

## Palms to Pines Scenic Byway Workshop V Series

### Draft CMP Walk-through and Next Steps

#### Attendees

Between the three workshop locations, 15 members of the community joined representatives of Supervisor Benoit's office, the San Bernardino National Forest, the BLM Santa Rosa and San Jacinto National Monument, Caltrans, Forest Service Recreation Solutions. Dr. Emilyn Sheffield, professor with California State University, Chico facilitated the meetings and led the discussion.

#### Agenda

Meeting objectives included completing a walk-through of the draft CMP, discussing the next steps toward implementing action items and sharing current FHWA discretionary funding opportunities.

#### Meeting Notes

Emilyn described what we accomplished in the previous workshops and then began a chapter-by-chapter walk through of the draft CMP. The intent of this step is to point folks to content that may be of particular interest to them personally, to check to see if the document reflects community sentiment and point out areas where you may be able to provide additional information.

Some hard copies were left at each workshop and the electronic version will be made available to community participants or by request. Additional print copies may be available at the San Jacinto Ranger District in Idyllwild or the BLM office in Palm Springs.

Comments and edits are invited and welcome either via post, email or phone to:

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To be most helpful, please provide your feedback by January 15, 2012.

This is a draft version, feel free to provide grammatical and punctuation edits as well as content. There are a few pictures included in this version to give an idea of their placement but most were left out to minimize the document size for review. If you have photos to share please send with your desired credit information and we will endeavor to include as possible.

#### *Draft CMP Walk-through*

**Chapter 1** – This chapter is not specifically required by FHWA but provides a stage-setting opportunity. It begins with an introduction to the byway and goes on to describe the overall byway program. The chapter culminates in a set of goal statements reflecting things we heard most often in the community workshops.

**Chapter 2** – This chapter is required by FHWA and describes features along the Palms to Pines Scenic Byway that fit FHWA's six intrinsic qualities.

It includes tables describing recreation opportunities along the route. Please identify any items that have been missed and/or any items that are considered a "local" asset that communities may not want to share with a larger audience.

**Chapter 3** – This information in this chapter is required by FHWA. It describes the existing resource protection strategies that are in place to protect the intrinsic values along the route. The federal, state and county presence along the route provides an established set of existing land management policies for protection of the byway's intrinsic values.

**Chapter 4** – This chapter describes the highway conditions and transportation safety including average daily traffic data, highway fatality data and most importantly, the desired safety improvements community residents identified and prioritized at the workshops. This information is located in Table 5 on pages 70 to 75. It is a comprehensive list of local roadway knowledge captured from community participants.

**Chapter 5** – Information in this chapter is required by FHWA relative to the hospitality services available for byway travelers. Please review and provide information regarding any businesses or service that may have changed or have been missed.

This chapter continues with a description of the 'built environment' requirements for any developments (interpretive signing or visitor facilities) on the Forest Service lands along the byway.

**Chapter 6** – FHWA requires regulation of outdoor advertising along a scenic byway route. California's state scenic highway outdoor advertising regulation and laws are more strict than the federal laws so those protections are in place along this route and no additional regulation or zoning is required. This chapter provides that information as required.

**Chapter 7** – This chapter describes the main interpretive themes and delivery options for the information community participants have identified as the important stories to share about the byway corridor. This includes the various life zones the route traverses, safety messaging and the history/heritage of the roadway corridor and its residents.

**Chapter 8** – Marketing opportunities and plans for byway promotion is something FHWA requires based on the program's original intent to revitalize economic commerce in rural communities. As the program has matured, FHWA's priorities have shifted and the workshops have progressed, it has become evident that marketing for increased visitation is not appropriate in every location. FHWA's new priorities regarding livability and this route's existing traffic loads provides a different opportunities for messaging the byway.

Considering the existing commuter traffic, the Monument as a draw on the south end and the returning visitation to the Idyllwild's annual festivals and camper/retreat infrastructure, attracting additional byway travelers is not necessary. Reaching the existing byway travelers with the messages communities have identified as most important is more important than marketing to additional visitors in this byway's case.

Accordingly, this chapter describes the opportunity to improve the community livability, traveler/commuter safety and the visitor experience by strategically communicating the importance of preservation of place, how to safely travel the route and how to respect private property along the route.

For the last several projects Recreation Solutions and Emilyn have worked on, a brochure, map or other promotional items like "rack cards" have been developed in association with the CMP. As marketing is not a desired activity for the Palms to Pines Scenic Byway residents, Emilyn is working to develop a brochure/flyer type publication as a "stewardship guide" that could be shared with visitors through the government agencies, camps and retreat centers or businesses along the route.

**Chapter 9** – This chapter identifies implementation items to improve the resident and visitor experience that have been identified throughout the community workshops. Please review and provide any other items that may have been missed.

This chapter also includes funding opportunities through various federal, state or private organizations. Please share any knowledge of any other funding strategies you may be aware of.

**Appendices** were not included for review but will include a map (required by FHWA), a bibliography of the many historical references that have been written about the area, a sign inventory and an inventory of the existing interpretation along the route.

### Next Steps

Community participants agreed to form a task force and continue to work together into 2012 to finalize the artwork and move forward on potential implementation items. This would involve two to four meetings over the next year with representatives of the byway community residents and organizations meeting together in one location (versus the previous year's separate community meetings) to continue the conversation of how to implement priority action items listed in the CMP and whether seeking national designation is something communities desire.

At this point in time, FHWA is not calling for nominations for national designation. That gives folks some additional time to work together and continue the good energy that has been invested over the previous year developing the CMP. It provides time to transition project leadership from the federal agencies to the hands of the communities.

Community participants agreed that if we stop now and no one is willing to work on some of the implementation items, the CMP will sit on the shelf and nothing more will be accomplished.

One community participant pointed out that many of the CMP described safety issues are generic in nature and do not specifically call out on what should be done. Working on specific plans (signing, turnout improvements, etc) that list locations and details may be something the task force chooses to address. Bringing diverse community organizations together to identify needs and network funding sources would give funding proposals a competitive edge.

*(Note: seeking specific data such as accurate daily time and seasonal traffic counts will be added as an implementation item in Table 17 of the draft CMP as requested.)*

In addition extending our time together over the next year provides an opportunity for Emilyn to bring university students down to travel the route to work on some of the potential stewardship interpretation implementation.

There was concern from community participants about how to bring their respective communities to agreement with the whole of the byway communities. Goal of continuing to work together over the next year will be for community participants to begin to outreach to those individual organizations, church groups, associations, etc. to share what has been accomplished and seek their feedback. There may be opportunities to provide information at community events (through booths, flyers, etc.).

**Artwork and application piece** - As the artists begin layout of the potential artwork, we would like a committee to provide feedback on the community preferences. The process will include a presentation of three 'rough' layouts of a particular theme for an artwork committee to vote on. The rough chosen by majority vote then will go back to the designer at Chico for polish and type set. If you would like to participate in the artwork committee, please let Timory know.

We will also be developing an application of the artwork in the form of easy to print/duplicate “stewardship” flyer or newspaper. It will provide safe mountain driving information as well as the interpretive messages described in the CMP. The goal of this application would be to capture the hearts and minds of your existing resident/visitor/commuting travelers instead of a traditional marketing strategy for increasing visitation.

### **FHWA 2012 Discretionary Grant Funding Period**

FHWA opened a short grant funding application period beginning November 14<sup>th</sup> with applications due to Caltrans by December 9<sup>th</sup>. This provides an opportunity to apply for funding through the Public Lands Highways Discretionary Program for some of the action items listed in the CMP. The funding amount is approximately half of what was available last year (43 million versus 98 million) and the FHWA has indicated priority will be given to projects that are “shovel-ready” and can provide immediate employment opportunities. Although many of the safety items listed in the CMP meet FHWA criteria, the site-specific planning for implementation/construction is not complete and a grant application may not be competitive at this time.

One safety concern that hadn't been mentioned in previous workshops was a need for additional parking at the National Monument Visitor Center. During special events, Thursday morning scheduled hiking groups and other days during higher visitor use periods, existing parking is insufficient. Overflow parking along SR 74 requires pedestrian crossing at a dangerous location on this high-speed route. The potential for a serious accident is high and reducing the risk would be beneficial to both visitors and the residents who drive the route regularly.

The Monument staff completed an environmental assessment and engineering design for additional parking facilities in 2010 but has been unable to procure funding for construction. This project would be very competitive as the planning and design are complete and the project could be directly implemented.

Other grant ideas the BLM, Forest Service and community participants discussed included repairing the foot bridge along SR 243 at Lake Fulmor, additional signing or turnout improvements along the both SR 74 and 243, additional, site-accurate traffic counts along SR 74 between Palm Desert and SR 371 and repairing interpretive signs at Cahuilla Tewanet.

All of the ideas discussed could meet FHWA funding criteria although some may be more competitive than others. Recreation Solutions will work to get at least one grant related to the Palms to Pines SB submitted and the FS and BLM may try and submit grants as well. The Santa Rosa Tribe is pursuing a HUD grant opportunity that is also currently available to improve route safety at the reservation entrance. Any community participant or organization is encouraged to coordinate with either the Tribe or one of the Federal agencies if they would like to submit an application. FHWA discretionary program information can be found at: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/discretionary/>.

There may be another opportunity for additional traffic counts along SR 74. The San Dimas Technology and Development Center is working to develop a method for wireless traffic counts and the San Bernardino NF is scheduled as a test site. The FS will contact San Dimas and ask about the flexibility to choose the location, perhaps providing data useful to both San Dimas and the Palms to Pines SB planning effort.