



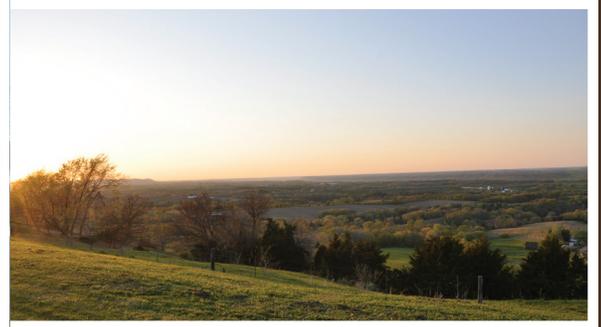
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
2015 Corridor  
Management Plan  
The Iowa Great River Road

# The Iowa Great River Road...

...the way the world travels to our Mississippi River



NATIONAL  
SCENIC BYWAY

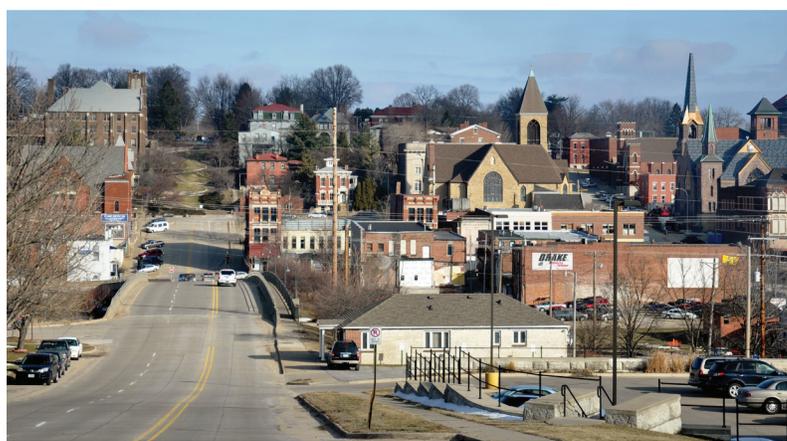


## Welcome to the 2015 Corridor Management Plan for the Iowa Great River Road!

As a summary of the Plan, you will find information about this National Scenic Byway and the resources which make it a national and international travel destination. After reviewing its contents, you are encouraged to explore the full Plan and the associated documents which support it. The Plan satisfies the requirements set forth by the Federal Highway Administration and the Iowa Department of Transportation.

The Iowa Mississippi River Valley and its companion parkway—the Iowa Great River Road—form **Iowa's richest travel corridor** with scenic, natural, historic, cultural, archaeological and recreation assets known across the world. These lands were significant highlands for North American Indians, these waterways provided the course of early European continental exploration, this corridor serves as a flyway for the birds of the western hemisphere, and its early settlements have grown into today's vibrant River towns and cities. This is a river of commerce, transportation and pure recreation integrated with a byway that connects ten states and provides rewarding experiences for today and every day into the future.

The Iowa Mississippi River Parkway Commission is privileged to have the public responsibilities for understanding the **PLACE** of the River, respecting the **PEOPLE** who rely on the Great River Road, ascribing to solid **PRINCIPLES** for stewarding this National Scenic Byway, and forging new **PATHWAYS** for its future.





Since its waters first carved channels across this continent, the Mississippi River has evoked awe, respect, love, and fear, and brought wealth, death, loss and gain, struggles and the unexpected. For nearly 100 years, the National Great River Road has provided the world a way to travel the Mississippi River Valley - to feel connected to and learn from the past, enjoy the present, and wonder about the future of this spectacular place.

As you have come to open the pages of this document, you likely hold more than a casual interest in the Mississippi River and the Iowa Great River Road. And hopefully, **the Plan will serve your needs and interests as a stakeholder, a partner, a steward and an advocate** for all that the Iowa Great River Road has, does and will continue to mean for Iowa and America.

The 2015 Corridor Management Plan for the Iowa Great River Road is a plan—*your plan*—for **conserving, developing, promoting and interpreting, and managing** the rich, diverse and unique resources we treasure. And while we all have so much to gain from dedicating our efforts to the resources of the Iowa Mississippi River Valley, we also understand that much is at stake if we fail to act. Degradation of the authentic character of the corridor; undeveloped access and unsafe conditions, ineffective communication and visitor information services, and inadequate public and private investment threatens the long-term potential of the Iowa Great River Road as well as the day-to-day economic livelihood and quality of life for tens of thousands of Iowans who live within this corridor.

The Plan builds on the long history of thoughtful consideration by the Iowa Mississippi Parkway Commission; the respect for more than a 1,000 Iowans who expressed their values, needs, expectations and dreams; the support provided by the National and Iowa Scenic Byways Programs; and the dedication of State of Iowa departments and staff, many partner organizations in eastern Iowa, and the citizens all along this 341-mile treasured route.



Look for these colors and section headings to guide your journey as you explore the 2015 Corridor Management Plan for the Iowa Great River Road.



# Pathways

In December of 2011, the Iowa Mississippi River Parkway Commission initiated a multi-year planning project to update the Corridor Management Plan for the Iowa Great River Road. The Plan identifies objectives, strategies, and actions to assure that the Iowa Great River Road and its corridor of intrinsic resources provide the environment and experience that citizens and visitors seek and expect from one of Iowa's greatest treasures. The degree to which this plan can be implemented rests with its stakeholders -- the citizens, communities, businesses, organizations, and agencies -- who have a vested interest in protecting and sharing its resources.

## Pathways to the Future

**Pathways to the Future**, the concluding chapter of the Plan, provides an approach for the Iowa Mississippi River Parkway Commission and Iowa Great River Road stakeholders to work in progressive steps—"Levels"—toward accomplishing the Core Management Directions for the Iowa Great River Road.

There are numerous indicators pointing to the overall conclusion that conserving, developing, promoting and interpreting, and managing a resource as significant as the Iowa Great River Road is, at present, substantially underfunded. The "Pathways" approach relies on undertaking and building Levels 2, 3, and 4 one at a time over a number of years. Moving from Level 1 to Level 2, as outlined on the following page, should be funded and implemented successfully before Level 3 is undertaken. Similarly, Level 4 should occur following the successful implementation of Level 3.

## A New Companion Leadership Team—The Iowa Great River Road Leadership Group

Leadership for the future of the Iowa Great River Road needs to expand beyond the present enthusiasm and capabilities of Iowa Mississippi River Parkway Commission and its technical advisors. An immediate priority should be establishing a **companion group of dedicated, local and diversely talented leaders** who would bring additional proven experience and skills at mobilizing human and financial resources from the private sector to focus on the Iowa Great River Road.

The Iowa Great River Road Leadership Group would be composed of **highly effective leaders in the areas of economic and rural development; regional tourism growth; environmental conservation and sustainability, education; agriculture; community foundations; and politics**. This group would focus on mobilizing the private as well as political sectors to support the conservation, development, promotion and interpretation, and administration of the Byway. Securing much-needed financial support for the Core Management Directions and Actions from both public and private sources would be a primary objective for the Iowa Great River Road Leadership Group.

## Elevated Effectiveness Levels — The Iowa Mississippi River Parkway Commission

The Iowa Mississippi River Parkway Commission is presently limited in its ability to effectively manage the future of the Iowa Great River Road in several ways.

First, due to the inherent nature of Governor-appointed commissions, Commissioners are restricted in their operational capacities despite their personal desires and professional effectiveness. The Commission has no power to determine or direct public funds for programs related to the Iowa Great River Road. There is **no dedicated State of Iowa source of revenue to support the legislatively mandated mission of the Commission**. It has no authority to regulate any activity. It has no direct ability to influence the activities of any particular state department. These realities constrain the ability for the Commission to facilitate significant advancements for the Great River Road.

Secondly, Commissioners receive no compensation for their time in service to the Iowa Mississippi River Parkway Commission and only receive per diem reimbursements for travel, meals, and lodging. Therefore, despite their personal levels of dedication, Commissioners are encumbered by state administrative rules and inadequate funding to fully cover their direct out-of-pocket expenses.

Finally, for the most part, the Commission is very limited in its capacity to effectively and repetitively raise funding for its operations from other governmental or private sources.

The next page presents summary points for each Level of *Pathways to the Future*.

## Level 1 Existing Level of Appropriation

- Financial support for Corridor Management Plan implementation is limited to the Commission's \$40,000 annual appropriation, much of which is earmarked for National Mississippi River Parkway Commission dues and travel expenses.
- **Performance is limited to Commissioners engaging with local stakeholders and partners.**
- State of Iowa departments and federal agencies will need to increase the sharing of information with local stakeholders, since the Commission, at its present Level 1, does not have the capabilities to fulfill that function.

## Level 2 Administration and Communications

- Elevate the operations of the Commission so consistent, competent and reliable **communication services** can be provided - **newsletters; regular stakeholder meetings; presentations to stakeholder organizations; information sharing with State and local agencies and organizations; representation of the Commission at meetings and events.**
- Increase awareness of the Iowa Great River Road and the Commission; improve collaboration among stakeholders and partners; and increase the effectiveness of the Commission in addressing policy issues and supporting Plan implementation by other parties.
- Level 2 objectives require employing an **experienced director** at a half- to full-time level. Ideally, this person will perform their duties from an Iowa Great River Road community. Options for administering the management functions of Level 2 could be assumed by an existing stakeholder organization.
- Estimated annual budget for fulfilling Level 2: \$160,000 - \$180,000.

## Level 3 Promotion and Interpretation

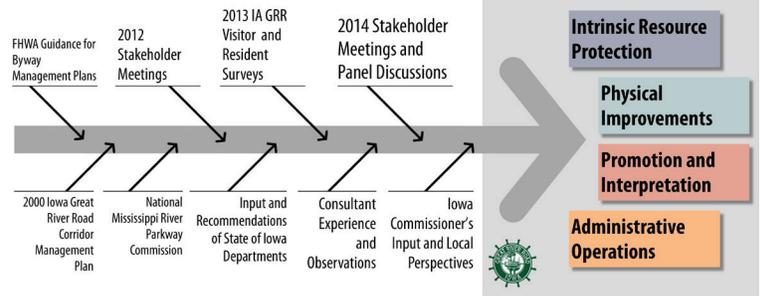
- **Achieve increased visitation and travel party expenditures in all Iowa Great River Road communities.**
- Prepare and implement a Market Development and Promotion Plan and an integrated Interpretive Management Plan; produce and distribute well-planned promotional media and travel planning information; coordinate and collaborate with various state, eastern Iowa, multi-county and municipal convention and visitors bureaus; design and produce interpretive exhibits and materials; facilitate annual training sessions for frontline staff and volunteers at visitor and interpretive centers.
- **Requires collaborative engagement** of various organizations and agencies including federal lands management agencies; the Iowa Tourism Office; Eastern Iowa Tourism; Iowa Department of Natural Resources; Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs; County Conservation Boards; designated interpretive centers; municipal and multi-county convention and visitors bureaus.
- Estimated annual budget for fulfilling Level 3: \$325,000 - \$525,000.

## Level 4 Facilitator for Capital Investment

- Recognize the need to establish one or several sources of public and private **funding** – state and local – **dedicated to new locally-conceived projects and programs** associated with the Core Management Directions: **Conservation of Intrinsic Resources** and **Physical Improvements**. Scope of financial investment likely between \$100 million to \$500 million or more.
- Funding options range from increasing/ targeting existing budgets of state/ local governments; a conservation, development and promotion grant program; to a multifaceted Iowa Great River Road investment initiative involving an accelerated program to meet infrastructure, innovation, beautification, and interpretation development needs and opportunities.

# Principles

To respect the incredible **place** that is the Iowa Great River Road corridor and the input of the **people** involved in developing this plan, specific **principles** have been adopted by the Iowa Mississippi River Parkway Commission to offer a framework for implementation.



Input Leads to Management Directions

## Core Management Directions and Actions

The Iowa Great River Road, the National Scenic Byway that connects people and their communities with Iowa's most important scenic, historic, cultural, natural, and recreation corridor, deserves thoughtful, comprehensive and long range planning and management. Conserving intrinsic resources, building physical improvements, promoting and interpreting, and effectively administering this dynamic resource are the four pillars for supporting the ongoing, new and long range investment of human talents and financial resources.

"**Core Management Directions**" describe the four broad, goal-oriented, mainstays that will continually support the effective sustenance, development, promotion and administration of the Iowa Great

River Road. These are constants which can guide and direct as well as account for and evaluate the investments of human and financial resources made on behalf of the Iowa Great River Road.

"**Actions**" are the expression of projects, programs and even day-to-day activities undertaken by the Iowa Mississippi River Parkway Commission and its broad range of partners and stakeholders—"fulfillment partners"—which are dedicated to and require the effective management of Iowa Great River Road. The dynamics that come with time will and should bring the Commission and each engaged partner to regularly consider the effectiveness of their fulfillment of specific actions.

Intrinsic resources are what make the Byway special. The places, the stories, the people that are scenic, cultural, historic, natural, recreational or archaeological make the Iowa Great River Road unique. Conserving, enhancing and reducing threats to these qualities certainly requires thoughtful choices and actions.

### Intrinsic Resource Conservation

### Physical Improvements

Physical improvements to the built environment create access for and encourage use and enjoyment of the Iowa Great River Road and its intrinsic resources. Several types of improvements are necessary to ensure the traveling safety of visitors and residents. Capital investment decisions are necessary before residents and visitors can realize the rewards of the Iowa Great River Road.

If we aren't made aware of something good, we will never experience its new and rewarding benefits. The stories, the beauty, the richness, the adventure, in short, the whole experience of the Iowa Great River Road, even if its resources are well-conserved and the infrastructure is fully built, will not be appreciated without continual encouragement through effective promotion and engaging interpretation.

### Promotion and Interpretation

### Administrative Operations

A variety of administrative services—funding, responsibility assignment, duties and others—are needed to identify, leverage, magnify and reward the allocation of human and financial resources.



# Core Management Directions and Actions

## Intrinsic Resource Conservation

**Roadside/ROW Management** - Manage the roadsides and rights-of-way of the Iowa Great River Road for visual and environmental sustainability purposes.

**Viewshed Management** - Recognize and enhance authentic scenic qualities that can be seen from the roadway of the Iowa Great River Road.

**Protect Historical and Cultural Resources** - Identify, protect and communicate the intrinsic qualities of historical and cultural personalities, events, sites, artifacts, photographs, art, crafts, livelihoods, and oral histories of the Mississippi River and Iowa Great River Road region.

**Trash and Litter Removal** - Remove and recycle trash, litter and debris from along the Iowa Great River Road roadway.

**Community Development and Appearance** - Recognize, conserve, and enhance the appearance and compatible development of the communities along the Iowa Great River Road.

**Mississippi River Qualities** - Recognize, conserve, and enhance the appearance, water quality and compatibility of the multiple uses of the Mississippi River and its shoreline.

**Botanical and Biological Resources** - Recognize, conserve, and enhance the quality and quantity of botanical and biological resources of the corridor related to the Iowa Great River Road and the water tributaries leading to the Mississippi River.

**Outdoor Advertising Control** - Regulate the erection of new outdoor advertising signs in accordance with federal, state and local laws, policies and ordinances.

## Physical Improvements

**Wayshowing Components** - Install and maintain, according to IDOT policy, new Iowa Great River Road Byway route guide signs; Byway entrance and exit markers; directional signage for Byway attractions; and attraction identification signage. Prepare and distribute printed and digital Byway maps and construct Byway orientation stops at key locations.

**Scenic Overlooks** - In all ten Iowa Great River Road counties, create and enhance scenic overlooks at key locations on or near the Iowa Great River Road to provide public access and parking for travelers to view the Mississippi River; rare geological and water features, agricultural landscapes, historic sites, city views, etc.

**Parking Areas and Access Points** - At key locations along the Iowa Great River Road, maintain, improve and, where needed, construct public parking areas for automobiles, recreation vehicles, motorcycles and bicycles and pedestrian access to trails; public boat launches and water bodies; federal, state, county and municipal parks; historic sites, museums, and interpretive centers; and other public assets and attractions associated with the Iowa Great River Road.

**Public Amenities** - Maintain, improve and, where needed, construct public amenities including restrooms, drinking water stations, rest areas, shelters, and trash receptacles. Provide accessibility during reasonable times of the day and incorporate universal design features.

**Mississippi River Trail** - Implement the routing of the Mississippi River Trail (MRT) from Minnesota to Missouri to provide a continuous bicycle path and connections to public amenities, parking areas, and attractions within the corridor of the Iowa Great River Road.

**Roadside Vegetation** - Plant, rehabilitate and maintain ground covers, trees and shrubs in the roadsides of the Iowa Great River Road which are consistent with the principles of the Iowa Living Roadway Trust Fund and community aesthetics and remove overgrown vegetation which otherwise blocks views of the Mississippi River and scenic vistas of the Byway.

**Sensitive Road Repair, Upgrades and Replacements** - Undertake routine maintenance, repair and replacement of roadway infrastructure -pavement, traffic control devices, drainage structures, bridges, fencing, etc.-in ways that are sensitive to and support a positive driving experience and visual appearance for the Iowa Great River Road.

**Community Entries** - Implement and maintain high quality and locally authentic community entrances for each town and city along the Iowa Great River Road and encourage expressions of the community's connection to the Iowa Great River Road and the Mississippi River.

**Livable Streetscapes** - Encourage communities to implement and maintain street and sidewalk improvements which will enhance the overall livability and usefulness (complete streets, green streets, quiet streets) of urban portions of the Iowa Great River Road.

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## Promotion and Interpretation

**A National Treasure** - Emphasize in all promotion and interpretation related to the Iowa Great River Road, that it provides the link to America's greatest river and a corridor of international importance.

**Interpretive Sites, Stories, and Venues** - Expand the offering of interpretive experience opportunities to build on the presently identified Interpretive Centers by including additional types of sites, interpretive programs, tours, and itineraries using a variety of authentic themes, messages, stories and media.

**Iowa Great River Road Website** - Redevelop, activate, and maintain an up-to-date website for the Iowa Great River Road and support it with widespread promotion and public awareness.

**Integrated Information and Promotional Material** Design, produce, print, upload and distribute a variety of promotion and information media developed to serve the various needs and desires individuals and travel groups have in the pre-visit, visit and post-visit stages of experiencing the route.

**Iowa Great River Road/Upper Mississippi River Discovery Guide** - Facilitate a well-known travel author to write, produce and market a top level, commercially produced travel discovery guide (book) focused on the varied intrinsic resources associated with the Iowa Great River Road region and the upper Mississippi River Valley.

**Hospitality Training** - Deliver training, information and support materials pertaining to the Iowa Great River Road for the diverse audience of 'front-line' hospitality personnel in the public and private sectors who provide information to the public.

**Community Events and Celebrations** - Emphasize, promote and strengthen the effectiveness of local community events and celebrations by linking them with being part of the Iowa Great River Road and the Upper Mississippi River valley.

**Niche Markets** - Emphasize connecting niche travel market groups—agri-tourism, culinary tourism, ecotourism, geo-tourism, recreation tourism, art tourism, motorcycle groups, vintage or special car clubs, bicycle tour groups, etc.—with the Iowa Great River Road.

**Loops and Side Routes** - Identify and inform travelers of highway, road and street segments that provide them with loops, spurs and alternative routes of the travel in exploring the GRR region in Iowa and the adjoining states.

**International Market Development** - Participate in programs intended to develop travel to the Iowa Great River Road by international travel markets through targeted promotion and group tour support. Translate promotional and interpretive media into additional languages.

**Formal Learning Resources** - Facilitate and support education-focused groups (school districts, colleges and universities, home school associations) to promote and use the intrinsic resources of the Iowa Great River Road as a rich teaching and learning resource.

**Merchandise** - Develop a licensing program to encourage the creation of product and merchandise lines that emphasize the Iowa Great River Road and its many resources.

## Administrative Operations

**Regional Stakeholder Communications** - Conduct regular communications with a full range of local, regional, state, Great River Road states and national stakeholders.

**Regional Planning Forums** - Periodically facilitate regional planning forums which bring together a variety of public and private interest organizations to address issues, challenges and opportunities which effect a larger area of influence than what is covered by any single organization or agency along the Iowa Great River Road.

**Key Indicators** - Identify, measure and report key indicators related to the Iowa Great River Road including visitor and resident opinions about the Byway and its management; measures of intrinsic resource conservation; economic impacts of the Iowa Great River Road and associated features; and economic impact and influence of the Iowa Great River Road corridor.

**Local Enterprise Support** - Identify, emphasize and support local business enterprises, locally produced food, art and crafts, etc. through public relations activities, collaborative programs and facilitate the availability of start-up and investment funding.

**National Mississippi River Parkway Commission** Participate in multi-state programs and projects of the ten-state national Mississippi River Parkway Commission which offer distinct benefits for the Iowa portion of the Great River Road.

**Iowa Byways Program** - Integrate the multi-faceted program activities of the Iowa Mississippi River Parkway Commission and the Iowa Great River Road with the activities and projects of the Iowa Byways Program offered by the State of Iowa and the Iowa Byways Foundation.

**Commission Support** - Undertake routine maintenance, repair and replacement of roadway infrastructure -pavement, traffic control devices, drainage structures, bridges, fencing, etc.-in ways that are sensitive to and support a positive driving experience and visual appearance for the Iowa Great River Road.

**Project and Program Funding** - Secure long-term dedicated funding to support direct operations of the Iowa Mississippi River Parkway Commission. In addition, secure funding to develop a competitive grant program for local governments and eligible private organizations in the 10 Iowa Great River Road counties to support projects and programs which fulfill resource conservation, facility development and maintenance, and promotion related to the Iowa Great River Road.

**Federal and State Agency Engagement** - Expand and recognize the effectiveness and financial commitments of federal and state agencies with roles and responsibilities for resource conservation, facility development and maintenance, and promotion related to the Iowa Great River Road.

**County and Municipal Agency Engagement** - Expand and recognize the effectiveness and financial commitments of county and municipal agencies with roles and responsibilities for resource conservation, facility development and maintenance, and interpretation at the local level related to the Iowa Great River Road.

**Non-profit and Corporate Engagement** - Identify and support cooperative agreements with non-profit organizations and corporations in the fulfillment of resource conservation, facility development and maintenance, and promotion related to the Iowa Great River Road.

**Point of Public Contact** - Establish, promote and operate a single point of information contact and administrative operations for all public, stakeholder and organization communications regarding the Iowa Great River Road.

**Non-profit Foundation** - Expand and elevate the effectiveness of the existing non-profit organization representing the Iowa Mississippi River Parkway Commission and the Iowa Great River Road in securing donations from individuals and corporations as well as funding from other foundations for broad program support and targeted projects which support the Iowa Great River Road.

**Friends Group** - Establish a membership-based "friends" group for Iowa Great River Road enthusiasts and supporters by securing membership at the national, state and local levels and providing information, events and other member benefits.

## Who is responsible for implementing this plan? You!

Conserving, developing, interpreting and promoting, and administering the Iowa Great River Road will inherently need to be shared by **a broad range of local to national entities**. No single agency or organization has the authority, resources or experience to do it all. Listed here are nearly 50 of the **principle fulfillment partners** which can play important roles in the future of the Iowa Great River Road.

### Local Entities

Iowa Mississippi River Parkway Commission  
Iowa Great River Road Interpretive Sites  
Private Property Owners  
Family and Corporate Farm Operators  
Local Businesses  
Local Travel Attractions  
River—and Great River Road Corridor—based  
Industrial and Commercial Operations  
County Conservation Boards  
County Boards of Supervisors and related  
Departments and Boards  
Municipal Governments and related Departments,  
Boards and Commissions  
Local Chambers of Commerce/Convention and  
Visitors Bureaus  
Local Charitable Foundations  
Local Civic and Community Organizations  
Local Historical Societies  
Local Main Street Iowa Programs  
Roadside Beautification Groups, Adopt-a-Highway  
sponsors, Keep Iowa Beautiful, etc.  
K-12 Education (Public, private and homeschooling,  
etc.)

### Regional Entities in Multiple Counties

Eastern Iowa Tourism  
Metropolitan Planning Organizations  
Rural Planning Agencies  
Resource, Conservation, and Development Councils  
Agricultural Interest Groups  
Leisure Travel and Activity Groups (Outdoor  
recreation, vintage cars, wildlife viewing, boating,  
bicycling, arts, antiques, wine, food, etc.)  
River Cruise Operators  
College and University Programs  
Dubuque Community Foundation—Mississippi River  
Parkway Commission Non-profit

### State-wide Agencies

Iowa Governor's Office  
Iowa Legislature and State Legislators  
Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land  
Stewardship  
Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs  
Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, State Historical  
Society  
Iowa Department of Natural Resources  
Iowa Department of Transportation  
Iowa Department of Transportation - Iowa Byways  
Program, the Byways of Iowa Coalition, and the  
Byways of Iowa Foundation  
Iowa Economic Development Authority  
Iowa Economic Development Authority--Travel Iowa  
Iowa U.S. Congressional Delegation  
Land Trust Organizations (i.e. Iowa Natural Heritage  
Foundation, County Conservation Foundations,  
etc.)  
Travel Writer/Publisher/Digital Production Company

### National and Federal Agencies

National Mississippi River Parkway Commission/  
Mississippi River Country  
National Park Service  
US Fish and Wildlife Service  
US Army Corps of Engineers  
US Department of Agriculture  
Federal Highway Administration - National Scenic  
Byways Program  
Dedicated River Interest Organizations (1 Mississippi,  
Mississippi River Collaborative, River Action, etc.)  
National Travel Promotion Organizations (Brand USA,  
U.S. Travel Association, etc.)

## How can you contribute to and benefit from the Iowa Great River Road?

- 1 Get to **know the corridor** more and better.
- 2 Use the phrase: **Iowa Great River Road**
- 3 Communicate that you are **located on or near** the Iowa Great River Road.
- 4 **Share your experiences** with your Iowa Mississippi River Parkway Commission representative, legislators, local public officials.
- 5 **Ask for more support - give more support.**

# Place

Managing and stewarding the Iowa Great River Road is most effectively accomplished by understanding the **PLACE**—the context, the geography, and the essence—of the corridor and its intrinsic qualities which make the Byway rewarding for both visitors and residents.

## What is the Iowa Great River Road?

The Iowa Great River Road is a 341-mile route that parallels the west bank of the Mississippi River in eastern Iowa between the Missouri and Minnesota state borders. The Byway passes through 10 Iowa counties, numerous towns, and several urban centers. Travelers along the route experience a variety of settings including magnificent vistas of the River; upland woodlands and floodplain forests; various parks, preserves and conservation areas; agricultural, small farms and rural countryside; small-town main streets; diverse and distinctive architecture; metropolitan centers and, most importantly, river life.

The entire route is paved two-lane and four-lane roadway. Approximately 188 miles (55%) are under the jurisdiction of the Iowa Department of Transportation. Approximately 153 miles (45%) are under county and municipal jurisdiction.

The route functions in a number of different capacities including: through traffic, local service, commercial use and recreational traffic. All portions of the route are maintained for year round use. The entire route is signed as the "Great River Road".

## What makes the Iowa Great River Road so special?

**Intrinsic qualities and resources** associated with the Iowa Great River Road National Scenic Byway are the visible and tangible resources that make this corridor special, unique and highly desirable to visit and experience.

Authentic intrinsic qualities are a condition of securing the Byway's designation by the State of Iowa and the U.S. Secretary of Transportation. Conserving intrinsic resources is a requirement for maintaining the state and federal Byway designations. Perhaps most importantly, telling the stories associated with the intrinsic resources of the Byway offers the most effective means to attract

visitors and provides authentic and rewarding visitor and resident experiences.

Six intrinsic qualities—**scenic, natural, historic, archaeological, cultural, and recreational**—are valued qualities used to describe and categorize a byway's special sense of place and meaning to local residents and byway travelers alike. Identifying these six intrinsic qualities aid byway stakeholders and managers conserve, develop, interpret and promote the local, regional, and national significance of each individual site, event, and the stories they contribute to the visitor experiences. In short, intrinsic qualities and resources are representative, unique, irreplaceable, or distinctive characteristics of the Iowa Great River Road corridor.

## What sites share the story of the Great River Road?

The National Mississippi River Parkway Commission designates **interpretive centers** as part of its Great River Road Network of Museums and Interpretive Centers. Seventy-two facilities have received designation as official Great River Road Interpretive Centers along the 10-state route. Iowa contributes an impressive fifteen of these (indicated on the maps on the following pages), more than any other state.



Signs marking all 15 designated Great River Road Interpretive Centers along the 10-state route

## Scenic Intrinsic Quality

Sc

- The Mississippi River itself
- Dramatic bluff land views and vistas
- Rock outcroppings
- Agricultural fields, farmsteads
- Distinctive architecture
- Small town main streets
- Vegetation of the fall and spring seasons
- Winter scenes with fresh snow
- Upland and floodplain forests
- Tributary rivers and streams, wetlands and backwaters
- Diverse topography
- Narrow channel and wide channel diversity

## Natural Intrinsic Quality

Na

- Geology, landforms and river hydrology
- Diverse wildlife including bald eagles
- Caves and natural springs
- Mississippi River tributary crossings and river level fluctuations
- Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge
- Mark Twain National Wildlife Refuge
- Protected wildlife management properties, state preserves
- State, county and city parks
- Nature centers, interpretation programs and watchable wildlife programs and opportunities

## Historic Intrinsic Quality

Hi

- National Register of Historic Districts
- National Register of Historic Places
- Historic vehicle and railroad bridges
- Century Farms and classic farm buildings
- Railroad routing, depots and structures
- Locks and Dams of the Mississippi
- River adjoining Iowa
- Historic cemeteries
- City and county historical museums
- Historic factory buildings, docks, commercial buildings, brewery buildings
- Country schools and small town school buildings
- Churches
- Riverfront parks
- Mormon Trail route
- Pedestrian walkways, stairs and elevators set in the bluff faces of towns and cities
- Historic markers

## Archaeological Intrinsic Quality

Ar

- Effigy Mounds National Monument
- Toolesboro Indian Mounds National Historic Landmark
- Various officially identified and protected archaeological sites
- Protected native American sites
- Museums and artifacts

## Cultural Intrinsic Quality

Cu

- All towns and cities along the Iowa Great River Road
- Various ethnic and community festivals and events
- Farmers markets
- Iowa Main Street Program districts
- Art galleries
- Music performance venues featuring locally-based artists
- Wineries
- Restaurants featuring locally-grown food and immigrant/ethnic food
- Mississippi River commercial barge and recreational boat traffic particularly associated with all locks and dams

## Recreational Intrinsic Quality

Re

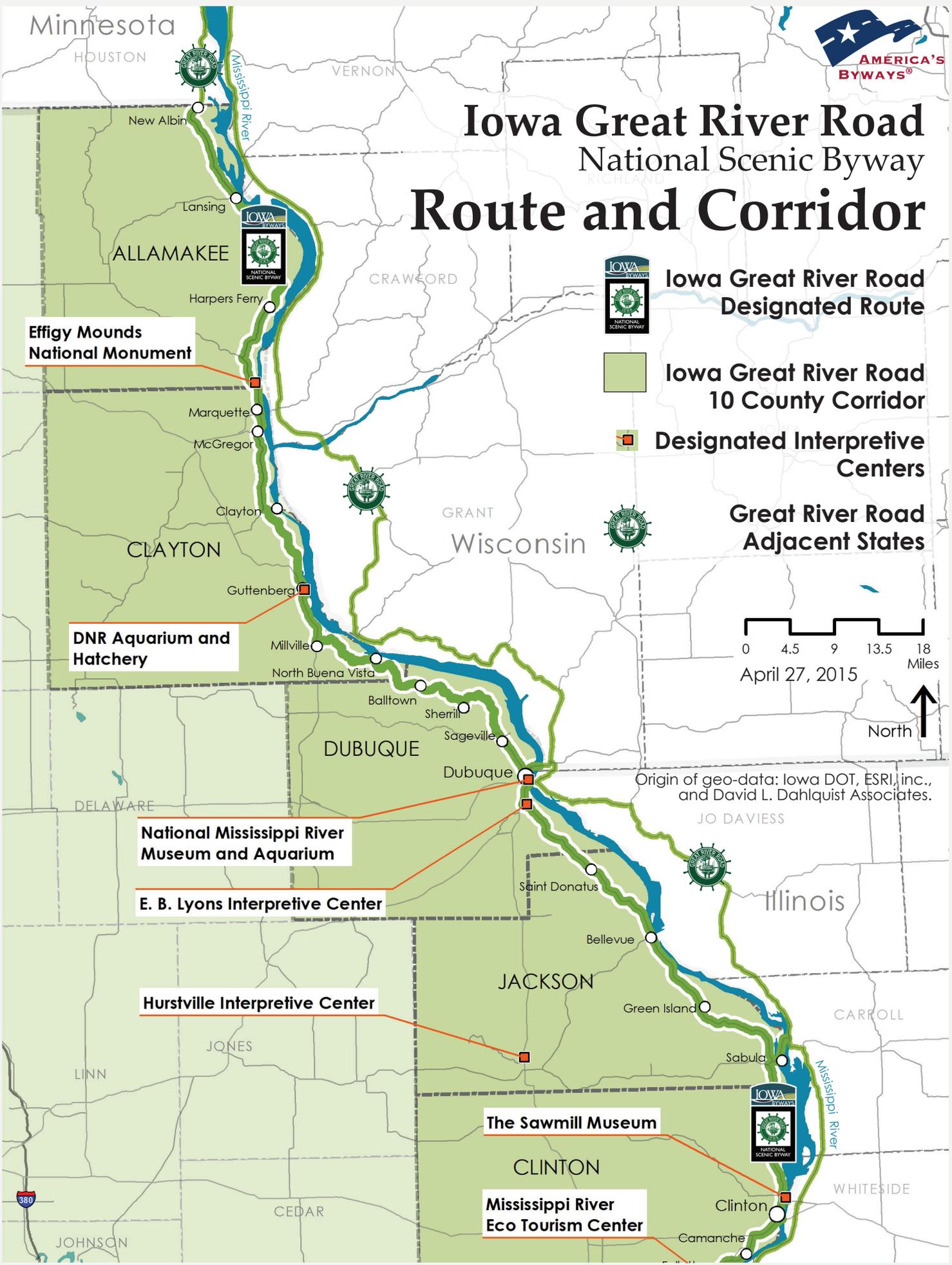
- Water-based recreation opportunities for boating, fishing, hunting
- Developed recreation access areas of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge, the Mark Twain National Wildlife Refuge and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Protected wildlife management properties, state preserves
- State, county and city parks
- Nature centers
- Many types of hiking and bicycling trails including the Mississippi River Trail
- Primitive and modern campgrounds
- Wildlife viewing
- Antique and art shopping
- Performing arts and cultural events
- Art museums

Iowa Great River Road Counties	Iowa Great River Road Intrinsic Resource Locations by County						TOTAL RESOURCE SITES BY COUNTY	Number of Designated National Great River Road Interpretive Centers	Number of Facilities which provide Interpretive Communication	Number of Facilities which provide Visitor Information	Mississippi River can be reached or seen from this Location	Supplemental Attractions or Points of Interest	Attractions Included in 2014 Iowa Tourism Office Inventory	Number of locations included in 2000 IA GRR CMP list of Intrinsic Resources
	Scenic	Natural	Historical	Archeological	Cultural	Recreational								
Allamakee	13	7	8	1	8	23	60	1	5	4	18	6	10	6
Clayton	14	5	16	1	10	20	66	2	9	5	14	8	24	8
Dubuque	10	7	22	1	16	21	77	2	10	3	16	26	50	13
Jackson	7	8	8	0	5	21	49	1	3	2	3	11	22	7
Clinton	6	7	10	0	6	30	59	2	9	2	19	20	21	7
Scott	3	3	16	0	17	16	55	3	9	2	15	16	35	10
Muscatine	5	3	7	0	4	10	29	2	6	1	9	8	16	6
Louisa	7	15	4	1	1	23	51	1	3	0	17	1	13	3
Des Moines	19	6	16	1	8	18	68	0	13	2	20	13	23	3
Lee	11	0	21	0	6	19	57	2	3	4	20	8	20	6
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>571</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>69</b>

Summary Table of the Intrinsic Resources of the Iowa Great River Road



# Iowa Great River Road National Scenic Byway Route and Corridor



**Effigy Mounds National Monument**

**DNR Aquarium and Hatchery**

**National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium**

**E. B. Lyons Interpretive Center**

**Hurstville Interpretive Center**

**The Sawmill Museum**

**Mississippi River Eco Tourism Center**



**Iowa Great River Road Designated Route**



**Iowa Great River Road 10 County Corridor**



**Designated Interpretive Centers**



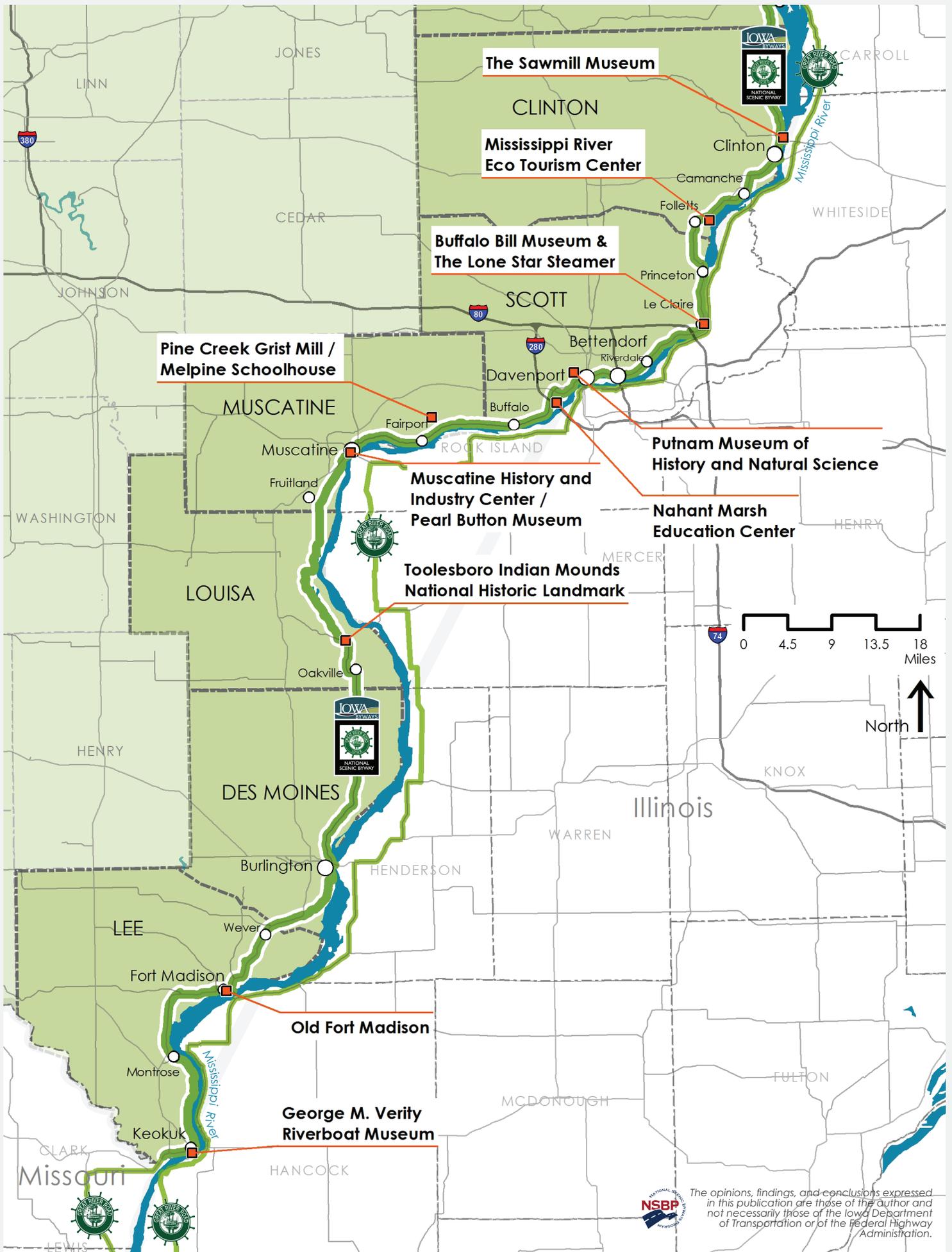
**Great River Road Adjacent States**



April 27, 2015



Origin of geo-data: Iowa DOT, ESRI, inc., and David L. Dahlquist Associates.



The opinions, findings, and conclusions expressed in this publication are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Iowa Department of Transportation or of the Federal Highway Administration.

# People

## Why is public input important?

Continuing to engage byway partners and stakeholders in implementing the vision laid out in this 2015 Corridor Management Plan for the Iowa Great River Road is necessary for success. Throughout planning process that led to the adoption of the Plan by the Iowa Mississippi River Parkway Commission, organizational and agency representatives, governmental officials, business owners, and corridor residents have demonstrated their strong commitment to the Iowa Great River Road and its future and their desire to maintain involvement or deepen their support.

## How were stakeholders engaged in the planning process?

The planning process that influenced the 2015 Corridor Management Plan involved numerous input opportunities for the general public and representatives of stakeholder organizations such as municipal and county governments and elected officials; state and federal agencies; non-profit interest groups; and private organizations.

In the spring of 2012, eleven public stakeholder meetings were conducted in six communities along the Iowa Great River Road. Approximately 175 attendees participated in these hour and half long meetings.

Two years later, in April of 2014, six stakeholder meetings were again conducted in the communities which hosted the 2012 meetings. Approximately 200 attendees participated in these two-hour meetings.



## Visitor and Resident Surveys

The primary goal of the 2013 Iowa Great River Road Survey was to gather and report indicators of the needs, desires and perceptions of Iowa Great River Road travelers and area residents. The survey findings will assist the Iowa Mississippi River Parkway Commission and its stakeholder organizations to provide more effective information, services and facilities for people to experience the Iowa Great River Road.

## Tourism's Impact on the Local and State Economy

Travel and tourism is vital to the eastern Iowa economy. **Travel expenditures in the 10 counties** which comprise the Iowa Great River Road account for 18% (**\$1.4 billion**) of total travel expenditures in the state though these counties represent only 16% of the state's population. Five Iowa Great River Road counties rank in the top twenty of total travel expenditures per capita.

# Information about Iowa Great River Road VISITORS...

**50%** of visitors plan to spend **2-3 days** along the Mississippi River



**26%** of visitors plan to spend **4 days or longer** along the Mississippi River



**70%** of visitors are **repeat visitors**

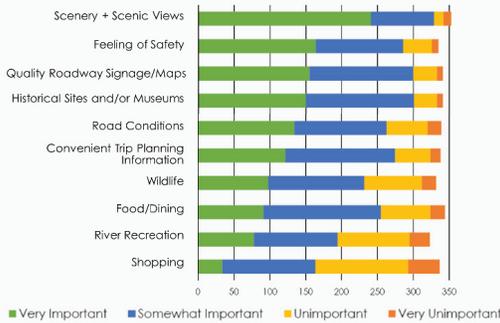
**40%** of repeat visitors have been visiting the area for

**25+** years



of repeat visitors feel the area has **changed for the better**. Only 1% feel it has changed for the worse.

Visitors ranked the importance of various factors in their decision to visit the area



of **Visitors** say **no additional tourism services or visitor amenities** are needed in the area



**42%** of Visitors report their trip **exceeded** expectations



**55%** of Visitors report their trip **met** expectations



**3%** of Visitors report their trip **was less than what they expected**

From the **24% of Visitors** and **55% of Residents** who felt additional tourism services or visitor amenities were needed, the following were most requested:



Public restroom facilities



Maps



Expanded advertising and marketing of local attractions



Guide signs and Attractions Signs

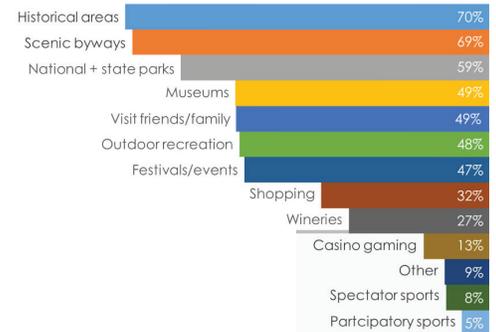


Bicycle trails and paths



plan to **visit again** specifically to experience the Iowa Great River Road

When traveling for pleasure, Visitors selected the following areas of interest:



Byway signs,



Maps,



and Word of Mouth...

...are the ways **75%** of **Visitors** became aware of the Iowa Great River Road



...of **Visitors** are either **"Somewhat"** or **"Very Much Aware"** of the Iowa Great River Road. 20% of Visitors report they are **"Not Aware"** of the Iowa Great River Road

# Information about Iowa Great River Road RESIDENTS...



of residents feel the area has **changed for the better**. 4.3% feel it has changed for the worse.

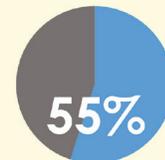
**78%** of residents feel tourism is either **Very Important** or **Extremely Important** to the local area economy



**57%** of residents feel the Iowa Great River Road **Contributes to a Great Extent** or **Contributes Significantly** to local area tourism



...of **Residents** are either **"Somewhat"** or **"Very Much Aware"** of the Iowa Great River Road. 10% of Residents report they are **"Not Aware"** of the Iowa Great River Road



of **Residents** say **additional tourism services or visitor amenities** are needed in the area

The above diagrams represent summary results of a self-administered survey completed by 430 self-identified visitors and 428 self-identified residents of the Iowa Great River Road region from June to October 2013.



# What is a Corridor Management Plan and why has it been updated?

The 2015 Corridor Management Plan is a written document which outlines the vision for the Iowa Great River Road and guides a wide range of activities for conserving, developing, interpreting and promoting, and administering the unique resources of the area. It outlines key goals and objectives and implementation strategies.

A 341 mile-long National Scenic Byway, the Iowa Great River Road connects and supports a diverse array of stakeholders. The 2015 Corridor Management Plan can help all stakeholders and partners perform more effectively, work together, and join forces on related projects.

## Ready for more information?

To download the complete 2015 Iowa Great River Road Corridor Management Plan and supplemental documents, please visit:

[www.iowadot.gov/iowasbyways/IAGRR-CMP.html](http://www.iowadot.gov/iowasbyways/IAGRR-CMP.html).

For travel information about the Iowa Great River Road, please visit:

[www.iowagreatriverroad.com](http://www.iowagreatriverroad.com).

For information about the ten-state Great River Road, please visit:

[www.experiencemississippiriver.com](http://www.experiencemississippiriver.com).

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