



Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway Newsletter

A National Scenic Byway

Volume 2 Issue 1 January 1, 2010

Website: <http://www.fbbsb.org>

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Sponsorship

Benefactor	\$5,000
Corporate	\$2,500
Florida Black Bear Founding	\$250
Florida Cougar	\$100
Florida White Tail Deer	\$75
Florida Bob Cat	\$50
Friends	
Individual	\$10
Families	\$10
Business	\$25
Organization	\$25

We're A National Scenic Byway

By Tony and Beth Ehrlich

On October 16, 2009, U. S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood announced that the Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway was designated as a National Scenic Byway. We represented our CME at the Designations Awards Ceremony in the ballroom of the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington, D.C. CME members from 26 states were there, including one from Alaska. In all, 42 highways throughout the country received recognition as America's Byways, either National Scenic Byways or All American Roadways. It was an awesome occasion and we took the opportunity to network with some of the other CME members.

Florida Table at Ceremony



L to R Judy Hull and Colleague, Big Bend Byway, Darcy Kohn, FDOT representative in Washington DC

The FBBSB was one of two Byways designated National in DOT District 5, the other being the Ormond Scenic Loop & Trail. Elsewhere in Florida, the Big Bend Scenic Byway in the Panhandle was also named National Scenic Byway and the Florida Keys Scenic Highway was designated as an All American Roadway, the highest category of designation.

Florida was one of only three states to receive four national designations this year. It also has twenty-one of the one hundred and fifty-three American Byways nationally. This says a lot about Florida DOT's emphasis on its Scenic Byway Program. It also says a lot about the kind of support and encouragement offered by Scenic Byway Coordinators Gary Balogh and Debrah Miller.

Plaque presented at the Awards Ceremony

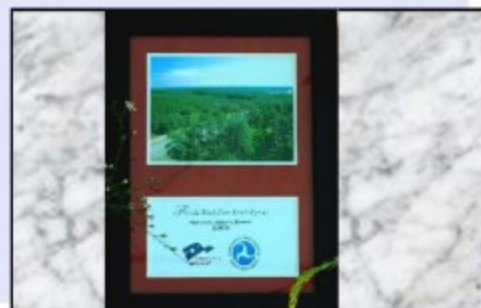


Photo courtesy of Diana Rose

Upon registration, each of the CMEs present received a booklet containing a brief description and two pictures of each Byway. Our copy will be kept with our other important papers and certificates. The introduction to the booklet, titled, "It Begins With the Community" says:



Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway

National Scenic Byway Continued

An historic building needs restoration; the local tourism office wants to promote cultural activities in town; a forest ranger hopes to educate families about respecting natural resources; an archaeological discovery of centuries old fossils needs protection; a recreational trail club wants to put up wayfinding signs; and a local garden club plans to spruce up a scenic overlook.

The community comes together to identify the intrinsic qualities they want to preserve, promote, and protect—historic, cultural, natural, archaeological, recreational, and scenic—along a route. They take action, recruit shareholders, organize their efforts, and reach out to the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, National Scenic Byways Program for recognition and funding.

The program began with inspiring opening remarks by Gloria Shepherd, Associate Administrator for Planning of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Congressman Mike Michaud from the U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and, FHWA Administrator Victor M. Mendez.



Associate Administrator Shepherd and Administrator Mendez present the FBBSB plaque to Beth and Tony Ehrlich

The CME representatives from each Byway were then called onto the stage for presentation of their plaque. A large screen at the rear of the stage displayed the name and pictures of each Byway. The images were a powerful display of our country's diversity, natural beauty, history, and other intrinsic resources, reinforced by the byway names, such as *Top of the Rockies* (Colorado), *Lincoln Heritage Scenic Highway* (Kentucky), *Baltimore's Historic Charles Street* (Maryland), and so on.

We wish to express here, as we did at the Awards Ceremony, how honored we felt to be representing the FBBSB CME. We express as well our appreciation for the outstanding spirit and work of our CME members, local, state, and federal government supporters, and for the efforts of Burns Consulting, who prepared our application. All played an important part in achieving this significant milestone. You go, CME!

Ribbon Cutting Celebration

By Tom Rose

October 24th was a special day of celebration for the Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway and all who love the natural beauty and wildlife of the Ocala National Forest and surrounding area.

Over 300 people attended the day long celebration held at Camp Ocala in the Ocala National Forest. They were treated to a day of outdoor recreation and entertainment including a free lunch, bluegrass music, forest tours, horse rides, boat tours and exhibits. Over 50 volunteers worked to stage the event.

What began as a dream in 2004 had developed into the reality of State and National recognition as a Scenic Byway. It was time to briefly pause and reflect on what had been accomplished, to focus on future plans and, yes, to **celebrate**.



Monso Tatum greets visitors at the hospitality tent.

(Photo Joan Klawunn)

Captain Vince Druding of Awareness Adventures provided guests with boat tours on Sellers Lake. (Photo Pauline Copello)



Ribbon Cutting Celebration Continued

The Umatilla Kiwanis Club cooked & served some 300 meals. Left to right Mike Mabry, Vernon Williams, Rufus Freeman and Skip Babb. (Photo Diana Rose)



Liberty the 4-H Bear joins in with Woods & Bridges Bluegrass for some great musical entertainment. (Photo Diana Rose)



Senator Cary Baker talks about a life-time of fishing, hunting and camping in The Forest. (Photo Diana Rose)

A grand moment, the ribbon cutting! Left to right Jim Thorsen, Kristee Booth, Senator Cary Baker, Tony Ehrlich, Ormond Beach Mayor Fred Costello, George Lovett of the Florida DOT, attorney and environmentalist Clay Henderson and Jet Netwal of U.S. Congressman Alan Grayson's staff.



(Photo courtesy Dwight Forsyth, DOT)



Umatilla Boy Scout Troop 253 worked hard all day directing parking. (Photo Diana Rose)



Lake County Commissioner Linda Stewart leads the way for a young visitor enjoying a horseback ride. (Photo Diana Rose)



The water activities were popular with guests. (Photo Diana Rose)

Smoky Bear poses with two fellow US Forest Service fire fighters.



(Photo Dwight Forsyth, DOT)



Beth Ehrlich proudly shows the National Scenic Byway plaque. (Photo Dwight Forsyth, DOT)

The Nature Conservancy was just one of many outdoors environmentally themed exhibits. (Photo Dwight Forsyth, DOT)



Member Profile**Jim Thorsen**

Photo courtesy of Diana Rose

Jim Thorsen first became acquainted with the area which is now known as *The Florida Black Bear National Scenic Byway* in 1992 when working for the U.S Forest Service. Over the years Jim has developed a passion for the surrounding roads, ecosystems and wildlife along the entire corridor. He was active in the development of the FBBSB in 2004 when he was still working for Forest Service and in 2005 he became the first chair person of the group. His vast knowledge, background and leadership have proven invaluable in bringing the *BYWAY* from concept to its National designation.

He currently serves as an at-large member of the CME Executive Committee. He is chairman of the Public Relations/Marketing Committee. It was in this role that he conceived of and headed the Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony. He is chair of the Interpretive Center Development Committee.

In this role, he has been working with Jacobs Engineering on the completion of the design of the Juniper Springs Trail Head. He is working with the DOT PD&E team designing the widening of SR 40 from Ocala to CR 314. Those plans include several wildlife underpasses.

Jim retired on April 1, 2005 USDA Forest Service with over 37 years service in a variety of positions on several National Forests in the Southern Region. He last served as District Ranger on the Seminole Ranger District, Ocala National Forest in Umatilla, Florida.

He has also served as District Ranger on the Daniel Boone National Forest, Stearns Ranger District, Whitley City, Kentucky and on the George Washington National Forest, Deerfield Ranger District in Staunton, Virginia. He worked on the Ouachita National Forest in Hot Springs, Arkansas as Fire Management Officer, and as a Forester on the DeSoto National Forest in Mississippi; Chattahoochee National Forest in Georgia; Jefferson National Forest in Virginia and Apalachicola National Forest in Florida.

He graduated with a BS degree in Forest Management from Mississippi State University in 1969.

Professional organizations include Society of American Foresters (SAF) since 1970, American Forestry Association, and Florida Forestry Association. He served as SAF Secretary-Treasurer for Kentucky-Tennessee section and Vice Chairman for the Blue Ridge Chapter in Virginia.

Other memberships have consisted of Kiwanis, Lions, Ruritan, Isaac Walton League, Trout Unlimited, Quail Unlimited, Gopher Tortoise Council, Florida Wildlife Federation, and Central Florida Prescribe Fire Council.

Significant awards related to national resource management and public awareness include the Silver Trout Award from Trout Unlimited, Certificate of Merit from U.S. Forest Service for working with external groups, and Certificate of Merit in all aspects of Human and Natural Resource Management. Just prior to his retirement, he received the Region 8 Regional Foresters award for Natural Resource Leadership and 2005 Ranger of the Year award from the National Forest Recreation Association.

Since retirement in 2005, he has stayed active in forest resource management. Currently, performing consultant work on all phases of Forest Management. Continuing and recent jobs have included the following:

- ◆ *Forest management plans and timber cruising*
- ◆ *Recreation management specializing in special use permits and recreation planning on public lands*
- ◆ *Coordinating fire and prescribe fire training sessions with USDA Forest Service and other public agencies*
- ◆ *Performing fire suppression duties and prescribe fire activities on public lands*
- ◆ *Certified Urban Forester*

WelcomeNewsletter

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Jim Thorsen

Linda Stewart

NewsCome Join the Fun

January 9, 2010 FBBSB Holiday Party, Pot Luck 2:30—5:30, Juniper Springs Pavilion. Please bring a food dish.

Swimming Black Bear Sets Record ??

On May 4, a group of fishermen spotted a Florida Black Bear swimming in the Gulf of Mexico seven miles off Pensacola Beach on the Florida Panhandle. Battling four foot seas and 15-knot winds, the bear may have swum a record 14 miles before returning to shore with a little assistance from the Marine Patrol and Coast Guard. Black

Bears are strong swimmers over short distances but not known for long swims like their cousins the polar bears. The bear was probably a young male from the Elgin Air Force base population. It is unclear why or where the bear was swimming. It is not uncommon for black bears to engage on long wide-ranging treks in search of a companion for the spring mating season.

(From the St. Petersburg Times 5/8/97)

Upcoming Events

January 14, CME Meeting, 10:00 am, Pioneer Settlement

January 23, ONF Cleanup

January 22-24, Indian PowWow, Casements/Rockefeller Gardens, Ormond Beach

February 11, CME Meeting, 10:00 am, Lake George Ranger Station

February 27, Wild Flower Show, Deland

March 11, CME Meeting, 10:00 am Pioneer Settlement

March 26, Florida Scenic Highway

March 27, Black Bear Festival, Umatilla, <http://www.umatillachamber.org/BlackBearFest/index.htm>

Mission Statement

To enhance, encourage, and promote the preservation and protection of the outstanding natural, ecological, cultural and historic resources of the Florida Black Bear National Scenic Byway for it's residents, inhabitants, visitors and future generations.