

John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Boundary Study Application Package

In response to the inquiries of several communities, and local organizations, the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission is launching a study to determine if the current boundaries of the Heritage Corridor should be expanded to include other communities. Congress established the Heritage Corridor in 1986 in recognition of the region's rich historic, natural and cultural traditions. The Corridor was established for the purpose of "preserving and interpreting for the educational and inspirational benefit of present and future generations the unique and significant contributions to our national heritage of certain historic and cultural lands, waterways, and structures within the Blackstone River Valley" in order to "provide a management framework to assist the states . . . and their units of local government in the development and implementation of integrated cultural, historic and land resource management programs in order to retain, enhance and interpret the significant values of the land, waters and structures of the Corridor." To that end, the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission was created as an umbrella agency to develop specific goals, establish a plan for implementation, and work in partnership with the communities within the Corridor to achieve their vision for the future.

In its work over the past two decades, the Corridor Commission has identified six goals that are vital to the region. They are to:

- Protect the Valley's historic, cultural and natural resources in an integrated manner
- Educate and interpret the Corridor's importance to the people of the Valley and its visitors
- Foster specific activities that tap the Valley's unique resources and invite people to enjoy and celebrate them
- Encourage public and private investment in the Valley's physical and human resources that reinforce these values
- Stimulate the research necessary to understand the Valley's role in the Industrialization of America and the lessons it holds for our times
- Coordinate and encourage all partnerships that will be necessary to achieve these goals.

The original Heritage Corridor, as established by Congress in 1986, consisted of twenty communities. That boundary was expanded to its current size of twenty-four communities in 1996. Now, over a decade later, the Commission is undertaking this study to determine if new communities need to be added to Heritage Corridor, in order to protect the critical resources that are integral to the national significance of this region. To this end, the Corridor Commission is inviting all of the communities within the watershed of the Blackstone River that are not currently within the Heritage Corridor, or another Heritage Area, to submit a proposal for admission. This proposal will need to demonstrate that the community contains cultural, historic, and natural sites that would expand the range of resources available to the Corridor Commission as it carries out its mission of preservation, education and interpretation of the Blackstone Valley.

To evaluate if communities are eligible to be added to the Heritage Corridor, their resources will be viewed in terms of their association with the distinctive character of the Blackstone River Valley and to the themes developed in the Heritage Corridor's Cultural Heritage and Land Management Plan, published in 1989, and amended in 1998 in the document The Next Ten Years. The Management Plan describes several factors that distinguish the Blackstone River Valley from other regions in New England, and make it nationally significant:

- It was the Birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution
- It experienced the first widespread use of water power in the United States
- It was the place where the Rhode Island system of manufacturing developed
- It was the first religiously and ethnically diverse area of New England
- Its industrial and transportation systems were crucial to the development of the 2nd and 3rd largest cities in New England

In addition, since 1996, the Heritage Corridor Commission has made a major investment in the restoration of the Blackstone River and its tributaries, through the Campaign for a Fishable/Swimmable Blackstone River by 2015, and other initiatives. In order to aid this campaign, all communities applying for inclusion on the Heritage Corridor need to detail what steps they have taken and/or are willing to take to help protect and restore the tributary waterways that feed the Blackstone River.

The Corridor Commission is reexamining its boundaries in order to safeguard the integrity, and coherence of the Blackstone River Valley. As part of this process, the Commission seeks to include only those areas that are functionally, ecologically, and historically integral components of the Blackstone region.

The Commission will consider for inclusion only those localities with significant resources relating to the themes outlined in the Corridor's Management Plan. Any community joining the Heritage Corridor will also have to show an initiative to utilize Corridor strategies to mitigate threats to resources. It is also critical that these communities can demonstrate a local commitment to work to protect the special resource character of the area. It is only through this kind of commitment that new communities could contribute, in the spirit of partnership, to the Heritage Corridor's mission of preservation and interpretation.

In assessing the communities' applications for inclusion in the Corridor, the Commission will employ the criteria spelled out in the National Park Service Criteria for Boundary Adjustments, Supplement to Planning Process Guidelines (NPS-2, 1991) as well as the National Park Service Criteria for Parklands.

The Corridor Commission will assess the application materials to determine if there are significant additional resources important to the protection, or interpretation of the Heritage Corridor existing in communities currently outside of the boundary. In addition, these communities will be asked to demonstrate the feasibility of their inclusion in the Corridor, by proposing purposeful strategies to address threats to the important resources that are the basis for the distinctive character of the Valley. The Corridor Commission does not have any regulatory

authority, and it is only successful in achieving its goals by working in partnership with its member communities, state, local and federal agencies, and other interested organizations. Communities seeking inclusion in the Corridor must therefore show their commitment to work towards these common goals in concert with the Commission.

Criteria for inclusion within the boundary of the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor

A. Geography and Natural Resources

1. Must be located within, or include substantial portions of, the watershed of the Blackstone River and its principal tributaries. (Reference: see attached watershed map)
2. Must contain locally important examples of wetlands, forests, and other protected open spaces that could contribute to the Corridor's ability to protect its extensive natural resources.
3. The community should outline steps it has taken and/or is willing to take to help protect and restore the tributary waterways that feed the Blackstone River in order to assist the Campaign for a Fishable/Swimmable Blackstone River by 2015

B. History and Culture

1. The community contains substantial and coherent assemblages of resources that support the Blackstone Valley's story as the birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution. Such resources may include:
 - i. rural "hilltop" villages and remnant agricultural lands;
 - ii. mills and mill villages that illustrate the so-called Rhode Island System of manufacturing, including resources that illustrate the use of water power;
 - iii. transportation modes linked to the Blackstone network of Native American trails, turnpikes, canals and canal-related structures, and railroads.
2. The town's historical demographics contribute significantly to telling the story of the Blackstone Valley as the first ethnically, and religiously diverse area in New England.

C. Recreation and Public Access

1. Contains publicly accessible recreational resources linked, or having strong potential to be linked, to the existing Blackstone Valley network of biking and walking trails, water trails, and open spaces.

D. Public Support

1. Demonstrated support by elected officials, affected property owners, and citizens for inclusion within the Corridor and willingness to partner with the Corridor to achieve its strategic goals. Support should include documentation such as letters and the official commitment of the governing body of the community.

YOUR PROPOSAL SHOULD INCLUDE

The objectives of your community's proposal and presentation are:

1. to submit information or evidence that your community's historic and natural resources are a significant part of the Blackstone Valley's heritage [feel free to use information from existing historical surveys to assemble this inventory];
2. to show that an effective public-private partnership in your community to protect and interpret those resources is feasible. In reviewing your proposal, the Commission will consider these points, but will **also** consider if, with the addition of your town, the National Heritage Corridor will be made stronger.

CORRIDOR SIGNIFICANCE AND PURPOSES

The significance of your resources, and the feasibility of the public-private partnership, can be measured against the congressional purposes and objectives for the National Heritage Corridor. Copies of the Heritage Corridors' Cultural Heritage and Land Management Plan, and its amendment, The Next Ten Years are available for study to explain what these purposes and objectives are in further detail. Please download, or contact the Corridor office for copies.

Proposals should include:

1. An inventory of your town's nationally significant natural, cultural and recreation resources, and an explanation of their relationship to Blackstone NHC themes; and,
2. Letters of support for inclusion in the Corridor, and evidence of commitment to protecting and interpreting the above-mentioned resources. Letters could come from town officials, state or local historic preservation and environmental conservation organizations, and representatives of the private sector, or others in a position to support activities in your town.

3. A brief statement from the governing body of the community demonstrating their commitment to the ideals of the Heritage Corridor and a willingness to partner with the Corridor Commission to achieve its strategic goals.
4. There is a \$1,000 filing fee required of all communities making an application for inclusion in the Heritage Corridor. All fees collected will be used to help offset the expenses of managing this study.

APPLICATIONS DUE: December 15, 2008 at the Corridor Commission office, One Depot Square, Woonsocket, RI 02895. Please include two hard copies and one digital copy in IBM format of the application, along with all supporting materials.

For more information, please contact Kevin Klyberg at the Heritage Corridor Commission office

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Please note: The John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor was designated in perpetuity, barring any future legislation that supersedes that designation. Any community added via this boundary adjustment will also remain a part of the Heritage Corridor in perpetuity. However, the federal commission that currently oversees the Heritage Corridor, as well as the National Park Service's commitment to provide staff for the Commission, are scheduled to terminate on October 12, 2011. As of this time, there is no determined successor agency to carry on the work of the Corridor Commission after that date.

Also, Congress authorized the appropriation of up to \$10,000,000 in Development funds to carry out the work of the Corridor Commission across the entire region through the period of 2006 to 2016. Communities and organizations within the Heritage Corridor are eligible to apply to the Corridor Commission for funding to support certain types of projects. However, there is no guarantee of financial or technical support to any community, or partner within the boundaries of the Heritage Corridor, nor has Congress appropriated any development funds to the Corridor Commission for the past two years.

MAP of Blackstone River Watershed showing communities that are within the Watershed, but not in the Heritage Corridor

