

NELSON SCENIC LOOP
www.nelsonscenicloop.com
2010-2020
A DECADE OF DISCOVERY AND FUN
Past, Present, and Future

The Nelson Scenic Loop (NSL), a local heritage tourism program, was developed in 2010 by the Rockfish Valley Foundation. It was conceived by Peter Agelasto and Liz Sargent, an RVF trustee. Grants funded the research and planning phase. The design and implementation were funded by a matching grant from Virginia Tourism Corp and spearheaded by Jesús Najar, a then UVA graduate student with the Urban and Environmental program. Liz is now a trustee emeritus of RVF and Jesús is now working for VCU in Richmond as a project manager. The two of them also collaborated to create the South Rockfish Valley Rural Historic District which in 2016 was inscribed in the National Register of Historic Places. NSL consists of US 151 to VA 56 to the Blue Ridge Parkway (BRP) to VA 664 and back to the Rockfish Valley Foundation Natural History Center on US 151.

The NSL with its strong branding identity, route maps, and informational website was ready for introduction in June 2010. For its launching, NSL engaged several classic car groups that offered to kick off the program with an antique car tour. Two dozen vehicles including several Model A Fords and some elegant 1930s classics drove the entire 50 miles. The opening tour started at Spruce Creek Park followed by a fried chicken lunch pickup at Mac's Market on 151 and a picnic at Pharsalia in Tyro, Virginia.

What is the significance of the NSL? It remains one of the first things visitors to Wintergreen Resort and Nelson County put on their to-do list. Many are not aware of the bounty of local information the website offers! It is designed to have seasonal updates, information on major attractions such as Crabtree Falls, hiking trails, the breathtaking mountain and valley vistas, the meandering Rockfish and the Tye Rivers, and our unique historic agricultural communities.

How can the NSL be improved and provide more enjoyment to the community? First, with the assistance of volunteers, a committee can be formed to study future opportunities and partnerships. The website, like all sites, requires constant updates. For instance, there is a need to add more links and seasonal posts on local flora and fauna. Blog activity and social media engagement should also be encouraged. Would photo postings or a photo contest be enjoyed? How about a program to discuss the local geology along the parkway; helping to clean up trash and maintain trails; volunteers might guide some trail walks such as at the 20-Minute Cliff Overlook at mile marker 19 on the BRP or to the Montebello Fish Hatchery.

An annual event was conceived of years ago: it suggested that all the churches on the NSL pick a day when they open their doors and offer food, crafts, tours, and history of the community and the churches. Historically, there were up to 16 churches in the NSL

area! Does the community want this now? No shortage of ideas and improvements here, but who wants to help make it happen? Send comments to volunteer@rockfishvalley.org

For now pick a time, pack a picnic, drive the NSL and just enjoy!