

## Palms to Pines Scenic Byway Workshop I Series

### Visions, Goals, and Intrinsic Themes

#### Meetings Notes

Meetings began with a welcome by Emilyn Sheffield and thank you to Camp Ronald McDonald, Idyllwild Nature Center and the Pinyon Fire Station for hosting us and for the work each organization does for the local communities.

#### Introductions

Jim Foote	Director, National Monument
Tamara Wilton	Scenic Byways Branch Director, US Forest Service, Recreation Solutions
Steve Harris	Outdoor Rec Planner, National Monument
Laurie Rosenthal	San Jacinto District Ranger, San Bernardino NF
Timory Peel	Writer/planner, US Forest Service, Recreation Solutions
Emilyn Sheffield	California State U., Chico and the evening's meeting facilitator

Thirty community members participated over the three nights.

#### Our Purpose and Byway Background

The purpose of the workshop series is threefold:

- Complete a Corridor Management Plan (CMP)
- Identify ways to enhance the visitor experience and the vitality of the communities along the route
- Begin to determine desirability and feasibility to pursue National Scenic Byway or All American Road designation

The Palms to Pines Scenic Byway includes portions of State Routes 74 and 243. The State Route 74 segment begins at the junction with State Route 111 in Palm Desert and extends to the west boundary of the San Bernardino National Forest east of Hemet. The State Route 243 segment begins at the junction with State Route 74 at Mountain Center and continues to the Banning city limits. SR 74 was designated a State Scenic Highway in 1971, SR 243 was designated a State Scenic Highway in 1972 and then both were subsequently designated a National Forest Scenic Byway in 1993. (Note: Although the NF designation was originally titled as a National Scenic Byway, that designation pre-dates the current FHWA national scenic byway designation program. The NF designation is now commonly referred to as a National Forest Scenic Byway.)

#### History of the Byway Movement

Galvanized by the 1964 President's Commission on the Americans Outdoors, a growing body of national outdoor research consistently confirms that scenic driving is a popular and common form of outdoor recreation. Based in part on this information, a variety of programs recognizing special travel routes as scenic byways were born in the late 1980s. Byways make en route travel more interesting and the landscapes they traverse more understandable as our culture becomes increasingly urban. Scenic byways help connect people to places.

California was an early leader in the scenic driving movement developing the first scenic highway programs in the country. The Palms to Pines route was one of the first scenic highways designated in California's program. Federal agencies such as the Forest Service and BLM followed and FHWA highways entered the game in 1991 with designations for National Scenic Byways and All American Roads. Currently, at least six federal agencies have route designation

programs (e.g., USDA Forest Service, USDI National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, FHWA).

FHWA developed its national scenic byway program to recognize excellent driving experiences and requires a community-driven corridor management plan as a prerequisite for designation. This is why we are here today. We'll work with your communities to develop and write a corridor management plan. From that point, you can decide if pursuing a national designation with FHWA is something you desire.

This is a recognition program, not a regulatory program. We are here to work together to develop a CMP. It will be up to your communities to decide whether to seek nomination for national scenic byway designation after this CMP has been completed.

### **What are the Benefits of writing a CMP and pursuing national designation?**

Scenic byways can be a way for communities to chart their best future.

Writing a CMP, communities can:

- Develop a shared vision for the future of their road corridor.
- Align planning efforts of various land management planning documents (Forest Service, County, Bureau of Land Management, etc.).
- Increase cooperation among communities and/or agencies.
- Organize the information about the corridor currently spread among various sources.
- Secure resources for safety improvements, interpretation, resource protection, etc.
- Respond to growth and change.
- Identify issues and concerns.
- Identify the intrinsic features to better preserve and maintain those highly valued assets.

In addition, creating a CMP is required as part of the nomination process for NHWAs national scenic byway designation.

Your CMP can describe how your communities want to:

- Maintain community vitality.
- Improve roadway safety.
- Manage tourism development.
- Improve economic development.
- Influence visitor management.
- Improve visitor experience.
- Maintain your quality of life.

Population growth figures for Riverside County and southern California project dramatic growth. Completing a corridor management plan for a popular, commuter, traveler, and residential corridor is one way to prepare for growth and associated changes in traffic. Census data for southern California can be found at <http://www.scag.ca.gov/census/index.htm>. (The SCAG data are more localized than the information that Emily used in her presentation. If you are interested in reviewing a copy of the Socioeconomic Atlas for California National Parks, the source of the statistics Emily cited in her presentation, you can download the large (20 MB) file at this URL: <http://www.nature.nps.gov/socialscience/archive.cfm> and then scroll down to the heading called "Socioeconomic Atlas. The California Atlas, released in 2010, is the fifth one on the list.)

As FHWA describes, the CMP is a *“Written document that lays out goals, strategies and responsibilities for conserving and enhancing a scenic byway’s most valuable qualities.”* There is no pre-determined outcome. Once the CMP is finalized, your communities will decide whether to pursue national designation.

### Why have some communities considered designation?

- The route is then “named and national” and signifies that the route is special.
- Communities have found a national scenic byway designation to be appropriate and achievable - we have spectacular roads and communities in the west, so it’s achievable. There are national caliber assets and stories here.
- National designations respect and honor the “working” nature of these scenic routes that also serve as commuter routes and transportation corridors for needed goods and services.
- Scenic byways help create an identity for the area and its communities.
- Scenic byway designations can help manage tourism impacts. As population growth continues, byway planning can assist in management of the visitor demographic. Byway drivers tend to spend more, stay longer, and respect a place. A CMP and designation can help you draw visitors that are more aligned with your values that are relatively lighter on the land, fit your lifestyle, and bring economic spending power.
- Scenic byways can be a great visitor service, acting as an itinerary for the scenic driver. It allows you to guide visitors where you want them to go. You can direct them to some places you want to highlight, and de-emphasize the areas you don’t want visitors to linger.
- Scenic byways give you opportunities to communicate your message – tell the story you want to tell/where you want to tell it.
- Scenic byway designations can increase competitiveness for resources/grants.

Of the four byway groups Recreation Solutions has worked with to write CMPs, one received national designation (Ebbetts Pass), one is preparing to pursue nomination (Yuba River), and two have elected not to pursue nomination at this time (Carson Pass and Angeles Crest). We’ll contact those groups and ask permission for providing names for you to call if you would like to ask about their experiences.

### The Process

Although the outcome of our workshops is not pre-determined, FHWA determined what will be included in a completed CMP. In other words, the outcome is not prescriptive but the contents of a CMP are.

The completed CMP will involve the public to:

- Identify the route
- Review existing planning documents
- Identify the intrinsic features
- Develop strategies and implementation items

How will we do this?

- Conduct workshops
- Review documents and have site visits
- Inventory signs and key features
- Recreation Solutions will prepare the draft CMP
- Community participants will review

- Recreation Solutions will consider community edits and revise
- Final CMP will be produced and shared with communities along the route

The more information you provide, the better and more complete the final CMP will be.

### Identifying the Palms to Pines Scenic Byways Intrinsic Values: What makes your byway special?

- The quiet; the solitude. It's not very populated. Cherish this and want to keep it.
- The difference in the energy up here from down the hill, the openness of the energy.
- The challenge of living here: people either love it or hate. The place demands you really be a part of it.
- It's a very special mountain.
- Native American heritage; prehistoric trails and settlements.
- Coyotes, rattlesnakes. The last (largest?) grizzly in California was killed here in 1906.
- Mountain biking.
- "24 Hours of Endurance: Hurkey Creek" (Mountain Bike race?)
- Snow-backed ridges.
- No smog/clean air.
- No franchise/commercial development.
- Horseback riding.
- Fishing on Lake Hemet and the San Jacinto River.
- Historic Lake Hemet Dam.
- De Anza Expedition.
- Mt San Jacinto - second tallest in So. Cal. And 7<sup>th</sup> steepest in US.
- Route has elevation gain from 300' to 6000' in 35 miles with remarkable views.
- Idyllwild School of Music.
- Mining: dolomite, gold, garnet, tourmaline.
- Cattle trail up from Anza.
- Movie heritage and ongoing movie filming. The Great Escape stallig scene was filmed in here 1953; it's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World; Bonanza.
- There is a sense of community up here that you don't experience down in the valley.
- Roadside recreation opportunities – PCT and other trails. 300 miles of trails on the National Monument with access to those trails along the byway corridor.
- Giant Old Irreplaceable Trees. Love coming up out of Hemet and you're in the trees, in the mountains. Those big trees are the character of the place.
- Pinyon pines (*P. quadrifolio*) and redshank (*A. sparsifolia*) unique to the area.
- "Old Growth Forest" – Juniper/pinyon scrub +/- 1000 year old juniper.
- Palm Desert has largest desert fan palm (*Washingtonia filifera*) oasis in world.
- +/- 30 threatened and endangered species at the monument.
- Hamilton Museum in Anza.
- Mountain scenery.
- Tahquitz.
- Motorcycle route; advertised as "miles of smooth asphalt with 180 degree turns"
- Diversity of the terrain: Seven life-zones/habitats.
- Timber history. These pines trees built every railroad tie from Banning to Yuba.
- Arts and cultural attractions in Idyllwild.
- Pine cone collection.
- Youth camps, drawing kids who may chose to return when they grow up.
- Climbing Lily Rock.
- Garner Valley Cattle Ranch History; cowboys; working ranch.

- National Monument.
- The road is fun to drive. Popular for motorcycles especially, but fun to drive for all.
- It was the road to the first state park in southern California. San Jacinto State Park – it was a very big deal at the time.
- When leaving to go to the valley – I question why I am leaving. It's a mini-eastern Sierra. A treasure, but not one we want to increase attention to.
- Prehistoric archaeological sites. However, some are pristine sights we don't want to draw attention to.

(NOTE: the workshops may also identify intrinsic qualities that you chose not to highlight in the CMP.)

- Good restaurants and amenities in Idyllwild.
- Opportunity to travel through the rain shadow: a weather story.
- Indian reservation (if the tribe wants to be highlighted as intrinsic feature)
- The scenic vistas, you can see mountains above and the valley below.
- Penny Pines Plantation.
- Message about fire and fire safety
- Geology of the route.
- The Nature Center.
- Lake Fulmor – good recreation access, right along the road.
- Cahuilla Tewanet.
- The Hemet dam – tallest masonry arch dam in the world when it was completed.

We'll continually build on this list as we go on ....

### **Considering the potential population growth in Riverside County, what is your vision for the Palms to Pines Scenic Byway for next 20 years?**

- Maintain Road Ambience
- Preservation of the natural resources that exist along the corridor
- Preservation of the whole visual aspect of the area
- Ongoing sense of the community
- Additional guardrails – preferably visually appealing guardrails, built to match the character of the area.
- Safety improvements along the highway that don't change the character.
- Vision for the animals, minimize car/animal hits.
- Still franchise – free, minimal commercialism.
- Maintain the openness, solitude.
- Preservation/maintenance of the original rock gutters (ca. 1932 or 1933) laid along the road the first mile above the monument's visitor center.
- No traffic lights in Idyllwild, still quaint and small.
- Minimal commercial traffic (don't allow commercial trucking).
- Highway patrol should enforce mufflers and speed.
- Afraid it will be straightened, widened and denuded of character just so people can get to work.
- This place is special because it's close to cities but has a unique, quiet character. Would like to keep that unique, quaint character.

*(Also mentioned was "that nobody can use it but those that live here" and "gates at bottom of mountain all around" which although understandable from some participants' points of view, is not achievable within this planning process.)*

**Participant questions:**

*How many national scenic byways does California have?*

California has seven National Scenic Byways. Visit <http://byways.org/> for descriptions of the national byways in California and across the U.S.

*What specifically can be gained by national designation for the communities that live here in light of current designations (state and forest designations)? Can it provide increased protections of what we enjoy?*

National Scenic Byway designation is a recognition program, not a regulatory program. As it is currently legislated, a CMP and national designation will not override any other agency policy (Caltrans, Forest Service, BLM, etc.).

Some communities pursue designation because they are proud of their area and want to share their story and want to attract the visitor they desire.

In addition, few state and forest designations bring any funding opportunities. The national scenic byway program is the only program that has grant funding. The funds help communities achieve the vision and implementation items laid out in their CMPs. A completed CMP and national designation may also provide a byway organization or local government entity with a competitive advantage in securing additional transportation funding or other external support.

*Have communities with national scenic byways noticed increased traffic?*

Although there has been some research regarding the economic effects of byway designation, there has not been specific data collection regarding changes in the volume of visitors. National designation in and of itself doesn't necessarily attract additional visitors. It would be dependent on a community's efforts to market that national designation. One option to consider would be to use national designation to provide a better visitor experience, directing visitors where you would like them to recreate vs. marketing to attract additional visitors.

*Caltrans has been conducting traffic counts on Hwy 74 near junction with Hwy 371. Can we get that traffic count data? Where does most of the traffic go? Down 371 to Temecula or on to Idyllwild?*

We can ask Caltrans to provide that data and could include a goal in the CMP for additional traffic counts on 5-year intervals. However, traffic counts alone aren't conclusive data demonstrating increased traffic due to designation. As population growth continues in the Coachella/Anza valleys, you may also be seeing an increase in the commuter traffic travelling via Hwy 74 and Hwy 371.

*Is a goal for you (Forest Service/BLM) to increase use and usage of the road? Is the goal that since there will be an increase in population it's better for the road to be used?*

The goal of the CMP process is for your communities to identify what you desire for the future of the route. You have a destination (Idyllwild) on the route that has been a destination for a hundred years, this your opportunity to have a voice and cooperate in the use of the route to that destination.

*What if all communities aren't in favor of nominating Palms to Pines for national designation?*

At the end of this project, you will have a CMP with a list of implementation items developed with community support. If you do not have consensus to seek national designation, the CMP can still be used to seek other funding opportunities for those implementation items.

The final CMP can express differing sentiments among the communities. However, it will also express items and goals where you agree. Identifying common goals through this collaborative process gives you an opportunity to seek funding for potential improvements to the route.

*Can different areas have different designations? If you have areas that don't want designation and areas that do, everyone still ends up driving through the areas that don't want the designation. How do you bypass them in these mountains?*

Some of the examples of existing segmented National Scenic Byways are in flat terrain with alternate routes around non-designated segments. California does not have any discontinuous (segmented byways). You could consider nominating a Hemet to Banning route for national designation if the communities along southern portion of Hwy 74 didn't want to participate. Extending the existing State Scenic Byway from the San Bernardino NF boundary to Hemet could be included as an implementation item in the CMP. These are all options that can be explored throughout the workshops while developing the CMP.

*Would it be possible to propose signs to promote heading to the scenic byway off I-10 at Banning or from Hemet?*

Yes, this could be listed as an implementation item if all the communities agreed on strategies to promote the route.

*I thought at first you wanted us to clearly identify the safety issues so we could seek corrections. But if we list them all in this document, it will be momentum for Caltrans to change the character of the road (straighten/widen) which is worse than the current safety issues. Caltrans could hijack this CMP and use it as documentation to put a straight commuter route through our communities.*

The grant to write this CMP has been funded to involve your communities, to seek your input, your goals, your intrinsic values. Kristen and Timory will take your input with the information already included in existing Forest Service, BLM, Riverside County, and State Park land management plans and write a draft document. It will be returned to you for your review and edits before finalizing. Although we will ask Caltrans to provide information for the document (traffic data, safety records, current and future plans) and invite them to attend a workshop to answer your questions, they will not be involved in the production of the document. The completed CMP will be a tool for *you* to use to seek grant funding for *your* listed implementation items.

*Question for Jim – How is national monument prepared for more visitors, more trash etc.? Can your staff handle the additional workload?*

The question also could be are we attracting more visitors because we are a monument? One thing to consider is that a portion of the traffic is actually commuter traffic, not monument visitors or scenic drivers.

However, this CMP is an integral tool for the monument to manage the visitor use. How do we get the visitors to go where we want them to go? I want people to come and respect the area. And I would like to make this road a safe journey. I want the plan to help us achieve that. We don't need national scenic byway designation to bring visitors, they're coming anyway. Maybe using a signage plan developed in this CMP we can have an additional tool to teach visitors to respect the area.

Joshua Tree National Park is an example of a visitor experience that is very regulated to protect the area. This isn't a national park, but we can follow their example of identifying a specific visitor niche and work to attract those like-minded visitors. We can identify the path for those

visitors to follow, pointing them through signage and interpretive materials to where we want them to stop, visit, or recreate.

*What were your (Forest Service) thoughts about the previous evening's meeting?*

Believe we have a better understanding of the safety issue of the route. There are concerns that highlighting the safety issues may be used as tool to change the rural character of the road (widen, straighten, and clearcut along the road). We were incorrect in our initial assessment of the route's potential as an international draw for All-American Road designation. Some Garner Valley residents pointed out the international visitors currently utilize the area.

We think people left with an understanding that the CMP can stand as an objective statement of intent about what your communities want for your future. And that there can be different goals for different communities.

*Will the BLM land swap affect the PCT or the byway?*

No, the proposed land swap on BLM doesn't impact PCT or Scenic Byway; it is within Indian canyon lands and near Palm Springs.

*Can we highlight Idyllwild and not other areas?*

Yes, opportunities for services and recreation can be highlighted to direct visitors where you would like them to go.

*Can we include opportunities in communities not on the byway?*

Although the focus of the CMP will be specific to the byway corridor, recreation and amenity opportunities in nearby communities can be discussed if desired.

*What is this current grant for?*

The USFS applied for a FHWA grant to write a CMP for Palms to Pines highway to assess the potential for nomination for national designation. This grant is not for the designation itself. Recreation Solutions will use the grant funding to conduct workshops to get community input to write and produce a CMP. The final document will be yours to use to pursue designation or apply for other grant funding for improvements to the highway.

At the end of the project, you will have a CMP. The next steps will depend on community desire. National designation can enhance your ability to get funding but it is only one of the funding sources. The CMP will list projects you would like to implement (e.g. safety or interpretive). The FS, BLM, community, or non-profit organization could go forward and look for funding from any number of sources. The CMP may make the grant applications more competitive and/or easier to prepare.

*Who would nominate the byway for national scenic byway designation?*

You could form a non-profit byway organization to nominate your byway. Or the nomination could come from a Community of Governments, Chamber of Commerce, other community groups, economic development groups, the Forest Service, or the BLM.

Once an entity nominates the byway, dissenting opinions have the opportunity to be voiced before the FHA would finalize designation.

*We are not opposed to writing a CMP, but we need to talk about the rock in the road. That big rock in the road is Caltrans – they own the road, they can do what they want. Will any representatives from Caltrans attend these meetings? Will a CMP and national designation give us more clout with Caltrans?*

As mentioned before, this is a recognition program, not a regulatory program. The CMP can be used to describe the community visions for the byway corridor but it cannot override local State agency policy for road standard safety.

We have introduced ourselves to the local Caltrans District 8 planning office and will invite them to attend Workshop 3 where we cover transportation issues. We will ask them to have a representative attend all three of the community's workshops to provide equal opportunity for all community members to ask questions.

The CMP gives your communities the opportunity to document what you value about this route and identify other safety mitigations you would like Caltrans to consider. For example, you could describe a desire for additional signing to slow traffic to improve safety as an alternative to removing trees along the route. However, the CMP and designation are not enforceable policy.

Please remember that Caltrans tree removal plans are a separate from the CMP. The timing of these two projects is coincidental. We hope you can work toward your goals on the trees but also move forward with this CMP process.

*How real are the population demographic projections you provided?*

The national US Census Bureau projections are based on the mid-range data series. In recent decades these population thresholds have often been reached earlier than projected. California regularly adds 400 – 500 thousand people a year (the equivalent of a Sacramento each year).

### **Conclusion**

We'll take the information and begin developing visions and goals for you to refine. We'll work on finding more answers to your questions. We'll send you the notes from these meetings and Website links for additional information.

We would propose to come to you every two months and tackle a different theme each time as we build on previous themes.

The next workshop will be in January. We'll send out two date sets and you can let us know if one or the other is a conflict for you. (There is an International Film Festival in Idyllwild January 10-12<sup>th</sup>.) We'll pick a 4 day set for the three workshops using one of the meeting dates as a "snow-date" in case weather prevents folks from coming out.

Most nights work for Garner Valley, Tuesdays and Wednesdays work well for Idyllwild, Wednesdays work well for Pinyon.

Thank you for your participation! This program is designed to honor and recognize as well as require local participation. Any time you can donate to participate in the workshop, research local history, review the document can be counted as a match for our work.

Please contact Kristen Thrall or Timory Peel with questions or if you have information or additional contact information for us!

### **Web Links for Additional Information**

[www.byways.org](http://www.byways.org) : Trip planning site for exploring America's Byways.

<http://www.bywaysresourcecenter.org/> : Provides resource information for byway planners.

<http://www.bywaysonline.org/> : National Scenic Byways Program information.

[http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic\\_highways/scenic\\_hwy.htm](http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic_highways/scenic_hwy.htm) : California's Scenic Highway program.

<http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic/faq.htm> : Frequently asked questions about California's scenic highway program.

[http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/tahoe/projects\\_plans/yd-byway/index.shtml](http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/tahoe/projects_plans/yd-byway/index.shtml) : Link to the recently completed Yuba River Scenic Byway CMP on the Tahoe NF Website.

<http://www.scenic4.org/cmp.html> : Link to the Ebbetts Pass byway organization website and the CMP.