

Our Treasured San Juan Skyway Turns 25



Ideas & Opportunities for the Future

December 2014



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Accompanying this report is a progress report towards completion of projects identified in the *San Juan Skyway Corridor Management Plan*, completed in the mid-1990s.





This report is being released by the San Juan Public Lands (USFS) and Montezuma Land Conservancy. These two organizations are currently serving as interim contacts for Skyway planning. The author is Marsha Porter-Norton, a regional consultant, who was hired to engage the communities along the Skyway at its 25th anniversary. This report follows and accompanies several plans that were done in the 1990s and 2000s related to the San Juan Skyway.

THANKS!

Thanks go out to the Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Program and to all the stakeholders and participants who gave input and time. Thanks also to Lisa Schwantes, Kathy Sherer and Laura Spann who worked on this project. Ken Francis and Ann Bond provided valuable historical background and they are thanked as well.

Photos credits: AAA Colorado (pp. 18); Google Images; Lisa Schwantes (pp.4); Montezuma Land Conservancy; www.tourcolorado.org (map on cover); Marsha Porter-Norton; and the Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Program.



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Please share this report with your colleagues and friends. Find it at: Montezuma Land Conservancy's Web site: www.montezumaland.org

Continue the conversation: The Montezuma Land Conservancy will keep an email tree List Serve active. If you are interested, please email the executive director, Jon Leibowitz: jon@montezumaland.org or call 970-565-1664.

I. Background

The San Juan Skyway (the Skyway), also known as the “Million Dollar Highway” for some sections, covers 236 miles and is often referred to as one of the most scenic drives in America. The Skyway ascends from its lowest point of 6,200 feet and rises to 11,008 in elevation. The Skyway covers five distinct life zones which is the equivalent of traveling from Alaska to Northern Mexico. It is known world-wide for its scenery, cultural resources, open spaces, stunning beauty, and unique communities and public lands that offer almost endless opportunities for fun, learning, and the enjoyment of all that nature, recreation and scenery have to offer. The Skyway passes through six counties and 11 towns, and encompasses the San Juan and Uncompahgre National Forests as well as the Tres Rios Bureau of Land Management (BLM) District. The towns and cities along the Skyway include: Rico, Dolores, Mancos, Cortez, Durango, Silverton, Ouray, Ridgway, Telluride, Sawpit, and Placerville.



In the summer of 2014, the San Juan Public Lands (USFS) and the Montezuma Land Conservancy (MLC) teamed up to celebrate the San Juan Skyway’s 25th anniversary and, in this landmark year, to engage the public in assessing needs, ideas and opportunities for its improvement. This effort followed a retreat in February, 2013 which was convened by the State of Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Program. At this retreat, San Juan Skyway stakeholders gathered in Ridgway, Colorado to develop an action plan (please refer to Attachment C for highlights from this meeting). The Montezuma Land Conservancy is a member of the Colorado Scenic Byway Conservation Coalition and obtained a grant from the National Scenic Byways Program administered by the Colorado Department of Transportation. It is this grant which has funded the project. The San Juan Public Lands (USFS) is interested in the San Juan Skyway because so much public land that it manages is adjacent to the Skyway. In fact, management of the San Juan Skyway is called out as a specific area in the *San Juan National Forest Land and Resource Management Forest Plan* (find it here: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detailfull/sanjuan/home/?cid=stelprdb5160593&width=full>.)

This project was organized by Marsha Porter-Norton, a local consultant and facilitator, who was hired to work with the planning team to:

- 1) re-energize and reinvigorate interest in building capacity for the San Juan Skyway;
- 2) work with stakeholders to discuss a long-term collaborative structure that could catalyze the effort and perhaps carry out ongoing projects or promotions; and
- 3) assist participants in revisiting the mid-1990s San Juan Skyway Corridor Management Plan and produce a list of new desired projects or goals for the Skyway. Note: a separate document released with this report details progress towards actions identified in the corridor plan.

Lisa Schwantes, a communications consultant, was also hired. Lisa, Marsha and Pauline Ellis from the USFS and Jon Leibowitz from MLC formed the planning team for this project. It should be noted that Mr. Leibowitz and Ms. Ellis are serving as interim contacts for the Skyway.

This report summarizes what was learned in the public engagement that was undertaken. It suggests ideas and opportunities for the future and presents a picture of the current capacity to accomplish joint projects and planning along the Skyway. It is not assumed that every action item in this report has consensus from all who participated in this process.

II. *History and Successes, and Past Collaboration*

Find the mid 1990's *San Juan Skyway Corridor Management Plan* here:

<http://www.coloradodot.info/travel/scenic-byways/southwest/san-juan-skyway/SanJuanSkywayCorridorManagementPlan.pdf>



Please refer to a separate document that accompanies this report. It is a progress check list towards completion of action items included in the *mid-1990s San Juan Skyway Corridor Management Plan*.

The San Juan Skyway was designated as a Scenic Byway in 1989. In 1996, the Skyway was further designated by the United States Secretary of Transportation as an All-American Road, the highest level of designation by the Federal Government. The San Juan Skyway is also among 11 Colorado byways designated by the United States Department of Transportation as America's Byways®, which gives Colorado more national byway designations than any other state. The Skyway also has the title of a National Forest Scenic Byway.

There were several previously active and very effective coalitions that worked on projects targeting the San Juan Skyway. These groups were especially active from the years 1990 to 2012. The Fort Lewis College – Office of Community Services (FLC-OCS), under the guidance of director Ken Francis, led these efforts working with scores of local stakeholders and funders. Values were discussed and goals set. Plans were written and funding was secured from many sources to accomplish projects. Over this 22-year period, FLC-OCS (again working with numerous partners) prepared an historic preservation, rails-to-trails open space plan; secured several historic preservation construction grants; obtained funding to produce interpretive materials and site grants; and kicked off the Red Mountain Project (carried out by the Red Mountain Task Force). In the early 2000s up to 2010, much land conservation happened specifically in the Red Mountain corridor relating to historic preservation, land acquisition and structure stabilization. Also during this time, there was intense work done on ranch and open land conservation.

More specifically, the main accomplishments done during this time period include:

Facilities, Infrastructure, Trail Heads

- ✓ Reconstruction of Little Molas Lake Recreation Area
- ✓ Upgrade of Amphitheater Campground & Nagach day use area
- ✓ Upgrade of Bear Creek trailhead/bridge off Highway 145
- ✓ Ouray ice park
- ✓ Molas Lake State Park was created
- ✓ Trail additions to Galloping Goose trail were added



Interpretive Sites and Signs and Visitor Centers and Rest Areas

- ✓ Coal Bank Pass – Highway 550
- ✓ Dominguez-Escalante – Highway 160
- ✓ Bear Creek trailhead sign
- ✓ Ouray and Silverton Visitor Centers
- ✓ Colorado Welcome Center in Cortez
- ✓ Durango Visitor Center
- ✓ CDOT rest area east of Cortez



Millions of people visit the Skyway each year. Previous coalitions, grants, planning efforts and “on the ground” projects have meant that visitors’ experiences are enhanced by pull-outs, infrastructure and safety improvements, interpretive signs, visitor centers, trail head, campgrounds, and more.

Historic Preservation of over 30 sites and structures

- ✓ Water tank in Rico
- ✓ Trout Lake railroad trestle
- ✓ Ironton town houses and other buildings
- ✓ Yankee Girl/Colorado Boy
- ✓ Red Mountain town house
- ✓ Silver Ledge mine and loading structure
- ✓ Several miles of historic railroad grade on Red Mountain

Red Mountain Project

- ✓ Many partners banded together and acquired over 10,000 acres on Red Mountain, the majority of which was deeded to the United States Forest Service to preserve viewsheds and land, and to protect historic structures.

Land Conservation

Through the work of four land trusts located in this region, a total of 10,421 acres have been preserved along the Skyway through the tool of conservation easement with more acres planned at this writing. The four entities are: Black Canyon Regional Land Trust; La Plata Open Space Conservancy; Montezuma Land Conservancy; and the San Miguel Conservation Foundation. These acres include land that directly abuts the Skyway but also acres in the viewshed (meaning that which can be seen from the highway). Other land trusts that are active in Colorado but not based locally also hold easements along the Skyway.

Importantly, a number of plans were completed to help guide Skyway work. As a start, a *San Juan Skyway Corridor Management Plan* was done which was a requirement on the part of the Federal Highway Administration to get projects funded for byway improvement. The plan covers the full Skyway resources in areas including:

Thousands of acres, both along the Skyway and in the viewshed, have been preserved through the tool of conservation easement. This parcel, near Mancos, is one example.



- a. Scenic and natural areas
- b. Recreational areas
- c. Archaeological and historic areas
- d. Advertising and
- e. Interpretive signs
- f. Tourism

The groups formed to work on these efforts included the Friends of the San Juan Skyway Public and Private Partnership, the Red Mountain Task Force (which still exists), and others. With Mr. Ken Francis’ retirement in 2012, a rather gaping hole was left in the capacity to organize Skyway-wide endeavors. It should be noted that the FLC-OCS no longer exists at Fort Lewis. With that said, many local groups are working on projects for their “segment.” The key questions at this juncture in time are: *How can we continue to promote and protect the Skyway? Should we work together for the entire Skyway? If so, how? Who might take a leadership role(s)?*

III. Public Engagement

For this report, a variety of tools were used to engage the public and seek input. Three meetings were held during August and September, 2014 in Mancos, Ridgeway and Durango respectively (refer to Attachment B for the meeting notes). A contact list of 283 stakeholders was assembled from many interest areas. Each meeting was also advertised in local newspapers. A Facebook site that was established:

(<https://www.facebook.com/SanJuanSkyway25thAnniversary>). The public meetings were professionally facilitated and a sample agenda is in Attachment A. A Power Point presentation was developed for the public meetings to educate attendees about the Skyway. Accompanying the public meetings was a questionnaire administered on-line by the Montezuma Land Conservancy. In addition, ten interviews were done with groups or interests who perhaps did not participate in the public meetings but who represented a sector with important perspectives.

The ideas that came out of the public input are listed below. In any section where there is a ranking, it is simply presented to show emphasis of where answers occurred. All answers were valid and meaningful, and any ranking is not a “vote count.”

Participants weighed in on this question: *What is important to you about the San Juan Skyway?*

Here are the answers that are shown in a ranked order:

1. The scenery, beauty, open spaces, and natural state of the land. Access to public lands, recreation, history, trails and trail heads, museums, culture, etc.
2. The conservation easements along the Skyway and a need to preserve land (need more), concern about private land being developed (easements balance the tendency to over-develop the Skyway).
3. Riding along it and just enjoying its intrinsic value. Cultural landscape (mining, history, etc.).

“...a lot of people think the Skyway will always be there and that is probably true. However, we fail to realize that the amenities along the Skyway, such as pull-outs, visitor centers, interpretive signs and the like were created because people worked together and accomplished something.”
 - Skyway meeting participant

4. Mountain ecology and environmental opportunities for the public to engage with those issues.
5. Links communities together and gives opportunities to collaborate.
6. Places to visit along the way (towns, attractions, breweries, museums, etc.).
7. The fact that it goes through our town; major tourism attraction; interpretive information; the Skyway creates pride and regional recognition; a great place to send visitors and business associates who visit; appreciation; like for and appreciation of the work that went into the road system.

Next, when asked about **specific concerns related to the San Juan Skyway**, here were the answers which are shown in a ranked order:

1. Safety: a need to slow speeds; the section south of Ouray and Red Mountain safety in general (more guardrails was mentioned); more pull-outs for drivers taking pictures; signs asking slower drivers to pull over; signage for first-time drivers re: how to drive the Skyway; making it safer for bikes; need safe pull-outs for recreationists (snowmobiling was specifically mentioned at Deer Creek and Little Molas).
2. Keeping the visual resources of the Skyway intact (more conservation easements, monitor development along the Skyway, reduce non-interpretive signage, etc.).
3. More interpretation: more markers; more opportunities and safe pull-outs for interpretation; more educational/interpretive signs; need more opportunities for the development of mobile apps and other interpretation that can be done from one's car; not adequately signed in general; signs that are there are in need of upkeep, repair and maintenance.
4. The Skyway is on the right track; don't fix what isn't broken.
5. Amenities: keep enough restrooms open; not keeping restrooms open means people "use the facilities" in inappropriate places.
6. Noxious weeds: they are a concern near Cascade Creek; transportation of grains and hay through the passes leads to invasion of foxtails; bottomland weeds are evident.
7. CDOT (Colorado Department of Transportation) actions and/or interface with communities: CDOT needs to make their signs more compatible with the visual goals of the Skyway (some specific areas were cited); lack of oversight over what CDOT does; need for CDOT to take more safety measures; and a need for CDOT to work with local towns that the Skyway goes through (Mancos was called out specifically).
8. Keeping the Skyway beautiful; ensuring that towns along the Skyway are equally highlighted in literature; not doing enough to leverage the Skyway for the region's benefit; not working together enough in general.

Learning about a current byway success story/ies:

As part of the public engagement, in Ridgway, we heard from Chris Miller, who represents a local group that is active along the neighboring Unaweep/Tabeguache scenic byway (which goes from Placerville to Whitewater and includes a segment of the San Juan Skyway). Ms. Miller, who works for the Western

Interpretive Association of Western Colorado, gave the following insights and advice as to the question of increasing capacity:

- Think about what it is like to be a traveler along your byway. What do they need? What is their experience? We are asking the public to get off the freeways and venture onto our scenic/historic byways, therefore the byways need to be the finest examples of roadways. That is our goal.
- Get projects “shovel ready” so the Skyway is positioned for any future rounds of scheduled funding from the state or federal governments. Be prepared to respond to opportunities.
- Involve and engage local CDOT staff and representatives. Our group asked them to ride along the byway so they could see first-hand the need for improved signage or pull-outs.
- Leverage our San Juan Skyway marketing by complimenting state, regional, county, and local campaigns.
- The Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) will match funds for printing of brochures. This is an opportunity.
- Contact elected officials about reauthorization of the federal highway bill to include additional funding for scenic/historic byways.
- Other regions in the state operate their byways in several ways: Grand Mesa is volunteer driven; Unaweep/Tabeguache uses local governments and agencies; and Crested Butte has an advisory board.
- Keep telling the Skyway story. Don’t let the public forget.

IV. Needs, Issues, Ideas for Action and Opportunities

The following themes and issues, by topic, along with ideas for action are listed below. These are not presented in any particular order in terms of emphasis or weighting. If this effort is to move forward in any form or fashion, a formal prioritization would need to be done as well as much more specific *planning*.

a. Scenery and Visual Resources Management

Significant acres of open space have been preserved along the Skyway through the voluntary use of a tool called conservation easements. The Black Canyon Regional Land Trust has preserved 1,476 acres; the Montezuma Land Conservancy has preserved 4,300 acres with 355 more almost ready to be placed in easement; and the La Plata Open Space Conservancy holds 3,000 acres in easements. Through the San Miguel County Conservation Foundation, 1,590 have been preserved. These numbers reflect conservation easements placed voluntarily on private property by the owners and include acres that are directly adjacent to the Skyway and in the viewshed. Other lands trusts, that are not based locally, hold conservation easements along the Skyway too.



The San Juan Skyway, such as this stretch near Ridgway, is characterized by stunning views. A number of tools are used to keep views intact in many areas.

Specific input given:

1. Continue to acquire as much land adjacent to the road as possible to keep it from being developed through outright buying land and/or through conservation easements.
2. Give landowners more visibility if they have put an easement on their property along the Skyway.
3. Continue to strengthen county land use codes through skyline regulations such as what San Juan County and perhaps other counties have done.
4. Minimize non-interpretive signage.
5. Minimize or otherwise deal with the beetle kill as best is possible.
6. There is erosion that is an eyesore between Coal Bank and Molas. The suggestion is to have CDOT remedy it.
7. There is a concern about noxious weeds and invasive species, and their impacts on the viewshed.
8. Defacing of the Skyway is occurring in some sections and is a significant concern.

Opportunities for action:

1. The four land trusts along the Skyway (Montezuma Land Conservancy; La Plata Open Space Conservancy, San Miguel Conservation Foundation and the Black Canyon Regional Land Trust), may consider working more closely together to update a Skyway-wide open space conservation plan and/or consider other joint actions. This plan and or actions taken collectively could set forth recommendations related to continuing to preserve open space along the Skyway in key, prioritized highway corridors and the open space surrounding towns. This step could be important as funding from sources such as Greater Outdoors Colorado (GoCo) become increasingly complex and competitive, and only the strongest partnerships receive funding.
2. Where conservation easements already exist, with the landowners' permission, credit could be given and/or called out via an electronic/mobile app or signs.
3. All levels of government can continue (or start) to consider the impact of their actions on the San Juan Skyway viewshed.

b. Preservation of Cultural and Historic Resources

(Note: this topic also came up in the section around "Interpretation")

The amount of cultural resources along the Skyway is notable nation-wide if not world-wide. Visiting a mining or archaeological site or learning about railroad history is one key reason many tourists and locals drive the Skyway. Many groups are involved in both preserving and interpreting these valuable sites and resources.

Specific input given:

1. The railroad is important to the history of Ridgway and other communities along the Skyway.
2. The Red Mountain Task Force is working to acquire lands in San Miguel, Ouray and San Juan Counties.
3. More effort needs to go into historic structure stabilization.



The Galloping Goose is just one of many things that celebrate the region's rich history.

4. These efforts need all the historical societies to be engaged.
5. Any effort should leverage all federal dollars available due to all these designations.
6. Hire local firms to use video to focus on these resources.
7. Tie history in with other things such as a brew or bike tour, etc.
8. Someone (such as the Mountain Studies Institute) could lead a project where viewpoints are identified and travelers can be a part of doing citizen science or monitoring. People could upload pictures of sites and use this information, over time, for monitoring. Note: MSI is already carrying out a technology program similar to this for the Alpine Loop.

Opportunities for action:

1. The Red Mountain District Task Force is currently in the process of acquiring more lands to be placed in the public domain through voluntary land acquisition from willing sellers. These efforts should be applauded and supported.
2. With public funding shrinking in many areas of government, and for byway and skyway protection specifically, the use of “citizen scientists” and nonprofit organizations could be a tool for monitoring and education.
3. The idea of doing a Skyway electronic/mobile app (or building on an existing one) came up often and could be a key tool for modern-day and electronic interpretation.

c. Infrastructure Improvements and Safety

For some members of the public, the topic of “infrastructure” on a highway can be unengaging. However, this topic is vital as it relates to any by-way’s drive-ability as well as travelers’ overall experiences and safety. This is particularly true for the San Juan Skyway due to the nature of the topography, the narrow, steep and windy roads in many sections, and the danger due to rock slides, snow and ice, and cliffs. Key ideas emerged in the public input phase about improvement and a consistent theme was *improving safety*. Specifically, putting in more pull-outs, marking pull-outs better, and providing more education about high-mountain and snowy-road driving could be considered in all transportation planning and funding decisions. Also, specific locations were noted where signs should be located asking slower drivers to pull over.

A topic that received support several times was the concept of putting in bike lanes where feasible. Biking as a recreational hobby, and as a destination experience for visitors, has exponentially increased across Southwest Colorado over the past few years.

A key issue raised is the need to find permanent funding for restroom facilities in three locations including Lizard Head, and Molas and Coal Bank Passes. The USFS has stated that due to budgets cuts to their recreation program (upwards of 30%), they simply cannot fund this service any longer. San Juan County has picked up the tab for the restrooms on Molas and Coal Bank Passes through securing funds from a Safe and Rural Schools Grant, but after this one-year reprieve, these restrooms might be closed. Community problem-solving is immediately needed.



Restrooms such as this one on Molas Pass are at risk for permanent closure due to funding shortages.

A new issue that emerged in the winter of 2013/2014 is the giant rockslide south of Ouray which crossed Red Mountain Pass and left this major transportation route closed for weeks. This closure, while necessary, affected local economies and created significant impacts for travelers, merchants and tourists. Some are very concerned about this stretch of the highway, and resolving the rock slide issues, they say, should remain a high priority for CDOT.

Specific input given:

1. Encouraging driver safety via more signage, especially putting up signs in a few places encouraging “slower drivers” to pull over and reminding them it is State law.
2. The Town of Ridgway will undergo \$13,000,000 in highway upgrades starting in 2015. This is on the byway and should be noted as a major upgrade project.
3. The Town of Mancos would like State Highway 184 to show up on Skyway maps since it goes through scenic territory and accesses Mancos State Park, Summit Lake, the San Juan National Forest and Jackson Lake. Also, the segment that leads into the Town of Telluride from State Hwy. 145 is considered by many locals to be part of the Skyway.
4. The Town of Mancos would like to develop a more beautified and safer stretch of the Skyway that goes through their town. They are working on planning efforts with CDOT related to their desire to slow traffic, improve safety and clean up the access points and frontage road issues.
5. Improve the identification of trailheads that are adjacent to the San Juan Skyway in terms of education related to where they are; better parking for some of them; etc.
6. Put in better and more rest areas where opportunities for interpretation might exist.
7. Maintaining what is there now is important related to signage, interpretation, and keeping up amenities.
8. Better education along the Skyway related to the interpretive signs, restrooms, location of danger areas (e.g., the rock slide), etc. This information could easily be incorporated into a mobile app.
9. Prohibiting engine brakes that are too loud and step up enforcement of too fast/ too loud vehicles.
10. More ingress/egress lanes in several areas where heavy traffic joins the highway.



This stretch of road along the Skyway called “Red Mountain Pass” is very scenic but can present safety challenges for drivers.

Opportunities for action:

1. Build a coalition to keep restroom facilities permanently open on Molas and Coal Bank, and/or Lizard Head Passes – seek creative funding strategies.
2. Conducting an inventory of the status and condition of existing facilities, interpretive pull-outs, and infrastructure along the entire San Juan Skyway, and incorporate future actions and priorities in funding requests and regional transportation planning.
3. Engage local biking groups and recreational organizations to seek ways to expand bike lanes in segments where they might be feasible. Perhaps a San Juan Skyway regional cycling master plan is needed? There are resources and contacts via the Colorado Scenic Byways Program.
4. Determine several locations where signs could be put up asking slower drivers to pull over. This would be a greater level of enforcement of a 2009 State of Colorado law requiring drivers going below the speed limit with five cars or more cars backed up behind them to pull over and let cars pass.

5. Continue to support local governments and CDOT in resolving joint issues and challenging issues along the Skyway.



d. Opportunities for Joint Marketing and Promotion

The San Juan Skyway enjoys quite a lot of marketing and promotion. Each Chamber of Commerce (there are eight of them), to varying degrees, uses the “San Juan Skyway” to market their events and their stretch or segment of the byway. The Southwest Travel Region, which is sponsored by the Colorado Tourism Office (CTO), and whose fiscal agent is the Region 9 Economic Development District, is one group that does collective marketing of the Skyway via their Web site. The Travel Region also markets seven other byways covering 10 Southwest Colorado and Western Slope counties.

Several examples of Skyway marketing include:

- Telluride Publishing produces a *Visitor Guide* magazine distributed to communities along the Skyway. Each community along the by-way is featured along with a calendar of events, articles of interest, etc.
- A San Juan Skyway brochure at all the USFS and BLM Visitor Centers (and at other locations). The San Juan Mountains Association currently is doing a re-print of the brochure and contributed funds would be helpful.
- There is a Skyway interpretive sign at the Tres Rios BLM Office.
- Each of the Chambers has a Web site that can be accessed here: <http://www.coloradodot.info/travel/scenic-byways/southwest/san-juan-skyway> (scroll down to the “Local Chambers of Commerce” section).

Here are some key examples of how the Skyway is promoted:

Colorado Scenic Byways

<http://coloradoscenicbyways.com/index.php>

Specific San Juan Skyway page:

http://coloradoscenicbyways.com/indiv_byway.php?id=19

Southwest Colorado Travel Region

<http://www.swcolotravel.org/page.cfm?pageid=15513>

Specific San Juan Skyway page:

<http://www.swcolotravel.org/page.cfm?pageid=15593>

San Juan Skyway 25th Anniversary – 2014

Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/SanJuanSkyway25thAnniversary>

As background, in May of 2000, a document was produced by the San Juan and Uncompahgre National Forests that presented a detailed plan for improving the Skyway for tourists and all visitors by improving and/or developing nine specific sites people visit and 16 historic markers. Find the document here: <http://www.coloradodot.info/travel/scenic-byways/southwest/san-juan-skyway/ScenicByway-SanJuanInitiative-May2000>.

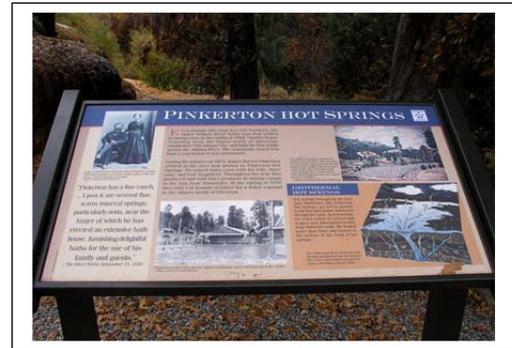
A key opportunity that arose in the public engagement process is developing an electronic/mobile app that the traveling public could use to learn about many aspects of the San Juan Skyway such as: interpretive signs and visitor centers; geology; open space easements and conservation goals; tourism destinations and more. Currently, an app for the Skyway already exists via a private company called Interactive Travel Guides. The owner, Cody Edwards, was approached and is open to opportunities for expanding his mobile app. There may be other apps for the Skyway as well. A “champion” is needed to step forth to lead this project.

Specific input:

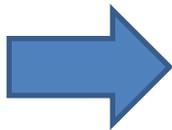
1. There is an April 2015 Colorado Tourism Office conference in Durango targeted to our region. There might be opportunities at this event to form a San Juan Skyway coalition.

e. *Way-Showing, Signage and Interpretation*

This topic received considerable attention. First, as part of past efforts, many interpretive signs were placed along the Skyway. Some of these signs are showing wear or have been damaged. Second, many people value interpretation and would like to see more of it along the Skyway and at key locations (e.g., visitor centers, chambers of commerce, etc.). Also, there are perhaps some new areas that deserve interpretation – notably, the beetle kill which is affecting (and will continue to affect) the nature of the scenery and health of the forests. Many expressed that they like learning about the history and cultural stories of the area so more interpretation around this topic would likely be met with a lot of support. Finally, with the advent of new technology and apps, there is a significant opportunity for new kinds of interpretation that did not exist before. The idea of doing a Skyway-wide, in-depth app gained traction in this process. A related issue to interpretation is that some expressed that sight-seers need places to pull over safely which was mentioned in the safety section.



In June of 2013, a report was published by the San Juan Skyway Way-Showing Project that covered Ouray, San Juan, La Plata, Montezuma, Dolores, and San Miguel Counties. This report's executive summary is presented in Attachment D. Because this was done so recently, future actions can be based on this report's findings. Wayshowing involves how a destination or amenity is signed and therefore navigated and experienced by the visiting public.



Find the 2013 San Juan Skyway WayShowing Report Here:
<http://www.coloradodot.info/travel/scenic-byways/southwest/san-juan-skyway/FinalTheSanJuanSkywayFrameworkforWayshowing.pdf/view>
The Executive Summary can be found in Attachment D.

Specific input:

1. Use paved pull-outs, rock barriers, roofed pavilions/kiosks, and better CDOT signs leading to the sites.
2. Find ways to link together interpretive opportunities such as with the Old Spanish Trail, the Colorado Trail, National Historic Trail, and/or the Dominguez & Escalante Trail, Colorado Trail, the Continental Divide Trail, the Bear Creek National Recreation Trail, etc.
3. Ask CDOT to not diminish scenic and other values through their actions. Ensure that CDOT signage is in keeping with scenic values, local culture and are aesthetically pleasing. Require CDOT to do a threat assessment prior to taking action on the Skyway (meaning a threat to the values that make the Skyway special).
4. Several comments were made related to including Native American history and people in interpretation and signage.
5. Be holistic in how things are interpreted. Find opportunities for themed interpretation specific to each area covering the towns, their history, their people, landscape, commerce and ecology. Along these lines, developing a consistent theme or branding for all Skyway signs came up as an idea.
6. Safe places for interpretation so sight-seers do not interfere with other drivers.
7. The rock slide above Ouray could be an area for interpretation.

8. Use signs as a way to educate people about “rules of the high country” and “Leave No Trace” messages.

Specific Opportunities:

1. Produce an updated Comprehensive Management Plan and Interpretive Plan. From this effort, replace or repair existing signs and sites that are damaged.
2. Determine if a Skyway-wide mobile app could be developed or if an existing app could be expanded to include all the values and topics relevant along the whole Skyway. Many specific “how to” ideas emerged from the meetings in Ridgway and Durango around this idea. This opportunity needs a champion and perhaps one could be identified at an April 2015 Colorado Tourism Summit to be held in Durango (but targeted to our entire region). Develop a partnership or work group specifically around this topic.



f. Other Comments and Ideas

These comments emerged as general ones and should be noted:

- ✓ Offer more ways to get out of the vehicle, in general.
- ✓ Use native story tellers: contact native story tellers and rotate them to different camping areas.
- ✓ Keep OHV restrictions in place.
- ✓ Step up visitor services.
- ✓ There is a project in the works to develop a trail between Mancos and Cortez. It would be good to see coordination and cross-support between this project and the Byway.
- ✓ We need “Don't drink the water” signs, especially around the Red Mountain areas or where water is contaminated by mining.
- ✓ I would have liked more meetings.
- ✓ I didn't know about the meeting in Mancos.
- ✓ The La Plata Open Space Conservancy needs recognition for the permanent protection of thousands of acres of open space preserved along the Skyway.
- ✓ With the advent of Service First going away and the USFS and BLM “breaking apart”, our community has seen much less interaction with the BLM since Dolores is so far from us. We used to do a lot of collaboration that helped the Skyway and now, all of that seems to be gone.
- ✓ Recreation budgets at the BLM and USFS has been slashed. That has really hurt our local efforts to do Skyway projects in a collaborative way. We used to do all kinds of collaboration around planning, storing equipment, etc. The budgets being cut so much means we have lost so much that could/would help the Skyway.

V. Where to go from here?

Many types of groups - whether governmental or a nonprofit - “touch” the Skyway in some fashion by working on a specific project or initiative. For example, the Montezuma Land Conservancy is still working to fund and complete conservation easement projects along the Dolores to Rico stretch of the Skyway. Another example: the Red Mountain District Task Force is still actively working to acquire lands to put into public ownership along the Skyway. At the current time, however, there is not one single entity pulling everyone together for the future health, vitality, improvement and increased awareness of the entire Skyway. No one is serving as a convener, fundraiser, advocate and promoter for the whole byway. Also, state and federal budget cuts for byways have meant that far less dollars are available (such as through GOGO’s Legacy Grant program or grant funds available through CDOT or the Federal Highway Administration).

So, at this 25th anniversary mark, where do we go from here? There are a number of scenarios that emerged in the public input around how a Skyway-wide effort might be organized:

A. Use an existing group to start a new Skyway-wide Coalition, Committee or Task Force:

The groups mentioned who might consider leading such as effort included:

1. Center of Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College
2. Mountain Studies Institute
3. Southwest Colorado Regional Council of Governments (does not include some northern communities)
4. Southwest Travel Region
and
5. A community foundation and there are three: a) Onward Legacy (serves the Four Corners); b) the Community Foundation Serving Southwest Colorado (serves Southwest Colorado); and c) and/or the Telluride Foundation (serves Telluride).

B. Raise the awareness of the Skyway at a conference or event:

1. Use the April 2015 Colorado Tourism Office conference that will be held in Durango to catalyze an effort (one note here is that the effort needs to include all stakeholders, not just those involved in tourism promotion).
2. MSI (Mountain Studies Institute) heads up the Connecting for Conservation in the Four Corners partnership (<http://www.mountainstudies.org/connecting-for-conservation/>). This effort came out of a conference held in May of 2014. This group might include the Skyway in one of their quarterly dialogue meetings. A task would be inclusiveness as the northern communities may not view themselves as part of the “Four Corners” but would be welcomed.

C. Do not actively form a group until an opportunity arises that would compel a partnership naturally or “organically.” Partnerships cannot be forced and they require human energy and usually funding or an in-kind resource. And, usually, the strongest partnerships come about through a compelling need, resources, energetic people and a focus. Given this, more ideas emerged for next steps:

1. Each segment organizes their own work and joint actions, and then an annual conference is hosted where everyone reports what they are doing.
2. Develop an email List Serve where anyone interested could report what they are doing. Out of this effort, future opportunities could be more easily seized upon if stakeholders had been in regular communication with one another. Note: This is underway. See below.

D. Enable and applaud those who were involved in this 25th anniversary to move forward on a project. Of course, any entity or person who was inspired by an idea in this process could run with it.

1. The mobile app is the one project that probably received the most focus. Might someone take this project on, secure funding and run with it?
2. One stakeholder is apparently moving forward on looking at the interpretative needs and signs.
3. At the Durango meeting, it was suggested that obtaining a VISTA Volunteer to work on projects would build capacity. If an entity were willing to secure a VISTA, he/she has a long list of opportunities to pursue as per this report.

The issues and barriers identified with establishing a structure that could take on joint actions and planning around the Skyway include:

1. Geography: It is very difficult to get a group together that spans the entire Skyway. Some ask: Is this even realistic?
2. Interest: Those who live in “x” community may not care or have time to work on something for the Skyway in “y” community. Also, equity comes into play as some smaller communities can be concerned that a broad effort will only benefit the larger counties, cities or towns.
3. Diversity: Any collaborative group should be diverse with all values at the table: scenery; open space and land preservation; tourism, marketing and promotion; history and cultural resources including archeology; local governments; those with an interest in signage, wayfinding and interpretation; state and federal governments who have a role and responsibility around managing Skyway resources and infrastructure. Most groups do not, by their mission, represent all these topics.

The roles that such a group could take on include:

1. Basic communication about what is happening along the Skyway.
2. Planning.
3. Project initiation and completion.
4. Providing oversight of policies that affect the Skyway and possibly, taking on an advocacy role.
5. Responding to funding opportunities (e.g., Federal Highway Dollars, GoCo, etc.).
6. Celebrating when accomplishments are done or milestones reached.

The specific stakeholders mentioned who could be involved include:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ BLM ❖ Center of Southwest Studies ❖ Chambers of Commerce ❖ Colorado Historical Society ❖ Colorado Parks and Wildlife ❖ Colorado Tourism Office ❖ CDOT ❖ Connecting for Conservation in the Four Corners (through Mountain Studies Institute) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Conservation Legacy (formerly Southwest Conservation Corps) ❖ Conservation groups in general ❖ Community Foundations (3 in the region) ❖ Economic development groups ❖ Education institutions (Fort Lewis College and Southwest Community College) ❖ Film festivals, videographers and the Four Corner’s Film Commission ❖ Historic societies/groups |
|---|--|



- ❖ Local Governments
- ❖ Lodging associations
- ❖ Main Street groups
- ❖ Media
- ❖ Mesa Verde National Park
- ❖ Mountain Studies Institute
- ❖ Open space organizations (MLC, LPOSC, Black Canyon Regional Land Trust and the SMCF)
- ❖ Professionals by project area (e.g., film makers, interpretation experts, architects, planners, etc.)
- ❖ Ranching, farming and ag-tourism groups

- ❖ Recreation and trail groups
- ❖ San Juan Mountains Association
- ❖ Service groups
- ❖ SW Council of Governments
- ❖ SW Travel Region
- ❖ USFS
- ❖ Visitor’s Centers
- ❖ Wineries and other food industry groups

Note: This list is by no means comprehensive of all stakeholders along the Skyway. These are the ones mentioned in the public input process.

Recommendation from the consultant based on public input:

At this time, it appears that no group currently has the capacity, interest or willingness in terms of funding, staff time or mission to take on a Skyway-wide mobilization effort. This by no means is a failure or critique. Many organizations or governmental units, while working on projects for their topic area or “stretch”, simply cannot take on the whole Skyway. Also, taking on such an effort is no small task due to the vast geography involved, the complexity of the topics, limited funding, and the number of entities to bring to the table.

Therefore it appears that at the current time, continuing the conversation through an email List Serve and a Facebook Page as well as informally could mean that a group launches in the future if and when a compelling opportunity exists. This model could also translate to Skyway-wide groups forming around specific topics.

Finally, it should be noted again that many efforts are already underway that mostly improve one segment. Each of them can be applauded and supported which then translates to byway improvement in the form of new services, preserved vistas, safer driving, more amenities, increased educational/interpretation opportunities and/or businesses receiving more traffic (and dollars) from visitors.

How to stay connected:

- ✓ The Facebook Page remains active and will be voluntarily staffed for a year by Lisa Schwantes: <https://www.facebook.com/SanJuanSkyway25thAnniversary>.
- ✓ The Montezuma Land Conservancy will continue to offer its Web Site to house this report and other 25th anniversary items: www.montezuma land.org.
- ✓ The MLC will also continue to keep the email tree List Serve active. Please email the executive director, Jon Leibowitz: jon@montezumaland.org



Attachment A – Sample Meeting Agenda

Public Engagement Meetings -- Meeting Agenda

Meeting Outcomes

- re-energize and reinvigorate interest in building capacity for the San Juan Skyway;
- assess, with stakeholders, the idea of establishing a long-term group or structure that could carry out priority projects for Skyway improvement, education, preservation, etc.; and
- assist participants in revisiting the corridor plan and produce a list of new desired projects or goals for the Skyway which will serve as an “addendum” to the current corridor plan.

Meeting Agenda

- 1) Introductions (10 minutes), Marsha Porter-Norton, Facilitator
- 2) Setting Expectations: Why are we here, Proposed Outcomes for the meeting, Ground Rules (10), Marsha Porter-Norton, Facilitator
- 3) Previous Planning Efforts and Current Accomplishments for the San Juan Skyway (30), Pauline Ellis, San Juan Public Lands (USFS)
 - Power Point presentation of past planning efforts done for the Skyway as well as key accomplishments towards goals previously set
- 4) Where could the Skyway “go” from here? (1 hour)
 - Group will discuss:
 - a) Way-Finding, Signage and Interpretation;
 - b) Infrastructure Improvements
 - c) Promotion and Tourism
 - d) Preservation, Natural, Scenic and Cultural Issues
 - e) Other
 - Accomplishments for this topic
 - Current issues, threats, and opportunities for projects/initiatives
 - Ideas about how to further work on new projects/initiatives together
 - Should a group form? If so, what might this look like?
 - Other thoughts
- 5) 25th Anniversary (5)
 - what are your ideas for your community “showing the San Juan Skyway you love her”
 - information sharing
 - Contact for Colorado’s Scenic and Historic Byways Program (it is also the 25th Anniversary of the State program) Info: <http://www.coloradodot.info/travel/scenic-byways>.
- 6) How to participate from here... (5)
 - Plan something in your community!
 - Be looking for a report from this public engagement process
 - Fill out Survey Monkey <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SPSGNLQ>
 - “Like” the Facebook page: facebook.com/SanJuanSkyway25thAnniversary
 - Other
- 7) Summary and Wrap Up

Attachment B – Meeting Notes -- San Juan Skyway Public Engagement Meetings (Mancos, Ridgway and Durango)

Mancos Meeting: 7/31/14

Present:

Tom Schillaci – Videographer; Mark Franklin – Interpretive Design LLC/Old Spanish Trail; Matt Janowich – USFS; and project personnel, Pauline Ellis – USFS, Jon Leibowitz – Montezuma Land Conservancy, Marsha Porter-Norton – Facilitator and Lisa Schwantes – Community Outreach.

Meeting:

- Marsha P-N lead introductions and explained proposed meeting outcomes.
- Jon L. presented a brief overview of the San Juan Skyway.
- Jon L. presented a power point slideshow and explained previous planning efforts, past goals set for the Skyway and past accomplishments.

Public Comments:

The group discussed four key issues: 1) Way-Finding, 2) Infrastructure, 3) Tourism, 4) Natural/Scenic/Cultural Resources.

1. Way-Finding/Signage/Interpretation

- Signage is very important
- Pauline explained signage evaluation exercise conducted in year 2000
- Current signage is getting worn or damaged in some places (e.g., Dominguez-Escalante Trail signage has been vandalized and damaged by snowplow)
- Suggestion made to put new signs in at key places along the Skyway. This signage would give consistency in branding. Signs do not have to be at an exact location. Need to be placed in safe pullout areas that can point out several points of interest.
- Signage should include several themes: Mining, ranching, geology, culture...
- Proposed action step: Do an inventory of all current signs along the Skyway (to include condition of)
- If new signs are needed, one view was that they could cost \$2000+ each
- There is a desire to enhance some storylines: Dominguez-Escalante Trail, Old Spanish Trail, Dolores Trail...
- Bear Creek is a “National Trail.” Is there federal money available to highlight this?

2. Infrastructure

- Past additional accomplishments include:
 - Red Mt. Pass major interpretive overlook created at cost of \$750K
 - Lizard Head Pass restrooms
 - Keystone pullout below Telluride
 - Interface with Alpine Loop
 - Andrews Lake improvements

- Q: Who maintains restroom facilities? This is a question.
- Concern by Mancos Community to include State Hwy 184 as official part of Skyway (Jackson Lake, Summit Lake, Mancos State Park)
- Suggest is to include the Skyway as being the “cherry stem” of highway that actually goes into Telluride
- Concern for beetle kill areas – really affects views...not much can be done...it’s an opportunity for interpretation
- Concern about restrooms on Molas. The Columbine District simply cannot maintain them. They are now maintained for two years through a Rural Schools Grant (San Juan County) but what next? They cost \$1,000s a year to maintain. Other stretches of highway (e.g. Wolf Creek) don’t have restrooms. Would the public support removing the ones on Molas or paying through different funding streams to keep them?

3. Promotion/Tourism

- Need to market the Skyway. Promotion and marketing will help protect what makes it special
- Possible Craft Brew Tour along the Skyway
- Partnerships are important with:
 - Mesa Verde and its Visitors Center
 - All Chambers and Tourism Offices
 - Ski areas (Telluride, Silverton Mt, DMR, Hesperus)
 - US Conservation Corp
 - CDOT
 - Old Spanish Trail Association
- Although most communities are centric, marketing the Skyway in general can benefit all communities
- Possibility of a short video to promote San Juan County’s portion of the Skyway
- Creation of App for the Skyway (Mancos is working on one for their segment)
- App might include a creation of map with icons/comments “how to celebrate” the 25th Anniversary

4. Preservation of Natural/Scenic/Cultural resources

- Q: Are there federal dollars available since this is a designated “American Byway”? A: There was initially some funding available, but the designation is now used mainly to be included in grant applications.
- An interpretive plan is needed to help identify sites, storylines, themes...
- Should future coordination be approached geographically or by topic/interest
- Eye sore (erosion) currently exists between Coal Bank and Molas. Can CDOT take initiative here?
- Concern with invasive vegetation species (Russian olive, tamarisk). Is there federal money to help eradicate these?

Other comments

- There was an obvious void created with the retirement of Ken Francis, FLC Office of Community Services
- Would FLC be able to reinstate Community Services Office, which no longer exists?
- Would another organization/institution be able to form a Community Services Office?
- Possible future community involvement:
 - It is not necessary for regular meetings to take place
 - Utilize e-technology and social media (web, e-mail, Facebook)
 - But a “champion” is needed – someone who can coordinate projects and community driven issues
- If a coalition or group is formed, it could be beneficial when approaching state/CDOT
- Possible field trip (tour of ranches, agri-tourism, old mines...) – who can organize? San Juan Mt Assoc., USFS, Chambers? *Notes taken by L. Schwantes*

Ridgway Meeting 8/14/14

Present:

Joe Lewandowski – Colorado Parks & Wildlife; Katharina Papenbrock – Ouray Chamber; Alecia Phillips – Black Canyon Regional Land Trust; Tom Schillaci – Videographer; Alan Staehle; Bill Tiedje – *Ouray County Plaindealer*; Rick Weaver – Ridgway Town Council; Jack & Patsy Young – Chipeta Solar Springs Resort; with project personnel Pauline Ellis – USFS, Marsha Porter-Norton – Facilitator and Lisa Schwantes – Community Outreach and with speaker Chris Miller – Interpretive Assoc. of Western Colorado;

Meeting:

- Marsha P-N lead introductions and explained proposed meeting outcomes.
- Pauline E. presented a power point slideshow and explained previous planning efforts, past goals set for the Skyway and past accomplishments.
- Chris M. presented information about the Interpretive Association of Western Colorado and specifically what they do related to the byways their organization promotes/improves (4). The points she made included:
 - We are asking the public to get off the freeways and venture onto our scenic/historic byways, therefore the byways need to be the finest examples of roadways. That is our goal.
 - Possible project: inventory of current signage. Consider replacing damaged signage, moving signage to better locations, adding signage for additional points of interest or safety...
 - Recommendation to prepare and pull together a list of possible projects that are “shovel ready” so the Skyway is positioned for any next rounds of scheduled funding from the State or Federal Governments. Be prepared to respond to opportunities.
 - Recommend getting our CDOT Reps involved (ask them to ride along the Skyway so that they will see first-hand needs for improved signage or pullouts)

- Leverage our San Juan Skyway marketing to compliment state, regional, county, local campaigns.
- CO Tourism Office (CTO) will match funds for printing of brochures. This was cited as an opportunity.
- Recommendation to contact elected officials about reauthorization of highway bill to include additional funding for scenic/historic byways
- Other regions in the state operate their byways in several ways: Grand Mesa - volunteer driven; Unaweep/Tabeguache - local governments are represented and agencies; Crested Butte has an advisory board
- Need to (year after year) keep telling the Skyway story. Don't let the public forget.
- CO scenic byway signs (Blue Columbine) are very important, and are the consistent link for all CO, they can be placed every 10 miles.
- Think about what it is like to be a travelers along your byway. What do they need? What is their experience?
- Phone service signs are needed (cellular and land)

Public Comments:

Group discussion regarding four key issues: 1) Way-Finding, 2) Infrastructure, 3) Tourism, 4) Natural/Scenic/Cultural Resources.

1. Way-Finding/Signage/Interpretation

- Q: Are there statewide design guidelines for signage?
- Need for signage encourage slower traffic to pull over or use turn-outs.
- Way-finding event of 2013. Where is that report available?

2. Infrastructure

- Red Mt Pass – no restroom facilities in key places
- Concern for driver safety
- Hwy 62 (downtown Ridgway) will experience \$13M in upgrades starting in 2015. This is on the byway and should be mentioned as a major upgrade project.

3. Promotion/Tourism

- Q: Is CTO involved in promotion of San Juan Skyway? (Chris' presentation touched upon some of this)
- Possible development of app or e-tour
 - Rick Weaver suggested contacting Cody Edwards. He recently presented information about being able to develop an app for under \$1000. Benefit to his app: you download it and can then access regardless of whether the device has internet access.
 - Each community along the Skyway could contribute to development costs.
 - Map Quest has a free app that can be used.
- Possibility of dedicated website, specific to the San Juan Skyway
- Important to have all the communities, governments, and organizations along the Skyway work together for its greater good – marketing.

- There is a San Juan Skyway Magazine (Big Earth Publishing/Telluride). Is it possible to work with the publication?
- Possibility of working with car & motorcycle manufactures – Jeep, Subaru, Harley-Davidson, Spyder
- Inns of the San Juan Skyway – Chipeta Resort is listed and is also working on a Web Site related to inns along the Skyway

4. Preservation of Natural/Scenic/Cultural resources

- Additional accomplishment: Potter Ranch – 200 acres preserved.
- History and cultural resources so very important to interpret and celebrate along the Skyway (mining, ranching, railway, tribes, geology...)
- Railroad important to history of Ridgway and other communities along the Skyway
- Are all historical societies being engaged?

Other comments

- Request from the Young's/Chipeta Resort for additional San Juan Skyway brochures
- Q: Who replaced Ken Francis, FLC Community Services?
 - How do we find that “Spark Plug”/“Champion” that can lead and coordinate projects?
- SW CO Travel Region
 - Working on a grant for creation of a map.
 - Don't reinvent the wheel – perhaps a subcommittee can be created under SWCOTR (*this from Kat P, Ouray Chamber & member of TR*) (There was consensus among the group on this idea.)
 - Important for the subcommittee to recognize other issues to compliment the destinations marketing – History, Culture, Preservation.
- Skyway is taken for granted, but it is so very important to all the communities along the Skyway. It could be that there isn't a lot of interest in this because people take it for granted. “It will always be there.”
- Estimated that more than 2M vehicles travel the Skyway every year.
- Is there a funding search?
- Northern San Juan Initiative – good example, used GOCO funds, multiple entities working together and pooled resources/time. But this takes lots of coordination.
- What are (should be) the top goals/objective/mission for the Skyway? Before you can get a champion, you have to answer this question.
- Marsha posed Q: Do we have (an)other meeting(s)?
 - Lots of good ideas, but who does the work?
 - Spring/fall meetings might be better attended
 - Grand Circle group already meets? Or do they still exist? Can you hook up with them?
 - Rather than physical meetings, participation via web/email/social media.
- State is marketing Color Weekend which is the last weekend in September. Can we coordinate with that campaign? What local events are happening in all the

communities? Check out Chamber and CTO calendars. Promote those events – “Drive the Skyway!” Draft a press release. *Notes taken by L Schwantes*

Durango Meeting: 9/9/14

Present:

Nik Kendziorski – Center of Southwest Studies, Heather Bailey – History Colorado State Historical Fund, Jen Jardine – BLM, Amy Schwarzbach – La Plata Open Space Conservancy, Kirk Komick – Rochester Hotel, Matt Janowiak – USFS, Alan Peterson – San Juan Mountains Association, Nancy Shank – CDOT; with project personnel Pauline Ellis – USFS, Marsha Porter-Norton – Facilitator, and Kathy Sherer taking notes.

Meeting:

- Marsha Porter-Norton lead introductions and explained proposed meeting outcomes.
- Pauline Ellis presented a Power Point slideshow and explained previous planning efforts, past goals set for the Skyway and past accomplishments.
 - Attendees listed accomplishments to date:
 - o Bear Creek bridge/trailhead
 - o 3,000 acres of La Plata Open Space easements in 3 counties
 - o SJMA brochure
 - o Land preservation
 - o State historical fund (mid 1990’s)
- Attendees listed their concerns:
 - o Beatle kill affects scenery – need signage to explain it
 - o Noxious weeds – an opportunity for education
 - o Protect the scenery from billboards and easement signs
- Attendees brainstormed ideas:
 - o QR code – technical interpretive signs
 - o Landowner easement signs with logo
 - o Guide to interpretive stops for self-guided tour – with what type of info?
 - o Assessment of what else is interesting
 - o App with info by mile marker
 - o Who would do the work: FLC interns, GIS certification classes, media history students
 - o Chamber of Commerce is different from Tourism Office (Chamber deals with history)
 - o Do presentation at the Southwest Tourism Summit April 10 in Durango
 - o The info is already there – it just needs to be put together (write blurbs)
 - o A contractor needs to be hired in addition to interns
 - o Use Go-Co funding, Youth Corps, USFS
 - o Link with the CDOT app – you can turn off what you don’t want – other apps are also out there
 - o Leave-No-Trace is of high interest to SJMA
 - o There are bike path opportunities parallel to the highway
 - o Trans-Alternative Program – CDOT \$
 - o State Historical Fund is interested in updating signs/kiosks to tell new stories as well as historical ones

- o Remember to give geological info (natural resources)
- o Paint or inlay the highway with something like a Columbine to indicate a pull-out
- o Identify potentially hotter properties for easements
- o Bathrooms are funded by San Juan County until 8/1/15 at Coal Bank and Molas
- o Avalanche pads could be used as pull-outs in the summer
- o Southwest Travel Region is under Region 9 EDD – could a group from under them? (untapped energy, regional marketing, good umbrella)
- o It costs \$8,200 to fund a SCC intern for 12 weeks

Notes taken by Kathy Sherer

Attachment C – Goals and “Take Aways” from the 2/26/13 Meeting in Ridgway for the San Juan Skyway Hosted by the Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Program

What follows are the key take away from a meeting held in Ridgway for the San Juan Skyway. At this meeting, key stakeholders identified action items. Celebrating the San Juan Skyway’s 25th anniversary and engaging the public in discussions about capacity were identified at this meeting as action steps.

Instructor: Sally Pearce, sjpearce@comcast.net

Program Manager: Lenore Bates, CDOT, Byways@state.co.us

Goals Set:

Year 1

- Establish “New” Scenic Byway Committee (Contact Original Members)
- Get one county commissioner from each county to be on board
- Establish communication with public agencies
- Need to find a “COG!” Champions!
- Formalize new San Juan Skyway Board with day-long conference/retreat: “Make the skyway part of your program”
- Establish immediate priorities – Is it signing? Marketing? Conservation easements? Projects?
- Revisit Vision & Mission – Ask are these appropriate for 21st century byway?
- Inventory *Existing Resources *Sign Inventory * 21 Century Road Evaluation, Pullouts, Safety
- Plan 25 Year celebration!
- Take interested committee members on van tour
- Take a trip around the byway
- Tie in with other byways
- Work with SW Tourism Folks
- Directing people to byway exploration
- Upload town “things to do” in mobile app & keep updated
- Develop weather station with schools & park
- Make byways a bigger part of tourism marketing – visitor information

Year 1+

- Update CMP (Corridor Management Plan)
- Rank & prioritize land & historic conservation goals
- Review Sale Tax benefits (increase or decrease)
- Acquire sponsors to pay for road maintenance. Site management & improvements.
- Involve schools/youth in cleaning, fundraising by byway (recycling waste)
- Fishing Tournaments
- Develop interactive marketing materials (passports – fun stuff)
- More Park/community events (i.e. locals appreciation day)
- Develop/Encourage the “Adopt the Highway Cleanup Program”

Year 3

- San Juan Skyway Treasures Tour (drive the byway & stop for hosted tours/presentations at 4-6 saved places)
- Re-energize Earth Day in thru schools (science, history, English, student projects about san Juan Skyway)
- Marketing Resources (national, state, region, county, lodging taxes) Capitalize
- Bike Trails on east side of Hwy 550 (inside fencing)
- Promote & integrate byways into cycling activities (BIKE GROUP ON BOARD?)
- Digital display on byway regarding events (balloons, farmers market...)

Year 5

- Use Skyway as hub for locally-grown foods, regional cuisine, wine, summer festivals, CSU as partner?
- Acquiring private land to protect from development
- Update & improve way-finding/signage
- Collaborate with other groups and agencies for funding opportunities.
- Market San Juan Skyway bus tours (For seniors, elder hostel events, historical, geology, museums, etc.)

Year 10

- Develop linked bicycle events through system of San Juan Skyway & adjacent byways
- Re-look at interpretive signs
- Evaluate Action Items, Develop new plan
- Work with land trust on state level to host annual conference on Skyway

Attachment D – Executive Summary of “A Framework for Way-Showing” – San Juan Skyway, June 2013

Link: <http://www.coloradodot.info/travel/scenic-byways/southwest/san-juan-skyway/FinalTheSanJuanSkywayFrameworkforWayshowing.pdf/view>.

Executive Summary

Wayshowing is a collection of maps, signs and other media that have been developed to aid travelers in their journey. A system of such information is critical to help travelers successfully choose a destination and plan their itinerary as well as to help them navigate once they arrive. As such, efforts to enhance a regional tourism economy must consider the strengths and deficiencies of existing wayshowing elements located along the full length of a byway corridor. The plan that follows assesses the current elements of the wayshowing system that exist throughout the San Juan Skyway, designated as one of 11 of America’s Byways in Colorado and one of 150 across the nation.

Utilizing a “front-seat back-seat” approach, travelers unfamiliar with the area took to the road with a list of significant historical, cultural and recreational sites to locate. Neophytes in the front seat searched for signs, used digital devices, studied maps and asked for directions. Meanwhile, transportation and tourism specialists in the back seat recorded the navigational challenges for those “new-to-the-byway” travelers in the front. Three (3) four-person teams set out to evaluate how effectively the regional wayshowing system guided travelers to sixty nine (69) specified sites on the San Juan Skyway.

An analysis of the navigation challenges posed in this formal assessment exercise, combined with the input of local officials, transportation and tourism specialists, resulted in recommendations that can improve the ease of navigation for visitors and better capitalize on the potential for increasing travel-related revenues for the communities along the byway.

The three teams gave high rankings to a network of eight visitor centers that span the 236 miles of the San Juan Skyway. They found all eight centers stocked with comprehensive written materials that covered the entire region, and visitor center staff that were well trained and extremely helpful. These centers include Silverton Visitor Center, Ouray Visitor Center, San Juan Public Lands Center, Mancos Visitor Center, Mesa Verde National Park and Visitor Center, Cortez Welcome Center, Durango Area Tourism Office and Visitor Center, and the Dolores Visitor Center.

Tourism has long been an important economic generator for the Southwest Colorado region. Its regional heritage sites are recognized nationally for their national and international significance, led by Mesa Verde National Park, a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site. Three federal public land agencies manage the federal lands and heritage sites in the area: The National Park Service, the United States Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management. Professional interpretive staff members from these three agencies have helped develop and produce interpretive panels and kiosks over many decades. The network of quality visitor information centers and extensive interpretive signage has created an information-rich region that is second to none in the State of Colorado. Additionally, the regional Colorado Department of Transportation has solid experience designing signage for domestic and international travelers who are unfamiliar with mountain roads.

Because of the excellent interpretive information located at sites throughout the San Juan Byway, the recommendations contained within this report cite mainly site-specific navigation challenges. In summary, the report recommends the following actions:

- A. Improve navigational signage within the city limits of towns and small communities located on the byway. Signage for attractions within the San Juan National Forest was uniformly excellent, as were those associated with Mesa Verde National Park. The greatest need is for wayshowing signs within the limits of the towns themselves.
- B. Modify existing in-town wayfinding signage in both Cortez and Telluride. Both need larger print on signs.
- C. Add pre-notification signs to important heritage sites and attractions. For many, travelers come upon them too fast to safely turn in.
- D. Install identifying signage on the fronts of buildings at the Museum and Mining Heritage Center in Silverton, the Galloping Goose Museum, and the Placerville School.
- E. Address inconsistencies in the naming of attractions in various media (brochures, maps, websites, Google Maps). These inconsistencies are rare and include Keystone Hill Overlook, Ophir Overlook, Red Mountain Overlook, and Galloping Goose Museum.
- F. Cell phone coverage is still spotty on the byway. With research showing that 50% of Colorado travelers depend on mobile devices to make travel decisions, the byway organization needs to move steadily to loading information online and developing byway-specific mobile apps.
- G. Develop clear distinctions between what is offered in the two different information centers in Durango – one downtown and one in Rotary Park.
- H. Assess the impact of heavy motorcycle usage on segments of the byway and add signage that alerts both motorists and motorcyclists to challenging segments of the roadway.
- I. Capitalize on the designation of All-American Road and explain the distinction to locals and travelers alike in wayshowing communication tools.