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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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National News:

Beautiful blight?

There is something perverse about an interstate highway "beautification" project that enhances rather than reduces billboard blight. But that seems to be the intent of a state Department of Transportation pilot project along I-75 from the Georgia line to the Florida Turnpike. Alachua County and the City of Gainesville have joined advocate groups like Citizens for a Scenic Florida and Scenic America in objecting to proposals that would allow companies to replace aging, nonconforming billboards with new steel structures; and multi-message digital boards to boot.

Critics of the proposal say it will not only detract from North Florida's natural scenic beauty, but provide new sources of driver distraction as well.

The DOT has for too long been joined at the hip with the billboard lobby. Whatever you want to call it, littering I-75 with high-tech, new and improved billboards is hardly beautification.

Gainesville Sun Editorial... November 20, 2009

Digital billboard moratorium is proposed in Michigan

Bill establishes two-year ban

By HYONHEE SHIN

Special to the Record-Eagle

LANSING -- Drivers might not see any new glowing digital billboards along Michigan highways for a while.

Rep. Rebekah Warren, D-Ann Arbor, introduced a bill to establish a two-year moratorium on new digital billboards until a federal analysis is completed and safety recommendations are issued by the end of 2011.

[more...](#)

Billboards

Flagler County Banning Billboards

Wednesday, November 04, 2009 9:37:47 PM

FLAGLER COUNTY -- Business is booming at a Flagler County car wash.

Even though it's located off the beaten path, customers found it.

"Probably through the billboards originally," said customer Kristin Moraitis.

Even though new businesses are popping up in the county, new billboards will not be because of a new ordinance approved by county commissioners.

"This new ordinance will outlaw any new billboards and we're going to be meeting with billboard companies to see if we can reduce the number of billboards we have now," said Carl Laundrie, Flagler County spokesman.

Independently owned billboards already in place will not be taken down.

"We've got great word of mouth advertising going on, but we need more. We need signs," said business owner Terry Colletti. "If it's not under their nose or in front of them they don't see it."

There are no electronic billboards in Flagler County, and there may never be.

Flagler County commissioners want an outright ban of electronic billboards. They say signs are distracting.

"The images changing, it flashes, it's distracting to traffic. People will end up looking at the billboard rear end another car," Laundrie said.

Commissioners want to show potential developers an old Florida.

They believe they can best advertise that with fewer billboards.

Laundrie says that even if old billboards are torn down, new ones cannot go up in their place.

The ban on new and electronic billboards is in unincorporated Flagler County and includes billboards along Interstate 95.

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Scenic Things to Do

Scenic travel calendars

The Sun-Centinel publishes monthly travel calendars of interesting things to do in Florida. Some of you sent your own calendars to be included. Time and space prevents researching every city so if you would make sure your local events are included in the Sun-Centinel calendars then the rest of the state will know about them. Here are links to the upcoming August events:

[North Florida & the Panhandle Travel Calendar for December](#)

[South Florida Travel Calendar for December](#)

[Central Florida Travel Calendar for December](#)

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Scenic Highways and Trails

Big Bend Scenic Byway gains national status

By Jon McCloud • DEMOCRAT WRITER • November 20, 2009

The management of Big Bend Scenic Byway Corridor this week announced its designation from a Florida Scenic Highway to a National Scenic Byway.

This puts the Big Bend Scenic Byway on the national map, increasing tourism chances and federal funding for the route.

"My wife and I helped to get the process going and we were involved during the process, so I am really thankful to see (the Byway) nationally recognized," said Don Lesh, codirector of Applied Sustainability Enterprises. "It means so much to this area."

Recognition as a National Scenic Byway is expected to boost tourism throughout Franklin, Leon and Wakulla counties, particularly along the 220-mile route.

"We pride ourselves on having some of the most beautiful natural resources," said Jerry Evans, chairman of the Wakulla County Tourism Development Council. "We are very excited, especially for the nature-based tourists."

"Not many communities can claim this richness of natural resources," said Sharon Liggett, chairperson of the Byway Entity. "The best part is that they're all right here in our backyard."

The new recognition should also create new jobs in the nature and heritage tourism markets.

"It will help bring grants and federal funds to the counties," said Mariano Berrios, environmental programs administrator for the Florida Department of Transportation.

Berrios also said that three other roads in Florida also earned national recognition this year, including the Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway, the Ormond Scenic Loop and Trail and the Florida Keys Overseas Highway, which was designated as an All-American Road.

"As our resources and wildlife become known around the country this (area) will become a real tourist attraction," Lesh said. "This is a great step, but we're just opening the door to the real benefits that will be coming in the future for the Panhandle."

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Florida National Scenic Trail Gains More Miles

Enables a 10-mile gap in the Florida National Scenic Trail to be connected.

Thursday November 26th, 2009

Tallahassee, Fla. – The U.S. Forest Service, in partnership with the Florida Trail Association, recently acquired rights to establish a public access trail corridor on 930 acres of property in one of the largest – and most significant – donations ever received from a private landowner. The donation of the easement enables a 10-mile gap in the Florida National Scenic Trail to be connected.

With negotiation and discussion over time, the Forest Service and Florida Trail Association reached an agreement over the easement with Walton County landowner M.C. Davis. The agreement allows the U.S. Forest Service and Florida Trail Association to construct, maintain and manage the Florida Trail for use by the public.

"We are very grateful for this donation," said Susan Jeheber-Matthews, Forest Supervisor for the National Forests in Florida. "Significant progress has been made in building the National Scenic Trail since its designation by Congress, and to further connect the Florida Trail is a testament of the commitment and partnerships to protect this national treasure."

The Florida National Scenic Trail, a footpath administered by the Forest Service primarily for hiking, backpacking or nature watching, is one of 11 national scenic trails in the United States. It spans 1,400 miles from the Big Cypress National Preserve in Miami to the Gulf Islands National Seashore near Pensacola.

The 930-acre easement that was acquired is unique such that it traverses through the Nokuse Plantation, a 48,000-acre private conservation initiative in the Florida Panhandle conceptualized and funded by conservationist M. C. Davis. The Florida Trail provides the only public access to this area. The easement also allows for a Florida Trail connection between Pine Log State Forest and Eglin Air Force Base. It will also allow hikers a more direct route. Prior to this donation, Florida Trail users would have to travel for miles on Highway 20 and State Road 81 in order to make their way between established sections of the Florida Trail. Users will now be able to enjoy a scenic walk through Florida's natural areas instead of alongside a roadway.

"Closing the gap and completing this section of the Florida Trail complements M.C. Davis' goals related to environmental education and natural resource conservation," said Michelle Mitchell, Florida Trail program manager.

The new section of the Florida Trail on Nokuse Plantation will be established and maintained by the volunteers of the Florida Trail Association. To get involved, visit www.FloridaTrail.org, or call 1-877-HIKE-FLA.

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Wilton Rooks

Scenic Watch Editor