
Chapter VII
Intrinsic Qualities

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To receive scenic byway designation at the state or federal level, a corridor is evaluated in terms of its intrinsic qualities, which are divided into seven categories: archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, tourism and scenic. Each intrinsic quality is measured by features or resources that are considered representative, unique, irreplaceable or distinctly characteristic of the region. A road must have significant resources in at least one of the seven categories to qualify as a Scenic Byway, and a minimum of two or more to qualify as an All-American Road.

Does SC 46 have enough intrinsic qualities to qualify?

The proposed scenic byway route (from the Jasper County Line to the Old Town of Bluffton into the Village) actually has significant characteristics in all six categories. This chapter describes the significant resources inventoried to establish the quality of each.



Cultural



Scenic



Historic



Natural



Recreational



Tourism

And over 150 known Archaeological sites within 200 yards of SC 46.

Natural Qualities

The natural quality of a region is evaluated by ecological features that have suffered minimal human disturbance. Traveling along SC 46 allows the visitor to see numerous diverse ecosystems including marshlands, cypress-tupelo swamps, forested areas, what were once rice fields, tributaries, and rivers (both fresh and saltwater), all rich in both fauna and flora. Canopies and tunnels are created by the live oak and Spanish moss growing along the roadside and periodically, one might see a palm tree and a forest of pines. In fact the only things one might not experience within this 10 mile stretch are deserts and mountains. All others appear to be represented.

This is an area “where sea water and fresh water from local rivers mix to form a complex environmental home for plants, animals, and sea life. The waters are filled with shrimp, crabs, oysters, clams and fish” as noted by Ben Turner who offers ecotours by kayak of the local marshes, creeks, estuaries, and rivers including the May and the New River

But it is not just the waters that make this area so rich. It is also the plant life, animals and trees. In 2000, a survey of all trees along the corridor was conducted.¹ A few of the notables included 200 year old live oaks along the route. A variety of species of birds, salamanders as well as minks, eagles, and otters are just a few of the many notable animals in this area.



Marshlands



Live Oaks



Wildlife



Once Rice Fields



Rivers



Spanish Moss on the tree

¹ Payne, D. & Dominques-Roblero, F.J., *Bluffton's Tree Inventory*, December, 2000.

Chapter VII

Intrinsic Qualities

The excerpt below is copied from a study on Bluffton's Critical Resources of Plant Life¹ conducted in December, 2004 by Daniel Payne and Francisco Javier Dominques-Roblero with their expressed permission. It best shows how unique this area is and the reason a corridor management plan is so needed which includes the development of a plant management plan and why the scenic byway designation is so deserved.

The Critical Resources Survey is the beginning of a process to document, describe, and explain the importance of some of the natural features that make Bluffton a unique and desirable place to live. Threats to the health of these systems and species will be noted. Recommendation on how to preserve and enhance these features will be given. The hope of the authors of this document is that public awareness will be raised and policy changes be implemented so that future generations will be able to enjoy what has made Bluffton such a special place to live and visit.

The critical resources map and survey began with a request for the following items:¹

- Survey and list the flora of Bluffton's three central "coves" (Verdier, Huger, and Heyward) and the Bluffton Oyster Factory
- Pin-point the locations of rare plants encountered in this study and
- Delineate the border between the hardwood and pine forests in Old Town.

Beyond the original scope of work, the authors also assisted with other vegetation surveys in Bluffton. The New River Trail Study was completed in 2003. The Tabby Roads site was surveyed in September 2004. A walkthrough was conducted of the Bluffton Townhomes site in October 2004. The Environmental Assessment of the Buckwalter Park began in October 2004. While in transit to other sites, Mr. Payne and his assistants have spot-surveyed many areas where rare plants were observed. Although not part of the scope of this study, the authors have included much of this data in their study to bring greater understanding to Bluffton's unique and critical resources.

Vegetation

The areas below mean high tide in the coves contain saltwater vegetation. Lower reaches are dominated by *Spartina alternifolia* (Saltmarsh Cordgrass). Upper reaches that are less frequently flooded are dominated by a mixture of the following species:

Bacopa monnieri
Borrichia frutescens
Suaeda linearis
Iva frutescens and
Juncus roemerianus.

¹ Payne, D. & Dominques-Roblero, F.J., Bluffton's Critical Resources of Plant Life, December, 2004.

Some of the freshwater wetland species observed along the streambeds include the following species:

Itea virginica
Leucothoe axillaris
Sambucus canadensis
Osmunda cinnamomea
Nyssa biflora
Woodwardia virginica
Woodwardia areolata
Saururus cernuus.

As expected many calcicoles, or calcium loving species, were encountered near the coves especially closest to the May River. These include the following species:

Polymnia uvedalia
Cornus florida
Cocculus carolinus
Morus rubra
Yucca aloifolia
Bumelia tenax
Hexastylis arifolia
Fagus grandifolia
Callicarpa americana

The Oyster Factory Property contained all of these calcicoles except *Hexastylis*. Several other calcicoles occur at the Oyster Factory as well. They include *Ipomoea macrorhiza*, *Cercis canadensis*, and *Juglans nigra*.

Surprisingly many acid-loving fire dependent pineland species were found growing near these calcicoles. They normally were growing slightly further from the streambed than the calcicoles. As expected, acid-loving species became more abundant along the northern stretches of the streambeds. These included the following species:

Magnolia virginiana
Gordonia lasianthus
Ilex glabra
Lyonia lucida
Clethra alnifolia
Vaccinium myrsinites
Vaccinium stamineum

This indicates that slash and/or longleaf pine woodlands historically began just outside of the streambeds. For more information about plant occurrences see the accompanying spreadsheet and shapefile.

Invasive Exotics

A great number of exotics were encountered growing in the Coves and on the Oyster Factory property. Most of these have escaped from local gardens. Many of these species are now out of horticultural fashion, but have continued to thrive in open spaces. *Pueraria lobata* (Kudzu) was seen in several locations. Rarely seen in the outer coastal plain, these are undoubtedly the result of past attempts to control erosion or use as an ornamental.

Chapter VII

Intrinsic Qualities

A species of “Wandering Jew” is a common component of the coves. However, it is not listed in Radford or Weakley as occurring in Georgia or South Carolina. Some invasive exotics are growing just at the edge of gardens and pose little threat to the native vegetation. Other species are spreading through the coves and displacing native species. A list of some of the more problematic species encountered are as follows:

Ligustrum sinense
Ligustrum lucidum
Elaeagnus pungens
Phyllostachys aurea
Thelypteris dentata
Hedera helix
Commelinaceae (White-flowered Wandering Jew)
Alternanthera philoxeroides
Broussonetia papyrifera
Lonicera japonica
Melia azederach
Nandina domestica
Firmiana simplex
Wisteria sinense
Morus alba



Samples of the variety of plant life along the proposed route of Bluffton Scenic Byway



Recreational Qualities

Recreational uses of the Scenic Byway include walking, jogging, biking, picnics in one of the many parks along or near the corridor, sightseeing, hiking and direct access to recreational sites such as lakes and campgrounds as noted in the Bluffton Critical Resource Study¹. The lower reaches of the coves provide excellent opportunities for kayaking and canoeing during high tides and rainy periods. They also provide excellent opportunities for fishing, crabbing, and shrimping. Exploring the coves by foot is also a wonderful experience. Due to the many flowering species, something is always blooming along the coves. Excellent opportunities exist for bird and butterfly watching by water or by foot.

Other recreational opportunities include:

Bicycling

Bicycling is a very popular activity which the Bluffton area has not taken full advantage of even though a major portion of SC46 has been designated a bike route and the area is basically flat which makes for pleasant, enjoyable rides. But due to the speed of traffic along this route, those who do ride are at risk and the 4 foot shoulder on either side of the road, although helpful, is not wide enough to truly offer a satisfying and safe riding experience.

Fishing and Boating

A public dock at the end of Calhoun Street as well as boat access at the end of Wharf Street offer opportunities to fish, boat or enjoy the view of the May River.

Kayaking/Canoeing

Kayaking is quite popular in this area with approximately 90% Kayaks and 10% canoes. Eco tours are available through local outfitters.²

Hiking

There are numerous areas to hike and walk including a 3 ½ mile walking trail near the western end of the scenic byway. This future multi-use trail will follow the old train tracks as a part of rails to trails initiative across old rice fields, through marshlands and the proposed 40 acre Park at New Riverside.

¹ Payne, D. & Dominques-Roblero, F.J., Bluffton's Critical Resources of Plant Life, December, 2004.

² See www.nativeguidetours.com for more information.

Chapter VII

Intrinsic Qualities

Birding, Butterfly and Wildlife Viewing

Due to Bluffton's diverse ecosystem which includes marshes, forest, tributaries, lakes, rivers and more, the area is rich in both flora and fauna. A public fishing dock, public pier, numerous parks and wonderful overlooks provide opportunities for one to enjoy nature.

Horseback Riding

A private stable just off Lazy J road, Dhu Rose equestrian gated community, and more recently, a polo match are three indicators that horseback riding is a popular activity in the area although primarily done on private lands by those who own their own horses.

Camping

Stoney Crest area offers both tent and RV camping, and there are numerous parks either developed or in the process of being developed that provide opportunities for both picnicking and wildlife viewing.

Golf

Golf is one of the most popular recreational activities in the area with over 20 golf courses within a 40 mile radius with a new golf course recently approved for development at the western end of the scenic byway.

Taking a Drive

SC46 Scenic Byway offers breathtaking overlooks, canopies and tunnels of live oak and Spanish moss, historic structures, a few remaining historic communities, and such a diverse ecosystem that within the 10 mile drive one will see evidence of marshes, tributaries, lakes, rivers, forest land, and more. If traffic was indeed slowed down, the drive from the Jasper County line into the Town of Bluffton could actually become a scenic pleasure trip.



Bicycling



Walking



Camping

Historic Qualities

Historic qualities embodies human-made, physical elements of the landscape that are of such historic significance that they educate the viewer and stir an appreciation for the past. Historic elements along the SC 46 Bluffton Scenic Byway tell the story of days past when plantations were plentiful; oyster and lumber were major industries; rice and cotton were major crops, and railroad was a mode of transportation.

Still visible along the scenic byway are historical structures as reminders of days gone by such as praise homes, African American and white cemeteries, historic homes and churches, a cannery, an old post office, and other buildings of note.



Abandoned Home



Abandoned Church



Old Post Office



The Cannery



Railroad
(Future Rails to Trails)



Historic Homes / Churches

At the eastern end of the Scenic Byway lies the original one square mile of Bluffton referred to as Old Town. There is a small area within the core of Old town containing the most historic properties along the May River and north of Calhoun Street that has been designated a National Historic District. In an effort to protect the historic integrity of this District, the Town of Bluffton created a Historic Preservation Overlay District encompassing the National District.

Twelve structures within the National Historic District are considered to be antebellum. Another 68 remaining structures were estimated to have been constructed prior to 1930.

Chapter VII

Intrinsic Qualities



Historic Walking Tour



Historic Churches and Homes



The Heyward House

This historic home located on Boundary Street was one of the few structures still standing within the community after the Civil War. Known as the Heyward House, it currently serves as a House Museum and Bluffton's Official Welcome Center.

Archaeological Qualities

Archaeological quality is determined by evaluating features that provide visual evidence of the unique customs, traditions, folklore, or rituals of human groups that no longer exist.

There are over 30 documented archaeological sites along SC 46 and another 120 within 200 yards of the route according to University of South Carolina's Archaeological Department. One such site is the Heyward Plantation in Bluffton. Partial funding from South Carolina Department of Natural Resources and a generous gift from the seller has helped to preserve this area as an historic site with a portion used as a passive park to be opened this spring.

As of yet, none of the other sites have been developed for viewing by the general public because the evidence of our human past is both fragile and irreplaceable and must be properly preserved. In order to protect such nonrenewable resources, this document will not reveal the location of these important sites although there has been found significant documentation of evidence of prehistoric, plantations, Civil War, and other important times in history.

Chapter VII Intrinsic Qualities

Cultural Qualities

Cultural quality encompasses the visual evidence of unique customs, traditions, folklore or rituals of a currently existing human group.

This is the quality that most sets SC 46 apart from other roads and scenic byways. The Town of Bluffton can best be described as “quirky”, “fun”, “eclectic” and not at all afraid to be a bit eccentric.



“Sassy Girl”



“The Store”



“The Red Stripe Gallery”

For example, each year they have a parade. The “drill” team happens to be the women in town parading down the road with Black & Decker drills in hand. Everything about the town gives you the feeling that the residents don’t mind poking a bit of fun at both themselves and the visitors who come through. It has the charm of a small historic community mixed with a wonderful sense of humor.



“Eggs’n tricities” is just one of the local businesses with a fun, quirky sense of humor

The Local Flavor of the Town of Bluffton



Unique name



Unique building



Unique name

A local restaurant is called the "Squat and Gobble", Bluffton Barbecue is located in a caboose and one of the resident artists in town comes up with "tongue and cheek" displays to boggle the mind each month which makes one step back and smile. Even the unique signage in town provides its own "quirky" fun message.



Unique Directional Signage

And then we have the artists and there are many of them, especially on Calhoun Street. Within the Village of Bluffton, one can find a pottery shop, two art galleries, an art guild, numerous craft shops and much, much more! The talent is amazing!



"Tallest Potter's" Shop



Art Gallery on Boundary St.



Art Gallery on Calhoun St.



Guild of Bluffton Artists

Chapter VII

Intrinsic Qualities

South Carolina's Oyster Industry

And one very unique cultural feature of this area is the Bluffton Oyster Company, one of the last remaining oyster-shucking factories in South Carolina.

Bluffton Oyster Company



\$2.5 million total purchase price, funded by the Beaufort County Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program in cooperation with the Beaufort County Open Land Trust and Town of Bluffton, to preserve and protect the property around one of the signature industries of the South.

The community appears to appreciate and value this industry's rich heritage and are taking efforts to preserve it. Five acres fronting Wharf Street next to the Bluffton Oyster Company is being developed into a Beaufort County passive park which will provide interpretive information about this business and the history it represents. Bluffton Oyster Factory Park also provides access to and views of the May River.

Scenic Qualities

Scenic quality means beautiful views, whether natural or human-made. The quality of the view is measured by how memorable, distinctive, uninterrupted and unified it is. The scenes that unfold along SC 46 and within the Town of Bluffton represent one of its most significant features and inspire many efforts to preserve the unique landscape, including the development of this Corridor Management Plan.

As one starts the scenic byway at the Jasper/Beaufort county line, one overlooks the New River. Crossing the bridge one finds marshes on each side of the road. A bit further up the road is stands of forest pines. There is a breathtaking view of the marshlands at Stoney Creek bridge and another one just past Rose Dhu development. As one enters the town of Bluffton, live oaks are more prevalent often creating both canopies and tunnels. A drive down Calhoun Street brings one to the Church of the Cross in a picturesque setting with a beautiful view from its yard of the May River and a view of Bluffton Oyster Company from the public boat dock. One can also take a side trip to the pier, less than a mile to the east, for another breathtaking view of the river.

Below are a few examples of the variety of scenic view sheds along the proposed route of the Bluffton Scenic Byway:



Breathtaking Views



Scenic Drives



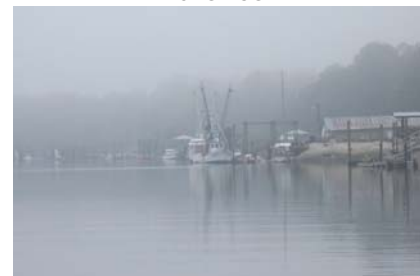
Marshes



Piers



Natural Canopies



Wharf

Chapter VII
Intrinsic Qualities



Bird, Butterfly, Flora and Wildlife Viewing

Tourism Qualities

A seventh quality, *not included in the original six specified in the Federal application for Scenic Byway designation but now recognized as a contributing quality*, is tourism. Bluffton has much to offer in this area, many of which are included as cultural, historic and recreation intrinsic qualities. A few such qualities are eco-tours by kayaks, historic walking tour, shopping, and antiquing. As noted, the Heyward House is a wonderful House Museum which also serves as a visitor welcome center within the Town of Bluffton and includes outbuildings of days gone by. There are also many unique dining opportunities including Squat and Gobble, Sippin Cow, Myrtle's, Bluffton Barbecue, and Pepper's Porch, just to name a few.

The area commonly referred to as the "Old Town" located within the Town of Bluffton offers art galleries, craft shops, and a performing arts theater. And it is not uncommon to see artists working on any given day. Although limited along the scenic byway itself, there are a number of lodging opportunities nearby.



Museum/Visitor Center



"Artisan's Row"



Historic Walking Tour



Unique Dining Experiences throughout the community

Chapter VII

Intrinsic Qualities

There is a historic walking tour within the Old Town which could be expanded to include both a self-guided driving tour of the entire scenic byway as well as a “park and ride” guided tour with possible pick up points at both the recommended visitor center near US 170 and one at the Promenade once it is built. And there is so much more that could be done in the area of birdwatching and wildlife viewing. The eco-tourism potential for the area is huge and fits with the vision the community has for the area.