

Collaboration Award



Western Minnesota Prairie Waters Convention and Visitors Bureau



Western Minnesota Prairie Waters Convention and Visitors Bureau is a program of the Upper Minnesota Valley Regional Development Commission (UMVRDC). It started in the early 1980s as a small coalition of partners in the region who saw the benefits of collaborating marketing efforts. In 1999, a feasibility study recommended an increased effort throughout the region to promote and market the area as a tourism destination. As a result, the UMVRDC met with local units of governments in the region and discussed the possibility of collectively funding a more aggressive regional marketing and promotional program. In 2001, voluntary funding was provided by cities and counties to create a Regional Tourism Program at the UMVRDC.

By bringing resources together, projects in Chippewa, Lac qui Parle and Swift counties are done in collaboration, which saves resources. Pooling funds allows Prairie Waters to place advertisements in state and national publications, coordinate regional events, create and maintain a regional website, provide a toll-free hotline for requests, attend trade/ travel shows to promote the region and produce regional marketing brochures and direct mail pieces. Communities can have a presence in all of these areas while sharing the total expenses, stretching their marketing dollars.

Prairie Waters promotes and markets the region as a great place to visit, a great place to work and a great place to live by highlighting and showcasing our natural, cultural, scenic and historical assets. Tourism has a direct economic development and community development impact on the region by improving the quality of life for the residents of the region. Efforts are done on a regional basis, making it more affordable to our rural communities to accomplish much more with combined revenues.

Some accomplishments include a regional visitors guide, "Antiques, Unique Shops, Dining and Lodging" Regional Directory, "Cuisine of the Prairie" local foods event, Bike Around Minnesota Event, Sesquicentennial Regional Art Event and marketing for Meander Upper Minnesota River Art Crawl. UMVRDC Executive Director Dawn Hegland played an instrumental role in this successful collaboration. In addition, the organization dedicates two staff to Prairie Waters including Kristi Link Fernholtz and Jenifer Fadness.

Learn more at www.prairiewaters.com.

