

This section provides an approach for interpreting the Bayshore Heritage Byway including recommendations for organizing and implementing the interpretive program. These recommendations provide a framework for specific actions to be taken by the scenic byway organization and a means to coordinate with byway partners. Also the byway's interpretive themes are outlined along with suggestions for implementation.

The byway organization needs to coordinate the actions of partners across the entire byway and assist them in presenting the interpretive themes as an integrated experience. The interpretive program should provide opportunities for visitors to explore the communities, landscapes and stories associated with the byway. An interpretive context must highlight meaning and significance and also provide links between places and themes. The interpretive framework should guide the efforts of the Heritage Tourism Committee as they work towards updating all interpretive and educational materials. Also the interpretive planning completed for the Delaware Bay section of the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail provides an excellent basis for the content needed for the byway's interpretive program. (\*\*\*)Please note that as of October 2011 the National Park Service has terminated funding and staff support for the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail program. (\*\*\*)

### **Bayshore Heritage Byway Interpretive Themes & Topics**

Interpretive themes are the "big ideas" (concepts of national or regional significance) within which the interpretation of individual resources, places and stories may be presented and understood. Topics are important storylines that contribute to themes. Five primary interpretive themes with associated topics help convey the overall natural and cultural heritage and significance of the Bayshore Heritage Byway:

#### **❖ The Bayshore's Nature**

- Geological History
- The Delaware Bay Estuary: Nature's Nursery
- Salt Marshes
- Downriver & Upstream
- Low-lying Uplands
- Skirting the Pine Barrens
- Notable Local Fauna
  - A Birder's Paradise
  - Shoreline Inhabitants
  - Fish
  - Amphibians & Reptiles
  - Mammals
  - Pesky Critters
- Notable Local Flora

#### **❖ The Bayshore's Legacy**

- The Nanticoke - Lenape Homeland
- Colonial Middle Ground
  - At the Edge of Empires
  - Whaling Camps
  - A Hidden Scandinavian Heritage
  - First Farms of the Garden State

- New Jersey: A Diverse English Colony
- Salem City: 18<sup>th</sup> Century Market Town
- Greenwich: New World Port of Entry
- The Quakers & Patterned Brick Houses
- Crossroads of the Revolution
- 19<sup>th</sup> Century Working Communities
  - Bridgeton: Center for Local Industry
  - Mauricetown: Boatbuilding on the Bay
  - Port Norris: Built on Shellfish
  - Bivalve & Shellpile: Oyster Ghost Towns
- United States Coastal Defense & Military Installations

#### ❖ **The Bayshore's Bounty**

- A Prehistoric Abundance
- Oysters & Other Shellfish
- Horseshoe Crabs
- Cultivating Salt Hay
- Garden State Truck Farms
- Jersey Fresh: Roadside Stands on the Byway
- Rediscovering Jersey Tomatoes
- Sand & Glass

#### ❖ **The Bayshore's Migrations**

- Migratory Birds & The Atlantic Flyway
  - Purple martins
  - Swifts & swallows
  - Songbirds
  - Shorebirds
  - Seabirds
  - Waterfowl
  - Raptors
- Fish
  - Alewife
  - American eel
  - Atlantic croaker
  - Bay anchovy
  - Blueback herring
  - Hogchoker
  - Menhaden
  - Shad
  - Shark
  - Striped Bass
  - Sturgeon
- Insects

- Monarch Butterflies
- Marine Mammals
  - Dolphins
  - Whales
  - Seals
- ❖ **The Bayshore's Leisure-time**
  - Cape May: America's Oldest Seaside Resort
  - History of Delaware River Picnic Parks
  - Religious Camp Meetings
  - Fish and Hunt Camps
  - Bicycling
  - Hiking
  - Paddling
  - Bird-watching

These five themes identified for the Bayshore Heritage Byway are intended to be broad and comprehensive so that they capture the wide range of potential stories significant to individual communities, habitats and sites. The use of these themes will help determine how the interpretive program will be implemented throughout the byway, how interpretation might be organized from a regional perspective, and how links between sites and resources might be established.

### **Guiding Principles for Interpretation**

The following guiding principles are suggested when considering an interpretive program for the scenic byway. Although interpretation along the byway may be implemented by a variety of different partners over time, it should be closely coordinated and these guiding principles should be followed. Where direct support from the byway organization is anticipated, one of the responsibilities of the Heritage Tourism Committee, as described later in this chapter, should review plans to ensure consistency.

- **Quality** - Interpretation along the scenic byway should meet a high quality standard. Interpretive exhibits, installations, tour scripts, printed materials and online media should meet the highest standards in terms of content, design, materials, fabrication, accessibility, and overall experience. Special events should also match this level of quality. Design guidelines for exhibits and infrastructure should be developed and used to assist partners in maintaining quality standards. In cases where funding is made available to a byway partner for projects and programs, a review of the proposed presentation and installation is necessary to assure consistency with interpretive goals and scenic byway themes. The byway organization should provide design assistance and technical support to partner organizations in the development of interpretive projects and programs. Installations should be designed to complement the landscape in which they are located. They should contribute to community character and conform to natural settings.
- **Creativity** - The Bayshore Heritage Byway should promote creativity in its interpretive program along with the aforementioned emphasis on quality. Wherever possible, creative alternatives to signage and waysides should be encouraged in conveying interpretive content. Artwork and landscape installations are appropriate ways to provide interpretation while enhancing community

and natural contexts. The byway organization should endeavor to create a reputation for the creative approach it takes in developing its interpretive program.

Tempting leads and interpretive connections should invite visitors to move from place to place. Themes and stories should be presented in ways that help visitors draw connections, spark interests, and encourage further investigation. Revelations and surprises should be incorporated into the experience.

- **Accuracy** - Interpretive content must be well-researched and accurate. Source material should be identified in the development of interpretive content and should be consistent with professional standards used by practitioners in scientific disciplines and the humanities. The extent of what is actually known and unknown should be clearly conveyed to visitors. Sometimes, what is *not* known is as interesting as what is known. If stories are based upon legend, folklore or oral tradition it should be clearly stated. The proposed Interpretive Committee for the scenic byway should be comprised of experienced historians, naturalists and interpreters to advise partners in the development of interpretive programs and review proposed content.
- **Authenticity** - To the maximum extent possible, stories should be communicated in an appropriate context which directly connects the visitor to a place. Whenever possible, authentic physical features—buildings, roads, viewsheds, and other resources should be used as the backdrop to tell stories. The scale, character and evolution of the landscape should be conveyed to the audience to help them better visualize and experience the story being told. In cases where the landscape has changed, its historical appearance should be conveyed through artwork, historic photographs, documented historical accounts or augmented reality applications. In some instances ‘placemakers’ can be used as a tool to mark locations for reference by visitors.
- **Experiential Learning** - Many people learn and remember things when an element of physical interaction is offered as part of the experience. Interpretive programs can be experiential to the maximum degree possible. Communication that is visual and connected to real things and authentic places and features should be emphasized over the reading of waysides and text. Public art can be very helpful in conveying interpretive content through the senses. Walking a trail being described interpretively helps visitors experience the story through their muscles. Hearing first person stories from a living history interpreter has a stronger impact than reading text. The opportunity to actively do things should be offered whenever possible over the mere providing of information. Visitors should be encouraged to experience stories and landscapes through various senses.
- **Variety** - Interpretive media and techniques should be designed to acknowledge different learning styles and generational differences in how information is received and absorbed. A variety of possible experiences should be provided in order to satisfy the interests and capabilities of different age groups, temperaments, and cultural orientations. Options should offer varying levels of activity, timeframes, and levels of required concentration. For example, alternative walking tours of 10 minutes, 30 minutes, and 60 minutes in length provide options for individuals with different levels of stamina or time constraints. Also equivalent facilitation for interpretive programs should be provided for individuals with physical limitations or disabilities.
- **Context** - Each story should be connected to the broader historical and natural context using the scenic byway themes and topics. Stories should be used to illustrate these themes and topics relating to a global and regional perspective in ways that make them immediately understandable.

Historical and natural context for each story should be clearly and accurately communicated, but easily comprehended. By using context, a cultural and natural backdrop is provided allowing the visitor to easily make connections to the big picture at different interpretive stops and resource locations.

- **Significance and Meaning** - Interpretation is much more than the reciting of facts. As Freeman Tilden, a career employee with the National Park Service wrote in his 1957 book *Interpreting Our Heritage*: “Through interpretation, understanding; through understanding, appreciation; through appreciation, protection [of our nation’s significant cultural and natural heritage].” Interpretation goes beyond the reciting of facts by drawing connections in a story to larger, meaningful truths. In developing interpretive content, each story should be examined for its significance. Each story or interpretive exhibit should have a key message it is intended to convey.
- **Multiple Points of View** - Visitors should be offered stories from multiple points of view and be led to appreciate how stories may hold multiple meanings. Varying perspectives should be presented in their historical context so we appreciate how people from diverse groups saw things differently. Visitors should not be told what to think, but should be allowed to draw their own conclusions.
- **Shared Experience:** Interpretation should be provided in ways that help audiences identify with and relate to experiences in their own lives. Using authentic stories of real people communicated in their own words in the actual places where events occurred should be encouraged whenever and wherever possible. The expression of universal emotional concepts such as love, loss, satisfaction, anxiety, pride, and uncertainty, allow opportunity for visitors to empathize and relate in a personal way.

The interpretive program for the scenic byway should include such tasks as creating a website and social media experience, publications, living history and tour guide services, and other initiatives that coordinate and support the byway interpretive presentation as a whole. It should include preparation of a comprehensive scenic byway interpretive plan. Interpretive projects should be identified, conceived, prioritized, and planned based upon the comprehensive interpretive plan and implemented through a planning process for interpretation and the visitor experience. Organizational partners and other interested individuals should be engaged early in the process as ideas are being formulated. When projects are at the initiative of an organizational partner, the participation of the scenic byway organization should be at or near the beginning of project planning. The byway organization in turn should provide encouragement and support.

Partners who should be involved in the implementation of each project should be identified and engaged. Sources of funding for implementation should be secured, and a process for implementation developed and scheduled. As individual projects are implemented, plans should be prepared to the appropriate level of detail describing the project and its position and role within the overall interpretive program. Projects involving byway funding, support, and/or promotion should go through a review and approval process for quality control prior to initiation of the actual project. Plans for specific projects should be prepared at the conceptual or schematic stage of design documentation. They should be reviewed by the byway organization’s Interpretive Committee for consistency with the comprehensive interpretive plan and guidelines. Projects should not proceed until the committee’s approval has been obtained. Planning requirements should be flexible, constructive, and tailored to the nature and circumstances of the project. They need not be complicated or burdensome. In general, plans should provide the following information:

- Organizations and individuals involved with the project
- Overall project concept and objectives
- Location and site plan
- Intended audiences
- Consistency with interpretive plan and guidelines
- Scenic byway themes and topics being interpreted
- Interpretive media to be used
- Key interpretive message for each exhibit
- Authenticity and accuracy of interpretive content
- Exhibit or installation designs
- Design consistency with established formats and design guidelines
- Interpretive connections to other sites and partners
- Estimated project costs

Chapter 5 of the Corridor Management Plan, Implementation, recommends the formation of a Heritage Tourism Committee (corridor wide), one of whose responsibilities is to guide the interpretive program for the Bayshore Heritage Byway. The committee should be led by members of the byway organization's board of directors (or management committee) and include representatives from partner organizations, specifically individuals with experience or professional-level training in interpretation, public history, and/or natural science. The committee will oversee preparation of the comprehensive interpretive plan and the subsequent implementation of interpretive projects whether by the scenic byway organization or partner. The role of the committee is to:

- Guide the interpretive planning and implementation process;
- Engage the appropriate professionals and partners in the process;
- Oversee the interpretive approach and format;
- Assure the accuracy of interpretive content; and
- Facilitate the creation of a high-quality visitor experience.

From an interpretive perspective, the identity of the scenic byway should be used for design elements associated with interpretive exhibits, wayfinding, publications, website, and others media formats and materials presenting interpretive content. Design associated with the region's identity and brand should be coordinated with signage design. At the time this corridor management plan is being prepared, wayfinding signage for the byway is being designed by the New Jersey Department of Transportation consistent with other designated byways in the state program and will be installed along the Bayshore Heritage Byway.

The Bayshore Heritage Byway should prepare a coordinated set of interpretive publications to support presentation of the scenic byway's interpretive themes and stories. All byway publications should use the graphic identity adopted by the state, should be available for download from the byway's website, and should be available for interpretive content in other media formats. All publications should be produced in both print and electronic formats. The following range of publications is suggested for consideration by the byway organization:

- An interpretive brochure introducing the scenic byway from a regional perspective and connecting the communities along the byway to thematically related sites in Salem, Cumberland and Cape May counties.
- A scenic byway brochure presenting all five interpretive themes and suggesting opportunities for visitors to explore.
- A large fold-out map of the scenic byway from Cape May to the Delaware Memorial Bridge showing the landscape, communities, trails, walking tours, visitor facilities, and locations where interpretation is provided.

- Individual brochures for each interpretive theme and related topics presenting the theme along with related stories and subject matter. Each brochure should include a map showing the places where full service interpretation and points of interest for the respective theme is offered
- Interpretive guides for each theme should be prepared presenting interpretative content in additional detail.
- Interpretive guides with information, activities and interpretive content for young people.
- Audio and video presentations on subjects related to the five scenic byway themes.
- Trails guide for the walking and biking trails along and in close proximity to the byway
- Interpretive guides presenting the natural history and ecosystems found along the byway.
- Media applications should be used to make interpretive content and orientation information available in as many formats as possible using applications, podcasts, Facebook, and other social media platforms.