Chapter 2
Byway Description and Resources

Byway Overview and Designation

BYWAY ROUTE

The state-designated Essex Coastal Scenic Byway is a coastal route linking Lynn in the south to Newburyport in the north. From Lynn, the Byway loops between the Lynnway and Lynn Shore Drive and Route 1A (Broad Street) then proceeds north on Route 129 in Swampscott. It then continues on 129 to Route 114 in Marblehead; follows 114 to Route 1A in Salem; and then follows 1A to Route 127 through Beverly and Manchester-by-the-Sea and into downtown Gloucester.

The Byway travels on two branches in East Gloucester and Rockport, Route 127A along the coast and Route 127 inland, joining in downtown Rockport on the north and downtown Gloucester on the south. A southern loop extends toward Eastern Point in Gloucester. North of Rockport, the Byway continues around the perimeter of Cape Ann along Route 127 and follows branches of the Annisquam River to Grant Circle in Gloucester.

From the intersection of Routes 127 and 133 in Gloucester, the Byway proceeds northerly along Route 133 through Essex and into Ipswich, where it merges with Route 1A. It then follows Route 1A through Ipswich, Rowley, and Newbury, and into downtown Newburyport, continuing along Route 113 to Atkinson Common on High Street. An extension of the Byway continues from downtown Newburyport along Water Street to the northern tip of Plum Island and the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge in Newbury. A detailed description of the byway route in each community is provided in the Appendix.

REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Essex Coastal Scenic Byway passes through the communities of Lynn, Swampscott, Marblehead, Salem, Beverly, Manchester-by-the-Sea, Gloucester, Rockport, Essex, Ipswich, Rowley, Newbury, Newburyport.

Collectively, these thirteen communities hold a population of 291,300 and range in size from three (Swampscott) to thirty-three and a half (Ipswich) square miles.

Figure 1: Estimated Population by Community, 2008

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Essex National Heritage Area

The entire Byway is located within the Essex National Heritage Area (Essex Heritage), designated by the U.S. Congress in 1996 to recognize the quantity and quality of the region’s historical, cultural and natural resources. These resources are categorized according to three nationally significant historical themes – Early Settlement (17th century), the Maritime Era (18th century), and the Industrial Revolution (19th century).

Occupying the northeast corner of the state, Essex Heritage abuts New Hampshire to the north and the Atlantic Ocean to the east. Incorporating all of Essex County, the region contains 34 cities and towns and a resident population of 750,000.

Merrimack Valley

The northern communities of Rowley, Newbury, and Newburyport are located in the lower Merrimack Valley region, defined by the watershed of the Merrimack River, which forms the northern borders of the City of Newburyport and the Town of Newbury. The three communities lie within the service area of the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC). The Merrimack Valley sometimes is referred to as the “Crossroads of New England” due to the proximity to Interstates 93, 95, and 495 connecting to major population centers in New Hampshire and Maine, as well as Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Downtown Boston is just 30 to 40 minutes by car from any point in the Merrimack Valley.4

The lower Merrimack Valley region is predominantly coastal lowland and substantial portions are tidal marsh, estuary and barrier beach. Some of the more rural areas in the region, including Rowley and Newbury and portions of Newburyport, have significant remaining agricultural properties, and much of the region’s undeveloped land area remains forested.⁵

**North Shore**

All the byway communities are part of the North Shore, loosely defined as the region along the Atlantic coast between the New Hampshire border and the City of Boston. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council, a public regional planning agency, groups nine of the byway communities (with the exception of Lynn) in a North Shore sub-region. Sharing a rich history, significant natural and scenic areas, and located close to Boston, the region is marketed as a tourism destination.

Intrinsic Qualities

This chapter has three clear objectives, consistent with the requirements of the National Scenic Byways Program. It identifies the intrinsic qualities along the Byway, describes the resources that contribute to these qualities, and evaluates the regional or national significance of these qualities.

While all of the byway communities have an extensive collection of remarkable historic and natural resources, the sites and properties highlighted in this section focus on those that directly abut or are visible from the byway route. Furthermore, the emphasis is placed on properties that are accessible to the general public. For the most part private properties were not noted unless they are an iconic landmark or have received recognition of significance (such as an individual listing on the Massachusetts or National Historic Register.)

Defining Intrinsic Qualities

Intrinsic quality of a byway is determined by features that are considered representative, unique, irreplaceable, or distinctly characteristic of an area.

Byway Beginnings, 1999

Scenic byways are designated for one or more intrinsic qualities that have regional or national significance. The National Scenic Byways program has defined six categories of intrinsic qualities – archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic. A byway’s intrinsic qualities are defined by the collection of resources – special places, landscapes, buildings and other features – that are located along the byway corridor and are immediately accessible or visible to travelers along the byway. These qualities establish the character of the byway, distinguish the byway from other roadways in the region and across the nation, and provide the context for the byway traveler’s experience.

A byway’s intrinsic qualities are the basis for creating a byway’s story – “the intentional, coordinated message that the byway conveys to visitors.”6 Once the resources are inventoried and the byway’s intrinsic qualities are identified, the separate elements will be pulled together into an engaging story that will serve as a unifying, coherent, and compelling message.

Historical

Historic quality encompasses legacies of the past that are distinctly associated with physical elements of the landscape, whether natural or manmade, that are of such historic significance that they educate the viewer and stir an appreciation for the past.

National Scenic Byways Program – Interim Policy, 1995

One key defining intrinsic quality of the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway is its historic quality. Byways that represent historic quality contain physical elements of the landscape, both natural and manmade, that are connected to specific historic events as well as broader movements that relate to the evolution of the American nation and society. Historic quality can be evident in buildings, settlement patterns, or other examples of human activity. A number of factors support historic quality as a defining intrinsic quality of the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway:

- The entire Byway is located in an area that has been designated as a National Heritage Area, acknowledging the quantity and quality of the region’s nationally-recognized historic resources.
- The historic resources create coherent stories (or themes) that connect all of the communities along the Byway.
- These historic resources possess integrity of location, design, setting, material, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The historic quality not only characterizes the region, but also ties together other intrinsic qualities that are represented within the byway corridor.

Historical Theme

The history of the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway region is defined by water. All of the communities along the Byway are coastal communities, bordering the Atlantic Ocean, and most have access to a major river and contain numerous lakes and

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ponds. These water bodies shaped the geography of the area and have steered the pattern of human settlement and economic development. Native Americans used the waterways for transportation as well as for fishing, and often settled in areas with access to water resources. Beginning in the First Contact Period, European settlers established themselves in the coves and harbors along the coast, creating some of the first permanent settlements in the nation. The founding and early settlement of New England in the 17th and 18th centuries is one of the historic themes identified by the National Park Service in studies of the region’s significance.7

The region’s relationship to its waterways was also a key part of the development of two defining periods in the nation’s history – maritime trade and the Industrial Revolution. International maritime trade as well as the related fishing and boat building industries thrived along the coast throughout the 18th century. As the maritime trade waned, the Industrial Revolution spurred the rise of manufacturing in the 19th century, replacing cottage-based industries.

The scenic coastline of the region attracted vacationers and stimulated a thriving summer community through the 19th century and into the 20th century. Summer residents built large summer estates along the rocky coast. This drove the need for additional train depots and created a new demand for services and housing for summer staff all of which further shaped the character of some of the byway villages.

_The story of the region illustrates how successive layers of history and developments shaped the region, exemplifying the ability and ingenuity of the settlers and early Americans in creating wealth and a distinctive way of life._

Essex National Heritage Area Plan, 1999

Sub-Themes

Within the Byway’s historical theme there are a number of sub-themes that relate to specific historical periods. These are discussed in more detail below:

- Founding and Early Settlement
- International Maritime Trade
- Manufacturing and Industry
- Summer and Art Communities

Historical Sub-Theme: Founding and Early Settlement

_It was Essex County where the Bay Colony began and a hardy people made history, even as they made a place for themselves in the New World._

Essex National Heritage Commission

Early European settlers arriving in the New World established settlements up and down the North Shore of Massachusetts. Along the coast, Gloucester (1623) and Salem (1626) were the first settlements. As new arrivals spread out along the coast, Manchester-by-the-Sea (1629), Lynn (1630), Ipswich (1633), Newbury (1635) and Rowley (1638) came into being.8 Other towns along the Byway were established when they split off from existing settlements, including Beverly and Marblehead (originally part of Salem), Essex (part of Ipswich), Newburyport (part of Newbury), Swampscott (part of Lynn), and Rockport (part of Gloucester). Many of these villages were connected to each other by ancient Indian trails, which, in time, became the roads along which much of the byway route travels today. Settlers in these communities were initially farmers and fishermen, making a living from the land and sea.

Over the next century, the economy of the coastal communities evolved to include ship building. Fishing continued to be an important mainstay, and Salem, Marblehead, Newbury, Beverly, and Gloucester began to develop into thriving trading ports.

8 Dates refer to arrival of first settlers, not necessarily dates of incorporation.
**First Period Architecture**

This style is easily recognized by such features as a second floor "overhang," a steeply-pitched roofline and lean-to additions, a prominent central chimney, and asymmetrical casement windows.

Essex National Heritage Commission

The houses and other buildings constructed by the early settlers of Essex County have come to be known as *First Period* American architecture – constructed between 1626 and 1725. The continual pattern of human settlement in Essex County throughout this period and ongoing efforts to preserve these structures have resulted in the largest concentration of surviving First Period architecture in the country. In addition to individual sites located along the byway route, the following historic areas and districts hold concentrations of First Period architecture:

- **Marblehead Historic District**  
  15 pre-1700 homes, 250 pre-Revolution structures.

- **Pioneer Village, Salem**  
  Living history museum in Forest River Park (about a quarter of a mile off the Byway), Colonial Revival replications of 1630 style Massachusetts settlement.

- **Ipswich**  
  Largest concentration of First Period houses in the country - 38 houses and an intact First Period streetscape are located within one mile of the Whipple House Museum (on the Byway at the South Village Green).

- **Rigg’s Corridor, Gloucester**  
  Located on the east and west side of Washington Street, the Riggs corridor area consists of the Riggs Pasture, which is roughly 33 acres, and two First Period houses, the Thomas Riggs, Sr. house (circa 1640s) and the Thomas Riggs, Jr. house (circa 1690s).

**Common Areas and Public Open Spaces**

The Early Settlement period was a tumultuous time. Armed conflicts involving Indians and English settlers persisted. By necessity and design, these original settlements were tightly knit and largely self-governing. The prominence of religion in the daily life of early settlers is reflected in the layout of many of the town and village centers along the Byway, producing a landscape that is considered quintessentially New England today. This pattern often included a church and/or meeting house located on a town common or village green surrounded by early houses. The common areas also have strong associations with military history, serving as training grounds for early militias.

Burial grounds and cemeteries are important elements of the region’s cultural heritage. They are often the oldest surviving remnants from the early years of a community and provide a historical record of the community through time.

Some areas along the Byway where these land uses are still evident include:

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9 Essex National Heritage Commission, Early Settlement Trail brochure.
Salem Common (Washington Square)
A monument in the park commemorates this as the site where the National Guard began in 1637. It was set aside in perpetuity as a training ground for militia in 1714.

Lynch Memorial Park, Beverly
Originally known as Woodbury’s Point, during the Revolutionary War a fort was located here to protect Beverly Harbor.

Ipswich Town Greens
North Green, site of first meeting house (1634), and South Village Green, used as a training field for local militia. For many years the South Village Green also had a meeting house or church at its northern end.

Rowley Main Street
17th century houses, Town Common and training field, First Congregational Church.

Newbury High Road
Two commons – Upper and Lower Greens. Lower Green was the original center of the town and may have been the site of the first meeting house. Upper Green, opposite the Town Hall and near the First Parish Church and Burying Ground, was used for military training.

Bartlett Mall, Newburyport
Once used as a “Trayning Field” and assembly area for Revolutionary War militias, current location of the Superior Court House (1800) and “Frog Pond”.

Burial grounds and cemeteries
Located along the Byway in almost every byway community.

Religion and Politics

Despite the establishment of an Anglican Church in Boston in 1686, Puritanism continued to define the government structure and religious life of the early towns. The now famous witch trials of Salem in 1692 were not an isolated event in the region (or in the world). Newbury had a trial for witchcraft thirteen years before the trials in Salem. ¹⁰ For the nation, the Salem trials (which actually occurred in Ipswich and Andover as well as Salem) represented a watershed event, marking the last major outbreak of persecutions of this kind in the western world. The witch trials are not only significant for what they reflect of the social and religious context of the early settlement of the nation, but also for the enduring fascination in popular culture with the paranoia and injustice that the events represent. Sites and museums along the Byway help to tell the history of the witch trials and their enduring legacy.

Marblehead
Home of Wilmott Redd (accused of witchcraft) and Ambrose Gale (one of her accusers).

Burying Point Cemetery, Salem
The oldest cemetery in Salem (1637) contains the grave of witchcraft trial judge John Hawthorne (an ancestor of Nathaniel Hawthorne) and the Salem Witch Trials Memorial.

Peabody Essex Museum, Salem
Its collection holds original documents pertaining to the accusations, examinations, trials, and executions of the witches.

¹⁰ In 1679, Elizabeth Morse was accused and tried for witchcraft in Newbury, MA.
- **Salem Witch Museum**  
  Stage sets with life-size figures and a narration provide an overview of the Witch Trials of 1692.

- **Beverly**  
  Several persons accused of witchcraft came from Beverly; Reverend John Hale (a prominent opponent of the witch trials) was minister here, and his house on Hale Street is now a museum.

- **Ipswich Meeting House Green**  
  People accused of witchcraft were imprisoned here.

- **Newburyport Market Square**  
  Displays a plaque marking the home of Elizabeth Morse (accused of witchcraft in 1679.)

**Living Off the Land and Sea**

Farming was difficult in the rocky soils of the coast. Those communities that were located further inland supplied the agricultural needs of the seaport towns. Land that is still in agricultural use abuts the Byway in the communities of Essex, Ipswich, Rowley, and Newbury.

Visible from portions of the Byway in Essex, Rowley and Newbury, the Great Marsh has been harvested since early settlement for wild hay and shellfish. Salt marsh hay provided fodder for cattle and was also used as insulation for houses, barns, and for roofing (as thatch). Ditches cut through the marsh to provide easier access for haying remain today.

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**You’ve seen pictures with the haystacks all over the marsh. Each one of those haystacks has 2 or 3 tons of hay on it ... Every spear of that grass was used. And people needed it. They banked their houses with it. They used it with bedding for their cattle.**  

*Ruth Alexander, Rowley*¹¹

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Clamming has been an important part of the local economy since early settlement. Clams were bait for fishing and incorporated into food for livestock. After the clams were eaten or sold, the shells were often burned and the left over lime was used to make bricks. Some of the clam shacks that once dotted the coast can still be found today. Today a number of local restaurants along the Byway specialize in fried clams, and clamming in the mud flats of the Essex, Ipswich, and Annisquam rivers continues to support a local industry.

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¹¹ *Voices of the Great Marsh, Eight Towns and the Bay.*
Fishermen were the first Europeans to arrive on the New England coast, and fishing was the primary source of food and livelihood for most of the early settlements. Over the next century, fishing ports thrived in Marblehead, Beverly, Gloucester, Essex, and Newburyport. Today, the fishing industry is still a mainstay of the economy in Gloucester. Recreational fishing vessels have taken the place of commercial fishing operations in many of the other port communities along the Byway.

Some areas along the Byway where these land uses are still evident include:

- **Goose Cove, Gloucester**
  Clam flats visible on the east side of the Washington St causeway are actively clammed in season.

- **John Wise Avenue, Essex**
  The scenic farmland along the long flat stretch of Rte 133 in Essex has been farmed for centuries and are reminiscent of First Period and Second Period farmsteads.

- **Spencer Peirce Little Farm, Newbury**
  Extensive open fields surround the historic farmhouse and barn and a variety of events and activities are designed to demonstrate specific aspects of life on the farm.

- **Great Marsh, Plum Island Turnpike (Newbury) and Route 1A (Rowley)**
  Hay stacks and ditches cut through the marsh for haying are still visible today.

**Historical Sub-Theme: International Maritime Trade**

Throughout the 18th century, the coastal seaports developed a thriving international maritime trade in addition to the expanding shipbuilding and fishing industries. Evidence of the marine-based industries is found in many of the byway communities, including custom houses, warehouses, wharves and piers, schooners, boat yards, lighthouses, and historic homes built by sea captains and merchants.

**Trade with the Far East and the Atlantic Rim**

Until the 1850s, merchants and sea captains sailed from Salem, Marblehead, Beverly, Ipswich, and Newburyport along rich trade routes. They imported exotic goods that included spices, tea, coffee, cotton, and porcelain. Traces of this rich past are evident in these communities today in the Georgian and Federal architecture, custom houses, seaside forts, historic wharves and boatyards, tightly packed portside neighborhoods on narrow streets, and in museums exhibiting trade artifacts.
Some of the areas that exemplify the era of international trade include:

- **Marblehead Historic District**
  Merchant and ship builder mansions, dense and narrow portside streets, active sailing harbor.

- **National Park Service Visitor Center, Salem**
  Start of the Heritage Trail that passes many historic Salem sites, interpretive exhibits about the nearby Salem Maritime National Historic Site (along Derby Street) which includes buildings, relics, and wharves from the shipping trade.

- **Peabody Essex Museum, Salem**
  Founded in 1799 as the Salem East India Society, has a collection of "natural and artificial curiosities" collected by society members from their trading routes.

- **Manchester Village Historic District**
  Includes historic properties once owned by some of the 45 merchant sea captains who lived in Manchester and commanded ships that traded with Europe and the Far East.

- **Cushing House, Newburyport**
  Contains exhibits on the history of international trade, including documents, furniture and art work.

**Fishing and Shipbuilding**

Starting as a fishing station in 1623, Gloucester became the nation’s largest fishing port in the 19th century and is still an active, working harbor. Fishing schooners from Gloucester that fished for cod, haddock, halibut, and mackerel were built in nearby Essex. Shipbuilding has occurred in Essex since the 1650s and the tradition continues today. Shipping vessels were also built on the Ipswich River in Ipswich and along the Merrimack River in Newburyport.

Some of the representative sites along the Byway include:

- **Fish House, Swamscott**
  Oldest active municipally-owned fish house, used by fisherman to store gear and land their catch.

- **Fish Flake Hill Historic District, Beverly**
  This small waterfront neighborhood has historic connections to marine and fishing industries. The name is a reference to the fish flaking tables that were used to dry fish.

- **Harbor Loop off Rogers St, Gloucester**
  Gloucester Adventure Schooner, Gloucester Maritime Heritage Center, views of working waterfront.

- **Cape Ann Museum**
  Just north of the Byway in Gloucester downtown, the Museum’s fisheries and maritime galleries reflect Cape Ann’s preeminence in seafaring pursuits.

- **East Gloucester Square Historic District**
  Exemplifies the growth of local fisheries during the 19th and early 20th centuries, notable for its Greek Revival and Italianate style residential architecture and for its collection of intact maritime-related buildings along the waterfront.

- **Essex Shipbuilding Museum**
  Exhibits and the **Evelina Goulart** schooner.

- **Newburyport Waterfront Park**
  Views of the Merrimack River along which shipping vessels were built. Custom House Maritime Museum provides history of shipping industry. This is the birthplace of U.S. Coast Guard – monument (behind the museum) and active station (visible from the park).^{12}

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^{12} The first Revenue Cutter ship was launched in Newburyport in 1791, commissioned by President George Washington. This was the first of 10 vessels to serve in the country's Revenue Cutter Service (precursor to the U.S. Coast Guard.)
Historical Sub-Theme: Manufacturing and Industry
The story of the Industrial Revolution in America – the conversion from cottage based industries to industrial manufacturing – played out along the byway corridor in the rise and prosperity of the textile and leather industries along with other industries. Harnessing the power of the region’s local rivers, mills, factories, and tanneries developed in Salem, Lynn, Beverly and Newburyport. The granite quarrying industry became well established in the Cape Ann economy in the 19th century. Immigrants flooded to these areas, and factory worker housing is still a defining architectural feature of many of the downtowns along the Byway.

- **Lynn Heritage Visitor Center and Lynn Museum**
  The Visitor Center provides information about Lynn’s prominence as a shoe manufacturing center and electronics pioneer. Exhibits show furniture, artwork and everyday objects through the 1800's.

- **Manchester Village Historic District**
  The district includes a few commercial buildings associated with the days of cabinet making and furniture manufacturing, at one time mainstays of the Town’s economy.

- **Halibut Point State Park, Rockport**
  Once an active quarry pit, now filled in with water, traces of granite blocks scattered around the landscape, historical exhibits at visitor center. Dramatic views of the treacherous waters off Cape Ann and north to New Hampshire and Maine.

- **Flat Ledge Quarry / Granite Pier, Rockport**
  Collection of historic resources associated with the Flat Ledge Quarry and the larger Rockport granite industry.

- **Newburyport National Historic Register District**
  It contains former mill buildings and worker’s housing. Mills now are all converted to non-industrial uses.

Historical Sub-Theme: Summer and Art Communities
During the 19th century, the popularity of the area grew as a destination for vacationers. Some of the byway communities developed into the heart of the fashionable North Shore, where wealthy families spent the summer months. Initially summer visitors stayed in boarding houses or small cottages, but these were soon replaced with large hotels and lavish estates built by renowned architects with grounds designed by famous landscape architects. By the late 19th century, Marblehead became the second most important yachting and racing capital of the East Coast after New York. Railroad spurs to Marblehead and then to Gloucester, completed in 1847, initially served seasonal visitors. Rail depots were added in Beverly Farms and Pride’s Crossing to be more convenient to the summer residents.

Another important historical influence that shaped the byway communities during the 19th century, was the rise of the land conservation movement and the development of the Metropolitan Park System. The Trustees of Reservations was formed in 1891 under the leadership of renowned conservationist and landscape architect, Charles Eliot. The organization was established “for the purposes of acquiring, holding, maintaining and opening to the public...beautiful and historic places...within the Commonwealth.”

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13 Heritage Landscape Inventory, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation.
14 This photo is for exclusive use in the Corridor Management Plan and may not be copied without permission from Historic New England.
In 1893, Charles Eliot was also involved in the formation of the Metropolitan Park System that was designed to protect as public property large tracts of open space located on the edges of developed areas; the shores of rivers and beaches, marshes and hills. Today, the system (now under the jurisdiction of the Division of Urban Parks and Recreation) extends from King’s Beach in Swampscott on the north to the Blue Hills Reservation in the south; from the Boston Harbor Islands in the east to the Elm Bank Reservation in Dover to the west. The park system was widely recognized as a model for other urban parks around the nation during the 20th century.

As the era of the grand estates came to a close, the expense of maintaining the large properties became unmanageable. Although many of the estates were subdivided and developed, a few properties were converted to public parkland and remain today as municipally-owned parks.

Some of the places that illustrate this era of the North Shore’s history include:

- **Lynn Shore Reservation, Lynn and Swampscott**
  The state acquired private properties along the coast in the early 1900’s in order to create the Lynn Shore Reservation. Many buildings were removed in order to assure public access, protect important natural features and provide open space.

- **Diamond District, Lynn**
  It emerged at the turn of the 20th century as an upper class neighborhood of suburban houses on large lots along the shore.

- **Humphrey Street, Swampscott**
  From the mid to late 19th century into the early 20th century, boarding houses and hotels built to accommodate summer residents lined this street. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow reportedly wrote his poem “The Cliff” from the Cliff House which at one time stood along Humphrey Street overlooking the water.

- **Marblehead Neck**
  Visible from Marblehead downtown and accessed by a causeway, the Neck has many large estates (old and new) as well as a number of yacht clubs.

- **Lynch Memorial Park, Beverly**
  Formerly part of the gardens of the Evan’s estate (once a summer destination of President Taft).

- **Beverly Farms and Pride’s Crossing, Beverly**
  These small villages along the rail line historically provided services and housing for staff to serve the large estates of
summer residents. Two campuses located along the byway route, Endicott College and the Landmark School, have converted some of the former grand estate properties to academic buildings and residences.

- **Manchester Village Historic District and Manchester Harbor**
  Manchester’s attraction as a summer destination for the wealthy is reflected in some of the fine homes constructed during this period in the downtown area as well as the commercial buildings containing stores and specialty shops to service the summer visitors. Manchester Harbor is still a popular destination for yachters.

- **Beauport, Sleeper-McCann House, Gloucester**
  Built in 1907, the summer home of one of America’s first professional interior designers, Henry Davis Sleeper.

During this period artists discovered Rockport and Gloucester and other coastal communities, establishing their own residential neighborhoods and creating images that further popularized the area.

- **Fitz Henry (Hugh) Lane House, Gloucester**
  Located on the Harbor Loop is the former home and studio of renowned 19th Century luminist painter Fitz Henry (Hugh) Lane.

- **Rocky Neck Art Colony, East Gloucester**
  Regarded by many to be “America’s Oldest Working Art Colony,” the artists’ enclave at Rocky Neck (1850 to 1950) attracted a number of important Realist painters.

- **Motif #1, Rockport**
  Considered America’s most painted building, dark red shack on Bearskin Neck wharf.

- **Cox Reservation, Essex**
  Built in 1785, it is the former home and studio of renowned muralist Allyn Cox and now serves as the headquarters for the Essex County Greenbelt Association. The property’s inspiring scenery is often a subject for landscape painters.

- **Salt marshes in Essex, Rowley, Newbury**
  Popular subject of landscape painters (both amateurs and world renowned), including Martin Johnson Heade.

![Sunlight and Shadow, The Newbury Marshes (c. 1871-1875) by Martin Johnson Heade](image)

**Nationally and Locally Recognized Historic Places and Sites**

**National Register**

The National Register of Historic Places (National Register) is the official list of the Nation’s historic places worthy of preservation. Administered by the Secretary of the Interior and maintained by the National Park Service through the Massachusetts Historical Commission, the list includes individual buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts that have been determined either to be locally, regionally, or nationally significant as they relate to American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering and culture. Being listed does not guarantee protection, which is the prerogative of the local community or property owner.
There are over 7,200 properties included on the National Register that are located along the Byway. Properties may be listed individually, as a contributing resource to a multi-property or thematic listing (NR), or as a district (NRD). Many of the byway communities have properties associated with a thematic National Register listing -- First Period Buildings of Eastern Massachusetts, Lighthouses of Massachusetts, Diners of Massachusetts, and Metropolitan Parks System.

In certain cases the Secretary of the Interior designates nationally significant historic places as National Historic Landmarks (NHL) because they possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States. Of the fewer than 2,500 historic places across the U.S. that bear this national distinction, 11 are located along the Byway.

Local Historic Districts and Sites

In accordance with the policies and criteria established by the federal National Scenic Byway Program, designation of a route as a National Scenic Byway requires the presence of intrinsic qualities that are significant at the national or regional (i.e. multi-state) level. Although many local historic resources do not meet this threshold of significance, they are nonetheless important for establishing a context for the Byway and contribute to the byway traveler’s overall experience. Therefore, in addition to recognizing those resources that help qualify a route for national designation, it is important that planning and management of the Byway also consider how locally significant resources play an important and supporting role.

Collectively, the individual sites -- historic houses, commercial buildings, mill and factory complexes, farms, churches, cemeteries -- of the Essex National Heritage Area provide the context within which the historical development of the region may be understood. So, while travelers may not travel to Essex County to visit an individual historic resource, their presence (and preservation) reinforce the nationally significant historic themes represented in the region.

Local Historic Districts

The General Laws of Massachusetts (M.G.L. Chapter 40C - Historic Districts) provide for the local adoption of bylaws establishing local historic districts. Established by a two-thirds majority city council or town meeting vote and administered by a local historic district commission, local historic districts are special areas within a community where the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places are preserved and protected. The Appendix contains a list of National Register properties and Local Historic Districts along the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway.

There are also ongoing efforts in many of the byway communities to add more of the local historic sites and buildings to the Massachusetts and National Registers of Historic Places.
Cultural

Cultural quality is evidence and expressions of the customs or traditions of a distinct group of people.
National Scenic Byways Program – Interim Policy, 1995

Although the byway region offers a number of cultural attractions and events, these do not collectively represent “customs or traditions of a distinct group of people.” Therefore, although cultural activities including music, theatre, and art contribute to the visitor experience and have the potential to attract visitors to the byway region, culture plays more of a supporting role to the other defining intrinsic qualities of the Byway. The sub-themes described below consider two traditions that are part of the region’s history that are still carried on today.

Cultural Quality: Local Trades

Fishing, boatbuilding, and farming though no longer major industries in the region, are still practiced in the byway communities. These trades, whose tools and traditions are passed along from one generation to the next, have been a part of life in the region since the first settlements were established along the coast. These trades still contribute to the character and sense of place shared by residents and experienced by byway travelers. Farmers markets and farm stands are prevalent in many of the byway communities. Fishing boats can be found in many of the thriving port communities, and the fishing industry is still a primary part of Gloucester’s local economy. Two centuries of shipbuilding tradition is represented in the H.A. Burnham Shipyards in Essex.

Cultural Quality: Visual Arts

The area’s landscapes have inspired many artists over the years, and local artists are well-represented in galleries and studios all along the byway route. There are also a number of locations with outdoor art and sculpture. The community of visual artists that exists today traces its roots to the rise in popularity of the region for artists in the 19th and 20th century – corresponding with the appeal of the region as a summer destination. The visual arts in the byway region have been influenced by the plein d’air movement that began in the 1870s and took inspiration from the dramatic natural scenery. Plein d’air painting (along with a variety of other media) is still common along the Byway, and the Rocky Neck Art Colony provides a connection between the local artists of today and the enduring legacy of the visual arts beginning in the mid-1800s.
Natural

Natural quality applies to those features in the visual environment that are in a relatively undisturbed state. These features predate the arrival of human populations and may include geological formations, fossils, landform, water bodies, vegetation and wildlife. There may be evidence of human activity, but the natural features reveal minimal disturbances.

National Scenic Byways Program – Interim Policy, 1995

The fascinating interface of land and sea characterizes the north shore communities of Massachusetts and provides an abundance of natural resources and distinctive landscapes that are the context for the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway.

The geological development of these landscapes has been documented from over 120,000 years ago when ice began to accumulate in northern Canada to form the Laurentide ice sheet. At its largest size, around 21,000 years ago, the ice sheet stretched to cover most of Canada and the northern United States. The advancing and retreating glacier dug lakes and river beds and left glacial till deposited across the landscape of New England. This glacial till, formed beneath and within glaciers as rocks are carried and ground up by the flowing ice, has grain sizes that range from boulders to clay and, in New England, is usually found resting directly upon bedrock. Along the Byway’s many low-lying areas, glacial-marine sediments composed of silt and clay were deposited as the ice sheet melted. Subsequent tidal flooding in these marine inlets continued bringing in sediment and sea detritus helping to build the foundation for today’s abundant salt marshes.

The variety of flora that established along the New England coast after the glaciers retreated was in response to the low land deposits enhanced with nutrients from the sea and the predominant thin and rocky deposits left on the uplands. Enriched by thousands of years of accumulated organic matter and a moderated temperate climate, today’s marshes and forests create a blanket of green in the summer and a changing pallet of yellows, oranges, reds and browns in the fall. The winters grace the landscape with a starkness that reveals changes in vegetative cover and landscape form and highlight the prevalence and beauty of the region’s waters.
Map 4: Water Features along the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway
Natural Quality: Water Resources

**Estuaries**

Estuaries are found along the entire length of the Byway and represent some of the area’s most distinctive landscapes. An estuary is a partially enclosed body of water where freshwater from rivers and streams meet and mix with saltwater before emptying into the ocean. These sheltered waters are host to unique communities of plants and animals particularly adapted to its specific characteristics and are among the most productive ecosystems on earth.

Estuaries support and interface with a variety of habitats including shallow open waters, freshwater and salt marshes, swamps, sandy beaches, mud flats, and tidal pools providing homes to a rich and diverse population of specialized plants and wildlife. Inhabitants include small mammals, reptiles, shore and sea birds, fish, shellfish including crabs, lobsters, clams, and shrimp, worms and other marine organisms.

In addition to supporting critical habitat for wildlife, estuaries provide opportunities for recreation including boating, fishing, swimming, and wildlife viewing, education, and industry such as shellfishing and tourism.

Byway estuaries are found alongside and within marshes, bays, and rivers including Forest River in Marblehead and Salem, the Annisquam in Gloucester, Essex River along the causeway in Essex, and throughout the expansive marshes of the Parker and Ipswich rivers within Ipswich, Rowley, Newbury and Newburyport.

**Salt Marshes**

Salt marshes are a typical and distinctive landscape found along the estuaries of the Byway. A salt marsh is a type of wetland which is subject to frequent flooding by tidal waters. It is generally based on soils consisting of sandy bottoms or thick deposits of soft, unconsolidated silty clay and is dominated by salt-tolerant herbaceous plants. Salt marshes are highly productive ecosystems that provide critical habitat and sanctuary for fish, shellfish, and wildlife. In addition, marshes play vital roles in shoreline stabilization as marsh plants and soils dissipate storm surges; in flood attenuation as they act as sponges to absorb flood water, and in water quality maintenance as they trap and filter sedimentation.

While salt marshes do not in themselves provide land for recreation, they are a critical component of the estuary ecosystem that supports educational programs and wildlife viewing opportunities and contribute to the tourism industry. Marshes are also peaceful and beautiful landscapes that people like to experience and live near, creating pressure for residential development at their edges.

Byway travelers can enjoy expansive salt marsh views in Gloucester as they travel along the Annisquam River on Route 127, in Essex as they cross the causeway, in Rowley along Route 1A, in Newbury as they cross the Parker River, and along the Plum Island Turnpike in Newbury and Newburyport.
The Great Marsh

The salt marshes along the Byway are part of the Great Marsh, the largest salt marsh in New England, with over 25,000 acres of marsh, barrier beach, tidal river, estuary, mudflat and upland islands that reach from Salisbury, just north of the Byway, to Gloucester. The significance of the Great Marsh was recognized in 1979 when a portion was designated by the state as the Parker River/Essex Bay Area of Critical Environmental Concern (now the Great Marsh ACEC.) Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) are places in Massachusetts that receive special recognition because of the quality, uniqueness and significance of their natural and cultural resources. The purpose of the program is to create a framework for citizens, communities, and agencies to work together to ensure the long-term preservation and management of the area. Projects within an ACEC that are subject to state jurisdiction or regulation, require a state permit or are funded by a state agency and are reviewed with close scrutiny to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts.

The Massachusetts Audubon Society also designated the Great Marsh as an Important Bird Area. To qualify as an IBA an area must regularly hold significant numbers of an endangered species; attract large numbers of breeding, wintering, or migratory species; contain assemblages of species characteristic of a unique habitat, or habitats containing species with a high conservation priority in the state; or be important for its long-term research or educational value.

Mud Flats

Mudflats are frequently found along the estuaries and salt marshes of the Byway and, while connected to each, they possess several unique characteristics that separate them from these other marine communities. Mudflats occur in well-protected estuaries where fine particles settle out of the water column, forming a soft, silt base. Mudflats are almost continually under water, and even at low tide remain moist. These areas are home to many organisms including algae, worms, snails, clams and crabs. Other wildlife use the mudflats as feeding grounds. A number of mudflats along the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway are open to recreational and commercial clamming. Mud flats are particularly visible from the byway route along the Annisquam River in Gloucester.

Sandy Beaches

Sandy beaches are scattered along the northern coastline of Massachusetts with many on or within easy access from the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway.
Beaches are more than just a place for sunbathers and swimmers. In fact, hundreds of living species (practically invisible to the casual observer) live buried in the sand. Beach inhabitants come from all major groups in the food web: decomposers such as bacteria and fungi; plants, primarily algae; filter-feeding organisms including clams; scavengers such as crabs and seagulls; and predators. The surf zones of sandy beaches are important nurseries and feeding grounds for fish that rely on the smaller invertebrates for nourishment. Beaches also provide essential habitats for sea and shore birds, as well as turtles.\footnote{R. Noriega and T. Schlacher, Sandy Beach Ecology, Information Sheet, May 2007}

While beaches may seem static to those who visit occasionally, in fact they are dynamic, changing with the waves and wind. Waves move sand each time they break along the shore; changes in the size and the direction of the waves increases or decreases the intensity of this movement. A great deal of planning, energy and resources are expended on understanding and protecting these rigorous, yet fragile ecosystems that are such an important resource to the region.

Beaches immediately visible along the Byway include Lynn Shore Reservation in Lynn, Kings Beach in Swampscott, and Back and Front Beaches in Rockport. A listing of public beaches can be found in the Appendix.

\textit{Rivers and Creeks}

An extensive network of rivers and creeks can be viewed and accessed along the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway. These water bodies have been transportation corridors, industrial sites and water and food sources throughout history. Today they are still home to numerous fish, bird and other wildlife. They provide a variety of recreational and educational opportunities and continue to support local economies through fishing, shellfishing, and tourism. Below are descriptions of some of the major rivers visible and/or accessible from the Byway.

\textbf{Danvers River}

The Danvers River is one of two rivers along the Byway that is tidal for its entire length, qualifying it as an estuary as well as a river. It receives flows from the Bass, Porter, Crane, Waters, and North rivers and discharges into Beverly Harbor near the Route 1A Bridge between Salem and Beverly. This river system drains highly urbanized sections of Salem, Peabody, Danvers and Beverly and is home to multiple marinas. The Danvers River Estuary is rated a Class SB water and is relatively shallow with a large intertidal area and a high flushing rate; approximately 70 percent of the total water volume is exchanged with each tide cycle. Class SB waters support fish, aquatic life and other wildlife, are considered suitable for primary (swimming) and secondary (boating) contact, and should support conditional shellfish harvesting.

\textbf{Annisquam River}

Like Danvers River, but unlike the other rivers along the Byway, the Annisquam River is tidal, connecting the Ipswich Bay on the north shore of Gloucester to Gloucester Harbor on the south. This four and a half mile navigable waterway is bracketed by extensive salt marshes offering exceptional views to byway travelers. The Annisquam is a unique river, open to the
ocean at either end and is an outstanding ecological resource that also offers opportunities for recreation, education, and navigation.

**Essex River**
The Essex River is located solely within the Town of Essex. Fed from Chebacco Lake via Alewife Brook, it widens at the town’s causeway and ultimately empties into Ipswich Bay. The river’s estuaries are connected to the Great Marsh and provide a rich combination of vital habitat for fish and wildlife and recreational opportunities. The tidal waters of the Essex River are designated as Class SA, in recognition of their excellent habitat for fish, other aquatic life and wildlife, and for primary and secondary contact recreation. Recent changes in the Town’s sewer system that allowed homes with private systems to connect to a public system have made dramatic improvements to the water quality of the Essex River, permitting the state to declare Essex Bay clam flats open to shellfishing.

**Ipswich River**
The Ipswich River winds over forty miles from its headwaters in Wilmington and Burlington, MA to Plum Island Sound and the Atlantic Ocean, and is fed by a 155 square mile watershed. The dam at Ipswich town center marks the change from fresh to tidal waters. The Ipswich River has served as an important transportation corridor and has provided fishing and shell fishing grounds since pre-colonial times. With colonization, the Ipswich River powered shipbuilding, sawmills, tanneries and textile mills. Today it is an important ecological, recreational and educational resource with its estuary part of the Great Marsh. The river’s watershed provides drinking water to over 330,000 residents and businesses in northeastern Massachusetts. Extensive pumping of water from the Ipswich River and its surrounding ground waters, combined with increasing amounts of impervious surfaces within the watershed, have seriously degraded the Ipswich, resulting in a designation of “highly stressed” by the Massachusetts Water Resources Commission. It has been designated by American Rivers as the third most endangered river in the nation. While the river’s headwaters are the most impacted, the entire river system is at risk. 17

**Parker River**
The Parker River originates in West Boxford and meanders about twenty-one miles through a rolling landscape before emptying into Plum Island Sound at the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge. It has a total drainage area of approximately eighty-two square miles and feeds approximately nine major tributaries. The freshwaters of the Parker River have been designated as Class B: habitat for fish, other aquatic life and wildlife, and for primary and secondary contact recreation. Marine waters of the river are Class SA: excellent habitat for fish, other aquatic life and wildlife, and for primary and secondary contact recreation. In addition, the MA Department of Environmental Protection has further classified the tidal portion of the Parker River and tributaries as open shellfishing waters. This additional classification imparts more stringent regulation and protection to the waters. 18

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17 Ipswich River Watershed, Restoration of the Ipswich River Watershed – An Approach to Enhance the Use of Low-Impact Development Techniques and Conservation within Market-Based Trading Programs, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, 2004
18 Parker River Watershed, Year 3 Watershed Assessment Report, Massachusetts Watershed Initiative, Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, 2002
Merrimack River
The Merrimack River originates in northern New Hampshire and flows one hundred ten miles before emptying into the Atlantic at Newburyport, the northern anchor community of the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway. The Merrimack River watershed extends over 5,000 square miles and the river itself is the second largest surface drinking water source in New England, serving more than 300,000 people. The Merrimack River in Massachusetts is designated as a Class B warm water fishery from the New Hampshire state border to Haverhill. Within its tidal waters (Haverhill to Newburyport), the Merrimack is classified as a Class SB river. Class B waters are expected to support fish, aquatic life and other wildlife, as well as be suitable for primary (swimming) and secondary (boating) contact. Class SB waters should also support conditional shellfish harvesting.  

Natural Quality: Forested Uplands
Portions of the Byway that travel away from the coast pass through upland forests, many of which are part of conservation areas and other protected open spaces. Although undeveloped, most of these lands show traces of human activity in what has been left behind. Much of the byway region was once forested and managed by American Indians then de-forested by European settlers who cleared the land to farm then, beginning in the industrial era, gradually farmland and pasture was abandoned and the forest came back. Stone walls and old apple trees can be found in many forested areas that were once fields and pastures.  

Natural Quality: Wildlife
The rich diversity of landscapes along the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway creates a mosaic of habitats for hundreds of species of birds, and a large variety of mammals, fish, shellfish, amphibians and reptiles. From the cold waters of the Atlantic Ocean to the tranquil estuaries and marshlands to the upland farmland and forests, wildlife find nourishment and shelter to sustain them.

Hundreds of species of birds are native to or migrate through the area of the Byway; over three hundred have been identified within the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge alone. Species of note include the bald eagle, the federally listed piping plover (threatened) and peregrine falcon (endangered) and the state listed species common tern (species of concern), northern harrier (threatened) and least tern (species of concern).  

During the spring and fall migrations thousands of birds move through the area along the Byway. The migrant land birds seek sanctuary and food on coastal thickets. In mid-May, it is not unusual to see fifteen to twenty species of warblers. During spring and summer, large numbers of waterfowl, herons, egrets and land birds nest and feed in the region’s extensive salt marshes. During fall, huge numbers of shorebirds pass through the area en route from their Arctic nesting grounds to Central and South America. These birds stop to rest and feed on the mud flats and salt meadows of the marine estuaries. The shorebirds are joined by vast numbers of land birds that are likewise in transit to their southern wintering grounds. During the winter, large flocks of loons, grebes, and ducks seek the ice-free waters of the rivers for shelter and food. Snowy owls and rough-legged hawks, species closely associated with northern latitudes, are annual visitors to the area. The diversity and numbers of birds found throughout the seasons make the byway region a nationally recognized bird watching destination.

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20 Federally-listed refers to species included on the National Endangered Species List, state-listed refers to species listed on the Massachusetts list. "Endangered" (E) species are native species in danger of extinction throughout all or part of their range, or which are in danger of extirpation. "Threatened" (T) species are native species which are likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future. "Special concern" (SC) species are native species which have suffered a decline that could threaten the species if allowed to continue unchecked, or which occur in such small numbers or with such restricted distribution or specialized habitat requirements that they could easily become threatened.
Important Bird Species found along the Byway (USGS Bird Checklist)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>American Black Duck</th>
<th>Brown Thrasher</th>
<th>Nelson’s Sharp-tailed</th>
<th>Short-billed Dowitcher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Kestrel</td>
<td>Eastern Kingbird</td>
<td>Sparrow</td>
<td>Stilt Sandpiper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Redstart</td>
<td>Green-winged Teal</td>
<td>Purple Martin</td>
<td>Tree Swallow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bald Eagle</td>
<td>Hudsonian Godwit</td>
<td>Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed</td>
<td>Willet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black-bellied Plover</td>
<td>Lesser Yellowlegs</td>
<td>Sparrow</td>
<td>Yellow Swallow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black-throated Green Warbler</td>
<td>Long-billed Dowitcher</td>
<td>Sanderling</td>
<td>Yellow-rumped Warbler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonaparte’s Gull</td>
<td>Magnolia Warbler</td>
<td>Semipalmated Sandpiper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The designation of Important Bird Areas (IBA) by Mass Audubon is an indication of the number and importance of birds using these sites. An IBA is a site that provides essential habitat to one or more species of breeding, wintering, and/or migrating birds. Three IBAs exist along the Byway: The Great Marsh, The Rockport Headlands and Inshore Waters, and Eastern Point in Gloucester.

Fish represent another classification of wildlife prevalent along the Byway. Fish living in the rivers, streams, estuaries and bays accessible from the Byway are primarily anadromous and salt-water species. Anadromous, or migratory fish, hatch in fresh water, migrate to the sea to grow and then return as adults to fresh water to spawn. Anadromous species typical to Massachusetts include smelt, sea lamprey, American shad, sturgeon, river herring and striped bass. Sturgeon and Atlantic salmon are state listed species. Atlantic salmon, once native to Massachusetts, were driven to extinction around 1800. A restoration effort by Mass Wildlife and the US Fish and Wildlife Service is attempting to restore the Atlantic salmon to the Merrimack River. Restoration efforts include habitat protection, fish passage, research, hatchery production and stocking.

Commonly caught salt-water species found in estuaries and bays include juvenile bluefish, mackerel, pollock, striped bass, tautog, and winter flounder. Shellfish prevalent along the Byway include soft-shelled clams, blue mussels, razor clams, surf clams, and ocean quahogs.21 Oysters and scallops are also found, though in lesser amounts.

Protected and Accessible Natural Sites

The Essex Coastal Scenic Byway offers both visual and/or physical access to all of the natural resources discussed above. A great many of the sites protecting these resources are publicly owned lands managed for conservation and recreation. Others are owned by agencies dedicated to the preservation of the site’s habitat or wildlife species. The following inventory of the Byway’s protected and accessible sites helps to show the depth and significance of the area’s natural resources. These are included on the Byway Resource Maps and more details about these properties are included in the Appendix.

Federal Lands
- Parker River National Wildlife Refuge (Ipswich, Rowley, Newbury, Newburyport)

State Lands
- Lynn Heritage State Park (Lynn)
- Lynn Shore Reservation (Lynn, Swampscott)
- Halibut Point State Park and Reservation (Rockport)
- Sandy Point State Reservation

Municipal Holdings
- Forest River Conservation Area and Environs (Marblehead and Salem)
- Powder House Hill Reservation (Manchester-by-the-Sea)
- Cape Pond Reservoir (Rockport)
- Gloucester Watershed Lands (Gloucester and Rockport)
- Delamater Sanctuary and Waring Field (Rockport)
- Dow Brook Conservation Area (Ipswich)
- Ipswich Watershed Lands (Ipswich)
- Beaches

21 Glenn Casey, Massachusetts, Division of Marine Fisheries, Annisquam River Marine Fisheries Station.
Landings

Holdings of Nonprofit Conservation Organizations

- Coolidge Reservation (Manchester-by-the-Sea)
- Normans Woe Wildlife Sanctuary (Gloucester)
- Ravenswood Park (Gloucester)
- Eastern Point Wildlife Sanctuary (Gloucester)
- Seine Field (Gloucester)
- Goose Cove Reservation (Gloucester)
- Thompson Street Reservation (Gloucester)
- Cox Reservation (Essex)
- Stavros Reservation (Essex)
- Rowley River Salt Marsh (Rowley)
- Old Town Hill (Newbury)
- Joppa Flats Education Center and Wildlife Sanctuary (Newburyport)
RECREATIONAL

Recreational quality involves outdoor recreational activities directly associated with and dependent upon the natural and cultural elements of the corridor’s landscape. The recreational activities provide opportunities for active and passive recreational experiences. Driving the road itself may qualify. The recreational activities may be seasonal, but the quality and importance of the recreational activities as seasonal operations must be well recognized.

National Scenic Byways Program – Interim Policy, 1995

The Essex Coastal Scenic Byway corridor’s natural resources support a host of outdoor recreational activities. The beautiful and fascinating landscapes of the corridor invite byway travelers to experience it actively and intimately through hiking, swimming, bicycling, paddling and boating. The wildlife of the region also supports birding, fishing and hunting.

The recreational capacities of the region are reinforced by the growing number of services, clubs, and facilities catering to the outdoor recreation enthusiast. Kayak and canoe rentals and paddling outfitters are abundant from Lynn to Newburyport. Fishing tours and whale watch expeditions offer opportunities in multiple byway communities. There are bicycle trails and clubs catering to both on and off road cyclists. Birdwatchers can find locations to engage in their passion along the entire corridor and find guidance and services at the many refuges, sanctuaries and commercial businesses that support the industry. While accessible but only minimally visible from the Byway, beaches are perhaps the most dramatic setting for recreation along the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway’s corridor and offer opportunities for swimming, sun bathing, picnicking, and strolling. Over twenty public beaches exist along or in very close proximity to the Byway.

The byway corridor provides settings for both active and informal (sometimes referred to as passive) recreational pursuits. The following list is not intended to be a comprehensive accounting of all the recreational activities that occur along the Byway, but rather highlights those that are most visible and contribute the most to the character and economic vitality of the corridor’s communities.

Recreational Quality: Bird and Wildlife Viewing

With over four hundred species of birds living or passing through Essex County, the area in and around the Byway is a premier, year-round, bird-watching haven enthralling local enthusiasts and drawing birders from across the country and beyond. The rivers, estuaries, marshes, dunes and sandy beaches create habitats for a large diversity of shorebirds, while the rocky coast along Cape Ann provides both habitat and observatories for birds of the sea. Completing the matrix are the forested landscapes and upland meadows sustaining songbirds and raptors. A few destinations close to the byway corridor are well-known birding spots, more information about these locations is included in Chapter 4. The popularity of birding along the North Shore is highlighted by events as well as by preserved and protected environments. These are discussed in Chapter 4.

Recreational Quality: Paddling and Boating

Canoeing and kayaking, together known as paddling, as well as other types of recreational boating, are popular three season activities for outdoor enthusiasts that can be enjoyed along the entirety of the Byway and within every byway community. These activities provide unlimited opportunities for byway travelers to experience the natural beauty and resources of the area up close.

Paddlers enjoy a diversity of waterways -- including freshwater rivers and creeks, estuaries, protected bays, and the open sea. The hundreds of miles of waterways accessible to the paddler from the Byway vary with the tides. Motorized recreational boating and sailing are enjoyed on the larger rivers and the open coastal waters from Newburyport to Lynn and provide a major economic benefit to the region. Water access sites are included on the Byway Resources Maps and a list of included in the Appendix.
Recreational Quality: Walking and Hiking
Exploring the landscape on foot is a popular recreational activity that can be enjoyed by nearly all ages and skill levels. The landscapes along the Byway -- from beaches to forests to fields -- offer opportunities for travelers to take in the scenic beauty of the Byway’s natural and historic resources and to experience these resources up close. Hiking, walking, and strolling are welcome activities at public parks as well as many of the conservation areas, reserves, refuges, and beaches as well as within village, town and city centers where cultural resources and traveler services are prevalent. Exploring the Byway and its many resources by foot offers a memorable and unique experience. Each community along the Byway offers multiple hiking, walking, or strolling options, more detail on these opportunities is provided in Chapter 4.

Recreational Quality: Bicycling
Both on- and off-road bicycling are alternative ways to experience the diverse qualities of the Byway. On-road bicycling is enjoyed (by varying skill levels) along the entire byway corridor. There are dedicated or striped bike lanes within a limited number of communities and paved road shoulders providing acceptable ways in others. Ten existing or proposed multipurpose trails and bike paths cross or parallel the Byway. Location of bikeways and recreational trails is provided on the Bikes and Trails Map and more information about the trails is provided in Chapter 4.

Recreational Quality: Fishing and Hunting
Fishing and hunting attract enthusiasts along the corridor, within its waterways, marshes and woodlands. Saltwater recreational fishing is the most extensive of these wildlife harvesting pursuits along the Byway, with large numbers of anglers plying the waters of the coastal rivers, inlets, bays and open ocean. Shore fishing is a popular pastime along the entire coast and along the Byway on numerous public beaches. Off-shore fishing takes place in the full range of water craft from canoes and dories to tournament and commercial scale fishing boats. Non-commercial shellfishing is a popular activity along the Annisquam and Upper Little rivers in Gloucester, the Essex River in Essex and the Ipswich River in Ipswich. Hunting for waterfowl is allowed within the Parker River NWR with certain restrictions. A primary waterfowl hunting site lies within the Parker River Wildlife Refuge with road access from the Byway on Route 1A and water access from the Parker River in Rowley.

Recreational Quality: Swimming
Swimming and sunbathing are synonymous with beaches, which abound along the Byway. While the season is limited primarily to the months of June through August, thousands of visitors seek the beaches of the North Shore each season, filling beach homes, hotels, inns and campgrounds. Lynn, Swampscott, Salem, Beverly, Manchester-by-the-Sea, Gloucester, Rockport, Newbury, and Newburyport all boast beautiful beaches directly accessible from the Byway. Beaches are included on the Byway Resources Maps and details about access and use policies are included in the Appendix.
Scenic

Scenic quality is the heightened visual experience derived from the view of natural and manmade elements of the visual environment of the scenic byway corridor. The characteristics of the landscape are strikingly distinct and offer a pleasing and most memorable visual experience. All elements of the landscape—landform, water, vegetation, and manmade development—contribute to the quality of the corridor’s visual environment. Everything present is in harmony and shares in the intrinsic qualities.

National Scenic Byways Program – Interim Policy, 1995

The Essex Coastal Scenic Byway passes through landscapes of great variety and complexity. The eighty-five mile corridor has a common backdrop of visual harmony in terms of integrity, scale, and order. These characteristics can be attributed in part to traditional building practices that worked with the land. The foundation of this diversity lies in the early colonization of the coast and the corresponding land use patterns that unfolded as Americans sought to make a living from where the land and water meet.

The byway corridor winds through landscapes with distinct and strikingly different characteristics expressed in water bodies, landforms, and architecture. Some roadway sections (such as in Newburyport and Marblehead) are tightly framed by mature street trees behind which stand buildings of granite, brick, or clapboard, set behind intricate fences, fronting on brick or cobblestone sidewalks. The buildings are oriented closely to the street and laid out around or near the once active working waterfronts of these historic maritime communities. The urban downtowns in Salem and Lynn contain the multi-storied mills and factory buildings that are evidence of the region’s industrial past. The small village centers that are found all along the byway corridor are less structured, with houses, barns, corner stores and shops intermixed, often at odd angles to each other.

The Byway also contains rural segments in Newbury, Rowley, Ipswich and Essex. The agrarian past of these communities is represented in the rolling cropland, pastures and fields, defined by woodlots, or stacked stone walls.

Perhaps equally as important as the architecture and working landscapes that define the corridor is the most consistent scenic element: water. The roadway follows the varied terrain of the coast, from wide flat expanses to hills and lowlands, from broad and straight to narrow and winding. The road’s historic path connected one village to another and town centers to the sea. How the water and the roadway meet holds great visual interest – glimpses of brooks and wetlands as the road travels over culverts, grand views from bridges over tidal and freshwater rivers, expansive views of the salt marshes, and the coastal and harbor vistas of the open ocean.

Scenic Quality: The Byway Experience

From north to south, a traveler on the Byway leaves historic Newburyport with its tree lined streets and cobblestone squares framed by three story brick market buildings to find small colonial era working farms and open pastoral landscapes framed with stone walls with large tracts of undeveloped woodlands and wide open expanses of marshland. These visual sequences shift as one travels south, where one encounters more small villages and towns, each almost imperceptibly larger than the last. Each collection of buildings becomes more permanent in appearance as single floor wood frame structures give way to two and three story brick buildings, signaling a visual pattern that is continued as the Byway approaches the communities closer to Boston. A traveler on the Byway will begin to notice a rhythm or pattern to the development of the 13 communities encountered along the way, one that echoes the development and industrialization of this country. The byway communities as they are situated along the byway route depict a confluence of the natural and built environment and represent a physical manifestation of our country’s shift from agrarian and ocean based commerce to industry and business. The scenic qualities of this Byway reinforce the story of the nation.
South of Newburyport, the byway communities of Newbury and Rowley are largely rural, with working farms and small village centers. Along portions of the roadway in these two communities, the byway corridor is flanked with open vistas of fields and pastures set against the backdrop of woodland to the west or often open sky over the ocean to the east. Fields are modulated by dense stands of oaks, pines and maples, with pockets of low land with marshes and streams. The Byway crosses salt marshes, and the traveler is able to see tidal rivers and marshland and can sense the close proximity of the ocean.

The scenic attributes of the Byway through Ipswich change from dense woodland in the north, to commercial strip development, and then the historic 17th century streetscape of the downtown (after the turn at Lords Square on Route 1A).

Continuing on Route 133, the Byway returns to an agrarian character, passing expanses of open fields and wooded hillsides into downtown Essex. The downtowns of Ipswich and Essex are located along the Ipswich and Essex rivers with houses and storefronts built close to the roadway, imparting an intimate scale.

The open marsh and agrarian landscape is replaced by larger tracts of woodland forests and more buildings as the traveler continues south from Essex into Gloucester.

Traveling south along Route 133 after the Route 128 overpass in Gloucester the Byway emerges from the forest, runs parallel to the Annisquam River and its tributaries, and then suddenly joins the harbor; presenting the traveler with one of the most dynamic and expansive vistas found on the route.
This confluence represents the transition away from the land and toward the sea. The coastal route around Cape Ann along Route 127A and the loop around East Gloucester Point presents the byway travelers with striking views of the sea, often framed by rocky peninsulas with houses perched above. Here too, the built environment creates a diverse and contrasting edge to the sea, with downtowns and village centers that are rich in architectural interest. The built environment is characterized by diversity in building use, type, scale, color and size, but linked by the common threads of history and purpose.

Many of the municipalities along the Byway have largely intact and unique historic street patterns. In the more densely built areas of the byway corridor, portions of the roadway wind alongside brick or cement sidewalks lined with fences, hedges, or walls and under mature street trees with well developed overhanging canopies.

In Rockport, Gloucester, Manchester-by-the-Sea, and Beverly, the traveler enjoys framed glimpses of tidal rivers, marshes or the ocean, and working waterfronts. Working waterfronts are characterized not only by wharves, piers and boats and an array of masts and rigging, but also views of the land based support industry with boatyards, dry-docked boats, ships chandleries, warehouses and seafood processing facilities. The traveler’s experience through these byway communities is rich in scale, detail, color and visual contrast, often brought about by diversity of active commercial centers and historic residential areas.

Stretches of the road corridor in southern Gloucester, Manchester-by-the-Sea and Beverly are forested with mature tree canopies. The forests are interrupted occasionally by glimpses of wetlands and, in the distance, views of the sea.
Leaving Beverly and crossing the Salem –Beverly bridge, the traveler will note that the road again shifts character, in both scale and appearance with greater building density along the waterfront and expansive harbors, reflecting more urban development and a greater mix of uses. Building construction types change to more frequency of brick, multi-story buildings. Through Salem the proximity of buildings to the road and taller building height creates a sense of enclosure with harder edges. In some areas, mature street trees, often at the curb line, soften the streetscape and frame urban parks, commons, and green spaces.

The loop through historic downtown Marblehead is also characterized by a narrow street pattern, brick sidewalks, buildings closely packed along the street and glimpses of the harbor. Travelers will be enticed to park and walk along the historic winding streets.

In contrast, the character of the route along Route 114 in Marblehead from the Salem border and Route 129 in Swampscott is primarily suburban residential with sidewalks, yards that front the street, and mature street trees.

The traveler encounters open ocean views starting at the Humphrey Street business district in Swampscott. These views continue into Lynn along Lynn Shore Drive. With the roadway tightly following the shoreline, the Byway is bordered by large residential homes and townhouses on the landward side. The water side has a wide esplanade with overlooks and stairway access to the beaches below and an unlimited view of the open ocean. In the distance, houses on Nahant are visible facing Lynn shore and beyond, Boston harbor, Logan Airport and the skyline of Boston.

The inland route that parallels Lynn Shore Drive along Broad Street introduces the traveler to the urban core of Lynn. The tall brick buildings provide visual evidence of the mill industries that built the city.
Scenic Quality: Scenic Locations

Scenic view points along the Byway are noted on the Byway Resources Maps. In some cases the scenic view is a narrow vista, a glimpse from a bridge without opportunities for stopping. In other cases scenic locations are broader and cannot be captured from a single viewing site, and in fact are best experienced by walking on sidewalks or in some of the linear parks or commons. The Appendix identifies and describes in greater detail the scenic views, features and elements of interest and provides a scenic value rating for these locations.

Criteria for Evaluation of Regional and/or National Significance

The Essex Coastal Scenic Byway is a byway of regional (multi-state) and national significance. This is demonstrated by the collection of natural and historic resources that have received national or regional designations or protections, most notably the federal designation of the Essex National Heritage Area. The Byway connects these resources in a cohesive route that traces historic settlement patterns that began with the First Contact Period and provides access to the naturally defining features of the area. The Byway’s resources attract visitors from outside the region with the capacity to reinforce and grow the heritage tourism and recreation-based businesses.

The extensive collection of extant vernacular architecture and the associated cultural resources located along this coastline are set within remarkable natural diversity and beauty. Agrarian and maritime commerce was, and to a great degree remains, the economic foundation for this region. It established land use patterns over the past three centuries that have shaped the scenic character of the Byway in a manner that has regional and national significance. The Byway chronicles the living history and the experience of settlement and commerce in coastal New England. This Byway passes through towns and villages where the present and future are evolving in recognition of the past.

This layered, authentic and working landscape offers byway travelers a compelling experience of American home life, work, and recreation within the context of our country’s early history. From a wealth of First Period architecture, to salt marsh farms and stone walls and jetties, the byway landscape is rich in visual interest and has a diversity that reflects the character of the people of New England.

Essex National Heritage Area

The Essex National Heritage Area (Essex Heritage) was designated by the U.S. Congress in 1996.

A National Heritage Area is an area in which natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally distinctive landscape arising from patterns of human activity shaped by geography. These patterns make National Heritage Areas representative of the national experience through the physical features that remain and the traditions that have evolved in them.

Essex National Heritage Area Plan, 1999

As the designated management entity of Essex Heritage, the nonprofit Essex National Heritage Commission, which works closely with the National Park Service, pursues a mission to “foster partnerships and educational opportunities that enhance, preserve, and promote the heritage of the Area.”

State and National Register of Historic Places

Each byway community contains historic resources listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the official list of the nation’s historic places worthy of preservation. Included are individual properties, entire neighborhoods, and several National Historic Landmarks. A National Register listing formally recognizes a property’s historical, architectural, or archeological significance based on established, well-defined criteria. While being listed on the National Register does not provide absolute protection, it may enable some properties to qualify for certain federal tax credits and other preservation-related assistance. In Massachusetts, the National Register Program is administered by the professional staff of the Massachusetts Historical Commission on behalf of the National Park Service.

The large number of state and nationally recognized historic sites and districts along the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway constitute a strong endorsement of the Byway’s regional and national historical significance.
National Estuary Program

Estuaries along the Byway are part of Massachusetts Bays Program\(^{22}\), which is part of the National Estuary Program. Recognizing the critical roles estuaries play, in 1987 Congress established the National Estuary Program under the jurisdiction of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to protect and improve the quality of estuaries of national importance. National Estuary Programs are required to develop a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan to meet the goals of the Clean Water Act Section 320 which, among other goals, include attaining or maintaining water quality in an estuary, protecting and propagating a balanced indigenous population of shellfish, fish and wildlife, and allowing appropriate recreational activities in and on the water. \(^{23}\) Currently twenty-eight National Estuaries exist in the United States, six along the New England coast.

National Wildlife Refuges

Containing 550 national wildlife refuges and more than 150 million acres, the National Wildlife Refuge System comprises public lands and waters set aside to conserve America’s fish, wildlife, and plants. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages the national network of lands and waters for the conservation and, where appropriate, restoration of fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitat.

The Parker River National Wildlife Refuge, which lies adjacent to the Byway in Ipswich, Rowley, Newbury, and Newburyport, was designated as part of the national system in 1942, primarily to provide feeding, resting, and nesting habitat for migratory birds.

Important Bird Areas (IBAs)

The Massachusetts Audubon Society, partnering with Birdlife International, identifies and protects internationally recognized bird habitats in Massachusetts.

To be designated as an Important Bird Area (IBAs) a site must:

- regularly hold significant numbers of an endangered species;
- attract large numbers of breeding, wintering, or migratory species;
- contain assemblages of species characteristic of a unique habitat;
- contain species with a high conservation priority in the state;
- be important for its long-term research or educational value.

Portions of four IBAs abut the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway: the Great Marsh, Rockport Headlands and Inshore Waters, Eastern Point/Gloucester Harbor, and Nahant Bay.

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\(^{22}\) Massachusetts Bays Program is the name used to describe the collection of estuaries in the 50 communities that make up this region of the National Estuary Program.

\(^{23}\) U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: http://www.epa.gov/nep/ccmp/index.html