

CASE STUDY

the
**ROAD
BECKONS**

BEST PRACTICES FOR BYWAYS

INTERPRETATION

**IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE KANCAMAGUS INTERPRETIVE AND FACILITIES PLAN**

New Hampshire



IMPLEMENTATION OF THE KANCAMAGUS INTERPRETIVE AND FACILITIES PLAN

*Located in the White Mountain National Forest, the **Kancamagus Scenic Byway** meanders through some of the most beautiful coniferous forests in New Hampshire. Well loved, the byway attracts over 2 million visitors a year who come to enjoy the stunning scenery and abundance of recreational opportunities.*

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Following the alignment of the old logging roads, origins of the highway can be traced back to the early 1800s as settlers attempted to make their living in the isolated valleys. Prior to European settlement, Native Americans inhabited the valley and many of the landmarks, including the byway itself, are named after Abenaki Chiefs. Long recognized as a treasured resource, the “Kanc” was designated one of the nation’s first USDA Forest Service Scenic Byways in 1989. Recognizing the opportunities inherent in national designation, the USDA Forest Service and a group of committed public and private partners joined forces to identify ways to enhance the visitor experience and promote stewardship of the region’s natural resources. Thanks to a lot of hard work and creative thinking, initial funding for 2 overlook sites has been parlayed into the development and implementation of an Interpretative and Facilities Plan for the byway. Implementation of priority projects is well underway with \$4.1 million invested to date.

WINNING ELEMENTS:

TAKING THE LONG VIEW IN IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES.

In 1991, the USDA Forest Service had funding available to rehabilitate 2 overlooks. Rather than rush out and implement the projects, they took the long view and elected to use the funding to develop an interpretive plan and recruit the expertise of a private contractor to craft messages and designs for the interpretive sites and related facilities. The result: messages and designs for each of the 17 interpretive sites, development of a forest discovery trail around a demonstration forest, construction of a new scenic overlook and the reconstruction of 3 others, the erection of 2 timber frame barns to welcome visitors and complement program delivery, trailhead improvements and historic landscape restoration.



A hiker suspension bridge at Lincoln Woods (right). 75 interpretative panels provide a quality experience for visitors (opposite right).



PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS. The involvement of a variety of public and private interests has been critical to the success of the project. Partners have shared in the cost of development of the Interpretive and Facilities Plan, provided in-kind labor, donated dollars to the “Kanc Campaign” to offset the costs of interpretive development, held events to raise awareness and diligently worked to identify sites and help develop interpretive materials. Local communities also were instrumental in identifying the opportunity to complement this initiative with the addition of 64 miles of the White Mountain Trail to form a second national scenic byway. Incorporating the Kancamagus Scenic Byway, the 100-mile loop includes some of the grandest scenery in the eastern United States. This “big picture” approach has helped leverage funds for many of the priority actions outlined in the plan and set the standard for management of the White Mountain Trail and roadside and interpretive signing throughout the state.

PROVIDING A QUALITY EXPERIENCE FOR VISITORS OF ALL AGES. The theme “Changing Landscapes” was selected to explain the natural and cultural history of the White Mountain National Forest and the USDA Forest Service’s role in managing it. Recognizing that the facilities and the interpretation have to work together, each was carefully designed to

TIMELINE

- **1989** Kancamagus designated a USDA Forest Service Scenic Byway
- **1993** Completed development of an Interpretive and Facilities Plan
- **1996** Kancamagus designated a National Scenic Byway
- **1997** White Mountain Trail designated a National Scenic Byway (includes Kancamagus Scenic Byway as its southern foundation)
- **2001** Completion of scenic overlooks
- **2002** Installation of interpretive signs at 2 sites
Timber Framers Guild constructs visitor center barn at White Mountain Attractions
- **2003** Completion of request for proposals for remaining 59 interpretive signs
Site work completed at trailheads, site work begins at historic homestead (Timber Framers Guild constructs barn at site)
- **2004** Anticipated completion of projects to include sign installation and fabrication of visitor center exhibits

complement the other. Interpretive products include 75 interpretive panels with original artwork, a brochure, 2 visitor center displays illustrating the theme of Changing Landscapes, an audio tape (available for loan at two byway entrances), pamphlets about the Discovery and Wildlife Trails, a Kid’s Discovery Trail and a children’s guide to the byway complete with fun facts and games designed to captivate the attention of kids of all ages.

PERPETUATING INTEREST AND PROVIDING FOR THE FUTURE. A unique partnership with the Timber Framers Guild will enable the group to attract students interested in learning the trade of timber frame construction. Upon completion, these barns will be used as visitor and education facilities.

The Discovery Trail Forest Demonstration site has united partners ranging from the timber industry, to educators, county foresters and representatives from local recreation areas to develop a learning area that will introduce forest management concepts to residents and visitors.

INROADS TO SUCCESS

RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF CAREFULLY COORDINATING INTERPRETATION WITH FACILITY DESIGN. Because the highway and related

facilities were constructed for family auto travel in the 1960s, site modifications were needed to better accommodate modern vehicles, provide access to visitors with disabilities and enhance pedestrian safety.

By carefully integrating facility needs with interpretive opportunities, project partners have been able to maximize opportunities for project delivery and provide a quality experience for visitors.

ENGAGING THE PUBLIC AS AN EQUAL PARTNER.

Actively reaching out to and involving the public has yielded many long-term benefits. To cite a few:

Customized interpretive displays. During development of the Interpretive and Facilities Plan, local individuals and organizations were contacted to assist in researching the history of the area. Enthusiasm for the project has yielded a wide range of materials including photographs and artwork for use in the development of interpretive materials.

Design alternatives. Input provided at public meetings held during the environmental review stages of the individual projects has helped craft alternatives not previously considered.

Designation of a second National Scenic Byway. Local communities, working through the State Scenic Byway Committee, were instrumental in complementing the Kanc's designation as a National Scenic Byway with the addition of 64 miles to form the White Mountain Trail. Designated a National Scenic Byway just 1 year after the Kanc, the White Mountain Trail incorporates the Kancamagus on its southern foundation.

Heightened awareness and appreciation for the byway and byway projects. Throughout the project, partners have reached out to the public through mailings, communiqués, presentations, public meetings, byway tours and interpretive events. One such event, the White Mountain National Forest Festival was held during the height of the fall foliage season in 1997. With the promise of lots of fun and activities, the public was invited to stop and enjoy 5 key locations along the byway. Held during peak season, the event aptly showcased the byway's many resources and provided project partners the chance to solicit on the spot review of the projects planned.

| FUNDING SHARE & SOURCES | DOLLARS | PERCENTAGE |
|--|--------------------|------------|
| STATE SHARE: | | |
| Lincoln Woods Pedestrian Bridge | \$34,400 | 3.0% |
| Lincoln Bicycle Shoulder | \$80,000 | |
| Vista Vegetation Clearing | \$7,600 | |
| Sub Total | \$122,000 | |
| PRIVATE SHARE: | | |
| Cash | | |
| White Mountains Interpretation— Albany CB Panels | \$2,000 | 3.5% |
| Timber Industry Cash-Discovery Trail | \$50,000 | |
| White Mountain Attractions Gateway VIC | \$50,000 | |
| Public Contributions to WMA Gateway through Forest Fee Demonstration Program | \$20,000 | |
| Passaconaway Valley Civic—R/C Barn Donation | \$22,000 | |
| Sub Total | \$144,000 | |
| In-kind | | |
| White Mountain Attractions Gateway VIC | \$32,000 | 3.7% |
| Timber Framers Guild—Russell Colbath Barn | \$81,200 | |
| Girl Scouts Archeology—R/C Barn | \$5,000 | |
| Plymouth State College Archeology—R/C Barn | \$8,000 | |
| Harley Hogs/PVCA/BSA—R/C Trails & Landscape | \$25,000 | |
| Sub Total | \$151,200 | |
| FEDERAL SHARE & SOURCE OR PROGRAM CATEGORY: | | |
| National Scenic Byways Program Grant | | |
| Albany Covered Bridge Interpretive Panels | \$10,816 | 21.4% |
| New Pemi Overlook | \$336,000 | |
| Annis Field | \$40,000 | |
| Vista Vegetation Clearing | \$37,800 | |
| WMA Gateway Visitor Center | \$460,000 | |
| Sub Total | \$884,616 | |
| Transportation Enhancements Program | | |
| Lincoln Woods Highway Bridge | \$172,200 | 6.1% |
| Kanc Bicycle Shoulders | \$80,000 | |
| Sub Total | \$252,200 | |
| Other | | |
| Forest Service “Up Front Planning \$” | \$754,132 | 62.3% |
| Forest Service In Kind Contribution— New Pemi Overlook (includes borrow materials, and design) | \$67,200 | |
| Forest Service In Kind Contribution—Annis Field | \$8,000 | |
| Forest Service—Lower Falls Toilet | \$92,000 | |
| Forest Service—Stewardship Grant for Discovery | \$92,000 | |
| Forest Service—Capital Investment Projects 2002 | \$1,559,400 | |
| Sub Total | \$2,572,732 | |
| TOTAL COST | \$4,126,748 | |

The Festival also marked the launch of the Kanc Campaign, an initiative designed to raise awareness for the byway and solicit support—both in-kind and financial—for the construction of 2 major visitor sites. Plans for both sites, Sabbaday Falls and The Forest Discovery Trail, were featured during the event.

EXPANDING PARTNERSHIPS AND OPPORTUNITIES.

Partner support has played an important role in leveraging funds and maximizing opportunities.

- Three of the sites (Loon Mountain, Lincoln Mills, White Mountain Attractions) involve a public-private

partnership to develop interpretive facilities on properties located outside the Forest that are heavily dependent on the USDA Forest Service's presence in the White Mountains. All 3 sites shared in the cost of the development of the Interpretive and Facilities Plan.

- Through partnership agreements, the Timber Framers Guild will use 2 of the project sites to attract students interested in learning the trade of timber frame construction to build barns (1 at White Mountain Attractions and 1 at the Russell Colbath Homestead). A win-win partnership, these projects will help perpetuate the craft and provide attractive visitor facilities.
- Since 1989, a local civic association has worked with the USDA Forest Service under an Environmental Education Agreement to manage public donations toward the construction of a barn at the historic Russell Colbath Homestead. In the intervening years, disbursements have been made to support a variety of living history activities. Thanks to a partnership agreement with the Timber Framers Guild, plans to construct the barn are underway.

Upon completion the barn will be used to interpret the rich cultural history of the 1830s, including barn architecture.

- Since 1995, the White Mountains Interpretive Association has provided funding for a seasonal interpretive specialist to staff the Russell Colbath Homestead. Approximately 20,000 people a year visit the home.
- The Discovery Trail Forest Demonstration site has united partners from the timber industry, educators, local school groups, county foresters and the Loon Mountain Recreation Area to name a few. These groups have worked together to help leverage funds from the USDA's Forest Service Stewardship Grant Program to produce a learning area that will introduce forest management concepts to visitors.
- To maximize project dollars, the construction of 2 overlooks with separate funding (1 funded through TEA-21 and the other through the USDA Forest Service) was combined under a single contract. This approach proved cost effective when the cut from one site was used to fill the other, thus avoiding significant trucking costs.



"Changing Landscapes" is the interpretive theme for the byway.

- As part of a Transportation Enhancement/TEA-21 highway bridge replacement project, the NH Department of Transportation assisted in the construction of a pedestrian bridge to complement a day use visitor loop trail located along the byway.
- A portion of the fees collected through the Recreation Fee Demonstration program, which allows the National Forest to collect parking fees at designated sites, will be applied toward the fabrication of exhibits at the White Mountain Attractions Visitor Center.
- The USDA Forest Service has been an active member of both local and statewide Scenic Byway Development Council meetings. Both groups are actively involved in identifying funding opportunities to enhance driving for pleasure and tourism throughout the state.
- Byway leaders forged a close working relationship with the North Country Council, a regional planning agency participating in the State of NH Byway Committee, to integrate the byway's plans into transportation funding categories eventually ranking the projects to receive funding to accomplish the projects.

LESSONS FROM THE ROAD: "IN THEIR OWN WORDS"

During this project we learned:

- Obtain commitment from leadership
- Develop a sound interpretive plan tied to the ground with consistent theme and goals
- Obtain and invest seed money
- Invest in NEPA to place projects "on the shelf"
- Network and "cast out" for multiple funding sources
- Assure quality implementation of initial projects to help sell remaining projects

If we were to do it again, we would:

- Keep pressure on completion of NEPA for more complex projects



ASSESSING YOUR EFFORTS

*This project was successful because of a number of factors.
Is your byway implementing similar best practices?*



Students and volunteers are raising two visitor facilities with assistance from the Timber Framers Guild.

ASSESSMENT
1 2 3 4

1: Never 2: Sometimes 3: Frequently 4: Always

1. We think ahead. We have a long-term (year by year) development plan for our byway projects.
2. We link our byway to a regional network of roads, attractions and visitor facilities.
3. We align ourselves with agencies and organizations that will adopt and advance our byway initiatives (e.g., Kancamagus partnered with the Timber Framers Guild and the North Country Council).
4. We have researched federal funding sources beyond the National Scenic Byways grant program (e.g., Transportation Enhancements and others).
5. We involve local, state, regional, and federal partners in our projects.
6. We engage the public through community meetings, byway tours, and other forums.
7. Byway facilities are designed to complement the surrounding landscape and setting.
8. When planning byway facilities, we consider visitor needs for safety, accessibility and wayfinding.
9. We have created opportunities to encourage stewardship of our resources.
10. We have worked with local planning agencies to incorporate our projects into prioritized transportation funding programs (e.g., TIP, STIP, etc.).
11. We make effective use of volunteers.

CONTACT

Name Alexis Jackson
email arjackson@fs.fed.us
Agency USDA Forest Service, White Mountain NF
Address 719 Main St, Laconia, NH 03246
Phone 603-528-8724
Fax 603-528-8783

RESOURCES

Kancamagus Interpretive and Facilities Plan, site plans, project PowerPoint presentation (designed for outreach with other byway managers), Timber Framers Guild Challenge Cost Share Agreement, byway brochure, A Kid's Guide to the Kancamagus (a book of activities).

ROAD WORK AHEAD

1. How do we create a comprehensive approach for improving and interpreting our byway?
2. Who can help us get started? What partners, organizations or individuals have the skills or perspective that we need? Or, let's just do it!
3. What plans or documents do we have at hand? Corridor management plan? Interpretive plan? Local master plans? Forest or park plans?
4. What projects or improvements are planned or scheduled along our byway? By us? By anyone?
5. What are the common elements of these existing plans or projects? How do these common elements relate to the byway and its intrinsic qualities? What is needed to tie all this together?
6. What do our byway travelers and visitors enjoy? How do we want to shape or influence their experiences? What's most important in shaping or influencing their experiences? What will bring them back? What will make them want to tell their friends what they need to see or experience?
7. What can we learn from this case study?
8. Are there aspects of this case study that we would like to incorporate into our byway plans and initiatives?
9. What are our success stories? What physical improvements have we made along our byway?
10. What steps would we like to take to improve and enhance our *byway's interpretive and visitor facilities*?
11. What would we like to know more about related to this case study?



A favorite fishing hole below the Albany Covered Bridge.



America's Byways Resource Center
227 West First Street, Suite 610
Duluth, MN 55802
P 800.429.9297, ext. 5
F 218.625.3333
www.byways.org

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Case studies are drawn from the 2001 and 2003 Best Practices for Byways competitions.