



National Scenic Byway Awarded \$99,000 Grant

Peoria, IL (July 28, 2011) – The Illinois River Road National Scenic Byway (IRRNSB) has been awarded a \$99,000 USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant. At a press conference today, Colleen Callahan, Illinois State Director for USDA presented the grant check to Byway Director Anaise Berry.

Berry said the Scenic Byway Community is working hard to ensure the National Scenic Byway Program has dedicated funding in the reauthorization of our country's next Transportation Bill and this grant is a welcome sight considering those funding issues. "Given the uncertain future of FHWA (Federal Highway Administration) funding for the National Scenic Byway Program, this grant helps the organization diversify its funding sources. This is a great step forward in enabling us to impact small businesses and the visitor experience throughout the Illinois River Road corridor."

The Byway covers ten counties including LaSalle, Bureau, Putnam, Marshall, Stark, Peoria, Tazewell, Woodford, Fulton, and Mason. This grant will provide technical assistance for small emerging businesses. There are over 5,000 of these businesses that will benefit from the Byway's presence. The Byway helps strengthen communities by making them more 'tourist-ready' through materials and marketing. This grant will also help the Byway program attract new small businesses that visitors can enjoy.

According to Jim McConoughey, President and CEO of The Heartland Partnership, this grant is a great boost for economic development along the byway. "This grant helps solidify the byway's mission and allows for further development of the region as a whole. It will help us to build our visitor based economy and enhance tourism all throughout the area."

The Illinois River Road was designated a National Scenic Byway in 2005 by the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, which recognizes roads having outstanding archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational and scenic qualities. It stretches 291 miles alongside the Illinois River through Central Illinois and is notable for its natural and historic qualities. Its six gateway communities include Ottawa, Princeton, Peoria, Pekin, Canton, and Havana with several other communities also reaping the benefits of being on the byway. Learn more: www.illinoisriverroad.org.

For more information or interviews please contact Renee Charles at 309-495-5905 or rcharles@h-p.org or Byway Director Anaise Berry at 495-5909 or aberry@edc.h-p.org. The Illinois River Road National Scenic Byway is a program of the Economic Development Council for Central Illinois and a company of The Heartland Partnership.



100 SW WATER STREET • PEORIA, IL 61602
309-495-5909 • Fax: 309-495-5941 • www.illinoisriverroad.org
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