



# Destination Red River: Regional Rural Tourism

Florija “Lule” Naas  
*Destination Red River Project Manager*



Pembina Gorge



**redriver**  
**REGIONAL COUNCIL**  
MOVING IDEAS TO ACTIONS

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



## OUR VISION

The RRRC brings together public and private partners to support business growth, revitalize main streets, and develop vibrant communities where people can live, work, play and prosper.

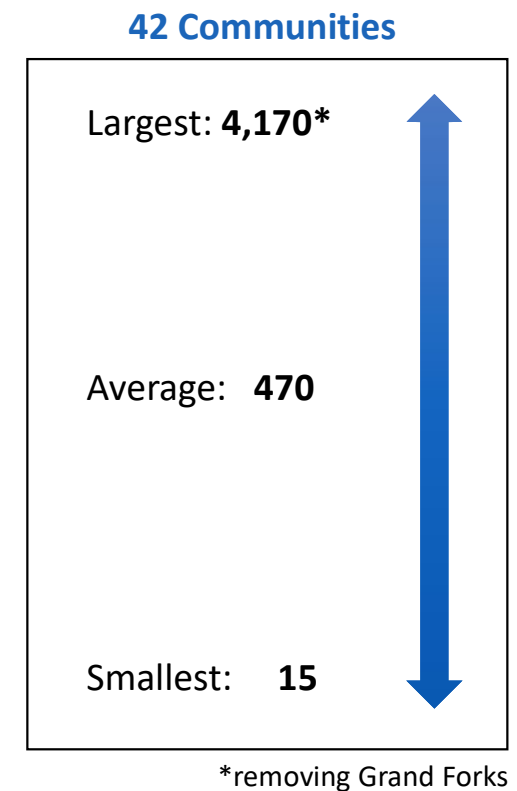
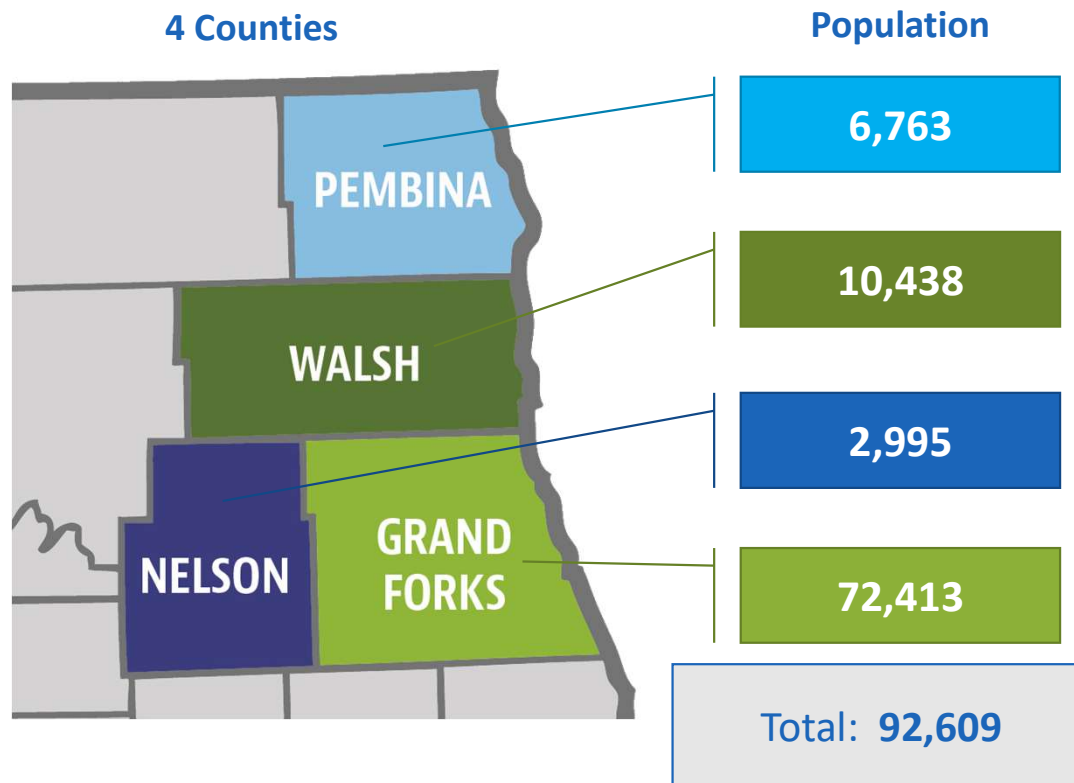
## WHAT WE DO

### OUR MISSION

The Red River Regional Council is a non-profit, quasi-governmental organization that serves as the federally-designated economic development district leader for Region 4, which includes 42 communities and the counties of Pembina, Walsh, Nelson, and Grand Forks in northeastern North Dakota.



# Region 4: Northeast North Dakota



# TOURISM

IS THE QUICKEST AND CHEAPEST  
WAY TO OFFSET LEAKAGE

## Leakage

Locally earned money  
spent elsewhere



# Tourism **Benefits** **Rural** Communities

---

- Showcases **quality of life**
- Supports and promotes **local businesses**
- Opens the door to **new residents**
- Helps grow our **workforce**
- Increases **economic activity**
- Potential to **increase population**



**Grafton**  
Walsh County

# Destination Red River Project



# Assessment Process

---

Destination Development – Roger Brooks  
International



**Aneta**  
Nelson County



# LAKOTA

## *North Dakota*

## Pre-visit Assessment

- Marketing effectiveness
  - Visibility (finding information)
  - Effectiveness (ability to close the sale)
  - Competitive analysis



# Destination Assessment

- First impressions (signage, gateways)
- Homes & neighborhoods
- Commercial areas & merchants
- Schools & health facilities
- Parks, recreational facilities
- Things to do

**You've been Secret Shopped!**

**42 communities**

**Recreation areas**

**2,200 miles traveled**

**+2000 photos taken**

**Stump Lake Village**  
Nelson County



# Focused Conversations

---

- Walhalla
- Grafton
- Frost Fire
- Rendezvous Region
- Large Employers & Elected Officials



**Grafton**  
Walsh County



# The Findings

---

## 4 County Workshops:

- 150+ observations and suggestions provided
- 200+ attendees

## The Plan

- 200+ page Action Plan





# Obstacles & Opportunities

---

Rural Tourism

# ND Ranks Low for Public Lands

---

- North Dakota has the smallest amount of public land (4%)
  - Next lowest state: 20%
- This limits recreation development comparatively.
- Trails and public spaces attract tourism



Frost Fire



## Lack of State/Region Identity

North Dakota has the lowest tourism and marketing budget in the country.





# Rural Tourism Funding

- Sustainable rural funding for tourism is difficult to find.
- No lodging tax for RV parks
- Limited funding for rural tourism means:
  - Limited staff
  - Limited marketing
  - Limited investment
  - Limited awareness

# Lack of Online Presence

---

- **Limited, dated** or **no** online presence
- Websites don't cater to **visitors**
- No **Google Listing**
- Not listed on **hospitality** and **lodging** travel sites
- Social Media

## Why Google?

Traffic

300%

**Search engines** drive **300% more** traffic to sites than social media.



# Lack of Information

---

- Many rural communities lack informational signage
  - Amenities
  - Businesses:
    - Services? Open? Hours?
  - Cities
  - Wayfinding
  - Trails
  - Informational signs





# Local Attitudes

---

Why do we talk so poorly about where we live?

- Self-deprecating
- Focus on the negative
- Militant modesty
  - Remain humble/don't brag

Why are we resistant to change?



**McVille**  
Nelson County

# Do we **want** Tourism?

---

- Do we think of our **rural** communities as **tourist destinations**?
- Voices against tourism and bringing people here
- How do we create welcoming communities?



**Drayton**  
Pembina County

# The Plan

---

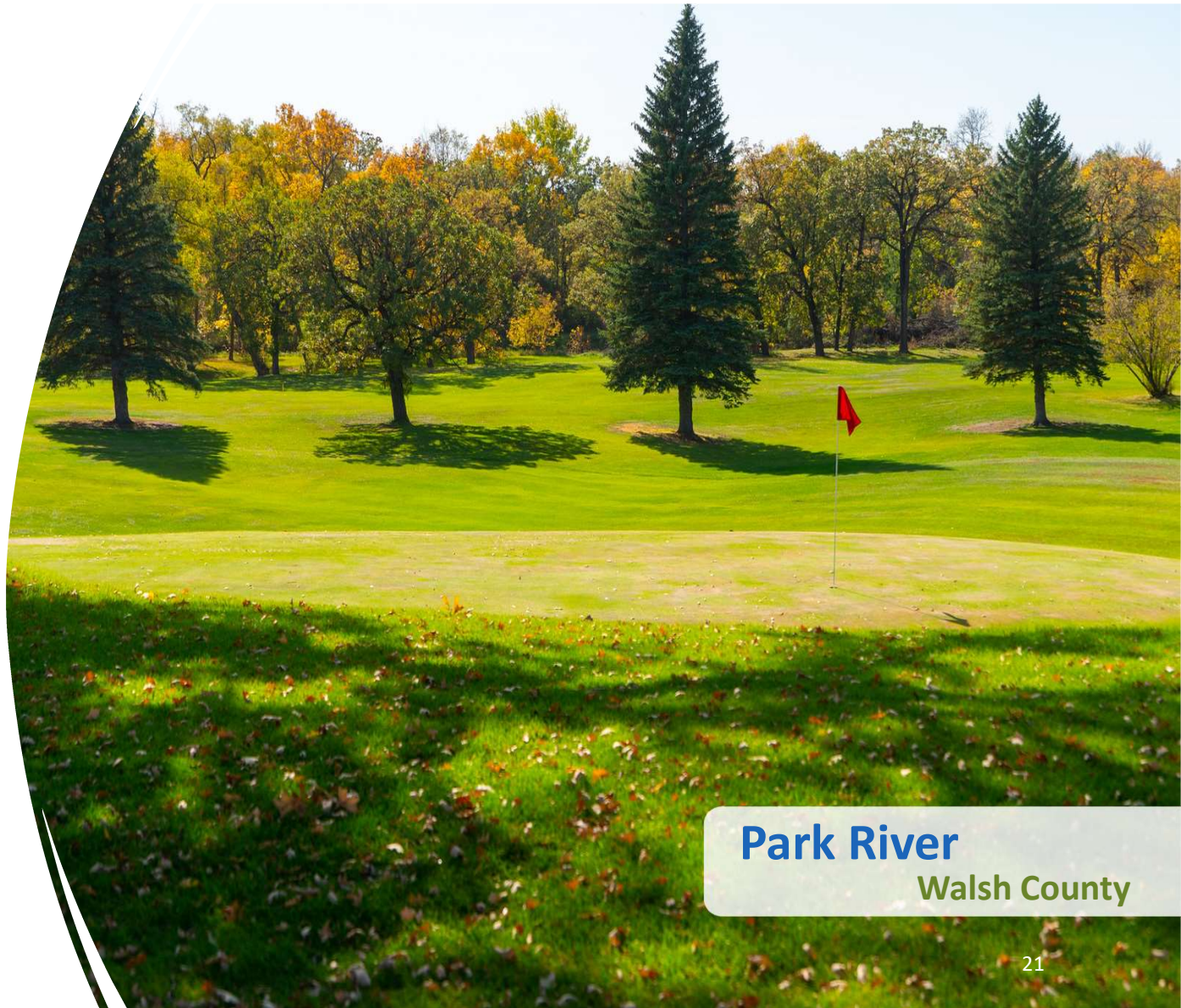
Red River Region Project



# Target Markets

---

- Campers and RVers
- Visitors coming home to see family
- Outdoor recreation



**Park River**  
Walsh County

# Build Local Awareness & Support



- Partner with community organizations
- Education, engagement and resources
- Benefits of Rural Tourism Campaign



# Create Destination [Your Town] Teams

---

- **Grassroots:** Change happens at the community level (doers)
- Focus on:
  - Beautification & Main Street
  - Awareness
  - Signage
  - Business support
  - Online presence
- Destination RR provide support, guidance, and resources



**Larimore**  
Grand Forks County



# Create an Online Presence

- Claim Google Business Listings
- Create/update websites (tailored to visitors)
- Travel website listings (RV sites, hotel sites, etc.)
- Travel Guides / Top 10 / Itineraries
- Social Media & Influencers

## Icelandic State Park

●●●●● 28 reviews • #1 of 3 things to do in Cavalier • State Parks

[Visit website](#) [Write a review](#)

### What people are saying

By baumlj

"Excellent Place to Camp"

●●●●● Aug 2022

There is **firewood** and ice available at the host site.

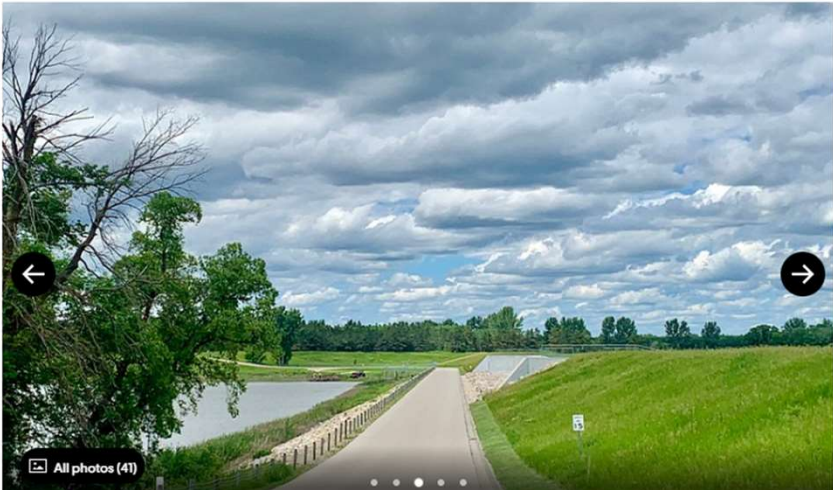
By ShanOC


"Excellent State Park Campground!"

●●●●● Jun 2022

We spent time hiking around the campground area, around the lake, and across the **dam**.

[Suggest edits to improve what we show.](#)  
[Improve this listing](#)





### Icelandic State Park

[Website](#) [Directions](#) [Save](#)

4.6 ★★★★★ 318 Google reviews

State park in Pembina County, North Dakota

Icelandic State Park is a public recreation area on the north shore of Lake Renwick, six miles west of Cavalier in Akra Township, Pembina County, North Dakota. The state park encompasses more than 900 acres, two hundred of which are wooded. [Wikipedia](#)

**Address:** 13571 ND-5, Cavalier, ND 58220

**Departments:** [Gunlogson State Nature Preserve](#)

**Hours:** Closed · Opens 9 AM Thu ▾

**Phone:** (701) 265-4561

**Area:** 1.454 mi²

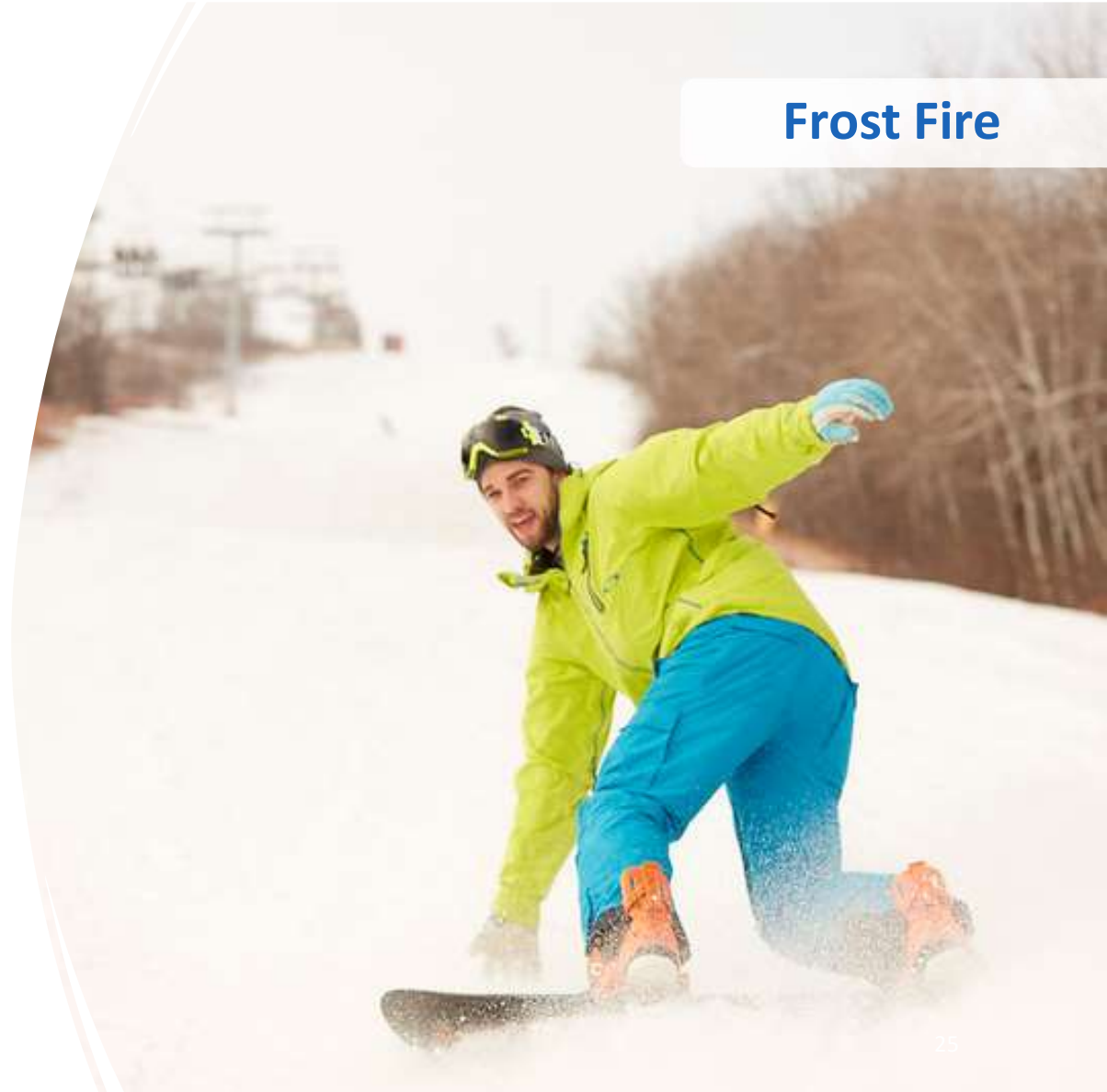
**Established:** 1964

# Create a Regional Brand

---

- **Workforce** Attraction & **Visitor** Attraction
- **Authentic** and **recognizable** for Northeast North Dakota
- Website, social media, photography, videography, advertising and marketing
- Brand rollout: **June 2023**

Frost Fire



# Showcase Local Activities

---

- Camping
- Golf
- Hunting/fishing
- Swim/paddle board/kayak
- Ski/snowshoe/snowmobile
- Hiking & mountain biking
- Theater & art
- Local events
- History (Talking Trails)

**Stump Lake**  
Nelson County





# Marketing Campaign Launch

---



## What is Destination Red River Region?



Destination Red River Region is a team of 15 people from throughout Region 4, Manitoba, and the State. [Read more »](#)

 Destination Red River on YouTube

 Destination Red River on Flickr

 Destination Development & Marketing Action Plan

For more  
information

- Visit [www.redriverrc.com](http://www.redriverrc.com) for:
  - Destination Red River Plan
  - County Workshop Recordings
  - County Workshop PDFs
  - Flickr Photo Library

# Questions







# Contact Information

---

## **Florija "Lule" Naas**

*Destination Red River Project Manager*

**Red River Regional Council**

Grafton, ND

(701) 730-2090

[lule@redriverrc.com](mailto:lule@redriverrc.com)

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