

In 2009, the Colorado Scenic & Historic Byways Program is celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary by helping host the National Scenic Byways conference in Denver Aug. 23-26.

Over the past two decades, the byway names have become legendary: San Juan Skyway, Alpine Loop, and Highway of Legends, for example. A byways roster envisioned at between 15 and 20 routes by the original Scenic Byways Commission has settled in at 25.

Ten of those are national (America's Byways), and 15 more are Colorado Scenic & Historic Byways. Their mutual characteristics are fascinating history, unique natural resources, and scenery ranging from high plans to mountains to plateaus and canyons.

They are truly the best of Colorado.

Colorado has been very fortunate to have the program, as well. Following its founding 1989

Want more byways information? Want to take a virtual byways tour? Here's how! Log onto: [www.coloradobyways.org](http://www.coloradobyways.org)

by Executive Order of Colorado Governor Roy Romer, the program got rolling in partnership with the Colorado Tourism Board. For eight years following the voters' decision to end Colorado's tourism promotion program (1992), the Scenic & Historic Byways program was the only statewide alliance promoting tourism. The program was no doubt responsible for softening some of the statewide tourism declines accrued during that period.

The program isn't just about

promoting tourism for the benefit of the local economy. Visitors and locals alike are interested in the history of these areas, the natural resources found there, and how to protect them for future generations. The byways program

## Two Decades of Accomplishments

# Scenic Byways at 20

is deeply involved in all of those areas.

The finances of this type of byways promotion and education provide another fascinating chapter of the program. Local grants funded the earliest years, then the 1991 creation of the National Scenic Byways program helped by offering competitive grants.

Over the past 20 years, the program has received \$13.4 million for more than 200 projects from the National Scenic Byways Grant Program. More than 150 completed grant projects have created numerous award winning training programs, interpretive signage, marketing products and land conservation projects. These federal funds have been matched by well over \$15 million in local and

state funds.

Along the way, the Colorado Historical Society (which has distributed more than \$200 million to 3,000 statewide projects, many of them benefiting local byways via interpretation, management, and preservation) and the Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund (which has provided more than \$650 million to 3,000 projects involving capacity building, open space acquisitions

*Continued on next page  
Please scroll down*



Colorado Governor **Roy Romer** (left of center) and Colorado Transportation Commissioner/Scenic Byways Commissioner **Flodie Anderson** were among a group installing the first scenic byways sign, with its distinctive columbine logo, on the San Juan Skyway in 1989. *CDOT byways program photo.*

Continued from previous page  
Please scroll up

and conservation easements) have helped a great deal

The program coordinator through all of this is **Sally Pearce**, who began serving part time along with her role as CDOT Staff Historian, then moved fulltime to the Byways program.

“This has been a fascinating evolution,” she said. “The early emphasis was on tourism promotion. Then it switched to education and interpretation. As Colorado grew so fast in the late 1990s, the emphasis switched to preservation. I guess that’s the mark of a maturing program.”

She added, “We’ve been chipping away at it for years with a highly successful statewide brochure, *Discover Colorado* and the newer version *Colorado: The Official Guide to Scenic & History*

*Byways*, a website ([www.coloradobyways.org](http://www.coloradobyways.org)), and anything else we can do that doesn’t cost much. We’ve never had any funds available for marketing.”

Some of the best progress has come in the area of assisting the local byways organizations to define their mission, goals, and needs. Training of local byway volunteers through programs such as the award-winning Grassroots Training Program has helped them provide better visitor information and helped them better meet visitor needs.

With Pearce’s statewide coordination, her effectiveness as a grant writer, and with the involvement of legions of dedicated local byways volunteers, the 20 years of accomplishments border on astonishing.

Happy anniversary, scenic byways. And many more.

## Colorado Byways Milestones

**1989** – Scenic Byways program created by Executive Order

**1989** – First five byways are designated

**1990** – Three more byways are designated

**1991** – Five more routes are designated

**1996** – U.S. Secretary of Transportation Federico Pena announces that three Colorado byways received national designations

**1998-2004** – Designations average one or two per year

**2005** – Collegiate Peaks becomes the 25<sup>th</sup> (and final, to this point) designated byway

**2009** – Colorado hosts the National Scenic Byways Conference



**Interpretation** - A scenic byways program grant provided funding for a series of interpretive signs like this one along the Top of the Rockies Scenic & Historic Byway at Hayden Meadows, not far from

Leadville along U.S. 24. This particular sign interprets transportation in the area and is installed adjacent to an historic bridge. *CDOT photo by Sally Pearce.*