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## Special Edition of Scenic Watch:

Approximately one year ago you were on our recipient list to receive Scenic Watch. We emailed a renewal notice and did not hear from you. Since then we have heard from several people that they did not get the renewal notice or did not understand it. We are sending you this one time distribution of the current newsletter and ask that you let us know if you would like to be put back on the list to receive future copies. If so - just reply with [Renew](#) in the subject line.

Thank you

Scenic Watch Editor

Scenic Watch is a free bi-monthly publication of Citizens for a Scenic Florida, Inc., dedicated to the preservation, protection and enhancement of Florida's scenic heritage. Individuals, organizations and government agencies are welcome as members. [Join Scenic Florida now](#) to protect our scenic qualities.

### National News:

#### Court upholds New Hampshire town's ban on electronic signs

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit has upheld the U.S. District Court of New Hampshire's ruling that the town of Concord's ban on electronic message centers (EMCs) is constitutional.

The court said: "It is given that a billboard can constitute a traffic hazard. It follows that EMCs, which provide more visual stimuli than traditional signs, will be more distracting and more hazardous....[The] Plaintiff's own witness stated that bypassers focus more on rapidly blinking electronic signs than static signs. This constitutes a greater hazard."

The court also agreed that Concord has a right to protect its visual environment, saying that the town's aesthetic goals would be much harder to achieve without a ban on EMCs.

[Scenic America celebrates Vermont's 40 billboard-free years](#)

[Spread of electronic billboards is raising questions of driver safety, visual clutter in Penn.](#)

Editors Note:

The article below regarding the cost to remove approved electronic billboards should be a wake up call for any municipality considering permit requests for them. The potential millions in costs to remove just one of these signs is staggering considering that most of them are taxed based on their construction costs but then are bought out at their revenue value.

## Billboards

### Electronic Billboards Cost Millions to Remove

In a February 2007 news article from Marietta, Georgia the city council wisely considered the cost to

the taxpayers when they voted against allowing Clear Channel's LED billboards. Council Member Philip Goldstein was quoted as saying, "When we know that the state is likely to take the property in the near term, does it make sense . . . to approve a new type of billboard sign that will cost a great deal more for the state to condemn?"

Now the Marietta city council members are keenly aware of these higher costs since it has since been sued by Lamar Outdoor Advertising. Lamar is claiming damages due to the city's alleged improper denial of a permit for a LED billboard conversion. **In its pleadings, Lamar claims that a particular static-faced billboard has a value of \$840,000 while the same sign, if converted into a LED, would have a value of \$2,940,000. This 3.5 times value increase may not take into account payments to a landowner who must also be compensated in any purchase or condemnation. Taking all interests into account, we believe buying a LED billboard could cost taxpayers a minimum of 5 times more than buying a traditional billboard.**

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## Scenic Highways & Trails

### Group working to preserve tree canopy at Penney Farms

By **BETH REESE CRAVEY, My Clay Sun**

If you've seen the majestic canopy of oak and magnolia trees that line Florida 16 in Penney Farms, you probably slowed down just to gaze at nature's glory.

If you haven't seen them, you should.

A citizens committee is working to ensure the canopy, along with other resources in Penney Farms, will always be around to be admired.

This month, the Citizens Advocacy for a Scenic Highway Committee filed an eligibility application for Florida Scenic Highway status for a stretch of Florida 16 through Penney Farms and a connecting loop through the town.

The Scenic Highway program is part of the state Department of Transportation, which also owns and maintains Florida 16.

The designation would not prevent DOT from widening the two-lane highway, which is a long-held fear of town residents, or prohibit property owners from developing land along the roadway. But it would give the agency and property owners reason to look at alternatives, said Cathie Parrott, coordinator of the citizens committee.

"With scenic highway status, the people of Penney Farms become part of the decision process," she

said.

The Scenic Highway program is designed to help "preserve, enhance and maintain the intrinsic resources along a corridor," said the program's Web site. That's the goal of the Penney Farms citizens committee, said Parrott.

"Preserving the resources for the next generation, that's the big thing," she said.

The tree canopy - some of them were planted 80 years ago by town founder J.C. Penney - is the natural and scenic star of the show. Some of the other resources the committee wants to preserve are historical, such as the Penney historic district, including Penney Memorial Church and French Norman architecture in the Penney Retirement Community; and the New Hope community and the remains there of an early slave home.

Other important resources cited by the committee include the town's tennis complex and walking and biking routes, the statue of Penney outside Town Hall and a nearby archaeological mound.

A state committee will review the eligibility application and make a decision at a Feb. 20 meeting. If the application is approved, the committee will prepare a Corridor Management Plan outlining protection measures, among other things.

The 2.85-mile J.C. Penney Memorial Scenic Corridor would run along Florida 16, from just east of the town limits, travel a short distance through Penney Farms, and create a small loop, terminating to the west of town.

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### **Explore Florida's own National Scenic Trail during Florida Hiking Trails Month**

With more than a hundred trailheads within an hour's drive of most Floridians, the Florida Trail offers a place for you to connect with natural Florida on a walk in the woods. Join us this February as Governor Crist proclaims Florida Hiking Trails Month. Participate in local guided hikes, attend workshops and presentations on hiking, or just head for the woods and enjoy what's great about Florida's outdoors—its extreme diversity, with more than eighty distinct plant communities found from the tropical forests of the Keys to creeks draped with mountain laurel blossoms in the Western Panhandle.

Hiking provides excellent cardiovascular exercise and is an important part of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Discover the value of a walk in the woods for your mental and physical health. Think you're too old to hike? This past November four senior hikers logged 139 miles in a 13-day hike from Flagler Beach to Withlacoochee Bay on the Gulf of Mexico. How old is "senior"? All four were over 80!

This year we celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Florida Trail's designation as a National Scenic Trail and the 40th Anniversary of the Congressional National Trails Act of 1968, creating what now totals 17 National Historic Trails and eight National Scenic Trails. To extend the fun of Florida's prime hiking season, sign up now for the Florida Hiking Festival, held March 28-30, 2008 at Stephen Foster Folk Culture State Park in White Springs. It's a weekend of outdoor adventure, demonstrations, educational seminars, knowledgeable and engaging speakers, exhibitors and vendors, and children's activities....and, of course, hikes!

Take a Hike, Florida!

For more information on the Florida Trail and the many outdoor activities celebrating Florida Hiking Trails Month throughout the state, visit [www.floridatrail.org](http://www.floridatrail.org) to see our calendar of events or call 1-877-HIKE-FLA.

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### **Other Scenic News**

## **A1A's beauty goes on the road**

**A stretch of the highway in Northeast Florida is dubbed A1A Scenic & Historic Coastal Byway.**

**By MAGGIE FITZROY, Shorelines**

As David Madden hiked south along Florida A1A one recent day on his way from Canada to Key West, he admired the view along the stretch of road in south Ponte Vedra Beach.

The sun was setting to his right, over the Guana River. Ahead of him in Vilano Beach, it draped moored sailboats in golden light.

He'd just left Guana Reserve, where a few anglers and birds seemed to have the river to themselves.

Since joining A1A in Jacksonville Beach, Madden had periodically meandered onto the beach, just off to his left, comparing the sand, sea and shore bird scenes to the beaches where he lives in New Jersey.

"There's a Cooper's hawk, up on the wire. Bird-watching's one of my hobbies," he said, pointing to a small gray bird the size of a pigeon.

"I'll be on A1A for much of its length," he said. "It's a nice road."

While most people who travel A1A don't walk it like Madden, the Friends of A1A Scenic and Historic Coastal Byway hope they appreciate the views from their cars or bicycles.

The byway is the portion of A1A that stretches 72 miles along the Northeast Florida coast from the Duval/St. Johns county line to the Flagler/Volusia county line.

The Friends organization is a nonprofit citizens' advocacy group that partners with municipalities, government agencies and other civic groups to maintain and improve resources along the road's corridor, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Intracoastal Waterway.

Since the road was designated one of America's 126 byways in 2002, the Friends strive to benefit residents and visitors, according to their mission statement, "by protecting, preserving, enhancing and maintaining" the area that "is rich in history, nature, archeology, culture, scenery and recreation."

This month, they were awarded \$569,000 in scenic national byway funds for five projects planned for the road, beginning in Ponte Vedra Beach.

Federal funds awarded to the A1A projects include \$72,000 for a northern gateway interpretive kiosk near the Duval/St. Johns county line, and one for St. Augustine Beach, said Sallie O'Hara, byway program administrator.

In addition, \$200,000 was awarded for a visitors' welcome center in southern St. Johns County at Windswept Acre Park; \$120,000 for a scenic overlook in St. Augustine Beach; \$25,000 for a corridor management plan for the town of Marineland; and \$152,000 for Flagler County facilities improvements, including a beach ocean rescue building and observation tower at the Flagler pier.

"It's a pretty big deal," said Barbara Golden, spokeswoman for the St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra and the Beaches Visitors and Convention Bureau. The byway is an important part of this part of Florida, she said.

With Guana Reserve, Anastasia State Park, the Castillo de San Marcos, Fort Matanzas and the inlet area, "the most unique part" about the roadway is "there is nothing along the coast taller than the St. Augustine Lighthouse," Golden said. "There are no late afternoon shadows [from tall buildings]

blocking the sun."

Florida A1A is a state road that runs from Callahan, just south of the Florida/Georgia state line, to Key West.

The state named the north-south road State Road 1 in 1945, but because it was often confused with U.S. 1 west of the Intracoastal Waterway, the State Road Board changed the name to State Road A1A on Nov. 25, 1946. The two A's in the name are believed to stand for Atlantic 1 Alternate.

The road, which was built in sections as the state developed, was constructed in the area of Mineral City, now Ponte Vedra Beach, in the mid-1920s by B.B. McCormick and Sons.

Barbara Jenness of North Beach, president of the Friends group, said she joined the movement to have the stretch of A1A that runs through St. Johns County designated a national byway to help maintain it in as natural a state as possible.

"It's a beautiful road and I don't want to see it cluttered with billboards," she said.

Golden agreed.

The byway directs people into this area, she said.

It "creates an awareness of this beautiful, pristine area that is unlike anywhere else."

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Wilton Rooks

Scenic Watch Editor

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