

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

White Pass Scenic Byway

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White Pass Scenic Byway Gateway Signs Installation Ceremony

Chehalis WA – November 3, 2011 -A celebration of completion is planned on Wednesday, November 9th at noon in Mossyrock for the nine signs that have been installed this past week on the byway. A group will gather at the Mossyrock Community Center at 12 noon and carpool to the site.

Two signs were installed at gateways to the byway, one near Mary's Corner and the other near Naches on the east side, and seven more welcome signs are for the communities of Mossyrock, Morton, Randle, and Packwood. The gateway signs were inspired by the historic CCC-era signs and monuments that have been signature features in Mount Rainier National Park and visitor areas in the Gifford Pinchot and Wenatchee-Okanogan National Forests. The signs have massive stone bases with wood support arms for the signs. Each sign base weighs over 10 tons. The byway gateway signs are over eight feet in height.

According to Maree Lerchen, Byway president and spokesperson, "The Gateway signs are just the latest in a series of projects for the White Pass Byway that have included the development of the new Mount Rainier Viewpoint just west of White Pass, improvements to day use areas and campgrounds along the Tieton River east of the pass, new interpretive signs in each of the byway communities, and maps and brochures." The byway also hosts a website that provides visitor information about lodging, activities and attractions at www.WhitePassByway.com.

The gateway signs were funded by a federal enhancements grant, and the total construction cost was approximately \$200,000. These signs, along with other visitor information pieces, are intended to improve the visitor experience along the byway and increase visitation.

Tourism is an important economic sector in East Lewis County, and has been quite healthy. Since the byway began ramping up marketing efforts in 2007, lodging tax revenues in unincorporated Lewis County have grown from approximately \$85,000 to \$145,000 annually, and estimated overall tourism revenues have grown to approximately \$7.2 million annually.

Lerchen also announced that, “Another phase of wayfinding signs funded by a National Scenic Byways grant, will begin the planning phase early next year. Rather than the grand entry signs of the current project, this second phase of signs will focus on directing visitors to destinations and services once they are in the byway communities.”

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