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FLORIDA BLACK BEAR SCENIC BYWAY DESIGNATED FEBRUARY 20TH

(Ocala, Fla., Feb. 21, 2008)...SR 40 and SR 19 were designated Wednesday, Feb. 20 as Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway by the Florida Scenic Highways Program's Scenic Highways Advisory Committee (SHAC). Designation of the was a cooperative effort between Marion, Lake, Putnam and Volusia County governments, state and federal government agencies, business and land owners and local citizens on the corridor. The Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway is the 21st scenic highway to be designated in the state

The Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway extends approximately 60 miles along SR 40 from Silver Springs in Marion County east through the Ocala National Forest to I-95 at the City of Ormond Beach in Volusia County. The designation also includes portions of SR 19 North from Putnam County to South SR 19 in Lake County..

The Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway Corridor Management Entity's (CME) action plan is eligible for state funding. Plans include the development of the CME bylaws and incorporation as a 501 (c) 3 organization, installation of wildlife crossings, construction of informational kiosks and interpretative areas and applying for status as a National Scenic Highway. The group's goals include reducing wildlife road kill and improving habitat connectivity; building and maintaining community support; promoting and encouraging sustainable economic development and providing economic opportunities for local and regional residents; while supporting the community plans within the corridor.

The Byway traverses some of Florida's most pristine ecosystems. Included within the corridor are many public lands such as Juniper Springs Wilderness Area, Silver River State Park, the Cross Florida Greenway, Florida National Scenic Trail and the Tiger Bay State Forest. The route also crosses several waterways, which have received special designation because of their uniqueness, including the St. Johns River, an American Heritage River and the Ocklawaha River, an Outstanding Florida Water Way.

Interested parties are encouraged to participate in the CME by learning about the group's goals which include preserving, maintaining, protecting and enhancing the intrinsic resources of the Florida Black Bear Scenic Byway while creating and maintaining a safe Scenic Byway for all users.

For more information, meeting dates and locations; please visit us online at www.flbbb.org or contact Carrie Christman, Deputy District Ranger, Ocala National Forest Lake George Ranger District, 17147 East Highway 40, Silver Springs, FL 34488, 352-625-2520, ext. 2521.

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