

# Flat Tops Trail Scenic Byway Corridor Management Plan

In Partnership with the  
Northwest Colorado Cultural Heritage Program  
Prepared by Aviva North, Joey Putnam, and Daniel Raggio

## Capstone Project Overview & Purpose

The Flat Tops Trail Scenic Byway (FTTSB) is an 82-mile road that travels through a remote portion of northwest Colorado, connecting the towns of Yampa and Meeker. In 1994, residents from these towns created a master plan for the road and it was designated both a Colorado State Scenic Byway and National Forest Byway. Nearly 30 years old, that document is the most recent plan for managing the Byway's cultural and natural resources.

Recent updates to the Colorado State and Historic Scenic Byway Commission now require byway managers to revise a byway's Corridor Management Plan (CMP) every 10 years. Any byway with a CMP older than 10 years must update their plan or potentially lose their designation from the Commission.



Photo of Trappers Lake from Joey Putnam



Map of the FTTSB from the Steamboat Pilot.

To avoid this scenario, our capstone team partnered with Nancy Kramer of the Northwest Colorado Cultural Heritage Program to develop a new CMP for the FTTSB. **The purpose of our project and the CMP is to develop a comprehensive overview of the history of the road and region, identify assets and visitor amenities, list conservation measures for resource management, establish information on marketing and destination management, and summarize traffic safety and studies conducted along the road. The CMP shall provide management goals and objectives for the FTTSB Committee from 2023-2033.**

## Methods

We developed this plan and its recommendations through **background research, site visits, stakeholder interviews, and community workshops**. The region around the Byway has a unique history of stewardship and preservation, which we studied in primary sources such as historic Colorado newspapers and USFS correspondence. To create a new inventory of the Byway's assets, we spent several days on the Byway, understanding the road's features and layout. We created an ArcGIS StoryMap to document the current inventory and status of interpretive signs along the Byway. In addition, we developed ArcGIS maps to understand the area's land use patterns, economic development potential, and outdoor recreation usage. To craft the Byway's mission, vision, and goals and the plan's recommendations, **we interviewed 30+ local stakeholders, from Forest Service officials to Airbnb hosts**. These interviews provided us with qualitative data in the form of insights from people who live and work in the area. **We then brought these insights to two community workshops, where residents had a chance to provide more feedback on the management plan and how it should function within communities near the Byway.**

## Outcome & Deliverables

Our primary deliverables were the **CMP, completion of two community feedback workshops, and a team feedback report for Nancy Kramer**. Nancy requested a feedback session and report from our group to communicate what went well and what can be improved upon in this experience, in the event she works with another capstone group. The community workshops ensured that the CMP reflects community sentiments and values of the region and that the recommendations are feasible and have stakeholder buy-in.

**The outcome of this project is a CMP that guides the FTTSB Committee to manage the road in a way that protects the regional values of solitude, scenic beauty and wilderness, maintaining the road as a place for high-quality outdoor experiences in unimpaired nature.**

## Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our wholehearted thanks and appreciation to the following people:

- Our capstone partner, Nancy Kramer and the Northwest Colorado Cultural Heritage Program
- Our capstone advisor, Dr. Lydia Lawhon
- Regional stakeholders: White River National Forest, Routt National Forest, Routt County Commissioners and staff, Rio Blanco County Commissioners and staff, the Town of Yampa, the Town of Meeker, and the Meeker Chamber of Commerce.
- Residents and business owners who participated in interviews and community workshops

Photo of Trappers Lake Campground from Joey Putnam

