Regional Heritage Areas: Connecting People to Places and History
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Cover photos:
Top left — Scenic trail along the Lehigh Canal. Photo by Peter Samuel.
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Large Photo — Blue Ridge Heritage Initiative. Photo courtesy of National Park Service.
Introduction

Richard Moe

It is often said that all preservation, like all politics, is local. Sometimes, however, a regional perspective—by inspiring initiatives that are closer to the ground than those led by state government but more inclusive than those of individual communities—offers the most sensible and effective means of preserving resources that transcend or ignore narrow political boundaries. Such a regional approach offers enormous benefits to preservation, not only in the number of historic sites protected but also in the breadth of the consensus it builds for a strong stewardship ethic.

The power of an integrated regional approach to preserving historic places and telling the story of a way of life has led to the success and growth of heritage areas across the country. While heritage areas are only one of many different kinds of regional planning partnerships, they offer a uniquely holistic approach to preservation that seeks to encompass not just the buildings that identify and enrich a place but also the living culture of the people who call the place home. Embodying a vision that extends far beyond a single structure or Main Street, heritage areas celebrate everything from music to crafts, from regional cooking to industry, from historic architecture to scenic trails, from transportation to agriculture.

They provide a venue in which preservationists can work on conserving the big picture, the distinctive living landscapes of our nation.

This issue of Forum Journal focuses on heritage areas—the history, principles, practices, and future of the field. The articles, written by some of the leaders in this new area of preservation, highlight community conservation and development efforts in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, land conservation partnerships in the Quinebaug and Shetucket watershed in Connecticut and Massachusetts, heritage tourism development in South Carolina, and place-based educational partnerships in the Essex National Heritage Area in Massachusetts. They also offer a critical look at the history of the heritage-area idea, pointing out that its evolution has been influenced and enriched by both the historic preservation and environmental movements. Finally, they illustrate the value of partnerships among the varied groups and individuals who seek to preserve the nation’s diverse cultural landscapes.

Congress has designated 23 national heritage areas thus far, and a dozen others are currently seeking official recognition. States are also adopting the heritage-area collaborative strategy: States as geographically diverse as Louisiana, Maryland, and Utah have recently launched their own heritage-area programs. With new heritage areas being proposed almost every week and legislative interest in a national program at an all-time high, this issue of Forum Journal is particularly timely.

Our thanks to Brenda Barrett, the National Park Service’s national coordinator for heritage areas, for her enthusiasm in helping us produce this issue.

Richard Moe is president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Heritage Areas: Connecting People to their Place and History

Jayne Daly

We all need such places…just to know who we are… These are the places where we have created our stories, where we find our shared memories…the places where we have experienced community and where we can learn to create it again…. Past, present and future are not separate. But we who are in the present are now accountable for the story.

— Robert Archibald, A Place to Remember

On March 3, 2003, First Lady Laura Bush announced a new White House initiative, Preserve America, which will provide funding to “protect and restore our nation’s cultural and natural resources—from monuments and buildings to landscapes and main streets…. Preserve America will provide more opportunities for preservation and increase tourism and economic development.” This initiative is the most recent manifestation of the tremendous interest by the federal and state governments and local citizens in preserving America’s cultural heritage and special places.

During the last several decades, a variety of programs have been tackling these issues, many of which, like Preserve America, highlight and support one or a few aspects of community regeneration such as main street revitalization, historic preservation, natural resource protection, or economic development, often one community at a time. However, as economies, natural resources, and cultural systems are regional in nature, these programs have made improvements at the local level but need to fit into a larger framework to maximize their benefit. Heritage areas can provide that framework in which communities can work together to develop a comprehensive approach to solve issues that extend beyond jurisdictional boundaries.

Early leaders in the heritage area movement included the states of Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania, which established “heritage
interpret and preserve the region’s steel, coal, and rail heritage to support and encourage recreation, economic development, and tourism.1

Over the last 20 years, a variety of terms have been used interchangeably to describe both the rich intersection of people and place as well as the efforts to integrate economic development with cultural and natural resource protection, including: living landscapes, partnership parks, cultural landscapes, urban cultural parks, scenic byways, heritage byways, American heritage landscapes, historic corridors, and heritage transportation corridors, to name a few. The phrase “heritage area” seems to be the current terminology which incorporates all of these various concepts to a degree.

While the language can be confusing, the basic principle is not. Heritage areas are dynamic regional initatives that build connections between people, their place, and their history. These connections are strengthened by capturing and telling the stories of the people and their place. These stories, when linked together, reflect a regional identity and support a collective awareness of the need to protect and enhance what makes our places unique. They give rise to opportunities for economic development that promote and preserve the region’s assets.

Heritage areas share the following fundamental principles and practices:

• They have a regional focus and geographic boundary.
• Partnerships between the public, private, and nonprofit sectors are essential in their formation and implementation.
• Local residents play an important role in designing and clarifying the goals and strategies for the region.
• A plan is developed that lays out the vision, identifies the goals and objectives of the region, outlines an implementation strategy, and allocates responsibilities to various partners.
• The region’s cultural and natural history are captured and communicated in ways that clearly articulate the importance of the place.
• Implementation activities often include establishing regional linkages such as trails or corridors, critical building renovation and restoration, and development of a coordinated interpretation strategy for the region’s stories.
• A management entity—which can be a corporation, nonprofit organization, commission, or authority—takes responsibility for guiding the planning and implementation of the heritage area.
• The management entity has no land-use authority and most cannot buy or own land within the heritage area.

Designation of Heritage Areas

National Heritage Areas: There are currently 23 national heritage areas, which are defined as places where 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.4

National designation brings with it a variety of benefits including technical and financial support, which is provided through the National Park Service’s “Heritage Partnership Programs.”

National designation often follows and rewards the work of citizens, local businesses, and organizations that have dedicated their time and effort to develop an initial vision for what the region can be. The initiative may come from existing economic development or tourism organizations, state government, citizens, or nonprofits. Alternatively, Congress can commission a special study of a region through the National Park Service. Proposals for designation are considered and approved by the U.S. Congress, with advice from the Department of the Interior.

Once an area is designated, a management plan must be developed and submitted to the Department of the Interior for approval. Components of the management plans vary according to the area’s legislation but may include an inventory of natural and cultural sites, policies for resource management, an implementation program including strategies for protecting and interpreting important cultural and natural resources and improving physical sites, a financial plan that sets out funding needs for implementation, and a description of partners’ roles and responsibilities.

Funding is provided through annual congressional appropriations. Amounts for 2003 range from a minimum of $50,000 for the Cache Le Poudre River Corridor in Colorado to $1,000,000 for her—
Rivers of Steel (Pennsylvania), Essex National Heritage Area (Massachusetts), and South Carolina National Heritage Corridor.\footnote{State Designation: A few states including Pennsylvania, Maryland, and South Carolina have developed programs that are as rigorous in regional resource identification and planning as the federal system. Pennsylvania’s Heritage Parks Program, which pre-dates federal designation, is administered by the state’s Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). Of the 11 state heritage parks, five are also national heritage areas. DCNR supports the heritage parks by providing technical and financial assistance to designated areas, which are defined as large geographic regions or corridors... that span two or more counties. These areas contain a multitude of cultural, historic, recreational, natural and scenic resources of state and national significance that collectively exemplify the industrial heritage of Pennsylvania. Through regional partnerships and public grassroots planning strategies, these resources are identified, protected, enhanced and promoted to strengthen regional economies through increased tourism, creation of new jobs and stimulations of public and private partnerships for new investment opportunities.\footnote{Local Initiatives: There are a number of very good examples of locally initiated projects that seek to connect heritage sites on a regional level to tell an authentic story of the local culture. The Tahoe-Comstock Heritage Area, established in 1993, tells the story of the gold and silver rush and how it affected small communities in Nevada and California during the mid-1850s. The story emphasizes the effects of the mining on natural resources, as significant amounts of wood and water were required to keep the mines running. The heritage area was initiated and is run by a nonprofit corporation, the Heritage Areas Association, to promote the awareness of history and historic sites in the Tahoe-Comstock region and to promote heritage tourism.\footnote{A Word of Caution: It is important to differentiate between heritage areas that promote an integrated regional approach to resource protection and economic development and those that have begun to use the heritage area label simply to attract tourists. According to a National Trust for Historic Preservation survey released in 2000, more than 50 percent of states have established statewide heritage or cultural tourism programs since 1990. Twenty of those programs had been established since 1995.\footnote{The reason for the tremendous interest in heritage tourism is the economic opportunity that it provides. Studies have documented that visiting historic and cultural sites is the second most popular activity for domestic travelers (behind shopping) and accounts for 15 percent of the tourism industry. People interested in historic and cultural activities also “spend more, do more and stay longer than other types of U.S. travelers.” The potential for capturing some of this financial windfall has even motivated theme parks and casinos to build “heritage sites” to attract tourists. However, there is tremendous risk in designing a heritage tourism program without the careful analysis and planning that goes into developing a heritage area. First, the desire to “jump on the bandwagon” often leads to inauthentic historic accounts or the “commodification” of heritage—the reduction of heritage to the lowest common denominator to attract the largest paying crowd. Attracting tourists without}}
first providing the appropriate infrastructure to accommodate their needs often leads to community outrage over crowded streets, lack of parking, etc., and can prove detrimental to the economic development efforts of the area when tourists are disappointed that the attractions are not well designed, coordinated, and staffed. Finally, selling heritage tourism without adequate protection measures in place can destroy the very resources that attract visitors to the area. In the end, these shortsighted efforts to capture tourism dollars will only last as long as the economy is strong and interest in visiting cultural and historic sites remains robust. The most successful heritage areas, on the other hand, are much more than tourist destinations. They are the expression of the people who live, work, and shape the land. Their stories are rich and diverse. They provide a bridge connecting the past to the present and people to their place.

**International Approaches to Heritage Principles**

U.S. heritage areas are relatively new compared to their international counterparts, and many lessons can be learned by examining the achievements and practices of these initiatives. Good examples can be found in England and Italy. Regional parks in France, in particular, are worth looking at more closely.

During the 1960s, the French government began to develop policies that would integrate social, economic, and environmental goals at a regional level. The French Regional Nature Parks, which were created as a part of this new approach, are similar to heritage areas in the United States in that they encompass entire landscapes, where millions of people live, work, and engage in recreation. Like heritage areas, regional parks in France are created through a locally based coalition which undertakes a planning process that extends over several years and includes a “landscape diagnosis”—a study of the natural and human factors that have shaped the landscape as well as an analysis of the region’s cultural, social, and economic situation. This study serves as the basis for the park’s charter, which, like a management plan, identifies the park’s boundary, objectives, management strategy, and budget. Each of the parks focuses its efforts on preserving and enhancing those qualities that make it culturally distinct.

Several important differences between the French and American systems point out the maturity of the French system. First, in France, the charter is a binding 10-year agreement and all local and regional officials who sign the charter commit to exercise their authority—including their land-use authority—in support of the charter. Second, while each park operates independently, each is seen as part of a larger system of parks that make up the French Regional Nature Parks. Finally, there is an umbrella organization, the Federation of French Regional Nature Parks, which provides various types of support including product promotion through coordinated local and regional branding, staff development, and marketing.

**Challenges**

As the heritage area movement begins to mature in the United States several challenges must be addressed.

**Leadership and Organizational Evolution:** Some of the management entities, particularly those with a commission or authority structure, struggle with issues of organizational evolution and find it difficult to attract new and visionary leaders to their boards. As many of the commission and authority members are appointed by a governor, these management entities often do not function like a board of directors but rather as a political oversight committee. This may hamper the ability of the organization to raise money and adapt to changing needs within the region.

**Communications:** Many of the rural heritage areas have difficulty expressing what their heritage area is and what it will accomplish. Further complications may arise when property rights proponents oppose the heritage area, concerned that it will affect their rights as landowners. Some of this difficulty stems from the lack of a widely accepted, clear, and precise definition of what a heritage area is and what it does. There is interest in Congress to further refine the federal definition and provide clearer guidelines to the National Park Service regarding feasibility studies. The challenge is to accomplish this goal—to provide clarity—while remaining flexible enough so that the concept of heritage areas can continue to encompass a wide variety of initiatives.
Meaningful Citizen Involvement: If heritage areas are about people, stories, and place, then residents must be meaningfully involved in the development, implementation, and evolution of the area. Some regions are simply too large for this type of meaningful involvement. Others are not interested in asking citizens to participate in what is considered a technically challenging planning process. Still others do not have the capacity and skill to deal with the competing interests and criticism that residents often provide. As a result, citizens are less engaged in the process and, accordingly, less committed to implementation.

National Coordination: Finally, there is much to be gained through better coordination among the existing heritage areas, with opportunities for sharing experiences, training, joint promotion, and product recognition. Fortunately, the Alliance of National Heritage Areas is beginning to undertake this very important role, but at this point the organization does not have the professional staff to meet the ever-growing demands of the field.

Conclusion
Heritage areas provide an important opportunity to re-invigorate communities in America. Recent studies have shown that Americans long to reconnect to their neighbors and their communities, but there are few mechanisms and places for that to happen. Heritage areas, done correctly, can provide that connection—among people, their place, and history.

Jayne Daly is director of programs for Glynwood Center, a nonprofit organization located in Cold Spring, N.Y., that helps communities address change in order to conserve local cultural and natural resources, heritage, and agriculture, and pursue economic opportunity consistent with these values. She is working with the Alliance of National Heritage Areas to develop the Heritage Development Institute.

Notes:
4 This definition was provided to Congress by the National Park Service during testimony at a House hearing held on October 26, 1999. See www.cr.nps.gov for a complete list of the National Heritage Areas.
5 Brenda Barrett, Heritage Area Bulletin Board (private list-serve), February 2003.

Evolution of the Heritage Area Movement

Tracing the evolution of heritage areas in the U.S. is a daunting and inherently leaky task that calls to mind D.W. Meinig’s paper, “The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene.” Meinig said that “even though we gather together and look in the same direction at the same instant, we will not—we cannot—see the same landscape. We will see many of the same elements, but such facts take on meaning only through association; they must be fitted together according to some coherent body of ideas.” Meinig added, “Any landscape is composed not only of what lies before your eyes but what lies within our heads.”

Heritage areas are like a view of the landscape in that everyone sees them, and their origins, differently because those involved have different values, goals, and backgrounds. The following description of the evolution of heritage areas is one view of the movement.

Origins and Influences
The heritage area movement began, arguably, in a dozen different places and points in time. The approach that is being used in hundreds of places evolved from a number of separate but related conservation, historic preservation, land-use, and economic development movements. Without question, heritage areas have evolved as a result of the 1949 creation of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act. For more than 50 years community leaders have worked first to preserve and conserve individual buildings and structures, and then districts, and then landscapes, and now entire regions. The heritage approach being used today, however, is much more than historic preservation and cultural resource conservation.

The major influences that created the first generation of heritage areas include evocative journalism, automobiles and the interstate highway system, cultural resource conser-
Heritage areas are an expression of the resurgence of democracy in America and the traditions of home rule. They illustrate the ability of economic leaders to broaden their focus to be able to integrate their goals with those of other interests and disciplines, thus creating a synergy with greater benefits to everyone.

Most importantly, the heritage area movement illustrates how the term “heritage” can be used as an organizing principle at all levels of government and in the private sector. In hundreds of regions the heritage idea is the unifying force that is strengthening communities and helping them successfully plan for their environmental, cultural, and economic future. Heritage areas benefit from work in cultural conservation, human ecology, and cultural anthropology. As the historic preservation community broadened its context for cooperation, technical and financial assistance, and outreach, insights from these fields were used to help people outside of the movement understand the importance of the relationship between people and the built environment.

Heritage areas give people visions of the past, present, and future. Heritage areas have a heart, soul, and human spirit that many traditional master plans, and land use and zoning ordinances lack. Heritage areas allow people to claim these places and make our communities, landscapes, and regions relevant special to the populations they serve.

**Evocative Journalism**

Author Chuck Little said, “Behind every successful conservation movement is a writer.” Writers, and their stories about places and people, have been important parts of the heritage area movement. The origins of the movement are obvious in the Federal Writers’ Project state and place guides of the 1930s. The project, created in 1935 as one of the New Deal’s undertakings, was a “government-sponsored national self-portraiture.” The guides, which came before superhighways, television, and computers, presented an enormous amount of research on an array of heritage topics and turned the untapped wealth of local history into a lasting treasure.

Across the country talented local writers wrote more than 1,200 guides and pamphlets about landscapes and communities. The writers used the documents to capture the sense of these places in a readable, evocative, enduring, and endearing way. The early guides gave people information on their own areas as well as descriptions of other places.

**Interstate Highway System**

As people became more aware of their, and other, communities, the government was working on the federal interstate highway system, to give them access to these places.

In 1954 President Eisenhower formed a Committee on a National Highway Program to assess the transportation needs of the nation. The committee had key leaders with a strong interest not only in the road system but in the direct and indirect impacts of the 41,000 miles of road that were part of Eisenhower’s vision.

Although the president’s plan stressed solving safety, transportation congestion, and nuclear evacuation issues, the impact on tourism—and access to the natural and cultural heritage was profound. The new highways gave people greater access to travel and the opportunity to compare and contrast other communities, landscapes, and cultures with their own.

**Recognition of Special Places**

The highways fueled land development, and leaders became concerned about the adverse impact of land-use change on special places. Between 1965 and 1977 state governments soon recognized that portions of the landscape were “sensitive areas.” This view emphasized the importance and uniqueness of place and led to state legislatures adopting nearly 100 statutes creating minimum development control standards for sensitive areas that included floodplains, wetlands, historic sites, and scenic areas.

Congress acted to help governments and the private sector conserve important values and improve land-use decision-making for special places. Not surprisingly, the management of the land-water interface was a major focus of these initiatives, as Congress enacted the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act in 1968 and the Coastal Zone Management Act in 1972.

Both the Coastal Zone and Scenic Rivers legislation defined federal policies to help all governments and the private sector plan for the future uses and enjoyment of these special landscapes. While federal legislation created frameworks for locally based work in coastal and river corridors, individual efforts were acting as the incubators of new ideas.

In 1968 the federal Bureau of Outdoor Recreation completed the “New England Heritage Study” to assess the feasibility of establishing the Connecticut River Valley as a national recreation area. The study report recognized “an outstanding array of historical, educational and cultural heritage, high quality scenic and recreational resources, and the need for a coordinated and interrelated program of public and private action.” New England’s “home rule” proponents disagreed with the recommendations and Congress never acted on the study. However, the proposal outlined a multi-objective approach centered on heritage values and an integrated partnership for implementation.

**Growing Awareness of Cultural Resources**

Heritage areas are inseparable and the combination is part of the intrinsic value of these places. But this view wasn’t always accepted. In the late-1960s and mid-70s historic preservationists, planners, and landscape architects began to change the way decision-makers looked at the relationship between people, the land, and the built environment.

Heritage areas benefited from work in cultural conservation, human ecology, and cultural anthropology. As the historic preservation community broadened its context for cooperation, technical and financial assistance, and outreach, insights from these fields were used to help people outside of the movement understand the importance of the relationship between people and the built environment. Greater value was placed on traditional land uses, vernacular architecture, working and everyday landscapes, and the populations they serve.

In 1969 Congress created...
the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) as a way to document America’s engineering, industrial, and technological heritage with measured drawings, large-format photographs, and written histories. The work was used to promote awareness and recognition of industrial heritage and assist state and local historic preservation and heritage area efforts.

The HAER Program helped create one of the earliest heritage area efforts in the U.S., on the Lehigh Canal in Pennsylvania. Led by a team that included Alan Comp and Karen Wade, the Lehigh effort refined the heritage area idea and built support for collaborative action.

In 1974 the University of Pennsylvania’s (UPenn) Department of Landscape Architecture, under Professor Ian McHarg, brought a team of human ecologists and cultural anthropologists to teach graduate-level ecological planning and design. The team was challenged to integrate the “other ecology” into the planning philosophy. Practical approaches for using human ecology to help make land-use decisions, reflecting natural and cultural values and functions, were taught and demonstrated. Jon Berger and Dan Rose, two of the professors, published Human Ecology and the Regional Plan, and trained a legion of landscape architects who would become prominent leaders of the heritage area movement within NPS.

Congress reinforced this view of culture through the creation of the American Folk Life Center (AFC) in 1976 to “preserve and present the heritage of American folk life” through programs of research, documentation, archival presentation, reference service, live performance, exhibition, publication, and training. The Center includes the Archive of Folk Culture, which was established in 1928 in the Library of Congress, and is one of the largest collections of ethnographic material from the nation and the world.

In 1990 UPenn and the American Folk Life Center collaborated in the New Jersey “Pine Barrens.” Mary Huffard of AFC, Berger, and Jonathan Sinton of Rutgers University used their human ecology methods to prepare a report for the New Jersey Pinelands Commission, Planning the Use and Management of the Pinelands: A Cultural, Historical, and Ecological Perspective. More so than any other heritage planning document, the report identified, explained, and illustrated the link between people, nature, and heritage in a form suitable for land-use management decisions.

Innovation in Parks, Preservation, and Development

In the 1970s leaders were searching for new ways to conserve landscapes. Land development outpaced conservation and preservation, land-use controls were increasingly unpopular, the cost of conservation far exceeded available budgets, and conflicts between protection and development were commonplace.

People were changing the way they looked at parks and special places. The public wanted these places close to where they lived for recreation, education, and to improve the quality of life. This changed view of parks and special landscapes—as places to live rather than just visit—dramatically expanded definitions of what was important to conserve.

These changes led to two new points of view. One placed greater emphasis on quality of life and land use, and firmly established “sense of place” as a national and community goal. The other was a greater value placed on living, working, and everyday landscapes and vernacular architecture. The new perspective shifted interest from distant natural parks and landscapes to those close to large populations and with a diversity of natural, cultural, and economic uses.

The heritage area movement evolved in special places and in Congress. In the early 1970s, in response to a depressed economy and an exodus of young people, the leaders of Lowell, Mass., proposed a plan for revitalization. Patrick J. Mogan, an educator, insisted that any revitalization of the city should be based on its industrial and ethnic heritage. After study and debate on Mogan’s proposal, city leaders decided to make Lowell a new kind of national park based on labor and industrial history. In 1978 Congress established Lowell Historic Park and the Lowell Historic Preservation Commission, a decision that proved to be a keystone of the heritage area movement.

Nationally the movement was making a shift. In 1976 Congress directed the NPS to undertake the “National Urban Recreation Study” to conduct a review and produce a report on the needs, problems, and opportunities associated with urban recreation in highly populated regions. This included analyzing the resources available for meeting such needs. The report recommended establishment of a national system of landscape conservation reserves based on a partnership between local, state, and federal governments; creation of a new urban recreation funding program; and development of a series of specific place-based heritage areas.

Author Chuck Little, then of the Congressional Research Service, prepared a report for Congress that summarized the need for a new approach to urban park acquisition and management, Greenline Parks: An Approach to Preserving Recreational Landscapes in Urban Areas. The concept, “greenline parks,” was based on U.S. and international precedents and it suggested that special landscapes could be protected using a combination of federal, state, and local means under a coordinated regional plan.

Although Congress never enacted legislation for this approach, many government agencies and private groups, with the assistance of the National Parks & Conservation Association and the American Land Forum, began to apply it in specific communities and landscapes.
In 1979 the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act program, in response to public support, was modified to create a technical and financial assistance program to help states and local governments conserve and protect important river corridors. Using a philosophy to help people help themselves conserve and protect resources, NPS created the Rivers & Trails Program, William K. Reilly, then president of The Conservation Foundation, in testimony before Congress, described the assistance as “in the best tradition of federalism and local initiative and a prototype for the next generation of land and water conservation techniques in America, one that adroitly melds federal, state, local, and private efforts into a cost-effective partnership.”

The Rivers & Trails Program’s community-based view was responsive to requests that didn’t fit neatly into existing federal programs. Requests came from places where community, and often congressional, leaders wanted to coordinate historic preservation, parks, and economic development into an integrated approach. As a result of this approach NPS became a sought-after federal partner for many of the earliest heritage area efforts, including eight current federal areas.

Massachusetts and New York played a leadership role in heritage areas. Massachusetts developed a strategy, based on the success of Lowell, for conserving and promoting the cultural resources of aging and declining cities to build community pride, enhance the quality of life, and stimulate economic revitalization. In 1979 the state created the “Urban Cultural Park Program” and designated 14 locally administered heritage parks located in 21 cities and villages.

Private sector historic preservation interests also adopted heritage approaches. In 1980 the National Trust’s National Main Street Center began to work with communities to revitalize their historic and traditional commercial areas. The Main Street approach was developed to save historic commercial architecture and the fabric of American communities’ built environment by partnering with development interests and using economic tools. With inspired leadership, from people such as Mary Means and Scott Gerloff, Main Street brought historic preservation and cultural conservation into communities with an emphasis on empowerment, innovation, sustainability, and flexibility.

Heritage area elements also surfaced in the White House. In 1981 the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) issued a report, Landscape Conservation & Development: An Evolving Alternative to Public Land Acquisition, to articulate the need to find a way to protect nationally significant landscapes faced with urbanization. The report built on greenline park philosophy and examined alternative ways to link protection and development, with appropriate federal roles. The effort sent a signal, from the Office of the President, that it was important to find ways to make land-use decisions that would allow communities and regions to protect important values and prosper economically.

Over time these efforts laid the foundation for the heritage area movement, shaping the principles that make it effective. These laws and projects proved to be important policy and place-specific testing grounds for new approaches to integrate different public objectives. The legislative and community initiatives also began to move government away from top-down, single-purpose approaches to conservation, historic preservation, park and economic development assistance, and decision-making.

First Generation of Heritage Areas

In the 1980s the first generation of national heritage areas arrived. The movement surfaced in 1984 with the designation of the Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor (I&M).

The I&M initially was an educational and identification program undertaken by the Open Lands Project, a private nonprofit organization that focused on a 25-mile segment of the corridor along the Des Plaines River. It began in 1980 and was unlike traditional state or national parks because it was located in one of the country’s most industrialized regions.

The I&M effort combined a diversity of land uses, management programs, and historical themes blended with economic development and grassroots involvement. With leadership from Jerry Adelmann and others, it was intended to encourage economic growth by preserving natural lands alongside of industries and historic structures within commercial centers. Project planners envisioned that the federal government would provide recognition, technical assistance, and coordination through a Corridor Commission.

The I&M’s goal for linking and maintaining the balance between nature and industry, and encouraging economic regeneration, caught the attention of many states and communities within the eastern U.S. In 1983 Congress directed NPS to assist Massachusetts and Rhode Island with a strategy for the future conservation, management, and use of the Blackstone River corridor. In addition, Congress directed NPS to assess whether the valley should be included in the national park system.

The Blackstone study did not recommend traditional national park designation. However, the report indicated that “there may be a role for federal assistance in the area...
The heritage area movement also surfaced in Pennsylvania. The commonwealth was well versed in integrating state environmental, cultural, and economic programs in cities and communities and had been exploring the state heritage park approach. In 1984 the commonwealth developed a framework for a Pennsylvania Heritage Parks Program “to preserve cultural resources in a manner which provides educational, recreational and economic benefits.” The commonwealth and NPS formed a partnership and the two governments worked in tandem to collaboratively support a series of state and federal heritage designations.

Heritage area interest in Pennsylvania, as well as other eastern states, surged when the population turned its interest, and disposable income, toward heritage tourism. In the late 1980s Americans were more educated, older, and willing to spend more money on travel and recreation. The baby boomers “back-to-the-city movement” was beginning and public demand for shorter, less strenuous, and more authentic vacations was increasing. Heritage tourism expert Richard Roddewig described the situation by saying, “The U.S. was mature enough as a country to have a varied and rich architectural, cultural and social history that makes every corner of the country fascinating.”

Heritage tourism increased the forces of fundamental demand and supply for heritage areas. As these forces were converging, the human spirit, public and political support, technical know-how, and legislative precedents were all available to meet the demand. Heritage areas began to multiply exponentially each year, as this community-based movement became a publicly supported approach to meeting environmental, cultural, and economic goals.

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Notes


Planning for Heritage Areas

Joseph DiBello

In the last 20 years we have seen the emergence of 23 federally designated heritage areas with more likely to be designated. Many heritage areas have also been created at the state and local level. These areas are living regional landscapes where residents and governments have formed partnerships to celebrate and conserve their natural and cultural resources. Congress has recognized and authorized these partnerships, and federal, state, and local agencies and organizations, including the National Park Service (NPS) have been assisting. The National Park Service’s role with national heritage areas focuses on providing information, advice, recognition, and technical and financial assistance in partnership with others. Planning assistance is one of the most important services NPS provides, and it helps make these locally driven heritage conservation efforts successful. By contributing and participating in the planning process, we can help develop the future vision for these areas, collaborate with multiple jurisdictions and interests, and help establish a workable plan for the area.

The most successful planning efforts are those that use an open planning process which includes partners and the general public. Why? Because planning processes that involve the public bring greater understanding, new ideas, additional information and perspective. An open process also helps develop long-term relationships with communities and future partners. Ultimately we can make better decisions by using an effective public planning process specifically designed for the place and situation. An open public planning process is critical and essential to establishing the dialogue, relationship, and collaboration that must be developed in order for these partnership strategies to succeed.

Heritage initiatives have created successful partnerships and plans to conserve and recognize regional landscapes where people live and work.

The planning process helps residents and visitors learn more about their past, gain appreciation for it, and develop ideas for how to move toward the future while enhancing the quality of life in a region. In the brief history of developing and implementing plans for heritage areas, there have been some resounding successes that have made a real difference to the people in heritage area communities.

Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor

The Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor stretches about 160 miles in northeastern Pennsylvania. It is home to a rich past including the nation’s most intact, accessible, and water-filled towpath canal, which was in service for the longest period for any such canal. It also includes resources and stories associated with anthracite coal mining, steel manufacturing, and other manufacturing enterprises. The towns within the heritage corridor all date from the time of the canal’s construction and most active period of operation, between 1830 and 1860; they collectively maintain a large degree of historic integrity. In 1988 Congress designated the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor and established a 21-member federal commission to develop and implement a management action plan. In January 1993, the Management Action Plan (MAP) was completed. The plan took more time than was anticipated but it was worth the effort. By taking the time to engage in a public dialogue, the process helped build understanding, awareness, support, and partnerships. The involvement stimulated action, and plan recommendations guided the efforts of the many partners.

The canal, manufacturing, and mining are all largely stories of the past. The planning process envisioned new

Visitors enjoy walking the scenic trail along the Lehigh Canal, which is part of the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor. Photo by Peter Samuel.
activities built on this rich past. Jim Thorpe, a 19th-century town along the corridor, is just one example of the towns that now attract visitors and have experienced revitalization. The Crayola Company not only makes crayons but also supports a visitor facility in Easton that provides information about the region and the company’s products. A 160-mile trail is being developed that will link communities and the countryside and intersect the Appalachian Trail and 20 other connecting trails. These are just a sample of the many accomplishments that were envisioned as a result of the planning process.

Lackawanna Valley National Heritage Area

Another example of a planning process that helped shape a heritage area is in the Lackawanna Valley National Heritage Area. Authorized by the governor of Pennsylvania as Pennsylvania’s first state heritage park in 1991, and designated as a national heritage area in October 2000, the Lackawanna Valley National Heritage Area is located in northeastern Pennsylvania and encompasses the watershed area of the Lackawanna River in Lackawanna, Luzerne, Wayne, and Susquehanna counties. Focusing on the heritage of the anthracite and anthracite-related industries, the Lackawanna Valley National Heritage Area creates partnerships to conserve, interpret, and develop cultural, natural, and recreational resources related to the significant impact this region had on the industrial growth of the United States.

Interestingly, the idea of a heritage area occurred during the planning process for Steamtown National Historic Site, which was designated in 1986. In developing the general management plan for this site, an extensive public process was used. It effectively engaged the community and offered an opportunity to examine the connection of related regional resources to the Steamtown railyard site. During this public process, the community and participants created the idea to link park resources and tell the broader story of the Lackawanna Valley. A subsequent heritage planning effort, also designed to involve the public and build partnerships, crafted the plan for a collaborative heritage partnership to conserve and enhance the resources of the region. The management plan served for 10 years and successfully guided heritage efforts in the Lackawanna Valley. Today many of the recommended actions have been carried out, a testament to the value of collaborative planning and of a commitment to partnerships.

The Stages of Heritage Planning

In both of the above cases, the management plans are being updated because much of the work envisioned years ago has been completed. A new vision and action guide for the next phase of these heritage areas is being developed. Examining these and other heritage planning experiences will help us learn much about planning for heritage areas. The existing areas are in many different stages and offer a great opportunity to experiment and learn about heritage planning.

Stated very simply, there are two stages to heritage area planning. In the early or formative stages of heritage areas, the interested public examines the resources of the area, the important themes or stories associated with them, the opportunities to conserve or preserve resources, and opportunities for public use and education. It is important to identify local issues and concerns and to explore ideas or concepts for the heritage area. Using a planning process built on public participation, there should be a clear sense of commitment to the heritage effort, and an understanding of who will participate and how it will be moved to the next stage.

As the heritage effort moves forward, it advances into the management planning phase which builds on the earlier concepts, brings in more views and agreement, and refines and details actions by identifying who will be doing what. A greater focus on organizing, involving, and developing the partnership and management entity also occurs. But it is not just about planning and process. While plans help decide what to do and how to do it, successful heritage areas also need to get things done. It is important to begin taking action and demonstrating progress.

Allen Sachse, executive director of the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, explained in his testimony to the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on National Parks, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, on March 13, 2003: “The Pennsylvania Heritage Parks program requires a two-step process before designation is granted. First is the feasibility study, which determines the study area, the lead agency, the
stakeholders, the public support, the appropriate theme(s) within the state framework, and supporting resources. If approved by a state inter-agency task force, the project area may go forward to the management action plan phase. If not, the applicant is offered assistance through the more traditional categorical and technical assistance programs... The state provides funding assistance for the two-step planning process.”

This approach is very effective. Completing and adopting management plans before seeking federal designation addresses many of the concerns of residents, government agencies, and elected officials. The National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the National Trails System Act require study authorization prior to designation as does the National Park Service for potential new units to the national park system. As we develop feasibility and management plan guidelines for heritage areas, we should examine and learn from the planning experiences of federally and state-designated areas.

Heritage areas are community-driven and include federal, state, and local government agencies and private groups. Community participation is the heart of the process. The challenge is coordinating and complementing the broad array of conservation, preservation, management, and interpretation work being carried out by a variety of agencies and groups. Heritage planning projects require extensive public involvement and consensus building. We need to develop new skills in planning to achieve mutually agreeable goals and assure that residents are heard and empowered in the process. We must also find the resources needed to support the heritage planning process. As General Dwight D. Eisenhower said in planning D-Day, “plans are useless, but planning is essential.”

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Sources of additional information:
2001 NPS Management Policies and National Park Service Director’s Order #2: Park Planning. These documents are accessible through the National Park Service ParkNet home page www.nps.gov
National Parks and Their Neighbors: Lessons from the field on building partnerships with local communities, prepared by the Sonoran Institute and the National Park Service, 1996.
Collaboration and Conservation: Lessons Learned in Areas Managed through National Park Service Partnerships, prepared by the Conservation Study Institute for the National Park Service, 2000.
Community Tool Box, produced by the Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, National Park Service. Accessible at www.nps.gov/ phso/trcatoolbox

The Blue Ridge Heritage Initiative: Partnerships to Preserve Traditions and Promote Positive Change

Becky Anderson

Since 1996 The Blue Ridge Heritage Initiative has fostered heritage development that both preserves and presents western North Carolina’s cultural resources. The Initiative has forged a partnership of HandMade In America, The Blue Ridge Parkway, and the Folklife Program of The North Carolina Arts Council that works to achieve new levels of cultural conservation, education, sustainable tourism, and economic development for the region. Guiding this initiative is the premise that heritage—those cultural traditions, natural resources, and historical events that together create a distinctive identity for the region—is integral to the well-being of communities and that the Southern Appalachians contain a heritage that is significant to the region and nation.

Participants in the initiative believe that partnerships are essential to achieving sustainable heritage development. Collaborations between organizations and communities with diverse interests have resulted in resource sharing and consensus building on a regional level. Just as important, these partnerships have encouraged discussion and debate within western North Carolina about how to achieve goals and implement projects. Through this dialogue, a core set of values has emerged which guide the work:

• The cultural, natural, and historic resources can be utilized to meet the social and economic challenges faced by communities in the region.

• Communities that possess resources used in heritage tourism and other economic development initiatives should have a major role in planning and implementing those initiatives.

• The conservation and perpetuation of heritage resources is of equal importance to economic development. Sacred sites and resources within communities must be protected and preserved.

• Basic strategies of preservation, adaptation, and activism are used to conserve
National Heritage Areas Program, 2003

Yuma Crossing

Cache La Poudre

Silos & Smokestacks

Ohio & Erie Canal

Illinois & Michigan

MotorCities

Wheeling

National Coal

Eno River Valley

Tennessee Civil War

Shenandoah Valley Battlefields

Ohio & Erie Canal

MotorCities

Rivers of Steel

Erie Canalway

Blackstone River Valley

Quinebaug—Shetucket Rivers Valley

Lackawanna Heritage Valley

Delaware & Lehigh

Schuylkill River Valley

Erie Canalway

Blackstone River Valley

Quinebaug—Shetucket Rivers Valley

Lackawanna Heritage Valley

Delaware & Lehigh

Schuylkill River Valley

For more information:
www.ohioeriecanal.org/nationalheritage.html
www.cr.nps.gov/heritageareas
Basic strategies of preservation, adaptation, and activism are used to conserve tradition amidst profound changes.

Preservation

The music traditions of the region are a major focus of preservation as exemplified in two projects: the Curriculum, Music, and Community Program and The Junior Appalachian Musicians Program. In the Curriculum, Music, and Community Program (CAM), traditional artists from local communities visit participating schools to share their artistry and to inspire the creation of lesson plans and activities in all areas of the fourth-grade curriculum. The curriculum was designed by local teachers and conforms to North Carolina’s state-mandated curriculum. Whether students polish their writing skills to create ballads, enhance their analytical ability by comparing different treatments of the same song, or develop deeper relationships through interviews with community elders, they explore their heritage in ways not normally associated with textbook learning.

Adaptation

The ability to conserve a region’s culture by adapting it to current economic patterns is a major strategy of The Blue Ridge Heritage Initiative. With the demise of the economics of factory production and the timbering industry, tourism has become the energizing economic force in western North Carolina, attracting more than 20 million visitors annually. Utilizing a new style of community tourism development, the Initiative has developed a series of self-guided auto trails that form a system of linked resources connecting several communities with each other. Communities are asked to define their “sacred places,” to list places that belong to community and are not welcoming to visitors, and to list those places reflecting their music, crafts, and agricultural heritage they would like to share with visitors.

A series of guides—The Craft Heritage Trails of Western North Carolina, The Blue Ridge Music Trails, and The Farms, Gardens, and Countryside Trails of Western North Carolina—take visitors to historic and natural sites; to private studios, gardens, and farms; and to shops, galleries, music venues, festivals, historic lodgings, and restaurants featuring local cuisine. In addition, a Cherokee Heritage Trail presents Cherokee resources that include historic landscapes, museums, festivals, historic reenactments, shops with authentic Cherokee crafts, and restaurants featuring traditional Cherokee food.

Products and Outcomes: More than 40,000 guidebooks have been sold and incomes of the trail participants have increased by 15 percent over the past five years. In addition to the guidebooks, three websites—www.CherokeeHeritageTrails.org, www.handmadeinamerica.org, and www.blueridgemusictrail.org—are available to visitors and local residents. Other products include the development of tours and weekend itineraries for visitors with an emphasis on educational tours and vacations.

Activism

The strategy of activism and involvement by the region’s citizens has resulted in a downtown revitalization effort in 12 of the region’s smallest towns which focuses on the heritage of each community. Using the National Main Street model to preserve the traditional environment and unique character of each community, HandMade In America provides technical assistance in economic restructuring, appearance, marketing, and organizational activities. In defining its assets, each community lists its cultural and historical traditions, and the community’s oldest citizens are invited to share their memories of the community. Using an empowerment
Essex County, Mass., was the center of many events that profoundly influenced the course of American history. For more than 1,000 years, the area has been home to Native Americans, Puritan settlers, maritime entrepreneurs, industrialists, and waves of other immigrants from across the globe. Today, within this 500-square-mile region north of Boston, there still exist thousands of reminders of the region’s prominent history, including 9,300 properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places, 600 National Register historic districts, and 25 National Historic Landmarks. Beyond the NR-listed resources, the area also contains hundreds of cultural landscapes, ancient archeological sites, and remarkable townscapes and farmlands that have remained unchanged for decades and, in some cases, centuries. In 1996, the U.S. Congress designated this region the Essex National Heritage Area in recognition of its nationally significant resources and history.

National heritage area designation does not grant any regulatory powers or development controls. Successful preservation must be achieved by engaging the interest and commitment of individuals and communities who voluntarily decide to preserve the region’s heritage. To accomplish this, the Essex National Heritage Area focuses on promoting partnerships and educational opportunities that enhance, preserve, and encourage regional awareness of the historic, cultural, and natural resources and traditions of Essex County.

**The Partners**

The Essex National Heritage Area started with a unique public-private partnership between The Salem Partnership (a coalition of elected officials, local businesses, and cultural leaders) in alliance with the National Park Service and the Salem Maritime National Historic Site. The Salem Maritime National Historic Site was created by

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**Essex National Heritage Area Embraces Heritage Education**

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The Essex National Heritage Commission has expanded its education programming outside of schools. Through its "History in the Making" program, middle school youth are connected to the heritage and culture of the region through the use of visual and theatrical arts. Photo courtesy of the Essex National Heritage Commission.

order of the Secretary of the Interior under the authority of the Historic Sites Act of 1935. This significant piece of legislation established the federal government’s role in the preservation of our nation’s historic resources, and Salem Maritime became the first National Historic Site in the national park system. Immediately following its dedication, NPS developed elaborate plans for the park, but these plans were interrupted by the onset of World War II. By 1986 the Salem Maritime site with its historic 18th-century wharves, U.S. Custom House (where Nathaniel Hawthorne penned The Scarlet Letter) and Derby House were badly in need of repair. It was this condition that spurred the successful partnership between the community and the National Park Service.

The Salem Maritime National Historic Site has the resources to tell a powerful story of American settlement, maritime prowess, and industrialization. But many soon realized as the planning started that the story could be greatly enhanced by extending it to include other resources in the region. The Essex National Heritage Area concept was created, and an ad hoc commission was formed to pursue this vision that later became the nonprofit Essex National Heritage Commission (ENHC) after the national designation was achieved.

Early on, the commission surveyed the resource managers and volunteers at the region’s heritage and cultural sites. A startling result showed that these heritage “stewards” averaged 60+ years of age. It was apparent that young people must become engaged in the region’s history and culture if these heritage resources are to be preserved in the future. Education became a priority.

Focus on Heritage Education

At the same time that the commission began focusing on reaching the area’s students and their teachers, the Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE) was following the national trend toward requiring greater educational accountability and annual testing. In the late 1990s, DOE introduced statewide standardized curricula in all subjects. The result has been that, in fields such as social studies and American history, the mandated “History Framework” now is focused on broad, national stories and seldom relates them to regional history and culture.

In the Essex National Heritage Area, where local events often determined national history, this disconnect has been particularly distressing. Exposure to local history and local sites is often a significant factor in engaging students to see the bigger concepts of history. When local sites associated with a historic personage of the stature of Frederick Douglass, who lived and worked for many years in this region, are not connected to the study of abolitionists and the Civil War, students lose a very valuable opportunity to relate to history in a personal way. To counteract this trend, the Essex National Heritage Commission, in partnership with the National Park Service, is developing innovative programs that connect local resources with the study of history and life sciences.

ENHC History Frameworks

The Massachusetts DOE-mandated curricula consist of outlines of required topics, subtopics, and bibliographies. There are no textbooks that follow this outline, no anthologies that cover each topic or subtopic, and no prepared “units” and other supporting materials to illustrate the themes. To fill this void in the Massachusetts American History Framework Standards and, more recently, in the Life Sciences Standards, ENHC has developed a web-based program that systematically follows the state’s outline and links local sites, archival records, and regional history to DOE’s required learning standards.

Access the education pages on the ENHC website and you can go from the outline of the “pre-Civil War reformers; abolitionism; labor” to the compelling “Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave.” Further into the website, you can read information on the National Park Service’s special

Exposure to local history and local sites is often a significant factor in engaging students to see the bigger concepts of history.
resource study on the Underground Railroad, including field trip opportunities as well as “tried and true” lesson plans with local resources, presented alongside national programs such as NASA’s “Follow the Drinking Gourd.”

Partnering with experienced teachers, museum educators, historians, and naturalists, ENHC is working to construct a network with the best local, regional, and national materials available. With this system, teachers are able to access authentic local and national learning materials; curriculum planners can justify field trips that complement the curriculum; and museum educators are able to re-establish connections with local schools. In every case, connections are being built with future generations learning to value and preserve the remarkable heritage of this area.

Alone, the website is not enough. To showcase the website, to further its development, and to evaluate it, ENHC does in-service demonstrations and workshops for teachers and curriculum coordinators. ENHC is also piloting a local research program whereby teachers receive small stipends for visiting local historical archives, galleries, or sites and conducting research to connect these primary sources with their classes. Teachers design curriculum units that incorporate the area’s resources, these units are posted on the web, and new connections are made between the local repositories and the schools.

**“History in the Making” Program**

Learning does not take place only in the classroom. To connect young people with the heritage of the area, ENHC has expanded its educational programming in a number of ways outside of the schools. One of these programs, called “History in the Making,” connects middle school youth to the heritage and culture of the region through the use of visual and theatrical arts. For at-risk children from immigrant and low-income families, their place in the history of the larger region is often unclear. This lack of connection can lead to resentment, isolation, and the destruction of heritage resources because these sites are seen as symbols of a culture that does not welcome newcomers.

ENHC has developed a successful “History in the Making” program in partnership with three urban Boys and Girls Clubs. Club members are encouraged to paint murals, produce drama shows, and construct shadow boxes that celebrate their experiences, and, in the process, they come to understand that they are contributing to the area’s heritage. In the newest segment of the program, “Immigrant Voices,” twenty 12- to 15-year-old children are interviewing older immigrants for the purpose of comparing their experiences with those of earlier ethnic groups. From these interviews they are developing works in a variety of mediums to present the unique role each wave of immigration has played in the region’s ongoing stories.

**A Growing Role for Sites**

Heritage education takes a comprehensive approach. It seeks to show history not as a collection of individual sites and events but as a continuum of human activity from ancient times to the present. It relates the past to the places where people still live, work, and play. Heritage areas, along with the National Park Service’s parks and historic sites, include many of our country’s most significant historic, cultural, and natural resources. They are remarkable places that have often been called “classrooms without walls.” If we expect future generations to care about our nation’s heritage, it is clear that the National Park Service, the national heritage areas, and their partners will have to be proactive in building relationships with our educators and our students.

**The Essex National Heritage Commission’s History Frameworks program links local sites and resources to the state mandated curriculum.**

Annie C. Harris is the executive director of the Essex National Heritage Commission.
The Blessing and Curse of the Last Green Valley

Cradled within the green rolling hills of northeastern Connecticut and south-central Massachusetts is the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley. The watershed of these two rivers (whose names so frequently tongue-twist) is the last predominately undeveloped region in the Boston-to-Washington coastal sprawl. In 1994 the U.S. Congress recognized the area as a national resource by designating it the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor.

Blessing and Curse

The Last Green Valley, as the Quinebaug-Shetucket NHC is also known, remains more than 70 percent green due to its forests and farms. Not only does the region have an abundance of land but it also has relatively low land prices. It is located within one hour of three of the four largest urban centers in New England—Boston, Mass., Hartford, Conn., and Providence, R.I.—and a one-hour commute has become an attractive trade-off to many who covet the quality of life and quality of place available in The Last Green Valley. Development pressure grows exponentially each year, especially from single-family, large-lot subdivisions. The lowest mortgage rates in decades are fueling development, even in a difficult economy.

New England has no county government system. Land-use decisions are made on the local level, and most of the Quinebaug-Shetucket’s 35 towns are small and volunteer-run with no professional planning staff. Three have no zoning at all.

No Regulatory Authority

Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor, Inc., (QSHC) the nonprofit management entity for the national heritage corridor, has no regulatory authority. It pursues its mission by acting as a catalyst to promote partnerships, serving as an educator and facilitator to motivate independent actions that will accomplish the mission, and acting through specific projects and programs when it is apparent that QSHC, Inc., is the most appropriate entity to undertake critical work.

It was clear from the beginning that if QSHC, Inc., were to influence positive changes in land-use decisions, it must develop a system for delivering information and services to those who made these decisions—landowners, land trusts, municipal officials and volunteers, developers, and real estate agents.

The Corridor Circuit Rider

As a first attempt to provide assistance to the local governments, QSHC, Inc., and the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension Service entered into an innovative partnership to undertake a position for a land-use/community-planning educator, or “circuit rider,” to work directly with individual members of municipal boards and commissions. The first order of business was to conduct a needs assessment of that audience. It garnered a 35 percent response and the results were used to focus the educational effort of the corridor circuit rider.

The corridor circuit rider provided current and cutting-edge information to foster sound stewardship of the land and natural resources, develop greenways, and provide for innovative economic development compatible with the significant resources of The Last Green Valley. The program was very popular and received accolades from many local governments whose capacity was enhanced by the access to the circuit rider.

One of the projects undertaken by the corridor circuit rider was developing a design manual for property owners, developers, and local governments for National Scenic Byway Route 169. Another focus was a continuing education program for the volunteers working in natural resources, land-use, and community design to foster widespread and intelligent conservation ethics within The Last Green Valley. The circuit rider published a quarterly newsletter and prepared a series of 20-minute presentations on hot topics that could be brought to any meeting of a local board or commission, complete with useful handouts. The circuit rider became a popular and reliable resource.

The Community Compact

In February 2002 leaders from the 35 towns of The Last Green Valley came together to sign the Community Compact, a non-binding document showing each town’s acceptance of the goals and objectives of Vision 2010: A Ten-Year Plan and expressing their commitment to balance conservation and growth by:

• protecting and enhancing the nationally significant resources of the National Heritage Corridor;
• sustaining and connecting diverse habitats and rural landscapes throughout the National Heritage Corridor;
• ensuring the long-term social, economic, and environmental health and vitality of the communities of the National Heritage Corridor.

This unprecedented collective affirmation of both the work of QSHC, Inc., and the necessity for all towns to work together toward common goals encouraged the expansion of the corridor circuit rider program.

The Green Valley Institute Program

The University of Connecticut College of Agriculture and
Natural Resources, Cooperative Extension Service, located in The Last Green Valley, shared QSHC, Inc.’s concern for the future of the region. Several educational projects had been launched with the corridor circuit rider related to town plans for conservation and development. The two entities began a joint venture called the Green Valley Institute (GVI), a comprehensive program of information management, continuing education, volunteer recruitment and training, and technical assistance in natural resources and land use. From its inception, the goals of the Green Valley Institute have been to improve the knowledge base from which land-use and natural resource decisions are made, and to build local capacity to protect and manage natural resources as the region grows. In addition to the formal relationship between QSHC and the University of Connecticut, Cooperative Extension Service, there are strong partnerships with the University of Massachusetts, Cooperative Extension Service and many other nonprofits and local, regional, and state agencies to develop and deliver the programming.

The GVI Program has four primary components: the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Data Center; comprehensive continuing education; volunteer recruitment, training, and support; and technical assistance.

The GIS Data Center makes current land-use and natural resource data available to towns, land trusts, and others for use in planning and decision-making. In many cases, this service has saved local governments considerable funds in preparing updated plans of conservation and development, as required by the states. It has also been a useful tool for QSHC, Inc., in illustrating the precise nature of the considerable resources of The Last Green Valley.

The GVI maintains a hectic schedule of practical and applied educational programs, some given annually and others when the need arises. It has offered an annual conference on Conservation Planning and Action, a series of workshops on protecting family lands from development, and an annual weekend retreat to train conservation volunteers.

Since volunteers make up the majority of the workforce in land-use planning and conservation, GVI has developed a system for recruiting prospective volunteers, providing them with essential education, and making new recruits available through a clearinghouse that matches the volunteer with an opportunity for service.

The GVI staff includes several specialists in community planning and estate planning/land protection. These staff members help landowners and communities develop site-specific plans for land conservation and development capacity.

Accomplishments and Recognition

The following results were measured in 2002 as positive outcomes of the Green Valley Institute:

• Hundreds of individuals were educated and are now at work in local venues.
• Cooperative natural resource inventory projects were completed in multi-town units and will indicate the direction of future planning.
• “Your Family Lands: Legacy or Memory?”—a workshop on estate planning—was offered for private landowners; a follow-up survey with a 40 percent response rate indicated that more than 1,678 acres of land are now under protection as a result of the program.
• The Green Valley Brush Brigade, a conservation SWAT team of volunteers, made themselves available to land trusts and other entities that needed on-the-ground assistance and donated 400 hours to conservation in 2002.
• Only in its second year, the Green Valley Institute was presented with the Connecticut Greenways Council’s Outstanding Education Award in May 2002. Later in the year, the Connecticut Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects gave the GVI’s program “Development Alternatives that Conserve Open Space” its Honor Award in Communications. In December, the Northeast Extension Directors’ Association presented GVI with its award for the Outstanding Cooperative Extension System Program in the 12 northeastern states.

The Challenge Ahead

At the beginning of a new century and with the abundance of existing resources, the people of The Last Green Valley have an unprecedented opportunity to celebrate and conserve the region. Unlike in surrounding areas that have already been overdeveloped, the people here still have the chance to make thoughtful decisions regarding quality of life and quality of place. But the clock is ticking. With reductions in federal, state, and local resources, it will take innovative partnerships like the Green Valley Institute to preserve the Last Green Valley.

Charlene Perkins Cutler is the executive director and chief executive officer of Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor, Inc., located in Putnam, Conn. For more information on the Green Valley Institute, visit its website: www.thelastgreenvalley.org.

The expansiveness of The Last Green Valley is best appreciated from the air. The view shows the Quinebaug River emerging from the mist at dawn. Photo by G. Leslie Sweetnam.
Four Corners Heritage Council: A Complex Collaboration to Meet Regional Goals

Wilson Martin

The mission of the Four Corners Heritage Council is to promote partnerships in heritage resource tourism, education, interpretation, and stewardship.

The Four Corners Heritage Council was established in 1992 by signing a cooperative agreement between the four governors of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah. The cooperative agreement was the result of a Four Corners governors conference held at the Anasazi Heritage Center in Delores, Colo., in June 1990. More than 100 public and private sector representatives from the Four Corners region joined in the conference to create a vision for the management, protection, and promotion of the world-class cultural resources and heritage of the region. Participants in the six conference working groups addressed the specific topics of economic development, management, interpretation, public involvement, partnership strategies, and law enforcement.

The cooperative agreement contained private property rights protection and laid out the goals of the Four Corners Heritage Council:

1. To improve cultural resource management, conservation, and protection.
2. To increase public access to and enjoyment of the region’s heritage resources.
3. To increase public involvement and education in heritage resources and management.
4. To expand comprehensive research into the heritage resources of the region.
5. To facilitate the establishment of a site recognition system for heritage resources.
6. To provide increased economic development opportunities.
7. To foster partnerships among public agencies, private landowners, and Indian tribes.
8. To facilitate the establishment of the “Trails of the Ancients” as a touring route that links prehistoric and historic cultural sites and scenic attractions in the Four Corners area. The route is intended to connect to the already established Masau Trail in New Mexico and Arizona, as well as other possible byways.

A 12-member council was established with three representatives from each of the four states. Two representatives were required to reside in the area, with one member at large. One member from each state must represent a Native American component. Over time, this council of 12 individual members has changed into what is now known as the council of ten. The council of ten represents the four states, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah; the tribes, Hopi, Navajo, and Ute Mountain; and federal agencies, the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and U.S. Forest Service. For a complete transcript of the cooperative agreement, please visit www.history.utah.gov/httoolkit/p6c.html.

Further refinement of the eight items in the cooperative agreement has led to tightening and grouping of activities. The program responsibilities of the Four Corners Heritage Council are now heritage education, heritage stewardship, heritage tourism, and heritage trails. Further partners have been invited to participate, including Area Resource Development Councils, Consortium of Heritage Stewardship, Four Corners Tourism Council, and Southwest Heritage Education Group.

The Four Corners Heritage Council has also been

Heritage tourism opportunities include hands-on workshops with Native American scholars and artisans. Photo courtesy of Crow Canyon.
undertaken and completed include:

1. Adopt a Site program.
2. Site Stewardship conference held in Blanding, Utah, in 2001. Topics included volunteer recruitment and management, start-up and funding, media relations and public education, and program sustainability. (see www.history.utah.gov/httoolkit/c6.html).
3. Trail of Many Tracks, a heritage auto touring route designed to be linked with heritage tourism efforts for the Four Corners region (www.littlecolorado.org/tofmt.htm).
4. Trail of the Ancients, a completely marked scenic byway that links a number of archeological sites as well as significant cultural and historic sites in the Four Corners region (www.southeastutah.org/tourism/scenic.htm#Trail Ancients).
5. Land of Silent Voices video.
6. Projects that are nearly completed include the Four Corners Visitor/Interpretive Center and the Monument Valley Welcome Center.

The Four Corners Heritage Council has also participated in the completion of the Utah Heritage Tourism Toolkit (at www.history.utah.gov/httoolkit/). The Council is currently working on an archeological site stabilization training program (Archaeological Academy) in partnership with the Bureau of Land Management; U.S. Forest Service; National Park Service; Utah Division of State History, Antiquities Section; College of Eastern Utah; and Utah State University at the College of Eastern Utah, Blanding Campus.

A Utah State Heritage Area grant program further assisted the Four Corners Heritage Council efforts. The purpose of the grant program is to provide a source of revenue to developing heritage areas and corridors and assist them with moving toward full state and potentially federal designation (see www.history.utah.gov/httoolkit/d9.html).

The Council has received ongoing funding from the four states and tribal entities, as well as number of grants from other organizations.

The Four Corners Heritage Council is now seeking federal heritage trail designation and is working on a number of other projects to enhance the experience, education, and visitation of those interested in the area.

Guiding Principles include cultural appropriateness, environmental sensitivity, and economic sustainability.

The council meets six to seven times per year. Due to the complexities of the area boundaries and partnerships, efforts have not necessarily come quickly to fruition, but have continually moved toward achieving their key goals.

Projects of the Four Corners Heritage Council

Projects that have been able to identify a theme for their area: “There are no boundaries.”

There are numerous cultural and historic sites in the Four Corners region.

The Four Corners region offers natural beauty coupled with the cultural heritage of Native Americans and settlers.

Photo courtesy of Crow Canyon.

Wilson Martin is state historic preservation officer for the Utah Division of State History. For more information concerning the Four Corners Heritage Council, please contact Cleal Bradford at (435) 678-4035, clealbradford@yahoo.com or Wilson Martin at (801) 533-3552, wmartin@utah.gov.
The South Carolina National Heritage Corridor Taps Heritage Tourism Market

Connecting heritage resources with those who might value them (both residents and visitors) is the central challenge and opportunity of heritage tourism. The concept of heritage tourism has been growing over the past two decades. Within this approach, communities build on an existing amenity base through creative packaging of natural, cultural, and historic resources. Through regional cooperation, communities collectively reap the economic benefit of increased tourism traffic, which serves as a catalyst for overall business growth and development. At the same time, there is growing recognition within communities of the value of heritage resources and a greater willingness to protect and conserve them.

By weaving the threads of South Carolina’s history, culture, and natural resources together in a defined heritage area—the South Carolina National Heritage Corridor—the state has added to its available tourism product and increased visitation and spending. According to a study prepared by Lane, Frenchman and Associates of Boston, full implementation of the corridor will mean as many as 700,000 additional visitor days and will generate $83.5 million in new tourism revenue each year. As an economic development strategy to improve primarily rural areas in the state, the Corridor has taken a unique approach to its development by focusing on heritage tourism in three important and interrelated areas: organizational development, product development, and marketing.

Organization

The South Carolina National Heritage Corridor received congressional designation in 1996 as a national heritage area, one of the first in the southeastern United States. The corridor represents 14 counties along a 240-mile stretch from the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains to the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. The area is divided into four regions, each with a planned Discovery Center to tell the story of the land and people in that area.

The project is organized at the local and regional level, with the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism (SCPRT) working with committees in each community, county, and region. Management is handled through SCPRT by an agreement with a nonprofit board of directors made up of representatives from each region. Consistent planning and support through training and technical assistance enables local leaders to stay on track and find opportunities to fit within a larger, more complex tourism market.

Product Development

Product development in the corridor has centered chiefly on creation of a tourism infrastructure in counties that have not always seen the benefit of tourism. The Discovery System is the mechanism to provide regional interpretation, wayfinding, and visitor services throughout the 14-county region.

Funding for the Discovery System has come from the South Carolina state legislature. The General Assembly awarded $1 million for the project in 1998. Those funds have been used to develop the master interpretive plan and provide exhibits and signage for the first Discovery Center, which opened at Clemson University in May 2001. A second appropriation of $2 million in FY 01 funded interpretation centers for two more regions. The buildings to house the centers are provided by partners at the local level, and operations are a joint effort with the state welcome center program.

Regional interpretation is a unifying process and linchpin for the corridor because it:

- weaves together the diverse resources and varying themes of the four regions;
- serves as a visitor management tool to ensure visitors move safely and smoothly from site to site;
- provides an educational context for schoolchildren and residents to better understand and appreciate the historic, cultural, and natural heritage of the area.

A comprehensive interpretive plan was completed in 2001 with the development of the first Discovery Center. The interpretive plan built on the concepts initially presented in the management...
Their work will serve as a prototype for the entire heritage area. The Corridor grants program is focused on strengthening the designated Stops and Sites as viable tourism attractions. Additionally, a partnership with the South Carolina Arts Commission has meant the hiring of a full-time folklorist to work on developing traditional arts projects with tourism potential, adding to the level of programming available and providing an additional opportunity to tie related sites together.

Marketing

The Corridor hired a marketing communications agency in 2001 to develop a comprehensive marketing plan to promote the Corridor. As part of the research process, the firm subcontracted with an independent marketing research firm to conduct a series of formal studies, including an analysis of all available secondary research and two seasonal studies of current visitors. The research also included on-site visits to locations in all four regions to gather extensive information from stakeholders, as well as an analysis of potential competition and possible partners for future marketing efforts.

Based on the research, the following appears to be a snapshot of current Corridor visitors:

1. Between 40 percent and 50 percent are from South Carolina; other visitors come largely from Georgia, North Carolina, and Florida.

2. The typical visitor is traveling by car, is middle to older age, with above average education and household income, married, and frequently traveling with his or her spouse or immediate family.

3. Visitors to the Corridor are most likely to represent the following psychographic groups:
   - Natural Families cluster, which refers to married, two-parent families with children at home;
   - Classic Relaxers category, including single professionals;
   - Active Families who tend to be family-focused, married with children at home; (on average, these families wish to be much busier when on vacation.)
   - Sightseers, who are generally empty-nesters or retirees with no children at home.

While in the area, visitors are most likely to visit parks and scenic areas and/or take scenic drives. The experience for travelers along the plan, along with regional narratives compiled by staff at the South Carolina State Museum Commission and research on folkways and traditional arts by the staff of the South Carolina Arts Commission under contract with SCPRT. The master interpretive plan provides the foundation for interpretive planning and exhibit development within the system.

The comprehensive interpretation developed for the Corridor is delivered through Discovery Centers, Discovery Stops, and Discovery Sites. The four Discovery Centers serve as gateways into the regions by providing in-depth interpretation and visitor information. Additionally, Discovery Stops are strategically placed in each of the corridor counties to provide smaller-scale exhibits and visitor services. Discovery Site signage explains the significance of individual sites to the main and ancillary themes. The two primary themes are Working Places: Farms to Factories & Beyond and Southern Culture: A Rural Heritage. Within the Working Places theme are sub-themes of Working the Land, Traversing the Land, Politics & Commerce, and Roots of Southern Industry. In the first two Discovery Centers, these themes led to specific exhibits centered on the textile industry and the importance of crops such as cotton to the state’s growth and development.

To be designated a Discovery Stop or Site, attractions must meet established criteria and be approved by the regional and Corridor boards. A team has been hired to review prototype designs and construct the Stops and Sites for the upper half of the Corridor and to develop a wayfinding plan for linking them.

The South Carolina National Heritage Corridor contains historic, cultural, and natural resources that tell the story of South Carolina’s centuries-long evolution and culture. Photo courtesy of the National Park Service.
Corridor is one of small-town friendliness, simple pleasures, and intellectual challenge—something that must be experienced rather than merely seen. The Corridor’s attractions are extremely diverse but unique in their authenticity. In field testing, the slogan that most closely matched the brand in the visitors’ eyes was “Discover Real People, Real Places.”

Because of the overall diversity of product, the marketing firm recommended focusing on niche markets around fields of interest that could be collectively packaged. These included water recreation; arts and antiques; hiking, birding, and watchable wildlife; scenic drives; adventure travel; plantations and historic architecture; farms and gardens; military sites and battlefields; mill villages and courthouse towns; and African-American heritage.

The Corridor is already reaping the benefits of capitalizing on such a strategy. Working with the department’s advertising and communications firm, the state recently developed a four-page “advertorial” celebrating its heritage, especially the contributions of the African-American community, for publication in Smithsonian, Savoy, American Heritage and Preservation magazines. The insert ran in conjunction with Black History Month and yielded interest from all over the country.

The Future

Implementation of the Corridor marketing plan will also include development of an e-marketing initiative that ties to the website, cementing the brand and building stakeholder awareness within the Corridor. From a product development standpoint, the state will need to finish the interpretive system in the remaining two regions of the Corridor. Communities and local leaders will continue to focus on strengthening the existing tourism product beyond designated Stops and Sites and find ways to tell the whole community’s story through meaningful interpretation. Additionally, the Corridor will need to develop strategies for fostering business development opportunities with the private sector and seed development of unique heritage programming to further engage the visitor.

The South Carolina National Heritage Corridor has a range and depth to its tourism product that is to be envied. The challenge is to package that diversity under a single brand and connect that heritage experience with tourists in a state that already receives 30 million visitors a year, while protecting what makes the state truly unique to visitors and residents alike.

What Is in the Future for the Heritage Area Movement?

Brenda Barret, national coordinator for Heritage Areas, National Park Service, and Augie Carlino, president and CEO of the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area and president of the Alliance of National Heritage Areas, prepared the following series of questions and answers about the future of heritage areas.

Why are heritage areas and national heritage areas growing in popularity?

Carlino: In the last two decades, heritage areas have grown from a nebulous concept to a powerful national movement. Heritage areas span a wide spectrum of activities. They can range from a single effort to save a group of historic buildings to a multifaceted approach to community conservation, preservation, tourism, and economic revitalization. Heritage areas can be located in one neighborhood or they can be multi-jurisdictional, crossing the boundaries of counties and even states. Heritage areas can be fostered by the philanthropy of an individual or by the collective participation of foundations, businesses, and governments in a regional project.

National Heritage Areas are special places in America. NHAs merge community resources to promote conservation and community and economic development—or heritage development. They harness a wide range of community assets and interests—from historic preservation, outdoor recreation, museums, performing arts, folk life and crafts, and scenic and working landscapes, to grassroots community-building activities—that when combined create a sum greater than its parts.

Barrett: The heritage area strategy is based on working collaboratively across boundaries to develop common vision based on a region’s shared heritage. What that gives communities is a sense that they can in some way determine their future. It also helps create a more valuable future that builds on the region’s past and includes the
landmarks and stories that give residents a sense of continuity. Charles Flynn, executive director of the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area in Arizona, described the process of creating a heritage area as giving his community a sense of control of their destiny in a region with an overwhelming federal presence. The community was able to reach consensus on plans for Yuma’s future and enlist the federal agencies as willing partners.

This is powerful stuff. Most heritage area initiatives arise in communities that are under stress: losing their traditional economic base, whether it is industry or farming, facing a loss of population, particularly young people; or growing rapidly with an influx of people who do not know the old stories or the history of the region. It is no surprise that communities across the nation are looking at this new kind of partnership to preserve what they care about as they face an uncertain future. It is no surprise that heritage areas appeal to regions that are trying to preserve some element of the authentic past in a culture that is moving towards uniformity and sameness.

**What do heritage areas do best?**

"It is no surprise that heritage areas appeal to regions that are trying to preserve some element of the authentic past in a culture that is moving towards uniformity and sameness."

Barrett: The value that heritage areas add comes from the complexity of their partnerships and the scope of their plans. Heritage areas bring together people from different disciplines and with different agendas to work on a regional scale. Together they can plan and implement big projects that cross local and state boundaries and require the assistance of many partners. One thing that is consistent from area to area is the development of a comprehensive plan—or management plan—for the proposed national heritage area. This plan becomes a blueprint for the communities and the citizens of the heritage area and outlines the objectives of the heritage area for the next 10 years. In many instances, this management plan is often the only truly comprehensive plan for a region.

Many of the early heritage areas were focused on canal and river corridors that naturally flow across jurisdictions and required intergovernmental cooperation. The first national heritage area, the Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor, was the result of grassroots advocacy to find a role for the National Park Service in preserving the historic canal system. The multi-jurisdictional approach has been essential in building trail coalitions and other linkages along canal and water corridors. Outstanding work has been done completing the Great Allegheny Passage trail from Washington, D.C., to Pittsburgh by the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area; in adding more than 70 miles of trail north and south of Cuyahoga National Park by the Ohio & Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor; and in developing a water trail recently designated as a national recreation trail by the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area.

The scale of heritage areas has allowed them to take a broader perspective in developing educational and interpretive programs for residents and visitors. While individual historic sites offer a small slice of the past, regional interpretation places the stories in a larger context, which adds a new dimension to place-based learning. Silos & Smokestacks recently won a national award from the National Association for Interpretation for their educational website on agriculture, known as “Camp Silos.” The website reaches out to schools and other users—not just in their 37 counties in Iowa but to visitors from around the world. Heritage areas realize that historic themes, if they resonate with the people who live there, can be used to knit communities together and give them hope for the future.

**What are the economic impacts of heritage areas?**

Carlino: Contrary to some people’s belief, NHAs are not a drain on the budget of the National Park Service.

The investment that Congress provides each year to the designated NHAs actually helps extend the reach of the NPS and furthers its mission in places where it might not be financially feasible if a project were to be otherwise solely funded by NPS dollars. The record shows that NHAs are greatly successful in brokering the Interior appropriations fund each year by using the money to attract project dollars from other federal, state, local, and private sources. Heritage areas can demonstrate impressive leveraging of the Park Service’s dollars for heritage projects and programs. Since 1985 Congress has appropriated more than $107,000,000 in the Heritage Partnership category; this has leveraged over $929,000,000, an impressive 1 to 8.7 match.

As for the direct economic impact on the individual areas, the Alliance of National Heritage Areas is working with Michigan State University to adapt the National Park Service’s “Money Generation Model,” used by park units to test impacts on a regional scale. The model will be tested on eight heritage areas this summer and fall.

Barrett: While national heritage areas can show impressive leveraging of the National Park Service investment, more difficult to measure is the increase in resident and visitor participation in the educational and interpretive programs and activities supported by the heritage areas. Even more difficult to measure is the effect that the heritage...
area approach, working in partnership with other organizations in a region, has on quality of life, community pride, and civic engagement. As the partnership model becomes a way of business for all of our programs, we would like to study the heritage area strategy to improve our ability to collaborate for conservation purposes.

What benefits does the National Park Service bring to the table?

Carlino: To be successful, NHAs not only have to work with communities to develop projects and raise funds, they also have to develop partnerships to carry out work. In all that we do, our most significant and most important partner for our efforts is the National Park Service. After all, NHAs exist because their historical, cultural, recreational, and natural resources have been determined to be nationally significant. NHAs extend the breadth of the National Park Service’s mission, and broaden the public’s awareness of the Service’s responsibility and commitment to the nation’s heritage. National heritage areas are fully consistent with the National Park Service’s mission to protect the nation’s natural, cultural, and historic resources. NHAs have been successful in developing and implementing preservation strategies and in bringing communities together to protect resources. I believe, from my work with the Northeast Region in particular, that the National Park Service believes in and wishes to enhance and encourage such local endeavors.

To that end, the National Park Service and the national heritage areas should have a continuing relationship in their larger partnership to protect the resources of America. NHAs are not just important to the public, they are important to the NPS in meeting its conservation and education goals. NHAs enable the NPS to involve communities firsthand in protecting resources and understanding and promoting the nation’s heritage. Working together, NHAs and the NPS tell the stories and protect the resources that are the backdrops of many of the country’s national parks, national historic sites, national monuments, and national battlefields. Together, they build constituencies that support each other’s work, and support the national parks. But this is a reciprocal relationship as NPS provides local groups with the needed resources, experiences, and expertise that help NHAs succeed in ways beyond most peoples’ expectations and imaginations.

Barrett: The National Park Service provides technical assistance and funding to national heritage areas. Resource-based planning is one of our strengths and we assist areas in the development of their management plan. This plan, which is reviewed and approved by the Secretary of the Interior, establishes a vision for the area’s future and serves as a road map for all stakeholders. It should be noted that the matching funds we provide to designated areas are very flexible and can be used for staffing, planning, and all kinds of innovative projects. These kinds of dollars are often the hardest to raise and, as discussed earlier, they have been a powerful tool in generating other sources of funding. The National Park Service can bring national recognition to the areas and provide other technical assistance on a case-by-case basis.

We also realize benefits from collaboration with national heritage areas. For example, heritage areas are important partners for adjacent park units, which are assisted by giving the community a voice in telling the larger story of a region, by building a common understanding and a vision for the future, and by encouraging local stewardship of key resources. The newly designated Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park tells in part the story of a crucial battle of the Civil War, yet it is embedded within the larger Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District that locally protects, interprets, and promotes Civil War heritage across the full sweep of the Shenandoah Valley. Gateway communities in particular can benefit from heritage planning that reinvigorates local tourist offerings with real and authentic experiences.

The heritage area approach is one more link in an inclusive national network of parks and conservation areas, from wild places of unparalleled beauty to the towns where people live and work. They are natural partners in expanding and making accessible a seamless system of parks for all people to enjoy.

Not all heritage areas are nationally designated. What is the future for state and locally established heritage area programs?

Carlino: The heritage areas strategy is not tied to any one title or designation. It can be and is used at the local, regional, and state levels. States in particular can play an important role in coordinating the many state and federal programs that flow through the state capitals, such as transportation enhancement projects, support for the arts, state historic preservation programs, recreation and trails assistance, economic development aid, and so much more. The established programs in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and South Carolina illustrate the benefits a heritage program can bring to both conservation and economic development.

There has been a positive growth in new state heritage programs including in Maryland, Louisiana, and Utah. While the numbers are still somewhat fluid, around eight states have programs specifically targeted to heritage areas. Many more have heritage or cultural tourism initiatives that work with similar communities.

As more states look to create programs for heritage areas, more will undoubtedly be proposed to become national heritage areas. That is why it is important that Congress and the heritage constituency, led by the Alliance of National Heritage Areas and the National Park Service, develop guidelines for establishing new national heritage areas.

How many new national heritage areas are potentially out there?

Barrett: This is hard to answer. For example there are already 12 bills to create new heritage areas in the 108th Congress and it is still early in the session. One of the trends in the growth of the heritage area movement is the increased interest in conservation, based on community collaboration. This is particularly true in the West where potential heritage areas in New Mexico, Nevada, and Utah propose to tell the story of the peoples of the West in a multiple-use environment. Heritage area partnerships are also becoming more diverse. As they move west, tribal
organizations are becoming partners, as seen in Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area where the Quechan Nation has contributed significant funding to rehabilitate a historic bridge over the Colorado River and is working with the heritage area on a major wetland restoration project.

The National Park Service is conducting a study for a potential heritage area to recognize the Low County Gullah Geechee, a geographically isolated community of African-Americans who have retained a distinct Creole language and traditional practices with elements that are traceable to the rice-growing region on the coast of West Africa. Their communities and way of life on the Sea Islands of South Carolina, Georgia, and northern Florida are threatened by development. Looking at the map of our nation, there are still many untold stories for communities to tell.

Where will these programs end up?

Carlino: That is the $64,000—or in this case the million dollar—question. The Congress cannot just continue to create heritage areas because there is a pot of money available at the end of the planning and legislative process. Congress, and the heritage area constituency, must come to grips with language that will define the guidelines and develop a program that justifies why any national heritage area should be created—or reauthorized. Congress must look at significance—or national importance—as one of the criteria for consideration of whether or not a heritage area should gain national designation. Congress must also create a program that respects the planning process of each heritage area, and insure that any legislation that creates a program does not create homogenous national heritage areas. After all, the uniqueness of a heritage area is what makes it special.

Barrett: At the end of the 107th Congress the Senate passed 11 national heritage area designation bills. While none of them reached the president’s desk, many of these areas illustrate the trends in heritage area development. Taken as a whole they represent more diversity in people and geography with a good number from the West; they are well planned, some with feasibility studies completed by the National Park Service and more with their own thoughtful inventories and plans; and many are partnering with units of the national park system.

The strong interest in establishing new areas at the national level has challenged Congress to consider program legislation to set criteria and standards for the evaluation of new areas and for the management of existing areas. The National Park Service supports efforts to develop a broad legislative framework, but also seeks flexibility to encourage local communities to be innovative in shaping their programs and conservation goals to meet regional conditions.