



DON SIEGELMAN
Governor, State of Alabama



TIMOTHY C. BOYCE
State Forester

From Mt. Cheaha National Forest to the Talladega National Park, from Selma to Gulf Shores and across the state to the Governor's Trail in Barbour County, Alabama is an extraordinarily beautiful state with much to offer for all tastes and interests. In April of 2000, the state Legislature enacted the "Alabama the Beautiful" Act, creating the "Alabama Scenic Byways Program." Alabama's Scenic Byways are roadways that boast beauty, interest, activities, and have emotional appeal for every Alabamian. The program will help highlight those characteristics and encourage others from across the country to seek out what we already know is special.

The Scenic Byways Program is an excellent way to showcase the scenic beauty, historical sites, recreational areas, cultural and natural areas, and the archaeological sites found across our great state. Roadways that provide these unique features deserve special consideration for designation in the highway system. Byway designation can encourage economic development through tourism, improve the transportation system, and educate residents and visitors on the history, culture, and natural beauty of this state. Most importantly, the Scenic Byways Program will bring together community participation.

The Legislation set forth a committee consisting of a designee from the Alabama Forestry Commission, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Department of Transportation, Bureau of Tourism and Travel, Historical Commission, Council on the Arts, Department of Economic and Community Affairs, a State Legislator, a State Senator, and a member of the House of Representatives. This group of diverse interests is charged with the responsibility of designating roadways as scenic byways.

An Advisory Council, appointed by the Designating Committee has been meeting to develop the state byway program. Over the past year nominations for possible byways have been received from all over the state.

Various marketing plans will be initiated in order to inform Alabama residents and out-of-state travelers alike of all that Alabama has to offer. The Alabama Scenic Byways Program promises to bring an economic boon to each community while protecting the beauty, history, and intrinsic values of all of Alabama's extraordinary roadways.

In Alabama, as with her sister southern states, the majority of the forestland is owned by private non-industrial landowners. According to the recently released "Forest Inventory Analysis," 78% of our state's 22.9 million acres of forested land is owned by private individuals. This land and the resource it nurtures provides fuel to Alabama's number one manufacturing industry, the forest products industry.

These same landowners are the heartbeat of the TREASURED Forest Program. At the end of the 2001 fiscal year approximately 1,681 landowners have been certified in the program since its inception in 1974, bringing with them almost 1.8 million acres of land. In the last three years the induction into the TREASURE Forest Program has seen a significant increase. From 1998 through the 2001 fiscal year Alabama averaged 167 landowners and over 80 thousand acres a year being certified under the standards of the program. These numbers represent a 111% increase in the annual number of landowner certifications and an 81% increase in the number of acres coming into the TREASURE Forest program as compared to the average from the previous five years.

This brings up a question. What has the difference been in the last three years that was not there in the previous years? The primary answer is the involvement of the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association (ATFA) and the development of county chapters. The development and involvement of these local chapters has been a catalyst for new landowners. Local TREASURE Forest owners help other landowners better manage their land and bring to the attention of hometown people the forestry-related issues of their individual communities. Local TREASURE Forest chapters have been the single greatest denominator in bringing new landowners into the program.

I commend the work of the ATFA and the active county chapters. You are making a difference because of your hard work and commitment to the TREASURE Program.