

VISTAS



AMERICA'S BYWAYS®

MARCH/APRIL 2008

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AUTHENTICITY IN TRAVEL: **Designing Real Experiences, Delivering Real Benefits**

By Cheryl M. Hargrove, President, The HTC Group

Authenticity. Today, it's the hallmark for excellence and credibility in the marketplace. Yet authenticity is not a new phenomenon in consumer products and services. Indeed, authenticity has gained stature in recent years due in part to an increase in "inauthentic" or fake deliverables not standing up to their hype or promise. Understanding what is real and what is not—and valuing the difference between the two—allows customers to make informed choices based on their own personal perceptions and criteria.

But how does authenticity relate to tourism? Webster's dictionary defines *authenticity* as "worthy of acceptance because of accuracy." Authenticity occurs in travel when the visitor gets a compelling, place-based experience and the destination credibly presents its story with integrity and factual accuracy. Engaging the customer in a real conversation about a real community allows greater opportunity for connectivity between visitor and resident, person and place. Destinations can realize immediate and long-term benefits from authenticity in travel. When visitors have a great experience, they share positive impressions with others. In turn, those customers think favorably of the destination and potentially become future visitors that spend money in the destination.

The tourism litmus test for authenticity is making sure the actual visit meets or exceeds the visitor's perception. Pine and Gilmour, authors of *The Experience Economy*, recently wrote in *Authenticity: What Consumers Really Want*, "displayed appearances can be the crucial element of determining authenticity, particularly for places." Citing how the inauthentic presentation of Tombstone, Arizona is risking the town's historic integrity, Pine and Gilmour share that it is "all of the representations + perceptions inherent in your displayed appearances" that hold you accountable to a customer's perception of authenticity. Certainly the built environment provides a concrete way to determine authenticity—if it is old or not, original or reconstructed,

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Cattle graze the lush grasses near the Historic Spring Hill Farm and Stock Ranch, along the Flint Hills Scenic Byway (Kansas).
© September 2006. Dwight Beckham, Jr.



THE STATE/TRIBAL BYWAY COORDINATOR: YOUR KEY TO SUCCESS!

One of the critical components of your byway work involves your State byway coordinator. State byway coordinators manage, direct and lead your State's byways program; they work within their State department of transportation and with the Federal Highway Administration on grants and nominations. Tribal byway coordinators perform similar functions for Tribal byway programs. It's a big job; in fact, some State coordinators hire managers to assist them in their work. They offer guidance and direction with your byway's projects, plans and grants. At the Resource Center, these are the people we rely on to help us develop products and deliver services to byways. They help communicate our messages and services, and they play a critical role in the success of the National Scenic Byways Program. I thought it would be interesting to interview several of them to get their perspectives and ideas.

HOW CAN THE RESOURCE CENTER HELP YOU, AS A STATE BYWAY COORDINATOR?

The America's Byways Resource Center can serve as a conduit for information flow to keep coordinators and byway leaders aware of available resources from a variety of sources: Federal Highway Administration, our partner agencies, other organizations with similar interests, other State byway programs, universities, experts in various interest areas and other sources of information/expertise, including some of us in the byway arena who have extensive experience in the byway world. The Resource Center can provide training for new coordinators and new byway leaders as well as for the long-timers (notice I didn't say "old") in how to assist our byways to be more effective, how to provide better State programs, etc. The new training teleconferences provide important input and do some of the research to help us further preserve, enhance and promote our byways.

I think of the Resource Center as a type of "extension" service—like county extension agents who keep up with the latest information on agriculture issues then share the information with farmers/ranchers in their areas. The Resource Center keeps abreast of new ideas for better byways and then shares them with the States and byways through the website, *Vistas*, the national conferences and workshops. The Resource Center provides opportunities for State coordinators and byway representatives to network with one another and to appreciate and share ideas about what works and what doesn't work.

— *Deb Divine, Program Manager, Kansas Scenic Byways Program*

THE BEST PART ABOUT BEING A STATE BYWAY COORDINATOR FOR WASHINGTON IS:

The excitement that byway groups experience as their long-term plans come to fruition—interpretive panels, gateway and logo signs in the ground, land acquired for viewshed protection and visitor centers, etc.—gives me as much pleasure as it does them. Each of our byway organizations is very different; however, they are all working countless hours to better their communities through the National Scenic Byway Program. With 27 active scenic byways, Washington has one of the largest scenic byway programs in the nation. I enjoy tremendous support from WSDOT both at the State and regional levels that help keep our ongoing projects running smoothly. I also enjoy traveling our State and admiring its great beauty. This job provides ways to both preserve that beauty as well as share it with others.

— *Carrie Sunstrom, Washington State Byway Coordinator*

IF YOU COULD CHANGE JUST ONE THING ABOUT YOUR JOB, WHAT WOULD THAT BE?

All in all, not much. I love my job. The people I work with and the people I am privileged to meet are, for the most part, doing something they are passionate about, which makes collaborating with them very rewarding. If I could change just one thing though, I'd call it "Federal uncertainty." This is a general term applied not to FHWA directly, but to the complex and lengthy process that happens in Washington, D.C., for most of the large actions that steer the Program, such as grant deadlines, awards, authorization, NSB nominations and Program reauthorization. I realize, of course, that it is this complex and lengthy Federal process which allows the National Scenic Byways Program to exist. The common saying, "taking the good with the bad," doesn't really fit. It's just having enough patience to wait for the good to happen. So would I change anything? No. Well, maybe. Spending more time in Duluth would be nice.

— *Arik Spencer, North Dakota State Coordinator*

IF YOU COULD SWAP STATES WITH ANOTHER STATE COORDINATOR, WHICH STATE WOULD YOU CHOOSE?

After carefully considering my 49 other options, I'm quite content to remain here in God's country, in the GREAT State of OREGON, in the GREAT Pacific Northwest. Oregon may not be heaven, but you can see it from here. Thanks for the offer, but I'll pass.

— *Pat Moran, Oregon State Coordinator*

IF YOU HAD TO GIVE A "STATE OF THE STATE" BYWAYS ADDRESS, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

The world of Colorado Byways is a vibrant, energetic place. I am constantly amazed at the passion, energy and dedication of the volunteers who manage each of our 25 designated Scenic and Historic Byways. Just when I think I've seen it all—and after 18 years, I've seen a lot—they surprise me with another innovative project, a creative partnership or a really cool idea for accomplishing their goals and objectives.

When the program started back in 1989, most byway organizations were interested in interpretation and promotion, so early projects and activities were aimed at developing brochures and providing tourist information. As a result, we can now share a wide variety of brochures, videos, audio programs and touring guides with the traveling public, along with hundreds of interpretive signs telling both historic and prehistoric stories as well as describing natural and geological features.

I'm proud to say that our byway organizations are maturing—they have become more willing to tackle harder issues such as resource protection. The Friends of the San Juan Skyway continue to amaze everyone with their partnerships and political savvy as they raise millions of dollars to stabilize and protect the historic mining and railroad structures that line the byway, and to place conservation easements on historic ranching property all around the 236 miles of the byway. Following their lead, the Gold Belt Tour, Top of the Rockies, West Elk Loop, Los Caminos Antiguos, and Peak to Peak byway organizations have all started working on protecting their natural and historic resources in both traditional and innovative methods.

The Top of the Rockies byway organization is participating in two projects related to the historic Hayden Ranch, located at the foot of Colorado's highest peak. First, they acquired grant funds to help with the master plan and construction of the Hayden Meadows Recreation Area, now a rest and interpretive area for the nationally designated byway. They are also working in partnership with Colorado Preservation, Inc., and Colorado Mountain College in the effort to stabilize the 16 historic structures on the homestead property for future use as a laboratory for Colorado Mountain College's associate's degree in historic preservation.

The Peak to Peak byway organization recently conducted a photo contest in which amateur photographers were asked to submit black and white photos, in the Ansel Adams tradition, of places along the byway they felt were important to protect. The winners were given a small monetary award for use in furthering their career or interest in photography in exchange for donating the photo rights to the byway organization. The byway can now sell smaller versions of the photos to raise funds. And the resulting exhibit is on display at locations around the byway to educate others about the byway, its beauty and the need for protection.

Statewide, we're excited to announce the release of two new publications in January 2008. In partnership with the Colorado Tourism Office, the Colorado Historical Society, the Colorado Division of Wildlife, and Colorado State Parks, the Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Commission has developed a new brochure to replace the Discover Colorado booklet that has served the program well for the past 12 years.

The new brochure will feature high-quality photos, updated descriptions and maps of all 25 scenic byways and revised resource charts. It will be a new look for one of the most popular publications handed out at the State Welcome Centers and Byway Visitor Centers. A second "keepsake" booklet will highlight the 10 nationally designated America's Byways along with the State byways by providing more detailed descriptions, spectacular panoramic photographs and a variety of special features about each byway.

Best of all, we're totally thrilled to be hosting the 2009 National Scenic Byways Conference!

— *Sally Pearce, Colorado State and Historic Byways Coordinator*

So, have you talked to your State byway coordinator lately? I hope you enjoyed this glimpse into their lives and their work. We'll talk with Tribal byway coordinators in future issues of *Vistas*. We enjoy working with this great group of people and thank them for their continued advice, assistance and insights. ★

By Derrick Crandall, President, American Recreation Coalition (ARC)

TRANSITIONS: SURVIVE, THRIVE —OR BE ROADKILL

Once worked closely with a bright Federal worker who always seemed tired and distracted. One day, he confessed to me that he hadn't slept soundly for nearly a decade because of fears about the threat of nuclear war and other macro-issues. We had a long conversation and it became clear that his ability to focus on parks and conservation issues was greatly inhibited by his feelings of inability to influence these mega-forces.

I share this because all of us will become caught up in the important public discourse on the elections of November 2008. But let's not be rendered powerless by these events. We can take part in the nation's future through the election process and thus create opportunities for many years to come.

One of the essential forces in politics can be labeled *zeitgeist*: the spirit of the time. Candidates that recognize, and perhaps even help create, the feelings of the populace are those that win elections.

So what is the current *zeitgeist*, and how does that affect us? Part of the answer is found by reviewing the sessions at the National Scenic Byways Conference in Baltimore, Maryland, and the activities of the byway community under Byways 2021. Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods*, helped us see how byways can be part of the effort to address the health challenges—physical and mental—arising from lifestyles low on physical activity. Since that session in May, the attention on juvenile obesity and its health consequences has become pervasive. *USA Weekend* highlighted the issue in the fall of 2007, and the topic gained great attention in December when the *New England Journal of Medicine* carried two studies and an article on the topic.

Dr. David Ludwig, a respected physician and researcher at the Children's Hospital Boston and professor at Harvard Medical School, compared obesity's consequences to

those of global climate change:

Without effective intervention, the costs of obesity might well become catastrophic, arising not only from escalating medical expenses but also from diminished worker productivity, caused by physical and psychological disabilities. Future economic losses could mean the difference between solvency and bankruptcy for Medicare, between expanding and shrinking health care coverage, and between investment in and neglect of our social infrastructure, with profound implications for our international competitiveness. The human costs would be incalculable.

My colleagues and I have predicted that pediatric obesity may shorten life expectancy in the United States by two to five years by mid-century—an effect equal to that of all cancers combined.

Dr. Ludwig then adds an important positive note:

But I believe that obesity differs in one important respect from global warming: simple solutions are available, and with a comprehensive national strategy, we may be able to implement them without great sacrifice.

Partners Promote Active Lifestyles

As this article contends, lifestyle changes that include more physical activity are vital to curbing the obesity trend. We can promote increased physical activity: visits to scenic byways paired with stops along the routes can help American children get the recommended 60 minutes (and 30 minutes for adults) of moderate activity for better health. Our Federally managed public lands have a mandate to be partners in this effort. Executive Order 13266 (June 2002) directs the Federal land agencies to help Americans be more active.

Already, we support activity-oriented events such as National Trails Day, with some 1,200 projects underway on the first Saturday of each June, and

National Boating and Fishing Week, when industry and public agencies host youth fishing derbies and other events. Now, the new National Get Outdoors Day, an annual celebration to be inaugurated this year on June 14, offers another great opportunity to help Americans increase their activity.

Inspiration for National Get Outdoors Day came from the USDA Forest Service, a result of the agency's commitment to its "More Kids in the Woods" effort. Key agency folks looked for ways to enhance the campaign. Starting with a concept based upon "Take Your Daughter to Work Day" created by *MS Magazine* in 1993, the idea evolved quickly into an inclusive, nationwide effort focusing on a single day whereby people are inspired and motivated to *get outdoors*. Federal, State and local agencies and key enthusiast organizations and recreation businesses will promote the fun of outdoor activity. This day will emphasize reaching new visitors to public lands, but all are welcome. By offering specialized activities and opportunities, this national effort concentrates on non-traditional audiences to broaden appreciation for and interest in the great outdoors and to increase awareness of its benefits.

Promotion will coincide with the White House and gubernatorial proclamations of Great Outdoors Month in June. At least 100 sites across the nation will be highlighted (including many within the National Forest System) where partners will introduce visitors to at least one activity and build awareness of nearby recreation options. ARC will make Get Outdoors Day a signature component of its Get Outdoors USA! campaign, which has already begun to receive significant media attention with its special events (WOW on the Road at the Connecticut State Capitol) and its seasonal "tip sheets" for fun outdoor activities, designed especially for busy moms and dads. A prominent national spokesperson has been identified and will be

confirmed shortly.

Key foundations such as the National Forest Foundation, the National Park Foundation, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, leading enthusiasts groups, including IMBA, Good Sam and the National Wildlife Federation, recreation businesses and others will be invited to serve on a steering committee for this national day. They will employ existing campaigns, efforts and websites to promote the day's opportunities.

The Role For Scenic Byways

Many of the sites being considered for National Get Outdoors Day have connections to byways. For example, the Mountain High Resort in the Angeles National Forest along the Angeles Crest Scenic Byway is one of the likely June activity sites.

And what does this have to do with *zeitgeist*? We think that more and more of the candidates for office will understand that no American parents or grandparents will be complacent when confronted with news of lowered life expectancy for America's youth. And candidates for office will want to help take advantage of this broad concern. Those who help give candidates ideas for action—or provide ways for candidates to be seen doing good—are likely to be prized allies.

This is the opportunity we need. Instead of lying awake at night contemplating issues, we can become involved as individuals in public policy debates. This will play a big role in determining our ability to sustain the interest of key American leaders—Members of Congress, Secretaries of Transportation, governors, even Presidents—interest that has aided byways since the 1980s. With the help of new champions, byways won't become roadkill on the policy expressways and they won't just survive. We'll thrive. ★

or rehabilitated in some way—but you can also differentiate fake from real in other ways. For instance, what your website looks like is as important as the information conveyed there. What messages are you sending, or first impressions are you providing, to the customer? Can you deliver on the products and services you are selling? If so, will they meet the expectations of your audience?

For byways, consider authenticity in the context of the six intrinsic qualities for designation. Authenticity needs to be demonstrated in these qualities to provide distinctive, unique experiences valued by customers. The **natural** and **scenic** qualities of a place, the assets that distinguish one destination from another, are the visual elements where authenticity can shine. The attractiveness of open spaces and unbroken sight lines beckon visitors to experience these one-of-a-kind gems. From the tall prairie grass in Kansas' Flint Hills to the rugged coast of Alaska's Marine Coast Highway, byways depend on the distinctiveness of

The benchmark for authenticity in travel is reviewing all the activities engaged in by visitors—from trip planning to on-site experiences such as dining, shopping, entertainment, lodging, recreation, and touring—and determining how credibly you present the collective experience.

their natural and scenic assets to attract visitors and sustain the intrinsic qualities of the place.

Hiking, biking, birding, and other forms of **recreation** may be similar, but the place where they occur—the type of flora and fauna witnessed along the way, the geological formations and landscapes that provide the platform for access—is unique. Keeping these places distinctive, and not losing their intrinsic recreational significance, is vital.

Historic assets are easily quantified as authentic or not. Almost two decades ago, the

National Trust for Historic Preservation recognized the need to “get real” with travel. This national institution built its heritage tourism program on principles of authenticity and quality as one way to differentiate this segment from other types of mass-market travel. Why? Authenticity in heritage tourism helps the customer to understand—and hopefully value—the difference between a fake façade and a real historic building; to recognize the importance of standing on the site where a significant moment in history occurred; or, to appreciate

participating in an event that commemorates or memorializes an event or activity. An historical marker does not evoke as compelling an experience as visiting Ernest Hemingway's Key West house where he wrote *A Farewell to Arms*.

Archaeology also lends itself to authenticity, when based on actual finds or documentation. Walking the sacred Pu'u Loa trail on Hawai'i's Big Island becomes a more personal journey when you learn the origin of this memorial. Authenticity in archaeology requires disclosing the real artifacts versus replicas, protecting sites from vandalism or looting, and educating visitors on what the evidence tells us about the past and its relevance to the present.

Cultural integrity and authenticity are often conveyed through the words or actions of a storyteller. The individual guide, billed as an expert or local insider, can turn narrative into a rich and compelling dialogue. Validation of the cultural message lies in how the information is presented. Conjecture or lore, supposition or oral history, the basis of the story must be clear for cultural authenticity. For the performing arts, authentic dance or music usually relate to or include local traditions or ethnicity. When considering cultural authenticity, ask if an artist is expressing his/her work and describing the object, painting or picture in relation to the place? Are restaurants serving up local cuisine or using local ingredients to tell their story? How and



Visitors walk inside one of the paleontological dig sites along the Dinosaur Diamond in Utah. © April 2005. Terry Mathews.



The coastal landscape that Alaska's Marine Highway traverses is rich and dynamic. Snowcapped mountains rise up to 18,000 feet above the ocean blanketed by a lush temperate rainforest. Glaciers, volcanoes and waterfalls add to this visual experience. © 2000. Art Sutch.

where can you best experience local culture?

The benchmark for authenticity in travel is reviewing all the activities engaged in by visitors—from trip planning to on-site experiences such as dining, shopping, entertainment, lodging, recreation, and touring—and determining how credibly you present the collective experience.

TO DESIGN YOUR OWN AUTHENTIC TRAVEL EXPERIENCES, CONSIDER THESE FIVE STEPS:

Research the “real.”

Discover the authentic stories and sites that contribute to your unique place. Seek out little-known facts or trivia to help add flavor or put information into

context. Update data frequently to accommodate changes in the political, social, and economic landscape, and record new chapters in the destination's lifecycle. The Blue Ridge Parkway pioneered parkway engineering and design; near the southern terminus of this All-American Road is also the birthplace of forest conservation in America. Visit the Cradle of Forestry Museum near Brevard to learn more about this landmark event and its impact.

Document the sources.

Understanding where information comes from, and the credibility of research, is of paramount importance to customers today. While the Internet is a great research tool, not all information

—nor all sources—is valid. Make sure you can defend whatever claims you make in exhibits, marketing, interpretive materials, etc. At various sites along Utah and Colorado's Dinosaur Diamond Prehistoric Highway, paleontologists excavate bones and prepare museum displays. These experts provide the authoritative voice for the region's prehistoric artifacts.

Tell the truth.

Integrity in messaging is key for customers to believe your story. In “The Four Truths of the Storyteller” (Harvard Business Review, December 2007), author Peter Gruber discusses the power of oral narratives to inspire action in others and meet business (community) goals. Gruber says, “great storytelling does not conflict with truth. In the business world and elsewhere, it is always built on the integrity of the story and its teller.” He continues, “. . .it's not enough to get the facts right—you've got to get the emotional arc right as well. Every storyteller is in the expectations-management business and must take responsibility for leading listeners effectively through the story experience, incorporating both surprise and fulfillment. The ending of a great narrative is the first thing the audience remembers. The job of the teller is to capture his mission in a story that evokes powerful emotions and thereby wins the assent and support of his listeners. Everything he does must serve that mission.”

Deliver on the promise.

Maintain the integrity of the assets. Even though a place constantly changes, accurately portraying the evolution of a destination defines what is authentic and what is not. Monitor the messages. Engage the customer in the mission. Destinations, especially linear corridors or large areas encompassing multiple communities, must carefully collaborate to deliver quality and consistency without compromising uniqueness, to ensure that the individual

attractions contribute to an overall compelling and authentic visit. According to Pine and Gilmore, “businesses that render original authenticity stimulate the buyer's sense of discovery.” They suggest that companies (or destinations) should “name a Chief Experience Officer or CXO, responsible and accountable for developing, launching and managing the rich portfolio of placemaking experiences you create in order to generate new sources of both revenue and profits in a world where authenticity is becoming the new consumer sensibility.” The authors further recommend, “the CXO should have primary responsibility for ensuring that what customers experience in these places matches what you are as a company.” This emphasizes designing authentic experiences and also managing the delivery of authenticity—concepts that should be embraced by every destination.

Reap the benefits.

Authentic experiences provide the credibility to compete for respectful visitors and provide them with a reason to travel. For destinations, authenticity offers the opportunity to showcase local assets as the “unique selling proposition” and attract visitor spending that can stimulate sustainable tourism.

Authenticity should be considered in the assessment and development of resources, be a primary reason for preservation and protection of intrinsic qualities, and serve as the benchmark for measuring effective and appropriate delivery of experiences. Bottom line: live your vision and mission, and offer it to others to experience and embrace.

Cheryl M. Hargrove is President of The HTC Group, an alliance of independent consultants specializing in providing quality products and services in cultural heritage tourism; strategic planning; tourism development and management; and marketing. She can be reached at (912) 638-6078 or htcgroup@mindspring.com.

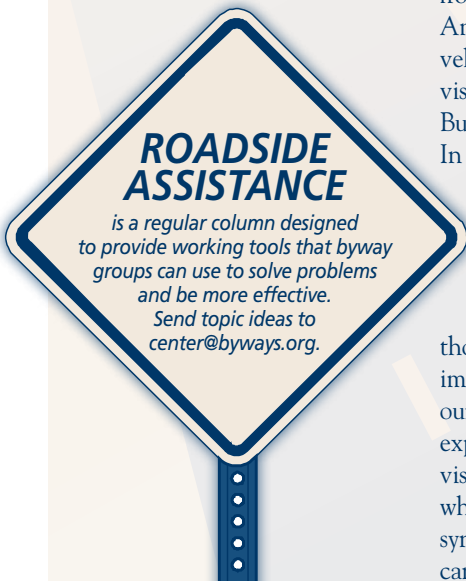
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Roadside Assistance

TOOLS FOR CREATING AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES ON YOUR BYWAY

By Curt Pianalto, Byways Specialist, with assistance from Sharon Strouse, Amish Country Byway



One of the America's Byways Resource Center's key points from its vision statement is that America's Byways® can be a vehicle to help create authentic visitor experiences for travelers. But what does this really mean? In our society, the concept of authenticity is often used without regard to its true meaning. We live in an information culture where we are exposed to thousands—if not millions—of images and messages throughout our daily lives. The byway experience offers a retreat, for visitors and locals alike, from what would be a hollow and synthetic overload. That retreat can be in the form of rewarding and authentic experiences.

It can be debated whether we can truly create authentic experiences. Authenticity is difficult to define. In the lead article, Cheryl Hargrove gave one definition of authenticity: "worthy of acceptance because of accuracy." Another definition is "not false or copied," according to the *Encarta World Dictionary*. With that definition in mind, think of a historical event. It might be impossible to create an authentic experience that is the actual occurrence of that historical event. However, with the help of interpretation, re-creation and other creative outlets, we can draw people closer to historical authenticity. Think about culture as another example. Consider a worker in

an industry whose livelihood and everyday existence help tell the byway story. It might be difficult to create a truly authentic experience of working in a factory for travelers. As byway practitioners, we can bring people closer to authenticity with other mechanisms, such as factory tours or interpretive programs that allow visitors to participate in simulated factory activities or allow access to public locations that are part of factory workers' lives. Your corridor management plan (CMP) inventories the assets of your byway corridor. In creating deeper and more meaningful experiences, take your CMP and the inventory of assets to the next step. You may even need to reexamine that inventory.

Our Byways Specialists are here to assist you.

Find the Resource Center contact for your State on the Resource Center website at www.bywaysresourcecenter.org/about/people/States. Call us toll-free at 866-974-6403, or contact your Byways Specialist directly:

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"Authentic Experiences" mobile workshop participants enjoyed a homemade lunch at Miller's Farm on Ohio's Amish Country Byway during the 2005 National Scenic Byways Conference.

Roadside Assistance continues on page 7

As we pull visitors closer to authenticity, though, we have to be cognizant of the risks associated with doing that, including:

Safety: Promote safety for travelers and visitors

Privacy: Ensure that travelers and visitors are not impeding on the personal property and privacy rights of local residents

Resource Protection: Check that additional visitor exposure will not degrade the actual intrinsic quality resource

Think back to the historical authentic experiences discussed earlier. Many byways have created interpretative panels that attempt to tell those stories. Should we stop there? While these panels can serve an important function in succinctly telling a story, do they allow a visitor to see, feel, touch, hear and experience firsthand the important events that took place? Is the visitor given a sensory experience that connects to the historical event?

Many everyday facets of your local byway environment can

help visitors move closer to those authentic experiences. Dining, shopping, commerce, industry and agriculture may provide authentic experience opportunities that invite people closer to your byway's intrinsic quality story. Think about something as common as food. Can a dining experience contribute to creating authentic experiences? Absolutely.

Should we be trying to create authentic experiences for each of those everyday facets along your byway? Not necessarily. However, if elements from those everyday facets can help deliver authenticity and strengthen your byway's intrinsic quality experience *and* help preserve

the actual resource, then by all means, look for ways to create and enhance authentic experiences.

Plan And Deliver More Authentic Experiences

The tagline of promotional materials provided for the America's Byways® collection is "Come Closer." This, in essence, is what creating authentic experiences is all about. We want to provide greater access for enhanced and meaningful visitor experiences while being cognizant of the associated risks with that added access.

Using the outline given by Cheryl Hargrove in the lead article, think about creating

authentic experiences with dining experiences, specifically restaurants. Cheryl has given a general overview of how you could begin to create authentic experiences. Go to the America's Byways Resource Center website to find a checklist tool to help you create authentic dining experiences: www.bywaysresourcecenter.org/topics/visitor-experience/marketing/tools/1180/. Check the website often to find additional tools for creating authentic experiences in venues such as historical buildings, agriculture, industrial settings, shopping and more.



As we pull visitors closer to authenticity, though, we have to be cognizant of the risks associated with doing that, including:

SAFETY: Promote safety for travelers and visitors

PRIVACY: Ensure that travelers and visitors are not impeding on the personal property and privacy rights of local residents

RESOURCE PROTECTION: Check that additional visitor exposure will not degrade the actual intrinsic quality resource

COMING & GOING



Welcome, Kathie Knapp

The America's Byways Resource Center is pleased to announce that Kathie Knapp has accepted the position of Byways Specialist at the Resource Center in Duluth, Minnesota.

Kathie will be responsible for providing assistance and services to States and byways in Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Nevada, California and Hawaii.

Members of the byway community may already know Kathie from her former role as the Arizona State Scenic Byway Coordinator. Coming from this background, she is familiar with State issues, programs, agencies, and procedures, as well as the National Scenic Byways Program procedures for grants and nominations. She is looking forward to bringing her expertise to the bigger picture.

Kathie has a passion for America's Byways and has traveled extensively throughout the western United States enjoying the beauty of the byways. Her retired husband, Vern, and six rescued pets, including the Byway Kittens, are in Cornville, Arizona and will join her "when it's warmer."

Kathie can be reached at kknapp@byways.org, 218-625-3307 or 866-974-6403.

COMING & GOING

A Conversation With...

Steve Elkinton

**Program Leader,
National Trails System**

1 *What is your background, and what led you to your current position with the National Park Service as Program Leader for the National Trails System?*

I have an undergraduate degree in art history (Kalamazoo College, 1969) and a graduate degree in landscape architecture (University of Pennsylvania, 1976). I came to work for the National Park Service in 1978, mostly designing parking lots and cultural landscape projects. At the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area in Ohio I became deeply involved in trails and helped coordinate a park-wide trail plan. I also came to appreciate the value of volunteers who “wouldn’t take no for an answer.” When this position coordinating National Trails System activities opened in the NPS’s office in Washington, D.C., I thought I’d try it out—having no idea that I would stay with it for 19 years!

2 *Can you provide us with an overview of the National Trail System?*

The National Trails System was created by law at the Federal level in 1968. It was one of a series of outdoor-oriented laws—such as the Wilderness Act, the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, and the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act—that came out of the Johnson Administration

and an environmentally minded Congress in the 1960s. Few countries have nationwide legislation creating such a trails system. The flagship trail was the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, already well known and well used since the 1930s. The fact that volunteers do so much of the work on the “AT” has led to continued reliance on the creative and resourceful energy of volunteers throughout the National Trails System. In 1978, the concept of historic trails was added. Today, the National Trails System includes 25 trails created by law (8 national scenic trails and 17 national historic trails), 1,033 national recreation trails (recognized by the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture), and two officially designated connecting-and-side trails. Together these four categories of trails total over 65,000 miles in combined lengths.

3 *Tell us about the overall mission of the National Park Service, other Federal land management agencies, trail organizations, and volunteers with the administration of the National Trail System.*

There are three Federal land-managing agencies tasked with administering components of the National Trails System: the USDA Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management,

and the National Park Service. In some cases one agency will administer a trail while another may manage most of the Federal ownership underlying the trail. Although each of these agencies manages land, each has a different history and mission. The Forest Service is the oldest of these agencies, having been formed in 1905 to conserve endangered forests for sustainable yields. Later it took on recreation and scientific ecosystem management. Thanks to its legacy, many of America’s mountain ranges remain in public ownership. The National Park Service was established in 1916 with a more absolute preservation mission: to preserve and protect resources for the enjoyment of future generations. Its first parks tended to be ones of spectacular scenery and limited resource extraction value. In the 1930s NPS became deeply involved in cultural resource management. BLM inherited the functions of the former General Land Office, which were combined in 1976 with grazing and mineral services pertaining to public lands never acquired for private ownership. BLM’s mission is for multi-use, including extensive mineral extraction and oil and gas drilling. Today these agencies, despite varying missions, work closely together to operate the National Trails System that crosses all of their boundaries.

Most of the nonprofit groups that support components of the National Trails System are devoted to a particular trail’s purpose; only a few have broader missions. All are citizen and volunteer based, although the bigger ones also have professional staff. Volunteers are the lifeblood of these trails, and the National Trails System Act strongly encourages their involvement “to plan, develop, maintain, and manage, where appropriate, trails throughout the Nation.” The typical trail volunteer enjoys a variety of tasks. On national scenic trails, many are trained in chainsaw skills for the removal of down and wind-thrown trees. Others build trail tread and bridges. Others provide and maintain tools. Along the national historic trails, volunteers give tours, monitor fragile sites, conduct educational programs, and install signs and markers. The list of tasks is endless. In 2006 it is estimated that volunteers donated 688,000 hours (worth \$12 million) to support and operate both national scenic and historic trails.

4 *What are the major issues facing the National Trail System today?*

From my perspective, some key issues affecting all the national scenic trails (NST) and national historic trails (NHT) are visibility, coordination, climate change, and

land-use changes. By visibility I mean that most of the American public is unaware that there even is a National Trails System. They know about the National Park System, but easily confuse it with the National Forest System. It seems most people are aware of the Appalachian Trail, but few know that it is part of a national system.

In the West, many people know about the Oregon Trail and the routes of Lewis & Clark. But, again, people are unaware that these routes are part of a national system of trails. Even in our own agencies (and here I refer to BLM, FS, and NPS) many staff are unaware of these trails—let alone that their agencies are responsible for helping with the trails system.

Coordination is a never-ending issue. Some of these trails occur only in one State, but most cross several State lines. For example, the Appalachian Trail crosses 14 States. In addition, many of these trails (largely the historic trails) connect urban areas. Recently I did an analysis of metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) over 50,000 in population whose jurisdiction includes one or more NSTs or NHTs, and found 98 metropolitan areas housing almost 1/3 of the entire U.S. population. As we all know, urban areas are complicated.

So it is a huge challenge for the typical short-handed trail office to establish links and stay positively connected over time to hundreds of local governments and groups, dozens of State agencies, and even far-flung Federal offices concerned with some aspect of each trail. This is further complicated by the divergent cultures and needs of Federal agencies and nonprofit organizations. Getting each side to work with others in a united direction sometimes takes years of negotiation.

Climate change is upon us. Winters are warmer, storms are more intense, and vegetation zones are shifting. The fight to protect a typical trail corridor is an exercise in preservation: trying to maintain the prairie grass of the Oregon Trail or the hemlock forests of the Appalachian Trail.

Each trail has its diagnostic setting, often a magnificent natural or cultural feature. And all of these are vulnerable to climate change: lakes dry up, tree species die out, soils erode, structures deteriorate, sea levels rise. The vistas and recreational experiences we are trying to leave our children may not resemble the ones we, and our predecessors, enjoyed.

Land-use change is more immediate. Suburbanizing America is devouring open space and farmland at an alarming rate. Fragile trail ruts or bucolic mountain vistas may suddenly be irrevocably altered or destroyed by subdivisions, highways, pipelines, wind farms, or cell towers. If not damaging the trail itself, these intrusions often dot the views from the trail. Recent oil and gas drilling in western Wyoming, despite a massive effort to minimize its impact, has made a noticeable difference to trail travelers. Industrialization of agriculture and proliferation of manufacturing business parks change the look and feel of the rural landscape. Zoning and land-use controls are largely local, while the authorities given to manage the national trails is Federal; so, Federal staff may be powerless (short of outright acquisition) to affect positive change at the local level.

5 *How can the National Scenic Byways Program support the National Scenic and Historic Trails?*

Many of America's Byways® already provide access to fulfilling hikes along national scenic trails, or lie congruent to the auto tour routes of national historic trails. Visitor facilities along certain trails, especially the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail in Alabama, have been largely funded with National Scenic Byways Program funding. (In that case, the route is also an All-American Road.) The Byways Program can help the National Trails System by sensitizing prospective partners to include nearby national trails. Even when grants are being awarded, applicants can be encouraged to network closely with nearby

scenic or historic trail projects. Often, such as along the Santa Fe Trail in New Mexico, the interpretive programs for both the trail and scenic byway need to be closely coordinated so that the public is not confused or misled. As nominations are made for National Scenic Byways and All-American Roads, the program office can sensitize applicants to nearby components of the National Trails System to ensure the traveling public that it gets the full benefit of these intertwining linear routes of history, nature and recreational opportunity.

6 *What services can the America's Byways Resource Center offer to the trails community?*

The America's Byways Resource Center is already very helpful to the National Trails System through such activities as conference workshops, mapping, training courses, and just a great attitude of helpfulness. The issues that face our trails and byways constituents from community to community are largely the same: publicity, wayfinding, interpretation, resource protection, organizational development, citizen volunteer involvement and, of course, funding. As both systems grow in future years, there will be more and more places where national trails and scenic byways cross or overlap. Tracking these intersections and helping byways and trails partners work together will be a great service to the traveling public.

7 *How does the National Park Service and the trails community plan to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the National Trail System?*

Planning for the 40th anniversary (officially October 2, 2008) has been underway for a full year. A gala dinner was planned in Washington, D.C., for February 13. In fact, the 40th anniversary begins a 10-year "Decade for the National Trails" effort, which will try to achieve three goals: higher visibility to the public, completion of many of the partially completed

trails, and increased capacity for both nonprofit and government agency partners. Specific actions are still being shaped. The National Park Service is offering for this effort an oral history project to capture the views and memories of those still alive who can recall the origins and early days of the Trails System. Also, we have drafted a 50-page public history of the System's evolution, starting with early 20th-century efforts to commemorate historic trails in the West. This way, all of us from our diverse perspectives can share a common history.

8 *If you could send one message to byways, what would it be?*

Stay flexible. Each situation is somewhat different from any other. Yes, there are steadfast guiding principles that help shape and operate these linear corridors. And the traveling public appreciates consistency of signage, facilities and safety. However, the regions and odd corners of America are so different that what works in New England may not apply to Texas and vice versa. Flexibility also opens doors when trying to link or integrate trails and byways. In some places they are congruent and should provide a seamless visitor experience. In other places they adjoin but have distinct identities, and this distinctiveness should be honored. The proponents of byways and trails should also be flexible in their methods of operation, reaching out where common interest occurs, while not compromising their values where differences lie. The more we can see all of America's linear systems: byways, trails, rivers, heritage corridors—not to mention roads and highways, rail corridors, and even greenways—as integrated systems that need to be presented to the public coherently, the more the public will receive and experience fulfilling trips along these routes.

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Connecting Children and Urban Youth to America's Public Lands



Girl Scouts in California having fun outdoors.

At the 2007 National Scenic Byways Conference held last May in Baltimore, keynote speaker Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, spoke about the changing relationship between children and nature and their disconnect with nature and the great outdoors, especially children living in urban areas and children of ethnic minorities. Mr. Louv discussed just how important direct contact with the outdoors is to healthy child development.

As a result of the concerns raised by parents, educators, physicians and land managers, the USDA Forest Service, USDI Fish and Wildlife Service and USDI Bureau of Land Management have put additional emphasis on programs to engage children in environmental education and outdoor recreation activities on public lands. The Federal land management agencies are reaching out to strengthen existing partnerships and forging new relationships with nonprofit organizations and other private groups to motivate children to spend time outdoors and try hiking, biking, camping, canoeing and other healthy outdoor recreational activities on public lands.

USDA FOREST SERVICE - MORE KIDS IN THE WOODS: HELPING CHILDREN COME CLOSER TO NATURE



Kristen Nelson, Interpretive Services Program Manager, USDA Forest Service

On December 17, 2007, Abigail Kimbell, Chief, USDA Forest Service issued an agency-wide

call for proposals for "More Kids in the Woods" with a commitment of \$500,000 for 2008. The primary objectives of More Kids in the Woods is to effectively engage children in meaningful and sustained outdoor experiences, thereby increasing awareness and understanding of the natural world. By awarding funds for a second year, the Forest Service continues its efforts with rural and urban community partners to improve children's health and well-being (see www.fs.fed.us). Parents, physicians, educators and land managers are increasingly concerned with the growing disconnect between children and nature. There is increasing evidence that today's children are gravitating away from outdoor experiences and towards an indoor virtual reality. This disconnect from nature has serious long-term implications for the health and well-being of our nation's children and the future stewardship of America's public lands.

The Forest Service understands the significance and benefit of connecting people to nature. For more than 100 years, the agency has provided interpretive walks, outdoor experiences, wildlife viewing, open spaces and educational programs ranging from Smokey Bear to the Natural Inquirer. Yet, even with these dedicated efforts, two of the biggest threats to the future of our nation's forests and grasslands are environmental illiteracy and the increasing disconnect between children and nature. The Chief is leading the agency to address these challenges by supporting a range of efforts aimed at connecting children

to nature with More Kids in the Woods being the latest initiative.

The Byway Community's Role

In bringing children closer to nature, the byway community can join in promoting access to recreational areas and facilities for physical activities and their associated health benefits. The strong local and State byway coalitions can assist in marketing the role natural environments play in enhancing individual and community health and well-being. Additionally, travel experiences along a byway can spark a child's or family's curiosity in the stories of these treasured places and foster environmental literacy and future stewardship. The network of byways across America is an important conduit for society to connect with nature and their public lands. These lands and their recreation infrastructure provide opportunities for: solace and solitude; challenge and risk; hunting and fishing; and outlets for keeping physically fit. They are critical to improving

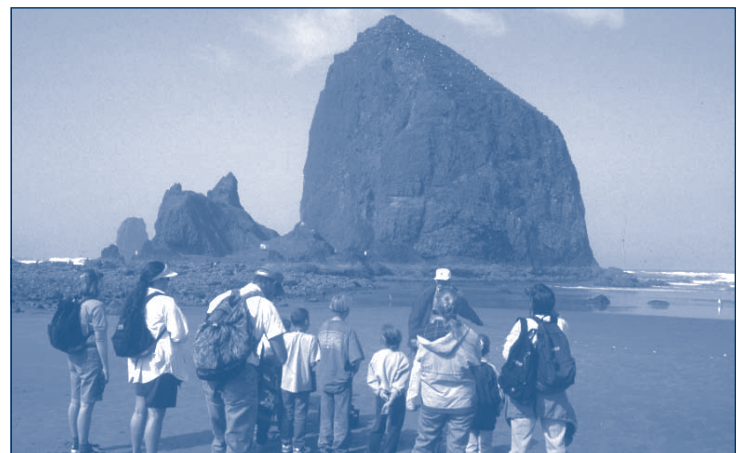
people's lives, promoting wellness and fostering a deeper appreciation for America's heritage.

USDI FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE - CHILDREN AND NATURE INITIATIVE



David Eisenhower, Public Affairs; Janet Ady, Chief of the Division of Education and Outreach - National Conservation Training Center; and Cathy Rezabek, Alaska Regional Public Affairs, USDI Fish and Wildlife Service

For years, Fish and Wildlife Service employees have been connecting children with the land and with the agency's conservation mission. Today, those efforts may be more important than ever. In January 2007, the Service Directorate listed connecting people with nature as one of the agency's six top conservation priorities and created a National Children and Nature Working Group of field and regional office representatives from each program to map a course of action for the future. In December 2007, the working group put on a national workshop at the National



A Fish and Wildlife Service volunteer at Haystack Rock in Cannon Beach, Oregon conducts an Environmental Education session on coastal resource ecology to families along the Pacific Coast Scenic Byway. Credit: Roy Lowe, USFWS

Conservation Training Center (NCTC) that made Child and Nature Ambassadors of Service employees in attendance and provided them with new skills and training to help children and families develop strong lifelong connections with the natural world.

Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder* and the keynote speaker at the 2007 Scenic Byways Conference in Baltimore, documents mounting evidence that an increasing number of children are becoming disconnected from nature, preferring to spend time indoors immersed in a virtual reality of television, video games, and iPods rather than explore the natural reality outside their front doors. This separation from the natural world can result in a host of physical and mental ailments, Louv warns—from childhood obesity to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder—and erode future support for conservation. “If this gap between children and nature continues to widen,” he asks, “where will future conservationists come from?”

Sparking A Conservation Ethic

As the nation's primary conservation agency, the Service has a significant stake in answering that question. Alarmed by Louv's conclusions and steady declines in hunting and fishing license sales, the Service, The Conservation Fund and Louv organized a national dialogue on children and nature at NCTC in September 2006 to discuss how to reconnect a generation of youth with the natural world—and secure the mental and physical health benefits that go with it.

About 350 educators, health professionals and conservationists participated in the meeting, including Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne, Service Director H. Dale Hall, The Conservation Fund's President Larry Selzer, Executive Director of the North American Montessori Teachers' Association David Kahn and Yale University's Stephen Kellert. National Conservation Training Center Director Rick Lemon, who leads the Service's Children and Nature Executive



Kids smiling after a day on the river in Oregon.

Team, says the agency—with its extensive land base and passionate and knowledgeable employees—is well positioned to help children reconnect with nature. But while the Service already provides public use opportunities—ranging from hunting, fishing, observing and photographing wildlife, or simply exploring and discovering connections to nature on refuges—Lemon says an “even greater and more focused effort is needed.”

“With big issues like climate change impacting our conservation mission, we will need every American to become part of the solution. Engaging children in our conservation and restoration efforts—from planting a tree to banding a duck—gives them a sense of connection to the natural world and personal empowerment that they can make a difference,” Lemon said. “Whether they grow to be a biologist, a banker or a mechanic, we will need them to be aware and care about the natural world. That starts with connecting them with nature when they are young. When you see the light in a child's eyes when they come in contact with a wild animal, you know that you have kindled a flame in their soul.”

Making The Connections

The Service hasn't been sitting on the sidelines when it comes to connecting children with nature. Dozens of hands-on conservation projects help restore habitat and wildlife species and teach children outdoor and scientific skills. Service employees also regularly give

presentations at schools, provide expertise on field trips, conduct training for teachers, participate in summer camps, and help develop curricula and lesson plans that deal with natural resource issues.

The Refuge System's nearly 100 million acres provide plentiful opportunities to reconnect children and families with the outdoors through the System's “Big Six” recreational uses—hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, nature photography, environmental education and interpretation. Nearly 40 million visitors enjoy refuges each year, and more than 300 refuges annually offer environmental education programs for some 700,000 students and teachers. Likewise, many hatcheries also provide excellent recreational and educational opportunities for schools and communities and regularly host events to share the Service's conservation message.

Most programs and initiatives are done in collaboration with a variety of partners, including watershed groups, scouting groups, refuge and hatchery friends groups, volunteers and junior naturalist programs. The Service also regularly teams up with national conservation organizations such as Audubon, the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation, the National Wildlife Federation and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. “The core mission of the Service has not changed,” Lemon says. “However, stressing the wellness benefits from connecting with nature in our outreach message is a paradigm shift for the Service;

one that will surely reap rewards in terms of increased advocacy and conservation.”

For more information about the Service's children and nature initiative, visit www.fws.gov/childrenandnature/ or email Janet Ady, Chief, Division of Education Outreach at NCTC at janet_ady@fws.gov

USDI BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT – TAKE IT OUTSIDE INITIATIVE



Patti Klein, *BLM National Stewardship and “Take It Outside” Coordinator, USDI Bureau of Land Management*

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) recently launched its “Take It Outside” initiative, designed to bring together resources from throughout the agency and partners to help connect children and families to public lands and nature. A main goal of Take It Outside is to encourage stewardship of public lands. It will give children a sense of ownership, respect and stewardship they will carry with them throughout their lives.

“The BLM has a unique opportunity to reconnect children and families to the outdoors,” according to Jim Hughes, BLM Director. “The BLM manages lands located throughout the U.S. that are backyards to many rapidly growing, urbanizing communities. These lands provide great opportunities for outdoor recreation and education.”

The initiative will bring together, and, in some cases, expand many of the BLM's successful programs that engage children and families in the outdoors. The initiative will combine the best of these programs, focusing on three key areas: schools, youth organizations and families. BLM annually reaches over three million children through education and outdoor recreation programs and opportunities.

To learn more about Take It Outside, please contact Patti Klein, BLM National Stewardship and Take It Outside Coordinator at (801) 539-4235 or email at patti_klein@blm.gov.



Calendar

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

★ indicates Resource Center workshops

2008

MARCH

March 31

Park Pride, Parks and Greenspace Conference
Atlanta, Georgia
For more information, visit:
www.parkpride.org

March 31-April 4

Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance National Training
Shepherdstown, West Virginia
For more information, contact
Cynthia Szymanski at 202-354-6912.

APRIL

April 15-18

National Tribal Environmental Conference
Santa Fe, New Mexico
For more information, visit:
www.ntec.org/conference.htm

★ April 16

Tele-Workshop: Interpretive Wayside Development and Design Standards
America's Byways Resource Center
Watch www.bywaysresourcecenter.org
for details and registration.

April 17-19

Annual Clean-up Event: Tourism Cares for America
New Orleans, Louisiana
For more information,
please call: 781-821-5990 or
E-mail: info@tourismcares.org

April 27-May 1

Annual National Planning Conference
Las Vegas, Nevada
American Planning Association (APA)
For more information, visit:
www.planning.org/2008conference/

April 27 – May 1

American Association of Museums Annual Meeting and Museum Expo
Denver, Colorado
For more information, visit:
www.aam-us.org/am08/index.cfm

MAY

May 10 - 18

25th Annual National Tourism Week
Travel Industry Association of America (TIA)
For more information, visit: www.tia.org

May 11-15

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

May 12-15

Interagency Regional Wilderness Stewardship Training Course
Medford, Oregon
For information, visit:
<http://carhart.wilderness.net/index.cfm?fuse=courses&sec=courseDetail>

May 13-15

National Association of Recreation Resource Planners Conference
Missoula, Montana
For more information, visit:
www.narrp.org/conference/

★ May 14

Tele-Workshop: Assessing Historic Roads
America's Byways Resource Center
Watch www.bywaysresourcecenter.org
for details and registration.

May 31 – June 4

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

May 19-23

Environmental Performance: Accelerating Pathways to Action
Baltimore, Maryland
National Environmental Partnership Summit
For more information, visit:
www.environmentalsummit.org

May 20-22

The History of Park Planning and Design Conference
Charlottesville, Virginia
Designing the Parks Conference, Part 1
For more information, visit:
www.georgewright.org

JUNE

June 1-5

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

June 4

National Get Outdoors Day

★ June 11

Tele-Workshop: Conducting a Visual Assessment II
America's Byways Resource Center
Watch www.bywaysresourcecenter.org
for details and registration.

SEPTEMBER

September 2-5

ProWalk/ProBike Conference 2008
Seattle, Washington
For more information, visit:
www.bikewalk.org/2008conference/index.html

September 11-14

Preserving the Historic Road 2008
Albuquerque, New Mexico
For more information, visit:
www.historicroads.org/sub7_1.htm

September 21-23

International Urban Parks Conference
Pittsburg, Pennsylvania
For more information, visit:
www.urbanparks08.org/

OCTOBER

October 19-24

65th Annual Convention of the National Congress of American Indians
Phoenix, Arizona
For more information, visit:
www.ncai.org/

October 21-28

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

NOVEMBER

November 11-15

Sustaining the Circle: NAI National Workshop
Portland, Oregon
National Association for Interpretation
For more information, visit:
www.interpnet.com/conferences

November 15-18

National Trails Symposium
Little Rock, Arkansas
American Trails
For more information, visit:
www.americantrails.org/2008/

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