

Memorandum

Date: January 10, 2005

To: John Hamill, DMG

From: Pat Flanagan, 29 Palms Chamber of Commerce

Subject: National Scenic Byways and Recreation Trails

Background

The communities within the California Desert are gateway to three National Parks, sixty-nine BLM Wilderness Areas, and several State Parks. The desert landscape with its broad uninterrupted vistas, diverse geology, and cultural features provides high quality scenic value for tourists and is of considerable economic importance to the communities.

At both the State and Federal level there are programs to preserve, protect, and promote scenic corridors and recreation trails with outstanding natural beauty:

The California Scenic Highway Program, (CSHP)

The National Scenic Byways Program (NSBP)

The national Recreational Trails Program. (RTP)

With the exception of the Death Valley Scenic Byway, there are no other designated scenic byways or trails in the California Desert.

The advantages of designating scenic byways and trails

1. Scenic Byway designation is a fitting tribute to our glorious vistas in every direction and would make our citizens proud.
2. Scenic Byways and Trails in the California Desert provide visibility at the national level.
3. Scenic Byways and Trails provide local entities with valuable tourism promotional tools.
4. A Scenic Byway could connect the three national parks from I-10 to Death Valley and include the BLM Wilderness areas and State Park in between.
5. A Scenic Byway could highlight the scenic values of Highway 62 as it parallels the northern boundary of JTNP through the Morongo Basin and underscore the need to preserve the open space between the communities. (Designation should be to the Colorado River.)
6. Designation, including both the process and the products produced, provides a positive cooperative project for the agencies, organizations, institutions, and citizens involved. Citizen participation in developing these requirements is very important if the program is to have popular support.

The Process

Nomination of a National Scenic Byway or Recreational Trail requires prior state designation through the CSHP.

[The California Scenic Highway Program](#)

1. The highway must be eligible to be officially designated. Eligibility begins at the county level. Already in San Bernardino County, Highways 62, 247, 127, and 58, and I-40 from Barstow to Needles and I-15 from Barstow to Baker are eligible (but undesignated).
2. "Eligibility" changes to "officially designated" when the local jurisdiction adopts a scenic corridor protection program, applies to Caltrans for approval, and receives notification of designation as a Scenic Highway.
3. The Protection program includes:
 - a. Regulation of land use and density of development;
 - b. Detailed land and site planning;
 - c. Control of outdoor advertising (including a ban on billboards);
 - d. Careful attention to and control of earthmoving and landscaping; and
 - e. Careful attention to design and appearance of structures and equipment.

Federal funds are available through the States to undertake eligible projects for the purpose of planning, designing, and developing State scenic byways programs, including the development of corridor management plans.

The Recreational Trails Program This program is simpler in concept and can include federal highway funding for up to 80% of the project on a reimbursement basis. The other 20% can be acquired through private donations, corporate sponsorships, volunteer hours, or through local and state government assistance. The process includes the following steps:

1. Contact State Trails Administrator to notify them of interest;
2. Develop trail project and fill out grant application;
3. State RTP advisory committee awards grants to deserving projects;
4. State Trails Administration notifies you if your project is given award;
5. Implement project.

National Scenic Byway The designation process (simplified) includes:

1. State designation— All nominations for NSB must be submitted by the *State Scenic Byways Agency* to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
2. Local sponsors submit to the SCBA documentation to determine if scenic byway has intrinsic qualities for a NSB. (Federal agencies can submit for federal lands.) Intrinsic qualities include one or more natural, historic, cultural, archeological and recreational qualities.
3. A corridor management plan is prepared and submitted which includes: a map; an assessment of intrinsic qualities; a strategy for maintaining the intrinsic qualities; a schedule and listing of all agency, group, and individual responsibilities in implementation of the plan including mechanism of how responsibilities will be met; a strategy for how existing development and new development will preserve existing qualities of corridor; a plan to insure ongoing public participation; a demonstration that intrusions on visitor experience have been minimized; a demonstration of compliance with all existing local, State, and Federal laws on control of outdoor advertising; a signage plan that supports the visitor experience; a marketing plan; an interpretation plan for the significant resources.
4. The Secretary of Transportation, with appropriate consultation, makes the decision.