



# SCENIC AMERICA

## Viewpoints

Spring, 1996 Vol. 13 No. 1

## Activists Take Aim at Visual Pollution

### *Charlotte Stands Firm on Billboard Law*

An estimated 180 billboards will be coming down in Charlotte, NC, in spite of the concerted effort by the outdoor advertising industry to negate the city's sign ordinance.

On February 14, despite a no-holds-barred lobbying effort by Atlanta-based Adams Outdoor Advertising and other billboard companies, Charlotte Mayor Patrick McCrory vetoed a proposal to overturn the amortization provisions of the city's 1988 ordinance. Scenic North Carolina board member Bill Keenan testified on behalf of the ordinance, and Scenic North Carolina supported the efforts of local citizens to keep the existing ordinance intact.

Charlotte's sign ordinance was passed in February, 1988, after months of discussion, debate and compromise. It set an eight-year amortization period for non-conforming billboards. Faced with the end of the amortization period, the industry offered a "voluntary settlement" that would have removed some signs but otherwise gutted the ordinance.

In recent days it became clear that the heavy-handed lobbying campaign organized by Adams had backfired. "I was considering accepting the compromise until I found out that some activities had gone on that were improper," said council member Charlie Baker. Describing a December meeting with attorneys representing Adams, council member Sara Spencer said, "When I left that meeting I felt that a very inappropriate level of lobbying had occurred."

In addition to its efforts in Charlotte, Adams Outdoor has led an unsuccessful

effort in the N.C. General Assembly to pass a state law undercutting the Charlotte ordinance. From 1993 to 1995, Citizens for Property Rights, a political action committee with the same street address as Adams Outdoor, paid lobbyists more than \$87,000 and made political contributions totaling \$29,441.

### *Maryland Rejects Private Signs on Public Property*

Maryland activists celebrated a significant victory recently with the defeat of a bill that would have turned state-owned highway rights of way into virtually unregulated advertising flea markets. Both the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee rejected the bill unanimously.

Real estate lobbyists pushed the bill, claiming only that it would allow real estate signs to be erected in rights of way during weekends. However, its exceptionally permissive language would have allowed advertising in the right of way of any product for sale. Moreover, though the bill included size limitations -- signs could be no more than four square feet -- it placed no restrictions on the number of signs a company or person could erect.

Marylanders opposed to the legislation argued that the bill would reduce

traffic safety by increasing off-road distractions, significantly degrade the visual character of the state's roadsides, and generate no real economic benefit to the state. Moreover, they pointed out that the bill's language would not likely withstand constitutional challenges, since it made arbitrary distinctions as to who could and could not use these signs.

The real estate industry has for the last several years made a practice of placing signs in the right of way. These signs, in Maryland, Virginia, and many other states, are illegal. Marylanders opposed to the legislation noted the irony of changing the law to fit the desires of an industry which simply ignored it in any case.



Charlotte will soon remove 180 billboards, as Jacksonville, above, is doing.

Photo: Bill Brinton

## Scenic America Welcomes New President

### Picture Power is Key to Conservation



by Meg Maguire, President

What a pleasure it is for me to be at Scenic America!

Sally, the staff, the dedicated Board, and you, our friends and supporters, have built an organization that is far stronger than our small size would suggest. As I learn the folklore — battles Scenic America has won, communities we've helped at a crucial time, scenic by-

ways preserved — I am reminded that the stakes are high, that time has not been kind to the scenic character of our communities and countryside, and that we must move swiftly and steadily. Pictures can be our best ally in this race.

The term "scenic America" evokes images that we like — winding country roads, soaring skylines, majestic landscapes. The flipside of these, which is too often the reality, is the billboard blight, strip development, and cookie cutter subdivisions that litter the land. But do others see what we see? Do we exploit the full worth of pictures? Or do our "thousand words" of jargon actually obscure reality?

The power of pictures to make people see something familiar in a new light — to understand that ugliness isn't inevitable, that we do have choices — is also part of the folklore. Bill Jonson, a Scenic America Board member from Clearwater, FL, is challenging the state's policy on tree-cutting in front of billboards. He told me that legislators were persuaded of his views when he presented two photos of decapitated pine trees in the public right-of-way. Ed McMahon,

the first president of Scenic America, is in great demand as a speaker because he shows people their choices for more beautiful communities. His excellent, fast-paced slide show has empowered communities all over the country to take action. Just ask the people of Louisville or Jacksonville.

For 12 years I was a video producer, and Scenic America was one of my clients. As I traveled around the country directing shoots for *Signs, Signs; Trees Are Treasure*; and *Gift of the Journey* I became keenly aware of the details of scenic and not-so-scenic America. Shooting a 100 ft. monopole from the bottom straight up seared my memory with the image of a monstrous metal hulk, dwarfing the tiny people below and blocking the sky. Though powerful, the phrase "litter-on-a-stick" doesn't begin to capture the poor civic image created by a wall of 672 sq. ft. billboards blocking the shapely skylines of many American cities. Pictures can make you deeply uncomfortable, I'm afraid, but

also drive you to action.

Photo documentation is also a powerful ally in systematically identifying and recording the scenic, cultural, historic, archaeological, recreational and aesthetic resources along our nation's many miles of scenic roads. Computer visual simulation, available through some universities, design firms and video editing houses, can create pictures of what will happen to those beautiful places if we do not take steps to protect them.

So, in addition to your well-reasoned arguments and facts, arm yourself with a camera. Shoot to make a point. Point to the evidence. Blow up those photos and take them to your city council and state legislators. Picture power to the people!

### The Big Picture

## New President Maguire Brings Wealth of Experience

This issue of *Viewpoints* marks the first with Scenic America's new president, Meg Maguire. Meg comes to us with significant experience in a variety of public interest fields. She was most recently a Senior Program Officer for AMERICORPS at the Corporation for National Service, where she supervised the selection and administration of \$47 million in grants for fiscal year 1994 for environment and conservation, human services, and education.

Prior to that, Meg was for 12 years a partner in Maguire/Reeder, a video production firm whose credits include all three of Scenic America's videos.

Meg also served for four years as Deputy Director of the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service of the US Department of the Interior. She oversaw various conservation and recreation pro-

grams, including the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Program, and the Historic Preservation Fund.

Meg received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Randolph-Macon Woman's College and a Master of Arts in Sociology from Rutgers University.

Meg replaces Sally Oldham, who will be taking a nine-month professional sabbatical. Under Sally's guidance, Scenic America has enjoyed unprecedented success and growth.

We are also pleased to welcome our spring intern, Pauh Wang. Pauh has a bachelor's degree from the University of Virginia and is working with Policy Director Frank Vespe on a variety of projects to help improve Scenic America's research and information dissemination capacities.

Scenic America, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, is the only national group devoted solely to preserving and enhancing the scenic character of America's communities and countryside.

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## Approaching Reauthorization, We Must Remember: ISTEA Enhances Transportation and Communities

*The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 charted a new course for federal transportation spending. That law must be reauthorized in 1997, and the debate over the shape of the new law has already begun. This article is the first in a series examining the impact of federal transportation policies on the visual environment.*

More than \$300 million spent for scenic conservation efforts. A new focus on identifying, preserving, and promoting scenic roads. Improved federal billboard controls. New community input and planning requirements.

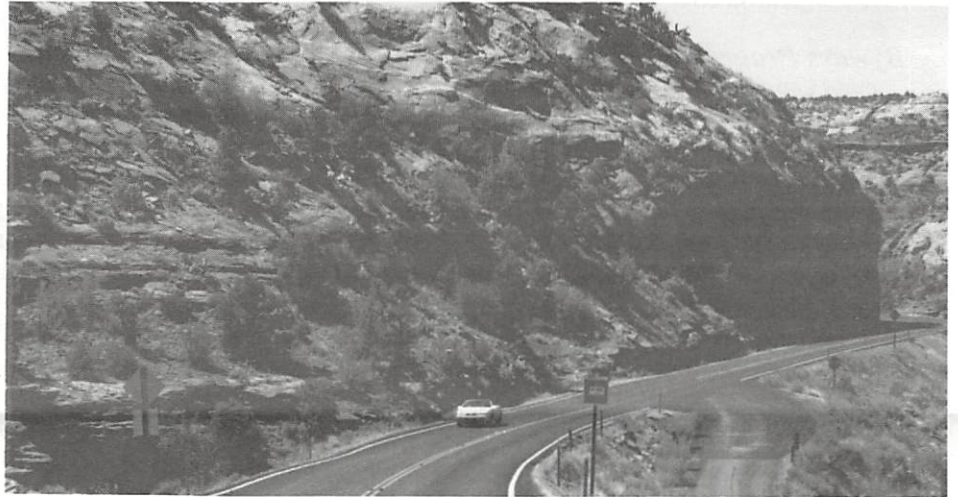
These are some of the benefits of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). This landmark law, which governs the expenditure of money from the federal Highway Trust Fund, refocused the federal transportation investment away from moving cars and trucks and towards moving people and goods and protecting communities.

This change has generated significant benefits for communities and people. Besides the obvious project benefits, ISTEA has led to significant new public participation from a variety of non-traditional constituencies in transportation decision making -- a step which can only help in making better, more inclusive transportation decisions.

Though ISTEA has been a sterling success, there have been some difficulties.



ISTEA brought communities back into transportation decisionmaking.



ISTEA has helped to protect scenic roads like Utah's Highway 12.

Photo: Jim Naegle

### On Capitol Hill

The wildly popular enhancements program, for example, has proven somewhat difficult to administer. The billboard lobby has fought tooth-and-nail for the destruction of conservation measures in the scenic byways program. ISTEA is by no means a perfect law.

As debate begins on how ISTEA will be reauthorized, a variety of proposals will be on the table, ranging from moderate tinkering to complete overhaul of the federal transportation programs. Organizations such as the American Association of State Highway and Transportation

Officials (AASHTO) have crafted positions that put much greater emphasis on the state role in transportation decisions. Others, like the American Highway Users Alliance, are seeking to reduce significantly the scope of the federal program, refocusing it on just a few major roads and removing any assistance for transit or programs like scenic byways or enhancements.

ISTEA's passage brought issues like community livability and scenic conservation back into consideration in transportation decisions, and it also brought whole new constituencies into the transportation planning process. After years of top-down, road-only transportation policies, these gains are making huge differences in communities across the nation.

As important as these gains may be, they are also tenuous. Transportation decisions -- where the money goes, who gets it, how it gets spent -- are political decisions. Because programs like scenic byways and transportation enhancements are so new and their constituencies relatively less sophisticated politically, it is unlikely that they will continue to thrive if the federal transportation program deserts the field.

The demise of these programs would have profound, negative impacts on our visual environment. There continues to be a significant federal interest in a national transportation investment. That investment must be placed in a larger context including communities, the environment, and quality of life. ISTEA moves the federal investment towards such a community-based orientation. It should be used as the baseline for future policies.

We've come a long way in the last five years, a long way towards transportation decision making that preserves and enhances our valued scenic resources. We cannot afford to turn away now, just as the work is beginning.

# Scenic Conservation Drawing Major Public Attention

## Ohio

### *Byways Program Gearing Up*

Ohio will kick off its new scenic byways program in April. Scenic America has been working with Ohio organizations and agencies for the last 15 months to foster the development of this program.

In response to the National Scenic Byways provision of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991, the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) is actively working with public and private interests to develop a State Scenic Byway Program. In November, 1994, ODOT invited Scenic America to become a member of the Advisory Committee, along with a variety of local and state organizations and public agencies, to create byway designation criteria and a strategic planning process for the program. Ohio's Scenic Byway Program will be modeled after the national program.

With cities, villages, orchards, and croplands scattered across Ohio's ecologically diverse landscape, the Scenic Byway Program will help balance the conservation of the state's recreational, historic, scenic, cultural, archaeological, and natural qualities with economic development and the use and enjoyment of its scenic transportation corridors. The process has brought together a wide range of public and private interests from the grassroots level to local, state, and federal governments. Among these are the County Garden Club of Perrysburg, the Ohio Canal Corridor, the Ohio & Erie Canal Corridor Coalition, the Ohio Township Association, the Ohio Departments of Natural Resources and Travel and Tourism, and the National Park Service, among others.

Simultaneously in northeast Ohio, a local initiative to designate a scenic byway through the proposed Ohio & Erie Canal Heritage Corridor is underway. Scenic America's expertise on the national program and other state scenic byway programs has provided guidance in organizing the planning process. Together with strong public participation, we are contributing to the development of a Corridor Management Plan (CMP). Developing the CMP, required for scenic byway designation, will require localities to address how they plan to as-

sess, protect, and enhance the byway's intrinsic qualities, how they will share responsibility regarding implementation, how to address outdoor advertising along the Byway, and how to assure continued public participation.

The County of Summit Engineer's office is leading this initiative with funding from ODOT. Scenic America's provision of technical expertise and materials to this



exciting project is being funded by the George Gund Foundation. Additionally, the National Park Service is dedicating significant resources to this effort. The state will demonstrate the requirements of completing a successful corridor management plan.

## Virginia

### *George Washington's Boyhood Home Threatened by Development*

Ferry Farm, George Washington's boyhood home on the Rappahannock River in Stafford County, Virginia, is the possible

site for a new 93,000 square foot Wal-Mart discount store.

Wal-Mart plans a "colonial-style" store with columns and a red brick facade, as well as a landscaped buffer between its facility and the site of the Washington farmstead, which will remain in county control.

These changes do not appease preservationists, who say that the site should not be developed by Wal-Mart. The local newspaper has editorialized against Wal-Mart. Cessie Howell, a leader of the *Save Washington Farm Coalition*, says that she has received hundreds of calls from across the country in support of the coalition's efforts, many because the story was featured on NBC's *Today* show. The Historic Fredericksburg Foundation has also come out against the project.

Nevertheless, Wal-Mart has few legal barriers to overcome before developing the site. The Stafford County Architectural Review Board must approve the plans for the store. If they reject Wal-Mart's plan, the Bentonville, AR, firm can appeal to the Stafford County Board of Supervisors, who appear solidly behind the project.

Gene Bailey, director of economic development for Stafford County, reports that a Wal-Mart store in northern Stafford County employs 240 and adds \$600,000 to the local tax rolls. The nearest Wal-Mart to the site is five miles to the west of the proposed site in a large commercial development.



Canal Fulton is part of the Ohio and Erie Canal Corridor, where Scenic America is undertaking scenic byways work.

## For Your Bookshelf...

# New Bulletin Describes How to Assess Scenic Resources

Scenic America's newest technical bulletin, *Evaluating Scenic Resources*, provides a critical link in the scenic byway conservation process and deserves a place on byways advocates' shelves.

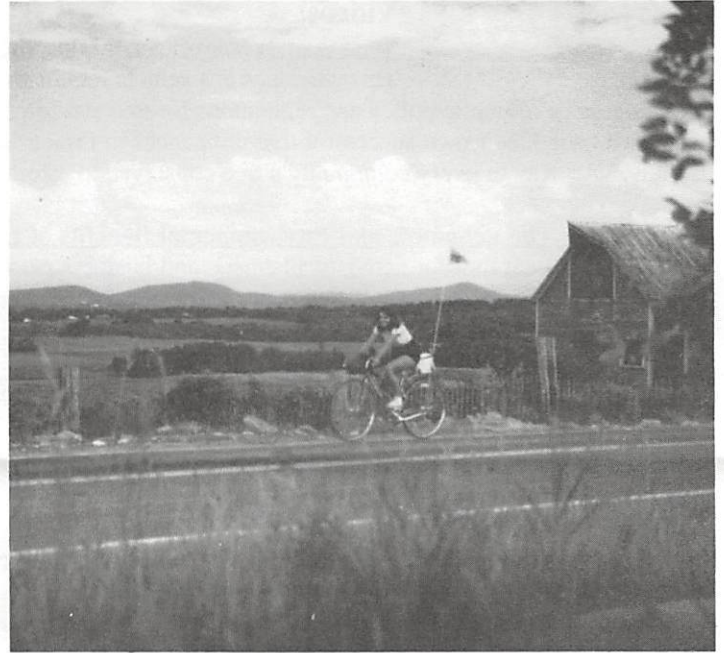
*Evaluating Scenic Resources* explains "visual assessment techniques," tested methods to identify key vistas. These techniques become an important tool to protect a community's valued scenic character because they offer a system for preservationists to identify and rank the resources that need to be preserved.

Useful for community groups, preservationists, planners and local officials, this 20-page bulletin is packed with information and advice on the entire visual assessment process, from building community support and organizing, to developing an action plan for implementation.

Funded by the L.J. Skaggs and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation in Oakland, CA, the bulletin focuses on the actual evaluation of the resources. The evaluation process includes the classification of the landscape into places, an inventory and description of scenic features within these places, and an evaluation of their scenic quality.

Scenic resources are evaluated using six criteria: magnitude, intactness, distinctiveness, draw, opportunity, and community preference. For each of these criteria, the user asks several questions. The answers to these questions help determine the significance of the resource by placing it in its regional and national contexts.

The first step in conserving scenic resources is identifying and evaluating them -- an obvious but too often overlooked fact.



Scenic America's new bulletin helps advocates to evaluate scenic vistas.

This bulletin offers an in-depth look at how to assess the unique visual characteristics of a community as a first step toward preserving the community's scenic heritage.

Jones and Jones, Architects and Landscape Architects of Seattle, WA prepared the bulletin for Scenic America. Copies are available from Scenic America at a cost of \$5.00 each.

## New Guide Steers Travelers to Scenic Railroads

Riding the rails through America's countryside - on an old steam train in Strasburg, PA, or passing scenic landscapes of the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area in Arizona - may take your breath away. Whether you are a rail buff or looking to get out of your car to see our country's natural beauty, you will find *Riding the Rails: A Tourist Guide to America's Scenic Train Rides* a practical guide. It highlights over 90 train rides. Among these are the Mt. Washington Cog Railway, the only coal-fired steam cog railroad scaling the second steepest railway track in the world to the Summit of Mt. Washington, and the first Chinese steam locomotive imported to this country in Boone, Iowa.

The guide is divided by regions and by state, and the description of each train

ride includes a map, notes about the ride including length and the time to complete a one-way or round-trip, schedule and fares. The travel directory lists welcoming local business and information about tourist accommodations and services. Unless you are familiar with a state or region however, a more detailed map from another source may be needed to locate and include a train ride as part of your vacation itinerary. Many of these are short trips and give you an alternative for a weekend get-away or special event.

*Riding the Rails* can be obtained for \$14.95 from Roundabout Publications, 2767 S. Parker Road, Suite 240, Aurora, CO 80014.

### Book Review

## Scenic Rhode Island Offers Eye-Opening Curriculum

The Scenic Rhode Island Foundation has developed a curriculum for elementary students to open their eyes to their natural and built surroundings. A pioneering effort in this field, the "ViewFinders" program introduces students to principles of community appearance, emphasizing the connections between the environment, community character, and aesthetics. To receive a copy of the curriculum, write to: David Leach, Executive Director, Scenic Rhode Island Foundation, 25 Bellows Street, Warwick, RI, 02888. Or call (401)941-3009.

**For Your  
Bookshelf...**

**Materials Available from Scenic America**

Quantity Total Price

**Videos:**

**Trees Are Treasure: Sustaining the Community Forest**, full color, 12 minutes.

This videotape is a vehicle for citizens and communities to spread awareness about the importance of public policy and regulations for tree and forest protection. Features stories of communities who established their own successful tree ordinances in Prince Georges County, MD; Austin, TX; and Fairfax County, VA. Key to every community's tree conservation effort. \$19.95\*

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**Signs, Signs: The Economic and Environmental Benefits of Community Sign Control**, full color, 16 minutes. An excellent tool for activists, planners, and business persons on the economic and environmental benefits of community billboard and sign control featuring beautification efforts in Houston, TX; Raleigh, NC; and Holland, MI. A must. \$19.95

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**The Gift of the Journey: America's Scenic Roadways**, full color, 11 minutes. Features a panorama of scenic roads across America and interviews with Lady Bird Johnson and Blue Highways author William Least Heat-Moon. \$19.95

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**Books:**

**Tree Conservation Ordinances: Land Use Regulations Go Green**, by Chris Duerksen, American Planning Association, 107 pages, 1993. A guidebook for planning and implementing a successful tree conservation ordinance. Targeted to citizens, local government officials and planners who want to know how to write and administer an effective ordinance that establishes a visual assessment process for tree conservation issues. The only guidebook on this new topic! \$24.00\*

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*\*Tree Conservation Ordinances and Trees are Treasure video are available for only \$29.95 when ordered together!*

**Save Our Land, Save Our Towns: A Plan For Pennsylvania**, by Thomas Hylton, RB Books, 128 pages, 1995. A look at how ten states are implementing comprehensive state plans for growth. A valuable tool for all concerned with land use, community planning and the resultant quality of life. \$24.95

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**Economic Benefits Technical Bulletins:**

These eight page bulletins document the economic benefits of preserving community character and scenic and environmental resources. Technical bulletins are \$5.00 each, any 3 for \$10.00, or 7 for \$21.00.

**Trees Make Cents**

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**On the Value of Open Spaces**

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**The Value of Nature and Scenery**

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**Wastelands NOT Wetlands**

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**Aesthetics and Commercial Districts**

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**Does Preservation Pay?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Economic and Community Benefits of Scenic Byways**

\_\_\_\_\_

Technical  
Bulletin Cost

**Scenic Resources Technical Bulletin:**

**Evaluating Scenic Resources.** This twenty page bulletin documents how to identify and assess the unique visual characteristics of a community as a first step toward preserving the community's scenic heritage. \$5.00 each.

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**Please Ship Materials To:**

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Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Send check or signed purchase order to Scenic America, 21 Dupont Circle, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Fax (202) 833-4304. Phone (202) 833-4300.

**Materials Totals**

Material Subtotal \_\_\_\_\_

Shipping & Handling \_\_\_\_\_

< \$20.00 = \$3.50

\$20.00 - \$49.99 = \$5.00

\$50.00+ = \$8.00

Total \_\_\_\_\_

## Scenic America Members: Committed, Active, Generous

Aesop tells a fable that has special meaning for Scenic America:

All the beasts of the forest were arguing among themselves as to which of the animals could produce the largest litter. They finally went to the lioness and asked her to settle the dispute. "And how many do you have at birth?" they asked. "One," she said defiantly, "but that one is a lion."

It's a wry reminder that quantity is no match for quality. It's also a lesson we at Scenic America take to heart about our membership: it's not great in number, but it is outstanding in its dedication. Members are always charged up and ready to

fight billboards or advocate for conservation provisions. Another indication of this commitment is members' unselfish giving. You, our members, give *higher* average gifts to Scenic America and give *more frequently* than do other groups' members. We realize we are but one in a bewildering array of organizations soliciting you. As a result, we never take your special contributions for granted.

Scenic America doesn't ask for members' support lightly. We work hard to limit the frequency of our appeals, balancing that against the pressing need for your "unrestricted" support -- the lifeblood of our op-

eration. Many of our members have chosen to make gifts of at least \$100 recently, and we're pleased to recognize them below. If you've never made a gift of this amount, please consider doing so when we next write you. As you can easily imagine, our small membership means that your \$100 gift makes a real difference.

Like the lioness, we know our "litter" is modest. But it's also magnificent. Thank you very much for your membership, your involvement, and your generous giving. Without all three, we simply could not keep up the fight.

### Recent Donors of \$100 or More

Ms. Madeleine G. Appel, Houston, TX  
 Mrs. H. H. Bassett, Coconut Grove, FL  
 Mr. James W.B. Benkard, New York, NY  
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 (List includes gifts made 11/1/95 - 3/15/96)



The Pacific Coast Highway is one of America's proudest scenic drives, providing inspiration for scenic conservation efforts nationwide. Members' support enables Scenic America to keep scenic byways free of visual pollution, preserving them for future generations.

## Full Slate of Conferences Scheduled for Spring

The next three months are busy ones on the conference and workshop front, with five major events dedicated to protecting important scenic, historic, and environmental resources. Scenic America is on the Steering Committee of Scenic Byways '96, which is sponsored by the American Recreation Coalition and will highlight the benefits and potential of scenic byways around the nation.

Scenic America is also developing, in conjunction with the Surface Transportation Policy Project, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, and other groups, a national conference, "Transportation Enhancements: Better Transportation, Better Communities," sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration. This conference will highlight excellent transportation enhancements projects and the benefits they bring to communities. Here is the schedule for upcoming conferences:

**March 31 - April 2**  
National Conference on Heritage Areas Rally 2 -- Working for America's Real Places  
Baltimore, Maryland (202) 673-4204

**April 19 - 20**  
Ohio Trails and Rivers Conference: Greenways to Discover Ohio  
Newark, Ohio (614) 224-8707

**April 21 - 24**  
Scenic Byways '96  
Tyson's Corner, Virginia  
(202) 682-9530 or 833-4300

**April 28 -30**  
Pennsylvania Heritage Partnerships 1996  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania  
(800) 228-3000

**June 9 - 11**  
Transportation Enhancements: Better Transportation, Better Communities  
Washington, DC (202) 797-5430

### Parting Shot...



### JOIN SCENIC AMERICA... YES, I WANT TO HELP SAVE OUR SCENERY!

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Organizational Membership:  \$50 Local or State Organization     \$100 Regional or National Organization

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Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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