

RECREATION



Sy Bean/The Gazette

Squaw Creek Park — its mountain bike trail is shown above — is alongside Highway 13, which some hope to designate as the Cedar-Wapsi Recreational Byway.

BRINGING THE BYWAY TO LIFE

- 1 Indian Creek Nature Center will break ground in the spring on a 12,000-square-foot center on Otis Road SE, just west of Highway 13. The center's old barn, which houses the not-for-profit organization's operations center, is likely to become a canoe and kayak rental site.
- 2 Linn County Conservation is partially removing the dam at Buffalo Creek Park near Coggon to allow fish to get upstream and kayaks and canoes downstream in a \$420,000 project.
- 3 Fundraising continues for the \$11 million Prospect Meadows project to build a 17-field complex at Highway 13 and County Home Road. Grading for some of the ball fields could start in 2015.
- 4 Linn County is exploring modifying the dam on the Wapsipinicon River at Central City to create a kayak venue.

Proponents say Linn big enough for 2 'corridors'



Jim Slosiarek/The Gazette

Linn County Supervisor Brent Oleson (right) points to a map as he talks about the Cedar-Wapsi Recreational Byway with John Myers (from left), executive director of the Indian Creek Nature Center; Dennis Goemaat deputy director of Linn County Conservation; and Jack Roeder, president of Prospect Meadows, at the Linn County Administration building in Cedar Rapids on Friday.

By Rick Smith, The Gazette

CEDAR RAPIDS — Brent Oleson says we are more than we realize.

That's the gist of an effort of geographic transformation in which Linn County Supervisor Oleson and others hope that people will come to view the north-south highway through eastern Linn County as the Cedar-Wapsi Recreational Byway, not Highway 13.

Oleson compared the naming campaign to the one that for years urged residents from the Cedar Rapids metro area to the Iowa City metro area to see Interstate 380 between the two as a "corridor." It's been called a

► **BYWAY, PAGE 10A**

Byway/‘Great Place’ designation sought

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technological corridor and then the “Creative Corridor.”

Oleson said the Cedar-Wapsi Byway is to recreation what the Corridor along Interstate 380 is to economic development.

Calling Highway 13 a byway also makes more sense because a byway by its very nature is “outdoorsy and engaging,” said John Myers, executive director of the Indian Creek Nature Center, one of the recreational and educational venues along Highway 13 in the proposed road.

Myers said the goal behind the designation of the Cedar-Wapsi byway is that residents and visitors from the region and beyond will appreciate the outdoor educational and recreational opportunities scattered along Highway 13, from the Wapsipinicon River in the northern part of Linn County to the Cedar River in the southern section.

Oleson counts 20 such outdoor venues north to south, including Buffalo Creek Park, Pinicon Ridge Park, Squaw Creek Park, Indian Creek Nature Center and Palisades-Kepler State Park.

“The sum is greater than the parts,” Oleson said, displaying a version of the Linn County map with Highway 13 highlighted in red to designate the byway boundaries.

Oleson said Linn County is leading a joint effort to bring traction to the byway idea by seeking to have the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs designate the byway as a Great Place in the department’s Great Places program.



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Brent Oleson says he expects there will be new signs and informational material displayed throughout Linn County to promote the existence of the Cedar-Wapsi Recreational Byway, which will include Squaw Creek Park.

In 2015, the state program will have \$1.3 million available to help support Great Place projects. The Cedar-Wapsi byway effort is submitting an application to the program, seeking \$500,000 for use by one of the byway attractions, the Indian Creek Nature Center.

COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

Iowa’s Great Places program is driving the push to create and market the Cedar-Wapsi byway, in part, because both the Indian Creek Nature Center and the Prospect Meadows ball field project intended to seek a Great Places designation in competition with each other.

Prospect Meadows’ Roeder said the Iowa Great Places program told the Prospect Meadows board of directors that the program is seeking to endorse “collab-

orative efforts and bigger visions.”

“And the byway is a collaborative effort and a bigger vision,” Roeder said.

Oleson said securing the Great Place designation for the larger idea of the byway will get people thinking of the “overarching idea,” and not just that Indian Creek Nature Center or Prospect Meadows is off Highway 13.

The byway application will seek \$500,000 for the Indian Creek Nature Center project in 2015, with a plan to seek a similar amount for Prospect Meadows in 2016 and Linn County Conservation in 2017, Oleson explained.

Roeder said Prospect Meadows realizes that it may lose out on Great Places funding by watching Indian Creek Nature Center go first. But the center’s plans are far-

ther along than Prospect Meadows’ plans, and so it makes sense for the center to go first, he said.

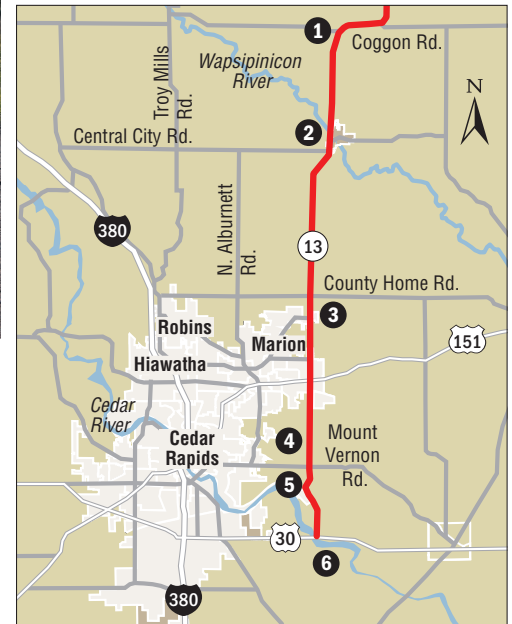
In the future, Oleson said he anticipates that the public will see new signs and informational material displayed throughout Linn County to promote the existence of the Cedar-Wapsi Recreational Byway.

Asked if people pay attention to the signs identifying the Avenue of the Saints — the highway connection between St. Louis, Mo., and St. Paul, Minn., that includes Interstate 380 — Oleson said the byway and its signs will come to mean more than that.

“I think it’s up to us as leaders to continue to educate the public on all these different opportunities along this road and why we refer to it as the byway rather than just Highway 13,” Oleson said.

Cedar-Wapsi Recreational Byway

Linn County officials are leading an effort to designate Highway 13 from Buffalo Creek and the Wapsipinicon River in the northern part of the county to the Cedar River in the southern part as a byway of outdoor recreational and educational venues.



1. Buffalo Creek County Park
2. Pinicon Ridge County Park
3. Prospect Meadows (proposed)
4. Squaw Creek County Park
5. Indian Creek Nature Center
6. Palisades-Kepler State Park

Source: Linn County

Gazette map

Roeder, the former general manager of the Cedar Rapids Kernels minor league baseball team, said Perfect Game Field at Veterans Memorial Stadium is a mouthful for Kernels fans to say.

“But the Cedar-Wapsi Recreational Byway comes off the tongue pretty well,” he said.

The Iowa Great Places program has awarded some \$13 million to 96 projects in about 30 Iowa communities, including

Marion, Decorah, a joint project of Clermont-Elgin-Elkader in the Turkey River Corridor and a joint project of Iowa City-Coralville-North Liberty.

In 2015, the city of Cedar Rapids also will compete for a Great Place designation and funding to help with the \$1.95 million renovation of the downtown Greene Square Park into Greene Square.

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