Landscape conservation bill passes House

The U.S. House of Representatives recently passed legislation that, if signed into law, would formally recognize 26 million acres of federally managed public lands as part of the first congressionally designated conservation system in the past 40 years.

The National Landscape Conservation System Act, H.R. 2016, is intended to formally recognize and protect a collection of existing special designations currently managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). These include: National Monuments, Wilderness Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, National Conservation Areas and Recreation Areas, and National Historic and Scenic Trails.

"These lands represent some of the most amazingly beautiful, ecologically rich and culturally significant landscapes in the entire country," said Brad Cownover, Director of Scenic Conservation for Scenic America.

One of 75 organizations that supported the bill, Scenic America is also the newest member of the advocacy coalition called the Conservation System Alliance, which was created to help ensure protection of the best lands and waters managed under the BLM.

Cownover said Scenic America plays a unique role as the only national organization actively focused on the protection and enhancement of the visual qualities of our public lands.

The bill now heads to the Senate for consideration. Click here for more information on public lands from Scenic America.

Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area signed into law

We are pleased to report that on May 8 President Bush signed the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area (JTHG NHA) into law.

The legislation, passed overwhelmingly in the House and Senate, recognizes the unparalleled cultural, historic and scenic resources within the entire JTHG corridor - the region that generally follows the Old Carolina Road (Rt. 15/231) from Gettysburg, Pennsylvania to Monticello in Virginia.

Scenic America is a founding partner and continued supporter of the JTHG Partnership.
**Scenic Trivia Question**

**Q:** When did we welcome Scenic Tennessee on board as an official Scenic America affiliate?

**A:** On April 2, 2000, Scenic America’s board of directors approved Scenic Tennessee’s application for affiliation, and welcomed the group as our eighth affiliate.

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Scenic America led the fight against the bill, soon joined by cities across the state, particularly along the Gulf Coast, where sign ordinances are a common and valued tool used to preserve scenic landscapes and community character.

Alabama legislators were taken aback by the uproar. A watered-down version of the bill came out of committee, but hard work by Scenic Alabama and the Alabama League of Municipalities to keep it off the special order calendar resulted in the bill going nowhere.

Elsewhere in Alabama, the Jefferson County Board of Zoning Adjustments voted against a request by Lamar Advertising to convert an existing nonconforming billboard to digital. Its location, on a steep grade near a hospital on U.S. 31, was a major reason for the unanimous decision.

Although the bordering cities do not allow any billboards, this particular sign is located on a small piece of unincorporated land. Residents of nearby Vestavia Hills and Homewood spoke against the application, as did Scenic Alabama.

**Sen. Alexander delivers remarks on Lady Bird’s legacy**

U.S. Senator Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) took the opportunity of the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the birth of President Lyndon B. Johnson to draw attention to the remarkable partnership between the former president and his wife, Lady Bird, on matters related to scenic conservation.
In remarks delivered on the Senate floor on May 21, Sen. Alexander hailed Lady Bird as "probably the most influential conservationist in America since Teddy Roosevelt," and reminded the Senate that "Lady Bird and Lyndon passed the Highway Beautification Act to free us from highway billboard blight and rampant ugliness."

The senator called for her legacy to be preserved by concluding that, "I would hope that one result of this commemoration of Lyndon Johnson's birthday would be to encourage someone among us -- or more among us -- to revive in us Lady Bird's passion for the natural beauty of America, to encourage once again the planting of wildflowers, to preserve the viewscapes, and to remind American communities of how satisfying it can be to live in one of the most beautiful places in the world."

The full text of Senator Alexander’s remarks can be found here.