

Looking to the Future: A Vision, Goals, Objectives and Strategies

The future of the Blackwoods Byway will be determined by a combination of natural forces, market forces and planning. Current and prior planning efforts along the byway have been referenced above.

Vision

The Blackwoods Byway is a wilderness road connecting two historic towns in Downeast Maine. The byway is a source of pride for our communities and township residents. We who live here visit the mountains, lakes and streams to hunt, fish, hike and boat throughout the year. Tourists are also invited to travel our byway and are encouraged to learn about our history, way of life and to visit our local businesses. We endeavor to preserve this corridor for our children and to maintain our close connection to nature. We also endeavor to maintain and improve the byway so that we can travel safely year-round.

Goals, Objectives And Strategies

Goal 1: Protect the natural, historic and scenic resources that make this byway unique

The Blackwoods Byway was selected more than 30 years ago as a state scenic road. Most of that wild character has been retained over these many years. In the meantime access to walkers, bikers, boaters and others has improved in several areas. The historic towns of Franklin and Cherryfield have also retained their beautiful old homes and rural traditions. The rapid expansion of public reserve lands and use of open space and tree growth easements will contribute to this ethic of conservation and public use. Local successes, such as a grant award to the Friends of Tunk for a non-point source pollution study points to activities that can happen when people work together.

Objectives

- ♦ Open and preserve vistas, such as Catherine Mountain overlooking Spring River Lake, where possible.
- ♦ Maintain a clean and natural environment along the byway that is free of litter and graffiti.
- ♦ Preserve water quality of the natural lakes and streams.
- ♦ Preserve night-sky along the byway by discouraging bright, internally lit outdoor signage and brightly lit parking areas.
- ♦ Preserve historic resources, including cemeteries along the byway.

Strategies

- ♦ Support campaigns to remove roadside litter and remove graffiti from rocks along the byway
- ♦ Reduce roadside erosion from Route 182 and adjoining roads into local ponds and streams.
- ♦ Encourage MDOT to employ mechanical control of vegetation rather than chemical control in areas near to sensitive waterbodies.
- ♦ Support Friends of Tunk non-point pollution project along Tunk Stream and connecting lakes and ponds.
- ♦ Inventory historic sites along the byway and in the Towns of Cherryfield and Franklin.

- ♦ Identify resources (capital and voluntary) to clean-up cemeteries, and to add historic plaques and interpretive information at select historic sites.
- ♦ Work with local utilities to avoid obstructing scenic vistas with utility poles, lines and other infrastructure.
- ♦ Provide input into management plans for the Maine Public Reserve lands.
- ♦ Identify ways to encourage sustainable, low impact tourism within wildlife reserve areas and other environmentally sensitive locations.

Goal 2: Maintain a safe and efficient transportation corridor connecting Cherryfield and Franklin

This goal was underscored repeatedly by residents in Cherryfield who depend on this highway as their most direct link to Ellsworth. The Blackwoods Byway was constructed in a very challenging environment before modern road construction standards had evolved. The use of this highway by freight hauling trucks stresses the road year round, but particularly in the fall and spring. The spring thaw inevitably damages the road, with much of that damage sustained until the road is resurfaced. The limited sections of Route 182 that were built to modern standards provide for safe and efficient travel. A long range goal should be to rebuild the remaining unimproved sections of Route 182 to provide safe year-round travel without detracting from the scenic character of the byway.

Objectives

- ♦ Identify options to correct locations with high crash rates and high crash potential and pass that information to MDOT.
- ♦ Increase site distance along the byway with vegetation management and context-sensitive design.
- ♦ Improve safety for entrance and egress at access points to scenic vistas and recreational locations such as Catherine Mountain, Tunk Lake, Fox Pond, Long Pond and Spring River Lake.
- ♦ Promote context-sensitive shoulder paving along Route 182 when road segments are reconstructed.
- ♦ Study potential for passing lanes on steep grades to permit cars to pass slow moving vehicles.

Strategies

- ♦ Corridor Management Committee works with RTAC, Sunrise Trails Coalition and MDOT to support design engineering for Route 182 safety enhancements.
- ♦ Corridor Committee works with Bureau of Parks and Lands to identify improvements for safe access to recreational sites and scenic vistas.
- ♦ Collaborate with MDOT to assure that future road improvements, such as new guardrails, use natural-looking materials and do not obstruct vistas.
- ♦ Study options for paving aprons for day use parking at boat launch areas to reduce congestion and the need to back-onto Route 182. Aprons might also provide day-use parking for ice fishing on the lakes.
- ♦ Improve directional signage, providing drivers with adequate warning of the boat launch locations.

Goal 3: Promote the local economy through diversified economic activities, including forestry, farming, manufacturing, retail and tourism

Cherryfield and Franklin are struggling economically. The resource-based economy is subject to changes in the environment as well as changes in regulations affecting people's ability to use these resources. Meeting the needs of an aging population, maintaining local schools and providing employment opportunities in the region are all important goals for these towns. The Blackwoods Byway should boost local economies through providing a more efficient transportation corridor, and attracting new residents, summer residents and tourists to the area.

Objectives

- ♦ Make improvements to Route 182 to preserve transportation speeds.
- ♦ Add way-finding signage on the byway encouraging people to continue their journey into the villages of Cherryfield and Franklin.
- ♦ Increase shoulder season tourism, including fall colors visits and heritage tourism.
- ♦ Increase all-season infrastructure for nature-based tourism along the byway, including additional space for vehicles in the Tunk Lake and Spring River Lake access areas, adding locations for camping, hiking, paddling, fishing, etc. and improving boat launch facilities.
- ♦ Market and promote the corridor for low-impact eco-tourism and heritage tourism.
- ♦ Identify resources to help small businesses start-up and expand in Cherryfield and Franklin.

Strategies

- ♦ Seek state and federal funding for marketing and promotion for the byway, Cherryfield and Franklin.
- ♦ Identify tour packages for the region, particularly in coordination with increased visitation connected to the Calais Downeast Heritage Center and the St. Croix 400 year anniversary in 2004.
- ♦ Explore potential for a Cherryfield Gateway Grant to encourage visitors to "come closer" rather than passing through.
- ♦ Evaluated the potential impact of changing highway names between Route 182, Route 1 and Route 1A.
- ♦ Promote multiple uses of the Calais Branch Rail right-of-way, including seasonal excursion rail, snowmobiles, all terrain vehicles, horses, bicycles and pedestrians.
- ♦ Identify cell tower locations that will improve wireless phone service on the byway without compromising the viewshed.

Goal 4: Promote community participation in protecting and enhancing the byway

Community participation in managing the Blackwoods Byway occurs in a typically low-key, Downeast manner. People passing through the corridor stop to help others who are having car problems, pick up litter and provide vacationers with ideas for things they can do in the area. These voluntary activities should be encouraged, with greater emphasis in communicating with state offices such as the Department of Transportation and Department of Conservation about local needs

and aspirations. Holding quarterly byway meetings, seeking resources for byway enhancements and supporting local voluntary organizations will help the towns and encourage ongoing success of the byway.

Locally, communication travels mostly by word-of-mouth. It is therefore very important that a diverse group of citizens remain active in the Corridor Committee. These committee members need to share what they have learned from their families and neighbors in order to shape local policies.

Objectives

- ♦ Develop a detailed work plan and community participation plan for refining and implementing byway objectives.
- ♦ Expand the circle of individuals and organizations partnering with the Corridor Management Committee.
- ♦ Support annual roadside litter collection and graffiti removal programs.

Strategies

- ♦ Share copies of this corridor management plan with community organizations such as the Narraguagus Snowmobile and ATV Club, Franklin and Cherryfield Historical Societies, and Downeast Rivers Land Trust.
- ♦ Identify partners for roadside litter and graffiti clean-up days in Franking and Cherryfield.
- ♦ Identify resources (capital and voluntary) to clean-up cemeteries, and to add historic plaques and interpretive information at select historic sites.

Goal 5: Encourage education about this byway for our residents and visitors

Education comes in many forms. Programs in the local schools and clubs can benefit by learning about the natural and historical assets found along the Blackwoods Byway. Past projects, such as litter collection and removal of graffiti not only reduce the existing eye-sores, but also build greater awareness of the importance of stewardship. Educating visitors is a different process that is supported by brochures, press releases, material in regional tourism guides, interpretive signage, information kiosks and even the creation of a Blackwoods Byway web site. Much can be accomplished through education. Important historical assets noted in one public meeting include blueberries, the gallamander (cart for carrying granite blocks), ice cutting and ice-houses, the hatchery once located on the Byway next to Tunk Lake and the Black Smith Shop in Cherryfield.

Objectives

- ♦ Add a small number of scenic turnouts, such as a Catherine Mountain overlook.
- ♦ Incorporate interpretive signage at scenic turnouts and the Tunk Lake and Spring River Lake access points.
- ♦ Develop information resources for local schools to learn more about the Blackwoods Byway.
- ♦ Develop information resources accessible to visitors such as brochures and a presence on the Internet.

Strategies

- ♦ Provide information to local schools about problems with litter and graffiti and encourage school clean-up campaigns.
- ♦ Seek funds to produce brochures, signage and other information.
- ♦ Work with the University of Maine-Machias recreation education programs to sponsor educational initiatives on the Blackwoods Byway.
- ♦ Work with local historical societies to promote heritage tourism sites, including local sites -- e.g. buildings and cemeteries.
- ♦ Work with local business to link their clientele with tourism opportunities on the byway.