

# FLORIDA SCENIC HIGHWAYS PROGRAM

## QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



Real Places. Real Stories.

[www.floridascenichighways.com](http://www.floridascenichighways.com)

Summer 2026



### DESIGNATION

### ANNIVERSARIES

This summer, there are 12 designation anniversaries to celebrate! We take this opportunity to thank these Scenic Highways' past and present board members, volunteers, and community supporters for all their hard work, dedication, and commitment to preserving, protecting, and enhancing Florida's intrinsic resources.

#### MAY

- 5/2 - Scenic Sumter Heritage Byway
- 5/23 - Courtney Campbell Scenic Highway
- 5/28 - Palma Sola Scenic Highway

#### JUNE

- 6/7 - Old Florida Heritage Highway
- 6/13 - Indian River Lagoon National Scenic Byway
- 6/13 - A1A Scenic & Historic Coastal Byway
- 6/22 - Florida Keys Scenic Highway

#### JULY

- 7/9 - Ormond Scenic Loop & Trail
- 7/19 - Green Mountain Scenic Byway
- 7/20 - Broward County A1A Scenic Highway
- 7/26 - A1A Ocean Islands Trail

#### AUGUST

- 8/18 - Suncoast Scenic Parkway



# FLORIDA SCENIC HIGHWAYS PROGRAM 2026 ANNUAL MEETING

The Florida Scenic Highways Program (FSHP) 2026 Annual Meeting was held on March 25, 2026 in Sebastian, Florida, at Captain Hiram's Resort along the Indian River Lagoon National Scenic Byway. This year's theme, "A Celebration of Heritage and Highways: America 250 and 30 Years of the FSHP," recognized 2026 as a milestone year for the nation and highlighted the role of Scenic Highways in preserving Florida's intrinsic resources.

The meeting opened with remarks from Dean Stoddart, Florida Scenic Highways Program Coordinator, who introduced Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) District Five Secretary John Tyler. Secretary Tyler emphasized the significance of the dual anniversaries this year and highlighted the strong presence of byways in Central Florida, noting the critical role of volunteers in sustaining the program.

Dean then provided a program update highlighting recent initiatives, including the 2025 Annual Meeting, Mid-Year Meet-Up, improved reporting processes, continued outreach, and development of an updated FSHP Guidance Manual. He also placed the program in a broader historical context, reflecting on the evolution of the national and state level scenic highway programs and discussing future opportunities for growth and designation.

The meeting continued with a presentation from Melissa Brooks of VISIT FLORIDA, who outlined strategies for leveraging this partnership to enhance visibility through listings, travel guides, and social media collaboration. Melissa also shared tourism trends and encouraged byways to actively engage with partners and promotional opportunities to expand reach and visitor engagement.

The following session highlighted the Indian River Lagoon National Scenic Byway. Nicholas Sanzone, Byway President, shared the byway's assets and emphasized the importance of community engagement and environmental stewardship, reinforcing ongoing efforts to protect the lagoon. As part of this presentation, City of Sebastian Mayor Fred Jones shared insights on Sebastian's growth and commitment to preserving natural resources and community character.



*FDOT District Five Secretary John Tyler welcoming attendees to the 2026 Annual Meeting.*



*Panel discussion on byway burnout led by Mike Palozzi.*

After lunch, a panel was held exploring the causes and impacts of volunteer burnout, along with practical strategies to maintain engagement through clear roles, strong support systems, and shared responsibility.

This discussion transitioned into a session led by Amy Roberson and Alice Giuliani, the FDOT District Two and District Five Scenic Highway Coordinators, respectively, who presented a framework for building resilient byway organizations through strengthened governance, diversified funding, and long-term planning.

Continuing the focus on strategic growth, Vicky Soderberg of Cygnet Strategies challenged common misconceptions about tourism and emphasized the need for thoughtful planning, targeted outreach, and authentic visitor experiences.



Dean Stoddart delivering the FSHP update.

The meeting concluded with an interactive roundtable, where byway leaders shared updates, challenges, and ideas, highlighting innovative projects and opportunities for collaboration. Dean closed the meeting by recognizing the contributions of partners and encouraging continued collaboration, communication, and growth moving forward.

Overall, the 2026 Annual Meeting emphasized the strength of partnerships, shared knowledge, and collective commitment driving the continued success of the Florida Scenic Highways Program.

The meeting agenda and presentations can be viewed under the Statewide Meeting 2026 tab on the Meetings & Workshop Archives page at: <https://floridascenichighways.com/fshp-community/meetings-workshops/>

## BEAT THE HEAT: SCENIC STOPS TO COOL DOWN

Florida summers bring plenty of sunshine, but finding ways to stay cool can make the experience even more enjoyable. Along the state's Scenic Highways, travelers can find refreshing stops that offer a break from the heat while showcasing Florida's natural beauty. From spring-fed waters to breezy coastlines, there are plenty of ways to enjoy the Sunshine State and stay cool along the way.

### Spring-Fed Escapes

Nothing beats the crisp, cool temperatures of Florida's natural springs on a warm day. Many byways provide easy access to these refreshing destinations, where visitors can swim, paddle, or relax by the water.

#### **Big Bend Scenic Byway**

- **Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park**
  - Known for its constant 72-degree water, this iconic spring offers a refreshing swim, wildlife viewing, boat tours, and shaded areas to unwind beneath.
  - 465 Wakulla Park Drive, Wakulla Springs, FL 32327

#### **Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway**

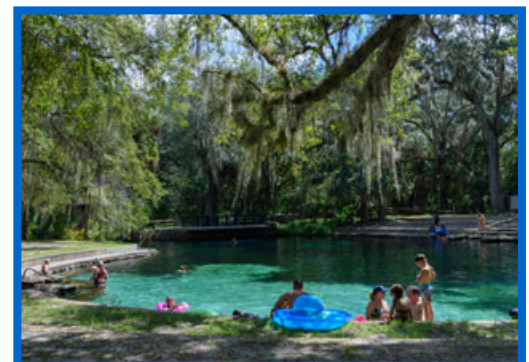
- **Silver Springs State Park**
  - One of Florida's most famous springs, known for its crystal-clear waters, glass-bottom boat tours, and shaded river edges ideal for staying cool while exploring.
  - 5656 E. Silver Springs Boulevard, Silver Springs, FL 34488
- **Juniper Springs Recreation Area**
  - Located in the Ocala National Forest, this spring offers a scenic swimming area and shaded picnic spots surrounded by lush forest, making it a refreshing and immersive escape.
  - 26701 E Highway 40, Silver Springs, FL 34488



Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park



Silver Springs State Park



Juniper Springs Recreation Area

## BEAT THE HEAT: SCENIC STOPS TO COOL DOWN (CONTINUED)

### River of Lakes Heritage Corridor

- **De Leon Springs State Park**

- A favorite stop with designated swimming areas and shaded picnic spots under mature oak trees, offering a cool and relaxing break from the heat.
- 601 Ponce De Leon Boulevard, De Leon Springs FL 32130

- **Gemini Springs Park**

- A quiet, lesser-known spring park featuring shaded walking paths, open green space, and access to cool spring-fed waters along the St. Johns River.
- 37 Dirksen Drive, DeBary, FL 32713

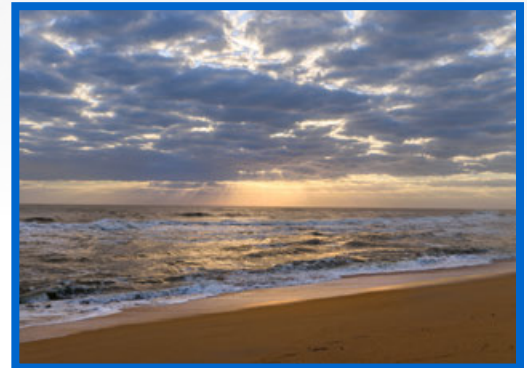


*De Leon Springs State Park*

### Coastal Breezes & Beach Access

Beyond their stunning views, Florida's coastal byways offer refreshing ocean breezes and easy access to the beach, perfect for cooling off on a hot summer day.

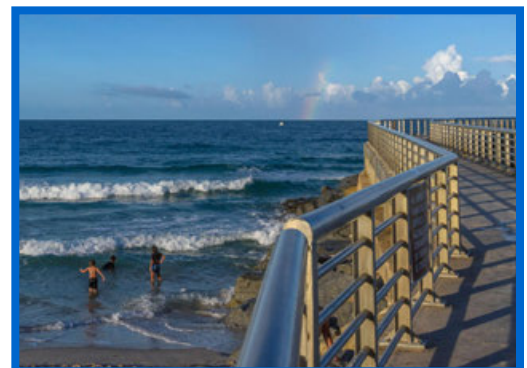
- **A1A Scenic & Historic Coastal Byway** – Multiple beach access points, scenic overlooks, and boardwalks make it easy to enjoy ocean breezes and coastal views along this iconic corridor, including Ponte Vedra Beach, Vilano Beach, St. Augustine Beach, and Flagler Beach.
- **Bradenton Beach Scenic Highway** – Offers convenient access to Gulf Coast beaches including Bradenton Beach, Coquina Beach, and Cortez Beach, known for calm waters, soft sand, and beautiful sunset views along Anna Maria Island.
- **Broward County A1A Scenic Highway** – Features vibrant beachfronts, pedestrian-friendly boulevards, and frequent access points to sandy shores and coastal parks. Many cities along the Byway feature beaches and fishing piers or boardwalks, including: Deerfield Beach, Pompano Beach, Dania Beach, Lauderdale-By-The-Sea, and Hollywood.
- **Florida Keys Scenic Highway** – Surrounded by turquoise waters, this byway features scenic pull-offs, small beach access points, and endless coastal views with steady ocean breezes. Stops along the way include Islamorada Founders Park, John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park, Curry Hammock State Park, Bahia Honda State Park, and Veterans Memorial Beach, to name a few.
- **Halifax Heritage Byway** – This byway runs along the Halifax River and nearby Atlantic coast, with easy access to Daytona Beach's wide shoreline and opportunities for waterfront views and coastal recreation. Highlights include the Andy Romano Beachfront Park, Ocean Walk and Daytona Boardwalk, Ponce Preserve Park, and Lighthouse Point Park, and multiple access points for driving directly on the beach.
- **Indian River Lagoon National Scenic Byway** – Lagoonfront parks, boat ramps, and shore access provide calm waterfront settings and opportunities to enjoy cooler breezes along the estuary. Locations along the byway include Sidney Fischer Park, Jetty Park Beach and Pier, Sebastian Inlet State Park, and the Canaveral National Seashore.



*Flagler Beach along A1A Scenic & Historic Coastal Byway.*



*Islamorada Founders Park along Florida Keys Scenic Highway.*



*Sebastian Inlet Pier and Beach along Indian River Lagoon National Scenic Byway.*

## BEAT THE HEAT: SCENIC STOPS TO COOL DOWN (CONTINUED)

- **Indian River Lagoon – Treasure Coast Scenic Highway** – Provides access to both lagoon and oceanfront environments, with tranquil beaches, scenic overlooks, and opportunities for wildlife viewing. Notable destinations along the corridor include Avalon State Park, Fort Pierce Inlet State Park, Jetty Park, and South Causeway Beach.
- **Ormond Scenic Loop & Trail** – Offers access to quieter Atlantic beaches, scenic dune systems, and stretches of undeveloped shoreline perfect for a peaceful coastal stop. Key locations along the Byway include North Peninsula State Park, Tomoka State Park, Tom Renick Park, and Al Weeks Sr. North Shore Park.
- **Scenic Highway 30A** – Known for its white sand beaches and charming coastal communities, with frequent public beach access points ideal for swimming, walking, and relaxing. Visitors can explore destinations such as Topsail Hill Preserve State Park, Blue Mountain Beach, Grayton Beach State Park, Seacrest Beach, and Inlet Beach.

### Tips for Staying Cool on Your Scenic Drive

- Travel early morning or late afternoon
- Bring plenty of water and sun protection
- Plan stops ahead using FSHP Maps: <https://floridascenichighways.com/interactive-map/>
- Take advantage of shaded areas for breaks
- Check park hours and seasonal access before visiting

Whether you're planning a long adventure or a quick getaway, Florida's Scenic Highways offer countless ways to stay cool while enjoying the journey. With a little planning, you can turn even the hottest summer day into a refreshing and memorable experience.



Fort Pierce Inlet State Park along Indian River Lagoon - Treasure Coast Scenic Highway.



Blue Mountain Beach along Scenic Highway 30A.

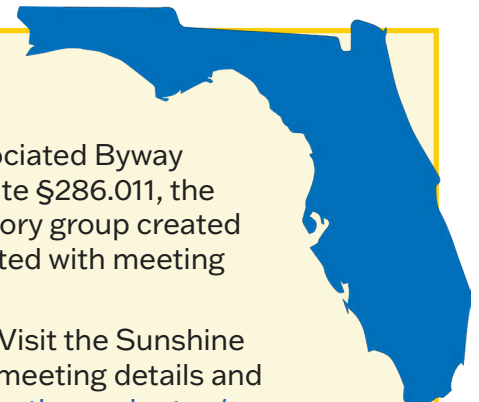


## FLORIDA'S SUNSHINE LAW

As a reminder, the Florida Scenic Highways Program (FSHP) and its associated Byway Organizations are subject to Florida's Sunshine Law. Under Florida Statute §286.011, the Sunshine Law requires that meetings of any board, commission, or advisory group created by a public agency be open to the public, properly noticed, and documented with meeting minutes.

Byway Organization meetings can now be noticed on the FSHP website. Visit the Sunshine Notices & Minutes page for details on Florida's Sunshine Law, as well as meeting details and minutes: <https://floridascenichighways.com/fshp-community/sunshine-notices-minutes/>

To have your meeting information added to the Sunshine page, please reach out to your District Coordinator or Dean Stoddart at [dean.stoddart@dot.state.fl.us](mailto:dean.stoddart@dot.state.fl.us).



# BYWAY DOINGS

## Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway Kids Fishing Day on the Byway

Saturday, April 11th began as a beautiful, sunny picture-perfect day on the byway. The day got even better as 20 young anglers, accompanied by their parents, gathered around the small pond adjacent to the Essex Seafood House on SR 40 in Volusia County. This group had signed up for the inaugural Kids Fishing Day on the Byway. The event was free for participants and a special day for kids age 6 to 12.



A generous grant from Fish Florida provided each child with a quality rod, fishing reel, and bait. Volunteers and parents provided valuable guidance and instruction. Each child caught a fish. For some, it was their first time!

Located adjacent to the byway, the event naturally drew the attention of passing travelers, many of whom stopped to watch the kids' fish and cheer them on. It was truly inspirational to witness the excitement of the kids and the interaction between kids, parents, and volunteer instructors. Best of all, the kids got to keep their fishing gear, setting them up for many more fishing adventures to come.

The Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway (FBBSB) is proud to have hosted this wonderful, successful event and hopes to continue it annually. This event would not have been possible without major commitments from the volunteers, partners, and sponsors.

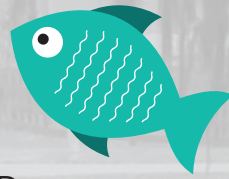
A heartfelt thank you goes to Essex Seafood House, which not only provided the fishing pond but also treated everyone to a delicious lunch.



Lunch provided by Essex Seafood House.

Fish Florida is a non-profit organization partially funded by the Fish Florida license plate. They provide organizations like the FBBSB with grants to teach kids about Florida fish, aquatic habitats, ethical fishing skills, and protection of the aquatic environment.

Other event partners included the Astor Kiwanis Club, Pierson-Taylor High School Future Farmers of America, the FBBSB Board and WiDa Outdoors in Astor. Special thanks to WiDa Outdoors owner David Williamson for his support and for providing bait for the event.



To learn more about the Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway organization and upcoming activities, visit: <http://floridablackbearsenicbyway.org/>

## Where Transportation Meets Conservation: The Courtney Campbell Scenic Highway

The past year has been an exceptionally active and impactful period for the Courtney Campbell Scenic Highway (CCSH). The iconic corridor is known not only for its sweeping views of Old Tampa Bay, sandy beaches, and popular multi-use trail, but increasingly for its leadership in protecting the Bay's long-term environmental health. Under the guidance of CCSH Byway Organization Chair Bill Jonson, the Byway continues to strengthen partnerships that connect transportation, restoration, and community stewardship.



Courtney Campbell Causeway



Darlene Shuman, Director of DRIVE for CleanWater, and Bill Jonson, Chair of CCSH.



Much of this momentum began in early 2024 with the launch of DRIVE for CleanWater, a bold initiative supported by FDOT District Seven. DRIVE for CleanWater, under the leadership of Darlene Shuman, reimagines transportation infrastructure as a catalyst for environmental recovery, supporting healthier coastlines, stronger habitats, and strengthened communities across Florida. Along the Courtney Campbell Causeway, that vision is already producing tangible results.

## BYWAY DOINGS (CONTINUED)

That collaborative spirit translated directly into restoration work in late 2025, when the Courtney Campbell Causeway became the site of a groundbreaking shoreline project with the installation of Oyster Catcher Mats (OCMs) near the Courtney Campbell Causeway Boat Ramp. Designed to help address long-standing water quality and habitat challenges in Old Tampa Bay, the cement mats provide the hard surfaces oysters need to grow in an area where sandy bottoms otherwise limit natural recruitment.



*Volunteers celebrating the first installation of OCMs.*

“Oysters are nature’s water filters,” explained Brennan Wehrhahn, Environmental Scientist with Fallner, Davis & Associates. “A single oyster can filter up to 50 gallons of water per day.” With 20 OCMs installed during the initial phase, the project has the potential, once fully established, to filter up to 265,000 gallons of water daily, while also creating habitat for fish, crabs, and shrimp and helping reduce shoreline erosion.

The Salt Strong Alliance – Tampa Bay Chapter hosted an all-day workshop that drew more than 600 fishing enthusiasts and conservation-minded residents.



*Attendees at the Salt Strong Alliance workshop.*

Led by Chapter President Darlene Shuman, the event featured expert speakers, hands-on fishing demonstrations, and discussions focused on habitat recovery, responsible angling, and the future of Tampa Bay’s fisheries. Collaboration with FDOT District Seven, local partners, and the CCSH, helped reinforce the message that protecting the bay is a shared responsibility.

The pace of restoration accelerated again in March 2026, just offshore from the Causeway near the Double Tree Hotel at Rocky Point. On that day, partners deployed four million juvenile clams across approximately six acres of healthy seagrass

using innovative drone technology, making this one of the most ambitious shellfish restoration efforts ever undertaken in Tampa Bay. The site was carefully selected for its dense, thriving seagrass beds, which provide natural shelter and optimal conditions for young clams to grow and flourish.



*A drone deploying clams in Old Tampa Bay.*

Clams, like oysters, play a vital role in improving water quality. Even with a conservative estimated survival rate of 20 percent, roughly 800,000 clams, the project could result in the filtration of approximately 19.2 million gallons of bay water per day. FDOT played a key supporting role by helping to fund this effort, coordinating partners, assisting with logistics, and helping communicate the project’s purpose and benefits, reinforcing the agency’s ongoing commitment to environmental stewardship.



These initiatives demonstrate how innovative technologies, from drone-assisted shellfish deployment to engineered living shorelines, can accelerate restoration when paired with strong public-private partnerships.

As DRIVE for CleanWater looks ahead to future efforts, including nature-based shoreline projects near the Howard Frankland Bridge, the CCSH remains both a gateway to Tampa Bay and a catalyst for its recovery. And together, community partnerships are proving that scenic byways can do more than move people, and enhance the places they connect.

To learn more about the Courtney Campbell Scenic Highway, visit <http://www.tbrpc.org/scenic/>



*Volunteers at the drone-assisted clam deployment.*

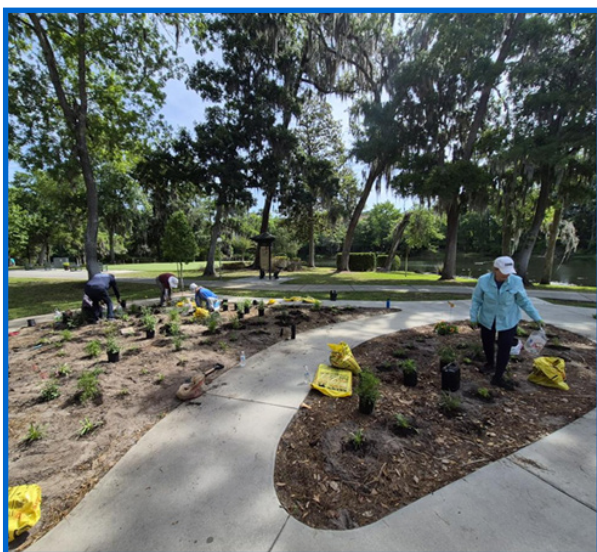


## William Bartram Scenic & Historic Highway Sparks Native Plant Initiative

Stretching 17 miles along State Route 13 from Julington Creek south to Wards Creek, the William Bartram Scenic & Historic Highway follows the St. Johns River and has recently earned recognition as the first scenic byway associated with the national non-profit organization Homegrown National Park. This growing initiative focuses on rebuilding biodiversity through native plant restoration. The partnership encourages residents, businesses, schools, and community groups to play a direct role by planting native species and reducing invasive plants across the broader byway corridor.

Named for 18th-century naturalist William Bartram, who documented the region’s rich plant and animal life, the byway provides a fitting setting for this work. Organizers say the goal is not large-scale transformation overnight, but steady, achievable progress driven by local participation.

Rather than focusing solely on roadside improvements, the effort extends into neighborhoods and shared spaces. Participants are invited to register their projects on Homegrown National Park’s Biodiversity Map, contributing to a connected network of habitats that support birds, pollinators, and other wildlife.



Volunteers installing the native plant demonstration garden.

The initiative is already moving from concept to action. On May 6, residents and local Master Gardeners installed the first native plant demonstration garden at Westminster Woods at Julington Creek Retirement Community, offering a visible example of how small-scale efforts can be replicated more broadly.

“This is about giving people a simple, meaningful way to get involved,” said Joe McAnarney, Chair of the William Bartram Scenic & Historic Highway Organization. “Every yard, garden, and shared space can contribute to something larger. We are so happy that Westminster Woods on Julington Creek has become a Homegrown National Park.”

As interest in nature-based solutions continues to grow, the partnership offers a relatable story of how everyday landscapes, when connected, can support healthier ecosystems.



Learn more: <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/>

Joe McAnarney can be reached at [joemcanarney@yahoo.com](mailto:joemcanarney@yahoo.com).



# A CREATIVE LEGACY: ART AND HISTORY COME ALIVE AT BONNET HOUSE

By *Katie Valli, Bonnet House Museum & Gardens Curator*

Traveling **Broward County A1A Scenic Highway** through the County reveals a striking study in contrasts. Here, the urban landscape opens up to reveal beautiful ocean vistas to the east and lush greenery of Birch State Park to the west. Just south of Sunrise Boulevard, there is another stretch of greenery west of the right-of-way. While this property has a historic tie to Birch State Park, it is in fact something very different: **Bonnet House Museum & Gardens.**



*Bonnet House East Facade by David Warren.*



*Bonnet House Courtyard by Sandy Dolan.*

Bonnet House is a historic estate that seamlessly blends art, history, and nature. Built in 1920, this breezy Caribbean-inspired winter retreat was created by prominent Chicago artist Frederic Clay Bartlett and his wife, publisher, composer and poet Helen Birch Bartlett. They received the land as a wedding gift from Helen's father, Hugh Taylor Birch, and the home was later transformed into an eclectic, colorful respite by Frederic's third wife, Evelyn Fortune Bartlett. Today, the house remains a vibrant reflection of their shared passion for creativity and art.

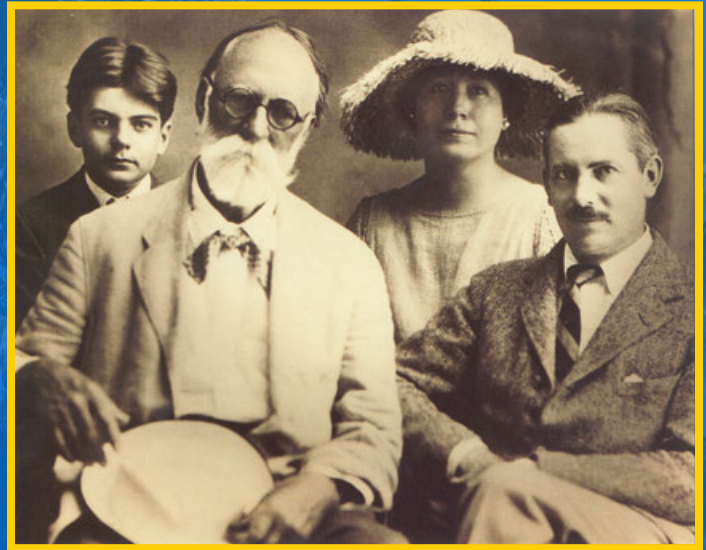
To celebrate America's 250th anniversary, the exhibit "100 Years on a Barrier Island: A Pioneering and Artistic Heritage" (on view through December 28, 2026) places Bonnet House within the broader narrative of United States and Floridian history. The display highlights the Bartlett artists alongside those that were pivotal to developing the area. It looks at the role of early South Florida pioneers, including the Barefoot Mailmen—carriers who braved remote coastal routes on foot and by boat to deliver mail between communities—illustrating the challenges and determination that shaped the region. It also explores the legacy of Hugh Taylor Birch, whose arrival in Florida during the late 19th-century land boom and subsequent land purchases helped define the development of Fort Lauderdale. Through these stories and personal artifacts, visitors are invited to consider how local history and individual lives contribute to the larger American narrative.



*The Barefoot Mailman (Florida Memory).*

## A CREATIVE LEGACY: ART AND HISTORY COME ALIVE AT BONNET HOUSE (CONTINUED)

In the Music Room, a centennial exhibit commemorates the 100th anniversary of Helen Birch Bartlett's passing. This tribute celebrates the legacy of a remarkable woman whose creativity and vision helped shape the estate. It features rarely seen photographs, personal writings, and objects from her collection, many of which are on display for the first time. On view through July 31, 2026, the exhibit provides a meaningful connection to one of the estate's most influential figures.



Left to Right: Clay Bartlett, Hugh Taylor Birch, Helen Birch Bartlett, Fredric Clay Bartlett.



Fine Artist Members Exhibit.

Finally, the Gallery's middle room hosts a rotating Fine Artist Member Exhibit every two months, showcasing a dynamic mix of works by regional artists. These exhibits feature various media and themes, often including unique interpretations of Bonnet House itself. Opening receptions are held on the first Wednesday of each new exhibit, offering a relaxed atmosphere to connect with the local art

community. All artwork is available for purchase, with proceeds directly supporting both the artists and the continued mission of Bonnet House.

Bonnet House Museum & Gardens is open Tuesday-Sunday, 11am-4pm and offers guided and self-guided tours.

More about our rotating and temporary exhibits here: <https://www.bonnethouse.org/temporary-exhibits/>



Aerial view of the Bonnet House Museum & Gardens.

# BYWAY LEADER INTERVIEW

**Name:** Danielle Anderson

**Byway:** A1A Scenic & Historic Coastal Byway

**Position:** Byway Program Administrator

## **Tell us about yourself:**

I'm a native Floridian, born in Tampa at MacDill Air Force Base, and grew up as a career Air Force brat. Even while moving around, my family stayed primarily on the U.S. east coast, and I always knew I wanted to return here permanently. My grandparents had a condo at Ocean Gallery in St. Augustine, and my childhood summers there created lifelong memories and a deep connection to A1A and St. Augustine.

I'm also the mother of two amazing daughters — Wilhemina, who is pursuing her master's degree in Library Science at the University of South Florida, and Penelope, a television reporter in Idaho and graduate of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. Both of my daughters have volunteered with Friends of A1A for more than a decade, so the Florida Scenic Highway Program has truly become a family passion.

Professionally, I'm the publisher and editor of a digital newspaper, along with being involved in many other community initiatives throughout St. Johns and Flagler counties. I also sit on the board of Citizens for a Scenic Florida.

## **How long have you been part of the Florida Scenic Highways Program (FSHP)?**

I joined the program in 2013 as Secretary during a challenging period when the National Scenic Byway Program had lost federal funding and several board members had departed. A small group of dedicated volunteers worked together to rebuild the organization from a deficit into a thriving, positive operation.

After serving as President, I transitioned into the role of Byway Program Administrator in 2017 once the organization was financially stable enough to partially fund administrative support.

## **What has your experience been like as part of the FSHP?**

Being part of the FSHP has been one of the most rewarding — and challenging — experiences of my life. A1A has been woven throughout my personal story since childhood. I remember driving A1A during my honeymoon in St. Augustine, and it remained a comforting constant during difficult times in my life as well.



*Danielle Anderson*

The byway has also been deeply connected to my children growing up, and now, as adults, it continues to be part of our lives. Beyond the roadway itself, the program has provided me with stability, opportunities to grow, and the chance to develop leadership and organizational skills in ways I never expected. The fact that more than half of that work has been volunteer-driven makes it even more meaningful.

## **What initially attracted you to the A1A Scenic & Historic Coastal Byway?**

Before I even understood what the byway program was, I used to park near the A1A Scenic & Historic Coastal Byway sign in Flagler Beach while taking my children to the beach. Later, while working as a magazine assistant managing editor, I met Bob Samuels, who invited me to join the board.

At first, I was drawn to the challenge because I had never served on a board before. Over time, though, it became much more personal. Today, I feel like a caretaker of A1A. Crossing the Matanzas Inlet gives me a feeling unlike anything else — almost like the connection you feel toward your own children. I care deeply about protecting the byway, improving it, making it safer, cleaner, and more beautiful for future generations.

## **What intrinsic qualities make your byway unique?**

Initially, recreation was our primary intrinsic quality, but history has always stood out to me personally.

When we earned All-American Road designation, history became a major focus because we are

home to two national parks, including Castillo de San Marcos and Fort Matanzas. Fort Matanzas, in particular, fascinates me because of its beautiful yet haunting history connected to the Matanzas Massacre.

The byway's combination of recreation, natural beauty, and deep historical significance truly makes it special.

**What has been your favorite project to work on as part of the A1A Scenic & Historic Coastal Byway?**

Writing the All-American Road application was probably the coolest project I've ever worked on. It was an enormous challenge and an incredible accomplishment for our organization.

I've also loved projects like the A1A 150-Mile Super Scenic Garage Sale, Spoonbills & Sprockets, and especially Kids Ocean Day. Watching children experience the beach, birdwatching, or nature for the first time is magical. Seeing kids use binoculars to search for birds or build snowy plovers reminds you exactly why these programs matter.



*Participants and volunteers at Kids Ocean Day.*

**What other memorable accomplishments stand out to you?**

Hosting both the state meeting and the National Scenic Byway Conference — along with our ribbon-cutting celebration — was incredibly memorable. It was stressful at times, but also one of the most rewarding experiences I've had with A1A so far. And I say “so far” because our centennial celebration is still ahead of us.

**What is one piece of advice you would give to other Scenic Highway organizations based on your experience?**

Build a strong core team around you. If you have people who genuinely believe in the mission and are excited about the work, there's nothing you can't accomplish. Success comes from surrounding yourself with committed people who share the vision.

**Which byway would you most like to visit (besides your own!) and why?**

I'd love to experience the Florida Keys Scenic Highway from the perspective of a Scenic Highway traveler. Usually, trips to the Keys are rushed vacations, but I'd like to slow down and truly appreciate the byway experience in a more intentional and unhurried way.

**Any final thoughts?**

I'd like to thank Dean for helping bring the byway program back to its core mission. At one point, the program became bogged down in policies and administrative issues, and some of the passion behind why we do this work was getting lost.

Dean helped restore focus through storytelling, photography, videos, and public engagement that created renewed awareness and enthusiasm for the program statewide. I'm incredibly grateful for that work and proud to support those efforts however I can.



*Castillo de San Marcos National Monument*