

Maple Traditions Scenic Byway

Overview

The Maple Traditions Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan (CMP) was prepared by the Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA) as an offshoot of the corridor management planning process for the Black River Scenic Byway in response to stakeholder concerns at the grassroots level. ANCA initiated the Black River Trail Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan, at the request of the New York State Department of Transportation, in order to create a planning document that would address the future of this existing State Scenic Byway.

The Black River Trail Scenic Byway received official designation as part of the New York State Scenic Byway System in 1992 under the leadership of Senator John B. Scheffer when the State established its State Scenic Byway Program. In 1984, a New York State Highway Law declared this touring route of scenic places would be known officially as the Black River Trail. The next section provides a detailed rationale for a route change to the *existing* Black River Trail Scenic Byway and for re-naming the portion of the route from Lowville to Ogdensburg as the Maple Traditions Scenic Byway.

The Maple Traditions Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan identifies and describes the Byway corridor and its resources. It outlines the public participation process used in creating the document and contains strategies presented by the Byway communities that support the realization of regional and local visions and the accomplishment of plan goals.

The document details plans for economic development that promote tourism while preserving the Byway's natural, historical, cultural and recreational resources and maintaining the route's distinctive qualities and character. It also describes how to maintain and enhance the Byway and proposes numerous regional and local projects and actions. Recommendations for future implementation are also included.

Rational for Creating Two Byways From One

As currently defined in its legislation, New York State's Black River Trail runs 140 miles from Rome to Ogdensburg. From Rome to Boonville the byway follows NYS Route 46 along the remnants of the historic Black River Canal. It then runs parallel to the Black River itself along NYS Route 12 from Boonville to Lowville. In Lowville, where the Black River turns westerly toward Lake Ontario, the Black River Trail continues north, following NYS Route 812 to Ogdensburg where it ends at the International Bridge to Canada.

The northern segment of the Black River Trail Scenic Byway, as currently defined, comprises more than half of the byway's length (80 miles) and has no connection to the Black River—neither physical, recreational, nor historical. From the start of the planning

process, this was a major point of discussions at all public input sessions. It has been reinforced by river community stakeholders who felt that the Black River Trail’s “story” was incomplete by leaving out the remaining length of the Black River from Lowville to Dexter. (The historical Black River Canal had run from Rome to Carthage, while communities from Lyons Falls to Dexter share and industrial heritage based in common on the power of the Black River’s flows). Stakeholder along NYS Route 812 from Lowville to Ogdensburg stated they felt no connection or identity with the Black River. In terms of marketing the byway as a tourism product, they expressed concern that the Black River theme for this northern route was inauthentic and would be confusing to travelers.

This CMP proposes to rename NYS Route 812 as the Maple Traditions Scenic Byway and has received strong support from community representatives all along the route. It is an authentic theme with which stakeholders readily identify and is reinforced by the byway’s key attributes and community assets. There are a number of “sugar bushes” (maple syrup producers) along the byway corridor; Croghan is home to the American Maple Museum; Ogdensburg is known as the “Maple City”; and the byway ends at the bridge to Canada—whose national flag prominently features the maple leaf. See *Vision and Theme Statement* section for more supporting details.

At the same time, legislation adding the remaining length of the Black River waterway (Lowville to Dexter) as part of the Black River Trail Scenic Byway will allow a more complete telling of the Black River’s story as a significant natural, economic, and recreational resource, as well as its historical role in the settlement of the region. It would also present a more consistent and authentic image to byway travelers.

DRAFT Vision Statement:

The proposed Maple Traditions Scenic Byway highlights the simple traditions of people living close to the land, while providing present-day folk with access to a variety of outdoor recreational activities. Beginning in Lowville, the 80 mile route takes travelers past the American Maple Museum in Croghan, and ends in the “Maple City” of Ogdensburg—at the foot of the international bridge to Canada.

Along the way, travelers may visit family-operated sugar bush operations where maple syrup is produced using wood-stoked fires and horse-drawn wagons; observe Amish farmers working their fields; and be tempted by a variety of locally crafted, traditions-based products such as furniture, cheeses, meats, candles, baskets, and candies. An alternate loop through Canton brings travelers past the Traditional Arts in Upstate New York (TAUNY), whose exhibits, archives, and Folkstore highlight and preserve the rich living heritage of customs and folk arts from across the entire North Country region. The proposed Maple Traditions Scenic Byway offers numerous opportunities to enjoy the undeveloped rural landscape: including bird watching, paddling quiet waterways, hiking woodland trails, and geo-caching.

DRAFT Theme Statement:

The Maple Traditions Scenic Byway guides travelers through peaceful rural communities where they will see people continuing the heritage and traditions of previous generations—living off the land and producing a variety of food and hand-crafted products from the resources provided by the land. The byway also provides access to the land for a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities.