

VISTAS



AMERICA'S BYWAYS®

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2007

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VIRTUAL ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

Growing Agricultural Heritage Tourism For Byways

America's Byways® wind across the landscape from coast to coast, highlighting the diverse stories that make up America. Many of those stories come from a rich agricultural heritage—farmers and ranchers who worked the land, provided food for communities and contributed an integral component to their area's cultural fabric. Increasingly, agricultural landscapes and rural heritage are threatened by development and economics, and a special part of America is vanishing.

In this article we'll explore how several of America's Byways are working in partnership with stakeholders to preserve, protect and promote the agricultural resources and heritage along their routes. We'll look at how byways connect the traveler to the stories of farms and communities through interpretive programs, seasonal events and local products. Byways have found ways to pique travelers' curiosity and deliver unique experiences that build a greater appreciation for the agricultural stewards of the past as well as the present.

FOR THIS VIRTUAL ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION, WE TURNED TO SEVERAL BYWAY LEADERS AND PARTNERS TO SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES ABOUT THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AGRICULTURE ALONG THEIR BYWAYS:

DAWN HEGLUND, *Byway Leader, Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway, MN*

PAM MURPHY, *Consultant to the Illinois-Great River Road Scenic Byway, IL*

SHARON STROUSE, *Byway Leader, Amish Country National Scenic Byway, OH*

GENEVIEVE SHOAL-HERDMANN, *Hood River County Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Information Center, Mount Hood National Scenic Byway, OR*

QUESTION #1

Vistas:

How is agricultural heritage linked to your byway's intrinsic qualities and story?

MINNESOTA RIVER VALLEY SCENIC BYWAY:

The Minnesota River Valley has a regional, national and international story to tell of the growth and development of the American agriculture system. One of our byway themes is *Taking Food to a Nation*. Telling the story of the region's innovations, its productivity and its farming systems helps visitors to better appreciate the importance of agriculture to this nation.

When immigrant settlers came to this land, they dreamed of a new life. But perseverance paid off for relatively few farmers. Many farmers worked hard for years, struggling to make a profit until

weather, insects, or injury pushed them to abandon their land claims. Many quaint early home sites still stand along the byway.

Cast-iron plowshares and harrowing machines eventually eased the fieldwork. The first horse-drawn combine was used in 1884 for wheat. By 1868, the first steam-engine tractors came into the American market, but farmers generally couldn't afford them until well into the 1930s and 1940s. By 1954, tractors outnumbered horses on farms. Along our byway, the Minnesota Machinery Museum in Hanley Falls has buildings packed full of these pieces of history.

With advances in farming technology, the average farm's production increased immensely. By 1960, a single farmer provided twenty-six people with food. However, the increased ease and automation of planting, fertilizing, weed control and

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Resource Center

Adventures & Opportunities Down At The Farm



Michelle Johnson, Director
America's Byways Resource Center

The kids and I recently visited our very dear friend Vickie, who had been our daycare provider until just a few months ago. Her husband retired last spring and, after years of raising kids in Superior, Vickie and Virgil decided to move closer to their parents and family. Fortunately for us, they didn't move too far away. Owatonna, Minnesota, is a short three-hour drive on the freeway. We had a great time together: we went to the county fair, shopped, and, most important, we visited. The most memorable time we spent together, and the activity the kids loved the most (okay, so it was really second to shopping at Cabela's) was when we drove out to the farm where Vickie lived as a child. Her family farm (still in the family but the land is leased) is only ten miles or so from town.

As we drove past farms and fields, Vickie told us stories about growing up on a farm.

The kids (me too!) couldn't get enough of her stories—how she saved a puppy from freezing to death in a snow-covered field, how she fell off the wagon in the field and then the wagon rolled over her and broke her arm, the trouble she got into when she rode her brother's motorcycle, and her chores of slopping the pigs and tending the garden. I looked at my kids sitting in the van and felt a little sad that they don't have those kinds of experiences and opportunities. Listening to her stories really gave us a glimpse into how hard farmers work to make a living and how close they are to the land. My kids think food comes from the grocery store or the Farmer's Market; I am not sure they fully understand the connection to the land.

Vickie also talked about all the changes in the area since she was a kid—how most of the families she knew had moved away or into town, how the small farms have been sold or leased to larger, corporate farms,

and how farming practices have changed over the years. When I drove into the parking lot of a major retailer, I noticed that cornfields surrounded it. I felt guilty shopping there, realizing an underlying message that shopping and consuming goods were more important than the land and its resources. I couldn't buy anything. Really.

I'm excited when my kids have an opportunity to understand the heritage of farming, to work the land, to enjoy, appreciate and harvest its resources. Luckily for us and other byway visitors, America's Byways offer those kinds of lessons and hands-on opportunities. We've highlighted several byways that have strong connections to farming, both past and present. Check out the farming stories and related resources on agricultural tourism. The quotation that sums it all up: *"Travelers want to see and taste it all."*

A day on a farm sounds like a great byway adventure!



2007 National Preservation Conference Welcomes Scenic Byways

★ *Submit Your Education Session Proposals For 2008 By January 11!* ★

Scenic byways made a new, positive presence at the 2007 National Preservation Conference in St. Paul, Minnesota, October 2-6. The National Preservation Conference is the premier preservation conference in the United States for professionals in preservation and allied fields, dedicated volunteers and serious supporters. It is the single best source for information, ideas, inspiration and contacts.

America's Byways Resource Center Byways Specialist Bonnie Hundrieser moderated a panel presentation, "Partnerships for Historic and Cultural Preservation along Byways."

Panel speakers included Mark Anderson, Minnesota State Byway Coordinator; Nathan Caldwell, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Trails, Byways, Transportation Enhancements, and Alternative Transportation Coordinator; and Glenn Harper, Ohio Historic Preservation Office and Ohio Historic National Road – All American Road. Speakers highlighted examples of successful historic and cultural preservation projects and initiatives, and explained how preserving, protecting and interpreting resources along byways takes complex collaboration between local, regional and Federal partners.

SHARE YOUR PRESERVATION STRATEGIES

The National Trust for Historic Preservation invites you to submit a proposal for an education session for the National Preservation Conference in Tulsa, Oklahoma, October 21-25, 2008. They are seeking proposals that explore critical issues that challenge communities across the country and present cutting-edge historic preservation strategies and models that address these issues. One of the topics of special interest to the National Trust for 2008 is Historic Roads and Scenic Byways.

The National Trust uses an Internet-based session proposal

submission system, accessible through the conference website, www.nthpconference.org. All submissions must be made through the Web-based system. **The deadline for education session proposals is January 11, 2008.**

For an electronic copy of the 2008 Preliminary Program, e-mail your request to conference@nthp.org.

For questions or to discuss proposal ideas, please contact Bonnie Hundrieser, Byways Specialist, at the America's Byways Resource Center: (218) 625-3328 or bhundrieser@byways.org ★

UPCOMING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FROM THE RESOURCE CENTER

CHECK
www.bywaysresourcecenter.org
FOR DATES AND LOCATIONS!

The staff at America's Byways Resource Center has planned an exciting variety of upcoming educational opportunities. Check www.bywaysresourcecenter.org frequently for the latest details, dates and locations as they become available.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOCUS ON THESE FOUR CORE AREAS:

Corridor Management (CM) Visitor Experience (VE)
Byway Organization (BO) Finances (F)

PODCASTS

- Scenic Conservation (CM)
- Tribes and Byways (CM, BO, VE, F)
- Public Relations 101 (VE)

TELE-WORKSHOPS

- Working with Volunteers (BO)
- Developing Effective Marketing Plans (VE)

ONLINE LEARNING AND RESOURCES

- Public Relations 101 – templates, checklists, podcasts and more (VE)
- Developing Effective Marketing Plans (VE)
- Scenic Conservation: A Visual Primer (CM)
- Technology Tools: Podcasting And Your Byway (VE)

WORKSHOPS

- Power Workshops I: Strength Training for Byways (BO, VE, F)
- Power Workshops II: Marketing To And Serving Your Visitor (VE)
- Byways 101 (CM, BO, VE, F)
- Interpretive Planning Workshops (VE)
- Interpretive Media Development Workshops (VE)
- Making Your Byway Accessible (VE)
- Our Native Pathways: Byway Opportunities for Indian Tribes (CM, BO, VE, F)

BACK BY
POPULAR
DEMAND!



harvest have come with a higher price tag over the years. The ability to work many more acres than in the past has increased the average farm size from the 80-acre homesteaded site in the 1850s to farms that encompass a full square mile today. This increase means fewer families farming and a change in how farm buildings are designed and built. Large round bales, outside storage and machine sheds are helping to make the traditional red barns obsolete. Preservation efforts by partners along our byway have helped to save one of the remaining red barns at the Swensson Farm Museum near Montevideo.

We hope that our byway travelers will stop to appreciate the traditional style buildings, discover the vast responsibilities of today's agricultural manager and learn more about the crops grown most commonly along the byway. Perhaps visitors will think back to the pioneers who settled this land and helped build this nation, and see the traces of those hopeful people's lives etched into the scenery of this beautiful valley.

ILLINOIS GREAT RIVER ROAD:

Along the 500-mile Great River Road Scenic Byway in Illinois, rural and agricultural lands are predominant. Small- to mid-sized river towns and Federal and State-managed natural areas are knitted together with only one large metropolitan area and one industrial area among them. Mile after mile of agricultural lands were once taken for granted. Now these lands have become a popular topic among educators and historians, and travelers have shown a growing interest, too.

Along the Great River Road/IL, the story of agriculture is gaining momentum with both domestic and international visitors. This renaissance is not hard to understand, considering that civilization began with agriculture, and as America emerged on the world's horizon, the Mississippi River played a vital role in

What is Agri-tourism?
"Agri-tourism is traveling to farms, ranches and other agricultural attractions and events. Agri-tourism is typically marketed to residents within a few hours of the farm but sometimes visitors come from across the continent. Getting people to travel from farther away and stay in the area longer is the challenge many rural areas are addressing to make farm-oriented tourism a more substantial part of the local economy. The answer is often coordinated promotional efforts."
From: *Stories Across America: Opportunities for Rural Tourism*
★ Learn more! www.bywaysresourcecenter.org ★

elevating this country as the primary supplier of food for six billion people. From Native Americans who first farmed along the banks of the Mississippi to John Deere, an inventor who used the river to increase production of his farming equipment, many people and places connected to the Great River Road in Illinois contributed to the enormous progress in agriculture. We're working to tell their stories.

AMISH COUNTRY SCENIC BYWAY:

The Amish Country circle of multi-cultural community life depends upon and draws from the byway, home to the largest settlement of Amish in the world. Early Amish were the first settlers to forge and design the byway's path. Its viewshed reflects the integration of the historically agricultural-based economy of the Amish with the culture of the Appalachian people. Both groups came to Ohio as immigrants yearning for a place for family roots. These roots grew together into an interdependent community with mutual needs, strong work ethics and family values, and a deep sense of belonging to these hills and valleys called Amish Country.

At the heart of the State's agricultural community, Amish Country boasts the largest dairy production in the State, the largest local produce auction during the growing season, and weekly livestock auctions in communities along the Amish Country Byway. The county's cheese and specialty

meat industries buy much of the locally produced commodities. Other agricultural production strengths are the chicken and egg producing facilities throughout Amish Country. Deer and exotic animal breeding is another unique agricultural industry in Holmes County, and it is quickly catapulting into a successful opportunity for entrepreneurial farmers.

The Amish have a strong respect for the land, and scenic agriculture vistas have been maintained along the byway. Access from the byway routes has been restricted, not necessarily by laws, but by landowner stewardship. Beginning in 1998, our community established a "Farmland Preservation Plan," committing a coalition of local resources to make land preservation and farming practices a continuing priority. The byway agricultural viewshed has been identified as one of the main resources we are working to protect and enhance.

MT. HOOD SCENIC BYWAY:

The northern gateway of Oregon's Mount Hood National Scenic Byway is the city of Hood River, located on the shore of the Columbia River and deep in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. From the gateway's beginning elevation of approximately 100' above sea level, the road quickly rises up several hundred feet to bring the traveler to the first breathtaking view of Mount Hood and the fertile Hood River Valley sprawled below. Here, in the 15,000 acres of fruit orchards that comprise our area's largest economic sector, nearly 50% of

the entire nation's winter pear crop is grown each year. The tree of the Hood River Valley's rich and diverse cultural heritage has all of its roots embedded in agriculture.

QUESTION #2

Vistas:

America's Byways aim to deliver authentic experiences to the traveler. What opportunities does your byway offer to help the traveler discover and experience agricultural heritage along your byway? How does your byway encourage the traveler to come back?

MINNESOTA RIVER VALLEY SCENIC BYWAY:

Our byway website (www.mnrivervalley.com) has specific "Discovery Sites" to guide travelers to places that can tell part of the agricultural story of our byway, including special agriculture museums like the Green Giant Museum in Le Sueur. The website also features a calendar to highlight special agricultural events, such as Farmfest at the Historic Gilfillan Farm Estate, Cornfest, the Good Old Days and Threshing Show and the Annual Old Fashioned Fall Festival.

"Pride of the Prairie" events along the byway showcase locally grown food at farmers markets.



Minnesota River Valley Scenic Byway has many local food initiatives like the "Cuisine of the Prairie."



Enhanced with entertainment, these events have been held in Morris, Montevideo, Willmar, and Alexandria. Pride of the Prairie is a collaborative effort among local farmers to promote the production and use of locally grown food and to develop a regional food system in western Minnesota that provides good, nutritious food, nurtures a healthy environment and provides economic opportunity for area entrepreneurs. Pride of the Prairie is periodically involved in educational events centered on buying, selling, preparing or raising sustainably produced local foods.

The historic Andrew Volstead House in Granite Falls introduces

visitors to this Congressman who spearheaded passage of the agriculturally significant Capper-Volstead Act in 1922. Still in effect today, this legislation enables farmers to form combines without fear of prosecution under the Sherman Antitrust Act. Volstead explained at the time: "Business men can combine by putting their money into corporations, but it is impractical for farmers to combine their farms into similar corporate forms. The object of this bill is to modify the laws under which business organizations are now formed, so that farmers may take advantage of the form of organization that is used by business concerns."

ILLINOIS GREAT RIVER ROAD:

Our byway has three major categories of agricultural experiences for the traveler: key interpretive sites, wineries, and private farm-based activities.

Among the three primary agriculture interpretive sites, the John Deere Complex in Moline attracts travelers from around the globe. It contains the Pavilion, with a 14,000-sq.-ft. exhibition hall. The world's largest agricultural exhibit, it features new and antique farm equipment, interactive displays and exhibits that trace agriculture's development and impact on the world. Nearby is the John

Deere Collectors Center, which houses a 1950s-era John Deere dealership with vintage equipment and memorabilia.

Another popular interpretive site, the 90-foot Dutch Windmill in Fulton features the State's only authentic Dutch working windmill and one of just two in the U.S. Located on the banks of the Mississippi River, the fully functional windmill provides a rare look at a by-gone era of development and processing for agricultural products, such as buckwheat, corn, rye and wheat flours. After the tour, visitors can purchase these products.

PRESERVING THE LANDSCAPE: AGRICULTURAL BYWAYS AND SCENIC CONSERVATION

An Interview with Scenic America's Brad Cownover

Vistas: What are some of the threats facing America's agricultural landscapes and rural heritage?

Brad: There are many challenges facing agricultural and rural landscapes today. Residential and commercial developments that sprawl along corridors can have a significant effect in altering the visual character of a roadway corridor. Haphazard development can fragment the landscapes, literally and visually.

In addition to sprawl, wireless communication towers and similar vertical visual towers are still a common problem for most landscapes. As our population

"Scenic conservation is a process for preserving or enhancing the visual quality of a particular place, be it a community, roadway corridor or landscape." – Scenic America

centers grow, people will continue to demand constant cellular coverage, and there will continue to be an increasing threat of new cellular towers being erected into rural locations.

Another common threat to the visual character of rural areas along byways comes from transportation-related roadway activities. As most of the interstate highway system has been built, State transportation agencies have moved their attention to maintaining and improving local and rural routes through the States. When a county road also happens to be the 'main street' of a community, the potential conflict over road improvement and preserving community character becomes obvious.

Vistas: How can agricultural and rural byways work to protect their scenic viewsheds?

Brad: First, it is essential that byway organizations have assessed and documented what they value about the visual character of their landscapes. If you don't document the character and valued resources that you have, how can you plan to protect them? Lack of documentation or ability to articulate the valued visual character of your byway can lead to decisions made by others that may alter or conflict with this character.

Second, byways might want to consider creating a scenic conservation plan to help connect the dots between identifying issues and strategies for addressing visual threats, as well as identifying the potential partners that would need to be involved to make it happen. There are many ways that byway organizations and their partners can help protect the character and identity of their roadways.

By working together to identify issues and possible solutions, a scenic conservation action plan can be developed.

Vistas: How can byways learn more about scenic conservation issues and strategies for solutions?

Brad: Scenic America is working with the America's Byways Resource Center to facilitate several scenic conservation workshops with byways across the country. Training includes teaching byways and their stakeholders how to identify scenic conservation issues and strategies so that they may work together towards developing their own scenic conservation action plans. To learn more about scenic conservation issue areas, principles for scenic conservation, news from around the country and resources from our bookstore, visit our website at: www.scenic.org.



Brad Cownover, Director of Scenic Conservation Services for Scenic America



The Mississippi River Visitor Center at Lock and Dam 15 in Rock Island explains locking procedures and river navigation to guests. Visitors can also watch boats and barges pass through the lock as they transport agricultural products to other river ports.

In addition to our agricultural interpretive sites, nine wineries along the byway offer tours of their vineyards and bottling areas, wine tasting on decks overlooking the river, and unique gift shops.

Farms and communities along the byway host many seasonal activities, too. These tourist favorites include festivals celebrating foods, flowers, and wines; farm tours; orchards; farmer's markets; pumpkin patches; Christmas tree farms; hunting clubs; and county fairs.

Visitors want to share their experiences, and they often return to the byway with friends and family. Some visitors return to experience the changes each season brings—different foods and different views of the landscape. Travelers want to come back to see and taste it all.

AMISH COUNTRY SCENIC BYWAY:

Agricultural heritage started tourism along the Amish Country Scenic Byway. The “Swiss cheese” industry claims to have first beckoned travelers here. More than sixty years ago, Alfred

Guggisberg created the original “Baby Swiss Cheese” in the Guggisberg Cheese Factory that still stands today along our route. The American palette then didn’t demand “Swiss,” but the local cheese manufacturers showed restaurants how to add this cheese to create wonderful recipes. Soon the public began to travel to the cheesehouses to purchase the best product—and tourism began here.

Auctions have become one of the most popular ways for travelers to experience local agricultural flavor and culture. Tourists enjoy auctions for livestock, land and estates. They attend charity and specialty auctions, as well as sales for hay, tack, toys, dairy, poultry and eggs, heavy equipment and more. The Farmer’s Produce Auction at Mt. Hope has become the State’s largest produce auction. Begun in 1995 as a wholesale market for local farmers to sell their produce in bulk, the Farmer’s Produce Auction proudly sells fresh, quality produce with 90 percent of it provided by growers from Holmes and Wayne County. The auction sells produce throughout the growing season, from April to November. In the spring, the auction specializes in flowers. In the fall, buyers come for pumpkins and squash. The Mt. Hope Auction website (www.mthopeauction.com) features an online schedule of events.



Blooming Orchard is located along a portion of the Mt. Hood National Scenic Byway (Oregon) known as the “Fruit Loop.”

MT. HOOD SCENIC BYWAY:

As travelers make their way from Hood River to the Mount Hood National Forest along the byway’s portion of the “Fruit Loop” on Oregon State Highway 35, they can experience the story of the Hood River Valley’s agricultural heritage in many ways. Several farms and fruit stands along the route are open spring through fall, offering freshly harvested berries, peaches, apricots, cherries, apples and pears. Many are organically grown or are of rare, heirloom varieties. Hood River Valley wineries, too, open their tasting rooms to visitors nearly year-round to sample “A World of Wine.” The Gorge White House, a beautifully preserved historic farm house, welcomes visitors to taste local wines and microbrews and visit the site’s art gallery, fruit stand and flower shop. The Fruit Company, just up the road, showcases the Fruit Heritage Museum where engaging interactive exhibits focus on fruit farming technology. Visitors can climb aboard The Fruit Company Express for a narrated tour through the orchard rows and see an authentic “pickers cabin.” Many other well-known “Fruit Loop” destinations are situated along the byway, including Rasmussen Farms’ huge pumpkin patch and sunflower gardens, two Alpaca ranches, two lavender farms, a blueberry

farm, several artisan markets and historic points of interest.

Travelers can also take a brief side trip to the Philip Foster Farm national historic site in Eagle Creek. The Foster Farm hosted an estimated 10,000 exhausted pioneers on their trek west. Travelers can explore the house, barn, pioneer store and blacksmith shop, and take part in the daily chores and activities of early pioneers.

QUESTION #3

Vistas:

How has the development of agricultural heritage tourism along your byway helped to forge partnerships with other organizations, and with stakeholders at the local, State or Federal level?

MINNESOTA RIVER VALLEY SCENIC BYWAY:

Locally, we work in partnership with museums and managers of interpretive sites along the byway to distribute our byway information and to collect updated site information to share in our materials and website. We have worked in partnership with others along the byway on interpretive panels for sites such as the Swensson Farm Museum, Gilfillan Estate, Hubbard House and the Enestvedt Seed Farm, and we actively promote and offer byway



Pumpkin harvesting is a sure sign of autumn on the Amish Country Byway (Ohio).



materials at agricultural-based events, including threshing shows, county fairs, Farmfest and others.

On a larger scale, our byway organization has supported “Ag in the Classroom” (www.agclassroom.org), a program that helps K-12 educators find classroom resources and lesson plans that integrate agriculture across the curriculum. We have also helped to promote interactive traveling exhibits, particularly “Barn Again” from the National Trust (www.barnagain.org).

ILLINOIS GREAT RIVER ROAD:

Much of Illinois’ agri-tourism development has been State-initiated and improved by the cooperation of private agri-business owners and operators. Two major agri-tourism partnerships are active in Illinois. One involves the Illinois Departments of Agriculture, Natural Resources, Commerce and Economic Opportunity and the Illinois Grape and Wine Industry. The Illinois Grape Growers and Vintners Association and its State partners study the wine industry, educate the public and promote Illinois wines.

The second multi-agency partnership is the Agriculture & Tourism Partners of Illinois. This group consists of representatives from all of the agencies listed above plus the Lt. Governor’s Office, Illinois Treasurer’s Office, Illinois Rural Affairs, the University of Illinois Extension Service, the Farm Bureau, Illinois Specialty Growers, agri-business owners Statewide, and the Illinois Bureau of Tourism and all of its Regional Tourism Offices around the State. A new website will link consumers and byway travelers to all of the fun and educational agricultural activities in the byway area and across the State. The byway is developing its own Agricultural Guide, too.

At least 10 workshops have been held across the State in the past three years to educate consumers and agri-tourism businesses on the benefits and opportunities associated with agri-tourism. The Western Illinois Tourism Development Office administers the Great River Road Byway in Illinois and provides a direct link between Statewide agri-tourism partnership initiatives and byway activities.

To learn more about scenic conservation issues and strategies, browse the Topics section of our website for “visual preservation”:
www.bywaysresourcecenter.org/topics/corridor-management/preservation/

AMISH COUNTRY SCENIC BYWAY:

At the State level, our byway has long been recognized for its agricultural-based communities and as a tourist destination. Our partnerships with State and Federal officials and organizations have recognized that this part of Ohio’s agriculture is the source of much family income. Locally in Holmes County, the map and directory identify the Amish Country Scenic Byway and this helps to encourage tourism along the route.

Among our State’s scenic byways, we have a unique and collaborative organizational model called “Ohio Byway Links.” Instead of competing for funding sources, the byways look for

cooperative funding and marketing opportunities, supporting successful projects such as the award-winning Ohio Byway Links map and brochure. One of our organization’s strengths has been its ability to build partnerships. Active partners include the Ohio Department of Transportation, Ohio Department of Travel and Tourism, Scenic Ohio, the Ohio Chapter of the Automobile Association of America (AAA), Model T Ford Club International and Ohio State University Extension. The group has worked hard to nurture positive relationships with key agencies and leaders at all levels, from local to national.

THE RURAL HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE



Rice Harvesting along Delta Byways (Arkansas).

The National Trust for Historic Preservation is working to strengthen the connections between sustainable agriculture and historic preservation. A current rural heritage program involves partnering with State and local organizations to demonstrate the value of sustainable “heritage-based” rural development strategies in two rural pilot regions. These strategies include barn preservation, farmland protection, heritage tourism, main street revitalization and the development of networks for the sale of local foods and other products.

The two pilot regions are Kentucky Crossroads, an eight-county area in Central Kentucky, and Arkansas Delta Byways, a 15-county area that includes Crowley’s Ridge

Parkway National Scenic Byway and the Arkansas-Great River Road National Scenic Byway (www.deltabyways.com). The Rural Heritage Development Initiative (RHD) is a three-year pilot program of preservation-based economic development and focuses on heritage tourism, local business development, preservation education, landmark preservation, and imaging and branding.

According to Arkansas Delta Byways executive director Ruth Hawkins, “One of the greatest benefits of this initiative is the ability to partner with other like-minded organizations and to leverage resources that can help us achieve our byways goals.”

For more information about the National Trust’s work to save rural heritage, contact Jim Lindberg, Director of Preservation Initiatives & Rural Heritage Coordinator at james_lindberg@nthp.org or call 303-623-1504. Visit online at www.nationaltrust.org/rural_heritage/.

For a byway perspective, contact Ruth Anne Hawkins, Executive Director of AR Delta Byways, Arkansas State University, at 870- 972-2803 or e-mail: rhawkins@astate.edu.





MT. HOOD SCENIC BYWAY:

Although our mainly large-scale farming operations put less emphasis on creating tourist-friendly destinations than smaller farms, a symbiotic relationship has grown between tourism and agriculture in a very visible sense in our area for at least 20 years. This relationship has fostered some creative thinking to bring the two separate industries of agriculture and tourism together in ways that

support their respective goals. For instance, in 2005, the Hood River County Commission passed a local ordinance to create a special-use permitting system to allow farms, wineries, and bed & breakfasts to commercially hold weddings on their properties. Sunny summer months, scenic beauty, great visitor services and lodging, and proximity to the Portland International Airport combine to make the Hood River Valley a highly desired wedding destination. Holding

weddings on farm and winery property raises tourism-based revenue that the farmer can re-invest into the farming operation. This is just one example of many ways that the local tourism and agriculture industries support each other.



BYWAY RESOURCES
 To learn more about agricultural and heritage tourism and preservation check out the following resources:

National Trust for Historic Preservation – Rural Heritage Program
www.nationaltrust.org/rural_heritage

Cultural and Heritage Tourism Alliance
www.chtalliance.com

A VIEW FROM THE FARM: Jeff Plunkett Talks About His Work Beyond The America’s Byways Resource Center

Vistas interviewed Jeff Plunkett, Technology Coordinator at America’s Byways Resource Center. Jeff keeps our technology systems running smoothly and he works to develop and deliver the advanced ways we can use technology to serve the byway community. Away from work, you won’t find Jeff in front of a computer. Instead, look for him in the field on a tractor. Jeff is part of a farming family, and their working farm has been in existence for nearly 100 years.

Vistas: Tell us about your personal connection to preserving agricultural history.

Jeff: Because I grew up on an old family farm, I feel strongly about the value of preserving small farms and the history that is tied to them. The majority of the old small farms and the families that worked them were around since the beginning of townships, counties and even small cities. These families and farms tell a tremendous story about what went on in the past and how things changed over the years.

Vistas: What do you see as some important benefits of Agricultural Heritage Tourism?

Jeff: Agricultural tourism can help bridge the gap between farm and city dwellers, to the benefit of both. Agricultural tourism also provides unique experiences and education for the public and promotes products from the farm. It can also support rural economics by providing income for area businesses.

Vistas: How do you think the America’s Byways® collection can help to preserve the history of old family farms?

Jeff: When I think about an old farm disappearing, I think about

the history that is lost with it. We can’t stop small farms from going away, but we can find ways to preserve the history they played a part in. One way to help preserve the history of old family farms is to educate others and celebrate the farming way of life and the heritage. Many States have agricultural heritage programs and agricultural heritage centers to educate people about farming and to promote farming within the State. Providing historical information to these centers about farming along your byway can help educate your community and your byway travelers.

Vistas: Do you have any other suggestions for byways to get involved in agricultural heritage preservation and tourism?

Jeff: America’s Byways encourages people to discover the stories of America. If we were to sit down and talk to an old farmer and ask him about the past, he would tell probably one of the most interesting stories you ever heard! If you want to find ways to connect the traveler to the agricultural stories along your byway, engage your local farmers. Tell the farmers’ stories. Work with the local farmers along your byway to provide opportunities for visitors with



Jeff Plunkett makes bales on his family farm in Wisconsin.

close-up and hands-on experience they will never forget. Chances are they will be glad to help connect people to the importance of the past and to have a role in preserving their farms for the future.

Byways seeking more information should also contact their State agricultural office, Federal lands partners, land trust organizations or historic preservation organizations. Promote agricultural heritage and tourism along your byway. Provide information to your travelers about the history of farming, the types of crops the farmers grow, how the crops are harvested, and

how the livestock are raised and fed. Most important, celebrate the people, their culture and the heritage of the area.

And don’t forget to put technology to your advantage to network! Share your questions and ideas about agricultural heritage with the byway community on the discussion forums at www.bywaysonline.org, and post your success stories on the Byways Portfolio on the Resource Center website at www.bywaysresourcecenter.org/resources/portfolio/.



A Conversation With...

Gary A. Jensen

Team Leader, National Scenic Byways Program, FHWA

1 Tell us about yourself and your background.

I am originally from Kuna, Idaho, a small town just outside of Boise. My degree is in Civil Engineering from the University of Idaho. After graduating from college, I took a position with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and spent two years on training assignments in Vancouver, Washington; Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming; Los Angeles, California; and Nashville, Tennessee. The next four years were spent in the FHWA Tennessee Division Office managing environmental and planning programs, including transportation enhancements, recreational trails and scenic byways. I then moved on to FHWA headquarters, where I worked in the Office of Natural and Human Environment for seven years, primarily addressing the air pollution impacts of



Gary A. Jensen, Team Leader
National Scenic Byways Program, FHWA

transportation. Most recently, I was appointed as Team Leader of several discretionary funding programs under FHWA's Office of Planning, Environment, and Realty, including the National Scenic Byways Program; the Transportation, Community, and System Preservation Program; and the Delta Region Transportation Development Program.

2 What appeals to you most about byways?

As many of us can probably relate to, my interest in byways comes from an early age, with memories of family road trips, including many on routes now designated as part of America's Byways®. I remember spectacularly scenic trips along the Pacific Coast and Columbia River in Oregon, the Trail Ridge Road/Beaver Meadow Road in Colorado, and, of course, the byways of Idaho. Whether it was to go camping along the Payette or Salmon Rivers, bird watching in the Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area, or hiking in the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness Area, the journey was always part of the adventure. As an adult, my enjoyment of travel has continued, whether it is the history and beauty of the Natchez Trace Parkway or the unique culture of the Las Vegas Strip. More than just a way to get from here to there, byways

have provided me unique and amazing experiences.

And that is what appeals to me most about the National Scenic Byways Program: the opportunity to promote, preserve, and protect America's Byways so that travelers now and in the future can experience the joy and discovery that I have experienced.

3 What can byways expect from you in the next year?

I will be working hard over the next year to continue existing initiatives and programs. Building a strong Team here at FHWA is very important to me, and I will be working with our newest team member, Cindi Ptak, to establish priorities and goals. Our highest priority will remain grants—allocating fiscal year 2007 funding, and soliciting projects for fiscal year 2008. We also have been hearing calls for another round of designations, and will be working towards that end over the next year. Beyond that, we want to build upon the relationships and partnerships that have been established with other agencies, stakeholder groups, and Tribes.

4 What role do partners play in the Program?

Partners are key to the success of not only the National Scenic Byways Program, but to the success of individual byways and

the America's Byways collection. Public- and private-sector partners provide national and international perspectives, as well as local and regional insights. Partners are vital to a shared vision and goals. Diverse stakeholders ensure compatibility between sometimes opposing priorities and viewpoints. Our accomplishments will result from cooperative efforts to strengthen and improve the Program.

5 How can the Resource Center support the work of the Program?

By working cooperatively with FHWA, America's Byways Resource Center plays a key role in providing training and support to the byway community. Through proactive assistance, the Resource Center can augment FHWA expertise, and provide resources to improve byway knowledge and practice. Most importantly, by leveraging resources, the Resource Center can draw on interactions with specific byways and groups to develop tools that benefit the entire community. In addition, the implementation of the Public Awareness Plan should provide a greater understanding and appreciation of America's Byways.

★

UTILIZING THE MEDIA TO GENERATE BYWAY SUPPORT



By Anaise Berry, Director, Illinois River Road National Scenic Byway

As a newly designated byway, the Illinois River Road National Scenic Byway has been working hard, not only to generate visitor attention to the byway, but also to heighten the awareness of those who live and work here in our byway region. It is important that communities of the Illinois River Valley embrace the byway's distinct characteristics and special qualities that earned the National Scenic Byway designation, if we are to draw travelers to our region.

Since receiving our designation in 2005, we have been

busy developing the byway organization, forming a board of directors and creating working committees focused on specific efforts to benefit the byway and its communities – all “behind the scenes” projects and efforts unbeknownst to most of our stakeholders.

Over the past several months we have been preparing and fine-tuning a number of marketing initiatives for our byway, including a new logo, new signage, a soon-to-launch website and marketing materials. Because we are beginning to fundraise and rally community

and public support, we wanted to make a big splash and bring some attention to our recent endeavors and successes. We wanted to share this news with others in the region and educate the public about why it is so special to have this National Scenic Byway right here in our own backyard.

Our public relations committee organized a media blitz along the byway that was held on August 29. We had several objectives for this campaign:

- Inform the public of the significance of the National Scenic Byway designation

- Announce projects underway to benefit the byway region
- Explain the byway's potential impact on growth for our visitor-based economy
- Inspire pride in the Illinois River Road National Scenic Byway

We also wanted our byway's seven designated gateway communities to be actively involved this celebration of our designation and progress. All of the communities help make our byway what it is, and buy-in from each of the communities is critical to our overall success. This led us to hold press conferences in each



Buffalo Rock State Park overlooks the serene blue of the Illinois River. © 2004. Michael Jeffords.



Left to right: Press conference participants included Mike Quine (Board Chairman), Anaise Berry (Director), Congressman Ray LaHood (18th Congressional District), Jim McConoughey (CEO Heartland Partnership), and Brad McMillan (Board Vice Chairman).

of the gateway communities along the byway to showcase their very important roles in our efforts to market the byway to potential travelers. Our board is geographically representative of the entire byway, and was able to help us “plug in” and organize the event within each community.

This event took the form of a “Caravan and Celebration.” We organized two caravans to drive the byway, stopping at each of the seven gateway communities for brief press conferences. One caravan took the northern route and the other took the southern route, each having simultaneous press conferences at 9 a.m., 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. We met in the middle of the byway (Peoria) at 4 p.m. for a larger press conference and reception.

In addition to unveiling the new signage at each location, we carefully planned each stop to include three speakers:

- A local Congressional representative to give the Federal and State perspectives on the National Scenic Byways Program
- Each community’s mayor to speak of the local benefits and pride of the National Scenic Byway designation
- A key byway board member to discuss our progress and projects underway

Local media attendance at each of the stops was crucial to getting the word out about the byway. We sent advisories to print, television and radio media, inviting them to attend press conferences in their communities or travel with us through the day. Follow-up phone calls were made to the press to encourage their attendance, and a press release detailing the day’s activities was sent the day of the event.

We had a very successful outcome to this event, inspiring pride and interest in the National Scenic Byways Program. We received substantial coverage from eight newspapers, three major television networks and audio clips from the press conferences were played on several radio stations throughout the week. We generated public awareness of the byway’s significance, as well as interest from communities and organizations wanting to get involved in our efforts.

Public and stakeholder support is critical to the success and sustainability of most byways. To inspire that support, we need to pass along our excitement about our byways’ special qualities and tourism potential. The media can be a powerful tool for generating that level of enthusiasm you need. Don’t underestimate the possibilities!



EDITOR’S NOTE: The following checklist is part of a series of public relations tools and tips to help byways support the national public awareness efforts for the America’s Byways® collection.

TIPS FOR CONDUCTING A SUCCESSFUL PRESS TOUR

Keep the following tips in mind when planning a press tour on your byway. The journalists on your press tour should be treated the same as any other byway visitor. Try to put yourself in their shoes and be considerate of their needs as travelers. Your careful planning will be appreciated...and the payoff could be huge!

Do...

1. Develop an itinerary two to three weeks in advance.
2. Tailor the itinerary to the journalist's assignments/outlets/interests. Group trips are best planned around a major special event, new attraction or theme, such as family travel or outdoor adventure.
3. Provide separate vehicles for broadcast media and for photographers. Their needs are quite different from print media.
4. Allow at least an hour before dinner for a breather: You’ll need it, too. And to ensure that hour, plan a break of at least 90 minutes.
5. Keep the media at one hotel for the duration, unless your trip is four days or more, or involves long, linear journeys. The time spent packing, re-packing and checking in and out of hotels can be much better utilized seeing more of your destination. Include breakfast at their host hotel, and take it easy on lunch. Choose an interesting location and serve box lunches or a picnic with a light salad or sandwich. They’ll be ready for a good, relaxing dinner, and a 10 p.m. bedtime.
6. Drive the route you will be taking before finalizing the itinerary. Incorporate potential construction and rush hour delays to avoid frustration and irritation.
7. Experience is the key word in travel today. Your journalists must have time to experience your byway’s attractions or they cannot write effectively about kayaking, berry picking, riding the new roller coaster, wine tasting, etc.
8. Provide each journalist with a FedEx, DHL, UPS, USPS or other shipping box for his or her materials, or collect all the press materials yourself, and send a packet to each journalist on the departure day, so he or she can begin writing the story ASAP.
9. Simplify your life and theirs by providing contact details for everyone they will be meeting along the way. Include the name, title, company, street address, area code, phone, fax, e-mail and website.
10. Follow up promptly with a “thank you for coming” note. Include a feedback questionnaire to help you improve the experience for the next journalist, and to get an indication of when their stories will appear. When you receive the reply, add the expected publication dates in your tickler file. Add the journalist to your media file with notes on likes, dislikes, what went well, and what didn’t. Send another “thank you” when the story appears and continue to keep in touch on a regular basis. Many journalists revive and revise their stories for many years and will want to know where to contact you for new information.



Calendar

Send calendar entries by the 5th of each month to center@byways.org

DECEMBER

December 3-5

Get Healthier Outdoors
Sacramento, California
California Roundtable on Recreation,
Parks and Tourism
For more information, please visit
www.calroundtable.org

2008

JANUARY

★ January

*Power Workshops I: Strength Training
for Byways*
Phoenix, Arizona
America's Byways Resource Center
Watch www.bywaysresourcecenter.org
for dates and application materials

January 13-17

*TRB 87th Annual Meeting: Partnerships
for Progress in Transportation*
Washington, D.C.
Transportation Research Board
For more information, please contact
Linda Karson at LKarson@nas.edu

FEBRUARY

★ February

*Grassroots Hospitality Train the
Trainer Workshop*
Denver, Colorado
America's Byways Resource Center
Watch www.bywaysresourcecenter.org
for dates and application materials

February 2

American Bus Association Marketplace 2008
Virginia Beach, Virginia
American Bus Association (ABA)
For more information, please visit
<http://marketplace.issi.net/2008/>

February 24-28

Going the Extra Mile: Embracing the Future
Denver, Colorado
Association of Partners for Public Lands
For more information, please visit
[www.appl.org/Training_Conventions/
conventions_tradeshov_general.html](http://www.appl.org/Training_Conventions/conventions_tradeshov_general.html)

MAY

May 11-15

NAI International Conference 2008
Sokcho, South Korea
For more information, please visit
www.interpnet.com/ic

JUNE

June 1-5

TIA 40th Annual International PowWow
Las Vegas, Nevada
Travel Industry Association of America (TIA)
For more information, please visit:
www.tia.org/powwow/index.html

SEPTEMBER

September 11-14

Preserving the Historic Road 2008
Albuquerque, New Mexico
For more information, please visit
www.historicroads.org

OCTOBER

October 21-25, 2008

National Preservation Conference
Tulsa, Oklahoma
National Trust for Historic Preservation
For more information, please visit
www.nthpconference.org

NOVEMBER

November 11-15

NAI National Workshop
Portland, Oregon
For more information, please visit
www.interpnet.com/conferences

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