

Opening Discussions for Partnerships and Programs

Between the William Bartram Scenic & Historic Highway Management Council
and
NE Florida Scout Programs
January 29, 2026



American-born **William Bartram** was an explorer, naturalist, and artist who in 1765 and 1774 sailed and canoed the St. Johns River from Cowford to almost the river's source in central Florida. He collected and illustrated plants and animals throughout his journey and published his accounts in his famous book, [The Travels of William Bartram](#).

Bartram touched many points along the river, including many in **St. Johns County**, and in 2005 the State of Florida designated its 17-mile State Route 13 as **The William Bartram Scenic & Historic Highway (WBSHH)**.



Partnerships and Programs

To bring educational opportunities to the community celebrating the history of William Bartram, the WBSHH Management Council would like to **partner with the scouting program – girls and boys, young and old** - in St. Johns County to create ways to encourage conservation, canoeing / kayaking, gardening and other scout activities and to **reward** scouts for completing those activities.

Perhaps such a reward could be a new **William Bartram Merit Badge** and we hope to start some discussion today about that – and more.

Idea 1 – The William Bartram Merit Badge?

Just as William Bartram was curious, adventurous, and focused, so are scouts as they pursue a variety of merit badge categories. And if a certain “**bundle**” of merit badges were identified as being very, very much what William Bartram would have liked, then scouts completing that “bundle” could be awarded the **William Bartram Merit Badge**.

And because there is a wide variety of badge pursuits, perhaps such a “bundle” could be **any 5** of the many badge choices (a few choices are shown below).



A William Bartram Merit Badge Idea

Discussions on Making this Possible

Established Scout Regulations

- Is a new merit badge possible?

Program Area

- The WBSHH would like to support St. Johns County scout programs along the William Bartram Scenic Highway in **St. Johns County**.
- Additionally, given Bartram's travels in Nassau, Duval, Clay, and Putnam Counties such a Bartram award program could be started throughout the NE FL Scouting District.
- In fact, we would love for that to happen, and it is possible to include the Bartram Trail Society chapters in each County as a part of this new program.

Variations to the Program

- Look at how to "craft" the programs for girls and boys, young and old.
- Awards and recognition might vary for each.

Helpful booklet guides

- The WBSHH can prepare a short booklet on William Bartram for scout use.
- The booklet can contain guides and prompts related to merit badge choices, i.e. If Gardening, "How do you think William Bartram would answer?" Etc.

Mentors

- The WBSHH has Master Gardener members who could be helpful to troop leaders in talking with scouts about certain badges (Gardening, etc.)
- WBSHH members could also be helpful to troop leaders in talking with scouts about William Bartram and the Bartram Merit Badge program.

Funding

- WBSHH would like to explore the scope of such a program in St. Johns County and consider funding that program, its badges, and awards ceremonies. Discussions and ideas are welcome.

Awards

- A ceremony to award Bartram Merit badges would be good. WBSHH would work with you for locations, dates, and ceremony agendas.

Other ways to Partner and Promote Scouting in St. Johns County?

Many thoughts come to mind when thinking about scouting activities, and the William Bartram Scenic & Historic Highway hopes that today's discussion is the start of much, much more. We are looking for ways to partner with you to promote scouting – and of course – all things William Bartram.

Just a few thoughts that we might discuss later include:

- A scout troop activity at Trout Creek Park along the Scenic Highway (a kind of **Jamboree?**)
 - This is very large park where individual troops can set up camp and where a “central” activity area can be established.
 - Canoe and kayak activities are possible in Trout Creek.
- **Gardening** activities with our senior center, Westminster Woods.
 - A kind of “Grandparents Day” might be possible where scouts - girls and boys, young and old - plant gardens side by side with seniors. (Westminster Woods is actually VERY excited about this possibility!!)
- Coordinating with **St. Johns County Parks and Recreation**
 - Parks and Rec have kayak and canoeing activities along the St. Johns River, for instance, and these may help fulfill merit badge requirements.
- Possible **direct funding** to scout troops, dens, etc.
 - Our funding is not unlimited, but we could consider giving some support to troops and dens to keep them active.
- And **more and more ideas** that you have.

Conclusion

The William Bartram Scenic & Historic Highway is excited to have this introductory conversation today with the North Florida Council, and we hope this will be the first of many. Thank you for inviting us to meet.

For follow-up ideas and questions, please do not hesitate to contact:

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