Lake Traverse Region Community Vision
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The final report, along with background information on the planning process, is also available as a PDF in CD format and online at the Center for Rural Design website http://www.ruraldesign.umn.edu/projects/traverse

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Lake Traverse Community Vision
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Executive Summary

A struggling farm economy, diminished water quality and outmigration – each trend alone could raise a number of planning issues to be dealt with in a rural region such as Lake Traverse, Minnesota. Determined to turn the tide of rural decline, citizens in Traverse County took up the water quality and quality of life questions facing them by embarking on a community visioning process.

The citizen-based Traverse County/Communities Uniting in Partnership (CUP) envisioned a County with a diversified economy that would protect natural and agricultural resources, attract and hold new residents and improve quality of life. This effort was coordinated through the Blandin Foundation’s Community Investment program (BCIP) and facilitated by University of Minnesota’s Center for Small Towns (CST) in 2001.

A team led by the University of Minnesota’s Center for Rural Design (CRD) undertook the task of developing and refining the community’s vision for the Lake Traverse region. Building on the recreational, cultural and environmental projects already highlighted in the Traverse/CUP work, attention was focused on Lake Traverse and the cities of Wheaton and Browns Valley that anchor each end of the lake. Underscoring CRD’s efforts was the goal of instilling a sense of well-being among residents and visitors, based in a collective understanding of strategic resource advantages of the region and the potential for sustainable development of these resources.

The planning process accomplished the following, working with a Citizens’ Advisory Group over the 2002-03 winter:

- Identified areas where water quality and quality of life are being impacted by changes in land use
- Explored how changes align with existing municipal ordinances, county, regional and state plans and community goals as defined by the citizens committee and current research on sustainable community planning.
- Produced a series of land use scenarios for potential redevelopment that illustrate these principles.
- Recommended an implementation strategy for managing change that is incremental in nature and capitalizes on the natural resource wealth and citizen energy that characterize this rural region.
- Documented the process in a format that accurately tracks the evolution of this citizen-based strategy for sustaining a vital Lake Traverse region.

Lake Traverse Community Vision

The Lake Traverse Community Vision is a strategy for addressing issues related to water quality and quality of life at three area scales: the urban centers of Wheaton and Browns Valley, the residential shoreline of Lake Traverse and the agricultural landscape of the Lake Traverse region. This document is not a land use plan; rather it offers a strategic approach to economic development and a sustainable future for the lake Traverse area. The information is grounded in a comprehensive understanding of the Lake Traverse region and built on citizens’ knowledge and personal experience as well as research expertise.

The Community Vision process produced a set of Guiding Principles to help shape future development. The principles are:
- Make efficient use of land resources and infrastructure.
- Evoke a sense of place.
- Invest in the public realm.
- Protect the region’s ecology.
- Promote the region as a safe, livable and equitable place to invest.

The principles are applied to development scenarios at three distinct scales, at the city scale of Wheaton and Browns Valley, at the lake focus scale and at the rural regional scale.

**Recommendations**

Physical design alone cannot provide all the answers for Traverse County in its citizens’ efforts to create a better place for future generations. However, design is an important component of the planning process that can reflect the values of the community. By its interactive nature, the design process itself is a useful forum for community debate about development and change.

While numerous project recommendations are in the Community Vision document, the main recommendations are as follows:

- Adopt this Community Vision as a strategic planning framework to complement County and municipal ordinances and support the Bois de Sioux and Upper Minnesota River Watershed Districts’ management plans.
- Amend zoning and other regulatory tools to accommodate the Guiding Principles that underlie the Community Vision.
- Move forward on the recommended priority projects as funding becomes available and, where possible, as part of larger funded initiatives.
- Use the Guiding Principles to evaluate proposed developments and propose new initiatives that can diversify the regional economy.
- Use the Community Vision as a guide for developing a Capital Improvements Plan that is regional in nature and incorporates sustainable tourism initiatives.
- Resolve communication issues between jurisdictions to prevent duplication of efforts and maximize available resources.
- Continue to make the planning process visible and inclusive.
Introduction

Document Format

This document tracks a community planning process that addressed land use management in the Lake Traverse region of Minnesota and sets a strategy for realizing specific community goals. Its focus is based in part on the Traverse County/Communities Uniting in Partnership (CUP) directive “to develop a Lake Traverse visioning and work plan development”, partly on the sustainable development goals of the region’s watershed management plans, but largely on citizens’ interest in seeing development managed preserve quality of life in the area.

The document begins with a summary of the issues and goals that initiated the need for a Community Vision and this project. Next, the planning process is described – who was involved and how interaction happened – along with an outline of the planning tools use. The community design principles that evolved during the planning process are described, as are the three scales of planning to which the principles were applied:

- Cities of Browns Valley and Wheaton
- Lake Traverse area
- Rural Lake Traverse region

These principles are followed by a set of development scenarios for each scale of development. Specific planning community goals are accompanied by strategies for implementing the community vision.

A summary of priority projects concludes the document, with recommendations for funding and programmatic needs and potential technical and funding assistance. The appendices contain all supporting documents related to the oral history and tourism opportunities research done as part of this project, as well as maps and poster graphics created for this planning process.

Goals and Need for a Community Vision

Physical planning issues for Traverse County are related to concern for falling population numbers, a steady drop in the number of farms and families in a county whose economy has traditionally been agriculturally based, degraded water quality due to increased phosphorous levels in Lake Traverse and a general sense of the need to diversify the economy, in part to keep the skills and vitality of youth in the county.

With only 4,170 County residents registered in the 2000 U.S. Census it ranks as one of the least populated counties in the state, however census data show the population decline has hit a crisis stage. Between 1940 and 2000, the County’s population plummeted by 50% to just 4200 residents in 2000, with 30% of the loss having occurred after 1980. For residents, the reason for these sharp declines seems obvious and reflects the fact that Traverse County’s traditional agriculture based economy was hit especially hard by the farm crises of the 1940s and 1980s. The net result was a dramatic increase in farm sizes and decrease in the number of farm families.

The County’s response in 2001 was to engage the citizenry in a community assessment.
process sponsored by the Blandin Foundation that had as its goal to diversify the economy, by shifting focus to physical assets other than its rich farmland, which may prove to be of strategic economic advantage for the region. The process revealed how participants enjoy the quality of life that Traverse County affords, take pride in the area’s history and place a high value on protecting the region’s physical assets, especially Lake Traverse. Optimism about the possibilities of a new economy based in information technologies and tourism offset despair about losing jobs and youth from the region.

The Traverse County/Blandin Community Investment Project (BCIP), later renamed Communities United in Partnership (CUP), met with the Center for Rural Design in the winter of 2002 to discuss the outcomes of the community assessment process and clarify the goals of a Community Vision project which would build on community efforts. The project study area was defined to include Lake Traverse, the ‘anchor’ communities of Browns Valley and Wheaton and the subwatersheds draining to Lake Traverse. In Fall 2002, a citizens’ advisory group met for the first of several meetings to begin the visioning process.

**Goals of the Community Vision Project**

The goals of this project were to:
- Build a shared vision for the Lake Traverse region that takes strategic advantage of its unique history and physical assets to create a diversified economy that will sustain community vitality.
- Produce a series of development scenarios for the Lake Traverse region, including the ‘anchor’ communities of Wheaton and Browns Valley, that balance economic vitality, environmental health and community identity.
- Create a structure for dialogue about development that promotes collaboration and cooperative investment in the region’s communities.
- Outline work areas that can direct and sustain the dialogue after completion of this project.
- Make this planning process a community building effort by promoting cooperative planning and instilling a sense of community well-being among all residents.
How can a Community Vision document be useful?

- A framework for setting development priorities for public and private investment in the community.
- A point of leverage representing the community’s voice in new public facilities and site plan reviews.
- A reference to attach to Requests for Proposals for new projects.
- A basis for seeking grant funding for projects.
Planning Process

The Design Team began its process by meeting with a Citizens’ Advisory Group to define issues and understand development patterns. (A full list of advisory group members is in Appendix 1). A series of digital Geographic Information Systems (GIS) maps and hand drawings was produced to show the land use, land cover, hydrological, wetlands and habitat characteristics of the region. These maps were overlaid with current property ownership and management to compare current development initiatives and existing physical conditions against sustainable community goals such as promoting a diverse economy, protecting natural resources and building community.

Ground rules for participation in meetings and a decision-making process were established by the group. Subsequent meetings brought forward a set of Guiding Principles that the advisory group endorsed as the basis for the Design Team’s development scenarios that were the focus of the project.

An April 2003 set of community workshops was held in Browns Valley and Wheaton to garner broader community input into the development and redevelopment potential for the region.

With supportive coverage by area newspapers and promotion by the Citizens’ Advisory Group, the series of workshops and meetings was a critical forum for community debate involving over 100 citizens through the year-long process. All workshop responses and meeting summaries were circulated to the Citizens’ Advisory Group and posted to the CRD website as the project progressed.

Planning Process Ground Rules for Lake Traverse Citizens’ Advisory Group 2002-03

- We all have something to teach and something to learn in this process.
- We are all experts.
- The process of learning requires us to rethink our assumptions
- We agree to be open to rethinking our own assumptions and to hearing other people’s ideas.
- We will act with respect for everyone’s knowledge and experience by:
- Listening without interruption or talking over each other
- Listening without judging someone’s ideas or experience
- Sharing time and space equally with each other
- Agreeing to disagree respectfully
- Describing the problem or issue, not the person.
- We agree to act in ways that are in the best interest of the Lake Traverse community and move beyond our own self-interest.
- We agree to listen to our neighbors in the public meetings and reflect their concerns, ideas and needs in the planning process.

**Decision-Making Process for Lake Traverse Citizens’ Advisory Group 2002-03**

Citizen group decisions will be made by using modified consensus. If full consensus is not readily reached on an item for decision, a modified consensus will be used, consisting of 75% of those attending the meeting.

At the start-up meeting in November 2002, a critical community concern was voiced as how to create a regional economy that works in concert with environmental stewardship and builds community. When asked their expectations of this project, comments ranged from frustration with yet more community dialogue following the BCIP/CUP process (2001) and a desire to get something done, to enthusiasm for findings ways to servings kids and seniors better, creating bike trails and investigating eco-tourism, protecting water quality and preserving agriculture and small-town life.

**Guiding Principles**

These principles were endorsed by the Lake Traverse Community Vision Citizens’ Advisory Group in January 2003 as the guidelines to use in planning and development in the Lake Traverse Region.

**Guiding Principles for Lake Traverse Community Vision:**

- Make efficient use of land resources and infrastructure.
  - Encourage development in areas with existing infrastructure.
  - Create a variety of housing and employment opportunities in urban centers to stabilize the region’s economy and provide new retail market for downtown.
  - Provide a mix of transportation choices for commuters and recreation.
  - Develop alternative energy possibilities that take advantage of the region’s solar and wind resources.
· **Evoke a sense of place.**  
- Respect the unique architecture and landscapes that define the character of the Lake Traverse region.  
- Celebrate the area’s rich history through environmental education and tourism.  
- Preserve and adapt historic structures i.e. gas stations, schools, barns – for new uses and scenic value.

· **Invest in the public realm.**  
- Enhance the pedestrian experience in towns with a network of parks, treed streets and sidewalks which link civic buildings, commercial and residential areas.  
- Connect communities to Lake Traverse with recreational trails along waterways, habitat corridors and scenic roads.  
- Ensure access to internet connections and high-speed telecommunications.  
- Advance community infrastructure improvements as part of larger funded projects as the opportunity arises, for example, Highway 27 upgrade.

*Gopher Theatre, Wheaton 2002*

· **Protect the region’s ecology.**  
- Preserve and restore wetlands and waterways, rare landscape elements and associated species.  
- Conserve large contiguous or connected areas – open space and farmland – that contain critical habitat.  
- Promote agricultural best management practices that minimize stream bank erosion and phosphorous load in area lakes.  
- Minimize disturbance from new construction and reservoir management on natural resources.

*View towards Lake Traverse, 2003*

· **Promote the region as a safe, livable and equitable place to invest.**  
- Make the planning process visible and decision-making a collaborative effort on future development.  
- Retain, expand and create businesses that support the community vision.  
- Examine the impacts of local decisions in a regional or watershed context.  
- Improve water quality and quality of life with all development.

*Wheaton, 2003*
Redevelopment Scenarios

Restoring Ecological Health: At the Lake Traverse area scale

Key Features:

Citizen participants early in the planning process identified a rich concentration of natural and cultural resources around Lake Traverse. Eagle nesting sites and favorite fishing areas on the islands, historic grain elevator sites, barge landings and Indian burial mounds along the lakeshore, native prairie bluff lands, wetland wildlife habitat and the Continental Divide, are just some of the special places identified with Lake Traverse. The lake itself is considered the key strategic asset to any redevelopment scenario. The accompanying map shows many of these key features and their potential educational and recreational value to residents and visitors.

Issues:

Currently only one resort on the South Dakota side of the lake services boats on Lake Traverse. Few camping facilities exist on the east (Minnesota) shoreline and lake access and boat docking are limited. Interpretive and directional signage is minimal and resort accommodation lacking. Additionally, communication is missing between Minnesota tourism interests and the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate of the Lake Traverse Reservation in South Dakota, despite the fact that the west shore of Lake Traverse is on Reservation land and pow-wows held annually on the Reservation draw thousands of visitors to the region. Given the range of natural and cultural resources that comprise the Lake Traverse region, a real opportunity exists to capitalize on the recreational tourism potential.

At the same time, water quality and water levels in Lake Traverse remain public concerns. Water runoff from agricultural fields, urban communities and shoreland property carries a high nutrient load, mainly phosphorous, that continues to pollute the area’s rivers, ditches and lakes. The Lake Traverse flood management program administered by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers results in variable lake water levels from year to year, depending on the alternating needs to store or draw down water to reduce flood damage. The dams, dikes and land areas that are part of this federal flood control project afford assured hunting and fishing recreation sites, however the variability in lake water levels affects all aspects of lakeshore living, from housing location to boating patterns.

Goals:

Citizen participants in the planning process identified the following goals for the Lake Traverse area:
- Inventory historical sites in the lake area and develop an interpretive driving route around the lake.
- Build new accommodations for recreationists (2-3 day stays) with campgrounds, motels, B & B’s.
- Develop new birding, bicycling and hiking trails and connect to national trails through the County, including the Hwy 75 Prairie Passage and Hwy. 28 Upper Minnesota River Valley Scenic By-Way.
- Collaborate with adjacent counties, the State of South Dakota and Lake Traverse Reservation tribal leadership on a tourism promotional strategy for region.
- Structure a closer working relationship with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers on management and use of Lake Traverse, to preserve its flood control function and support water-based recreation and shoreland development.

- Support soil and water conservation programs that can assist area farmers in slowing field runoff and preventing shoreline erosion.

Vision:

A healthy Lake Traverse region protects the water quality of Lake Traverse and its watershed, to ensure a natural resource base for recreation and sustainable fish and wildlife habitat.

Strategies to achieve the community vision:

- All farm operations demonstrate agricultural Best Management Practices to slow runoff and decrease phosphorous load to Lake Traverse and the rivers and ditches that drain to it.
- Shoreland residential developments concentrate lawn area and include native vegetation planting at the water’s edge to minimize soil erosion. This is true for standard 100’ lots and cluster developments.
- Lake water levels are managed through public dialogue and cooperative agreements between the USACE and local jurisdictions on both sides of the state line, to balance preservation of the lake’s recreational value with the need to provide effective flood protection here and downstream on the Red River of the North.
- Riverbank and waterway restoration is done incrementally, as agricultural producers work with area Watershed Authorities and Soil and Water Conservation Districts to plant buffers and field breaks. Conservation planting initiatives provide opportunities for environmental education.
Redevelopment Scenarios:

*Preserving Sense of Place: At the city scale*

**Key Features:**

The cities of Wheaton and Browns Valley are part of the larger Lake Traverse story, but each city also has a distinct history and special character. Key features in Wheaton include its distinctive downtown prairie architecture, railroad station museum, historic County fairgrounds and the Mustinka River that edges the city. Browns Valley’s situation on the Continental Divide, at the headwaters of the Minnesota River, lends a historical prominence that is recognized by the city’s designation as part of Upper Minnesota River Valley Highway 28 Scenic By-Way. The burial site of the prehistoric Brown’s Valley Man and the visible meander of the Ancient Glacial River Warren through town speak to the long human history and interpretive potential of this place. The early 20th century architecture of the central business district is remarkably intact which, given its proximity to Lake Traverse, position Browns Valley as a tourist destination and gateway to the lake. Citizen participants were passionate about the need to build on both cities’ histories in any redevelopment scenarios.

**Issues:**

Population loss in the county is an overriding issue, as these two cities struggle to keep their service center function in an agricultural region where fewer people are needed to farm. Skills training opportunities are few, information technology services are lacking and wages are not always adequate. Lack of jobs and related infrastructure has meant that high school graduates leave to live and work elsewhere.

**Goals:**

Citizen participants identified the following goals for Browns Valley and Wheaton, that underscore the vision:

- Create living wage jobs in town to help stabilize population numbers and attract new residents.
- Develop the cities’ historic resources as the basis for a tourism initiative, starting with rehabilitation of the Gopher Theater in Wheaton and Browns Valley’s Carnegie Library.
- Consider a County wide Economic Development Authority (EDA) that would assume a regional, or watershed, approach to development, promoting the region’s full range of assets and development locations to prospective investors and examining local decisions within a regional context.
- Improve the recreational infrastructure of both cities to make them better places to live, work and play.

**Vision:**

- Led by the ‘anchor’ cities of Wheaton and Browns Valley, Lake Traverse region communities capitalize on their prairie architecture, historic downtowns and small-town character.
- Historic preservation is used as an economic development tool to spur investment in downtown, attract tourists and create pride of place in residents.

**Strategies to achieve the community vision:**

- Historic preservation becomes an economic investment tool to improve Central Business Districts through restoration or adaptive re-use of old buildings.
- Restaurants, shops and services are improved that already exist or are built new in the anchor communities of Wheaton and Browns Valley through entrepreneurial initiatives.
- City entries and streets are improved with interpretive signage and amenities for pedestrian and bicycling around town.
- The County Fairgrounds is rehabilitated to accommodate more types of campers and attract more events that can be shared with neighboring County Fairs.
- A designated place to skateboard and roller blade is established, and tied into a community’s parks and trail system that gives kids a recreational route through town with destinations along the way.
- Extend the collaborative model of the schools/community partnership established by the current 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CLCs) program that involves Wheaton, Browns Valley and the Lake Traverse Reservation to other educational and economic initiatives that could benefit from cross-jurisdictional involvement.
Lake Traverse Community Vision
Redevelopment Scenarios:

Creating a sustainable economy: At the rural regional scale

Key Features:

The high value citizens place on Lake Traverse and its history extends to the rich mosaic of wetlands, bluffs and coulees that frame the lake on both sides of the Minnesota/South Dakota border. The farm landscape also – historic barns, windbreaks, field patterns and grain elevators – is impressive for its extent across the region, a visual reminder of the importance of agriculture to the state’s economy and appealing to those seeking to experience an authentic rural region.

They imagined the future look and function of the Lake Traverse region, citizen participants identified tourism as a means of conserving these key natural, historical and cultural features that captures new sources of revenue. As a complementary industry to agriculture, tourism offers the potential to diversify the economy. A tourism opportunities study done concurrently with this project confirmed the need to include resources on both sides of the lake into any redevelopment scenarios. Minnesota Extension Service’s Tourism Center argues the importance of seeing the ‘big picture’ when imagining what visitors would travel to see and do and how best to manage resources to ensure quality visitor experiences and generate revenue for the region. (See Appendix 4 for the full report.)

Issues:

Protecting water quality in the region’s lakes and waterways is a high priority for residents, seasonal visitors and water resource management agencies alike; however, the alternating flood and silt-in cycle experienced at Mud Lake, along with the engineered level changes to Lake Traverse, create resident frustration with agencies’ flood prevention and habitat management mandates that directly impact on people’s recreational experience. At the same time, flood control measures and wildlife habitat management programs remain critical to protecting the agricultural productivity and recreational hunting and fishing industries that depend on public management of the natural resources.

Wetland drainage of the agricultural uplands that accelerates flow to Lake Traverse and crop fertilizer and herbicide applications that are carried in runoff further diminish water
quality. Inadequate recreational accommodations in the region, few lake access points and a lack of marketing of existing services for hunters and anglers combine to discourage recreationists who would otherwise come to enjoy the region.

Goals:

- Continue to work with the Bois de Sioux Watershed District and the Upper Minnesota Watershed District and private property owners on wetlands restoration and buffer plantings throughout the region to improve water quality and create opportunities for environmental education.
- Improve facilities at the recreational ‘pressure points’ on Lake Traverse, especially at Traverse County Park and Mud Lake boat access.
- Redevelop Highway 27 as a scenic corridor between Browns Valley and Wheaton and extends in a circle route around Lake Traverse on the South Dakota side.
- Determine the regional tourism market.

Vision:

- A tourism economy strategy is in place that takes advantage of the region’s natural and architectural features and historic agricultural landscape and promotes vacation trips here by those the Travel Industry of America has identified as adventure travelers and the historic/cultural travelers.
- A sustainable agricultural region is attained that includes diversified products and scales of operation which tap into local market for fresh locally-grown foods.
- The natural resource base is sustained through partnered resource management by public agencies, already a major presence in the region, working with citizens and property owners.
Strategies to achieve the community vision:

- Recreational resources and special places are identified that will become part of a tourism economy and preserved as change and development occurs in the region. Native prairie stands, natural bluff lands and barn architecture are some of the special places in the region.
- Camping, resort and bed & breakfast accommodations are built or re-built around Lake Traverse through private and public investment.
- The Hwy 27 corridor between Browns Valley and Wheaton is developed as a scenic corridor for birding, bicycling and agri-tourism.
- A regional tourism development organization is in place that carries the ‘big picture’ of tourism and can facilitate marketing of individual and community tourism initiatives.
- A public history program is initiated that builds on the oral history survey being conducted as part of this Community Vision project and involves youth.
Summary Recommendations

Overview

While numerous goals and strategies are described throughout this Community Vision document, this section is reserved for the main recommendations and priority projects that emerged from the planning process. These recommendations include:

- Adopt this Community Vision as a strategic planning framework to complement County and municipal ordinances and support the Bois de Sioux and Upper Minnesota River Watershed Districts’ management plans.
- Amend zoning and other regulatory tools to accommodate the Guiding Principles that underlie the Community Vision.
- Move forward on the recommended priority projects as funding becomes available and, where possible, as part of larger funded initiatives.
- Use the Guiding Principles to evaluate proposed developments and propose new initiatives that can diversify the regional economy.
- Use the Community Vision as a guide for developing a Capital Improvements Plan that is regional in nature and incorporates sustainable tourism initiatives.
- Resolve communication issues between jurisdictions to prevent duplication of efforts and maximize available resources.
- Continue to make the planning process visible and inclusive.

Redevelopment Priorities

Several critical questions in the closing community meetings helped focus discussion on implementing the sustainable development strategy that is the Community Vision:

- What civic projects should have priority?
- What private businesses should be developed to support the Vision?
- What individual actions are needed to support the Vision?
- What community actions are needed to support the Vision?

The Priority Projects described following are those that had early consensus in the planning process, best illustrate aspects of the Community Vision and show how the Guiding Principles can be applied to a range of individual and community actions that cumulatively will sustain the region’s economy, ecological health and sense of place. As importantly, these projects could be initiated in the immediate to near future as funding and technical support have been identified. If a Project Coordinator is hired to carry forward the recommended initiatives as part of a Community Work Plan, the planning process will be kept open to new information, such as upcoming grants cycles and the pending results of a county-wide Business Retention and Expansion Survey.

Likely costs for research, design and construction of the Priority Projects are included when practical, however emphasis is placed on the programmatic steps and implementing partners needed for each, reflecting their collaborative nature.

As preface to the Priority Projects, this section first describes a community organizing initiative that should be undertaken in the immediate future, to establish a regional tourism organization that could serve as a model for building community leadership and expanded regional collaborations.
**Develop a Regional Tourism Organization**

- Form a regional tourism planning consortium to market and promote Traverse County and the Lake Traverse region.
- Conduct an inventory of existing and potential tourist attractions, festivals and events and set priority on those that could be developed within a reasonable timeframe.
- Do a market analysis, feasibility study and business plan for each priority project.
- Work with the Blandin Foundation to provide community leadership training for planning task groups and individuals.

**Timeframe:**
In the immediate or near future, form a tourism consortium and develop projects that build on existing attractions and could show quick success: do a market analysis, feasibility study and business plan for each project as it is developed.

**Partners:**
Minnesota Office of Tourism, Western Minnesota Prairie Waters, Southern Minnesota Tourism Association, University of Minnesota Extension Service, Minnesota Historical Society, West Central Initiative, Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate tribal leadership, South Dakota Tourism Office, Traverse County, local and regional tourism groups, area Economic Development Authorities

**Technical and/or Financial Assistance:**
University of Minnesota Extension Service, Tourism Center, West Central Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, West Central Initiative, Blandin Foundation
**Priority Project**

**Lake Traverse Regional Tourism Opportunities**
- Build a regional tourism program through public/private partnerships that maximizes existing resources and infrastructure and promotes the unique events and recreational activities in the Lake Traverse area without diminishing quality of life for residents.

**Work Plan**
- Design and seek funding for interpretive sign program to support the Lake Traverse Scenic Circle Tour as a first collaborative project between Traverse County, Roberts County (S.D.), Sisseton-Wahpeton tribal leadership and private land owners. ($15,000 - $20,000)
- Develop bicycle and canoe rental service as new recreational attractions.
- Provide amenities at Traverse County Park.
- Increase the number of campsites around the lake.
- Identify locations for new waysides, picnic areas and rest stops for lake- and road-based tours in the region

**Timeframe**
Long-term

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**Technical and Financial Assistance**
The following list provides names and types of assistance offered by various potential funding and technical sources:

- West Central Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships: grants for regional community development
- Minnesota Office of Tourism: promotional and marketing materials
- Traverse County: public infrastructure capital improvements budget for campsites, waysides and lake access
- Extension Service Tourism Center: technical and planning advice
- MnDOT: grant funding for highway directional and interpretive signage
- Minnesota Historical Society: grant funding for historical interpretive tour development; promotional and marketing materials re: area National Register properties

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Lake Traverse, 2003

![Lake Traverse Scenic Circle Tour, 2003](image)
- West Central Initiative (WCI) and local banks: 
  small business start-up grant and loan funds for bicycle and canoe rental service, B&B’s, café and resort development
- Wheaton Dumont Community Fund:
  community development projects, workforce training assistance
- Wheaton Economic Development Authority (EDA):
  small business development incentives
- Browns Valley EDA:
  small business development incentives
- Western Minnesota Prairie Waters
  promotional and organizational assistance re: Highway 28 Upper Minnesota Valley Scenic Byway
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Lake Traverse Project
  collaborative management of wildlife areas and recreation areas on Lake Traverse and Mud Lake
- Big Stone County
  collaborative marketing of tourism opportunities
**Priority Project**  
**Traverse County Scenic Routes**

- Develop a recreational scenic routes system using existing roads to highlight the natural and cultural features of the region. Potential ‘theme’ routes are the Army Corps Route, Prairie Pothole Route, Wildlife Wetlands Route, Agriculture in Action Route and the Lake Traverse Route, as shown on the accompanying drawing.

**Work Plan**

- Design and install interpretive markers for a set of scenic routes, one route at a time, along existing roads and where there is early consensus, e.g. Lake Traverse Route. ($50,000 - $200,000)

- Add new scenic route components as public road upgrade projects are scheduled, e.g. Highway 27 through Wheaton, County road improvements to maximize funding, equipment availability.

**Timeframe**

Immediate- to long-term

**Technical and Financial Assistance**

The following list provides names and types of assistance offered by various potential funding and technical sources:

- West Central Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships:  
  grants for regional community development
- Minnesota Office of Tourism:  
  promotional and marketing materials
- Traverse County:  
  public infrastructure capital improvements budget for waysides
- Extension Service Tourism Center:  
  technical and planning advice
- MnDOT:  
  grant funding for highway directional and interpretive signage
- Minnesota Historical Society:  
  grant funding for historical interpretive tour development; promotional and marketing materials re: area National Register properties
- MnDOT:  
  grant funding for highway directional and interpretive signage
- Wheaton Economic Development Authority (EDA)  
  *small business development incentives*
- Browns Valley EDA  
  *small business development incentives*
- West Central Initiative and local banks  
  *small business start-up grant and loan funds for bicycle and canoe rental service, B&B’s, café and resort development*
- U. S. Army Corps of Engineers  
  *public infrastructure capital improvements budget for waysides*
- Western Minnesota Prairie Waters  
  *promotional and organizational assistance re: Highway 28 Upper Minnesota Valley Scenic Byway*

*Prairie pothole pond, 2003*
Priority Project
Preservation and Redevelopment, Browns Valley
- Revitalize the Central Business District through restoration and adaptive re-use of historic buildings.

Work Plan
- Conduct an architectural inventory of historic properties along with a commercial space needs study of downtown to determine feasibility of adaptive re-use of some properties. ($5,000 - $10,000)
- Develop historic preservation design standards for central business district storefronts with incentives for property owner participation. ($10,000 - $15,000)
- Undertake a re-use study of one property, e.g. Creamery building, to determine the range of storefront possibilities and cost to upgrade to meet building code. ($25,000 - $35,000)
- Seek developer for Creamery building or other vacant buildings using architectural inventory and adaptive re-use study to market to local entrepreneurs and outside investors.
- Restore historic Broadway Avenue one property at a time as tourism related businesses are needed.
- Coordinate marketing of the historic downtown with the Highway 28/Upper Minnesota Valley Scenic By-Way designation that includes Browns Valley.

Technical and Financial Assistance
Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (MHS/SHPO), Departments of Interior and Commerce/Preserve America, Preservation Alliance of Minnesota, Transportation Enhancement Act (TEA-3), National Trust for Historic Preservation, Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission, local EDA

Timeframe
Immediate to long-term

Technical and Financial Assistance
The following list provides names and types of assistance offered by various potential funding and technical sources:
- West Central Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships
  grants for regional community development
- Minnesota Office of Tourism
  promotional and marketing materials
- Traverse County
  public infrastructure capital improvements budget for road upgrades and signage

Postcard, Browns Valley nd. (MHS)
· Extension Service Tourism Center
teachical and planning advice
· MnDOT/TEA-3
grant funding for transportation-related historic restoration and interpretation
· Minnesota Historical Society
grant funding for historic building re-use studies
· Browns Valley EDA
small business development incentives
· West Central Initiative
community development funds for historic preservation and deteriorated structure removal
· National Trust for Historic Preservation (Main Street)
technical assistance for Main Street improvements
· Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission
promotion and organizational assistance re: Highway 28 Upper Minnesota Valley Scenic Byway
· Preservation Alliance of Minnesota
promotion and advocacy for tax relief on historic preservation investments
Browns Valley Preservation and Redevelopment: Central Business District
Priority Project

Preservation and Redevelopment, Wheaton

- Improve Central Business District through restoration and adaptive re-use of historic buildings.
- Conduct an architectural inventory of historic properties along with a commercial space needs study of downtown to determine feasibility of adaptive re-use of some properties. ($5,000 - $10,000)
- Develop historic preservation design standards for CBD storefronts with incentives for property owner participation. ($15,000 - $20,000)
- Undertake a re-use study of one property, e.g. Gopher Theatre building, to determine the range of storefront possibilities and cost to upgrade to meet building code. ($25,000 - $35,000)
- Seek developer for Gopher Theatre building or other vacant buildings, using architectural inventory and adaptive re-use study to market to local entrepreneurs and outside investors.
- Restore historic Broadway Avenue one property at a time, as tourism related businesses are needed.
- Coordinate marketing of the historic downtown with Browns Valley and Traverse County, as part of a regional tourism promotion initiative.

Timeframe
Immediate to long-term

Technical and Financial Assistance
The following list provides names and types of assistance offered by various potential funding and technical sources:

- West Central Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships
  grants for regional community development
- Minnesota Office of Tourism
  Promotional and marketing materials
- Traverse County
  public infrastructure capital improvements budget for road upgrades and signage
- Extension Service Tourism Center
  technical, planning advice and grants
- MnDOT/TEA-3
  grant funding for transportation-related historic restoration and interpretation
- Minnesota Historical Society
  grant funding for historic building re-use studies
- Wheaton EDA
  small business development incentives
- West Central Initiative and local banks
  community development funds (grants and loans) for historic preservation and deteriorated structure removal
- Wheaton Dumont Community Fund
  grants and loans for business development
- National Trust for Historic Preservation (Main Street)
  technical and funding assistance for Main Street improvements
- Preservation Alliance of Minnesota
  promotional materials, legislative advocacy and technical assistance
- Preserve America (U.S. Dept. of the Interior)
  grants for historic preservation investments
Wheaton Preservation and Redevelopment:
Central Business District
Lake Traverse Community Vision
Priority Project

Mustinka River Recreational Opportunity

- Build a canoe/kayak recreational route on Mustinka River to show early success from a small investment in tourism.

Work Plan

- Designate the lower Mustinka River as a kayak/canoe route, terminating at the KT-9 bridge in Wheaton and Reservation Dam at Lake Traverse.
- Improve the terminus sites with designated parking and canoe landings.
- Develop a kayak/canoe rental service and Highway 27 shuttle service out of Wheaton to encourage use and promote the concept of nature-based recreation.
- Create interpretive materials on the wildlife, natural vegetation, crops and other points of interest along the canoe route.
- Develop additional canoe/kayak routes throughout the lake and river system, as recreational demand increases, building on the early success of the Mustinka River project.

Timeframe
Immediate

Technical and Financial Assistance

The following list provides names and types of assistance offered by various potential funding and technical sources:

- West Central Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships grants for regional community development
- West Central Initiative transportation/recreational trails development grants
- Minnesota Office of Tourism promotional and marketing materials
- Traverse County public infrastructure capital improvements budget for road upgrades and signage
- Extension Service Tourism Center technical and planning advice
- MnDNR technical assistance and native plants grants
- Bois de Sioux Watershed District buffer strip conservation planting program
- Traverse County SWCD conservation planting incentives
- Wheaton EDA small business development incentives
- Wheaton Dumont Community Fund grants and loans for business development

Mustinka River, 2003
**Priority Project**  
**Residential Shoreline Redevelopment**

Work with Lake Traverse property owners and seasonal home developers to improve shoreline habitat, slow erosion and restore the scenic quality of Lake Traverse.

**Work Plan**
- Work with Lake Traverse property owners association and the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers to develop a shoreline buffer planting program.
- Create a model sustainable lakeshore development with cluster housing and cluster septic.
- Develop an environmental education program with lakeshore property owners regarding the benefits of a vegetated buffer along the shoreline and on the highway side of residential properties to provide privacy and preserve historic view to lake.

**Timeframe**
Immediate- to long-term

**Technical and Financial Assistance**

The following list provides names and types of assistance offered by various potential funding and technical sources:

- Traverse County  
  *shoreline protection zoning ordinance*
- Extension Service and Tourism Center  
  *technical advice re shoreline native planting, environmental education, and tourism*
- MnDNR  
  *technical assistance and native plants grants*
- Bois de Sioux Watershed District  
  *buffer strip conservation planting program*
- Traverse County SWCD  
  *conservation planting incentives*
Priority Project

Recreational and Agricultural Shoreline Redevelopment Scenario
- Provide incentive programs and compensation for area farmers to use best agricultural management practices in the floodplain and the upland prairies. Invest in public access points, e.g. Traverse County Park with native plantings to slow runoff and improve the natural look and feel of the park.

Work Plan
- Replace rip-rap with vegetation along shoreline at County Park to demonstrate public leadership in protecting shoreline habitat and preserving natural character.
- Amend shoreland zoning to require shoreline buffer planting to minimize soil erosion, slow runoff to lake and reduce phosphorous load in lake.
- Identify County Park as an interpretive location to provide educational opportunities for park visitors.
- Support Watershed District programs to encourage agricultural producer participation in stream and ditch buffer plantings, wetland restorations and other soil and water conservation programs that could positively impact water quality at Lake Traverse.

- Increase area producer participation in field windbreak planting and agricultural best management practices (BMP’s) to improve habitat and reduce soil erosion.
- Protect coulees with designation as ecological assets and scenic attractions.
- Feature working farms and natural scenery in tourism promotion literature.

Timeframe
Immediate to long-term

Technical and Financial Assistance
The following list provides names and types of assistance offered by various potential funding and technical sources:

- Traverse County Shoreline protection zoning ordinance
- Extension Service technical advice re: shoreline native planting and environmental education
- MnDNR technical assistance and native plants grants
- Bois de Sioux Watershed District buffer strip conservation planting program
- Traverse County SWCD conservation planting incentives
- U. S. Army Corps of Engineers conservation planting and environmental education programs

East side of Lake Traverse, n.d.

Above: Agricultural shoreland, Lake Traverse, 2003
Below: Traverse County Park, 2003
Appendices

Appendix 1: Timeline, Products and Citizens Advisory Group Members
Appendix 2: Maps
Appendix 3: Priority Project Posters
Appendix 4: Traverse County Tourism Opportunities
Appendix 5: Lake Traverse Historical Research
Appendix 6: Community History Project Summary
Appendix 7: References
Appendix 1: Timeline, Products and Citizens Advisory Group Members

Task One: November 2002
CRD met with the Steering Committee to clarify goals, approach and schedule; hear about existing research and plans for the region; share base maps of existing conditions, using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and other data and visual sources; and identify stakeholders whose future actions could affect development and whose energy is needed in this process.

Task Two:
CRD prepared maps and drawings illustrating the possibilities for current projects and potential investments and linkages; explored design scenarios to illustrate tourism and recreational opportunities, water quality concerns, quality of life issues and public policy implications.

Task Three:
February 2003
CRD co-led a first community workshop with the Steering Committee to present alternative scenarios based in sustainable design principles, ascertain citizen preferences for new initiatives practices, and document the evolving community vision for Steering Committee approval.

Task Four:
February - May 2003
CRD assembled the community vision with a strategy for taking next steps on projects that have early consensus and can showcase the community vision. After approval by the Steering Committee, the Community Vision was presented to the public at a second community workshop, then documented in this written and illustrated final report. Additionally, the visioning process was accessible via the Center's web site http://www.ruraldesign.umn.edu so that as many members of the community as were interested could participate.
## Citizens’ Advisory Group Members

Harold Moore, Community Workshop Facilitator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Member</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marv Bach</td>
<td>Gerald and Arlyne Kaus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jay Backer</td>
<td>Ginger Kuschel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jeff Backer</td>
<td>Betti Labs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brad Beal</td>
<td>Fran Larson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Christian Boe</td>
<td>Mike Larson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harold Bruce</td>
<td>Marilyn Mathias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcie Conroy</td>
<td>Paul Mitteness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arlene Dobbs</td>
<td>John Nerenz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pat Ecker</td>
<td>Melissa Persing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edith Foren</td>
<td>Phil and Delores Petterson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don Gesterling</td>
<td>Dve Ranney</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dawn Hegland</td>
<td>Chere Rikimoto</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edna Johnson</td>
<td>Ed Rikimoto</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jerry Johnson</td>
<td>Linda Schwagel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Todd Johnson</td>
<td>Phyllis Schwagerl</td>
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<td>Clarence Juelich</td>
<td>Elaine Smith</td>
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<td>Jim Smoger</td>
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<td>Bruce Strader</td>
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<td>Collen Violet</td>
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<td>Ken and Stephanie Warren</td>
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<td>Janet Weick</td>
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<td>Father Stan Weiser</td>
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<td>Kent and Karen Whaley</td>
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<tr>
<td>Henry Wilberts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ron Wirtjes</td>
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</table>
Appendix 2: Maps
Lake Traverse Community Vision - Fall 2002

The University of Minnesota’s Center for Rural Design will lead a community visioning process through the Traverse County/Blandin Community Investment Partnership to produce a strategy for revitalizing the Lake Traverse region. The community-based design process will focus attention on Lake Traverse and the towns of Wheaton and Browns Valley that anchor each end of the lake.

Underscoring the planning effort is the goal to instill a sense of community well-being among residents and visitors, based on a shared understanding of the natural and cultural resource advantages of the region. The recommended development strategy will come out of a series of design workshops to be held over the fall and winter 2002-03.

Anyone with interest in the region’s future is invited to participate! For further information contact:

Janet Raguse, County Coordinator for Traverse County 320.563.4652
Thora Cartledge, University of Minnesota Center for Rural Design 612.624.9273

This poster was created by the Center for Rural Design. It is intended for reference purposes only. Map data was provided by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Department of Transportation, and the United States Geological Survey. The images were provided by the Minnesota Historical Society - www.mnhs.org.
Appendix 3: Priority Project Posters
KEY FEATURES - TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES
LAKE TRAVERSE

- Bicycle Rental/Shuttle Service
- Scenic Driving Route
- Extension of Paddling Tours
- Hiking/Biking Trail Development along Lake, Along Major Roads
- Horseback Riding/Snowmobile Trails

NEXT STEPS:
- Develop interpretive signage/guide to points of interest
- Solicit/Develop Partnership with Native American Community and South Dakota Neighbors
- Identify Sites and Locate New Waysides/Picnic Areas/Rest Stops for Lake and Road Based Tours
- Provide Amenities at County Park
- New Business Development for Boat and Bike Rental/Shuttle
- Locate/Develop New Campsites
- Broaden Accommodation Options in County
- Grant Applications/Fundraising
KEY FEATURES AND SCENIC ROUTES
TRAVECO COUNTY

- Army Corps Route
- Lake Traverse Route
- Prairie Pothole Route
- Wildlife Wetlands Route
- Agriculture in Action Route

Next Steps:
- Farmers Market
- Demonstration Farming
- Extended Roadside Shoulders for Bicycling
- Creekside Trail Development (bicycle/hiking/snowmobiling)
- Interpretative Signage
- Tour Guide Booklet
Appendices

Lake Traverse Community Vision
Residential Shoreline: Model Existing Scenario

**Guiding Principles**

**Protect the region's ecology**
- Shoreline buffer minimizes soil erosion and slows runoff to lake
- Field windbreaks and agricultural BMP's improve habitat and reduce soil erosion

**Evoke a sense of place**
- Preserved coulee an ecological asset and scenic attraction
- Working farms and natural features part of agri-tourism and eco-tourism
- Vegetated buffer on highway side of residential gives privacy, preserves historic view of lake

Residential Shoreline: Potential Redevelopment Scenario

**Guiding Principles**

**Protect the region's ecology**
- Shoreline buffer and concentrated lawn area minimize soil erosion, slow runoff and reduce phosphorus load in lake

**Evoke a sense of place**
- Vegetated buffer on highway side of residential gives privacy, preserves historic view to lake

**Promote the region as a safe, livable and equitable place to invest**
- Lakescaping as part of development plan evidence of commitment to improve water quality over time

Lake Traverse Community Vision

Appendices
Residential Shoreline:
Potential Rehabilitation Scenario

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

**Protect the region's ecology**
- Shoreline buffer with wave breakers minimize soil erosion, slow runoff and reduces phosphorous load in lake

**Invest in the public realm**
- Native vegetation along shoreline replaces rip-rap in County Park and demonstrates public leadership in protecting habitat

**Evoke a sense of place**
- Park as interpretive location, camp site and lake access offers educational and recreational opportunities unique to Lake Traverse

Agricultural Shoreline:
Potential Preservation Scenario

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

**Make efficient use of land resources**
- Preserve the agricultural economy through agricultural BMP's and agri-tourism

**Evoke a sense of place**
- Protect agriculture as a way of life and integral part of rural scenery

**Protect the region's ecology**
- Shoreline buffer with wave breakers minimize soil erosion, slow runoff and reduces phosphorous load in lake
Appendix 4: Traverse County Tourism Opportunities
TRAVERSE COUNTY TOURISM
Opportunities for Development

Submitted to the Center for Rural Design
University of Minnesota

April 15, 2003

Cynthia C. Messer
Extension Educator and Associate Professor
Tourism Center
University of Minnesota Extension Service
INTRODUCTION

Today, many small rural communities are looking to diversify their economy. These communities and surrounding regions often have a rich heritage and unique tourism resources to share with visitors. Tourism offers potential for economic diversification, and has many advantages. The ambience and scenic appeal of a community or region is a natural draw for visitors. A local labor force is in place, and initially the public services that are in place will sufficiently handle tourism needs. Tourism can generate jobs and income into the community through direct and indirect effects, and contributes to the local and state tax base. It can create new business opportunities, and help retain or expand local businesses.

Tourism also has social and environmental implications. Tourism can help renew local interest in the cultural traditions and heritage of the region, build community pride, enhance property values, generate improvements to services and facilities used by residents and foster conservation and preservation of natural, cultural and historic resources.

However, tourism can generate negative impacts that diminish the quality of the resources and life in a community. Developmental costs, infrastructure overload, damage to the natural resources, conflict among residents, economic distortion from development that is not geographically balanced, and even inflation of property values are possible negative effects. Maximizing the benefits and minimizing the costs is the goal. Accurate assessment of both the potential benefits and costs, weighed against the community values and vision are needed to avoid problems. A partnership between the tourism industry, the community and the public sector allows for compromises to ensure benefits are maximized for all. Applying sustainable tourism development principles will help balance the benefits and costs of tourism in a manner that is relevant and acceptable to residents. This includes the conservation of natural, historical, cultural and other resources through comprehensive planning and management strategies to maintain quality experiences that produce visitor satisfaction.

Tourism also needs to be developed in harmony with the larger community. One of the key methods to do this is to identify and understand the values and goals of the community or region, and then to imbed these in the planning and goals for tourism. Tourism can and should be an expression of the life, geography, history and culture of the area. These concepts are reflected in the following set of values for tourism.1

?? Commitment to Assessing the True Benefits and Costs
   ○ Economic, social and environmental.

?? Diversification
   ○ Tourism is best used as an economic diversification strategy – not a substitute. Like any industry, in requires commitment and long-term planning.

Quality Products and Services
- Visitors and residents seek quality products and services
- Tourism is highly competitive and quality is a key competitive factor

Locally Shared Benefits and Control
- Business and community residents must share the benefits of tourism and control of future development through planning and involvement.

Authenticity
- Authenticity is the lifestyle of the community that emerges in response to its physical and social nature, its significant historic and economic events and the special qualities of the residents. Authentic attractions reflect the community.

Tourism is not so much an industry as a system of interrelated industries serving a common market. The tourism industry is generally thought of as only the private sector businesses such as lodging, food or beverage services, and attractions that directly serve visitors. In reality, it includes a variety of economic groups such as transportation, accommodations, food or beverage, retail shops and services, attractions and public services. Public sector entities are engaged in tourism because they manage attractions, such as museums, parks and historical sites; and are responsible for the public services and infrastructure used by tourists and residents. The most successful tourism efforts are those that have created a network of public-private relationships. A successful tourism experience depends on collaboration among groups who may not otherwise work together. A break in that chain can affect the delivery of the total tourism product, and thus the visitor’s experience.

TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES

Tourism offers an opportunity for economic diversification for Traverse County. For this strategy to be successful, several elements will need to be in place. First, tourism should be developed within the framework of the county’s vision and overall planning efforts. The current work done on this project and others has identified guiding principles and tapped into the vision and values of county residents. This will help ensure that tourism is developed in a manner consistent with these vision and values of the greater community. Tourism in Traverse County is dependent on the attractions and activities that are related to both the natural and cultural resources of the area. Preservation and conservation of these local resources has been a key theme in this study. Good planning and management strategies to develop a sustainable tourism program will help conserve and enhance these resources for local citizens and visitors alike.

Second, cooperation between individuals, organizations and governing bodies in both the private and public sectors will need to be maintained in a long-term commitment. This will be to the collective benefit of county citizens and businesses. The cooperative efforts of those engaged in this project, the recent Blandin work and the current Business Retention and Expansion efforts should be a springboard to action. Identification and engagement of other key players in the county and region will be needed to move tourism
efforts forward. Public-private partnerships and regional thinking are critical to develop, support and promote tourism opportunities. This is motivated not only by limited resources but by the marketplace. Visitors think regionally – “what else is there to do around here?” Keeping visitors in the region is beneficial even if the direct benefit is not to a single community or business.

Third, tourism in Traverse County will take time to implement and grow. Like any long-term economic strategy, tourism requires substantial commitment from local leaders, residents and businesses. For Traverse County tourism to move forward, identification and prioritization of specific projects, a market assessment, and development of infrastructure are needed. However, there are several opportunities that currently exist which can provide “quick wins” and demonstrate action with a relatively small investment of resources. This will be an important morale builder and help everyone to see change. Finally, keeping the citizens of Traverse County informed and educated about tourism will help build support. There are a number of ways to do this. A regular column or articles in the local paper, a half-day tour of county attractions, and hospitality training can be used to help residents see the benefits of tourism, to create county “ambassadors” and provide consistent quality service to residents and visitors.

The following chart suggests key strategies for success.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success Strategy</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tourism Organization</td>
<td>Don’t try to “dabble” at tourism or expect the industry to just happen. Adopt a serious, consistent, systematic approach with a community tourism organization and dedicated paid or volunteer staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Development</td>
<td>Tourism is a dynamic industry. Constantly change to provide more interesting and extensive attractions and services to meet visitors’ expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target Marketing</td>
<td>Use specialized marketing strategies targeted to specific groups of travelers. Profile customers accurately to maximize your marketing budget.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Service Management</td>
<td>Customer service is paramount to successful tourism programs. Use hospitality training programs to improve frontline service and stress service quality in local business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Big Picture” Perspective</td>
<td>Recognize that neighboring towns are allies, not competitors. Small destinations compete with national and international attractions for tourists, so regional products are more competitive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling “Experiences”</td>
<td>Many tourism businesses sell their physical features when crafting marketing messages. You will be more successful if you focus on marketing the “experience” of travel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Join forces with other communities through effective collaboration to maximize your marketing potential and improve your ability to provide the attraction and service base needed to draw visitors.</td>
</tr>
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<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining Competitiveness</td>
<td>Staying abreast of change and understanding the impacts and opportunities that will result can help you distinguish yourself by capitalizing on new travel trends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public-Private Partnerships</td>
<td>As the industry becomes better understood, it has become clear that government must play a much greater role in tourism development. Create and participate in effective public-private partnerships that define roles and responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth Management</td>
<td>If you define local carrying capacity limits, you will be better able to manage tourism growth and balance visitor needs with maintaining quality of life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Traverse County Tourism Product**

As part of this project with the University of Minnesota’s Center for Rural Design, an inventory of attractions was completed by local community members, as well as by the project team. This inventory includes current and potential attractions. The inventory was then reviewed and a set of recommendations presented to the communities during workshops on April 7 & 8, 2003.

A number of natural and historic features that are unique assets to Traverse County were identified in this inventory. The most significant is Lake Traverse. The lake currently attracts anglers, hunters and outdoor enthusiasts, but is relatively undeveloped for tourism. It has not experienced the commercial lakeshore development found at so many of the lakes in Minnesota. This provides opportunities for development of tourism that is consistent with a community vision and the rural setting of Traverse County. These include a scenic drive route, trail development including hiking, biking and snowmobile trails, expansion of amenities at the county park, expanded boating and fishing and the development of camping facilities.

Traverse County is also near or connected to established Scenic Byways and trails including the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway that begins in Browns Valley, the Otter Trail Scenic Byway that begins in Fergus Falls, and the Pine to Prairie Birding Trail that runs from Warroad to Fergus Falls. These are potential opportunities to collaborate or cross-market. The Minnesota Continental Divide is an underdeveloped regional attraction. Consideration of how to take advantage of this potential could include redesigning the current viewing point and interpretive display, and long-term efforts to explore expanded uses such as a trail. An example of how the Laurentian Divide has been developed and promoted is on the website: [http://www.irontrail.org/Attractions/recreation](http://www.irontrail.org/Attractions/recreation)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attraction</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Potential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lake Traverse</td>
<td>Angling, boating, hunting Duck Days event Giant Mallard</td>
<td>Scenic Drive &amp; outlooks Trail development County park upgrade Campsite development Improved water quality for water activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mustinka River</td>
<td>Fishing, hunting</td>
<td>Paddling - Canoe rental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trails</td>
<td>Designated snowmobile trail Biking Horse</td>
<td>Improved signage Development of new trails Upgrade amenities Cross promotion with regional byways/trails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic Downtown - Browns Valley</td>
<td>Interlake Coop Creamery Sam Brown cabin/park Carnegie Library Scenic Byway</td>
<td>CBD Restoration – small prairie town character with agricultural link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic Downtown - Wheaton</td>
<td>Gopher State Theatre Historic Register Depot Grain Elevator</td>
<td>CBD restoration - small prairie town character with agricultural link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American heritage</td>
<td>Archeological sites</td>
<td>Burial Mounds Lakeshore Scenic drive interpretation and tie-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fur trade heritage</td>
<td>Archeological sites</td>
<td>Signage Long-term development Lakeshore Scenic drive interpretation and tie-in Festival/event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife</td>
<td>Birds, ducks, deer Public areas for hunting in Wetland management and Dam areas (non-motorized) Festival/events</td>
<td>Festival/event Fee-based hunting on private land Ag-tourism experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Parks</td>
<td>Recreation, picnics, camping, fairgrounds</td>
<td>Expanded recreation and camping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barns, fields and windbreaks</td>
<td>Scenic working landscape</td>
<td>Interpretation and education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Mustinka River is an example of a natural resource tourism opportunity that can be implemented almost immediately with a small investment. The river is an even-flowing river through rolling vistas. A natural put-in for canoes exists near the KT9 bridge in
Wheaton. Downriver approximately six miles is a natural take-out at the park. The put-in site will require some brush clearing to prepare it for use, but with that, the location and purchase of paddling equipment and establishment of transportation along Highway 27 for those canoeing, a new tourism business opportunity can be created. Promotion would be local initially, but expand as the business grows.

Traverse County has a rich heritage as an agricultural based economy with rural small towns. This agricultural base and small town culture now provide opportunities related to tourism. Both Browns Valley and Wheaton have attractive historic buildings that can be preserved and enhanced. Sam Brown’s and the Carnegie Library, and the Creamery in Browns Valley; and in Wheaton, the Gopher State Theatre, the historic depot and grain elevator hold potential for re-development and preservation.

An example is the Gopher State Theatre. The theatre, closed since the fall of 2001, is currently for sale. Opened in 1936, it is a well-preserved building with the original marquee still in place. The theatre seats approximately 300, and is fully operational with screening equipment for first-run movies and a concession stand. The present owners are local residents, and have offered a number of creative options including a dinner and movie event. It was a popular local facility and attraction.

In Browns Valley, the historic Creamery provides an excellent example of the agricultural history of the county. This building could be developed as a retail shop for local agricultural products including dairy. It could also serve as a regional information...
center for visitors along the Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway and for those traveling through along Highways 28 & 10 to South Dakota as a way to promote other county attractions.

MARKETING TRAVERSE COUNTY TOURISM

The goal for Traverse County is to match the tourism “product” – the attractions and experiences available, with the correct potential visitor groups – the market. The inventory work and prioritization of development projects will suggest certain target markets, but the process begins by first identifying current visitors.

Current Markets
Every community already has a number of visitors coming into and through the community. Rich opportunities already exist in those currently coming into Traverse County. For example, many families host friends and relatives at various times throughout the year. This is a very viable market—often referred to as the VFR (Visiting Friends and Relatives) market. By simply extending the stay, or encouraging these visitors to explore attractions or events in the county, you are expanding tourism.
Marketing to reach these visitors requires marketing to local citizens – a different approach to marketing tourism. This serves a dual purpose however. By promoting to local residents, you also build their knowledge and pride in what Traverse County has to offer. They then become marketers for the county when asked by visitors “what else is there to do around here?”

 Traverse County also has other travelers. For example, salespeople, construction or maintenance workers, and truckers come to and through Traverse County. Understanding who these travelers are and what their needs, wants and expectation are can help you match Traverse County product with market. There are many communities that have found this to be an important market that matches their product. For example, York Nebraska on Interstate Highway 80 benefits specifically from truckers and pass-through travelers. Marshall, Minnesota used an analysis of current visitors to effectively target their marketing efforts to business travelers, same-day surgery visitors from the region, sports groups and families of students attending the local state university.

Many tourists are already passing through the county at various times of the year enroute to/from South Dakota and Minnesota. According to South Dakota’s Department of Transportation, the average daily count of vehicles on Highway 10 at the Minnesota border is 1,390.\(^2\) Many travelers heading to South Dakota destinations like Fort Sisseton or Roy Lake State Park travel from Highway 94 along Highway 28 to Highway 10. By getting these current visitors to stop and purchase a meal, gas, or visit your museum, you can increase the dollars into the local economy. If they spend time they may see a reason to stay or return for leisure purposes. For examples, an opportunity exists with a scheduled road project on Highway 10 between the Minnesota/South Dakota border and Interstate Highway 29.\(^3\) This work is scheduled within the next three years, and may provide an opportunity for signage, and marketing of a Traverse County stay. As you develop additional attractions, activities, and accommodations the potential increases.

 Traverse County’s location along the Minnesota/South Dakota border provides opportunities to capture visitors to both states. Access to the county is via two lane highways that transect the county both North/South and East/West. Major interstate Highway 29, which runs from the Canadian border to Texas is located approximately 15 miles west. At least four major cities that are potential markets geographically are located within easy driving distance of the county.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market</th>
<th>Approximate Distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minneapolis/St Paul</td>
<td>180 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fargo</td>
<td>90 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sioux Falls</td>
<td>190 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>630 miles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^2\) Marks, Ken. Data Inventory office, State of South Dakota Department of Transportation. Phone conversation April 17, 2003.

\(^3\) ibid
Potential Markets

Traverse County’s tourism product will appeal primarily to visitors interested in the culture and history of the area, and outdoor enthusiasts. These are two primary markets for Traverse County. However, there are many ways to segment travelers even within these market groups, and this will need to be done within a market assessment so that future marketing efforts will be effectively directed to the desired audience.

Research conducted by the Travel Industry Association of America highlights the following information about these two market groups.

Cultural/Heritage

?? Forty-five percent (92.7 million adults) of the U.S. adult population indicates they included at least one of eleven cultural, arts, heritage, or historic activities or events while on a trip of 50 miles or more, one way, in the past year.

?? The average age of households taking historic/cultural trips is 48 years old, but one-third are 55 years or older. Four in ten work in a professional or managerial capacity; and one in five are retired. The median household income is $53,600, and one-third of these households include children.

?? One in four historic/cultural trips includes a child from the household.

?? Summer is the most popular season for historic/cultural trips.

?? Nearly all historic/cultural person-trips involve an overnight stay, with travelers staying an average of 4.7 nights on a trip.

?? On average, households spend $631 per trip, excluding transportation to the destination.

?? One-third of historic/cultural travelers says they added extra time to their trip—either when they were planning the trip or while on the trip—specifically because of a cultural, arts, heritage or historic activity or event.

?? Popular activities include visiting an historic site such as a building, battlefield or historic community, museums, live theater, art galleries, heritage or ethnic festivals or concerts.

?? Shopping is also a popular activity along with visiting national and state parks, and engaging in outdoor activities.

Adventures travel and outdoor recreation

Adventures travel refers to hands-on, participatory travel that is educational and challenging. Soft adventure offers activity and the experience, but with less perceived challenge or danger. Hard adventure travel usually requires a higher degree of perceived danger for the participant.

?? According the Minnesota Office of Tourism, one in three travelers in Minnesota participate in some form of outdoor recreation.

?? One-half of U.S. adults (50%) or 98 million took an adventure vacation within the past five years. 92 million took a soft adventure vacation.

---

The top soft adventure activities in the last five years were camping (64.7 million adults or 33%), hiking on gradually changing terrain (44.8 million adults or 23%) and biking (27.2 million adults or 14%).

The demographic profile of the soft adventure traveler is similar in many ways to the total U.S. adult population. Specifically, seven in ten have attended some college, and two-thirds are married. All income levels are represented within the soft adventure group. Soft adventurers are younger, typically ages 18-44, and a higher share are employed full-time, in households with two wage earners and with children at home.

Spouses (60%) and children are the primary companions for soft adventure experiences.

Outdoor recreation and/or visiting national or state parks is one of the top activities for U.S. travelers taking leisure trips within the U.S. One in four (27%) leisure person-trips includes some form of outdoor recreation and/or a visit to a national or state park. These trips are most likely to be taken by car (74%) and 17% of outdoor trips includes camping.

Nature-based tourism
Nature-based tourism is a rapidly growing component of the tourism industry. Eco-tourism is a form of nature-based tourism that encourages sustainable and responsible tourism to conserve and minimize negative impacts on the resources upon which it depends. Among the most popular forms of ecotourism tourism in many rural areas are bird watching and wildlife viewing. According to a national survey by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (2002), 31% of Americans engage in wildlife viewing and spend $38 billion to do so. In Minnesota, 54% of Minnesotans watch wildlife.

Agri-tourism
Agri-tourism, or ag-tourism is a relatively new concept in Minnesota. It links travel with the products, services and experiences of agriculture. Agri-tourism can encompass a variety of activities such as pick your own fruit, roadside stands, touring farms and agricultural processing plants, staying at a farm based B&B (bed and breakfast) or fee-based hunting. The agricultural base of Traverse County can provide tourism opportunities to supplement farm income and provide agricultural education, but the goals must be clear, and a business plan, pricing strategy and retail strategy should be developed by individual businesses.

CONCLUSION
Traverse County has the opportunity to develop tourism as an economic diversification strategy. By building on existing attractions, festivals and events, you can make relatively quick changes or improvements that effect tourism. Many attractions exist or could be developed within a reasonable timeframe. These must now be prioritized and a feasibility study conducted to ensure that each selected project reaches its potential. A comprehensive analysis of the market will also be beneficial.
To proceed with these tourism opportunities, two essential components will need to be established. First, who will give leadership and direction to the efforts, and second, is there a commitment to continued and even expanded regional collaboration?

Tourism will need strong leadership to coordinate the various aspects including development and marketing. It is important to identify and shape an organization to address the collective needs of the county’s tourism efforts. Determining if an existing organization may be able to take the lead, and establishing cooperation and compromise will enable the county to benefit from tourism opportunities. Many groups have a direct or indirect interest in tourism including chambers of commerce, the historical society, economic development groups and local government. Working together will prevent duplication of efforts and maximization of resources.

It may be beneficial to partner regionally to market and promote Traverse County. Explore this potential with others in the region – both Western Minnesota and Eastern South Dakota – to identify similar products, ways to build on each other’s strengths and cross-market to similar target audiences. Marketing costs to effectively reach a target audience can be high, and partnering will expand your dollars and effectiveness.

Identification and engagement of key partners and resources in the region are also important steps to building collaborative efforts. Many potential partners or collaborators bring much needed experience, expertise and even resources to help move a county tourism effort forward. Potential partners or resources include: the Minnesota Office of Tourism, regional tourism groups such as Western Minnesota Prairie Waters and the Southern Minnesota Tourism Association, University of Minnesota Extension Service, the Minnesota Historical Society, the West Central Initiative, the Sisseton Wahpeton Sioux Tribe leadership and the South Dakota Tourism office.

Infrastructure development to enhance existing attractions and services can be highly effective. These may not require large amounts of resources and are ways to engage local citizens, community groups and businesses. This includes signage, trail development and enhancement of camping facilities.

Finally, include education in the tourism development goals. Participate in regional and state tourism conferences and workshops offered by state agencies or the tourism industry; and consider offering workshops for county residents on subjects like customer service, business plans and nature-based tourism. The Tourism Center, part of the University of Minnesota Extension Service, has developed a manual entitled Community Tourism Development that provides a process and set of tools to assist community tourism development. Many of the issues Traverse County is addressing are not unique, and are discussed in it. This manual can be purchased from the University of Minnesota Extension Service’s Distribution Center at www.extension.umn.edu
Appendix 5: Lake Traverse Historical Research
History of Traverse County
Places of Geographic and Cultural Significance

Report prepared by
Jon Huebner, student
University of Minnesota-Morris
October 2002

Prepared for Center for Rural Design as part of
Lake Traverse Community Vision Project
Traverse County, established February 20, 1862, organized March 8, 1881, received its name from Lake Traverse (Lac Travers in French), a translation of the Dakota name. William H. Keating wrote of its significance: “The lake has received its present appellation from the circumstance that it is in a direction nearly transverse to that of the Big Stone and Lac qui Parle lakes, these being directly to the northwest, while Lake Travers points to the northeast.” Prof. A. W. Williamson gave its Dakota name and meaning: “Mdehdakinyan, lake lying crosswise.”

By the way of Lakes Traverse and Big Stone and by the Minnesota River valley, the River Warren out flowed from the Glacial Lake Agassiz, which in the closing part of the Ice Age filled the basin of the Red River and Lake Winnipeg. The Ojibwa have given quite another name to Lake Traverse, referring to this deeply channeled ancient watercourse of the continental divide, noted by Rev. Joseph A. Gilfillan as follows: “Lake Travers is Gadgetawaii-mamiwung sagaigun, the lake with a breast or pap (like a woman’s) on either end; one on the northern, and one on the southern (flowing into Big Stone lake in high water); so flowing either way.”

In exceptionally high flood stages of the upper Minnesota River, flowing into this channel of the Glacial River Warren at the village of Browns Valley, a part of its water goes northward into Lake Traverse, so that canoes or boats can then have a continuous water passage from Big Stone Lake to Lake Traverse; but probably no flood conditions in recent time have permitted any southward outflow from Lake Traverse. At the east side of the southwest end of Lake Traverse, Maj. Stephen H. Long and his party in 1823 were entertained by Wanotan, leader of the Yankton, for whom, with changed spelling, Wahnahta County of Minnesota Territory in 1849 was named, including the present Traverse County.

While the Glacial Lake Agassiz flowed south along the valley of Lakes Traverse and Big Stone, its outlet stream, named the River Warren, eroded that remarkable valley, with gradual reduction of the lake level. Five stages of the ancient lake during its southward outflow are shown by so many distinct beaches, each lower than the preceding. In their descending order they are named, from places where they are well developed and were first recognized and mapped, being the Herman and Norcross Beaches, for villages in Grant County, the Tintah Beach for a village in Traverse County, and the Campbell and McCauleyville Beaches in this county.
Thence each of these old lake levels, recorded by the successive low beach ridges of sand and gravel, are traced far along each side of the Red River valley in Minnesota and North Dakota and onward in Manitoba. Two other islands, nearer to the South Dakota shore, lie about one to two miles north of Battle Point, the more southern being Plum Island and the other North Island. The former translates a Dakota name, Kanta Wita, which is placed farther north on Nicollet’s map, in the extreme northern end of this lake. The islands are also called Carlson and Jackson Islands.

The most southern island of Lake Traverse, about halfway across the lake opposite to the former trading post, which has been noticed for Folsom Township, is called Snake (or Jensen) Island, “covering about 20 acres, once the village home of the Indians.”

Bois des Sioux River, out flowing from Lake Traverse to the Red River, has an early French name, meaning “Woods of the Sioux,” with reference to the woods or narrow groves by which it is bordered along its lowest five miles, next to Breckenridge and Wahpeton. On the map of Long’s expedition, in 1823, it is called Sioux River; and in the Narrative by Keating, as also in the description of the country by Long, it is mentioned as the Sioux River or Swan River. The name Bois des Sioux was used by Keating to note only its fringe of timber. On Nicollet’s map, 1843, it is named Sioux Wood River.
Traverse County was included in the area of what was Wabahta County of Minnesota Territory. The county was known as Breckenridge County, but was changed due to Breckenridge’s southern leanings during the Civil War. The county presently consists of 586 square miles.

In 1871 the county got its first permanent white homesteaders, the Whitley, Schiefley, and Finley families, all from Philadelphia. The families all settled in Windsor Township. In 1874 the county’s population was only around 40 people. It was not until 1883 when a rail line went north through the center of the county from Ortonville to Fargo, North Dakota, that the population really saw any significant increase.

A Frenchman LeSueur, originally discovered Lake Traverse, in 1681. It has been under the jurisdictional possession of four different countries, Spain, France, England, and the United States. The Spanish claimed it by right of discovery of the Mississippi River by Desoto and others. The French claimed it from the Spanish officially as a settlement of war and some of the area’s first explorers were French. England claimed the area in 1670 via the Hudson Bay Company’s claim to Hudson Bay and its watershed. The English ultimately gained control by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 and had it until 1800. Napoleon forced the return of the region west of the Mississippi to France. It was then sold to the U.S. in 1803 and finally in the relinquishments by England following the War of 1812.
The lake was the center of commerce for many of the local residents, especially the farmers. There were several grain elevators on its shores and a lot of steamer and grain barge traffic on its waters. It is thought that the lake at one time held a Coast Guard designation due to the large amount of barge traffic. The designation has not been proven true or untrue during research.

**BROWNS VALLEY**, in sections 32 and 33 of Folsom Township, a city founded in 1866-67 by Joseph R. Brown, platted in 1878, was the first village in the county and the first county seat, being succeeded by Wheaton in 1886. The settlement and post office, established in 1867, were at first called Lake Traverse but were renamed Browns Valley after the death of the founder in 1870. Biographic notes of him are presented in the chapter on Brown County, which also was named in his honor. His son, Samuel J. Brown, who during 50 years was a resident of this village, was its first postmaster, 1867-78. A vivid sketch of Joseph Renshaw Brown was given in the pamphlet history of this county by J. O. Barrett in 1881. The city was incorporated as a village on February 23, 1881; it had a station of the Great Northern Railway.

Samuel J. Brown, of the village of Browns Valley, stated that this name “was taken from a picture carved on a tree, meaning probably some animal so pictured.” This accords well with the meaning of the name given by Nicollet, as the moose of the Kara or Kahra band of Dakota, perhaps a family totem or the mystic patron of the clan.

**WHEATON**, was originally platted September 1, 1884, and incorporated May 25, 1887. The original lay out was a little west and north of the present location, but was moved due to flood danger. Wheaton succeeded Browns Valley in 1889 as the county seat, after much contention between communities.

It is a city in sections 17-20 of Lake Valley Township, named in honor of Daniel Thompson Wheaton of Morris, a surveyor for the Fargo and Southern Railroad. He advised that this new village be named Swedenburg in compliment to the Swedish owners of its site, Swan C. and Ole Odenborg, but they preferred to give it this name of the surveyor.

**DUMONT**, a city in sections 14, 22, and 23 of Croke, was named by officers of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad Company, perhaps for a local French hunter who supplied food to the railroad men. The same name is borne by villages in New Jersey, Iowa, and Colorado. The city was incorporated as a village on May 3, 1898; it began in 1884 when the Fargo and Southern Railroad came and was platted on April 1, 1885; the post office was established in 1886.

**TINTAH** Township, organized in 1881, received its name from the Dakota, this being their common word meaning “a prairie.” The city in sections 3 and 10 was incorporated as a village on May 2, 1889, and separated from the township on April 27, 1906. The Great Northern Railway built a station in section 3 in 1872. The village was organized in 1881 and platted on March 1, 1887. Charles Smith became postmaster when the post office opened in 1880.

Hennepin wrote of the Dakota as “the Nation of the prairies, who are called Tintonha,” a name derived from tontah. Later it has been written Tintonwans, Titonwans, or Teton, comprising many Siouan bands ranging over southern and western Minnesota and onward to the vast country of plains west of the Missouri.
DAKOMIN, a village in sections 11, 14, and 15 of Windsor Township on a spur line of the Great Northern Railway; it had a barge service on Lake Traverse to haul grain; it had a post office, 1916-17. The village was never platted or incorporated, and when the boat line discontinued in 1917, the town ceased.

COLLIS, a village in section 11 of Tara, comes from the Latin word *collis*, “a hill,” this name being proposed by a priest, with reference to the hill Tara in Ireland, whence the township was named. The village was platted on July 15, 1881, with a Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad station; the post office operated 1885-1954.

MAUDADA, a village in section 6 of Walls Township, platted on July 12, 1888, by A. C. Earsley and Charles F. Washburn of Herman, was designated in the first county election, November 8, 1881, to be the county seat, but business of the new county had been earlier transacted at Browns Valley, from which its offices were not removed until in 1886 they were transferred to Wheaton. The name Maudada was in honor of Maud and Ada, daughters of Earsley and Washburn. This proposed village, though manifesting much vigor in its first year, had only a brief existence. The post office was called Lake View, 1878-79, Round Mound, 1879-82, and Maudada, 1882-84.

CHARLESVILLE, a town site platted on March 5, 1904, in section 36 of Tintah Township, which had a Great Northern Railway station.

BOISBERG, a village site platted on May 17, 1901, in section 3 of West Monson, is named from the Bois des Sioux River, to be noticed on a later page, and from the large granite boulder (berg) on the opposite or South Dakota side of this river in the village of White Rock, whence that village derived its name. The village was never incorporated, and no businesses developed.

ARTHUR Township, organized in 1881, originally called Hoff in honor of Abel Hoff, its first settler, was renamed on the suggestion of James H. Flood for Arthur village, Ontario, about 70 miles west of Toronto.

LAKE VALLEY Township, organized in 1881, is named for the northern part of Lake Traverse bordering its west side. This part of the lake, northward from its marshy tract at the mouth of Mustinka River, is called Buffalo Lake on the map of Long’s expedition, and Joseph N. Nicollet’s map called it Intpah Lake, a Dakota name meaning “the end.” It has an extent of eight or ten miles from south to north, being at the ordinary stage of low water an area of marsh one to two miles wide, in which are several spaces of open water a mile or two in length. The lake later became a reservoir and was named Mud Lake. The township was divided into LAKE VALLEY EAST Township, T. 127N, R. 46W; and LAKE VALLEY WEST Township, T. 127N, R. 47W.

FOLSOM Township, organized September 2, 1880, was named in honor of Maj. George P. Folsom, who came from New Hampshire and was one of the first merchants of Browns Valley. In the north part of this township, adjoining the shore of Lake Traverse in sections 2 and 10, Robert Dickson, “a red-haired Scotchman,” whom the British government had appointed “superintendent of the western tribes”, established a trading post about the year 1815. In 1823, the expedition of Long and Keating found the Columbia Fur Company occupying this post (or another location near it), under the superintendence of “Mr. Moore,” probably Hazen Mooers (1789-1858). He was also trading here in 1835 when Joseph R. Brown first came to this post; a few years later, in 1838-39, Mooers and Brown were associated at Grey Cloud Island, below St. Paul, in trading and farming.

CROKE Township, organized in 1881, was named, on the suggestion of P. D. O’Phelan, a homestead farmer in Tara, who was a member of the board of county commissioners, in honor of Thomas William Croke, who was born in County Cork, Ireland, May 24, 1824, and died at Thurles, Ireland, July 22, 1902. He was a Catholic bishop in Australia, 1870-74, and afterward was archbishop of Cashel in Ireland, taking an active interest in political affairs and in support of the home rule movement. In 1876 the Catholic Colonization Bureau was organized, with Bishop John Ireland as president and Dillon O’Brien as secretary, each of St.
Paul, through whose efforts many Irish colonists were brought to this county and to Swift, Murray, and other counties in southwestern Minnesota.

**PARNELL** Township, also organized in 1881, was named, like Croke and Tara, by P. D. O’Phelan, one of the county commissioners, in honor of Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-91), the prominent Irish statesman, who visited the United States in 1879-80.

**LEONARDSVILLE** Township, organized in 1881, commemorates Patrick Leonard, who came from Philadelphia, Pa., settled in Hastings, Minn., in 1855, removed to this township as a homestead farmer in May 1878, and died here in 1900.

**TARA** Township, organized in 1881, received this name on recommendation of one of its pioneer settlers, P. D. O’Phelan, a county commissioner, for the renowned hill of Tara in Ireland.

**WINDSOR** Township, first settled in September 1871 and organized in 1881, was named by one of its pioneer farmers, William J. Smith, who came here from Hastings, Minn. This name is borne by an ancient borough on the River Thames in England, a seaport town of Nova Scotia, a city in Ontario, and townships and villages or cities in 19 other states of the Union.

**DOLLYMONT** Township, organized in 1881, bears the name of a seaside suburb of Dublin, Ireland, about four miles northeast from the center of that city. It was chosen also partly or mainly in honor of Anthony Doll, who was a pioneer settler here.

**BATTLE POINT**, in section 29, Windsor, commemorates a battle between the Ojibwa and the Dakota, about the year 1830,

Nicollet mapped similar knolls or hillocks on or near the lake bluff close south of the Mustinka River with Dakota names, Plan Kara and Manstitsa Kara. One of these is now called Round Mound, from which, as noted by Barrett, very impressive views are obtained, especially when the effects of mirage bring Herman and the Tokua Lakes into sight. Pelican Hill, two miles northeast of Browns Valley, is a knoll on the crest of the bluff of Lake Traverse, about 25 feet higher than the adjoining portions of the bluff.

Minnesota’s first oil field was discovered in May of 1937 north of the

**National Register of Historic Places:**

**Larson’s Hunters’ Resort**

Traverse Co. Hwy 76,
Lake Traverse Township,
Listed on NRHP:  8-15-1985
Built in 1901
Alfred Setterlund, Architect
[insert photo]

As soon as the railroads reached western Minnesota in the 1870s, sportsmen came to the area in search of mallards, geese, grouse, cranes and other game birds. Rail companies sponsored excursions, farmers opened their land to the hunters and local residents hired themselves out as guides. Before long, professional hunting lodges replaced the informal lodgings offered by farmers in their homes. Larson’s Hunters Resort opened for business in the late 1890s and it soon became one of the best known in Traverse County.
The resort’s 14-room main house, built of smooth, light brown bricks brought in from St. Louis, encompasses a living room, dining room, library, kitchen and eight bedrooms. With five additional cabins, a granary, barn and tents, the resort could accommodate 50 to 60 hunters at a time. The proprietors provided them with breakfast, box lunches and supper, as well as flat-bottomed boats to be used on Upper Lake Traverse (now known as Mud Lake). The Larson family operated their resort as a commercial business until 1979. 40 acres and 8 buildings.

**Fort Wadsworth Agency and Scout Headquarters**

[* File contains invalid data | In-line.JPG *]

Also known as the Joseph R. Brown—Samuel J. Brown House
Corner of Broadway and Dakota Avenues
Browns Valley, MN
Listed on NRHP: 7-17-1986
Built in 1864

As Minnesota grew more populous, conflicts often arose between American Indians who had lived on the land for centuries and newcomers seeking a place to homestead. After the Dakota Conflict of 1862, the U.S. War Department issued orders to build four frontier outposts to protect the homesteaders. Fort Wadsworth (later known as Fort Sisseton) was established near Kettle Lake in what is now South Dakota.

In 1864 the Agency and Scout Headquarters building was built one mile east of the fort, on the shore of Kettle Lake. The 18-foot-by-49-foot log structure was constructed using a French-Canadian method known as *pièce-sur-pièce*, in which logs are laid horizontally between vertical timber-frame posts. In 1866 the building was dismantled and reconstructed near Lake Traverse in Minnesota. It was moved again in 1871 to its present location on the Little Minnesota River in Browns Valley. The only surviving log building associated with Fort Wadsworth and a rare example of *pièce-sur-pièce* construction, it serves today as a museum.

**Browns Valley Carnegie Library**

[* File contains invalid data | In-line.JPG *]

Broadway and 2nd
Browns Valley, MN
Listed on NRHP: 1985
Built in

**Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Depot**

[* File contains invalid data | In-line.JPG *]

Also known as the Traverse County Historical Museum

The information is from Minnesota Place Names written by Warren Upham. In his book he sites information of the origin and meaning of names has been gathered in *History of Traverse County, Brown’s Valley and its Environs* by J. O. Barrett (1881, 32 pp.); *History of the Minnesota Valley* (1882), having pp. 986-90 for this county; and from E. J. Fortune, judge of probate, Patrick H. Leonard, sheriff, George G. Allanson, postmaster, James H. Flood, and Ole Odenborg, all of Wheaton, the county seat, interviewed during a visit there in September 1916.
Other Photos at MHS

Steamer and Barge on Lake, 1910
Location: HE5.14 r59
Negative: 60512

Other Places of Interest

Traverse County Fairgrounds
5th and 7th
Wheaton, MN

Frank Murphy Home
801 Broadway
Wheaton, MN

Schmall’s Brewery
Location: ???
Photo Available @ MHS

Minnesota’s First and only Oil Derrick
Location: ???

Treaty Rock
Location: ???

Map website directory

http://bell.lib.umn.edu/hist/
http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MAP/map_hp.html#atlas
http://hcl.harvard.edu/maps/
http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/sources_mississippi.jpg
http://wvlc.uwaterloo.ca/environmentaldata/topmappingsites.asp
http://map.lib.umn.edu/Minnesota/reference.html#Historic
http://www.davidrumsey.com
Appendix 6: Community History Project Summary

_Traverse County Oral History Research: Report on Interviews_
Summarized from Report by Sarah Coleman, Center for Small Towns: May 15, 2003
Summarized by Melissa Wyatt, Center for Rural Design: June 2003

The oral history research gathered anecdotal and experiential data about changes that have occurred in the Lake Traverse region, resulting from changes in agricultural and natural resource management. The living memories of long-time residents provided a rich complement to data collected through map analysis, public record, published history and photographs of the region. A primary objective of this work was to infuse the physical development scenarios with a strengthened sense of place based in a long standing relationship between the region’s communities and Lake Traverse. This report should serve as a strong starting point for an ongoing public history program, which should help gain support of both adults and youth to work towards building a better future for the region.

The research method involved interviews with local residents, generally lasting one to two hours each. A set of open-ended questions about the respondents’ experiences were developed for this purpose. The group of potential respondents were identified by the local citizens committee, and sent a letter of introduction and request for interview. The selected respondents had lived or regularly visited the region over extended periods of time. Sarah Coleman, Center for Small Towns, followed up with phone calls and arranged interview appointments.

Respondents were first asked general questions about Lake Traverse. Summarized responses to additional questions follow.

**Topic One: Memories of the Lake**

*Any first memories of the lake? Most memorable or favorite memories of the lake? As a child, how did you use the lake?*

**Responses:**

One respondent remembers described the area was “neat” and was struck by “how unused it really was”. Another remembers that his dad was quite the fisherman, fishing in both winter and summer. In the winter they used to be able to spear fish, and remembered his father “put a rope around my waist”. His father was known him to go three times in one day, he “just loved to fish”. Describing one fishing experience, the respondent recalls, “I can remember walking out there stepping on this rock, casted and looked out into the water maybe 30 feet or something. There was this big northern and I assume that’s it’s the one and on the first cast I caught one... one of my memories.”

One respondent remembers the lake going dry, explaining, “Well, I suppose in the 30s before the lake went dry there were rushes down below here, way out and then when the lake went dry, when it came back the rushes never came back.” He also remembers fishing off the rocks stating, “There was a big rock down there but you can’t see it anymore.” One gentleman said that there were 50-100 feet of rushes for 5 miles (above the shoreline). He along with the nine boys in the area had double pointed boats, which he and his friends would try to tip in the water. They tried to see who could stay up the longest, commenting, “We had a great time.”
Where there picnics with family or church at the lake? Describe events further and how brought community together, activities, percentage of the community that participated.

Responses:
A respondent described the many fishing tournaments on Lake Traverse; however, there are not enough motel rooms to house all the competitors. The schools will often bring 200-300 kids out to explore and learn about nature as well as the ecology and function of the lake.

Describe geography as remembered... the landscape, the parks, what was it like?

Responses:
One gentleman described the landscape noting the continental divide, set back from Lake Traverse, right up to Lake, Big Stone. Another respondent remembers that before the lake went dry there were rushes in the lake. Giving a detailed account of growing up along Lake Traverse, one respondent stated:

“[Farmers experienced the “dirty thirties”] growing up poor, but [we] never thought [we were] poor because what you didn’t know didn’t bother. [We] had inexpensive fun.”

He continues, remembering in the 1930s the lake went dry and you were able to walk across the entire lakebed. His family raised potatoes and millet hay because it was the only place with moisture. The lake came back in 1937-1938. There were a number of grain elevators along Lake Traverse. There were also Indian camps right at Turpin’s point, and the respondent commented “I have a whole bunch of Indian hammers.”

Fishing: how was it? What was caught? Concern about the quality of fishing? When did they use the lake? When did the fishing change? What was the water quality like? Any concern about the water quality? Who voiced and how big of a concern?

Responses:
A respondent described the fishing as cyclic going from excellent to good, never really bad. This is partially due to the fact that the lake is stocked. Currently it is cycling back up to excellent quality. There is similar usage on the South Dakota and Minnesota side. Water quality has gained a lot more emphasis. The respondent commented that he has served on many committees, but in his opinion steps have been taken but nothing to improve water quality has been implemented as of yet.

Another respondent talked about fishing and catching Northern Pike, Perch, and panfish. When questioned about Lake Traverse water quality, he stated that he more first had experience with Big Stone Lake, south of Beardley, which also turns green in late summer. He remembered a time where there was no clear spot on the lake in 1960s. Although this respondent has not been to either one in the past 10 years, he didn’t believe that Lake Traverse water quality was ever as bad as Big Stone Lake. One gentleman remembers fishing for bullheads, and perch, and recalled that there were crews who made their living off of commercial fishing. When questioned about water quality, the responded stated it is the result of chemicals and drainage creating scum/algae. He thought of 19 places that have had cattle along the lake.

One respondent had a hunting boat, and went to the Mud Lake refuge. He also took Boy
Scouts fishing. He has caught walleye, northern, catfish (23lbs once), crappies, sheephead, and there were no perch worms so that is good. Another respondent reported that he has caught bullheads, walleyes, northern and perch in the lake. He has noticed the change in the increase of big boats. As a child he recalled being able to fish off a big rock and being able to spear fish. The lake water quality gets worse in August and September, with the stated cause being fertilizers and cattle in lake. This respondent contested this explanation, stating, “A lot of people don’t believe it but when I was a kid Lake Traverse was just as dirty and green in the summer as it is now.” The respondent noted that at that point farmers only used cattle manure as fertilizer and there was little ditching.

**How was the lake used seasonally? Where ice fishing and skating a part of life in the winter? What are the recreational uses of the lake? (water-skiing, Ice fishing, swimming, canoeing, public beaches)**

**Responses:**

A respondent described swimming and boating from May to July, but then in August the lake turns green and activity decreases. Another respondent remembers skating in the winter, and having sailboats in the 1950s and 1960s. One gentleman also remembers ice skating, describing that there was very little snow. He also remembered playing ball and other games, a slide, and that Rainbow Island had been called Turpin’s Point. They had ice boats in the winter. One respondent recalled renting a cottage in the early 1950s on Lake Traverse for the summer. Her husband fished while she worked on summer projects and prepared for the school year. The gentleman commented on how much electronic equipment has changed fishing and also talked about events such as the Fishing Derby.

**Where are places that are closely associated with the lake? (Lake Side Pavilions, Bars, Community Institutions connected to the lake, Ike’s)**

**Responses:**

Ike’s:
A respondent talked about Ike’s; the original building was added onto. It had a smorgasbord 1½ miles from south end of the lake. Another gentleman also commented on Ike’s, recalling that old movies had been shown. The building is now empty.

Pleasure Park:
A gentleman described one of the resorts, called Pleasure Park. There had been several resorts on the lake in the past. Some of the buildings of various establishments are still standing. There is only one currently active resort on the South Dakota side, reflecting the trend of declining numbers of resorts.

Shady Dell:
A respondent recalled Shady Dell with fondness stating:
“A lot of people in the summertime would go to Shady Dell. That was the center for activity... mostly picnicking, there were ballgames, and they had it was like a roller coaster only it went out into the lake. It came down and plane on the top for a little ways.”

He added that the roller coaster was a lot of fun, starting out high on rails, and had a flat car with wheels to stay on track. There was also “horseshoe” there. He remembers, “[They] had, the two old fellas that run it, had a big garden, a lot of flowers, [they] sold ice cream....
[I'm] pretty sure [there was] a bathing house...[but] flowers, that was a big attraction.”

Another respondent explained that Shady Dell had 3 cabins, a little store and a place to play ball, and a slide. There is not much public property in that area anymore.

Another respondent recalls her experiences at Shady Dell:
“[As] a child, 1932, six or eight, [I remember my] family going there. There was this water slide in the lake and you see the lake was dry and I can just remember seeing that thing... I remember we climbed up on it and wondered what it was, because it wasn’t a slide and yet the water wasn’t there so we wouldn’t know.” She also talks about Shady Dell as a place where they had family picnics on the weekends and celebrated the Fourth of July.

Turpin’s Point (Rainbow Island):
A respondent described Turpin’s Island, which had two houses and 3 cabins for hunters who came from the cities. He states, “They would come from the cities to hunt, and they would have enormous luck... They’d have a clothesline of 50 feet long full of duck next to duck just hanging there.”

Grain Elevator Sites:
One respondent, a former school teacher, recalled taking her student to the lake while studying elevator sites. They took a school bus, went around the lake to each of the sites and the students would then produce a written history from the trip. This respondent conveyed her interest in local history in her classroom by showing students the historic sites and teaching them about the regions history. Another respondent explained that there is an anchor from a grain barge at the history museum. The barges were used to transport grain on the lake to the 5 grain elevators to the railway head.

Was the lake ever used in a religious context or for services? (Harvest masses, baptisms)
No one was aware of any religious services; one respondent speculated that perhaps Native Americans may have used the lake in a spiritual context.

**Topic Two: How has the Town Changed?**
**What did the business community of 20, 30, 40 or 50 years ago look like? What did main street look like? What were the landmarks, main buildings? How many butchers, grocers, and gas stations were in town?**

**Responses:**
A respondent spoke of the main street, noting that many of the same buildings remain but some have different awnings or false fronts. The Terra Mitchell Insurance office has been the only new building in the last ten years. There has been an increase of mass merchandisers. There are fewer people in town fewer students now (a guessed decrease of 40% in 30 years). The highest population in Wheaton was 2100. In the year 2000, there was a gain of four people. Some respondents attributed the smaller population to past family practices of having five or six kids to the current trend of smaller families. Others spoke of the small industry that has developed. A respondent commented on changes in stores, stating there used to be a department size store for clothing, more restaurants, gas stations, and a jeweler. Comments were also made regarding loss of grocery stores, and that the movie theater has closed so in some ways the town of Wheaton is lacking in culture. Another respondent discussed local businesses including local gas stations and convenience stores. One store has closed and two opened, and they offer the only fast food in Wheaton on Hwy 75. The
restaurants have remained the same downtown, there are three restaurants as well as a bar and grill.

Has the number of students in school changed?

General comments noted the trend towards smaller classes and a shift in the school to more single parent families, some of who are attracted to Wheaton because of growth in light industry. These businesses include the following: Spectrum Marrow Mead (collapsible beds), Polytech (plastic injection molding), Wheaton Plastics (retrieving dummies for grouse and ducks), Wheaton Gazette (printing), Runestone, Barrett Automatics.

A respondent spoke fondly of the Brown Valley Man (the skeleton of ancient man) and the teaching conference that she went to in 1989, working with students on National History Day. The students performed well and attended the national event in Washington, D.C. The Browns Valley Man project was relevant at the time because of the skull of the Browns Valley man was found again, sparking controversy over who it belonged to. The respondent also spoke of her own school experiences including school picnics where her mother brought chocolate cake and potato salad. The students played games including relays and ballgames.

Another respondent went to country school until 8th grade that was down the road in School District #1. He described the old horse that pulled the sled to school in winter. When questioned, the respondent stated, “I would pick country school again... first graders played with eighth graders, there was much more family connection, no fights, everyone got along good... [however you]can’t back the clock up.”

Are there any annual events in the area such as county fairs, carnivals, festivals or celebrations that occur?

A respondent remembered the County Fair around 1980 that brought in big name entertainment. They did two shows, but he stated that the acts began to charge too much. Until last year there were horse races. One respondent remembered coming with his grandparents to see races. Another respondent described Wheaton Market day and the Dance Hall at the Fair Grounds. Another comment concerned the lack/loss of dairy cows in the county.

What are changes that have occurred independent of the lake? Aging population, outmigration, Main Street changes, new businesses, Why?

Regarding the changes in Wheaton and the surrounding community, a respondent noted changing farming practices and the loss of 50% of farm places. There are no trees. The respondent also commented that hunting has declined, stating, “[If you see] pheasants it’s a shame to shoot ... [the decline is due to] loss of habitat.”

Comments were made about the aging population and loss of young people, with an estimate that only one in ten young people return to the area following college. Positive changes have included the availability of the internet, and the automation of some processes at city hall. Farmers have acquired more efficient but expensive new equipment. Another respondent noted positive changes in housing, as there were no apartments when he first came to the area. Now there are seven. Population loss does continue, estimated at 400-500 or more. One respondent felt that many young people would like to live here but there are
not enough job opportunities, and “jobs make a difference.” Another respondent recognized about the stores as a way to bring people into town, as well as Dehiks and the Café potential destinations. One respondent felt that there should not be any discussion concerning new use for the creamery in Browns Valley, as it is already being used.

**Topic Three: Connect .... Object- how relationship to lake has changed**

**What have you noticed about people moving/aging in the town?**

A respondent commented about more people in town and more families but feeling there were fewer neighbors.

**Do people fish as much as they used to as you remember? Transportation: Where are people coming from? (Those that own cabins etc... Twin Cities people) are people more or less interested in fishing/recreation?**

One respondent stated that fishing remains quite popular and noted the number of fishing tournaments each year. Numbers of fish in the lake remain relatively constant as the lake is stocked. There are more cabins now than ever before, in part because of the Waterfront Addition which almost doubled the number of cabins. Many people come from the Twin Cities (Little Hennepin County), who like the lake’s natural appearance. A respondent commented that recreation is still very much an interest of people, commenting on the number of boats on the lake.

**Changes have occurred in the area (To get at Values) Why occurred? Most significant changes? Good and bad changes, how so? How has the lake changed over time? When, how, why changes? (pollution, fishing, swimming, Army Corps of Engineers, White Rock Dam, Browns Valley Bridge) Have you noticed any changes in water quality?**

A respondent noted the increase in the number of cottages, Shady Dell being gone, and the increase in population forcing the sewer having to serve people, possibly contributing to lake pollution. With more cottages there have been more personal conflicts. The dam has also caused a lot of changes. Also noted is the increase of privately owned shoreline, now up to 75% private ownership.

Another respondent commented on the changes in agriculture and changes in pheasant hunting, believing that there is better habitat. For migrating ducks and geese Traverse County has premier areas, due to more wetlands in a concentrated area. The area is affected often by flooding, including the flood of 1998.

**Have you noticed any changes in fishing? Have you noticed any changes in hunting?**

A respondent recalled the County Corner Café was a hotel, called the Palmer House. People would come all the way from Chicago by train, but the train no longer runs due to privatization and things being more regulated. Another gentleman commented, “We are a major draw for both pheasant and duck hunting in the area.” He depends on others for information. There have only been three game warden conservation officers starting in 1926 with Archie Desmond and then Corky Peterson. A respondent remembers that pheasants were attracted to the corn fodder outside of the barn. The pheasants also would go out into the field as the manure was being spread and eat the corn that had gone through the cattle. There were also incentives to trap fox, skunk where people could make money off of it. The
respondent also recalled walking through a corn field and having 25 birds by the end. Another respondent talked about duck hunting on the two rock reefs, and noting there were more geese than ducks. He also stated there were initially no deer in the area.

**Could the Government (local and state) be more supportive in any ways? Army Corps of Engineers in 1930s**

One respondent felt that at times the local government could be more supportive of EEA director and businesses in town. Another thought that dikes and dams do not always work, because they keep water from flowing into the lake. The respondent stated, “Wheaton never got flooded when I was a kid.” Flood waters flowed more quickly out of the lake, at the points where the dams block it now. Browns Valley floods now, as the dike prevents from the water getting to the lake. He believes, “When you start monkeying and trying to steer nature it is a little difficult.” A respondent spoke of aid to farmers, doubting whether it has been a good thing. Another respondent discussed [local?] government support of bike trails, the museum, and streets.

**Does the lake continue to bring people together or does it divide people? How does the lake affect different segments? Do children use as much as you did as a child? Do Native Americans use the lake the same way that they used to?**

A respondent described the reservation on the South Dakota side, and explained there had been a land rush similar to that in Oklahoma (a picture is in the museum) which is unusual. At the reservation there is restored fort, and powwows are held but there is no distinction made. A respondent spoke of the Native American care of land by using timber and prairie fires. Another person commented on the change in patterns regarding who use the lake from the region, including both Minnesota and South Dakota. The sell prairie CRP program (Conservation Reserve Program) was also discussed. A respondent commented on the history of Native Americans in Browns Valley being forced out to Sisseton in 1862. The historical campsite remains near the edge of the water. Some of the Sioux remain in Browns Valley and are not part of the reservation. A respondent commented on improvement in quality of life among the Native population because of gaming and more money available.

**Pictures and responses to them:**

Although all of the people interviewed saw the pictures, responses to them were individual. A respondent commented on the Browns Valley pictures and the uses of the Carnegie Library at the City Council level.

The boat: there was a shipping industry on Lake Traverse and elevators along lake on way to White Rock. The barges hauled grain to Browns Valley to be shipped via railroad at turn of the century. A respondent stated that in his retirement he has hopes to restore a steamer on the lake. He mentioned the uniqueness of the ruined fort along the lake called “Fort Washington” which was Spanish, French, British, and American. It is located 1- 1 ½ miles north of the county park, and the ruins of the fort can be found. Looking at the aerial the same respondent noticed that there are now a lot more trees on the riverbank. Commenting the Jubilee Celebration picture, the respondent brought out that it was the 100 year celebration of the game warden and city of Wheaton in 1987.

One respondent identified the buildings from historical photos that are still remain. He
thought that Browns Valley has a few more original buildings. The respondent also believed that the Depot is close to being 100 years old, recalling the first one burned down, but it was rebuilt in the same Milwaukee Style.

**Topic Four: Future of Lake Traverse**

*What do you miss the most? What are you scared of losing? What is the most important thing to preserve? How do you envision the lake in 10 years: worst case/best case scenarios? Future: prioritize projects to be built and completed*

One gentleman felt it was important that the natural resources were utilized and protected. He discussed limiting lakeshore development, or to require clustered development, stating that he would “hate to see that gone. That is one of the reasons that people came here in the first place, [and it is] still there.” He would like to see the lake play a bigger part as an attraction, and shared an idea about having a paddle boat on the lake. He also felt it would be wonderful if the natural draws and coulees could be developed into trails, stating, “[A] trail system along the edge of that lake it would take advantage of those coulees and canyons it would make a big difference.” The old fort could become a tourist attraction. In Wheaton, there is a need for non-agricultural jobs, and other industry should be promoted. Farms are getting bigger, there is good transportation, and people are well connected, able to drive about an hour to anything. In commenting on state government, the respondent felt “the state is just abandoning the area.” There should be a new school. The respondent also felt it would be good to keep the Bois de Sioux River in its “natural state” keeping water available for canoeing and fishing.

Another respondent sees the lake continuing to be a place for pleasure and tourism with more places to stay, additional rental cabins, and increased tourism. He also mentioned that some would like to see the lake being dredged, but that dredging is expensive. The respondent felt that in Wheaton the population will stay about the same. Considering new community projects, he stated the economic development board is thinking about a new community center with an indoor pool, but this is lower priority to the new legion hall. This year half sanitary sewers are being replaced. Main Street (Broadway) is being transformed with new sidewalks and lighting. The airport is also implementing improvements. The respondent felt that “Wheaton is not standing still... everything has to change.”

One respondent stated “I liked growing up when I did... life was simpler.” He thought in ten years there will be less country. He also was concerned about the amount of greed that he sees in people.

Another respondent believes that in ten years there will be fewer farms. Although he has been here all life, he said he wouldn’t want to farm now, as it is difficult and not always profitable. The lake in ten years will be affected by the increased numbers of septic systems, as well as continued high water and dredging issues. The respondent expressed concern about Browns Valley and its future. He felt that people “don’t support own town” as they do their shopping elsewhere.
Appendix 7: References

Print Sources:

Websites:
- Big Stone Lake Chamber of Commerce. www.bigstonecounty.org/
- Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy. www.mncenter.org
- Information on natural resource preservation as well as quality of life issues.
- Minnesota Historical Society. www.mnhs.org
- Minnesota Office of Tourism. www.exploreminnesota.com
- Minnesota Sustainable Communities Network (MnSCN). www.nextstep.state.mn.us Assistance addressing sustainability issues.
- Minnesota Valley Scenic Byway. www.mnrivervalley.com/sites/sites.php3?itinid=1
- National Main Street Center, National Trust for Historic Preservation. www.mainstreet.org/
- Rural Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Community Program. www.ezec.gov/
www.sdglaciallakes.com
*Information on regional tourism near/in west central Minnesota and eastern South Dakota.*

The Travel Industry Association of America.  www.tia.org/tourism/

West Central Regional Partnership.  www.regionalpartnerships.umn.edu/westcentral/
*Serving west central Minnesota by promoting active citizenship; helping the west central region attain a sustainable future; and building strong partnerships with the University of Minnesota and region.*

West Central Initiative.  www.wcif.org/index.html
*A public foundation which brings people and resources together to maintain and enhance the viability of west central Minnesota.*

The Tourism Center, University of Minnesota Extension.  www.tourism.umn.edu/

University of Minnesota Extension Service.  www.extension.umn.edu
*Education and guidance in farming, gardening, general natural resource stewardship as a part of the University of Minnesota’s land grant institutional mission.*

US Army Corp of Engineers.  www.mvp.usace.army.mil
*Information on engineering and waterway management throughout the region.*

Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission (UMVRDC).  
www.umvrdc.org/

Western Minnesota Prairie Waters.  www.prairiewaters.com