

National Scenic Highway designation could bring more dollars to county

By Wendilyn Grasseschi
Mammoth Times Staff Writer

The long, clean sweep of U.S. 395 as it passes by the High Sierra Nevada range is arguably one of the prettiest roads in the country. Elk, deer, ranches, spectacularly high mountains, rivers, creeks, small quaint towns, fast pavement, low traffic – what driver could ask for more?

So it's no surprise that Mono County is looking at getting the highway a National Scenic Byway designation to add to the one that the state has already assigned to the portion of the highway



MAMMOTH TIMES PHOTO/WENDILYN GRASSESCHI

Those who drive U.S. 395 already consider the highway scenic. Mono County is going for National Scenic Byway designation.

that runs through Mono County.

And that process is going to be a lot easier, after the county recently received a \$196,000 grant from the federal government that will help it do a Scenic Byway corridor plan.

It's all about bringing tourism and money to the county, said county staff.

"There is as much as \$300 million in federal funds in a pool for these highways each year to tap into," said Heather deBethizy, a county planner. "And the designation opens up great marketing options."

She said that one of Mono County's neighboring roads, the Ebbetts Pass

road in Alpine County, has already been designated as a national byway and it has been a big boon to the county economically.

"It even has its own Web site," she said.

Although District 3 County Supervisor Vikki Bauer was worried that such a designation might impose more conditions on businesses and residents lining the highway, similar to the way state regulations for scenic byways require certain landscaping and paint color schemes, deBethizy said the federal designation will not impose any more restrictions than are already in place.

"It's more about being a promotional and marketing tool," she said.

If the highway is accepted as a National Scenic Byway, it could mean there will be money available to put in more amenities close to the road, such as rest rooms and even trail segments, she asked.

Could the money be used to make sure the Crestview rest stop stays open year round, asked District 1 Supervisor Tom Farnetti.

deBethizy was not sure of the answer to the question, but said it might be an option.

The plan will take about a year to complete, she said. Public input will be a part of the plan.

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Mammoth Christian Fellowship Easter Celebration

Saturday April 3rd 6pm

Sunday April 4th 9am

Mammoth Lakes Middle School

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April 2, Good Friday service 7pm at Mammoth Lakes Community Center on Forest Trail just off Minaret: *this is our normal meeting site for weekend worship: Sat. 6pm; Sun 9am*

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National forests under microscope in development of planning rule

Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell has announced a series of events to provide opportunities for public discussion on the development of a new Forest Service Land and Resource Management Planning Rule. The Forest Service will host a national science forum, three national roundtables and nine regional roundtables.

With an expected completion date of 2011, the new Planning Rule will address a variety of current and future needs related to management of the national forests, including sustaining local economies, restoring forests, protecting watersheds, improving collaboration, and addressing climate change.

In the Eastern Sierra people interested in the development of the new Planning Rule will have their opportunity to be involved on Tuesday April 6. On that date the Regional Forester will host a Roundtable for discussion on the new Planning Rule at the Sacramento Convention Center. Concurrently, via video-conferencing, people will be able to attend the Roundtable at satellite locations in Redding, San Bernardino and Bishop.

The Bishop Roundtable will be held at the Forest Supervisor's Office, 351 Pacu

Lane, behind the Department of Motor Vehicles. An afternoon Planning session will run from 1 to 5 p.m., allowing ample time for discussion and input on a set of potential principles that could guide development of a new Planning Rule.

An evening Information session will run from 6:30 to 8 p.m., allowing more members of the public to join in the dialogue and to hear about outcomes of the afternoon Roundtable discussions. Participants in the evening session will be able to gather information and discuss the Planning Rule with other stakeholders and Forest Service staff.

To adequately prepare for the multi-venue April 6 Roundtable events, the Forest Service is strongly encouraging people to RSVP. Please RSVP online at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/planningrule/roundtable/> or call 916-930-3994.

For more information about the Planning Rule Roundtables please visit: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/planningrule/>

For more information locally, or if you have special needs for accommodation to participate in these public sessions, please call Public Affairs Officer Nancy Upham at (760) 873-2427. -USFS