



Real Places. Real Stories.™

FLORIDA SCENIC HIGHWAYS PROGRAM

A Program of the Florida Department of Transportation

2018 Annual Report

2018 FSHP STATEWIDE MEETING A SUCCESS

On May 17, 2018, the Florida Scenic Highways Program (FSHP) hosted its first statewide meeting since 2011. The meeting was held in the City of Lake Helen on the River of Lakes Heritage Corridor and was well attended by scenic highway leaders, Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Districts, state agencies, local governments, and nonprofit organizations.



Greg Gensheimer, long-time leader of the Green Mountain Scenic Byway, co-presented a session on partnering and building relationships with organizations that share your mission.



Dawn Cary of the Scenic Sumter Heritage Byway was an active participant in the statewide meeting. Her “inexhaustible drive” is one of the reasons she received the **2018 Garry Balogh Inspiring Excellence Award**, the highest honor bestowed by the Florida Scenic Highways Program.



Kathleen Pagan is a Senior Planner for Alachua County and attended the FSHP Statewide Meeting on behalf of the Old Florida Heritage Highway.



Marti Miller is a Recreation Specialist for the Florida Forest Service who works closely with the Big Bend Scenic Byway. Marti shared information about universal accessibility on public lands and Big Bend’s plans to provide access and opportunities for people with disabilities.

Presenters for the day-long meeting discussed building partnerships, current marketing trends, and delivering high-quality visitor experiences. Attendees were also treated to a preview of the innovative new mobile app for travelers on the A1A Scenic & Historic Coastal Byway.

In a follow-up survey, meeting participants indicated that the meeting content and networking opportunities directly supported their byway organization’s efforts to promote economic development, enhance local quality of life, and conserve important resources along their scenic highways.

floridascenichighways.com   

Byway Organizations Advocate at Florida Tourism Day

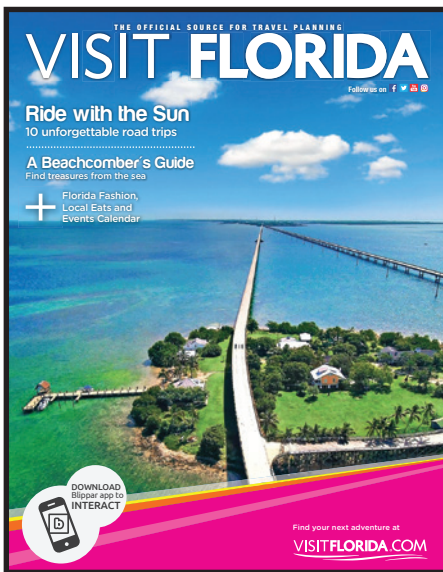


Brian Blanchard, former FDOT Assistant Secretary; Dawn Cary, Scenic Sumter Heritage Byway; Sallie O'Hara; Kelly Williams, Scenic Sumter Heritage Byway; Michael Dew, former FDOT Secretary; Georgia Turner, West Volusia Tourism Bureau; David Butler, Big Bend Scenic Byway; Danielle Anderson, A1A Scenic & Historic Coastal Byway.

Early in January 2018, several scenic highway leaders traveled to Tallahassee to participate in Florida Tourism Day at the Capitol sponsored by Visit Florida. The purpose of the event is to inform the legislature, media, and Florida residents about the significant impact tourism has on the state's economy. Byway leaders took the opportunity to advocate for scenic highways with state representatives and also met with FDOT Secretary Mike Dew.

FDOT Transportation Symposium

Program outreach continued in June with a prominent FSHP display and staff presentation at the FDOT Transportation Symposium in Orlando.



Visit Florida continues to be a key FSHP partner. Florida Scenic Highways were prominently featured in Visit Florida's 2018 Official Florida Vacation Guide which was delivered to half a million visitors and is also available online as a trip-planning tool.

Visit Florida Welcome Center staff toured the Pensacola Scenic Bluffs Highway in the fall of 2018 to experience the byway first hand as a destination and to share marketing recommendations with byway leaders. Additional byway tours for Visit Florida staff are planned for 2019.



An important role of Florida's byway organizations is to support the conservation of the resources that earned the scenic highway designation. This annual report focuses on natural resource conservation and the important role byway organizations play in raising awareness of conservation issues.

From guided trail walks to environmental education fairs, the Department is proud of the way byway organizations lead by example. Byway programs and events are popular and enjoyable opportunities to learn and raise awareness of the need to protect Florida's most precious resources and inspire the next generation of conservationists.

Call to Action: Florida Scenic Highways Mobilize Grassroots Conservation Efforts



Florida's water and natural resources are the foundation of the state's economy and way of life. Raising awareness of at-risk resources is the critical first step to conservation. Many Florida Scenic Highway communities sought designation as a way to document and influence the protection of important resources. Byway management plans are used to guide and balance the conservation, enhancement, and promotion of scenic highways in order to deliver high-quality visitor experiences and improve local quality of life. This year's annual report highlights scenic highway supported programs that raise awareness and encourage residents and visitors to conserve and enjoy byway resources in a responsible manner.

A1A Scenic & Historic Coastal Byway: Kids Ocean Day Environmental Education Fair

Children who engage in environmental education are more likely to become proactive adults, which is what inspired the Friends of A1A to create "Kids Ocean Day Environmental Education Fair." According to Friends of A1A Vice Chair Marge Rooyackers, "Allowing kids to discover nature in an interactive environment plants the seeds for lifelong environmental awareness and stewardship."

The event was held for the ninth year in 2018 at Gamble Rogers Memorial State Park on the A1A Scenic & Historic Coastal Byway in Flagler County. Students from Rymfire Elementary School enjoyed a day of learning about native plants and wildlife at educational stations, craft activities, and tours of the park.



Friends of A1A board member Adam Morley is a licensed boat captain whose dedication to litter reduction along the waterways of the A1A Scenic & Historic Coastal Byway led him to create "The Litter Gitter," a sponsored watercraft known throughout the corridor for removing litter and debris from the Intracoastal Waterway. Adam participated in Kids Ocean Day for the second time in 2018, educating kids about removing litter and marine debris from beaches and waterways.



To further engage students in the area, a Kids Ocean Day poster contest is held annually in cooperation with the Flagler-Palm Coast High School Art Department. Due to an overwhelming number of entries in 2018, the above poster was selected for a people's choice award in addition to the work selected as the official poster for the event. Both art students received a cash prize in addition to public recognition.

Florida Black Bear National Scenic Byway: Florida Wildlife Festival Bus Tour



According to the Executive Director of the Umatilla Chamber of Commerce, the Florida Wildlife Festival, including the Florida Black Bear National Scenic Byway bus tour, not only raises awareness of important conservation issues, but has a significant economic impact on the local community.



Previously known as the Florida Black Bear Festival, the Florida Wildlife Festival's focus has expanded to include not only the Black Bear but other native species, both imperiled and common to the region.

The Florida Black Bear National Scenic Byway crisscrosses the Ocala National Forest, the first National Forest established east of the Mississippi River. The forest contains the world's largest sand pine scrub, an increasingly rare natural community that is home to plants and animals found nowhere else on earth. The Florida Wildlife Festival began fifteen years ago to increase awareness and promote the safe coexistence of humans and wildlife.

Several guided tours are offered each year in conjunction with the festival, including one led by the Florida Black Bear National Scenic Byway organization. The byway tour is one of the festival's most popular activities, and along with other Florida Wildlife Festival programs, fosters community appreciation of the Florida Black Bear and other wildlife species native to the Ocala National Forest, as well as the unique ecosystems that serve as wildlife habitat.

Ormond Scenic Loop & Trail: Trail Walks

Since 2008, the Ormond Scenic Loop & Trail byway organization has sponsored nineteen free, professionally-guided trail walks on the byway corridor. The two-hour walks are led by Dr. Don Spence, a certified arborist, plant pathologist, and biology professor at Bethune-Cookman University.

Dr. Spence discusses the natural history of the area, as well as the environmental and conservation issues related to or illustrated by resources along the trail. The events are the byway organization's most direct form of educational outreach, and byway leaders believe the program deepens participants' appreciation of the natural and scenic resources of the scenic highway.



Held early on Saturday mornings, the Ormond Scenic Loop & Trail guided walks teach participants about local plant and animal species as well as threats to natural resources, from rising temperatures to the increasing salinity of ground water due to rising seas.



The guided trail walks hosted each year along the Ormond Scenic Loop & Trail instill an appreciation for the scenic and natural resources of the byway. In 2018, the March trail walk departed from the Fairchild Oak at Bulow Creek State Park, and in November participants walked the Red Trail in Tomoka State Park.