TRAIL STRATEGIES

TRAIL CONCEPT

TRAIL ALIGNMENT STRATEGY

THE FIVE AREAS
TRAIL STRATEGIES

TRAIL CONCEPT & ALIGNMENT STRATEGY:
The Minnesota River State Trail is to follow the Minnesota River as it transverses the southern third of the State of Minnesota. When completed it will stretch from the City of LeSuer in the east to the City of Ortonville in the west. The initial phases of the design investigation focused on understanding the nature of this varied and interesting landscape and creating design strategies for the trail. It developed two trail strategies: celebrating the unique characteristics of this vast Glacier River Warren landscape and creating memorable, ride-able, walk-able trail loops that are accessed from the many towns along the Minnesota River. The richness of the landscape in the segment selected for this study is evident in the map on the page opposite.

THE VALLEY OF THE GLACIAL RIVER WARREN CONCEPT:
The powerful torrential waters from Glacial Lake Agassiz that became the mighty Glacial River Warren carved a wide riverbed across Minnesota that is visible today long after the glacial waters have gone. The modern Minnesota River meanders through this riverbed on its way to its confluence with the Mississippi River at Fort Snelling. The design team sought to celebrate the unique landscape features that the River Warren created and revealed which include some of the oldest rock formations on earth. It also sought to interpret the landscape that the River Warren moved through including the many tributaries to the modern Minnesota River and the rich farmlands and prairies on the bluff lands far above the ancient river bed. Interpretation focused on both the natural and the cultural aspects of the historic and present day landscape.

TRAIL SPINE & LOOPS STRATEGY:
The second design strategy conceptualized the trail having a main spine consisting of a two-way paved trail with trailheads in the Minnesota River towns. In addition to the main spine, paved and unpaved trail loops off the main trail would move through the river bottom lands, climb to the bluff lands, cross the river, and return to the main trail and the town of origin. Existing and potential amenities that could be accessed from the trail were identified. Care was taken to respect the rights of property owners and the restrictions imposed upon protected lands.
THE FIVE AREAS:
Five areas of unique identity were identified for focused work through an analysis of the environmental and cultural characteristics of the trail segment. These included the City of Granite Falls, the Minnesota Falls Area, the Upper Sioux Community, the Upper Sioux Agency State Park, and Skalbakken County Park.

RIVER WARREN CITY, GRANITE FALLS:
Granite Falls is the only city sited within the riverbed of the Glacial River Warren. Its rock outcroppings, falls, historic buildings, historic sites, and riverfront parks could make it a rich trail environment. Because the city experienced recent flooding, it also offers an opportunity to link the development of a new trailhead to the flood control projects and business district revitalization that are to start soon in the riverfront area.

GNEISS / PRAIRIE BANKS, MINNESOTA FALLS:
Geological outcroppings, a prairie landscape, and a public riverside park characterize this area. It has a park with river access and many other facilities. One of the falls of the Minnesota River is located here by the site of an early white settlement.

DAKOTA CULTURE, UPPER SIOUX COMMUNITY:
The Upper Sioux Community is the home of a Dakota tribe of Native Americans. Lands owned by the tribe include both river bottom lands and bluff-top lands.

THE BLUFF-TOPS, UPPER SIOUX AGENCY STATE PARK:
This state park has a variety of recreational facilities and good areas to view across the expanse of the River Warren Valley. It also has a pow-wow site and historic federal agency sites dating from the contact time with native peoples.

THE RIVER-BOTTOM, SKALBAKKEN COUNTY PARK:
This river bottom park is located at the confluence of Hawk Creek and the Minnesota River. It is part of a series of riverfront parks in Renville County.