

# Lessons from the Road



## Case #9: Marketing a Scenic Byway

"Gumbeaux Gator" helps tie together the marketing plan for Southwest Louisiana and the Creole Nature Trail.

Marketing and promoting the scenic byway are significant components of a Corridor Management Plan. The marketing plan identifies how byway advocates will attract visitors. It is essential to promote what is special and attractive about the byway, and to tell potential visitors what to see, how to travel, and where to find detailed information for trip planning, including where to stay, eat, and relax.

On the Creole Nature Trail in southwestern Louisiana, planners have developed a marketing campaign using a multi-tier approach that may be of interest to others planning byways.



### About Lessons from the Road

This case study features lessons learned by scenic byway advocates across the country that are applicable to many scenic byway initiatives.

Scenic byways are public roads with special scenic, historic, recreational, cultural, archaeological, and/or natural qualities that have been recognized as such through legislation or some other official declaration.

Nomination guidelines for National Scenic Byway designation require a series of planning and management elements. Some byway efforts lead to nomination, and possibly national designation; the rest choose other paths for implementation. These case studies show how various byway managers address planning and management issues in distinctive ways.

Each case study in this series concludes with a resource list of helpful publications and details on how to contact the National Scenic Byways Clearinghouse.

Good luck with your byway.

#### The Series

1. Mapping
2. Design and Maintenance
3. Assess Intrinsic Qualities
4. Telling the Story
5. Conserving Intrinsic Qualities
6. Visitor Experience & Services
7. Manage Development
8. Signage
- 9. Marketing**
10. Public Involvement
11. Action Plans
12. State Program Management

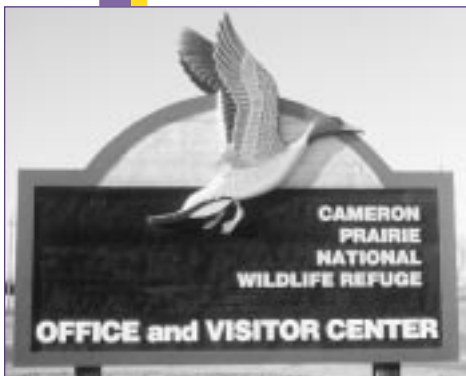
# Marketing Basics—Three Tiers to Success

The Creole Nature Trail's local partners learned early that marketing a scenic byway is much more than creating a brochure. Marketing is identifying potential markets and finding ways to reach those markets. The most efficient way to reach a broad market is to address three major markets or tiers, specifically: 1) the local community; 2) travel and tourism professionals, including travel and tourism writers and editors, and 3) the traveling public.

Tier One begins after the byway advocates have assessed the route's intrinsic qualities and developed a skeletal plan of action. Local buy-in and support is a must for suc-

## Tier One: Market to Thyself

cess. Local businesses, community and civic leaders must participate in developing and planning the marketing strategy, allowing the communities to set guidelines for development. Bringing diverse groups together from the beginning helps build consensus and eliminates many misunderstandings that can surface among people with divergent views or goals. Following are tools used for Tier One.



Marketing starts with the byway's intrinsic qualities, builds local support, then reaches out to attract visitors.

### Awareness

Conduct seminars and workshops on the importance of developing a scenic byway and its value as an economic resource and to the region's quality of life.

### In-House Publicity

Picture a corporation with in-house newsletters, electronic bulletin boards and e-mail. Now transfer this idea to the scenic byway and use it to keep all of the partners informed. Create news releases, public service announcements, and direct mail or newsletters. This is also a way to build consensus and public support. At this point it is

a good idea to bring the local media into the planning process as well.

### "FAM" Tours

"FAM tours," which is shorthand for familiarization tours— educate local community leaders and interested citizens about "intrinsic qualities" in their own backyard. Invite outsiders to participate and get their opinions about the byway and its amenities.

The Creole Nature Trail Scenic Byway Commission favored FAM tours as its local marketing tool. Area residents served as guides, telling stories and anecdotes while familiarizing participants with the byway's intrinsic qualities and attractions. Local media continually updated the public via news articles and television spots.

### Get Familiar with FAM Tours

A familiarization (FAM) tour educates travel and feature writers, editors, photographers, film makers, tourism businesses, civic officials, and others about an area's cultural, historical and natural attractions, entertainment opportunities, accommodations, restaurants, history, or lore.

FAM tours should be free to invited guests. Print media contacts need to attend usually six months ahead of print schedule. It's wise to try a "dry run" to time and preview the tour before the real event.

### Education & Public

## Tier Two: Build a Better Mousetrap

The tourism industry is often referred to as the “mouse that roars.” Travel and tourism have become very competitive as local economies seek to diversify. Catching the mouse has become more complicated than printing a brochure. Managers seeking to market their byways face a global economy, and must build a better mousetrap to capture a larger share of the traveling public.

The travel and tourism industry is interlinked and interdependent. One segment builds and depends on the others. For example wholesalers, such as tour operators, “package” the scenic byway together with other area amenities. They select the attractions, facilities, restaurants, and other amenities that serve their target markets. They create packages, negotiate prices, and arrange for transportation to destinations.

Then, they sell the packages to travel agents, travel clubs, and convention planners, who in turn market to the traveling public. This creates a trickle-down effect. The tools used to reach each of these components are the same—they just occur sequentially.

Effective promotional tools include:

- Sales Calls
- Marketing Seminars
- FAM Tours
- Travel Industry Trade Shows
- Cooperative Marketing

### Sales Calls and One-on-One Presentations

This is the most cost-effective marketing tool. A professional presentation and sales packet is taken directly to the wholesaler and tour operator. This direct and targeted marketing builds a personal relationship which is the basis for much business, especially in international markets.

### Marketing Seminars

Seminars are group meetings with tour operators and travel agents in which you provide specific information about the scenic byway. The goal of both the sales calls and the seminars, which can often be paired successfully, is to get the travel industry pro-

professionals to your scenic byway for a personal tour.

### FAM Tours

FAM tours also can be used to show off the scenic byway to wholesale and tour operators. Local partners host and sponsor participants, providing food, lodging, transportation, and entertainment. Airlines and hotels usually provide complimentary tickets and rooms for travel industry professionals.

State offices of tourism can provide names of appropriate and legitimate wholesalers and tour operators, as well as help in arranging the FAM tours. Tours can be arranged for travel agents, meeting and group planners, and the travel and tourism media as well.

*Read about Trade Shows and Cooperative Marketing on page 6.*



Local artists display their talents and the region's natural wonders in murals that cover whole sides of buildings.

## Tier Three: The Traveling Public

After wholesale tour operators have created byway travel packages and offered them to travel agents, clubs, and other marketers, it is time for you to market directly to the traveling public. Partnerships and cooperative efforts are keys to success here. Advertising and promotions are expensive, but byway managers can reduce costs through cooperative ventures with State offices of tourism, local tourist commissions, local businesses, and others in the travel and tourism industry.

Joint ventures also ensure that important community members and businesses buy into the byway effort.

In developing a marketing strategy, it is tempting to create a brochure and wait for

customers. Brochures can be glitzy, but they are only part of a complete marketing approach. Relying on a brochure alone bypasses the critical steps needed to implement a successful marketing strategy. An effective marketing plan will produce brochures and other collateral materials to complement professional sales call kits and media packages.

## Target & Niche Markets

A successful marketing campaign recognizes the differences and importance of target and niche markets. They are not the same.

### Target Market

A target market is a group of potential visitors, or buyers, who share common geographic, demographic, psychographic and other characteristics.

### Niche Market

A niche market is a smaller group sometimes within a target market segment that is attracted by one or two specific features, or is defined by a single group characteristic. For example, recreation travelers may fit the definition of a target market, but those only interested in mountain biking would be a niche market.

Based upon travel surveys in southwest Louisiana, most of its visitors come from southeast Texas. However, not everyone from southeast Texas is the potential market for the Creole Nature Trail. Nature-based travelers are the target market. Those

interested in bird watching would be a niche market.

The marketing strategy of the Creole Nature Trail is to target only those in east Texas with an interest that would prompt them to visit. Ways to reach these target and niche markets are through the publications and specific television programs that nature-based travelers traditionally subscribe or view, such as *National Geographic Traveler*, *Historic Traveler*, *Discovery Channel*, *Great Country Inns*, *Weekend Getaways*, *GEO* (a German Eco-tourism publication), and *I Viaggi* (Italian cultural/eco-travel publication).

## Lessons Learned

- ✓ Avoid the temptation to create a brochure first. Brochures by themselves are not enough to market a byway. Within a multi-tiered marketing plan, use brochures and other collateral materials to convey messages to specific audiences.
- ✓ Understand that developing a marketing strategy, implementing the marketing plan, and promoting the byway are different elements of an overall Corridor Management Plan.
- ✓ Be patient. Creating public consensus is not an overnight process. It takes time and patience. Start building consensus immediately by gathering input from all sectors of the population.
- ✓ Recognize the three different tiers of markets. The process may be the same for each, but the order in which they are done is very important.
- ✓ No scenic byway is an island. Link with other resources locally and regionally. Partners need to work together and not compete against each other.
- ✓ Not all scenic byways are primary destinations. Most can benefit by linking to bigger tourism attractions and serving as side or day trips. Link your byway to nearby convention centers, gaming areas, and tour bus routes.
- ✓ Make sure the byway is highlighted on the state highway map.
- ✓ Advertise sources of byway information and explain how to get it.
- ✓ Piggy-back on other advertising sponsored by State or regional tourism efforts.
- ✓ Don't forget to use the Internet. Research and use valuable links to reach target and niche markets.

"Gumbeaux Gator" is used in promotions for year-round fun on the bayou and the Byway.

# Year-round Playground!



## More Marketing Tools for Tier Two

### Travel Industry Trade Shows

Local travel industry representatives already attend national and international travel trade shows. Ask them to promote the local byway at the trade shows they attend and provide them with information and promotional literature.

Some important trade shows include the National Tour Association (NTA), Tourism Industry Association of America (TIAA), American Bus Association (ABA), and many regional shows including those sponsored by the American Association of Retired People (AARP) and recreation vehicle (RV) shows. Again, state offices of tourism are excellent sources of help.

### Cooperative Promotional & Marketing Efforts

Once familiarized with the byway, tourism wholesalers can help determine the right target market. In fact, if they like what they see, they can be instrumental in reaching new markets. They may be interested in cooperative advertising, sponsoring contests, helping to get other sponsors, and other innovative ways of selling, marketing, and promoting the scenic byway.

Through its close working relationship with the Southwest Louisiana Convention and Visitor Bureau, the Creole Nature

Trail benefits from the bureau's FAM tours for travel writers, state-held conferences for travel and tourism professionals, and brochures and advertising. This publicity earned the attention of the Louisiana Office of Tourism, which featured the Creole Nature Trail in full-color magazine ads in the US and abroad, and at trade shows, at little or no cost to the local partners.

### Additional Resources

*Rural Tourism Handbook: Selected Case Studies and Development Guide* and *Tourism USA: Guidelines for Tourism Development*, both compiled by US Travel & Tourism Administration, Washington, DC.

Contact the National Scenic Byways Clearinghouse for these and other resources (see below).

## About this Series

The National Scenic Byways Program of the Federal Highway Administration and the Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program of the National Park Service collaborated to research, write, and produce **Lessons from the Road**. The series was written in 1998.

For information on resources mentioned in this series, contact the National Scenic Byways Clearinghouse: 1-800-4-BYWAYS (1-800-429-9297), press 2, or visit our website at [www.byways.org](http://www.byways.org).

The Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance Program works beyond national

park boundaries to bring conservation assistance to communities, serving as a catalyst for tangible results.

Opinions expressed in these case studies are not necessarily those of the USDOT/FHWA or the NPS. These documents do not constitute standards, specifications, or regulations and are distributed in the interest of information exchange.

The United States Government assumes no liability for the contents or use thereof.

