



## Florida Headlines

### Scenic Award

[Conservation Awards to be held at Paynes Prairie](#)

### Scenic Highway

[West Volusia area gets scenic destination](#)

### Scenic Improvement

[Highway 98 in Santa Rosa Beach getting face-lift](#)

### Scenic Community

[Amelia Island](#)



Citizens for a Scenic Florida, Inc. is dedicated to preserving and enhancing Florida's scenic heritage. But it needs your support. This newsletter comes to you free whether you are a member or not. But we hope you will join us to work together to keep Florida the scenic place it is. Joining is easy and rewarding.

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## Editors Comments

I 'googled' Scenic Education Florida' looking for either news or websites that focused on schools that included scenic issues or awareness in their curriculum. None popped up. Maybe I missed them. I hope they are out there. Unless our future leaders are made aware of their scenic heritage, it will not be on their priority list to protect for their future leaders.

Florida is fortunate. Scenic is good business and will always attract some private funded efforts to keep it attractive. But our schools need to be involved also. On this general topic I came across a website that specializes in 'green' education. It is aptly named [Green Teacher](#). Check it out and encourage your local school board to think about it.

While touring the Internet I did come across a website that looks very interesting and recommend that you visit it. It is also aptly named - [Florida's Eden](#). I think you will like it.

## Scenic Awards

### Conservation Awards to be held at Paynes Prairie

*Ed. Note: This will be over by the time you read about it, but we wanted to give them recognition.*

By Hayley Mathis  
Correspondent

Published: Friday, March 20, 2009 at 6:01 a.m.  
Last Modified: Thursday, March 19, 2009 at 11:22 p.m.

Right outside Gainesville's back door, away from bright street lights and the noise of RTS buses, is a tranquil place where, during the heat of the day, animals of all kinds roam freely in the tall grass and, at night, glistening stars can be seen for miles against a black sky.

Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park is a Gainesville's landmarks and a place to celebrate the achievements of the community.

The 10th Conservation Stewards Awards will be held Friday at the High Barn at Hickory Ranch, a 963-acre ranch added to Paynes Prairie in 1990.

The first land acquisition bought by the Alachua Conservation Trust, Hickory Ranch includes prairie basins, canals, forests and structures for park operations.

Animals such as cranes, alligators, bobcats, wild Spanish horses and bison are common in this area of Paynes Prairie.

"Celebrating the Cranes and the Places They Sing and Dance" is this year's theme, said Robert Hutchinson, the executive director of ACT and vice president of Friends of Paynes Prairie, due to the unusual amount of cranes stopping at the prairie this year.

More than 8,000 sand hill cranes and more than 10 whooping cranes have stopped at the prairie during their migration route.

"We have the most phenomenal conservation of cranes," Hutchinson said.

The awards banquet will honor conservation stewards who have made contributions to preserving and improving Florida's natural resources, Hutchinson said.

Hutchinson said conservationists from different fields are chosen to show the ways in which everyone can be a conservationist.

This year's honorees include Al Krause, who has made significant contributions to promote cave conservation and founded Friends of Dudley Farms; Dominick Martino, photographer and Paynes Prairie volunteer; and Earl Starnes, president of The Nature Coast Conservancy, former director of state planning and former member of the boards of the Suwannee River Water Management District and the Florida Greenways Commission.

"These are mentors or role models for the conservation work they each have done," Hutchinson said.

Along with honoring these three conservationists, there will be a sunset cocktail hour, a twilight dinner on the prairie, a silent art auction and hayrides.

Entertainment will be provided by Sister Hazel's Ken Block and Drew Copeland.

To go along with the crane theme, Jim Weimer, prairie biologist, will give a speech about the cranes and preserving their habitat, while Cathy DeWitt will sing a traditional song about cranes.

Hutchinson recommends dressing appropriately for the occasion with boots instead of heels or dress shoes and long pants and long-sleeved shirts.

All proceeds benefit ACT, a non-profit organization whose mission is to protect natural, historical, scenic and recreational resources in and around Alachua County, and Friends of Paynes Prairie, a non-profit citizens support organization that aids the missions, programs and goals of Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park through fundraising, outreach, education and volunteering.

Hutchinson said he expects more than 300 people to attend and looks forward to the awards banquet every year.

"Each year they get bigger and more interesting," Hutchinson said. "It brings people from various interests together and enjoy our success."

[Click here for the full article](#)

[Return to Headlines](#)

## **Scenic Highway**

### **West Volusia area gets scenic destination**

West Volusia County's River of Lakes Heritage Corridor, a 120-mile network of roads centered on U.S. 17 and U.S. 17-92, has been designated a Florida Scenic Highway.

Stephanie Kopelousos, secretary of the Florida Department of Transportation, signed off on the

designation in a March 12 letter.

The corridor met the requirements under the state's heritage corridor classification, which applies to corridors designated as scenic highways based on cultural, historic and or archeological value to the state, according to Kopelousos letter.

"It's going to mean increased tourism and a great economic impact for the West Volusia region, as well as the county as whole," said Jessi Smith, program and partnership director for the River of Lakes Heritage Corridor.

She said the designation would lead to greater awareness of the area's resources and assets through the state and national scenic highway programs.

The designation also open doors for substantial federal and state money for enhancement, preservation and beautification projects, according to River of Lakes Heritage Corridor press release.

[Return to Headlines](#)

## **Scenic Improvement**

### **Highway 98 in Santa Rosa Beach getting face-lift**

March 18, 2009 - 6:07 PM

[Suzanne Preston](#)

Beautification of the roads in Santa Rosa Beach is well underway with a two-mile stretch along Highway 98.

What began a few weeks ago has progressed at a rapid pace. The project is ahead of schedule and should be completed by early-to-mid-June.

"This project is about community pride," said Roger Hall, president of the Scenic Corridor Foundation. "It's about making this area better than it already is."

During a short ceremony March 18 more than 20 business and community members came out for the "gold shovel" event.

The Florida Department of Transportation awarded Walton County with state grants totaling \$600,000 for beautification along the roadways.

Hall recognized the Walton County Board of Commissioners for their agreement in 2007 to maintain the medians once the project is complete.

"Their support was instrumental in receiving the grants from the state," said Hall.

"Our goal is to beautify the medians from the Okaloosa County line to the Bay County line."

The beautification project, which began with application for grant funding two years ago, is a now a public/private initiative.

Many businesses and residents have made contributions to SCF to help fund the project.

"This is a great community and we will continue to form public/private partnerships to accomplish the goal of beautification," Hall said.

As president of the newly-formed SCF, Hall stated their goal is to "continue efforts to foster an environment of excellence in the community that benefits everyone."

Landscaping will consist of several varieties of foliage with crepe myrtles providing a splash of

color when in bloom.

"This is a simple design," said Bill Smith, senior landscape architect. "It will be a continuous flow of trees, grass and shrubs for ease of maintenance."

Along with the added beauty, statistics prove that fewer accidents occur along roadways that have landscaping, according to Smith.

[Click here for the full article](#)

[Return to Headlines](#)

## Scenic Community

### Amelia Island

Wes Smith | Sentinel Staff Writer



Fishing on the beach at Amelia Island (Visit Florida)

Northeast Florida's Amelia Island, an Atlantic Ocean barrier island, is like a family-friendly Key West minus the wild street parties and torrid heat -- and with better beaches.

The town on the island, Fernandina Beach, a laid-back old shrimping village, boasts a charming historic district with a scenic harbor and marina that may tempt you away from its 13 miles of dunes and sand. Amelia's broad beaches have areas where you can drive the family van and even ride horseback. Where else can you take a riverboat cruise and in one sweeping view see wild horses, a 19th-century fort and a U.S. nuclear submarine?

\*Can't miss: Amelia River Cruises (group tours) and On the Water Adventures (private tours) voyage into the intriguing backwaters off Amelia Island and nearby Cumberland Island where Carnegie and Rockefeller descendants dwell amid wild horses and wild hogs. Surprises lurking include dolphin schools, wild stallions, gators, manatees and the occasional nuclear-powered submarine from the Kings Bay Submarine Base ([ameliarivercruises.com](http://ameliarivercruises.com), [onthewateradventures.com](http://onthewateradventures.com)).

\*Bargain lodging and dining: There are two Hampton Inns on Amelia Island, one near the beach and the other in the historic district near the marina ([hamptoninn.com](http://hamptoninn.com)). The Best Western Inn at Amelia Island is within a block of the surf ([book.bestwestern.com](http://book.bestwestern.com)). The locally owned Amelia Hotel

at the Beach has a family-of-four summer package that includes dinner at The Crab Trap (ameliahotel.us).

The Crab Trap is a fun family restaurant in the historic district while Sliders Seaside Grill sits on the beach and has service on the sands. The grand Elizabeth Pointe Lodge Bed & Breakfast welcomes nonguests to sit on the porch and eat breakfast or "all-day" lunch while enjoying the ocean views (elizabethpointelodge.com).

\*Inside track: Native boat captain Cecilia McCarthy, descendant of lighthouse keepers and shrimpers, says a favorite for eating and gassing up is T-Ray's Burger Station at 202 S. Eighth St. Breakfast and lunch are served in two former service bays of the Mullins family gas station. Son T-Ray serves breakfast and lunch (go early on Friday for the shrimp special) while dad Big Ray pumps gas. "It's not fancy, but it's where locals love to go," she says.

#### \*AGE APPROPRIATE

Nature-loving families will find relief from carnival clutter here. Yet there are plentiful adventures by land and by sea.

#### \*TOO MUCH FUN

This boot-shaped island offers fishing, surfing, hiking, biking and boating -- along with tennis and golf. Nearby Jacksonville and St. Augustine have amusements, water parks and go-kart tracks.

#### \*BEST ADVENTURE

Kelly Seahorse Ranch sits along 200-acre Amelia Island State Park where Nassau Sound meets the Atlantic Ocean. Grand views of beaches, salt marshes and coastal forests can be had on the 45-minute horseback ride (\$60). For those 13 years old and older. (kellyranchinc.com)

#### \*KEEP 'EM HAPPY

Kayak Amelia gives "a good paddlin' " in the salt marshes of Talbot Islands state parks and the Timucuan Preserve. Dolphin, manatee and sea turtle sightings are bonuses. Beginners are welcome; swimmers only (kayakamelia.com).

#### \*TIMING IS EVERYTHING

Amelia Island sits at the northeastern tip of Florida, so it will be cooler than more southern destinations.

#### \*AVOID THE CROWDS

Local moms take their kids to the beach at Fort Clinch State Park at the north end of Amelia Island, where they can romp on the sand in search of shark's teeth, throw a line from the pier or play soldier in a 19th-century fort. There is a six-mile trail for hiking and biking, and a campground with restrooms, changing facilities and shallow areas for kiddies (floridastateparks.org/fortclinch/).

[Click here for full article.](#)

[Return to Headlines](#)

Wilton Rooks

Scenic Watch Editor