



Shared Legacies in Cane River National Heritage Area: Linking People, Traditions, and Landscapes

*A Technical Assistance Report for the
Cane River National Heritage Area Commission*

*Cane River Evaluation and Visioning Project
Final Report*



This report is the fifteenth in the Conservation and Stewardship Publication Series produced by the Conservation Study Institute. This series includes a variety of publications designed to provide information on conservation history and current practice for professionals and the public. The series editor is Nora J. Mitchell, director of the Institute. This volume was prepared in cooperation with the Quebec-Labrador Foundation (QLF)/Atlantic Center for the Environment.

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Courtesy of the Cammie G. Henry Research Center, Northwestern State University of Louisiana

Above: From the 1930s until her death in 1988, Clementine Hunter documented life on Cane River in her vibrant memory paintings. The grandchild of slaves, she worked at Melrose Plantation as a field hand and a cook before becoming an artist later in life.

Cover: Clementine Hunter's African House murals tell the story of life along the Cane River in the first half of the twentieth century. This panel depicts her view of ancestors of the Cane River Creole community and people who lived and worked at Melrose, including visiting artists. Cover photo credit: James Rosenthal, National Park Service, HABS/HAER/HALS.

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**Prepared by the
National Park Service Conservation Study Institute
in cooperation with
QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment**

CONSERVATION AND STEWARDSHIP PUBLICATION NO. 15

Jacquelyn L. Tuxill, Philip B. Huffman, Daniel N. Laven, and Nora J. Mitchell
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The Conservation Study Institute team dedicates this report in memory of

Saidee W. Newell,

long-time co-chair of the Cane River National Heritage Area Commission,
for her many contributions to the preservation of cultural heritage—in the Cane River
region and the state of Louisiana, and at the national and international levels.

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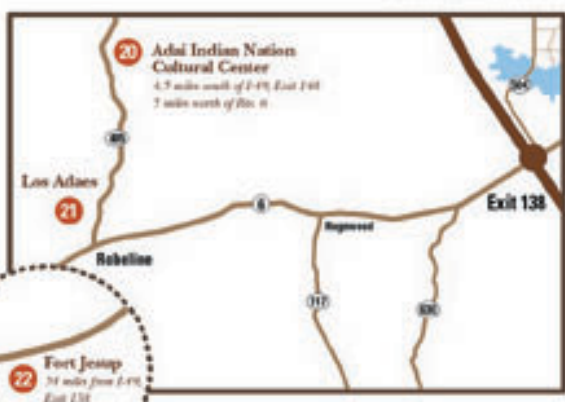
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CANE RIVER NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA



- 1 Natchitoches National Historic Landmark District
- 2 Northwestern State University of Louisiana
- 3 National Center for Preservation Technology and Training
- 4 Louisiana School for Math, Science and the Arts
- 5 Fort St. Jean Baptiste State Historic Site
- 6 Grand Ecore Visitor Center U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- 7 Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery
- 8 Oaklawn Plantation
- 9 Cherokee Plantation
- 10 Beau Fort Plantation
- 11 St. Charles Chapel
- 12 Cane River Creole National Historical Park, Oakland Unit (NHL)
- 13 Melrose Plantation (NHL)
- 14 Badin-Roque House
- 15 St. Augustine Catholic Church and Cemetery
- 16 Magnolia Plantation Home (NHL)
- 17 Cane River Creole National Historical Park, Magnolia Unit (NHL)
- 18 Kate Chopin House (NHL)
- 19 Monette's Ferry
- 20 Adai Indian Nation Cultural Center
- 21 Los Adaes State Historic Site (NHL)
- 22 Fort Jesup State Historic Site (NHL)



SECTION I: SETTING THE CONTEXT

Chapter 1

Background and Introduction to the Cane River Evaluation and Visioning Project

Cane River National Heritage Area conserves and interprets the rich multicultural legacy and landscapes of a region that was a vibrant crossroads in the 1700s and a base for early trade and settlement in North America by France and Spain. Located in northwestern Louisiana along the former main channel of the Red River, the heritage area embodies the diverse cultural traditions and stories of the American Indian, Spanish, French, African American, and Creole peoples who have lived in this region down through the centuries.

Congress established Cane River National Heritage Area in 1994 in recognition of the national significance of the region and its cultural resources.¹ Seven years later, the Louisiana legislature designated Cane River a state heritage area as well. The 1994 federal authorization also established Cane River Creole National Historical Park as a unit of the National Park System within the heritage area, and charged the heritage area and the park to work in partnership to carry out a shared preservation and education mission. This establishment of a national park and a national heritage area in the same enabling legislation is unique in the country. In addition, the legislation created the Cane River National Heritage Area Commission to assist in implementing the purposes of the heritage area. A broadly representative body, the commission works with community interests, nonprofit organizations, private landowners, and local, state, and federal authorities to carry out its duties. The commission's authority and federal funding are due to expire in 2010; however, the national heritage area designation is permanent.

To prepare for future decision making, the commission initiated the "Cane River National Heritage Area Evaluation and Visioning Project" to document its accomplishments over the past 13 years, evaluate how the heritage area partnership has worked, and explore options for the future. The commission and heritage area staff

believed this project would help them make better-informed decisions about the future, provide an opportunity for enhanced engagement with local stakeholders, and strengthen governmental and partner relationships that are key to the future. The commission and staff also saw an opportunity to reflect on and learn from the past through an approach that builds on research conducted in other national heritage areas. By engaging in this project, Cane River management demonstrated a willingness to look critically at its accomplishments and consider adjustments to its partnership process in order to become more effective at achieving heritage area goals. It also believed that investment in a rigorous evaluation would help to inform policy development at the national level, with benefits for both existing and emerging national heritage areas.

A. The Scope and Methods of the Cane River Evaluation and Visioning Project

The commission asked the National Park Service Conservation Study Institute to provide technical assistance in implementing the project and identified four points to be addressed:

- Evaluate progress toward achieving the purposes of the heritage area's authorizing legislation and the implementation strategies set forth in the Cane River National Heritage Area Management Plan of 2003.
- Identify additional actions needed to protect, enhance, and interpret the heritage area and its nationally significant resources.
- Analyze the National Park Service (NPS) investments to determine their impacts.
- Examine models, options, and opportunities to enhance state and local partnerships, including consideration of a new management framework to support the work of the heritage area initiative.²

In response, the institute's study team investigated three aspects of the heritage area's partnership

¹ Public Law 103-49; see chapter 2 for more on the national significance of the Cane River region.

² "Heritage area initiative" refers to the collective body of activities and projects undertaken to implement the management plan, and the people and organizations that carry them out.

efforts to date: (1) accomplishments and investments (to assess progress toward heritage area goals), (2) the structure and operations of the current management framework, and (3) the perspectives of partners on how the heritage area initiative has worked. The team gathered information from various written sources (e.g., the management plan, annual reports, project documents) and used participatory techniques (e.g., confidential interviews, meetings, informal conversations, visioning sessions) to engage and gather insights from key individuals. These individuals included commissioners, heritage area staff, partners, people who played important roles in the heritage area's formation, and others with expertise in heritage areas.

The project was carried out in several phases. The first phase involved an initial visioning session with the commission and data collection in the three aspects identified above, followed by an analysis of the data to identify strengths and challenges. In this phase individual team members focused primarily on their assigned research areas. In the next phase the study team began a joint, iterative process of synthesis in which each member shared insights from his or her phase one analysis. Through joint analysis of the research data, the team refined its understanding of the Cane River partnership system,³ the strengths of that system, and the challenges that the heritage area faces. The team also identified

ingredients that are critical for sustained success of the heritage area in the future. In the last phase the team identified and analyzed options and opportunities for addressing the challenges and for sustaining and enhancing the Cane River partnership system. While the focus of each phase was distinct, the three phases were closely linked through the team's collective synthesis, and the findings for each phase were refined through a process of iterative analysis as the project progressed. For more on project methodology, see appendix A.

B. The National Context

Heritage areas are an important direction in conservation, as demonstrated by the growing interest in this model across the United States. As of this writing in January 2008, there are 37 national heritage areas, 10 of which were authorized in 2006. Although the majority of national heritage areas are east of the Mississippi River, both the number of heritage areas and the interest in designation is expanding in western states. Legislation has been introduced in Congress to designate 14 additional new areas and to study four more for possible designation.

In 2004 the director of the National Park Service asked the National Park System Advisory Board to examine the future of national heritage areas and their relationship to the National Park Service. The board, composed of 13 citizens with diverse expertise and a commitment to the mission of the NPS, has the statutory responsibility to advise the NPS director and the secretary of the interior on policy and program matters. In 2006 the advisory board issued its report, *Charting a Future for the National Heritage Areas*, which found in part that "the national heritage area approach, with its complex but essential networks of relationships and ability to leverage resources for resource conservation and economic and community development, can serve as a model for achieving NPS conservation goals with multiple partners. The process, key elements, outcomes, and impacts need to be identified and better understood." The report recommends investing in research "to better understand the process of collaborative conservation and partnership networks, and to better evaluate the outcomes of designation and partnership on resource conservation and community development over time."⁴

The advisory board also recommended establishing a legislative foundation for a system of

St. Augustine Catholic Church is the heart of the Cane River Creole community. The congregation formed in 1803, the first Roman Catholic church in the U.S. established by and for people of color.



Jack Boucher, National Park Service, HABSHAE/PHALS

³ "Cane River partnership system" refers to the overall array of components, participants, and processes that interact as a system to make possible the accomplishments of the heritage area. See chapter 7 for more details.

⁴ The advisory board's report can be found at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/heritageareas/nhareport.pdf>.

Front Street, Natchitoches' historic commercial quarter, lies within the Natchitoches National Historic Landmark District. A shared history and economy keep the city of Natchitoches strongly connected to the rural land downriver.



national heritage areas within the National Park Service, including a policy requiring a study three years prior to the cessation of federal funding authorization to make recommendations regarding future NPS involvement. Studies conducted by the Conservation Study Institute at the request of the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission in 2005 and the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor Commission in 2006, as well as this Cane River Evaluation and Visioning Project, may inform future evaluations at other national heritage areas.

C. Organization of the Report

The remainder of this report is organized as follows:

- Section I continues to set the context for readers, with a retrospective on the origins of Cane River National Heritage Area (chapter 2) and a description of the current management framework (chapter 3).

- Section II, Assessing the Cane River National Heritage Area Partnership, presents the results from the phase one analyses, including a discussion of accomplishments and investments (chapter 4), an analysis of the existing heritage area framework (chapter 5), and a discussion of the Cane River partnership system from the perspective of partners involved in the initiative (chapter 6).
- Section III, The Future of Cane River National Heritage Area, describes the critical ingredients of the Cane River partnership system (chapter 7) and presents options and opportunities for the future of the heritage area, including management considerations (chapter 8) and other considerations (chapter 9). Chapter 10 presents closing thoughts.

To minimize confusion regarding terminology and acronyms used in this report, readers are encouraged to consult the glossary that begins on page 90.

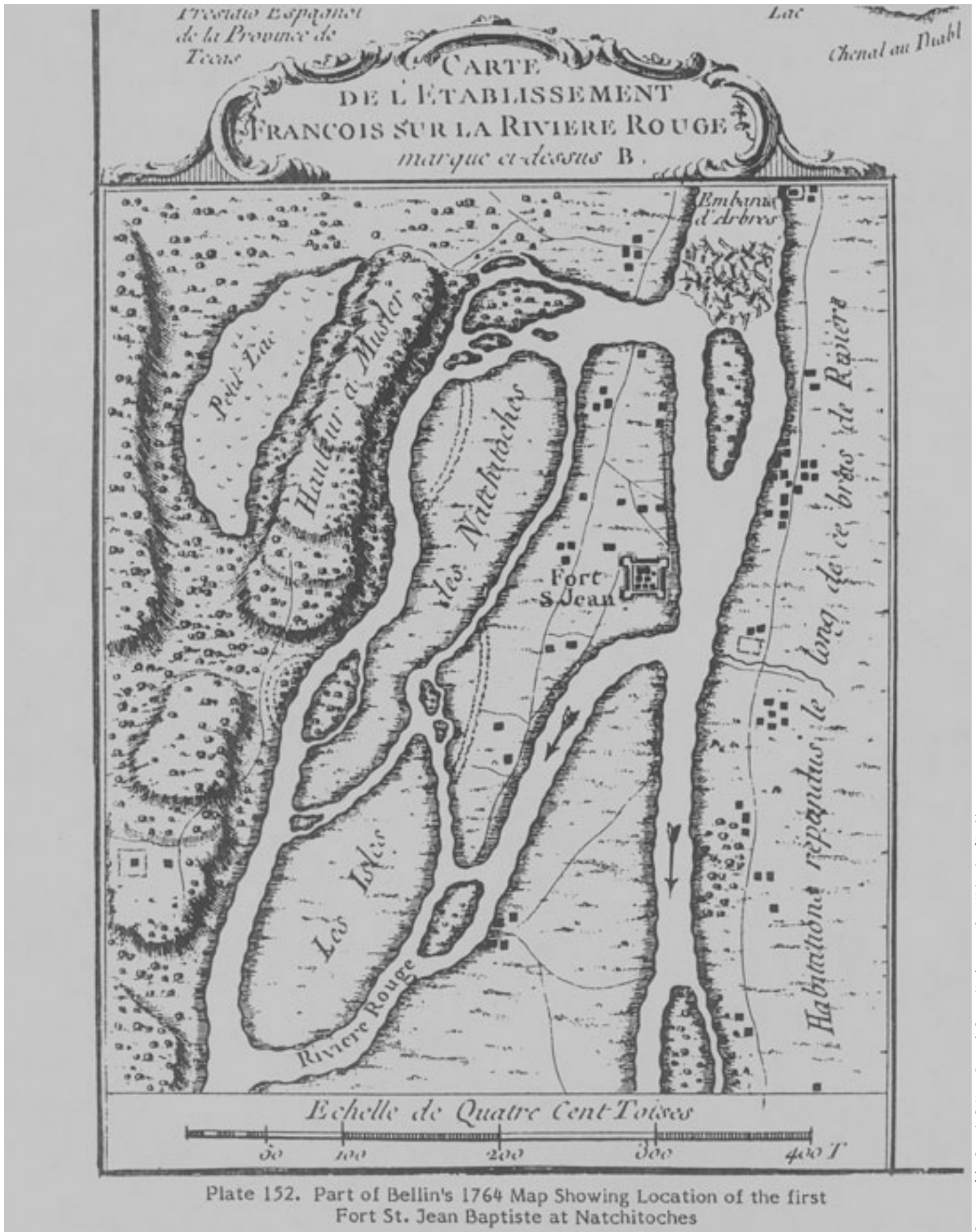


Plate 152. Part of Bellin's 1764 Map Showing Location of the first Fort St. Jean Baptiste at Natchitoches

This detail from a 1764 French map shows the colonial Natchitoches settlement along the Red River. The map includes Fort St. Jean Baptiste, established in 1716, and the Great Raft, a log jam that prevented navigation further north along the river channel.

Chapter 2

Establishing Cane River National Heritage Area

Cane River National Heritage Area was established because of its rich, unique multicultural legacy and traditions, along with the landscapes that even today reflect the region's complex history. The leadership and vision of many organizations and people led to national designation of the Cane River region as a heritage area. This chapter examines the significance of the region and the events leading up to its designation.

A. The Heritage of the Cane River Region⁵

Cane River, today a 37-mile-long oxbow lake in northwestern Louisiana, was once the main channel of the Red River. In the late seventeenth century, French explorers found settlements of Natchitoches Indians, a tribe of the larger Caddoan cultural group, all along the river in this area. The present-day city of Natchitoches, named after these Indians, is located at what was the intersection of major east-west and north-south trading routes of the Caddos and other tribes. The early French explorers, eager to trade with American Indians, initiated social and political relations with the Natchitoches and other tribes in northwestern Louisiana. They established Fort St. Jean Baptiste in 1716 to support commercial trade, and soldiers, administrators, traders, and tradesmen came to the area.⁶ Fifteen miles to the west, the Spanish (who were interested in the region for reasons similar to the French) established a settlement and presidio (or military fort), which served as a provincial capital in New Spain from 1729 to 1772. Today the fort has become the Los Adaes State Historic Site, one of the heritage area's outlying "satellite" areas.

As countries came together in this region, so did cultures. American Indians were joined by European settlers, who brought African slaves to help grow indigo and tobacco, then the primary trade crops. As these groups interacted, a distinctive Creole culture developed that cut across racial categories, drawing from many traditions but remaining grounded in French colonialism and Catholicism.⁷ Over the years, the Creole culture became centered in the plantations and

small communities along the river south of the town of Natchitoches.

In 1803, when the United States purchased the Louisiana Territory from France, the Cane River region was a thriving agricultural area, with the town of Natchitoches its commercial center. Following the Louisiana Purchase, the area attracted Anglo-European settlers, who brought with them the Protestant faith and cotton as an agricultural crop. Before long, cotton became the new cash crop on the downriver plantations.

In the mid-1800s, the removal of a vast, natural log jam on the Red River north of Natchitoches caused the river to change its course. Although the main river now bypassed the town, Cane River remained the main transportation route between Natchitoches and the downriver plantations. In the aftermath of the Civil War, economic hardship and cultural change came to the region as tenant farming and sharecropping replaced slavery. The agricultural economy remained dependent on human field labor until the ascendancy of mechanized farming following World War II.

The Cane River region is unique in part because its complex history is still visible in the landscape. The plantation homes and other remaining historic structures, agricultural fields, live oak allées, and pecan groves—even the land divisions, fencerows, and road network—provide evidence of the past. The region's history is alive, too, in the many cultural traditions that persist. Cane River National Heritage Area, in conjunction with Cane River Creole National Historical Park, was established to interpret this significant cultural landscape, help preserve and enhance the traditions of the region, and provide for a culturally sensitive approach to heritage preservation.

B. The Origins of Cane River National Heritage Area

To understand the origins of Cane River National Heritage Area and to capture the early thinking about the approach to this particular heritage

⁵ This account has been drawn from various heritage area materials, including the Cane River National Heritage Area Management Plan (2003).

⁶ Although the original fort is no longer standing, a replica has been built in Natchitoches at what is today the Fort St. Jean Baptiste State Historic Site, where visitors can learn more about this phase in the area's history.

⁷ According to the NPS brochure for Cane River Creole National Historical Park, "the term 'Creole' was originally defined as New World products derived from Old World stock, and could be applied to people, architecture, or livestock. Regarding people, Creole historically referred to those born in Louisiana during the French and Spanish periods, regardless of their ethnicity. Today, as in the past, Creole transcends racial boundaries. It connects people to their colonial roots, be they descendants of European settlers, enslaved Africans, or those of mixed heritage, which may include African, French, Spanish, and American Indian influences."

National Significance of the Cane River Region

In establishing Cane River National Heritage Area and Cane River Creole National Historical Park, Congress affirmed the national significance of the Cane River region. The city of Natchitoches, established in 1714, is the oldest permanent settlement in the 13-state territory that comprised the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. Cane River served as the focal point for early settlement of the region and as a transportation route by which commerce and communication reached all parts of Louisiana. This area is also the locale where Cane River Creole culture developed from interactions among people of French, Spanish, Native American, and African descent beginning in the early eighteenth century. Although Creole architecture exists elsewhere in Louisiana and beyond, the Cane River region holds the most-intact Creole plantations in the U.S., complete with their original outbuilding complexes.

The heritage area includes a wide variety of historical features with their original elements in both rural and urban settings, and a cultural landscape that exhibits aspects of the different cultures that have lived there since European settlement—particularly French, Spanish, African American, and Creole. These assets provide the foundation for developing an understanding of the region's history.⁸

The heritage area includes a 33-block national historic landmark district in downtown Natchitoches, which contains more than 100 historic homes and buildings, several of which date to the eighteenth century. Furthermore, the region encompasses seven national historic landmarks, three state historic sites, and more than two dozen properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Philip Gould

area, the study team interviewed five people who helped shape the initiative. Revisiting the formation of the heritage area through the eyes of these community leaders and visionaries enabled the team to explore the events that contributed to the heritage area's creation and provided a lens through which to view its progress since its creation in 1994. The interviews also provided an opportunity to probe the relationship of the heritage area's designation to the establishment of Cane River Creole National Historical Park, and to understand the early roles of current partners.

Some interviewees credit the birth of preservation in the Cane River region to the preservation of the Lemée House in Natchitoches in the 1930s, and the increasing activism after World War II of the Association for the Preservation of Historic Natchitoches (APHN) in preserving the homes and plantations of some of the region's long-established landowning families. Many of the people involved in these historic preservation efforts had a living connection with the plantations and the development of the city of Natchitoches. They found value—historic, economic, and social—in preserving the stories and resources that had shaped and continued to define the cultural and economic character of the region. In the 1960s and 1970s the city worked with APHN and other nonprofit organizations to

preserve a number of homes and structures in the downtown, which became a national historic landmark district, one of only two in the state.⁹

The National Park Service first documented the region through studies by the Historic American Buildings Survey in 1940. In the early 1990s the NPS conducted a special resource study and prepared alternatives for establishing a more permanent NPS role in preserving the region's nationally important resources and stories. During this period local residents, who were beginning to support a designation for the region that included an enhanced federal role, and NPS planners were both influenced by preservation efforts in Charleston, South Carolina; Savannah, Georgia; and the nearby Jean LaFitte National Historical Park in New Orleans. In the latter instance, rather than obtaining or owning historically significant properties, the NPS established a unique presence as an interpretive specialist. In 1994 several NPS leaders, including the deputy director, toured the Natchitoches region, which strengthened NPS support for the creation of a new park area that would enrich the range of stories and resources in the agency's portfolio.

Interviewees highlighted the support of key members of Congress as critical to the passage of legislation to authorize a dual role for the NPS in the region. Senator J. Bennett Johnston, then

⁸ Derived from Public Law 103-49, section 302.

⁹ The other national historic landmark district in Louisiana is the French Quarter in New Orleans.

chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee (and with family ties to one of the region's plantation families), introduced the bill to designate both a national park and a national heritage area. Johnston's chief of staff, a well-respected visionary, played a key role in crafting this unique legislation that established a permanent physical presence for the NPS and a mechanism for local residents to play a central role in deciding how the region would be preserved and interpreted. Congressman Thomas "Jerry" Huckaby was equally vital to passing the legislation that established a national park within the national heritage area. This pairing strengthened and legitimized the heritage area while recognizing that the success of the park unit depended on its relationship with the communities beyond its designated boundaries.

For several years following the 1994 designation, a lack of dedicated funding for the heritage area and management from afar of the national park created significant financial, political, operational, and communication challenges for both sites. In 1996 the NPS planner who was leading the planning process for the park also began to facilitate the development of the heritage area's management plan, and in 1997 a new superintendent was assigned to lead the management of the park. The passion and professionalism that these two women brought to their work contributed to a more positive relationship between

the NPS and community leaders, and to the reengagement of Creole and other cultural groups in planning for the park and heritage area. The joint planning process that ensued was vital to building a foundation of trust and leadership that enabled community groups to share their hopes for increased tourism and quality of life along with their concerns about property rights, traffic, and politics and power. According to one person interviewed, the planning workshops "changed priorities for the whole area. . . . By the end of the process the local groups were telling a unified story." A local leader who has played several roles during the heritage area's lifetime recalled how residents involved other residents in the work of the heritage area: "We bombarded every single property owner or voter in the whole parish . . . with what we were doing . . . and they [became] a part of it."¹⁰

Interviewees identified the National Park Service role in supporting the heritage area during the management planning as critical to enabling the heritage area to prioritize its goals and carry out initial implementation activities. Engagement by the NPS of diverse cultural and economic groups in building a unified vision, along with the strong support and passion of local residents, has enabled the heritage area to foster an equitable, authentic, and inclusive approach toward interpreting the area's complex heritage.

The Badin-Roque House is one of only a few poteaux-en-terre (posts-in-the-ground) structures left in the U.S. It has been preserved through a partnership project led by St. Augustine Historical Society with assistance from Cane River National Historical Park and the heritage area.



¹⁰ In Louisiana, the parish is the level of government between municipalities and the state (the equivalent of the county in other states).



Jack Boucher, National Park Service, HABS/HAER/HALS

The quarters at Magnolia Plantation housed workers from 1853 through the 1960s. The national park shares the stories of all the families who lived on the plantation during colonial times, in the eras of slavery and sharecropping, and up to the mid-twentieth century.

Chapter 3

The Existing Framework for the Cane River National Heritage Area Partnership

A central purpose of the legislation that established Cane River National Heritage Area and Cane River Creole National Historical Park was to create a collaborative framework for implementing the heritage area initiative. This framework has been enhanced over the course of the initiative's lifetime through management planning, visioning, and development of the area's partnership system.

The heritage area's framework consists of five basic, interrelated elements, as follows:

- **purposes, vision, and mission:** the “guiding direction” for what the heritage area initiative is designed to achieve;
- **geographic scope:** the physical area or region that encompasses the heritage area's core stories and heritage assets;
- **management entity:** the organization given lead responsibility through the authorizing legislation to coordinate the initiative and spearhead the development and implementation of a management plan;
- **partners:** the collection of public and private organizations and individuals from within the region and beyond that are involved in helping to fulfill the initiative's purposes, vision, and mission;
- **funding and other forms of support:** the financial, human, in-kind, and other resources provided by heritage area partners that enable progress toward achieving the initiative's purposes, vision, and mission.

The framework provides much of the underpinning for the Cane River partnership system, which is explored throughout the rest of this report. While partners actively involved in the heritage area initiative are already knowledgeable about the framework elements, other readers may be less familiar with them. Therefore, this chapter presents a brief description of the framework to ensure all readers have a common understanding.

It is important to note that while all national heritage areas have collaborative frameworks that encompass these same five elements, the substance of those elements differs in every individual case. This is an inherent reflection of the unique heritage, geography, network of partners,

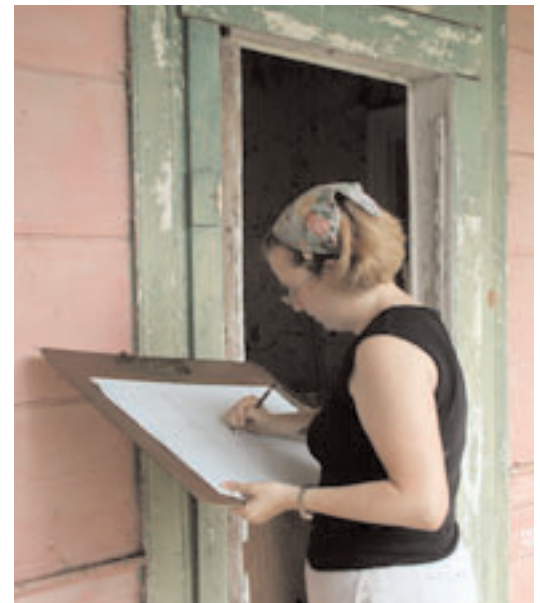
and socioeconomic and political contexts of each national heritage area.

A. Purposes, Vision, and Mission

The purposes for which the initiative was established provide the starting point for the heritage area's framework. These are to:

- complement Cane River Creole National Historical Park;
- provide for a culturally sensitive approach to the preservation of the heritage of the Cane River region;
- recognize areas important to the nation's heritage and identity;
- assist in the preservation and enhancement of the cultural landscape and traditions of the Cane River region;
- provide a framework for those who live within this important, dynamic cultural landscape to assist in preservation and education;
- minimize the need for federal land acquisition and management.¹¹

These legislated purposes were elaborated on in the management plan and have been refined and distilled by the Cane River National Heritage Area Commission in the years since. Currently,



The National Park Service's Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) documented historic properties throughout the heritage area. The intern shown here helped create architectural drawings, which, along with photographs and written histories, are available in the HABS Collection at the Library of Congress.

¹¹ Public Law 103-449, Title IV, section 401(b).

the commission articulates them in its mission statement as follows: “The purposes of the Cane River National Heritage Area are to assist in the preservation and enhancement of the cultural landscape and traditions of the Cane River region, to complement Cane River Creole National Historical Park, and to improve the overall quality of life of the current residents by increasing economic benefits through promotion of the national heritage area to local, regional, and national audiences.”¹²

Also, in 2006 the commission refined its articulation of the heritage area’s overarching vision as follows:

A Vision for Cane River

Cane River National Heritage Area is the place to experience the rich cultures that developed out of Louisiana’s past. The landscape holds stories of American Indian origins, colonial exploration and settlement, plantation agriculture, and social and cultural change. People who call this nationally significant place home remain connected to these stories, and their present-day lifestyles, traditions, and celebrations reflect the region’s heritage.

Residents of the Cane River region enjoy a quality of life based on respect for traditional lifestyles and on a strong, healthy economy and environment compatible with the historic character of the region. Economic benefits of heritage tourism assist in the long-term preservation and enhancement of heritage area resources. Land use decisions remain at the local level.

Our work is accomplished through local, regional, state, and federal cooperation and partnerships.

Together, these statements of purpose, vision, and mission provide the guiding direction for the work of the heritage area initiative.

B. Geographic Scope

The geographic region included in a national heritage area helps to define the extent of the heritage assets to be addressed by the initiative, and the political jurisdictions, public constituencies, and other stakeholders that need to be involved in management and implementation. For Cane River National Heritage Area, the authorizing legislation identified an initial area to

be included, but directed that the final geographic boundary be established during development of the management plan. The resulting area encompasses 116,000 acres, including a concentration of sites within the Natchitoches National Historic Landmark District and a corridor extending south from the outskirts of Natchitoches for 35 miles along the Cane River. In addition, three significant state-managed historic sites are included in the heritage area: Los Adaes State Historic Site, Fort Jesup State Historic Site, and Fort St. Jean Baptiste State Historic Site. All of the heritage area is within Natchitoches Parish except for Fort Jesup, which is in neighboring Sabine Parish. (See map on page 4.) As a whole, this encompasses the bulk of the region’s significant historic sites and cultural landscapes that are most closely tied to the heritage area’s core stories and themes.

C. Management Entity

The Cane River National Heritage Area Commission serves as the management entity for the initiative. This 19-member body was established in the federal authorizing legislation and includes representatives of key interests in the area:

- cultural and historic preservation groups
- education, recreation, and natural resource organizations
- tourism and business organizations
- landowners
- city, parish, and state governments
- the National Park Service

Members of this federal body are appointed to three-year, renewable terms by the secretary of the interior based upon nominations from the various interests. The commission was originally authorized for a period of ten years after its first official meeting, and was subsequently extended for an additional five years by the secretary of the interior. Its current authorization terminates on August 5, 2010.

At present the commission oversees a staff of four full-time employees, a part-time heritage ranger, and student interns. Full-time employees include an executive director, an assistant director, an administrative assistant/office manager, and a project coordinator. The staff covers a range of disciplines, expertise, and functions that reflects the breadth of the heritage area’s purposes and vision. Staff members work at the direction of the commission but are employed by the city of Natchitoches through a cooperative agreement between the city and the commission.

¹² *Cane River National Heritage Area 2006 Annual Report*, p.3.



Historic preservation organizations are important partners in the heritage area initiative. The Kate Chopin House (left), home of the feminist author of *The Awakening*, is owned by the Association for the Preservation of Historic Natchitoches. The Roque House (right), built by a freed slave, is owned by the Natchitoches Historic Foundation.

As is customary with all national heritage area management entities, the commission has the authority through its legislation to receive, use, and distribute federal funds that are appropriated for the heritage area. It can also use a variety of administrative authorities to further the purposes of the initiative, such as hiring staff and consultants, entering into cooperative agreements with other governmental agencies and private organizations, making grants, receiving and using donations of funds and services, and holding hearings.

In addition to its fundamental responsibilities of coordinating and spearheading implementation of the heritage area initiative, the commission is directed under the authorizing legislation to identify organizations that could replace it as the management entity after termination of its authority. More specifically, the legislation directs that “the commission shall . . . identify appropriate entities, such as a nonprofit corporation, that could be established to assume the responsibilities of the commission following its termination,” and “recommend to the governor [of Louisiana] and the secretary [of the interior] appropriate entities, including the potential for a nonprofit corporation, to assume the responsibilities of the commission.”¹³ In light of this legislative mandate, consideration of potential management entities for the heritage area’s next phase has been one important dimension of this evaluation and visioning project. Options

identified during the project are presented in chapter 8.

D. Partners

At its core, the heritage area initiative is a regional public-private partnership involving governments at all levels, nonprofit organizations, community groups, businesses, and individuals working together to achieve the stated purposes, vision, and mission. As articulated in the management plan executive summary, “The United States Congress, in creating Cane River National Heritage Area, knew that partnerships would be the key to preserving and enhancing this special region. By bringing together the vision, expertise, and resources of the state of Louisiana, the city and parish governments of Natchitoches, the National Park Service and other federal agencies, and many area businesses and civic organizations, great strides will be made toward the long-term protection and promotion of the region.”¹⁴ Within that context, a brief summary follows of the ways in which each broad category of partners is involved in the effort.¹⁵

1. Local government

City of Natchitoches

The city of Natchitoches is a central player in the heritage area initiative. As the largest municipality within the heritage area and the seat of parish government, it is the center for much of the region’s population and economic activity, and

¹³ Public Law 103-449, Title IV, section 402(c)(4) and section 404(c).

¹⁴ *Looking to the Future: Cane River National Heritage Area Management Plan Executive Summary*, p. 17.

¹⁵ Additional information on the range of partners and their roles is available on pages 37–45 of the *Cane River National Heritage Area Management Plan*.

key parts of the heritage area lie within its boundary (e.g., the national historic landmark district). In light of this significance, the city holds a dedicated seat on the commission. Also holding a dedicated seat is the Natchitoches Historic District Commission, which was established under a municipal ordinance and charged with overseeing the protection of the landmark district (i.e., regulating historic renovations, repairs, and signage).

The city administration includes several branches and programs that are closely connected to various aspects of the heritage area's mission. These

include the Mayor's Office, the Community Development Department, the Main Street Program, and the Planning and Zoning Department. Staff from these offices have worked collaboratively with the commission, heritage area employees, and other partners on various projects involving historic preservation, heritage tourism, economic development, and other relevant goals.

Natchitoches Parish

Natchitoches Parish is another important player in the heritage area initiative. Most of the heritage area lies within the parish, and its governing

This wooden screw press was used to produce 500-pound bales of cotton at Magnolia Plantation (now part of Cane River Creole National Historical Park). The press is the only one of its kind left on its original site in North America.



Philip Gould

body, the Natchitoches Parish Police Jury, is responsible for overseeing land use and development, local roads, and transportation outside the Natchitoches city limits. Because of the importance of these roles, the police jury has a dedicated seat on the commission. As with the city, the parish administration includes several branches that are involved in issues of direct relevance to the heritage area initiative. These include the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Tourist Commission, and the Natchitoches Area Convention and Visitors Bureau.

2. State government

The state of Louisiana has been involved as a partner in the heritage area initiative in a variety of ways. First, one member of the commission is nominated by the governor. In addition, the heritage area's authorizing legislation required the governor's review and approval of the management plan. The governor approved the plan in November 2002, and expressed the state's enthusiasm for assisting the commission in implementing the plan.

The Louisiana legislature has taken several noteworthy actions directed specifically toward supporting the heritage area. In 2001 the legislature passed a resolution recognizing the Cane River region as one of only two state heritage areas in Louisiana. More recently, the legislature for the first time appropriated funding in the 2008 budget specifically to support Cane River National Heritage Area programs, and established a tax credit program for heritage-related small businesses within the area's boundary.

Beyond these policy-level actions by the governor and the legislature, several branches of state government are involved in the initiative on an ongoing basis. The most active to date include:

- The Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism (CRT), which encompasses the Office of State Parks, Louisiana State Museums, and Office of Tourism (among other branches) as well as the Divisions of Historic Preservation, Archeology, and the Arts. With a wide range of relevant programming, management responsibilities, and regulatory authorities under its various branches, CRT is the state agency most closely connected to the heritage area's mission.
- The Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD), which provides funding, technical assistance, project management, and implementation capacity for transportation and water resources projects.
- Northwestern State University of Louisiana (NSU) in Natchitoches, which provides

funding and in-kind support for heritage area projects, resources for scholarly research and technical assistance, and a home for the Creole Heritage Center (CHC) and the NPS National Center for Preservation Technology and Training (NCPTT). There is also a strong, mutually beneficial relationship between the heritage area and NSU's new Master of Arts in Heritage Resources program, and several students from the program have interned with the commission in recent years.

- The Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts, a state-supported residential high school for high-achieving students, which has partnered in educational projects and in preserving the historic building in Natchitoches where the school is housed.

In addition, there are two state-authorized commissions that are directly connected to the heritage area initiative: the Cane River Waterway Commission (CRWC), which is charged with maintaining a navigable waterway system on Cane River; and the Natchitoches Historic District Development Commission (HDDC), which is responsible for planning, tourism development, and helping to maintain historic integrity in the Natchitoches National Historic Landmark District. Because of the link between their purviews and the mission of the heritage area, each of these commissions has a dedicated seat on the Cane River National Heritage Area Commission and participates in heritage area projects as appropriate.

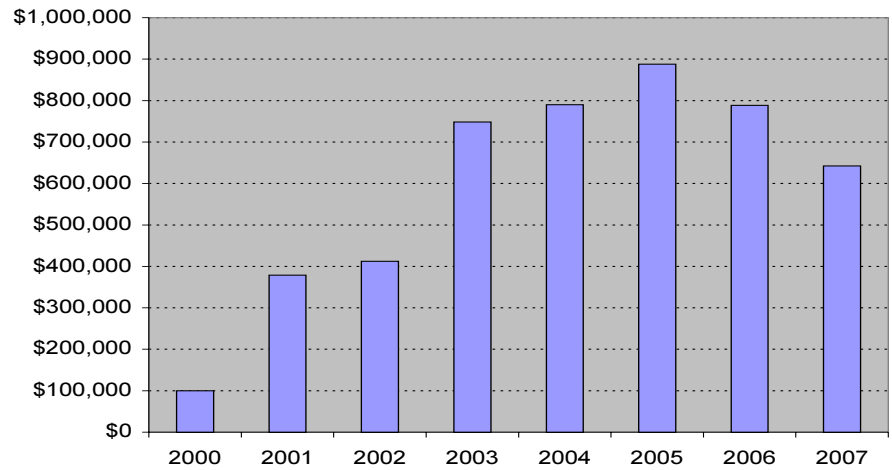
3. Federal government

National Park Service

As is the case with all national heritage areas, the National Park Service (Department of the Interior) is the lead federal partner in the heritage area initiative. As such, the NPS has a legislated seat on the commission. The secretary of the interior is responsible for appointing commissioners and reviewing and approving the heritage area management plan. Annual federal funding appropriated specifically for Cane River National Heritage Area flows through the NPS Heritage Partnership Programs (HPP) budget. Over the years since 1994, the NPS has also provided the heritage area with technical assistance and staff support for planning, policy, and other efforts through its centralized offices and programs (e.g., Southeast Region, Washington headquarters, Denver Service Center, Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record/Historic American Landscapes Survey).

What is most noteworthy about NPS involvement in the Cane River region relative to many

Figure 3.1. Total federal funding appropriated to Cane River National Heritage Area, fiscal years 2000 through 2007 (through the Cane River Creole National Historical Park budget in 2000 and through NPS Heritage Partnership Programs thereafter).



national heritage areas, however, is the agency’s significant local presence and activity through Cane River Creole National Historical Park. The park and the heritage area have a unique relationship in that they were created simultaneously through the same authorizing legislation, with the explicit intent of complementing each other in the preservation and interpretation of the region’s heritage. The park provides support to the commission and heritage area partners in many forms (e.g., funding for collaborative projects, technical and interpretive assistance, legal guidance, administrative services), and the park superintendent serves as the NPS representative on the commission.

The National Center for Preservation Technology and Training adds to the NPS’s strong local presence from its base at Northwestern State University. While NCPTT has a broad mandate to provide training and technical assistance in historic preservation nationwide, it has applied its expertise, capacity, and resources to local efforts as well, thus becoming an important partner in the Cane River network.

Other federal agencies

In addition to the NPS, a number of other federal agencies have a site-based presence or other important responsibilities in the Cane River region, with varying connections to heritage area goals and activities. These agencies include the following:

- U.S. Forest Service (Department of Agriculture), which manages the Kisatchie National Forest. A significant portion of the forest’s Kisatchie Ranger District lies to the west of Interstate 49 and adjacent to the heritage area’s central corridor.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Department of the Interior), which manages the Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery and the

recently established Red River National Wildlife Refuge. One of the refuge’s four units, and a focus area for land acquisition efforts, lies within the heritage area boundary along the Lower Cane River.

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Department of Defense), which manages the Red River Waterway and the Grand Ecore Visitor Center north of Natchitoches. The Army Corps also administers permitting for development projects in wetlands under section 404 of the Clean Water Act.
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (Department of Agriculture), which provides technical assistance and education to help private landowners conserve and enhance natural resources on their lands.
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which oversees implementation of federal environmental quality laws and initiatives.
- Twin Valley Resource Conservation and Development Area, the local nonprofit branch of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Resource Conservation and Development Program.

Senior staff members from the heritage area, the park, NCPTT, and several of the other federal agencies, including Kisatchie National Forest, Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery, and Red River National Wildlife Refuge, have met regularly in recent years to stay abreast of each other’s activities and explore opportunities for potential collaboration.

Cane River’s authorizing legislation requires all federal agencies to consult with the commission and the secretary of the interior (i.e., the NPS) regarding any activities affecting the heritage area and, to the maximum extent practicable, to coordinate those activities with the commission in order to minimize potential negative impacts.

Leverage

“Leverage,” used as a verb, refers to the process of obtaining additional financial and/or nonfinancial commitments from others in response to an initial investment. It can also refer to the power or ability to influence people, decisions, or ideas. Used as a noun, leverage refers to the additional financial and/or nonfinancial resources that are committed by others in response to an initial investment.

4. Nongovernmental interests

Organizations and individuals outside of government, including nonprofit organizations, businesses, community groups, landowners, and other residents, are also central to the Cane River partnership. In fact, nearly two-thirds of the seats on the commission are dedicated to nongovernmental interests from across the heritage area. Many of these interests have been involved in historic preservation, cultural conservation, and heritage-based economic development in the Cane River region since well before the heritage area was established. They continue to have lead responsibility for many initiatives related to heritage area goals (such as preserving, restoring, and managing certain sites, and providing education and interpretation) and they also contribute to other collaborative projects and programs within the heritage area.

E. Funding and Other Forms of Support

As alluded to elsewhere in this chapter, support for the heritage area initiative comes from all levels of the partnership and in a variety of forms (e.g., financial support, staff time, in-kind contributions, volunteer involvement). Indeed, this dependence on broad support and participation is a fundamental aspect of the Cane River partnership model and of national heritage areas in general.

Most national heritage areas receive federal appropriations through the NPS Heritage Partnership Programs budget. While this has been the case in recent years for Cane River, its funding through HPP did not begin until fiscal year 2001, seven years after designation. What is unusual at Cane River is the funding and other support provided by Cane River Creole National Historical Park in the years prior to the beginning of direct federal appropriations. In 1998 the park allocated nearly \$402,000 to the NPS Denver Service Center for professional assistance with the heritage area’s management plan. Late that same year, the park and the heritage area signed an interagency agreement to allow the transfer of \$300,000 from the park to the heritage area—\$100,000 for operations and \$200,000 for projects in 1999 and 2000. These funds enabled the commission to hire staff and begin its work.

The first federal appropriation (of \$100,000) specifically designated for the heritage area was included in the park’s budget in 2000. From 2001 through 2007, annual federal appropriations directed to Cane River through HPP ranged from \$379,050 to \$888,000. In all, federal funds directed by Congress to Cane River National Heritage Area during fiscal years 2000 through 2007 totaled \$4.75 million (see figure 3.1 on page 18).¹⁶

The legislation that established Cane River National Heritage Area did not require that federal funds appropriated by Congress be matched by other funding sources, nor did it specify an authorization ceiling for federal funds. Nevertheless, the commission has actively sought to leverage funds from other sources. (See box for explanation of leverage.) To date, the commission’s total cash investment of \$3.08 million in projects carried out since 1998 has leveraged \$3.43 million in cash from diverse public and private sources. Furthermore, these projects have leveraged nonfinancial support (e.g., partner staff time, in-kind contributions, and volunteer assistance) conservatively worth \$1.4 million. (See chapter 4, section C for further discussion.)

The commission has taken steps to diversify its funding sources, with several important results in the last two years. The heritage area was awarded \$274,000 in federal transportation enhancement funds¹⁷ by DOTD in 2006 for rehabilitation and preservation of the Texas and Pacific Railway Depot in Natchitoches (see discussion in chapter 4, beginning on page 21), and a \$198,000 grant in 2007 from EPA’s brownfields program to assist with rehabilitation at St. Matthews School in Melrose. In addition, in August 2007 the Louisiana legislature appropriated \$110,000 in the state’s 2008 budget for Cane River National Heritage Area projects, which the commission hopes will be the beginning of annual state appropriations to the heritage area. Also, in 2007 the city of Natchitoches requested an additional \$282,000 in transportation enhancement funding and \$1 million in capital outlay funding from the state of Louisiana, both for the railway depot project. In January 2008 the city received an initial allocation of \$100,000 (for planning) from its capital outlay request.

¹⁶ In fiscal year 2002, the heritage area’s budget included a congressionally designated pass-through of \$250,000 for the Creole Heritage Center at Northwestern State University. These funds were transferred to CHC; they were not included in this study or the figures in this report.

¹⁷ State transportation departments receive transportation enhancement funding as a percentage of their annual Surface Transportation Program appropriation from the Federal Highway Administration, then reappropriate these funds to eligible projects. For more information, see <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/te/index.htm>.



Jack Boucher, National Park Service, HABS/HAER/HALS

The Prud'homme family occupied the main house at Oakland Plantation from its construction in 1821 until 1998, when the National Park Service acquired the working core of the plantation. Today, Oakland's 44 historic structures and associated landscapes make up one unit of Cane River Creole National Historical Park. The park and the heritage area work closely together to conserve the landscapes and traditions of the region, and to share its nationally important stories with the public.

SECTION II: ASSESSING THE CANE RIVER NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA PARTNERSHIP

Chapter 4

Pursuing the Vision: Progress, Accomplishments, and Leverage

Congress designated Cane River National Heritage Area in 1994, but appropriated no funding until 2000. In the intervening years, the National Park Service conducted preliminary studies—including a cultural landscape inventory, archeological surveys, ethnographic reports, and historic structure documentation—to inform planning and preservation efforts for both the heritage area and Cane River Creole National Historical Park.¹⁸ Management planning for the heritage area began in 1996, with the National Park Service taking the lead at the request of the heritage area commission. However, progress was slow in the absence of federal funds. In 1998, the national park provided the funding to complete management planning for the heritage area; the final management plan was signed by the governor of Louisiana in 2002 and approved by the secretary of the interior in 2003.

The approved plan has three primary thrusts: (1) conservation, preservation, and research to help ensure the long-term integrity of heritage resources, including traditions, landscapes, and structures; (2) education and interpretation to foster public support and appreciation for Cane River history and resources; and (3) support for marketing a full range of heritage tourism opportunities. In order to accomplish these objectives, the management plan specifies 11 implementation categories: cultural landscape protection, research, technical and financial assistance, conservation of cultural traditions, marketing, visitor information and wayfinding, interpretation, visitor facilities, volunteer services, transportation, and natural resource protection. The implementation program also lists more than 50 partners and additional potential partners.

A. Observations on Progress and Accomplishments

The commission has made considerable progress in most of the implementation categories since 1999, when funding from the national park enabled it to hire staff and begin work. That year the commission provided

grants to four organizations for preservation projects, thus launching its competitive grants program. Since then, the commission has invested the bulk of its funds via two separate but complementary tracks: the grants program and commission-initiated projects. Both have involved working with a wide range of partners and both have leveraged additional cash and nonfinancial support (see discussion beginning on page 29 of this chapter).

The two tracks have supported the initiation of 177 projects. Of these, 130 (73 percent) have been completed, 38 (21 percent) are still underway, and 9 (5 percent) are considered annual or ongoing. Five additional projects, all from the grants program, were initially funded but were subsequently withdrawn and the funds returned. Many of the projects address specific actions in the management plan's implementation categories, especially in the areas of research, technical and financial assistance, conservation of cultural traditions, visitor information and wayfinding, interpretation, visitor facilities, and transportation. In addition to projects, the commission and heritage area staff have addressed other implementation aspects on an ongoing basis, such as providing information and technical assistance, coordinating with partners on joint marketing efforts, or working to establish a heritage area friends group.

The study team reviewed ten years of project data covering the years 1998–2007, beginning with the management planning funded by the park. Through historic preservation projects, 21 buildings have been restored or rehabilitated and numerous historic documents have been conserved. Fifty-eight research projects have produced information about the region's various cultural groups. Among these are oral histories (e.g., Caddo Indian, African American, Creole, civil rights), genealogical studies (e.g., Creole, African American, French), archeological studies, a database of Indian basketry, and a digital library of Adaesaño Spanish recordings.¹⁹

¹⁸ Personal correspondence with Ann Van Huizen, National Park Service planner, Denver Service Center.

¹⁹ "Adaesaños" refers generally to descendants of the inhabitants of Los Adaes, the eighteenth-century Spanish mission and presidio that served as a provincial capital in New Spain and is today the Los Adaes State Historic Site.

Table 4.1. Project classification by purpose

	Commission Projects	Grants Program Projects	Totals
Interpretation and education	31	29	60
Documentation	19	39	58
Historic preservation	13	35	48
Visitor services	27	10	37
Marketing	22	3	25
Land conservation	8	1	9
Transportation	7	1	8
Administration	7	1	8

Sixty interpretation and education projects have led to exhibits and documentaries, children’s programs, online information, and books, brochures, and other publications. A signage system and a GIS database have been developed and implemented for the entire heritage area, a concept plan for a joint visitor center has been prepared for the heritage area and the national park, and map guides have been completed for walking and driving tours.

Because the commission made an early strategic decision to establish the grants program, the study team first divided projects into two groups: those undertaken through the grants program (89 projects) and those in which the commission invested funds or staff time directly (88 projects). The two groups of projects were then analyzed in several ways: by purpose and by relationship to geography and cultural groups.

1. Analysis by project purposes

With the assistance of heritage area staff, projects were classified according to eight main purposes that correspond with commission recordkeeping: interpretation and education, documentation (i.e., research), historic preservation, visitor services, marketing, land conservation, transportation, and administration (see table 4.1). Because some projects address two or more purposes, the totals add up to more than 177.

The following observations were made related to project purposes:

- Of the 177 projects, 107 (60 percent) addressed a single purpose; 70 projects (40 percent) addressed two or more purposes.
- Of the commission’s 88 projects, 44 (50 percent) have integrated two or more purposes; these projects in total have addressed

all purposes except historic preservation. (The commission has initiated 13 single-purpose historic preservation projects.)

- Of the 89 projects in the grants program, 26 (29 percent) have integrated two or more purposes; of these, 24 have included some aspect of historic preservation, documentation, or interpretation and education.
- Of the 9 land conservation projects, 8 have been undertaken within the past three years.

2. Analysis of project investments by geography

In order to see how project investments have been distributed across the heritage area, the study team analyzed project investments by whether the project was focused area-wide,²⁰ downriver, in the city of Natchitoches, or in the several “satellite” areas that lie outside the main heritage area boundary (e.g., Los Adaes State Historic Site). Figure 4.1 (on page 23) shows how project investments have been distributed across the heritage area geographically, using the 177 projects undertaken from 1998 through 2007. In this case, grants program projects, commission-initiated projects, and the funds leveraged by both are aggregated.

Beginning in 2003 and continuing through 2007, the commission chose to make a major annual contribution to the Creole Heritage Center as its chief direct investment in Creole-related projects. (Creole-related projects initiated by partners have been funded through the grants program since its inception in 1999.) The commission directed that its funds to CHC be used only to support work within the heritage area and not CHC’s work nationally. Because Cane River Creole culture and resources are centered in the downriver portion of the heritage area, this funding to CHC is included with the downriver projects in figure 4.1.²¹

²⁰ Examples of area-wide projects include the management plan, the master interpretive plan, signage, website development, development of GIS resources, and this evaluation.

²¹ Since some of the commission’s funding to CHC was intended for administration, the actual investment in downriver projects may be somewhat less than that shown in figures 4.1 and 4.2.

Figure 4.2 compares the geographic distribution of the two investment tracks (i.e., the grants program and commission-initiated projects), displaying only the area-wide, downriver, and in-town categories that comprise 98 percent of the geographic investments and showing the dollars leveraged by each investment track. In figure 4.2 the commission's contributions to CHC are reported separately.

Study data indicate that heritage area investments have been relatively evenly distributed across the heritage area. Looking at how the different types of projects (as determined by project purpose) are distributed geographically, the following observations were made:

- A total of \$3.05 million was invested in historic preservation projects. Of this, \$.023 million (1 percent) was invested in area-wide projects (for conservation of historic records),

\$1.38 million (45 percent) in downriver projects, and \$1.65 million (54 percent) in Natchitoches projects.

- Of the 60 interpretation and education projects, 42 (70 percent) were focused area-wide, 9 (15 percent) were downriver, 7 (12 percent) in Natchitoches, and 2 (3 percent) in satellite areas.
- Of the 58 projects related to documentation, 33 (57 percent) were area-wide in focus, 10 (17 percent) were downriver, 9 (16 percent) were in Natchitoches, and 6 (10 percent) took place in satellite areas.

3. Analysis of project investments by cultural group

Because the commission is charged in part with providing “a culturally sensitive approach to preserving the region’s heritage,” and assisting “in the preservation and enhancement of the cultural landscape and traditions of the region,” the

Figure 4.1. Total project investments by geographic area, fiscal years 1998 through 2007.

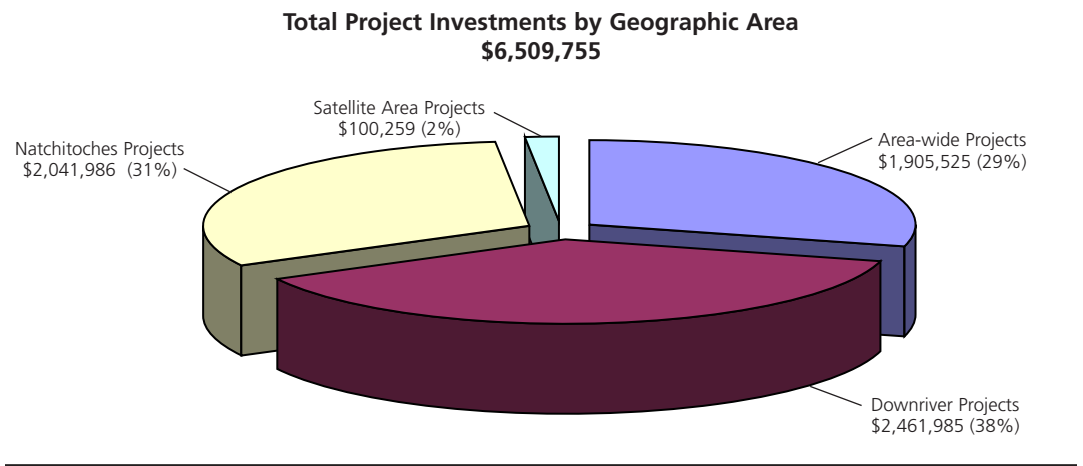


Figure 4.2. Geographic distribution of commission investments and leverage, fiscal years 1998 through 2007.

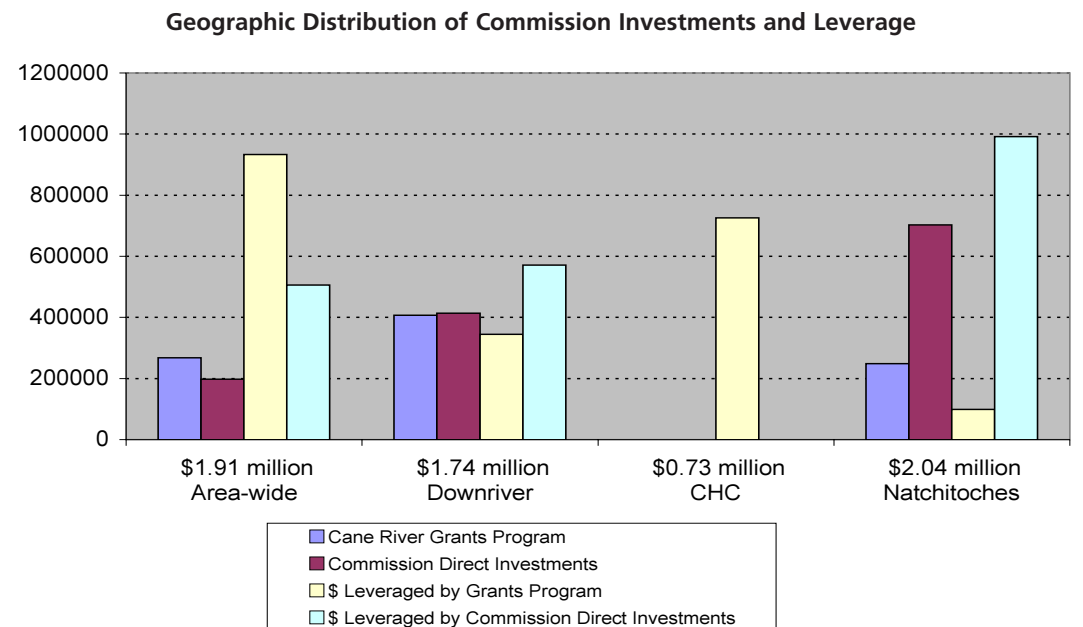
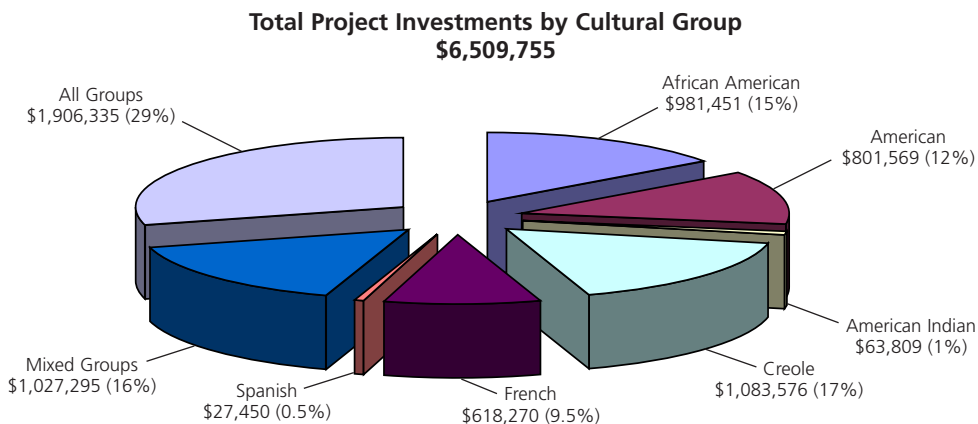


Figure 4.3. Total project investments by cultural group, fiscal years 1998 through 2007.



study team assessed how project investments were distributed across the different cultural groups that have historic connections to the Cane River area. Projects were analyzed as to whether their focus was African American, American,²² American Indian, Creole, French, Spanish, “mixed groups” (i.e., more than one cultural group but not encompassing all of them), or “all groups.”²³ The distribution of investments overall, aggregating grants program projects, commission-initiated projects, and the funds leveraged by both, is shown in figure 4.3.

Figure 4.4 on page 25 compares the distribution across cultural groups of the investments made through the two tracks and the leverage from each. (Note that only the six largest categories—excluding American Indian and Spanish—that comprise 98 percent of the total investments have been included.) As with the geographic analysis, the commission’s direct support of the Creole Heritage Center is shown separately from the other Creole-related investments. Projects in the “area-wide” category (see footnote 20 on page 22) also make up much of the “all groups” category in figures 4.3 and 4.4.

Looking at the distribution of investments across cultural groups, the following observations were made:

- Of the 58 projects focused on documentation, 15 (26 percent) addressed all cultural groups; 14 (24 percent) related to African Americans; 10 (17 percent) served a mixture of groups (e.g., Creole–French, Creole–American–African American, Spanish–American Indian); 7 (12 percent) focused on Creole subjects; and the remaining 12 (21 percent total) were spread fairly evenly among American Indian, French, Spanish, and American groups.

- Of the 60 projects related to interpretation and education, 31 (52 percent) included all cultural groups, 9 (15 percent) addressed a mixture, 8 (13 percent) focused on African Americans, 6 (10 percent) on American Indians, 5 (8 percent) on Creole subjects, and 1 (2 percent) on American culture (as defined in footnote 22 on this page).

This analysis, combined with the commission’s investments in marketing, visitor services, and transportation that serve all groups, reinforces the notion that heritage area investments have been relatively evenly distributed across the primary cultural affiliations in the Cane River region today.

B. Program and Project Highlights

To better understand how the commission conducts its work, the study team examined in depth two projects (interpretive planning for the heritage area and rehabilitation of the Texas and Pacific Railway Depot) and one program (competitive grants). The narratives that follow were developed with the assistance of heritage area staff and are meant to complement the analysis of progress and investments presented in the previous section.

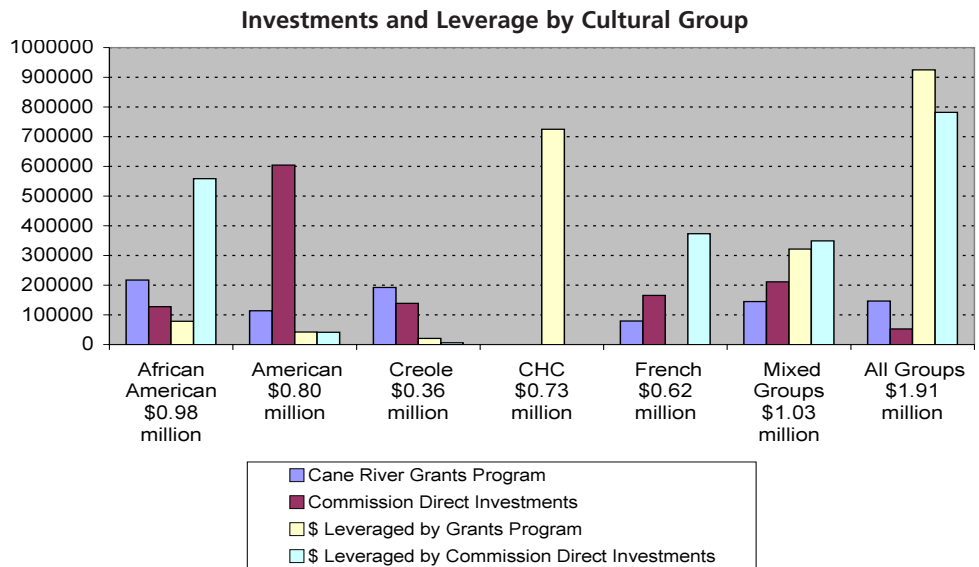
1. Interpretive planning for Cane River National Heritage Area

The methods used to develop the Cane River National Heritage Area Master Interpretive Plan demonstrate the commission’s inclusive approach to planning and to involving stakeholders in general. In 2000 the commission funded the development of an interpretive plan to refine and expand the interpretive themes identified during management planning and to present a unified approach to telling the region’s stories. Twenty people representing diverse perspectives were invited to serve on an interpretive committee. They included managers of historic

²² Refers to the period that began with the influx of settlers following the 1803 Louisiana Purchase.

²³ These categories were developed by the study team in consultation with heritage area staff.

Figure 4.4. Distribution of commission investments and leverage relative to cultural group, fiscal years 1998 through 2007.



sites, representatives of cultural organizations, community leaders, scholars, local historians, and interpretive staff from the national park. The committee met several times over the course of a year to strategize how best to accomplish the tasks described above.

Finalized in 2003, the master interpretive plan that resulted from the committee’s deliberations contained strategies applicable throughout the region, as well as site-specific information and recommendations. Many of its elements have been put into practice. Some organizations have used the plan to leverage grant funding to implement recommendations found within. For example, the Association for the Preservation of Historic Natchitoches received grant funding from the commission and the National Trust for Historic Preservation to enhance interpretation at Melrose Plantation and the Kate Chopin House.

Other benefits

Of equal importance to the plan itself was the process by which it was developed. The interpretive committee brought together people of diverse cultural backgrounds who had never before sat at the same table to talk about their shared and often difficult past. For the first time, descendants of slaveholders and of slaves came together to discuss how their ancestors’ history was part of a national story and why it was important to share that history. Slavery was but one of several complex historical and cultural issues discussed by the committee. “Jim Crow” segregation, the definition of “Creole,” the romanticism of the Old South, local legend versus historical accuracy, and the question of which sites and cultural groups “owned” certain stories are other examples of topics with widely divergent perspectives.

At one point during the meetings, an older African American participant pointed out the difficulty of having such discussions, stating that in Natchitoches people had always gotten along because they didn’t talk about the differences of the past. By creating a safe environment in which people felt they could open up, the interpretive planning process helped to establish trust and respect between the cultural groups, historic site partners, national park, and commission. This trust and respect have carried over into many other aspects of the commission’s work, and this inclusive process has become standard practice for all commission projects.

Unanticipated challenges

Some unanticipated challenges arose during implementation of the plan. While a group of stakeholders can make recommendations about which stories should be interpreted at which historic sites, ultimately the site owners themselves are responsible for their own interpretation. For example, local stakeholders had a very different vision of what should be interpreted at sites managed by the Louisiana Office of State Parks than did state employees in Baton Rouge. Managers and interpreters at sites where interpretation was well-established also had difficulty in accepting the recommendations in the plan, especially in cases where they felt that legend made a more compelling story than reality. Over time, however, it appears that historical accuracy has made headway in the region.

Heritage area partnership investments and leverage

The commission funded development of the interpretive plan in its entirety at a cost of \$43,750. Commissioners, heritage area staff, and partners all provided significant time to the

The Texas and Pacific Railway Depot rehabilitation project is a community effort. Residents, the city of Natchitoches, the heritage area, and the park are working together to give the building new life.



Cammie G. Henry Research Center, Northwestern State University



Philip B. Huffman

project, although the amount of contributed time was not tracked.

2. The Texas and Pacific Railway Depot rehabilitation project

The Texas and Pacific Railway Depot, a passenger and freight facility built in 1927, is a landmark Natchitoches structure. One of the city's finest buildings, its Spanish Revival-Italian Renaissance design is quite different from that of the few other surviving urban train depots in Louisiana. Rehabilitation of the depot is recommended in the management plan and is perhaps the heritage area's most complex project, serving resource preservation, interpretation and education, transportation, and visitor services objectives.

Located in the heart of a predominantly African American residential section of the city, the depot saw its passenger heyday when trains were the primary mode of transportation for soldiers serving in World War II and laborers leaving plantations during the "Great Migration."²⁴ By the late 1960s, service had dwindled to freight only; Union-Pacific closed the depot in the 1980s and gave the building to the city of Natchitoches. An early effort to raise restoration funds failed because the city did not own the land, but in the mid-1990s Union-Pacific gave the land to the

city, sparking renewed interest in preserving the building. Today, a major partnership project seeks to rehabilitate the depot as an African American heritage center and multimodal transportation hub.

The depot is close to the downtown Natchitoches National Historic Landmark District and could potentially provide parking and easy access to transportation, both of which are otherwise problems in the district. The idea of a heritage center evolved in part from the importance of rail travel to African Americans at a time when the mechanization of agriculture was increasing and they were leaving in search of jobs and greater economic opportunities elsewhere. Furthermore, the depot holds cultural significance as one of the few buildings in Natchitoches in which the "Jim Crow" policy of racial segregation is apparent in its architectural design. Separate "white" and "colored" entrances, ticket windows, waiting rooms, and restrooms remain as a testament to this practice. Through the rehabilitation project, the depot will become the primary location where the African American experience in the region is interpreted, thus complementing and connecting with interpretation of African American history at other sites in the heritage area. Transportation services, including potential

²⁴ When applied to African Americans, "Great Migration" refers to the movement of seven million people between 1916 and 1970 from the rural South to urban areas in the North, upper Midwest, and West, with the largest population shift (about five million people) taking place between 1940 and 1970.

revenue from a transportation tax, eventually may help to support the depot's function as a heritage interpretation facility.

Since 2000, the commission has worked collaboratively on the depot project with the city of Natchitoches, the Ben D. Johnson Educational Foundation (a local nonprofit organization working in the African American community), and the National Park Service. Staffers from the heritage area and the city have shared the tasks of writing grants, submitting requests for funds, and community outreach, and both the commission and the city have committed funds at key times. Cane River Creole National Historical Park has provided technical assistance in planning and stabilization efforts, and the Ben D. Johnson Foundation and the Black Heritage Committee have provided valuable leadership and outreach efforts in the African American community.

Although at times the project appeared stalled due to lack of funds and the daunting rehabilitation task, momentum has been building in recent years. In 2006 the Louisiana Preservation Alliance designated the depot one of the "Ten Most Endangered Historic Sites in Louisiana." Also that year, a preservation planning process invited significant community input, and grassroots involvement increased rapidly. As this planning proceeded, community members formed a committee to spearhead development of a heritage center within the depot. The preservation plan will guide the project as it unfolds and can be used to leverage additional project funding.

Other benefits

The scale and complexity of the depot project have encouraged big-picture thinking by the commission and its partners, and progress in recent years has created momentum for other projects throughout the community. As an example, the preservation planning process sparked interest in developing an African American historic district for placement in the National Register of Historic Places, which would allow residents of the district to seek tax credits for preservation and development.

Unanticipated challenges

The amount of funding needed and the time required to secure major funding have been challenging for all partners. As a result, interest in the project has waxed and waned over time. In addition, public meetings throughout the project have made clear that residents of the depot area do not fully trust the intentions of the city administration.

Heritage area partnership investments and leverage

From 2000 through 2007, the commission invested considerable staff time in community outreach and fundraising, and committed \$66,000 in direct funding for stabilization, architectural documentation, and preservation planning. The commission also pledged an additional \$100,000 to match transportation enhancement funding. Grants received include \$15,000 from the Great American Station Foundation in 2001 (matched by \$3,000 from the city); a \$24,500 Louisiana Historic Preservation Emergency Rescue Grant, also in 2001; \$5,000 from the Louisiana Main Street Program in 2003; and \$274,000 in 2006 federal transportation enhancement funds for preservation planning. In 2007 the city of Natchitoches requested an additional \$282,000 in transportation enhancement funding from DOTD and \$1 million in capital outlay funding from the state of Louisiana, both for construction. An initial \$100,000 of the capital outlay request was received in January 2008.

3. Cane River National Heritage Area competitive grants program

The commission's longest running program, competitive grants, has strengthened partner capacity, advanced heritage area purposes, provided an important source of leverage, and raised public awareness about the heritage area. Program objectives include (1) conserving, interpreting, and promoting Cane River resources, cultural landscapes, and history; (2) interpreting and promoting understanding of the region's cultures; (3) increasing visitation and public participation through programs and events; (4) providing opportunities for residents to assist in preservation and education; and (5) promoting local partnerships with organizations, educational institutions, businesses, and individuals.

In 1998 frustration was high among commission members, as the heritage area had received no federal appropriations since its establishment in 1994. Late that year, funding provided by the park to the commission through an interagency agreement enabled the commission to begin its grants program, thus helping to alleviate the frustration. In 1999 the commission awarded grants to four highly visible historic preservation projects managed by four local nonprofit organizations. Two of the projects were in Natchitoches and two were downriver, and together they encompassed the region's major cultural groups. Since these first awards, the program has evolved to meet management plan goals and respond to the changing needs of the community.

Through a Cane River National Heritage Area grant to the Creole Heritage Center, artist Gilbert Fletcher's work was exhibited locally and in Creole communities across Louisiana. Fletcher painted people and places special to the Cane River Creole community.



During the program's early years, the application process remained simple: a committee of commissioners reviewed the one-page applications and made recommendations on grant awards to the full commission. In late 2001, the commission hired a grants manager to develop a formal application process, manage the existing grants, oversee compliance with federal regulations, and promote the program. As a result, program goals and guidelines were developed and applications became more rigorous. The application form was revamped to better ensure that projects would further heritage area goals and applicants would be capable of carrying out their plans.

As the program evolved, formal criteria were adopted to assess the feasibility of proposed projects and their applicability to heritage area purposes. The grants committee was expanded to include non-commissioners with pertinent expertise, such as historic preservation and cultural conservation. Applicants were required to show leverage, either financial or nonfinancial, and later to quantify the nonfinancial match. Perhaps most importantly, the grants manager improved the services available to applicants, providing assistance throughout the grant process from application preparation to project implementation. This technical assistance has been significant, as many potential applicants are unfamiliar with the process of preparing grant proposals and carrying out projects. The grants manager not only raised the standards of the program, but also helped build capacity so that individuals and organizations could meet those standards.

Overall, completed grant projects have made major contributions to accomplishing the heritage

area's mission to preserve and promote the resources of the Cane River region, with particular benefits for cultural stewardship. Historic preservation projects have played an important role in this, as historic properties are where the history of the region's cultures has played out. Finally, more than any other commission action, providing grant funding to partners has helped raise public awareness about the heritage area.

Other benefits

Although grants projects help the commission accomplish its mandates, the grants also help cultural groups and organizations conduct projects on topics they identify as important. The politics of cultural identity and stewardship are complex, and allowing the control of grant projects to remain with the grantees is significant for these groups. As an example, the oral history projects carried out in the African American, Cane River Creole, Caddo, French, and Spanish communities encouraged residents to tell their own stories in their own words. Through the grants, groups have documented living traditions in the region, and scholars have expanded understanding of the region's cultural groups through archeological, archival, and genealogical projects. The projects reflect the breadth of partners' priorities and interests, and partners have gained much technical knowledge through the process of applying for and implementing these grants.

Unanticipated challenges

The grants program faces several challenges. With the heritage area's small geographic size, there are a limited number of individuals, organizations, and institutions able to undertake matching grants. In carrying out projects over the past eight years, many partner organizations have stretched

themselves to their organizational and financial limits and need to rebuild their resources before taking on more projects. Also, the earlier, less structured process for awarding grants has led to lingering perceptions that some organizations have better access to grant funding than others. Although the more thorough application process and availability of technical assistance may be helping to mitigate this perception of differential access, nevertheless some entities may be over-represented in the applicant pool because they have skilled grant writers on staff.

Heritage area partnership investments and leverage

On an annual basis, grant projects often produce the largest portion of leveraged support. Overall, the competitive grants program has provided nearly \$1 million in funding to 89 projects, leveraging more than \$1.3 million in cash from partners as well as in-kind support valued at \$632,000. This is a significant investment by partners, given the small scale of most grants and the relatively poor, rural setting of the heritage area.

C. Funding and Other Public Investments in the Heritage Area

Examination of investments and leverage for Cane River National Heritage Area involves both financial and nonfinancial aspects. Although the commission is not required to match its federal funding with other financial or nonfinancial support, it has nonetheless sought leverage as much as possible. The sections that follow first describe financial investments and leverage and then nonfinancial support.

1. Financial investments and leverage

In fiscal years 2000 through 2007, the commission received \$4,748,120 in federal funds specifically appropriated to the heritage area (see page 18 for more details). In addition, in late 1998 Cane River Creole National Historical Park transferred

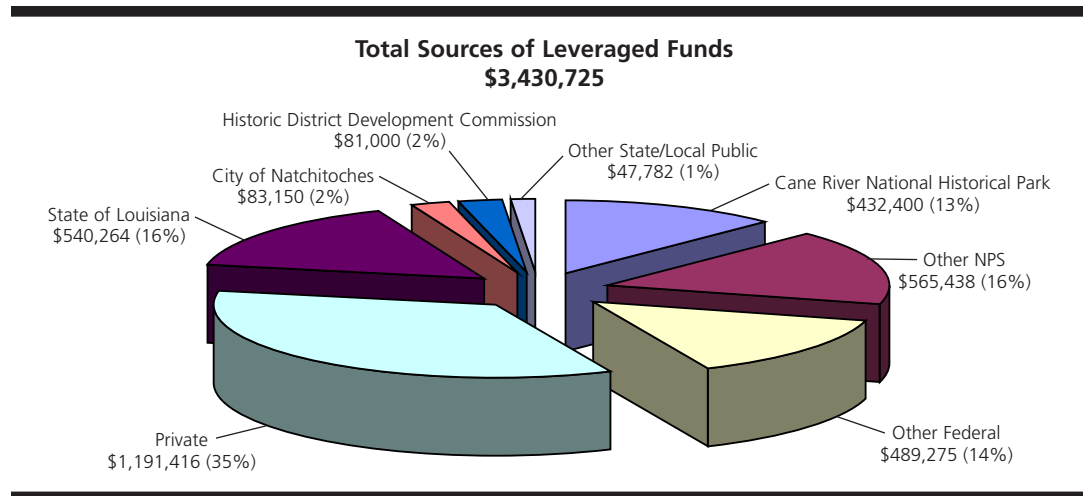
\$300,000 of its federal funds to the heritage area for operations and programming. Of this total \$5,048,120 in federal support, the commission has invested \$3,079,030 (61 percent) in projects throughout the heritage area, either through the grants program or through direct initiation of projects. The remaining \$1,969,090 (39 percent) was used for administration and staffing. It should be noted, however, that a good portion of heritage area staff time has been committed to pursuing grant funding and to building partner capacity to plan and implement projects effectively, both of which have resulted in cash leveraged. No attempt has been made to put a dollar value on this time.

These investments in projects have leveraged the following:

- In the grants program, the commission has invested a total of \$966,498, which has leveraged \$1,320,384 in cash for a total of \$2,286,882.
- In its direct investments, the commission has invested \$2,112,532 plus unspecified staff time in projects, which has leveraged \$2,110,341 in cash for a total of \$4,222,873.
- Combined, the commission’s investment of \$3,079,030 and the resulting \$3,430,725 in leveraged funds add up to a total project investment of \$6,509,755.

The leveraged funds have come from diverse sources in the private and public sectors, as illustrated in figure 4.5. At nearly \$1.2 million, private sector funding has been the single largest source of leveraged funds, \$1.1 million (91 percent) of which has come through historic preservation projects. Cane River Creole National Historical Park has been a key funding partner, especially in its early commitment to get the heritage area up and running. In the years since, the park has been instrumental in helping the heritage area access other NPS funding

Figure 4.5. Sources of leveraged funds, fiscal years 1998 through 2007.



sources (e.g., the Lower Mississippi Delta Region Initiative and the Save America's Treasures and Preserve America programs). Beyond the NPS grants, in the last several years the commission has recently obtained several large federal awards, most notably the \$274,000 in 2006 federal transportation enhancement funds for the depot project and the \$198,000 grant in 2007 from the EPA brownfields program for the St. Matthews School rehabilitation project. Efforts to engage the state of Louisiana as a funding partner have begun to bear fruit recently, as shown by the legislature's 2008 budget approval of \$110,000 for the heritage area, and the \$100,000 provided in January 2008 in response to the city's request for \$1 million in capital outlay funding for the depot project. (These 2008 funds are not included in figure 4.5).

2. Nonfinancial leverage

In the first years of project work, the heritage area collected only general information on nonfinancial partner support (i.e., an acknowledgment that volunteer time, partner staff time, or other in-kind support had been contributed), with no quantification as to number of hours or dollar value. The staff first began to document dollar value in 2001, although quantification was still sporadic. In 2003 reporting of nonfinancial partner support was made a requirement for all grants provided by the commission. Since then nearly all grant projects and one-third of commission-initiated projects have documented a dollar value for nonfinancial partner support. Of the 177 projects undertaken by the commission and its partners since 1998, 158 (89 percent) showed some type of nonfinancial support, with a total reported value of more than \$1.41 million. This figure is undoubtedly low, however, due to the sporadic reporting prior to 2003.

D. Overall Observations from the Analysis of Heritage Area Accomplishments

The observations that follow have emerged from the overall analysis of accomplishments.

Through its direct investments, the commission has emphasized area-wide projects that apply to all cultural groups and provide a broad foundation for future work and activities.

These include such initiatives as a logo and signage that establish a graphic identity and presence for the heritage area, brochures and a comprehensive GIS database that provide information on the heritage area and its resources, and documents such as the master interpretive plan and a tourism marketing plan

that provide a resource to partners throughout the heritage area.

The commission's early decision to establish a grants program to engage partners has helped build the involvement of partner organizations and enhanced partner capacity.

The incentives offered by the grants program (e.g., funding to take on a project that a partner thinks is important, the availability of technical assistance) have increased the involvement of partners, their understanding of what the heritage area is about, and their capacity to carry out projects effectively. Over time, this may lead to a sense of enhanced pride in their heritage and a greater stake in the success of the heritage area, both important elements of a strong partner network.

Projects and investments increasingly address multiple objectives.

In both the grants program and the commission's direct investments, the number of projects with two or more objectives has increased over time. For example, all of the early historic preservation projects were single-purpose. In the last two years, five grants were awarded to projects that combined historic preservation and documentation objectives. A similar trend can also be seen with both grant projects and commission projects that combine documentation with interpretation and education. Similar data gathered at other national heritage areas suggest that this trend of integrating objectives or goals in projects may be an indication of maturation and growing sophistication in the heritage area's partnership system.

The commission's inclusive, collaborative approach has provided a means for the different cultural groups to talk about and bridge their difficult history.

The trust established among people and organizations that share a difficult history suggests that the commission's collaborative approach—designed to achieve a culturally sensitive approach to preserving Cane River's heritage—has been effective. The relatively even spread of investments across cultural groups and geography reinforces the commission's inclusive approach.

The heritage area and the national park have established a strong, mutually beneficial partnership.

Establishing a national park and a national heritage area within the same legislation appears to have created a reciprocal relationship that allows each entity to accomplish more toward its mission than it could by working

The “Landmarks in Time” exhibit, developed through an inclusive interpretive process, orients visitors to the region’s stories and places.



alone. The park’s timely provision of such things as funding and technical assistance (e.g., support with interpretation and preservation, liaison with other levels of the NPS, administrative assistance, collections management) has been complemented by the heritage area’s access to and engagement with the community and area grassroots organizations, its sharing of interpretive staff, and the regional context provided for the park and its stories.

The commission has demonstrated its capacity to take on and accomplish complex, large-scale projects.

Projects such as the depot restoration, heritage area signage, and pursuit of major grants require vision, strategic planning, the ability to obtain and coordinate the cooperation of local government and grassroots stakeholders, and persistence in carrying out the necessary implementation steps. Success in carrying out such complex projects indicates the maturation and increased capacity of the commission and staff over time.

Although the grants program has enhanced partner capacity, the issues of partner leadership and capacity remain a challenge.

The grants program has played an important role in enhancing partner capacity and ensuring that partner projects are carried out successfully. However, the challenge of building capacity is ongoing. Although any network will display an ebb and flow of partner activity, the small size of the Cane River heritage area makes its partner network more vulnerable to this tendency. Related to this is the ongoing need to identify future leaders within the partner network and to provide a means for enhancing their leadership skills to ensure that the network remains strong and vibrant.

The commission has begun to address cultural landscape conservation in recent years, but much remains to be done in this important implementation category.

Protecting the heritage area’s nationally significant cultural landscapes poses one of the biggest challenges to the heritage area initiative. Although the commission has made progress in laying groundwork for future conservation of Cane River’s cultural landscapes, the commission and its partners have not yet mounted a cultural landscape initiative that engages all the necessary partners in addressing the threats to landscape integrity.



Split cane and split oak baskets are traditional products of American Indians in this area. The Caddo Nation of Oklahoma and the Adai community in western Natchitoches Parish trace their ancestry to this region, and tribal leaders work with local partners to share stories and traditions.

Chapter 5

Analyzing the Existing Heritage Area Framework: Strengths and Challenges

As described in chapter 3, the legislation that established Cane River National Heritage Area created a federally authorized framework to assist public and private partners in protecting and interpreting the region's rich heritage and using that heritage as a foundation for community enhancement. With the existing framework due to expire in August 2010, part of this study involved examining the strengths and challenges associated with the framework as a precursor to identifying possible options for the future. This chapter summarizes the findings of that analysis, organized by the five main framework components. The analysis draws particularly on discussions with heritage area commissioners, staff, and other individuals knowledgeable about the commission;²⁵ two commission visioning sessions; and the study team's knowledge of similar initiatives elsewhere. Additional information on the methods and sources used in the analysis is presented in appendix A.

A. Purposes, Vision, and Mission

The purposes, vision, and mission described in chapter 3 provide a solid, vital foundation for the heritage area's work. This "guiding direction" integrates many different dimensions: conserving the region's cultural landscapes, sites, and traditions; enhancing the quality of life for residents; providing economic benefits to the community; and promoting the heritage area within the region and beyond.

The heritage area's broad, integrated vision, articulated on page 14, is seen by study participants as an important strength—in one individual's words, it "has been incredibly effective here." The different aspects complement and reinforce each other, and provide a platform for engaging diverse constituencies and fostering partnerships with a range of people and organizations. One study participant summarized the importance of this point in the following way: "Unless you have the big [integrated] vision, you don't maintain inclusiveness." This inclusiveness is especially important at Cane River because of the region's cultural complexity.

While the broad, integrated nature of the vision is a key strength, it also presents certain challenges. It is an ambitious mandate and, coupled with the realities of working in partnerships,

makes progress difficult to sustain through all dimensions simultaneously. Furthermore, the breadth of the vision requires maintaining a balance among the different aspects (e.g., ensuring that the region's underlying heritage assets are not compromised by economic considerations), and stretches the heritage area's limited capacity by spreading the staff across the various dimensions.

There are also challenges associated with specific aspects of the guiding direction. For instance, the cultural and ethnic heritage at the heart of Cane River's stories and purposes is complicated and sensitive, and in the past was often misunderstood and/or misinterpreted to the public. Working effectively in this context requires ongoing sensitivity, openness, professionalism, patience, and tolerance from heritage area participants, including the commission, staff, and partners. Also, it can be difficult to measure progress in enhancing the quality of life for local residents and to determine the degree to which the heritage area initiative is having tangible, lasting impacts on people's lives in the region.

In addition to the strengths and challenges described above, a few other observations are worth noting. First, unlike other national heritage areas, natural resource conservation and recreational enhancements are not explicitly included in Cane River's guiding direction. Second, there is no explicit discussion of heritage-related economic and community development in the heritage area's legislated purposes (although they have been incorporated in the commission's vision and mission statements). Finally, some aspects of the commission's authorities from the enabling legislation (specifically those related to cooperative agreements, grants, and assistance to partners) appear to be more narrowly defined than might be desirable in light of the breadth and integrated nature of the purposes, mission, and vision. Each of these points is addressed further in chapter 8.

B. Geographic Scope/Boundary

Relative to most national heritage areas, Cane River National Heritage Area encompasses a fairly small geographic area with a modest population size and few political jurisdictions (one

²⁵ Throughout the remainder of this report, the term "study participants" is used to denote the people who participated in the meetings, discussions, and interviews that were a part of this study.

major municipality, one parish, and one state).²⁶ This geographic scope presents both strengths and challenges.

A primary strength is that the region included within the heritage area's current boundary is tightly connected to its core stories and associated landscapes. That is, the boundary has been determined primarily by *thematic* rather than political or jurisdictional considerations. One study participant explained the value of this in the following way: "We have an incredibly tight story...in a very small area...and that makes it [easier] to accomplish things, and to keep our story straight, and to explain to the public who we are and what we are."

Cane River's relatively small size is more manageable and makes possible a more concentrated impact in comparison to many larger national heritage areas that encompass dozens of local communities, multiple counties, and in some cases parts of two or more states. This has a number of associated benefits:

- Limited funding and other forms of capacity can have a greater and faster effect than in a larger area, where similar resources would be spread more thinly.
- There is likely a more manageable array of needs and opportunities to address, which can make strategic planning and selection among potential programs and projects somewhat more straightforward.
- The heritage area's smaller population size provides an opportunity to connect with a greater percentage of residents and engage them more deeply than may be possible in other situations.
- Implementation is less complicated logistically (e.g., in convening meetings and establishing and maintaining an informed "ear to the ground").

In addition, the more modest scale of Cane River compared to larger national heritage areas may have benefited the initial development and management of the partner network. For example, many players in the area know each other well and have been working together effectively for a long time. Also, there is a smaller universe of potential new partners than in larger, more densely populated areas. These factors can create synergies over time, reduce the investment of time and energy required to develop new partnerships, and foster a tightly woven network.

A further, practical strength of the current boundary is that it is generally defined by physical features that are readily identifiable, such as the Red River levee, Interstate 49, and Waterwell Road. Study participants noted that this is less arbitrary and easier to identify than the original parameter included in the authorizing legislation of "approximately one mile on both sides of Cane River."

In contrast to these strengths, Cane River's small size and population create a number of noteworthy challenges relative to larger national heritage areas and other similar initiatives:

- A smaller pool of potential new participants and partners to infuse fresh ideas, energy, capacity, resources, and connections. This may constrain the growth and development of the partner network over time.
- Less political clout at the state and federal levels due to the limited number of local jurisdictions and constituents.
- Less access to funding and other resources because of the smaller array of partners and funders, and the initiative's more limited political clout.
- The potential for stagnation, perpetuation of inefficiencies, and similar detrimental dynamics because of the more limited number of existing and potential partners and leaders.

In a more site-specific context, some study participants suggested that the Fort Jesup State Historic Site may not be as tightly connected to the heritage area's core stories as the other places within the current boundary. Meanwhile, there are areas to the north and west of the boundary that connect to the core stories but are not included within the heritage area. Also, some study participants believe the current gap in the boundary between the Natchitoches National Historic Landmark District and the bulk of the heritage area to the south of Natchitoches along the river is somewhat awkward for public understanding and implementation.

C. Management Entity

Study data suggest that as the management entity the commission has provided critical leadership and coordination for the partner network across the breadth of the multifaceted mission. Working with the initiative's public and private partners, the commission and heritage area staff have been instrumental to the accomplishments, leverage, and investments described in chapter 4. With a growing record of progress in a complex and

²⁶ By comparison, the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor contains 24 cities and towns in two states (Rhode Island and Massachusetts), while the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor (Pennsylvania) contains more than 200 municipalities.

Many sites in the heritage area host local children to learn about the cultural and natural history of the region. The children at right, visiting Melrose Plantation, are participants in the Main Street summer camp, which was funded in part through a heritage area grant.



sensitive setting and a strong reputation of professionalism and expertise, the commission and staff have established Cane River National Heritage Area as a leader in the heritage area movement nationwide.

One of the commission's essential strengths is in providing formal, balanced representation of diverse interests. Study participants emphasized that by giving key stakeholders an equal seat at the table, the commission has been able to transcend the agendas and interests of individual commissioners and the organizations they represent. This is especially important given the cultural, organizational, and geographic context of the Cane River region—with its complex mix of racial and ethnic heritage, a well-established array of groups working on different aspects of the heritage area mission, and strong distinctions between “in-town” and “downriver” perspectives.

The commission's federal status appears to have been an important factor in its effectiveness to

date. Study participants observed that this status brings a number of key attributes, including clout, credibility, respect, and leveraging ability. Also, the federal stature instills in local members of the commission a sense of prestige, pride, power, and responsibility—recognition that they are part of something that is larger than their local context. Yet at the same time, the preponderance of local commissioners ensures that although it is a federal entity, its work, decision making, and strategies reflect local needs and priorities (i.e., it provides for local control). From a different angle, as a federally established entity with its own source of funding (federal appropriations), the commission is able to partner effectively with a wide range of organizations because it does not compete with them for funding or members.

The staff that has served the commission over the past several years has clearly been a great asset to the heritage area initiative and has played a critical role in the accomplishments to date.

More than 20 partners participated in the design and implementation of the comprehensive signage program, which visually connects the heritage area's resources.



Staff members are seen by study participants as capable, dedicated, professional, and culturally sensitive. Their achievements with limited resources are substantial, and they understand how to work effectively through partnerships in a complex, ever changing environment. As a result, the staff is highly regarded by local, regional, and national partners, and has contributed to the credibility, respect, and confidence that the commission has engendered, enhancing its effectiveness as the heritage area's management entity.

The commission and staff have played diverse roles as they coordinate the implementation of the management plan and facilitate the functioning of the Cane River partnership system. These include such functions as creating and sustaining connections among partner organizations and with the broader community; fostering wider appreciation of the region's diverse stories and cultures; strengthening the links between heritage preservation, public understanding, and compatible community development; providing assistance and resources for on-the-ground projects; and raising the capacity and professionalism of partners. The range and significance of the commission's various roles are discussed further in chapter 6, in the section entitled "Partnership system facilitator."

While the commission's strengths are considerable, there are challenges and limitations that have affected its functioning and effectiveness:

- Administrative challenges associated with the federal appointment process for commissioners,

which have created frustrations, inefficiencies, and operational hurdles.

- Limitations on the commission's ability to respond to changes in the local community and organizational context because of its legislated composition and the challenges associated with replacing members.
- Variable participation in commission affairs by some of its members.
- The inability of some commissioners to serve as effective liaisons between the commission and the organizations and interests they represent, because they lack close ties and/or do not maintain regular communication and reporting with their constituent organizations and interests.
- The perception that some member organizations may no longer be as vibrant as when the commission was established, and therefore may no longer be the best organizations to represent their constituencies.
- The need for turnover within the commission's membership and the related need to attract and cultivate new members and leaders.
- The need for closer relationships with certain key governmental partners (discussed in the next section).
- The perception among some stakeholders that the commission is too "town-bound" (i.e., that it is weighted toward interests associated with the city of Natchitoches).
- The commission's inability as a federal body to effectively access funding from certain sources, such as private contributions from individuals, corporations, and foundations, and earned

- income generation (e.g., product sales).
- The limited capacity of the staff given the breadth of the commission's mission and niche. As a result, the staff is spread fairly thinly across different roles and responsibilities.

Despite these challenges and limitations, study data suggest that the commission has been very effective in its role as management entity. Indeed, study participants observed that the commission fills a unique and critical niche, one that was vacant before the heritage area was created and would otherwise be vacant now.

D. Partners

Much of the heritage area initiative's success to date has been due to the involvement and investments of a wide range of public and private partners. This reliance on a broad-based partnership approach is a fundamental aspect of the heritage area model, and clearly was envisioned in Cane River's authorizing legislation. Relationships with certain partners have varied over the lifetime of the initiative, but overall the partnership approach appears to have worked well and resulted in far more accomplishments on the ground than the commission or any of the partners could have achieved alone. Within that backdrop, the involvement of key partners is examined further below, organized according to the different partner categories identified in chapter 3.

1. Local government

City of Natchitoches

The city is one of several vital governmental partners in the heritage area initiative, and its strong support over time has been critical to many aspects of the success to date. In addition to providing important logistical support by employing the heritage area staff under a cooperative agreement with the commission, the city's essential contributions include capacity, leadership, leveraging ability, and funding. The city has been an important partner in numerous successful joint efforts, including national awards from the Preserve America and Main Street programs, which have heightened the region's visibility, credibility, local pride, and support. There has been good alignment of goals and priorities between the city and the heritage area, especially with respect to historic preservation, heritage-based economic development, and work in specific areas such as the national historic landmark district and along Waterwell Road. This alignment has stemmed in part from the shared roots of the heritage area approach and certain city initiatives (e.g., the Main Street Program), and the strong relationships, synergy, and complementarity that

have developed at the staff level between the heritage area and the city.

Perhaps the biggest challenge associated with this partnership lies in sustaining the strength and effectiveness of the relationship over time, given the inevitable changes for both parties in such key factors as leadership, priorities, budget pressures, and political dynamics. A related challenge will be the difficulty of maintaining over time a solid understanding among city officials (both elected and appointed) of what the heritage area initiative is and the benefits it offers the city and the region (e.g., heightening the area's visibility and image and enhancing tourism and local quality of life).

Natchitoches Parish

In contrast to its strong partnership with the city, the heritage area's relationship with Natchitoches Parish has been more limited and much less constructive and mutually beneficial. Clearly, the parish is one of the central governmental players in the region, and it has the purview and authority to play a vital role on such pressing heritage area issues as landscape conservation and compatible economic development outside the city of Natchitoches. However, a number of obstacles appear to have hindered the development of a more effective partnership between the heritage area and the parish.

First, the heritage area encompasses a relatively small part of the parish overall, and is within the district of a single member of the Parish Police Jury. Study participants suggested that as a result most police jurors have only limited ties to or awareness of the heritage area. This has likely contributed to the difficulty in engaging them meaningfully and having them see the concerns of the heritage area initiative as priorities for the parish. This dynamic has been reinforced by the parish's modest budget and competing priorities for funding, which limits the police jury's ability to actively support the heritage area initiative. Study participants also noted tensions in the relationship between the police jury and the city, which may have some spillover effect on the heritage area initiative. Compounding these challenges, the parish's representative on the commission has not been a member of the police jury and, as a result, has had difficulty serving as an effective liaison between the two entities. Overcoming these obstacles and building a strong partnership with the parish is clearly one of the most significant needs and challenges facing the heritage area initiative.

2. State government

The partnership between the heritage area initiative and the state of Louisiana can perhaps

best be described as partially developed: the state's involvement has been strong and helpful in some respects, but less supportive and less engaged in others.

With respect to the strengths of the state's participation, some aspects have become well established over the course of the heritage area's lifetime. For instance, several branches of the Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism have played important partnership roles with the heritage area. These include the local state park units (e.g., Fort St. Jean Baptiste) and the Divisions of Historic Preservation and Archeology (which have assisted with preservation work and implementation of section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act). Also, the Department of Transportation and Development has played an important part in transportation-related projects, and will be a key player in development of the new joint visitor center for the heritage area and the national park. The state's local academic branches, Northwestern State University and the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts, have provided valuable capacity, expertise, and assistance to the commission and other heritage area partners.

Recent developments have strengthened the state's connections to the heritage area and provide a broader platform for enhancing the partnership in the future. Perhaps most noteworthy are the legislature's first-time direct appropriation for heritage area programs and establishment of a state tax credit program for heritage-related small businesses within the area's boundary. These actions, which build upon the past recognition of Cane River as a state heritage area and the governor's approval of the management plan, represent an important commitment to addressing some of the heritage area's pressing needs. Also, there is good alignment between heritage area goals and current statewide priorities, such as those related to heritage tourism and Louisiana's "cultural economy" that are incorporated in CRT's strategic plan, "Louisiana Rebirth." In addition, the new statewide memorandum of understanding between CRT and the National Park Service may offer an opportunity for strengthening CRT's involvement at Cane River. There may be similar new opportunities for collaboration, leverage, and shared learning between Cane River National Heritage Area and CRT in conjunction with Atchafalaya State and National Heritage Area, given the latter's recent (2006) national designation.

Despite these strengths, there have been significant challenges associated with the state's involvement. In general, the state does not appear

to have been as broadly or consistently involved over time as might have been desirable, and there has been no clearly identified lead agency to advance partnership efforts with the commission. Study participants observed that this lack of consistent support from the state has been an obstacle to progress and a source of frustration. Many believe that the heritage area initiative has not received the support it deserves from the state given (1) the significance of the region's heritage, (2) the connections between local stories and those of other parts of Louisiana, (3) the heritage area's role in serving as a model for similar efforts elsewhere in the state, and (4) the initiative's potential to enhance the well-being of the Cane River region and to complement heritage development activities statewide. There is a perception that the state tends not to focus resources and support in areas that are doing reasonably well on their own—particularly in the northern part of Louisiana and especially after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita—even if there could be mutual benefit from greater state involvement.

There are also challenges associated with the state's involvement on the commission. Unlike at some other national heritage areas, there are no dedicated seats for any key agencies. With only a single representative of the state (nominated by the governor), it is necessary for that commissioner to be an effective liaison between the commission, the governor, and key agencies on an ongoing basis.

In sum, the state is clearly an important governmental partner for the heritage area and has provided valuable support to the initiative, but the partnership is not as fully developed as it could be. Evidence from other national heritage areas suggests that establishing a stronger, more consistent "anchoring connection" with the state and identifying a lead state agency to advance the partnership could be valuable in furthering Cane River's integrated vision for heritage conservation and development.

3. Federal government

National Park Service

The NPS clearly has been one of the keys to the heritage area's success. The agency's presence and affiliation with the heritage area bring national and international attention and recognition, helping to put Cane River "on the map." Through its visible, multifaceted local presence at Cane River Creole National Historical Park, the NPS has established a substantial and synergistic involvement in the heritage area initiative. Overall synthesis of the study's data

The heritage area partnered with the city of Natchitoches to develop a land use plan for the Louisiana Highway 478 corridor (Waterwell Road). At right, city officials review suggested future development.



analyses indicates that the park is the heritage area’s most important partner, and the strong partnership that has been established appears to be truly of mutual benefit.

A number of factors have contributed to this complementary dynamic:

- The missions of the park and heritage area were closely intertwined by their joint authorizing legislation, and both entities influence each other in ways that enable them to better achieve those missions; in other words, together they are able to achieve more than either could alone.
- The park provides valuable technical assistance and expertise to local partners, including assistance with preservation and interpretation, and in so doing helps to build the capacity of those organizations and facilitate a preservation mindset throughout the community.
- The park provides information on NPS funding sources and other programs, and has itself contributed essential funding at key times, most notably during the heritage area’s start-up phase.
- The heritage area provides the park with an entrée into the community and the partner network that would be difficult if not impossible to replicate on its own.
- The commission serves as a sounding board for park staff and provides information on Cane River history and culture that is invaluable to the park’s interpretive activities.
- The individual commissioners, through their

skills, experience, and professional ties, offer networking potential of national and international scope and a built-in support system, both of which have benefited park projects and joint park–heritage area projects.

- The heritage area provides a broader, regional context for the park’s resources and “rounds out” the stories told at the park.
- The relationship in recent years between the staff leaders of the park and heritage area, which has been characterized by remarkable synergy and complementarity, is widely viewed as a critical factor in their collective accomplishments.
- The park superintendent has provided invaluable leadership, vision, connections, guidance, resources, and other assets to the commission, staff, and partners.
- The park provides a permanent local NPS presence in the heritage area initiative and the region more generally, unlike the situation in many other national heritage areas.

The National Center for Preservation Technology and Training also works closely with the park and the heritage area, adding to the strong local NPS presence. Its expertise, capacity, and resources have benefited local partners and projects. NCPTT’s staff has worked closely with heritage area and park staff, contributing to the strong synergy, and study participants acknowledged NCPTT as an important contributor to the collective success of the heritage area initiative.

While the NPS has played a vital role in the heritage area’s evolution and accomplishments

A corn crib and cistern at Oakland Plantation form part of the cultural landscape of Cane River Creole National Historical Park. The national park consists of 63 acres and 67 historic structures on two former cotton plantations in the heritage area.



to date, it is important to note certain challenges associated with the agency's involvement over time. For instance, study participants observed that NPS participation was more mixed in earlier stages, without the recent synergy between the staff leaders of the park and heritage area. Also, there is apparently still some confusion locally over the distinction between the park and the heritage area, as well as some concern about the potential for sites managed by local partners to be overwhelmed by the larger NPS presence.

In a broader context, there was some frustration in prior years with the administrative fee levied by the NPS Southeast Region on the heritage area's annual budget, because local participants felt the heritage area was not receiving a comparable value of assistance in return. This sentiment has declined in the past year or two, but study participants still see a need for additional capacity in the Southeast Region and the Washington headquarters to provide greater support to heritage areas in the region and nationwide.

Looking forward, perhaps the biggest challenge for the NPS–heritage area partnership will be to sustain the synergy of the past several years in the face of changes in personnel, priorities, and resources over time. Overcoming this challenge will likely hinge on a combination of factors, some of which may be within the control of the two entities (e.g., learning from the success of the recent past and keeping the “right” kind of people in leadership positions), and others which may not (e.g., changes in federal budgets and evolving support for national heritage areas).

Other federal agencies

As noted in chapter 3, there is a substantial federal presence in the Cane River region given its relatively limited size. Although the NPS is the only agency that has become deeply involved in the heritage area partnership to date, the presence

of the whole suite of agencies creates the potential for significant collaboration and leveraging of resources and political support. As a starting point, senior on-site managers from several of the agencies have developed good relationships and regular dialogue in recent years.

Nonetheless, it may be difficult to establish and maintain closer alignment among the various agencies given their respective areas of focus, priorities, budgets, schedules, and changes in personnel over time. This appears to have been the case in recent years with the inability to move forward on a shared visitor center. Instead of a single facility shared by several agencies, it now appears that there will be multiple major visitor centers within an hour's drive of each other. The agencies are still likely to collaborate to some extent on exhibits and marketing, but the possibility of capitalizing more broadly on their collective needs, presence, and resources has not materialized to date.

On a separate front, the recent sizable EPA grant for clean-up at St. Matthews School and the transportation enhancement funding for the depot restoration are promising evidence of significant opportunities for heritage area partners to tap into a broader range of federal funding sources. This possibility is explored further in the chapter 8 discussion of funding options.

4. Nongovernmental interests

Nongovernmental interests (including nonprofit organizations, businesses, community groups, landowners, and other local citizens) have been responsible for much of the heritage preservation and development work in the Cane River region over the past several decades. Likewise, nongovernmental interests have comprised an indispensable element of the heritage area initiative and its accomplishments to date. They complement the commission's governmental

partners and provide leadership, energy, capacity, political clout, grassroots connections, financial resources, and other support (e.g., volunteers) on behalf of heritage area goals and activities.

Through its competitive grants program, the commission has worked to build the capacity of these organizations, funding projects that might not otherwise be accomplished and providing assistance to potential applicants to help them compete for funding from this and other sources. Also, study participants observed that although the commission and staff have made good progress in building relationships with the business community, further outreach and education are needed.

Despite the commission's efforts through the grants program, the limited capacity of non-governmental partners in the region remains a challenge, and many study participants noted the need for further attention to this issue.

There is also a perceived need for additional engagement with the African American community. Good progress has been made on this front recently with initiatives like the train depot and St. Matthews School projects, but more attention may be warranted given the importance of this constituency.

E. Funding and Other Forms of Support

The substantial contributions of funding and other support from partners, as described in chapter 3.D and chapter 4, have been essential to Cane River's success to date. Given that the heritage area initiative's access to resources is limited (due to such factors as size and population base, the region's limited number of foundations and corporations, and competition with other priorities in Louisiana, especially after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita) and that it has no legislated matching requirement for its federal funds, the commission and its partners have been quite effective in leveraging various forms of support and making good use of what they have had.

Core federal funding through the NPS Heritage Partnership Programs has clearly been critical in supporting the commission's operations and the grants program, and has been a catalyst in leveraging investments by others. However, as has been evident in the last two budget cycles and with the approaching sunset of Cane River's current federal authorization, this funding is not predictable or assured either year-to-year or over the longer term.

These challenges are compounded by the commission's difficulty in accessing funding

from nonfederal sources for its core operations and programs. This dynamic has been observed at other national heritage areas managed by federal commissions, in part because these federal entities are limited in their ability to raise funds from private sources (e.g., individuals, corporations, foundations) and generate earned income (e.g., product sales, fee-for-service work). An additional factor has been the limited support over time from other key governmental partners, particularly the state of Louisiana. The legislature's first-ever appropriation of \$110,000 to the heritage area for fiscal year 2008 is a promising sign that this latter pattern could be changing. For the moment, however, the initiative's heavy reliance on federal appropriations for core funding creates significant vulnerability, especially with a difficult budget climate and no overall legislative authorization for a nationwide national heritage area program.

The lack of a stable, secure, and predictable funding base presents operational challenges with respect to such considerations as planning, budgeting, and staff retention. Moreover, these challenges can play out in at least three different time frames: within a given year (because of the unpredictable timing of federal appropriations), from year to year, and over longer periods.

While the federal funding situation is difficult, Cane River does have a significant advantage relative to many other national heritage areas in that Cane River Creole National Historical Park provides an existing and comparatively secure base for the sustained presence and involvement of the National Park Service. Given how essential the park's assistance (both financial and nonfinancial) has been to the heritage area's success, this relative security is an important reassurance for the future (recognizing that the continued effectiveness of the NPS's involvement will depend not only on having a presence, but on how that presence is implemented by the individuals involved).

Finally, it is perhaps worth reiterating a point first touched on in chapter 3—that the lack of dedicated federal funding for the heritage area in its early years made its start-up very difficult and slow, and created frustration among the commission and its partners. While this is no longer significant for the heritage area itself, it is an important point in the broader national context as new heritage area initiatives are established and try to begin making a difference on the ground.



Philip Gould

Lair LaCour, known on Cane River as “Mama Lair,” holds portraits of her parents. Cane River Creole culture is anchored by a strong sense of family.

Chapter 6

Evaluating the Cane River National Heritage Area Partnership System: The Partner Perspective

This chapter focuses on understanding from the perspective of partners how the Cane River partnership system operates. In other words, how do Cane River partners work with the commission and heritage area staff to deliver the accomplishments described in chapter 4? In what ways do heritage area programs, activities, and investments have an impact on partners (i.e., organizations and communities) in the Cane River region? Are there opportunities for strengthening or improving the partnership system in the future?

To explore these issues, the study team conducted confidential interviews with 30 partners, including representatives from the business community, municipal governments, state and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, community leadership, and Cane River staff.²⁷ Some of these partners have long been connected with the heritage area initiative and others are new. In the discussion that follows, the findings are presented in two broad categories: perceived strengths and perceived challenges.

A. Perceived Strengths

Analysis of interview data revealed four interconnected themes that characterize the perceived strengths of the Cane River partnership: (1) heritage: linking history, people, and place, (2) a collaborative framework, (3) the National Park Service connection, and (4) a partner network. Collectively, these themes identify and explain the process by which the partnership system works from the perspective of heritage area partners. Each theme is defined by subthemes that articulate different dimensions. It is important to note that the themes and their subthemes are tightly interwoven.

1. Heritage: linking history, people, and place

The notion of heritage serves to link history, people, and place in the Cane River region. In this way, it is an important organizing concept for the heritage area initiative's activities, investments, and programs. This theme is defined by the following subthemes: heritage stories, sense of place, and context for civic and community engagement.

Heritage stories

Partners emphasized the value of their own heritage stories, and the importance of preserving and

telling all of the stories associated with the Cane River region. Cane River's heritage stories collectively describe significant chapters in American history. These experiences have shaped the region's human and natural communities and created a meaningful context for heritage area programs and activities. One partner said it this way:

We have a structure, or a set of buildings that people look at. That is not the story that we talk about. The real story is how the people got here, what they did when they got here, whom they met, how all these different people interacted, and how that developed into what we have here today. That's the story that we talk about.

Many study participants acknowledged the ways that Cane River's stories link different cultural groups to the same place. There is a general understanding among partners of the importance of recognizing the experiences of these different groups. For many, preservation of these stories is the first, critical step in thinking about heritage-based conservation and development. One study participant observed:

[The commission and staff] made it quite clear that our story is just as important, or equally important as anyone else's. . . Building a legacy in this community about the black experience is a very difficult thing. . . There exists no written history, per se, about our experience here in the Cane River area. . . Somewhere, somehow, someone has to [document our story so it] can be passed [to the next] generation.

The notion of cultural heritage links the complex mosaic of natural, cultural, and historic resources throughout the Cane River region. In describing the role of heritage in her work, one study participant noted that "heritage is the thread that ties it all together." Other partners use heritage stories as lenses for defining Cane River resources in a regionally distinct way, as explained by this study participant:

[Among] Louisianans, Southerners in particular, there is a notion that if you didn't have a big antebellum home, if you didn't have some sort of Civil War history, then you didn't have any history at all because we let Hollywood

²⁷ See appendix B for a full discussion of the research methodologies employed in this chapter.

dictate what the history of the South has been. The reality is that our area has a wonderful, almost unique, history. . . We all share this wonderful heritage and lineage. . . It's something to be more proud of than the nonsense that people assume to be the history of the South.

Sense of place

For many study participants, the notion of cultural heritage fosters a strong sense of place. A number of partners described how this concept affects their work. While the heritage area does not, on its own, create a sense of place, several study participants described how commission efforts have helped to move a heritage-based agenda forward among partner organizations. This, in turn, has helped protect and enhance the resources that create a sense of place. One community leader expressed it this way:

I've used [heritage] to twist the arms of the political gurus in order to get [the outcomes] we want at times. You have to realize that even though we are so culturally rich in this area, our city fathers really were not on board [in terms of heritage-based conservation and development]. We have lost a whole lot. . . [But when] you talk about heritage tourism, you're talking about economic development. You're talking about interest in the community that we haven't had before. . . It's [about] using the heritage area to work with our political leaders and our community leaders in order to help them understand what they can do.

Other study participants underscored the value in working with the heritage area initiative because of its commitment to heritage-based economic development. Many partners felt that working with Cane River staffers was effective because “they get things on the agenda” and then “they get the right people in the room.” Over time, such facilitation may encourage economic development strategies that respect and reinforce the region’s strong sense of place. One local official explained it as follows:

If you used the term “heritage tourism” five or six years ago, you would hardly find anybody who knew what you meant. . . The more that [concept] is promoted nationwide, [the more] you start to find people turning inward and back to their roots. . . To me, there is a complete resurgence of looking back at where you came from, where you've been, and what you've left behind. That is why, to me, the term “heritage [tourism]” is so important.

Ultimately, sense of place is about understanding and preserving the different meanings of what otherwise might be viewed as unimportant activities, objects, or sites. One study participant observed:

The idea of heritage in what I do translates to tradition. Whether it's building traditions, the built environment, the natural environment and what you do with it, material culture, oral tradition—whatever it happens to be—it's all bound

Northwestern State University of Louisiana, founded in 1884 as the state's normal school, is an important partner in preserving the region's resources. University scholars have assisted the national park and the heritage area with research throughout the region.



to a place in one respect or another. So, the idea of heritage, (i.e., the idea of tradition), is an easy sell in small communities. When I go and say, “Oh, you don’t want to paint this building purple because this building was originally not painted, and the reason it wasn’t. . .,” there’s a tradition behind it, there’s a story behind it, [and] there’s a rationale for preservation. So consequently, in terms of our material tradition, like building or making walking sticks, or whatever it happens to be, there’s a reason and a value for continuing it and maintaining it. While I don’t use the word “heritage” very often, I use the word “tradition” and it [basically] translates to the same thing.

A context for civic and community engagement

Heritage can play an important role in engaging diverse communities throughout the Cane River region. Several partners described how working with the commission and staff on a heritage-based agenda has helped create partnership opportunities between groups that traditionally may not have worked together. While acknowledging that more work remains, one community leader described how the heritage area staff has done an excellent job of reaching out to underrepresented groups. This is especially important given the complexity and sensitivity of the region’s history. A study participant reflected that:

Whenever you actually work with people who are really serious about their heritage, you have to have some type of understanding of what that heritage is. It’s a two-way street. . . The more I worked with people in the area, the more I really got to understand their heritage. We worked better together [as a result].

For other partners, heritage preservation itself is a form of civic engagement. When used in this way, heritage area programs and activities help create the context and impetus for community-based action. One local leader said:

I think [heritage] is the most motivating portion of the presentation to the black community. It means that you need to become involved. It is timely for you to become involved. It is a loss if you do not become involved because your heritage is at stake. Your heritage has not been properly recorded and interpreted, so here is the opportunity. It’s finally come, so [now] you can be recognized—your people, your ancestors, your family, your racial group. [Heritage] helps to encourage people to become a part of the preservation movement. . . Now, they’re saying, “Hey, my heritage is being recognized too, and it’s

worthy of being studied and being funded, and to have experts come and be sure that it’s properly recorded and preserved.”

Some study participants described how working with heritage area programs and staff has helped to “foster dialogue” around difficult issues. Other study participants noted that “attitudes have changed” as a result of activities and programs. Meaningful civic and community engagement is about being relevant in a diverse society. Cane River National Heritage Area can play an increasingly vital role in the region by serving as a vehicle for heritage-based conservation and development that reflect the diversity of the area’s communities. One community partner described the use of heritage as follows:

Sometimes I use heritage as a unifier. [For example] if I want to talk about the greatness of Natchitoches, then heritage is a unifier and I can talk about all of the various cultures that made Natchitoches what it is [today], and how all of these people are essentially related, or have very close ties from a historical perspective. So, in that way, I can use [heritage] in a really positive way. Other times I use heritage to break down groups, to say, this particular cultural group is being ignored, or we have very little information on this group, yet we know they were important in the area. So, it can be used in that way to single out problem areas and things we [as a community] need to work on more.

2. A collaborative framework

Interview data suggest that the heritage area initiative serves as a framework for collaboration, providing the opportunity and mechanism for different organizations to develop partnerships. This theme is defined by the following sub-themes: a critical friend, a shared mission, and vision and leadership.

A critical friend

Numerous study participants explained that the heritage area staff serves as a strategic “sounding board” or “critical friend.” In conversations with partners, staffers introduce new ideas, communicate best practices, and demonstrate new ways of working. This information, in turn, can affect how individual partner organizations understand their roles in developing a regional, heritage-based agenda. One governmental partner explained his experience as follows:

[Working with the heritage area] really showed me that you can get a lot more done if you can actually get people on the same page. . . get

people moving in the same direction. One thing that was neat about Natchitoches was there was almost an unending flow of resources that we kept discovering and kept discovering, and it really showed me that if you get out there and you really dig, you'll find allies in the least likely of places.

While there is a strong and successful legacy of historic preservation in the area, there is also growing recognition that traditional historic preservation activities, while necessary, are not sufficient for capturing the rich cultural diversity that defines this region. Commission investments and activities have helped partner organizations think more broadly about heritage conservation. When this shift in thinking occurs, it greatly expands opportunities for collaboration. One partner remarked:

Some groups in Natchitoches probably were predisposed a little bit to working together, [particularly] in historic preservation. But in terms of other things, there wasn't [much collaborative work]. And what the heritage area has helped do is expand beyond just historic preservation. I don't know if, in the past, the historic district would have worked with some of the outlying plantations 20 miles away. It's a definite, very significant impact. [The heritage area] really elevated the term "partnership" to something that people can understand.

According to several study participants, heritage area management offers an "outside" yet empowering perspective. This perspective allows partner organizations to explore and craft new ideas in innovative ways. A number of local initiatives have been developed and/or enhanced through interaction with Cane River staff. One city official reflected on the process this way:

[There are] things that you might have worked toward for a number of years, [but] you couldn't quite get off center because you always had those individuals that were somewhat negative within the community—a "that's not gonna happen in your lifetime" attitude. "You're thinking too big. Come on, you're in Natchitoches." That's what changes [with the heritage area] because you're dealing with individuals who are more worldly than the city of Natchitoches. They've had exposure in many other areas of the country and even other parts of the world, and you start kicking around these harebrained concepts which are just extemporaneous, but you're drawing on 30 years of background, . . .and the next thing you know

you have a new concept that moves forward. That, to me, is where the real payoff is, because I'm not out there by myself doing things anymore.

A shared mission

Much of the heritage area's value lies in its ability to engage a diverse set of partners in developing a shared mission for the region. In doing so, the Cane River staff has helped residents find areas of mutual interest while facilitating dialogue among town officials, the business community, nonprofit organizations, state and federal agencies, and a host of other partners. Study participants used words like "connector," "networker," and "convener" when describing the commission and staff in this capacity. One local official described the impact in this way:

People tend to look to their own little island [and they think], "What's going on on my island and how do I protect that?" I have seen better cooperation because we have so many different groups and organizations represented on the commission. So you're beginning to have more of an understanding. The prime example would be the Caddo Adai Indians, and what has been done to cultivate more of an understanding of how we can all work together to increase their presence and increase their visibility and enhance what they're doing. And at the same time, help the Creoles down the river, and help the people who live in the landmark district. Everybody has the same goal. Very often you're just getting to it in different ways.

For some partners, Cane River programs provide coordination and consistency for embarking on regional, heritage-based development. This allows smaller partners to connect their efforts with broader heritage area goals and initiatives, while reducing redundancy and duplication. A manager of a local historic site explained:

One thing that really does help is having the heritage area here to pull it all together, [and to] be a focal point for these different partners in town that sometimes duplicate efforts. Having the heritage area to pull everybody together lets us think about these things. . . It brings value to the community because I'm just one partner in this whole area, and it gives all of us a better umbrella to work under instead of just being an individual entity among many others. We're all working for the same purpose, to develop this area right here.

A majority of study participants felt that the heritage area is a unique entity in the region, and the

Ferry crossings were common throughout the historic landscape of the Cane River region until the early twentieth century. Today, although the locations of past crossings are known, the landings themselves have been absorbed into the modern landscape.



Courtesy of the Cammie G. Henry Research Center, Northwestern State University of Louisiana

combination of its regional focus and integrated approach creates opportunities for robust partnerships. There are numerous examples in the interview data where study participants noted that having an entity (i.e., commission and staff) dedicated specifically to partnership building has been very effective. For some organizations, working with heritage area management has enhanced their ability to work in partnership, as this study participant expressed:

[The heritage area staff] brings a lot because [it is] probably the broadest player in the community. . . . If we work together on a project with them, we can make sure that we're communicating with all the different segments of the community. . . . They work very hard to connect with all different segments of our community and their board represents a broad cross-section of the community. They address diversity issues, [in] both economic and ethnic [terms]. That would be hard for us and our small staff to do.

Vision and leadership

Nearly every study participant noted the role that the Cane River staff plays in the heritage area initiative, using words like “vision” and “leadership” when discussing the contributions of staff to programs and projects. There is a strong sense among study participants that individuals on the heritage area staff “get it.” One study participant made the following observation:

I think what the heritage area needed was leadership that actually could craft a vision and then put it on the ground, and not just be a

caretaker of a historic property or something like that. The mission of a heritage area director and its staff needs to be more than just site-specific. And that's quite hard to do if you're trained only in specific conservation measures. You have to roll with the punches and be able to move and be flexible and give people that do that type of work—very site-specific conservation or preservation work—the leeway and the latitude to do it while you're out there making things happen in order to enable them to get their work done. . . . Nancy and her staff have helped that organization and that region grow in ways that, when they were getting into this, they never anticipated.

For other study participants, the heritage area staff provides vision and leadership during the formative stages of specific projects. This type of feedback not only improves project outcomes, but also builds trust and reinforces the important role that community-based efforts play in Cane River's regional, multicultural mission. One local leader explained:

They've been able to focus on some things that allowed us to then focus on them, too, so that they've given us some leadership and pointed us in some directions that were easy for all of us to work on and acceptable to all sides comfortably. For example, their work on the railroad depot here is critical. A lot of people talked about [the railroad depot], a lot of people mentioned it, but I think the only substantive work that's been done on that project has come through the commission. That's a good rallying point—a good focal point—for us to be able to

work together effectively. [It pulls in] all these different cultural areas.

Perhaps most importantly, the heritage area staff helps to navigate a complex sea of histories, stories, and values. One local official described the role of the staff as “an essential go-between.” Another local leader explained that the staff’s commitment to “professionalism” was essential for maintaining their joint efforts. Study findings like these suggest that working successfully in multidimensional partnership environments requires a special kind of organizational culture and leadership philosophy. Another local official observed:

I just consider [the heritage area initiative] top-quality work. And it’s not just the quality of their work, it’s the spirit in which it’s done. It’s always a cooperative spirit, it’s never a spirit in which Nancy or her people say, “Well, here’s the way we are going to do this.” [Their approach] is always to ask us how we can best do this.

3. The National Park Service connection

As discussed in chapters 3 and 5, Cane River National Heritage Area has a special connection to the NPS, primarily through Cane River Creole National Historical Park. This special connection with the NPS has two important attributes or subthemes: a strong tie and branding and credibility.

A strong tie

Regarding the active presence of the NPS in the Cane River region, many study participants acknowledged the benefits of having a robust, collaborative relationship between the heritage area and the national park.²⁸ The resulting synergy creates new opportunities that neither the park nor the heritage area could deliver independently. One member of the university community noted:

We just think we have a model that ought to be studied carefully, because I think the federal government could obtain far more leverage out of just [this] situation—where you have a national park embedded within a heritage area and in proximity to a college or university.

Other study participants described how the heritage area and the park reinforce and complement each other. This kind of cooperation happens on many levels, ranging from joint programming to the development of a regional, heritage-based vision:

In my humble opinion, it’s also been most successful in that [the heritage area and Cane River Creole National Historical Park] have a wonderful relationship. Oftentimes these are people-driven, and the individuals in charge of those two different entities today work very well together. The other side of the heritage area is that it’s a complement to the park. It allows the stories that the park is responsible [for] telling to be told in a larger area because of the heritage area involvement. [The heritage area] brings more hands to the table in getting out that information and it brings more advocates for the park. Again, the bottom line is that the heritage area allows the culture and the story of that area to be told better than NPS could do in separate little sites.

The national park helps to anchor the heritage area, and the park’s resources represent important elements of this cultural landscape. The NPS also provides technical assistance in terms of site conservation and interpretation (including the capacity offered by NCPTT, as described in chapter 3). The heritage area, in turn, provides the park with additional tools for civic and community engagement as well as a platform for exploring ways to link conservation with development over a larger landscape. One study participant reflected on it in these terms:

There needs to be more education [about] what heritage areas are and the incredible benefits that heritage areas can provide to [the management of] federal lands. We constantly work with multiple partners that are either represented on the commission or others in the neighborhood. Federal lands for so long [represented] very distinct boundaries. But that’s not how we can afford to do business anymore. To make everything work, we’re going to have to partner, and we’re going to have to build constituencies that might not have been thought of 20 years ago.

Branding and credibility

Numerous study participants commented on the value that national heritage area designation brings to the region as well as to their specific organizational objectives. For many study participants, the designation validates, in an inclusive manner, the history and experience of all the cultural communities in the region. Interview data are particularly striking in this regard, and it is difficult to overstate the credibility and significance conveyed by national heritage area designation. One local government official explained it this way:

²⁸ While study participants described the current relationship with the NPS in very positive terms, a number of interviewees also reflected on the challenges in working with the NPS. These challenges are discussed in chapter 5.

Does [federal designation] mean anything? In the area that I represent it means an awful lot. It means that Congress thought enough of the history here to grant us a national designation. It solidifies the significance of where we began and the part we played in the history of this country. . . It carries more weight to have the national designation. It means somebody else thinks it's a significant point of interest other than the people of the community.

Federal designation also adds value as a “brand.” According to study participants, this “branding” effect is extremely important to heritage-based tourism and economic development. One long-time member of the business community said:

[Federal designation] adds that legitimacy to everything I'm trying to do. We include the fact that we've got a national heritage area and a

national park in almost every piece of literature that goes out, every press release, every ad, every radio [advertisement].

The value of federal designation means different things to different partners. Despite these differences, most partners interviewed felt that the federal designation communicates the legitimacy and credibility of heritage area programs, activities, and objectives. One community partner summarized it thus:

Well, it's a recognition of the area's cultural importance to the nation.

4. A partner network

Many of the commission's activities and investments have been directed toward building a network of partners. The Cane River initiative's ability to achieve its long-term goals depends

Plantation stores, such as this one at the Oakland Plantation unit of the national park, were gathering places for all classes and cultures. Stores also served as an extension of earlier economic oppression—laborers were required to purchase farming supplies at the store on the plantation where they worked.



Jack Boucher, National Park Service, HABS/HAER/HALS

Roles Played by Cane River Management

Advocate
Capacity builder
Opportunity creator
Catalyst
Communicator
Convener
Connector
Consensus builder
Coordinator
Credibility broker
Critical friend
Direct investor
Empowerer
Facilitator
Framework (or organizing concept) provider
General resource provider
Glue
Inspiration provider
Idea generator
Information provider
Leverager
Networker
Navigator
Nucleus
Partner
Planner
Promoter
Sounding board
Strategist
Technical assistance provider

significantly on the strength and effectiveness of this partner network. This theme is defined by the following subthemes: enhancing partner capacity, partnership system facilitator, and key network factors.

Enhancing partner capacity

According to many study participants, Cane River programs play an important role in building the capacity of partner organizations. Capacity building can come in many forms. For some organizations, capacity refers to their actual ability to manage cultural or natural resources effectively. One study participant described the impact that heritage area efforts had on his organization's ability to do work:

[The heritage area] helped us fund our interpretive plan [with help from] a group from out of state. When the group came in and looked at our historic sites, they said we not only need to recommend interpretation, we need to recommend management practices. So we are changing the structure of our organization to reflect those recommendations. . . . So [Cane River staff members] are helping us to understand that our focus is sort of shifting from educating others to really realizing that most of our resources go into stewardship of our sites.

For other organizations, capacity building refers to efforts aimed at improving organizational management and operations. Many partner organizations are small nonprofits that may lack professional experience and training in securing and managing grant funding. For these partners, the heritage area has helped increase their capacity to be effective:

Well, I think [the heritage area staff] makes you aware that there are guidelines or parameters. . . . [For example], if you're going to do a project and you want to make it accurate and make it good, you need to do it [in a certain] way, as opposed to me saying, "I don't think we need to spend that kind of money on this component of the project." Well, that's just a personal call by me, and I have no background to know whether that's right or wrong. If [the heritage area staff] comes in and says, "We've studied that kind of stuff and we know if you're going to do it, this is the way it needs to be done," that helps us because we're not interested in doing an inaccurate project and we're not interested in wasting anybody's money. That helps us make sure that the money that we do spend, and we spend a lot of our own money, gets directed the right way.

The strength and effectiveness of the heritage area's partner network depends significantly on the stability of individual partner organizations and their ability to deliver results. Building the capacity of individual organizations can strengthen and improve the network over time. This, in turn, may increase the likelihood of leveraging additional investments toward long-term heritage area goals and objectives. One local government official put it this way:

We use [the heritage area staff] as a resource quite a bit—even [in] projects that they're not involved in, we ask for their advice or their input. We're currently working with the federal government and the state government to develop a rest area and an interpretive center that would be located along I-49. . . . at one of the exchanges here in Natchitoches. Again, [the heritage area staff] has been a big part in working with us on that, and it's a unique situation. It's a situation where you bring local government, state government, and the federal government together, which is a cost savings for everyone. And, at the same time, everyone infuses ideas and makes it more workable.

Partnership system facilitator

Heritage area activities have helped to link a complex network of partners (and their stories) in the Cane River region. This network is the primary instrument for achieving integrated resource stewardship and community development goals. Many study participants described the role of heritage area management in the network using terms like "facilitator," "communicator," and "connector." (See sidebar for the 30 terms used by partners to describe the different roles played by heritage area management.) Several study participants noted the high value they place on the Cane River staff's ability to provide information. Some partners rely on the commission and staff for seed funding or technical assistance, while others use them as a source of information, a marketing tool, or as a link to state and federal policy makers. The point is that different partners are connected in different ways at different times in a highly dynamic system. Interview data suggest that, as an organization in this system, Cane River management functions as the "system facilitator" or network "hub," serving as the primary entity that communicates, coordinates, guides, and encourages network activity. Nearly every study participant indicated that at the present time no other organization in the region is capable of replacing the commission and staff in this capacity. One study participant made the point in this way:

The Old Courthouse, built in 1896, is an example of the Richardsonian Romanesque style, one of many architectural styles to be found in the Natchitoches National Historic Landmark District. Today the building is home to the Old Courthouse Museum, a branch of the Louisiana State Museum and a heritage area partner.



I think the other entities tend to be so factionalized and they tend to only represent certain groups. I have not seen one entity that's totally inclusive. And, because of that, I think the heritage area can serve as a more level playing field and I think that's a critical component of what it does in bringing voices to the table.

Key network factors²⁹

Analysis of study data also suggested that three key factors are essential for growing and sustaining the heritage area partner network into the future. First, nearly every study participant referenced the importance of *time*. It takes time for partner organizations to build sufficient trust to engage in partnerships. It takes time for new organizations to build enough capacity to be active in the network. It takes time for more “traditional,” established organizations to see value in working across areas of interest. And it takes time to integrate resource conservation objectives with community and economic development goals.

Next, the ability to identify and procure *sustainable sources of funding* surfaced as another key factor for many study participants. The reasons for this are obvious—funding affects partner

organizations' staff size, training and equipment budgets, and ability to make long-term project commitments. The constant pressure to secure funding may limit the effectiveness of some organizations in the network because it is very labor-intensive, thereby pulling limited staff resources away from project work.

Finally, *system facilitation* emerged as a third key factor. As discussed earlier, heritage area management plays numerous roles in a complex and dynamic network system. The need for system facilitation is essential—failing to connect in the right way at the right time with the right partner can greatly reduce the ability of the partner network to accomplish heritage area goals and objectives.

B. Perceived Challenges

Analysis of interview data revealed six issues that are perceived by heritage area partners as the primary challenges facing the Cane River region: (1) long-term funding strategy, (2) land use planning, (3) institutional barriers, (4) visibility and relevancy, (5) ability to access the resources of the heritage area initiative, and (6) independent perspective. The remainder of this chapter discusses these issues.

²⁹ While these key network factors are not strengths per se of the Cane River partnership system, study participants identified them as important elements in supporting the network of heritage area partners and therefore they are included in this section of the report. See chapter 7 for a broader discussion of the critical ingredients associated with the Cane River partnership system.

1. Long-term funding strategy

Although the issue of sustainable funding was addressed in the previous section, nearly every study participant identified the need for the commission to develop a long-term funding strategy. Failure to develop such a strategy may reduce network efficacy. One partner explained it like this:

My concern is that when the funding gets tight we're going to get scrapping with each other, which will really hurt. . . . As resources begin to dry up, unless we find alternatives, it's going to be hard. I think we need to focus and I think we need to be smart and far-seeking.

2. Land use planning

Many study participants identified issues associated with land use planning and development as a significant threat facing the heritage area. This is particularly acute along the river corridor, where development has increased rapidly over the last five years. One study participant expressed fear that there will be “too much ‘Mickey-Mouse’ development” in the area. Another study participant described the situation this way:

It's a wonderful community and we have wonderful resources. But we could wake up in 20 years and go, “Well, what happened to it?” We need to figure out a way to help our community keep our community in a way that people really want it. . . . The primary threat here is suburban development of the river corridor, [and] we are at a watershed moment. It's great that the heritage area is here, but it's going to take some hard, heartfelt action if we're going to still have it. . . . In 20 years, it won't be here at all unless the whole community gets together and joins hands and decides to do something.

3. Institutional barriers

Many study participants highlighted the need for the commission to better engage the police jury, echoing what the study team heard in the conversations and meetings focused on the heritage area framework (discussed in chapter 5). Within the context of land use planning, zoning, and river corridor issues, study participants noted the necessity of the police jury being a more active participant in the Cane River partner network, given its authority to enact and enforce zoning. In addition, many study participants felt that the heritage area lacked adequate and/or ongoing support from state government. While several state agencies maintain sites that are

active heritage area partners, there is a sense among study participants that state government is generally ambivalent about Cane River National Heritage Area. This relationship is particularly complicated by the short- and long-term effects of Hurricane Katrina. Two partners portrayed these institutional barriers as follows:

[Heritage area management] needs to have more interactive business with the parish police jury. We need to engage them. . . . We've got to get involved with them and somehow get [traction] on the zoning and planning [issues]—we can't do it on our own.

We've fought for a number of years to try and get some acknowledgment on the state level. It's not so much the money as much as being able to say that we have everybody on board. The state is not unsupportive, but some flow of additional funds [is important] to be able to argue that we have additional matched monies locally to help continue the flow of federal funding. We can make the case with the city in terms of in-kind [contributions] as well as hard cash, but we [cannot make] the argument in terms of state support.³⁰

4. Visibility and relevancy

There is a strong sense among study participants that the heritage area needs to become “more visible” in the region. Some observed that Cane River's federal stature may appear threatening in some locales, suggesting that additional engagement with those communities may increase understanding of the heritage area's role and mission. In other cases, study participants described visibility in terms of marketing, promotion, and identity building. While the heritage area's activities have engaged a diverse set of partners, study data suggest that continued effort may be needed to broaden the relevancy of the heritage area. One partner explained it in these terms:

I know what their strengths are because I infused myself into the organization. I took the time to find out who they were and what they do because I didn't know—it is a new concept. I do think that the people in the historic preservation field understand what the heritage area is. I don't think the general public does.

5. Ability to access the resources of the heritage area initiative

Several study participants noted that there are obstacles to accessing the Cane River initiative's

³⁰ As noted earlier in this report, the state legislature did include a first-time appropriation for the heritage area in the 2008 budget. This interview predated that action.

Increasing residential development along Cane River poses a threat to the integrity of the region's cultural landscape.



Philip B. Huffman

resources. This is closely related to the issue of partner capacity and experience, as some partner organizations do not have the capacity to apply for and manage federal funds. In this way, the partner network may be unnecessarily limited. One study participant reflected on the situation:

I'm thinking about the processes around the grants. If you're already professional-minded. . . , it's easy for you to sit down and write a grant and know what you want to do and how to compose it properly to get it accepted. But many members of the African American community don't have [any experience] about how to go about writing a grant.

6. Independent perspective

Several study participants described the need for an “independent perspective” on the commission’s

grants committee. This issue is, in part, a function of the (comparatively) small size of the heritage area, and the long history of historic preservation activities within the region. The ability to provide an independent perspective will lend additional credibility to heritage area activities and investments, and is reinforced by the “critical friend” role described earlier in this chapter. This issue also relates to the development of the next generation of leaders within the heritage area. One study participant observed:

There are the same people every time—they need an outsider on the grants committee. It doesn't have to be the same outsider every time, but it needs to be someone with no vested interest. It's a very small town and so we're all peripherally connected. So there needs to be different people, and I really do think that they need at least one outside person.



French and Spanish colonialism, including Catholicism, greatly influenced the Cane River region. The first Catholic church was associated with Fort St. Jean Baptiste. The Church of Immaculate Conception shown here, was built in Natchitoches between 1852 and 1889 and traces its history to the original congregation at the French fort.

SECTION III. The Future of Cane River National Heritage Area

Chapter 7

Identifying Critical Ingredients for Sustained Success

Earlier chapters of this report describe the accomplishments of Cane River National Heritage Area, examine the existing heritage area framework, and discuss the strengths and challenges associated with the partnership system. Building on the findings from these elements of the study, this chapter identifies critical ingredients for sustaining and enhancing the partnership system in the future. The ingredients are organized into four categories: (a) structuring the partnership system, (b) guiding the partnership system, (c) cultivating the partnership system, and (d) considering the role of time in development of the partnership system.

These ingredients encompass a diverse and complementary array of components and processes that are needed over time to advance the heritage area initiative. Many of these ingredients are already in place and have been essential to the heritage area's success to date, but not all are fully realized. The options and opportunities presented in chapters 8 and 9 offer ideas for helping to fill some of these gaps.

A. Structuring the Partnership System

The structural ingredients that follow constitute much of the collaborative framework for implementing the heritage area initiative.

- **Management entity**

The initiative's success is influenced by how the management entity and heritage area staff operate and by the composition of the management entity. Ideally, these characteristics are understood internally by management and staff and also recognized by partners and the general public. The management entity must:

- represent in a balanced way the diversity of key interests associated with the heritage area (i.e., cultural, geographic, economic, organizational, governmental);
- actively "steward" the mission;
- transcend organizational and political interests;

- inspire respect in its dealings with heritage area partners, the general public, and those who make up its authorizing environment;
- be perceived as having credibility and clout;
- play a unique and necessary role as the network hub, or "system facilitator," in a complex, multidimensional network (see the discussion of "system facilitator" in chapter 6, page 50).

- **Key governmental partnerships**

Strong partnerships between the heritage area and key governmental entities help to "anchor" the partnership system, thereby providing stability. At Cane River, certain governmental partners are essential to achieving success in the future and addressing the challenges identified by the study team:

- the city of Natchitoches (partnership generally well developed)
- Natchitoches Parish (partnership not well developed, but desirable)
- the state of Louisiana (partnership partially developed)
- Cane River Creole National Historical Park (partnership very well developed) and other arms of the National Park Service (partnership generally well developed)

- **Partner network**

A robust network of partners, representative of the heritage area's diversity, is essential to carrying out projects and advancing the purposes and vision of the heritage area. This network can also provide future leaders for the heritage area.

- **Community energy and a sense of local ownership of the heritage area initiative**

Cane River National Heritage Area came into being because of local energy and leadership, which together resulted in a sense of ownership. This combination has been an important factor in the heritage area's success to date and will continue to be so in the future. Maintaining such grassroots vibrancy is an



Courtesy of the Cammie G. Henry Research Center, Northwestern State University of Louisiana

Many African Americans labored in the region's agricultural fields from the eighteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century, first as slaves and later as tenant farmers and sharecroppers. The man shown here plowed fields at Magnolia Plantation, now part of the national park.

important theme in the sections that follow in this chapter.

- **Secure, stable funding from diverse sources**

Establishing a base of dependable funding is critical to buffer the heritage area from the uncertainties of the annual federal appropriations process and to provide stability in planning and carrying out projects.

- **Mechanism(s) to leverage funds and resources**

The ability to leverage funds and other resources is fundamental to the heritage area model, and is essential for building a diverse base of support and strengthening partner involvement.

- **Thematic boundaries**

Heritage area boundaries should continue to reflect thematic considerations rather than political or administrative considerations, and should encompass the core stories and significant resources of the heritage area.

B. Guiding the Partnership System

The guiding ingredients work together to provide direction and inspiration to heritage area participants and activities, and help to ensure that projects and programs focus on achieving heritage area purposes. Although these guiding ingredients apply to the management entity (both governing board and staff) and partners, the management entity has a special responsibility for ensuring that these ingredients function in a way that effectively guides the partnership system.

- **Guiding direction from overall purposes, vision, and mission**

The purposes, vision, and mission of the heritage area should reflect the significance of the region; be realistic regarding community resources, needs, opportunities, and constraints; allow flexibility for the future; and provide a guiding direction for the partnership system.

- **Broad, integrated vision**

A vision for the heritage area that is broad, integrates the various goals, and embraces the

diverse cultures present in the Cane River region provides an overarching framework for engaging partners and aligning organizational goals. In such a vision, partner organizations can understand how they fit into the overall effort and how they complement the other partners in the network. The network becomes most effective and efficient over time as the various partners better align the goals of their organizations with the vision and mission of the overall network.

- **Compelling story**

A compelling story is authentic, encompasses the history of the region's different cultures, connects with local resources, and is relevant to people's experiences today. Such a story inspires pride and engages local partners and the general public.

- **Shared heritage**

A sense of shared heritage, which can be the result of an inspiring vision and compelling story, provides a base for community engagement and partner initiatives and an organizing concept for collaboration.

- **Leadership**

Personal leadership from the management entity (both governing board and staff)—including vision, integrity, a sense of entrepreneurialism, a willingness to take risks, and an ability to think creatively—is essential to fostering a partnership culture and to building and sustaining the partner network.

- **Capacity to leverage ideas**

A capacity to leverage ideas will encourage big-picture thinking and entrepreneurialism, contribute to synergy, link partners in ways that strengthen the partner network, and help overall to maintain the vibrancy of the partnership system.

- **Commitment to maintaining resource integrity**

The cultural and natural resources of the Cane River region, including the landscapes, provide the context for the heritage area's unique stories and are integral to the heritage area's national significance. If the integrity of these resources is diminished or degraded over time, then the integrity of the context and the ability to tell the region's stories will be diminished and degraded as well.

C. Cultivating the Partnership System

In concert with the guiding ingredients listed above, certain processes and a style of leadership

help to build collaboration and an effective partner network. The management entity (including heritage area staff) is primarily responsible for ensuring that these processes and ways of working operate within the Cane River partnership system, and its leaders need to model the leadership style described below. However, evidence at other national heritage areas suggests that as the partnership system matures and evolves, partners often assume increased leadership responsibilities themselves over time.

- **Collaborative leadership**

Collaborative leadership engenders an open, inclusive, participatory approach that helps to build trust in partner relationships. It includes operating in a transparent, flexible, and adaptive manner and interacting with partners in ways that help them develop a sense of common purpose and ownership of the heritage area initiative.

- **Commitment to meaningful community engagement**

An ongoing commitment to engaging partners, stakeholders, and the general public in meaningful ways is fundamental to the community-based approach upon which heritage areas depend, and helps to sustain the vitality of the partner network.

- **Responsiveness to local needs**

Being responsive to local needs and priorities builds and maintains strong community relationships and helps to ensure that the heritage area's programs and activities remain relevant over time.

- **Attention to leveraging the full potential of the partnership system**

With the relatively small size of Cane River National Heritage Area, it is essential to think strategically about how to leverage the potential of every player and every component in the partnership system. This includes leveraging such diverse aspects as the clout of the management entity, the abilities of individual staff members, the visibility of prestigious awards, the strategic placement and connections of key partners, the ideas of influential local leaders, and funding.

- **Commitment to building and enhancing partner capacity**

Related to the previous point, in an initiative predicated on partnerships it is essential to build the capacity of partner organizations so they can be as effective as possible. In addition

Fragile elements like this historic fence provide substance and meaning to the heritage area's cultural landscape. The fence is located at Oakland Plantation within the national park.



Philip Gould

to enabling partners to better carry out their own missions (which, in turn, contributes to achieving the overarching vision of the heritage area), effective partner organizations help to create a robust partner network and provide a “seedbed” of new leaders for the heritage area.

- **Application of “governing by network” principles**

In a heritage area context, governing or managing by network involves managing through influence rather than control. (See box on the next page for more discussion on the concept of governing by network.)

- **Commitment to learning and adaptive management**

Adaptive management can be defined as a systematic process for continually improving management by learning from the outcomes of operational programs.³² An ongoing commitment to learning and integrating new knowledge and understanding is an important factor for success—the more knowledge that Cane River’s management entity and partners have about the partnership system, the more effective they will be in using that system to achieve heritage area goals and objectives.

D. Considering the Role of Time in Development of the Partnership System

Time is another crucial factor for the future of the Cane River partnership system. It takes time to build the necessary social infrastructure to effectively implement a partnership system as complex as a national heritage area initiative. It takes time to establish effective individual partnerships, and, because partner capacity varies, to build a strong network of partners. It takes time to integrate diverse objectives (e.g., linking resource conservation with community and economic development) at a regional or landscape scale. It takes time for the complex partnership system of a national heritage area to evolve and mature.

With an ambitious agenda such as that contained in Cane River’s management plan, there is of necessity a strategic sequencing of projects, with early ones catalyzing or setting the stage for those that come later. As accomplishments accrue and the relationships in the partnership system become more robust, partners are able to take on more challenging, complex efforts—in essence the bar can be raised higher with time. As the partnership system matures, there is a need for increased specialization, technical

³² B.T. Bormann, P.G. Cunningham, and J.C. Gordon, “Best management practices, adaptive management, or both?” *Proceedings from National Society of American Foresters Convention* (Portland, ME, 1995).

From Partnerships to Networks

All national heritage areas are set up through their authorizing legislation to work through partnerships. Research conducted in national heritage areas has highlighted the importance to effective management of using an approach commonly referred to as “governing by network.”³³ This requires shifting from simply managing a diverse array of partners to creating and managing a networked structure.

Using an intentional networked approach involves, in part, engaging diverse partners and stakeholders in ways that build a sense of common purpose and ownership in the ongoing work so that partners become an integral part of the success of the heritage area. In the most effective networks, an increasing number of partners over time align their efforts directly with the heritage area’s goals and mission. It is particularly important to create a management structure and policies that will channel the energy and capacity of the entire group and build leadership capacity in both partners and managers.

The approach to leadership in networked environments is distinct from many other management settings. Some of the principles involved include:

- managing through influence rather than control, and understanding the key role of the network “hub” or “system facilitator;”
- engaging partners through initiatives that catalyze further partner action and involvement;
- embracing an integrated, cross-cutting approach whereby projects address multiple goals;
- adopting a collaborative leadership style;
- applying lessons learned to ongoing management in order to improve the network.

Implementation of these principles relies on good communication, requires a flexible approach, builds trust, and ultimately enhances shared responsibility and transparency in network operations.

expertise, and capacity building in order to maintain partner energy and general momentum. In addition, the nature of the relationship between partners and the management entity

may change. Partners may be able to take on greater leadership responsibility over time, which opens the door to further learning and strengthening of the partnership system.

³³ Stephen Goldsmith and William D. Eggers, *Governing by Network: The New Shape of the Public Sector* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2004).



Jack Boucher, National Park Service, HABS/HAER/HALS

A successful collaboration among local, state, and federal partners led to the preservation of the bricks along historic Front Street in the Natchitoches National Historic Landmark District.

Chapter 8

National Heritage Area Framework Options and Opportunities

To assist the commission, staff, and partners in thinking about the future of the Cane River National Heritage Area initiative, this chapter explores possible options for the heritage area's framework. The approaching August 2010 sunset of federal authorization and dedicated funding provides the commission and its partners with an opportunity to identify the most desirable framework and to pursue its implementation through legislative and/or administrative action as appropriate.

The options presented in this chapter were developed from several complementary streams of information:

- conversations with heritage area commissioners, the commission's options committee, and staff
- consideration of approaches used in other national heritage areas and similar partnership initiatives
- reflection on the strengths and challenges associated with the current heritage area framework and partnership system (chapters 5 and 6) and the critical ingredients for future success (chapter 7)

The full range of framework options is summarized in figure 8.1 (see next page), organized under the five major framework components described in chapter 3. Several general points about these options should be noted. First, many are interrelated (e.g., decisions about the options related to Cane River's purposes, vision, and mission or its geographic scope could affect the desired composition of the management entity's governing body). Also, some are mutually exclusive (e.g., only one management entity would be chosen from the range of options identified), but many others are not (e.g., some or all of the options identified for key governmental partnerships could be pursued together). Finally, some would require legislative action at one level of government or another, while others could be pursued administratively by the commission and other heritage area partners.

It is important to note that the study team was not charged with providing recommendations on these options and has not done so. Instead, the

team worked to identify and analyze a reasonable range of viable options to serve as food for thought about the heritage area's future framework. It is now up to the commission and its partners to decide what combination from this menu of choices will create the most desirable framework for Cane River's next phase.

A. Purposes, Vision, and Mission

As discussed in chapters 3 and 5, Cane River's legislated purposes, along with the subsequent vision and mission statements developed by the commission, provide the guiding direction for what the heritage area initiative is designed to achieve. As the commission and partners look to the future, a number of questions related to this guiding direction may be worth considering:

- Does the guiding direction encompass an appropriate and sufficient range of dimensions in light of the area's heritage assets, resources, needs, opportunities, and constraints?
- Does it offer a safe, appropriate level of flexibility to accommodate future changes and growth?
- How does it compare to the scope and mandate of other national heritage areas?
- Do the vision and mission align sufficiently with the heritage area's legislated purposes?
- Are the commission's authorities sufficient to achieve the guiding direction?

With these questions in mind, there are several options to consider for possible adjustments to the heritage area's guiding direction and associated authorities. Note that any changes to the legislated purposes or management entity authorities would need to be addressed through federal legislation, presumably as part of a federal reauthorization package, while any adjustments to the vision and mission statements could be adopted administratively.³³

Option A.1. Add new dimensions to the purposes, vision, and mission

The commission could consider adding new elements that are not currently included in either the legislated purposes or the vision and mission statements, but that connect with existing heritage area activities. The two primary

³³ Reauthorizing legislation to renew federal funding authorization, designate a management entity for the heritage area's next phase, and address other aspects of the framework would need to be passed by Congress prior to their scheduled expiration in August 2010.

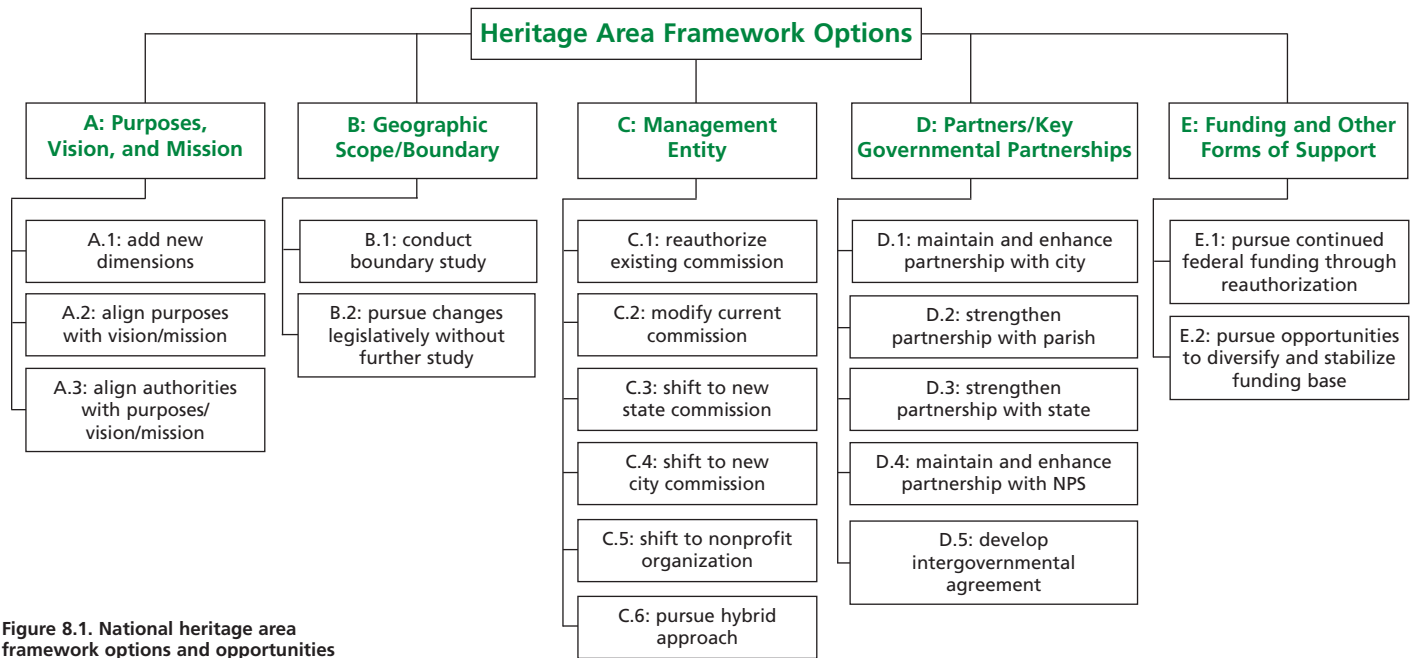


Figure 8.1. National heritage area framework options and opportunities

possibilities that emerged during the study are conserving natural resources and enhancing recreational opportunities.

Neither concept is explicitly included in the existing enabling legislation or the vision and mission statements. However, in recent years both concepts have received some attention from the commission and its partners. They also relate to several current priorities including the recognized needs for additional attention to landscape conservation and development of sustainable heritage tourism in the region.³⁴ In addition, it does not appear that any other entity is providing strong leadership on either issue in the Cane River region. In many other national heritage areas, natural resource conservation and recreational enhancements are vital components of the mandates, and evidence indicates that integrating them with other priorities can create important benefits, such as opportunities for broader community support and engagement, and new synergies and cross-cutting relationships among partners.

On the other hand, broadening Cane River’s guiding direction by adding these components could spread limited staff and financial resources more thinly, heightening an existing challenge, and could divert attention from the heritage area’s core focus on preserving the region’s cultural resources and traditions.

Option A.2. Align the heritage area’s legislated purposes with its vision and mission statements

As part of a federal reauthorization package, the legislated purposes could be expanded to include additional aspects that are currently addressed explicitly only in the vision and mission. The two most applicable concepts are: fostering compatible economic development based on the region’s heritage assets, and enhancing quality of life for local residents. Both are important elements of the current vision and mission, but neither is addressed specifically in Cane River’s authorizing legislation.

Adding these concepts to the legislated purposes would reinforce their importance and legitimacy as part of Cane River’s mandate, and could strengthen and clarify the connection between conserving the region’s heritage and enhancing its economic viability and attractiveness to both residents and visitors. This, in turn, could boost partnership opportunities with other entities that are focused on those topics (e.g., the Louisiana Economic Development Department), and could better position the heritage area to justify a share of local revenue streams as an appropriate, sustainable funding source.

Some might argue that strengthening the mandate for economic development could jeopardize the heritage area’s preservation efforts.

³⁴ It should be noted that while neither natural resource conservation nor recreational enhancements are included in Cane River’s guiding direction, the authorizing legislation established that one seat on the commission would be filled by an individual with “experience in and knowledge of environmental, recreational, and conservation matters affecting the heritage area from recommendations submitted by the Natchitoches Sportsman’s Association and other local recreational and environmental organizations.”

However, to date this does not appear to have been a major issue at either Cane River (given the inclusion of economic development in the vision and mission statements), or other national heritage areas with similarly broad mandates. The key is to seek opportunities for integrating preservation and economic development goals and activities in mutually reinforcing ways, rather than seeking to advance these goals in isolation or at the expense of one another.

Option A.3. Align the management entity's authorities with the purposes, vision, and mission

As described in chapter 5, some of the commission's authorized powers are defined somewhat narrowly relative to the breadth of the purposes, vision, and mission. Specific authorities that could be broadened as part of federal reauthorizing legislation include:

- The commission's cooperative agreement authority in section 402(d)(5), which is currently limited to "research, historic preservation, and education purposes." (It should be noted that there is broader treatment of cooperative agreements under "Duties of the Commission," section 402(c)(3), but this language is not carried over into the following section on "Powers of the Commission.")
- The commission's grant-making authority in section 402(d)(6), which is currently limited to providing grants "to assist in the *preparation of studies* that identify, preserve, and plan for the management of the heritage area" (emphasis added).
- The commission's assistance authority in section 402(d)(8), which is currently limited to "assisting others in developing educational, informational, and interpretive programs and facilities."

The discrepancy between these authorities and the heritage area's guiding direction does not appear to have interfered with the commission's efforts to pursue its mandate, and adjusting the authorities to achieve closer alignment might therefore be considered a technicality. Nonetheless, it could still be desirable to address this matter as part of federal reauthorizing legislation, thus ensuring that the commission or a successor management entity has the full authority and flexibility it needs to optimize progress toward the heritage area's purposes, vision, and mission.

B. Geographic Scope/Boundary

As described in chapter 5, Cane River National Heritage Area has, on the whole, a boundary that is tightly connected to the initiative's core

stories—that is, it is based largely on thematic rather than political or administrative considerations. Having a boundary that reflects thematic considerations is one of the critical ingredients for success discussed in chapter 7.

While the existing boundary generally appears to have been workable during the heritage area's first phase, this project provided an opportunity to contemplate whether adjustments are necessary or desirable. In meetings and discussions, study participants identified a number of possible boundary alterations. The study team had neither the charge nor the capacity to explore these ideas in depth, but did compile them to facilitate future consideration as follows:

- expand the boundary to the north, which could include extending to the confluence of the Cane River with the Red River, to Grand Ecore, to the Red River's confluence with Bayou Pierre, or to the Natchitoches Parish line on the Red River;
- extend the boundary farther west, perhaps to the Los Adaes State Historical Site or the Adai Indian Nation Cultural Center, encompassing the Spanish Lake Lowlands, or expanding the downriver area southwest of Interstate 49 to the Kisatchie foothills;
- adjust the boundary to encompass more of the city of Natchitoches, which could include the full national historic landmark district, the area between the landmark district and the heritage area's existing downriver component (to eliminate the current gap), or the entire city;
- expand the boundary to encompass the entire Cane River watershed;
- narrow the current boundary by eliminating Fort Jesup State Historic Site as a satellite location.

Two general options were identified as a next step in considering potential boundary refinements. These options could be pursued sequentially or the second one could be pursued alone.

Option B.1. Conduct a boundary study

Conduct a thorough boundary study to evaluate more carefully the adjustments listed above and to identify and analyze other possibilities as well. A boundary study could be authorized legislatively as part of a federal reauthorization package, or the commission could initiate it administratively. The cost and duration of such a study would likely depend on who will conduct it (i.e., through in-house capacity or with outside assistance) and their familiarity with the region's core stories and cultural geography.

Fort St. Jean Baptiste State Historic Site helps to bring colonial history alive for visitors. The site is a replica of the region's early eighteenth-century French outpost.



Option B.2. Pursue boundary changes legislatively through federal reauthorization, without further study

The commission and its partners could identify desired changes through a less involved but still open and public process, then seek to have those changes enacted directly as part of federal reauthorizing legislation. The commission may want and need to have some further, structured discussion internally and with its partners about possible changes, but this option would likely require less investment of time, money, and energy than a more formal study.

Under either of these options, the commission would need to weigh various considerations carefully in deciding whether to pursue any changes to the boundary. For instance, it is important not to dilute the existing tight connection with Cane River's core stories, while at the same time ensuring that important aspects of the region's heritage are not left out. Also, there may be a temptation to consider adding areas for political or financial reasons, which might not produce the intended benefit for the heritage area and could compromise the close link to the core stories and resources. With this in mind, perhaps the primary question in considering whether to make adjustments is this: Does the boundary as currently configured *appropriately* reflect and encompass Cane River's core stories, themes, and significant heritage resources?

C. Management Entity

As the 2010 sunset approaches, one of the biggest questions facing the commission and the heritage

area initiative is whether the commission or some other organization will serve as management entity for the heritage area's next phase. Indeed, the authorizing legislation explicitly requires the commission to "identify appropriate entities, such as a nonprofit corporation, that could be established to assume the responsibilities of the commission following its termination," and, prior to its termination, to provide recommendations to the governor of Louisiana and the secretary of the interior on a successor. With these requirements in mind, one of the study team's highest priorities was to propose potential options for a future management entity.

The team identified key factors to keep in mind while considering management entity options:

- the entity's ability to embody the essential characteristics described in chapter 7, section A
- the importance of seeking and retaining a diverse mix of skills, backgrounds, and expertise among members of the entity's governing body, in light of the cross-cutting nature of the heritage area's mandate and the multiple roles that the management entity plays within the partner network (see chapter 6, page 43)
- the challenge of achieving the right balance of interests and the right mix of qualifications among members of the governing body, and assuring that this balance and mix will be maintained over time, especially if the composition of the entity's governing body is not legislated

- the need for flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances—among the members of the governing body and the organizations they represent, in the community at large, and in the political environment at local, state, and federal levels
- the ability and readiness to effectively fulfill the responsibilities of the management entity by August 2010, without jeopardizing the heritage area’s forward momentum and the functionality of the partner network

The management entity options presented below are mutually exclusive; only one would be chosen for the heritage area’s next phase (although another might possibly be pursued at some point in the future). Also, if the chosen organization is to be federally authorized and recognized as the management entity with the associated powers and responsibilities (e.g., receiving and distributing federal funds appropriated for national heritage area operations and grants), this would need to be incorporated as part of federal reauthorizing legislation.

C.1. Reauthorize the existing commission

The first option is to seek congressional reauthorization of the existing commission, continuing its federal status and current composition. The desired duration of the reauthorization would need to be identified—perhaps an additional five, ten, or twenty years to allow time for building further momentum toward heritage area goals, strengthening the partner network, and considering long-term options for management and coordination of the initiative.

This approach would maintain the significant strengths of the commission described in chapters 5 and 6 (e.g., formal, balanced representation of diverse interests; clout, credibility, and leverage; its ability to fill a critical niche that could not be filled by any other existing organization). At the same time, pursuing this option would perpetuate the challenges associated with the commission (e.g., the frustrations and inefficiencies associated with the federal appointments process, the limitations posed by its legislated composition, and its inability to access funding from certain sources).

Recognizing its strengths and shortcomings, study participants appeared quite comfortable with the possibility of the commission continuing as the management entity at least for the near term. At the same time, there has been a trend away from federal commissions in recent years, and the majority of national heritage areas are managed by nonprofit organizations. However,

recent examples do exist of congressional approval of federal commissions. In 2006 the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission was established (with an initial ten-year authorization), and the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission was reauthorized (for five years, or a total of twenty-five years since its establishment).

Option C.2. Modify the composition of the current federal commission

As an alternative to continuing the commission in its current form, it could be reauthorized for a specified duration but with changes to enhance its effectiveness as a body representing the heritage area’s full range of interests. This approach would seek to retain and build upon the commission’s important strengths, while making changes to address challenges that have affected its functioning (described in chapter 5).

A variety of adjustments to the commission’s composition were identified during the study process. The more general ideas include seeking closer alignment between the commission’s composition and the demographics of the Cane River region (i.e., more ethnic and socioeconomic diversity), and creating greater flexibility in its composition so that all of the key interests are represented but not necessarily by specified organizations. The more specific possibilities include:

- addition of an African American representative;
- addition of a Creole representative;
- addition of a representative from the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism (This could be accomplished by adding a new seat on the commission or by specifying that the governor’s existing discretionary seat be filled by a CRT representative. It would be desirable for the agency’s representative to be able to provide continuity over time and to be well grounded in the range of CRT’s responsibilities and activities that are most relevant to the heritage area’s mission.);
- addition of a representative from the Natchitoches Parish Tourist Commission and/or the Natchitoches Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, either by adding new seats or by specifying either or both of these organizations for the two existing tourism seats on the commission;
- addition of one or more seats for “at-large” representatives to help round out the diversity, expertise, and experience on the commission (A related issue is who would nominate the candidates for these slots.);
- replacement of organizations that may not be

as relevant as they were at the time of the commission's establishment;

- term limits for members—for instance, a maximum of perhaps two or three consecutive three-year terms.

Challenges related to the commission's current composition and functioning that could be addressed through this option include:

- the perceived need for turnover and “new blood” on the commission;
- the perception among some stakeholders that the commission is too heavily weighted toward interests in the city of Natchitoches (i.e., that it is too “town-bound”);
- the need to tighten key governmental relationships;
- the perception that some member organizations may no longer be as vibrant as when the commission was established, and therefore may no longer be the best organizations to represent their constituencies;
- the need for the composition to reflect the evolving community context and dynamics.

It should be noted that changes in the commission's legislated composition would not necessarily resolve all of the challenges that have affected its functioning and effectiveness. The resolution of some challenges would be dependent on other factors, such as the individuals who are appointed to serve on the commission and the ever-evolving political dynamic with various levels of government. Other challenges, such as the cumbersome appointments process and limited flexibility to respond to changing local circumstances, are intrinsic to all federal commissions. Nonetheless, making modest adjustments to the current composition could address a number of important factors and enhance the commission's effectiveness.

Option C.3. Shift to a new state-authorized commission

As an alternative to the existing federal commission, the Louisiana legislature could establish a new state-level commission with similar representation of interests. This commission could be designated by Congress to serve as the federally authorized management entity for Cane River's next phase if reauthorizing legislation goes forward.

Two well-established examples of state-authorized commissions that currently work with the heritage area initiative are the Natchitoches

Historic District Development Commission and the Cane River Waterway Commission. While both were established through state legislation, they each have a strong local orientation and do not have day-to-day involvement with state government. Of the two, HDDC may be a more relevant model because it has a larger and more broadly representative composition that is closer to that of the current federal commission. It is perhaps worth noting that both HDDC and CRWC have powers under their authorizing statutes that extend beyond those of the current federal commission, such as the authority to acquire property and to issue bonds. Whether those or other authorities would be desirable or possible for a new state-authorized commission for Cane River would need to be carefully considered by heritage area leaders and their legislators.³⁵

As with the current commission, this approach would provide stakeholders with the assurance of legislated representation of key interests. If the right mix of interests were included, the new commission could potentially continue the current commission's key strengths of filling an important niche in the Cane River region and transcending the individual agendas and perspectives of its members. Shifting to a state-level commission would remove the administrative and appointments challenges associated with federal commissions and, depending on how the authorizing statute was crafted, could simplify or eliminate the need altogether for an appointments process. (For example, HDDC's statute specifies the positions represented on the commission and therefore avoids an appointment process, while CRWC members are appointed by the governor based on nominations from specified interests.) Furthermore, it would avoid the risk of Congress not extending the authorization of the current federal commission.

On the other hand, a new state-level commission could be affected more over time by political forces within the state than the current federal commission. Heritage area participants would need to evaluate the state-level political context in the near term to determine the likelihood of the legislature's authorizing a new commission that would meet Cane River's needs. In addition, it is possible that a state-authorized commission might not command the same degree of clout, credibility, and respect that the federal commission is perceived to hold (although if the new commission were officially recognized as the federally authorized management entity, this would likely bolster its image and presence). It is also

³⁵ HDDC's authorizing statute, RS 25:791, is available online at <http://www.legis.state.la.us/lss/lss.asp?doc=84579>. CRWC's authorizing statute, RS 43:3261-3276, is available online at <http://www.legis.state.la.us/lss/lss.asp?doc=92246> and subsequent sections.

The heritage area assists in preserving important historic properties in the region. The Prudhomme-Rouquier House, built about 1790, received a Save America's Treasures preservation grant through the heritage area.



possible that there might not be the same degree of synergy and complementarity as currently exists between the federal commission and Cane River Creole National Historical Park, which trace their roots back to the same authorizing legislation and which were explicitly designed to complement one another.

Option C.4. Shift to a new city-authorized commission

Similarly, the Natchitoches City Council could establish a new representative commission through a municipal ordinance. The Natchitoches Historic District Commission, which is closely connected to the heritage area's mission and activities, is a well-established example of a representative body set up in this way. If reauthorizing legislation goes forward, Congress could designate this new municipal commission as the management entity for the heritage area's next phase.

Many of the potential considerations of a state-level commission discussed in option C.3 would apply to this option as well, although political considerations obviously would focus on the municipal context in Natchitoches rather than the state legislature. The city has been one of the heritage area's core partners throughout its existence, and has a number of strengths that could help to support a new municipal commission. These include its strong administrative structure and the potential for closer ties and greater synergy between the heritage area initiative and the city's relevant branches (e.g.,

Community Development Department, Main Street Program, Planning and Zoning Department). In addition, shifting to a municipal commission would dovetail well with the heritage area's current staffing arrangement with the city.

Perhaps the biggest concern about a municipal commission is that it could reinforce perceptions among some stakeholders that the heritage area initiative is oriented too heavily toward Natchitoches. It would be essential for the authorizing ordinance to ensure balanced representation among interests throughout the heritage area, and for the city and other in-town interests to engage those downriver to ensure that the heritage area initiative remains focused on the broad regional agenda and relevant to all of its diverse constituents.

Option C.5. Shift to a nonprofit organization

As suggested in Cane River's authorizing legislation, a nonprofit organization could replace the current commission at its sunset. In reauthorizing legislation, this organization could be designated by Congress to serve as the management entity for the heritage area's next phase.

Nonprofits serve as management entities for the majority of national heritage areas around the country. They vary in size, age, capacity, budget, board composition, organizational structure, and other characteristics. Nonprofits offer a number of advantages relative to governmentally established commissions:

- They are generally less bureaucratic and not subject to administrative constraints such as cumbersome appointment processes.
- They can be more flexible and entrepreneurial in fundraising (e.g., by being better able to access private donations from individuals, corporations, and foundations as well as able to generate revenue from sources such as product sales).
- They are not subject to legislated termination.
- They are able to hold interest in land (e.g., easements and/or fee title), which can be an important tool for helping to protect key resources, conserve landscape integrity, and provide recreational access.
- They can provide a mechanism, through organizational memberships, for broadening the base of people connected to national heritage area management.

At the moment no nonprofit organization in the Cane River region appears to be positioned or prepared to take on the role of management entity. None of the well-established nonprofits has a mission and scope (geographic and/or thematic) of comparable breadth to that of the heritage area, and study participants suggested that none could bring all of the diverse interests and perspectives together in the integrative, transcendent way that the federal commission has. It is possible that the fledgling Friends of Cane River could be nurtured to fill this role, but it is unclear at this time whether it will become a viable organization with a sufficiently broad vision and capacity to successfully take on the role of management entity. Alternatively, a new nonprofit organization could be created.

There are other potential considerations with a nonprofit management entity:

- Many study participants felt that a nonprofit would not have the same degree of clout and credibility with governmental agencies and other partners as the current federal commission has. The same could hold true, although perhaps to a lesser degree, with a nonprofit relative to a new state- or municipally authorized commission.
- It would be more difficult to ensure balanced representation of key interests over time with a nonprofit relative to a governmental commission, since presumably the composition of the nonprofit's board would not be legislatively mandated but would instead be determined by the membership.
- Shifting to a nonprofit management entity could create competition for funding with other nonprofits in the region. Some study

participants questioned whether the Cane River region is a big enough “market” to support another nonprofit. There are already a number of heritage-related groups in the area, and many factors constrain the support available to such organizations (e.g., a limited population base for potential donors, not as strong a tradition of charitable giving as elsewhere in the U.S., a limited number of foundations in the region).

- As with a state- or municipally authorized commission, it is possible that a nonprofit management entity might not have the same degree of synergy and complementarity as currently exists between the federal commission and Cane River Creole National Historical Park, which has been essential to the heritage area's success to date.

Option C.6. Pursue a hybrid approach that combines features of other management entity options

There are at least two distinct hybrid management entity options. Each is described and analyzed below.

Option C.6.a. Continue with the federal commission for Cane River's next phase, and cultivate and position another entity to take over at the commission's next sunset
Heritage area partners could seek reauthorization of the existing commission for an additional five or ten years (through option C.1 or C.2). During that period, the commission and its partners would identify the most desirable alternate management entity (e.g., options C.3 through C.5) and move assertively to get that entity in place, initially as an operating partner and then as successor to the commission.

This process would need to be carefully planned and implemented to ensure an orderly, effective transfer of institutional knowledge and capacity from one entity to the other. The Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor in Pennsylvania has pursued this approach successfully over the past several years. Facing the second sunset of its federal authorization at its twentieth anniversary, the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor Commission formed a nonprofit organization called Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, Inc., to assist the commission and be positioned as its potential successor. The two organizations have been working together since 2002, with the commission, its staff, and key partners implementing a deliberate strategy to build the organizational capacity of the nonprofit entity. This has included creating a board composition for the

nonprofit that closely mirrors the commission's make-up, having a number of members serve on both governing bodies, and holding many joint meetings to ensure a viable transition. The nonprofit has gradually taken on greater responsibility and visibility, and is now fully prepared to assume the responsibilities of management entity.³⁶

Pursuing this approach offers the advantage of a phased transition from one management entity to another, rather than a more abrupt shift. The successor entity can be tailored thoughtfully in light of local circumstances, and an orderly process can be planned. In addition, during the transition the heritage area initiative can benefit from the combined strengths of both organizations.

On the other hand, orchestrating a smooth and effective transition is complicated and time-consuming, and having two entities working in tandem during the overlap can create a complicated administrative arrangement. Also, the heritage area initiative can be burdened by the combined challenges of both entities while they are working side by side.

Option C.6.b. Develop a nonprofit organization to complement the management entity and serve as a core operating partner in helping to advance the heritage area initiative

This would be a variation of options C.5 and C.6.a, wherein a nonprofit could be cultivated to play a leadership role alongside the management entity but without the explicit intent that it would become the management entity itself. This scenario could be pursued in conjunction with any of options C.1 through C.4. Depending on how it evolves organizationally, Friends of Cane River could be a candidate for the core partner role.

Under this option, the nonprofit partner could serve a number of functions to help the Cane River partnership achieve its goals and vision as follows:

- provide more opportunities for diverse stakeholders to be meaningfully involved in heritage area management at different levels, both through participation in the nonprofit's board and through general membership in the organization;
- increase the heritage area's visibility in the region and beyond, and help to broaden public understanding of its mission;

- advocate for desirable actions (e.g., funding and policy decisions) by governmental entities and other partners;
- hold interest in land (easements and/or fee title);
- help to access funding from sources that a commission, either federal or non-federal, would not be well positioned to obtain (e.g., individual and corporate donations, workplace giving, product sales);
- offer stability by providing a back-up to the governmentally established management entity in case of its eventual termination.

These and other similar roles could be valuable to the Cane River partnership regardless of which type of commission is serving as management entity. However, there are important considerations to keep in mind. Care would be needed to ensure that the nonprofit operating partner did not end up competing for funding with other heritage area partners. Also, it would be important to avoid overlap and duplication of effort by the nonprofit and the management entity. Careful forethought would be needed in carving out complementary niches for the two organizations, and close, ongoing communication and coordination between them would be essential.

D. Partners/Key Governmental Partnerships

Partnerships with a rich mix of public and private organizations lie at the heart of Cane River National Heritage Area's strategy. Of the many partners involved, several governmental entities play particularly important roles in Cane River's framework and have a significant bearing on the initiative's effectiveness. However, as described in chapters 5 and 6, some of these governmental relationships are well developed and serve as strong mutually beneficial connections, while others are not yet as firmly established. The study team worked with commissioners, staff, and partners to identify options for building and enhancing these valuable relationships in the future. (In addition to the discussion in this section, other important partnership options and opportunities are addressed in chapter 9.)

Option D.1. Maintain and enhance the commission's strong partnership with the city of Natchitoches

The partnership with the city is one of the heritage area's strongest, and has been critical to many aspects of the initiative's success to date.

³⁶ Further information on the Delaware & Lehigh Corridor's organizational transition is available at http://www.delawareandlehigh.org/images/library/FINAL_NPS_CSI_REPORT.pdf

Small churches and their associated cemeteries dot the Cane River landscape. Many churches, such as St. Matthew Baptist Church (shown here), provided a foundation for the religious, educational, and political lives of African Americans following Emancipation.



Sonny Carter

The challenge going forward will be to continue and reinforce this relationship in the face of ever-changing circumstances affecting each side (e.g., leadership transitions, budget pressures, political shifts).

One important element in meeting this challenge will be to maintain strong staff ties over time. A number of factors have contributed to the solid foundation already in place, among them the largely complementary goals and vision of both entities, a history of collaborating on projects, and close working relationships between the two staffs in recent years. With the current transition in key staff positions on both sides (Cane River’s executive director and the city’s Main Street Program coordinator), there is an opportunity in the near term to further enhance the relationship as the new staff members settle into their positions. (See discussion on transition management in chapter 9, page 84.)

A second element in enhancing the heritage area’s partnership with the city would be to seek further opportunities for institutionalizing the relationship. Here, too, a strong foundation is in place, with the existing cooperative agreement between the two parties through which the city provides certain administrative support, including employing Cane River staff. Establishing an intergovernmental partnership agreement would be one possible mechanism for further binding the two entities together. This concept is described in option D.5 below.

Option D.2. Strengthen the commission’s partnership with Natchitoches Parish

As described in chapters 5 and 6, the heritage area initiative has not yet been able to build a strong, mutually beneficial partnership with the parish like the one it shares with the city. With the parish’s key role in land use planning and other matters important to the future of the region and the heritage area initiative, it is clearly desirable—if not imperative—to establish a stronger, more effective relationship.

While it will undoubtedly take time and effort to build such a partnership, the commission could take actions in the near term to engage strategically with the parish, such as:

- create a tighter connection and liaison through the police jury’s representative on the commission (or its successor), with regular reporting by the representative to both entities at a minimum and with more strategic engagement;
- seek a closer relationship and regular communication with the police juror whose district encompasses the heritage area;
- initiate a regular commission presence at police jury and planning and zoning commission meetings;
- engage both the police jury and the planning and zoning commission on matters of joint interest;
- use the current leadership transitions in both entities (e.g., Cane River’s new executive

director and commission appointees in 2008, newly elected members of the police jury) as an opportunity for dialogue and building new working relationships;

- pursue project opportunities of mutual benefit, such as seeking assistance in developing a sustainable land use plan for the heritage area from the Center for Planning Excellence, a nonprofit organization based in Baton Rouge that coordinates urban and rural planning efforts in Louisiana (see also page 78 for further discussion on joint projects with the parish);³⁷
- leverage funding from other sources to address mutual needs, thereby augmenting the limited resources of both the parish and the heritage area;
- develop an intergovernmental partnership agreement involving both entities, among others. (See option D.5 below.)

Option D.3. Strengthen the heritage area’s partnership with the state of Louisiana

Cane River’s partnership with the state can be characterized as partially developed at this point, and study participants have described the lack of clear, consistent state support as a significant impediment to greater progress. Evidence from other national heritage areas suggests that a strong, “anchoring” connection with a lead state agency can be invaluable in advancing an integrated vision for heritage conservation and development.

As discussed in chapter 5, a number of existing factors provide a platform for building a stronger, more synergistic partnership, including the constructive relationships between the heritage area and some branches of state government, the legislative appropriation in the 2008 budget, and the alignment with current statewide priorities as expressed in the CRT plan, “Louisiana Rebirth.” Building from this base, there are many possible actions that could strengthen the heritage area–state partnership, such as:

- establish CRT as the official lead state agency in the Cane River partner network;
- create a designated seat for CRT on the commission (or its successor);³⁸
- seek opportunities to pursue specific collaborations that meet the needs or goals of both partners (e.g., linking with CRT statewide

initiatives related to Creole and African American heritage, development of a Louisiana film and literature “trail” and birding “trail”);

- pursue the creation of a state-level heritage area program within CRT, which could provide for more stable state support to Cane River and Atchafalaya state and national heritage areas, and similar initiatives statewide;
- build ties with key staff in other state agencies and seek opportunities to pursue need-based collaboration;³⁹
- build closer relationships with the governor and the legislature, using opportunities provided by the transitions in key leaders on both sides (i.e., the newly elected governor and legislators from the area, and Cane River’s new executive director and commission appointees in 2008);
- establish an intergovernmental partnership agreement. (See option D.5 below.)

Option D.4. Maintain and enhance the heritage area’s strong partnership with the National Park Service

The heritage area’s relationship with the NPS is well developed in many respects, anchored by the close, mutually beneficial partnership with Cane River Creole National Historical Park. Indeed, the strength of this local partnership has clearly been one of the dominant reasons for the heritage area’s success to date, and is notable relative to NPS’s involvement in other national heritage areas.

As with the heritage area’s partnership with the city of Natchitoches, perhaps the biggest challenge for the NPS relationship going forward is to sustain the synergy that has existed between the heritage area and the park over the last several years in the face of changes in personnel, priorities, resources, and other factors over time. Overcoming that challenge will undoubtedly hinge in large part on the individuals involved, but there may be other ways that the NPS’s vital involvement in and support for the heritage area could be further strengthened and solidified.

One possible approach would be to seek additional staff capacity to enable the national park to provide broader assistance to the community and to heritage area partners. This could include additional staff and funding support for interpretive

³⁷ Further information on the Center for Planning Excellence is available at www.planningexcellence.org/about.

³⁸ As discussed in option C.2, whether accomplished by adding a new commission seat or specifying that the governor’s discretionary seat be filled by a CRT representative, it would be desirable for the CRT representative to provide continuity over time and be well-grounded in CRT’s responsibilities and activities that are most relevant to Cane River’s mission.

³⁹ State agencies that offer potential opportunities for such collaboration include Louisiana Economic Development, the Department of Transportation and Development, Department of Agriculture, Department of Environmental Quality, Department of Education, Endowment for the Humanities, Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Secretary of State (for any area museums under its purview), and Red River Waterway Commission. (See option E.2 for further discussion.)

and educational programs, hands-on technical assistance, and/or operational assistance. The park appears to have much of the authority it needs to do this from its existing legislation, but it does not appear to have sufficient capacity to provide the amount of assistance that study participants indicated would be desirable.⁴⁰ However, in considering these possibilities, it is important to note that study participants emphasized the need to avoid creating an overdependence on the park or diminishing the funding or capacity for the heritage area.

A second possible approach would be to solidify the heritage area's relationship with and support from the NPS's Southeast Region and Washington offices. Study participants suggested a variety of possible actions, such as:

- seek more frequent (at least annual) dialogue between the heritage area and NPS regional leaders, through existing opportunities such as the regional superintendents' conferences and/or separate one-on-one meetings;
- bring Cane River (and other national heritage areas) more closely into NPS decision making on key issues such as budget allocations;
- seek opportunities for technical assistance and other support to the heritage area through relevant NPS programs such as the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program and the Conservation Study Institute;
- conduct occasional exchanges between heritage area and NPS staffs to help foster mutual understanding of each other's needs, skills, and contexts;
- explore opportunities in which the experience and expertise of Cane River partners can inform NPS work regionally and nationally, e.g., in partnership-based activities and achieving meaningful conservation of lived-in landscapes;
- consider other possible ways of providing additional NPS staff support from the regional and national levels to Cane River and other national heritage areas in the Southeast Region; for instance, study participants suggested the possibility of the NPS establishing a full-time national heritage area coordinator for the region (like the position that currently exists in the Northeast Region), noting that such a position would be an appropriate use of the annual fee that the regional office has retained in years past from the national heritage areas within its jurisdiction.⁴¹

Option D.5. Develop an intergovernmental partnership agreement

To further strengthen relationships with its key governmental partners, the commission could initiate a written partnership agreement or memorandum of understanding that would bind those partners (and potentially others) together more formally. The purpose of such an agreement would be to help solidify relationships and institutionalize the commitment of key governmental partners to participate in the heritage area initiative. The document would be a broad, philosophical statement of shared goals and a mutual commitment to work together in advancing heritage area purposes, and need not be overly long or detailed. It could also identify the roles and responsibilities of the participating entities in helping to support the initiative.

Core signatories to the agreement would ideally include the entities representing each level of government in the Cane River partner network:

- the city of Natchitoches (through the mayor or city council)
- Natchitoches Parish (through the police jury)
- the state of Louisiana (through either the governor, lieutenant governor, or CRT)
- the National Park Service (presumably through Cane River Creole National Historical Park)
- the Cane River National Heritage Area Commission (or its successor)

Other important agencies and commissions from various levels of government could also be invited to join the agreement. Although each additional entity could make the agreement more powerful, it would add a layer of logistical and potentially substantive complexity and would require a significant investment of time and energy by the commission and its staff, even with the core participants alone. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that the various parties would all agree to participate, or that the agreement would not become watered down by the time it was completed.

On the other hand, getting the key entities to sign on would represent a significant expression of support for the heritage area, and could help to make their respective involvement more resilient to political change. The agreement could also be a powerful tool for leveraging further political support over time. Perhaps most fundamentally, the process of developing and building support

⁴⁰ Providing operational assistance to partners outside the park's boundaries could require broader authority. Cuyahoga Valley National Park offers an example in which NPS has this type of authority within the context of a surrounding national heritage area (Ohio and Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor).

⁴¹ This fee was not levied in fiscal year 2007.

for the agreement would provide a new opportunity for dialogue and relationship-building, especially with those key governmental partners who have not yet been fully involved.

E. Funding and Other Forms of Support

Aside from the future management entity, the other major question raised by the approaching sunset of federal authorization relates to funding and whether federal appropriations for Cane River operations and programming will continue. Working with study participants, the project team identified two primary options related to funding and other forms of support.

Option E.1. Pursue continued federal funding through reauthorizing legislation

This option would permit continued annual appropriations to the heritage area through the NPS Heritage Partnership Programs budget. Such continued federal funding could be authorized for a limited period (e.g., an additional ten years), or theoretically could be made permanent (although this has not occurred at any national heritage area to date).

As has been the case since the heritage area began receiving direct federal appropriations in 2000, this funding would likely provide core support for ongoing operations and programming at least in the short term, since other sources of comparable funding have not yet been secured. While there has been recent progress in obtaining greater support (e.g., the state legislature's appropriation of \$110,000 in the 2008 budget) and there are opportunities for expanding this in the future (see option E.2 below), it appears unlikely that other sources would meet the heritage area's funding needs in the next few years if annual federal appropriations are not renewed.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the current pressures on federal budgets both generally and within HPP, as well as the ongoing national policy dialogue about the nature and duration of the federal government's role in national heritage areas. These are clearly important factors in the potential reauthorization of federal support for the heritage area.

Option E.2. Continue pursuing support from a broad mix of other sources, and seek new opportunities to diversify and stabilize the heritage area's funding base

Building on the initiative's record of support from diverse sources (see page 29), this option

recognizes the need to reduce reliance on federal appropriations and increase the support contributed by core partners and others. This option would enhance the initiative's ability and capacity to achieve its mission, and would increase its resiliency and durability over time.

Study participants and the project team identified a number of opportunities to enhance Cane River's funding and other types of support. Some of these sources have supported the heritage area's efforts in the past and hold promise for additional support in the future, while others are yet untapped by the commission. The study team did not have the charge or the capacity to explore these ideas in depth, but compiled them to facilitate further consideration. These opportunities have not been evaluated for potential significance, priority, or viability, and they are not presented in any particular order relative to these considerations.

Possible opportunities for further federal support include:

- **Funding and other assistance from individual agencies for relevant heritage area projects and activities**
 - Federal Lands Highways Program (www.fhwa.dot.gov/flh/index.htm), for road and other transportation-related initiatives in or near Cane River Creole National Historical Park
 - Small Business Administration (www.sba.gov/), for branding and marketing initiatives related to local products and support for other heritage-based businesses
 - Department of Agriculture (www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usdahome), for branding and marketing initiatives of local agricultural products
 - Environmental Protection Agency (www.epa.gov/), for activities focused on environmental quality and restoration (such as the St. Matthews School clean-up, for which EPA recently granted \$198,000)
 - Land and Water Conservation Fund (www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/lwcf/), for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities
 - National Endowment for the Humanities (www.neh.gov/), for initiatives related to history, cultural anthropology, folklore, ethnic studies, etc.

Possible opportunities for further state support include:

Cotton was the cash crop that brought wealth to the Cane River region. It remained the primary crop from the late eighteenth century to the late twentieth century.



Philip Gould

- **Annual appropriation from the state legislature**

This would build on the legislature’s fiscal year 2008 appropriation to the heritage area and would involve seeking ongoing support for both programming and operations. Future state appropriations to Cane River could come through direct appropriations, or possibly through a state-level heritage area program if one were established by the legislature (see option D.3).

(www.lded.state.la.us/), for community development, branding, and other similar initiatives

- Endowment for the Humanities (www.leh.org/html/aboutus.html), for activities related to the fields mentioned above in the discussion of the National Endowment for the Humanities

Possible opportunities for further local support include:

- **Funding and other assistance from individual agencies for relevant heritage area projects and activities**⁴²

- Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism (www.crt.state.la.us/), for activities related to historic preservation, tourism promotion, outdoor recreation, heritage education, the arts, etc.
- Department of Transportation and Development (www.dotd.state.la.us/), for scenic byways and transportation enhancements such as roadside pull-offs, bike routes, and the planned visitor center (and as illustrated by the \$274,000 granted in 2006 for the depot project in Natchitoches)
- Economic Development Department

- **Existing local revenue streams**

Given the benefits that the heritage area provides to the region, a case could be made for the local community to provide direct financial support to the heritage area initiative. This contribution could be funded from such sources as a small additional increment to the area’s hotel/motel tax, or allocation of a small percentage of the property tax.⁴³

- **Possible new local revenue streams**

A local funding pool for the heritage area could be created by establishing a new fee on developments or property transfers within the heritage area.⁴⁴

⁴² As discussed in option D.3, access to these types of opportunities could be enhanced by the development of strong working relationships with key staff from the relevant agencies and by focusing on collaborations driven by the needs of the heritage area and its partners.

⁴³ Other entities active in the Cane River region currently receive funding from the hotel/motel tax. These include the Natchitoches Tourist Commission and the Natchitoches Historic District Development Commission.

⁴⁴ Further research would be needed to determine what level(s) of government (i.e., city, parish, and/or state) would need to authorize use of new or existing revenue streams to help support the heritage area.

Possible opportunities for further private sector support include:

- **Corporations**

Cane River participants identified a number of large corporations with a significant presence in and/or connection to the Cane River region that could be worth approaching for support. These include Weyerhaeuser, Boise Cascade, Alliance Compressors, Pilgrim's Pride, and Archer Daniels Midland.

- **Foundations**

While there is not the same density of charitable foundations in northwest Louisiana as in other parts of the country, study participants identified several foundations providing support to local initiatives that have a connection to Cane River's mission. These include the Rapides Foundation in Alexandria, Louisiana (www.rapidesfoundation.org/site.php); the National Park Foundation's African American Experience Fund (www.aaexperience.org/); the Foundation for the Mid South (<http://www.fndmidsouth.org/>); and the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe's Economic Development Corporation, Marksville, Louisiana (http://www.tunicabiloxi.org/economic_development_corporation.php).

- **Revenue generation through a nonprofit operating partner or friends group**

As discussed in option C.6.b, a nonprofit operating partner could provide better access to certain sources of revenue, such as charitable contributions from individuals and businesses, workplace giving, and product sales (e.g., a Cane River National Heritage Area guidebook).

The possible funding sources listed above represent a mix of types. Many support specific projects and activities, while some could provide ongoing core support for heritage area operations (e.g., continued state appropriations, a small percentage contribution from existing or new local revenue sources, and private sector fundraising). None of these possibilities alone would provide the heritage area with a stable, predictable base of funding for the future, but some combination could significantly reduce the initiative's reliance on federal appropriations and enhance progress toward its vision for the Cane River region.

As with the other framework options presented in this chapter, it will be up to the commission, staff, and partners to consider these and other possible ideas and then determine the appropriate mix to pursue in light of Cane River's unique context and circumstances.



Sonny Carter

Fishing along Cane River is one of many popular outdoor activities in the area's rivers, lakes, and forests.

Chapter 9

Other Options and Opportunities for the Future

In addition to the framework options presented in the previous chapter, the study team identified other options and opportunities for enhancing and sustaining the Cane River partnership system, grouped in three categories:

- investment in programs
- investment in outreach and enhancing partnerships
- investment in operations

As with the framework options, these options were developed from several complementary streams of information: conversations with study participants, reflection on both the challenges facing the heritage area initiative (identified in chapters 5 and 6) and the critical ingredients for the future (described in chapter 7), and consideration of approaches used in other national heritage areas and similar initiatives. The study team is not recommending specific options; instead, it is presenting an array of ideas for consideration by the commission and its partners. The team acknowledges that the commission and staff may already be working in some of these areas. Many of the options and opportunities are interrelated, so some combination may best address the needs of the heritage area. Finally, decisions made among the options by the commission may require trade-offs in terms of the allocation of limited staff and financial resources.

A. Investment in Programs

Although the commission and its partners have made considerable progress toward implementing the management plan, work remains, some of it with significant associated challenges. In addition, as the heritage area and its programs have matured, the opportunities for investment in programs have shifted. This is in part because the “view” has changed in light of what has been accomplished, and in part because the commission, its partners, and the Cane River partnership system as a whole have developed enhanced capacity and competencies. Some of the options below respond to the significant challenges that remain and some to new opportunities that have emerged, both of which categories are important to future success.

Option A.1. Develop a long-term strategy and tools for cultural landscape stewardship
Study participants repeatedly identified the

need to conserve the character of Cane River’s nationally significant landscapes as the largest, near-term challenge facing the commission and its partners. The rural communities and agricultural landscapes on both sides of the river provide an important visual and historical context for the heritage area’s stories and for the historic buildings that have benefited from considerable financial investment by the commission and its partners. The management plan implementation strategy identifies the importance of cultural landscape protection, and the commission and staff have taken steps to address this over the last several years. These include expanding the focus of the competitive grants program to include landscape conservation, encouraging compatible design of the entrance to Lambre Gin Estates across from the national park’s Oakland Plantation unit, and completing the Cane River cultural landscape guide, “Finding Common Ground.”

With threats to the integrity of the downriver cultural landscape increasing, a long-term conservation strategy is needed before the landscape is compromised irreparably and the context for key stories and historic structures is diminished or lost entirely. Moreover, developing such a strategy offers an opportunity for realigning relevant partners in a more integrated way to help address this pressing issue.

There are a number of steps that the commission can consider to address this land use challenge:

- **Partner with an existing land trust from outside the region to conserve important landscapes in the short term, and establish local land trust capacity over the long term**
Priority landscapes for conservation could include agricultural land, frontage along Cane River, key “viewsheds” for significant historic sites, and other open space. With no existing local organization available to work with landowners on voluntary land conservation approaches, it appears necessary to seek assistance from an established group from outside the area. Help could come from national land conservation groups with regional offices. Since all of the following organizations have distinct niches in land conservation, their involvement may depend on the character of the land and its resources, the project being considered (some ideas

follow), and potential uses of the land as envisioned by the landowner:

- The Conservation Fund (<http://www.conservationfund.org/southeast>);
- American Farmland Trust (<http://www.farmland.org/programs/protection/default.asp>);
- Trust for Public Land (http://www.tpl.org/tier2_kad.cfm?folder_id=3129);
- The Nature Conservancy (<http://www.nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/louisiana/>).

In addition, the Land Trust Alliance could be of assistance in developing local capacity over the long term (<http://www.landtrustalliance.org/aboutus/index.html>). The alliance sponsors national and regional conferences and training sessions on all aspects of land trust work, which could help the commission and key partners learn about developing local capacity.

- **Offer workshops for landowners on conservation options**

Workshops could provide information on the importance and benefits of conserving the cultural landscapes of the Cane River region, as well as on various voluntary methods of conserving land and what it means for the landowner. This option could be pursued in collaboration with one or more of the national land conservation organizations mentioned above.

- **Identify a supportive landowner with a high priority parcel who will participate in a pilot conservation easement project**

Locating a willing landowner who is open to considering the donation or sale of a conservation easement could provide leverage in engaging one of the organizations listed above. Such a project could be a potential outcome of a landowner workshop.

- **Work with the parish and/or the city to preserve parks, open space, and public access downriver**

Efforts to expand or enhance regional tourism and recreational opportunities (both land- and water-based) should be integrated with a long-term land conservation strategy. Being proactive in this regard could help to ensure that infrastructure development (e.g., picnic areas, public access to the river, trails or bike paths) occurs in a manner and location that is sensitive to the cultural landscape

values and overall quality of life, and benefits local residents along with visitors. Potential sources of project funds and/or technical assistance include:

- The state of Louisiana, especially federal grants administered by CRT. One such federal grant comes from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which provides funds to municipalities, counties, and recreation districts to acquire or develop property for public recreational purposes.⁴⁵ A 50-percent local match is required (<http://www.crt.state.la.us/parks/ioutdoorrec.aspx>). For other potential grant programs, see <http://www.crt.state.la.us/DocumentArchive/grants/grantprogramsOLG-dcrt20071204.pdf> and <http://www.crt.state.la.us/legislativeinitiatives/pdf/2007federal/smartgrowthopenspace.pdf>.
- The NPS Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program, which provides technical assistance to community groups and government agencies on specific projects to conserve rivers, develop trails, and preserve open space (<http://www.nps.gov/nrcr/programs/rtca/index.htm>).

- **Partner with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to expand the interests of the Red River National Wildlife Refuge in the heritage area**

The refuge, established in 2002, has identified four focus areas for land acquisition, one of which lies within the heritage area along the lower Cane River. The refuge currently manages 600 acres of agricultural land used by migrating birds and waterfowl along the river. Partnering with the refuge and its “friends” group, the Red River Refuge Alliance (www.fws.gov/southeast/redriver and www.redriverrefugealliance.org), could serve the interests of both the refuge and the heritage area.

- **Cultivate broader understanding and appreciation of the significance of the region’s resources among developers**

The commission could build on its work to date (e.g., the “Finding Common Ground” booklet) by proactively meeting with developers and related stakeholders (e.g., parish planning and zoning commission) to explain the significance of the cultural landscape, available resources, and the benefits of development that is done with an eye to protecting the cultural landscape. Tools (e.g., an informative DVD with case studies, a speakers’ bureau)

⁴⁵ See also page 73 for more information on this federal program, which is overseen by the NPS.

could be developed to educate developers and the public about the importance of the cultural landscape.

- **Better integrate “bricks-and-mortar” historic preservation with broader conservation and stewardship of Cane River cultural landscapes**

The Cane River region has a long and impressive tradition of historic preservation focused largely on historic structures. Although the commission understands the necessity of complementing this with protection of associated cultural landscapes, this awareness may be less prevalent among others in the preservation community and the general public. It is essential to build a constituency for landscape protection as an important component of protecting cultural resources—in essence, broadening the “lens” beyond the built environment. The commission could work proactively to advance this perspective by bringing key people together to discuss the significance and value of cultural landscapes as the contextual backdrop to the historic structures.

Option A.2. Explore tools and approaches to guide and manage growth

It is important to have local planning and zoning policies that reflect the vision of the community at large and support conservation of the region’s key attributes. Tools available to communities to help reduce sprawl or development in sensitive

rural areas include conservation easements, scenic easements, purchase and/or transfer of development rights, and tax incentives to encourage farmland retention. “Smart growth” is an increasingly popular approach to development that balances community needs with economic, environmental, and health concerns. Among other things, smart growth guides development toward existing settlements and away from open space, scenic vistas, areas of critical environmental importance, and lands valued by the community. The commission could take a number of steps toward guiding growth to protect landscape character including:

- provide heritage area funding (and seek matching support) for the Natchitoches Parish Planning and Zoning Commission to conduct a heritage-area-wide land use study;
- pursue an “adjacent lands study” for Cane River Creole National Historical Park through the NPS;
- seek direct assistance from professional organizations with relevant expertise, such as:
 - Center for Planning Excellence, which provides services to Louisiana communities to build local capacity in community planning (www.planningexcellence.org/program/louisiana-community-planning.html);
 - American Institute of Architects, which offers technical assistance services that relate to community and regional character (www.aia.org/liv_dat);

Cane River, once the main channel of the Red River, winds through the region’s agricultural landscape. Development along the river is threatening to disrupt long-standing agricultural patterns such as that shown here.



Rolonda Teal

- Southern Rural Development Center, which operates in conjunction with state land grant universities and has initiatives and training programs focusing on rural agriculture and community assets (<http://srdc.msstate.edu/about/rdcenters.htm#>);
- American Farmland Trust, which offers communities the tools and expertise to balance growth while protecting productive farmland (<http://www.farmland.org/services/examples/default.asp#programs>).
- Gather information on effective planning and growth management from sources such as:
 - Smart Growth Network (www.smartgrowth.org/sgn) and Smart Growth Vermont (www.smartgrowthvermont.org)
 - American Planning Association (www.planning.org) and its Louisiana chapter (www.louisiana-apa.org)
 - American Society of Landscape Architects (<http://www.asla.org/nonmembers/publicrelations/factshtpr.htm>)
- Encourage participation by a Cane River team in the national program “Balancing Nature and Commerce in Communities That Neighbor Public Lands” (<http://conservationfund.org/node/458>).⁴⁶

Option A.3. Examine models and tools to strengthen existing businesses and foster new economic development that is compatible with heritage assets

Economic development can happen in a way that is compatible with maintaining resource authenticity and conserving important landscape features and character, but this rarely happens without the involvement of citizens who value the resources at risk. Economic strategies that support the communities and cultural landscapes downriver could be employed:

- **Develop a Cane River “brand” that creates an identity for local products**
A Cane River brand could be created for products that are associated with the Cane River area, recognized for their socially and environmentally responsible production, and/or related to the heritage area’s mission. A Conservation Study Institute publication, *Stewardship Begins with People: An Atlas of Places, People, and Handmade Products*,

provides examples of nationally designated areas that have developed products that help preserve traditional land uses and cultural landscapes.⁴⁷ For example, Cuyahoga Valley National Park in Ohio has established the Cuyahoga Countryside Initiative to advance private, economically viable, and environmentally friendly approaches to agricultural practices on land within the park that had traditionally been farmland. The initiative, a partnership between the national park, a non-profit organization, and area farmers, is “developing a network of sustainable farms, value-added strategies, and new markets for their products.”⁴⁸ While the initiative takes place on publicly owned land, many of the ideas could be adapted to the Cane River region. The necessary vision, leadership, and ability to bring people together around such ideas can all be provided by the commission.

- **Foster compatible and sustainable agricultural efforts that support the local resource-based economy**
Supporting local production through initiatives such as community supported agriculture (CSA) and farmers’ markets helps to keep agricultural land in use.⁴⁹ The impetus for initiating demonstration CSA farming might lie in a paragraph of Cane River Creole National Historical Park’s general management plan and environmental impact statement, which refers to returning some of the [federal] acreage to agriculture, either for demonstration purposes or for lease.⁵⁰
- **Support local, value-added products that are high-quality, produced in a manner consistent with conservation goals, and associated with place**
This step could be taken in addition to establishing a specific Cane River “brand” (or only in the short term, until the brand is established). The heritage area initiative could help in various ways, such as facilitating the flow of ideas and information, providing marketing and business development assistance, or offering low-interest loans for start-up enterprises. Examples of existing local products associated with place include Cane River basketry, Cane River pecans, and the cards and books sold at Melrose Plantation displaying Clementine Hunter’s artwork.

⁴⁶The Conservation Study Institute is a partner, along with The Conservation Fund and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in this national program.

⁴⁷ Available from the Conservation Study Institute by emailing stewardship@nps.gov.

⁴⁸ For more information, go to <http://www.nps.gov/archive/cuva/management/countryside/countrysideinitiative.pdf>.

⁴⁹ For more on community supported agriculture, see <http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/csa/csadef.shtml>.

⁵⁰ Cane River Creole National Historical Park General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement, page 68.

Archeological research contributes to understanding the history of the heritage area and the people who have lived here over time. This excavation at Melrose Plantation was undertaken collaboratively with the University College London, Northwestern State University of Louisiana, National Center for Preservation Technology and Training, and Association for the Preservation of Historic Natchitoches.



Sonny Carter

Option A.4. Seek a multiple-property listing on the National Register of Historic Places for historic resources downriver

This option would focus attention on the array of cultural resources downriver (e.g., the cultural landscape, prehistoric through historic archeological resources, historic properties) and help to convey the integrated nature of Cane River’s heritage assets. The document produced for the nomination would be an important resource and contextual statement.

Option A.5. Support implementation of design guidelines for the Waterwell Road corridor

The commission and the city of Natchitoches partnered to develop these guidelines two years ago following annexation of the I-49 interchange and corridor by the city.

Option A.6. Capitalize on interpretive and marketing opportunities to connect Cane River stories more broadly

Opportunities exist to connect Cane River stories with initiatives beyond the region in ways that

could enhance tourism, broaden partnerships, and attract new audiences. Possibilities include collaborating with Atchafalaya National Heritage Area; linking with Creole initiatives elsewhere in Louisiana and beyond; highlighting the Cane River region’s Civil War and World War II heritages; and connecting with initiatives related to the El Camino Real de los Tejas National Historic Trail, the Louisiana African American Heritage Trail, and the development of French colonial heritage in Missouri. (See also the CRT statewide initiatives mentioned in chapter 8, option D.3.)

Option A.7. Participate in the establishment of a regional collections conservation center

This option would involve collaborating with Cane River Creole National Historical Park, the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training, and Northwestern State University. The result would be a facility to care for NSU’s Williamson Museum collection as well as the extensive historical collections received by the NPS with the Oakland and Magnolia Plantations.

Agricultural fields contribute to Cane River's special sense of place. On the right, Donald Balthazar rides along straight rows of young cotton.



Philip Gould

B. Investment in Outreach and Enhancing Partnerships

The commission works very effectively with diverse partners in carrying out the heritage area's purposes. However, with the natural ebb and flow of partner involvement in heritage area networks, frequent turnover in partner staff and volunteers, and new opportunities for partnerships, the commission might consider developing a strategic approach for ongoing partner engagement and outreach to ensure the strongest possible network. There are various options that would fit into such an approach.

Option B.1. Develop a strategy for building and sustaining relationships with key stakeholders who are not yet fully engaged

This could include preparing materials targeted to different interests to make a case for enhanced collaboration (i.e., explain the value the heritage area brings to the region and identify common objectives, mutual benefits of collaboration, and specific ideas for advancing shared concerns.) Key stakeholders not yet fully engaged in the heritage area initiative include:

- the Natchitoches Parish Police Jury and Natchitoches Parish Planning and Zoning Commission, both essential to addressing the challenges to the downriver landscapes (see

- chapter 8, option D.2 for more discussion);
- the African American community (recent progress provides a platform for enhancing relationships with this important partner group);
- the business community and others involved with community and economic development.

Option B.2. Develop a strategy for strengthening leadership skills and capacity in partner organizations

This option would build depth and resiliency in the partner network and help to cultivate the next generation of leaders. Seeking opportunities to enhance citizens' abilities to lead within their communities and organizations would complement the commission's project-related capacity building through the grants program. Some national heritage areas have developed their own leadership training programs.⁵¹ Partnering with the newly designated Atchafalaya National Heritage Area might provide an opportunity to develop specialized training because of the increased number of potential participants (and could also help to leverage the resources needed to initiate a training program). There may also be opportunities to develop specialized leadership training through NSU's heritage resources program or a specific heritage track within the following leadership development programs:

⁵¹ See Leadership Blackstone Valley at www.blackstonevalley.org/leadership.

- Community Development Works, offered through the Rapides Foundation (www.communitydevelopmentworks.org);
- Leadership Louisiana, a one-year leadership development program for emerging community leaders, offered by the Council for a Better Louisiana (www.cabl.org/leadership);
- Southern Rural Development Center's community leadership training programs, offered through state land grant universities in conjunction with the Pew Partnership for Civic Change's LeadershipPlenty® Institute (<http://srdc.msstate.edu/focusareas/civic/civic.htm> and www.pew-partnership.org/lpinstitute.html);
- Heritage Development Institute's training programs (both basic and advanced levels) for people working in heritage development, coordinated through the Alliance of National Heritage Areas and the Heritage Development Partnership (<http://www.heritagedevelopmentinstitute.org/home>).

Option B.3. Pursue closer partnership with Atchafalaya National Heritage Area

In addition to leadership training, numerous opportunities exist to work collaboratively with Atchafalaya, including efforts at both the state and federal levels that would benefit the two heritage areas (e.g., establishing a state program on heritage areas; coordinating efforts to enhance relationships with the NPS at the regional level and in Washington, D.C., as discussed in chapter 8, option D.4; and jointly cultivating relationships with Louisiana's congressional delegation). Closer to home, the two heritage areas could build peer relationships among members of their staffs, participate informally in each other's commission meetings and public events, arrange reciprocal site visits, and pursue joint programming opportunities in overlapping subject areas.

Option B.4. Further capitalize on the substantial federal presence in the Cane River region

The scale of the federal presence is unusual for a region of this size. Although some regional managers of the area's federal agencies meet periodically, there may be additional unrealized opportunities to provide (1) combined clout, resources, and expertise to address pressing challenges (e.g., landscape conservation), (2) closer coordination of services (with the heritage area serving as an umbrella for better integration), and (3) further opportunities to weave stories together at exhibits and in public materials.

Option B.5. Provide additional leadership for partnership opportunities related to recreational enhancements

Possible enhancements such as a bike path, walking trails, a greenway along the river corridor, and water-based recreation represent unrealized potential for both residents and visitors. Development of recreational opportunities would result in locations for interpretive kiosks to raise awareness of the heritage area and would broaden the community development potential for related services (e.g., food services downriver, bike and boat rental facilities, use of centralized transportation). (See chapter 8, option A.1 for discussion on refining the heritage area purposes, vision, and mission to include recreation.)

Option B.6. Provide additional leadership for partnership opportunities and activities related to conservation of natural resources and prime agricultural land

Although natural resource protection is included in the implementation program of the heritage area's management plan, this has not been a high priority for the commission to date. The attention now focused on landscape challenges raises a question about the need for closer attention to natural resources as an important landscape component. (See chapter 8, option A.1 for discussion on the framework option to broaden the heritage area purposes, vision, and mission in this regard.) This option could involve collaborating with local, state, and federal agencies and the private sector on initiatives related to these important resources. One possible joint initiative could be to conduct a natural heritage inventory within the heritage area boundary to identify the types, locations, and significance of natural communities and wildlife habitats.

Option B.7. Publicize research opportunities nationally to the academic and other research communities

This option could be pursued jointly with Northwestern State University, the Creole Heritage Center, and the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training. The research conducted to date on Cane River's heritage assets has added considerably to understanding of the interaction of cultures and traditions over time. No doubt much more can be learned.

Option B.8. Seek opportunities to work with others to engage more broadly with the general public

The experience at some national parks suggest that investing in opportunities to engage more broadly with the public can lead to greater

participation in heritage area activities.⁵² Also, initiatives led by others might offer an opportunity for the heritage area to involve people who might not otherwise be focused on the heritage area's core stories. Examples include Natchitoches's upcoming tricentennial in 2013–2014, and activities related to the development of the Louisiana State Museum, Natchitoches Events Center, Louisiana Hall of Fame, and the new downtown hotel complex.

C. Investment in Operations

There are steps the commission could take to improve heritage area operations and enhance its ability to govern effectively in a “networked” environment. (See page 59 for more discussion on “governing by network.”)

Option C.1. Initiate measures to facilitate a common understanding of commission roles and responsibilities on the part of commissioners and the organizations they represent

Study participants identified the need for commissioners to (1) have close ties to the organizations they are appointed to represent, (2) understand the roles and responsibilities of a commissioner, and (3) actively participate in commission meetings and initiatives. Steps that could be taken to address these concerns include:

- identify desired qualifications for potential commissioners and clarify expectations, roles, and responsibilities (including effectively representing the constituency on whose behalf they have been nominated and acting as an effective communication link) and convey this information to nominating bodies;
- provide a primer for commissioners and the organizations they represent that offers a general overview of “governing by network” and outlines the expectations, roles, and responsibilities of commissioners within this context;
- develop a strategy for ongoing education and engagement of all commissioners and proxies, which could include an orientation course; periodic refreshers on heritage area history, policies, and process; and annual visioning and work planning. This strategy should include a process for transferring the knowledge gained by commissioners to the organizations they represent.

Option C.2. Develop a strategy for dealing effectively with transitions

With inevitable changes in key partners, commissioners, and heritage area staff—and possibly a shift to a new management entity—it is critical to ensure both the smooth functioning of ongoing programs and partner relationships and the maintenance and transfer of institutional knowledge. Specific steps relevant to transitions in key leaders are to:

- maintain network functionality and understand the essential roles the management entity must continue to play as the primary network hub;
- model existing staff relationships that have been key to success;
- convene meetings both internally and with partners to discuss major transitions and minimize disruption to operations.

It is important to agree on a transparent approach to planning for and managing transitions so that incoming leaders have ready access to knowledge of the current situation (including prior commitments and agreements) as well as an understanding of the key issues, priorities, and opportunities. This report, for example, could be of use in upcoming leadership shifts.

Option C.3. Conduct periodic evaluation and visioning exercises to keep programs and operations fresh and relevant

With the heritage area constantly evolving and maturing, it is essential to use adaptive management (i.e., applying lessons learned to improve the partnership system) to maintain and enhance effectiveness. The commission could develop a process for periodically assessing programs and operations and deciding on actions based on how things have evolved. Such a process could include visioning sessions; review of the management plan, highlighting accomplishments and prioritizing needs and actions; and development of a short-term strategic plan to capitalize on unanticipated opportunities.

Option C.4. Develop a better system for tracking the impacts of the grants program and the leverage from grants and commission-initiated projects

Demonstrating leverage has become a measure of success that can be used in fundraising, but a tracking system that makes this information accessible is essential. Such a system could also document project impacts and outcomes of both the grants program and commission-initiated projects, which would also have fundraising

⁵² As an example, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy in San Francisco, a cooperating association for Golden Gate National Recreation Area, provides numerous volunteer opportunities through diverse park-related initiatives. See http://www.parksconservancy.org/our_work/index.asp.

value. One specific example highlights this need for documentation: the funding provided by the commission to the Creole Heritage Center between 2003 and 2007. These funds, which were provided for CHC operations and programs, represent a significant investment and the primary means by which the commission has invested in Creole-related projects. The commission funding has provided CHC with capacity it would not otherwise have had to advance initiatives contributing to the heritage area’s vision and mission. Without a mechanism for documenting the use of these funds and the resulting impacts, it has been difficult to estimate accurately the full extent of the commission’s accomplishments in the Creole community.

Option C.5. Depending on funding, consider expansion of staff capacity to meet wide-ranging demands

If funding is available, expanding capacity in the areas of development (i.e., fundraising) and

communications would help address the needs to expand and diversify funding sources and engage more broadly with the general public.

Option C.6. Change the structure of commission leadership to chair and vice chair

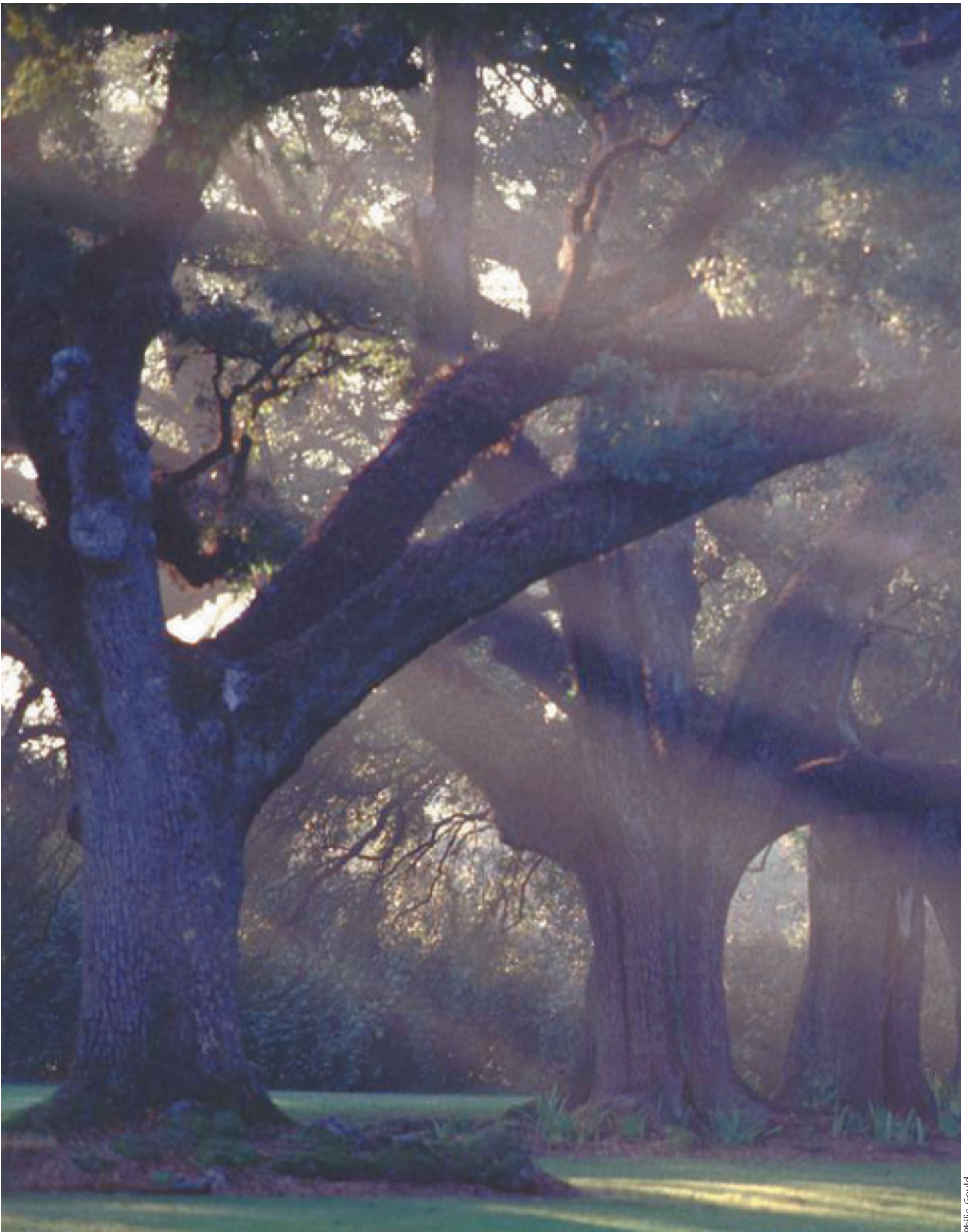
In order to ensure continued mobility in commission leadership, a number of study participants suggested that the co-chair arrangement be changed to chair and vice chair.

Option C.7. Update the NPS “special resource study” done prior to establishment of the heritage area and park in 1994

This would provide an opportunity to reevaluate the region’s heritage resources in light of both current circumstances and changes since the initial study. It could also allow for an assessment of broader theme-based linkages with Atchafalaya National Heritage Area, other NPS units, and other heritage-related initiatives.

The heritage area encourages cultural groups to uphold their traditions. Caddo artisans displayed baskets at the Cane River Green Market with support from grants to the heritage area from the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Forest Service.





Philip Gould

Oaklawn Plantation's oak allée is one of the longest in Louisiana. Live oaks such as these often mark the formal entrance to the main houses at plantations in the region.

Chapter 10

Closing Thoughts

The growth and evolution of the Cane River National Heritage Area initiative are clearly visible in its accomplishments and the progress made toward achieving its established purposes. Key milestones have included the completion of the management plan and other planning efforts (e.g., the interpretive plan); the identity and visibility achieved through the logo, signage, brochures, and other information; the careful relationship-building with a wide array of partners and the solid partnerships with key players such as Cane River Creole National Historical Park, the National Park Service generally, the city of Natchitoches, and Northwestern State University; and the numerous projects that have restored heritage infrastructure and helped to create a greater understanding and appreciation of the region's multicultural heritage. Together, these and other accomplishments have contributed to a solid foundation from which to view the future and consider next steps for the heritage area.

Much remains to be done to achieve the vision laid out in the heritage area's management plan, and there are significant challenges. The cultural landscapes that define the Cane River region's national significance and provide a living, visual context for its rich stories and important historic structures are threatened by development that is out of character and scale and jeopardizes landscape integrity. While relationships with the NPS and the city are strong, other organizations, institutions, and constituencies that are key to long-term success are not fully engaged in the heritage area partnership. Further investments are needed to build partner capacity and leadership skills in order to keep the network vibrant and strong. More secure, stable funding sources are needed to reduce the initiative's dependency on federal appropriations, increase the resiliency of the partner network, and enhance the ability of the initiative to achieve its purposes. In addition, there are contributions that the heritage area initiative can make within the realm of heritage tourism and development, including helping key actors to develop and embrace a

vision that fully integrates heritage assets into tourism opportunities and services. Heritage-based tourism can provide substantial benefits, but this approach requires that resource conservation and community development goals be defined in complementary, rather than mutually exclusive, terms.

This study and the approaching sunset of federal authorization and funding create an opportunity for the commission to think strategically about moving forward into the heritage area's next phase. Key considerations for the commission and its partners will include deciding what management structure will best position the heritage area to be successful over the long term; what actions will sustain a strong effective partner network; how to incorporate lessons learned into management practices and operations; how to secure sustainable funding; and what projects and programming will fully leverage the heritage area's partnership system.

There is much that can be learned from the experiences and accomplishments of the Cane River initiative. The strong, vibrant relationship that has been established with Cane River Creole National Historical Park demonstrates the mutual value in having a close association between a national park and a national heritage area. The synergy that has resulted from the heritage area's partnerships with the park and the city of Natchitoches demonstrates that these relationships are models for public-private partnerships. The careful building of trust and respectful relationships across multicultural groups, and the success in working together through difficult subject matter, illustrate to a much broader audience the importance of addressing, not avoiding, such issues. Finally, the lessons learned at Cane River about what can be accomplished by approaching heritage conservation and development collaboratively are instructive not only to other national heritage areas but to others working in conservation and community-based initiatives across the nation and beyond.

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Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

Authorizing (or enabling) legislation: The law (Public Law 103-49) passed by Congress in 1994 that established Cane River National Heritage Area, the Cane River National Heritage Area Commission, and Cane River Creole National Historical Park, and set forth the purposes, scope, and authorities of each entity.

Cane River National Heritage Area Evaluation and Visioning Project: The technical assistance project conducted by the National Park Service Conservation Study Institute at the request of the Cane River National Heritage Area Commission to assess heritage area progress and accomplishments since 1994, evaluate how the heritage area works, and examine options and opportunities for the future.

Cane River partner: Any public or private organization, institution, agency, or individual that collaborates with the Cane River National Heritage Area Commission and staff on specific initiatives that help implement the management plan; includes both formal partners (i.e., those who collaborate through cooperative agreements) and informal partners (i.e., those who contribute to heritage area goals without a formal agreement).

Cane River partnership system: The overall array of components (e.g., federal designation, public funding), participants, and processes that interact as a system to make possible the accomplishments of the heritage area.

Commission: The federally appointed, representative body that coordinates the overall effort within the heritage area. Established in the 1994 enabling legislation, the commission is responsible for implementing the heritage area's management plan.

Federal reauthorizing legislation: Legislation introduced into the U.S. Congress to renew the federal authority and funding authorization for Cane River National Heritage Area, which are due to expire in August 2010. The legislation could also address other aspects of the heritage area framework, such as redesignating a management entity and changes to the boundary.

Guiding direction: The heritage area's purposes, as set forth in Public Law 103-49, and the subsequent vision and mission statements that together provide overall guidance for the work of the heritage area commission, staff, and partners.

Heritage area (or Cane River) initiative: The combined body of activities and projects undertaken to implement the management plan, together with the people and organizations that carry them out.

Heritage area framework: Collectively the commission, staff, partners, purpose, vision, geographic scope, and funding and other forms of support associated with the heritage area, as well as the authorities granted to the commission in Public Law 103-49 in order to carry out its mandate.

Heritage area management: The commission and the heritage area staff collectively.

Leverage: Used as a noun, the financial and nonfinancial investments committed to the heritage area initiative as a result of an initial investment of funds. Also used as a verb, in which case it refers to the process of obtaining financial or nonfinancial commitments to the heritage area initiative.

Management entity: The specific body authorized through federal legislation to carry out heritage area coordination and management (i.e., the commission at the present time), along with heritage area staff.

Management plan: The guiding document for the heritage area, completed in 2003 through a participatory process. Articulates a broad, integrated vision for the future of the heritage area, and includes an implementation program with actions to achieve this vision.

Partner network: The diverse array of public and private organizations and individuals that work with the commission to carry out activities and projects to achieve heritage area purposes.

Study participants: Denotes the partners, commissioners, staff, and other individuals knowledgeable about Cane River National Heritage Area who participated in the meetings, discussions, and interviews that were a part of this study.

Acronyms Used

APHN: Association for the Preservation of Historic Natchitoches
CHC: Creole Heritage Center
CRT: Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism
CRWC: Cane River Waterway Commission
DOTD: Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development
EPA: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
HABS/HAER/HALS: Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record/Historic American Landscapes Survey
HDDC: Natchitoches Historic District Development Commission
HPP: National Park Service Heritage Partnership Programs
NCPTT: National Park Service National Center for Preservation Technology and Training
NPS: National Park Service
NSU: Northwestern State University of Louisiana

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Association for the Preservation of Historic Natchitoches

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Steven Horton
Museum Contents, Inc.

Will James
Natchitoches Parish Police Jury

Betty Jones
Governor's appointee

Gloria Jones
Landowner

Victor Jones
Landowner

Randy LaCaze
Mayor's appointee

Jason Stagg
Local tourism and business

John Vandersypen
Cane River Waterway Commission

Edward Ward, Jr.
Black Heritage Committee

* Deceased

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Finally, the study team thanks Jessica Brown and colleagues at QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment for their assistance and advice and for reviewing this report. Many thanks also to our editor and designer.

The Cane River Evaluation and Visioning Project Study Team

The study process was a team activity: all members participated actively in study design, implementation, analysis, and report preparation. Within this overall approach, individual team members had lead responsibility for the following:

Philip B. Huffman (cooperator): description and analysis of the existing heritage area framework and the framework options

Daniel N. Laven (management assistant, Conservation Study Institute): national context, evaluation of the partnership system from the partner perspective, and description of critical ingredients

Nora J. Mitchell (director, Conservation Study Institute): project scope, regional coordination, financial management, and report review
Jacquelyn L. Tuxill (director of partnership programs, Conservation Study Institute, and cooperator): project management; background and context; documentation of accomplishments, investments, and leverage; other options and opportunities; and report coordination

Project Advisors

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Laura Soullière Gates (superintendent, Cane River Creole National Historical Park)

Nora J. Mitchell (director, Conservation Study Institute)
Nancy I.M. Morgan (former executive director, Cane River National Heritage Area)

Appendix A

Cane River National Heritage Area Evaluation and Visioning Project Methodology

In conducting the Cane River Evaluation and Visioning Project, the project team employed a range of methods, as discussed generally on page 6 of this report. The discussion below provides more details on the methods used to obtain the data reported in chapters 2.B, 4, 5, and 6.

1. Methods for Chapter 2.B

The historical narrative in chapter 2.B is based on interviews with four people selected in consultation with Cane River staff. They are representative of the diverse perspectives and experiences of organizations and individuals who played important roles in Cane River's formative years, including the National Park Service, U.S. Congress, and local leaders. The interviews were semi-structured and retrospective in nature, asking participants to identify and describe significant moments leading up to and immediately following the heritage area's designation by Congress in 1994. Although discussion topics were identified and shared with the interviewees beforehand, the questions varied according to the role played by each individual in the heritage area's formation. The discussions probed the chronology of events, the thinking at the time about conservation of the Cane River region, key factors that may have led to the designation, and participants' perspectives on the future of the heritage area.

2. Methods for Chapter 4

Chapter 4 documents the Cane River initiative's accomplishments as well as its investments and leverage. The study team used a three-step approach to assess progress as accurately as possible, while acknowledging some inherent limitations to a comprehensive evaluation (e.g., varied record-keeping on leverage over ten years of projects, and a lack of documentation on impacts of the commission's contributions to the Creole Heritage Center). It was not within the scope of this study to develop a methodology to account for such variations in investment and impact associated with actions by commission, staff, and partners.

The first step involved a compilation and analysis of projects undertaken between 1998 and 2007. With the assistance of Cane River staff, the study team compiled a project spreadsheet that contained the following information: (1) whether the project was commission-initiated or a partner project (i.e., part of the competitive grants program), (2) project purpose(s), (3) geographic scope, (4) cultural groups addressed, (5) commission investment (i.e., financial, nonfinancial, or both), (6) leverage (financial and/or nonfinancial) and source, (7) main partners, (8) source of incoming grant (where applicable), (9) project status (i.e., complete, underway, ongoing), and (10) beginning and completion dates for the project. In the case of a commission financial investment, the dollar amount was listed; a nonfinancial investment was not quantified. In the case of financial leverage, the dollar amount was listed; nonfinancial leverage was quantified (e.g., the dollar value of contributed partner/volunteer time) when records permitted. A general cross-check of the projects with the implementation strategy in the management plan allowed a general assessment of progress across the 11 implementation categories. Documents that informed this inventory and assessment included the heritage area's management plan, annual reports, project reports, and financial documents.

The study team aggregated the projects according to whether they were commission-initiated or part of the competitive grants program, which allowed a comparison of the two investment tracks in the analyses described below. The study team examined the aggregated data in three ways—by project purpose, geography, and cultural group affiliation:

- Project purposes were tallied (i.e., interpretation and education, documentation, historic preservation, visitor services, marketing, land conservation, transportation, and administration), counting each purpose separately in a multipurpose project. A table was constructed to show the overall tally of the grants program projects and the commission projects. A spreadsheet was also constructed that tallied single-purpose projects, projects with two purposes, and projects with three purposes. This spreadsheet allowed the study team to assess the increase in multipurpose projects over time and by purpose.
- Projects were sorted by geography (i.e., area-wide, downriver, Natchitoches, and satellite areas), which allowed the study team to assess the distribution of investment across geography over time as well as by cultural affiliation and purpose.
- Projects were sorted by cultural group affiliation (i.e., African American, American, American Indian, Creole, French, Spanish, mixed groups of two or more cultural affiliations, and all groups), which allowed the study team to assess the distribution of investment across cultural groups over time as well as by geography and purpose.

In step two, to better understand how the commission and staff have approached their work and their relationships with partners as well as how their methods have evolved over time, the study team selected two projects and one program to examine in greater depth. The team also developed project narratives to highlight the heritage area's work. The Cane River staff assisted with selecting the projects and program and developing the narratives included in chapter 4, section B.

Finally, to evaluate NPS investment and the leverage achieved by the heritage area initiative, the study team analyzed the data contained in pertinent sections of the project spreadsheet and gathered additional information from the staff and annual reports. The team reviewed the overall financial investments from the NPS (i.e., through Heritage Partnership Programs and Cane River Creole National Historical Park, including funds that the park made available to the heritage area through an interagency agreement). It also assessed the matching funds and nonfinancial support leveraged for projects and programs since 1998. With the data aggregated according to commission projects and grants projects, the study team was able to compare the leverage achieved through both investment tracks.

3. Methods for Chapter 5

In analyzing the Cane River initiative's existing framework, the study team drew on three primary sources of information. First, team members gained an understanding of the framework through review of key documents (e.g., authorizing legislation, management plan, and commission bylaws). Second, team members held semi-structured conversations with individual commissioners, senior heritage area staff, and key partners. Participants in these conversations were selected in consultation with staff. The conversations addressed a range of relevant topics related to the five components of the framework, such as the role and function of the commission, the involvement of key partners, and the geographic and thematic scope of the initiative. Third, during several official meetings of the commission and its options committee, the team gathered input on aspects of the framework.

The study team then analyzed the data obtained through these efforts to identify what appeared to be the most significant strengths and challenges of the heritage area framework. Preliminary findings were refined through an iterative process of discussion and further analysis, both within the team and through additional dialogue with commissioners and Cane River staff. Throughout this process, the team also drew upon its knowledge of

management structures from other national heritage areas and partnership initiatives as a comparative backdrop for analysis.

4. Methods for Chapter 6

The study team employed a “process evaluation” approach for the research described in chapter 6. Process evaluation refers to a specific type of evaluation research designed to examine the ways in which complex programs function.¹ Such studies are particularly helpful in facilitating policy learning and adaptive management (i.e., helping programs improve their operations), and generally represent good examples of research informing management.² This study also builds on previous evaluation research conducted at other national heritage areas.³

a. Research methods

The research described in this chapter was conducted in two stages. The first stage was designed to identify what Cane River partners perceived as the strengths and challenges of the current partnership system. Between January and February 2006, a total of thirty open-ended interviews with key partners were conducted, of which twenty-nine were in person and one was by telephone. The complexity of the Cane River initiative and the partner network suggested that a purposeful sampling design would be most appropriate, and care was taken to invite a diversity of heritage area partners to participate.⁴ With the consent of each respondent, all interviews were recorded and transcribed (see consent form and interview protocol in sections b and c that follow). The interviews lasted approximately one hour each and yielded transcripts ranging from 8 to 30 pages. Data were analyzed using a content analysis for themes and patterns across the 30 respondents.⁵ Collectively, these themes and patterns identified the strengths and challenges that study participants associate with the current Cane River partnership system. This stage of research was very much an iterative process involving stakeholders and the study team.⁶

The second stage was designed to better understand the structure of the Cane River partnership system. Along with data obtained from the 30 open-ended interviews, an additional 27 partners were asked only the fourth question from the interview protocol (see section c below). These interviews were conducted by telephone and lasted approximately 15 minutes. Once coded, these data were analyzed using a quantitative form of “social network analysis,” a method designed to understand relationships between organizations and/or individuals. This second interview approach was applied because there is increasing interest in using network theory and analysis in evaluations of community-based, collaborative programs.⁷ Study findings from this analysis informed the description of strengths and challenges associated with the Cane River partnership system.

b. Consent form

At the beginning of each interview, the consent form below was read to the study participant, and permission to conduct and record the interview was obtained.

CANE RIVER NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA STUDY PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

At the request of the Cane River National Heritage Area Commission, the National Park Service is conducting a study to learn more about Cane River National Heritage Area. Cane River National Heritage Area is

affiliated with the National Park Service, and the purpose of this study is to learn how Cane River National Heritage Area actually works and document the impact of the heritage area on the Cane River region. Study findings will be used to inform future management of the heritage area as well as contribute to development of the National Park Service’s Heritage Areas Program.

As a result of your experience with the heritage area, you are in a unique position to describe what the program does and how it affects organizations like yours within the region. And that’s what the interview is about: your experiences with Cane River National Heritage Area and your thoughts about your experiences.

A total of 65 people will be interviewed and these responses will be combined for the study. No individual or organization names will appear in the written report or presentations. If you have any questions during the interview, please feel free to ask. Or, if there’s anything you do not wish to answer, just say so. Again, the purpose of the interview is to get your insights into how the program operates and how it affects organizations in this region.

Finally, I am requesting your permission to record the interview. It is very important to capture your words exactly as you say them. The interview will remain confidential—your name and/or your organization will be removed from the transcript and replaced by a numbered code that will be kept in a confidential manner and locked in a secure place. Once the interview has been transcribed, the tapes will be destroyed. You will also receive a draft copy of the study findings for your review. Furthermore, the Paperwork Reduction Act requires approval of all federal government surveys by the Office of Management and Budget. This survey has been approved under this Act. The Office of Management and Budget control number and expiration date are available at your request. Additional information about this survey and its approval is available at your request. The interview will last about 40 minutes and, again, all of your answers are voluntary and confidential. If at any time during the interview you would like me to turn the tape off, please let me know and I will do so. May I use the tape recorder?*

Any questions before we begin?

*OMB Approval Number: OMB Approval #1024-0224 (NPS #06-004)

Expiration Date: 6/30/06

Person Collecting and Analyzing Information:

Robert Manning/Daniel Laven
351 Aiken Center
University of Vermont
Burlington, VT 05405
(802) 656-3095

16 U.S.C. 1a-7 authorizes collection of this information. This information will be used by park managers to better serve the public. Response to this request is voluntary. No action may be taken against you for refusing to supply the information requested. No personal data will be recorded. You may direct comments on the number of minutes required to respond, or on any other aspect of this survey to:

¹ Carol Weiss, *Evaluation*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998).

² Darlene Russ-Eft and Hallie Preskill, *Evaluation in Organizations: A Systematic Approach to Enhancing Learning, Performance, and Change* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, 2001).

³ Jacquelyn L. Tuxill, et al., *Reflecting on the Past, Looking to the Future* (Woodstock, VT: Conservation Study Institute, 2005) and Suzanne E. Copping, et al., *Connecting Stories, Landscapes, and People: Exploring the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor Partnership* (Woodstock, VT: Conservation Study Institute, 2006).

⁴ Matthew Miles and Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Source Book* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994).

⁵ Michael Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002).

⁶ Michael Patton, *Utilization-focused Evaluation: The New Century Text* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997).

⁷ Maryann M. Durland and Kimberly A. Fredericks, eds., “Social Network Analysis in Program Evaluation,” *New Directions for Evaluation* 107 (Fall 2005).

Study Participant Signature _____

Date _____

c. Interview protocol

The protocol below was used to guide the interviews of the study participants.

HERITAGE AREA STUDY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The first part of this interview is designed to help me learn about your current relationship with Cane River National Heritage Area programs.

1. In what ways are you now connected, or do you currently work with the Cane River National Heritage Area?

2. How long have you been working with Cane River National Heritage Area?

3. In your view, what role(s) does Cane River National Heritage Area play in this relationship?

- (a) Provides funding directly?
- (b) Helps your organization to leverage funding from other sources?
- (c) Provides relevant information and good ideas?
- (d) Provides access to other potential partners (network conduit)?
- (e) Increases organizational capacity?
- (f) Provides additional credibility?
- (g) Role of leadership?
- (h). What other roles could be particularly helpful in the future?

4. Which other organizations, or people, do you work with in the region?

- (a). What do you get from this relationship? (content of relationship)
- (b) How strong is this relationship? (intensity)
- (c) Which direction do these resources flow? (flows and directionality)
- (d) How often do these exchanges take place? (frequency)
- (e). How has this relationship changed over time? (temporal change)

5. How has, if at all, your relationship with Cane River National Heritage Area impacted the way you work?

- (a) Creates a shared understanding of opportunities and challenges in the heritage area region?
- (b) Other unintended consequences? By unintended consequences, I am referring to impacts that you didn't expect or intend from this relationship. These can be either positive, negative, or neutral.

6. What formal, or informal, criteria do you use to evaluate the effectiveness of this relationship?

7. What factors influence you to continue to maintain this relationship?

8. What could Cane River National Heritage Area do to improve this relationship in the future?

The next series of questions will help me to understand how you/your organization function(s) in the Cane River region.

9. What are your organizational goals/mission?

10. What specific factors, if any, would increase the likelihood of achieving these goals? What specific factors would decrease the likelihood of achieving these goals?

11. How do you/your organization measure your effectiveness in achieving these goals?

This is the last section of the interview, and the questions are more general and reflective in nature. This is an opportunity for me to learn from you, in broad terms, about the impact of the Cane River National Heritage Area program in the region. Are you ready?

12. In your opinion, over the life of Cane River National Heritage Area (the last 7–10 years), what impact has it had on the following issues:

- (a) Conservation and restoration of natural, cultural, and historic resources?
- (b) Creation of heritage-based tourism and recreation opportunities and/or infrastructure?
- (c) Community development within the Natchitoches and Cane River region?
- (d) Created partnership opportunities?
- (e) Cultural conservation through interpretation and outreach concerning the history and living traditions of area cultural groups?

13. How, from your perspective, has the heritage area program and/or staff integrated these multiple goals?

14. How, if at all, does heritage area designation (state or federal) affect the way in which you work? For example, does this designation change your/your organization's strategic thinking or long-term planning? How does this designation change the way in which you/your organization prioritize(s)?

15. I'm interested in learning how various organizations in the Cane River region have been influenced by the concept of "heritage." By "heritage," I am referring to the history of this region and the cultures associated with that history, along with the living cultures here today. What role does "heritage" play in your work?

16. What is you/your organization's "vision" for the Cane River region in the future?

(a) What else, from your perspective, needs to be done in the region to achieve this vision?

17. What do you think the role of Cane River National Heritage Area should be in realizing that vision?

18. As we think about how to move forward with this work in the Cane River region, do you see any other organizations (existing or potential) that could play that role as or more effectively than the national heritage area?

19. In the future, which other people, or organizations, would you like to partner with in the Cane River region but have yet to do so?

20. In your opinion, what has prevented these partnerships from occurring thus far?

21. That covers everything I wanted to ask. Is there any additional information you would like to provide?

Thank you so much for your valuable time. I really appreciate it.

Appendix B

Cane River National Heritage Area Projects, 1998-2007

The chart that follows lists the projects and activities carried out by the heritage area initiative from 1998 through 2007. The projects are grouped by their primary purpose, using the eight purposes listed in chapter 4, table 4.1 (see page 22) although many focus on multiple purposes. The

chart also shows the geographic area and cultural group(s) addressed by the project and the year funded. Projects that were funded through the Cane River National Heritage Area Competitive Grants Program are shown in italics.

KEY

Purposes

A	Administration
D	Documentation
HP	Historic preservation
I&E	Interpretation and education
LC	Land conservation
M	Marketing
T	Transportation
V	Visitor services

Acronyms

CRNHA	Cane River National Heritage Area
GIS	Geographic Information System
HABS	Historic American Buildings Survey
HALS	Historic American Landscapes Survey
NSU	Northwestern State University of Louisiana

PROJECT	Project Purpose(s)	Geographic Scope	Cultural Groups	Year Funded
Administrative Projects				
Management Plan: Draft Plan/ Environmental Assessment	A	Area-wide	All groups	1998
Management Plan: Final Plan	A	Area-wide	All groups	1998
Management Plan: Executive Summary	A	Area-wide	All groups	2002
Management Plan: American Planning Association Planning Award for Outstanding Collaborative Planning Project	A	Area-wide	All groups	2003
Creole Center Operations and Project Assistance	A, D, I&E	Downriver	Creole	2003
Creole Center Operations and Project Assistance	A, D, I&E	Downriver	Creole	2004
Creole Center Operations and Project Assistance	A, D, I&E	Downriver	Creole	2005
Historical Administration Seminar	A, VS	Town	All groups	2005
Creole Center Operations and Project Assistance	A, D, I&E	Downriver	Creole	2006
Grantsmanship Training	A	Area-wide	All groups	2006
Conservation Study Institute: Program Assessment and Visioning Study	A	Area-wide	All groups	2006
Conservation Study Institute: Program Assessment and Visioning Study	A	Area-wide	All groups	2007
Creole Center Operations and Project Assistance	A, D, I&E	Downriver	Creole	2007
Documentation Projects				
<i>African American Oral History: "Elder Utterances: An African American Oral History Remembrance"</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Area-wide</i>	<i>African American</i>	<i>1999</i>
<i>Cane River Genealogy Study</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Downriver</i>	<i>Creole</i>	<i>2000</i>
African American Oral History: Afro-Natchitoches Parish History and Genealogy (Gwendolyn Midlo Hall Workshop)	D	Area-wide	African American	2001
<i>Surname Origins of Cane River Creole Families: Genealogy Study</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Downriver</i>	<i>Creole</i>	<i>2001</i>
Fort Jesup archaeology	D	Satellite	American	2001
HABS: CRNHA Architectural Documentation	D	Area-wide	French / American / African American	2001
GIS: Cane River Geographic Information System	D, LC	Area-wide	All groups	2002
HABS: Magnolia Plantation Architectural Documentation	D	Downriver	French / African American	2002
<i>Caddo Oral History</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Area-wide</i>	<i>American Indian</i>	<i>2002</i>
<i>African Diaspora Archaeology</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Downriver</i>	<i>Creole / African American</i>	<i>2002</i>
<i>History of the Catholic Cemetery</i>	<i>D, I&E</i>	<i>Town</i>	<i>French / American</i>	<i>2002</i>
<i>Translation of 18th-Century French Courthouse Records (Phase 1)</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Area-wide</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>2002</i>
<i>Translation of 18th-Century French Courthouse Records (Phase 2)</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Area-wide</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>2003</i>
St. Matthews School: Oral History Project	D, I&E	Downriver	African American	2003
<i>Documenting Vestigial French in Cane River</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Downriver</i>	<i>Creole</i>	<i>2003</i>
<i>Cane River Historic Documents</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Area-wide</i>	<i>All groups</i>	<i>2003</i>
<i>"Did Your Grandparents Ever Tell You" Interview Reels</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Area-wide</i>	<i>All groups</i>	<i>2003</i>
HALS: Briarwood—The Caroline Dormon Nature Preserve	D	Satellite	American	2003
<i>"Adaesaños - Our Culture Heritage and Traditions"</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Satellite</i>	<i>Spanish</i>	<i>2003</i>
<i>Digital Library of Adaesaños Spanish Recordings (Phase 1)</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Satellite</i>	<i>Spanish</i>	<i>2003</i>
<i>Digital Library of Adaesaños Spanish Recordings (Phase 2)</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Satellite</i>	<i>Spanish</i>	<i>2004</i>
HABS: Front Street Documentation	D	Town	All groups	2004
<i>"John Gideon Lewis, Jr."</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Town</i>	<i>African American</i>	<i>2004</i>
<i>Caddo Elders: Connecting the Past to the Present</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>Area-wide</i>	<i>American Indian</i>	<i>2004</i>
<i>Maiz to Maza: Maintaining the Traditional Method</i>	<i>D, I&E</i>	<i>Area-wide</i>	<i>Spanish / American Indian</i>	<i>2004</i>

PROJECT	Project Purpose(s)	Geographic Scope	Cultural Groups	Year Funded
HABS: Creole House Types	D	Area-wide	Creole / French	2005
HABS : Cherokee Plantation Documentation	D	Downriver	French / American	2005
Civil Rights Oral History Project	D, I&E	Area-wide	African American / Creole	2005
GIS: Geographic Information System Georeferencing	D, LC	Area-wide	All groups	2005
Historical Maps Project (Phases 1 and 2)	D, LC	Area-wide	All groups	2005
<i>"Transcription, Inventory, & Mapping: Applying Data in CRNHA "</i>	D, I&E	Area-wide	All groups	2005
<i>African American Genealogy of Natchitoches Parish (Phase 1)</i>	D	Area-wide	African American	2005
<i>African American Genealogy of Natchitoches Parish: Asbury Roots (Phase 2)</i>	D	Town	African American	2006
GIS: Update and Training	D, LC	Area-wide	All groups	2006
GIS: Survey of Historic District Development	D, LC	Town	All groups	2006
<i>Adai Indian Nation Cultural Center Collections Management</i>	D, I&E, VS	Satellite	American Indian	2006
<i>Natchitoches / NSU Folk Festival Narrative Sessions</i>	D, I&E	Town	All groups	2006
<i>Natchitoches Parish Clerk of Courts Colonial Records: Detailed Index and Accessibility (Phase 2)</i>	D, HP	Town	All groups	2007
<i>Archaeological Investigation of the Magnolia Plantation's Quarters Community</i>	D	Downriver	African American	2007
<i>"Founding French Families of Natchitoches, 1714-2007"</i>	D	Area-wide	French	2007
<i>Acquisition of Sister Francis Jerome Wood Collection and Development of a Management Plan</i>	D	Downriver	Creole	2007
<i>Kate Chopin House: Preserving Nostalgia - Heritage Resources Management at the Bayou Folk Museum</i>	D, I&E, VS	Area-wide	French / American	2007
<i>Brown Bomber Hotel: Historical Research and Building Documentation</i>	D, HP	Town	African American	2007
<i>Southeastern Indian Basketry Database</i>	D, I&E	Area-wide	American Indian	2007

Historic Preservation Projects

<i>Kate Chopin House</i>	HP	Downriver	French / American	1999
<i>Roque House</i>	HP	Town	Creole / African American	1999
<i>Badin-Roque House (Phases 1 and 2)</i>	HP	Downriver	Creole	1999
<i>Prudhomme-Rouquier House (Phases 1 and 2)</i>	HP	Town	French	1999
<i>Prudhomme-Rouquier House (Save America's Treasures Grant)</i>	HP	Town	French	2000
<i>Melrose Plantation: Yucca and African Houses (Save America's Treasures Grant)</i>	HP	Downriver	Creole / African American / American	2000
<i>Melrose Plantation: Yucca and African Houses</i>	HP	Downriver	Creole / African American / American	2001
<i>Roque House</i>	HP	Town	Creole / African American	2001
<i>Cherokee Plantation</i>	HP	Downriver	French / American	2001
<i>550 Second Street (Phase 1)</i>	HP	Town	American	2001
<i>Roque House</i>	HP	Downriver	Creole	2001
<i>American Cemetery: Fencing</i>	HP	Town	All groups	2001
<i>Texas and Pacific Railway Depot Rehabilitation (Great American Station Foundation Grant)</i>	HP	Town	African American	2001
<i>Texas and Pacific Railway Depot Rehabilitation (Louisiana Historic Preservation Emergency Rescue Grant)</i>	HP	Town	African American	2002
<i>Texas and Pacific Railway Depot Rehabilitation: Roof Repair</i>	HP	Town	African American	2002
<i>Prudhomme-Rouquier House (French Heritage Society Grant)</i>	HP	Town	French	2002
<i>550 Second Street (Phase 2)</i>	HP	Town	American	2002
<i>American Cemetery: Archeological Compliance</i>	HP	Town	All groups	2002
<i>American Cemetery: Interior Lighting</i>	HP, VS	Town	All groups	2002
<i>Professional Study of Two Cane River Structures</i>	HP	Downriver	Creole	2002
<i>Roque Brothers Store: Stabilization and Inventory</i>	HP	Downriver	Creole	2002
<i>Judge Porter House</i>	HP	Town	American	2002
<i>Magnolia Plantation</i>	HP	Downriver	French	2002
<i>St. Matthews School Rehabilitation: Feasibility Study</i>	HP	Downriver	African American	2003
<i>Front Street Bricks: Project Planning</i>	HP	Town	American	2003
<i>The Hankins House</i>	HP	Town	American	2003
<i>Texas and Pacific Railway Depot Rehabilitation: Masonry Repair</i>	HP	Town	African American	2003
<i>Texas and Pacific Railway Depot Rehabilitation: Graffiti Removal</i>	HP	Town	African American	2004
<i>St. Matthews School Rehabilitation: Windows</i>	HP	Downriver	African American	2004
<i>The Hankins House: Chimney</i>	HP	Town	American	2004
<i>Assumption of the The Blessed Virgin Mary: Painting Restoration</i>	HP	Town	French / American	2004
<i>Old Trade School: Exterior Restoration</i>	HP	Town	American	2005
<i>Grandpere Augustine Metoyer Painting: Enhancement of Environmental Conditions</i>	HP	Downriver	Creole	2005
<i>Melrose Plantation: Yucca and African Houses</i>	HP	Downriver	Creole / African American / American	2005
<i>Melrose Plantation: Yucca and African Houses</i>	HP	Downriver	Creole / African American / American	2006
<i>Texas and Pacific Railway Depot Rehabilitation (Transportation Enhancement Grant)</i>	HP	Town	African American	2006
<i>Natchitoches Parish Clerk of Courts Colonial Records: Conservation (Phase 1)</i>	HP, D	Area-wide	All groups	2006
<i>Williamson Museum: Curatorial Management Enhancement</i>	HP, D	Area-wide	All groups	2006
<i>"Police Jury Meeting Minutes, 1849-1921: Conservation"</i>	HP, D	Area-wide	All groups	2006
<i>Piece-Sur-Piece Slave Cabin</i>	HP	Downriver	African American	2006
<i>St. Charles Chapel</i>	HP	Downriver	French / American	2006
<i>Edsel Guesthouse Garage Rehabilitation</i>	HP	Town	American	2006
<i>226 Poete Street</i>	HP	Town	American	2006
<i>Melrose Plantation: Yucca and African Houses</i>	HP	Downriver	Creole / African American / American	2007
<i>St. Matthews School Rehabilitation (EPA Grant)</i>	HP	Downriver	African American	2007
<i>St. Matthews School Rehabilitation: Cultural Community Center Long-term Strategic Plan</i>	HP	Downriver	African American	2007

PROJECT	Project Purpose(s)	Geographic Scope	Cultural Groups	Year Funded
Interpretation and Education Projects				
CRNHA Brochure	I&E, M, VS	Area-wide	All groups	1999
CRNHA Brochure Reprint	I&E, M, VS	Area-wide	All groups	2000
Cane River Traditions (Division of Arts)	I&E, VS	Town	All groups	2000
CRNHA Brochure Reprint	I&E, M, VS	Area-wide	All groups	2001
Master Interpretive Plan	I&E, M, VS	Area-wide	All groups	2001
Historic Black Churches of Natchitoches Parish brochure	I&E, VS	Area-wide	African American	2001
<i>Natchitoches and Louisiana's Timeless Cane River: Photographic Book</i>	I&E	Area-wide	All groups	2001
<i>Caddo Indian Exhibit</i>	I&E	Area-wide	American Indian	2001
Cane River Heritage Website Development / NPS website update	I&E, M, VS	Area-wide	All groups	2001
<i>Old Courthouse Museum: Children's Programming</i>	I&E	Area-wide	All groups	2001
<i>Old Courthouse Museum: Children's Programming</i>	I&E	Area-wide	All groups	2002
<i>Kate Chopin House/Melrose Plantation Brochures</i>	I&E, M	Downriver	Creole / French / American	2002
National Park Service Brochure	I&E	Area-wide	All groups	2002
<i>Cane River Ecosystem Informational WebQuest</i>	I&E	Area-wide	All groups	2002
CRNHA Brochure Reprint	I&E, M, VS	Area-wide	All groups	2003
<i>Kate Chopin House: Exhibit</i>	I&E	Downriver	French / American	2003
<i>Old Courthouse Museum: Children's Programming</i>	I&E	Area-wide	All groups	2003
"A Common Pot: Creole Cooking on Cane River": Documentary	I&E, D	Area-wide	Creole	2003
"Louisiana for a Song": Louisiana Purchase Exhibit at the Natchitoches Parish Library	I&E, VS	Town	American	2003
Annual "Christmas Downriver" Program	I&E, M, VS	Downriver	All groups	2003
History of Creoles Brochure	I&E	Area-wide	Creole	2003
<i>Adai Interactive Museum Exhibit</i>	I&E, VS	Satellite	American Indian	2003
African American Oral History: Ethnographic Study Analysis	I&E, D	Area-wide	African American	2004
<i>Old Courthouse Museum: Children's Programming</i>	I&E	Area-wide	All groups	2004
<i>"Spirit of a Culture": Documentary</i>	I&E, D	Area-wide	Creole	2004
Great Tours! Workshop	I&E	Area-wide	All groups	2004
Fort Saint Jean Baptiste Electronic Kiosk	I&E, M, VS	Area-wide	All groups	2004
<i>Cane River-Natchitoches Archeological Culture Exhibit</i>	I&E, VS	Town	American Indian	2004
National Register Travel Itinerary	I&E, VS	Area-wide	All groups	2004
<i>Badin Roque House: "Glimpse of Real Living" Orientation Film</i>	I&E	Downriver	Creole	2005
Melrose Plantation: Interpretive Plan	I&E	Downriver	Creole / African American / American	2005
<i>Melrose Plantation: A Walk Through Melrose with Francois Mignon</i>	I&E	Downriver	Creole / African American / American	2005
<i>French Colonial Pottery Publication and Exhibit</i>	I&E, D	Area-wide	French	2005
<i>Lost Treasures of Louisiana Book</i>	I&E, D	Area-wide	All groups	2005
Melrose Plantation: Clementine Hunter—The African House Murals Book	I&E, D	Downriver	African American	2005
<i>Exhibition Documenting Creole Legacy in Cane River</i>	I&E, D, VS	Area-wide	Creole	2005
Cane River Folkways and Traditions	I&E, VS	Area-wide	All groups	2005
<i>Main Street Summer Camp</i>	I&E	Town	All groups	2005
<i>A Particular Place: Viewing the Natural & Cultural History of Natchitoches</i>	I&E	Area-wide	All groups	2005
"Landmarks in Time": Exhibit for the Natchitoches Events Center	I&E, M, VS	Area-wide	All groups	2005
"Landmarks in Time": Exhibit for the Natchitoches Events Center	I&E, M, VS	Area-wide	All groups	2006
"Landmarks in Time": Replica for the Historic Natchitoches Exhibit (Louisiana State Exhibit Museum)	I&E, M, VS	Area-wide	All groups	2006
<i>African American Online Tour of Historically Significant Sites</i>	I&E, D, VS	Area-wide	African American	2006
Old Courthouse Museum: Key Ingredients Exhibit	I&E	Area-wide	All groups	2006
<i>"Making a Way Out of No Way": Documentary</i>	I&E, D	Area-wide	African American	2006
<i>"Making a Way Out of No Way": Documentary</i>	I&E, D	Area-wide	African American	2007
African American Oral History: Natchitoches Parish (Publication in Black America Series)	I&E, D	Area-wide	African American	2007
<i>Caddo Memorial Plaza</i>	I&E, VS	Downriver	American Indian	2007

Land Conservation Projects

<i>Land Use Master Plan: Water Well Rd Annexed Area (Phases 1 and 2)</i>	LC, T	Town	All groups	2005
Land Use Master Plan: Water Well Rd Annexed Area (Phase 3)	LC, T	Town	All groups	2006
Entryway for the Lambre's Gin Estates	LC	Downriver	American	2006
"Finding Common Ground": CRNHA Cultural Landscape Guide (pdf and brochure)	LC, M	Downriver	All groups	2006

Marketing Projects

Annual "Preservation in Your Community" Program	M	Area-wide	All groups	2001
Preserve America Community Designation	M	Area-wide	All groups	2004
Melrose Plantation: Artists' Historic Homes Affiliated Site Designation	M	Downriver	Creole / African American / American	2005
National Trust for Historic Preservation's Dozen Distinctive Destinations Award	M	Area-wide	All groups	2005
Texas and Pacific Railway Depot: 10 Most Endangered Sites Designation	M	Town	African American	2006
<i>Marketing A Cane River Creole Tour</i>	M	Downriver	Creole	2006
Tourism Regional Marketing Plan and Hospitality Training Development	M	Area-wide	All groups	2006
Great American Main Street Award	M	Town	All groups	2006

PROJECT	Project Purpose(s)	Geographic Scope	Cultural Groups	Year Funded
Preserve America Presidential Award	M	Area-wide	All groups	2007
<i>50th Annual Caddo Conference</i>	M	Town	American Indian	2007
Transportation Projects				
State Scenic Byway Designation	T, M, VS	Area-wide	All groups	2006
Visitor Services Projects				
Initial Signage Project: Installation of 60 directional signs	VS, T	Area-wide	All groups	2000
<i>Old Courthouse Museum: Museum Equipment</i>	VS	Town	All groups	2001
Cane River Audio Driving Tour	VS	Downriver	All groups	2001
Signage and Identity Initiative: Society for Environmental Graphic Design	VS, T	Area-wide	All groups	2002
Signage and Identity Initiative: Request for Proposals from Design Firms	VS, T	Area-wide	All groups	2003
Economic Impact Survey	VS	Area-wide	All groups	2003
Joint Visitor Center: Development Concept Plan	VS, I&E	Area-wide	All groups	2003
Annual Northwestern State University of Louisiana Tourism Summit	VS, M	Area-wide	All groups	2004
Signage and Identity Initiative: Directional and Interpretive Signage (Phase 1)	VS, T	Area-wide	All groups	2004
Signage and Identity Initiative: Directional and Interpretive Signage (Phase 2)	VS, T	Area-wide	All groups	2005
Signage and Identity Initiative: Implementation in National Historic Landmark District (Preserve America Grant)	VS, T	Town	All groups	2006

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Cooperative Agreement H1818-06-0011, Task Agreement J1818-06-A011 between the Conservation Study Institute and QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment



Jack Boucher, National Park Service, HABS/HAER/HALS

The Cane River Gin processed cotton from the surrounding family farms and plantations in the mid-twentieth century. Abandoned cotton gins dot Cane River's landscape, reminders of the area's agricultural legacy.



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