



Idaho Historic Highway Marker Program

History:

- 1956: project inception (informal). 1957: program formalized through codification via state statute.
- Program is a partnership between the Idaho State Historical Society, which is responsible for content and design—and the Idaho Transportation Department, which is responsible for fabrication, installation, and maintenance.
- There are currently approximately 290 historic highway markers in the state.
- Signs must be on state highway ROW or public property (e.g., park)
- Public response to the program is favorable

Issue: The ISHS has become increasingly aware that some of the historic highway markers are problematic/inappropriate. Recently, ISHS staff undertook a comprehensive review of the content of each extant sign and identified concerns with approximately 37% of them; of those, 12 (4%, see reverse side) were identified as being particularly egregious. Not all signs of concern are tribally related, though most are. Issues of concern include:

- Potentially offensive/insensitive language used on a large number of signs
- Signs need tribal perspective; we do not believe that Idaho's tribes were consulted about the content and/or language of most, if not all, of the signs that relate to tribal history
- We do not believe that tribes were consulted about what tribal-related topics should be addressed on a highway marker, including, whether or not the tribes desire a highway marker conveying their history in the first place
- The stories conveyed on some highway markers are of questionable historical merit when viewed through a modern lens

Other issue:

- ITD budget: Cost/expense to replace signs

Next steps:

ISHS seeks to work with each tribe to review all signs relating to tribes, either directly or indirectly, and classify them into 4 categories:

1. Leave (sign acceptable/not problematic)
2. Rewrite (change language to tell same story)
3. Remove (do not replace)
4. Replace (new sign of different topic)

Sign No.	Title	Issue	County	Location
13	Lava Hot Springs	Patronizing and problematic language	Bannock County	US 30, MP 371.22
75	Ward Massacre	Provocative and problematic language	Canyon County	US 20, MP 27.21
112	Lapwai Mission	Patronizing and problematic language	Nez Perce County	US 95, MP 300.5
216	Bear River Massacre	One-sided and problematic language	Franklin County	US 91, MP 13.2
384	Bear Lake	Provocative and problematic language	Bear Lake County	US 89, MP 2.2
340	Hunt (Minidoka)	Outdated Views/NPS request to change	Jerome County	US 25, MP 14.8
493	The Utter Disaster	Inflammatory and problematic language	Owyhee County	SH 78, MP 47.79
427	Nez Perce War	Patronizing and one-sided language	Clark County	I-15, RA 167
286	John Mullen	One-sided language/request for removal	Benewah County	ID 5, MP 17.8
307	Chinese Hanging	Inflammatory language/Questionable merit	Clearwater County	ID 11, MP 27.5
312	MacDonald's Battle	Pejorative and problematic language	Lemhi County	ID 28, MP 119.9
338	Oregon Trail	One-sided and problematic language	Power County	I-86, RA 30.4 Westbound