon Community Member
Jamie Root-Larsen	Communications	Onamia Community Member
Andy Hubley	Advisor	Arrowhead Regional Development Commission
Tad Erickson	Advisor	Region 5 Regional Development Commission
Penny Simonsen	Advisor	East Central Regional Development Commission
Naomi Creech	Isle Business Owner	Lake Mille Lacs Business Community
Judd Brink	Natural	Birding Minnesota

## 2.3 Administration and Coordination

The East Central Regional Development Commission, through a contract with MnDOT provides oversight of key processes of the LMLSB Committee throughout the route designation and CMP processes. Additionally, Arrowhead Regional Development Commission provides mapping services and transportation planner support, and Region 5 Regional Development Commission supplies transportation planner support to the efforts of the LMLSB Committee.

The East Central Regional Development Commission remains adjunct to the LMLSB Committee which currently operates as a citizen committee, with oversight and administrative support through the CMP process by ECRDC staff.

## 2.4 Public Engagement

The process included the involvement and collection of input from people, businesses, and organizations that represent a variety of interests and backgrounds. Several different methods of engagement generated responses from several groups.

Desiring to fully utilize the strength of partnerships and the reciprocal dedication of the partners to each other came through early on in the development of the LMLSB. Working back through the connections made at the time of designation created another stable layer of continuous and renewed interest, resulting in a web of public and private interests that become stronger because of their connectedness. Specific groups and efforts included the following:

**Stakeholder Interviews.** One-to-one and small group in-person contacts with conservation boards, tourism associations, county engineers, city council members, township representatives, tribal staff, county boards, chamber/community development, historical societies, among others produced key guidance for the CMP.

**Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway Committee.** Information gathered by the committee related to the six intrinsic qualities provided direction, and produced quantities of documentation routinely throughout the CMP process. They assisted in the inventory of resources, developing marketing strategies, began interpretation development, prioritized projects, obtained cost estimates, collected photographs, and other more topic-specific input needed for development of this CMP.

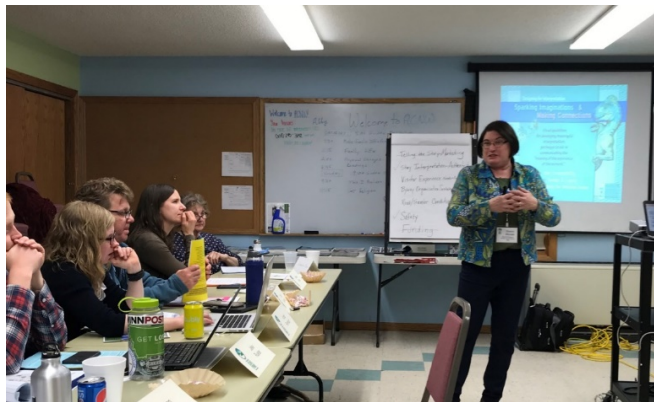
**Byway Leadership Training and Workshops.** Multiple LMLSB members completed the nationally recognized Byway Leadership Training, hosted by the East Central Regional Development Commission, and presented by the National Scenic Byway Foundation. This training provided the leadership within the LMLSB committee to gain expertise in the development of their new byway.

The LMLSB hosted the annual Minnesota Scenic Byway Workshop, holding it at Eddy's, a tribally owned resort on the lake's west shore. The workshop offered the LMLSB an opportunity to engage more fully with the larger scenic byway community across the state, while sharing what the LMLSB has to offer in the way of tourism and economic development.



**Surveys.** Conducted to identify awareness of the LMLSB and gather input for the development of intrinsic qualities discussed in this CMP. Additionally, local businesses helped develop, distribute, and test market promotional materials for the LMLSB Committee.

The combination of input from all of these avenues proved invaluable to the development of this CMP. Their collaborative effort moving forward provides a foundation for the plan's implementation and updates over time.









### **Section Three.** *Mission, Values & Goals*



### **3.1 Introduction**

Byway visitors bring both benefits and impacts to local community residents. As Dar Williams states in her book “What I’ve found in a Thousand Towns”, for something to be successful it must meet the ‘visitor-viable : resident-relevant’ balance. Visitor benefits can include positive economic impacts and an opportunity to educate the public about the unique equalities and characteristics within the byway corridor. On the other hand, visitor impacts can include increased traffic, undesirable visitor behaviors and the exploitation of natural resources.

Immense opportunities exist for visitors in search of a roadway with significant scenic vistas and natural resources where visitors and residents alike take part in the area’s recreational activities. These exceptional qualities offered along the LMLSB attract thousands of visitors annually, who will support the local economy by way of spending on fuel, food, lodging and visit-related shopping. The spending implies that direct economic contributions experienced by many local byway communities often result from tourism-related ventures. However, many of the communities along the LMLSB face challenges common amongst small, rural communities. These challenges include views where communities desire the economic benefits that often come from attracting visitors to the byway corridor but also want to ensure their natural resources remain unexploited. How can the LMLSB attract visitors and economic growth while improving livability for residents and protect the corridor’s natural resources while providing a safe, rewarding visitor experience?

To work toward arriving at a satisfactory long-term relevant response, the LMLSB committee developed a mission statement to guide future planning, management and implementation efforts that remain supported by the values and goals listed within this section to achieve and sustain success.

### **3.2 Mission Statement**

A mission statement guides the actions of an organization, identify its overall goal, a path, and guide decision-making. The LMLSB committee’s mission:

*“To promote the exploration and beauty of ‘Life Around the Lake’ while highlighting the natural, cultural, and historical aspects of the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway.”*

### **3.3 Values and Goals**

Values and goals that support the mission of the LMLSB provide a basis for the proposed LMLSB projects included within this CMP. Values and goals, defined as ambitions or broad intentions of desired conditions, coupled with objectives—the more specific, measurable efforts or actions address the realization of values and attainment of goals. The objectives or actions identified in this CMP include programs and projects that byway organizations and partners show a willingness to work toward implementation in order to achieve the following:

**Value 1: Protect and Preserve Scenic Byway Resources**

- Ensure that scenic byway endorsed programs and projects enhance rather than detract from the route's intrinsic qualities, viewsheds, and vistas.
- Endorse programs and projects that preserve and protect sensitive, threatened, or endangered animal and plant species.
- Endorse programs and projects that preserve and protect natural resources such as the region's woodlands, wetlands, wild life refuges, and others.
- Endorse programs and projects that preserve and protect historic sites, museums, structures, collections, or artifacts.
- Endorse programs and projects that preserve and protect cultural resources, traditions, and settings of human interaction with the land dating back thousands of years.
- Ensure byway programs and projects will complement and enhance the corridor's intrinsic qualities, not detract from them.

**Value 2. Protect and Enhance Local Quality of Life**

- Support roadway improvements and safety measures related to the byway.
- Certify that byway programs and projects respect local resources and interests while being able to enhance and retain the local identity and quality of life.
- Encourage the expansion of economic development initiatives that increases livability of the byway region.

**Value 3. Create an Easy-to-Navigate Byway Experience While Sharing Byway Stories**

- Create a welcoming visitor experience complete with area attraction, service, and facility orientation.
- Support minimal byway signage, not to detract from the corridor's intrinsic qualities.
- Develop a cohesive wayfinding system which may include byway driving directions, maps, main route/auxiliary route signs, off-byway direction signs, community entrance signs, site-approach markers, site-identification signs and wayside media.
- Develop a strategy for how to inventory, maintain, and replace damaged or missing byway main route/auxiliary signs.

**Value 4. Ensure the Safety of the Scenic Byway Traveler**

- Create safe conditions for all travelers and all modes of transportation. This includes convenient, well-designed and maintained roadways and alternative transportation routes.
- Work with state, city, county, and township jurisdictions to ensure the LMLSB has adequate byway main route/auxiliary signs and traffic signs within the byway corridor.
- Regularly review the crash history information to improve crash-prone areas along the LMLSB. When safety concerns arise, explore opportunities for traffic safety-related funding.

- Provide a travel environment where visitors can conveniently access pull-offs, scenic overlooks, attractions, interpretive panels, kiosks, information hubs, restrooms/rest areas and other services and amenities in a safe and enjoyable manner.
- Provide adequate sight distances by controlling unwanted trees, shrubs, and other vegetation to help improve motorist safety along the byway.

#### **Value 5. Identify Scenic Byway Programs and Projects that will Engage Byway Communities and Build Strong Partnerships**

- Conduct LMLSB planning and management with on-going community involvement.
- Ensure that the CMP integrates and supports local community visions, plans, programs, and objectives relevant to the LMLSB.
- Promote and manage byway tourism in ways that minimize impacts to sensitive intrinsic resources and the local residents' daily routines, cultural traditions, favorite locales, and rural lake lifestyle.
- Encourage on-going community support of the LMLSB through partnerships with residents, local government, organizations, agencies, and businesses.

#### **Value 6. Develop a Sustainable Scenic Byway Organization**

- Sustain an active and engaged LMLSB board.
- Continue to hold stakeholder meetings to discuss LMLSB issues on a frequent basis.
- Actively recruit new people and stakeholders to attend LMLSB discussions and meetings.
- Assist the group facilitation, partnership building, grant research, and grant writing for LMLSB-related projects, programs, and/or materials.
- Collaborate with the Minnesota Department of Transportation, and each of the other Minnesota byways to develop and share ideas, participate in trainings, and assist one another on statewide projects.





#### **Section Four. *Byway Corridor & Communities***

## **4.1 Introduction**

The Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway Corridor encompasses over 100,000 acres of land and more than 100,000 acres of water surface that reflects the intrinsic qualities of the region that originally influenced the designation of the byway. Lake Mille Lacs itself measures more than 200 square miles, all of it exists within the byway corridor.

The LMLSB board considers the features and qualities of the LMLSB when making decision about marketing, interpretation, scenic overlook development, economic development projects, natural resource protection, historic restoration and a wide-variety of other decisions.

This section offers basic information about the LMLSB Corridor, including the Mille Lacs Lake Watershed and foundational descriptions of the corridor communities. This section offers context for many of the other sections in the CMP.

## **4.2 Byway Corridor**

The LMLSB Corridor consists of one watershed, one tribal nation, three counties, six small cities, and nine townships in central Minnesota. Each play a vital role in the creation, development, and longevity of a vibrant byway corridor.

The byway's current population characteristics relates directly as result of early settlement patterns related to forestry, agriculture, and railroad expansion. Total byway population amounts to approximately 7,667 spread across the five cities and nine townships. Township populations range from Kathio (at the southwest corner of the byway) with 1,626 and Hazelton (northwest corner of the byway) with 97 residents offer a baseline of population at the lake's perimeter.

Vineland (the unincorporated city located on the Mille Lacs Indian Reservation) is the largest city with 1,001 residents, followed by Onamia at 816, Isle with 798, Wahkon with 213, and Garrison at 212 and the unincorporated community of Malmo. City population totals 3,040. These six cities/communities project themselves as 'Anchor Communities' of the scenic byway, and the CMP identifies them in this manner.

In sum, cities account for just 40% of the byway's population. In contrast, about 80% of Minnesotans reside in a city setting, making the LMLSB a very rural experience. The remaining 60% of the byway's population comes from townships. Kathio Township, continues to see double-digit growth from census year to census year, with its location along the west side of Lake Mille Lacs. Most townships along the route see stable or increasing populations, though all remain very rural.

A tour of the Anchor Communities, going clock-wise on the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway, the trek begins at Onamia.

### **Anchor Community of Onamia**

South of Lake Mille Lacs at the junction of MN27, CR26, and US169 the community serves as the "Gateway" to the byway several tourism-related businesses situated along the roads of the byway. The

historic former rail depot now serves as a library. Four city parks feature playground equipment, ice skating rink, and tennis court. The city's location at the western end of the paved Soo Line Trail, with its associated ATV trail passes through the city and includes a beautiful multi-use bridge that spans US169 connects the Soo Line Trail to the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway. The historic Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) city hall sits along MN27 on the west edge of town, directly on the byway route. Eighteen miles from Onamia to Vineland, travelers will take MN27 west to CR26 north, going past Shakopee Lake, Lake Ogechie, and Mille Lacs Kathio State Park, then turning north again at US169, the traveler arrives at Vineland.

### **Anchor Community of Vineland**

As a Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe community, situated between Onamia to the south and Garrison to its north along US169 on the western shore of Lake Mille Lacs, the area includes a historical museum, a casino with lodging and restaurants, a movie theatre, and grocery store. The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe maintain playgrounds, boat landings, and other public features that draw tourists. The traveler will leave Vineland, moving north along US169 for 11 miles, reaching Garrison.

### **Anchor Community of Garrison**

The smallest of the incorporated cities with 212 residents—and home to the highly recognizable Garrison Concourse, one of several Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Great Depression-era structures. The developed wayside complete with a huge walleye makes it a “must stop” spot for a lakeside photo. The location boasts several other Civilian Conservation Corps projects, all with historical significance. At this point in the byway journey, Garrison hugs US169 and Lake Mille Lacs, bringing the traveler close to the shore for several miles of uninterrupted viewing. An active VFW, commercial club, and tourist related businesses (gas stations, restaurants, hotels, resorts) support a variety of byway-type endeavors, projecting an image of a community much larger than its 212 residents. Continuing north on US169 to the junction of US169 and MN18, the traveler will take the US169/MN18 “fork in the road” and go 18 miles east to Malmo, which will take the traveler along the entirety of the glorious north shore of Lake Mille Lacs.

***MN18-Lake Kenny Side Trip.*** Slightly off the LMLSB at Garrison, if the traveler remains on MN18 toward Brainerd, the Lake Kenny Overlook provides a historic and scenic pull-off as one in the collection of CCC sites. This will put the traveler in close proximity to the Mille Lacs Area Scientific and Natural Area, and to the Paul Bunyan National Scenic Byway.

### **Anchor Community of Malmo**

Along this northernmost portion of the byway route sits sandy beaches, State Forests, and archeologically significant ‘Malmo Mounds’ at the northeast corner of the LMLSB, near the unincorporated community of Malmo in Aitkin County at the junction of MN18 and MN47. Multiple active businesses (gas stations, convenience stores, restaurants, boat shop, liquor store) occupy this intersection.



***Malmo-Glen-Aitkin Side Trip.*** Beyond Malmo, while not directly on the LMLSB route, at the MN18 and MN47 junction and continue north 22 miles through scenic Glen and Aitkin, connecting with other established National Scenic Byways along the Mississippi River, with all the sights and services attached to the byways and the river. This side-trip can also take the traveler from Aitkin on US169, returning to Garrison via US169.

Along MN47 the byway route wanders a bit east from the shores of Lake Mille Lacs where the landscape opens a bit to expose wetlands, lowlands, and glimpses of Lake Mille Lacs. Locally owned resorts, and campgrounds welcome visitors to the lake along this stretch of the route. Just north of the Isle city limits is the Scenic Overlook of Lake Mille Lacs at MN18 and Vista Road. The canopy of mature trees opens to expose a dramatic view of the lake.

### **Anchor Community of Isle**

From the junction of MN18 and MN47 at Malmo, traveling south along MN47, this 14-mile leg of byway takes you to the community of Isle. At 798 population, this junction of MN47 and MN27 features a variety of tourism related businesses. Two city parks and Father Hennepin State Park are located in Isle. Soo Line Trail connects to the Red Top ATV trail, and include Father Hennepin State Park. The office of the Mille Lacs Tourism Council is in Isle, co-located with Chapman's Resort on MN27 in the neighborhood of Father Hennepin State Park.

### **Anchor Community of Wahkon**

Traveling west along MN27 for three miles the community of Wahkon, population 213, features three city parks with historical sites, picnic areas, playgrounds, and a veterans' memorial. In addition to these, the historic Ellen Ruth—an early fishing and sightseeing launch boat—is dry-docked in downtown Wahkon. Bustling restaurants at Wahkon's city center welcome visitors and residents alike. The Soo Line Trail passes through the city. Continuing west/southwest on MN27 to the MN27/US169 junction toward the city of Onamia, nine miles west of Wahkon. From that MN27/US169 junction, the traveler will turn north on US169, returning once again to CR26 by turning west, and reaching the byway's "Gateway", the city of Onamia, via east-bound MN27.

## **4.3 Environmental and Climate Characteristics**

Various landforms resulting in different glacial advances that passed over the Lake Mille Lacs region remain today. These landforms include: moraines, drumlins, eskers, outwash plains, lake plains, ice blocked depressions (mainly bogs), and old glacial tunnel valleys. Glacial drift (any material deposited by glaciers), averages 50 feet thick to bedrock, with only some bedrock outcroppings.

During the last stages of the Wisconsin glacial ice age, the Superior lobe terminated in the Lake Mille Lacs region. It originated from the Lake Superior basin to the northeast. The Mille Lacs moraine includes some of the steepest landscape. This moraine (an accumulation of material transported or deposited by a glacier) made up of mostly reddish-brown sandy loam till (a mixture of sand, silt, and clay).

The dense till and steep slopes contribute to the rapid runoff in the Mille Lacs moraine. The Lake Mille Lacs immediate watershed is quite small. Precipitation is the main source of water for Lake Mille Lacs. Degradation of the watershed would be from the adjoining land uses and recreational uses for the surface of the lake.

Outwash plains and ice blocked depressions (bogs and swamps) scattered throughout the Lake Mille Lacs region, occur within till areas associated with moving water along stream channels or glacial meltwater. This area gently sloping to rolling hills and its loamy cap over sands and gravel round out the landforms.

The continental climate of the Lake Mille Lacs region, characterized by severe winters and warm summers averaging rainfall of about 29 inches, with 41 inches of snowfall occurring. The region produces on average, 90 days with precipitation each year. The ground freezes about the first week in December and thaws during mid-April. Between the frosts, the byway region can claim a growing season of approximately 125 days.

Annual average daily temperatures at Lake Mille Lacs range from the high in July of 81 degrees Fahrenheit (F), and the low of -2 degrees F in January. Minnesota's climate, in conjunction with the lakes and forests, produce an ideal environment for recreational activities. The summer season during May-August with its warm days and cool nights attract vacationers. The winter season with sufficient snowfall and low temps provide ideal conditions for activities such as snowmobiling, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and ice-fishing.

The unique combination of types of soils, topography, land use, natural ecosystems, flora and fauna in the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway Corridor, creates a scenic byway, filled with recreational activities and a rich historical context that exists no where else in the same way.

The type and amount of roadside vegetation within the LMLSB corridor's road right-of-way, the land directly adjacent to the roadways of the byway—immediately impacts the visitor's experience and the quality of life for byway residents. The CMP will focus attention to the opportunities and challenges presented in this portion of the byway corridor.

The publicly owned right-of-way for roadways in the LMLSB corridor and their management fall to several entities including townships, cities, counties, tribes, MnDOT, and federal agencies. The LMLSB will work with each of these entities to encourage the progression of the following goals: 1) preserve and provide safe, functional, and environmentally improved corridors of travel along the LMLSB route; 2) utilize a long-term integrated management program that promotes desirable self-sustaining plant communities; 3) make more efficient and effective use of a variety of control methods of undesirable brush and plants; and 4) enhance the natural and scenic qualities of the roadsides and their value as roadside habitat when practical. The LMLSB also advocates for the continued involvement of key partnerships of agencies and jurisdictions to attain those goals.

#### **4.4 Lakes, Rivers and Watersheds**

The massive shallow basin Lake Mille Lacs with 132,516 acres of surface area, dominates the corridor of the byway for which it is named. Approximately 68,378 acres of Lake Mille Lacs falls within Mille Lacs County, with Aitkin and Crow Wing counties claiming the remaining portion. Smaller lakes (under 2,200 acres) in the Lake Mille Lacs watershed include Onamia Lake, Shakopee Lake, and Lake Ogechie, all at the southwest corner of the byway route.

The Rum River, classified as a Minnesota State Wild, Scenic, and Recreational River, and thus authorized by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources requires Mille Lacs County to adopt land use regulations and control development along the Rum River. The river corridor possesses scenic woodlands and wetlands, which provide a natural habitat for wildlife and rare plant species.

The Mille Lacs Lake Watershed Management Group, based in Milaca defines a watershed as an area of land that catches rain and snow that then drains into a wetland, river, lake, or groundwater. Homes, farms, cabins, forests, small towns, big cities, and more become parts of a watershed. They come in all shapes and sizes, and can vary from millions of acres to a few acres that drain into a pond.

The Mille Lacs Lake Watershed encompasses the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway Corridor. At 116,000 acres of land, and 132,516 acres of water surface it envelops the byway. Lake Mille Lacs (207 square miles) takes up 53% of the entire watershed. The watershed, like the byway falls within the jurisdiction of three counties—Aitkin, Crow Wing, and Mille Lacs, and tribal lands controlled by the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, plus the cities of Onamia, Garrison, Wahkon, and Isle.

The Mille Lacs Lake Watershed has a small land area compared to its water surface area. Water enters the lake either through rainfall, inlets, or groundwater. Water exits the lake through only one outlet, the Rum River. These factors result in what is called “long water residency”. This means that it may take as long as thirty years for water entering the lake to exit the lake. Pollution carried into the lake with the water, will also remain in the lake for a long period of time.

Thirteen tributaries flow into Mille Lacs Lake. These tributaries contain 73% of the surface water flow into the lake. The remaining 27% comes from the shoreline adjacent to the lake. The volume of water entering the lake through runoff is not great in comparison to the volume entering the lake in the form of rain. In an average year 81% of the inflow into Mille Lacs Lake comes from rainfall.

#### **4.5 Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe**

To the Ojibwe who live along its southwestern shores, Lake Mille Lacs and the surrounding land holds a special significance. This part of Minnesota—where the seasons of the year bring cycles of great beauty to the Lake and the land—contains the setting of their history for more than two centuries. While the Lake Mille Lacs region holds famed fishing and recreational activities, to the Ojibwe the lake connects past and present with whom left such a rich tribal history.

Today, the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe strive to retain their tribal heritage, while blending their own culture, with the culture of the larger community which surrounds them. The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe embrace their understanding and use of tribal knowledge, customs, beliefs, and practices which gave meaning to the life of their ancestors, and gives present day meaning to their own lives.

With over 2,000 members of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe calling the Lake Mille Lacs region home, Vineland, close to where the Rum River takes leave of Lake Mille Lacs and begins its zig-zag course to the Mississippi River, sits directly on the LMLSB route along US169 just north of Onamia, and south of Garrison. Tribal government offices, tribal health and human services, the Mille Lacs Indian Museum and Trading Post of the Minnesota Historical Society all reside in Vineland. Additionally, the Mille Lacs Grand Resort and Casino, grocery store and movie theatre offer visitors and residents alike jobs, life necessities, and recreation. Nay-ah-shing School provides school age residents a fully-accredited Pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade education program. A wide-range of housing types make up residential areas of Vineland, including assisted living for tribal elders.

#### **4.6 Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway Corridor Counties**

##### **Aitkin County**

Aitkin County, whose southwest border reaches to the north shore of Lake Mille Lacs with the population of 16,202 (2010) has the smallest population base of the three byway counties. The county seat of Aitkin sits just 14 miles north on US169 from the northwest most corner of the byway route, making Aitkin County government the closest of the three. This major north-south roadway (US169 positions Aitkin County government, the City of Aitkin, and its proximity to the Mississippi River—and associated National Scenic Byways as a vital conduit to the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway corridor.

Aitkin County's land mass consumes 1,822 square miles, water mass 174 square miles, to total 1,995 square miles of geography filled with wooded rolling hills, dotted with lakes and ponds. With 6 cities (Aitkin closest to the route), 40 townships ( four directly on the byway route), with unincorporated population centers of Glen, Nichols, Wealthwood, Red Top, and the Anchor Community of Malmo on or near the route, Aitkin County dominates the north end of the LMLSB corridor through its geography and population.

Demographically, Aitkin County's median household income of \$44,139 trails the 2017 Minnesota state average of \$70,315, and nationally of \$61,937.

##### **Crow Wing County**

Crow Wing County hugs the west side of Lake Mille Lacs including and just south of the Anchor Community of Garrison--the single Crow Wing County incorporated city (of its eighteen in total) situated along the byway. One township (Garrison Township) of Crow Wing County's 29 engulfs the city of Garrison, and surpasses it in population.

The 62,500 population of Crow Wing County dwarfs the total population of both Aitkin and Mille Lacs County, primarily due to Brainerd and Baxter population centers to the west of the LMSB route. The Crow Wing county seat of Brainerd, located along MN18 just 24 miles west of Garrison connects the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway travelers to the Paul Bunyan National Scenic Byway.

Within the 1,157 square miles, (999 land and 157 water square miles), Crow Wing County claims 10 protected areas, including the important Mille Lacs Moraine Scientific and Natural Area. Like both Aitkin

and Mille Lacs Counties, Crow Wing County's gently rolling woods, and heavily noted waters and wetlands create a perfect nest for abundant wildlife. White tail deer, cottontail rabbit, snowshoe hare, racoon, red fox, gray fox, coyote, mink, muskrat, squirrels, beaver, American Black bear, American Bald Eagle, Osprey, and many waterfowl species call Lake Mille Lacs home.

Within easy driving distance (24 miles from Brainerd to Garrison), all of the amenities of the Paul Bunyan National Scenic Byway, two state forests, and the Cuyuna Lakes State Trail become connected to the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway.

Median household income for Crow Wing County residents checks in at \$53,121.

## **Mille Lacs County**

Translated from French, Mille Lacs means "Thousand Lakes". Mille Lacs County holds the southern two-thirds of Lake Mille Lacs. Over half of the LMLSB route sits within the Mille Lacs County boundaries, figuratively, cradling the west, south, and east sides of Lake Mille Lacs.

Comparable to Aitkin County, the population of Mille Lacs County at 26,097, with most of the population concentrated in the southern-most reaches of the county, not the northern-most area that takes in Lake Mille Lacs. It's 682 square miles—572 land, and 109 water registers it as the smallest of the three counties, with by-far the largest proportion of water area. This fact is significant in regard to the importance of water in Mille Lacs County, and specifically for Lake Mille Lacs.

Mille Lacs County located in east central Minnesota, 70 miles north of the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area, 115 miles southwest of the Duluth metropolitan area, and 29 miles east of the St. Cloud metropolitan area. Mille Lacs County borders Aitkin County at its north border, and Crow Wing County at its northwest corner.

A great deal of contrast exists between the northern and southern parts of the County. Lake Mille Lacs, a tourist destination for the entire state forms almost the entire northern boundary of the county. Because of the unique recreational opportunities and the scenic beauty associated with Lake Mille Lacs, the lake and its surrounding area have historically attracted both seasonal and year-round development and the area serves as a focal point for the tourism industry.

The Rum River flows southward originating from Lake Mille Lacs, traversing the county from north to south. As a designated state Wild, Scenic, and Recreational River, the waterway's corridor possesses scenic woodlands and wetlands that provide a natural habitat for wildlife and rare plant species. The Rum River State Park near Onamia, managed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources includes northern hardwoods including maple, oak, ash, basswood, in the upland areas of the park, and tamaracks and black spruce in its lowlands. The highest point in Mille Lacs County, located a mile from the southwest shore of Lake Mille Lacs at Kathio State Park offers wonderful opportunities for viewing Lake Mille Lacs and its surrounding areas.

Mille Lacs County contains 8 protected areas, 5 of which touch the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway. They include: Father Hennepin State Park, Mille Lacs Kathio State Park, Mille Lacs National Wildlife Refuge, Mille Lacs State Wildlife Management Area, and Rum River State Park. Of significant note: Mille Lacs

Kathio State Park includes 19 archeological sites, considered one of the most significant archeological collections within the state of Minnesota.

Milaca, the county seat sits in the southern half of the county, twenty-six miles from Lake Mille Lacs. Median household income for Mille Lacs County is \$53,737.



#### 4.7 Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway Anchor Communities

The Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway passes through several distinct communities. As “Anchor Communities”, their distinct personalities and make-up offers a diverse trek around the big lake. Their shared common bonds as residents of taking up life on Lake Mille Lacs spans centuries.

##### **Anchor Community: Onamia**

Three miles southwest of Lake Mille Lacs, the City of Onamia serves as the “Gateway” to the byway with a population of 862. Several tourism-related businesses situated along US169 and MN27 take prominence. The historic former rail depot turned library, multiple city parks with a variety of features join at the city center. The Mille Lacs Health System (one of two health systems on the byway), the western end of the paved Soo-Line Trail, and the associated ATV trail passes through the city and includes a very impressive bridge that spans US169. Onamia businesses include a liquor store, hardware store, several restaurants, a bank, and a post office. The Onamia School District (PreK-12) and Rolf Olsen Community Center, plus the historic Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) city hall sits in proximity to MN27 on the west edge of town, on the LMLSB.

In Ojibwe, the name Onamia means “red ochre”, “vermilion”. The city sits along Lake Onamia, and close to Lake Ogechie and Shakopee Lake, both lakes take their spot along the LMLSB. Of the 862 residents, the median age is almost 42 years, and median household incomes come in at \$21,250 well below the state average of \$70,315.

From Onamia, the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway route goes west on MN27, 1.7 miles, then north on CR26 2 miles until reaching US169.



*Onamia's City Hall, a Great Depression-era National Historic Place, along MN27*



### **Anchor Community: Vineland**

A Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe community situated between Garrison and Onamia on US Highway 169 at the western shore of the lake (at the 8 o'clock hour), the area includes the Mille Lacs Indian Museum and Trading Post, the Mille Lacs Grand Resort and Casino and associated lodging and restaurant, grocery store, and movie theatre . In addition, Vineland serves as the government center for the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, with an older adult living community and Na-ah-shing K-12 school serving the tribal community housing and education needs through generations. Playgrounds, boat landings, and other public features draw tourists.

Vineland's residents' median age of 29, makes it the most youthful community, with a median income of \$40,667, well below the state average of \$70,351.

From Vineland to Garrison along US169 takes about 13 minutes for the 10.7 leg of the LMLSB.



*The Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway on US169 at Vineland. See the lake in the upper left-hand corner.*



### **Anchor Community: Garrison**

Garrison, the smallest of the incorporated cities, with 212 residents. Garrison boasts several Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) projects, all on the National Register of Historic Places, that include the Garrison Concourse, Bridge 5265, St. Albin's Bay Culvert, and the Kenny Lake Overlook (just off the byway by a bit). Collectively, the historic value of these sites is significant to transportation history in the United States and the State of Minnesota.

Garrison hugs US Highway 169, and Lake Mille Lacs, at the 10 o'clock hour, on the west side of Lake Mille Lacs. An active little community with tourist related businesses (gas stations, restaurants, hotels, and resorts) support a variety of byway-type endeavors. Two medical clinics, veterinary clinic, VFW, post office, hardware store, and grocery store support travelers and locals alike.

Garrison's median age is 61 (the oldest amongst the Anchor Communities), and the most affluent, with \$41,875 median household income—still, well below the state average of \$70,351.

From Garrison to Malmo, the LMLSB moves from US169 north, to the junction of MN18. From US169, the route goes east on MN18 to Malmo. The total miles traveled for this portion of the LMLSB is 17.9 miles, and approximately 21 minutes.



*The walleye caught by Paul Bunyan, immortalized at the Garrison Concourse in Garrison*

### **Anchor Community: Malmo**

By making the trek from Garrison to Malmo, the traveler traversed “The Hogsback” land formation created by glacial activity 15,000 years ago. Beautiful sand beaches, public access areas, and resorts dot the lake side, while Wealthwood State Forest and the Wealthwood Gun Club take residence on the north side of MN18.

When one arrives at the Aitkin County unincorporated community of Malmo they’ve reached the intersection of MN47 and MN18 on the lake’s northeast (2 o’clock) corner. Multiple active businesses-- gas stations, convenience stores, restaurants, boat shop, liquor store occupy this location.

Beyond Malmo, while not directly on the LMLSB route, at the MN47 and MN18, travelers can continue north 22 miles through scenic Glen and arrive at Aitkin, connecting with other established scenic byways (Great River Road National Scenic Byway and nearby Paul Bunyan National Scenic Byway), sights, and services in Aitkin County. This loop can connect travelers to US169 at the City of Aitkin.

Malmo’s median age is 50, with a median household income of \$31,161, well below the state average of \$70,315.

Traveling south on MN47 at Malmo to Isle takes approximately 21 minutes, and one will travel 18.3 miles.



*"You Are Here" at Malmo*

### **Anchor Community: Isle**

Traveling south along MN47 from Malmo, traveler pass the scenic overlook at MN47 and Vista Road, wetlands, ATV trails, and resorts, campgrounds and restaurants.

At the intersection of MN47 and MN27 sits Isle. Main Street of this lake community, and the shores of Lake Mille Lacs and Isle are “as one”. Named for the island near its harbor on Lake Mille Lacs, Isle positions itself at the southeast corner of the LMLSB route.

The community of 798 features a variety of tourism-related businesses. Two city parks and Father Hennepin State Park (one of two state parks along the byway) that catches the Soo Line Trail which connects to the Red Top ATV trail.

Several lake resorts businesses are located within the city limits of Isle. The Mille Lacs Tourism Council’s office calls Isle “home”, co-located with Chapman’s Resort right on MN27 “up the street” from Father Hennepin State Park directly on the LMLSB, and between Father Hennepin State Park and downtown Isle that offers, a full-service grocery store, bowling alley, medical clinic, bakery, pharmacy, hardware store, lumber yard, post office, and two financial institutions, insurance agencies, retail stores. The Isle School District (Pre-K-12), the Isle Recreation and Activity Center, and the region’s weekly newspaper, ‘The Mille Lacs Messenger’ all are located in Isle. Isle’s median age is 48, and with a median household income of \$29,766, well below the state median household income of \$70,315.

Remaining on MN27, the byway traveler will come to Wahkon 3 miles west of Isle.



*The big walleye, Main Street in Isle.*

### **Anchor Community: Wahkon**

Wahkon, a community of 213 sits at the “4 o’clock” position, at the south-central point on the LMLSB route along MN27—it’s main thoroughfare, or main street is indeed the LMLSB. Wahkon’s average age of almost 50, and the median household income of \$22,321, lower than the state median of \$70,315 reflects the influx of older adults with lower incomes residing in Wahkon.

The community features three city parks and their proximity to Lake Mille Lacs offer hiking opportunities. On the west edge of Wahkon, ‘Bare Ass Beach’, a favorite sand beach frequented by visitors and locals alike for generations reflects the vibe of the community. The dry-docked historical Ellen Ruth—an early 20<sup>th</sup> century fishing and sightseeing launch boat lives on in downtown Wahkon.

Several businesses focus on tourism at Wahkon’s tidy downtown, including restaurants ready to greet folks coming off the lake or from the Soo Line Trail which passes through the city. From Wahkon, the byway traveler continues west on MN27 for 7.5 miles in 10 minutes to the intersection of MN27 and US169. By turning north on US169 for 6.6 miles, and returning to CR26, the traveler has completed the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway.



*The historic EllenRuth, downtown Wahkon.*





Section Five. Natural Resources & Major Attractions

## 5.1 Introduction

According to Scenic America “Natural Resources apply to those features in the visual environment that are in a relatively undisturbed state. These features predate the arrival of human populations, and may include geological formations, fossils, landforms, water bodies, vegetation, and/or wildlife. There may be evidence of human activity, but the natural features reveal minimal disturbances.” This statement sets the tone for all that embodies the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway, and its efforts.

The National Scenic Byways Program (NSBP) collectively defines intrinsic qualities as the “archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic features that are considered representative, unique, irreplaceable or distinctly characteristic of an area.” The important attributes of a byway, or the distinguishing features that create the character of the route, and make the byway a special place for both residents and visitors. Intrinsic qualities attract people to the byway and remain the focus of some combination of enhancement, preservation, and promotion.

To repeat: ***The intrinsic qualities attract people to the byway and remain the focus of some combination of enhancement, preservation, and promotion.*** These three things--enhancement, preservation, and promotion are the bedrock of a successful, productive scenic byway.

This section includes an exploration of the significant natural resources along the byway, along with general guiding principles for the LMLSB committee as they plan to assist in the maintenance and enhancement of the byway’s natural resources.

## 5.2 Background Information

“Natural resources” made it to the top of the list, of most significant and distinctive intrinsic qualities of the LMLSB corridor. The natural resources in the corridor receive constant private, public, state, national, and international recognition for what exists at Lake Mille Lacs. The natural resources draw visitors from around the world who want to see and experience the lake, woodlands, wetlands, rivers, and the birds and wildlife that call the corridor “home”.

Visitors and residents alike experience recreational opportunities including world-class fishing and hunting, boating, birding, wildlife watching, and fall leaf viewing. These recreational activities made available by the corridor’s natural resources form the foundation of the local economy.

## 5.3 Significant Natural Resources

The natural resources show cases the scenic experiences related to the byway and make up the fabric of the corridor through rich cultural, historic, and archaeological resources unique to Lake Mille Lacs. The specific significant natural resources listed beyond in this document will make reference in repetitious fashion the interconnected of these stellar resources in one geographic area, Lake Mille Lacs.



## **Mille Lacs Important Bird Area**

The Mille Lacs Important Bird Area (IBA) includes the entire water body of Lake Mille Lacs, plus Spirit and Hennepin Islands (Mille Lacs National Wildlife Refuge), the surrounding shoreline, and significant areas adjacent to Lake Mille Lacs. The IBA, located in the three byway counties (Aitkin, Crow Wing, and Mille Lacs) takes in the 207 square mile (132,500 surface acres) Lake Mille Lacs, and its 249,000 acre watershed makes the ratio of land to water in Lake Mille Lacs less than 2:1. The rather shallow very large lake's maximum depth of about 43 feet (21 feet average), with overall water quality remaining good, with some cautions of potential problems. The Rum River, part of the watershed and the IBA flows out from Lake Mille Lacs through Lakes Ogechie and Shakopee (both along the byway route) in Mille Lacs Kathio State Park, winding through Mille Lacs County south about 60 miles to the Mississippi River.

Significant lands within the Mille Lacs IBA boundaries include Mille Lacs Kathio and Father Hennepin State Parks, both which the traveler can access via the LMLSB; Mille Lacs Kathio at US169 and Mille Lacs CR26; and Father Hennepin at the Anchor Community of Isle, on MN27. Beyond the two state parks, the Lake Mille Lacs Indian Reservation, state forestry lands, six wildlife management areas, and Crow Wing and Aitkin County forestry lands provide many opportunities to view the 80+ species of birds noted.

Within the expanse of Lake Mille Lacs, two small islands—Spirit and Hennepin, located in the south and southeast regions of the lake make up the smallest National Wildlife Refuge in the United States. Known as the Mille Lacs National Wildlife Refuge, the two small islands have the distinction of being one of only four nesting colonies for the Minnesota listed threatened species, the not-so-common, Common Tern.

The Minnesota County Biological Survey and the Brainerd Lakes Area Conservation Collaborative identified the land on the west side of Lake Mille Lacs as a high biodiversity area. The primarily hardwood forest area touts a significant population of Red-shouldered Hawks, a Minnesota listed Species of Special Concern.

Mille Lacs IBA notes three conservation issues: 1) As a popular fishing lake in the state, large numbers of anglers increase the threat to birds from boater harassment, entanglement in fishing line, and lead poisoning from ingestion of lead sinkers and jigs; 2) The problematic erosion on Hennepin Island for the nesting Common Terns. The habitat enhancement project seeks to reduce the erosion and increase the area for nests; and lastly, 3) Rapid development around Lake Mille Lacs—the 70% development of the almost 100 miles of shoreland with seasonal and year-round homes, businesses, and other commercial properties. The majority of these developed parcels rely on on-site treatment systems, not municipal sewer systems.

To summarize the study of birds within the Mille Lacs IBA, of the 231 species of birds recorded for the IBA include 62 Species of Greatest Conservation Need. The Mille Lacs IBA can boast: 1) nesting for the Common Tern; 2) the fall staging area for Common Loons and Bonapartes Gulls; 3) Red-shouldered Hawks (a Minnesota-listed Species of Special Concern) nest in the hardwood forest on the west side of Lake Mille Lacs; 4) Bald Eagle nesting; and 5) during migration, a wide variety of waterfowl, gulls, marsh birds, and passerines

Of special note: Initiated in 1993, with the assistance of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Department of Natural Resources, a project to increase Common Tern nesting success on Hennepin Island includes the

annual installation of Ring-billed Gull deterrent grid over the gravel beach portion of Hennepin Island during the Common Tern nesting season. In addition to this work, the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe support an Environment Wildlife Program that aids in the conservation of declining and threatened species such as Purple Martins and Common Terns.

The Common Tern, Bald Eagle, Red-shouldered Hawk, and the Yellow Rail. Remain the main species of concern within the Mille Lacs IBA.



*Common Tern, Lake Mille Lacs*



*Bald Eagle, Lake Mille Lacs*



*Red-shouldered Hawk, Lake Mille Lacs*



*Yellow Rail*

### **Mille Lacs Moraine Scientific and Natural Area**

The Mille Lacs Moraine Scientific and Natural Area (less than 2 miles from Garrison's city center and Lake Mille Lacs) contains no trails or other recreational facilities. Unmaintained roads do exist through the site, which the Audubon lists as an Important Bird Area (IBA). The only Scientific and Natural Area (SNA) currently in existence in the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway corridor, the SNA, designated in 2012 offers a quieter activity distinct from the sounds of motorized recreation in other areas of the corridor.

The 318-acre site features steep forested slopes, wetlands, and small lakes. The topography reflects the most recent glacial era—over 15,000 years ago, when the advancing glacier stalled, then retreated, depositing rock and debris as a moraine along its melting edge. Within the SNA, this moraine explains the abrupt, 160' rise in elevation to the west and south of Sunfish Lake.

Mature hardwood forest dominates the uplands, that include red oak, sugar maple, and basswood. Lowlands produce a range of open and more forested wetlands including wet ash swamp, rich tamarack swamp, willow-dogwood swamp, poor fen, cattail marsh, sedge meadow, and others. Sunfish Lake, a loon nesting spot lies entirely within the SNA, plus portions of Fawcett and Hogsback Lakes.

As a part of a much larger region of outstanding biodiversity, the significant diversity of native plant communities, rare species, undeveloped shorelines, and unfragmented forest with few roads makes it very important. In particular, the combination of deciduous forest in close proximity to wetland openings offers critical breeding habitat for Red-shouldered Hawks, Purple Martin, and Cerulean Warblers, all Minnesota-listed special concern species.

On full display within the SNA, the tale of the seasons follows a predictable yet stunning routine. Once winter snow retreats, the SNA's "understory" includes hepatica, bloodroot, and marsh marigold, followed by jack-in-the-pulpit and pale green blue-bead lily, as the tree canopy closes in late spring.

The Nature Conservancy and the original property owners (Geordie and Jaimie Hormel--of the SPAM Hormel's) worked to protect the site and urged the designation as an SNA. The list of wildflowers and ferns, grasses and sedges, trees and shrubs, and birds identified within the Mille Lacs Moraine Scientific and Natural Area—extensive, yet not all inclusive:

Forty-three wildflower and fern species within the SNA: 1) large-leaved aster; 2) maidenhair fern; 3) wood anemone; 4) large-flowered bellwort; 5) large-flowered trillium; 6) pale vetchling; 7) bracken; 8) bluebead lily; 9) Canada mayflower; 10) early meadow-rue; 11) oak fern; 12) wild sarsaparilla; 13) norther bedstraw; 14) three-leaved false; 15) marsh marigold; 16) bog laurel; 17) buckbean; 18) pitcher plant; 19) rose twistedstalk; 20) bloodroot; 21) American spikenard; 22) common false Solomon's seal; 23) lady fern; 24) rattlesnake fern; 25) blue cohosh; 26) interrupted fern; 27) lopseed; 28) hairy Solomon's seal; 29) zigzag goldenrod; 30) yellow violet; 31) red baneberry; 32) jack-in-the-pulpit; 33) Indian pipe; 34) round-lobed hepatica; 35) Leadplant; 36) Hog peanut; 37) Perly everlasting; 38) Pointed-leaf; 39) Wild bergamot; 40) Heal-all; 41) Gray goldenrod; 42) Canada goldenrod; 43) Common milkweed.

Fourteen grasses and sedges (grass-like flowering plants) within the SNA: 1) starry sedge; 2) bearded shorthusk; 3) Pennsylvania sedge; 4) pointed woodrush; 5) many-flowered woodrush; 6) creeping sedge; 7) silvery sedge; 8) tussock cottongrass; 9) poor sedge; 10) scheuchzeria; 11) stalked bulrush; 12) long-stalked sedge; 13) nodding fescue; 14) mountain rice grass.

Twenty-five trees and shrubs: 1) basswood; 2) sugar maple; 3) norther red oak; 4) ironwood; 5) beaked hazel; 6) red pine; 7) lowbush blueberry; 8) velvet-leaved blue berry; 9) winterberry; 10) paper birch; 11) balsam fir; 12) raspberries; 13) white pine; 14) woodbine; 15) gooseberry; 16) green ash; 17) bush honeysuckle; 18) big-toothed aspen; 19) tamarack; 20) Labrador tea; 21) small cranberry; 22) red maple; 23) bitternut hickory; 24) pagoda dogwood; 25) chokecherry.

The Mille Lacs Moraine SNA bird checklist species is extensive and includes: 1) Wood Duck; 2) Mallard; 3) Blue-winged Teal; 4) Hooded Merganser; 5) Ruffed Grouse; 6) Wild Turkey; 7) Mourning Dove; 8) Black-billed Cuckoo; 9) Common Nighthawk; 10) Ruby-throated Hummingbird; 11) Sora; 12) Wilson's Snipe; 13) American Woodcock; 14) Black Tern; 15) Common Loon; 16) American Bittern; 17) Great Blue Heron; 18) Green Heron; 19) Turkey Vulture; 20) Osprey; 21) Bald Eagle; 22) Cooper's Hawk; 23) Red-shouldered Hawk; 24) Broad-winged Hawk; 25) Barred Owl; 26) Belted Kingfisher; 27) Red-bellied Woodpecker; 28) Yellow-bellied Sapsucker; 29) Hairy Woodpecker; 30) Northern Flicker; 31) Merlin; 32) Eastern Wood-Pewee; 33) Alder Flycatcher; 34) Least Flycatcher; 35) Great Crested Flycatcher; 36) Eastern Kingbird; 37) Yellow-throated Vireo; 38) Warbling Vireo; 39) Red-eyed Vireo; 40) Blue Jay; 41) American Crow; 42) Common Raven; 43) Purple Martin; 44) Tree Swallow; 45) Northern Rough-winged Swallow; 46) Bank Swallow; 47) Black-capped Chickadee; 48) Red-breasted Nuthatch; 49) White-breasted Nuthatch; 50) Brown Creeper; 51) Winter Wren; 52) Veery; 53) Swainson's Thrush; 54) Hermit Thrush; 55) Wood Thrush; 56) Gray Catbird; 57) Cedar Waxwing; 58) Purple Finch; 59) American Goldfinch; 60) Ovenbird; 61) Northern Waterthrush; 62) Golden-winged Warbler; 63) Black-and-White Warbler; 64) Nashville Warbler; 65) Common Yellowthroat; 66) American Redstart; 67) Cerculean Warbler; 68) Chipping Sparrow; 69) Chestnut-sided Warbler; 70) Yellow-rumped Warbler; 71) Chipping Sparrow; 72) Song Sparrow; 73) Swamp Sparrow; 74) Scarlet Tanager; 75) Northern Cardinal; 76) Rose-breasted Grosbeak; 77) Indigo Bunting; 78) Red-winged Blackbird; 79) Common Grackle; 80) Brown-headed Cowbird; 81) Baltimore Oriole





### **Rum River--A Wild, Scenic, and Recreational River**

The Rum River, designated by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources in 1978 as a river that satisfies all three classifications—wild, scenic, and recreational along segments of its 145 mile path. Beginning at the outlet of Lake Mille Lacs at its southwest region through Mille Lacs County, the Rum River continues south through Sherburne County, Isanti County, ending in Anoka County, in the City of Anoka at the Mississippi River, approximately 70 miles by road from Lake Mille Lacs.

A number of rocky boulder beds create Class I and some Class II areas for canoeists. Several dams, snags, and overhanging trees present areas of caution. With a river depth from 20 to 100 feet, water level is usually sufficient for canoeing throughout the summer.

The last glacial retreat formed Lake Mille Lacs, from the lake. The Rum River flows through mostly glacial outwash plain, with geology typical to that of Central Minnesota's glacial topography. It passes extensive backwaters and marshes, sandy upland plains, and bottom lands covered with maple, elm, and other hardwoods. Small stands of red and white pine near the river's lowest reaches are what remain of the once vast Minnesota pine forests.

Smallmouth bass and northern pike remain the "go-to" fish for anglers near the headwaters at Lake Mille Lacs. White-tailed deer, gray and fox squirrels, cottontail rabbits and snowshoe hares, beavers, minks, muskrats, raccoons, loons, great blue herons can also be found. Songbirds are plentiful along the whole route, as well as waterfowl nesting areas in the Lake Mille Lacs outlet.

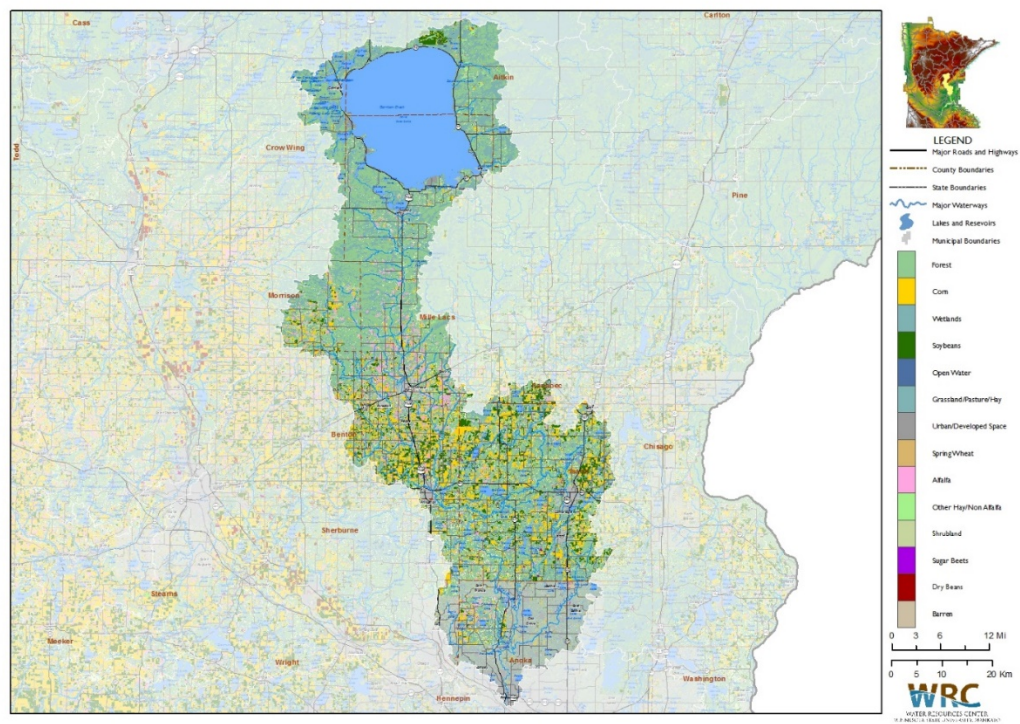
The archeological value of the Rum River with its very high concentration of prehistoric sites in Minnesota representing a collection of rich Indian history dating back over 3,000 years that includes burial mounds, ricing pits, copper tools and other artifacts. Established communities of Dakota, then Ojibwe lay out expansive history documented in few other places. White settlement occurred later with the entry of early French fur traders, which made way to the timber industry that reflects the current



communities and demographics. Currently no Wild and Scenic River planning processes exist for the Rum River.



*Example of promotion of the Lake Mille Lacs & Rum River area.*



**RUM RIVER MAJOR WATERSHED - LAND USE**

## **Wealthwood State Forest**

At the north end of Lake Mille Lacs, the 15,000 acres of rolling hills has a number of lakes, rivers, and wetlands that attract waterfowl such as mallards, ring-neck ducks and Canada geese. Within the Wealthwood State Forest is the Ripple River Wildlife Management Area.



## **Ripple River Wildlife Management Area**

The 3,930-acre Aitkin County Wildlife Management Area (WMA)—takes in the northern reaches of the Wealthwood State Forest—covering nearly half of the State Forest, at the 12 o'clock hour of the LMLSB. Close to both US169 and MN18, the prairie and forest complex, with grasses and brush fill the expansive area of low ground and marsh, while pine plantations and aspen in the eastern most portions, and black ash and black spruce comprising the low ground timber round out the landscape.

Forest management activities include: 1) Aspen managed for ruffed grouse, deer, and woodcock; 2) basswood, oaks, maple-types managed for red-shouldered hawks; and 3) Open lands managed for sharptailed grouse, Sandhill cranes, and short-eared owls.

Bald eagles and red-shouldered hawks will nest in the forest areas of the WMA, along with breeding spots for Sandhill cranes in the spring. Game within the WMA includes white tail deer, Black bear, snowshoe hares, brown creepers, chorus frogs, four-toed salamanders, forest upland birds, Sharptail Grouse, and waterfowl.

MnDNR forest and wildlife managers work closely together so management activities benefit both wildlife and plant species. Canoeing, kayaking, dispersed camping, hunting, and snowmobiling reflect some of the recreation that typically occurs within the Wealthwood State Forest, and the Ripple River Wildlife Management Area.



*Ripple River Wildlife Management Area, Aitkin County*

### **Mille Lacs Wildlife Management Area**

The 38,700-acre Mille Lacs Wildlife Management Area located seven miles south of Onamia, along US169, and south of MN27 several miles, was established in 1949. The large parcel is 60% forested, with the remainder wetlands, bogs, and forest openings, surrounded mainly by rolling farmland.

The WMA's forests are managed to promote an interspersed of different aged plant communities and enhance wildlife diversity. Logging of hardwood and aspen stands create forest openings and edges between vegetation types. Game within the WMA include white tail deer, black bear, small game, forest upland birds, and waterfowl.



*Mille Lacs Wildlife Management Area, Mille Lacs County*



## Father Hennepin State Park

Named for Father Louis Hennepin, a priest who came to the area in 1680, as part of a French expedition, of key historical significance. The 332-acre state park, boasts over a mile of sandy beach along the southern shore of Lake Mille Lacs, nestled at the Anchor Community of Isle, at the 4 o'clock hour. The two campgrounds, Maple Grove Campground provides campers with a wooded, secluded experience or a more exposed beach accommodation by way of Lake View Campground, combine to offer over 100 campsites.

It's part of the State Park Hiking Club Trail system, so visitors come to park for hiking to walk through the woods (on your one side), and the lake's shore (on the other). The State Park Call of the Wildflowers GeoTour and I Can Fish programs lure others into the little gem.

A typical response to this unpretentious park? "Magnificent!" "Truly one of the most beautiful parks in Minnesota." "Excellent spot to watch the sunset on a beach." And finally, the best, "It is a jewel in the crown of Mille Lacs."



*Father Hennepin State Park, Isle*

## Mille Lacs Kathio State Park

Mille Lacs Kathio State Park, a much larger park in size—13,000 acres, offers a distinctly different experience from Father Hennepin State Park at Isle. Mille Lacs Kathio State Park situated north of the Anchor Community of Onamia, and south of the Anchor Community of Vineland, occupies the landscape just west of Lake Mille Lacs and US 169 at the outlet of the Rum River. Mille Lacs CR26 wraps near the park, Lake Ogechie, and Shakopee Lake connecting the traveler to the historically and naturally significant region where the park now resides.

The 100' observation tower/fire tower gives willing climbers an opportunity to take in Lake Mille Lacs, Lake Ogechie, Shakopee Lake, the Rum River, and most of the entire Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway viewshed from this single vantage point. The tower, open year-round sees the most climbers in the autumn "leaf" season.

Within the park, the **Kathio National Historic Landmark District** protects the sites of American Indian villages that date from between 3000 BC and 1750 AD, that document the Sioux Indian culture and the relationships between the Sioux and the Ojibwe. The 1-mile Landmark Trail takes you to the large collection of archeologically significant sites.

The **Touch of Nature hiking trail**, with its boardwalks preserves the sensitive plant life within the park. "It's very interesting how the mossy plant life seems to mound up around the base of the trees", commented a visitor. The design of the trail guides the visitor toward the forest floor, and all that is important there.

The **Interpretive Center** welcomes over 9,000 visitors yearly. Nature programs, camping, swimming, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, horseback riding dominate the recreational activities. Boat access to both the Rum River and Shakopee Lake make all water-related activities possible.







*Mille Lacs Kathio State Park, Mille Lacs County*

## 5.4 Climate

The Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway corridor consistently offers a comfortable summer climate. The months of June, July, and August temperatures range between 70-85 degrees F, with only 4 days on average each year with temperatures over 90 degrees F. making day-long activities possible, and enjoyable. Average precipitation in the form of rainfall totals 27", with the autumn months being the experience the most rain. On average, the lake area sees 188 sunny days each year.

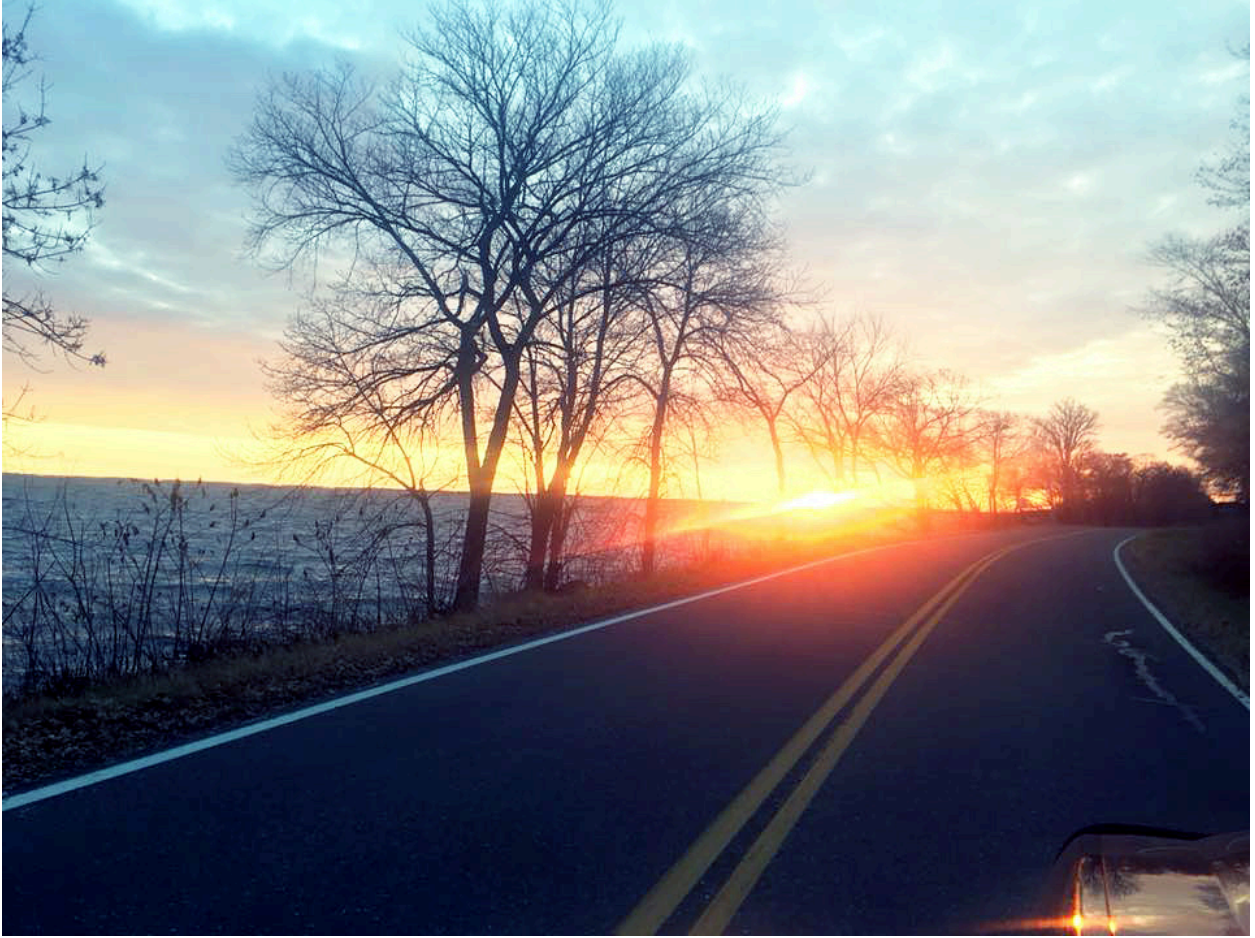
For winter activities in the LMLSB corridor, the important snow fall total of 39" average, coupled with an average of 179 days when the nighttime temp falls below freezing, gives a consistent opportunity to engage in snowshoeing, ice fishing, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling among the many natural venues during the coldest seasons of the year.



## 5.5 Strategies for Maintenance and Enhancement of the Byway's Natural Resources

The following strategies offer a framework for further development of partnerships and resources central to the natural aspects of the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway. They include:

Natural Resources Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop and implement projects and programs that encourage public and/or private natural resources projects, partnerships, and recognition.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support programs and initiatives that help private landowners voluntarily protect natural areas.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Secure or develop maps, descriptions, and photographs of significant natural landscapes.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Implement high-quality interpretation that fits with the development of a "LMLSB Brand" that encourages sustainable use of natural resources.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Facilitate multi-agency and public/private partnerships that increase public access to high priority natural areas.</li></ul>



## **Section Six. *Scenic Resources***

## **6.1 Byway Intrinsic Qualities**

The National Scenic Byways Program (NSBP) collectively defines intrinsic qualities as the “archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic features that are considered presentative, unique, irreplaceable or distinctly characteristic of an area.” These attributes distinguish the byway and its features that create the character of the route, and make the byway a special place for both residents and visitors.

Intrinsic qualities attract people to the byway and are the focus of some combination of enhancement, preservation and/or promotion. This section includes an inventory and assessment of the significant scenic resources along the byway.

The LMLSB committee follows the guidance of Scenic America. “Scenic Quality is the heightened visual experience derived from the view of natural and manmade elements of the visual environment of the scenic byway corridor. The characteristics of the landscape are strikingly distinct and offer a pleasing and most memorable visual experience. All elements of the landscape—landform, water, vegetation, and manmade development—contribute to the quality of the corridor’s visual environment. Everything present is in harmony and shares in the intrinsic qualities.”

## **6.2 Background Information**

Acknowledging the stunning natural beauty of the LMLSB corridor, recognizing the importance of its viewshed by understanding its scenic resources and conserving them through the adherence of guidance from within the corridor, and beyond is paramount to the thriving longevity of the LMLSB as it was originally envisioned.

Knowing the influence that scenic views have on traveler safety, length of stay, placement and maintenance of overlooks, waysides, and pullouts is vital. Additionally, visitor referrals and other efforts are important.

This section of the CMP intends to help the LMLSB committee and stakeholders to understand and articulate the quality and composition of their viewshed as well as the most significant scenic elements. The section also presents several challenges and opportunities currently faces, and ideas that may assist the byway and their partners in the ongoing work of protecting and enhancing the LMLSB travelers visual experience.

## **6.3 Key Visual Resources**

The grand massive expanse of Lake Mille Lacs with the ribbon of road that rides its shores at places, and waivers toward the relatively untouched wetlands and forests within the lake’s watershed, keep the traveler keenly aware of “what’s beyond the trees”. The route of the byway--a circle, with an attached small loop that allows for the reconnecting to the circle at two points-- serves as a necklace for Lake Mille Lacs, with glimpses of the lake at some points that engage the traveler, that open to the overlooks, waysides, and pull-offs the jewels of the necklace: beautiful on their own, while each having the ability to draw interest back to the roadway necklace, and the outstanding lake it surrounds.

Seasonal changes alter the views along the LMLSB. Hardwood forest, and wetland that collectively encompasses the majority of the byway create a frame of the always present lake. The hardwood trees specifically take on prominence in the autumn when the leaves change color from wildly vivid green to yellows, oranges, reds, deep purples, and browns, always backdropped by the pines and tamarack greens until the autumn rains and winds strip the leaves, leaving nature to show the peaceful bark of birches and ash trees in heavy number along the route. Where once was greens, then reds and yellows, come the cold, crisp, clear sunny winter days offering every combination of blues and greys in a painters' palette, to then be replaced by an eruption of glorious green by Mother's Day. The cycle of the seasons offers new views to the same landscape.

The natural areas in the viewshed, the lakes, rivers, forests, and wetlands harbor outstanding opportunities for wildlife watching. Wildlife seen along the LMLSB is a significant element of the LMLSB visitor's visual experience, creating exciting, memorable, visual experiences as an integral part of the byway's viewshed. All of the LMLSB viewshed is designated as rural. All of the Anchor Communities along the byway number under 1,500 year-round residents. All of the communities share their location with the byway, and thus become part of the viewshed. At points, the roadway winds to present a community from around the bend, at others the roadway lays open the viewshed for miles to expose Lake Mille Lacs and the community along its side.

#### **6.4 Viewshed Analysis**

The LMLSB committee will utilize a minimum one-mile distance from the center of the LMLSB roadway based on the physical limitations of the human eye as it processes images while traveling along a roadway at a rate higher than 45 miles per hour. It also takes into consideration the USDA Forest Service's definition of "Distance Zones" that should be considered when making decisions.

Collectively, these four distinct zones influence the quality of the byway's viewshed, the visitor's experience, the ability of the byway to draw visitors and ultimately the long-term capacity of the byway to sustain related economic development. These zones are: 1) Immediate Foreground—all things visible within 300 feet of the road. Fine detail can be observed. Typically, this includes the road right-of-way, which is controlled and managed by township, city, county, or state jurisdictions; 2) Foreground—beyond the 300' mark to .5 miles of the center of the roadway. At this distance, fine details fade, and the general shape and scale of the surroundings become more important. Shape, sizes, colors, and the relationships of these individual elements to each other define the scenic quality; 3) Middle Ground—includes all that is visible within .5 to 1 mile from the center of the roadway. At this distance, landscape and topography define the visible elements and the terrain features define the view; 4) Background—takes the traveler beyond 1 mile from the center of the roadway. At this distance, color, large overarching patterns and topography influence the landscape's appearance.

The LMLSB corridor viewshed analysis presently includes extensive mapping completed by the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission as part of the original CMP development. Future work will include video and photography from multiple viewpoints and perspectives focusing on overlooks, waysides, and pull-offs described in this CMP.

## 6.5 Overlooks, Waysides, and Pull-offs

Existing Overlooks, Waysides, and Pull-offs offer travelers a place to park, leave their vehicle, and observe something of interest. Typically, true waysides do not have an additional recreational purpose such as a boat landing. There are several overlooks, waysides, and pull-offs along the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway. Beginning north of Onamia, and traveling clockwise around the byway, the following existing places:

- **Southwest Pull-offs**—between the Mille Lacs Outlet/Rum River and the southwest corner of the lake, multiple pull-offs just off of US169 on Mille Lacs CR35 offers an outstanding viewshed of Lake Mille Lacs.

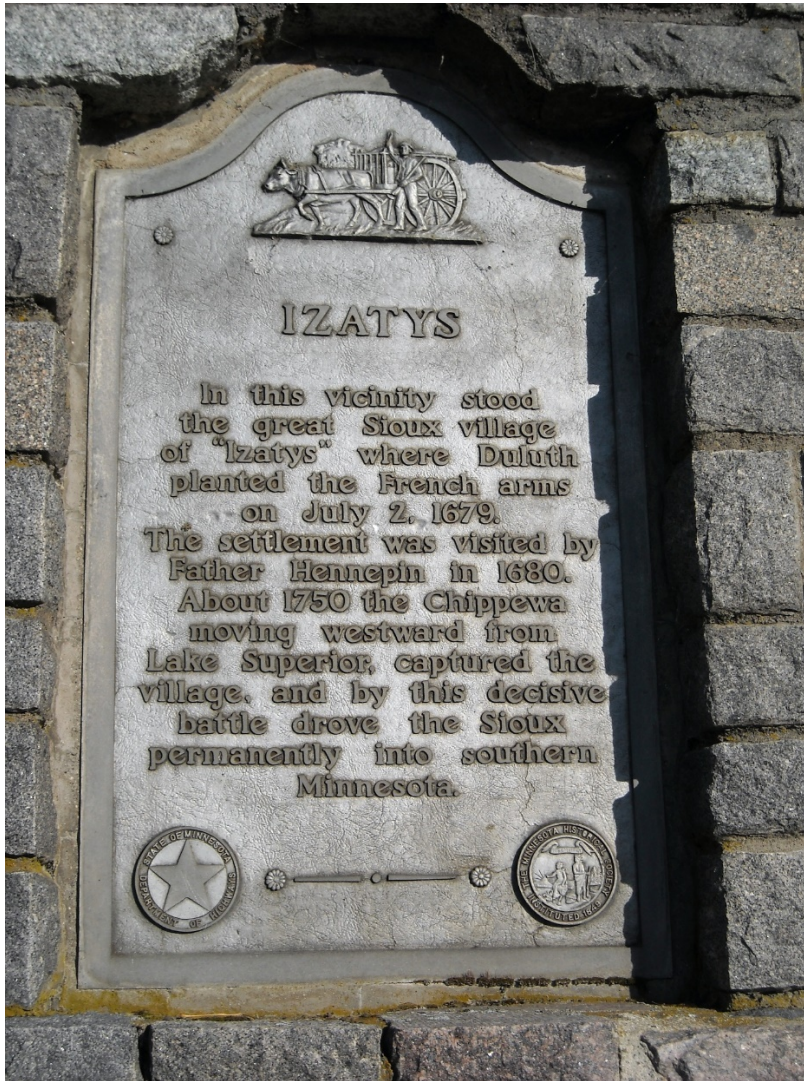


*Mille Lacs CR35—Twilight Road*

- **Izatys Village Pull-off**—off US169 south of Grand Casino Mille Lacs a pull-off with a historical marker notes the location of a Dakota tribal village in the 1700s. The plaque describes the French explorers that visited the site, and the battle between the Dakota and the Ojibwe that drove the Dakota out of the area.



Erected in 1952, replacing a less substantial sign placed in 1930, the then Minnesota Department of Highways place the current marker, made from granite quarried from near the Anchor Community of Isle.





*Two views of Izatys Pull-off monument, near Vineland*



- **Virgo Road Pull-off**—north of Grand Casino Mille Lacs in the Anchor Community of Vineland, a small pull-off on Virgo Road, just off US169 and Mille Lacs CR 35 overlooks the Lake Mille Lacs.
- **South Garrison Wayside**—a 56-acre tract of public land off US169, just south of Garrison once served as an inviting wayside with a frontage road with multiple pull-offs and stunning views from the paved road. In addition to the frontage road, a picnic area adjacent to the public boat landing with expansive grass lawns welcomed visitors to the lake. From the frontage road, a historic Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) “kitchen”, complete with stone hearth, operated during the FDR years and served the workers located in the area. After the Great Depression, the “kitchen” took on the role of picnic shelter complete with tables and plentiful parking. The view from atop the hill that holds what remains of the “kitchen” due to a fire—the stone hearth and it’s “million-dollar view”.



- **The Garrison Concourse Wayside**—jutting into Lake Mille Lacs on the western shore along US169, the City of Garrison touts a unique wayside, that benefitted from recent investments. The site includes ample parking, a large statue of a walleye, benches, a flag pole, tourism information kiosk, and a historical marker placed within a recently restored substantial block structure, a historically significant site as a Franklin D. Roosevelt-era Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) project. In addition to the Concourse, a CCC bridge located near between the South Garrison Wayside and the Garrison Concourse Wayside along US169 was restored in 2018.



*Historical Photograph of the Garrison Concourse, Garrison*

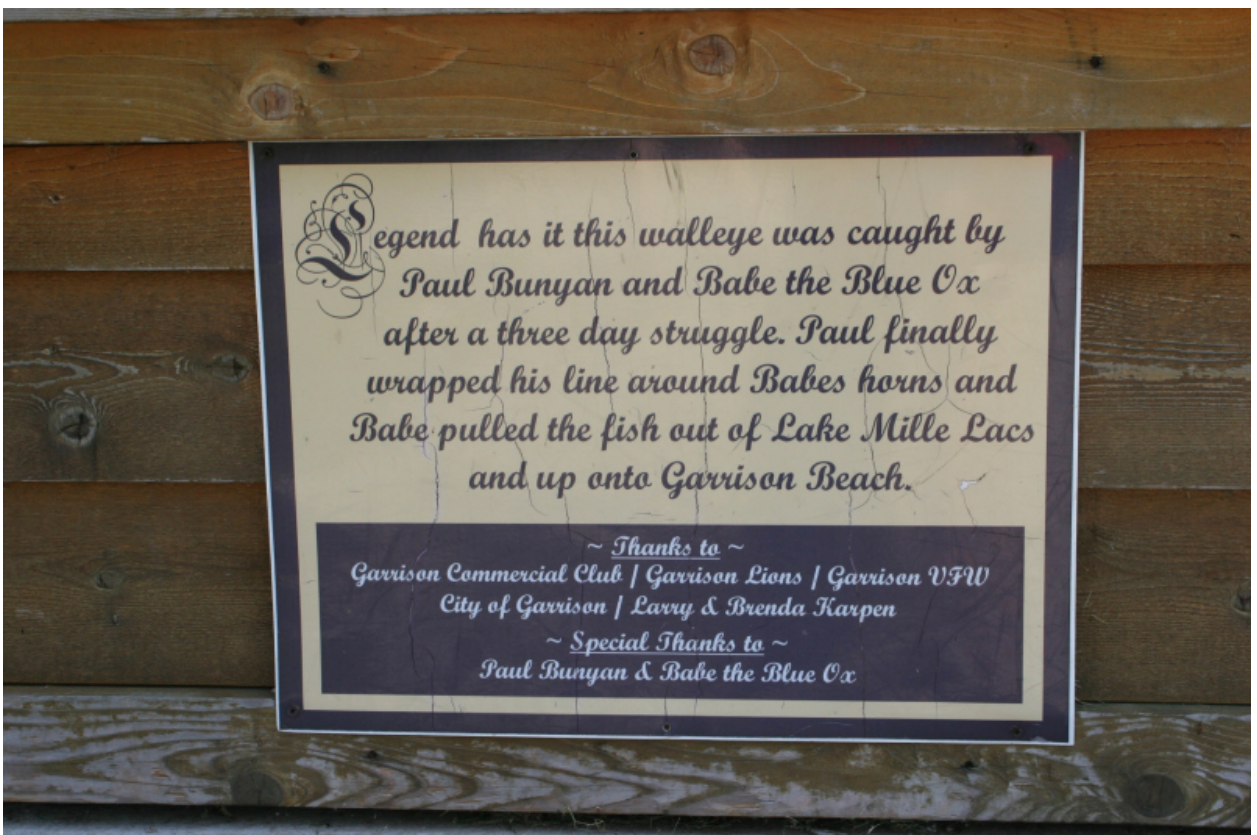


*Garrison Concourse, Garrison*

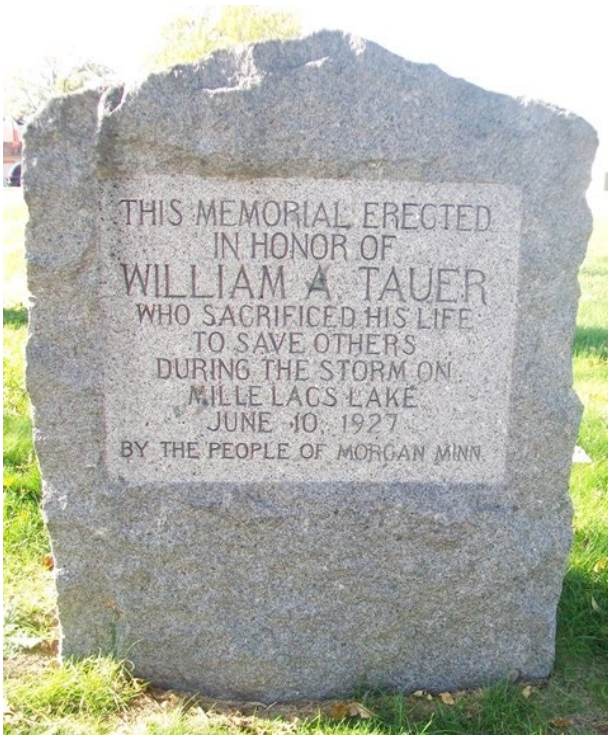




*Garrison Concourse Fish and its legend, Garrison*







Mr. Tauer was a local hotel owner who drowned while trying to save boaters during a storm on June 10, 1927. The memorial, while small in size compared to the entire Garrison Concourse, and its famous fish, does declare a strongly held view of the residents of Lake Mille Lacs—the tight bond, feeling of community, and the generosity of those who call it “home”.

- **MN18 Western Pull-offs**--a series of flat areas just off MN18 west of the Wealthwood Public Access, appear to once operate as waysides, accommodating one or two vehicles to pull-off the highway and enjoy the view from an elevated area. Presently, overgrown vegetation obscures the outstanding lake views and prevents parking.



*Reedy Creek Beach, Hogsback area North Shore Lake Mille Lacs*

- **The Hogsback**—officially designated “Reedy Creek Beach”, the swimming area with its expansive shallow sandbars that expand out beyond one hundred feet. In addition to the sand beach, the section of MN18 along the byway runs through the hilly region referred to as “The Hogsback, the high ridged hills standing against the shoreline, like a pig’s back. The Hogsback owes its existence to Lake Mille Lacs being a moraine-dammed lake formed when glacial meltwater gets trapped by large pile of dirt and debris. Locals speculate that The Hogsback got its name during the “early resort period of the 1920s”.

Several areas of the hills were dug out during the 1930s to accommodate MN18, including the current Wealthwood Public Access. The dirt removed from the Hogsback was used as fill for the swampy, western portion on MN18. At one time, an older road ran along the southern side of the Hogsback by the beach. This road currently is not navigable.

- **Wealthwood Wayside**—at the very northern end of Lake Mille Lacs in Wealthwood Township, west of the Anchor Community of Malmo, this lengthy undeveloped sand beach parallels MN18. Technically a boat landing, the Wealthwood Public Access with its small parking lot and shallow, sandy ramp offers limited use by boaters. It seems to act more like a wayside, giving travelers a place to park and walk and enjoy the expansive beach.





- **Mille Lacs Scenic Overlook along Vista Road**—South of Malmö, along MN47, and just north of the Anchor City of Isle, in East Side Township, the overlook, just off of MN47 and Vista Road is the “must stop” spot, particularly magnificent at sunset as you look west across the second largest lake in Minnesota. The 27-acre site owned by the State of Minnesota includes a significant amount of stunning undeveloped woodlands.

Along with the small parking area that brings you to the edge of the shore, a geographical marker erected in 1998 by the Minnesota Geological Society and the Minnesota Department of Transportation records the glacial activity 15,000 years ago that created Lake Mille Lacs.



- **Supporting Cast of Local Memorable Spots**

A trio of local landmarks, uniquely Lake Mille Lacs in vibe, sums up the local culture, art, and nature on a small scenic scale. The first, Bare Ass Beach—a sand beach just west of the city limits of Wahkon. A nice walking trail takes you from Wahkon to Bare Ass Beach.



*Bare Ass Beach, along MN27 at Wahkon*



The second, Lady of the North Shore Mermaid, a 11.5' local artist chain-sawed rendering of a siren complete with flowing red hair prompts travelers to stop and picture-take on Conifer Street in Aitkin County.



*Lady of the North, somewhere along the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway*

And lastly, a side-trip to 230<sup>th</sup> Place, aka “That Dam Road”—notated by a single large white sign as a landmark along Aitkin CR2, about eight miles east of Malmo, and Lake Mille Lacs. The gravel road runs deep into the secluded swampland to mainly private property in the southern Aitkin County region. The story of the sign and the road go hand-in-hand. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources constructed a dam in the vicinity of the road, and the aforementioned private property owners took it upon themselves to provide a “confidence marker” for travelers along Aitkin County Road 2, lingering too long end up on MN65, too far to the east, instead of navigating to 230<sup>th</sup> Place. The fact that the dam was indeed nearby, and the general condition of the road, created a moniker that stuck. The sign, originally part of a commercial sign displaying 230<sup>th</sup> Place was placed in the 1960s, and then recently replaced with a new version of the same sign, saying simply “That Damn Road” and 230<sup>th</sup> Place, the road’s official name.



*That Dam Road Sign, Aitkin County*

## 6.6 Challenges and Opportunities

Common scenic conservation issues that stakeholders typically get advised of, and many times relate directly to the challenges and intrusions that do and can occur within a byway corridor, also exist along the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway. The list that follows, while not all-inclusive gives a proper foundation for future efforts.

1. **Public Area Management**—the LMLSB viewshed encompasses township, city, county, state, and federal public land, much of which include the “immediate foreground” category of viewshed. The management of these properties can positively or negatively impact the byway traveler, add character and diversity, or leave an impression of neglect.
2. **Private Land Use and Conservation**—private lands conservation, or lack of it can enhance or distract from the byway traveler’s overall experience and make or break the Foreground, Middle Ground, and Background viewshed. Poorly managed and/or placed structures within any area of the viewshed can impact the visual experience for the traveler. Illegal use of any lands can negatively impact the viewshed.
3. **Mining and Mineral Extraction**—some areas along the byway may be targeted for mining that coincide with the LMLSB viewshed. Large mining operations can directly and irrevocably impact the viewshed.
4. **Roadside Management**—the road right-of-way is one of the significant public land units in the LMLSB viewshed. It is also located in the Immediate Foreground making plants and features in this land area highly visible to the byway traveler. Management or neglect of native vegetation and invasive species in the road right of way greatly impact the byway travelers experience. Trash in this area can negatively impact the traveler’s perception of the LMLSB, especially large dump sites with houses, cars, scrap metal, appliances some of which may occur in the road right-of-way.
5. **Wireless Telecommunication Towers, Wind Turbines, and Overhead Utility Lines**—are examples of large structures that can impact site lines and horizon lines. Planning and zoning restrictions can reduce the impact of these features along the LMLSB’s viewshed.
6. **Flood Damage to Roads, Bridges, and Natural Areas**—the natural waterways that enhance the LMLSB viewshed can flood, and sometimes do flood. Flooding can alter natural areas, and destroy infrastructure that contribute to the beauty and functionality of the LMLSB. Debris carried by flood waters can accumulated on public and private lands, and in the waterways creating unsafe and unsightly conditions that detract from the LMLSB corridor and create a public hazard for byway travelers.
7. **On-Premise, Off-Premise, and Roadway Signage**—while Minnesota limits billboards and advertising along Minnesota’s byways. Signage issues remain a source of impact of byways when the signs block or degrade the viewshed in the Immediate Foreground and the Foreground. Illegal, improper, and disorganized signs may cause confusion for the traveler, and distract from the Immediate Foreground.
8. **Design Standards in Towns, Commercial Areas, Historic Sites and Neighborhoods**—the restoration, improvements, and modifications can enhance or detract from the LMLSB overarching message, and it’s viewshed.
9. **Byway Roadway Context**—using context-sensitive highway, street, and bridge design solutions that meet the desired characteristics of the LMLSB roadways and possible adjacent trails adds to

the overall experience of the byway traveler. A well-maintained road appeals to a traveler, while one in decline, or one significantly altered in way not consistent with the six intrinsic qualities may detract.

10. Residential and/or Commercial Structures in the Immediate Foreground—as the LMLSB gains popularity, more pressure will come to bear on the most easily accessible land and properties for residential and commercial development. This has the potential to be particularly detrimental to those high-value areas and overlook viewsheds that define the LMLSB corridor.

## 6.7 Possible Foundational Strategies

The LMLSB strategies for conservation, protection, and enhancement of the byway address issues, while shrinking the scenic losses, and stretching the visual resources, and adding a component of management when appropriate. The LMLSB has no authority to enforce the strategies, many will be taken up as a volunteer effort, or executed via an informed public policy. Possible foundational strategies may include:

Scenic Resources Possible Foundational Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Implement education and outreach strategies</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Develop partnerships with local, state, and federal public and private partners.</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Develop and implement technical and functional assistance for voluntary efforts.</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Inform and encourage jurisdictional planning, zoning, and public land management objectives that protect the byway's viewshed.</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Encourage participation in local, state, and federal programs and incentives.</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Acquire property or easements that protect the viewshed.</b></li> </ul>

## 6.8 Potential Actions by Issue

The following are examples of possible actions the LMLSB will consider as part of their work. The list is not all-inclusive, but items linger on the above-mentioned guidance of the foundational strategies.

### Issue 1: Public Areas Management

- Educate public land managers about the LMLSB and its viewshed. Highlight its significance locally, as well as beyond in connection with state and national scenic byway systems.
- Invite state and federal public areas managers to act as liaisons to the LMSB committee, attend meetings and provide input and training for initiatives of common interest.

- Encourage, support, and promote public programming pertaining to native vegetation, ecosystems, biodiversity, invasive species, and other management tools that foster a positive conservation ethic.
- Assist LMLSB townships, cities, and counties with development of related grant opportunities that will help them secure funding and technical assistance for native vegetation plantings, trails, and other improvements to public amenities and properties.
- Develop mechanisms that inform and makes recommendations to the LMLSB committee regarding community land issues such as public land issues, and private lands development, as examples.
- Encourage and inform local, state, and federal public land managers to consider the LMLSB viewshed in program, policy, and project decisions.
- Encourage and empower communities to develop and implement efforts to secure technical, financial, and volunteer assistance in areas of interest such as trash collection, tree planting, invasive species control, and so on.

## Issue 2: Private Lands Use and Conservation

- Work with communities along the byway to secure funding and develop technical and financial incentives for residential and commercial roadway beautification, including tree and native flower plantings along the LMLSB.
- Educate private landowners adjacent to the LMLSB and its viewshed about local, state, and federal conservation programs and incentives that would help them more fully utilize conservation practices or improve natural areas.
- Implement a LMLSB viewshed education and awareness program that raises awareness of the value of the viewshed and highlights private landowners that are contributing positively to the LMLSB viewshed.
- Educate landowners of the opportunities about conservation easements and other avenues that may help preserve viewsheds, while working with entities to assist in securing funding for viewshed easements.
- Partner with communities or counties that want to develop policies, zoning or ordinances in agreement with LMLSB corridor/viewshed strategies during development of areas along the byway. Sharing educational materials and draft policies, keeping the lines of communication open.
- Encourage landowners to participate in programs and practices promoted by the wide range of conservation partners. Referring them to local, state, or federal entities, and sharing materials.
- Consider the LMLSB viewshed in relation to watersheds, with special attention to high-value areas of the viewshed, to help local conservation partners understand which watersheds could be targeted for outreach and technical assistance to have the greatest impact on the LMLSB viewshed and why that outreach and technical assistance is important.
- Encourage existing and future entities to target outreach and technical assistance to private lands in high-value areas of the LMLSB viewshed.
- Develop a database that records changes in land use in the LMLSB viewshed over time.



- Recognize the impact of invasive species on specific ecosystems and take action to restore those ecosystems.
- Work with partners to reduce the casual dumping of trash and other waste along the LMLSB viewshed.

#### Issue 3: Mining and Mineral Extraction

- Educate local, state, and federal entities about the LMLSB viewshed, its economic impact through job/business creation, tourism, and other benefits.
- Assist in the development of policies to protect the LMLSB viewshed, and when possible show support for existing efforts that value the LMLSB viewshed.

#### Issue 4: Roadside Management

- Provide education and technical assistance to all of the LMLSB communities and county personnel about, and encourage participation in vegetation management programs utilized by other communities and byways.
- Work with community leaders and citizen groups to plan and implement community entrance enhancements that include native vegetation, and other low-maintenance, byway compatible improvements.
- Work with partners, including MnDOT, with their Highway Sponsorship Program to promote efforts such as pollinator plantings and art along the roadways. Encourage local well-rounded education related to roadway improvements, and foster increased involvement in roadside adoption programs reducing litter along the byway roadways.

#### Issue 5: Wireless Telecommunication Towers, Overhead Utility Line, and Wind Turbines

- Work with agency and government entities to identify priority locations for reducing the visual impact of towers, overhead utility lines, and wind turbines.
- Develop processes with these entities to bury lines, provide screening, or plan for relocation as opportunities arise.
- Ensure that vegetative cover is replaced on the disturbed ground following construction, and where possible, used to reduce the visual impact of towers, line, turbines and associated structures and other potential obstructions.
- Work with public lands partners to help them understand the benefits to less obtrusive placement of towers, lines, and turbines.
- When possible, acquire conservation easements that prohibit overhead utilities, towers, or turbines on properties in high-value areas.

#### Issue 6: Flood Damage to Roads, Bridges, and Natural Areas

- Encourage the support of projects and policies that seek to reduce flooding.

- Work with local, state, and federal partners in the education of the public about how to reduce non-biodegradable and hazardous waste pollution that occurs during flood events.
- Help local conservation partners understand the connection between watersheds and the LMLSB viewshed, and the positive impact the connection can have related to ongoing outreach and technical assistance.
- Access and utilize mapping tools that identify floodplain properties in relation to the LMLSB viewshed, and when feasible encourage the use of programs that mitigate floodplain areas via programs or buyouts that will expand the long-term resiliency of the viewshed for everyone involved.
- Support installation, maintenance, repair, and implementation of best management practices related to stormwater run-off, stream flows, downstream flooding, and other efforts being undertaken by the partners of the LMLSB.

#### Issue 7: On-Premise, Off-Premise, and Roadway Signage

- Educate partnering communities, counties, businesses and the public about existing signage policies, ordinances, laws, and restrictions.
- Encourage communities and business districts to develop on-premise sign guidance.
- Assist with research for policy development that helps/supports community and county planning and zoning activities to protect the LMLSB viewshed.

#### Issue 8: Design Standards in Towns, Commercial Areas, Historic Sites, and Neighborhoods

- Educate planning and zoning entities, property owners and conservation partners about the LMLSB viewshed, and the impact planning and zoning can have on the different distance zones.
- Assist with policy development research that will support jurisdictional planning as it relates to protecting the LMLSB viewshed.

#### Issue 9: Byway Roadway Context

- Participate in regional transportation enhancement meetings, workshops, trainings that may influence the use of state and federal funding within the byway corridor.
- Work with county and tribal engineers, jurisdictional administrators to plan for and secure funding for well-maintained roads, streets, bridges, shoulders, sidewalks, trails, and other infrastructure along the LMLSB corridor.

#### Issue 10: Residential and/or Commercial Structures in the Immediate Foreground

- Educate planning and zoning entities and landowners about the LMLSB viewshed and the impact that planning and zoning can have on the different distance zones.
- Encourage the consideration of conservation easements in high-value areas that limit development and bring about protections to those areas.



## Section Seven. Recreational Resources

## **7.1 Byway Intrinsic Qualities**

The National Scenic Byway Program (NSBP) collectively defines intrinsic Qualities as the “archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic features that are considered representative, unique, irreplaceable, and/or distinctly characteristic of an area or region.” They are the important attributes of a byway, or the distinguishing features that create the character of the designated route, and make the byway a special place for both residents and visitors alike. Intrinsic qualities attract people to the byway and are the focus of some combination of enhancement, preservation, and/or promotion. This section includes the inventory and assessment of the significant recreational resources along the byway.

According to Scenic America, “Recreational Quality involves outdoor recreational activities directly associated with and dependent upon the natural and cultural elements of the corridor’s landscape. The recreational activities provide opportunities for active and passive recreational experiences. They include but are not limited to, downhill skiing, rafting, boating, fishing, and hiking. Driving the road itself may qualify as a pleasurable recreational experience. The recreational activities may be seasonal, but the quality and importance of the recreational activities as seasonal operations must be well recognized.”

## **7.2 Background Information**

Recreational venues in the LMLSB corridor draw visitors from across the state, regionally, nationally, and yes, internationally. Most of the renowned recreational activities lean toward natural-based. The byway offers opportunities for travelers to recreate near Lake Mille Lacs, the Rum River, and their associated watershed. Additionally, two State Parks, one National Wildlife Refuge, one Scientific Natural Area, and Audubon’s “Important Bird Area” that engulfs the entire Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway corridor. Toss in forests, wetlands, archeological treasures, and a rich Lake Mille Lacs history, recreation attached to those offerings provide many opportunities for engagement by the visitor and resident alike.

Of the almost 100 miles of Lake Mille Lacs shoreline, the publicly held land amount to approximately 8%, and private land at about 92% within the confines of a one-mile viewshed. Most recreation takes place on public lands, and contributes to economic diversity and economic growth along the LMLSB corridor. The majority of public lands are state owned and managed. Many of the public areas are significant in the amount of resources (natural, historical, cultural, scenic, archeological) that offer recreational activities.

In addition, the private landowner in the corridor who opens their land creates other public opportunities for byway recreation. The LMLSB private landowner’s contribution to access to natural resources benefits for visitors and residents rounds out a diverse offering of recreational activities.

Travelers along the byway can easily view, access, and experience natural habitats, areas of nature, cultural landscapes, and a wide variety of sites due in part to the relatively large amount of public land available on the corridor. Even the portions of the LMLSB corridor held privately offer the visitor the ability to view wildlife, spot threatened or endangered birds, or witness extensive hardwood forests through every season.

The natural resources found along the LMLSB intertwine with the recreational resources. This section offers information specifically about recreational activities and resources associated with those natural areas.

### 7.3 Significant Recreational Resources Overview

Noted from the Lake Mille Lacs Tourism Council, a partner of the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway, the organization divides recreational tourism activities into five broad categories with items listed as possibilities for adventure along the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway.

#### Categories of Recreational Resources

<b>Active Adventure</b>	Cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, kiteboarding, bicycling, hiking, canoeing, swimming
<b>Fishing</b>	Launch Fishing, Boat Rental, Summer Season and Ice Fishing for Walleye, Muskie, Northern Pike and Smallmouth Bass
<b>Hunting</b>	Whitetail Deer, Grouse, Duck, and Black Bear
<b>Motor Sports</b>	ATVing, Motorcycling, Snowmobiling
<b>Leisure Activities</b>	Bird Watching, Golfing, Beaches, Horseback Riding, Spas, Shopping, Arts & Culture, Restaurants, Bowling, Movie Theatres, Scenic Byway

Visitors can fish for Walleye, Muskie, Northern Pike and Smallmouth Bass. They hunt waterfowl, black bear, white tail deer, and small game. Photographers and botanists record nature in its big and small ways—the white deer sightings or the rare and endangered plants. Visitors explore Lake Mille Lacs and its adjacent woodlands and wetlands on foot, by bicycle, water craft, or a wide-range of motorized vehicles in this four-season byway corridor.

Winter sports including snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and ice-fishing engage all ages. Travelers from around the world visit each fall to enjoy the colorful leaf viewing offered up by native hardwood forests. The brilliant autumn foliage landscape rings the enormous sea of blue that is Lake Mille Lacs. The nature of the compact 68-mile route, makes a day's "leaf peeper tour" a do-able autumn excursion. Spring brings the eye-popping vivid green to the trees and plants to the byway's corridor. Everything that can be green, is green. The eruption from brown and grey to bright emerald seems to occur overnight. For naturalists in whose travel brings them to the forest's floor, this is an exciting, critical time before the tree's canopy completely closes for the summer. Summer opens the Lake full-bore. The days are warm and sunny, the evenings cool and comfortable. Plenty of time to be on the lake by boat, canoe, kayak, parasailing, or jet-ski; or be in the lake by way of public access sand beaches.



Small resorts, 13 in total, offering personalized service by local owner-operators help the visitor to experience the byway corridor to its full extent. The warmth of the communities, engaging histories, and a splendid lake. These resorts account for most of the byway's lodging. The Mille Lacs Grand Casino & Resort and a handful of other traditional hotels round out the offerings of lodging along the lake.

Public lands encompass about 8% of lakeshore on Lake Mille Lacs, with approximately 25,500 acres of public property that touches Lake Mille Lacs. The majority of public lands are state owned and managed. Many of the public areas are significant in the amount of resources (natural, historical, cultural, scenic, archeological) that offer recreational activities.

Three golf courses near Lake Mille Lacs; two of the 18-hole variety, and one 9-hole course, provide a variety of challenges and opportunities to those who golf.

As significant as the public parks and lands are to the byway corridor-- the private landowner in the corridor who opens (at their discretion, to the public or to their clients as part of a private business) their land expands exponentially the public opportunities for byway recreation. The LMLSB private landowner's willingness to share the stellar natural resources within their control has economic, social, and recreational benefits for the visitor as well as the residents of the byway.



*Lake Mille Lacs, at Father Hennepin State Park, along MN27*

## 7.4 Significant Recreational Resources

There are many recreational venues within the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway Corridor. The descriptive list shows the publicly owned recreational sites along the route:

1. **Lake Mille Lacs.** The large, shallow lake whose name comes from French words meaning “thousand lakes” covers over 200 square miles with a maximum depth of 42 feet. It’s location in proximity to the metropolitan areas of the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, Duluth, and Saint Cloud—all within 2 hours of the lake, make it a popular destination for many Minnesotans and beyond.

The Anchor Communities of Isle, Wahkon, Vineland, and Garrison have Lake Mille Lacs shoreline. All of the amenities which the communities offer--gas stations, convenience stores, bait and tackle, equipment rentals, lodging, and restaurants relate directly to the traffic generated by the appeal of Lake Mille Lacs.

Renowned for its walleye, the lake is also a world-class smallmouth bass lake. Muskies, Northern pike, and others make it an appealing place to fish.

**RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES:** Summer fishing, ice fishing, boating, kiteboarding, swimming, canoeing, kayaking, sailing, bird watching, beaches.



*Kites on frozen Lake Mille Lacs*

2. **Mille Lacs National Wildlife Refuge.** The National Wildlife Refuge System, within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, manages a network of lands and waters set aside to conserve America's fish, wildlife, and plants. The Mille Lacs National Wildlife Refuge is the smallest refuge in the National Wildlife Refuge System and hosts one of only five common tern breeding colonies in Minnesota. The fact that one of the largest lakes in Minnesota is home to the smallest National Wildlife Refuge is an example of the expanse of the natural systems at work on the big lake.

The common tern is a species with an extensive range throughout Europe and Asia. In North America, it nests primarily in three areas, which include the Great Lake areas. Due to several reasons, the common tern population has declined to a point where the species is classified as threatened or endangered in most of the Great Lake states. What once numbered 2,000 breeding pairs in 1900, now number less than 900 nesting pairs in Minnesota.

The slender, gull-like bird with a black cap and nape, gray back and wings, pale grayish underparts, pointed wings, and a forked tail, the common tern is similar to the Forester's tern, another rare species. Common terns select isolated, sparsely vegetated islands in large lakes for nesting, making Lake Mille Lacs an ideal location. These preferred breeding sites offer protection from predators by their natural barriers, with nearby food sources and have a stable water level during their nesting season. Conservation efforts are very labor intensive, and have been most successful when done in collaboration with other agencies.

Mille Lacs National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1915, consists of two islands, Hennepin and Spirit, in Lake Mille Lacs. The islands are covered with jumbled rock, boulders, and gravel. Hennepin Island is managed as a nesting colony for the Minnesota-listed threatened common tern. Spirit Island is used by other colonial nesting species including ring-billed gulls, herring gulls, and double-crested cormorants.

The two islands are closed to public access. If boating on Lake Mille Lacs, guidance calls for at least 100 yards offshore while fishing or observing wildlife from the watercraft. Minimizing human disturbance to the waterbirds that call the refuge home is a top priority. The two small islands offer to the recreational bird watcher, a unique birdwatching opportunity at the Mille Lacs National Wildlife Refuge.

**RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES: Boating, birdwatching**



*Common Terns, Mille Lacs National Wildlife Refuge, Lake Mille Lacs*

- 3. Father Hennepin State Park.** Located in Isle, on the southeast shore of Lake Mille Lacs, visitors enjoy a large sandy beach for swimming, two boat accesses, fishing piers and picnic sites with a panoramic view of the lake. It's named for the priest Father Louis Hennepin who visited the area with a French expedition in 1680. The historic story includes the priest's accounting of his experience, kept in a journal—and later published, described the lakes, rivers, landscapes, and the lifestyle of his hosts, the Mdewakanton Dakota.

The Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway hosts two State Parks. Father Hennepin and Mille Lacs Kathio. Father Hennepin is the smaller of the two in size (320 acres) and each have qualities unique from each other. The park has two campgrounds. One more beach-like, one more woodsy with hiking trails that take you through a hardwood forest and along the rocky shoreline of Lake Mille Lacs. The hardwoods provide shade in the summer, and spectacular color in the autumn.

Abundant wildlife is on display at the park. Hawks, ospreys, owls, and eagles are common. Tracks of beaver, raccoon, and mink are prevalent year-round. Now, let's talk about the deer of Father Hennepin. There are the typical white-tail deer, and then there are the rare white deer that inhabit the park. It's a very local, unique variation of the white-tail deer common to the area. The fish prominent at the lake can be caught at Father Hennepin State Park. Northern pike, walleye, bluegills, sunfish, and smallmouth bass are found in the lake.

The stands of aspen-birch and small clearings are excellent for ruffed grouse. The small ponds and streams provide homes for amphibians and insects, which in turn attract larger fish, birds, and mammals. In the spring when the swamps thaw, the sound of frogs leaving the mire is tremendous. Millions croak to announce a new season on the lake.

Visitors enjoy the diversity in this park. The aspen-birch and mixed hardwood forests, pines, conifer bogs, and swamps. The terminal moraine dam, responsible for the formation of Lake Mille Lacs is found in Father Hennepin State Park. Camping closes for the winter on October 20<sup>th</sup>, and reopens in the spring, in conjunction with the snow melt. A state park permit is required for entry to the park.

**RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES:** Camping, fishing, boating, geo-caching, naturalist programs, stargazing, birdwatching, picnicking, volleyball, children's playground, swimming beach





#### 4. Soo-Line Trail

The Soo Line Trail was created from segments of the former Soo Line Railroad that operated in the area previously. The converted rail to trail ballast and gravel surface is enjoyed by many types of outdoor enthusiasts because of the relatively flat terrain with gentle sweeping curves available on the Soo Line Trail.

The Soo Line Southern Route extends over 100 miles from the Lake Wobegon Trail through Morrison County east to Mille Lacs County, travels through Aitkin County to Pine and Carlton to points beyond the Minnesota-Wisconsin border. The point-to-point trail runs through the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway corridor, in Onamia, coming along the south shore of Lake Mille Lacs at Wahkon and Isle.

In addition to its encounter with Lake Mille Lacs, the Soo Line makes a 22 miles swath through Mille Lacs County, running just south of the Rum River State Forest, Mille Lacs Kathio State Park, Mille Lacs Lake, and Father Hennepin State Park. This portion of the trail is maintained by Mille Lacs County and the Mille Lacs Drift Skippers Snowmobile/ATV Club. From the Mille Lacs/Aitkin County line, the 23 miles into Aitkin County offers access to the Red Top Trail within the LMLSB corridor, and beyond to the Solana Loop. The Aitkin County portion of the trail is maintained by Aitkin County and local ATV clubs.

**RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES: ATV, fishing, horseback riding, mountain biking snowmobiling, walking, cross country skiing.**





## 5. Mille Lacs Kathio State Park

Located north of Onamia, and south of Vineland just off of US169, at Mille Lacs Kathio State Park climbers can climb a 100-foot fire tower overlooking rolling forests of oak, maple, birch, and pine. Hanging out where bald eagles soar, a view of Lake Mille Lacs rewards people who reach the top of the tower.

Mille Lacs Kathio State Park has more than 30 miles of trails, 70+ campsites with a wide variety of amenities, including sites for groups, backpacking, and horses. Camper cabins are open year-round.

The year-round interpretive center offers fun activities, plus nature programs. When visiting Mille Lacs Kathio State Park in the winter, cross-country skiing on Mille Lacs Kathio State Park forested trails or take advantage of their sledding hill. The year-round trail center offers a warming respite with modern restrooms.

In the warm weather months, fishing, swimming, and boating are popular lake activities. Kayak, canoe, or rowboats are available for rent at the park.

Visiting Mille Lacs Kathio State Park, nature's artwork a result of ancient glaciers is on full display. A state park permit is required for entry to the park.

**RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES:** climbing, hiking, camping, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, sledding, kayaking, canoeing, boating, naturalist education, geo-caching, birdwatching, fishing, swimming



*View from observation tower, Mille Lacs Kathio State Park, US169&CR26*

## 6. Mille Lacs Indian Museum and Trading Post

Located in the Anchor Community of Vineland offers a thoughtfully designed full-service museum, complete with a wide range of educational opportunities that are hosted by the museum. The museum operates from May through October each year, and admission is charged. The Trading Post, next door to the museum, is open year-round and offers a one-of-a-kind shopping experience. Visiting the Mille Lacs Indian Museum is an excellent complementary stop with Mille Lacs Kathio State Park, both along the LMLSB on US169, within several miles of each other.





## Section Eight. Historical Resources

## **8.1 Byway Intrinsic Qualities**

The National Scenic Byways Program (NSBP) collectively defines intrinsic qualities as the “archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic features that are considered representative, unique, irreplaceable and/or distinctly characteristic of an area or region.” They are the important attributes of a byway, or the distinguishing features that create the character of the designated route and make the byway a special place for both residents and visitor alike. Intrinsic qualities attract people to the byway and are the focus of some combination of enhancement, preservation and/or promotion. This section includes the significant historical resource along the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway.

## **8.2 Background Information**

Historical sites, structures, and artifacts are important to the LMLSB residents and visitors alike. They include the history associated with the Native American inhabitants of the area and structures of tremendous value directly related to the roadways of the byway.

## **8.3 Significant Historical Resources**

### **Aitkin County National Register of Historic Places: Malmo Mounds Village Site**

First surveyed in 1893, and again in 1899, the mound group located on the northeast shore of Lake Mille Lacs (at the 2 o'clock hour), the US Department of Interior in 1975 placed the site on the National Register of Historic Places, due to its archeological and cultural significance.

The 1899 survey identified 128 mounds. In 1936, the University of Minnesota excavated 13 mounds that became the subject of books and additional studies. Many mounds were leveled in 1939 during the building of MN18, and others were leveled to build lake cabins. Since 1970 the site has been privately owned.

Malmo Ware, a type of pottery, named after the site is firmly dated to the Initial Woodland period (1000-200 BC). Its distinct markings and structure are thought to be the earliest pottery ware in the Mille Lacs area.



**Crow Wing County National Register of Historic Places: Bridge No. 5265**

Bridge No. 5265 Garrison, on US169 one of the New Deal bridge projects built in the 1930s. A modular iron-plate arch and fine stone masonry. One of the finest examples of a style used in many Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) bridges in Minnesota. The bridge was successfully restored in 2019.



### **Crow Wing County National Register of Historic Places: Garrison Concourse**

At the junction of US169 and MN18, a large highway wayside built in 1935-39 by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) centerpiece of an early and extensive roadside development project. Noted for its blend of formalism and National Park Service rustic design.



*Historical drawing and photograph of Mille Lacs Concourse, Garrison*



### **Crow Wing County National Register of Historic Places: Kenny Lake Overlook**

A historic roadside park in Garrison Township adjacent to MN18, just north of the US169 and MN18 along the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway. While not located on the byway, the two-acre sit provides a parking area and an overlook of Kenny Lake. The significance related to the LMLSB is the overlook's relationship to other Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) structures located in and near the Anchor Community of Garrison.

The wayside built in 1939 as part of the Mille Lacs Lake Highway Improvement Plan, a major highway improvement project, representing the work of the Veterans Division of the CCC and some of the earliest scenic improvements of the Minnesota Highway Department and for its National Park Service rustic design. The overlook is among the first generation of Minnesota Highway Department's roadside parks established in the 1930s and 40s that sought to improve highway safety, beauty, and aiding the burgeoning automobile tourism industry by providing scenic areas for motorists to relax, eat, and use restrooms in the years before the development of gas stations, and later convenience stores.

From September 1935 to April 1940, several CCC companies cycled through a camp just south of the Anchor Community of Garrison, all working on the Mille Lacs Lake Highway Improvement Plan. Most of the regular companies of the CCC were men under the age of 25. Company 2713-V of the Veterans Division made up of older men, veterans of World War I, who had been hit particularly hard during the Great Depression. While Minnesota hosted over 100 CCC companies, less than ten comprised veterans. The Mille Lacs project was one of only four camps in total that were sponsored by the Minnesota Highway Department.

At the time of construction in 1939 MN18 was a recently built gravel road. The stone for the Kenny Lake Overlook came from a quarry near the Anchor Community of Isle.

The Lake Kenny Overlook was designed by three men, Howard O. Skooglun, Harold Olson and A.R. Nichols. Together they designed this and the previously identified Garrison Concourse, Bridge 5265, Bridge 3355, and ST. Alban's Bay Culvert. All of these structures are listed on the National Register of Historic Places; taken individually they are substantial in design and history. As a collection within a 5-mile distance from each other, they are magnificent.



*Kenny Lake Overlook, Garrison*

**Mille Lacs County National Register of Historic Places: Bridge No. 3355**

Kathio Township, designated June 29, 1998, US169 over Whitefish Creek. One of Minnesota's few ornamental concrete slab bridges covered in fine masonry by the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1939.



**Mille Lacs County National Register of Historic Places: Cooper Site**

Located at the west central Shore of Lake Ogechie, within Mille Lacs Kathio State Park. The pre-contact and early-contact era Mdewakanton Sioux habitation site and burial mounds reflects the type of site for a particular cultural complex and a contributing property to the Kathio Site.



*Cooper Site, Mille Lacs Kathio State Park, Mille Lacs County*

### **Mille Lacs County National Register of Historic Places: Kathio Site**

Within Mille Lacs Kathio State Park, a concentration of at least 17 archaeological sites in the contact-era homeland of the Dakota people, later taken over by the Ojibwe, with high potential to illuminate the development of the area's pre- and post-contact indigenous cultures. Currently, the site is within the confines of Mille Lacs Kathio State Park.



### **Mille Lacs County National Register of Historic Places: Onamia Municipal Hall**

Located on the LMLSB along MN27/621 Main St, in Onamia. The Fieldstone municipal hall built 1935-36, is a well-preserved example of typical Works Progress Administration unemployment relief projects using readily available, but labor-intensive local materials. It continues to operate as the city hall and center for city government for the Anchor Community of Onamia.





**Mille Lacs County National Register of History Places: Petaga Point**

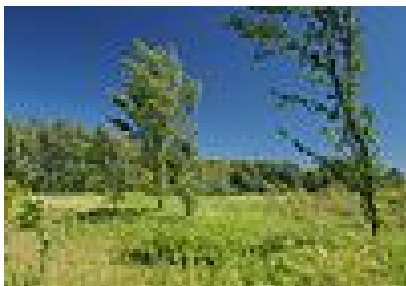
The outlet of Lake Ogechie in Mille Lacs Kathio State Park near Onamia, 3000-1000 BC habitation site, the oldest within the Kathio Site District.

**Mille Lacs County National Register of Historic Places: Saw Mill Site**

Northwest shore of Lake Ogechie, Mille Lacs Kathio State Park, Onamia vicinity, site of a precontact village in use 400-1600 CE, representing a distinctive cultural phase of native occupation. A contributing property to the Kathio Site.

**Mille Lacs County National Register of Historic Places: Vineland Bay Site**

North Shore of Vineland Bay, Vineland vicinity Mille Lacs Kathio State Park, Site of a late precontact-era village circa 800-1100 CE as well as a 19<sup>th</sup>-century Ojibwe camp, the former being significant as a distinct cultural phase of native occupation. A contributing property to the Kathio Site.



## 8.4 Historical Societies and Museums

### Historical Societies and Museums

<b>Aitkin County Historical Society and Depot Museum</b>	<p>20 Pacific Street, Aitkin</p> <p>A great place to learn about the history of transportation in central Minnesota. The ACHS collects, preserves, and displays information and artifacts pertinent to Aitkin County history. The Depot Museum is located in the historic Northern Pacific depot constructed in 1916 in the city of Aitkin. Displays and a well-supplied research resource center available for public utilization</p>
<b>Crow Wing County Historical Society</b>	<p>320 Laurel Street, Brainerd</p> <p>Established in 1927, and operates as a museum and library</p>
<b>Mille Lacs Indian Museum and Indian Trading Post</b>	<p>43411 Oodena Drive, Vineland/Onamia</p> <p>The museum illustrates the journey of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe from their settlement in Minnesota 300 year ago to their culture, traditions, and lives today.</p> <p>The trading post established in the 1930s is available to shop year-round at Minnesota's largest selection of traditional and contemporary Native American art and crafts. Selection includes quillwork, beadwork, pottery, baskets, jewelry, moccasins and more.</p>
<b>Mille Lacs Lake Historical Society</b>	<p>Established in 1983 as a grassroots non-profit organization, that is tied to Lake Mille Lacs and surrounding area.</p>

## 8.5 Historic Resources Strategies

Developed by the LMLSB committee and stakeholders the strategies relate to future efforts regarding historic resources present in the byway corridor, and ways to preserve and promote them.

### Potential Historic Resources Strategies

<b>Develop and Implement a LMLSB Historic Restoration Plan</b>	Work with LMLSB stakeholders to develop a plan that identifies and prioritizes historic infrastructure/collection projects, identifies private and public funding opportunities, and encourages strategic and timely projects along the byway.
<b>Support and Leverage Historic Project Fundraising</b>	Partner with LMLSB stakeholders to identify, develop, and help implement opportunities for private and public fundraising to help implement historic projects.
<b>Raise Public Awareness</b>	<p>Document and celebrate successful historic restoration, preservation, and engagement projects in a variety of ways.</p> <p>Working with state and local historical societies, preservation groups, chambers of commerce, economic development boards, and government leadership coordinate education and information efforts related to historic resources along the LMLSB.</p> <p>Engage visitors with historic interpretation by creating dynamic historic learning opportunities along the byway.</p>





## **Section Nine.** *Cultural Resources*

## **9.1 Byway Intrinsic Qualities**

The National Scenic Byways Program (NSBP) collectively defines intrinsic qualities as the “archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational and scenic features that are considered representative, unique, irreplaceable and/or distinctly characteristic of an area or region.” They are the important attributes of a byway, or the distinguishing features that create the character of the designated route and make the byway a special place for both residents and visitors alike. Intrinsic qualities attract people to the byway and are the focus of some combination of enhancement, preservation and/or promotion. This section includes the assessment of the significant cultural resources along the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway.

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

## **9.2 Background Information**

The opportunities to experience local culture exist along the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway, providing one-of-a-kind, interesting travel experiences for byway visitors. The cultural opportunities directly engage the byway traveler, give them an opportunity to meet local people, and encourage visitors to learn more about local customs, beliefs, architecture, celebrations, art, food, and more.

They can determine whether or not a byway traveler feels like they had an authentic experience or have visited a special place. Cultural opportunities span time and place and can make or break a visitor’s overall satisfaction with their visit, as well as influence the likelihood that they will recommend the LMLSB to friends and family.

Small, locally owned establishments that sell local or regional goods and services, in unique ways greets the visitor to the Lake Mille Lacs area. Few chain or “big box” businesses exist along the route. Cultural resources along the LMLSB come through via local experiences associated with those small businesses, including among other things, local artists and their resulting works. Available from the byway’s communities include a wide variety of arts and crafts, live music at the local bar and grills, school theatre productions, local farmers markets, and restaurants featuring local foods.

### 9.3 Community Celebrations

Reenactments and social events related to specific traditions, the natural environment, or a specific culture, are all part of the Lake Mille Lacs travel experience. The Mille Lacs Lake community offers a variety of events that include in some large or small way each of the six intrinsic qualities of the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway.

#### Mille Lacs Rendezvous

Since 1993, the annual Mille Lacs History Festival and Rendezvous has been held in late June on a rolling field in the woods south of Lake Mille Lacs. The event produces a bloom of white canvas in the form of tents in the style of 200 years ago. The fur trade era is well connected to the Mille Lacs area, and there were multiple trading posts, trails, and portages present. Aitkin County was named after a fur trader.

The Rendezvous camp opens on Saturday the last weekend in June, six miles south of Isle on MN47, and one mile west on Red Road. The sights, sounds, and smells of 200 years ago come alive once again with food, blacksmiths, woodcarvers, woodworkers, ropemakers, music, and storytellers.



### **Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Pow Wow**

The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe each June hosts a Pow Wow in Vineland where renewing Native American culture and preserving the rich heritage of the Ojibwe is shown through dancing and singing. The public is invited to attend.





### **Anchor Community Celebrations**

Each of the Anchor Communities takes their turn at hosting a hometown celebration, each with a unique local flavor. It's an example of how the communities of the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway work together to generate interest for their community, as well as the larger lake community.

With the big weekends of "Fishing Opener" –the second Saturday in May that brings walleye fishing back to the lake, and Memorial Day, the last weekend in May, the lake communities bring together local



music, 5k and 10k runs, antique car shows, quilt shows, pie sales, and more, to welcome the summer travel season.

Onamia kicks off the chain of events the 2<sup>nd</sup> weekend in June with Onamia Days, followed by Isle Days the 2<sup>nd</sup> weekend in July, then comes Garrison Play Days the 3<sup>rd</sup> weekend in July, and Wahkon Days the 3<sup>rd</sup> weekend in August. Just in time to put a wrap on activity prior to the “Great Minnesota Get-Together”, otherwise known as the Minnesota State Fair.







## 9.4 Significant Cultural Resources

### The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Jingle Dress

When the late Larry Amik Smallwood's film 'The Jingle Dress Tradition' aired on public television stations, the retelling of the tale exposed a much larger audience to the locally familiar story. As the story goes, the dress and the dance came to a Mille Lacs man in a dream as a way to heal his sick daughter. The jingle dress and its healing properties spread quickly through Ojibwe country, and eventually to the Dakota, and beyond.

The Jingle Dress holds a cultural prominence during the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918-1920, it showed the central role of women as healers in Anishinaabe society, and it connected Indians in North America to the global community. The beauty of the dress, both visually and spiritually has its origins at Lake Mille Lacs. Films, books, museum exhibits, and live demonstrations of jingle dresses reminds the viewer and participant of the power of the dress and the people responsible for its creation.







## **Francis Lee Jaques and the Jaques Art Center**

Francis Lee Jaques (pronounced jay-kweez—rhymes with squeeze) moved to a farm near the Mississippi River in rural Aitkin in 1904 when he was 15 years old. In Aitkin, Jaques began his career as a self-taught artist depicting wildlife and outdoor scenes in addition to being a taxidermist, railroad fireman, farmer and logger.

After completing an electrical engineering course, entered World War I, serving in France. He later worked for the James Ford Bell Museum of Natural History at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis and the American Museum of Natural History in New York.

Jacques painted dozens of dioramas, two of which are on permanent loan to the Jacques Gallery from the Bell Museum. In addition to backdrops for habitat groups, he illustrated over forty books with black and white scratch board drawings. Many of the books were written by his wife Florence Page Jaques, such as the well-read, 'Canoe Country' and 'Snow Shoe Country'. He also illustrated books by Sigurd Olson, noted Minnesota naturalist, including 'The Singing Wilderness' and 'Listening Point'.

In 1940 he was the winner of the Federal Duck Stamp award. Lee, as he was known by his friends, was a renowned easel painter of wildlife art. He and his wife, Florence traveled the world in the course of his work.

The Jacques Art Center in Aitkin, celebrates the visual arts in North Central Minnesota by presenting art exhibits, workshops, and other programming to all ages and backgrounds. Since 1995, the JAC, as it is locally known exhibits local, regional, and national art congruent with its mission.

Located in downtown Aitkin, within the historic Carnegie Library, in addition to the gallery the JAC has a gift shop filled with art and handiwork of artists and artisans.





### **Ripple River Gallery and Ripple River Woodturning**

Original work by more than 60 exceptional regional artisans, owned by two Aitkin local artisans Bob Carls and Amy Sharpe. Featuring monthly exhibits showcasing individual artists. Gallery exhibits and collections, woodturning and weaving studios, gardens in a welcoming woodland setting. Sponsor arts adventures that bring travelers from across the globe, and trips from Lake Mille Lacs to points beyond.

### **Steve Premo**

Well-known Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe artist, started to draw as a child, while recovering from a serious leg injury. His mother gave him art supplies. By third grade, his style developed and the secret was out—he was always asked to draw things. By sixth grade he had his first graphic design job producing the poster for his mother’s quilting circle.

After his first trip to the Minneapolis Institute of Art he found he liked Rembrandt and other classics, equating them to “footprints in history”. People take care of those images, and give them a special place. Through his long career in art and design, put in his words, “Painting feeds the soul; design feeds the kids.” This sentiment could be translated to many occupations held by many people along Lake Mille Lacs. Multiple interests and talents serving multiple purposes.

Within Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe territory, many products of Premo’s designs are evident. He says, “I am nothing without the Mille Lacs Band. It is my muse, my inspiration.”

### The Works of Art Carr (b.1942—d.2019)

The art graced the front pages of the Mille Lacs Messenger for almost 25 years. The pieces were based on Carr's fundamental belief that life was meant to be fun. Self-described artist, not to be confused with cartoon artist, nor a sketch artist. He always said he was simply "an artist".



According to Carr, his art started as a toddler, drawing little faces on eggs in his mother's refrigerator. Spending some time at the University of Minnesota studying art, it was the Vietnam era, and Carr was drafted to the Army. He returned to Minnesota, living in the "art neighborhood" in South Minneapolis. After years of coming to visit his mother at Lake Mille Lacs, he moved to the area, producing his first cover drawing for the Messenger for their New Years week edition in 1995.

Prolific in the amount of work produced, Carr's work can be seen around the lake, in public places, and in private homes.

**Al Mohler (b.1983 – d.1986)**

Al Mohler was born and raised in Onamia near the shores of Lake Mille Lacs. A true outdoorsman, Mohler hunted and fished for livelihood and his work reflected as much. As a self-taught painter of mostly outdoor scenes he turned out thousands of works of art before his death in 1986 at the age of 93.

For the better part of seven decades, each year he produced hundreds of painted ovals—his signature style—oval tree slabs—wood cut at Onamia saw mills. In addition to his painted ovals, Mohler as a sign painter created signage for mostly local businesses, including many Lake Mille Lacs area resorts. He would typically initial each sign with the notation at the bottom: “Devil with the Brush”.

He focused mainly on the natural world that surrounded him, from bears to deer, wolves, elk, ducks, and pheasants. Mostly working with oil paints, Mohler created natural scenes on wood-slab or hardboard. Mohler also created folk scenes that depict life of the Ojibwe as well as hunting and fishing scenes. Gatherings of collectors of “Mohlers” from around the state have taken place in Onamia—bringing their favorite Mohler or two, and sharing stories of their connection to the artisan.



## 9.5 Possible Strategies

Many opportunities exist for visitors to experience modern history, culture, art, and folklore along the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway. The byway corridor is made up of a very diverse population compared to other rural areas in the region. Several factors contribute to this: 1) in-migration from the metropolitan areas of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, translating to their global community moving to Lake Mille Lacs; 2) the established Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe community; 3) the established non-Indian community that came historically because of a wide range of reasons, such as logging, fur trade, or later the railroad, and stayed; 4) multi-generational connection to the lake because of family-owned cabins; and then: 5) the difficult-to-quantify reason that the area simply appeals to a vast array of people.

Some of the challenges to fully expose the culture of a rural region is shared by the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway corridor. Small, locally owned businesses can struggle to maintain a main street presence, economic development initiatives don't always happen in the smallest towns, the cost related to gathering and maintaining the resources can be overwhelming to the small lake communities, and finding agreement about what should be shown as prominent is not always easy.

Below are a number of possible strategies identified by the LMLSB as future efforts to expand the cultural intrinsic qualities:

<b>Cultural Intrinsic Qualities Strategies</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Support the identification and collection of oral histories from local and regional people about their cultures and experiences and use them to develop interpretation and outreach materials.</b></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Encourage cultural and historic documentation amongst byway partners.</b></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Develop cultural interpretation tools (exhibits, digital, print).</b></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Support the development, coordination and delivery of culturally diverse materials and events.</b></li></ul>





## Section Ten: Archaeological Resources

## **10.1 Byway Intrinsic Qualities**

The National Scenic Byways Program (NSBP) collectively defines intrinsic qualities as the “archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic features that are considered representative, unique, irreplaceable and/or distinctly characteristic of an area or region.” They are the important attributes of a byway, or the distinguishing features that create the character of the designated route and make the byway a special place for both residents and visitors alike. Intrinsic qualities attract people to the byway and are the focus of some combination of enhancement, preservation, and/or promotion. This section includes the significant archaeological resources along the byway, and possible maintenance and enhancement strategies.

According to Scenic America, “Archaeological Quality involves those characteristics of the scenic byway corridor that are physical evidence of historic or prehistoric human life or activity that are visible and capable of being inventoried and interpreted. The scenic byway corridor’s archaeological interest, as identified through ruins, artifacts, structural remains, and other physical evidence, has scientific significance that educates the viewer and stirs an appreciation for the past.”

## **10.2 Background Information**

The Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway travels through an area of Minnesota that has rich archaeological resources and a significant Native American History. The connections to these archaeological treasures, as well as their preservation, understanding, and interpretation, are important to the LMLSB—its residents and visitors.

## **10.3 Significant Archaeological Resources**

### **Kathio Site Archaeological District National Historic Site**

Resorts situated along the beautiful shores of Lake Mille Lacs have drawn vacationers for nearly 100 years. Centuries earlier, those same shores were home to many Native American villages whose occupants took full advantage of the abundant fishery, game, and wild rice—all that the lake could provide. The chain of smaller lakes at the Rum River outlet, leaving Lake Mille Lacs to ultimately make its way to the Mississippi, was the “it” spot for Native settlers, primarily Dakota, long before the time of European contact.

The French explorer Daniel Greysolon, Sieur DuLhut (Duluth), would encounter the Dakota at Lake Mille Lacs in 1679, but by the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the region was occupied by Ojibwe groups driven west from their homelands by European expansion. The Ojibwe continue to have a major presence on the southwest shore of Lake Mille Lacs today.

In 1964, Secretary of Interior Stuart Udall designated the Kathio Site Archaeological District, comprising 17 related sites, a National Historic Landmark. At the time of designation, it was deemed important because of its potential to provide significant insights into the profound changes that were wrought among native peoples during the early Historic period (3200 B.C. to 476 A.D.). The Kathio Site, almost

13,000 acres in its entirety, includes all of Mille Lacs Kathio State Park, a portion of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Reservation, and several privately owned land parcels.

Stewardship of the National Historic Landmark provided primarily by the state park managers work with preservation and interpretation tasks critical for this important archeological resource. Public programming, exhibits at the visitor center, a self-guided tour at one of the archeological sites, and the 1.5 mile Landmark Trail all interpret the importance of the National Historic Landmark to Mille Lacs Kathio State Park visitors. Visitors can also learn more about Native American history at the Mille Lacs Indian Museum operated by the Minnesota Historical Society on the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Reservation, 12 miles north of Onamia, along US169 on the south edge of Vineland.

### **Minnesota Historical Society-Bradbury Brook**

The MHS archaeology collections contain almost one million artifacts dating from ca 11,500 years ago to the present. The artifacts, acquired through excavation, surface survey, and underwater recovery techniques. Over 125,000 artifacts were found near Lake Mille Lacs at Bradbury Brook, dating to 9220 B.P (Before Present), making it the earliest dated excavated site in Minnesota.

### **Petaga Point Archaeological Site**

The site, located in Mille Lacs Kathio State Park, on a peninsula formed where the Rum River exits Ogechie Lake. Today a portion of the site is used as the Mille Lacs Kathio State Park picnic area.

In 1679 the French explorers Greysolon and DuLhut first encountered the large Dakota village, which many historians believe was located in the northern part of Mille Lacs Kathio State Park, where the Rum River flows out of Lake Mille Lacs. The explorers wrote of the important population, political, and spiritual center of the Dakota nation. Father Louis Hennepin is best known for documenting the epic journey into North America in 1679-80, describing his stay with the Mdewakanton Dakota at Lake Mille Lacs from May through September of 1680. His book was published in 1683 under the title 'Description of Louisiana'.

Sometimes called the "Father of the Minnesota State Park System", Jacob Brower was the first person to conduct archaeological work in the Lake Mille Lacs region. In the 1890s Brower conducted surveys and mapped sites of ancient villages and cemeteries around the lake, along its shores. He noted a concentration of archaeological sites in the area that is now Mille Lacs Kathio State Park. Brower's pioneering work informed and inspired later archaeologists who would find the Lake Mille Lacs vicinity a rich treasure of knowledge about the ancient past.

In 1922 John and Judith Moore moved to the peninsula that would come to be known as Petaga Point Archeological Site. The family built a house and outbuildings and began to live from the landscape on the shores of Ogechie Lake. They grew crops and raised livestock, with hunting, fishing, gathering berries and nuts from the forest and harvesting wild rice from Ogechie Lake supplemented their subsistence farming. The Moore family lived on the peninsula until 1939. The lifestyle of the Moore's is representative of most of the people who took up residence along the lake during that time.

In 1933, the University of Minnesota's first sponsored archaeological investigation at Kathio took place. U of M Professor Albert Jenks and graduate assistant Lloyd Wilford conducted excavations and surveys of several sites in the area that would later become Mille Lacs Kathio State Park. Wilford would return to the site and worked at Mille Lacs sites through the 1950s.

Further archeological investigations continued through the intervening years, with the sites gaining more prominence with every artifact's unearthing. In 1957, Minnesota Governor Orville Freeman signed the bill creating Mille Lacs Kathio State Park.

Petaga Point Archaeological Site has revealed evidence that people were living and making tools of stone and copper on the peninsula between the Rum River and Ogechie Lake about 3,500 years ago.

By about 2,200 years ago people had begun to settle along the shore of the lake, and the first ceramic vessels appear in the archaeological record.

800 years-ago a small number of large houses stood in the village along the banks of the river on the south side of the peninsula. Sophisticated cooking and storage vessels existed, inhabitants hunted with bow and arrow and harvested plants from the lake and forest. Some hold the view that these occupants of the peninsula are the ancestors of the people who would form the Dakota nation.

At the time of the European explorer DuLhut with priest, Father Louis Hennepin, the villages of Dakota people were scattered across the landscape that is now Mille Lacs Kathio State Park. Around 1750, the Ojibwe people moved into the area, displacing the Dakota, who moved south and west.

By the late 1800s the timber industry came to the area to harvest pines that grew along the lakes and rivers. Trees were cut in the winter and in spring were floated down the river to sawmills.

Following the logging, families attempted small-scale farming in the "cutover", like John and Judith Moore did in the 1920s until 1939. The 1957 State Park designation followed in 1964 with the Kathio National Historic Landmark District recognition, commemorating 9,000 years of humanity.

### **Malmo Mounds and Village Site**

Placed on the National Register of Historic Places by the Department of Interior in 1975, this Aitkin County site at the northeast shore of Lake Mille Lacs was surveyed by Jacob Brower at the time of surveying occurring at Kathio Site and others around the lake in 1893. Over 100 mounds were identified, and noted as a village site. A 1936 University of Minnesota group excavated 13 more mounds, leading to Dr. Lloyd Wilford's publication 'Mille Lacs Aspect'.

Since the original survey and subsequent discoveries, over half of the original mound group has been destroyed due to the building of MN18 in 1939, and through housing development in the area.

The Malmo Ware pottery prevalent to the area are thought to be the earliest pottery are in the Lake Mille Lacs area. The distinctive smooth surfaced, limestone-tempered cone-shaped wide-mouthed jars have been studied extensively by the University of Minnesota Anthropology Department



## Stories, Events, and Beliefs

Understanding the customs of the past societies that flourished in this region, their beliefs, and activities creates a compelling byway experience. Add to that, accountings of the most notable inhabitants and events elevates the travel beyond a portion of road—a truly unique destination.

Sharing stories from disparate groups can produce common themes. Things like water, and the connections everyone has to it, has a unifying quality. The collecting of the folklore, stories, and legends that express the customs and tradition of the people that lived along the byway corridor have the ability to shape the visitor’s perception of the byway.

### 10.4 Possible Archeological Strategies

Archeological Intrinsic Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Exceptional archeological sites exist within the LMLSB corridor. Develop interpretive materials that support them.</b></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Help state park, public sites, museums, and others to provide cross-training and technical assistance to increase the understanding, and how to provide interpretation and education to the LMLSB visitor.</b></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Expand the awareness through partner sites to expand the amount of knowledge and understanding of the work to protect archaeological sites.</b></li></ul>



## Section Eleven: Transportation and Safety

## **11.1 Introduction**

A successful scenic byway relies on transportation and safety, as a top priority for federal, state, and local officials remains a top priority for the byways across the country. The roadways included in the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway: U.S. Highway 169 (US169), Minnesota Trunk Highway 18 (MN18), Minnesota Trunk Highway (MN27), Minnesota Trunk Highway 47 (MN47), and Mille Lacs County Road 26 (CSAH26). The multiple entities that own and maintain those roads and provide management of them according to their policies and guidelines. Fortunately, because of State of Minnesota Scenic Byway designation, the LMLSB committee and their partners can act as an advocate for opportunities that lead toward improvement of the roadways and provide a safe byway route.

This section of the CMP provides information about transportation and safety as they relate to specific goals and projects. It reviews the available data about existing conditions, crashes, and other relevant information about the LMLSB, and concludes with some possible strategies.

## **11.2 Existing Conditions**

The circuitous 68-mile Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway (LMLSB) loops through six Anchor Communities, three counties, nine townships, and one tribal nation. The majority of the byway route is managed by the Minnesota Department of Transportation in cooperation with the other jurisdictions. In the evaluation of existing road conditions along the byway the following items were noted: 1) speed limits; 2) the presence and location(s) of rumble strips; 3) presence and width of shoulders; 4) lighting; 5) guard rail.

Speed limits on the majority of the route is 55 mph, with speeds lowered to between 45 and 30 mph in other portions of the route reflecting community residential and commercial areas, or terrain changes. None of the 68-mile route is a gravel surface.

Rumble strips exist in some combination of fog line and/or center line for all of the route, with the exception of MN18. The combination of no rumble strips nor shoulder (paved or gravel), and amount of remaining pavement markings is an area of concern for MN18.

In review of condition of shoulders along the route, going clock-wise, shoulders do not exist along MN27 from Onamia to CR26, shoulder widths increase on US169 to 8', reduce to no shoulder along MN18, when arriving at MN47 4' shoulder exists until Isle. Along MN27 between Isle to the US169 junction, shoulder width is 2'. In present condition, pedestrian or bicycling use along the route would be challenging. There are alternative county roads near the LMLSB route that can facilitate easier traversing and offer both pedestrians and bicyclists opportunities to view Lake Mille Lacs up close.

MnDOT placed lights exist at all junctions of the byway, with the exception of CR26 where no lights are present either at US169 or MN27. In addition to intersection or junction lighting, significant lighting is placed along US169 in Vineland.

Installation of guard rail at the Rum River west of Onamia along MN17, several locations along US169, at MN18 near Wealthwood and another at Barnacle's Resort.

### 11.3 Traffic Counts

By using a clockwise narrative, the 68-mile Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway traffic counts offer a reflection of the differences in traffic volume from one portion to the route to another. Beginning in Anchor Community of Malmo at the junction of MN18 and MN47, traveling south toward the Anchor Community of Isle, this Aitkin County portion of MN47 reports 1,350. The closer to Malmo the rates are somewhat lower, but as the road continues south, more travelers, about 1,750 a day, will use MN47 near Isle.

In Mille Lacs County, at the junction of MN47 and MN27 at the Anchor Community of Isle, the traffic count numbers grow to 3,850 between Isle and the Anchor Community of Wahkon. Traveling along the southern shore of Lake Mille Lacs, the traffic numbers west of Wahkon lessen slightly to about 2,450. From Wahkon to the junction of MN27 and US169, the numbers remain at the approximately the 2,450 mark.

At the MN27 and US169 junction, the traffic numbers spike dramatically. From that intersection, turning north toward the Anchor Community of Vineland, traffic numbers reach almost 10,000 between the MN27/US169 junction and the junction of US169 and CR26 (Shakopee Lake Road).

The CR26 loop in the byway route through Mille Lacs Kathio State Park to MN27 at Onamia has a count of 290 on Shakopee Lake Road, with numbers closer to 3,000 near Kathio State Park on one end, and a similar count near Onamia on the other.

Staying on US169 at CR26 and remaining northbound toward Vineland, the traffic numbers climb from almost 10,000 to 11,300 at the Crow Wing County Anchor Community of Garrison. At Garrison the choices travelers make to stay on either US169 toward Aitkin, or MN18 toward Brainerd splits the traffic counts slightly. Those traveling on MN18 toward Brainerd account for 8,800, and those remaining on the byway route via US169 toward Aitkin number 4,150.

Back in Aitkin County, the US169/MN18 junction at the 11 o'clock hour, traveling along the north shore of Lake Mille Lacs the traffic numbers settle in to between 2,900 and 960 when you return to your beginning point of Malmo.



## 11.4 Future LMLSB MnDOT Projects

Minnesota Department of Transportation Projects on Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway 2020-2029	
MnDOT District 1—Route: MN18 Replace the bridge over Morman Creek and stream on MN47 in Aitkin County Project Year: 2020    Project Cost: \$1.99M	
MnDOT District 1—Route: MN18 Resurface MN18 from the north junction of US169 to the north junction of MN47 Project Year: 2024    Project Cost: \$4.8M-\$6.4M	
MnDOT District 3—Route: US169 Resurface highway from 0.26 miles south of Wagadaki Drive in Vineland to 1.1 miles north of MN18 in Garrison Project Year: 2024    Project Cost: \$6.9M-\$9.3M	
MnDOT District 3—Route: MN27 Reconstruct highway from 1 <sup>st</sup> Street to 3 <sup>rd</sup> Street in Wahkon Project Year: 2024    Project Cost: \$1.0M -\$1.4M	
MnDOT District 1—Route: MN47 Resurface MN47 from the Mille Lacs-Aitkin county line to just north of CR80 Project Year: 2029    Project Cost: \$2.5M-\$3.3M	

## 11.5 Assessment of Safety Concerns

Created in 2003, Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths (TZD), the state’s cornerstone traffic safety program employs an interdisciplinary approach to reducing traffic crashes, injuries, and deaths on Minnesota roads. The Toward Zero Deaths (TZD) approach is based on the belief that even one traffic-related death on our roads is unacceptable. This “zero deaths” idea, first adopted in Sweden in 1997 as “Vision Zero”, evolved to Minnesota’s TZD. Minnesota has identified TZD as a core objective in its Strategic Highway Safety Plans. The State’s TZD program team works in partnership with community groups to improve traffic safety of a designated area. Toward Zero Deaths provides technical assistance, materials and guidance to local groups who are committed to reducing crashes and the fatalities and severe injuries that result from them.

Aitkin, Crow Wing, and Mille Lacs County each has a fully-functioning TZD Safe Roads Coalition that operates in full cooperation with the state-wide effort. This existing structure within the three counties touch the LMLSB in a variety of ways. In addition to the work outlined below, the TZD group membership overlaps the LMLSB committee and stakeholder memberships, bringing expertise and experience from the TZD work to the scenic byway.

TZD uses a data-driven, interdisciplinary approach that targets areas for improvement and employs proven countermeasures, integrating the “4 Es”—education, enforcement, engineering, and emergency medical and trauma services. A combination of strategies from different focus areas is often most effective for solving a particular traffic safety problem. Exploring the Es in more detail:

**Education**—changing driver behavior is the focus of traffic safety education efforts. It is not enough for drivers to understand the “rules of the road”. Drivers must be motivated to change their driving habits. Education and enforcement efforts working together can be an effective strategy for improving roadway safety—for example, targeted enforcement in areas such as drunk driving and safety belt use can be coordinated with educational efforts such as public service announcements. Many educational efforts are led by public health educators, who may integrate traffic safety into their work within their communities.

**Enforcement**—traffic controls, driver licensing requirements, impaired-driving laws, and other safety-related regulations are known to be effective—when drivers obey them. Ensuring compliance with traffic laws is a major component in changing driver behavior and reducing unsafe driving practices.

When a specific traffic safety problem has been identified, a targeted enforcement campaign can be planned to address the issue. These campaigns are often most effective when used with an education campaign. Education and enforcement efforts working together can be an effective strategy for improving roadway safety—for example, targeted enforcement in areas such as impaired-driving and safety belt use can be coordinated with educational efforts such as public service announcements.

**Engineering**—modifying or reconstructing roadways can be challenging and time consuming. Careful evaluation of road characteristics is the key to a solid investment in public safety. When a traffic safety issue is identified, changing the roadway—including traffic signals, signage, or the like—may appear to be the most direct solution. However, a close look at crash data and driver behavior often reveals that engineering is just one component of a complete traffic safety solution—a solution that includes education, enforcement, and emergency services.

The Minnesota Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) gives an overview of and coordinates with other safety plans within the state, including the TZD program and those of the Minnesota Departments of Public Safety and Health. The plan documents initiatives, program advances, and achievements. It also provides MnDOT districts, and Minnesota county highway departments with technical assistance in ranking and deploying safety countermeasures within their jurisdictions based on detailed crash analyses.

**Emergency Medical and Trauma Services**—the goal of the TZD program is to reduce not just crashes, but total road injuries and fatalities when a crash does occur, through fast, efficient emergency response. Prompt emergency service response is particularly important in rural Minnesota, where crash victims are far from medical facilities and crashes go unnoticed until encountered by another vehicle.

## **Crash Data**

The Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) crash reporting statistics for 2018 (the most recent comprehensive report available at the time of this publication) confirmed 79,215 traffic crashes were reported to DPS. Of these crashes, 381 people died, and 27,877 people were injured. The economic impact to Minnesota was estimated at almost \$2B.

Of the crashes, 4,027 were alcohol-related—with 123 deaths and 2,156 injuries. Safety-belt use in Minnesota is at 92%. An indicator known as “vehicle miles traveled” or VMT-based fatality rate remains on a downward trend, with Minnesota reporting one of the lowest VMT’s in the nation.

### **Factors Affecting Traffic Crashes**

Vehicle Safety Factors-- such as passenger protection systems in vehicles such as airbags, safety belts, and others when used properly reduce the level of injury severity.

Behavior Factors—noted in order of frequency: failure to yield the right of way, driving in a careless, negligent, or erratic manner, and driver distraction. Reducing these behaviors reduces crashes.

Roadway Characteristics Factors—in general, roadway characteristics conducive to safety include wide lanes, clearly visible striping, flared guardrails, wide shoulders of good quality, shoulders and roadsides free of obstacles, well-planned use of traffic signals, and effective communication to roadway users through clear and visible signage.

Environmental Factors—things like weather conditions. Clear, dry roads are conducive to high speeds; consequently, fatal crashes have a pronounced seasonal variation, peaking in the warm summer months and falling in the winter months. The total number of crashes is driven by the incidence of the less serious property damage crashes, which tend to have the opposite seasonal variation, peaking in the winter months. In 2018, 58% of all fatal crashes occurred in rural areas—which are defined as populations less than 5,000.

Volume of traffic, noted previously by the byway’s traffic counts is a predictor of crash incidence. All other things being equal, as the volume of traffic increases, so will traffic crashes. The relationship may not be simple, however; after a point, increasing congestion leads to reduced speeds, changing the proportion of crashed that occur at different severity levels.

The quality and availability of emergency medical services might be classified as an environmental factor. The first hour after a traumatic episode, such as a traffic crash, has been called the “golden hour”. Victims who receive emergency services within that time have markedly improved chances of survival.

The age structure of the population has a strong effect on crash incidence. In Minnesota, each year about one in ten crash-involved drivers are teenagers, even though they make up only 6% of the driving population. On the other hand, in Minnesota, older drivers tend to be underrepresented in crashes. As an example, drivers in their sixties represent only 9% of crash-involved drivers, but 15% of all licensed drivers.

Total fatalities in Minnesota numbered 381. Of those, occupants of a motor-vehicle were 258, on motorcycle were 58, pedestrians numbered 45, while riding a bicycle were 7, using an All-Terrain-Vehicle were 10. Those in a commercial bus or other totaled 2.

## 11.6 Possible Strategies

Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway Corridor Roadway Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Review shoulder widths and conditions along the byway route. Request a safety audit for the LMLSB route.</b></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Organize a MN18 Corridor Group to facilitate communication between stakeholders of one of the five roadways of the LMLSB.</b></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Explore improvements to Aitkin County Roads 37 and 51 within the LMLSB corridor.</b></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Explore adding a bike lane to Mille Lacs County Road 26 – Shakopee Lake Road, a LMLSB roadway.</b></li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Organize a LMLSB Bike and Ped Advisory Group to facilitate communication between stakeholders and jurisdictional entities related to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure within the LMLSB corridor.</b></li></ul>



## **Section Twelve.** *Control of Outdoor Advertising*



## 12.1 Overview

Highway Beautification Act was signed into law in 1965, by President Lyndon B. Johnson as part of the sweeping “Great Society” legislation referred to as “Title 23 US Code 131” called for control of the erection and maintenance of all outdoor advertising signs, displays, and devices in areas with 1,000 feet of interstate and federal highways. The legislation also gave jurisdictions the right to remove certain types of signs along highway systems to encourage scenic enhancement and roadside development.

At the time of designation, and present day, the LMLSB falls within and adheres to the guidance from the State of Minnesota, that the erection of new billboards on state-designated scenic byways are prohibited. Control of signs and billboards on such highways shall be in accordance with Highway Beautification Act control provisions.

Off-premise signs are typically billboards or displays that are not advertising the businesses adjacent to their locations. The majority of off-premise signs along the LMLSB are along US169, on the west side of Lake Mille Lacs.

Upon designation as a state scenic byway in July 2018, existing off-premise signs were allowed to remain, and their owners can legally change their signs messages as they see fit. They cannot, however be allowed to change their size, or be rebuilt. New billboards will not be accommodated along the roadways designated as the LMLSB. On-premise signs for adjacent businesses would be allowed to continue, and new on-premise signs could be permitted.

## 12.2 Possible Strategies

Control of Outdoor Advertising
1. Inventory existing outdoor advertising within the LMLSB Corridor annually.
2. Develop messaging related to outdoor advertising constraints along the byway.
3. Communicate at regular intervals with all byway corridor jurisdictions regarding outdoor advertising: standards, policies, and guidance.



## Section Thirteen: Wayshowing

### **13.1 Introduction**

Communication of information to visitors assisting them with their travel plans, visitors needing to find their way through unfamiliar and complex environments begs for the implementation of an effective wayshowing system that employs the strategy of using written, audible, and visual information such as signs, maps, landmarks, icons alone or in combination help navigate pedestrians and vehicles with ease.

These environmental cues and tools assist travelers in answering these questions: 1) How do visitors find the byway? 2) How do visitors orient themselves along the byway? 3) What and where are the byway's intrinsic qualities? 4) How do visitors know they are still on the byway? 5) Where does the byway begin and end? 6) How much time should visitors allocate for travel on and to the byway? 7) Where should visitors stay, eat, shop, learn, and recreate? 8) Where are the travel services located (ATMs, restrooms, car charging stations, etc.)?

This section of the corridor management plan looks to address these questions, and outlines a preliminary plan to implement an enhanced wayshowing system along the LMLSB.

### **13.2 The Difference Between Wayfinding and Wayshowing**

Wayfinding and Wayshowing are related but distinct concepts. Wayfinding is the mental process byway travelers do by actively navigating the byway by continual problem-solving in uncertainty. They use clues to reassure themselves that they are where they hoped to be. They use information to make their byway experience safe and enjoyable.

Wayshowing offers constant communication of information, undertaken in an intentional way by scenic byways to aid travelers in setting their desired travel goals, making decisions, and taking action based on that information.

Successful wayshowing includes everyone involved with the byway. That means, government entities, tourism agencies, volunteer committees, landowners, businesses. Everyone. Everyone's role is to provide assistance to byway travelers so that their wayfinding problem-solving can be successful and effective along the byway route.

This can include anything from preparing travel information, developing maps and brochures, planning and installing signs, and developing navigational help via in-person, by paper, or electronically. To be successful, the LMLSB will need to maintain a level of both wayfinding and wayshowing methods.

### **13.3 Three Stages of Byway Trip Planning**

For the purposes of this document, we are using three stages of trip planning--pre-visit, visit, and post-visit. During the PRE-VISIT stage prospective travelers examine their options and select/choose to visit a byway. Once they SELECT a byway, the travelers prepare for their visit—PLAN. They decide how and when they will visit, and plan their journey. During the VISIT stage travelers experience the byway and create memories of the visit. In the POST-VISIT stage, the traveler REFLECTS on the travel, and uses things from the visit to help recall their experience. It is in this stage that travelers will REFER others about their experiences, and decide to visit the byway again, and/or to visit another byway.

The LMLSB committee and stakeholders will continue to use a variety of “tools” to create a wayshowing experience that includes: 1) print brochures; 2) website; 3) advertising; 4) print maps; 5) digital maps and other guidance; 6) guide signs; 7) interpretive exhibits; 8) social media; 9) merchandise; 10) word of mouth.

Within the development of these “tools”, it is understood that travelers will have questions that reflect their wayfinding needs, and the LMLSB will use wayshowing tools and clues to meet those needs, and ultimately, answer the traveler’s questions.

During the PRE-VISIT SELECT stage travelers can be expected to ask some of these questions: 1) Where is the byway? 2) What is there to see and do? 3) How much time should it take to travel the byway? 4) What is the byway story? 5) How will we benefit from the experience?

Add to these questions to be answered, the PRE-VISIT PLAN stage questions: 1) How will we get there? 2) Where will we stay, eat, and recreate? 3) How much time will it take us to get to, from, and along the byway? 4) What are the intrinsic qualities of the byway? They will not understand it in those terms, but we know what they mean! 5) What wayside interpretive exhibits and attractions will I find?

As the traveler navigates along with their trip planning to the VISIT stage. TRAVEL occurs, and with it, another set of questions typical of the stage. Those questions can be: 1) Where are the entry points to the byway? 2) How will we know this is the byway? 3) Where are travel services located? 4) How do we get back on when we’ve gotten off the byway? 5) Where are the byway attractions?

The POST-VISIT REFLECT(ION) stage takes in questions such as 1) What good things will we remember? 2) Do we remember bad parts of the experience? 3) Have we kept maps, pictures, or souvenirs so we can remember our byway experience? 4) What emotions will we remember?

And finally, the POST-VISIT REFER(ING) stage, where travelers ask: 1) How will we share our experiences? 2) What will we tell others about our experiences? 3) Will we go back for another visit? 4) Will we visit another byway? 5) Will we recommend that others visit the byway?

### **13.4 Wayfinding Tool Development**

In an effort to most effectively offer wayshowing for the average byway traveler, the LMLSB has several goals:

- Provide a reliable, consistent wayfinding guidance system.
- Integrate the Pre-Visit, Visit, and Post-Visit stages into the guidance system.
- Be both supportive and responsive to how byway travelers find their way in unfamiliar paths.
- The guidance system contributes to the overall roadway safety goals.
- The guidance system becomes widely used.

Integral to the guidance system is the set of information essential to wayfinding. Identifying the beginning and destination, determining turn locations, identifying segment links, direction of movements, recognizing on-route or more remote locations of interest, and offer visualization cues to paint a broader more complete picture.

### 13.5 Developing a Wayshowing System

The topic of wayshowing has dominated discussions within the LMLSB committee since the beginning of the process of developing the byway. The committee has coalesced around three key components that when combined, should produce a lasting wayshowing system.

- The development of maps, including turn-by-turn driving directions both in paper and digital formats, including emphasis on mobile devices.
- A systematic collection of signage, including guide signs, byway welcome signs, community welcome signs, destination-approach signs, and on-site identification signs.
- Training for communities, businesses, and hospitality staff that immerses those front line individuals—visitor center staff, volunteers, park rangers, business owners, and the all-important-local resident in the important role they play along the byway to provide timely and factual information to travelers and visitors in a way that best represents the byway region.

### 13.6 Existing and Future Wayshowing Signage

An inventory of existing signage including the point of interest, primary intrinsic quality it addresses, the location, type of sign, and condition will be conducted yearly in an effort to determine gaps in signage, prioritization of repair and/or replacement, and setting a future budget for signage needs.

A wide variety of signage needs exist along the byway corridor. The expectation of the LMLSB committee that efforts between township, city, county, tribal, and state partners will be participatory and coordinated in a way, so that each entity is encouraged to work together to ensure that sign installation, maintenance, and repair contracts are completed in a manner that is both visually appealing, organized, and cohesive.







## **Section Fourteen. Interpretive Planning**

## **14.1 Introduction**

While the marketing plan looks to identify strategies for how to lure visitors to travel and explore the LMLSB, solid interpretation addresses how the byway stories get told to the visitor in an interesting, concise, relevant, and memorable way. Interpretation as a communication tool reveals meanings and relationships between our cultural and natural heritage through experiences with objects, artifacts, landscapes and sites.

Essentially, interpretation involves the process of defining what makes a byway special. It remains a strategy to help visitors understand the unique stories associated with the byway, told by locals or visitors that help everyone understand the significance of the byway route.

Interpretation can reveal stories of the people, places, and events that have occurred, or are occurring, while serving as a forum for sharing the region's history, cultural, and natural heritage.

This interpretive planning section intends to lay the groundwork for a future, more detailed Interpretive Master Plan. This section offers the new byway committee an opportunity to begin the efforts, conduct extensive research and fully develop their interpretive mission via the solid foundational work generated here through cataloguing existing interpretation and assembled recommendations to identify future interpretive investments.

## **14.2 Information and Interpretation**

Information refers to the facts, dates, statistics, pictures, or other data that can be arranged and presented to the visitor through the use of varying media sources. Information is useful. However, materials with information minus interpretation can attempt to answer questions the visitor may not ask or care to receive.

Interpretation is the process of transforming and translating information into a story for the visitor. A true interpretive message conveys its meaning by:

- provoking the attention and curiosity of the audience;
- relating to everyday life of the visitor;
- revealing the message or story through a unique viewpoint;
- illustrating how each individual stop relates to the main interpretative theme or story of the total byway experience;
- while portraying a unified, cohesive, and distinctive visual identity.

## **14.3 Benefits of Interpretation**

Interpretation's integral role in telling the byway story leads to the following conclusions regarding the support of additional interpretive programs and projects related to the LMLSB: 1) increasing the rate of repeated use of the route; 2) educate the byway traveler and stir interest about the intrinsic qualities along the route; 3) encourage travelers to use the route in a safe and responsible manner; 4) expand the

marketability of the LMLSB and its anchor attractions; 5) help residents gain a greater appreciation for their local heritage; and 6) inspire residents to take an active role in LMLSB stewardship.

#### **14.4 Discussion of Anticipated Interpretation**

Interpretive methods can range from publications to multimedia, to exhibits and “branded” messages. These elements of a successful interpretive program. A future Master Interpretive Plan will build upon the components of existing interpretation. For the purposes of the CMP, three components of expected interpretation along with the planned works of preliminary interpretive plans, planned exterior interpretation at anchor locations, and planned multimedia interpretation highlighted below.

##### **1. Preliminary Interpretive Plans**

An interpretive plan clearly identifies the themes and storylines of the byway and identifies how they effectively become shared. A successful implementation of an interpretation plan can impact a byway immensely. An interpretive plan’s implementation connects advocacy, partnerships, programs, marketing, and management of the byway.

Quality interpretive plans will provide the critical foundation for the development of marketing materials, identify anchor attraction needs, guide program development, and prioritize projects needed to effectively communicate the byway’s story.

Very few of the identified anchor attractions possess interpretive plans along the byway route. The LMLSB will work with the anchor attractions that have interpretive plans, including them in a future master interpretive plan while moving ahead with developing interpretive plans and associated developments for other anchor attractions that will compliment LMLSB efforts.

##### **2. Planned Exterior Interpretation**

Three types of exterior interpretative media 1) Information Hubs (IH); 2) Territory Orientation Panels (TOP); and Wayside Exhibits (WE) will be beneficial to the byway visitor. These will be developed using a unified, cohesive design consistent with all other interpretive media along the byway. Elements will be complementary to the Lake Mille Lacs region and the byway corridor. Priority of the development of the exterior interpretation will focus on high-traffic areas, easily accessible and visible to the traveler. The use of local materials and labor, creating vandal-resistant, durable, non-corrosive materials has been identified by the LMLSB committee as initial expectations. Taking these foundational goals to the next level in both planning and development is a priority of the byway committee.

Information Hubs (IH) typically take the shape of a thematic kiosk structure developed and placed at key visitor intersects to help introduce travelers to the byway and help inform and orient them to the route’s attractions, stories, and communities. These structures may include multiple signs that provide maps, information, and interpretation 24 hours a day, every day of the year. By simply passing by them, the motorists and visitors will introduce themselves via the IH structures. Their size and character draw attention, and can help support the byway’s identity and brand. Community gathering spaces or anchor attractions make optimal locations for Information Hubs.

Territory Orientation Panels (TOP) predominately gets used to identify, attract, and orient visitors to collections of resources along the byway such as county parks, natural areas, trailheads, water trails, stream accesses, and historic places. In other words, TOPs help provide a collection of detailed information regarding a grouping of similar resources or sites that by their very nature collectively create interest amongst a specific group of travelers.

Wayside Exhibits (WE) placed along various attractions along the byway will help visitors understand messages, stories, and meanings behind a resource and/or site. These stories and/or message intend to help change a behavior, educate visitors, or evoke emotion in the traveler. Wayside Exhibits at anchor attractions, sites, roadside pull-offs and/or overlooks offer a more intimate opportunity to tell a byway story.

#### 14.5 Planned Interpretation

The LMLSB committee developed a prioritized list of interpretive recommendations and strategies desired to implement along the byway. Broad preliminary cost estimates for implementation, including staffing to complete each strategy and/or project. Four components of interpretation reviewed by the committee include:

- ***Collect and Inventory Photographs and Stories of the LMLSB.*** To maximize interpretive projects along with byway, the LMLSB committee began during the route designation phase the practice of collecting photographs related to the byway and sorted by intrinsic quality. Further collection and inventories remain a key part of the process. In addition to the photography, compiling of byway stories via Q&A sessions, public-input meetings, and oral history interviews. Collecting the stories and photographs, and using them as content for all types of interpretive media will create a lasting archive. Generally, the photographs and stories pool into four broad categories: 1) Lake Mille Lacs landscapes; 2) people present in the region today; 3) biologically diverse landscape and natural resources; and 4) prehistoric people and native cultures.
- ***Implement Multi-Media Interpretive Planning.*** In addition to the collecting of photographs and stories of the LMLSB, the committee determined the development of a multi-media interpretive effort including web-based functions and video that interfaces with a wide variety of applications, including full phone uses.
- ***Implement Site Specific Interpretive Planning.*** Preliminary review has focused on the following eight sites along the LMLSB for further review, scoping, and possible future implementation:

**Scenic Overlook on Vista Road.** Located north of Isle, at MN47 and Vista Road, the basic wayside facilities include a large, open parking lot, a short trail, a geological marker, and slightly elevated west facing view of the entirety of Lake Mille Lacs. As a “must stop” spot—particularly magnificent at sunset; the 27-acre site owned by the State of Minnesota includes a significant amount of stunning undeveloped woodlands.

**Wealthwood Wayside.** At the very northern end of Lake Mille Lacs, this lengthy undeveloped sand beach parallels MN18. Technically, a boat landing, the Wealthwood Public Access with its small parking lot and shallow, sandy ramp offers limited use by boaters. It seems to act more like a wayside, giving travelers a place to park and walk and enjoy the expansive beach.

**MN18 Western Pull-offs.** A series of flat areas just off the highway, west of the Wealthwood Public Access, appear to once operate as waysides, accommodating one or two vehicles to pull-off the highway and enjoy the view from an elevated area. Presently, overgrown vegetation obscures the outstanding lake views and prevents parking.

**Garrison Concourse Wayside.** Jutting into Lake Mille Lacs on the western shore, the City of Garrison touts a unique wayside, that benefitted from recent investments. The site includes ample parking, a large statue of a walleye, benches, a flag pole, tourism information kiosk, and a historical marker placed within a substantial block structure recently restored—in a way to preserve the historical significance of the site as a New Deal-era Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) project. In addition, to the Concourse, a CCC bridge a bit farther south along US169 was restored recently.

**South Garrison Wayside.** A 56-acre tract of public land off of US169 just south of the city of Garrison once served as an inviting wayside with a frontage road, picnic tables, and a picnic shelter atop one of the few hills on Lake Mille Lacs. This wayside in close proximity to the above-mentioned historic bridge and Garrison Concourse offers a significant opportunity for development.

Currently, the State-owned site appears stagnant, prior local efforts look abandoned. The picnic-shelter/kitchen burned, and the brush leading to the site is overgrown. The brush along the Mille Lacs County Road makes car travel impractical, and creates an obstructed view of the lake.

**Virgo Road Pull-off.** Just off of US169 north of Grand Casino Mille Lacs, a small pull-off on Virgo Road overlooks the lake.

**Itzatys Village Pull-off.** Off of US169 south of the Grand Casino Mille Lacs a pull-off with a historical marker notes the location of a Dakota tribal village in the 1700s. The plaque describes the French explorers that visited the site, and the battle between the Dakota and the Ojibwe that drove the Dakota out of the area.

**Southwest Pull-offs.** Between the Mille Lacs outlet, and the southwest corner of the lake, multiple pull-offs just off of US169 on Mille Lacs CR35 offers an outstanding viewshed.

- ***Plan Resource-Focused Interpretation.*** Develop proposed projects that provide travelers and local residents with on-site information about specific locations/activities regardless of pre-trip planning.





**Section Fifteen.** *Marketing the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway*

## **15.1 Introduction**

Uncovering distinct features and benefits of the byway, reinforcing long-held popular themes, projecting the values that one can expect to experience along the byway all shape a well-rounded approach to marketing the LMLSB.

Through this distinct identity, by means of marketing materials and promotions, the LMLSB marketing efforts offers an enormous impact on influencing the byway use patterns of tourists and residents alike, especially when all are combined to satisfy the needs of a target market.

When done properly, net sales will increase because of new and repeat byway visitors. An increase of byway visitors will translate to more overnight stays, the growth of local jobs, and additional revenue produced by lodging and sales tax. Sometimes, *just* sometimes, it yields a visitor turned resident. Someone who contributes to the overall local economy every day of the year.

With keeping a focus on efforts that affect the greatest number of byway travelers in the most cost-effective way, the LMLSB will continue to collect information, and distill it to decisions for the purpose of intentionally increasing tourism, year round while balancing the need to protect and preserve the resources of the byway, and resident life satisfaction.

Future and ongoing (annually) collection of information will include: 1) Input from current residents; 2) Input from visitors; 3) Specific market research; 4) Engagement with byway jurisdictions; 5) Flexibility to respond to changing needs.

## **15.2 Global Impact of Tourism**

The tourism sector, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council generated \$8.8 trillion (10.4% of the global GDP) and 1 in 10 job for the global economy in 2018. In the United States tourism is estimated to be a \$1.5 trillion dollar industry, with 1 in 5 new jobs being created by tourism since 2014.

## **15.3 Tourism and Minnesota's Economy**

Explore Minnesota estimates that annually \$15.3 billion dollars in gross sales (\$42 million a day) is generated through almost 300,000 full and part-time jobs, making up 11% of the total private sector employment and almost \$6 billion dollars in wages. From these tourism sales dollars, the State of Minnesota receives almost \$1 billion dollars in tax revenue—18% of the total state sales taxes.

Minnesota's tourism dollars are generated relatively evenly across all four distinct seasons, with summer months (June through August) garnering 37% of spending, autumn months (September through November) totaling 25%, winter months close to autumn at 24%, and spring months (April-May) bringing in 14% of total expenditures. Local Lake Mille Lacs tourism trends follow Minnesota's closely, reinforcing the held view that Lake Mille Lacs is a year-round destination.

Travelers to Minnesota spend 25% on food, 20% on lodging, 16% on retail shopping, 16% on transportation, 16% on recreation, and 7% on second homes. The state experienced over 73 million overnight and day trips in 2017.

Explore Minnesota reports that for every dollar spent on advertising travel and tourism in Minnesota, over \$100 is returned to the state in travel related spending. It is estimated that the average Minnesota household would owe an addition \$625 in taxes, without the tax revenue generated by travel and tourism.

Within Aitkin County \$22.3 million dollars in gross sales translated to \$1.5 million in state sales tax and 515 jobs. In Crow Wing County \$233.4 million dollars in gross sales, and \$14.4 million sales tax dollars yielded 4,139 jobs. For Mille Lacs County \$55.3 million dollars in gross sales and \$3 million in sales tax offered 1,027 jobs related to tourism.



## 15.4 Identifying Targeted Markets

The identification of target markets is the process of selecting a group of people who the LMLSB will decide to direct its marketing efforts toward. This process will help address the following questions: 1) What types of tourists should we target? 2) What are the characteristics of these tourists? 3) How do we target them?

Utilizing Lake Mille Lacs Tourism Council information, survey data, and anecdotal details, the LMLSB committee has initially focused on four target markets: 1) The Scenic Byway Tourist; 2) Cultural Heritage Tourist; 3) The Bird Watcher Tourist; and 4) The Nature Tourist.

1. The Scenic Byway Tourists can be defined as an individual who enjoys traveling along a designated route to experience one or more of the six intrinsic qualities resources (archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic). This group has a wide range of interests and values—with one common characteristic, they enjoy driving for pleasure. The circuitous nature of the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway offers the traveler to stop and linger, and move along the circle.

According to the National Scenic Byway Foundation, forty percent (40%) of American adults drive for pleasure, making it the second most enjoyed recreation, only after first-ranked walking. Most scenic byway tourists are over 50, and use the internet to decide on a destination. Most come for a vacation—leisure. The most important feature for a scenic byway tourist is relaxation, scenic beauty, and a wide variety of things to do.

By promoting the byway's safety, accessibility to sites, well-maintained visitor services, coupled with comprehensive wayshowing and interpretation to draw in the scenic byway tourist.





2. The Cultural Heritage Tourist defined as “travel to experience the places, artifacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present, including cultural, historic and natural resources” by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The cultural heritage tourist seeks authentic destinations and experiences that are rich in history and archaeological character. Of primary interest in this area, the archeological resources along Lake Mille Lacs offers an environment rich is American Indian archaeological resources, stories, and artifacts.





3. The Bird Watcher Tourist is defined as someone who observes birds in their natural settings as a recreational hobby. According to the 2016 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Survey, it approximates that over 45 million people observed birds around their home/on or on trips within the United States, contributing to \$80 billion dollars into the U.S. economy. Bird watchers spent over \$41 billion on trips and equipment, with almost \$15 billion directed toward local economies.

The LMLSB marketing efforts will inform the bird watcher tourist about birdwatching spots located along the LMLSB corridor. This includes those sites, attractions, and resources that offer or promote information about safety etiquette, accessibility to birdwatching infrastructure (bird hides, interpretation, educational signage, and materials) the quality of birdlife and/or availability of experienced guides.

Within the confines of initial planning the LMLSB committee set forward to designate bird watching as one of the four key tourist groups, realizing the demographic fits into the fourth group as well.



4. The Nature Tourist--nature tourism, responsible travel to natural areas, which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people. It is tourism based on the natural attractions of an area. Examples include birdwatching, photography, stargazing, camping, hiking, hunting, fishing, and visiting parks. These experiential tourists are interested in a diversity of natural and cultural resources. They want what is real, and they want to be immersed in a rich natural, cultural, or historical experience.

From the standpoint of conservation, nature-based tourism provides incentives for local communities and landowners to conserve wildlife habitats upon which the industry depends – it promotes conservation by placing an increased value on remaining natural areas. As nature tourism becomes more important to the local economy, communities have additional incentive to conserve their remaining natural areas for wildlife and wildlife enthusiasts.

The nature-based tourism efforts along the LMLSB will continue to focus on achieving habitat conservation by providing information and assistance to private landowners, communities, businesses, and local community leaders wishing to make nature-based tourism an integral part of their business and community. By empowering people at the local level, the hope to build and provide guidance to a growing industry holds great promise for sustainable economic development and conservation of wildlife habitat.

It is the goal of the LMLSB to promote nature-based tourism as a way to promote habitat conservation, promote sustainable economic development, and build broad-based public support for wildlife conservation programs within the byway corridor, that support the sustained use of both public and private lands while providing a diversity of recreational opportunities.

Initial projects include the Christmas Bird Count, and first steps toward creating a water trail within Lake Mille Lacs for canoers and kayakers to discover public access sites, that mirrors the roadway beyond its shores. The goal of connecting people with nature, by making it easier for them to enjoy the natural resources of Lake Mille Lacs, and care about conserving them.



## **15.5 Development of Marketing Materials**

The LMLSB from its inception works hand-in-glove with the regional Mille Lacs Tourism Council. The organizational professional is a key member of the LMLSB committee. This significant partnership and working relationship are foundational to efforts undertaken by the LMLSB.

Amassing a useful, well-organized inventory of LMLSB photographs began in earnest before the byway was designated. Contests were held that elicited submittal of many photographs, showing the six intrinsic qualities (scenic, historical, archeological, recreational, cultural, and natural), with the determination that showing the byway through photographs will be a constant effort in marketing the byway.

The LMLSB acknowledges that additional marketing and promotional strategies have to be developed, tested, and analyzed to properly gauge what strategies are most beneficial to the byway visitor. These marketing components, while in coordination with the Mille Lacs Tourism Council, are driven by the needs of the byway organization. The goal remains that the efforts continue to be in coordination, and mutually beneficial.

As part of the CMP process, the MnDOT contract with the East Central Regional Development Commission allowed for \$22,000 in funding to be spent on “Byway Toolkit” investments. The LMLSB committee brought forward several fundamental marketing materials concepts, researched costs, and narrowed the items to key initial items: 1) LMLSB website development and maintenance; 2) Multiple social media platforms and tools that interface with the website—its maps and location specific information; and basic printed items, tear-sheet maps, and small bookmark style brochure to make available in mass around the route.

Beyond a mission statement, the LMLSB committee developed a 30-second elevator pitch that proves beneficial for those representing the LMLSB at public events, in print, video, and audio distribution. The development assisted the committee in formalizing the byway’s message as well as useful as a training tool for byway leadership and stakeholders.

These marketing efforts beyond their development and testing will be analyzed by the LMLSB committee, where successes and less-positive attempts will form “invaluable knowledge” and will enter the list of truly successful things with all the trappings of goals and strategies attached to them.

Future guidance for marketing decisions fall into several categories: 1) Development of a tagline/slogan that represents the byway in its best light; 2) Continue to collaborate and partner with other like-minded organizations; 3) Promote the LMLSB in a prudent, cost-effective way; 4) Create a LMLSB experience that exceeds the tourist’s expectations; 5) Create a distinctive visual identity for the byway that includes defining a color palette, standards for typography, and unified graphic elements; 6) Annual re-evaluation of the mix of promotional strategies and reporting out of those strategies with assigned budgets; 7) Continue the collection of a wide-range of byway photography.



## 15.6 Possible Future Projects

Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway Potential Future Marketing Projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Development of ways to link partnership information and publications to/ from the LMLSB</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• “Eat Your Way Around the Lake” themed publications and promotions to draw in restaurants and travelers seeking food.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nature-Tourism—specifically bird watching, kayaking/canoeing</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Development of LMLSB Five-Year Marketing Action Plan</li></ul>





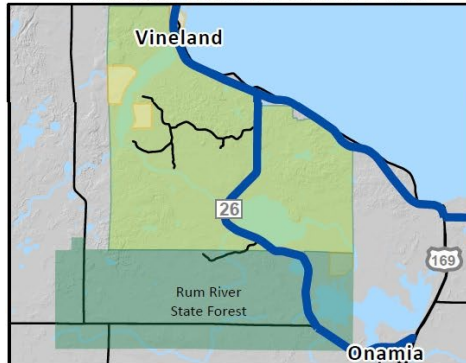
## Section Sixteen. Maps



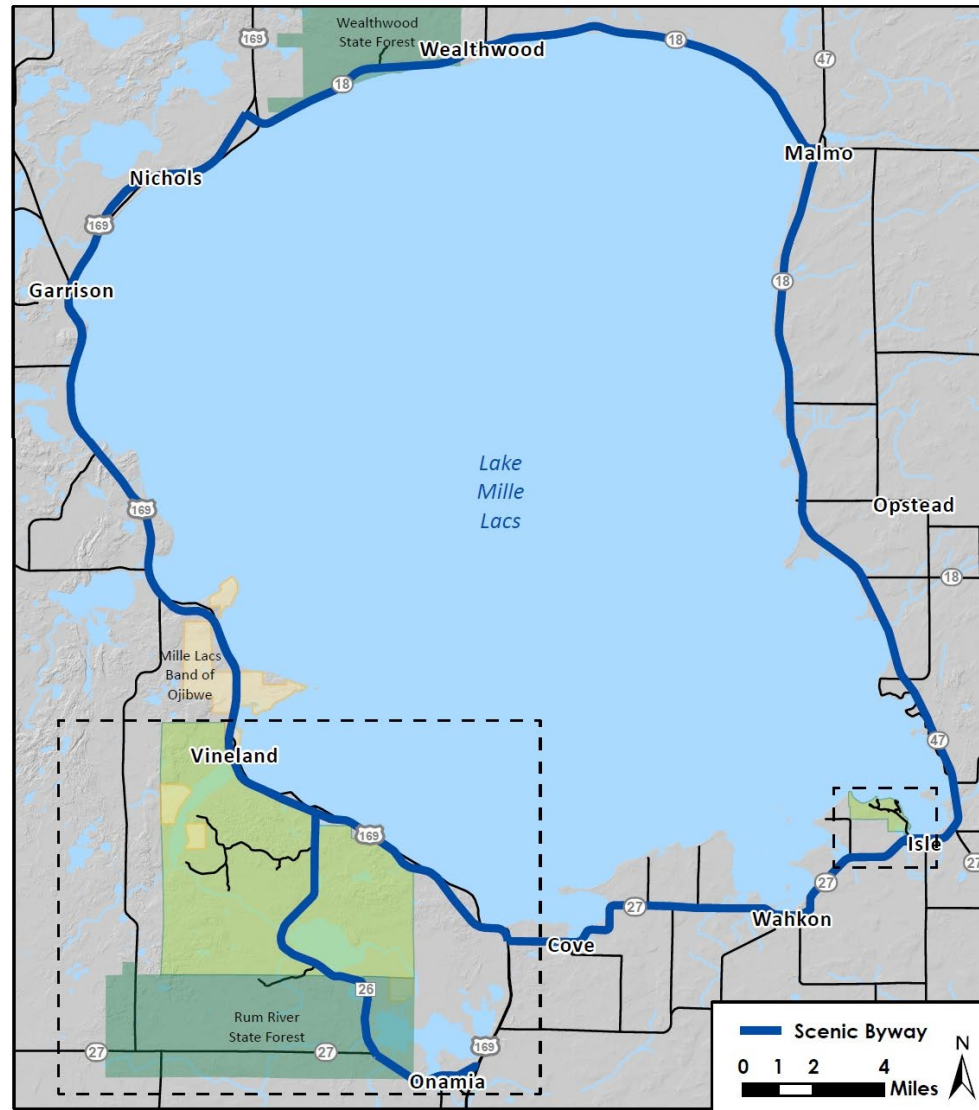
## 16.1 Map – Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway Route & Topography

### Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway Route & Topography

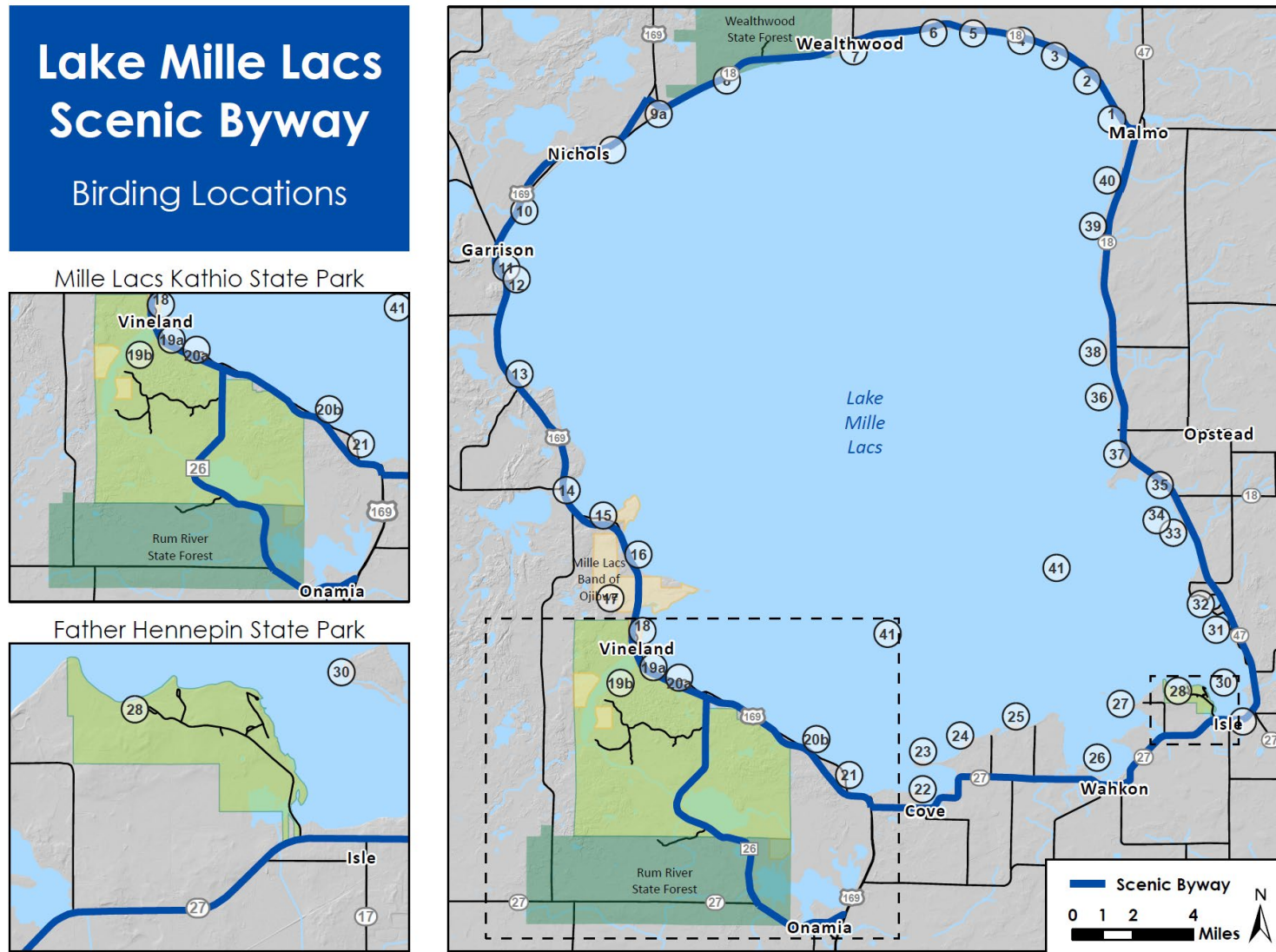
Mille Lacs Kathio State Park



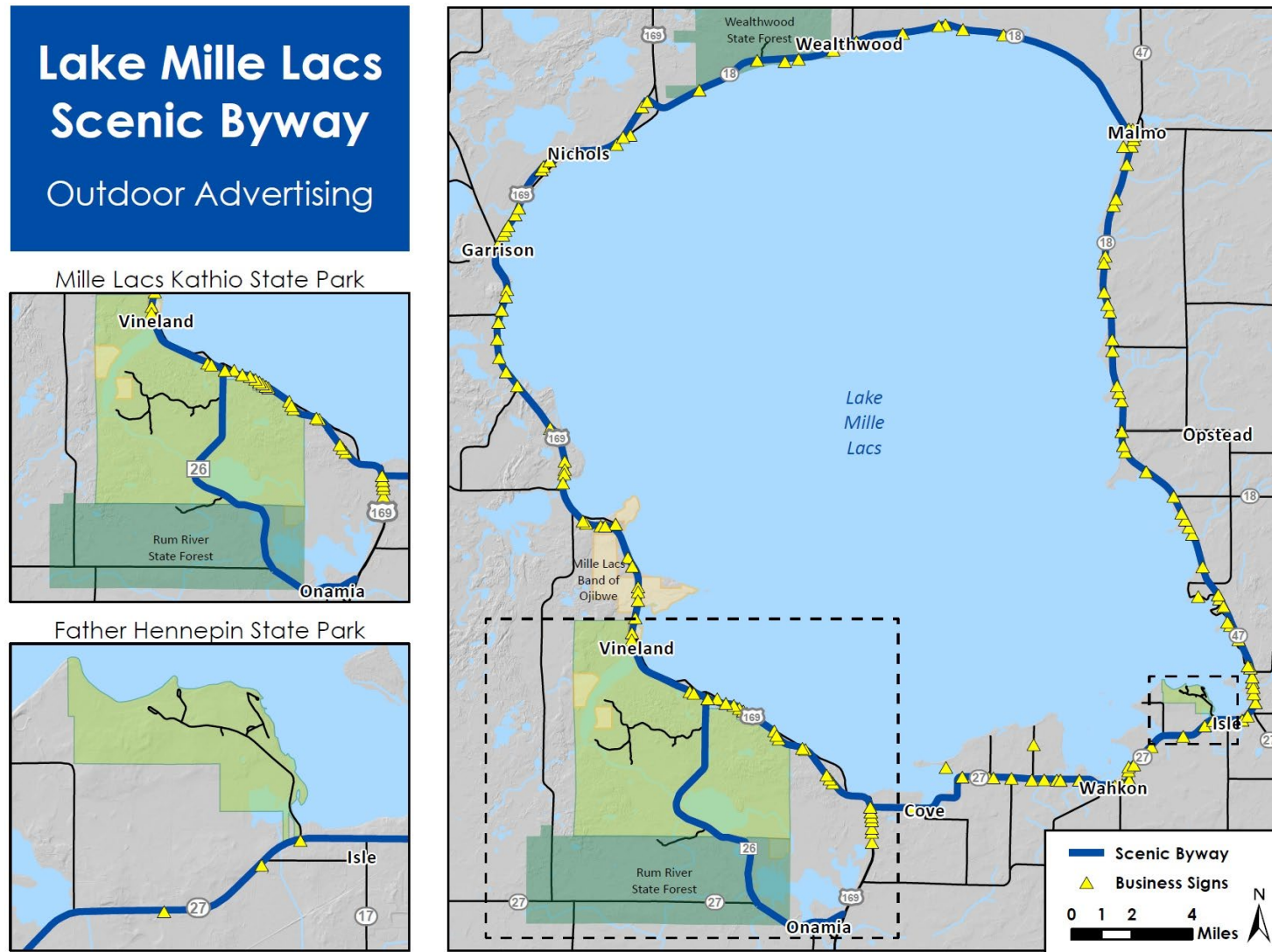
Father Hennepin State Park



## 16.2 Map – Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway Birding Locations

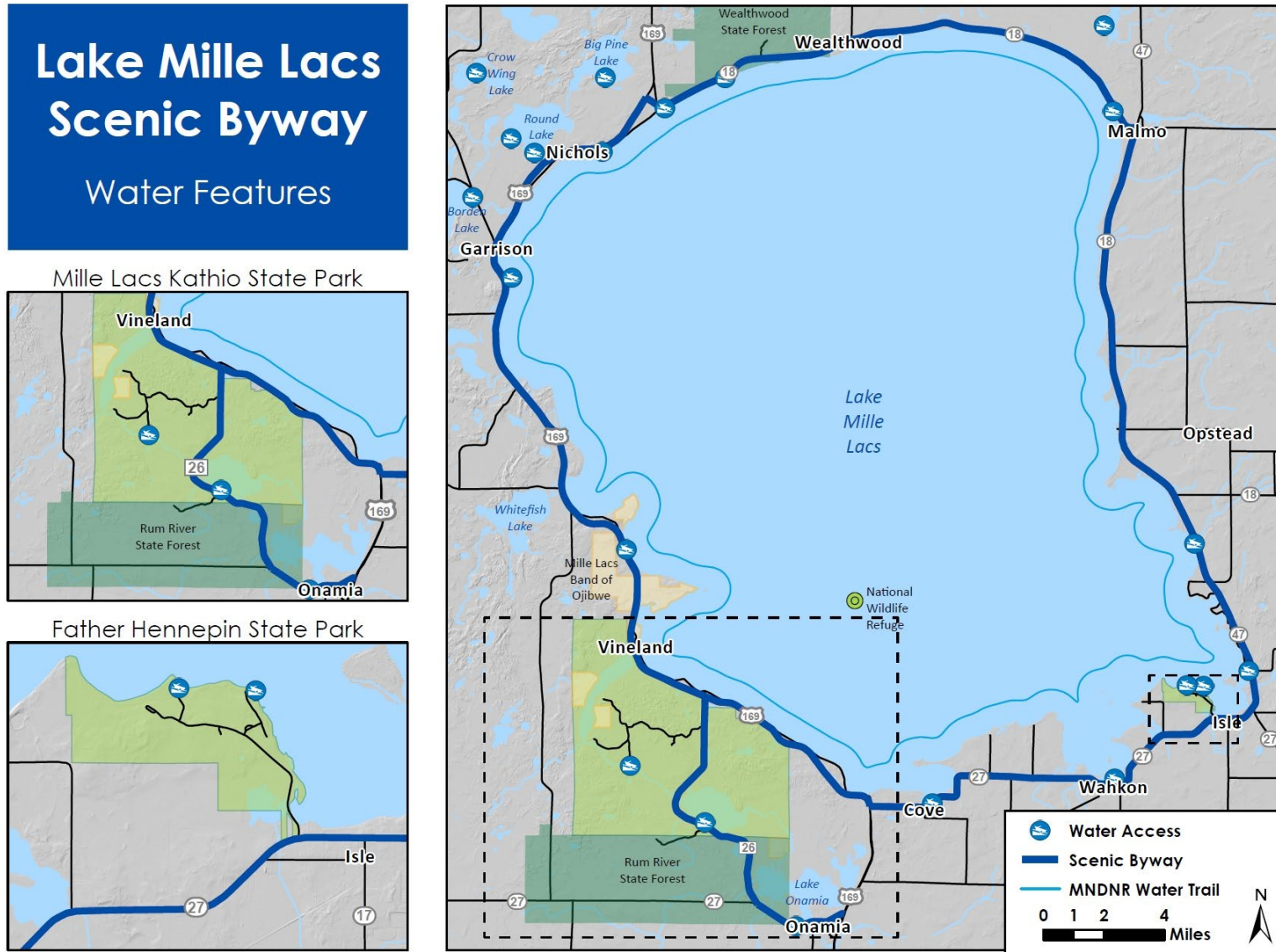


### 16.3 Map – Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway Outdoor Advertising





## 16.4 Map – Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway Water Features



## 16.5 Map – Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway Points of Interest

