

## Introduction to Mount Greylock Scenic Byway

- [What is a Scenic Byway?](#)
- [How Does This Matter to the Mount Greylock Area?](#)
- [What Does This Mean to Local Landowners?](#)
- [Scenic Byway Description](#)
- [Corridor Management Plan](#)
- [The Mt. Greylock Advisory Council](#)

---

### What is a Scenic Byway?

A scenic byway is a route that people generally enjoy traveling and that reflects the intrinsic qualities of an area. The intrinsic qualities can be forests and mountains, communities, historic landmarks, or recreation resources for which the area is known. A byway can consist of one or more roads, and include rural or developed areas. Designating a route as a scenic byway can help residents plan how to preserve what they like best about it for the future and makes it eligible for additional funds. The Mount Greylock Scenic Byway consists of the existing roadways between Route 8 in North Adams (by Western Gateway Heritage State Park), the Summit, and the intersection of Rockwell & Greylock roads just south of the DEM Visitors Center (on the Route 7 side of the Reservation).

---

### How Does This Matter to the Mount Greylock Area?

The trip over Mount Greylock is often described with affection by residents and in glowing terms by visitors, though sometimes with an expression of concern about the safety of the roadway. Its value was recognized in a 1996 Executive Order with state scenic byway designation which stated that "the Commonwealth shall promote the protection of the scenic, historic, recreational, cultural and archaeological characteristics of the roadways which ascend to the summit of Mount Greylock."

---

### What Does This Mean to Local Landowners?

Scenic byway designation offers a way to protect property values and preserve local quality of life while supporting the local economy. The scenic byway project is locally controlled by a working committee of community representatives and staff from the Department of Environmental Management, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, Appalachian Mountain Club and others. There is no federal or state involvement in terms of new regulations or changes in property rights.

---

### Scenic Byway Description

The Mount Greylock Scenic Byway is located in northern Berkshire County, Massachusetts, passing through the communities of Lanesborough, Cheshire, New Ashford, Williamstown, Adams, and North Adams, and traversing the 3,491 foot summit of Mount Greylock, the highest peak in Massachusetts. The route offers historic pastoral settings, rugged mountain terrain, dense woodlands, panoramic vistas of the Hoosac Range, Hoosac Valley and Taconic Range, and views of the New England church steeples prominent in historic North Adams. The summit of Mount Greylock, located in the Mount Greylock State Reservation, offers panoramic views of four

mountain ranges and five states. In addition, Mount Greylock made its mark in New England history, and thus the world, by providing inspiration to authors such as Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Henry David Thoreau.

The Mount Greylock Scenic Byway was designated on June 18, 1996 by an Executive Order of Governor William F. Weld. The order of designation recognizes that the 16.3-mile Scenic Byway traverses the highest mountain and the oldest state park in the Commonwealth. The historic roadway intertwines with the world famous Appalachian National Scenic Trail which follows the ridge line of Mount Greylock and its range. Mount Greylock's diverse scenic, literary, historic, and recreational roles in the regional community, and its symbolic value as the central feature of the Berkshire landscape, all contributed to the Governor's enthusiastic endorsement of the state scenic byway designation.

---

## **Corridor Management Plan**

A Corridor Management Plan has been prepared offering ways to balance preservation and development. This plan addresses ways to improve road safety while minimizing traffic impacts, ways to improve signage, ways to further protect natural and scenic resources, and ways to link the byway to other tourist attractions. The Plan, finished in the fall of 2000, was developed with the help of local landowners and officials from the communities along the Scenic Byway, as well as Mt. Greylock Reservation staff members. The Plan can be found at the public libraries of the towns through which the Scenic Byway runs: Lanesborough, New Ashford, Cheshire, Adams, North Adams, and Williamstown.

---

## **The Mt. Greylock Advisory Council**

The Mt. Greylock Advisory Council, a group of local citizens that works with the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) to manage the Mt. Greylock State Reservation, is the "steward" of the Mt. Greylock Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan. This group meets quarterly with DEM staff to discuss issues relating to the Reservation and the Scenic Byway. The Advisory Council regularly meets the fourth Thursday of January, April, July and October and is open to the public.

BRPC is currently working with the Advisory Council to conduct improvement projects along the Scenic Byway. There are three components to this project: 1) design and install directional and interpretive signs along the Byway without creating sign clutter, 2) develop a tourist brochure to inform Byway travelers of the unique resources within the Reservation, and 3) improve trailhead parking and safety measures within the Reservation. This project is being funded by a grant from the federal Scenic Byway Grant Program, which is administered by MassHighway

The Historic Parkways Initiative, an interagency effort launched in the fall of 2001, is funding the rehabilitation of the road system through the Mt. Greylock State Reservation. The mission of the initiative - a coalition of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, the Department of Environmental Management, the Metropolitan District Commission and other public and private organizations - works to protect, preserve, and enhance historic parkways throughout the Commonwealth. Through advocacy, education, and action, and in the spirit of partnership, the Initiative celebrates the invaluable scenic, cultural, recreational, and transportation roles of these remarkable and diverse parkways. A catalyst for change, the Initiative is building new models of stewardship and revitalization for these treasured resources.

The rehabilitation of the historic roads through the Reservation will focus on these key issues:

- Preservation of existing parkway character, including road alignment, stone features, and historic vistas and overlooks
- Rehabilitation of road surface and drainage
- Safety improvement for vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle traffic
- Stabilization of slopes and walls
- Interpretation of historical, cultural and natural elements
- Protection of rare and endangered species
- Protection of wetlands
- Planning for future operations and maintenance

BRPC will be working with the Historic Parkways Initiative to coordinate rehabilitation efforts with the improvements being conducted through the Scenic Byway grant. Each project brings its own unique improvements to the Reservation. The rehabilitation project will repair the road and the scenic byway project will improve signage and trailheads. The brochure developed with scenic byway funds will document the history and natural resources of the Reservation. It is a partnership that we hope will make the Reservation a better place to visit and enjoy.

For more information on the Mt. Greylock Scenic Byway, contact BRPC staff member Lauren Gaherty. For more information on the Historic Parkways Initiative, call the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs at 617-626-1000.

**Sources:**

*Executive Orders 387 (6/18/96) and 415 (11/13/99), Commonwealth of Massachusetts Community Guide to Planning & Managing a Scenic Byway (USDOT, 1998) Corridor Management Plans: Guidelines for Communities (Scenic America, 1995)*