

# Geronimo Trail National Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan

Located in Southwest New Mexico

Updated April 2008



Prepared by Pathways Consulting Services – Aspen Doan  
Support and assistance provided by Geronimo Springs Museum and the Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway Advisory Board, U.S. Forest Service, New Mexico Department of Transportation, Sierra County Historical Society, Sierra County Economic Development Organization, and the Sierra County Recreation and Tourism Advisory Board

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
I. Executive Summary	5
II. Geronimo Trail Advisory Committee	16
III. Byway Inventory	20
A. Overview	21
B. Scenic Highlights & Features	25
C. Historic Highlights & Archeological Sites	27
D. Map – GTNSB Scenic & Historic Features	30
E. Side Trips	31
F. Map – Side Trips	35
G. Recreational Sites & Facilities	36
G. Map - Recreational Sites & Facilities	39
H. Cultural Attractions	40
I. Map - Cultural Attractions	36
IV. Corridor Management Plan: Critical Elements	42
A. Introduction	43
B. Involved Agencies, Organizations and Individuals	43
C. Road Sections and Areas	43
D. Road Safety – Hazards and Possible Corrections	44
E. Outdoor Advertising	46

### TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

V. Vision Statement, Goals and Objectives	47
A. Vision Statement	48
B. Goals	48
C. Objectives	48
VI. Strategies	50
A. Strategy on Development	51
B. A Strategy for Maintaining Intrinsic Qualities	51
C. A Strategy and Effort to Minimize Anomalous Intrusions on the Visitor’s Experience.	51
VII. Plans and Projects	52
A. Plans	53
1. Public Participation	53
2. Byway Signage Plan	53
3. Byway Marketing Plan	54
4. Byway Interpretive Plan	54
6. Plan for Accommodating Commercial Traffic	56
B. Projects	57
1. Truth or Consequences	57
2. Elephant Butte	57
3. Elephant Butte Lake State Park	58
4. Hillsboro	59
5. Monticello (Side Trip)	60

**TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)**

6. Cuchillo	60
7. Chloride	61
8. Hwy 152	61
9. Hwy 59	62

## Appendix

Appendix A – Market Analysis	1- 5
Appendix B – Tourism Asset Inventory	1 - 22
Appendix C – Resources	1 - 2

# Executive Summary



*Informational display board near Hwy junctions 52 & 59*

## **I. *Executive Summary***

### **Overview**

Ten years have passed since the first Corridor Management Plan was published for the Geronimo Trail National Scenic Byway, (hereby referred to as GTNSB). Since 1997 The GTNSB has become a well traveled and much appreciated resource for Sierra County. The restoration of historic buildings, the development of hiking trails and walkways, the building of rest areas and pullouts and an increase in accommodations and tourist destinations have added richness to the GTNSB over the past ten years.

The Corridor Management Plan of 2008 will reflect the improvements and changes since 1997. This Plan will discuss proposed projects and plans for the next five years. Projects will include more restorations of historic buildings, increased and improved signage and interpretive areas, the development and updating of brochures and the linking of two major trail projects to the GTNSB.

Collaborations in the maintenance and continued improvement of the GTNSB include the following entities:

- New Mexico Department of Transportation
- U.S Forest Service
- Bureau of Land Management
- Elephant Butte Lake State Park
- Geronimo Springs Museum & Geronimo Trail Visitor Interpretive Center
- National Park Service
- Sierra County Recreation & Tourism Advisory Board
- Sierra County Historical Society
- Sierra County Economic Development Organization
- Sierra Soil & Water Conservation District
- City of Truth or Consequences
- City of Elephant Butte
- Sierra County
- Towns & Villages along Byway

### **The Geronimo Trail Advisory Committee**

The Advisory Committee was organized in 1996 and continues to define the direction for the Byway, stressing preservation and economic development.

### **Byway Inventory**

The Byway Inventory describes the rich assets and resources found along the Geronimo Trail. The GTNSB covers terrain from dry deserts to forests, spanning many



distinct life zones. Several significant changes will be noted in the Byway Inventory since 1997. One of these changes is that the GTNSB only goes to San Lorenzo in the south and only as far as Beaverhead in the north. The U.S. Forest Service Road 150, once a part of the GTNSB, is now listed as a side trip due to the need for high clearance vehicles and the unpredictability of the road conditions. Hwy 35 through the Mimbres and to the Gila Cliff Dwellings has been taken on by Grant County and is now part of the Trail of the Mountain Spirits National Scenic Byway. An addition to the GTNSB is the mining town of Chloride. Chloride was previously considered a side trip but the development of a rest area with restrooms, sheltered picnic tables now provides visitors with a place to bring their lunch and spend more time.

Beginning at the Geronimo Springs Museum in Truth or Consequences (T or C), New Mexico, the GTNSB travels west through Williamsburg and south on NM 187 following the Rio Grande. The barren peaks of the Caballo Mountains stand sentinel over the valley below, and the shimmering waters of Caballo Lake can be seen at the junction with NM 152.



***View of Caballo Mountains and Lake  
from Hwy 187 near junction NM 152***

This portion of the Trail overlaps the Lake Valley Back Country Byway along NM 152 as it climbs out of the river valley and through the foothills toward Hillsboro, a mining town of the 1880's, and former County seat.

### **Byway Inventory (continued)**

Hillsboro today is a picturesque blend of stately old homes, shady tree-lined streets, and remnants of a former glory.

As NM 152 winds into the mountains, it passes Kingston, another 1880's mining town, with a reputation for wild and wooly ways and sleepless nights. From here the climb becomes much steeper, gaining nearly 3000 feet in altitude in the next nine miles,

where it crests at Emory Pass. Visitors stopping here will be treated to a panoramic view of mountain peaks and the tiny winding road they just traveled before continuing their journey down the other side. The terrain changes from towering pines on the mountains and cliffs overshadowing the road to gentle slopes, with juniper, cedar and scrub oak, until it reaches the Mimbres River Valley at San Lorenzo where the GTNSB ends and the Trail of the Mountain Spirits National Scenic Byway begins.

The northwestern route of the Byway starts from the Geronimo Springs Museum, circling back through downtown Truth or Consequences. The Byway goes north on Date Street then east on Third Street (Hwy 51) along the Rio Grande at Hwy 179 north. The Byway joins Hwy 195 and travels the southern end of Elephant Butte Lake, past the Elephant Butte Lake State Park entrance and into the city of Elephant Butte. The Byway then travels Hwy 195 due west and heads north on Hwy 181 to Hwy 52 west. Hwy 52 travels through Cuchillo, the location of an old stage coach stop and home to the Annual Pecan Festival. The Byway continues on Hwy 52 to the historic mining town of Winston. The road comes to a "T" and at this point the GTNSB goes either left to the second historic mining town of Chloride or right, to continue on to the junction of Highways 52 and 59. The Byway continues on Hwy 59, crossing vast mountain meadows, shifting into beautiful forest terrain, intersecting the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail and ending in Beaverhead.



Mileage from Truth or Consequences to San Lorenzo is approximately 56 miles or 112 miles round trip.  
Mileage from Truth or Consequences to Beaverhead is approximately 82 miles or 164 miles round trip.

Several side trips can be taken from different areas of the Geronimo Trail in either direction.

#### ***Windmill off of Hwy 59***

### **Management Plan Elements**

T  
S  
(CMP) was written as a means of charting the National  
The Plan describes the activities and tasks that are  
needed to achieve the goals and objectives defined by the stakeholders. The  
cooperation of all the stakeholders is vital to the accomplishments of the Plan.

The Geronimo Trail Byway Advisory Committee is the primary group directing the maintenance and improvement of the Scenic Byway. Partnerships with other organizations include: the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, New Mexico Tourism Department, New Mexico Department of Transportation, town/cities along the Byway and private sector firms (banks, etc.).

The Geronimo Trail Scenic Byway Advisory Committee was formed in May of 1996. The Committee is chaired by Albert Lyon and represents principle stakeholders



(communities and organizations) located along the route. The Advisory Committee plays an important role in all preservation and economic development projects planned along the GTNSB.

### **Vision Statement, Goals and Objectives**

The Geronimo Trail Advisory Committee has defined a direction for the Byway for the years 2008 – 2013 which stresses preservation and economic development. The statements listed below have shaped major elements of the plan adopted by the route stakeholders.

#### Primary Vision

The GTNSB has been established to showcase and preserve the Corridor area for its historic multi-cultural heritage and outstanding natural resources.

#### Goals

- A. Increase awareness of the historic significance of the GTNSB region, thus enhancing public education, enjoyment and appreciation of the natural and cultural heritage of the area.
- B. Market the GTNSB as a unique tourism opportunity in New Mexico for local residents, out-of-state visitors and international travelers.

#### **Goals (continued)**

- C. Develop information and interpretive services along the byway that will encourage and promote stewardship to ensure the preservation of the land by the byway users.
- D. Ensure that services provided by local communities be authentic and of high quality, as well as tailored to the traveler's needs and desires.
- E. Increase volunteer participation in the support and maintenance of the Trail.
- F. Preserve the GTNSB's resources, while developing the route as a sustainable tourist and recreation attraction, and provide area residents – particularly the youth – with employment and meaningful careers.

#### Objectives

- A. Improve information on mileage or Byway signs to let tourists know if services such as restrooms, gas and food are available. This would be completed by the end of 2010.
- B. Improve directional signage along the GTNSB by 2010. This would include a sign at Winston on Hwy 52 pointing in the direction of Chloride; a sign directing visitors to cemeteries; better signage on Hwy 59, (such as identifying Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, the Forest Service Roads and rest areas); signage off of Hwy 52 pointing to restrooms at Cuchillo and a sign off Hwy 152 in Hillsboro directing visitors to the old Court House site.
- C. By 2010 create educational signage in Kingston identifying historic locations and building around the town.
- D. By 2009 add signage along winding Hwy 152 between Kingston and Emory Pass warning drivers of bicyclists on the road.
- E. Collaborate with the Healing Waters Trail Committee, the Rio Grande Trail Project and Elephant Butte Lake State Park in designing and constructing hiking / biking / walking trails along the Byway.
- F. By 2013 expand print, radio and other media coverage of the GTNSB by 10% or more.

**Objectives (continued)**

- G. Create a visitor map giving directions to the cemeteries of Sierra County and point out burial sites of well known characters such as Sadie Orchard, Cassie Hobbs and Raymond Schmidt. This will be completed by late 2010.
- H. Increase travel expenditures along the Byway by 5% annually over the next five years.
- I. Inventory the current Trail visitor tour products and conduct a needs assessment by January 2009.
- J. By late 2009, collaborate with the Sierra County Recreation & Tourism Advisory Board to host two hospitality training programs in communities along the Byway.
- K. Develop training programs for volunteers who will assist in the education and maintenance of the GTNSB by 2010.
- L. Support the development of additional museums in Sierra County including an Airplane Museum (replacing Callahan's Car Museum), a museum at the Vietnam War Memorial Park and space port museum, a Game Show Museum and any other proposed museums.

## **Strategies**

The following strategies have been adopted by the Advisory Committee and the communities located along the route. Region-wide efforts and considerable resources will be utilized to implement these strategies in the years to come.

### *Strategy on Development*

Continue development of the GTNSB including signage to better direct visitors to places of interest and to inform travelers of the location of rest areas and services. There will be an expansion of hiking / biking / walking trails and further landscaping of pullout and rest areas. Interpretive areas will be developed to increase visitor awareness of cultural and historical occurrences along the Trail. Partnerships will be developed with the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, New Mexico Department of Transportation, Elephant Butte Lake State Park, the Rio Grande Trail Project and the Healing Waters Trail Committee.

### **Strategies (continued)**

#### *A Strategy for Maintaining Intrinsic Qualities*

The GTNSB is a long beautiful drive through rural New Mexico, allowing all the people living along this Byway to maintain traditional lifestyles with sensitivity to the view-shed and impacts to the Byway.

All City, State and Federal agencies with management responsibilities along the GTNSB are working in concert to enhance this project. All are committed to maintaining the intrinsic quality of the Byway. There is no threat to the intrinsic quality known at present. The current County Plan discusses land development in the future. The Geronimo Trail Advisory Board will make sure that the County remains sensitive to the protection and preservation of the GTNSB.

## **Plans and Projects**

The following plans and projects have been adopted by the Geronimo Trail Advisory Committee and communities located along the route. Region-wide efforts and considerable resources will be utilized to implement these plans and projects in the years to come.

### *Plan for Public Participation as Volunteers*

Since the completion of the first Corridor Management Plan in 1997 the Geronimo Trail Advisory Committee has continued to work with the public and to collaborate with local groups in planning and carrying out improvements to the GTNSB. There is a desire to

increase public participation to assist with education and support of the Byway. The Geronimo Trail Advisory Board will collaborate with the Sierra County Recreation & Tourism Advisory Board to provide training for volunteers to ensure that the GTNSB will be sustained by strong support at the local community level.

### *Byway Signage Plan*

The Geronimo Trail Advisory Committee in collaboration with the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and the New Mexico Department of Transportation have installed Geronimo Trail marker signs along the entire length of the Byway and informational signs at rest areas and pullouts along the route. Visitor response to this signage has been positive.

### **Plans and Projects (continued)**

Current public input has requested that the Advisory Committee plan to improve signage by adding information about distances to rest areas and services such as gas and food and to let the traveler know that services such as gas and food may not be available for some miles. Further signage is needed to direct visitors to communities such as Chloride and to historic sites such as cemeteries and the ruins of the old court house in Hillsboro. Another public request is to post signs along the winding road between Kingston and Emory Pass to let drivers know that bicyclists may be on the road. Continued collaboration with the above mentioned entities will ensure that improved signage will be completed within the next five years.

### *Byway Marketing Plan*

The advent of the Internet age has increased marketability of the GTNSB tremendously over the last ten years. Stakeholder websites in addition to the National Scenic Byway website, <http://www.byways.org> include information and links that visitors can follow to learn more about the GTNSB. In 2004 the Sierra County Recreation & Tourism Advisory Board was created to focus entirely on promoting tourism in Sierra County. Members of the Geronimo Trail Advisory Committee have become very active with this group. The website, <http://www.sierracountynewmexico.org> includes a link to the GTNSB in addition to providing visitors with contact information to accommodations and destinations along the Byway. Continuing efforts over the next five years will keep the GTNSB website information current.

### *Byway Interpretive Plan*

Driving for pleasure is the most popular outdoor recreational experience for the American public. Visitors to the GTNSB include residents of Southwestern New Mexico, visitors from across the nation, and international tourists. A large number of visitors are repeat visitors who are returning to the region.

Southwestern New Mexico is geographically isolated from major population areas. As a result, while most visitors have visited larger cities in the Southwest (Albuquerque, Santa Fe, El Paso, Tucson), they know very little about the recreational opportunities in this part of New Mexico. They are eager to receive additional information to help orient them to the land and learn about the local and regional history. Most visitors are very appreciative of information, as it allows them to relate to the people and places that make southwestern New Mexico so special. In addition to informational signage that can be found at rest areas and pullouts,  
**(continued)**

signage about Sierra County's relationship with the Apache have been added at ten different sites along the Trail. The Geronimo Spring Museum now has an interpretive center dedicated to the GTNSB and will be adding a representation of an Apache campsite. The historic mining town of Chloride is in the process of restoring an original mining cabin and developing a walk-through interpretive gallery honoring the mining history of the area. Elephant Butte Lake State Park will be enhancing a popular birding campground with the addition of interpretive signage and programs.

### Projects along the Geronimo Trail

- Truth or Consequences
  - Healing Waters Trail Project
  - Cemetery Brochure
  - Completion of Apache campsite at the Visitor & Interpretive Center.
- Elephant Butte
  - Continued Landscaping
  - Collaborate with Elephant Butte Lake State Park in the establishment of a CCC statue & Plaque at Damsite Recreation Area
- Elephant Butte Lake State Park
  - Create Interpretive Program for Paseo del Rio Campground
  - Restore Fish Hatchery
  - Improving Existing Hiking Trails
  - Upgrade Visitor's Center
  - Rio Grande Trail Project
- Hillsboro
  - Court House Restoration
- Monticello
  - Restoration of old school house
  - Restoration of Plaza
  - Informational signage for plaza buildings
- Cuchillo
  - Plan & develop a rest area
  - Restoration of Cuchillo Store / Bar

- Chloride
  - Completion of Mining Interpretive Gallery
  - Food Service in Chloride
  - Restoration of Cassie Hobbs house

### **Plans and Projects (continued)**

- Hwy 152
  - Wright's Cabin
  - Railroad Trailhead
  - Lower Gallinas Canyon Campground
- Hwy 59
  - Development of Trailhead near Continental Divide National Scenic Trail.



**Lake Valley Informational Kiosk at Lake Valley**

