

SMOKY VALLEY VISION STATEMENT VISION STATEMENT

The Smoky Valley Scenic Byway offers visitors an opportunity to experience the transition between the mixed grass prairie and the short grass prairie of the plains. The vista of ranches along the route is some of the last open ranges of the high plains and a sampling of Fort Hays limestone and niobrara limestone. The area is steeped in the rich history of the westward movement of the pioneers along the Smoky Hill Trail and those early settlers whose vision was to make this fertile untamed land their own. The Byway passes through Trego County, named after Edgar P. Trego, who was Captain in the Civil War and Ness County, named after Noah V. Ness who was a Corporal in the Civil War.

Travelers may sample an expanse of rolling hills blanketed with wildflowers in springtime, waving golden heads of wheat in early summer and russet heads of milo and dried shucks of corn in the fall of the year. The autumn harvest makes way for spectacular wildlife viewing of golden eagles, many species of waterfowl, mule and white tail deer and the wily coyote during the winter season. Visitors may observe the conservation and care of the land by the people who farm the soil, and participate in the varied recreational activities provided by the Cedar Bluff Reservoir and State Park.

There are scenic, natural, historic, cultural, archeological and recreational sites along the byway. The Byway communities provide the traveler with historic sites, cultural sites, shopping, lodging, dining and other amenities.

In order to preserve, promote and enhance the Smoky Valley Scenic Byway, the Volunteer Management Committee is to work with those who live along the byway to continue to preserve the beauty of the Smoky Valley for future generations to enjoy. Landowners have cared for the land for many years and desire to share this area with visitors who will respect the private land, the public land, and the natural environment by keeping it unspoiled.

Promotion will include economic development marketing to area, regional, statewide, as well as out of state visitors and will include educational materials about the area. Local residents will be encouraged to extend gracious hospitality to Byway visitors.

The Smoky Valley Scenic Byway Committee will strive to enhance the visitors understanding of the differences between the more developed regions of the country and the rural lifestyle of the residents, farmers and ranchers.

The Committee will develop a comprehensive corridor management plan that provides a framework for maintaining and promoting the scenic aspects of the byway.

SMOKY VALLEY SCENIC BYWAY SCOPING STATEMENT

The Smoky Valley Scenic Byway Committee recommends a scope encompassing approximately .5 of a mile on either side of the route.

The corridor management plan will uphold existing regulations and encourage volunteer efforts on the part of landowners and operators and community organizations to preserve, maintain and enhance the beauty and environmental health of the Byway. Five areas will be addressed:

Safety - Provide areas along the route to enable visitors to park and enjoy the views and historic sites.

Visual Appeal - Encourage local residents to take pride in their property and clean up unsightly areas along the route. Encourage 'Adopt-A-Mile' involvement of community groups and provide convenient trash containers for visitor use.

Economic Development - Work with the local Economic Development offices, Travel & Tourism Committees, Chambers of Commerce, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, and civic groups to promote the Byway.

Education and Communication - Development of a map/brochure listing historic sites, points of interest and driving & walking tours of the area. Temporary signs erected to identify growing farm crops along the route. Education of employees in the service industry regarding the importance of visitors, the need for gracious hospitality and knowledge of the area's historical sites, points of interest and services available. This will be accomplished with tours of the area. Periodic information published in the local papers updating residents about the Smoky Valley Scenic Byway.

Historic Appreciation - The area along and near the route is rich in history and the committee will research and make written copy via map/brochures of the historic sites, points of interest and local folklore available to visitors of the Byway.

SMOKY VALLEY SCENIC BYWAY GOALS & OBJECTIVES

What goals are important for the long-term enjoyment of the byway?

ISSUE: LONG TERM STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

The Smoky Valley Scenic Byway Committee was formed by personal contacts in an effort to have a representation of both counties (Trego & Ness) and a representation of interests along the byway. Included are a member of the WaKeeney Economic Development Board, a member of the WaKeeney Travel and Tourism Committee, a representative of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (Cedar Bluff), the Ransom City Clerk/Ransom Economic Development Task Force Committee, the WaKeeney City Administrator and 3 members at large. Half of the members will be replaced every two years on an alternate basis beginning in 2004. The new members will be asked for a two-year commitment.

ISSUE: PRESERVATION

GOAL: Preserve intrinsic resources of the byway

OBJECTIVE: Conserve intrinsic resources of the scenic byway in a sustainable balance with economic development and tourism.

ACTION: Any amenities for enhancement needed to preserve and protect native resources.

Encourage preservation and restoration of historic structures

- Identify current owners of historic properties.
- Meet with owners regarding their plans for their properties.
- Work with current owners of historic properties regarding possible historic programs and funding available.
- Work with KDWP to develop historic sites near the route
 - o Nature trail in Threshing Machine Canyon
- Identify historic sites with kiosks/historic signs
 - o BOD Trail, Wilcox School, and possible Emanuel Lutheran Church
- Add paved parking for safety and enjoyment of the historic sites
- Work with the Kansas State Historical Society and other preservation s groups to develop feasible projects.
- Pursue funding for the projects.

ISSUE: ENHANCEMENT of the scenic qualities and environmental protection of the byway

GOAL: Preserve and enhance the natural beauty of the byway.

OBJECTIVE: General and specific clean up sites and environmental improvements along the entire route.

ACTION: Any clean up needing to be addressed along the byway.

- Work with KDOT to promote clean up projects
- Work with the current landowners to encourage pride in their property
- Assist landowners with cleanup projects using local community groups
- Add trash receptacles along the route to discourage littering

Enhancement of natural environmental qualities along the byway

- Work with KDOT with seeding projects on new highway construction sites
Encourage civic groups and individuals to gather wildflower seeds in a manner that will not destroy the current population of native plants
- Work with KDWP and landowners adjacent to the byway to encourage wildlife plantings
- Meet with owners of historic sites to encourage and assist them in adding native grass and wildflower plantings to those sites
- Encourage cooperation with extension to identify growing farm crops to educate the traveler.

ISSUE: PROMOTION

OBJECTIVES: Keep local communities, neighboring communities, local and state governmental leaders, etc. informed of byway goals, objectives and activities.

ACTION: Keep people informed

- Inform local governing bodies of progress and plans concerning the byway
- Provide regular press releases on byway activities
- Invite other people to address issues as the need arises
- Utilize existing web sites to inform and involve others
- Work with the local travel and tourism committees to develop brochures to promote nearby scenic and historic sites
- Assist local volunteers and KDWP in promoting activities along the byway
- Meet with local clubs and civic organizations to involve them in the byway program projects
- Plan ribbon cutting ceremony with the Chamber of Commerce for opening of the Smoky Valley Scenic Byway
- Erect windmills at both end points of the byway to identify the byway
- Work with the economic development offices to promote compatible new businesses and support existing businesses along the byway

ISSUE: FUNDING

GOAL: Enhance and preserve the intrinsic qualities of the byway

OBJECTIVES: Provide resources for available funding to carry out the goals

ACTION: Involve as many groups as possible to increase funding

- Apply to travel and tourism committees, local chambers of commerce and economic development committees to provide funding
- Meet with local civic organizations and clubs to host fundraising events to help fund byway projects
- Work with the Kansas State Historical Society to secure funding for preservation of historic sites.
- Work with economic development for assistance in securing and writing grant applications
- Seek Donations from interested individuals

ACTION PLANS: Assignment...Prioritization...Funding...Monitoring

- Inform local governing bodies of progress and plans concerning the byway (2003)
- Provide regular press releases on byway activities
- Invite other people to address issues as the need arises
- Utilize existing websites to inform and involve others (ASAP)
- Work with the local travel and tourism committees to develop brochures to promote nearby scenic and historic sites (2003)
- Assist local volunteers in KDWP in promoting activities along the byway (especially the nature trail in Threshing Machine Canyon, The Gatherin' and Pumpkins in the Park)
- Meet with local clubs and civic organizations to involve them in the byway program projects
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- Plan ribbon cutting ceremony with the Chambers of Commerce offices, economic development offices, Travel and Tourism committee and other civic groups for opening of the Smoky Valley Scenic Byway (2003)
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- Work with the economic development offices to promote compatible new businesses and support existing businesses along the byway
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- Erect windmills at both end points of the byway to identify the byway (2003/2004, \$2000, Dave Hendricks)
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- Identify current owners of historic properties
- Work with current owners of historic properties regarding possible historic programs and funding available (Stonework on Wilcox School - \$2000, New Roof?)
- Work with KDWP to develop historic sites near the route (Troy Brown)
 - o Nature trail in Threshing Machine Canyon (2004)
- Identify historic sights with kiosks/historic signs (2004, KDOT and Kansas Historical Society, \$3000 estimate for each sign)
 - o BOD Trail, Wilcox School, and possible Emanuel Lutheran Church
- Add paved parking for safety and enjoyment of the historic sites (2005)
- Work with the Kansas State Historical Society and other preservation groups to develop feasible projects
- Pursue funding for the project
- Work with KDOT to promote clean up projects (Adopt-A-Mile program, Dave Hendricks)
- Work with current landowners to encourage pride in their property

- Assist landowners with cleanup projects using local community groups
- Add trash receptacles along the route to discourage littering (\$400/bin +\$10/mo Pickup. Seeking funding from beer distributors, McDonalds, etc.)
- Work with KDOT with seeding projects on new highway construction sites (Fall of 2004-Mary Hendricks, no funding needed as part o overall Hwy 283 project)

Encourage civic groups and individuals to gather wildflower seeds in a manner that will not destroy the current population of native plants. (2003/2004, Mary Hendricks)

- Work with NRCS and landowners adjacent to the byway to encourage wildlife plantings (Spring 2003, no funding needed)
- Meet with owners of historic sites to encourage and assist them in adding native grass and wildflower plantings to those sites (2003/2004)
- Encourage cooperation with extension to identify growing farm crops to educate the traveler (Ness County project, Dave Hendricks)
- Apply to travel and tourism committees, local chambers of commerce, and economic development committees to provide funding
- Meet with local civic organizations and clubs to host fundraising events to help fund byway projects
- Work with the Kansas State Historical Society to secure funding for preservation of historic sites
- Work with economic development for assistance in securing and writing grant applications
- Seek donations from interested individuals

Smoky Valley Scenic Byway Tourism Asset Inventory – Trego/Ness Counties

Scenic and Natural

SMOKY RIVER VALLEY – The Smokey Hill Trail follows the river along the north side. Also known as the Butterfield Overland Dispatch trail, the trail was surveyed and established in 1865 by Col. David A. Butterfield. The trail served as a passenger and freight company route for a short period of time due to the progression of the Kansas Pacific Railroad and the trail's reputation for being harsh and dangerous. In 1867, a group of freighters transporting a threshing machine to Salt Lake City for Brigham Young's farmers was attacked and killed by Native Americans at the base of a rock bluff near Bluffton Station. This stage stop along the trail then became known as Threshing Machine Canyon.

CEDAR BLUFF RESERVOIR- The reservoir was completed in 1951 as a flood control and irrigation project. IT now encompasses 6,800 surface acres of water that provides habitat for waterfowl and has been recognized nationally for its black bass and crappie. Approximately 9,000 acres of wildlife area surrounds the reservoir providing some of the finest upland game bird and big game hunting in the state. The reservoir is located 13 miles south of the I-70/exit 135 on Hwy 147.

CEDAR BLUFF STATE PARK – The park is divided into two areas along the shorelines of Cedar Bluff Reservoir. Camping, boating, swimming, fishing, wildlife viewing, birding, sand volleyball and horseshoes are a few of the activities that people participate in. Cedar Bluff State Park also offers two primitive cabins and three modern cabins for rent. In addition, special events are scheduled throughout the year, such as: “The Gatherin’,” which is a Celtic celebration with Celtic foods, games, and music. The park's crappie tournament offers anglers a chance to compete for money and prizes and “The Pumpkin in the Park” which offers pumpkins, games, prizes, and horse drawn wagon rides.

CEDAR BLUFF SCENIC OVERLOOK – Located in the Page Creek are the 100-foot limestone bluffs dotted with cedars for which the reservoir was named. This area offers a panoramic view of the reservoir and interesting rock formations. Follow Hwy 147 south of Cedar Bluff Dam and turn west on Trego County Rd #474 and follow the signs to the overlook.

Historical

EMANUEL LUTHERAN CHURCH – This church was constructed in 1902 of native limestone quarried near Threshing Machine Canyon located along the Smoky Hill Trail. PA Nelson quarried all of the stone for the church and his nearby home. Mr. Nelson would pack a bottle of water and a sandwich each day and ride his horse from this location to the quarry. Mr. Hughes was the main builder of the church and Mr. Schutte from Ellis constructed its arches. The original name was Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Emanuel Church and was established by early settlers from Sweden. Services were held at 6:00 am on Christmas morning. There is still an active congregation which celebrated its 100th anniversary in April of 2000. You'll find this historic limestone church 7.5 miles south of Ogallah on Hwy. 147 on a very scenic drive prior to arriving at the Cedar Bluff Reservoir.

WILCOX SCHOOL - The strong desire of the early pioneers for their children to have an education, prompted the building of Wilcox School in 1886. The rock was quarried south of the Smoky Hill River and hauled by horses and wagons to the building site across the river on low water bridges and natural fords. Nearly all of the work was done by the settlers and one man in the group who was a stone mason. The Wilcox School was truly the hub of the community and was the site for religious services and Sunday school. Lyceum programs and draft registrations in World War I. The school is located 16 miles south of WaKeeney on Hwy 283 or ½ mile north of the Smoky Hill River.

1900 TIMBER CLAIM - On March 3, 1873, the Timber Claim Act was passed, which enabled a man to acquire the land at the end of 8 years if he planted a certain amount of timber. The effort to grow timber on the high plains was like prohibition, a well-intentioned, but futile experiment. The only tree which grows native in this part of the state is our state tree, the cottonwood. Ogallah, Kansas had a Forestry Station, established in 1887. Young trees and seeds were planted. These were distributed to settlers for making their timber claims. One hundred and sixty acres of land was given to a settler if he would plant and care for ten acres of trees. A few of these timber claims have survived. One such claim is a grove of trees planted in 1900 by Harm Schneider under the Timber Claim Act which is visible on the east side of Hwy 283, 10 ½ miles south of WaKeeney.

ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH - In May, 1905, a group of people of German descent, who had emigrated to this country from Russia and who had settled in Trego County, organized as a Lutheran congregation. The first church was built in 1908. The congregation experienced a steady growth and after a number of years, a larger church building was needed. Plans were discussed and work was begun on a new church in 1919. This building, which cost approximately \$18,000 was dedicated on June 13, 1920, and serves the congregation to this present time. The Zion Church is located 9 miles south of WaKeeney on Hwy 283 on the west side of the highway.

TREGO CENTER STORE - Located 9 miles south of WaKeeney on Hwy 283 is what remains of the Trego Center Store. The general store began in this location in approximately 1923. Over the years, the cracker barrels and pickles disappeared and everyday groceries, beer, chicken feed, gasoline and fishing equipment were made available to those living close by and those who traveled Hwy 283. It was also a place where the farmers gathered to catch up on the local neighborhood news and served as a recreation center for dances, card games and trap shoots.

Nearby Attractions

TREGO COUNTY COURTHOUSE - The cornerstone of the Trego County Courthouse was laid in 1888 and the building was completed in 1889. It was constructed from Trego County hard limestone and finished with Manhattan limestone because they could not find enough Trego County hard stone. The building was designed by George R. Ropes, an architect from Topeka, Kansas. It featured the American Queen Anne Style with an Elizabethan frontage. The highest cupola reached 100 feet in the air and the original tin roof was imported from Europe. In 1951-1952 the original roof was removed to make it a "modern-looking" building. The roof

was also in disrepair and this was the method chosen to repair it. Since the main portion of the building remains the same the Trego County Courthouse is one of the oldest still in operation in Kansas. In June 1974 several scenes of "Paper Moon" were filmed in the Courthouse. The jail in the basement was also used until it was condemned in 1976. Presumably, the jail was pre-made elsewhere and shipped in. It's unusual features included flat bars instead of round ones and a different locking system. The Courthouse is located at 216 Main Street in WaKeeney.

TREGO COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM - The Trego County Historical Society Museum, along with the recent addition of a one-room country schoolhouse, is located on the Trego County Fairgrounds in WaKeeney. This is a vast collection of pioneer possessions on display. Remains of the threshing machines burned at the Threshing Machine Canyon can be viewed at the museum. The old safe from the office of the Trego County Treasurer, which was installed there in 1901, was given to the historical society in February 1989. The museum is located 1 mile north of I-70 exit #128 on Hwy 283. Call 785-743-6651 for hours.

IWO JIMA MONUMENT - Iwo Jima silhouette monument was a 100-foot flagpole with a 20' x 38' flag plays tribute to the people preserving the great freedom of the United States. They are located at WaKeeney exit #128 just north of I-70. The new veterans cemetery will be located just ½ mile to the north of the exit on the left-hand side of the highway.

TEXT FOR SMOKY VALLEY SCENIC BYWAY BROCHURE

EXPLORE THE SMOKY VALLEY SCENIC BYWAY.....

A RIVER VALLEY STILL TRAVELED

As you travel Hwy 147 south of I-70 in west central Kansas the gently rolling hills open up to the 60-mile long, Smoky Valley Scenic Byway through Trego and Ness counties. Named for their “hazy” appearance at sunrise and sunset, the Smoky Hills offer visitors an opportunity to experience the transition between the mixed-grass prairie and the short-grass prairie of the plains. Many varieties of native wildflowers—including colorful Indian blanket, coneflowers, yuccas, and swaying sky blue pitcher sage—dot the Scenic Byway throughout the growing season. During the early summer you’ll see waving golden heads of wheat, and then russet heads of milo and dried shucks of corn in the fall.

Travelers on the Scenic Byway are greeted by a multitude of picturesque creaking windmills or “skyscrapers of the prairie”—a disappearing feature of the western Kansas prairie. These landmarks that “tamed the wind” were vital in providing life-giving water to the early homesteaders who traveled and settled in this valley and to their livestock on the abundant grazing lands.

The Scenic Byway is steeped in the rich history of the westward movement of the pioneers along the Smoky Hill Trail and the early settlers whose vision was to make this fertile untamed land their own. The Butterfield Overland Despatch was established in 1865 by Col. David A. Butterfield along the Smoky Hill Trail. The BOD was originally established to carry freight and, later, passengers following the Smoky Hill River from Fort Leavenworth to Denver—the shortest route between the two. However, it was not always the safest route due to its harsh and dangerous nature, and after a short time the BOD was abandoned. Today limestone markers denote the location of the BOD, which crosses the Scenic Byway in two locations.

One of the best-kept secrets along the Smoky Hill Trail lies near Cedar Bluff State Park and Reservoir. Threshing Machine Canyon is the site of an 1867 Native American attack on a wagon train transporting a threshing machine to Brigham Young in Salt Lake City. They were ambushed in the bottom of the canyon known as Bluffton Station and the remains of the old burned threshing machines could be seen for many years. To this day, if you search for them, the names and dates of the many travelers from the mid-1800s are still carved in the limestone bluffs surrounding the area. For the travelers’ information, this area is located in a wildlife refuge and is closed to the public from September 1 through March 10.

Cedar bluff State park and Reservoir, located 13 miles south of I-70 on Hwy 147, is an ideal setting for hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, birding, water sports, camping, sand volleyball and horseshoes. Cedar Bluff was named for the 100-foot tall, cedar-covered limestone bluffs along the south side of the lake. A trip to the top of the bluffs in the Page Creek area provides a stunning view of the are and is an ideal spot to view wildlife, especially eagles during the winter months. Cedar Bluff Reservoir, designed as flood control and irrigation project, was completed in

1951. Currently it serves as a magnet, drawing visitors from a large radius to enjoy the reservoir's many recreational activities. Cedar Bluff Reservoir offers some of the best fishing in Kansas and hosts many fishing tournaments. Hunting in the public hunting areas for deer, turkey, pheasant, quail, ducks and geese is also popular during the various hunting seasons of the year. In addition, there are special events throughout the year, such as "Th' Gatherin'," a Celtic celebration with Celtic foods, games, and music, and "Pumpkins in the Park" which offers pumpkins, games, prizes and horse-drawn wagon rides.