

OCONEE COUNTY



SCENIC HIGHWAY COMMITTEE

415 SOUTH PINE STREET

WALHALLA, SC 29691

864-638-4218

February 26, 2013

Mr. Moulder
Oconee County Administrator

RE: Proposal to Improve the Scenic Nature of the Cherokee Foothills National Scenic Highway

Sir,

On February 21, 2013, the Scenic Highway Committee met to discuss a variety of issues. Under New Business, a motion was made, seconded and unanimously approved by all members present to send the attached proposal to you for review.

Thank you for considering this matter and please do not hesitate to contact the Scenic Highway Committee if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

Scenic Highway Committee

OVERVIEW OF PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE THE SCENIC NATURE OF THE CHEROKEE FOOTHILLS NATIONAL SCENIC HIGHWAY

The Cherokee Foothills National Scenic Highway (Highway 11) is the gateway to Oconee County and its major thoroughfare. It is in many instances the first impression that tourists, visitors and potential businesses have of our county. We should make every effort to make a good first impression. The Scenic Highway Committee is concerned that development and a lack of awareness is undermining the scenic nature of this highway and that steps should be taken to maintain and preserve the beauty of this valuable asset. In order to accomplish this, we propose and request approval of the following steps so that the Scenic Highway Committee can proceed with this necessary endeavor.

- 1) Right of Way Maintenance. The Scenic Highway Committee will develop plans and work with the DOT to reduce the width of the mowing and tree removal of the state owned right of way. The goal is to produce a tree lined natural landscaped traffic corridor which will enhance the natural beauty of the driving experience.
 - a) Sections of the CFNSH will be identified and appropriate trees and shrubs' will be selected and planted by volunteers/garden clubs/schools, etc. These trees and shrubs will be selected to promote seasonal interest. For example: dogwoods and azaleas for the spring, crepe myrtle for the summer and maples for the fall.
- 2) Improve the appearance of those properties which do not add to the scenic nature of the CFNSH.
 - a) The Scenic Highway Committee will develop a program to work with owners to improve their properties where needed. This may involve planting screening landscape in the DOT right of way or perhaps giving a tax credit to owners who implement a Landscape Plan approved by the county administrator and the scenic highway committee.
 - b) The Scenic Highway Committee will develop an Awards program and with the county administrator select the commercial property, residential

community and private homes to be recognized by the county commissioners for their enhancement of the scenic nature of the CFNSH.

3) Landscape the Interchange at Highway 28 and Highway 11. This will involve the cooperation of West Union and Walhalla as well as local garden clubs, schools and civic organizations.

4) Other Ideas. Wild flower planting would add color and interest to the highway with a minimum expense.

The Quilt Trail could be incorporated into the highway to create interest at businesses along the roadway and tie into side routes throughout our cities and other points of interest in Oconee County.

Sections could feature Oconee plants such as the Oconee Azalea, Oconee Bells and Hybrid American Chestnuts.

Use all available public relation sources to promote awareness of CFNSH scenic assets.

These proposals to improve the Cherokee Foothills National Scenic Highway will NOT get into zoning, land use or other potentially controversial issues. Once a green beltway/buffer area is established, the use and the visual impact of the property behind this "green screen" will be minimized and perhaps become less controversial. And, the scenic nature of the Cherokee Foothills National Scenic Highway will be preserved regardless of the development.

It must be emphasized that as each step is developed it will not be implemented without the approval of the county administrator. Also any purchases of trees and utilization of landscape professionals will be provided only from businesses in Oconee County unless otherwise approved by the county administrator.

The Scenic Highway Committee respectfully requests your approval to proceed with these concepts and that you endorse the development and maintenance of the CHEROKEE FOOTHILLS NATIONAL SCENIC HIGHWAY as a major tourist attraction and asset to Oconee County.