

Lady Slipper Newsletter

Fall 2008

This newsletter is brought to you by volunteers, who serve on the Lady Slipper Scenic Byway (LSSB) board, as a way to inform local residents and the general public about what the LSSB is, what it does and how you can participate in many of the activities and events held throughout the year. First, a little history....

The US Forest Service created the Scenic Highway, (county road # 39), in 1993 as a designated scenic byway within the Chippewa National Forest. In 2001 this designation was expanded to include designation at the federal and state level, and it was officially incorporated as a 501© 3 non-profit organization in 2003. A board of directors, who are volunteers from our area, meet regularly to plan activities and explore opportunities that benefit the environment, local economy, people and businesses in and near the byway corridor.

During 2003-2005 a Corridor Management Plan (CMP) was created to help guide development and preservation activities. Many public meetings were held to gain input from the public and stakeholders along the byway. The CMP surveyed the resources, needs and opportunities, and listed them in a strategic plan that the LSSB board has used to implement projects. In 2005 the name was changed officially to the Lady Slipper Scenic Byway, reflecting one of its most valuable assets; more than 10,000 showy lady's slipper orchids that grow along the corridor of the byway. This is the Minnesota state flower and the best times for seeing them are late June through early July.

The Beltrami County Highway Department has planned to reconstruct this roadway for a long time. However, due primarily to federal transportation policies, the reconstruction start date has been delayed more than 4 times. It's now tentatively scheduled for 2009-2010 and Phase I construction will begin on the southern end of the byway and reach as far north as Pennington. There are 4 Phases scheduled for the reconstruction process. The LSSB has met regularly with the Beltrami County engineers and is currently working closely to minimize destruction of lady's slipper orchids, as well as planning several roadside rest stop areas, where travelers can pull off the main road and park to view scenic landscapes, state flowers, and other scenic amenities along the byway, which enhances the safety of the byway. There will be periodic updates on this web site to let people know about construction, best places to view lady's slippers, etc.

Since 2006 LSSB members and volunteers have participated in an annual survey of showy lady's slippers along the entire length of the byway. More than 10,000 flowers have been mapped with GPS coordinates and integrated into a GIS data base that is used for planning purposes. Additionally, a Steering Committee was formed in 2006 to explore redeveloping Camp Rabideau into a Conservation Academy & Learning Center for youth and young adults. Camp Rabideau was classified as a National Landmark in 2006, as one of only 2500 National Landmarks in the United States. It is the best preserved Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp in the US and tours are offered May-September.

Other projects that have been implemented include developing a byway logo, signs, and summer pilot programs for youth at Camp Rabideau. This summer more than 40 youth from the Bois Forte Reservation participated in a language immersion program over the course of a week long stay. Also, 17 youth from Beltrami County participated in a variety of work and service learning programs at Rabideau. They scraped and painted the buildings at Rabideau, stained and landscaped the Benjamin Lake Recreation area and Fishing Pier at Rabideau and participated in a survey of lady's slippers along the byway. For these and other similar projects over a six (6) week period, they were provided a wage, insurance and transportation daily by a grant through the Minnesota Department of Labor, operated and managed by the Beltrami County Workforce Center. These types of projects are reminiscent of the CCC era and could become a permanent part of Rabideau Conservation Academy & Learning Center.

Promotional tools for the byway are being developed too, including an interactive web site and brochures; through grants received that were applied for by LSSB volunteers. The next newsletter will list the address for the new web site and provide updates on current and future projects, meetings and opportunities for volunteers to participate in LSSB activities.