Published by the Mille Lacs Lake Area Scenic Byway Steering Committee with assistance from the East Central Regional Development Commission and the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission using funding from the Minnesota Department of Transportation. More information can be found at [www.ardc.org/millelacs](http://www.ardc.org/millelacs) and [www.facebook.com/millelacsbyway](http://www.facebook.com/millelacsbyway).
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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION AND PLANNING CONTEXT

The Mille Lacs Scenic Byway Designation Study examined the feasibility of designating an existing route around Lake Mille Lacs as a Minnesota State Scenic Byway. Led by a steering committee of local stakeholders, and guided by the East Central and Arrowhead Regional Development Commissions, the study reviewed route possibilities, features, and public interest in seeking State Scenic Byway Designation.

The area examined included the ring of roadways circling Lake Mille Lacs, one of Minnesota's largest lakes at 132,000 acres. The lake is a natural body of water that features sand beaches, open horizons, islands, and scenic surrounding forests. The lake's shores have quaint communities, resorts, camping and lodging, two State Parks, several public water access points, a casino/resort, a tribal history museum, and unique waysides. The area is in central Minnesota in Mille Lacs, Crow Wing, and Aitkin Counties.

For many years, Lake Mille Lacs was one of Minnesota’s premier walleye fishing lakes. Located only about 90 minutes from the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area’s large population base, anglers flocked to the lake in all seasons to catch walleye, Minnesota’s State Fish, prized for its white, flaky fillets. Many of the area’s tourism related businesses focused their facilities to serve traditional anglers — basic lodging, boat marinas, bars and restaurants, and ice fishing shack rentals. The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe diversified the area’s offerings somewhat by operating a casino/resort on their property on the lake’s southwest shore. The area also offers golfing, coffee shops, gift shops, fuel and convenience stores, and sporting goods.

In recent years, surveys of the lake have shown that the lake’s walleye population was much smaller than it once was. Potential reasons for the decline are varied and a consensus regarding the issue has not been arrived at. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has been significantly managing the number of walleyes harvested from the lake, reducing and even eliminating daily bag (harvest) limits at different times. Visiting anglers not being able to keep and eat walleyes has had impacts on the businesses surrounding the lake. Less people are fishing the lake and businesses have suffered. Note that in 2017 some positive fishing news has been brought forward. Catch and release walleye anglers have been reporting good success. Also, Mille Lacs has become a premier smallmouth bass fishery and was named the “Number One Bass Lake in the Nation” for 2017 by Bassmaster Magazine. Musky anglers have caught and released several giant fish that could have approached the State record.

Still, local stakeholders recognize the need to diversify the tourism infrastructure in the Mille Lacs area. Concerned business owners, tourism organizations, elected officials and citizens from communities surrounding the lakes began discussing ways to attract non-anglers to the area as a way of augmenting the economy. Several ideas have been mentioned, but one in particular has gained momentum and gotten the attention of local, regional, and State leaders – designating the lake’s surrounding roads as a State Scenic Byway.

Grassroots organizations nominate Scenic Byways and engage in planning, conservation, preservation and marketing activities to ensure a quality byway experience for visitors and residents. Four state agencies, including the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR), the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) and Explore Minnesota Tourism, partner with these
grassroots organizations and with local governments on byway projects. Minnesota Scenic Byway federal funding is available through MnDOT.

Planning Process

Following a series of meetings with area business leaders and local elected officials, the East Central Regional Development Commission (ECRDC) and the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC)1 proposed to lead a public process that would determine the feasibility of seeking byway designation. The proposal was reviewed by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and State funding was provided for the project.

ECRDC was the lead agency and was responsible for process organization, promoting and holding meetings, and responding to requests from the media and the public. ARDC conducted research, led mapping efforts, and wrote the final document. AFLA, Inc., a landscape architecture firm, was hired to design one public wayside as an example of the improvements that could occur on a Byway and was responsible for creating logo and signage options.

ECRDC formed a steering committee to help guide the process. The Committee included tourism professionals, business owners, County and City representatives, and interested citizens. ECRDC also met with officials from the Mille Lacs Band to ensure their input. Additionally, ECRDC held a series of open houses that promoted the process and sought public input.

A public meeting was held on, September 19, 2017. The draft document, including route options, the wayside design, and the draft logo, were presented. Comments from attendees were considered and addressed, either at the meeting or later by the Steering Committee. The final document was approved on October 19, 2017.

1 Regional Development Commissions are public entities that assist Minnesota’s rural communities with planning processes and improvement program implementation.
Potential Route

Planning staff conducted a thorough review of the Mille Lacs area to determine what potential route could make up the byway. The findings were shared with the Steering Committee, which approved an initial route idea while acknowledging that changes could be made following stakeholder and public input. Following the public meeting, the Committee finalized their proposed route as described below, shown from the perspective of a traveler going from north from Onamia, then traveling counter-clockwise around Lake Mille Lacs.

- From downtown Onamia, the byway would go west on Trunk Highway (TH) 27, then turns north, following Mille Lacs County Road (CR) 26 through Mille Lacs Kathio State Park.
- On CR 26, the Byway would intersect with Trunk Highway 169. The Byway would move southeast on Highway 169 to its intersection with TH 27.
- The Byway then continues east on TH 27.
- Staying on TH 27, the Byway would pass through the communities of Wahkon and Isle.
- At TH 27’s intersection with TH 47, the Byway would begin to move north on TH 47 all the way to Malmo.
- At Malmo, the Byway would then turn west onto TH 18, passing the north shore of Lake Mille Lacs.
- From the TH 18/TH169 intersection, the Byway would move south on TH 169 through Garrison.
- Continuing south on TH 169, the Byway would meet up with CR 26 in Mille Lacs Kathio State Park, completing the circle.

The total distance of the potential Byway route is 68 miles. A detailed interactive map of the potential route and its features can be reviewed at: [http://bit.ly/MilleLacsSB](http://bit.ly/MilleLacsSB)
SECTION 2: INTRINSIC QUALITIES

On April 12 and 13, 2017, planners and a mapping specialist from ARDC conducted a tour of the Lake Mille Lacs area and documented, through descriptions and photographs, the features and qualities, of the region. Potential routes for a Byway were explored and communities were assessed. The results of the review are available to the public using an interactive map at: http://bit.ly/MilleLacsSB

Scenic byways around Minnesota and the nation can be described though “Intrinsic Qualities.” The National Scenic Byways Program defines intrinsic quality as “features that are considered representative, unique, irreplaceable, or distinctly characteristic of an area.” The qualities are sorted into six categories. The following is a brief description of the Lake Mille Lacs area’s qualities. More detailed and specific descriptions will be needed for at least two of the categories if stakeholders do in fact apply for State Scenic Byway designation. The six categories are: Archeological, Cultural, Natural, Historic, Recreational, and Scenic.

For the purposes of this document, Historic, Archeological, and Cultural Qualities are described together, and Scenic Qualities are paired with Natural Qualities.

Natural and Scenic Intrinsic Qualities

Lake Mille Lacs itself is the most dominant natural and scenic quality of this area. Its sheer size and low shorelines, along with very few islands and a bowl like shape, give the lake an almost oceanic or Great Lakes feel. Shorelines across the lake are barely visible to the human eye, even on the clearest of days. This expanse provides visitors with a wild, very natural feel as they gaze upon the lake. This natural quality is particularly notable when visitors make the climb up the former fire tower in Mille Lacs Kathio State Park. The tower is still maintained and is open to the public. The view from the tower reveals the expansive lake and its forested shores.

Another primary natural feature of the area are the Lake’s sand beaches. The north shore of the Lake is an expansive, often publicly accessible, sand beach. The north beach is one of the largest uninterrupted natural beaches in all of Minnesota, which has nearly 12,000 lakes over 10 acres in size. The beach attracts swimmers, walkers, and kayakers. Other sand beaches include a site on the south shore locally known as “Bare Ass Beach.” The site is publicly accessible and primarily used by residents. The writers of this document chose not to explore the origins of the beach’s name.

Lake Mille Lacs resides very near the transition between Minnesota’s deciduous and coniferous forest biomes. Predictably the Lake’s shores are generally forested with both pines and hardwood trees as well as aspen and birches. The largest natural forest areas are protected as part of the area’s two State Parks, Father Hennepin and Mille Lacs Kathio, with Kathio being the larger of the two. The forests in these areas can be explored by state maintained hiking and other trails in all seasons. Other notable forest areas include state owned property north of Isle that is the subject of the design process described later in this document and the former wayside just south of Garrison that has become overgrown in recent years. It is also owned by the State of Minnesota. Most of the lakeshore’s private land owners have kept their properties at least somewhat forested.

Additional natural and scenic qualities include some small, attractive islands and bays on the south shore and the Rum River (Mille Lac’s outlet) between the Lake and the City of Onamia.

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Lake Mille Lacs is notable as one of the most historical places in the state of Minnesota. For centuries, humans have resided on or near the lake to take advantage of the area’s natural bounty of fish, wild rice, water fowl, and game animals. More recent history includes logging and railroads, development of the tourism industry, and traditional launch fishing.

Geological history of the area is like most of Minnesota in that the landscape has been greatly altered by multiple waves of glaciation. This geology is documented on a marker at a wayside rest north of Isle, and waymarkering.com describes the Mille Lacs’s story: “Almost all the Lakes in Minnesota were formed by glacial action. Many small lakes formed after the glaciers receded and blocks of ice buried in the sediment melted, leaving holes, called kettles, that filled with water. Other lakes occupy basins that were scraped out of solid rock by glacial ice. Lake Superior is a prominent example of a lake bottom scoured by glacial ice. Lake Mille Lacs, by contrast, is not really in a basin. It is surrounded on the north, west, and south sides by a moraine - a ridge of sediment left along the edge of a glacier. With the land on the eastern shore also being of higher elevation, the moraine effectively dams the drainage to the south to form one of the largest lakes in the state. This area’s geological history is a story of immense natural forces at work over thousands of years. The rolling hills are a part of a terminal moraine. The small, but abrupt hills, were formed approximately 15,000 years ago when a major glacier stopped its advance south. As the glacier melted, it deposited gravel, rocks, and boulders that it had accumulated in its grinding passage over to the north and east. The resulting land form is referred to a terminal moraine. The glacial debris partially blocked the land’s natural drainage pattern and in effect became a huge dam, creating an extensive lake of melt water - a lake even larger than the present day Mille Lacs. This ancient lake had three outlets and a shoreline 15 feet higher than the present lake. A long period of geological and vegetational succession followed. The outlet streams cut deep channels. Ponds and small lakes drained away. Wave and ice action built up beach ridges. Drainage patterns and the shape of lakes altered. Silt and vegetation filled many of the depressions. The present park of Kathio - its soil, vegetation, and wildlife - is the result of these thousands of years of constant natural progression.”

Mille Lac’s human history is also well documented at several locations. The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe has a museum located on Highway 169 on the Lake’s southwest corner. The museum tells the story of the area’s Ojibwe and preceding native peoples. Mille Lacs Kathio and Father Hennepin State Park have displays describing the native people and their use of the Lake and the land surrounding it. Many important archeological sites have been found and documented near the Lake, including former Native American villages and burial sites. The Native American culture still has a strong presence at Lake Mille Lacs. The Mille Lacs band has housing, businesses, parks and public facilities, as well as a resort/casino located near the Lake. The band continues to use the lake for the purposes of gathering food.

More recent human history includes the migration of non-native people into the area, including fur traders, loggers and railroad developers. Onamia has facilities noting the area’s railroad facilities and the Soo Line Trail is located on the former rail bed on the south end of Lake Mille Lacs. Wahkon features a historic boat display. There also reminders of the early tourism infrastructure at Mille Lacs, often in the form of the many colorfully painted large boats called “launches.” Launches were operated by resorts and fishing guides to bring multiple people onto the lake to fish for walleyes. Launches often carried over 10 anglers on a single trip. Some of the launches are still in operation while several others are dry docked along the area’s roadways as a reminder of the past. Similarly, there are many ice fishing shacks stored on back lots of resorts or guide services’ facilities. Placement of the shacks on the ice and renting them to anglers is a

3 Source: http://www.waymarkering.com/waymarks/WM2DKV_Geology_of_the_Lake_Mille_Lacs_Region
common practice on the Lake and the summer storage of the shacks can dominate some private landowners’ yards.

Finally, one period in history was specifically noted by the public when meeting with the planners conducting this process. A “1950’s Nostalgia” theme to these comments was apparent. Members of the public recalled a time when family road trips to Mille Lacs were a common activity in the area. Recalling station wagons, drive-in restaurants, and locally made signs, stakeholders felt that that era is a common point of interest for Mille Lacs. Many of the resorts and other businesses around the lake still have a layout, some décor, and some signage that originated in that period.

Recreational Qualities

Recreational opportunities abound in and around Lake Mille Lacs. The State Parks feature hiking and the beach on the north shore is a good place to take a walk. The Soo Line Trail near the south shore provides a paved surface for biking, walking and rolling. The same corridor provides a trail for all terrain vehicles. In the winter, multiple snowmobile trails are groomed and the State Parks offer opportunities for cross country skiing and snowshoeing.

Fishing continues to be a significant recreational activity despite the dip in the walleye population. The Lake is known as one of the best smallmouth bass fishing lakes in the world and muskellunge anglers regularly catch fish that would challenge the state’s records for size. Walleye anglers still enjoy a catch and release fishery at different points in the year. Ice fishing probably has been the most impacted by the walleye’s challenges as bass and muskie are not very active in the cold-water period.

Other area activities include sailing, pleasure boating, and kayaking. Kayakers in particular have an asset in Mille Lacs. The Lake’s size means that wind can create more challenging and fun conditions for paddlers of sea kayaks when the waves build to a significant size. Groups of local kayakers regularly meet on Lake Mille Lacs. There are at least 13 designated public access points on Lake Mille Lacs for boaters and paddlers. They range from gravel ramps with no other facilities to concrete ramps with docks and large parking lots. Some of the landings include informational kiosks describing different features of the Lake. Several resorts and other private businesses maintain their own boat landings as well. Additionally, the lakes outlet, the Rum River, is a State designated water trail. Canoeists and kayakers can enjoy a mostly flat water paddling experience winding through wetlands and undeveloped forest between Mille Lacs and the City of Onamia. Malone Creek, near Isle, offers about 3 miles of small water paddling through forests and wildlife rich wetlands.

Camping is very popular at Mille Lacs, with many sites being located at private resorts and at the two State Parks. The campgrounds on summer weekends at both State Parks are nearly always completely full. The campgrounds feature a variety of campsites accommodating large RVs and travel trailers as well as tents. Group campsites exist and Kathio has an equestrian campground as well. The Parks feature picnic and swimming facilities as well as hiking trails and interpretive facilities.

Several of the communities on Lake Mille Lacs have small parks with playgrounds and picnic facilities.

Waysides are often key points on a designated scenic byway. These are sites where travelers can park, leave their vehicles and observe something interesting. True waysides do not have an additional recreational purpose, such as a boat landing. There are several waysides surrounding Lake Mille Lacs.
Starting in the City of Isle and going around the Lake counterclockwise, notable waysides include:

- **Mille Lacs Vista Wayside.** North of Isle, located off both Highway 47 and Vista Road, is a basic wayside. Facilities include a large, open parking lot, a short trail, a geologic marker, and slightly elevated west facing view across the entirety of Lake Mille Lacs. The site (27 Acres) is owned by the State of Minnesota and the public property includes a significant amount of undeveloped woodlands.

- **Wealthwood Wayside.** At the very northern end of Lake Mille Lacs is a lengthy undeveloped sand beach that is paralleled by Highway 18. The Wealthwood Public Access is technically a boat landing, but due to its small parking lot and shallow, sandy ramp, it has 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.

- **Highway 18 Western Waysides.** West of the Wealthwood Public Access is a series of flat areas just off the highway that appear to once being used as waysides where one or two vehicles could have pulled off the highway and viewed the Lake from an elevated area. Currently those sites are overgrown with vegetation that prevents parking and obscures lake views.

- **Garrison City Wayside.** Jutting into Lake Mille Lacs on the western shore, the City of Garrison has a unique wayside. The site includes ample parking, a large statue of a walleye, benches, a flag pole and a small historic marker. A small building with tourism information is also located the site.

- **South Garrison Wayside.** A large tract (56 acres) of public land off Highway 169 just south of Garrison is a unique site. It once served as a wayside with a frontage road, picnic tables, and a picnic shelter atop one of the few hills on Lake Mille Lacs. Currently the State-owned site is mostly stagnant – picnic tables are disintegrating and unusable, the shelter burned down, and brush is overgrowing most of the site and closing in on the frontage road. The only maintained portion of the site is Minnesota DNR boat landing and parking lot. The site has been mentioned as a potential site for a DNR fish hatchery and office building. Support for that development has been somewhat lacking as there is disagreement on the idea that a new hatchery would benefit the Mille Lacs walleye population. The idea has failed to get funding from the State legislature. The site has potential to be a unique scenic wayside if it were to be improved.

- **Virgo Road Wayside.** Just off of Highway 169 north of Grand Casino Mille Lacs, there is a small pull off on Virgo Road (County Road 35) overlooking the lake.

- **Izaty’s Village Wayside.** Off of Highway 169 south of Grand Casino Mille Lacs there is a pull off with a historical marker noting the location of a Dakota tribal village in 1700’s. 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 Waysides.** Between the Mille Lacs outlet and the southwest corner of the lake, there are multiple pull offs just off of TH 169 on County Road 35. Each of the pull offs have no additional features other than the viewshed.

Other recreational assets in the Mille Lacs area include multiple golf courses and Grand Casino Mille Lacs.
Inventory of Intrinsic Qualities and Points of Interest

Planners from ARDC conducted a full survey of the areas surrounding Lake Mille Lacs and noted every point of interest, including scenic sites and tourism-related business. The resulting information was added to an interactive map at http://bit.ly/MilleLacsSB

A summary of the points of interest is as follows – keep in mind that many of the points could fit into multiple categories (such as natural and scenic).
SECTION 3: STAKEHOLDERS

Committee

The Mille Lacs Scenic Byway Steering Committee was organized to guide the development of this document. Attendees at Steering Committee meetings included tourism promotion professionals, elected officials, economic development professionals, business owners, and interested citizens. Committee meetings were held throughout the process at a variety of locations surrounding Lake Mille Lacs. The Committee reviewed documents, offered ideas, made community connections, and promoted the process. The Committee was responsible for approving this final document.

Communities

The potential byway route passes through several distinct communities, including:

- **Onamia.** Onamia is south of Lake Mille Lacs and serves as a gateway to the area. The City has a population of 862 people\(^4\) and has several businesses that are tourism oriented. The former rail depot is now a museum and the City park features a playground. The City is the western end of the paved Soo Line Trail, and the associated ATV trail passes through the City as well.

- **Wahkon.** This City is located on the south shore of Lake Mille Lacs. The population is estimated to be 213.\(^5\) The community features two City parks with historical, picnic, playground, veterans’ memorial, and boating features. Several businesses are focused on tourism in Wahkon, including restaurants and lodging. The Soo Line Trail passes through the City.

- **Isle.** Just east of Wahkon, Isle’s population is 771 people.\(^6\) The City features several tourism related businesses, a playground, and a historical museum. The Soo Line Trail’s paved section’s eastern terminus in in Isle and a spur trail has been developed that seeks to provide access to Father Hennepin State Park. One final short section of trail remains unconstructed to make that connection.

- **Malmo.** This unincorporated community is at the intersection of TH 47 and TH 18 on the Lake’s northeast corner. There are multiple tourism related businesses located near the intersection.

- **Garrison.** This City has a population of 209\(^7\) and features a unique wayside overlooking Lake Mille Lacs and containing a large statue of a walleye. There are several tourism related businesses in Garrison.

- **The Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe** has tribal lands on the western shore of Lake Mille Lacs. The area includes housing, a historical museum, a Casino Resort, a motel and restaurant, and other service entities. The Band partners on tourism efforts in the Region and maintains playgrounds, boat landings, and other community features.

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\(^4\) 2016 Estimate by the Minnesota State Demographer
\(^5\) 2016 Estimate by the Minnesota State Demographer
\(^6\) 2016 Estimate by the Minnesota State Demographer
\(^7\) 2016 Estimate by the Minnesota State Demographer
Agencies and Organizations

Multiple organizations were involved in this planning process.

- **Regional Development Commissions.** The East Central RDC organized the process and organized, promoted, and facilitated Steering Committee meetings, the public meeting, and the public open houses. The Arrowhead RDC completed the area inventory, developed the interactive map, completed research, and wrote, formatted, and published this document. The Region 5 RDC stayed informed about the process and offered input when appropriate.

- **The Minnesota Department of Transportation.** MnDOT’s Scenic Byway program staff met with the Steering Committee at the beginning of the process to help educate attendees about designation process. MnDOT also coordinated the process to fund this study. MnDOT planners participated at Steering Committee meetings and offered input.

- **The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.** MnDNR representatives were included in the process and discussions were held regarding their ownership and use of two major, but underused waysides.

- **Mille Lacs, Crow Wing, and Aitkin Counties.** Representatives of each County was invited to the Steering Committee meetings and discussions were held with County Transportation Department representatives regarding County Road use.

- **Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe.** Project leaders met with the Mille Lacs Band regarding the process and ensured the Band’s input was garnered and made a part of this effort.

- **Cities.** City staff and leaders from Onamia, Wahkon, Isle, and Garrison participated in the process through the Steering Committee and other opportunities for input.

- **Townships.** Townships surrounding the Lake participated in the process by supporting its initial funding efforts and attended the open houses and other input sessions.

- **Tourism Promoters.** Representatives of the Mille Lacs Area Tourism Council participated on the Steering Committee and helped promote the process to its member businesses.
SECTION 4: THE TRAVELER EXPERIENCE

Strategies to Enhance and Maintain the Traveler Experience

To have a successful Scenic Byway the stakeholders of the project will need to work together to create and maintain a unique byway experience. Due to the fact that the proposed Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway route involves two State agencies, three counties, several cities and townships, the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, tourism organizations, businesses and citizens, there is not one obvious entity to manage the Byway. Future strategies for the betterment of the Byway need to address that issue in addition to making physical improvements. The following are the initial proposed strategies for the potential byway.

A. Form a formal non-profit organization to manage the byway. The organization’s board should include representatives of the three counties, the Mille Lacs Band, the Mille Lacs Area Tourism Council, any Cities and Townships that want to participate, and any interested business owners and citizens. The organization would be responsible for byway promotion, project coordination, and other duties as identified. There are multiple examples of the organizations for other byways. The North Shore Scenic Drive Council is a non-profit that has more advisory role for their byway, while the Edge of the Wilderness Scenic Byway is administered by a formal joint powers board that is involved in many community initiatives. The organization will need to determine what type of role it is seeking.

B. Install byway route signage. The Mille Lacs Scenic Byway organization will need to work with the local road authorities to manufacture and install the byway’s route signage. MnDOT has significant experience with this type of signage and will likely help coordinate the process.

C. Make major site improvements. Already two sites have been identified as being key sites on the byway that could be greatly improved. One site (“Mille Lacs Vista”) is located north of Isle, another potential site is just south of Garrison (see page 10). Other sites can be identified and addressed by the Byway organization and the sites’ administrators. The byway organization will need to identify long term caretakers of these sites. Improvements to sites should follow a common Byway theme while maintaining their individual character. Examples of the types of improvements that could occur are show in Appendix C of this document.

D. Hold Byway events. The Byway organization should organize and hold events based on the Byway route. Examples could include motorcycle rides, classic car gatherings, running races or festivals/celebrations. The events will promote tourism in the Mille Lacs area.

E. Develop parallel facilities. Stakeholder input in this planning process have shown that people are interested in developing at least two parallel routes to the Byway – a designated bicycle route and a water/kayak trail.

- Bicycle route – currently the Soo Line Trail is paved and used by cyclists and other non-motorized uses. It is poised to connect to Father Hennepin State Park and its facilities. It is connected to the Cities of Onamia, Wahkon, and Isle. The Byway organization should seek to make the trail a part of a larger bicycle route surrounding Lake Mille Lacs. The route should use newly constructed paved trail as much as possible, but designating lower speed, lower volume local roads with bikeway striping and signage is also feasible. The stakeholders understand that the most challenging area for a bike route will be the north shore, where room is limited and wetlands are common.

- Water trail – While a water trail is less defined, designating a route using maps, designated campsites and access points, and creating a lodge to lodge promotion system, could be a significant draw for paddling and sailing enthusiasts.
SECTION 5: SIGNAGE

Roadway signage is a significant component of Scenic Byways. The existing signage of the potential route was inventoried by ARDC and can be reviewed at: http://bit.ly/MilleLacsSB

Outdoor Advertising Controls

Signage is regulated to a higher standard on Scenic Byways, primarily addressing off premise signs. Off premise signs are typically billboards that are not advertising the businesses adjacent to their locations. The majority of off premise signs on the proposed byway route are on Trunk Highway 169 on Lake Mille Lac’s west shore. If the route is designated as a byway, existing off premise signs will be allowed to continue and can legally change their messages as they see fit. Existing billboards would not be allowed to change their size or be rebuilt, however. New billboards would not be allowed. On premise signs for adjacent businesses would be allowed to continue and new on premise signs would be permitted.

Signage

If designated the new byway would need to create a unique sign signifying the route. These signs are fairly small in size and are often added to other existing road signs as shown to the right in the example from the North Shore Scenic Drive. The signs would likely be fashioned after the new byway’s logo.

Logo

As part of this planning process, a potential logo was designed for the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway. The logo could be used on internet sites, paper promotional items and other supporting materials. See Appendix C for more information.

Gateway Signs

Often, communities choose to help promote the byway and to create continuity of the route through the use of Gateway Signage. This signage is consistent for each community. The North Shore’s gateway sign to below on the right.

Interpretive Signs

Additional signage providing details about the area’s intrinsic values are an important part of a byway. Panels or kiosks at waysides are a good way to tell the byway area’s story and facilitate a connection to travelers, perhaps convincing them to spend more time in the area. Interpretive signage should be a strategy for the future byway organization if it is designated.
SECTION 6: CONCLUSION

Primary Recommendations

1. Pursue the designation of the Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway. The Byway Steering Committee should work with the Minnesota Department of Transportation to complete the tasks necessary to be designated. This recommendation reflects the interest shown by stakeholders, including community leaders and businesses.

2. Formalize a Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway Council as a not for profit board to lead efforts in promoting and improving the Byway’s resources. Future roles of this board could include the physical development and maintenance of waysides on the route.

3. Complete a formal Corridor Management Plan for the Byway. Much of the information needed is contained in this document (Designation Study) already.

Potential Future Recommendations

4. Install byway logo signs at regular intervals on the byway route.

5. Encourage the development of Gateway signage at Byway community entrances/key sites. The signage should be unique and consistent.

6. Develop an interpretive plan for the byway and implement the recommendations in that plan through information panels and other methods.

7. Pursue the development of a designated bike route around Lake Mille Lacs. The route could be on off road, paved trails and/or low volume, low speed roads.

8. Pursue the development of a kayak/sailing route circling the Lake. Consider developing water access campsites and work with area lodging facilities to promote a resort to resort paddling/sailing program.

9. Identify and implement a private business aesthetics program that encourages private entities to use signage and building exteriors that complements Lake Mille Lacs Scenic Byway themes.

10. Redesign and improve wayside facilities around the byway. Sites could include the Mille Lake Vista site, the site south of Garrison, the beach area on the north end of the lake and “Bare Ass Beach” on the south shore.

11. Implement programming affiliated with the Byway, its communities, and businesses. Programing examples are classic car events, motorcycle tours, art events, bicycle ride events, history programs and many others.

12. Continue to update and implement the Corridor Management Plan.
APPENDICES:

Appendix A: Scenic Byway Committee
ECRDC INSERT NAMES AND AFFILIATIONS

Appendix B: Public Meeting
INSERT MEETING SUMMARY
Appendix C: Design Features

Proposed logo/sign:

The logo intends to show the openness of Mille Lacs, its sand beaches, and wooded shores. It is based on a photo that the Scenic Byway committee used to promote the planning process.

Additional Designs:

The designs on the next pages are general examples only. They are intended to demonstrate the type of improvements that Scenic Byway designation can help to bring to a community or site. They are not depicting any designs for a specific site.
Wayside Site Concept

- turf open space
- shelter w/ fireplace
- stone masonry
- geological monument
- stormwater treatment basin
- picnic tables & bbq - ada accessible
- natural playground - stump jump - hill top - slide - stone climb - stone cave - branch craft
- shore line hiking trail -natural surface
- parking - 27 + 1 accessible stall - RV turn-a-round - 1 trailer drop off or RV stall
- trailhead - kiosk & way finding - bike racks
- paved 10’ multi-use trail
- byway sign

LAKE MILLE LACS Scenic Byway Project
Wayside Site Concept

- 42'x24' shelter
- Fireplace with timber cube seats
- Geological monument
- Shoreline hiking trail - natural surface
- Trailhead - kiosk & wayfinding - bike racks
- Picnic tables & BBQ - ADA accessible
- Turf open space
Precedent Images
Site Elements - Retro Style

**MONUMENT SIGN**
- 10’ tall
- 22’ wide
- Bent wood edging (primary color)
- Routed Lettering
- Laminated Board
- Glu-Lam Beam (secondary color)
- 4” granite stone veneer

**KIOSK**
- Angled cuts to match monument sign
- Sign hanging cable
- Plywood poster backing
- 8”x8” timber set in concrete base
- 4” granite stone veneer to match existing monument
- Pour concrete core

**SHELTER**
- 14’ wide
- 42’ long
- Flat Glu-Lam roof
- 8”x8” timber posts
- Grill
- Picnic Table
- Glu-Lam Seat
- 4” granite stone veneer
- 2-sided fireplace
- Boardformed concrete hearth core
- Boardformed concrete planters + seat walls

**BENCH**
- 3’ wide
- 22’ long
- Boardformed concrete core
- Glu-Lam Seat
- 4” granite stone veneer
Additional Information

More information about this project can be found at https://ardc.org/millelacscenicbyway/.

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