

## **Scenic Byways Designation for Route 113 between Standish and Gilead**

### **Who is heading this effort?**

The Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments, in partnership with the Western Maine Cultural Alliance and the Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission received a grant from the Maine Department of Transportation to prepare an eligibility application for Route 113 from Standish to Gilead for State Scenic Byway designation. This application requires substantial research into the particulars of the road and approval from every town the road passes through.

### **Mission of Maine's Scenic Byways Program**

The Maine Scenic Byways Program will preserve, maintain, protect and enhance the intrinsic resources of scenic corridors through a sustainable balance of conservation and land use. Through community-based consensus and partnerships, the program will promote economic prosperity and broaden the traveler's overall recreational and educational experience.

### **What is a National Scenic Byway?**

The National Scenic Byways Program is part of the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration. The program is a grass roots collaborative effort established to help recognize, preserve and enhance selected roads throughout the United States.

Since 1992, the National Scenic Byways Program has provided funding for almost 1,500 state and nationally designated byway projects in 48 states. The U.S. Secretary of Transportation recognizes certain roads as All-American Roads or National Scenic Byways based on one or more archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational and scenic qualities i.e. intrinsic qualities.

To be designated as a National Scenic Byway, a road must possess at least one of the six intrinsic qualities. The significance of the features contributing to the distinctive characteristics of the corridor's intrinsic qualities must be recognized throughout the multi-state region. Maine currently has three nationally designated scenic byways.

### **What is an All-American Road?**

To receive an All-American Road designation, a road must possess multiple intrinsic qualities that are nationally significant and contain one-of-a-kind features that do not exist elsewhere. The road or highway must also be considered a "destination unto itself." That is, it must provide an exceptional traveling experience so recognized by travelers that they would make a drive along the highway a primary reason for their trip. Maine currently has one nationally designated All-American Road.

### **What is the National Byways Marketing Program?**

America's Byways® is the umbrella term used to market the collection of 126 National Scenic Byways and All-American Roads designated by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation. This program is founded upon the strength of the leaders for individual Byways. It is a voluntary, grassroots program. It recognizes and supports outstanding roads. It provides resources to help manage the intrinsic qualities within

the broader Byways corridor to be treasured and shared.

### **What does it take to become a National Scenic Byway?**

America's Byways® is a distinctive collection of American roads, their stories and treasured places. They are roads to the heart and soul of America. Joining this unique collection is not a trivial task. It involves much more than simply taking a few photos and filling out the application. It can take months to prepare a byway and its organization for this process. However, once approved travelers can be assured the Byways that have successfully negotiated the program requirements will offer a truly exceptional experience.

### **What are the economic benefits from designation as a National Byways?**

There are many potential benefits, especially to a rural community, from the national byways program including community recognition and economic development through cultural tourism. There are also grant funds available for these roads.

If a corridor is able to reach federal status, grant funding becomes available for maintenance, safety improvements, turnouts and other features that will enhance the road. We are living in a time of shrinking state and federal resources. When towns cooperate to attain national byways status, they are repaid through access to federal resources. In other words, byways is a program capable of delivering tangible benefits.

### **How do tourists view byways?**

Tourists rate byways at top of attractions. In 2005, Maine Tourism received almost 16,000 requests for information about Maine's designated byways; the second most common request after sightseeing. For travelers, the chance to leave the monotony of a highway for new and unique vistas is magnetic. By distinguishing the superior qualities of certain corridors, the byways program promotes community economic prosperity while offering travelers a broader array of educational and recreational experiences.

### **What is a cultural tourist?**

Cultural tourists take an active interest in the history, indigenous culture and creative activity of an area. They support performance groups, the preservation of historic structures, the work of downtown revitalization and exhibits of local artists and artisans. They tend stay longer and spend more than conventional tourists and are critical to a region's Creative Economy. Byways is a means of delivering these tourists.

### **Why is WMCA involved?**

Western Maine Cultural Alliance (WMCA) supports Western Maine's Creative Economy by bringing attention to indigenous cultural resources and promoting cultural tourism which is growing faster than any other area of tourism and could bring real benefits to our area. WMCA works to responsibly enhance quality of life and economic growth without subtracting from the regional character that inspires creative endeavor.

### **For more information**

For more information on Maine's byways, visit [www.maine.gov/mdot](http://www.maine.gov/mdot) and type scenic byways in the search feature.