Ogle County Greenways and Trails Plan

Purpose of the Plan

The Ogle County Greenways & Trails Plan serves multiple uses and objectives:

1 - It fulfills the need of residents and local planners for a long-range, visionary master plan for the green infrastructure of the region.
2 - It identifies the resources and opportunities for open space and recreational trail systems.
3 - It provides a strategy for linking communities with one another and with the natural and cultural resource areas via greenways and trail networks.

Conservation, economic development, and transportation planning at local and state levels is an ongoing process. In this context, it is critical that long range visionary and short term strategic planning for greenways and trails also be a continuing process, assuring that Ogle County will be ready to capitalize on opportunities as they arise. This plan has been conceived with public input as the frontline tool to:

- **define opportunities and priorities**
- **recommend courses of action**

Intended users include open space, environmental, and recreational agencies and jurisdictions at all levels, from municipal and county to regional, and state. Conservation and recreational groups as well as planning officials will use it in their efforts to secure funding and promote the development of local plans and projects. With the assistance of this plan, Ogle County can link its resources to greenways and trails in neighboring counties. The goals are better environment, access to recreation for residents and visitors, and preservation of quality of life for everyone.

Among the benefits of greenways and trails planning are:

- Providing a framework for coordinated greenway and trail conservation and development.
- Assisting public agencies to allocate resources in support of plan priorities.
- Initiating a forum for discussion and resolution of greenway issues among government jurisdictions and private sector interests.
- Providing a basis for coordinating transportation, recreation, water quality, stormwater management, wildlife, and related programs, to advance conservation of greenways and reduce conflict with other development activities.
- Promoting understanding and encouraging stewardship of Ogle County's natural and cultural resources.

What is a Greenway?

A greenway is any linear open space established along either a natural corridor such as a stream valley or overland along a man-made corridor such as a converted railroad right-of-way, canal, scenic road or parkway. Like arteries linking vital organs, greenways connect parks, nature preserves, wetlands, streams, cultural and historic sites with each other and with populated areas.

Some greenways—though not all—are trails that allow humans passage into and through the natural world. Any natural or landscaped course for pedestrians or bicycles is a greenway.

Not all greenways are publicly owned. Some may be established on private land by easements or other methods that protect valuable natural areas and cultural/historic sites or allow public access on trails. Some are managed to preserve ecological diversity. Others are purely recreational.

Types of Trails

Dedicated Trails are designed and built off-road for the exclusive use of pedestrians, bicyclists, cross-country skiers, skaters, people in wheelchairs, equestrians, or by motorized use such as snowmobiles. The uses allowed on each trail are established by the organizations and public agencies involved in its acquisition, development, and maintenance. Although more than one type of non-motorized use is allowed on most trails, motorized recreational vehicle traffic typically is segregated by location or season.

Shared-Use Trails are low-volume streets or rural roads designated and intended to be shared by existing vehicular traffic with proposed bicycle and other non-motorized uses. Generally shared-use trails will require at least some signage and perhaps paint striping to identify the routes and to alert motorists. Some may accommodate other uses such as equestrians or snowmobiling within the right-of-way, although not on the pavement. State law and local ordinances govern such uses.

Snowmobile Routes are seasonal trails on public right-of-way and on private land by arrangement with property owners. The actual pathways on private property may be altered from year to year. Permissions, mapping, and signing the routes are the responsibility of local snowmobile organizations. The extensive Tri-County snowmobile Trail system links 15 communities in Ogle County with one another and with neighboring counties.

Equestrian Trails occur primarily on and between public conservation areas and on privately owned land, including campgrounds, dude ranches, and horse-boarding farms. While horse-back riding is often separate from other uses, sometimes the trails may permit pedestrian and seasonal snowmobile use.

Canoe Trails may occur on any year-around or seasonally navigable waterway that is not obstructed by fences or fallen trees. Canoeists and kayakers generally prefer stream segments that require paddling skills or afford close-up nature viewing and a minimum of conflict with speed boats and jet skis.

ATV Trails are associated with off-road use and with rugged landscapes. Public access for motorized all-terrain vehicles may be limited primarily to supervised private or public ATV parks with trailer parking.

Patterns of History and Geography

The greatest concentration of sites with significant public values are to be found in or near the corridors of the major streams of the county: primarily the Rock River and secondarily the Kyte River and Pine Creek. The linear nature of stream corridors, the desirable biological diversity, scenic qualities, the limits to development imposed by steep slopes and flood plains, and the proximity to historic population centers combine to make these corridors the obvious locations for greenways stewardship in Ogle County. In some places they are also logical routes for trails that link natural resources to communities.

The development of railroads in the 19th century favored some settlements and created other towns and villages at regular intervals along their routes. By default, rail right-of-ways have also served as greenways and conservatories of native prairie vegetation. When abandoned with their roadbeds and bridges intact, they become logical trail routes linking the historic railroad towns.

Many of the early settlement travel routes across the open prairies of Ogle County are preserved in the present-day road alignments between towns and river crossings. Typically, the first travelers who laid out the roads relied on groves and mounds for landmarks. Wagon and coach roads angled and curved to avoid

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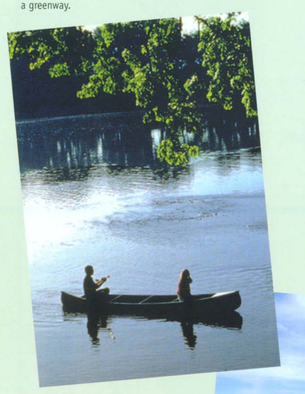
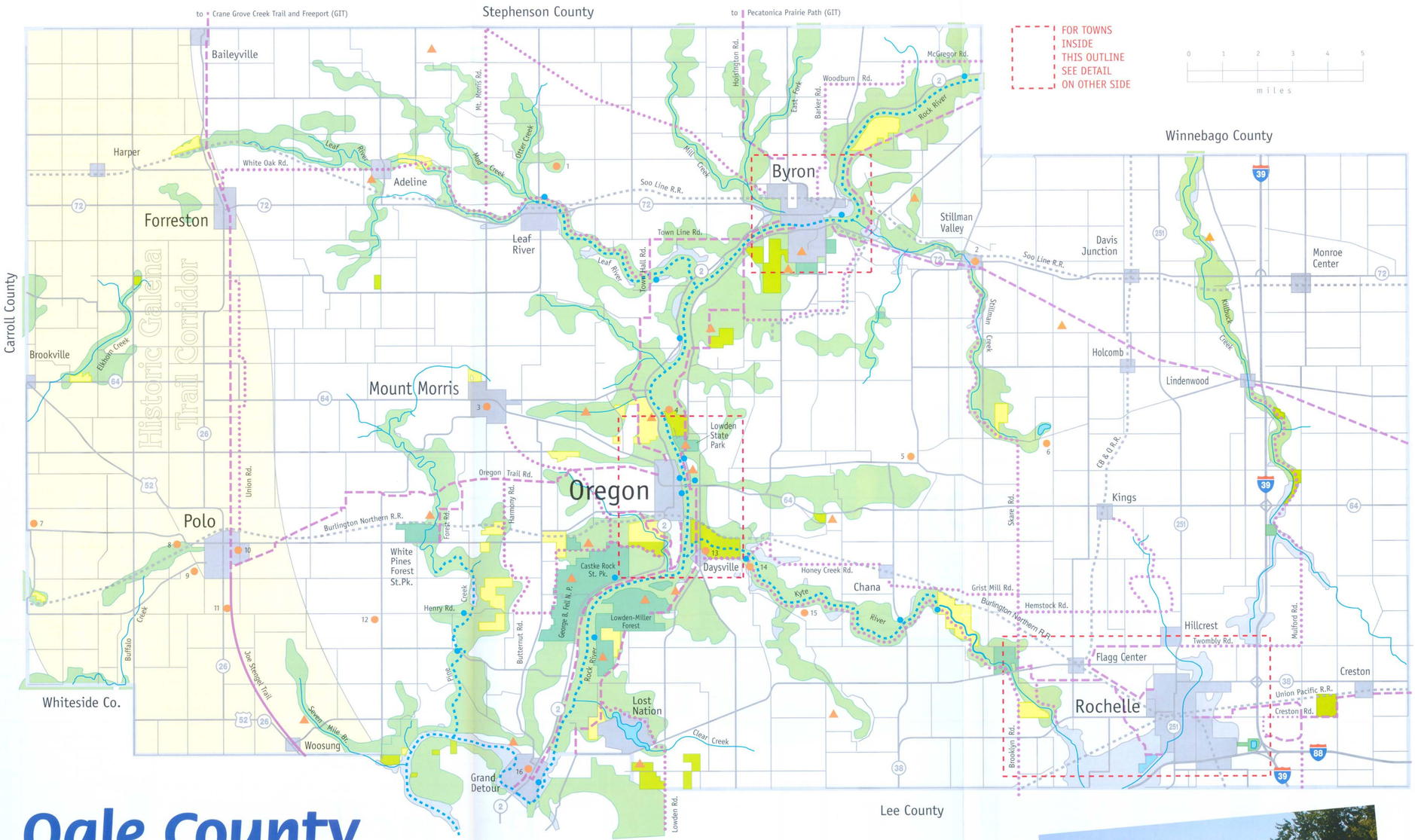


The Rock River charms canoeists and kayakers with shaded islands and the surprising "wildness" of its vistas.

Oregon Trail Road, an historic route preserved as a township road, is a potential shared-use recreational trail connecting populations centers with rural scenery and greenway resources.



Ogle County Regional Greenways and Trails Plan

Historic Attractions

1. *Lightsville settlement*
2. *Black Hawk War Battleground Memorial*
3. *Pine Creek Seminary/Mount Morris College buildings, 1839/1884*
4. *Eagle's Nest Artists Colony campsite,cottages, & Ganymede's Spring, 1898-1942*
5. *Paine's Point settlement*
6. *White Rock Burg settlement on the Chicago & Iowa Trail*
7. *Eagle Point settlement*
8. *Polo Lime Kiln, ca. 1850 (restored)*
9. *Buffalo Grove/St. Marion settlement*
10. *Applington House/Polo Historical Society*
11. *Henry School, 1878*
12. *Pine Creek settlement/Penn Corners*
13. *Daysville settlement*
14. *Watertown settlement*
15. *Washington Grove settlement*
16. *Grand Detour settlement/John Deere Historic Site /St. Peter's Episcopal Church (restored)*
17. *Brodie's Grove/Brodie's cabin site*

Legend:

- Flood Plain
- Potential Greenways
- Public Greenspace
- Private Greenspace
- Recreational Areas (private and commercial campgrounds, religious, etc.)
- Canoe Access
- Historic Site
- Illinois Natural Inventory Site
- State / County Highway
- Township Road
- Existing Trail
- Potential Recreational Trail
- Potential Secondary Trail
- Rail Road
- River & Streams
- Potential Canoe Trail

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Backbone of Ogle County's greenways plan, the Rock River links numerous tributary stream corridors and upland forest areas.

Access to nature preserve trails and the Pine Creek at White Pines Forest State Park is both an economic asset and an unequaled greenways resource.

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sloughs, marshes and brushy woodlands, choosing high ground wherever possible. Along these historic roads are to be found many of the oldest farmsteads, handsome stone houses and churches, cemeteries, former rural schoolhouses, grist and sawmill sites, and historic markers.

Foremost among the historic routes was the Peoria-Galena Trail and Coach Road. During its heyday, it was not one but a series of routes traversing the western part of Ogle County.

For the past century, the road most closely identified with the character of Ogle County has been Black Hawk Trail, Scenic Ill. Rte. 2. Bordering the Rock River most of the way, the highway continues to be one of the top-ranked scenic routes in the Midwest and among the first in the nation to be planned as a "scenic" road when it was paved in the early 1920s.

Top Regional Priorities

Prioritization is the key to attracting broad local support for the implementation of individual projects. Adhering to priorities is essential to winning public and private funding. This plan gives priority to the development of six proposed greenways or trails. The recommended actions are:

1. Completion of a network of greenways along the Rock River and its tributary streams, with the majority of greenspace remaining under private ownership and management.

2. Creation of continuous trails on both sides of the Rock River by linking regional trail segments with community trails. Connecting these with trails in Lee and Winnebago Counties will complete the Rock River Trail loop of The Grand Illinois Trail (G.I.T.).

3. Extension of the regional trail along or parallel to the Illinois Central rail-bed from Polo through Forreston to the county line at Baileyville. There it can connect with Freeport and the G.I.T. via the proposed Crane Grove Creek Trail in Stephenson County.

4. Extension of a regional trail from the Rochelle community bike path system to Creston. In coordination with trail initiatives in DeKalb County, ultimately the trail should continue from Creston to the county line, linking Ogle's regional trail system with Kishwaukee Community College, DeKalb community trails, and the Great Western Trail at Sycamore.

5. Development of a dedicated trail on or adjacent to the rail path between Byron and Stillman Valley.

6. Linkage of the Oregon and Polo community trail systems and White Pines Forest State Park via a shared-use trail on historic Oregon Trail Road with a leg south on Forest Road. This will create a bridge between the regional G.I.T. trail loops in Priorities 2 and 3 above.

Additional potential greenways and trails are described in the complete Greenways & Trails Plan for Ogle County. The plan supports implementation of the Byron, Oregon, and Rochelle bike path plans and the development of coordinated trail plans in other communities throughout the region.

OGLE COUNTY

OREGON
BYRON PARK DISTRICT
Take time for fun

Byron, Illinois

BYRON FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT

OREGON PARK DISTRICT

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Blackhawk Hills
RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

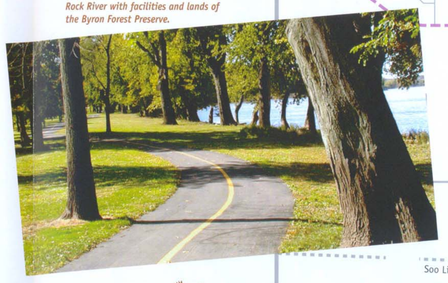
BLACKHAWK WATERWAYS
Conservation & Tourism Bureau

Rochelle
815-562-7813
COMMUNITY PARK DISTRICT
www.parkdistrict.rochelle.net

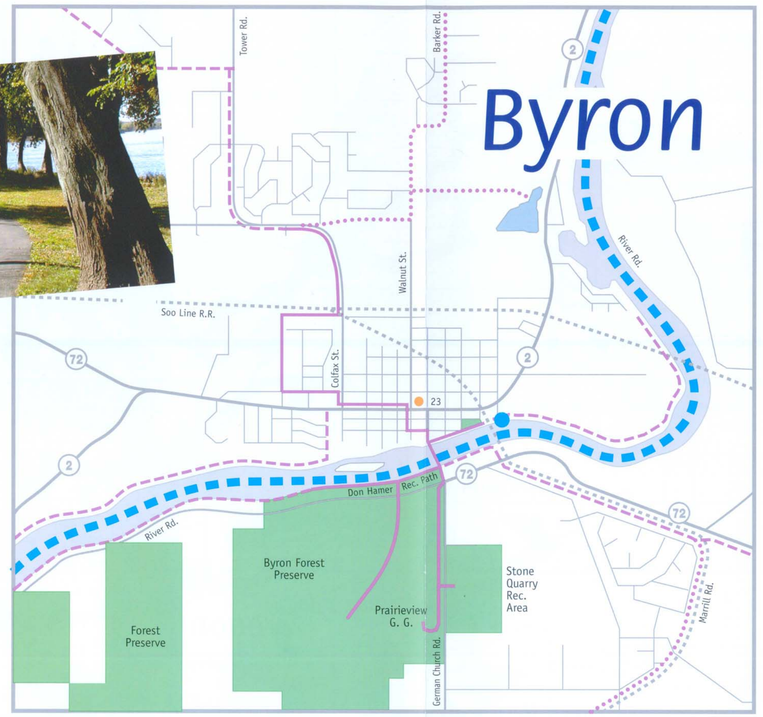
ILLINOIS TRAILS Conservancy

Lowell Park
Dixon Park District

Don Hammer Recreational Path, a core element of the proposed regional trail system, links parks on both sides of the Rock River with facilities and lands of the Byron Forest Preserve.



Byron



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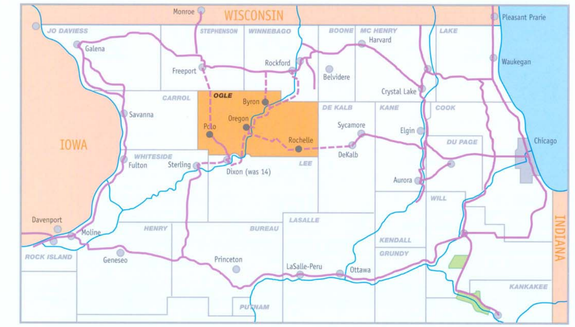
- Rail Road
- River & Streams
- Potential Canoe Trail
- Canoe Access
- Historic Site
- Illinois Natural Inventory Site

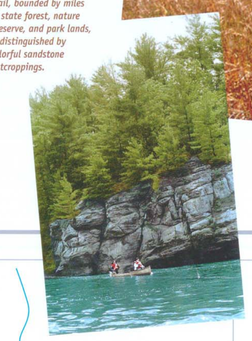
Historic Attractions

18 *Mix Mansion-Pinehill Inn*
19 *Ruby Nash House/Ogle County Historical Society*
20 *Ogle County Courthouse and Square, 1891*
21 *Black Hawk Hotel-Patchwork Inn*
22 *Chana School Museum and Education Center*
23 *Lucius Read House/Byron Museum of History*
24 *Firehouse Museum*
25 *Flagg Township Historical Society*



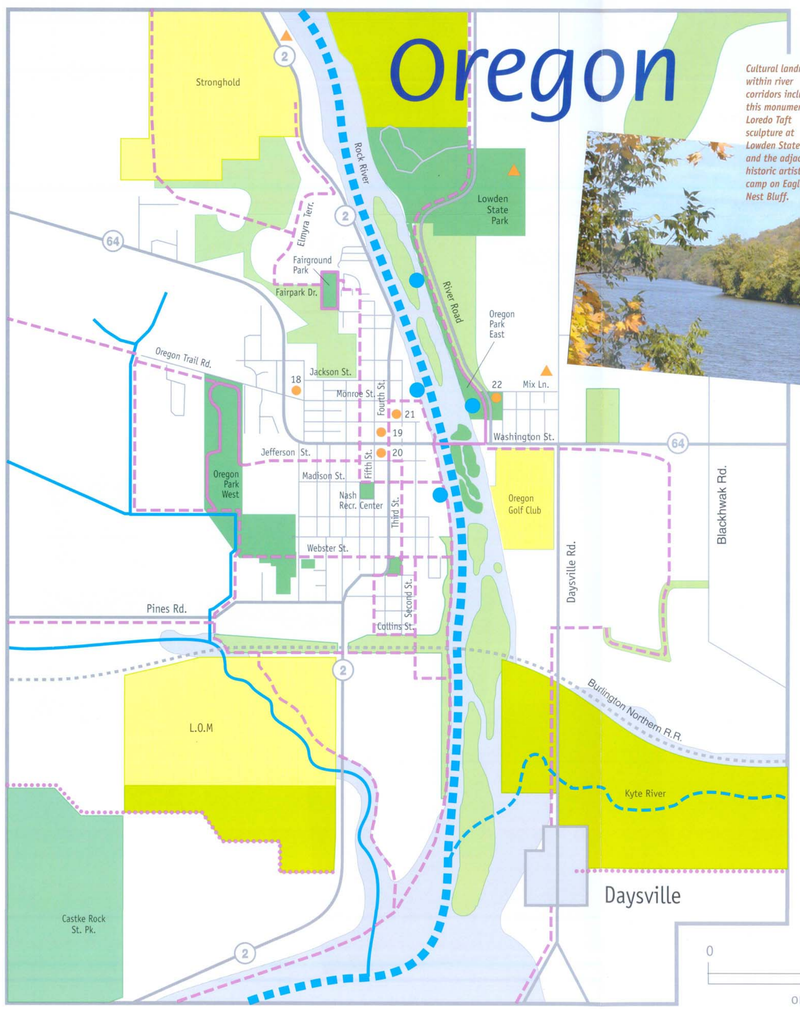
Grand Illinois Trail System

The Rock River Canoe Trail, bounded by miles of state forest, nature preserve, and park lands, is distinguished by colorful sandstone outcroppings.

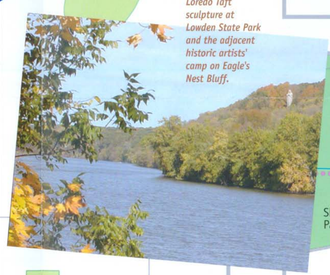
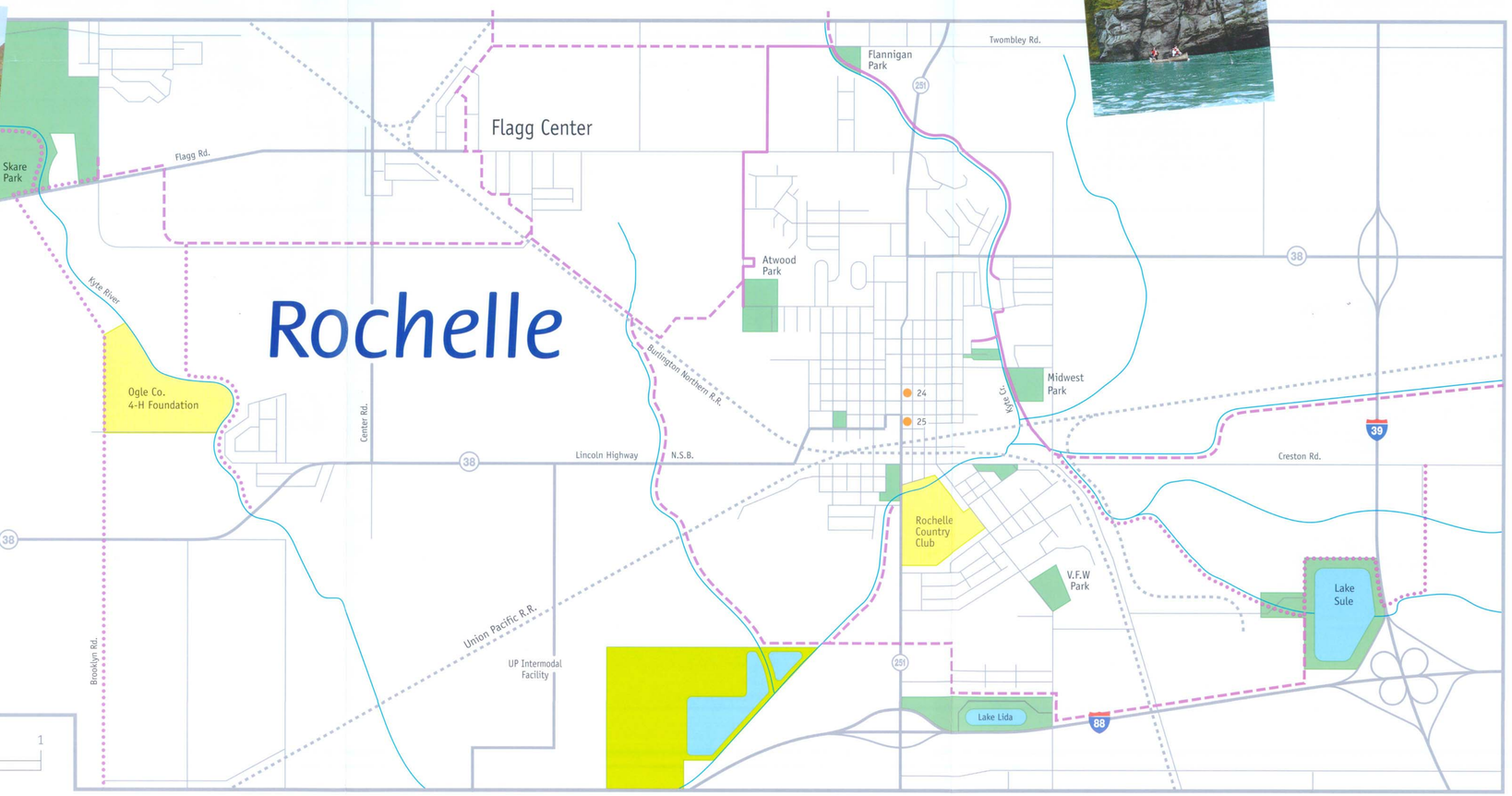


Visitors at Nachusa Grasslands experience prairie, savanna, and marsh lands much as did travelers who crossed the Ogle County region prior to settlement.

Oregon



Cultural landmarks within river corridors include this monumental Loredo Taft sculpture at Lowden State Park and the adjacent historic artists' camp on Eagle's Nest Bluff.



Rochelle