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Native Stone Scenic Byway extended north of I-70

TOPEKA - The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), in cooperation with the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) and the Kansas Historical Society (KHS), has extended the Native Stone Scenic Byway in northeast Kansas. KDOT Secretary Richard Carlson signed the official resolution on Aug. 24. The extension increases the byway's length from 48 miles to 75 miles.

The byway was originally established in 2005 when it followed portions of K- 4 and K-99 in Shawnee and Wabaunsee counties and took travelers through Dover, Keene, Eskridge and Alma. It ended at the K-99 and I-70 interchange. The newly extended byway continues along K-99 northward from I-70, and then it turns west onto K-18 and goes through the city of Wabaunsee. It courses westward into Riley County through Zeandale to K-177 at the edge of Manhattan, where it turns southward on K-177, passes into Geary County and ends at the I-70/K-177 interchange.

"We are excited to extend the Native Stone Scenic Byway north of I-70," said Secretary Carlson. "The extension will help broaden awareness of the Flint Hills and the important role that native limestone plays in the scenic beauty and history of the region. It is sure to spur interest in the communities along the route."

The Native Stone Scenic Byway is known for its Flint Hills beauty, abundant natural limestone formations and historic stone fences, buildings, barns and bridges. A popular activity that takes place twice annually is the Stone Fence Workshop where participants

get hands-on experience in the construction of a stacked limestone fence. The next workshop will be Oct. 14-15 at Lake Wabaunsee west of Eskridge.

The new extension adds the Underground Railroad history of Mount Mitchell Heritage Prairie along K-99 just south of K-18 and the Beecher Bible and Rifle Church in the community of Wabaunsee. Also featured along the new extension are the Konza Prairie, Pillsbury Crossing and waterfall on Deep Creek, the Flint Hills Discovery Center in Manhattan and a hilltop overlook on K-177 from which visitors can survey the expansive Flint Hills and the Kansas River valley below.

The updated corridor management plan was crafted by Sally Stratton, Alma; Marsha Ericson and Debbie Bell, Dover; and Cheryl Collins, Riley County Historical Society. Each county and incorporated city along the byway have agreed to be included in the byway.

Additional route markers will be placed along the extension. It will be included in the Kansas Byways Guide, added to the byway page on the Kansas Byways website at www.ksbyways.com and promoted on the Kansas Byways Facebook and Pinterest pages. The byway communities are also eligible for grant applications to enhance the route for visitors.

The Kansas Byways program is a cooperative partnership of the Federal Highway Administration, KDOT, KDWP, KHS and local grassroots committees. The program identifies scenic and historic routes in the state and helps preserve, enhance and promote the routes. For additional information, contact Scott Shields, Kansas Byways Coordinator, at 785-296-0853, or Sue Stringer, Kansas Byways Manager, at 800-684-6966.

Editors: attached are two images taken along the Native Stone Scenic Byway. Credit: Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism.

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