



Real Places. Real Stories.™

FLORIDA SCENIC HIGHWAYS PROGRAM

A Program of the Florida Department of Transportation

2017 Annual Report

A MESSAGE FROM THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR

The **Florida Scenic Highways Program (FSHP)** was launched in 1996 to influence the preservation and enhancement of important Florida resources. At that time, no one could have predicted that the **real places** and **real stories** found along Florida's scenic highways would offer today's most sought-after type of travel experience. In fact, 84% of avid travelers indicate a desire to learn something new while they travel, and a majority want to "travel like a local." The opportunity to spend time with locals in neighborhoods and communities has always been the travel experience offered by scenic highways. This trend is significantly higher among younger travelers, so the demand is likely to continue to grow.

Thanks in large part to the leadership of **Secretary Mike Dew**, the FSHP continues to stay abreast of national trends and best practices and support Florida's 26 designated scenic highways. Recognizing that today's travel experience is an end-to-end, online and offline journey, the FSHP's recently updated website at www.FloridaScenicHighways.com provides detailed maps and other trip-planning tools. The Program also collects information about scenic highway events across the state and promotes them on the website as well as social media. In addition, the FSHP partnered with **Visit Florida** to help promote off-the-beaten path destinations to Florida's record-number of visitors in 2017 (116.5 million).

In 2017, the FSHP also hosted four discussion forums to collect guidance and feedback from the state's 26 grassroots byway organizations. Byway leaders from across the state shared ideas and suggestions for continuing the success and strengthening the Program in future years. In 2018, many of these ideas will be implemented. We can all look forward to a statewide meeting of byway leaders, increased emphasis on pedestrian and bicyclist safety, and an initiative by the Department to accommodate the needs of byway communities during planning and design of transportation facilities.

Florida's byway organizations not only provide quality experiences to their visitors, but are also good neighbors. In 2017, byway volunteers supported other community projects with direct positive impacts on the local economy and quality of life. A good example of this is Green Mountain Scenic Byway's support of the Friends of Lake Apopka bike ride in April 2017. The FSHP is proud to showcase in this annual report how Florida's byway organizations are truly champions of community.

Sincerely,

Jeff Caster, Program Coordinator

Florida Scenic Highways Program

floridascenichighways.com



Florida's Byway Organizations: Champions of Community

Florida Scenic Highways are managed by mostly all-volunteer organizations that rely on individuals that are passionate, involved, and committed to their communities. These volunteers do not limit their support to efforts that only benefit visitors, they also look for opportunities to assist with programs and events that reflect the values and priorities of their communities and improve local quality of life.

Their work in 2017 was no exception, and this report highlights some of the ways byway organizations supported their partners and byway communities. These groups are outstanding stewards of their special places and demonstrate extraordinary passion for **real places** and **real stories**.



Greg Gensheimer, Glenn Burns, and Mona Phipps of Green Mountain Scenic Byway at Oakland Nature Preserve where friends gathered to celebrate Glenn.

The **Garry Balogh Inspiring Excellence Award** is the highest honor bestowed by the Florida Department of Transportation's Scenic Highways Program. The award recognizes leadership, innovation, stewardship, and achievements that have made a significant and lasting impact on a scenic highway, scenic highway community, or the statewide program.

The 2017 recipient of the award was Glenn Burns of Montverde, a local leader and 17-year advocate for the Green Mountain Scenic Byway. Glenn served the Green Mountain Scenic Byway as community liaison, administrator and grant writer, but also spent countless hours representing the byway at public meetings and special events. He is described by many as Green Mountain's greatest champion.

Florida's Byway Organizations: Champions of Community



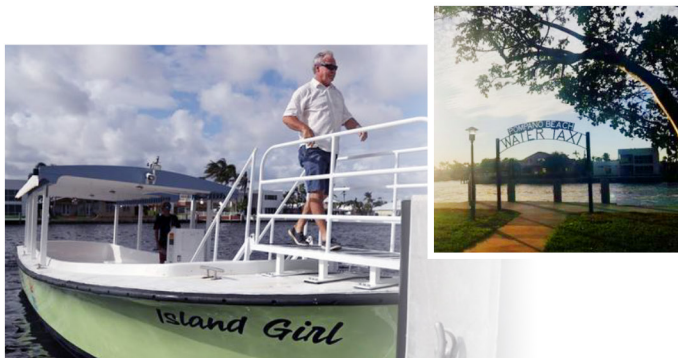
Flagler County's Centennial was celebrated in 2017 with a year-long series of events designed to recognize the county's rich cultural heritage. The events culminated with a Centennial Celebration in April. The **Heritage Crossroads: Miles of History** byway organization participated in many of the sponsored events including the Centennial Celebration where the byway and its partners took the opportunity to promote both the historic and cultural resources of the scenic highway and the **Florida Scenic Highways Program**.



The **Florida Wildlife Conservation Festival** is held annually in Umatilla to promote awareness of the Florida Black Bear and living safely in bear country. It also raises awareness of other native wildlife species. The **Florida Black Bear National Scenic Byway** organization is one of the event's key partners. Each year in conjunction with the festival, the byway organization conducts a tour of the Ocala National Forest. The theme of the 2017 tour, "**First Ranger on the Ocala National Forest and Juniper Springs,**" looked back in time to 1908, the year the Ocala National Forest was created. The byway organization also helped with a pre-event fundraiser along the scenic highway that benefited other community organizations.



In April 2017, the **Friends of Lake Apopka (FOLA)** hosted the "**FOLA 40 Bike Ride**" around Lake Apopka, including portions of the **Green Mountain Scenic Byway**. The event was organized as a fundraiser for FOLA and is expected to become an annual spring event. The **Green Mountain Scenic Byway** organization and the **Friends of Lake Apopka** are long-time partners, and to support the effort, members of the byway organization volunteered to staff water and snack stations for the ride. The scenic highway and surrounding trails are popular among cyclists, and event organizers expect ridership to grow each year.



In late 2017, a **new water taxi service** was launched along a portion of the **Broward County A1A Scenic Highway**. The water taxis provide service between Pompano Beach south to Fort Lauderdale, making eleven stops along the Intracoastal Waterway. The project provides a multi-modal mobility enhancement to the corridor and was championed by the **City of Pompano Beach**, a member of the **Broward County A1A Scenic Highway** organization.



The **J.C. Penney Memorial Scenic Highway** organization has worked in close partnership with the **Town of Penney Farms** since the scenic highway was designated in 2010. In 2017, the town began a visioning project to learn how residents and business owners view the ideal future of this small, close-knit community. The visioning process has included a survey, bus tours and open forum meetings with transportation, economic development, and tourism experts. The goal of the project is to produce "Quality of Life" recommendations for the town's Comprehensive Plan. The **J.C. Penney Memorial Scenic Highway** organization played a key role in obtaining the grant for this important project.