

Southern Pinelands Natural Heritage Trail Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan

Task 17: Marketing Narrative

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Introduction

The Southern Pinelands Natural Heritage Trail Byway faces several interesting challenges and unusual opportunities regarding marketing itself to travelers:

- The region is well known within New Jersey and the nearby metro areas as a *place*, but not necessarily as a *place to travel*. In other words, people know that there is a big part of New Jersey called *The Pinelands* but it is not strongly seen as a travel destination.
- Lying so close to some of the Mid-Atlantic's major destinations – the Jersey Shore, Atlantic City and Cape May-- offers interesting opportunities that are rare for a rural region. There are many potential visitors traveling very close to the region each year.
- A realistic perspective of the Pinelands must acknowledge that it may never become a major destination like many of our national parks. While it offers many beautiful and intriguing places and stories, it does not offer breathtaking landscapes that are typically so critical to the average person's enjoyment of a natural area.
- It is also true that currently there are limited numbers of lodging and dining establishments along the byway. In other words, the capacity of the byway to feed and lodge more visitors has some limits.
- Visitors who will enjoy the Pinelands are those who will leave their car and venture a bit into the landscape in order to feel the essence of the place. The primary markets that mesh with this criterion are canoers, kayakers, campers, hikers, botany-buffs and wildflower fans, and birders. The night skies draw stargazers. The heritage will draw people interested in Revolutionary War history, pirates, Jewish settlements, New Jersey history and railroad enthusiasts. As an entrance point for many colonists, there is also a large genealogical market. Finally, there will be average people interested in a quiet weekend away in a beautiful, new location or shore-goers needing an inland day of activities.
- Therefore, positive impacts can be experienced with relatively modest gains in visitation from the region's most natural markets. An extra 100 people per day wandering into the shops and diners of Mays Landing, Woodbine, Tuckahoe and Tuckerton can very helpful to local merchants. This is equivalent to an average of an additional 30-50 cars venturing along the byway each day. Assuming typical food and gift expenditures of \$25 per day per visitor, this translates into an extra \$2500 per day added to local economies or \$500,000 over the course of a typical 200 day tourism year (i.e., leaving out periods of bad weather and thus low travel levels). Adding an extra \$20,000 in revenues each to 25 small businesses along the byway is not insignificant in these times.

The strategies that follow are all low cost, effective ways to bring the Pinelands to the minds of more travelers and to encourage visitors to come and stay in the region.

Strategies

Getting Organized

Form a Byway Promotion Committee

As noted below, this byway is challenged by crossing four different state travel regions (Southern Shore, Atlantic City, Delaware Bay and Shore.) Thus, it does not have a dedicated DMO (i.e., destination marketing organization.) Therefore, the byway ends up offering a bit of an experience in each of the four travel regions, and thus it is a travel experience that will take someone out of a travel region and into another region. While most regions work cooperatively with their neighbors based on the 'rising tides lift all boats' theory, it is also true that DMO's need to focus their resources on the travel products that will most benefit their regions. A byway that crosses a number of regions becomes a secondary travel product for each of those regions unless it offers distinctively different and new travel experiences that really augment what the region offers.

While it is not recommended that the byway try to create a new Pinelands Travel Region, it will be important that the byway and the region begin to have a unified marketing voice and effort in order to work most effectively with the existing travel regions. Such internal organization, with a professional eye for how to work cooperatively with all of the relevant nearby travel destinations, will help the byway progress.

It is recommended that the byway group organize a marketing committee comprised of the following organizations:

- Interested elected officials
- Representatives of local tourism and visitors bureaus
- Chamber of commerce representatives
- Tourism business representatives
- Museum and destination representatives
- Public land management agency representatives

This committee should review this chapter, review the draft brochure and map and define some clear projects and events that make the most sense to pursue.

Then the group should present its ideas, and draft marketing map and brochure to the county tourism offices and each of the travel regions and begin discussions on how to best cooperate and support those entities. The byway should work perhaps most closely with the Atlantic County Tourism office as Atlantic County holds the greatest number of byway miles. If this office could take the lead to market the byway, it would be easier for adjoining counties and travel regions to participate.

Another benefit from this effort would be raising awareness within the greater Atlantic City region about the byway. While the byway will never be a highly significant partner for most Atlantic City destinations, it should always be looking for ways to support, partner with and benefit from associations with Atlantic City tourism businesses and organizations.

Adopt a Name

“Pine Barrens Byway”

As a name, *The Southern Pinelands Natural Heritage Trail* has several weaknesses and a new name should be chosen.

- It is too long and the eventual addition of ‘National Scenic Byway’ or ‘America’s Byway’ will make it even more cumbersome.
- The word *Pinelands* is too generic.
- It is comprised of too many words that are too generic (i.e. *southern, natural, heritage* and *trail*.) Thus, it is difficult to remember...Pinelands Southern Heritage Nature Trail??, Southern Pinelands Heritage and Nature Trail???
- Eventually, the northern end of the region should be linked to this route to create one national byway for the region. *Southern* must be dropped one day anyway.
- It is not a ‘trail’. This byway is very much a collection of areas, some of which lie off the byway. And, the most interesting experiences are not found during the course of driving the byway. They are found only once one gets out of the car.

Adopt the following name: **The Pine Barrens Byway.**

- The words *Pine Barrens* are distinctive. If one does a web search on *pine barrens*, one only easily finds a few locations of pine barrens and New Jersey is clearly the most significant.
- The word *barrens* is evocative. While it suggests a certain desolation, it also suggests a place that is unusual, out of the way, a little mysterious. It is a word with some energy.
- *Pine Barrens Byway* is short and memorable. *Pine Barrens National Scenic Byway* is also sufficiently short to be easily used.
- *Barrens* and *byway* alliterate well. Together *pine, barrens* and *byway* are fun to say.
- When the northern segment is added, there will be no need to change the name in marketing and other materials.

Clarify a Byway and Regional Image

If the Pine Barrens offered a travel experience that rivaled the Jersey Shore or Mount Rushmore, there would already be lots of people traveling to the region. In many ways, the natural tourism development of a destination is a good measure of the underlying appeal of the place to the general traveler. Therefore, this byway faces the challenge of going from an unknown or misunderstood place to one that has a strong appeal to at least a portion of the travel market.

The image projected by the place plays a strong role in this effort.

Today, the Pinelands region presents an image comprised of the following elements:

- A special environmental place, as recognized by scientists and environmental groups;
- A big green area on some maps of New Jersey;
- A desolate, lonely place where one can easily get lost or never be found (see *Sopranos* episode 37, Season 3, *Pine Barrens*);
- A mysterious place, home to the Jersey Devil and ‘pineys’;
- And for a smaller group of outdoor recreators, a place that offers solitude, good birding, good stargazing, a special environment while hiking or canoeing, and good hunting and fishing.

It is recommended that the byway work to clarify and define this image by working with the existing ideas that are already out there. Use existing ideas as hooks for people to learn more. As the America's Byways Program says, encourage visitors to 'Come closer.'

The above existing images can be translated to a few more compelling statements:

- **This is a special, vast place – it is the Mid-Atlantic's National Park.** At 1 million acres in size, the Pinelands would rank as the 6th largest national park in the lower 48 states after Death Valley (3.3 million acres), Yellowstone (3.2 million acres), Everglades (1.5 million acres), Grand Canyon (1.2 million acres), and Glacier (1.02 million acres). (If we add the acreage of the coastal National Wildlife Refuges to the Pinelands Reserve acreage, the region would come in at #5.) ***Come explore one of the largest wild areas on the East Coast.***
- **This is a place to get away from regular life.** The Pinelands offers two experiences: 1) views of forests and water, quiet small towns, pretty country roads and acres of farmland, and 2) the seclusion and solitude of the wilderness. ***Leave your regular life; escape to the Pine Barrens for a few hours or a few days.***
- **The wild areas of the Pinelands are mysterious.** This region has a long history of people and things who do not want to be found, to not be found. Pirates, privateers, thieves, escaped slaves, wilderness men, the Jersey Devil and more. ***Come feel the mystery of the Pine Barrens.***
- **Finally, the Pine Barrens are fun and accessible!** There has been a historic tendency to present the region with a level of seriousness and while the conservation effort for the region is nationally laudable and important, the tourism side of the region needs to project an image of fun and relaxation. Decrease the amount of text and importance on how well-protected the area is; increase the message of how fun it is to recreate in such a special place. The Pinelands are neither steep, nor deep with no raging currents or fierce winds. They are flat; they are calm. All of this translates into *easy accessibility* for most travelers. The Pinelands is a place where people can experience wildness without climbing mountaintops or hiking 100 miles. ***Come have fun in the Pine Barrens!***

These messages should be integrated into all new and revised promotional materials and advertising.

Obtain Spectacular Photography and Create a Photo Library

Good photography lies at the heart of enticing new visitors to come to your region. The region must raise funding to create a highly professional photo library. These images will be used in promotional materials and on the website. In addition, the library will allow travel journalists to use the images in their articles and blogs.

Connect the Pine Barrens Byway to Nearby Destinations and Experiences

The Pine Barrens Byway is near to a variety of established destinations and experiences, including:

- The Jersey Shore
- Atlantic City
- Cape May
- The Delaware Bay

- The New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail

For each of these destinations, find ways to compatibly link the Pine Barrens Byway. Below are marketing messages that help to accomplish this objective.

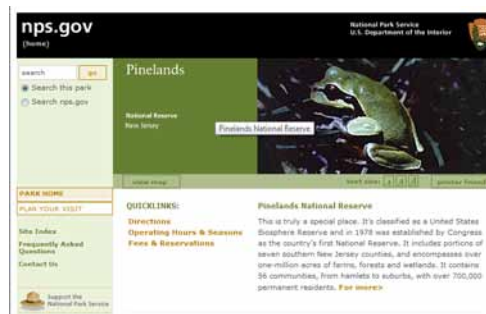
- To Jersey Shore visitors: On a rainy day, enjoy the cool quiet of the Pine Barrens Byway.
- To Atlantic City visitors: Need some quaint village shopping and the quiet of nature as a break from the excitement of AC? Come to the Pine Barrens Byway.
- To Cape May visitors: Make an excursion up the Great Egg Harbor River into some of the finest inland birding habitats on the East Coast. Explore the Pine Barrens Byway.
- To Delaware Bay visitors: Take a day to explore the fascinating heritage and ecosystems of the region inland from the coast. Find the villages where people settled, the lands that supported the Leni Lenape Nation, and one of the most interesting ecosystems in America. It's like having a National Park in your backyard: Explore the Pine Barrens Byway.
- To New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail visitors: Make your explorations into a loop. Drive the coast on one leg and return along the Pine Barrens Byway.

In the same manner, promote these other locations as ways to lengthen stays along the byway. Encourage people to lodge near the byway, but offer excursions into Coastal Heritage Trail communities or to locations along the coast that augment the experience of the byway. Develop itineraries that take people to other great experiences in Southern New Jersey, but which return them to the byway.

Present a Consistent Look and Feel

Develop an Image that Combines the Branded Feel of National Parks with the Regionally Distinctive Quality of National Heritage Areas

Develop a set of graphics standards that mixes the feel of a National Park with a more local quality. This will require the involvement of a good graphic artist. There are elements of the National Park Service's graphics that should be retained. For instance, include the Park Service logo where appropriate. Use Park Service-like signage – rustic support structure construction with a clean modern look for the graphics. Using a simple approach with sans serif fonts and the characteristic three color banded colors with white lettering. These all send a Park Service-like message.

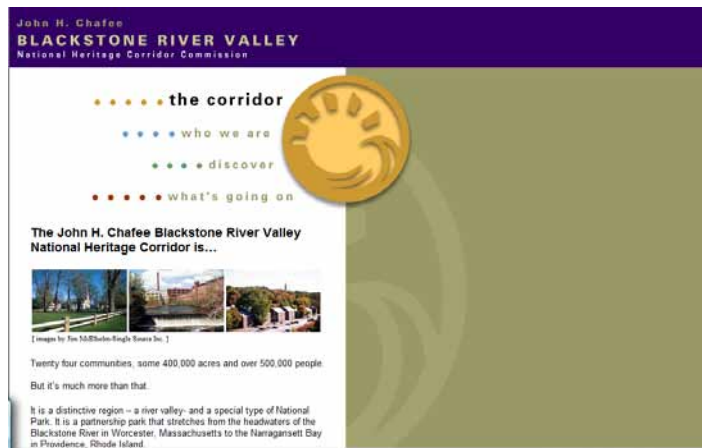


Using these standards, which are appropriate given the Park Service's role in the national reserve system, will send a not-so subtle message that visitors should expect a park-like experience.

It should be noted that the Pinelands Commission and National Reserve have been using these formats for many years. As noted below, however, a missing element is the application of these formats in a way that more actively attracts visitors. To date, the region has not been actively marketed to visitors; instead, information has been published and presented for those who might be interested in the place. What has occurred is a passive presentation of interesting information. What needs to occur is an active outreach and appeal to attract visitors.

A very good model for combining a local feel with a National Park Service feel is the National Heritage Area system. These areas are comprised largely of private land within which a National Park Service planning and partnership effort leads to projects that promote the region and protect local heritage.

The Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Area (Rhode Island and Massachusetts) works to interpret the industrial revolution's history while encouraging the economic revival of the area with both tourism and other forms of business development. Their programs and their website present the image of a place that is building its future character on the foundation of its heritage.



The **Blue Ridge National Heritage Area** celebrates Appalachian heritage and culture in Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee. The heritage area blends together the region's major resources: natural areas and trails, crafts, Cherokee heritage, music and history. A variety of trails are offered to explore each of these subject areas. As one can see in the trail signage, it gives a feel similar to that of a National Park in its simplicity while projecting a more home-grown quality.



Other Actions to Support Graphic Consistency:

- Develop a byway-specific logo for the Pine Barrens Byway.
- The region should consider installing multi-logo signs that announce entering the Pinelands National Reserve and then include logos for the byway, the international bio-reserve designation, wild and scenic rivers, national wildlife refuges and the other resources of the place.
- Use these general graphics concepts on all new interpretative signing that is installed. This will mesh with recent Pinelands Interpretive Plan wayside signage.
- Use these standards for all brochures, maps and print ads.
- Use these standards in web sites that promote the region.
- Develop a set of information and orientation kiosks that can be placed along the byway and which provide 24/7 information and materials to travelers. Design a regionally appropriate style for the kiosks. Provide brochures and maps as well as panels that orient the traveler. Consider a 'shadow box' design that provides opportunities for each local area to display items that represent their town or area (e.g., local art, crafts, small advertisements, etc.)

Navigating the Byway

The byway must have a series of maps and brochures that present the image of the region and guide people to series of experiences and destinations.

- Create three maps/brochures for the byway using a four-color, 17"x24" format. Make one map/brochure for each of the three general segments of the byway.
- One side will be the map presenting the portion of the byway with all destinations and activities indicated. The other side will consist of text and photos that describe the nature of the experience as well as give an overview of the entire byway.
- A full byway orientation map and brochure should be prepared. This can be of a similar size to the current Pinelands byway map.
- Develop a few series of themed itinerary brochures, as discussed below. These will link to specific sets of interests that might entice visitors to pursue a journey along the byway.
- Install directional signing along the entire route. This is particularly important along this route as there are so many intersecting roads and confusing intersections. (See signage chapter.)
- Install TODS (tourist orientation and directional signing) for all relevant local businesses. (See signage chapter.)
- As noted above, install information and orientation kiosks in town centers and key locations so that visitors can determine where they are and what lies nearby.

- Use the byway logo -- developed for the above section-- on orientation byway signage along the route.

Simplify the Journey and the Product

Itineraries that Tell the Story

This is not a byway that offers an exceptional experience just by driving the route. The value and emotion of this byway are found by going to specific places and seeing and feeling what is there. One can drive by Rocky Mountain National Park and still see amazing landscapes. Driving by Batsto is not sufficient; one must enter and go through the Village and Visitors Center. The same is true for the rivers, for the marshes, the wildlife areas and state forests. Therefore, visitors must be guided through these experiences.

Develop a series of itineraries for each of the three byway segments. The northern loop might have itineraries such as the following:

- Explore the inland to coastal watershed along the Jacques Cousteau Center Interpretive Trail
- Follow the path of Pirates and Pine Barrens Mysteries. The history and mystery of the Pine Barrens including the Jersey Devil, the privateers and pirates of the Revolutionary War and other stories along the Mullica River corridor.
- Canoe the Mullica and see history first hand: Start upstream and encounter the quiet wildness of the Pine Barrens, visit Batsto Village, the quaint villages of the Mullica, boatbuilding along the Mullica and the river's ecosystems

The Central Segment might focus on the Great Egg Harbor National Scenic and Wild River. Activities might include canoeing, kayaking, biking and hiking along the river corridor, seeing historic sites like Weymouth Furnace and Estell Manor, visiting the nature trails and interpretation in Estell Manor, exploring the MacNamara Wildlife Management Area and finally enjoying Tuckahoe and the Cape May Railroad.

Finally, the Southern Loop might offer itineraries that focus on coastal ecosystems and villages with trips from Eldora Nature Center into surrounding villages like Dennisville, Port Elizabeth and Mauricetown. The upland Pine Barrens ecosystems of Belleplain State Forest lend themselves to driving tours, cycling tours and walking excursions. Use the interpretive staff at Belleplain as the core guides for these experiences. Woodbine offers an excellent heritage center at the Sam Aziz Museum of Woodbine Heritage. Develop walking tours that extend out from the center.

These itineraries can be 8.5" x 17" folding brochures and maps. Affordable to produce and distribute and easy for travelers to carry.

Web Marketing - Create a Pine Barrens Byway Travel Site

The region needs a strong travel-oriented website. As noted by one traveler in an online travel forum:

I found the Pine Barrens on the internet but couldn't get a handle on what recreational activities are available there but it sounds like a real possibility. Can you hike, or kayak or canoe there? Are there rentals available? The website is atrocious unless you're interested in the biographies of the commission members.

While the region offers good general information websites about the region and PineyPower.com provides enthusiastic support for the region, there is not a clear central, regional website that offers a strong traveler-oriented presentation of the full byway and/or region.

Such a site must obtain high rankings on all search engines. As there is little competition for Pinelands search words, any well-designed site or modestly funded search-word effort on the major engines will produce quality listings.

The basic website should address the following topics and structural issues:

Home Page:

- Welcome message with emphasis on inviting people to visit
- Compelling images with people having fun: canoeing, kayaking, birding, hiking, boating, event activities, talking with an interpretive guide, visitors enjoying a meal or drink by a great view, long view of an engaging landscape, close up view of environmental feature (e.g., flower or animal)
- What's New: Upcoming Events and News
- Contact information
- Downloadable maps and brochures
- Downloadable audio files
- Photo tour of the byway

- Several link paths. Each would offer at least a page of information.
 - Overview of the byway
 - ½ day visit ideas and itineraries
 - 1 day visit ideas and itineraries
 - 2-3 day visit ideas and itineraries
 - Outdoor recreation tours
 - Heritage tours
 - Learning about the Pine Barrens Byway – educational programs
 - Arts in the Barrens – programs, talks, galleries, tours
 - Writings on the Pinelands – links to books, articles, poems and audio files of authors.
 - Lodging
 - Dining
 - Outfitters and services

Modifications to the New Jersey Tourism Website

For all practical purposes, the Pinelands is not a travel destination on the New Jersey state travel website except within the unexpected location in the Delaware River region. Searching on Pinelands produces no links to the state site. A general Google search connects to a fall foliage tour and that is it. The Pinelands Region and the byway cross through four state travel regions (i.e. Southern Shore, Atlantic City, Delaware River and Shore.) While this plan does not recommend as a high priority the arduous process of trying to make the Pinelands its own travel region, the Pinelands must be better indicated as a travel destination within each of the four existing regions.

The responsibility for this lies with the region, not solely with the state. If regions and places do not work to make themselves destinations, they will not receive good representation on state

web sites and promotional materials. The absence of a Pinelands Travel Council or similar entity means that there is no unified voice for the region's travel industry and public travel resources (e.g., parks, forests, etc.)

There are a number of changes that should be made to the state web site that would benefit the byway and the Pinelands.

- On the pop-up map for the Atlantic City travel region, show the Pinelands area and show the byway. Currently, the site makes Atlantic City appear to be the only destination.
- The same is true for the other regions.
- Create and post a series of 2-3 adventure trips from Atlantic City that would be shown when visitors are searching for heritage and outdoor recreation activities within the Atlantic City Region. For example, the site notes Batsto under Parks and Forests for the Atlantic City Region (http://www.nj.gov/travel/gac_outdoor.html), but when one clicks on that link, there are no attractions or destinations shown.
- The same is true for Heritage Trails in the Atlantic City region. Mention is made of the Warren Fox Nature Center, but there is no link for more information and it is not shown well on the map.

National and State Scenic Byways sites

On the National Byways Program website (www.byways.org), the byway is listed under state byways for New Jersey. There are no pictures provided and minimal text for this byway. The site links to the New Jersey State Byway website. This site provides the same overview text and a description of the general route. One photo is offered-- the Green Bank Methodist church and cemetery.

Once the byway attains national status, its portion of the national byways website will be much more substantial. The website along with other National Program marketing will help to provide more information to interested travelers.

Trip Advisor and other Travel Guide Sites

The byway organization should work with all private and public destinations and communities along the byway to submit destination information to Trip Advisor. This can be done at: http://www.tripadvisor.com/pages/getlisted_photo_description.html

In addition, all destinations should encourage their satisfied guests to submit reviews to Trip Advisor.

This same process should be pursued for other travel guide sites including the following:

- American Automobile Association websites- drive trips, triptiks and the tour books – contact Mid-Atlantic AAA to present an overview of the byway and request representatives to explore the region during their next set of inspections.
- Fodors Travel Talk Forums: <http://www.fodors.com/forums/threadselect.jsp?fid=1>
- Lonely Planet: www.lonelyplanet.com and <http://www.travellerspoint.com/forum.cfm?qclid=C1zqlsGUt5gCFRxNagodB1hgaw>
- Virtual Tourist: <http://www.virtualtourist.com>
- Matador Travel: <http://matadortrips.com/>

GPS/Online Mapping Marketing

More and more travelers are seeking information before and during a trip using their GPS units or their cell phones' GIS mapping and trip assistance services. The byway group should submit information about the byway to the following services:

- Google maps
- Mapquest
- Yahoo maps
- Randmcnally.com
- Garmin

Each site should be reviewed to identify any missing businesses or destinations or incorrect information. These errors can be reported through each site's support lines. Postcards are mailed to a legitimate representative and an access code is provided. One can then log in and make the changes as needed. In the case of Google, Mapquest and Yahoo maps, a byway volunteer could create overlay maps and itineraries that can be accessed as separate layers by travelers or downloaded from the byway website.

For Garmin, the byway can correct existing points of interest and will need to create a separate set of destination and information layers that can be downloaded from the byway website or locally into travelers GPS units. The Garmin error page is:

- <http://www8.garmin.com/cartography/mapSource/errorForm.jsp>

There are also websites where you can provide point of interest files for download and people can load these customized files to their GPS's. The following web page has several of these websites for the byway group to review:

- <http://www8.garmin.com/products/poiloader/POISource/>

Print Advertising

Print advertising – i.e., hard copy advertisements in magazines, newspapers or other related media -- can be an effective approach, but it requires funding. It is not likely that the byway will be able to purchase anything more than some cooperative ads in the next few years. There is some potential that a multi-county application to the New Jersey Travel and Tourism Cooperative Marketing Grant Program will yield funding for advertising. There is a 25% match required for this application. Groups can apply for up to \$25,000.

There are some basic limitations to print advertising that are particularly relevant for the Pine Barrens Byways. First, the region is introducing a relatively new product to the market. That means that awareness must be built. Typically, awareness is developed through expensive, multi-outlet campaigns that bring the new product before lots of people many times in many forms. This is beyond the means of most destinations, and is certainly beyond the means of a byway.

Therefore, print ads to raise awareness should only be used in publications that target priority markets and will have a long shelf life. Examples include quarterly outdoor recreation magazines and journals, birding periodicals, event catalogs, and trail and recreation guides.

Market Special Lodging

Almost any rural location can draw tourists if the area offers quality lodging. Many people will happily spend a weekend at a luxury bed and breakfast, even if the only activities are simple drives and walks through the countryside with the remainder of the time spent sleeping, reading, eating and relaxing.

Identify the most distinctive, quality lodging properties and restaurants along or near the byway and market get-away weekends focused on a combination of the businesses and the byway. Also include as many recreation service providers so as to offer guide and equipment rentals. This is a case where the byway organization should promote a collection of its best properties and services in a package that can provide the best quality experience possible.

Guides and Travel Books

There are a variety of travel guides and books that this byway should try to enter in future editions. The marketing committee will need to buy the books, review the entries to determine the nature of the information needed for an entry and then submit the information to the author/publisher.

- *New Jersey State Travel Guide*: work with state tourism office to create an article about the byway;
- American Automobile Association tour guides
- *Backroads of New Jersey: Your Guide to New Jersey's Most Scenic Backroad Adventures*
- *New Jersey Day Trips: A Guide to Outings in New Jersey and Nearby Areas of New York, Pennsylvania, and Delaware* by Patrick Sarver
- National Geographic Guide to Scenic Highways and Byways;
- *Life: America's Most Scenic Drives : On the Nation's Highways and Byways (Life Books)*

Travel Journalists

One of the most effective ways to tell the subtle, detailed story of a byway's experience is through travel journalists. Whether in print, radio, TV or internet travel sites and blogs, the byway's story will be targeted to the people most interested in what the destination offers and it will provide the deeper detail that can engage a person to really consider a trip. Potential travelers respond well to the personal recommendation tone of travel journalism.

In order to attract a journalist to visit and report on your area, you must create a story, you must create news. This can be in the form of a well-designed familiarization tour for a journalist, an interesting event, a new destination, a news-worthy occurrence or a quick mention via a press release for a travel publication. Create 2-3 newsworthy events per year and obtain coverage. For this byway's markets, even coverage in Sunday Travel sections in nearby newspapers will have significant impacts.

Develop a series of two day outdoor trips for journalists. These must include the following:

- Canoeing or kayaking on the main rivers
- Guided experiences for birding and nature observation
- Interaction with local 'characters' – people who offer fun stories and have a big personality
- Regionally distinctive food

- High quality, personalized lodging

Work with the state tourism office and with the regional DMO offices to obtain lists of travel writers. Also go to the library and review several years worth of relevant magazines and capture the names of the journalists.

A useful site to track is the public relations listserve from shankman.com. Journalists post brief requests for story topics. Keep an eye on the travel section.

Events

Events accomplish a variety of objectives for a region including being newsworthy items, drawing people to an area for the first time which can then translate into future visits, focusing visitation and spending to a certain area at a certain time and the general public relations that comes from putting an area on the map for travelers.

Develop 1-2 events per year. While these might be general interest events (e.g., the Pine Barrens Byway Fallfest), it would be as impactful (and less work) to organize a series of events targeted at the byways key markets.

- Diners – Pie Eating Rallies
- Nature photography contests
- A Piney Hootenanny - canoe trips with an end of the day shoreline dance at Estell Manor or similar location
- Treasure hunts themed on pirates or the Jersey Devil
- Geocaching events
- Motorcycle rallies
- Bicycling rallies raising money for environmental protection
- Blueberries and Blues on the Byway
- Arts on the byway

Local In-room Promotion and Hospitality Training

Work with lodging properties in the region to create a byway guide brochure that will be left in hotel brochure racks and in hotel rooms to encourage visitors to venture to the byway during their stay.

Work with DMO's and chambers to incorporate byway information into local hospitality training events. Develop an overview brochure for hospitality workers so that if questions arise about the byway, hotel front desk staff will have an idea what to say about the byway.

Audio

Obtain a National Scenic Byways grant to develop a series of audio travel products for the byway. Use oral history audio files, local storytellers, local musicians and local historians and other experts to assemble simple, but interesting descriptions. These products can be translated into a variety of formats including cell phone stories linked to specific sites or routes, podcasts transmitted to portable audio players, low power radio broadcasts in specific locations (e.g., parking areas that overlook great views) and CD's for sale or rent that travelers can play in their vehicles as they travel.

Radio and Television

Public television and radio in New Jersey and in Philadelphia have run periodic shows on the Pinelands region and thus offered important information that has helped to both educate the public and raise higher levels of awareness about the region. These productions include:

- *Sand in our Shoes*. New Jersey Public Television.
- *Ghosts of the Pines*. New Jersey Network.
- *Pinelands Sketches*. The State of New Jersey coordinated a series of brief video pieces on the culture and nature of the Pinelands as part of their New Jersey History Kids program. These were produced in cooperation with the New Jersey Network, the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, and the New Jersey Historical Commission with a grant from the National Endowment on the Arts.
- New Jersey Public Television and Radio sponsors a strong website that features written, video and audio material from previous coverage of New Jersey culture and history, including the Pinelands.

<http://www.njn.net/television/specials/ourvanishingpast/pinebarrens/>

These programs are great opportunities for the region to shape its image and to offer interpretive information about the Pinelands. They provide opportunities to encourage more people to visit the region. These programs are also difficult and long term projects to initiate from the local level and/or require a committed effort to see opportunities when they arise.

The opportunities for using television and radio fall into two categories: short news pieces and longer, educational, documentary productions. Short news coverage can be captured through a consistent effort that feeds potential stories to the public TV and radio outlets as well as to conventional media. Thus, the byway group will need to either manage themselves or hire a public relations firm to track the occurrence of interesting events and activities that might merit a brief mention in the media. Journalists are always looking for ideas, but the byway must provide the ideas to the journalists. Journalists in today's news environment rarely have the luxury of seeking out stories from scratch. Lead time is essential. Therefore, the byway group must anticipate events, historical anniversaries, groundbreakings and other newsworthy items and feed them to the media with as much advance time as possible. The best way for the byway to establish this public relations system will be to develop a relationship with the media offices at New Jersey and Philadelphia (WHYY) public television and radio. It is also likely that byway group members know a local public relations professional who has these contacts and can offer guidance to the group.

The category of longer show/documentary programming is appealing but arduous. Public television broadcasting is funded in a very odd manner: public television producers and media salespeople must first find a sponsor for an idea and obtain the funding before they can create a show. Thus, some foundation or corporation must buy the idea of a show first and then wait for months and months for the show to be produced before it appears on public television. The shows, while often compelling and beautiful, then run for a limited amount of time before the sponsorship value has been completed and then they run only sporadically afterwards. Thus, the product is interesting and beautiful; the timing and financing are problematic. Therefore, if the byway group is able to both find an organization willing to spend several hundred thousand

dollars for a short Pinelands TV documentary and then to wait a long time for its broadcasting, that would be a wonderful interpretive and marketing opportunity.

This leaves longer (3-5 minute) radio coverage as an intermediate media form between the short news piece and the TV documentary. The key for these programs is, again, to find a quirky, interesting story idea and feed it to public radio press rooms for their evaluation. The essence of these shows will always be the quirky, interesting person. The person often represents the underlying story, but is nonetheless the focus of the coverage. The byway group would do well to spend some time assembling a list of good radio coverage people in the region and shaping a series of potential story ideas for public radio.