

Religious Freedom Byway Implementation

Overall Considerations

The primary need for the management of the Byway is to ensure that there is a steady and continuous effort to achieve the goals spelled out in the Byway Management Plan. Currently, a management team consisting of representatives from each County, the Southern Maryland Heritage Area, the State Highway Administration, the Maryland Office of Tourism Development, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the Maryland Historic Trust, and the Maryland Department of Planning, is serving in this capacity. However, each of the members of the management team have additional responsibilities that limit their time available to work on the byway.

Strategy 6.1: Hire a Byway Manager

A Byway Manager or Byway Steward is needed to take a leadership role regarding implementing the plan. The Byway Manager should take responsibility for the following activities:

- 1) Pursuit of National Scenic Byway Designation – responsible entity for implementing the plan
- 2) Communication with all stakeholders along the byway with regard to issues facing the Byway
- 3) Speaking out on behalf of the Byway with regard to land use, transportation, conservation, and heritage tourism development matters to ensure that the Byway has a voice in deliberations that affect its potential success as one of the primary touring routes through Southern Maryland.
- 4) Identify opportunities for public and private grants to implement the priority projects spelled out in the Byway Management Plan.
- 5) To manage grants awarded on behalf of the Byway including the hiring of any needed outside consultants or vendors, processing payment of invoices, record keeping, and grants administration to implement goals and strategies.
- 6) Work with the private sector, institutions, churches and managers of historic sites and visitor attractions on behalf of the byway to encourage business participation in implementing the byway management plan, especially in relation to the interpretation and heritage tourism strategies outlined in the plan
- 7) To work with and encourage participation from the Byway Advisory Committee including ensuring that adequate participation is achieved from the private sector and adjoining property owners along the Byway.

Strategy 6.2: Organize the byway strategies into specific programmatic areas and establish small 3-7 person subcommittees to implement the strategies

1) Heritage Tourism:

The representatives from each County's Destination Marketing Organization's, the director of the Southern Maryland Heritage Area, and representatives for the sites along the byway should coordinate their activities to ensure that the Byway marketing efforts, along with the interpretation and education activities are well coordinated and present a unified image to the community and the visitor. This subcommittee should be responsible for coordinating, acquiring funding, producing and distributing the following in a coordinated manner:

- 1) printed materials
- 2) web-presence
- 3) front-line training
- 4) media coverage
- 5) development of interpretive materials
- 6) development of educational programs
- 7) marketing for group tours
- 8) integration with Capital Area tourism programs

2) Stewardship Activities:

A second subcommittee should be formed with representatives from each County's Departments of Land Use and Growth Management and Preservation Programs, along with private conservation and historic preservative organizations identified in the Byway Management Plan. This subcommittee should be responsible for pursuit of funding for preservation, conservation and enhancement projects along the Byway including the following:

- 1) Conservation and preservation easement program (or ensuring that the Byway's Conservation or Preservation priorities are part of other

organizations agendas).

- 2) Coordination with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the Bureau of Land Management, as well as private landowners and non-governmental organizations, regarding implementing the Byway related facilities along the Nanjemoy Loop
- 3) Coordination with County Land Use and Open Space Plans to ensure that the byway's conservation and enhancement priorities are identified in the Comprehensive Plan and are considered in deliberations regarding future land use issues along the Byway.
- 4) Advocate for the adoption of Byway specific design guidelines in each County as identified in the Byway Management Plan.
- 5) Encourage the use of adopt-a-highway, community tree-planting and other volunteer efforts to maintain the Byway.

3) Transportation Programs

A third subcommittee should be established to work with the Maryland State Highway Administration and each County on monitoring the planning and design of new transportation projects to ensure they address the Byway's needs and incorporate Context Sensitive Solutions as part of the project planning and design process. Of particular importance are the following activities:

- 1) US 301 improvements
- 2) MD 5 approaching Leonardtown
- 3) Making adjustments to the wayfinding system
- 4) Ensuring that bridge replacement projects maintain the open bridge rail designs
- 5) Working with local government to improve access management strategies in the vicinity of Leonardtown and La Plata.

6.3 Permanent Management Entity

A permanent management entity is needed to submit a nomination for National Scenic Byway. Each byway must identify a byway manager, along with a primary tourism contact to whom the public can call for information about the byway.

There are two viable options for establish a permanent management entity:

1) Southern Maryland Heritage Area

From the perspective of managing tourism in the region, the Southern Maryland Heritage Area offers a strong option for serving as the Permanent Management Entity. However, SMHA has limited staff time available to take on additional responsibilities. In addition, SMHA is a three-county area, and the byway only includes two of those three counties.

2) Bi-County Management Committee

From the perspective of managing grants, providing tourism information, and coordinating with each County's land use and growth management, transportation, and tourism departments, this option presents another viable possibility. The disadvantage would be that it would be difficult for such an entity to advocate on behalf of the Byway when there are potential competing interests for grants, economic development or other programs that are broader in scope than the byway's.

For the near term, we recommend that the current "Bi-County" Management Team continue in that role and that they jointly adopt a resolution establishing the management entity for a defined period of time (for example, a maximum of five years) until such time as either the Southern Maryland Heritage Area takes on the Byway Management, or an existing or new non-profit organization takes on the byway management role.

In either case, the existing Advisory Committee should be maintained and encouraged to sign on for the next phase of implementation. Subcommittees could then be formed that might meet more regularly (bi-monthly) with the full Advisory Committee meeting on a quarterly or semi-annual basis to review progress and review priorities.

6.4 Funding

Initial funding efforts for implementing the plan shall necessarily come from applications to FHWA's America's Byway Program. Funding for a byway manager shall be the highest priority with the funding for an interpretive master plan as the next immediate need.

Once a byway manager is in place, then additional

grant applications can be developed from a wider range of sources utilizing the dedicated staff time of the byway manager.

Appendix 4, Implementation Table lists each of the recommended strategies, along with a listing of the possible partners that should be involved with implementing the specific strategy. A preliminary budget has been identified for the initial strategies, along with an indication of the priority, where applicable.

Implementation of the strategies identified in the plan are dependent upon first, the initial hiring of a byway manager, and then second, upon successfully securing funding from outside sources necessary to implement the strategy. The pace at which the plan will be implemented is dependent upon the success of the byway manager in bringing in new funding and resources.

While the byway is ready for visitors now, the success of the byway as a heritage tourism and economic development program will be dependent upon how well the byway manager can first establish a byway organization and then grow the capacity of that organization to help preserve, maintain and enhance the qualities that make this byway experience unique and enjoyable.

(Footnotes)

¹ Maryland Byways p. 134.

² According to §1.170A-14 26, CFR Ch. I, 4-1-03 Edition): (iii) Governmental conservation policy– (A) in general. The requirement that the preservation of open space be pursuant to a clearly delineated Federal, state or local governmental policy is intended to protect the types of property identified by representative of the general public as worthy of preservation or conservation [see http://www.lta.org/publicpolicy/treasury_regs_on_ce.pdf]

³ Charles County Economic Development/Tourism Office. <http://www.visitcharlescounty.com/outdoor1.htm#top>. Accessed 10/22/2007.

⁴ Maryland Department of Natural Resources. <http://dnr.state.md.us/publiclands.southern/smallwood.html>. Accessed 5/18/2007.

⁵ <http://www.dnr.state.md.us/publiclands/southern/myrtlegrove.asp> Accessed 12/20/07

⁶ Nature and Experiential Tourism Report and Recommendations for Charles County, MD. Prepared by Fermata, Inc. October 2000. <http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/tourism/charlescounty.pdf>. Accessed 1.1.2008. p. 25

⁷ Nature and Experiential Tourism Report and Recommendations for Charles County, MD. Prepared by Fermata, Inc. October 2000. <http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/programs/tourism/charlescounty.pdf>. Accessed 1.1.2008. p. 39

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Maryland Department of Natural Resources. <http://www.dnr.state.md.us/resourceplanning/nanjemoy.html>

¹⁰ Site prepared for Bureau of Land Management by the William and Mary Center for Archeological Research. <http://www.wm.edu/wmcar/chiles/>

¹¹ Museum Division – Department of Recreation and Parks. Piney Point Lighthouse Museum brochure.

¹² Charles County Department of Public Facilities. <http://www.charlescounty.org/pf/pg/parks/facilities.htm>

¹³ Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin. http://www.potomacriver.org/about_ICPRB/faqs.htm#lr. Accessed 10/19/2007.

¹⁴ Charles County Comprehensive Plan. p. 8-12.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 8-13

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 8-10.

¹⁷ Charles County Economic Development/Tourism Office. <http://www.visitcharlescounty.com/outdoor.htm>. Accessed 10/19/2007.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Maryland Department of Natural Resources. <http://www.dnr.state.nmd.us/publiclands/southern/myrtlegrove.asp>. Accessed 5/22/2007.

²⁰ “Nanjemoy Naturally – A Shared Vision (2002-2032)”; Charles County Economic Development/Tourism Office. <http://www.visitcharlescounty.com/outdoor.htm>. Accessed 10/19/2007.

²¹ Charles County Comprehensive Plan. p. 8-9

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin. <http://>

www.potomacriver.org/history/regions/region%2011/section3.htm. Accessed 10/19/2007.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Charles County Comprehensive Plan, p. 8-26.

²⁷ St. Mary’s County Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, p. 40-1

²⁸ Charles County Comprehensive Plan, p. 10-3.

²⁹ St. Mary’s County Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance, p. 40-1

³⁰ See page 66, Quality of Life in St. Mary’s County – A Strategy for the 21st Century, St. Mary’s County, Maryland.