

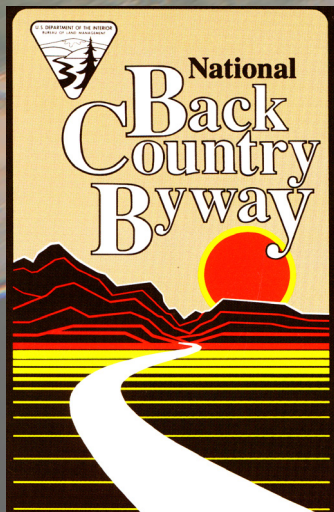
Rediscover the West...

Pioneers crossing the expanse of the Old West experienced the vast scenic wonders of this country. The Bureau of Land Management's National Back Country Byway program offers the public the opportunity to rediscover the splendor of the West's public land. The National Back Country Byway program is the BLM's unique contribution to the larger National Scenic Byway program. Both are the result of a study by the President's Commission of Americans Outdoors that found 43 percent of American adults identified driving for pleasure. In fact, next to walking, driving for pleasure is America's most popular form of recreation. Back Country Byways usually traverse scenic corridors and offer a wide variety of outdoor experiences.

... And Respect the Lands

The western lands are special places. Along the Byway are private, State-trust, and BLM public land. This land requires great care. The resources must be preserved, not only for the wildlife that inhabit the land, but also for future visitors. Please be considerate of others you encounter in your journey, leave gates as you found them, pack out trash, and value the rights of private landowners.

Thank you for traveling the Byway.



For more information, please contact:
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BLM/NM/GI-22/001+1220

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U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Lake Valley Back Country Byway



Welcome...

To The Lake Valley National Back Country Byway

The Lake Valley Back Country Byway offers spectacular scenic views of several mountain ranges in New Mexico including, the Caballo Mountains, Black Range, Cooke's Range, and Uvas Mountains. The Byway also passes through two historic mining towns, offering the traveler a peak at the area's rich history.

The Lake Valley Back Country Byway is a paved two-lane highway, spanning about 48 miles. It is somewhat winding, and has occasional sharp curves. Traveling the Byway will take about 1 hour. It is important to allow enough time to enjoy the sights and travel the Byway at a safe pace. The byway can be driven in either direction, by starting near Hillsboro or by starting down near Nutt.

Lodging, full RV hookup, and meals are available in Hillsboro and Kingston, but there are presently no fuel stations at any location along the Byway.

The Lake Valley Back Country Byway connects the Copper Flat Mine, Hillsboro, Lake Valley, and Nutt. (See Map on reverse side.) By leaving the Byway route at Hillsboro and traveling west to Silver City, you can visit other historic mining towns or enjoy hiking and camping in the Gila National Forest.

You will find wayside exhibits at three locations: Copper Flat Mine, Lake Valley, and the Nutt Railroad Siding.

The resort town of Truth or Consequences is located approximately 18 miles north of the Byway's northern entry point and the Interstate 25 Hillsboro exit. Stop in at the Geronimo Springs Museum to learn more about the area's rich prehistory and history. Or stop in at one of the many hot springs that the town is famous for. The nearby Elephant Butte and Caballo Reservoirs offer year-round camping, fishing, boating, and water sports.

The Gila National Forest, 9 miles west of Hillsboro, offers a variety of outdoor activities, including hiking and camping.

Watch for livestock and wildlife on the road, and never drive into flowing water during a flood situation. Stay safely away from mine shafts. They are extremely dangerous.



COPPER FLAT

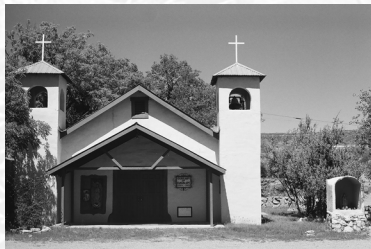
One of three wayside stops on the Byway is at Copper Flat. Look to the north and you will see a berm for a tailings dam. Behind this berm was the tailings pond for the open pit copper mine that operated in 1982. Read the Kiosk signs for more information.

BETWEEN COPPER FLAT AND HILLSBORO

As you travel to or from Hillsboro, notice the frequent evidence of past mining activities. Near mile marker 54, notice the arroyo is lined with mounds of soil piles where panners have sifted the sediment for gold.

HILLSBORO

Of all the historic mining communities of the area, it is Hillsboro, on the banks of Percha Creek, that survived and thrived. Once the County Seat and a raucous boom town, Hillsboro has developed into a quiet community, weekend getaway, and window to the past. Park your car and go exploring. The crumbled ruins of the jail and courthouse are located on the hill overlooking the town, due south of the post office. Stop in at the Black Range Museum, at the junction of State Highways 152 and 27. Currently many of Hillsboro's historic structures house businesses, stores, and restaurants. Time permitting, it is definitely worth a side trip to Kingston, 9 miles west of Hillsboro.



BETWEEN HILLSBORO AND LAKE VALLEY

You will travel through mountain scrubland, characterized by shrubs, pinyon, and juniper trees. This is prime habitat for mule deer. You will also pass several drainages with low water crossings. After a heavy rain, these drainages or creeks can fill with water. These arroyos begin in the Black Range, and can run deep if it has been raining in the mountains, even if it is sunny and clear along the Byway. If you encounter running water, it is best to wait it out, rather than risk crossing the creek. These creeks support lush riparian habitats, and it is in this area that you are likely to see deer browsing along the roadsides.



Between Hillsboro and Lake Valley, you will follow the route of the Kingston-Lake Stage Line. In the 1880s, stage travel was a hazardous affair. Apache attacks were a constant threat in this area where Native Americans, led by local chiefs like Geronimo and Victorio, fought against the unending tide of settlement. To provide protection for settlers, four companies of soldiers were stationed in Hillsboro, and a cavalry regiment organized in Lake Valley. Native Americans, however, were not the only threat to local residents. Numerous outlaw bands added to the hardships. The Kingston Gang, Farmington Gang, and Butch Cassidy all terrorized this region of New Mexico.



LAKE VALLEY

Here you see the remains of a once thriving mining town. The inhabitants of Lake Valley once numbered over 4,000. The devaluation of silver in 1893 led to the eventual decline of the town to its present "virtually" deserted state. The BLM is working to stabilize the historic structures of Lake Valley, beginning with the schoolhouse. This building was used for country dances, weddings, and other community functions, and is now used as a visitor center. Stop in and see the volunteers for more information.



BETWEEN MILE MARKER 10 AND 13

The Lake Valley Railroad grade is particularly visible in this area, on the east side of the road.

BETWEEN LAKE VALLEY AND NUTT

As you drive this expanse of desert grassland, you may see antelope, deer, quail, roadrunners, red-tailed hawks, and coyotes. Cattle may also be found grazing. The livestock industry has changed significantly since it was introduced to the area in the 1880s. Open rangelands are fenced. During the early part of the century, exotic angora goats were raised on ranches around Lake Valley, but have since been replaced in favor of cattle.

Today's ranchers recognize the importance of managing their livestock in a manner compatible with the ecosystem. Innovations, such as frequent pasture rotations, temporary electric fences, and resting pastures during the plant growing season have been developed. Pipelines are used to fill remote water storage tanks to help evenly distribute livestock across the rangeland, and to expand wildlife habitat.

COL. COOKE & MORMON BATTALION

On the western horizon, you can see Cooke's Peak. About half-way between Nutt and Lake Valley, you will cross the now obliterated trail blazed by Lt. Col. Cooke and the Mormon Battalion in 1846. On the east side of the road, a small pyramid monument commemorates the march. Many Mormons enlisted in the U.S. Army during the Mexican War, partly to assess the western lands and find a new home to escape the religious persecution the Mormons suffered in Illinois. Cooke and the Mormon Battalion succeeded in opening the first wagon road through the Southwest to California. Not generally recognized, many of the 49ers of the California Gold Rush reached their destination via this southern route.

NUTT

The Lake Valley Back Country Byway southern entry point is at the town of Nutt, NM, at the junction of State Highways 26 and 27. Originally a stop on the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway, Nutt was named for railroad director Col. Nutt. Nutt grew as a terminus for fortune seekers and merchants in route to area mining communities. It was also the region's main location for cattle shipping. Imagine this expanse of land filled with thousands of cattle waiting to be loaded onto the train for shipment.

Nutt declined in importance after 1884 when the spur line was completed from Nutt to Lake Valley, the mining town 14 miles north of Nutt. The spur line's tracks were removed in 1934, but its grade is still visible. Read the posted sign for more information.



