



SCENIC
AMERICA

BULLETIN

November/December 2025

Volume 1, Issue 1

A more beautiful tomorrow starts by connecting children with nature today

Why has Scenic America, the only nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's scenic beauty and the visual character of our communities, partnered with Nature Explore?

To find the answer, think back to an early memory of when you were a young child — a time when you felt joy and the freedom to explore. Was this memory made while you were outdoors in nature?

Children today need nature more than ever, as they are spending significantly less time outside than previous generations. The American Academy of Child and Adolescent

(See "Nature Explore ..." continued on page 2)



Photos show children learning through Nature Explore experiences. Regular time spent in nature improves kids' health and well-being, supports imaginative play and creativity, inspires collaboration, reduces violence and bullying, reduces stress, and creates feelings of empathy for nature — the first step toward developing the next generation of environmental stewards.

Nature Explore and Scenic America join forces for children's nature-based learning experiences

(Continued from front cover)

Psychiatry reports that by the time a child is 8 years old, they spend an average of 7.5 hours a day looking at electronic device screens.

Compounding this issue, the majority of America's children live in urban areas. Children who grow up without contact with nature are often fearful and indifferent toward the natural world.

With your support, it doesn't have to be this way. That is why Scenic America is partnering with Nature Explore, a nature-based educational program committed to connecting children with nature by transforming "traditional" playgrounds into beautiful, nature-rich educational environments where children may learn, play, and grow.

Beautiful Nature Explore Classrooms can be created at preschools, houses of worship, children's museums, elementary schools, family libraries — almost anywhere a traditional playground might be located.

Scenic America's new partnership with Nature Explore complements its longstanding commitment to fostering the next generation of scenic stewards. That commitment also shines through our collaboration with Agents of Discovery, a mobile app that transforms outdoor exploration into interactive learning. Children undertake gamified missions that reveal the value of scenic conservation in parks, cities, and other outdoor locations.

Together, we can improve education, counteract some of the challenges facing children, and create greener and more sustainable communities with Nature Explore Classrooms! Learn more at natureexplore.org.

Image at right: A Nature Explore Classroom typically begins with the creation of a concept plan drawn up by a specially trained landscape architect and a team of child development specialists that works directly with the program site operators to imagine what is possible. This rendering is an example of this visioning process.



This is an all-too-typical playground where young children spend time outdoors. A large concrete slab covers most of the ground, there is no tree canopy protecting children from the hot sun, and there is little or no vegetation.



This is a lush and interactive Nature Explore Classroom where young children spend time outdoors connecting with nature and learning to appreciate nature's beauty.



For more than 40 years, Scenic America has led the fight to keep our landscapes, communities, and roadways scenic and safe

Scenic America was founded as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in 1982 by a group of citizens from around the country who were concerned about the state of America's visual character. We are now the national leader of a network of more than 40 state and local affiliates that share a common belief: everyone deserves to live, work, and play in beautiful places.

We provide research, advocacy, communications support, and guidance to communities and individuals faced with scenic conservation challenges, from development issues to sign ordinance questions. Our key issues include:

Billboards and Sign Control

Billboards do more than damage the scenic qualities of our communities. They distract drivers, bring down property values, and bombard us with marketing messages that we can't avoid. But the \$9 billion billboard industry is known for working behind the scenes, swaying decision-makers to make policies that put more signs on our streets. And now, they're trying to proliferate digital signage, with even more severe environmental harm. We fight against these efforts.

Placemaking and Community Planning

We believe everyone deserves to live, work, and play in beautiful places. The scenic qualities of our communities impact our quality of life — promoting economic prosperity, mental health, and community pride. Our elected officials have a responsibility to encourage responsible development that preserves what's unique about our communities while looking to the future.

Scenic Byways

Scenic America is the leading advocate for scenic byways. We fought to bring back the National Scenic Byways Program when its funding lapsed and its designation process disappeared, and we continue to fight for federal support for this critical program. For more about our stewardship of the National Scenic Byways Program, see the back cover of this newsletter.

Energy Infrastructure and Equity

With natural disasters and extreme weather events growing worse each year thanks to climate change, creating a resilient power grid has never been more important. Overhead wires raise aesthetic concerns while also threatening our safety and the integrity of our natural and built environments. Undergrounding utility infrastructure can improve the safety and aesthetics of our landscapes and communities. However, marginalized communities often suffer from inequitable exposure to unsightly energy infrastructure and a lack of awareness and investment in alternative energy sources.

Parks and Open Spaces

Parks and open spaces deliver big benefits, providing opportunities for outdoor recreation, protecting plants and wildlife, showcasing scenic beauty, fueling our sense of well-being — and boosting the economy. The role of open spaces can't be taken for granted, and we must all do our part to protect them.



From securing funding in Congress to helping defend the beauty of our highways, Scenic America is the leading advocate for byways



Scenic byways are part of the American experience. They take us to and through the places we've always dreamed of traveling, guiding us through our history and heritage and connecting us to national parks, scenic shorelines, majestic mountains, and more.

Beyond these benefits, scenic byways also deliver an important economic impact to the communities they traverse. And with more than 1,200 designated roadways in all 50 states, they impact all of us.

Scenic America was instrumental in the reestablishment of the National Scenic Byways Program in 2019, and we have advocated to secure more than \$50 million in funding for the program in the years since.

Byways as Economic Engines

Scenic byways help communities by driving tourism and economic development, which results in job creation. Scenic byways are stewarded by local stakeholder groups who volunteer countless hours in support of byways, and federal dollars are often combined with local public and private investment to improve the byway experience, increasing the draw to visitors and creating a large return on investment.

The National Scenic Byways Program

Under The National Scenic Byways Program, the U.S. Secretary of Transportation recognizes certain roads as National Scenic Byways or All-American Roads based on their archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities.

Threats to America's Byways

To ensure the visual appeal of designated scenic byways, federal regulations prohibit the construction of new billboards along these routes. However, the billboard industry often advocates for "segmentation," a policy that circumvents this protection.

Scenic byways are also threatened by the buildout of overhead transmission lines, reinforcing the need for the undergrounding of utilities for scenic integrity.

Consequently, Scenic America must continue to fight on behalf of our country's beautiful byways.

To learn more, visit scenic.org/byways.



Renowned scenic byways include the Selma to Montgomery March Byway in Alabama (top left), Historic Route 66 from Illinois to California (top right), Big Sur Coast Highway in California (bottom left), and Florida Keys Scenic Highway (bottom right).