

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Mississippi Hills
National Heritage Area

Prepared for the:
**Mississippi Hills
Heritage Area Alliance**

Revised:
June 4, 2014



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Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area Management Plan

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MANAGEMENT PLAN

Mississippi Hills
National Heritage Area

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prepared for the:
**Mississippi Hills
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Revised:
June 4, 2014



There are two primary objectives in including this Executive Summary section of the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA) Management Plan. First, it provides an abbreviated version of a lengthy plan document that will allow the reader to understand the most basic components and ideas of the plan. It is noteworthy that a stand-alone “marketing” version of this Executive Summary will also be created with less detail and more graphics. The second objective is to explain how this plan meets the planning mandates of the federal legislation creating the heritage area. That part of this plan summary outlines the legislative requirements and explains how each requirement has been satisfied.

A. SUMMARY OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

In addition to the numerous supporting appendices, the Management Plan is comprised of three main sections – the Background Report, the Alternatives, and the Management Plan. The latter section consists of four components: Strategies, Interpretive Plan, Business Plan, and Implementation Plan. This “Management Plan” section is, not surprisingly, the most substantive and critical of the main three plan sections. Below is an overview of each section.

A1. BACKGROUND REPORT

Below is a list of this plan section’s seven components:

Background Report Contents

- A. Overview & Benefits of NHAs
- B. Related Policies & Studies
- C. Planning Methodology
- D. Foundation Statement
- E. Interpretive Theme Structures & Stories
- F. MHNHA Resources
- G. Economic & Market Assessment

What is a Heritage Area?

This section starts at the most fundamental level for readers who may have little background with heritage areas by making the following key points about what constitutes a heritage area. A heritage area is:

- A *program* whereby communities and leaders work together to preserve the natural and cultural resources that are important to them.
- A *partnership* of collaborative planning around a theme, industry and/ or geographical feature that influenced the region's culture and history.

- A *strategy* encouraging residents, government agencies, non-profit groups and private partners to agree on and prioritize programs and projects that recognize, preserve and celebrate the area's defining landscapes.

Why Would We Want a Heritage Area?

Once the reader has been educated on heritage areas, this part of the plan makes the case for heritage areas by explaining that they are:

- *Historic Preservation* – saving, enhancing and interpreting the area's historic resources.
- *Environmental Conservation* – preserving natural resources for a “greener” environment.
- *Recreational Development* – leveraging natural resources for hiking, boating, fishing and similar activities.
- *Heritage Tourism* – attracting visitors to spend money on lodging, dining and shopping.

Provisions of Federal Legislation for MHNHA

The key provisions of the federal legislation creating the MHNHA in 2009 include the following:

- *Local Coordinating Entity* - Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance
- *Cooperative Agreement* - spells out the local coordinating entity's working relationship with the National Park Service
- *Extensive public input* and coordination with federal agencies
- *Approved Management Plan* – requires NPS, Department of the Interior, and State approval
- *Federal Funding* - \$10 million total; \$1 million annual maximum amount; minimum 50% match from the coordinating entity, which can include in-kind services

Regarding the funding, while those figures are indeed in the legislation, the actual levels achieved by most NHAs are substantially less (typically closer to a third of that amount).

Management Planning Process

While this section explains the planning process in detail, the six key steps were as follows:

- 1.0: Project Scoping & Start-Up
- 2.0: Research & Public Input
- 3.0: Workshop & Alternatives Preparation
- 4.0: Evaluation & Selection of Alternatives
- 5.0: Draft Plan Preparation
- 6.0: Draft Plan Presentations, Reviews & Revisions

Public Involvement Strategy

This required component was developed early in the planning process and includes a broad range of methods to solicit public input. Examples of techniques contained in the public involvement strategy include public presentations at important stages of the project, posting of plan elements on the MHNHA website for public review, interviews and one-on-one meetings with various stakeholders, a series of key stakeholder meetings with groups sharing a common interest (public officials, economic development professionals, historians, etc.), a charrette public workshop for preparing the overall plan, as well as charrette public workshops for the two case study concept plans for a historic site and a downtown.

Foundation Statement

The required foundation statement consists of an overall mission statement, as well as a set of goals and supporting objectives. Although the lengthier objectives can be reviewed within the plan's full foundation statement, below are the mission statement and five goals:

Mission for the MHNHA:

“The mission of the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance is to preserve, enhance, interpret and promote the cultural and heritage assets of the hills region. Its key objectives are to increase jobs and visitation to the area and to develop and support projects and programs that sustain the heritage tourism industry within the region.”

Goal 1: Develop the MHNHA's local coordinating entity – the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance – into a highly-effective organization capable of successfully implementing the Management Plan once completed.

Goal 2: Conduct research, education and interpretation related to the MHNHA's primary themes as a means of documenting and telling the story of the Heritage Area's unique cultural heritage.

Goal 3: Preserve and enhance the Heritage Area's numerous cultural and natural resources, particularly those with a clear link to the MHNHA's primary themes.

Goal 4: Encourage community enhancement and the development of tourism “infrastructure.”

Goal 5: Establish MHNHA as a viable and attractive visitor destination through effective branding and innovative marketing.

Interpretive Theme Categories & Stories

The real core of any heritage area is the interpretive theme categories, the interpretive statements, and stories that can be told. Below is a summary of the theme and sub-theme categories for the MHNHA:

Theme Category: Native-American Heritage

- Prehistoric Era
- Historic Era

Theme Category: African-American Heritage

- Freedom Arrives
- Reconstruction & Post-Reconstruction
- Civil Rights - An Arduous Journey

Theme Category: The Civil War

- The Opening Clash of Amateur Armies
- The Quest for Vicksburg Begins
- The Play's Final Acts - 1864

Theme Category: The Arts

- Literature
- Music



It is noteworthy that the Native-American Heritage theme did not materialize until the weeklong planning "charrette" occurred, which included a public workshop. While the existence of stories and cultural resources tied to this theme were clearly evident all along, their significance and potential tourism appeal were not fully appreciated until that phase of the planning project. Also, while it appeared earlier in the planning process that Architecture might be a primary interpretive theme, that subject was ultimately demoted to a secondary theme category or topic that can be tied to the four primary theme categories.

MHNHA Resources

An inventory of natural and cultural resources was prepared as part of this project to document the MHNHA's resources and to serve as a planning tool for creating the plan's recommendations. The inventory of natural resources is also required as part of the NHA program and the federal legislation creating the MHNHA. In fact, because none of the natural resources identified in the research had a direct link to the MHNHA's interpretive themes, the ultimate purpose of that inventory was to anticipate any potential impacts to natural resources that the heritage area program might cause. As is the case with most of the Southeast, several endangered and threatened plant and animal species have been identified, including a wide variety of mussel types.

Natural Resources

- Landscapes and Waters
- Biological Resources
- Other Resource Types
- Categorical Exclusion

The general findings of the cultural resources inventory are that there is a rich assortment of cultural resources related to the MHNHA's interpretive themes. While cultural resources tied to the four key themes are relatively plentiful, most are privately-owned, and many are not accessible to the general public.

Cultural Resources

- Native American
- African American
- Civil War Cultural
- Arts (literature and music)
- Architecture

Economic & Market Assessment

This component of the plan is not legislatively mandated or commonly included in other national heritage area management plans, but it was deemed an important one for the MHNHA. The sections of this plan component were as follows:

- Economic & Tourism Sector Overview
- Heritage Tourism Asset Base
- Heritage Tourism Market Potentials
- Program & Project Concepts

This work identified several useful findings that fed into the subsequent planning work and should help to ground the management plan more strongly in economic realities. One important finding is that a significant portion of the MHNHA heritage tourism market will come from within the heritage area boundaries, in addition to external tourists who will travel to the heritage area. It also found strong correlations between an individual's age, education and income level with their propensity to engage in heritage tourism. In general, heritage tourists are older, better educated, and have more income than the average person. This work also highlighted the desire of heritage tourists for authentic and unique experiences and places, as opposed to generic experiences and places such as chain restaurants found in strip commercial highway corridors. Quantifiable unmet market demand exists for additional cultural events and various historic attractions, particularly museum space for the Native American interpretive theme. Finally, there is a strong need for enhanced strategic planning and curatorial and interpretive support for many of the heritage area's existing cultural sites and museums.

A2. ALTERNATIVES REPORT

This important and legislatively-mandated plan component features the following sections:

Alternatives Report Contents

- A. Federal Requirements for Alternatives
- B. Examples of Alternatives of Other NHA Plans
- C. Proposed Alternatives for MHNHA
- D. Comparison of the Proposed Alternatives
- E. Recommended Alternative for the MHNHA

As part of the management planning process, the National Park Service requires the consideration of various alternatives related to the heritage area's management. Virtually any sort of planning process, regardless of the context, will often reach a "fork in the road" at which point a path must be selected from multiple options. The Alternatives Report of the management plan formalizes this frequent circumstance by utilizing comparative analysis and public input to select the optimal path. Because the provision of technical assistance to the various MHNHA partners is so important, this plan considered seven different alternatives for how interpretive centers might be utilized. One required alternative (Alternative A) is the "no action" option in which the MHNHA does not exist. The other alternatives considered were as follows:

Alternative B: Centralized Interpretation in which the NHA's sole interpretive center would be located in Tupelo and interpret all of the key themes for the MHNHA.

Alternative C: Thematic Multi-Anchored Interpretation in which there would be five interpretive centers in five different locations - each focusing interpretation on a particular MHNHA theme (with perhaps a sixth center for the Architecture secondary theme).

Alternative D: Non-Thematic Multi-Gateway Interpretation in which four interpretive centers would be provided. Each would be located at a gateway into the NHA and would interpret all of the themes.

Alternative E: Decentralized Interpretation in which there would be no MHNHA interpretive centers. Instead, interpretation would occur through various existing and new local interpretive centers not sponsored by the MHNHA.

Alternative F: Centralized and Northwest Gateway Interpretation in which only two NHA interpretive centers would occur (Tupelo and Hernando) and they would both interpret all of the key themes.

Alternative G: Multi-Anchored & Northwest Gateway Interpretation in which two NHA-sponsored interpretive centers occur in Tupelo and Hernando to interpret all of the key themes (Alternative F), while five locally-sponsored centers would each focus on one particular theme (a sixth center might also be created for the Architecture secondary theme).

Of those seven alternatives considered, Alternative G was selected as the best approach for the MHNHA. However, the plan also emphasizes that *no interpretive centers are being formally proposed* by this Management Plan. Instead, *it is recommended that feasibility studies be conducted* to first determine the viability of such centers.

A3. MANAGEMENT PLAN

As the real “meat” of the overall plan document, this portion is the most substantive and critical to laying out the details of the MHNHA’s vision and approach to managing the heritage area. Below is a summary of this plan component’s key sections:

Management Plan Contents

- A. Executive Summary
- B. Strategies
- C. Interpretive Plan
- D. Business Plan
- E. Implementation Plan
- F. Appendices

Below is a summary of this plan component’s four primary sections.

Strategies

The Strategies section of this plan serves as a key part of the “Planning Framework” within the context of federal environmental requirements per NEPA. This section was created by taking the plan’s earlier Foundation Statement section and expanding upon that outline with much greater detail with specific planning recommendations. A summary of the public input process for creating the Foundation Statement and other components of the management plan is

provided on page ii of this Executive Summary under the sub-heading "Public Involvement Strategy." Below are the five goals and supporting objectives that constitute the Foundation Statement and serve as the outline for the Strategies section.

Goal 1: Develop the MHNHA's local coordinating entity – the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance – into a highly-effective organization capable of successfully implementing the Management Plan once completed.

- Objective 1-A: Establish a leadership program to help maintain the effectiveness of current board members, committees, and staff for the MHNHA, and to identify and groom potential future leaders.
- Objective 1-B: Secure dependable funding sources both to match available federal funding and to sustain the MHNHA in the long-term.
- Objective 1-C: Involve a broad cross-section of MHNHA stakeholders to benefit from a diverse set of perspectives and to build a strong grassroots foundation of support.
- Objective 1-D: Develop a network of partner sites, attractions, and events that meet minimum standards of quality to be included within the promotion of the Heritage Area.
- Objective 1-E: Establish a promotional program that not only markets the Heritage Area and its sites, attractions, and events, but that also markets the MHNHA as a destination.

Goal 2: Conduct research, education and interpretation related to the MHNHA's primary themes as a means of documenting and telling the story of the Heritage Area's unique cultural heritage.

- Objective 2-A: Support, sponsor or conduct additional research into MHNHA themes.
- Objective 2-B: Work with appropriate partners to establish an oral history program utilizing high school and/or college students within the MHNHA to record histories from individuals that address the Heritage Area's primary themes.
- Objective 2-C: Partner with various entities to create an educational curriculum within the heritage area's grade schools and high schools centered around the MHNHA's primary themes.
- Objective 2-D: Explore the development of an interpretive center for the MHNHA.
- Objective 2-E: Utilize a variety of tools and media for interpretation, including regional theme-based tours/itineraries, as well as printed materials and new and emerging technologies.

Goal 3: Preserve and enhance the Heritage Area's numerous cultural and natural resources, particularly those with a clear link to the MHNHA's primary themes.

- Objective 3-A: Adopt a set of minimum standards of quality to insure "tourism readiness" for partner sites and attractions, as well as for an incentive to emerging sites and attractions.

- Objective 3-B: Provide technical assistance and collaborate with appropriate agencies to identify sources of grants to partner and emerging sites and attractions.
- Objective 3-C: Work with existing land trust organizations and willing land owners to protect lands through conservation easements.
- Objective 3-D: Partner with existing historic preservation organizations and other entities to aid willing property owners in protecting historic resources through facade easements.
- Objective 3-E: Assist communities within the MHNHA with technical assistance to establish public policy tools which help preserve heritage assets and reinforce community character.

Goal 4: Encourage community enhancement and the development of tourism “infrastructure.”

- Objective 4-A: Aid communities in identifying sources of technical assistance for creating public policy strategies which improve quality of life and enhance community character.
- Objective 4-B: Explore the development of a wayfaring and wayfinding program that identifies the NHA boundaries along major thoroughfares within the region and also identifies key heritage area communities and heritage assets.
- Objective 4-C: Support the development and/or enhancement of outdoor recreational facilities and opportunities.

Goal 5: Establish MHNHA as a viable and attractive visitor destination through effective branding and innovative marketing.

- Objective 5-A: Promote existing special events tied to the history, cultural traditions, and themes of the Heritage Area, and encourage the creation of new such events.
- Objective 5-B: Continue to maintain the MHNHA website, which highlights primary themes and key heritage attractions, features tours tied to the themes and a schedule of events, and includes links to other relevant websites.
- Objective 5-C: Utilize conventional means (ads, brochures, maps, rack cards), as well as internet based social networking and other new and emerging technologies (downloadable phone apps, GPS, QR codes) to promote the Heritage Area and its resources to a variety of audiences.

Interpretive Plan

The Interpretive Plan provides a series of detailed recommendations on how to effectively tell the story of the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area. In addition to providing a series of theme-based interpretive statements and tying them to the area’s inventoried cultural resources, it recommends techniques for interpretation. Among numerous recommendations are the following:

- Support and/or sponsor research into the various themes associated with the MHNHA. Encourage area universities and colleges, as well as subject matter experts, to research the

MHNHA's interpretive themes, and pursue grants for eligible research projects relevant to the MHNHA's interpretive themes.

- Establish an oral history program within the MHNHA to address the heritage area's primary themes.
- Create an educational curriculum with public and private schools to teach the MHNHA's primary themes. Integrate the MHNHA's interpretive themes into the curriculum related to American History in the grade schools, and support field trips related to the MHNHA's interpretive themes for high school students.
- Explore the development of one or more interpretive centers for the MHNHA, including leveraging existing facilities. Feasibility studies would be necessary to determine locations and viability, and environmental review in accordance with state and federal regulations would be required for any development that might negatively impact the environment.
- Utilize technology to more effectively interpret history to an increasingly tech-savvy public, including the use of the MHNHA website, driving tour apps and other telecommunications mechanisms, and similar tours.
- Program living history demonstrations at historic sites and special events.
- Create a series of theme-based driving tours (tour maps are included in the Interpretive Plan)

Business Plan

Not only is the Business Plan component a legislatively required element of the plan, it is a good idea to increase the odds of success and financial sustainability for the heritage area's coordinating entity - the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance (MHHAA). In addition to including a detailed five-year budget that provides line items for both revenues and expenditures, it makes the following recommendations:

Funding Sources

Among the primary funding sources for the MHNHA are the following:

- Federal & State Grants & Appropriations
- Memberships & Sponsorships
- Fundraising Events
- In-Kind Services
- Fee-Based Services
- Income-Generating Programs, Merchandise & Facilities
- Special Project Grants

Performance Goals, Monitoring & Metrics: Key Goals

Performance information can also be used to help leverage future funding, grants, in-kind, or investment support, by demonstrating the ability of the local coordinating entity and partners to implement successful projects. The plan provides detailed measuring objectives for each of the broader performance goals summarized below:

- *Capacity.* Develop the local coordinating entity (MHAA) into a highly-effective organization capable of implementing the management plan.
- *Education & Interpretation.* Conduct research, education and interpretation relating to MHNHA's primary themes as a means of documenting and telling the story of the area's unique heritage.
- *Preservation & Enhancement.* Preserve and enhance the heritage area's numerous natural and cultural resources, particularly those with a clear link to the MHNHA's primary themes.
- *Community Enhancement.* Encourage and assist in community enhancement and development of tourist "infrastructure."
- *Marketing & Tourism Development.* Market and promote the heritage area through a number of vehicles to further brand the heritage area and increase heritage tourism as a means of economic development.

Benchmarking

Another approach to measuring the success of the MHNHA over the coming years is to use other similar NHAs as benchmarks. NHAs to consider as benchmarks for MHNHA include the following:

- Atchafalaya NHA – Southern Louisiana (Literary Heritage)
- Muscle Shoals NHA - Northwest Alabama
- Mississippi Delta NHA – Western Mississippi
- Upper Housatonic Valley NHA (Literary Heritage)

Implementation Plan

This component of the management plan is another legislatively-required section, but also critical to success. Below are some of the key elements:

Organizational Structure

The Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance (MHAA) is in charge of the MHNHA, whose offices are housed in Tupelo. The organizational structure also includes a Board of Directors of representatives having a stake in the MHNHA. The staff and committee structure is summarized below:

Staff Structure

- Executive Director
- Administrative Manager
- Heritage Technical Specialist
- Tourism & Marketing Specialist
- Historian in Residence, volunteers, interns

Committees

- Cultural Resources & Preservation
- Conservation & Recreation
- Fund Raising
- Community Investment



- Education & Interpretation
- Marketing & Public Relations

Implementation Matrix

The matrix provided in this section of the plan summarizes each goal and objective from the Strategies section of the management plan and provides the following information:

- Alpha-numeric designation
- Page number within the Strategies section of this plan for greater detail
- Party or parties responsible for implementation
- Timeframe (near, mid and long term)

Consistent with the Strategies implementation matrix is a five-year work plan. The three distinct time-frames of this plan are organized as follows:

- Near Term: Year 1
- Mid Term: Years 2-3
- Long Term: Years 4-5

Projects & Programs

The balance of this final plan section revisits many of the projects and programs described earlier in the plan, but it provides yet another layer of detail that will be helpful for actual plan implementation. In addition to providing more detail on the ideas for exploring a series of interpretive centers, it also offers a set of principles for historic site and community enhancement. The latter topic is split between how to enhance strip commercial corridors to offer better gateways into communities and principles for downtown revitalization. In fact, the appendices section of the management plan includes a sample historic site enhancement concept plan and a sample downtown revitalization concept plan.

Relationship Between the Plan Sections

It is noteworthy that, because of the long duration of the NHA management planning process, some of the plan's ideas have evolved over time. For example, the interpretive theme of architecture was considered a "primary" theme earlier in the planning, but was demoted to a "secondary" theme having much less emphasis by the time the Alternatives section was developed. Nevertheless, the section on the architecture theme within the Background Report has been left intact to document the process and how the plan evolved. In short, to the extent that there may be minor inconsistencies between the earlier documents, such as the Background Report, and the Management Plan (Strategies, Interpretive Plan, Business Plan, and Implementation Plan), *the Management Plan's content should be considered the final word.*

B. MEETING LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Below is a list of key requirements in bold-faced text from the federal legislation that created the MHNHA. Accompanying each of these legislative requirements for the management plan

is an explanation of how the management plan and the planning process have satisfied those requirements.

(A) provide recommendations for the preservation, conservation, enhancement, funding, management, interpretation, development, and promotion of the cultural, historical, archaeological, natural, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area;

Goals and objectives for interpretation, preservation, management and related activities are contained in the management plan's Foundation Statement. More detailed strategies and recommendations elaborate on the Foundation Statement in the management plan's Strategies section, Interpretive Plan, Business Plan, and Implementation Plan. The roles and proposed actions of various MHNHA partners are described throughout the management plan where applicable.

(B) specify existing and potential sources of funding or economic development strategies to protect, enhance, interpret, fund, manage, and develop the Heritage Area;

Funding and economic development strategies are contained in the management plan's Business Plan. That plan section includes a five-year budget with both revenues and expenditures. It also features supporting text that describes those revenue sources and the nature of expenditures. The Business Plan also includes specific projects and downtown revitalization principles that will lead to economic development within the MHNHA. The downtown revitalization principles are further expanded upon through a concept plan prepared for a specific downtown as part of this MHNHA planning project.

(C) include an inventory of the natural, historical, cultural, archaeological, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area; and

The management plan's Background Report section features an inventory of natural and cultural resources. The natural resources inventory is located in the appendices section and organized by sub-topics (biological resources, land resources, water resources, etc.), while the cultural resources are organized by interpretive themes and sub-themes. Text describing the inventories is also included in the Background Report under the heading "MHNHA Resources." It makes conclusions regarding the extent of various resources, their conditions, threats, and similar characteristics important to their preservation and interpretation. This section also addresses the topic of a Categorical Exclusion (CE) within the context of federal NEPA requirements for environmental review.

(D) an analysis of how Federal, State, tribal, and local programs may best be coordinated to promote and carry out this section;

The required analysis and recommendations for ways that federal, state, tribal, and local programs may best be coordinated to further the efforts of the MHNHA are addressed by the management plan's Implementation Plan under the heading "Roles and Actions of MHNHA Partners."

(E) provide recommendations for educational and interpretive programs to provide information to the public on the resources of the Heritage Area;

This requirement is satisfied by this management plan's "Interpretive Plan" section, which goes into tremendous detail regarding the various interpretive themes and thematic statements and associated cultural resources. This plan section also features recommended methods for educating the public and telling the stories, including a system of potential interpretive centers, a series of recommended theme-based driving tours, the use of digital technology for interpretation, the use of more traditional interpretive tools (brochures, wayside exhibits, etc.), and enhanced exhibit design and curation of artifacts within existing museums.

(F) involve residents of affected communities and tribal and local governments.

The Background Report segment of this management plan features a section entitled "Public Involvement Strategy." This federally-required component was developed early in the planning process and includes a wide range of methods to solicit public input, including: public presentations at important stages of the project, posting of plan elements on the MHNHA website for public review, interviews and one-on-one meetings with various stakeholders, a series of key stakeholder meetings with groups sharing a common interest (public officials, economic development professionals, historians, etc.), and a charrette-style public workshop for preparing the plan. That strategy for public involvement was indeed carried out as proposed, and the appendices section of the "Management Plan" segment of the plan provides documentation of those various methods of public input.

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Mississippi Hills
National Heritage Area

STRATEGIES SECTION

Prepared for the:
**Mississippi Hills
Heritage Area Alliance**

Revised:
June 4, 2014



A. Purpose & Approach to the Strategies

A1. STRATEGIES PURPOSE

This section of the Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA) elevates the research and planning conducted thus far to a more advanced level of detail. It builds upon the background work and analysis, as well as the Foundation Statement, to explain detailed strategies. The Framework is the composite of all of the Management Plan components created to date, including the Background Study and the Alternatives.

A2. STRATEGIES APPROACH

As noted previously, the Strategies section of the plan builds upon previous work and provides much greater specificity than previous plan sections. This Strategies section has been created using the following approach:

- 1) Utilize the previously-created Foundation Statement's five Goals and supporting Objectives as the framework for the Strategies.
- 2) Integrate the ideas conveyed in the previously-presented Concept Plan into the Foundation Statement's Goals and Objectives, and add more detailed ideas to expand upon the Foundation Statement.
- 3) Expand upon the other two steps above with additional new ideas to complete the Strategies component of this Management Plan



The Public Workshop utilized to help create the Task 3.0 Alternatives and Concept Plan was pivotal in generating ideas for this Strategies section of the MHNHA Management Plan. Above is one of the four break-out sessions organized by the NHA's key interpretive themes.

B. Strategies

Goal 1: Develop the MHNHA's local coordinating entity – the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance – into a highly-effective organization capable of successfully implementing the Management Plan once completed.

Objective 1-A: Establish a leadership program to help maintain the effectiveness of current board members, committees, and staff for the MHHA, and to identify and groom potential future leaders.

The MHHA will take advantage of available useful programs rather than attempting to do their own in-house training. However, an occasional *MHHA-sponsored workshop* for board and committee members will be employed as needed to address issues specific to the MHNHA. Likewise, an *annual retreat* for board members (and perhaps committee members) will also be conducted to discuss issues that typical meetings do not address, including establishing yearly work plans and reviewing work accomplished. Other strategies will include the following:

- Continue membership in the Alliance of National Heritage Areas (ANHA) to provide networking opportunities with other NHAs and to benefit from the various forms of technical information and support that the ANHA provides. Full membership was recently decreased to \$2,500 annually, while Associate levels are \$500 annually. The MHHA is currently at the Associate level, but will consider full membership in the future if it is determined worth the cost.



The ANHA provides technical support to NHAs and offers a variety of membership levels at various price points.

- Send the MHHA Director to regional and national conferences of the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP). If funding is available, some board members will also be sent. Because NTHP conferences feature concurrent educational sessions, there are usually multiple sessions relevant to heritage tourism.
- Provide training for board members, committee members and staff through workshop sessions. The Mississippi Center for Nonprofits, based in Jackson, offers a wide variety of training options (www.msnonprofits.org). While the heritage area's key universities, such as the University of Mississippi and Mississippi State University, lack formal programs/degrees in nonprofit management, they do offer occasional relevant courses. Also, relevant conferences and training offered by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History will also be leveraged.



The Mississippi Center for Nonprofits is an excellent resource for board and staff development.

- Utilize local leadership development programs of Chambers of Commerce. For example, the Tupelo Chamber of Commerce sponsors the Jim Ingram Community Leadership Institute. This program is designed to enhance community leadership development and to enhance personal and professional growth. According to the Chamber's website, this two-year program consists of "one year of training and one year of community re-investment." Other chambers in other MHNHA communities offer similar programs, such as Leadership Lafayette, Leadership Lowndes County, Oktibbeha County Leadership FORUM, and Leadership Alcorn. Chambers such as Holly Springs' that currently lack such programs will be encouraged to start them. The MHHAA will need to discuss with the leaders of these various chambers whether the MHHAA would need to formally join each chamber to participate in its programs. If so, the programs will be used by individual MHHAA board members, depending upon their individual memberships.

Objective 1-B: Secure dependable funding sources both to match available federal funding and to sustain the MHNHA in the long-term.

While the federal legislation creating the MHNHA stipulates that the heritage area can receive up to \$1 million dollars annually for a ten-year period, the most recent average funding allocations for all NHAs has been much lower (closer to \$250,000 to \$300,000). The following strategies will be considered to achieve this objective:

- Continue the current MHHAA membership program for area Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVBs) in which they pay annual dues to achieve the highest level of benefits. The current program seems to work well in which there is a three-tiered membership structure for CVBs that is based upon their annual tourism-generated tax revenue as calculated by the State. This structure includes the following: Tier 1 - \$10,000; Tier 2 - \$5,000; and Tier 3 - \$1,000. Members in all three categories have voting privileges on the Board of Directors. At present, there are only members representing Tiers 1 and 2, so a push should be made to recruit some Tier 3 members. There is also a \$500 non-voting membership category.
- Establish an MHHAA membership program for individuals. An example from the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area is the following membership structure: Individual & Senior - \$25; Family - \$45; Supporting - \$75; Premium - \$125; Patron - \$250; Benefactor - \$500. Membership in the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition (an NHA in Akron, Ohio) is very similar, with membership options ranging between the Student and Senior levels as \$10 annually to Partner levels at \$100 annually. Benefits for membership in the Rivers of Steel NHA include: personalized membership card, 10% discount at their retail shop (discount valid on up to 4 tour tickets), e-mail updates, free admission to exhibits, invitations to member-only events and programming, supporting Members and above receive two complimentary Hard Hat Tour tickets. The MHNHA will need to further develop out in order for MHHAA membership to provide comparable benefits to its members.
- Pursue corporate sponsorships. There are many examples of NHAs that have been successful in securing sponsorships from area corporations, and such sponsorships can amount to substantial funding. As one example, the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition has two levels of "Canal Trailblazers." At the highest level of sponsorship is the "Platinum Level" at \$5,000 annually, while the regular level is at \$2,500 annually. One likely corporate sponsor for the MHNHA

would be the Toyota Motor Corporation given their significant investment in Blue Springs. In fact, they will be approached about a much more substantial sponsorship level than the \$2,500 and \$5,000 examples above, particularly since heritage areas encourage driving.



The Toyota Motor Corporation's investment into a manufacturing plant in Blue Springs has had a major economic impact on the area. They will be approached about a potential corporate sponsorship of the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area.

- Continue to pursue grants from various relevant programs. The MHAA has already exhibited a strong track record in securing grants even before it secured NHA status. Examples include funding secured from the CREATE Foundation based in Tupelo, the U.S. Forest Service, the University of Mississippi, the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), and similar entities for conducting research, planning and consensus building that led to the heritage area's establishment. Because of the need to secure non-federal dollars to match the federal dollars already coming from the National Park Service (NPS), State, regional and private foundations will be targeted.
- Utilize local universities and colleges for in-kind services to match grants. The University of Mississippi offers bachelor's, master's and doctorate degrees in History. The University's Center for the Study of Southern Culture also offers degrees in Southern Studies. Likewise, Mississippi State University offers bachelors and masters degrees in History. While Rust College does not offer history degrees, it does have a Division of Social Sciences, and the Mississippi University for Women offers a bachelors degree in History. Most of these same schools also offer programs and/or degrees in other issues related to heritage areas, such as marketing, business, and political science. Because some of these programs encourage hands-on experience gained through project work, there will be plenty of opportunities for student projects for the MHNHA that could also meet the in-kind service requirements for matching grants.
- Conduct events for both promotion and financial sustainability. Events are useful for a range of reasons. Not only can they raise awareness of the MHAA's mission and activities, but events can also be useful for raising money. With regard to the MHAA's potential sponsorship of

major outdoor “special events,” such as concerts and festivals, they might initially be too much of a distraction and energy drain compared to the benefits derived. However, as staff capacity grows in time, these types of events might be worthwhile endeavors. In the meantime, smaller “fundraising events” held just a few times a year and entailing a dinner party type event with an entertainment component might be the most viable option. This type of event could target key stakeholders (including business leaders and public officials), have a substantial ticket cost, and encourage donations as part of the event. There are existing models to borrow from, including various historic preservation and conservation non-profit entities in the state and region.

- Offer fee-based services to provide technical expertise and generate revenue. If in-house staff (including college interns) or occasional consultant support can be added to the MHHAA having expertise in preservation, interpretation, marketing, and tourism, the MHHAA will contract with various stakeholder entities in the heritage area for projects. The MHHAA can perform the work for less money than consultants, especially if it can utilize area college students for acquiring hands-on experience. A good model for this approach is the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition, which has a similar program. Their “Conservation Collaborations” program provides technical assistance and support to their partners and the partners compensate the Coalition for their work. That program generates between \$15,000 and \$40,000 annually for the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition.
- Establish income-generating programs that also further the MHHAA’s mission. Although most of the heritage area’s programs will likely cost money, some might actually generate income. As one example, the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition’s annual program income budget is \$120,000 and consists of “health and wellness” walking programs, fishing derbies for inner-city school children, and canal clean-ups. Because of corporate sponsorships, they raise \$60,000 through these programs. They not only further the heritage area’s mission, but they also raise money.




The Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition's health and wellness program actually raises money.

Objective 1-C: Involve a broad cross-section of MHNHA stakeholders to benefit from a diverse set of perspectives and to build a strong grassroots foundation of support.

- Diversify the MHHAA Board of Directors or Create a Supplemental Advisory Board. At present, the MHHAA board is comprised solely of heritage area CVB directors. While this board composition provides plenty of representation and insights from the tourism facet of the MHNHA, it neglects other important facets related to research, interpretation, preservation, marketing, business, fund-raising, and similar heritage area functions. Depending upon what the current board finds most appropriate, one of the following two approaches will be pursued:

- *Diversify the Current Board Structure*: This option requires that the organization's by-laws specify a variety of board member types similar to the way that Certified Local Government (CLG) programs require specific historic zoning commission members by member type (property owner, architect, historian, etc.). If the MHHAA decides to take this approach, it will specify the member types noted above.
- *Create a Supplemental Advisory Council*: If there are reasons that compel the MHHAA to continue with the current board composition of CVB members, a supplemental Advisory Council will be created in accordance with Section 9.03: Advisory Council of the current bylaws. This council would not have voting authority, but would represent a broad range of expertise and insights to fill the void that a CVB-only board would create.
- Insure Full Participation of Board Members. To address the issue of members who have not been active enough, the adopted bylaws Section 6:10: Attendance, which allows the Board to remove a member who has missed three consecutive meetings without a valid excuse, will be considered. Removal of any board members requires a two-thirds vote of the members in favor of the vote to remove such member.

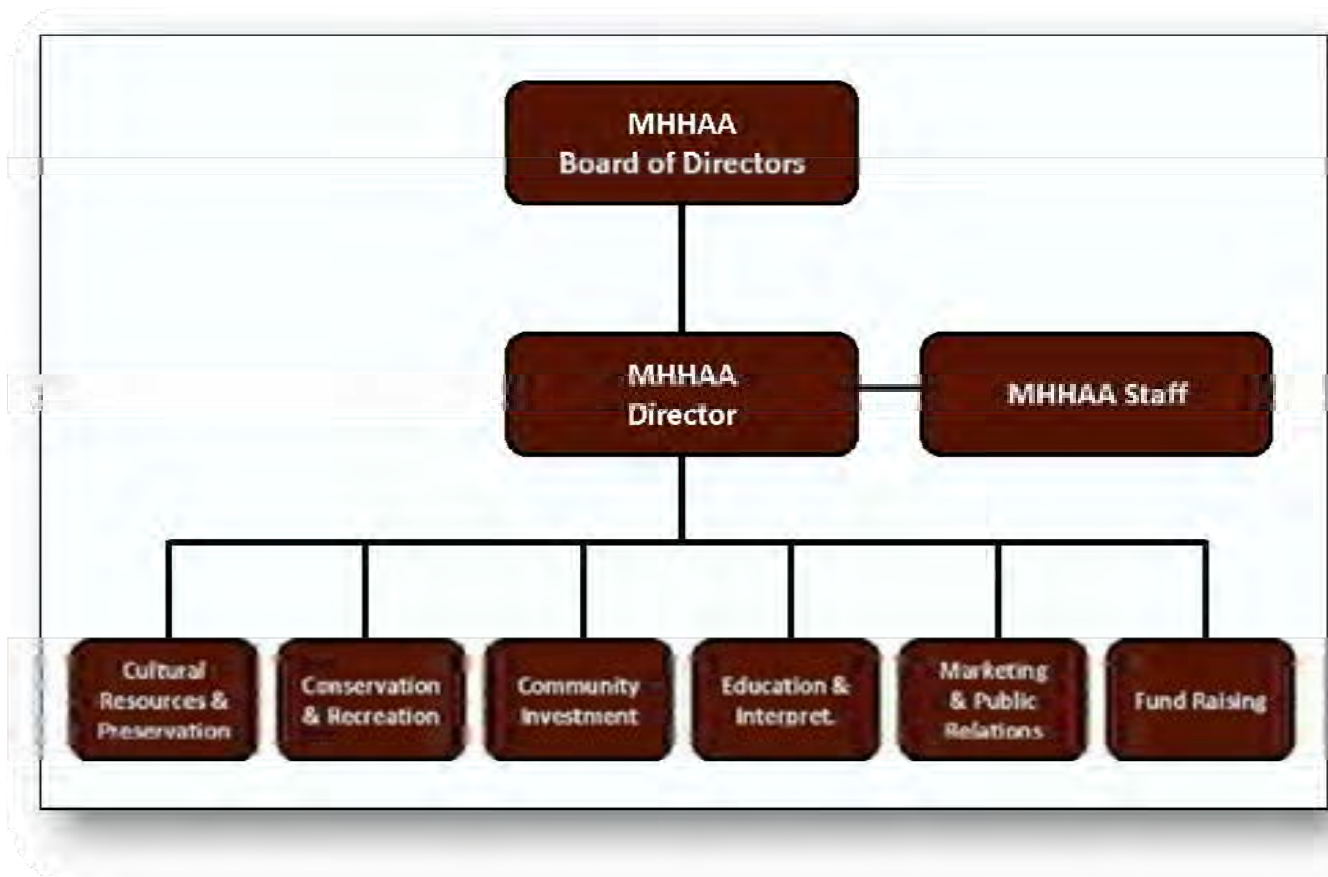


It is critical that board members attend most board meetings.
- Create working committees to expand involvement in the MHNHA and to achieve key tasks. Many organizations similar to the MHHAA utilize a series of committees to help implement their objectives and to broaden the range of individuals involved with the entity. Committee members do not need to be limited to board members. An example is the National Main Street Center's downtown revitalization program in which committees are based upon the "Four Point Approach" of organization, design, economic restructuring, and promotion. Six distinct committees will be established for the MHNHA. Some of those committees will assist with a particular function of the heritage area, while others will address a specific topic. Below is a list of each proposed committee (see the Implementation Plan for detailed descriptions):
 - The Cultural Resources & Preservation Committee
 - The Conservation & Recreation Committee
 - The Community Investment Committee
 - The Education & Interpretation Committee
 - The Marketing & Public Relations Committee
 - The Fund-Raising Committee
- Leverage existing relevant organizations. There are numerous existing organizations within the MHNHA that have strong relevance to the MHHAA's mission. They already exist, they have supporting members, and they can be mobilized to support the MHNHA. They include the area's CVBs, local preservation organizations, local governments, and academic institutions.

Also, living history groups such as Civil War reenactors are another group to leverage. Other important groups include environmental and outdoor recreational entities such as those listed previously, local school districts and private schools, universities and community colleges, and economic development groups such as Main Street programs.



Existing groups in the MHNHA can be leveraged to further interpretation efforts, including Civil War reenactors.



Objective 1-D: Develop a network of partner sites, attractions, and events that meet minimum standards of quality to be included within the promotion of the Heritage Area.

- Establish a designation system for sites, attractions and events that are deemed “visitor-ready.” The intent of this program is to promote sites, attractions and events that meet a minimum standard based upon best practices so that visitors to the MHNHA are not underwhelmed by sites, attractions and events that fail to meet their expectations. Standards to determine visitor readiness will address the following issues: sufficient wayfinding, parking, bathrooms, standard days/hours of operation, physical maintenance of the site, historic authenticity and integrity, and accurate and

effective interpretation. Sites, attractions and events that meet the adopted standards will be officially deemed “visitor ready” and will receive full promotion benefits from the MHHAA.

- Establish a designation system for sites, attractions and events that are deemed “emerging.” This program will be intended for sites, attractions and events not yet deemed “visitor ready” per the best practices standards outlined above, but whose operators seek to achieve such status. To avoid failing to meet visitor expectations and potentially harming the MHNHA brand, emerging sites, attractions and events will not be promoted by the MHNHA. However, technical assistance will be provided to them by the MHHAA to help them ultimately achieve visitor ready status. Grant funding will also be sought by the MHHAA for such sites.

See this plan’s Implementation Plan for details on a committee to apply standards to designate sites.

Objective 1-E: Establish a promotional program that not only markets the Heritage Area and its sites, attractions, and events, but that also markets the MHNHA as a destination.

A great deal of promotional activity is already occurring, particularly through the MHHAA’s website. The following steps will occur:

- Integrate MHNHA logo into the marketing of individual sites, attractions and events. Although it will be limited to use only by sites, attractions and events designated by the MHHAA as being “visitor ready,” the existing logo will be used in numerous ways. It will be used for wayfinding signage, and it will be integrated into the marketing materials and websites of sites, attractions and events. Use of the logo will require formal approval by the MHHAA to insure that sites, attractions and events of inferior quality do not degrade the MHNHA brand.



The MHNHA is fortunate to have a highly-effective and attractive logo. It is simple, yet colorful and appealing. It is also easy to instantly identify, which is critical when viewed at a distance.

- Revise the MHNHA website. The current website has many positive attributes, including being well organized, containing useful information, and having a high-quality graphic appearance. However, the interpretive themes that it reflects are slightly inconsistent with those recommended in this Management Plan. Those currently on the website include: African-American Heritage, the Civil War, the Arts (music and literature), and Architecture. While the first three noted are consistent with this plan, the Architecture theme has been demoted slightly to become a secondary theme rather than a primary theme. Also, the new primary theme of Native-American Heritage has now been suggested in this plan. Therefore, the MHNHA website will be revised accordingly, including organizing the website’s suggested trip itineraries, which are theme-based, to be consistent with this plan’s theme structure.

- Create and distribute brochures for the MHNHA. The MHHAA has already created an excellent brochure giving a general overview of the heritage area, and much of the text and graphics needed for additional brochures is already contained on the MHNHA website. Other components might be borrowed or adapted from this plan, such as theme-based tour maps. Four supplemental brochures will be created, each focusing on one of the four primary themes of the heritage area. Once developed, they will be provided in brochure racks at all visitors' centers, at partner sites, and at relevant hotels and restaurants to the extent funding to do so is available. A digital version of each brochure will also be downloadable on the MHNHA website.
- Secure gateway signage for the MHNHA at key transportation gateways into the heritage area. This simple signage as used by other NHAs can be produced by the state highway department and it is typically brown in color to reflect a cultural site. It might also utilize the NPS logo, as well as the existing MHNHA logo. Such signage will definitely be placed at the north and south gateway points along I-55, at both ends of Highways 78 and 82 into the MHNHA. It was just recently placed by the NPS at both ends of the Natchez Trace as it enters the MHNHA. Where applicable, such signs will also indicate the first related stop for the MHNHA, such as any interpretive centers or attractions.



- Continue the development of positive relationships with local media and the generation of regular press releases about the MHNHA. Whenever any positive newsworthy occurrences avail themselves, the MHHAA staff will continue to prepare press releases. After doing this with enough frequency, the staff will develop (if it has not already) a feel for what types of news stories will be covered by certain media outlets and those that will not. Among the media outlets to continue to utilize are newspapers, television and radio stations, newsletters of various organizations, and internet-based media.
- Make regular presentations about the MHNHA both within the NHA and outside of it. This management planning process has resulted in the creation of several different PowerPoint presentations that can either be used "as are" or can be adapted as needed. Within the heritage area, staff and leadership from the MHHAA will make presentations to promote the heritage area to schools, fraternal organizations (Elks, Masons, Rotary, etc.), local governments, and similar groups. Beyond the MHNHA, presentations will be made at tourism/preservation conferences.

- Utilize social media to garner attention for the MHNHA. The MHHAA is already utilizing Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest. Additional sources might be considered, such as Linked-In. Being effective in the use of social media requires both knowledge of the medium and frequent interaction. If the MHHAA staff lacks expertise to utilize social media, either a Board member or an issue-based

Committee member will be asked to help with this effort.



While there are numerous social media outlets that can be utilized, only a couple are likely worth the effort.

- Develop strong relationships with travel writers. Travel writers prepare articles for magazines and other publications related to travel. Clearly, heritage tourism has a strong link to travel, and travel writers tend to focus particularly on places that are somehow unique and offer an authentic experience, depending upon the readers targeted. The MHHAA staff will utilize Travelwriters.com, a professional network of travel writers, editors and members of the public relations community. According to their website, “Travelwriters.com is based on a simple principle: to connect top-tier writers with editors, PR agencies, tourism professionals, CVBs and tour operators, nurturing the important link that so heavily influences the travel media.” This resource and others will be leveraged to get the MHNHA out to the broader public nationwide. Another approach would be for the MHHAA staff to coordinate with the various CVBs to “Fam Tours” (familiarization tours) with travel writers and others.

Furthermore, given that literature is one of the key interpretive themes of the MHNHA, that theme will be linked to travel writers. One approach might be for the MHHAA to partner with the University of Mississippi to sponsor a conference either for travel writers or for literary-based travel. This approach could make the heritage area stand out as not just marketing itself to travel writers, but actually providing substantive discussion about literary heritage tourism and travel writing within the broader context of the MHNHA.

It is important that all promotional efforts be performed in close collaboration with the heritage area’s other tourist entities, including the CVBs. Rather than duplicating efforts, it will supplement and reinforce current efforts. Promotional strategies will be spearheaded by the committee of heritage tourism representatives recommended previously under Objective 1-C (third bullet point).

Please see this plan’s separate “Business Plan” element and the “Implementation Plan” element for more detail on ideas related to those issues.

Goal 2: Conduct research, education and interpretation related to the MHNHA's primary themes as a means of documenting and telling the story of the Heritage Area's unique cultural heritage.

For additional detail on many of the topics covered by the objectives below, please see this Management Plan's supplemental Interpretive Plan.

Objective 2-A: Support, sponsor or conduct additional research into MHNHA themes.

As detailed in the Background Study of this Management Plan, there are four primary interpretive themes developed for the MHNHA: the Civil War, African-American Heritage, Native American Heritage, and the Arts (Music and Literature). Architecture is a secondary theme that relates to some of the primary themes. Each of these primary themes has a set of supporting sub-themes.

- Leverage the MHNHA's existing universities and colleges for conducting research into the MHNHA's interpretive themes. The University of Mississippi and Mississippi State University both offer a bachelor's degree in History, a master's degree in History, and a PhD in History. Furthermore, the University of Mississippi's Center for the Study of Southern Culture offers a master's degree in Southern Studies. While Rust College in Holly Springs does not have a history program, their Humanities Department does include a music program that could be involved with research into the music theme (part of the Arts) of the MHNHA. Likewise, the Mississippi University for Women (the "W") in Columbus offers a bachelor's degree in History. There are also programs in Public History at nearby University of North Alabama (UNA) in Florence and at Auburn University. All of these programs, among others across the country, offer a tremendous opportunity for the Heritage Area's themes to be researched. In particular, master's students needing a thesis topic will be encouraged to investigate topics relevant to the MHNHA.
- Pursue grants for eligible research projects relevant to the MHNHA's interpretive themes. There are numerous foundations that fund research on historic topics, and funding will be pursued for the MHNHA. Examples of funding entities include the following (see the Interpretive Plan for more detailed information on funding entities):
 - *National Endowment for the Humanities*
 - *American Historical Association*
 - *American Antiquarian Society*
 - *Lehrman History Scholars Summer Program*
 - *Phillips Fund Grants for Native American Research*

Objective 2-B: Work with appropriate partners to establish an oral history program utilizing high school and/or college students within the MHNHA to record histories from individuals that address the Heritage Area's primary themes.

There are multiple resources available to learn more about how to record oral histories. Just one example is the book entitled "The Oral History Workshop: Collect and Celebrate the Life Stories of Your Family and Friends" by Hart and Samson.

- Identify the topics to be documented through oral histories based upon the MHNHA's four interpretive themes and various sub-themes. Many of the Native American stories – both historic and lore - are orally-based and in need of recording. Perhaps the oral histories that are still most accessible are those associated with African American heritage and the Arts. Much of the African American heritage relates to the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, and many of those associated with the movement are still alive. Likewise, many people with a connection to the MHNHA's music and literature heritage can also be recorded.
- Consider an oral history program that is managed by college students, but conducted using area junior high and high school students. Since oral history documentation is an educational activity that can be performed by junior high, high school, and college students, it is recommended that all three categories of students collaborate on the research. As noted before, there are multiple universities and colleges within the heritage area with history programs. Working closely with the MHNHA based upon the four primary interpretive themes, college students can be charged with structuring an oral history recording program that is implemented by junior high and high school students.



Oral histories are a productive and interesting method of recording and conveying history.

While it is recognized that there are several potential obstacles to this concept, it is still worth pursuing. Because the heritage area covers 30 counties, numerous school districts will need to be approached about such a program. Some schools that are focused on a relatively narrow scope of curriculum and test scores to measure achievement may not have the flexibility to be involved with an oral history program. In such cases, college students might be used to conduct interviews rather than junior or high school students. Furthermore, the idea may not appeal to the area universities. Private schools will likely have more flexibility to accommodate an oral history program. Regardless of the challenges, it is a concept worthy of further exploration because of its potential benefits to research and interpretation for the heritage area.

Objective 2-C: Partner with various entities to create an educational curriculum within the heritage area's grade schools and high schools centered around the MHNHA's primary themes.

- Work the MHNHA's four primary interpretive themes into the curriculum related to American History in the grade schools and junior high schools. Many school districts across the country place an emphasis on local history when learning about history in general. The MHNHA will work with the local school districts to create a curriculum for grade school and junior high students that teaches them the MHNHA's themes. According to the publication "2011 Mississippi Social Studies Framework," Mississippi history is taught in the 4th and 8th grades. Thus, the MHNHA's curriculum will be targeted to those grades. Once developed, these lesson

plans will be placed on the MHNHA website. At some point later, the heritage area can also develop lesson plans for environmental education. Similarly, the MHNHA can work with teachers to develop school tours or field trips as a part of their curriculum.

- Pursue hands-on experiences and field trips related to the MHNHA's interpretive themes for students. Assuming the teaching of the MHNHA's themes can occur as recommended above, area students will build upon that foundation of knowledge learned in the class room with more hands-on experiences. For example, they can travel to various historic sites in the MHNHA and witness (and even participate in) living history demonstrations. They might also participate in crafts and projects related to the MHNHA, such as flint-knapping or pottery making at a Native American site, or participating in camp life and military drills associated with the Civil War interpretive theme.



The MHNHA offers a wide range of potential destinations for school field trips.

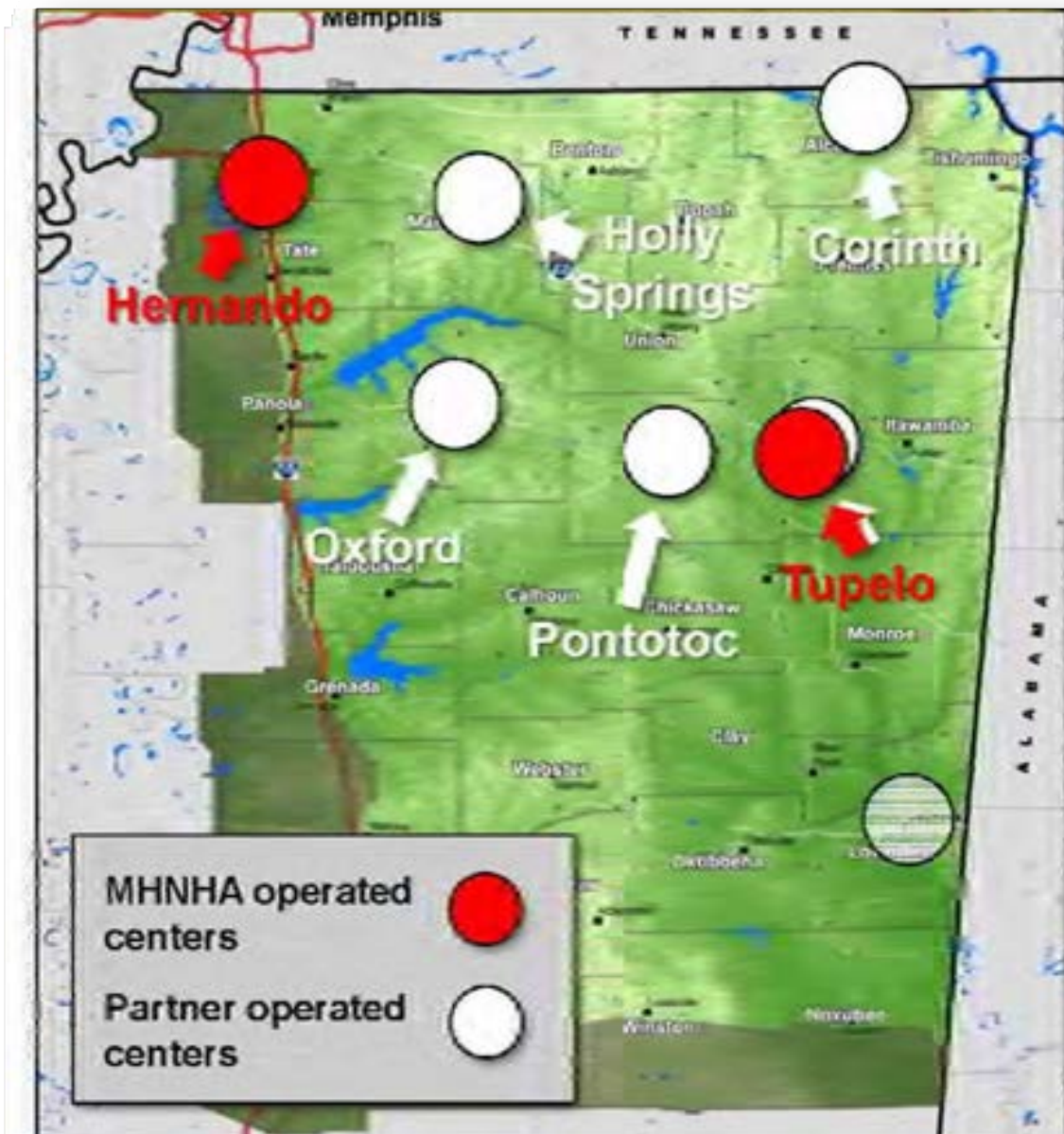
Objective 2-D: Explore the development of an interpretive center for the MHNHA.

Although this objective has existed since early in the management planning process for the MHNHA as part of this plan's Foundation Statement, it is recognized that the establishment of interpretive centers can be an ambitious and risky venture. In general terms, many interpretive centers across the country, including some associated with National Heritage Areas, have struggled financially and have even had to close their doors because of insufficient funding. While this trend should not be ignored, opportunities for success can still exist for some specific types of interpretive centers. As this plan's earlier Market Assessment concluded, there is clear demand for additional interpretive space for some of the MHNHA's primary interpretive themes – particularly Native American heritage. Much of the future success will depend upon a center's theme, its location, the existence of competing centers/attractions, its foundation of strategic planning, its organizational and funding structure, its marketing, and its substance. Thus, *potential new interpretive centers must be considered on a case-by-case basis.* It is beyond the scope of this Management Plan to include a feasibility study for any one particular interpretive center. **Rather than propose that the MHHAA will initiate one or more specific interpretive centers, this objective is to propose a process by which the MHHAA can thoughtfully explore the establishment of one or more centers, regardless of whether any centers ultimately come to fruition.**

Potential Concepts for Interpretive Centers

This Management Plan's Interpretive Plan and Business Plan will go into more detail on potential interpretive centers, but the following is a summary of the key ideas. The potential for interpretive centers served as the basis for the Management Plan's Alternatives that are typically developed for NHA management plans. In that section of this plan, it was proposed that a hybrid Alternative

combining “Alternative C: Thematic Multi-Anchor Interpretation” and “Alternative F: Centralized & Northwest Gateway Interpretation” be pursued for the MHNHA as the “Preferred Alternative.” This hybrid would charge the MHNHA’s coordinating entity with exploring the development and operation the two interpretive centers featured in Alternative F (northwest gateway center in Hernando and the main center in Tupelo), while the theme-specific interpretive centers featured in Alternative C would be the responsibility of MHNHA partners. The MHNHA would function as a catalyst and technical supporter for the Alternative C theme-specific centers. The ultimate decision on whether to develop any of these potential interpretive centers will hinge upon the results of feasibility studies, which are beyond the scope of this management plan. The map below illustrates the potential locations of the various potential interpretive centers, and each is also summarized in text below this map.



Note: The hash-marked circle at Columbus reflects the potential center interpreting the secondary theme of Architecture. It is an optional center that would be partner operated.

Below is a summary of the potential interpretive centers, which are explained in greater detail in this plan's Interpretive Plan.

- Potential MHNHA-Sponsored Interpretive Centers

Only two MHNHA-sponsored centers are suggested for further exploration, but both would provide a comprehensive and balanced interpretation of all of the heritage area's interpretive themes.

Main Interpretive Center – Tupelo

This center could feature either an expanded version of the existing small interpretive center that is currently part of the MHNHA's office on East Main Street or it could feature a new center located elsewhere in Tupelo.

Gateway Interpretive Center – Hernando

This center might be smaller than the one in Tupelo, but its location on I-55 just south of Memphis would provide tremendous audience exposure to the heritage area. This section of I-55 experiences higher traffic counts than any other segment of roadway within the heritage area. Because Downtown Hernando is less than a mile from the interstate, it could be located there in an authentic historic downtown, and because this location overlaps geographically with the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area (MDNHA), there may even be potential for a joint interpretive center.

- Potential Partner-Sponsored Interpretive Centers

These centers would only be viable if sufficient local interest and funding materializes, but each would be located where the greatest concentration of cultural resources exists for their particular interpretive theme, as follows:

Native American Heritage Interpretive Center – Pontotoc or Natchez Trace near Tupelo

If located in Pontotoc, this center would leverage the existing museum already found in the downtown post office building. Also, the Chickasaw Nation has proposed building their own interpretive center to be located on the Natchez Trace near Tupelo. If that idea materializes, perhaps it could be adapted to also interpret the broader Native American story for the MHNHA.

African American Heritage Interpretive Center – Holly Springs

This center would tell the story of Ida B. Wells, Rust College, and other African American personalities, resources and stories in Holly Springs and throughout the heritage area. An ideal location would be on the downtown square to help leverage economic spin-off benefits.

Civil War Interpretive Center – Corinth

While there is rich Civil War history throughout the heritage area, Corinth has the greatest single concentration, including an extensive system of earthworks. It is also the closest community to Shiloh and its many visitors. If space within the NPS-operated Corinth Civil War Interpretive Center cannot be secured to interpret the MHNHA, another possibility might be at the NPS-owned Curlee House in Downtown Corinth.

Arts Interpretive Center: Music – Tupelo

As the birthplace of Elvis Presley, Tupelo already draws thousands of music fans annually.

Possibilities to be explored for this center might include interpreting this theme within the MHNHA's main interpretive center in Tupelo, or perhaps even doing so at the Elvis Presley Birthplace & Museum.

Arts Interpretive Center: Literature
– Oxford

In cooperation with the University of Mississippi, this center might be able to benefit from the university's related collections. A "storefront" location at the downtown public square could be a great compliment to that area's many businesses, including the highly-acclaimed bookstores.



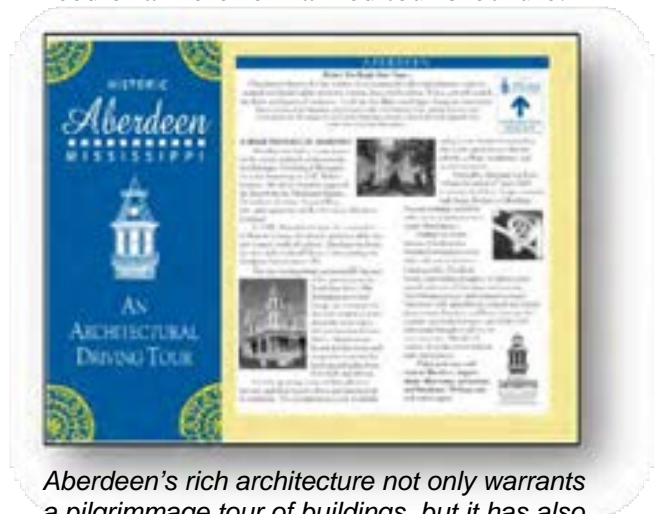
The only secondary theme of the MHNHA is architecture. Given the rich architectural tradition of Columbus, that might be an appropriate location if an interpretive center were to be included for that interpretive theme as well.

It is critical to keep in mind that, with regard to the concept of partnering with any of the existing or proposed attractions that are owned and operated by other entities, their willingness participate will obviously be necessary. Also, as noted elsewhere, this Management Plan is not proposing the development of interpretive centers, but – instead – *the exploration of such centers through feasibility studies.* Finally, *National Heritage Areas cannot acquire property using federal NHA funding* and any development that might significantly impact the environment would require *environmental review per NEPA* and other related environmental regulations.

Objective 2-E: Utilize a variety of tools and media for interpretation, including regional theme-based tours/itineraries, as well as printed materials and new and emerging technologies.

- Encourage the development of theme-based tours at the community level where they currently do not exist, but could exist. Many of the MHNHA's larger communities and those with particularly rich collections of architecture, such as Columbus, Oxford, and Aberdeen, already have web-based and printed tour brochures highlighting their local history and architecture. Other communities, however, lack such interpretive tools. Okolona, for example, has an especially strong Civil War history. While information on the community's history can be accessed on the Chamber of Commerce's website, they are currently in

need of a more formalized tour brochure.



Aberdeen's rich architecture not only warrants a pilgrimage tour of buildings, but it has also prompted the creation of a tour brochure.

- Develop a series of driving tours tied to the MHNHA’s primary interpretive themes. For maps of this Management Plan’s various proposed tours, please see the Interpretive Plan. However, below is just one example. This map for the Civil War theme has been broken up into multiple sub-tours that are associated with individual military campaigns, as well as separate routes connecting those sub-tours. Since the MHNHA’s existing website already features a series of excellent theme-based trip “itineraries,” it will be important to coordinate the website’s existing itineraries with the proposed tour routes in the Interpretive Plan. That coordination may include adapting the existing itineraries, as well as creating new ones.



This proposed Civil War Tour for the MHNHA is organized around three key military campaigns, and it features two east-west “connector routes.”

- Work to expand the fledgling Roots of American Music Trail. There is the opportunity of greatly increasing the marketing exposure and tourism potential of the region by designating a tour route focused on the Roots of American music that might incorporate Tupelo. This idea stems from an effort sponsored by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) and the Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments. Their idea features a tourism trail linking Nashville and Muscle Shoals, Alabama, along the Natchez Trace Parkway. However, it does not extend west to Memphis via Tupelo, as perhaps it should. Formalization of a broader triangle routing, development of interpretive sites and packages, marketing strategies, and recruitment of tour companies would establish a new format. This tour could form a triangle linking Nashville, Muscle Shoals, Tupelo and Memphis. The tour would be marketed through bus tour companies, but also for self-driving, biking, and motorcyclists. The advantage of such an effort, despite the fact that much of the tour is located outside of the MHNHA, is that it leverages a much larger and broader audience with national and international exposure. This concept is now moving forward for the Nashville to Muscle Shoals segment, and cell phone-based interpretation is in the process of being created.
- Utilize a variety of media for interpretation of theme-based tours.

Maps & Brochures – Maps and brochures are a very traditional approach to interpreting theme-based tours, but they are still quite effective regardless of more recent technological advances in interpretation. Most brochures for tour routes include a map. Such maps typically use symbols to identify sites on a particular map, and those symbols are coordinated with associated text about the sites within the brochure. Brochures of this type for the tour routes proposed above will be available on the MHNHA’s website in a digital format that can be accessed by computers and cell phones, as well as in a downloadable format (PDF) that can then be printed and used as a hard copy.

At present, the MHNHA website features a series of “Itineraries,” which includes American Cultural Icons, The March to Freedom (civil rights), Crossroads of the Confederacy, Southern Architecture, Outdoor Recreation, and Educational Heritage. While these are excellent itineraries, they are not organized consistently with the recommended four primary interpretive themes and they do not feature downloadable brochures. Therefore, the website and interpretive tools will be revised to be consistent with this plan.

Telecommunications Tools – There are a variety of telecommunications technologies that can be used for interpretation as well. A younger audience, in particular, uses such technology. Examples of telecommunications tools that will be considered for the thematic tours include the following:

- Cell Phone Audio Interpretation: One approach is to provide a call-in phone number on either a tour brochure or a marker at the site that is being interpreted.
- Cell Phone Apps: Applications software, also known as an application or an “app,” is computer software designed to help the user to perform specific tasks. Apps can be free, GPS-enabled, and provide multimedia tours of historic areas via Smartphones.
- QR Codes: QR codes, which is an abbreviation for “Quick Response Codes,” is the trademark

for a type of matrix barcode (or two-dimensional code). For historic interpretation, QR codes are linked to telecommunications resources that provide the same type of interpretive experiences (audio and video) described above for apps.

As one example of an NHA utilizing telecommunications, the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition is currently working with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation on the creation of a “Virtual Visitors Center” accessible on the internet and via Smartphones. Many of their partners, including Cuyahoga Valley National Park, are excited about this project since they believe it will save money and resources by allowing less reliance on paper brochures. *See this plan’s Interpretive Plan for more detail on telecommunications tools.*

Interpretive Exhibits

Two key types of exhibits for the MHNHA will include wayside exhibits and interpretive center exhibits. Wayside exhibits typically consist of a vertical, horizontal or angled two-dimensional panel that combines text and graphics to tell a story. Such exhibits are made durably to withstand the elements, and they are intended primarily to be read by a person standing in front of it, although they can sometimes be read by an individual in a vehicle parked extremely close to the exhibit. Most such exhibits made today are modeled after those utilized by the National Park Service (NPS).



Outdoor interpretive wayside exhibits should provide a hierarchy of information and high-quality graphics.

In designing exhibits for interpretive centers, it is important that potential new centers utilize “best practices” for exhibit design. Good exhibits do not need to rely heavily on the existence of artifacts, as the most important factor is that information and stories are conveyed in a simple but engaging manner. When possible, technology will be employed to help tell the stories. Such technology will be both visual and audio-based. The possibilities of computer-generated techniques are virtually endless.

Please see this plan’s Interpretive Plan for more detail on interpretive exhibits.

- Develop a series of brochures for the MHNHA. As described in greater detail in this document’s Interpretive Plan, the heritage area will have – among others - the following two types of brochures:
 - *MHNHA general brochure:* This brochure will provide an overview of the heritage area, including a general summary of the four primary themes and a map.
 - *Theme-based brochures:* These four theme-based brochures will feature information on the respective themes, as well as a map for a driving tour tied to the theme.

These brochures will include a website address for additional information, and they will be available in both hard copy format and a PDF digital format for downloading off of the MHNHA's website.

- Develop a "coffee table" type book for the MHNHA. The local historic society of many communities will produce a hardbound book having strong graphics to highlight the history and remaining cultural resources of the particular community. Such an approach would be useful to the MHNHA not only to convey the themes and stories more widely, but also as a means of fund raising for the heritage area. To create such a book, the MHNHA will be the sponsoring organization and partner with one of the area's universities to draft the text and secure historic photographs and similar graphics. A local photographer will also be needed to photograph existing resources. As with most concepts in this plan, this idea will be contingent upon available funding.
- Program the MHNHA with living history demonstrations at various key sites. The following demonstration types might occur at the following sites tied to the MHNHA's four primary interpretive themes:

Native American demonstrations: Flint-knapping, food preparation, pottery making, music, basket making, and ceremonial dancing activities should occur at sites such as the various mound sites along the Natchez Trace Parkway and any potential new Native American Heritage interpretive center.



Many Native American living history demonstrations are particularly appealing to children, such as basket weaving.

Civil War demonstrations: Civil War demonstrations (camp life, firing long arms and artillery, etc.) already occur at Corinth and should occur more frequently at other key sites in the MHNHA, such as Brice's Crossroads, Tupelo, Okolona, and Iuka. Of course, aggressive promotion of such demonstrations will be the key to their success, and they should generally be coordinated with other activities that would draw attendees on their own.

Music demonstrations: Activities related to song writing, playing music, and recording music should occur at a Music interpretive center if one should be established. Such programs could be modeled after those of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland and similar museums.

- Program the MHNHA with living history demonstrations at various events. The types of demonstrations described above could also be organized to occur at various special events throughout the NHA. Because of the need to sometimes bring history to the audience, rather than audiences being attracted to a particular site, MHNHA-sponsored demonstrations will be targeted to those events attracting the largest audiences, particularly those having a theme related to the heritage area. The MHNHA may need to compensate participants for their expenses in at least some instances.

Goal 3: Preserve and enhance the Heritage Area’s numerous cultural and natural resources, particularly those with a clear link to the MHNHA’s primary themes.

Objective 3-A: Adopt a set of minimum standards of quality to insure “tourism readiness” for partner sites and attractions, as well as for an incentive to emerging sites and attractions.

• Tourism-ready standards will be based on the following “best practices” considerations:

- *Wayfinding* – The site should be relatively easy for visitors to find.
- *Accessibility* – The site should be easy for pedestrians to travel both to and within the site, including meeting the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements
- *Parking* – Parking should be available in sufficient amounts based upon current/future visitation numbers to the site. It might include on-site or nearby off-site parking lots, as well as adjacent on-street parking. Bus parking may be needed for key attractions.
- *Visitor Comfort Amenities* – Bathrooms, water fountains, picnic tables, and similar amenities should be available for visitors to have a positive visitor experience.
- *Days and Hours of Operation* – The site should be open to the public within a reasonable range of days and times so that most visitors can enjoy it. While it is recognized that some site operators may have religious and/or personal reasons for closing on Sundays, that is also a key tourism day, so this consideration can sometimes be challenging to negotiate.
- *Interpretation* – The approach to interpretation should be effective and compelling, and the information should be accurate.
- *Planning* – The site has a plan in place (written procedures, benchmark analysis, etc.) for how it will assess visitation numbers and potential impacts to the site and the surrounding context.



The Strawberry Plains Audubon Center at Holly Springs is an example of a clearly “tourist ready” site in the MHNHA.

Because of the wide range of site types that these considerations will be applied to, a quantifiable scoring system will be difficult to craft. Instead, each site might be evaluated with the criteria above based on a range of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest score and 10 being the highest.

- Tourism-ready standards will initially be applied by a special committee of representatives from other NHAs, and then applied by a local committee of the MHHAA. Potential committee

members for the initial round of evaluations might consist of staff from other nearby NHAs, such as the Tennessee Civil War NHA, the Mississippi Hills NHA, and the Mississippi Delta NHA. Such a group will provide greater objectivity and provide some “political cover.” Once the initial round of evaluations occurs by this committee, the locally-based ongoing committee for this function might consist of CVB/tourism representatives, local historians and preservationists, and MHHAA representatives. For more detail on these committees, please see this plan’s supporting Implementation Plan.

- The designation of “tourist ready” will be used to prioritize which sites within the MHNHA are most aggressively promoted, as well as which ones receive technical assistance and funding if available. Whether a site is designated as “tourist ready” or “emerging,” there are benefits for either scenario, as explained below:
 - *Tourist Ready Sites:* The advantage to this designation is that these sites can be vigorously promoted as part of the broader MHNHA, as they meet a minimum level of quality that reinforces the image and reputation of the heritage area rather than detracting from it.
 - *Emerging Sites:* While emerging sites have not yet achieved a level that would warrant their strong promotion within the MHNHA, the positive aspect of such designation is that emerging sites would receive the highest level of priority when competing with other sites for grants and technical assistance if the MHNHA is able to provide such resources.

Objective 3-B: Provide technical assistance and collaborate with appropriate agencies to identify sources of grants to partner and emerging sites and attractions.

As indicated above, while both tourist-ready and emerging sites might be eligible for MHNHA technical assistance and grants – to the extent that it might be available, the emerging sites are generally considered to be in greater need. Thus, they will be given the top priority when the MHHAA provides assistance and pursues grants for such sites. Potential agencies for the MHHAA to collaborate with might include local planning and economic development agencies, chambers of commerce, convention and visitors bureaus, regional planning and development districts, Main Street programs, the area’s universities, the State (including the transportation, preservation and tourism agencies), federal agencies (Appalachian Regional Commission, Tennessee Valley Authority, US Department of Housing and Urban Development, US Economic Development Administration, etc.), and area non-profits such as CREATE. *A key needed area of assistance for many sites is strategic planning.*

- Technical Assistance: Technical assistance will be needed for a variety of issues, including historic resources preservation, site enhancement, curatorial services, interpretation, and marketing. This plan’s Business Plan identifies potential funding sources for funding to hire individuals with technical expertise on an as-needed basis. Also, although the MHHAA staff will remain relatively small, staff members will be able to provide at least some level of technical assistance to partner sites and attractions needing help.

- **Grants:** In general, emerging sites will be given priority over the other partner sites that have already “arrived” with respect to tourist readiness. However, that general principle does not mean that meritorious projects of tourist-ready partners will not also be considered. When pursuing grants on behalf of the heritage area’s various partners, the following criteria will be applied by the MHHAA in determining which ones to assist:
 - *Extent of Need:* The pursuit of grants should be limited to applicants who truly need it to achieve their missions.
 - *Benefits to the MHNHA:* Although grant funding might benefit a particular applicant, that does not mean it will be significantly beneficial to the heritage area. Projects that relate directly to the MHNHA’s four primary interpretive themes will be considered particularly beneficial. One litmus test for this consideration is “How does this project relate to the MHNHA Mission Statement?” Furthermore, projects considered for funding will be measured against this plan’s stated goals and objectives to insure consistency as another means of determining the project’s likely benefits to the MHNHA.
 - *Amount of Match & Leveraging:* In general, potential grant applicants who can match the sought funding with the highest percentage of match funding will be given a higher level of consideration for assistance. In fact, many grant programs will have specific match requirements. Likewise, leveraging other funding sources will be viewed favorably. While cash should be at least part of the potential applicant’s match, in-kind services should also be considered.
 - *Capability of the Prospective Grantee:* This consideration relates to the abilities of the entity seeking the MHHAA’s assistance in pursuing funding. Partners with sufficient staffing to successfully implement the proposed project and with a positive track record on similar projects will be given the highest consideration for assistance in pursuing grants.

It is anticipated that most grant funding for MHNHA partners will come from other sources. However, to the extent that the MHHAA might at some point be in a position to offer grant funding directly, grants will not be given for operational costs of sites or the acquisition of property. While it may not need to be completely precluded, funding of physical improvements should be allowed only in special cases, if at all. Any grant program of the MHHAA will require a clear and systematic approach, including annual funding cycles, an application for those seeking funding, and the objective application of the criteria, such as those listed above. It will also require project monitoring, compliance, reporting, and similar activities. A grants manager may also be needed who is familiar with federal regulations such as NEPA and Section 106, matching requirements, and reporting requirements.

Objective 3-C: Work with existing land trust organizations and willing land owners to protect lands through conservation easements.

Conservation easements restrict the development of natural lands, while allowing the private owners to maintain ownership and use of the land. Land trusts are the entities that typically enter

an agreement with the subject property owner and enforce the easement. The Mississippi Land Trust (MLT) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) conservation entity with the mission of preserving open space throughout Mississippi. While there are other land trusts in the state that focus on specific areas, such as the coast and the southeast, no such groups exist specifically for the northeast “Hill” country. The MLT presently has only a few easements within the MHNHA, as most are concentrated in the Delta and just east and south of the Delta. It is noteworthy that *NHAs cannot acquire an interest in real estate using federal funding and have no land use and development regulatory authority*, but they can work with other groups as a catalyst to encourage easements.

While a strong preservation focus of the MHNHA will be on man-made cultural resources, natural resources are also important in serving as an appealing context that adds to a tourist’s visitor experience, as well as for the benefit of the heritage area’s residents. Also, depending upon the potential level of land value loss that an easement might cause, there are federal income tax benefits available to those who donate conservation easements. The MHHAA will work closely with the MLT in promoting the concept of easements and in identifying potential lands to conserve. In particular, a focus will be placed on the following two land types:

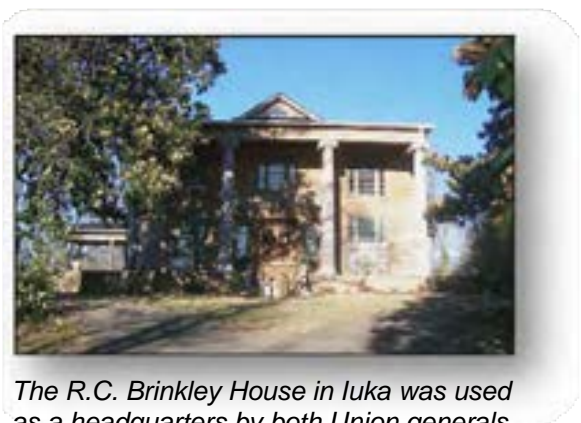
- 1) Lands containing (or adjacent to) historic sites and cultural attractions having a strong relationship to the MHNHA’s four primary interpretive themes, and
- 2) Lands that can be linked to other lands to create green corridors for outdoor recreation, such as greenways located along streams and floodplains.

Objective 3-D: Partner with existing historic preservation organizations and other entities to aid willing property owners in protecting historic resources through facade easements.

Facade easements function similarly to conservation easements. Instead of protecting land, however, they protect buildings. As in the case of conservation easements, there are often federal tax incentives available for those properties listed on (or eligible for) the National Register of Historic Places. This type of easement is an agreement between a willing owner and a willing easement-holding entity to preserve a historic building. Most facade easements focus on the building’s exterior, but, if written to do so, they can also protect interiors. The Mississippi Heritage Trust is one potential candidate for accepting facade easements.



Although the MLT has been most active in the state’s Delta region, there is strong potential to preserve more land within the MHNHA.



The R.C. Brinkley House in Iuka was used as a headquarters by both Union generals Grant and Rosecrans. It would be a good candidate for a conservation easement if the owner is willing.

The MHHAA will build a strong working relationship with the Mississippi Heritage Trust, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, and similar groups to continually look for façade easement opportunities. The MHHAA will promote the existence of easements as a preservation tool, including their many benefits. To the extent that sufficient staffing capacity will exist, it will also help easement-accepting entities identify candidate properties and serve as a liaison between such groups and property owners interested in pursuing a façade easement. It is noteworthy that organizations such as the Mississippi Land Trust can also accept façade easements for buildings that are part of a land conservation easement property if they so desire.

Objective 3-E: Assist communities within the MHNHA with technical assistance to establish public policy tools which help preserve heritage assets and reinforce community character.

While there are several areas whereby the MHHAA can provide assistance or seek assistance from others, most can be categorized as preservation policies, community enhancement policies, and “other” types of policies. A summary of such policies is provided below, but more detail is provided in this Management Plan’s Implementation Plan.

- Preservation Policies

If the qualities that make the MHNHA special and unique are not conserved, there will be nothing to attract visitors. Thus, the following types of policies should be pursued for communities that may need them, but do not have them:

- *Open Space Planning* – Planning to conserve natural open space can be an important approach to preserving environmentally sensitive resources and open space in general, as well as to avoid fiscally-inefficient sprawl. Such planning can be implemented by adjusting zoning, encouraging conservation easements, and developing connected open space systems such as through greenways. The MHHAA can also promote federal tax incentives for conservation easements.

- *Historic Zoning* – Although there are several communities within the MHNHA that have a comprehensive historic preservation program (historic resource inventories, locally-designated historic districts, and historic zoning), others within the heritage area will be encouraged to pursue a preservation program. As part of such a program, historic zoning would regulate demolitions, building alterations, building relocations, and new infill development within historic downtowns and neighborhoods. While *NHAs have no regulatory authority related to local land use and development*, they can provide consultation to local governments that have such powers.

- *Preservation Incentives* – Because regulations need to be balanced with incentives for successful preservation, the MHHAA will provide assistance to help local governments identify incentives for preservation. One of the most common examples of local-level incentives is property tax abatements in which a property’s assessed value is frozen for a specific amount of time so that the property’s assessed value does not go up after a building rehabilitation. The MHHAA will also promote federal and state tax credits for the rehabilitation of historic buildings.

- Community Enhancement Policies

Examples of public policies that can enhance communities within the MHNHA include corridor planning and zoning, revitalization programs, and wayfinding, as summarized below.

- *Corridor Planning & Zoning* – A key threat to the effective branding of the MHNHA is the many unattractive corridors connecting communities and key attractions. Almost all of the larger communities have “gateways” featuring strip commercial development corridors lined with large competing signs, little landscaping, no sidewalks, and expansive parking lots punctuated with one-story franchise architecture. For most heritage tourists, this environment is the antithesis of what they are seeking in a heritage area. To provide a more inviting first and last impression, there are two techniques that can be applied in unison to these corridors. The first is a planning and design project that would transform a highway into an attractive rural parkway or a multi-modal urban boulevard, depending upon the surrounding context. The other complimentary technique is to revise the zoning and development codes of the adjacent lands to require a higher quality of development. The MHNHA can provide advice to local governments on such issues.

- *Revitalization Programs* – As noted throughout this plan, historic downtowns are the “backbone” of the MHNHA. One useful model for downtown revitalization is the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Main Street program. The Main Street program has existed for several decades now and it has a strong track record across the country. It utilizes the “four point approach” of organization, design, economic restructuring, and promotion. Several MHNHA communities are already Main Street communities, but more should be designated, and even many of the designated communities can use additional help.



The Mississippi Main Street program is a critical organization for the future success of the MHNHA. Downtowns are the location of much of a community’s history, authenticity, uniqueness, and locally owned businesses.

- *Wayfinding* – Wayfinding is the process of utilizing signage and similar tools to guide visitors so they can find their way around a particular area. Effective wayfinding is critical to the success of heritage areas, as it is critical that visitors can navigate the area and find their destinations. While brochures with maps have already been addressed and there are various digital means of wayfinding, such as I-phone maps and GPS (global positioning systems), signage remains a staple for wayfinding.

Goal 4: Encourage community enhancement and the development of tourism “infrastructure.”

Objective 4-A: Aid communities in identifying sources of technical assistance for creating public policy strategies which improve quality of life and enhance community character.

See specific recommendations under Goal 3 – Objective 3-E above regarding how the MHAA can help communities acquire technical assistance to positively transform unattractive strip commercial corridors, revitalize downtowns, plan for open space, and enhance wayfinding. This plan’s Implementation Plan provides yet greater detail on this topic.

Objective 4-B: Explore the development of a wayfaring and wayfinding program that identifies the NHA boundaries along major thoroughfares within the region and also identifies key heritage area communities and heritage assets.

Because some objectives of this plan can help to achieve multiple goals, there is necessarily repetition of some objectives that fall under multiple goals. Wayfinding was previously addressed as part of Objective 3-E and is expanded on in greater detail within the Implementation Plan. Likewise, gateway signage welcoming visitors to the MHNHA is already addressed in Objective 1-E of this Strategies section.

Objective 4-C: Support the development and/or enhancement of outdoor recreational facilities and opportunities.

- Work with one or more partnering entities to develop a greenway system along the heritage area’s key streams and linking them with important sites and existing greenway systems. The majority of existing trails in the MHNHA are not part of an extensive and formal greenway system. Most of the trails in the area are primarily associated with parks and civic destinations and are intended for recreation and exercise rather than the additional objectives of transportation and linkages. One such example is the one-mile Oxford Depot Trail, a “rails to trails” project. The most extensive and ambitious greenway project in the MHNHA is the Tanglefoot Trail, another rails to trails project that is nearing completion. Stretching over 43 miles from New Albany to Houston, it follows the former Ripley Railroad (later renamed the

Gulf & Ship Island Railroad) built by William Faulkner’s great-grandfather (Colonel William C. Falkner) in 1872.



The final stages of development of the Tanglefoot Trail are now occurring in Houston.

The MHHAA will support greenways, but not actually implement their development. A greenway plan should be created for the entire MHNHA, and the MHHAA will serve as the catalyst organization that coordinates the plan's preparation through a joint effort with a variety of relevant entities. Among the potential partners for the MHHAA to pursue the development of a greenway system throughout the heritage area are the following:

- Tennessee Tombigbee Development Authority
 - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 - Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)
 - NPS's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program
 - Planning & Development Districts (PDDs) within the MHNHA
 - Municipal parks and recreation departments
- Once the greenway system is more fully developed, encourage the sponsoring entities to establish a program for individuals and groups to “adopt” segments of the greenway for on-going maintenance and beautification efforts.

Similar to “adopt a highway” programs, such a program entails groups or individuals committing to help physically maintain specific segments of a trail or greenway in return for recognition on a small sign. It is proposed that the entity (or entities) that develop and operate the greenways manage such a program, but with support from the MHHAA. Such support might be in the form of promoting the program at MHNHA events, on the MHNHA website, and perhaps by even sponsoring a segment of a greenway. An adoption program will require:



Sample adoption program sponsor signage

- A map to designate greenway segments for adoption
- A set of minimum standards of maintenance that adopting entities/individuals must meet
- A standardized sign to identify sponsors along their respective greenway segments

Sponsors should also be recognized in other ways, such as on the greenway entity's website and perhaps during annual awards events.

- Develop promotional and interpretive materials related to outdoor recreation, such as a trail guide book, a map highlighting access points to rivers, information on the plant and animal species of the heritage area, and similar materials. It is important that the MHHAA not “reinvent the wheel” on this issue, as much of the information already exists in various forms. Two good sources of information on plant and animal species and other environmental resources are the National Park Service (including the Natchez Trace Parkway) and the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). Also, this plan's Background Report includes an inventory of endangered plant and animal species and fragile landscapes within the appendices section. By starting with readily available information from organizations such as these, the MHHAA can integrate and package it into attractive and user-friendly materials in both digital and hardcopy formats.

- Encourage and promote the development of outdoor recreational businesses and services, such as outfitter stores, canoe rental and drop-off/pick-up services, and a network of outdoor guides who will take customers hiking, cycling, fishing, canoeing, and similar outdoor recreational activities. The establishment and/or recruitment of any businesses is an economic development issue, so the MHHA will work closely with Chambers of Commerce and other economic development entities throughout the heritage area. For jurisdictions having financial incentives for businesses, those incentives will be promoted by the MHHA.

The MHHA will also promote the area's outfitter stores, canoe rental businesses, outdoor guides, and related businesses in its marketing materials and website if possible. While many of these types of businesses will be located in relatively remote areas near the natural resources to be enjoyed (streams, lakes, trails, etc.), outfitter stores are a good fit for historic downtowns. Consequently, Main Street programs and other downtown revitalization entities will also be allies of the MHHA for this effort.



Keel Kreek Outdoors is an outfitter based in Pontotoc.

Goal 5: Establish MHNHA as a viable and attractive visitor destination through effective branding and innovative marketing.

Objective 5-A: Promote existing special events tied to the history, cultural traditions, and themes of the Heritage Area, and encourage the creation of new such events.

- Existing Special Events – The MHNHA already benefits from many unique festivals and events, such as Pioneer Days (French Camp), the Howlin Wolf Blues Festival (West Point), the Elvis Festival (Tupelo), the Ragtime Music Festival (Starkville), the Tennessee Williams Festival (Columbus), the Hummingbird Migration and Nature Festival (Holly Springs), and the Southern Literary Festival (Blue Mountain). There is also a growing number of sporting events such as pro fishing tournaments, golf tournaments, 10k runs, and softball and other amateur athletic tournaments. Disc Golf has become popular in the region, and Tishomingo State Park has developed several major disc golf courses and attracts hundreds to its tournaments. These events are spread throughout the region, but with some concentrations in the larger communities.

According to this plan's Market Assessment, the MHNHA could capture a festival audience of up to about 224,000, an increase expected by 2017 of 12.8%. Atlanta, Memphis, and Nashville will generate the fastest growth in festival-goers captured by the MHNHA. However, the largest share of attendance would still be generated by residents of the 30-county heritage area region. Festival audience growth within the MHNHA will be relatively slow compared with audience growth generated by other core markets and other areas of the country. Since the vast majority of festival attendance is generated from local sources, the lack of audience growth within the 30-county core market suggests slow growth in support to the MHNHA festival market. The area only generates major festival attendance in the 20,000 to 30,000 range (with all event attendance estimated at around 100,000). This analysis indicates that *the market is under-served for larger festivals and could potentially attract larger regional and national audiences*. With current attendance at less than one-tenth of regional festival potential, there is the opportunity to expand on the existing festival offering.

- Potential New Events - There are several music festivals in the region that focus on specific genres. For example, there is the Down from the Hills Heritage Music Festival & Sparks Family Music Festival (Bluegrass), the North Mississippi Hill Country Picnic (Hill Country Blues), and Elvis Fest (Rock n Roll). There is also the opportunity of greatly increasing the marketing exposure and tourism potential of the region by establishing a regional music festival that captures the broad range of musical styles and genres that have been associated with the Mississippi Hills. This festival could include Hill Country Blues, Country & Bluegrass Music, and Rock n Roll, all of which have benefited tremendously from the Hills' influence. The music festival would complement, rather than compete with, other festivals and events in the region, and it would help strengthen the region's unique brand. The festival would bring together very diverse fans who share a love of all types of music, and diverse food and crafts would add to the cultural milieu. Key components of this festival would include:
 - A location with good access to key metro markets (i.e., Atlanta, Memphis, Nashville) and representative of the diverse geographic landscape of the MHNHA
 - A focus on Blues, Bluegrass, and Rock n Roll with a local connection

- An education component that builds on the region's unique musical contributions and characteristics
- Tie-ins that build on other music festivals, rather than competing with them
- Tie-ins with regional music marketing, including the "American Music Triangle" that includes Memphis, Nashville and Tupelo, as well as the "Roots of American Music," which ties together Nashville and Muscle Shoals, but could be expanded to include the MHNHA and Memphis
- Tie-ins with a more detailed local music tour route for destination travelers to the MHNHA

Objective 5-B: Continue to maintain the MHNHA website, which highlights primary themes and key heritage attractions, features tours tied to the themes and a schedule of events, and includes links to other relevant websites.

As addressed previously in Objective 1-E, this objective has already been achieved, at least in its initial stage, via the website "www.mississippihills.org." This excellent website features high quality graphics and an extensive amount of useful information for people interest in experiencing the MHNHA. Once this Management Plan is adopted, the website will need to be slightly adjusted to be consistent with the plan. As one example, the website currently reflects four primary theme boxes to click onto for more information. Those themes include African-American Heritage, Architecture, the Arts, and the Civil War, and each has a suggested trip itinerary. Although three of these primary themes have remained intact per this plan, the Architecture theme has been demoted to a secondary theme, while Native American Heritage has been added as a primary theme. Thus, the website will require some minor tweaking to be consistent with the ideas ultimately confirmed by this plan. The website's existing itineraries will be coordinated with the proposed theme-based tours of this plan's Interpretive Plan, and new itineraries will be created for tours not already existing on the website.

Objective 5-C: Utilize conventional means (ads, brochures, maps, rack cards), as well as internet-based social networking and other new and emerging technologies (downloadable phone apps, GPS, QR codes) to promote the Heritage Area and its resources to a variety of audiences.

- Conventional Means to Promote the MHNHA

Below is a summary of how each of the three most conventional means of promotion will be used to promote the MHNHA:

Print Ads – Print advertisements for the MHNHA would most likely be for travel magazines and others such as "Southern Living" and "Garden & Gun." Such ads would not be inexpensive and, consequently, should be limited in their number and extremely targeted if implemented at all. For example, an ad for the MHNHA might be coordinated with an article related to the area. Such ads will be carefully considered based upon available funding versus projected benefits. Also, the MHNHA will consider a joint-marketing effort with the adjacent Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area.

Brochures – Brochures will be made available in both hard-copy format and a digital downloadable format on the MHNHA's website. At a minimum, there will be a separate

brochure for the following topics: 1) the MHNHA overview; 2) Native American Heritage; 3) African American Heritage; 4) the Arts; and 5) the Civil War. Fortunately, the MHNHA overview brochure already exists. To the degree that funding is available, hard-copy brochures will be made available at all of the typical locations, including interstate visitor centers, hotels, key restaurants, attractions, and similar sites. See this plan's Interpretive Plan for more detailed ideas on the development of effective brochures.

Maps – Maps are a critical item for any effective heritage area. NHAs naturally place a substantial focus on geography. In particular, maps are needed for navigating theme-based tours. Maps for the MHNHA can be integrated into a variety of formats, including brochures, the MHNHA website, and other marketing materials. In fact, this plan's Interpretive Plan features a series of maps illustrating theme-based tours, and these maps might be adapted for promoting the MHNHA and for using in MHNHA brochures.

- New/Emerging Technologies to Promote the MHNHA

As previously addressed in Objective 1-E under "Utilize social media to garner attention for the MHNHA," examples of social media for the MHNHA to leverage include Facebook, Twitter, and Linked-In. Being effective in the use of social media requires both knowledge of the medium and frequent interaction. If the MHNHA staff lacks expertise and experience in utilizing social media, either a Board member or issue-based Committee member will be asked to help with this effort.

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Mississippi Hills
National Heritage Area

INTERPRETIVE PLAN SECTION

Prepared for the:
**Mississippi Hills
Heritage Area Alliance**

Revised:
June 4, 2014



A. Introduction

The Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA) contains a varied and rich assortment of historic, cultural, and natural resources. Many resources are listed in the National Register of Historic Places or in the Mississippi Register. There are also several federal, state and local parks and wildlife management areas. Some resources have existing organizations dedicated to the interpretation of a major theme of the heritage area. Just one example is the NPS-operated Civil War Interpretive Center in Corinth. Other resources exist as annual festivals that help interpret a theme, such as the Tupelo Elvis Festival. There are numerous historical markers throughout the heritage area that support one or more of the major interpretive themes or sub-themes. Visitor centers in the heritage area offer an array of informational brochures. Some of these brochures are city or county-level products listing sites, events, and often including maps. Some brochures are site or event-specific, while others provide directions for a walking tour of historic architectural sites in neighborhoods and towns. The primary goal of this Interpretive Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area is to: 1) identify the requirements for interpretation; 2) recap the interpretive themes of the heritage area and introduce the interpretive statements for each; 3) evaluate the current approaches and effectiveness of interpretation throughout the MHNHA; and 4) recommend specific techniques for interpreting the stories and resources of the MHNHA.

B. Requirements for Interpretation

FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

Interpretation is one of the key components of an NHA management plan and figures prominently in the legislation establishing the heritage area. The various requirements related to interpretation as stated in the legislation for the management plan include the following:

- *establishing and maintaining interpretive exhibits and programs within the Heritage Area;*
- *increasing public awareness of, and appreciation for, natural, historical, cultural, archaeological, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area;*
- *restoring historic sites and buildings in the Heritage area that are consistent with the themes of the Heritage Area;*
- *provide recommendations for the preservation, conservation, enhancement, funding, management, interpretation, development, and promotion of the cultural, historical, archaeological, natural, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area;*
- *specify existing and potential sources of funding or economic development strategies to protect, enhance, interpret, fund, manage, and develop the Heritage Area;*
- *provide recommendations for educational and interpretive programs to provide information to the public on the resources of the Heritage Area;*

FOUNDATION STATEMENT REQUIREMENTS

The MHNHA's interpretive themes are based, in part, on the Mission Statement and Foundation Statement of this heritage area's Management Plan. The themes are intended to ensure that the interpretive goals reach the NHA's audience and meet the purpose of the heritage area. The Mission of the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area per this management plan is to:

“The mission of the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance is to preserve, enhance, interpret, and promote the cultural and heritage assets of the hills region. Its key objectives are to increase jobs and visitation to the region, and to develop and support projects and programs that sustain the heritage tourism industry in regional communities.”

After a series of public meetings and workshops, a number of goals and objectives were formulated for the management plan as part of the federally required Foundation Statement. One of these was Goal 2, *“Conduct research, education and interpretation related to the MHNHA's primary themes as a means of documenting and telling the story of the Heritage Area's unique cultural heritage.”* Specific objectives included:

- Objective 2-A: Support, sponsor or conduct additional research into MHNHA themes.
- Objective 2-B: Work with appropriate partners to establish an oral history program utilizing high school and/or college students within the MHNHA to record histories from individuals that address the Heritage Area's primary themes.
- Objective 2-C: Partner with various entities to create an educational curriculum within the NHA's grade schools and high schools centered around the MHNHA's primary themes.
- Objective 2-D: Explore the development of an interpretive center for the MHNHA.
- Objective 2-E: Utilize a variety of tools and media for interpretation, including regional theme-based tours/itineraries, as well as printed materials and new and emerging technologies.

It is noteworthy that, in transforming these goals and objectives into the plan's subsequent Strategies section, there have been some slight modifications. For example, Objective 2-B has been adapted to add junior high school students to the possible students for recording oral histories. The other student types already suggested for this work include high school and college students.



Oral histories are a productive and interesting method of recording and conveying stories from the past.

C. Themes, Sub-Themes & Interpretive Statements

STATEMENT OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE

The Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area is nationally important because of its unique association with Native American heritage, African-American heritage, the Civil War, and the Arts in the specific form of literature and music. The Native American heritage includes both the prehistoric era in which the rich ecosystem provided sufficient sustenance to allow relatively complex mound-building societies to evolve, as well as the historic era in which the 1832 Pontotoc Creek Treaty resulted in the Chickasaws ceding all of their lands east of the Mississippi River, a nationally significant event relative to the overall Indian removal efforts of the early-nineteenth century. The area's African-American story is unique over multiple eras, including: the Corinth contraband camp serving as an early model for the balance of the Civil War; the dramatic post-war educational and political gains for African Americans, such as establishment of Shaw University (later Rust College) and Hiram Revels filling the US Senate seat once held by Jefferson Davis; and the nationally significant civil rights personalities such as Ida B. Wells and events such as James Meredith's 1962 enrollment into the University of Mississippi and Grenada's 1966 Southern Christian Leadership Conference featuring icons such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Andrew Young, and singer Joan Baez. While the MHNHA is one of multiple areas of the country with a strong Civil War history, this area witnessed the first Union successes in the Deep South with Grant's Shiloh/Corinth Campaign in 1862 and the subsequent launching of his initial efforts to capture Vicksburg. Also, Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest's victory at the Battle of Brice's Crossroads might have been the single greatest feat to cement his reputation as the "Wizard of the Saddle." The MHNHA's literary heritage is second to none having produced great southern writers such as William Faulkner, Tennessee Williams, Eudora Welty, Ida B. Wells, and John Grisham, and their writings have been richly colored by the region's landscape, history and culture. Equally as nationally important is the MHNHA's musical legacy represented by greats such as Elvis Presley, the undisputed "King of Rock and Roll" and the most popular American musician of all times.

In addition to this rich and unique history, there are countless surviving sites and cultural resources within the MHNHA that relate to the various interpretive themes. For example, there are several Indian mounds from the prehistoric era, as well as artifacts from all relevant eras in places such as Pontotoc's post office museum. Likewise, African-American heritage can be experienced through cultural resources throughout the heritage area, including the Ida B. Wells museum and Rust College in Holly Springs, as well as Catfish Alley in Columbus. The Civil War story of the Mississippi Hills can be experienced at the many battlefields, such as those at Corinth, Iuka, Brice's Crossroads, Tupelo and Okolona, surviving buildings throughout the region associated with the war, and the National Park Service's Interpretive Center at Corinth. The region's many sites and cultural resources tied to literature and music include William Faulkner's home Rowan Oak in Oxford, Tennessee William's boyhood home in Columbus, Elvis' birthplace in Tupelo, and the Howlin' Wolf Museum in West Point. Many of these resources are inventoried, documented, and commemorated through National Register of Historic Places designations.

PRIMARY INTERPRETIVE THEMES

To achieve this plan's Mission, interpretive themes for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area build upon the four primary themes of the region. These primary themes are: 1) Native American Heritage, 2) African American Heritage, 3) the Civil War, and 4) the Arts: Literature & Music. The MHNHA's one secondary theme is Architecture. Sub-themes and stories associated with the primary themes provide greater detail and insight into the area's rich trove of resources remaining on the cultural landscape.

OVERARCHING THEME: "The Mississippi Hills - Where Appalachia meets the Delta."

The following summary of the interpretive themes and sub-themes also introduces for the first time in this management plan an *Interpretive Statement* for each primary theme and sub-theme. These statements are based on the regional and national significance of the Mississippi Hills region and connect the region's resources to the themes in a tangible way. The Interpretive Statements are intended to communicate the relevance of the themes. The themes and sub-themes were presented previously in detail in the Background Study of this plan, but the overarching theme above was not.



Theme: Native-American Heritage

Interpretive Statement: Complex Native American societies that inhabited the region for thousands of years before European exploration and settlement have left physical vestiges on the landscape in the form of mounds, archaeological sites, and traces, which help tell their stories of cultural development and conflict, among each other and with the United States.

Sub-Theme: Prehistoric Era

Interpretive Statement: The region's rich ecosystem with numerous streams provided sufficient sustenance to nurture Native American cultures during the Paleoindian, Archaic, Woodland, and Mississippian periods that culminated in relatively complex mound-building societies prior to European occupation.

Sub-Theme: Historic Era

Interpretive Statement: The MHNHA is perhaps the most significant region in the country to the Chickasaw Nation, which included the 1832 Pontotoc Creek Treaty whereby the Chickasaws gave up all lands east of the Mississippi River in exchange for lands west of the Mississippi.

Theme: African-American Heritage

Interpretive Statement: The complete story of African-American history in the United States can be told through the MHNHA, as much of the most significant facets of it occurred within the region. That story progresses from slavery, to freedom and contraband camps, to the formulation of United States Colored Troop (USCT) regiments, to admirable performance of USCT soldiers at battles such as Brice's Crossroads, to the Reconstruction era political achievements of Hiram Revels and the establishment of Shaw University (now Rust College), to the twentieth century civil rights gains through nationally prominent heroes such as Ida B. Wells and James Meredith.

Sub-Theme: Freedom Arrives

Interpretive Statement: The Union Army's occupation of North Mississippi beginning in the spring of 1862 resulted in freedom for most of the area's slaves. The Contraband camp in Corinth was the first model for such camps that was replicated by countless Contraband camps across the South by the end of the war.

Sub-Theme: Reconstruction & Post-Reconstruction

Interpretive Statement: Following the Civil War, the Hills region saw some of the most significant - yet short term - educational and political gains for African Americans in the country, including the establishment of Shaw University in Holly Springs in 1866 (later Rust College) and Hiram Revels filling the US Senate seat once held by former Confederate President Jefferson Davis. Rust College graduate Ida B. Wells became one of the country's most important civil rights activists and writers in the early-20th century.

Sub-Theme: Civil Rights - An Arduous Journey

Interpretive Statement: The Hills region is one of the most significant places in the country relative to the civil rights movement, including the early activism of Ida B. Wells, James Meredith's tumultuous enrollment into the University of Mississippi in 1962, and Grenada's 1966 Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which featured icons such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Andrew Young, and singer Joan Baez.

Theme: The Civil War

Interpretive Statement: Many of the nation's most respected Civil War historians have pointed to the critical role Union victories in the Western Theatre of the war played in the ultimate outcome of the war. That theatre's earliest Union victories in the Deep South are strongly tied to the MHNHA, such as Grant's Shiloh/Corinth Campaign of 1862 and his initial efforts to capture Vicksburg, which were launched from Holly Springs and Oxford. The enduring reputation of success for generals such as Grant, Sherman and Nathan Bedford Forrest were also forged within the Mississippi Hills.

Sub-Theme: The Opening Clash of Amateur Armies

Interpretive Statement: Corinth was the target of Grant's Union forces in the spring of 1862 and prompted the first major battle in the Western Theatre of the war – the Battle of Shiloh. The subsequent capture of Corinth and related actions, such as the Battle of Iuka, represented the Union's first successful military campaign into the Deep South.

Sub-Theme: The Quest for Vicksburg Begins

Interpretive Statement: Upon securing Northeast Mississippi, Grant used the area as a springboard

to push south toward his ultimate target – the Confederate stronghold at Vicksburg. However, logistical setbacks such as Van Dorn’s raid on Union supply stores at Holly Springs stalled Grant’s progress toward Vicksburg for roughly half a year.

Sub-Theme: The Play’s Final Acts - 1864

Interpretive Statement: During the waning days of the war, Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest cemented his reputation as one of the greatest cavalry leaders in history with victories at Okolona and Brice’s Crossroads. However, the defeat of his troops under General Stephen D. Lee at Tupelo marked the beginning of the end for Confederate efforts in Mississippi.

Theme: The Arts

Interpretive Statement: While some of the other thematic categories for the MHNHA need each other in combination to create a unique cultural landscape worthy of NHA status, the arts - specifically literature and music - have a level of extraordinary national importance that can clearly stand on its own. The landscape and culture of Northeast Mississippi greatly influenced the writings of authors such as William Faulkner, Tennessee Williams, and Eudora Welty, while the life and music of Elvis embodies the MHNHA's "overarching theme" of "Where Appalachia Meets the Delta."

Sub-Theme: Literature

Interpretive Statement: Based upon writers such as Oxford’s William Faulkner, Columbus’ Tennessee Williams, the Mississippi University for Women’s Eudora Welty, Holly Spring’s Ida B. Wells, Southaven’s John Grisham, and many others, the Hills region can be considered the cradle of Southern Literature. The landscape, history and culture of the region have richly colored the writings of its authors.

Sub-Theme: Music

Interpretive Statement: Musicians such as Ruby Elzy, Elvis Presley, Howlin’ Wolf, Tammy Wynette, and Otha Turner have helped to cement the Hills region’s reputation as an incubator for diverse genres of music rooted to the South. Much of the region’s music reflects the Hill’s geographic and cultural intersection of Appalachia and the Delta.

Primary Interpretive Themes



The Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area has four primary interpretive theme categories: Native American Heritage, African American Heritage, the Civil War, and the Arts. The Arts theme category consists of only two specific art forms: literature and music.

D. Current Approaches to Interpretation

Before specific ideas to interpret the cultural resources and stories of the MHNHA can be formulated, a basic understanding of the current approaches must be achieved. Furthermore, their relative levels of effectiveness should be recognized. The summary of current approaches is split into two categories – 1) historic sites and museums and 2) downtowns and neighborhoods.

INTERPRETATION BY RESOURCE TYPE

Historic Sites & Museums

Historic Sites

The MHNHA's historic sites range from the Tennessee Williams Home in Columbus to Civil War sites and ancient Indian mounds throughout the heritage area. The historic sites are generally clustered around themes focused on renowned southern literary figures and musicians, the Civil War, historic homes, agriculture, civil rights, and Native American heritage. However, the region's Native American heritage appears to lack the level of research, interpretation, and promotion that other themes enjoy. Few of the Native American mound sites in the region are marketed or interpreted proactively, although there is written information available to help interpret many of the sites. Pharr Mounds may have the highest attendance of Native American sites due to its scale and some marketing of the site. While there are exceptions to the following generalization, below is a list of the typical components of an interpretive experience at the heritage area's various historic sites:

- Website that interprets the site using text and graphics
- Brochure that interprets the site using text and graphics
- Outdoor wayside exhibits that interpret the site using text and graphics

While the three key approaches above can be found at many sites, some utilize additional means of interpretation, such as guided tours and living history demonstrations. However, there is little use of technology at most sites, such as audio tours or apps tied to Smartphones.

Museums

Nearly 50 museums have been identified in the MHNHA as part of this management planning process. The broad range of museums covers music, literature, transportation, local history and events, science, art, and various specialties, such as the Apron Museum in Iuka. While many museums are found in the larger cities, a number of smaller towns have museums. The region's universities, including Mississippi State, the University of Mississippi, Rust College, and others are



The Jacinto Courthouse in Alcorn County is interpreted, in part, by weathered looking wayside exhibits.

important repositories of art, literature and historical artifacts. Several universities have their collections displayed in museum facilities, although much of the universities' collections are housed in buildings buried within the campuses and having very limited public exposure.

As with historic sites, the range of interpretation approaches and their effectiveness varies. Many of the smaller museums having very limited funding use a traditional and minimally effective approach featuring simple exhibits in which artifacts are placed behind glass cases with interpretive labels. At the other end of the spectrum are museums such as the Corinth Civil War Interpretive Center. Benefiting from the funding and capabilities of the National Park Service, there are numerous high-tech and interactive exhibits, as well as a video.



The Mississippi's Final Stands Interpretive Center in Baldwyn is an example of a museum with a minimal budget and relatively few artifacts that has still achieved effective interpretation.

Downtowns & Neighborhoods

The MHNHA is home to at least 90 downtowns and historic districts. Regardless of size, each community has an opportunity to interpret the unique history and culture of its area. In addition to the larger downtowns in Tupelo, Columbus, Starkville, Corinth, and Oxford, there are quaint town centers like Olive Branch's Old Towne and other communities offering interest to the heritage tourist. Many of these downtowns are home to unique locally-owned retail and other businesses. At least 50 such "unique" retail businesses have been inventoried over the course of this planning project, ranging from Square Books in Downtown Oxford to Tupelo Hardware in Downtown Tupelo (where Elvis's mother purportedly purchased his first guitar), to Annie's Soul Food in Downtown Holly Springs. There are also at least 15 historic theatres and other venues in the area. Some are restored and operating successfully as both film and live event venues, while others are awaiting funding for restoration. The larger cities like Columbus, Tupelo, and Oxford also offer significant historic districts with dozens of homes listed on the National Register.

There is already a relatively extensive amount of interpretation occurring in the heritage area's downtowns and neighborhoods. Most of the larger communities have both web-based and hard copy driving and/or walking tour brochures. Some focus on the downtowns and others on the adjacent historic neighborhoods.

Even communities as small as Aberdeen have historic architecture tour brochures. In fact, Aberdeen has such a rich collection of historic architecture that the community has an annual Pilgrimage tour of historic homes. The 38th Annual Aberdeen Southern Heritage Pilgrimage will occur this April 5-7, 2013. Not surprisingly, the MHNHA's larger



Aberdeen is one of many MHNHA communities with an effective architectural tour brochure.

communities that are rich in architectural history host similar pilgrimages, such as Holly Springs, which will host its 75th annual pilgrimage April 12-14, 2013. To supplement the interpretation that occurs on the home tours, most of these events feature living history demonstrations as well.

Overall, the interpretation that currently occurs in the heritage area's various downtowns and neighborhoods is relatively effective. Although many of the existing tour brochures can be accessed and downloaded on websites, most still need to keep up with changing technology by offering apps and similar Smartphone-based interpretive tools.

INTERPRETATION BY THEME

Native American Heritage

Native American heritage is the least researched, understood and interpreted theme in the heritage area. Few of the associated prehistoric sites are identified or interpreted, other than some minor interpretation of a few mound sites, such as those interpreted by the NPS along the Natchez Trace Parkway. With respect to the historic era, there are a few sites that celebrate the heritage of Tishomingo, the last great Chickasaw Chief, and some collections have been integrated into local museums, such as the one at the Pontotoc post office. However, those collections tend to consolidate all pre-historic and historic Native American cultures into a single exhibit, which are typically focused on arrowheads.



Because of current limited funding, Pontotoc's post office museum is one that could benefit from improved exhibits and interpretation.

Beyond displaying stone relics, there is generally little interpretation of the lifestyles, history, or culture of prehistoric Natives nor of the historic Chickasaw and Choctaw nations. Furthermore, few of the sites are actually controlled or operated by the Indian nations themselves, although the Chickasaws are planning an interpretive center to be located on the Natchez Trace Parkway near Tupelo. Clearly, there are opportunities for partnerships between MHNHA, the area's universities, and the Indian nations on developing opportunities to interpret this rich heritage.

African American Heritage

As in the case of Native American heritage, while there are individual sites that interpret African American heritage - including the civil rights struggle, there is a need for enhanced linkages to more effectively tell the story of how this region played an important role in the broader African American national story. The interpretation of sites and the overall tour routing should be considered as a sort of "screenplay" of the story of African-American culture, history, and struggle for civil rights. As with most of the heritage area's other interpretive themes, much of the region's exceptional African-American history cultural materials are archived within the "ivory tower" of universities where they are not very accessible to the public. Even at historically-black Rust College, the university's African art collection is housed in quarters that are not readily accessible on an ongoing basis during normal working hours. Moreover, the interesting history of that university is not yet interpreted thoroughly for visitors. Having rotating exhibitions of university

collections at more public venues in Main Street locations (whether through interpretive centers, sites, or museums) can help enhance exposure and create more tourism draw to the region that could spin-off economic and social benefits to the local communities.

Civil War

The Civil War heritage at some key sites, such as Corinth, Brice's Cross Roads, and Tupelo, is well-interpreted with the backing of funding from the federal government or other key sources. The Corinth Civil War Interpretive Center, in particular, is a state-of-the art facility with effective interpretation that utilizes modern technology well. These sites have also benefited from exposure during the Sesquicentennial that has brought more visitors to many of the Civil War sites nationwide. Corinth, in particular, benefits from its geographic proximity to Shiloh just across the state border. However, the important battles of Iuka and Okolona have very limited interpretation, and it is difficult for visitors to understand the battles or even get a sense of the land areas involved. Those same battlefields could also benefit greatly from the acquisition of more lands for protection. Another interpretation issue with room for improvement throughout the heritage area is the lack of a more extensive interpretation of the role of African-Americans during the war and its aftermath, which can be easily integrated with the story of the African-American struggle for civil rights.

The Arts: Literature & Music

Although there are other areas of the South with relatively rich Native American, African American, and Civil War history, the MHNHA is exceptionally rich in literary and musical heritage. There are several key sites that successfully interpret this heritage, but there are also opportunities for enhancing the overall access and interpretation of this interpretive theme for education and tourism.

Literature

Many of the same issues impacting the interpretation of the region's other themes impact interpretation of the region's rich literary heritage. The Hills features several literature-related sites that are not geographically linked in formalized tour routes other than sites plotted on a map. Some of the best vehicles for interpretation are in the form of the homes of literary figures, such as the homes of William Faulkner (Oxford), Tennessee Williams (Columbus), and Ida B. Wells (Holly Springs). Blue Mountain gave birth to the Southern Literary Festival and the event has returned to the area recently. As noted before, the area's universities house important literary collections, but they are not readily accessible to the public. There is also the opportunity for developing a Southern Literary Tour in conjunction with the festival that would promote the Mississippi Hills at the core of this effort, but would also encourage expansion to other noteworthy literary "hot spots" in the South. Linking the various sites and events can help enhance interpretation and promote the region more effectively for heritage tourism.

Music

The MHNHA's musical heritage is currently interpreted through individual sites and disparate tour routes that could be made stronger and more integrated. For example, many Elvis fans travel from cities such as Memphis, Nashville and New Orleans to visit his birthplace in Tupelo. Likewise, Howlin' Wolf fans are directed through the Mississippi Blues Trail to visit his museum in West Point. Integrating these diverse aspects of the Mississippi Hills, consistent with the overarching theme of "Where Appalachia meets the Delta," can strengthen the overall interpretation. Individual collections like the Ragtime and music business collections at MSU and

the Blues collection at Ole Miss are housed internally at those universities and do not have a presence “on the street” that engages with the visitor. Exposure, such as through museums and festivals help to bring visitors to Main Street and create more beneficial spin-offs for local businesses and downtown preservation. Tour routes that connect these sites more effectively will help maximize that exposure.

SUMMARY OF CURRENT INTERPRETATION IN THE MHNHA

Below are summarizing points to understanding the current state of interpretation in the MHNHA:

- Some interpretive themes warrant greater research and interpretation. The Native American heritage theme, in particular, needs interpretation that better differentiates the various chronological/cultural eras of pre-history and history.
- Many of the web-based and hard copy interpretive tools (maps, brochures, etc.) should be rewritten to tell a more compelling story and reformatted for greater visual appeal and user-friendliness.
- Greater use of telecommunications-based technology will need to be utilized, such as apps for theme-based tours that can be accessed by Smartphones.
- Some of the material culture collections presently housed in universities should be made more readily accessible to the general public.
- Individual sites and attractions are generally not linked together interpretively so that a “big picture” is provided for the various interpretive themes.



While the many historic markers that exist throughout the MHNHA are useful in conveying the most basic information about historic sites and events, they are not a very effective tool for telling an interesting and vivid story that will engage the reader.

E. Recommended Approaches to Interpretation

LINKING THEMES, SITES & EVENTS

The following plan section points out some of the key sites and events that will be strongly linked to their associated interpretive themes to help tell their respective stories. A more complete inventory of cultural resources is available in the appendices section of this management plan's Background Study. Also, a series of proposed tour route maps for each of the four primary interpretive themes is provided after these narrative descriptions of key sites.

Native American Heritage

The MHNHA lies at the heart of the Chickasaw Nation homeland. Place names throughout the region, especially north of U.S. Highway 82, testify to the heritage of the Chickasaw people. Just a few examples include Pontotoc ("Land of Hanging Grapes"), Itawamba ("Bench Chief"- Levi Colbert), Tishomingo (or Tisho Minko, "Assistant Chief," the last great Chickasaw Chief), and Okolona ("peaceful" or "blue water"). South of what is now U.S. 82, the Choctaw predominated long before Europeans entered the region. Tombigbee is a Choctaw word meaning "Coffin Maker" and Noxubee means "stink." The Chickasaw and Choctaw shared a close history and culture. Their languages are similar and words such as Yalobusha, meaning "Tadpole Place," are found in both cultures. Both the Chickasaws and Choctaws were forcibly removed to Oklahoma along the Trail of Tears. The area has an equally rich prehistoric cultural heritage. Key Native American sites in the MHNHA that will be thematically linked include the following:

Woodland Period

- Nanih Waiya (Middle Woodland period mound in Winston County sacred to the Choctaw and listed on the National Register. The date of the site's return became a Choctaw Nation holiday)
- Bynum Mound and Village Site (six Middle Woodland period mounds, 28 miles southwest of Tupelo, one of the largest Middle Woodland ceremonial sites in southeast)
- Pharr Mounds (eight Middle Woodland mounds - 23 miles northeast of Tupelo)
- Ingomar Mounds (Middle Woodland period – Union County)
- Brogan Mound (Middle Woodland period - Clay County)

Mississippian Period

- Thelma Mound Archeological Site (Houston)
- Bear Creek Mound and Village Site (Mississippian period site - 45 miles northeast of Tupelo)
- Owl Creek Site (Five Mississippian period platform mounds - 18 miles southwest of Tupelo)
- Walls Indian Mounds (operated by Desoto County Museum)

Historic Period

- Site of Chickasaw National Council House (Pontotoc)
- Site of Allen's Tavern ("town hall" of Chickasaw villages - Pontotoc)
- Topulka's (Chief's House, Cate's Place - Pontotoc)
- Pontotoc City Cemetery (burial of Chickasaw and whites)
- Statues of Chief Tishomingo (at/near Tishomingo State Park)
- Tishomingo County Historical Museum (Chickasaw exhibit)
- Chief Tishomingo Home Site (near Baldwin)

- Council House of Greenwood LeFlore – Choctaw Chief (French Camp – on Natchez Trace)

Multiple Periods Interpreted

- Pontotoc Post Office Town Square Museum (features Native American exhibits and relics)
- Natchez Trace Parkway (interprets Native American trail history)
- Oren Dunn Tupelo City Museum (has pre-history exhibits)
- American Indian Artifacts Museum (Columbus)

Also, if the interpretive center being contemplated by the Chickasaw Nation (to be located on the Natchez Trace Parkway near Tupelo) comes to fruition, that site will clearly be a critical one to link with. In fact, it would likely become a springboard for Native American heritage tours throughout the MHNHA. *See page 15 for the suggested tour route map for this theme's interpretation.*

African American Heritage

Among the most enduring images of African American Heritage and the struggle for civil rights are the heroic steps taken by James Meredith to enroll in the University of Mississippi. What started as a personal journey became a flashpoint in American history memorialized in images of Meredith entering the university under armed guard among rioting demonstrators. While such images paint a raw picture of Northeast Mississippi during the civil rights era, they also provide a reference point for the tremendous and hard-fought progress that has occurred in the region and nation-wide since that time. Some of the region's key sites associated with African American heritage include the following:

- Black History Museum of Corinth
- Corinth Contraband Camp
- Rust College (Holly Springs)
 - Donald Trousdale African Art Collection
 - Mississippi Industrial College Campus
 - Roy Wilkins Collection
- Ida B Wells Barnett Museum (Holly Springs)
- Hill Crest Cemetery (resting place of Hiram Revels and others)
- Historic Colored School (Burnsville)
- Saints Academy (slave history of plantation - Lexington)
- University of Mississippi (Oxford)
 - The Lyceum
 - Civil Rights Monument and James Meredith Statue
 - Center for the Study of Southern Culture
 - Blues Music Collections
- Columbus area African-American churches homes, etc. (including Catfish Alley)
- James Meredith hometown of Kosciusko
- Okolona College (historically black college on National Register)
- Belle Flower Missionary Baptist Church (Civil Rights Movement – Granada)
- Pontotoc Cemetery (resting place for jazz singer Ruby Elzy)

See page 16 for the suggested tour route map for this theme's interpretation.

Civil War

The Civil War presents an important component of interpretation for the region, even though Northeast Mississippi did not witness the most major battles of the war. However, located not far from the area is Shiloh National Military Park, one of the major Civil War historical sites and a key driver for heritage tourism throughout the broader region, attracting about 70,000 visitors per year. Located just over the state line in Tennessee, Shiloh is easily accessible via Routes 57/25 and U.S. 45 from the MHNHA. Various places in the region saw significant battles during the Civil War, such as the siege and battle of Corinth, as well as battles at Iuka, Brice's Cross Roads, Okolona, and Tupelo. Confederate General Earl Van Dorn's raid on Holly Springs in December of 1862 also greatly impacted Grant's initial push toward Vicksburg. Key Civil War sites in the MHNHA include:

- Airliewood (General Grant's Holly Springs headquarters / held Christmas party here)
- Walter Place Estate (General Grant's family was housed here during the Union occupation)
- University of Mississippi Civil War Collections (Library), Ventress Hall (dedicated to Confederate Veterans), and Lyceum (used as hospital during war)
- College Hill Presbyterian Church (Oxford) – Used as Sherman's headquarters during occupation
- Van Dorn Raid Driving Tour (Holly Springs)
- Hill Crest Cemetery (Holly Springs), Confederate Cemetery (Oxford), Shady Grove Cemetery (Iuka), Corinth National Cemetery, Friendship Cemetery (Columbus), Okolona Confederate Cemetery, Grenada Confederate Cemetery, Old Aberdeen and Odd Fellows Rest Cemetery (Jeffrey Forrest)
- Battle of West Point (Sakatonchee Creek/Ellis Bridge)
- Battle of Iuka (site adjacent to highway) and related sites - Twin Magnolias (CS headquarters), Brinkley House (US & CS headquarters), and Iuka Methodist Church (hospital)
- Battle of Mud Creek (Cane Brake)
- Booneville Battlefield (Prentiss County)
- President Grant papers (de facto Presidential Library, MSU)
- General Stephen D Lee Home (Columbus)
- Tupelo National Battlefield
- Corinth Civil War Interpretive Center, Battery F, and Earthworks, Curlee House
- Corinth Contraband Camp
- Brice's Cross Roads National Battlefield Site / Mississippi's Last Stands Interpretive Center
- Tishomingo County Museum (Civil War exhibit)
- Okolona Battlefield
- Elliot-Donaldson House – Nathan Bedford Forrest treated for wounds here in 1865 (Okolona)
- Davis' Mill Battlefield (Michigan City, Benton County)
- Golladay House – Jefferson Davis stayed there in 1861 (Hernando)
- Confederate Earthworks – Grenada Lake (Grenada)

See page 17 for the suggested tour route map for this theme's interpretation.

The Arts: Literature & Music

Literature

The MHNHA region stands out in American culture as the home of so many iconic writers and literary figures, with an exceptional impact on Southern literature. William Faulkner was not only born in the region (New Albany), he established his home at Oxford and provided some of America's greatest literature from his home at Rowan Oak. Tennessee Williams, one of the country's greatest playwrights, was born and lived his early years in Columbus. One of America's most recognized present-day writers, John Grisham, is from Southaven and has presented personal papers and other materials to his alma mater, Mississippi State University in Starkville. Below are some of the key sites affiliated with this interpretive theme:

- Rowan Oak - Home of William Faulkner (Oxford)
- St. Peter's Cemetery (Faulkner family - Oxford)
- College Hill Presbyterian Church – where Faulkner was married (Oxford)
- University of Mississippi - J.D. Williams Library (46,000 rare books & manuscripts)
 - Faulkner Room and collections of Barry Hanna, Larry Brown, Ellen Douglas, Beth Henley, Ace Atkins and other literary figures
 - Reading Room - Hallway used for research and exhibitions
 - Center for the Study of Southern Culture
- Tennessee Williams Home & Columbus Welcome Center (moved from its original site)
- St. Paul's Episcopal Church (Williams' baptism - Columbus)
- Mississippi University for Women Galleries (Eudora Welty alma mater) - Columbus
- Mississippi State University (Starkville)
 - John Grisham Room
- Faulkner Literary Garden (Union County Heritage Museum – New Albany)
- Bryan Reading Park (busts of literary figures) at West Point Library
- Square Book bookstore (Oxford)
- Ida B. Wells - Barnett Museum (Holly Springs)

Music

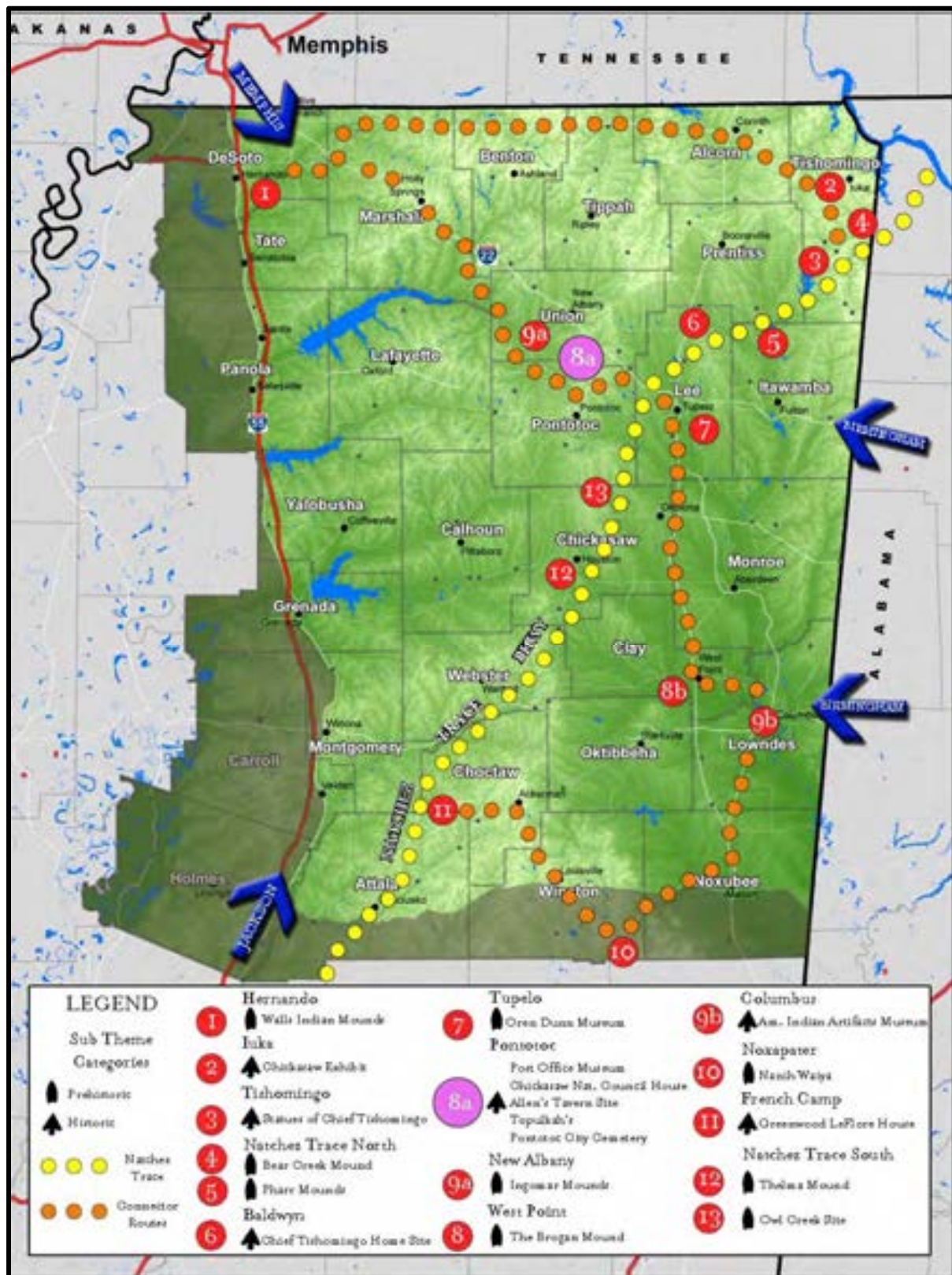
The MHNHA has a unique place in the history of American music. Due in part to its location at the crossroads of Appalachia and the Delta, this region gave birth to a blending of musical genres ranging from dulcimer-driven mountain music to Hill Country Blues. The amalgam of musical styles was perhaps best captured by the King of Rock 'n Roll, Elvis Presley, born in Tupelo. The Elvis Birthplace and Museum thoughtfully acknowledges the various influences on Elvis's music, including gospel, country and Delta blues. In addition to Elvis, the region gave birth to such iconic music figures as country music queen Tammy Wynette and famed blues singer Howlin' Wolf. Out of this mix of music and genres, one could argue that Rock n Roll itself was born in the Mississippi Hills.

- Elvis Presley Birthplace & Museum (Tupelo)
- Tupelo Hardware (Elvis' first guitar)
- Johnnies Drive-In (a favorite Tupelo restaurant for Elvis)
- University of Mississippi - J.D. Williams Library (46,000 rare books & manuscripts)
 - Blues Collections (music, posters, personal effects some of which temporarily displayed in Faulkner Room, but otherwise having no permanent exhibition space)

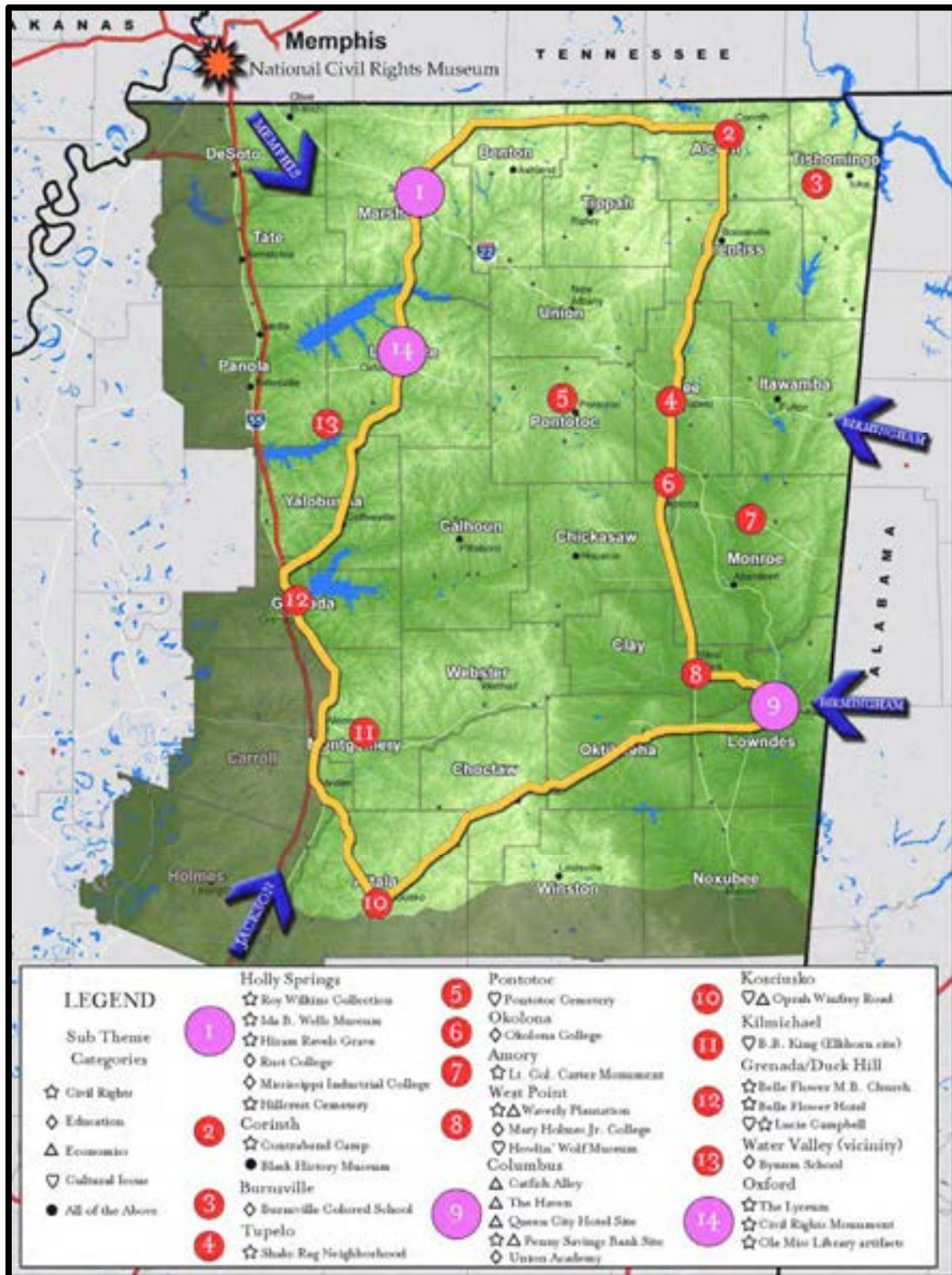
- Center for the Study of Southern Culture
- Mississippi State University
 - Charles H. Templeton, Sr. Ragtime Music Museum
- Starkville City Jail – Johnny Cash jailed here and it inspired his song “Starkville City Jail”
- White Station Juke Joints (Wolf Birthplace)
- Walter “Shakey” Horton (blues) hometown – Horn Lake
- Jimmie Lunceford (jazz) hometown - Fulton
- Mainstreet Vintage Guitars (Tupelo)
- Tammy Wynette (country) hometown – Tremont
- Elvis & Priscilla Honeymoon Cottage – Horn Lake (DeSoto County)
- Jerry Lee Lewis (rock n roll, country) current home (Nesbit)
- Howlin’ Wolf Blues Museum (West Point)
- Opry Family Theatre (Amory)
- Sandyland Road Juke Joint (Noxubee County)
- Graceland Too – shrine and museum dedicated to Elvis Presley (Holly Springs)
- Ruby Elzy (jazz singing great) Burial – Pontotoc Cemetery

See page 18 for the suggested tour route map for this theme’s interpretation.

NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE TOUR



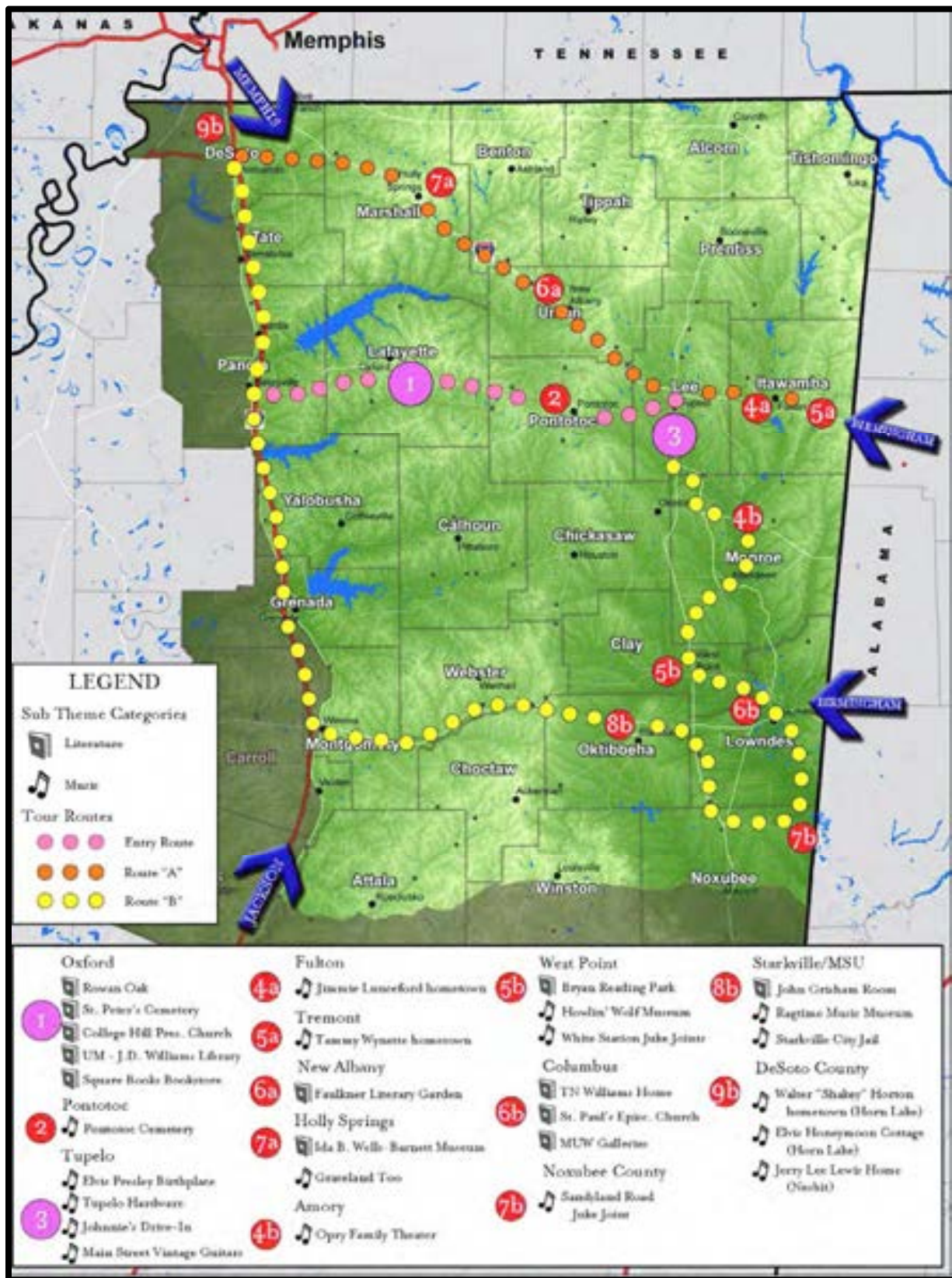
AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE TOUR



CIVIL WAR TOUR



ARTS TOUR: LITERATURE & MUSIC



SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

The Strategies section of this Management Plan is very comprehensive in addressing all of the key issues for the management of the MHNHA. Of the Strategy section's five goals and supporting objectives, only one specifically addresses interpretation, as follows:

Goal 2: Conduct research, education and interpretation related to the MHNHA's primary themes as a means of documenting and telling the story of the Heritage Area's unique cultural heritage.

The balance of this Interpretive Plan will reiterate each of Goal 2's five objectives and concisely summarize the ideas associated with each objective as contained in the Strategies section, but will not repeat them in detail. However, this section will go a step further by including additional supplemental ideas for interpretation within the MHNHA.

Objective 2-A: Support, sponsor or conduct additional research into MHNHA themes.

As detailed in the Background Study of this Management Plan, there are four primary interpretive themes developed for the MHNHA: the Civil War, African-American Heritage, Native American Heritage, and the Arts (Music and Literature). Architecture is a secondary theme that relates to some of the primary themes. Each of these primary themes has a set of supporting sub-themes.

Summary of the Objective 2-A Strategies from the Strategies Section

- *Leverage the MHNHA's existing universities and colleges for conducting research into the MHNHA's interpretive themes.*

Elaboration of the Objective 2-A Strategies from the Strategies Section

- *Pursue grants for eligible research projects relevant to the MHNHA's interpretive themes.* To expand upon the more concise list contained in the Strategies section, below is a more detailed list of potential funding sources for research:
 - National Endowment for the Humanities (America's Historical & Cultural Organizations planning and implementation grants)
 - American Historical Association (Bernadotte E. Schmitt Grants, the Albert J. Beveridge Grant for Research in the History of the Western Hemisphere, the Michael Kraus Research Grants, and the Littleton-Griswold Grants)
 - American Antiquarian Society (offers visiting research fellowships for those interested in American history from colonial times to the Reconstruction era following the Civil War)
 - Lehrman History Scholars Summer Program (the Teaching American History grant program awards \$100 million of U.S. Department of Education funds to help teach American history in the country's schools)

- Phillips Fund Grants for Native American Research (offers grants for the study of Native American linguistics and ethno-history)
- Mississippi Archaeological Research Grant Program (the first grant year in 2006 provided nearly \$25,000 in grants to seven projects – each to a university conducting research)

Objective 2-B: Work with appropriate partners to establish an oral history program utilizing high school and/or college students within the MHNHA to record histories from individuals that address the Heritage Area’s primary themes.

There are multiple resources available to learn more about how to record oral histories. Just one example is the book entitled “The Oral History Workshop: Collect and Celebrate the Life Stories of Your Family and Friends” by Hart and Samson.

Summary of the Objective 2-B Strategies from the Strategies Section

- *Identify the topics to be documented through oral histories based upon the MHNHA’s four interpretive themes and various sub-themes.*
- *Consider an oral history program that is managed by college students, but conducted using area junior high and high school students.*

Objective 2-C: Partner with various entities to create an educational curriculum within the heritage area’s grade schools and high schools centered around the MHNHA’s primary themes.

Summary of the Objective 2-C Strategies from the Strategies Section

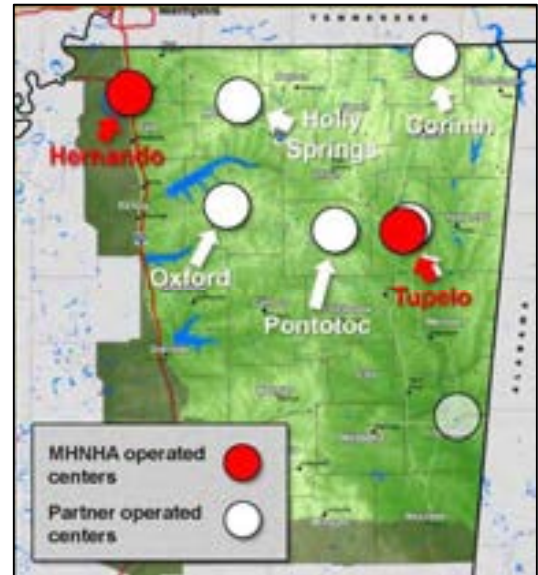
- *Work the MHNHA’s four primary interpretive themes into the curriculum related to American History in the grade schools and junior high schools.*
- *Pursue hands-on experiences and field trips related to the MHNHA’s interpretive themes for students.*

Objective 2-D: Explore the development of an interpretive center for the MHNHA.

Potential new interpretive centers must be considered on a case-by-case basis. It is beyond the scope of this Management Plan to include a feasibility study for any one particular interpretive center. Rather than propose that the MHNHA initiate one or more specific interpretive centers, *this objective is to suggest a process by which the MHNHA can thoughtfully explore the establishment of one or more centers*, regardless of whether any centers ultimately come to fruition. It is critical to remember that federal NHA funding cannot be used to acquire real estate, and any development that might impact environmental resources will require following NEPA and similar regulations.

Summary of the Objective 2-D Strategies from the Strategies Section

- *Potential MHNHA-Sponsored Interpretive Centers:*
 - Main Interpretive Center: Tupelo
 - Gateway Interpretive Center: Hernando
- *Potential Partner-Sponsored Interpretive Centers:*
 - Native American Heritage Interpretive Center: Pontotoc or Natchez Trace near Tupelo
 - African American Heritage Interpretive Center: Holly Springs
 - Civil War Interpretive Center: Corinth
 - Arts Interpretive Center: Music: Tupelo
 - Arts Interpretive Center: Literature: Oxford

Elaboration of the Objective 2-D Strategies from the Strategies Section

Although potential locations for interpretive centers are summarized above and explained in this Management Plan's Strategies section, it has been emphasized that a feasibility study should be conducted to determine the viability and location of potential new centers. In fine-tuning these ideas, the following principles will be utilized for the siting of interpretive centers:

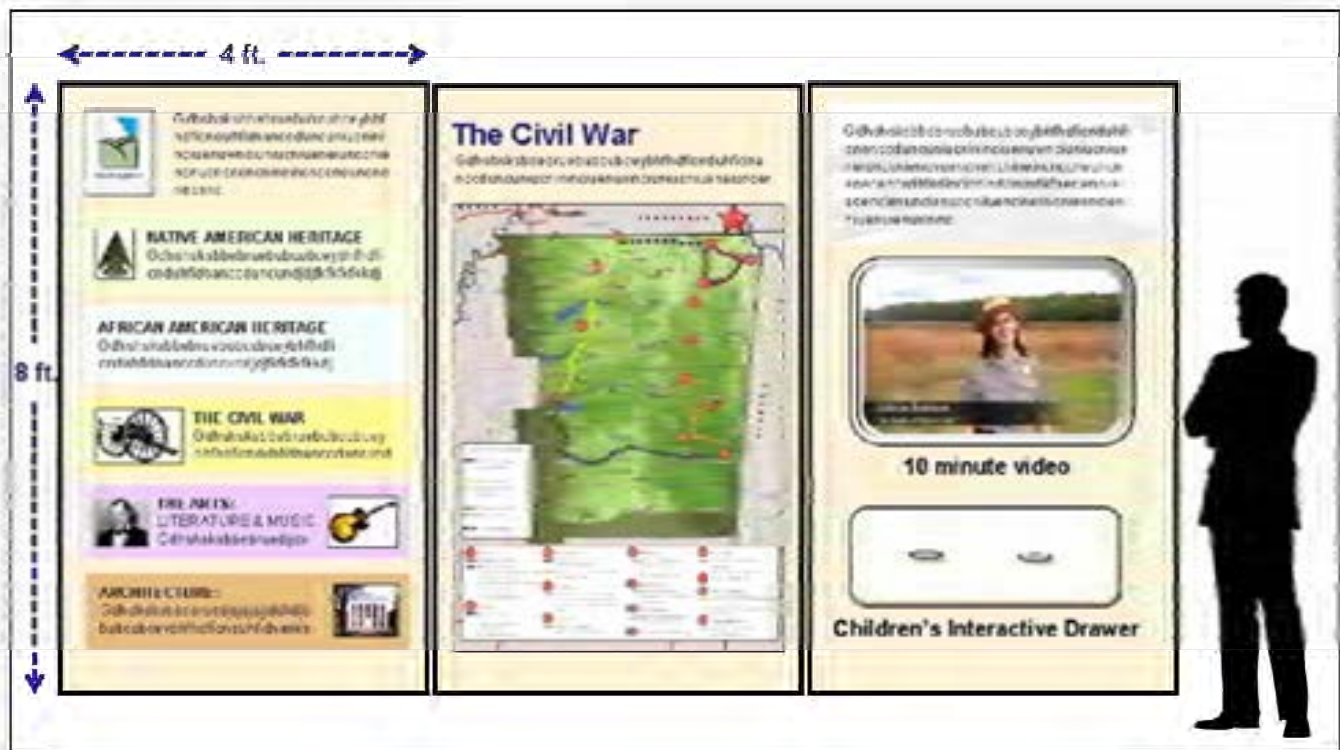
Principles for Locating MHNHA Interpretive Centers

- When possible, locate interpretive centers on or near key major transportation corridors, particularly at gateway locations into the MHNHA (I-55, Natchez Trace Parkway, etc.).
- When possible, locate interpretive centers near important cultural resources that relate to the theme of the particular interpretive center.
- When possible, locate interpretive centers in historic downtowns or similar significant places where the interpretive center can leverage economic spin-off benefits for the immediate area.

Exhibit Design

It is important to keep in mind that an interpretive center does not have to be large or extensive to be an effective center. Even an existing modest building can be adapted into use as an interpretive center while continuing to serve its previous function. For example, an existing historic house museum or a visitor's center could double as an interpretive center by simply dedicating one room (or even part of a large room) for interpretive space. The following page features a graphic for how to transform a space into an interpretive resource with the use of a multi-paneled exhibit. It is noteworthy that the principles conveyed by this graphic are consistent with many of the

characteristics found on the interpretive exhibits currently on display at the MHHAA offices in Downtown Tupelo.



Among the cost-effective approaches that might be used lieu of the development of new interpretive centers is to install interpretive panels in existing facilities. This concept illustrates a potential design.

Objective 2-E: Utilize a variety of tools and media for interpretation, including regional theme-based tours/itineraries, as well as printed materials and new and emerging technologies.

Summary of the Objective 2-E Strategies from the Strategies Section

- Encourage the development of theme-based tours at the community level where they currently do not exist, but could exist.
- Develop a series of driving tours tied to the MHNHA’s primary interpretive themes. See pages 10-18 of this Interpretive Plan for more information on this idea.
- Work to expand the fledgling Roots of American Music Trail.
- Develop a “coffee table” type book for the MHNHA.

Elaboration of the Objective 2-E Strategies from the Strategies Section

- Develop a series of brochures for the MHNHA.

INTERPRETIVE BROCHURES: GETTING THE MESSAGE RIGHT

There are numerous opportunities in the MHNHA for the creation of brochures to assist in tourism development and site interpretation. As new brochures are developed and existing ones are enhanced, the following guidelines will be considered:

- **Develop your Theme** - The theme is the single big message that you need to present to the target audience and should be kept to one sentence. The content of the brochure then continues on the inside to continue and expand the story.
 - **Know Who Your Audience Is** - Determine who your target audience is and the kind of audience who would visit your site on a regular or seasonal basis. Select the images which would best get their attention.
 - **Create an Attention-Getting Cover** - The reader needs to be able to understand within five to ten seconds of looking at the cover what the subject of the attraction or site might be, what it offers, and if it looks of interest.
 - **Create Interior Content Easy to Read** - The interior content should be able to tell the reader, through narrative and images, what they will learn, why the site or attraction is important, and why they should want to visit. Does the brochure have a clear theme or central message?
 - **Do You Have Sufficient Maps or Directions?** - Sites and attractions should be easy to find through easy to read maps.
 - **How Will You Distribute the Brochure?** - Will the brochure be designed to be mailed? If so then it will need to be designed to fit into a standard envelope. If it is to be distributed, how will this be accomplished and to whom for the greatest exposure to your market.
- *Utilize a variety of media for interpretation of theme-based tours.*

Telecommunications Tools – There are a variety of telecommunications technologies that can be used for interpretation. A younger audience, in particular, uses such technology. Examples of telecommunications tools that should be considered for the MHNHA's thematic tours include the following:

Cell Phone Audio Interpretation

Wayside exhibits, brochures and historic markers are now being created that have a call-in phone number at the site that is being interpreted. The viewer calls the number and gets an

audio message as they are standing at the site. This approach would be particularly applicable for the Civil War tour and for tours of properties in the downtown area and neighborhoods.

Cell Phone Apps

A cell phone app, sometimes called a mobile app, is any cell phone *application*, particularly those that are directly purchased and installed by phone users. These are Smartphone add-ons that perform functions other than making a phone call. The term "app" can be used to refer to any application for any device, but when used alone, it most commonly refers to software downloaded onto cell phones. An example of how apps can be used to interpret historic sites is Boston's Freedom Trail, which has 16 marked historical sites. This app has a written explanation, as well as a professional-quality audio and HD video component. There is also a map feature providing the viewer with specific directions along this walking trail.



The History Channel is one of many businesses and organizations that have developed historical tour applications for cell phones.

QR Codes

QR codes, which is an abbreviation for "Quick Response Codes," is the trademark for a type of matrix barcode (or two-dimensional code). This system has become popular due to its fast readability and large storage capacity compared to standard barcodes. The code consists of black modules (square dots) arranged in a square pattern on a white background. For historic interpretation, QR codes are linked to telecommunications resources that provide the same type of interpretive experiences (audio and video) described above for apps.

Interpretive Exhibits

PRINCIPLES OF SUCCESSFUL WAYSIDE INTERPRETIVE EXHIBITS

Successful panels attract the eye by guiding people to a historic landscape filled with compelling stories. These panels are designed to spark a desire for the reader to know more and connect people to place. The following are tips to achieve that success:

1. Identify the experience you want the visitor to have. After you identified the theme for your exhibits, specify what you want your visitor readers to know, feel, or do after they read them. Make sure every sentence in your text sticks to the purpose of the exhibit.
2. Give the story offered by the exhibit a name instead of the topic it introduces. Example: Instead of "Corinth's Civil War Earthworks" call it "Defending the City."

3. Use photos, maps and images to tell the story. Use interesting graphics that avoid duplicating the view at hand.
4. Text supports the graphics, headings, and captions, not the other way around. Typically, text introduces the idea, sets the context, or leads the reader to further experiences.
5. Wayside exhibits should contain less than 100 words and feature no more than 4 graphic images.
6. Make your text interesting to read through the use of active verbs and by avoiding descriptive adjectives.
7. Think about how the story would be relevant to today's readers.
8. Make the MHNHA and other supporting organization logos visible and identifiable, but secondary to the overall story and graphics.
9. Create a mock-up of the final draft – if the narrative catches your eye more than the graphics, then you should rethink your design.
10. Make sure your text is correct – mistakes on wayside exhibits are expensive to change and can make the visitor question the accuracy of their experience.
11. Do a trial run with the design with potential audience members to get comments before implementation and creating the actual wayside exhibit.

- *Program the MHNHA with living history demonstrations at various key sites.*
- *Program the MHNHA with living history demonstrations at various events.*

The following demonstration types might occur at the following sites and event types tied to the MHNHA's four primary interpretive themes:

Native American Heritage Demonstrations

Because so much more is known about the lifestyles of the historic era Native Americans, as opposed to the prehistoric eras, it is recommended that most demonstrations occur at sites and events associated with the historic eras, which includes the various recognizable tribes (Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, etc.). Furthermore, most individuals who perform such demonstrations have Native American ancestry that can be traced to the historic era rather than the prehistoric era. Examples of the types of demonstrations that might occur include flint-knapping, finger-weaving, gorget-making, stickball, drum-making, woodcarving, blacksmithing, basket-making, pottery-making, and stone pipe-making. It is noteworthy,

however, that many of these demonstration types did occur during prehistoric eras as well, so such activities could occur at prehistoric sites (flint-knapping, gorget-making, woodcarving, basket-making, pottery-making, and stone pipe-making). These types of activities should occur at the following Native American sites in the MHNHA:

- Pontotoc Post Office Town Square Museum (features Native American exhibits and relics)
- Site of Chickasaw National Council House (Pontotoc)
- Site of Allen’s Tavern (“town hall” of Chickasaw villages - Pontotoc)
- Topulkah’s (Chief’s House, Cate’s Place - Pontotoc)
- Chief Tishomingo Home Site (near Baldwyn)
- Council House of Greenwood LeFlore – Choctaw Chief (French Camp – on Natchez Trace)

Living history should also be a key component of the potential new Chickasaw Interpretive Center being proposed by the Chickasaw Nation on the Natchez Trace Parkway near Tupelo if that project should come to fruition.



African American Heritage Demonstrations

Because the main topics associated with African American heritage are related to slavery, the civil rights movement, and similar topics, it is a theme that does not lend itself to living history demonstrations. However, there are some topics related to African American heritage that have themes with strong associations with other primary themes that can be interpreted through living history. Examples include the Civil War (African American Union soldiers) and the Arts (African American writers and musicians). Potential venues for living history demonstrations related to the Civil War might include the Black History Museum of Corinth and the Corinth Contraband Camp. Although writing is a difficult theme to interpret through living history, music clearly is not. Thus, the music of regional greats such as Howlin’ Wolf and Otha Turner can be readily interpreted at relevant historic sites and special events.

Civil War Demonstrations

Civil War demonstrations (camp life, firing long arms and artillery, etc.) could occur at a wide variety of locations throughout the MHNHA, including the Corinth Civil War Interpretive Center and related Corinth sites (Contraband Camp, Curlee House, etc.), Brice’s Crossroads Battlefield NPS park, Tupelo Battlefield NPS site, Iuka Battlefield sites, and the Okolona Battlefield sites, to name just a few. Because of the Civil War Sesquicentennial (150th anniversary) that is currently occurring, the timing for Civil War demonstrations at various sites

and events is particularly relevant and time-sensitive, as they can leverage strong heritage tourism gains that will not be available for another fifty years after 2015.

Arts Demonstrations: Music

As noted previously, literature does not generally lend itself to living history demonstrations. However, music clearly does. Not only can live music demonstrations occur at related historic sites, such as the Elvis Presley Birthplace & Museum in Tupelo and the Howlin' Wolf Blues Museum in West Point, but they are particularly well-suited for special events. There are already numerous music events in the region that, perhaps inadvertently, interpret the area's musical heritage, such as the North Mississippi Hill Country Picnic. However, Hills music should be introduced to other events that do not otherwise highlight the region's music, including literary events such as the Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference held in Oxford each July. Another potential venue for such music might be the Eudora Welty Writers' Symposium in Columbus.

The annual North Mississippi Hill Country Picnic is an event that inadvertently interprets the MHNHA's music heritage.

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Mississippi Hills
National Heritage Area

BUSINESS PLAN SECTION

Prepared for the:
**Mississippi Hills
Heritage Area Alliance**

Revised:
June 4, 2014



A. Introduction

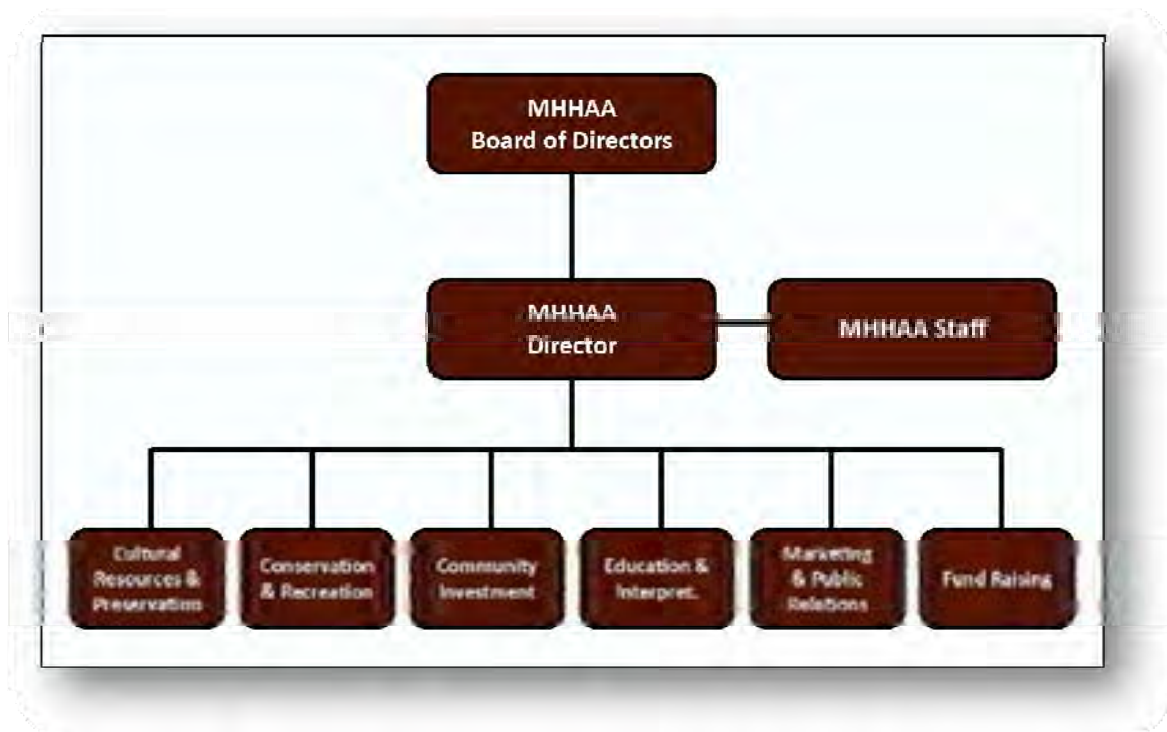
The National Park Service (NPS) recommends that every heritage area have a business plan to guide the local management entity and various heritage area activities. According to the NPS, the business plan “describes the role, operation, financing and functions for the local coordinating entity and of each of the major activities contained in the management plan; and provides adequate assurances that the local coordinating entity has (or will have) the partnerships, and financial and other resources necessary to implement the management plan for the National Heritage Area.”

B. Coordinating Entity Structure

This section describes the overall structure of the coordinating entity for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA). An “organogram” is provided below which graphically summarizes the overall structure of the coordinating entity, the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance (MHAA). Included in this section is a description of the role of the coordinating entity as a facilitator for cooperation among various partners. The section also describes the key functions in terms of the types of tasks for which the entity is responsible. Finally, the section summarizes the overall operating structure, which includes a description of prospective staff responsibilities.

DESCRIPTION

The MHAA operates the Mississippi Hills Exhibit Center, located in Tupelo. Having its own offices and a small interpretation space with street-front location in one of the region’s primary tourism hubs provides a benefit in terms of exposure and marketing.



The management plan has proposed a primarily a facilitation role for the MHNHA’s coordinating entity. The MHHA would help coordinate with partner entities in support of heritage tourism development, heritage preservation, and conservation through its partner’s capacity, external resources and collaborations. A more diversified advisory board will support the MHHA through the committee structure and will help broaden the pool of resources for cultural resources and preservation, conservation and recreation, community investment, education and interpretation, marketing and public relations, and fund raising.

Partners

The MHHA benefits from a potentially broad and diverse array of partner organizations, as noted in the Strategies section of the management plan. Such organizations include the various universities, chambers, heritage associations, convention and visitors’ bureaus, and others. A sample partner organization list is found on the following page, although the specific roles of partners are specified within this plan's "Implementation Plan" section. The MHHA will engage with these partners to leverage funding and technical expertise in support of the heritage area’s mission.

The University of Mississippi was highly instrumental in the establishment of the MHNHA, providing funding, technical expertise, logistical support and other services. In 2006, the University established the Mississippi Hills Institute for Heritage Resource Management as an official entity within the University for the purpose of assisting with the development of MHNHA. As the Alliance works to implement the Management Plan, the Institute will serve as the conduit through which the University will channel appropriate resources to assist with specific projects. The University has recently reaffirmed its commitment to fostering this relationship.



The heritage area’s many universities are among key potential partners for the MHNHA. The University of Mississippi is singled out as a key partner within the federal legislation creating the heritage area.

Sample Partner Organizations For the MHNHA

Below is a sample of potential public and non-profit organization partners. The Implementation Plan features a more comprehensive list and indicates the role of each partner. The Appendices section includes letters of support and statements regarding their various roles in implementation.

US Fish & Wildlife Service
Mississippi Sweet Potato Council
US Forest Service
Mary Holmes College
Mississippi State Parks
Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway
University of Mississippi
Columbus Cultural History Foundation
Mississippi University for Women
Columbus Air Force Base
Rust College
Noxubee County Historical Society
Mississippi State University
Tippah County Historical Society
Southern Literary Festival (once located in MHNHA)
TAP - Tishomingo/Alcorn/Prentiss County Alliance
Tishomingo County Historical Society
Tanglefoot Trail
Chickasaw Nation
Mississippi Archeological Association

Summary

The MHNHA local coordinating entity, the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance (MHHA), operates an office and small exhibit center in Downtown Tupelo. Because of its location in a major tourism hub, exposure for the MHNHA is automatically enhanced. The entity will focus on coordination and facilitation, and will benefit from a more diversified advisory board to assist the MHHA Director and staff in specific program areas. The MHHA will provide technical assistance and grant funding to the extent that such funding is available, and will also help leverage partnerships and funding for outside technical expertise.

KEY FUNCTIONS

The management plan proposes a set of key functions for the MHHA that relate primarily to *coordination and facilitation* of various program activities, as specified in the Strategies component of this management plan. The key functions include the following, summarized below:

- Secure Dependable Funding Sources in support of the MHNHA mission
- Engage a Diverse Set of Stakeholders to provide grass-roots support
- Establish Standards for Tourism-Ready Sites
- Engage in Marketing & Promotion for heritage sites and area as a whole
- Leverage Support and Expertise for research, education and interpretation
- Grant Programs
- Preservation and Enhancement

Secure Program Support

The Strategies section of the plan proposes the diversification of revenue sources for MHHA programs and services, above and beyond grant-based income (which it will still continue to pursue). For example, it is proposed that the MHHA expand its current membership programs to include individuals. However, the MHHA will also pursue more corporate sponsorships, which can help broaden and diversify the sources of funding over the long term. Building partnerships with local colleges, universities and other institutions can provide a ready source of in-kind contributions and services that help the MHHA provide a broader range of services to its constituent counties and communities. Small fundraising events can also help broaden and diversify the funding mix, especially if logistics and operations are handled through partnership organizations. Occasional internships and consultant support will be contracted so that the MHHA can provide fee-based services and other income-generating programs as possible.

Engage Diverse Stakeholders and Partners

The MHHA will develop an even stronger regional network of sites, attractions and events by coordinating with key stakeholders and operators. The coordinating entity will continue to build leadership, such as by networking and joining key organizations, attending conferences, and accessing available leadership programs. The MHHA will further diversify its board, create working committees, and further coordinate with existing associations and organizations. Also, in support of its program activities, the MHHA will develop its fundraising capacity through various public and private partnerships, by establishing membership programs, pursuing corporate sponsors and grants, working with in-kind technical assistance providers, and conducting fundraising events.

The MHHAA will also monitor challenges and success of efforts to meet its program goals and objectives, using a series of benchmarks and metrics as outlined later in this Business Plan.

Establish Tourism Standards

Strategies have already been proposed for the MHHAA to establish a system of standards for designating sites, attractions and events as “visitor ready” and “emerging,” to further develop the region’s tourism base. As such, the MHHAA and its partners will play an integral role in strengthening the overall visitor experience, thereby promoting the region’s heritage resources for tourism.



As a National Park Service park, the Brice's Crossroad battlefield is already a “visitor ready” site.

Engage in Marketing and Promotion

The MHHAA will expand its marketing and promotion of the area to increase heritage tourism as a means of enhancing the region’s economic development. In addition to strengthening and branding marketing collateral, signage, social and other emerging media, and web sites, the MHHAA will build a strong relationship with regional and national media to promote the region. A priority for the MHHAA will be to create and distribute theme-based maps and materials that build strong branding and thematic touring for the heritage area, above and beyond lists of sites. Such maps will include sites and attractions throughout the heritage area. The MHHAA will promote existing events and encourage the development of new events in the region tied to the heritage area’s primary themes.

Leverage Support for Research, Education and Interpretation

The MHHAA will leverage the region’s well-regarded colleges and universities to coordinate research into the MHNHA’s themes. The MHHAA will work with these universities and other institutions to identify topics and pursue grants for eligible research and oral history projects relevant to the heritage area’s themes. The MHHAA will also work to encourage the incorporation of heritage area themes into the region’s school curricula, youth experiences, and field trips.

It has been proposed in this management plan’s Strategies and Interpretive sections that the MHHAA develop a process for assessing the feasibility of interpretation center development, with several concepts proposed as a result of this management planning process. These concepts include a mix of MHNHA-sponsored and partner-sponsored centers. As noted previously, the market and financial viability of one or more interpretive centers would be tested thoroughly, including an identification of not only grant income sources, but also independent, site-generated revenue streams to support operations. Testing the operational feasibility of such centers will help improve the likelihood of sustainability of one or more centers. Regardless of future decisions regarding one or more interpretive centers, federal *NHA funding cannot be used for the acquisition of real estate or the development* of interpretive centers. Also, *NHAs have no land use and development regulatory authority*, and developments that might impact the natural and social environment would require following *federal environmental regulations* based upon NEPA and other relevant laws.

The MHHAA will also encourage the development of theme-based tours at the local level where they do not currently exist. Again, a critical role for the MHHAA in interpretation, marketing and promotion of the heritage area is the development of hiking, biking and driving tours tied to the MHNHA's primary themes and illustrated through maps. The MHHAA can also help support and strengthen the Roots of American Music trail now under development. To the degree that funding is available, maps and other media will be developed for interpretation of the theme-based tours through communication tools, interpretive exhibits, brochures, books, and living history demonstrations.

Grant Programs

To the extent funding is available, the MHHAA will provide Assistance Grants for outside consulting, and Transportation or other Education and Outreach grants. It is also hopeful that, sometime following the first five years of MHNHA operations, Festival and Event Grants can be provided. Such grants can provide a "return on investment" for the NHA's communities, but also build brand recognition for the heritage area and strengthen the area's cultural heritage events.

Preservation and Enhancement

The MHHAA will assist and collaborate with other agencies to identify sources of grants to assist and enhance "emerging" visitor sites. The MHHAA will also provide (or collaborate with others to provide) technical assistance to the region's communities on implementation of heritage preservation and community enhancement policies. The MHHAA will explore development of wayfaring and wayfinding programs throughout the heritage area. The MHHAA will support development and enhancement of outdoor recreation facilities, such as greenways, along with associated businesses in the region. Finally, the MHHAA will work with existing land trust organizations, historic preservation organizations, and willing land owners to protect heritage area lands through conservation or façade easements where appropriate. As noted elsewhere in this management plan, such an approach will not involve heritage area federal funding in land acquisition and it will not feature a regulatory approach – it will rely exclusively on the involvement of willing parties.



New Albany's segment of the regional greenway system is just one example of the enhancements that can occur at the community level.

OPERATIONS

To carry out the functions described above, the MHHAA will continue to operate as an independent non-profit entity. Staff currently includes two full-time members: a Program Manager and a Project Coordinator. Assuming this plan's budgeting projections can be met, on a more permanent basis, the entity will operate with two additional staff members who will bring to the organization additional expertise in heritage preservation, interpretation, funding, marketing, and tourism development. In addition to the four paid staff, the MHHAA will work with its partners to bring various external specialists in-house on a pro-bono or fee-for-service matching grant basis, depending on the project and the recipients' resources. This operating structure is defined in more detail below.

Permanent Positions

The four permanent positions will include an Executive Director (or “Program Manager”), Administrative Manager (currently “Project Coordinator”), Tourism and Marketing Manager (currently a part-time contractor), and Heritage Technical Specialist (a new position), as described below.

Executive Director - The Executive Director (currently operating as the “Program Manager”) will direct and provide oversight for all operations of the MHHAA. The director will have primary responsibility for external relations, marketing, and partnership development; and will maintain and promote existing partnerships with the various tourism and heritage preservation organizations throughout the region. The Director will also direct fundraising efforts and build relationships with corporate sponsors with a goal of establishing a diverse and sustainable mix of funding sources to support MHHAA operations and assistance to community organizations.

Administrative Manager - The Administrative Manager (currently operating as “Project Coordinator”) will continue to manage the administrative functions of the MHHAA, including in-house accounting, budgeting, non-research grant proposal writing, logistics, board meeting minutes, contracts and procurement, basic research, and other administrative activities as necessary.

Heritage Technical Specialist - This heritage research, conservation, preservation, education and outreach specialist will manage all research, technical assistance, and grants for heritage interpretation, preservation, and enhancement. This person will secure and manage partnerships for providing technical assistance (with a specialty in interpretation, preservation, and curatorial services); and will manage internship and pro bono historian-in-residence programs. This technical specialist will also provide technical expertise and assistance relating to strategic planning, funding, design, and the operation of heritage sites. This individual will oversee education programs, including transportation grants for school field trips to sites. The technical specialist will also help the Executive Director with grant writing and fundraising for heritage development programs.

Tourism and Marketing Specialist - A full-time marketing specialist position will be established to replace the current part-time contract marketing position. This person will oversee not only development and maintenance of the website and marketing materials, but also promotions, tour design and coordination, CVB and tourism services partnership development, database management, and economic development promotion. The position will require a background in tourism marketing and management.

Volunteer and Non-Permanent Positions

The entity will benefit from the assistance of volunteers, interns, and grant-based temporary technical specialists as follows.

Historian-in-Residence (Non-Permanent Grant) - With sufficient funding, an occasional historian-in-residence can be recruited every 2-5 years through regional or national competitions to work with the MHHAA on specific research or interpretation projects. This individual’s tenure will be funded through sponsored grants and source institutions. The “historian” may also include musicians, writers, scientists, or others with a specific research link to one of the area’s key themes.

Volunteers - Through its executive board, the MHAA will continue to seek the assistance of volunteers, particularly those with specialist technical backgrounds, to work on fundraising, events management, special projects, and other activities as required.

Interns and Assistantships - Students will be recruited through partnerships with area universities to gain credit for internships and assistantships through the MHAA. These individuals will work pro bono, but will more likely receive academic credit or a stipend for their work.

C. Budget & Funding Sources

The National Park Service requests that the management plan outline the budget amounts required for the operation of the coordinating entity to complete heritage area projects or initiatives. The costs and funding sources are to be identified in dollar amounts and in-kind contributions from anticipated or known partners. Identification of partner commitments helps provide reassurance that the heritage area has broad support and its program is sustainable.

OPERATING INCOME AND EXPENDITURES

The MHAA has already been operating with \$147,000 in federally-appropriated funds, plus another \$100,000 in State Division of Tourism Development funding and income generated through membership dues and contributions. Overall, the MHAA has a \$389,000 operating budget in FY2013, including \$95,040 in FY12 funds carried-forward. More than \$105,000 of the total budget was allocated for completion of the Management Plan, which is a one-time expense. For the purposes of this Business Plan, MHAA income and expenditures were forecasted for the five-year period from FY2014 through FY2018.

Income

State funds, membership dues, and in-kind contributions have helped the heritage area meet the matching requirements for receipt of the \$147,000 in federal funds. Ultimately, one key budgetary objective will be to further diversify the funding base for the MHAA so that it is less dependent on federal and state appropriations and is more financially independent over time.

As part of the strategy to diversify its funding base, it is assumed that income will be generated from a broadened combination of federal and state appropriations, sponsorships, membership dues, fundraising events, special project grants, and earned income. This budget is predicated on the assumption that the MHAA will continue to be awarded a National Park Service (NPS) appropriation through the Heritage Partnership Program, but with a higher target amount of \$250,000. At the same time, a decrease in state funding is anticipated over time based on the experience of state allocations nationwide. While there is absolutely no guarantee of federal (or state) appropriations, which tend to vary from year to year, it is important to set targets for meeting the objectives set forth by the Management Plan. The following table summarizes key budget targets for the MHAA.

| TABLE 1. INCOME AND EXPENDITURES FORECAST, MHAA, 2014-2018 | | | | | |
|---|---|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Income | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
| NPS Heritage Partnership Program | \$ 145,000 | \$ 145,000 | \$ 250,000 | \$ 250,000 | \$ 250,000 |
| Mississippi Development Authority - Tourism | \$ 100,000 | \$ 75,000 | \$ 75,000 | \$ 75,000 | \$ 70,000 |
| Corporate Sponsorships | \$ - | \$ 7,000 | \$ 15,000 | \$ 25,000 | \$ 30,000 |
| In-kind Contributions | \$ 30,000 | \$ 30,000 | \$ 35,000 | \$ 40,000 | \$ 50,000 |
| Special Project Grants | \$ - | \$ 1,000 | \$ 8,500 | \$ 10,000 | \$ 10,000 |
| Membership Dues | \$ 70,000 | \$ 75,000 | \$ 80,000 | \$ 85,000 | \$ 90,000 |
| Earned Income / Technical Assistance | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 4,000 | \$ 6,000 | \$ 8,000 |
| Fundraising / Events, Rentals | \$ - | \$ 5,000 | \$ 8,500 | \$ 12,000 | \$ 12,000 |
| TOTAL | \$ 345,000 | \$ 338,000 | \$ 476,000 | \$ 503,000 | \$ 520,000 |
| Expenditures | | | | | |
| <u>Administration & Operations</u> | | | | | |
| Personnel (2) (Salary+Benefits) | \$ 108,000 | \$ 114,000 | \$ 144,000 | \$ 150,000 | \$ 158,000 |
| Office Rent, Insur., Supplies & Contracts | \$ 43,000 | \$ 45,100 | \$ 48,300 | \$ 50,400 | \$ 52,500 |
| Travel & Conferences | \$ 3,000 | \$ 4,000 | \$ 8,000 | \$ 9,000 | \$ 10,000 |
| Exhibit Center Operations | \$ 10,000 | \$ 11,000 | \$ 12,000 | \$ 13,000 | \$ 14,000 |
| Utilities | \$ 0 | \$ 0 | \$ 0 | \$ 6,000 | \$ 7,000 |
| Membership Dues & Prof. Development | \$ 6,000 | \$ 7,000 | \$ 9,000 | \$ 10,000 | \$ 11,000 |
| <u>Heritage Resource Development</u> | | | | | |
| Personnel (Salary+Benefits) | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 55,000 | \$ 57,700 | \$ 60,000 |
| Project Assistance Grants | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 25,000 | \$ 27,500 | \$ 30,000 |
| School Transportation Grants | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 5,000 | \$ 7,000 | \$ 9,000 |
| Research Materials / Exhibit Center | \$ - | \$ - | \$ 10,000 | \$ 10,000 | \$ 10,000 |
| Resource Development & Interpretation | \$ 2,500 | \$ 5,000 | \$ 10,000 | \$ 12,000 | \$ 14,000 |
| <u>Tourism & Marketing Specialist</u> | | | | | |
| Personnel (Salary+Benefits) | \$ 32,000 | \$ 34,000 | \$ 45,000 | \$ 50,000 | \$ 55,000 |
| Collateral and Production | \$ 15,000 | \$ 17,500 | \$ 20,000 | \$ 20,000 | \$ 20,000 |
| Media | \$ 30,000 | \$ 30,000 | \$ 30,000 | \$ 32,500 | \$ 35,000 |
| Events/Festival Grants | \$ 0 | \$ 0 | \$ 0 | \$ 0 | \$ 0 |
| Web Site / New Technology | \$ 12,500 | \$ 15,000 | \$ 17,500 | \$ 20,000 | \$ 22,500 |
| TOTAL | \$ 262,000 | \$ 282,600 | \$ 438,800 | \$ 474,900 | \$ 508,000 |
| Surplus or Carryover / (Deficit) | \$ 83,000 | \$ 55,400 | \$ 37,200 | \$ 28,100 | \$ 12,000 |
| *Note: | Includes volunteer hours, local administrative & technical assistance, professional services, research apprentice, etc. | | | | |
| Sources: | MHAA Strategy, Comparable heritage areas, and RGDE. | | | | |

A conservative target has been set for special project grants or those grants generated by foundations and others for project or program-specific uses and not available for administrative operations. This amount should increase over time with the addition of technical staff. Based on FY2013 membership dues collections, it is anticipated that \$70,000 will be generated in FY2014 through member dues. However, other forms of fundraising will gradually supplant some of the dues requirements over time. FY2014 income will also include in-kind contributions with a volunteer value that will continue to be applied as part of the match. It is assumed that the MHAA will not generate any earned income in FY2014, but can grow such income over time with the addition of a technical staff member specialized in heritage conservation, preservation and interpretation.

Expenditures

The MHHAA will generate expenditures relating to administration and operations, heritage resource development, and marketing and tourism. Under administration and operations, there will be two staff members (Executive Director and Administrative Manager) employed. In addition to personnel, administrative expenses include office equipment and supplies, conferences and travel, contracts, and memberships. It is assumed that there will be reduced professional service fees (e.g., for accounting) when such services are offered on a pro bono basis.

Heritage resource development (conservation, preservation, and interpretation) will be managed by one technical specialist, although interns and pro bono assistance will also be provided on a project-by-project basis. To the extent funding is available, other expenses will include: the issuance of project assistance grants (for outside consulting), transportation or other education and outreach grants; and costs for research materials, interpretation center materials, printing and distribution.

Marketing and tourism expenses include personnel (one tourism and marketing technical specialist), plus the cost of development and dissemination of marketing materials. Regular media expenses are included and any special media projects will be funded by outside sources. There will continue to be costs for revisions to and maintenance of the website and databases. It is hopeful that, sometime following the first five years of MHNHA operations, festival and event grants can be provided. Such grants can provide a “return on investment” for the NHA’s communities, but also build brand recognition for the heritage area and strengthening the area’s cultural heritage event products. Overall, the budget is balanced and will even yield end-of-the-year “carryover” funds, but it is based largely on “targets” for NPS and state appropriations, which are uncertain.

FUNDING SOURCES

As noted previously, the MHHAA will be funded during the next five years through a broadened combination of federal and state appropriations and grants, fee-based services, project-related grants, donations, memberships, sponsorships, in-kind services, and fundraising events. Some of the key sources of funding are discussed below.

Federal and State Grants & Appropriations

The MHHAA receives National Park Service (NPS) Heritage Partnership appropriations of \$147,000 per year, which is very close to the average amount (\$148,000 per annum) received by heritage areas nationwide. Nevertheless, it is likely that the MHNHA will, over time, qualify for larger matching funds in the range of \$250,000. To help the heritage area meet its stated objectives, and to more effectively distribute resources and assistance to the large geographic area covered by the MHNHA, the proposed budget has set a target for \$250,000 in federal heritage area funding by FY2016. Aside from heritage area funding, the MHHAA can also access grants from other federal agencies such as the National Endowment for the Arts, the Department of Agriculture, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Economic Development Administration, the Appalachian Regional Commission, and other federal agencies.

The State of Mississippi currently provides funding at \$100,000 per year through its Mississippi Development Authority/Tourism. The proposed budget conservatively estimates a reduction in the

funding level to approximately \$75,000 per year by FY2015. These target amounts are based on the experience in other states, where funding for heritage areas has been reduced due to budget shortfalls.

Memberships & Sponsorships

The strategy for this management plan has reaffirmed the existing system of tiered memberships for board members, but proposes diversifying the board beyond only CVB representatives. The strategy also proposes the establishment of membership programs for individuals and businesses. Dues for these memberships are also set forth through the suggested strategy. Large corporations will be recruited as sponsors for major programs and initiatives, above and beyond regular membership fees. In return, corporations will receive recognition through branding and other rights associated with events, tour routes, merchandising, and similar means. Similarly, individuals and others will be encouraged to make donations above and beyond regular memberships, in return for various forms of recognition.

Fundraising Events

The MHHAA has the opportunity to increase the scope and scale of fundraising events. Annual dinners, concerts, festivals, auctions, and other events could become an important fundraising tool for the heritage area. These events can also be used to bring stakeholders together from throughout the broad region that comprises the heritage area.



In-Kind Services

Valuable contributions can be made in the form of technical assistance provided pro bono or through credited programs from Ole Miss, Mississippi State, and other institutions. The MHHAA can help coordinate and access this assistance for the benefit of heritage area communities, sites, attractions, events, businesses, organizations, and tourism agencies throughout the region.

Fee-Based Services

In addition to technical services provided through partnerships with Ole Miss and others, the MHHAA will also provide some fee-based services to assist various stakeholders. Ultimately, member organizations receive a number of benefits, including some free technical assistance and/or training. However, there will also be fee-based services available for larger projects or programs (e.g., strategic plans) available through a competitive grant process for communities and attractions to the extent that such funding is available.

Income-Generating Programs, Merchandise and Facilities

Over time, the MHHAA can generate additional earned income through programs, merchandising and facilities that serve the broader market base. The MHHAA can contract for the development of branded merchandise to be sold throughout the heritage area, with profits shared between the site and the MHHAA. The MHHAA might, at some stage, opt to collaborate with other entities on the development of tour programs, or participate in the operation of a venue or facility where rentals or entrance fees might be charged for users. The advantage of these programs, merchandising

strategies, and facilities is that they can provide a recurring income stream for heritage area operations, thereby reducing dependency on project grants and federal or state funding.

Project & Program Grants

The MHHAA will continue to apply for various project and program grants through regional, national and international foundations, trusts, and other non-governmental organizations. There are a number of corporate foundations. For example, the Ford Foundation (\$413 million per annum), Chevron, Rockefeller, de Beers, and others focus some or all of their funding on arts and cultural heritage. Ford also has a focus on Native American arts and culture that could consider grants relevant to the MHNHA's themes. Community foundations provide funding for various local programs and projects. Conservation grants, also relevant to the heritage area, are sourced from a variety of organizations.

A variety of corporations provide sponsorships and grants for education programs, including museum interpretation and use of emerging technologies in interpretation. Companies and government agencies with important operations in the region will be targeted for corporate giving. Such companies include:

- Renasant Bank (HQ in Tupelo)
- BancorpSouth
- Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Mississippi, Inc. (TMMMS)
- Fusion Hospitality

Because these companies are headquartered or have major operations in the region, they are more likely to contribute to or sponsor heritage area activities in order to gain public relations exposure.

D. Performance Goals, Monitoring & Metrics

Performance measures are provided here to help evaluate management activities and project success. Performance goals are developed for the local coordinating entity (Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance - MHHAA) and for the heritage area in general. The National Park Service (NPS) has stated that performance goals, benchmarks and evaluation provide useful feedback on heritage area efforts to indicate success and to determine if operational changes are required. In addition, NPS notes that "Cooperative Agreements between the local coordinating entity and the Park Service may be a useful tool for evaluation because they define what work is to be done over a year period and lay out specific tasks each year. They can be used as benchmarks when compared to the actual work completed at the end of the year." Performance information can also be used to help leverage future funding, grants, in-kind, or investment support, by "demonstrating the ability of the local coordinating entity and partners to implement successful projects." It is noteworthy that this management plan's "Implementation Plan" section features a matrix on pages 8-9 with key plan objectives that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely (SMART).

KEY GOALS

Key goals and objectives have been established in the Strategy section of the management plan. The metrics and other performance measures should relate directly to the ability of the coordinating entity (MHAA) in meeting these goals.

- 1. Capacity & Diversification.** Develop the local coordinating entity (MHAA) into a highly-effective organization capable of implementing the management plan. A key element of this effort will be the broadening and diversification of board composition, partnerships, and funding sources.
- 2. Education & Interpretation.** Conduct research, education and interpretation relating to the MHNHA's primary themes as a means of documenting and telling the story of the area's unique heritage.
- 3. Preservation & Enhancement.** Preserve and enhance the heritage area's numerous natural and cultural resources, particularly those with a clear link to the MHNHA's primary themes.
- 4. Community Enhancement.** Encourage and assist in community enhancement and development of tourist "infrastructure."
- 5. Marketing & Tourism Development.** Market and promote the heritage area through a number of vehicles to further brand the heritage area and increase heritage tourism as a means of economic development.

KEY METRICS

As noted above, the measures for success should relate directly to the goals established for the coordinating entity, the MHAA. The following describes several key metrics for tracking, monitoring and measuring success. It should be noted that the goals have been established as ongoing tasks rather than as final targets. For example, preservation itself is an ongoing task; it does not "end" once the physical assets of a heritage site are preserved but is rather, an ongoing process of ensuring that the region's historical sites will be available for interpretation, education, and enjoyment of future generations.

- 1. Capacity & Diversification.** Enhancing the capacity of the coordinating entity to implement the management plan is a critical goal, particularly in these early stages of operations, as a prerequisite to that all other goals can be achieved. Key metrics include:
 - a. Stable or generally increasing operating funding levels over time.
 - b. Number of funding sources, illustrating the diversity of funding sources and sustainability of operations (with a lack of dependency on any one funding source).
 - c. Amount of funding leveraged from non-governmental sources.
 - d. Amount of earned income generated (through technical assistance programs, rentals, fundraising events, and other activities outside of grants or appropriations).

- e. Staffing levels and professional and technical capacity.
- f. A leadership program established for board members, committees and staff.
- g. Board and committee members representing various heritage, tourism, demographic and economic factions in the region (illustrating the diversity of the board). Geographic diversity and coverage is also important, given that the MHNHA covers a vast geographic area.
- h. Number and diversity of partner organizations providing direct support illustrating a broad base of partnerships. The number of new partnerships developed should also be tracked over time.
- i. “Repeat” contributors and supporters (indicative of ongoing support), illustrating sustainable and ongoing support from a strong “stable” of partners and supporters.
- j. Quality standards in place to rate “visitor-readiness” among the various sites, attractions, and events.
- k. Number of volunteers and value of volunteer hours.
- l. Value of external in-kind support, such as technical assistance.

2. Education & Interpretation. Research, interpretation and education are critical components of the overall mission of the MHNHA and its coordinating entity. Key metrics for tracking success in this arena include the following.

- a. Numbers of students gaining access to area sites and programs with assistance from transportation grants and educational curricula leveraged or developed by the MHHAA.
- b. Increased awareness of the region’s heritage (determined through surveys, etc.).
- c. Number and value of research projects associated with the heritage area and its primary themes that are leveraged through MHHAA partnerships.
- d. Number of publications and films generated based on research conducted or facilitated by the MHHAA and its partners.
- e. Number and value of technical assistance projects provided (such as through partnerships enabled by MHHAA) for interpretation.
- f. Design of themed tours, creation, and dissemination of interpretation material (maps and tour guides, etc). The creation of branded routes and maps is especially important, given the large geographic area covered by the heritage area and the need for linkages and tourism corridors to ensure the broadest appropriate coverage.
- g. Number and types of media materials generated for interpretation services.
- h. Number of activities (e.g., feasibility studies for interpretation centers, funding of temporary or permanent street-front galleries, or touring shows) that are leveraged to help to bring collections closer to the public.
- i. Funding secured for, and implementation of, interpretation signage.
- j. Number of sites assessed and improvements in standards made for “visitor ready” sites through programs developed by the MHHAA.
- k. Increased number of visitor-ready sites, attractions, and events.
- l. Increased attendance at educational venues (lectures, films, forums, and museums).

3. Preservation & Enhancement. One of the primary issues impacting on the success of the MHNHA is the condition and operation of existing heritage sites, attractions and events.

There is a need for strategic planning, preservation, and sustainable operation of the existing sites within the heritage area.

- a. Number and value of technical assistance projects leveraged (such as through collaborations) for preservation and curatorial services at “emerging” sites.
 - b. Number of successful collaborations which have brought technical assistance to establish policies which reinforce community character or preserve sites.
 - c. Number of successful collaborations which resulted in the establishment of conservation and/or façade easements.
 - d. Number of “tourism-ready” sites.
 - e. Number of additional heritage sites meeting preservation and conservation standards.
4. **Community Enhancement.** The physical environment and context is very important in marketing the region for heritage tourism. There is a need to ensure that the environment is conducive to promoting heritage tourism. The coordinating entity, the MHHAA, can play an important role in coordination and facilitation for bringing technical expertise to communities to help them develop plans and strategies for enhancing their physical assets and leveraging tourism.
- a. Number and value of technical assistance or facilitation initiatives leveraged for regional and municipal planning and other agencies to develop plans and policies, and to leverage infrastructure improvements to enhance community character.
 - b. A wayfinding/wayfaring program initiated.
 - c. Value of infrastructure funding and other investment leveraged through the use of plans, incentives and policies generated with the help of technical assistance leveraged by the MHHAA through partnerships and collaborations.
 - d. Number of recreational facilities or activities established (or further developed) through promotions and collaborations initiated by the MHHAA.
 - e. Number and value of technical assistance or facilitation initiatives on tourism services and support infrastructure leveraged through collaborations for municipal economic development or Main Street organizations.
5. **Marketing & Tourism Development.** The role of the MHNHA and its coordinating entity, the MHHAA, in tourism development should be measured and tracked over time to ensure maximum success. Possible metrics for measuring this success include the following:
- a. Number of events promoted, in part, through contributions (in-kind or financial) made by the MHNHA.
 - b. New events established, in part, based on promotion, facilitation, and/or financial contributions made by the MHHAA.
 - c. Number of articles written about the MHNHA in regional and national publications.
 - d. Number of broadcast media output about MHNHA.
 - e. Changes to the website, which include more diversity in terms of geographic coverage, and more tour maps and guides relating to the heritage area’s key themes.
 - f. Number of hits on MHNHA website, or on Twitter, Facebook and other social networking media.
 - g. Use of apps and hand-held tour technologies in the MHNHA region.

- h. Requests for information received by MHHAA.
- i. Growth in attendance at MHNHA heritage sites, attractions, tours, and events over time. While such growth (or decline) cannot be attributed directly to the actions of the MHHAA, there should be some general indication of impact. Impacts can be assessed, for example, based on visitor surveys and interviews with operators.
- j. Increase in lodging room-nights, revenues, and tax revenues over time. Again, such growth (or decline) cannot be attributed directly to the actions of the MHHAA, but there should be some general indication of impact. This impact can also be assessed through regular visitor surveys and operator interviews.
- k. Increase in retail sales and tax revenues over time (with attribution based on surveys and interviews with Main Street organizations, operators, and others).
- l. Economic impacts of MHNHA, as determined from above (collected as through an economic impact study) on a regular basis (once per 3-5 years).

BENCHMARKS

In addition to regular monitoring and measuring of MHHAA progress in meeting key goals, there is also the need to benchmark MHHAA performance. Clearly, the closest and easiest comparable programs available for benchmarking are other national heritage areas recognized by the NPS. Perhaps most relevant are those national heritage areas located in the region, as well as those that offer similar themes and approaches for interpretation and tourism. Possible heritage areas with which to benchmark progress on a regular basis are the following:

- Mississippi Delta NHA
- Muscle Shoals NHA
- Upper Housatonic Valley NHA (Literary Heritage)
- Atchafalaya NHA (Literary Heritage)



The Muscle Shoals NHA is one of several potential "benchmark" NHAs for the MHNHA.

Progress against these other heritage areas will be benchmarked in terms of growth in attendance, fundraising, volunteer hours, in-kind contributions, and other factors outlined above.

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Mississippi Hills
National Heritage Area

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN SECTION

Prepared for the:
**Mississippi Hills
Heritage Area Alliance**

Revised:
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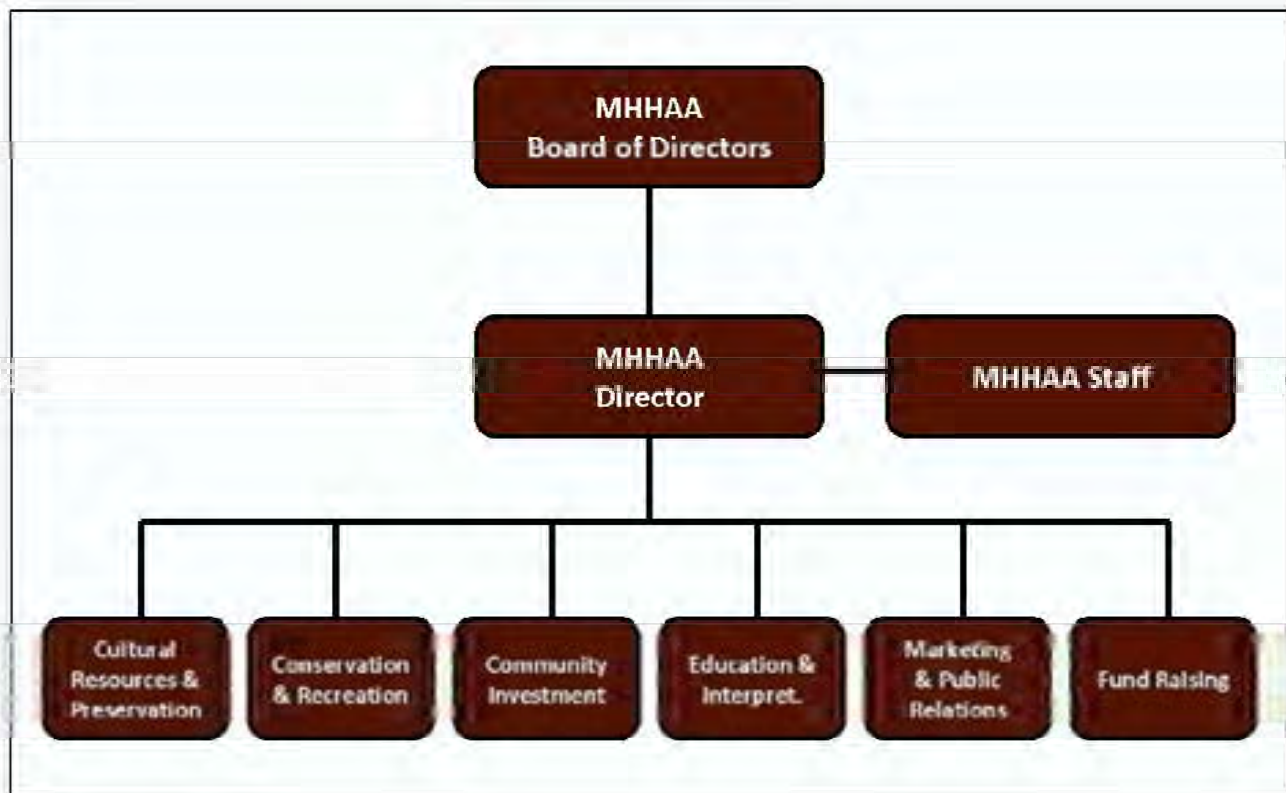
A. ORGANIZATION & RESOURCES

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE MHNHA

Graphically displayed in the chart below, the key components of the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area’s coordinating entity – the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance (MHHA) are as follows (in order of authority):

- MHHA Board of Directors
- MHHA Director
- MHHA Staff
- Committees

Each component of this organizational structure is described below.



MHHA Board of Directors

Objective 1-C of this plan’s Strategies section states the following: “Involve a broad cross-section of MHNHA stakeholders to benefit from a diverse set of perspectives and to build a strong grassroots foundation of support.” It further states that the MHHA should either diversify the Board of Directors or create a supplemental Advisory Board. At present, the MHHA board is

comprised solely of heritage area CVB directors, thereby neglecting other important facets related to research, interpretation, preservation, marketing, business, fund-raising, and similar heritage area functions. Diversifying the Board structure will require that the organization's by-laws specify a variety of board member types. If there are reasons that compel the MHHAA to continue with the current board composition, the supplemental Advisory Council should be created in accordance with "Section 9.03: Advisory Council" of the current bylaws.

Staffing

The four permanent positions will include an Executive Director (currently "Program Manager"), Administrative Manager (currently "Project Coordinator"), Tourism and Marketing Manager (currently a part-time contractor), and Heritage Technical Specialist (a new position), as summarized below and described in more detail in this plan's Business Plan.

Director

The Executive Director will oversee all operations of the MHHAA. They will have responsibility for external relations, marketing, maintaining and promoting partnerships with tourism and heritage preservation organizations, directing fundraising efforts, building relationships with corporate sponsors, and supervising staff.

Administrative Manager

The Administrative Manager (currently operating as "Project Coordinator") will continue to manage the administrative functions of the MHHAA, including in-house accounting, budgeting, non-research grant proposal writing, logistics, board meeting minutes, contracts and procurement, basic research, and other administrative activities as necessary.

Heritage Technical Specialist

This heritage research, conservation, preservation, education and outreach specialist will manage all research, technical assistance, and grants for heritage interpretation, preservation, and enhancement. They will also secure and manage partnerships for providing technical assistance, and they will provide technical expertise and assistance relating to strategic planning, funding, design, and the operation of historic sites.

Tourism & Marketing Specialist

Replacing the current part-time contract marketing position, this person will oversee maintenance of the website, development of marketing materials, promotions, tour design and coordination, CVB and tourism services partnership development, database management, and economic development promotion.

In addition to paid full-time staff, the MHHAA will also benefit from the assistance of volunteers, interns, and grant-based temporary technical specialists, as listed below and explained in more detail in this plan's Business Plan:

- Historian-in-Residence (Non-Permanent Grant)
- Volunteers
- Interns and Assistantships

Committees

Six specific topic-based committees will be established. Committee members will not be limited to board members. Some of these committees will assist with a particular function of the MHNHA, while others will address a specific topic. The proposed committees include the following:



Cultural Resources & Preservation Committee

Since the heritage area is dependent upon the preservation of cultural resources, this committee is critical. It will address all issues related to cultural resources and related preservation efforts. The committee's focus on cultural resources will be limited primarily to resources with a direct link to the MHNHA's primary interpretive themes - Native American heritage, African American heritage, the Civil War, and the Arts. Committee members should include individuals involved with cultural resource management and historic preservation, including directors and board members of organizations that manage historic sites, members of local historic preservation commissions, academic institution history teachers/professors, and local historians.

Conservation & Recreation Committee

This committee will focus on natural land conservation efforts, including acquisition of open space for public use and conservation easements for private lands. As noted throughout this plan, *federal funds obtained through the NHA cannot be utilized toward property acquisition. Nor does the NHA have land use and development regulatory powers.* This committee will include representatives from the state and regional land trusts, governmental entities involved with conservation, and private entities such as the Sierra Club. In addition to natural resources, this committee will address outdoor recreational activities, such as boating, fishing, hunting, hiking, cycling, canoeing, and rafting. Committee members focusing on this mission will include Parks and Recreation Department staff from local governments and leaders of clubs for fishing, hunting and related activities.

Community Investment Committee

This committee will address everything that is “bricks and mortar” for the MHNHA. It will be involved with investing in the physical aspects of the heritage area to improve its condition and make it more livable, more attractive to visitors, residents and businesses, and to help improve the overall quality of life. Key participants for this committee will include Main Street program managers, planning directors, and community redevelopment officials from the MHNHA’s various communities.

Education & Interpretation Committee

This committee will be comprised of local historians, history academics from area universities (University of Mississippi, Mississippi State, Rust College, Mississippi University for Women, etc.), museum operators, anthropologists (including archeologists and ethnographers), and others with expertise and interest in the area’s history and culture.

Marketing & Public Relations Committee

This committee will consist of marketin and public relations professionals, CVB representatives,

Natchez Trace Compact, and others involved with tourism, including tourism-related businesses (hospitality, dining, specialty retail, etc).

Fund-Raising Committee

This committee may be the most important committee of all because of the critical nature and unique issues associated with fund-raising. As noted previously, anticipated changes to the NPS's treatment of NHAs and their funding will only make this issue even more significant. This plan's Business Plan section addresses fund-raising strategies in detail.

These six working committees do not include the additional committee suggested in Objective 3-A of the Strategies section of this plan for determining "tourist ready" versus "emerging" sites and attractions. That committee will only meet as needed following an initial round of evaluations by a smaller group of representatives from other NHAs.

Members

To both generate revenue and encourage commitment among those who will benefit from and contribute toward the MHNHA, two different categories of memberships shall occur:

Convention & Visitors Bureaus (CVBs)

The current three-tiered membership structure for CVBs will be continued. It is based upon their annual tourism-generated tax revenue as calculated by the State and includes the following: Tier 1 - \$10,000; Tier 2 - \$5,000; and Tier 3 - \$1,000. Members in all three categories have voting privileges on the Board of Directors, and there is also a \$500 non-voting membership category.

Other Member Types

The Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area has been offered as a potential model for other membership types. It includes the following categories: Individual & Senior - \$25; Family - \$45; Supporting - \$75; Premium - \$125; Patron - \$250; Benefactor - \$500. While there is a range of benefits for membership in the Rivers of Steel NHA, the MHNHA will need to develop further for MHNHA membership to provide sufficient benefits to its members to be attractive.

This plan's Strategies section also includes a proposal for corporate sponsorships.

Other Personnel

The other personnel that will be necessary to carry out the mission of the MHNHA include technical consultants and individuals with legal and financial expertise.

Technical Consultants

Technical expertise will be provided through both in-house staff and consultants. The staff technical expertise has already been addressed both in terms of the specific positions and their pay ranges within this plan's Business Plan. Contingent upon sufficient funding, technical consultants will be employed as needed to the extent that the staff technical assistants lack the time or level of expertise needed for specific projects. For the purposes of planning and budgeting, it is assumed that approximately half of the time for consultants will be hired directly by the MHNHA, while the heritage area's various partners will account for the balance of the time for consultants utilizing funding from the MHNHA.

Legal & Financial Expertise

An organization such as the MHAA may occasionally need legal and financial expertise. Needed legal expertise might include reviewing draft contracts with consultants and addressing legal liability issues for board members and for sponsoring special events. Examples of financial expertise that may be needed include preparing financial statements, setting up bank accounts, dealing with audits, and similar accounting needs. An approach used by many such organizations is to appoint board members who can volunteer these areas of expertise. Consequently, this plan’s Business Plan assumes that no expenses will be incurred for these areas of expertise.

RESOURCES

In addition to staffing, volunteers and hired expertise, resources that will be required to support the efforts of the MHNHA include office space, transportation and other resources.

Offices

The MHAA office is currently housed on Main Street in the Fair Park District on the edge of Downtown Tupelo. The existing space should be able to accommodate the four recommended staff members, not including interns and other part-time staffing. It is proposed that this space continue to be utilized, although the use of interns and other part-time staffing may require that additional space within the same building be provided. Because the landlord has office furniture and equipment provided that is on-loan for the short term, it is estimated that some office furniture purchases will be necessary in the future. Although not tied to staffing needs, the potential expansion of the interpretive exhibit space currently adjacent to the

MHAA offices could impact the office space as well.



The MHAA’s offices on the edge of Downtown Tupelo should be suitable for future needs.

Transportation

While the Mississippi Hills NHA covers a relatively large area with 30 counties, the office headquarters in Tupelo are somewhat centrally located (although a bit to the east of center). While staff will definitely need to circulate regularly throughout the heritage area, it is not proposed that the MHAA purchase or rent one or more vehicles. Instead, employees will utilize their own vehicles and keep a mileage log to be reimbursed according to mileage. If taking this approach results in significant dissatisfaction among the staff or other problems, the idea of buying a MHAA-owned vehicle should be revisited. At this point, ownership of a vehicle has not been factored into the budget within this plan’s Business Plan, although “travel” has been budgeted to accommodate reimbursements.

Other Resources

Other resources that will be required to keep the MHHAA functioning include the typical office support resources, such as office furniture (desks, chairs, etc.), office equipment (computers, a printer, a digital projector, telephones, cell phones, cameras, etc.), various office supplies (ink cartridges, paper, folders, envelopes, labels, etc.), utility and telecommunications expenses (phone bills, website hosting, internet, etc.), and related items. Because the MHHAA already has office furniture and equipment in its offices, it is estimated that future such purchases will be infrequent, although supplies and similar expenses will be ongoing.

B. STRATEGIES SEQUENCING & RESPONSIBILITIES

The matrix provided on the following two pages summarizes each goal and objective from the Strategies section of the management plan and provides the following information:

- Alpha-numeric designation
- Page number within the Strategies section of this plan for greater detail
- Party or parties responsible for implementation
- Timeframe (near, mid and long term)

Although the timeframe only addresses the first five years of the MHNHA's existence upon completion of this plan, the heritage area is clearly expected to exist long beyond that time horizon. However, attempting to forecast this plan's implementation steps beyond that timeframe would not be a useful exercise given that the plan will need to be revisited by that time since much will have changed.

The objectives contained on the following two pages have been organized by the Strategy sections five goals. Below is an overview of each:

1) Develop the MHNHA's local coordinating entity – the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance – into a highly-effective organization capable of successfully implementing the Management Plan once completed.

This goal focuses on building the MHHAA as an entity so it can effectively accomplish the goals for the heritage area. With the exception of leveraging organizations such as chambers of commerce, the National Park Service (NPS), and the Alliance of National Heritage Areas (ANHA), this goal's supplemental objectives will rely exclusively on the efforts of the MHHAA. Furthermore, each objective will be initiated during the first year ("near term") following this plan's adoption and will continue throughout the MHNHA's existence.

2) Conduct research, education and interpretation related to the MHNHA's primary themes as a means of documenting and telling the story of the Heritage Area's unique cultural heritage.

Two of the strategies proposed for this goal - research into interpretive themes and utilizing tools/media for interpretation - will be initiated during the first year ("near term") after this plan's adoption, while the balance will occur during years two and three ("mid term"). The strategies that

are considered more pressing are those that relate directly to interpreting the heritage area, such as further research into themes, the development of thematic tours, the creation of interpretive materials (brochures, web-based tools, etc.), and the programming of living history demonstrations. Strategies considered less urgent are those such as the establishment of oral history programs and educational curriculum for area schools. While it would be desirable to have the potential interpretive centers developed within the near term, it is recognized that this strategy is the most ambitious and will take time. Thus, the serious exploration of this concept is suggested for the years two and three (mid term) timeframe. While the MHHAA will need to spearhead these strategies, most will require partnerships with other entities, such as the local schools.

3) Preserve and enhance the Heritage Area’s numerous natural and cultural resources, particularly those with a clear link to the MHNHA’s primary themes.

The strategies tied to this goal that will be initiated during the first year after this plan’s adoption relate to the improvement of the quality of various historic sites and attractions. Because the heritage area will have only one chance to make a first impression on heritage tourists, it is vital that sites and attractions that the MHHAA might promote have a high level of quality to avoid disappointing visitors and giving the heritage area a negative reputation. Tasks to be initiated during the second and third year timeframes (mid term) relate to less pressing issues, such as land preservation, historic building preservation, and the enhancement of commercial corridors and historic downtowns. Key partners for these efforts will include local governments, property owners, and historic preservation and conservation groups.

4) Encourage community enhancement and the development of tourism “infrastructure.”

This goal consists of only three strategies – the enhancement of quality of life and community character, a wayfaring and wayfinding program, and the development and/or enhancement of outdoor recreational facilities and opportunities. Because all three issues cannot come to fruition overnight, they have been deferred to the mid term (years two and three) timeframe. They will also require partners to the MHHAA who will need to take the lead role, including local governments, chambers of commerce, Main Street programs, and similar other entities.

5) Establish MHNHA as a viable and attractive visitor destination through effective branding and innovative marketing.

All three of the strategies for this goal will be initiated in year one (near term) because they are all marketing efforts that can be accomplished within a relatively brief amount of time and they are important to jump-starting increased tourism. One of these tasks – continued maintenance of the MHNHA website – will only require some recommended revisions generated by this plan. Likewise, networking using social media is a tool that can be implemented quickly at very little cost. Of this goal’s three strategies, the only one that cannot be achieved solely by the MHHAA will be the promotion and establishment of special events, which will rely on the joint participation of partners.

The following two pages feature the matrix just summarized above. All of these implementation steps meet the NPS's principles for planning objectives that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely (SMART).

Matrix of Key Recommendations - part 1

| No. | Recommendation (page numbers reference the Strategy section of the plan) | Page # | Responsible Party | Time-Frame |
|----------|--|--------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | Develop the MHHAA (local coordinating entity) into a highly-effective organization | | | |
| 1-A | Establish a leadership program to help maintain the effectiveness of current board members, committees, and staff | 3-4 | MHHAA | Near Term (Yr. 1) |
| 1-B | Secure dependable funding sources both to match available federal funding and to sustain the MHNHA in the long-term | 4-6 | MHHAA | Near Term (Yr. 1) |
| 1-C | Involve a broad cross-section of MHNHA stakeholders for diverse perspectives and to build a strong grassroots foundation | 6-8 | MHHAA | Near Term (Yr. 1) |
| 1-D | Develop a network of partner sites, attractions, and events that meet minimum standards of quality to be promoted in the MHNHA | 8-9 | MHHAA | Near Term (Yr. 1) |
| 1-E | Establish a promotional program that markets the NHA's sites, attractions, and events, as well as the MHNHA as a destination | 9-11 | MHHAA | Near Term (Yr. 1) |
| 2 | Conduct research, education and interpretation related to the MHNHA's primary themes | | | |
| 2-A | Support, sponsor or conduct additional research into MHNHA themes | 12 | MHNHA | Near Term (Yr. 1) |
| 2-B | Establish an oral history program utilizing high school and college students to record histories from individuals | 12-13 | MHHAA & area schools | Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3) |
| 2-C | Create an educational curriculum within the NHA's grade schools and high schools to teach the primary themes | 13-14 | MHHAA & school districts | Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3) |
| 2-D | Explore the development of an interpretive center for the MHNHA | 14-17 | MHHAA & partners | Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3) |
| 2-E | Utilize a variety of tools and media for interpretation, including tours/itineraries, printed materials, and new technologies | 17-21 | MHHAA & partners | Near Term (Yr. 1) |
| 3 | Preserve and enhance the Heritage Area's numerous natural and cultural resources | | | |
| 3-A | Adopt minimum standards of quality to insure "tourism readiness" for partner sites and to be an incentive to "emerging" sites | 22-23 | MHHAA | Near Term (Yr. 1) |
| 3-B | Provide technical assistance and help identify grants for tourist-ready and emerging sites and attractions | 23-24 | MHHAA | Near Term (Yr. 1) |
| 3-C | Work with existing land trust organizations and willing land owners to protect lands through conservation easements | 24-25 | MHHAA, land trusts & owners | Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3) |
| 3-D | Partner with preservation groups to work with willing property owners to protect historic resources with facade easements | 25-26 | MHHAA, pres. orgs. & owners | Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3) |
| 3-E | Assist communities with technical assistance to establish public policy tools to preserve resources and reinforce character | 26-27 | MHHAA & communities | Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3) |
| 4 | Encourage community enhancement and the development of tourism "infrastructure" | | | |
| 4-A | Help identify technical assistance for public policy strategies to improve quality of life and enhance community character | 28 | MHHAA & communities | Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3) |
| 4-B | Explore the development of a wayfaring and wayfinding program | 28 | MHHAA & partners | Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3) |
| 4-C | Support the development and/or enhancement of outdoor recreational facilities and opportunities | 28-30 | MHHAA & partners | Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3) |

Matrix of Key Recommendations - part 2

| No. | Recommendation | Page # | Responsible Party | Time-Frame |
|----------|--|--------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 5 | Establish the MHNHA as a viable and attractive visitor destination through branding and marketing | | | |
| 5-A | Promote existing special events tied to the history, cultural traditions, and themes of the MHNHA, and create/promote new events | 31-32 | MHHAA & partners | Near Term (Yr. 1) |
| 5-B | Maintain the MHNHA website to highlight the primary themes, attractions, tours, and a schedule of events | 32 | MHHAA | Near Term (Yr. 1) |
| 5-C | Utilize conventional means to promote the MSHHA and its attractions, as well as internet-based social networking, etc. | 32-33 | MHHAA | Near Term (Yr. 1) |

C. FIVE-YEAR WORK PLAN

Consistent with the Strategies Summary matrix contained in the previous section of this Implementation Plan, below is a list of strategies for each of the timeframes during the MHNHA's first five years following this Management Plan's adoption. The three timeframes are organized as follows:

- Near Term: Year 1
- Mid Term: Years 2-3
- Long Term: Years 4-5

The timeframe associated with each strategy below indicates *the timeframe during which each strategy will be initiated*. Depending upon the type of strategy, many of them will occur continuously after their initiation. For example, "Strategy 1-A: Establish a leadership program to help maintain the effectiveness of current board members, committees, and staff..." is a strategy that will continue throughout the life of the heritage area. However, some strategies will occur only as long as needed for their achievement. An example would be "Strategy 2-D: Explore the development of an interpretive center for the MHNHA." Once a feasibility study is prepared for one or more potential interpretive centers, and once the viable centers (if any) are developed, this strategy will obviously not require ongoing implementation.

NEAR TERM: YEAR 1

The initial year of the MHNHA's operation after the adoption of this management plan will focus on strengthening the coordinating entity, interpretation, and marketing. In particular, the easy and/or inexpensive projects ("low hanging fruit") will be pursued. An example of a project that will not be pursued at this point is the exploration of the development of one or more potential interpretive centers. This does not mean that meetings and early planning should not occur, but such a substantial undertaking will be difficult to focus on without distracting from the various strategies listed below for Year 1. Below are the near-term tasks organized by goals:

1) Develop the MHNHA's local coordinating entity – the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance – into a highly-effective organization capable of successfully implementing the Management Plan once completed.

- 1-A: Establish a leadership program to help maintain the effectiveness of current board members, committees, and staff for the MHHAA, and to identify and groom potential future leaders.
- 1-B: Secure dependable funding sources both to match available federal funding and to sustain the MHNHA in the long-term.
- 1-C: Involve a broad cross-section of MHNHA stakeholders to benefit from a diverse set of perspectives and to build a strong grassroots foundation of support.
- 1-D: Develop a network of partner sites, attractions, and events that meet minimum standards of quality to be included within the promotion of the Heritage Area.
- 1-E. Establish a promotional program that not only markets the Heritage Area and its sites, attractions, and events, but that also markets the MHNHA as a destination.

2) Conduct research, education and interpretation related to the MHNHA's primary themes as a means of documenting and telling the story of the Heritage Area's unique cultural heritage.

- 2-A: Support, sponsor or conduct additional research into MHNHA themes.
- 2-E: Utilize a variety of tools and media for interpretation, including regional theme-based tours/itineraries, as well as printed materials and new and emerging technologies.

3) Preserve and enhance the Heritage Area's numerous cultural and natural resources, particularly those with a clear link to the MHNHA's primary themes.

- 3-A: Adopt a set of minimum standards of quality to insure "tourism readiness" for partner sites and attractions, as well as for an incentive to emerging sites and attractions.
- 3-B: Provide technical assistance and collaborate with appropriate agencies to identify sources of grants to partner and emerging sites and attractions.

5) Establish the MHNHA as a viable and attractive visitor destination through effective branding and innovative marketing.

- 5-A: Promote existing special events tied to the history, cultural traditions, and themes of the Heritage Area, and encourage the creation of new such events.
- 5-B: Continue to maintain the MHNHA website, which highlights primary themes and key heritage attractions, features tours tied to the themes and a schedule of events, and includes links to other relevant websites.
- 5-C: Utilize conventional means (ads, brochures, maps, rack cards), as well as internet-based social networking and other new and emerging technologies (downloadable phone apps, GPS, QR codes) to promote the Heritage Area and its resources to a variety of audiences.

MID TERM: YEARS 2-3

The strategies listed below focus on research, education, and interpretation, as well as the preservation and enhancement of cultural resources and places, and community improvements. Below are the mid-term tasks organized by goals:

2) Conduct research, education and interpretation related to the MHNHA's primary themes as a means of documenting and telling the story of the Heritage Area's unique cultural heritage.

- 2-B: Work with appropriate partners to establish an oral history program utilizing high school and/or college students within the MHNHA to record histories from individuals that address the Heritage Area's primary themes.
- 2-C: Partner with various entities to create an educational curriculum within the heritage area's grade schools and high schools centered around the MHNHA's primary themes.
- 2-D: Explore the development of an interpretive center for the MHNHA.

3) Preserve and enhance the Heritage Area's numerous cultural and natural resources, particularly those with a clear link to the MHNHA's primary themes.

- 3-C: Work with existing land trust organizations and willing land owners to protect lands through

conservation easements.

- 3-D: Partner with existing historic preservation organizations and other entities to aid willing property owners in protecting historic resources through facade easements.
- 3-E: Assist communities within the MHNHA with technical assistance to establish public policy tools which help preserve heritage assets and reinforce community character.

4) Encourage community enhancement and the development of tourism “infrastructure.”

- 4-A: Aid communities in identifying sources of technical assistance for creating public policy strategies which improve quality of life and enhance community character.
- 4-B: Explore the development of a wayfinding and wayfinding program that identifies the NHA boundaries along major thoroughfares within the region and also identifies key heritage area communities and heritage assets.
- 4-C: Support the development and/or enhancement of outdoor recreational facilities and opportunities.



A small part of the needed wayfinding program for the MHNHA was recently addressed when the NPS installed signage indicating entry into the heritage area at gateway points along the Natchez Trace Parkway.

LONG TERM: YEARS 4-5

Although a three-tiered timeframe was initially determined as a reasonable approach to implementation of this plan's recommendations, that idea was ultimately abandoned. Once detailed consideration was given to each of the plan's strategies, it was concluded that none of them warranted waiting four or more years to initiate implementation. However, as plan implementation evolves in the future and the plan is reconsidered and updated, it may make sense to push some of the strategies into the “long term” phase of four to five years out.

D. KEY PROGRAMS & PROJECTS

The various programs and projects described below have already been explained in this plan's previous Strategies section. However, rather than addressing the broader aspects of these concepts, the text below will focus on their more detailed implementation considerations.

PROGRAMS

There are several programs to be carried out by the MHHAA, including: initiating a leadership program (Objective 1-A), offering fee-based services to provide technical expertise and generate revenue (Objective 1-B), and establishing an oral history program utilizing high school and/or college students (Objective 2-B). However the most significant program warranting further elaboration here is the program of designating "visit ready" and "emerging" sites/attractions to insure a minimum level of standards to elevate the quality of visitor experiences (Objective 3-A). This program is explained in further detail below.

Visitor Ready & Emerging Sites/Attractions Program

The purpose of this program for "visitor ready" resources is to be able to promote sites, attractions and events that meet a minimum standard based upon best practices so that visitors to the MHNHA are not disappointed by resources that fail to meet their expectations. Conversely, the parallel program of "emerging" sites and attractions will identify those that are not yet deemed visitor ready per the best practices standards, but whose operators seek to achieve such status. The benefit of being determined "visitor ready" is that the MHHAA will aggressively market them, while the advantage of being designated "emerging" is that technical assistance and other resources will be targeted toward them. Standards to determine visitor readiness will address the following key factors:

Standards for Site/Attraction Evaluations

- Sufficient wayfinding
- Parking
- Visitor comfort amenities
- Standard days/hours of operation
- Physical maintenance of the site
- Historic authenticity and integrity
- Accurate and effective interpretation

These considerations are expanded upon further within the Strategies section of this plan. Because of the potential political nature of applying the standards and the need for clear objectivity, it is recommended that a small panel of experts (3 to 5) be appointed to administer the standards and to make the designations. Ideally, for the initial round of evaluations, the panel's experts will live and work outside of the MHNHA, and it is proposed that they consist of staff from other NHAs. Once

that initial round of evaluations occurs, a more local panel (5 to 10 people) will likely be needed and might be comprised of area CVB representatives and similar professionals. Each of the evaluation considerations listed above could be rated on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest score and 10 being the highest.

First Steps

1. Fine-tune the criteria, if needed
2. Assemble the evaluation panel
3. Implement the initial round of evaluations

Project Assistance Grants Program

It is explained in this plan's Strategies section that the heritage area will establish a grants program to help its various partners secure technical assistance as needed. In general, emerging sites will be given priority over the other partner sites that have already "arrived" with respect to tourist readiness. However, that general principle does not mean that meritorious projects of tourist-ready partners will not also be considered. The following criteria will be applied to grant applications by the MHNHA organization:

Selection Criteria for Grants

Extent of Need: Funding should be limited to applicants who truly need it to achieve their missions.

Benefits to the MHNHA: While funding might benefit a particular applicant, that does not mean it will be significantly beneficial to the heritage area. Projects that relate directly to the NHA's three primary interpretive themes should be considered particularly beneficial. One litmus test question for this consideration is "How does this project relate to the MHNHA Mission Statement?"

Amount of Match & Leveraging: In general, applicants matching the sought funding with the highest percentage of match funding should be given a higher level of consideration. Similarly, leveraging other funding sources will be viewed favorably. While cash should be at least part of the applicant's match, in-kind services should also be considered.

Capability of the Grantee: This consideration relates to the abilities of the entity seeking funding. Applicants with sufficient staffing to successfully implement the proposed project and with a positive track record on similar projects should be given the highest consideration.

Grants will not be given for operational costs of sites/organizations or the acquisition of property. While it may not need to be completely precluded, funding of physical improvements will be allowed only in special cases, if at all. An exception might be the emergency preservation of some threatened cultural resource closely associated with one of the MHNHA's primary interpretive themes.

A grant program will require a very clear and systematic approach, including annual funding cycles, an application for those seeking funding, and the objective application of the criteria listed above. It

will also require project monitoring, compliance, reporting, and similar activities. A grants manager, who should be one or both of the recommended staff Technical Assistants, will need to be familiar with federal regulations such as NEPA and Section 106, matching requirements, and reporting requirements.

First Steps

1. Fine-tune the criteria
2. Prepare the grant application using good models
3. Initiate the funding once a pool of funds are adequately budgeted

PROJECTS

While MHNHA “programs” tend to be on-going activities, “projects” are generally one-time actions having a clear beginning and ending point. Examples of projects include the development of thematic tours and various marketing materials. While this plan proposes a broad range of projects, the largest and most critical projects that call for greater detail than is already offered in the Strategies section of this plan include the potential development of interpretive centers, the enhancement of historic sites, and community enhancement projects. Each of these three project types are elaborated on below.

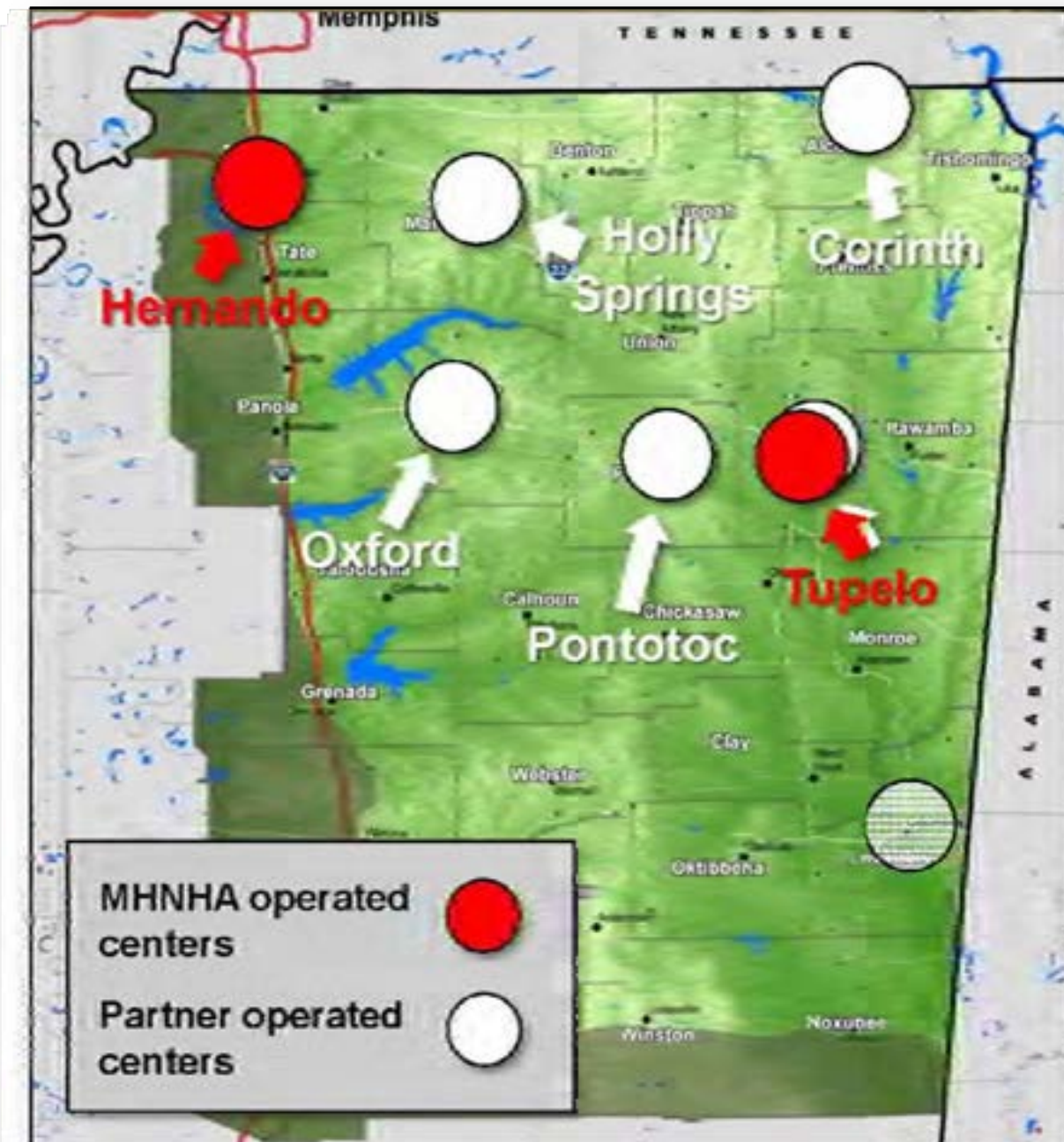
Exploring the Development of Interpretive Centers

The general ideas for the potential interpretive centers were previously described in Objective 2-D of the Strategies section of this management plan, as well as within this plan’s Interpretive Plan. In fact, the corresponding map is repeated below. While the Strategies section of this plan focuses on the rationale for the various locations that might be considered, their relative merits, and the stories that might be interpreted, this section of the Implementation Plan will focus more on what interpretive centers might entail and the approaches for exploring and potentially initiating their development. It must also be emphasized that *this plan has not recommended the development of interpretive centers per se, but rather that they be considered via feasibility studies.* Also, *federal NHA funding cannot be used for land acquisition or development, and any development that might impact the environment would require environmental review per state and federal laws.*

Interpretive centers do not necessarily require a large amount of square footage, but they should feature the following key components:

Components of an Interpretive Center

- Wayfinding – An effective signage system to guide visitors to the center
- Parking – A sufficient amount to meet anticipated needs, including for touring buses
- Comfort Amenities – Including restrooms, water fountains, trash receptacles, etc.
- Interpretive Space & Tools – Including an orientation film, exhibits (including interactive high-tech options)
- Programming – Including living history demonstrations, lectures, and related events



Note: The hash-marked circle at Columbus reflects the potential center interpreting the secondary theme of Architecture. It is an optional center that would be partner operated.

Potential Scale & Costs

Although these ideas are for very preliminary planning purposes, modestly-scaled interpretive centers should be expected to require between 5,000 and 10,000 square feet of space. Based upon examples of other interpretive centers and depending upon the level of quality, development costs (planning and design, property acquisition, development, and exhibit installation) might range between approximately \$400 and \$500 per square feet. If utilizing an existing structure, as has been encouraged by this plan where possible, the physical development costs might be less. Regardless, a

general cost range of \$2 million to \$5 million can be expected per interpretive center until preliminary planning can occur. *These figures should be refined based upon the necessary feasibility studies that should occur.*



Built in the late-1990s in Beaverton, Oregon, the Tualatin Hills Interpretive Center contains 4,845 square feet of space and cost \$1,936,257 to build. It was built to fit into a rustic environment and won awards for its environmental-friendly construction. It cost just under \$400 per square foot (not including land acquisition).

Interim Versus Ultimate Centers

Although feasibility studies for the potential interpretive centers may determine that no centers are viable, they might also determine that one or more interim centers are viable, to be later followed up by one or more “ultimate” centers. Because of the ambitiousness of pursuing the development of multiple interpretive centers within the MHNHA in light of likely funding challenges, it is important to have a two-tiered strategy for centers that identifies a more modest initial phase for a center that utilizes an existing facility. If the ultimate vision for a new interpretive center fails to materialize over time, the “interim center” might need to become the “ultimate center.” Feasibility studies may determine that one or more interpretive centers are not viable prior to such projects even gaining traction. Regardless, below are concepts for each proposed center:

POTENTIAL MHNHA-SPONSORED INTERPRETIVE CENTERS

Main Interpretive Center – Tupelo

Potential Interim Location:

- Existing small interpretive center connected to the MHAA offices on Tupelo’s Main Street

Potential Ultimate Location:

- Expansion within the existing interpretive center connected to the MHAA offices in Tupelo
- Another location within Downtown Tupelo yet to be determined

Gateway Interpretive Center – Hernando

Potential Interim Location:

- Existing downtown building to be determined

Potential Ultimate Location:

- Existing or new downtown building to be determined

POTENTIAL PARTNER-SPONSORED INTERPRETIVE CENTERS

Native American Heritage Interpretive Center

Potential Interim Location:

- Existing downtown Post Office museum in Pontotoc

Potential Ultimate Location:

- Existing or new downtown building in Pontotoc
- New building on Natchez Trace near Tupelo (as proposed by the Chickasaw Nation)

African American Heritage Interpretive Center – Holly Springs

Potential Interim Location:

- Partnership with the existing Ida B. Wells Museum to utilize their existing or expanded space
- Utilizing existing space at Rust College

Potential Ultimate Location:

- Existing or new downtown building (preferably on the town square)

Civil War Interpretive Center – Corinth

Potential Interim Location:

- Existing NPS-operated Corinth Civil War Interpretive Center

Potential Ultimate Location:

- Existing NPS-owned Curlee House in Downtown Corinth
- Existing or new downtown building

Arts Interpretive Center: Music – Tupelo

Potential Interim Location:

- Existing small interpretive center connected to the MHAA offices on Tupelo's Main Street

Potential Ultimate Location:

- Expansion within the existing interpretive center connected to the MHAA offices in Tupelo
- Another location within Downtown Tupelo yet to be determined
- Partnership with the Elvis Presley Birthplace & Museum at their existing facilities

Arts Interpretive Center: Literature – Oxford

Potential Interim Location:

- Existing space within the University of Mississippi

Potential Ultimate Location:

- Existing or new downtown building

Some of the suggested “interim” locations for consideration would be ill-suited for the “ultimate” center under any circumstances because of their location. Examples include housing the African American Heritage center at Rust College or housing the Arts center for Literature at the University of Mississippi. Both centers would be effectively “buried” within a relatively insular campus when a more accessible “storefront” location having high visibility would be needed for long-term success. For some of the other the potential “interim” centers to successfully become long-term centers, they would need improvements in a variety of ways. For example, adapting the existing Post Office museum in Downtown Pontotoc would require a major overhaul of the existing space layout, exhibits, and general interpretive methods.

First Steps

1. Perform a feasibility study for the centers
2. Perform a site selection study for the centers
3. Create preliminary design documents
4. Develop a fund-raising plan for the centers

Historic Site Enhancements

As indicated throughout this plan, one important approach to improve the MHNHA will be to help improve the many cultural sites and attractions that already exist and are operational. Working with site operators on upgrades will be one of the duties of the MHHAA’s Technical Assistant for preservation and interpretation. Likewise, the heritage area’s efforts to help sites secure grants will be targeted to sites needing assistance, including those designated as “emerging.” While each site’s needs will differ, the following principles will apply to many (these principles have been adapted from the considerations recommended elsewhere in this plan for determining whether a site is “tourist ready” or “emerging.”):

Principles for Site Enhancements

- *Sufficient wayfinding must be available so patrons can easily find the site:* Can the site be found solely via directional signage upon entering the community from one or more key corridors? Are there any gaps in signage that could cause the patron to get lost? Can the site also be readily found using printed maps and/or telecommunications (internet mapping, apps, etc.)? These are all questions that should be posed.
- *Parking should be in sufficient amounts and convenient to the site for a broad range of transportation modes without detracting from the site itself:* At a minimum, there should be plenty of parking for conventional automobiles and trucks. For the most popular sites, bus parking should also be available. While parking should be within a comfortable walking distance from the key anchors of the site, they should not visually impact the site’s overall character and integrity.
- *Visitor comfort amenities should make for an enjoyable visit:* Every historic site or cultural attraction should have adequate public restrooms, water fountains and similar amenities within an indoor facility. Outdoor amenities should include paved pathways that are ADA accessible (per the federal Americans with Disabilities Act), benches, trash receptacles and lighting. Opportunities for picnicking should also be considered.
- *Sites/attractions should have standard days and hours of operation:* Since weekends are the peak tourist days of the week, most sites should attempt to be open on weekends. Preferably, sites should

also be open most days of the week. Many tourist-oriented businesses that are closed one day per week choose Mondays, and cultural sites should consider the same policy. However, some may also choose Sundays to be closed for religious purposes.

- *Sites/attractions should be physically maintained at a high level:* Physical maintenance is important for two reasons in particular. First, maintenance is the best method for preserving cultural resources. Without cultural resources, heritage areas have difficulty succeeding. Secondly, well-maintained sites and attractions are more appealing to visitors and project a more positive image to help market the heritage area.
- *Historic authenticity and integrity should be preserved and reinforced:* As experience has confirmed, a key aspect sought by most heritage tourists is authenticity. It is important that any improvements to historic sites and attractions be done with a high level of authenticity. There are various guidelines that can be utilized for this principle, such as the federal government's Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Historic Rehabilitation. Those particular standards are used to determine whether qualified historic building rehabilitation projects can earn the lucrative federal investment tax credits.
- *Accurate and effective interpretation must be provided at historic sites and attractions:* It is important that the stories told are factual and of interest to patrons. An example of making interpretation interesting to a broader range of the tourist market is the recent trend for most Civil War sites. Rather than simply telling the story of names, dates and military strategy, interpretation now addresses issues such as the civilian experience, African-Americans in the war, the role of women, and similar topics aimed at a broader and more diverse audience. Interpretation should also include the use of creativity and interactive technology when possible.

For an example of how these principles might be applied to a single site within the MHNHA, please see Appendix 1 for a Concept Plan created as part of this project for the Brice's Crossroads Battlefield. Specifically, this plan is for a proposed new tour stop on the battlefield driving route that interprets the heroic actions of the United States Colored Troops (USCT) at this battle.

Community Enhancements

The MHHAA will work with the various planning and development districts, municipal planning agencies, downtown revitalization entities, and others to enhance communities as a means of overall "product improvement" for the heritage area. Below is a summary of the three areas especially in need of focus by the MHHAA, all of which are already explained in greater detail in Objective 3-E of this plan's Strategies section ("Assist communities within the MHNHA with technical assistance to establish public policy tools which help preserve heritage assets and reinforce community character.")

Highway Corridors

As noted throughout this plan, heritage tourists place a high value on authenticity and environments that are unique and historic in character. However, the typical highway corridor that serves as the gateway to provide a first and last impression for the MHNHA's key communities is anything but authentic, unique or historic. Instead, most of these corridors are unattractive and dominated by generic "franchise" architecture. The two key elements needed for transformation of strip commercial corridors are as follow:

- 1) Redesign and redevelopment of the road profile within the public right-of-way to introduce landscaping, human-scaled lighting, sidewalks, and other pedestrian-friendly amenities; and
- 2) Revised zoning and design standards for the adjacent private realm to minimize the size and quantity of signage, to place buildings closer to the road, to relocate more of the parking to the rear and side of buildings, and to provide cross-access between adjacent properties.



This strip commercial corridor serving as a gateway for one MHNHA community could be anywhere in America.

As emphasized throughout this plan, *NHAs do not have the authority to impact local land use and development regulations.*

Downtowns

In most respects, historic downtowns are the opposite of strip commercial corridors. They are typically historic, authentic, unique and pedestrian-friendly. Also, they generally have a much higher percentage of unique locally-owned businesses than do strip commercial corridors. They should serve as the heritage area's backbone for visitor shopping, dining and – when possible – lodging. Many of the MHNHA's key communities already have Main Street programs or some other type of revitalization entity. The MHHAA will work closely with those organizations where they exist and encourage their establishment where they are lacking. The State Main Street program is another important partner. In many cases, the starting point for revitalization is a public input process and master plan, including a market analysis to determine which uses and business types are economically viable. In other cases, the planning and analysis has already been completed and implementation should be the focus, assuming the previous planning and analysis has not become outdated. It is proposed that the National Main Street Program's "Four Point" Approach be applied, which treats downtowns holistically, as follows:

- Organization: including a board of directors, issue-based working committees, and paid staff
- Design: streetscape, building rehabilitations, infill development, signage, landscaping
- Economic Restructuring: market analysis, optimal tenant mix, incentives, business development
- Promotion: logo development, website, social media, special events, joint advertising

E. ROLES AND ACTIONS OF MHNHA PARTNERS

One of the many requirements of the federal legislation creating the MHNHA is to identify the roles and duties that might occur between the MHNHA's local coordinating entity (MHHAA) and the various partners, including institutions, non-profits, businesses and individuals. Based upon the management plan's Strategies section, Interpretive Plan, Business Plan, and Implementation Plan, below is a description of the roles and actions of the MHNHA partners. While review and input into the Management Plan can apply to any MHNHA stakeholders, including the average citizen, that function has been specifically noted for some of the key entities listed below because of their critical role in that regard (Native American Tribes, NPS, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, etc.). See Appendix 3 for letters of support expanding on commitments from many of these partners.

| Partner | Role/Action in Partnership with the MHNHA |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| National Park Service | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review and approval of the Management Plan - Provision of MHNHA gateway signage on Natchez Trace - Provision of partial MHNHA annual funding - Greenway planning w/ NPS Rivers, Trails & Cons. Assist. |
| Other NHAs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participate on resource teams to identify "tourist ready" and "emerging" sites/attractions per MHNHA standards |
| Appalachian Regional Commission | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grants for specific projects (greenways planning, etc.) |
| Area Colleges & Universities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expertise for research and interpretation (example: University of Mississippi's Center for the Study of Southern Culture) - Leading oral history programs tied to interpretive themes - Intern opportunities with MHHAA for students - Making theme-related collections more accessible - Collaborating with potential interpretive centers (Rust College: African American Heritage; Univ. of Mississippi: Arts (literature); etc.) - Assistance with community enhancement (example: Mississippi State University's Carl Small Town Center) |
| Miss. Dept. of Archives & History | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review and approval of the Management Plan - Review and approval of National Register sites/districts - Certified Local Gov't program/grants for MHNHA towns - Technical assistance to communities and sites - Strong consideration to fund specific projects - Host workshops on various preservation issues in the NHA |
| Mississippi Main Street Program | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of joint programs for MHNHA MS communities - Addition of new MS communities within the MHNHA where sufficient local support and funding exists - Potential collaboration with MHHAA on a forum for MS programs in the NHA to focus on leveraging heritage tourism |
| Miss. Dev. Authority - Tourism Div. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of project-based grants |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Highlighting MHNHA on website and other promo sources - Potential co- sponsoring of a workshop with MHHAA for attractions operators to be more effective - Consulting to attraction operators directly |
| Miss. Dept. of Transportation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of approved signage for the MHNHA and key sites - Potential project-based grants (transport. enhancement, etc.) |
| Miss. Arts Commission | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consulting on the proposed oral history program - Consulting on the development of regional K-12 curriculum - Potential assistance/funding of cultural programs and events |
| MHNHA Native American Tribes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review and input into the Management Plan - Explore potential Native American interp. center (Chickasaws) - Technical input into interpretive and living history programs - Participation with oral history programs |
| Planning & Development Districts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identification and/or provision of project-based grants - Working with local gov'ts on community enhancements by sponsoring workshops and providing technical assistance |
| Mississippi Land Trust | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continued pursuit of conservation easements with willing owners |
| Mississippi Heritage Trust | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continued pursuit of facade easements with willing historic property owners - Promotion of properties needing or achieving preservation via their "Ten Most Endangered..." and "Heritage Awards" programs - Continued advocacy to keep the historic rehab tax credits - Hosting preservation conferences and workshops |
| Local Governments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pursuing community enhancements (highway corridors, etc.) |
| Downtown Organizations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pursuing downtown revitalization |
| Private Non-Profit Economic Development Organizations (Community Development Foundation, CREATE Foundation, etc.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of services and discounted office space for MHHAA (CDF's Renasant Center incubator) |
| School Districts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creation of curriculum, oral history programs, and field trips |
| Convention & Visitors Bureaus | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotion of communities, areas, and the entire MHNHA - Dues paying memberships to support MHHAA operations |
| Local Museums & Hist. Societies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Theme-based research, interpretation and promotion - Improvements in strategic planning, curation, interpretation |

With respect to the various partners listed above that represent a group of entities, below is a summary of the specific entities within each respective partner group that have formally indicated their willingness to partner with this management plan's implementation:

Universities & Colleges: University of Mississippi, Mississippi State University, Mississippi University for Women, Rust College

Planning & Development Districts: Northeast Mississippi PDD, Three Rivers PDD, Golden Triangle PDD

Convention & Visitors Bureaus: Corinth Area CVB, DeSoto County Tourism Association, Greater Starkville Development Partnership / Starkville CVB, Holly Springs Tourism and Recreation Bureau, New Albany Marketing & Tourism, Tupelo CVB, Visit Oxford, Tishomingo County Tourism Council

WORKING WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ON COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENTS

Because there are numerous local governments within the MHNHA, thereby offering a wide range of possibilities for how the heritage area might assist each government, this potential relationship has only been generalized in the chart above. However, this section will provide an example of how such a relationship might work.

Identification of Corridors Enhancement Project

As noted throughout this plan, heritage tourists place a high value on authenticity and environments that are unique and historic in character. However, the typical highway corridor that serves as the gateway to provide a first impression for the MHNHA's key communities is anything but authentic, unique or historic. Instead, most of these corridors are unattractive and dominated by generic "franchise" architecture.

To provide just one example community of many, the corridors leading into Columbus could be greatly enhanced. In particular, Highway 45 from the north is greatly in need of physical enhancements, and gateway corridors such as Highway 82 from the east and west have the potential to evolve into unattractive strip commercial highways. Thus, efforts for Highway 45 would need to be remedial, while those for the other gateways would be more preventative in nature.



Columbus has some attractive corridors to serve as models to transform strip commercial corridors such as Hwy. 45.

Project Initiation & Roles

Once the MHNHA has identified the issues summarized above, we will approach the Planning and Development District having jurisdiction in Columbus – the Golden Triangle Planning & Development District (GTPDD). Since they work regularly with the various local governments within the region (Choctaw, Clay, Lowndes, Noxubee, Oktibbeha, Webster, and Winston Counties), they can function as an effective liaison entity between the MHNHA and the City of Columbus. The

GTPDD also deals with regional transportation issues and is well-versed in obtaining state and federal grants that might be used for both planning and implementation components of the project. Once the GTPDD is on board with the project, they might help to initiate a meeting between the City, the GTPDD, and the MHHAA staff. Again, *Columbus is just one of many potential examples being used here to illustrate the process of implementation.*

Preparation of a Plan

The details of this type of project have already been outlined under Objective 3-E of this plan's Strategies section, as well as under the "Community Enhancements" section of section "D. Key Programs & Projects" above. The technical expertise, as well as the man-hours required, is typically beyond the level that can be provided by either a Planning and Development District or a City government. Thus, it is likely that, once sufficient funding can be identified, a request for proposals (RFP) would be issued to hire a consultant. Once selected based upon specific criteria, a contract would be entered between the City and the consultant. An exception might be if the primary funding source is through the PDD, in which case they might be the contracting entity, but with input from the City. The key two elements of a plan to transform a strip commercial corridor, as well as to avoid them where they have not yet evolved, are as follow:

- 1) Roadway Redesign - Redesigning the road profile within the public right-of-way would introduce landscaping, human-scaled lighting, sidewalks, and other pedestrian-friendly amenities. It would also entail the concept of "complete streets" that make the road more user-friendly for non-motorized forms of transportation, including pedestrians and cyclists. It would also feature "context-sensitive" design that recognizes the context of the road for any given segments. Thus, a rural road design would be employed for rural contexts, while an urban street profile would be used for urban contexts.
- 2) Zoning & Design Standards – To address the privately-owned lands adjacent to these corridors, revised zoning and design standards should be pursued to minimize the size and quantity of signage, to place buildings closer to the road, to relocate more of the parking to the rear and side of buildings, to increase site landscaping, and to provide cross-access between adjacent properties. Design standards would address both site design and architectural design issues. *It is important to note that the MHNHA has no legal authority with respect to local zoning and development regulation issues*, but that would not preclude the heritage area from serving as a catalyst for community enhancement initiatives such as corridor improvements.

Once the planning process starts, representatives from the MHHAA will be closely involved, such as serving on any project steering committee that might be appointed, as well as attending all meetings at which input might be solicited.

Plan Implementation

Until a planning process is carried out, it is difficult to predict much about plan implementation. Such issues would be determined by the plan's contents, but regardless the MHHAA will need to remain engaged in the project. In fact, since funding may be a key hurdle, MHHAA representatives will be prepared to assist in seeking funding and serving as political "cheerleaders" to turn the plan into tangible results.

F. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Because future implementation of this management plan may result in significant impacts to natural and/or cultural resources, a set of steps based upon “best practices” in historic preservation and environmental conservation need to be in place. This section will cover two key issues: the types of regulations that might apply and a potential series of steps that might be followed by the MHHAA.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS

This management plan’s Background Report under sub-section “B4. Environmental Policies and Requirements,” which is under the broader section heading of “B. Related Policies and Studies,” already provides an overview of the relevant state and federal regulations. Below is a summary of that information, which has been expanded upon for some issues:

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

The 1970 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was a landmark act for Federal environmental policies, and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) is an agency created to help implement the act. NEPA requires that every federal agency prepare an in-depth study of the potential impacts of major federal actions having a significant effect on the environment, as well as alternatives to those actions. It also requires that each agency make that information an integral part of its decisions. Furthermore, NEPA mandates that agencies make a diligent effort to involve the public before they make decisions affecting the environment.

Categorical Exclusions (CEs)

NPS has two lists of categorically excluded actions. One list requires no NEPA documentation, and no internal scoping is required. However, the agency may choose to prepare a memorandum for the record to show that environmental effects were at least considered. The process in utilizing the second list is more complex. While the types of actions in the list not requiring documentation would rarely cause environmental impacts, the actions for the list requiring documentation do have the potential for measurable impacts. The six categories of actions are as follow:

- Actions related to general administration
- Plans, studies and reports
- Actions related to development
- Actions related to visitor use
- Actions related to resource management and protection
- Actions related to grant programs

Environmental Assessments (EAs)

An EA should be prepared if: A) additional analysis and public input is needed to know whether the potential for significant impact exists; or B) preliminary analysis indicates there will be no significant impacts, but some level of controversy over the proposed action exists. An EA must lead to a FONSI (finding of no significant impact) or an NOI (notice of intent) and an EIS. Therefore, if an EA process finds that a proposed action has the potential for significant impacts, an EIS is required (unless section 5.4(f)(3) applies). However, if an analysis of the proposed action via an EA finds that no impact will result, a FONSI should be issued.

Environmental Impact Statements (EISs)

An environmental impact statement (EIS) is a document required by NEPA for certain actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. An EIS is a tool for decision making. It describes the positive and negative environmental effects of a proposed action, and it usually also lists one or more alternative actions that may be chosen instead of the action described in the EIS. An EIS acts as an enforcement mechanism to ensure that the federal government adheres to the goals and policies outlined in NEPA. An EIS should be created in a timely manner as soon as the agency is planning development or is presented with a proposal for development. The statement should use an interdisciplinary approach so that it accurately assesses both the physical and social impacts of the proposed development. In many instances an action may be deemed subject to NEPA's EIS requirement even though the action is not specifically sponsored by a federal agency, such as when private entities pursue actions that receive federal funding, federal licensing or authorization, or that are subject to federal control.

On the following page is a chart comparing CEs, EAs, and EISs from page 10 of the Draft NEPA Guide for NHA Management Plan (August 2012).

Endangered Species Act (ESA)

Section 7 of the ESA requires all federal agencies to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the National Marine Fisheries Service on any action that might affect endangered or threatened species (and "candidate" species), or that may result in adverse impacts to critical habitat. An EA or EIS may provide sufficient information to serve as a biological assessment for Section 7 of the ESA.

Executive Orders 11988 and 11990, Floodplain Management and Wetland Protection

These Executive Orders direct NPS to avoid, to the extent possible, adverse impacts caused by modifying or occupying floodplains and wetlands. They also require NPS to avoid support of floodplain or wetland development whenever there is a reasonable alternative. If a proposed action would result in an adverse impact to a regulated floodplain or wetland, there must be a statement of findings with the finding of no significant impact (FONSI) or the record of decision (ROD).

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106

Section 106 of the NHPA requires federal agencies to consider the effects of their proposals on historic properties, and to provide state historic preservation officers, tribal historic preservation officers, and, as necessary, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation a reasonable opportunity to review and comment on these actions. "Section 106 review" and NEPA are two distinct processes that should occur simultaneously. Documents can be combined, but one is not a substitute for the other. They should, however, be coordinated to avoid duplication of public involvement or other requirements. The information and mitigation gathered as part of the Section 106 review should be included in the NEPA document, and the Section 106 process must be completed before a FONSI or ROD can be approved for a proposed action that impacts historic properties.

Executive Order 12898, Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations

This Executive Order requires federal agencies to determine whether their actions have disproportionately high and adverse impacts on human health or the environment of minority and low-income populations. It requires an analysis and evaluation of the impacts of the proposed

action on minority and low-income people and communities, as well as the equity of the distribution of the benefits and risk of the decision in the NEPA document.

Secretarial Order 3175 and ECM95-2

These memoranda require agencies to explicitly address environmental impacts of their proposed actions on Indian Trust Resources in any environmental document.

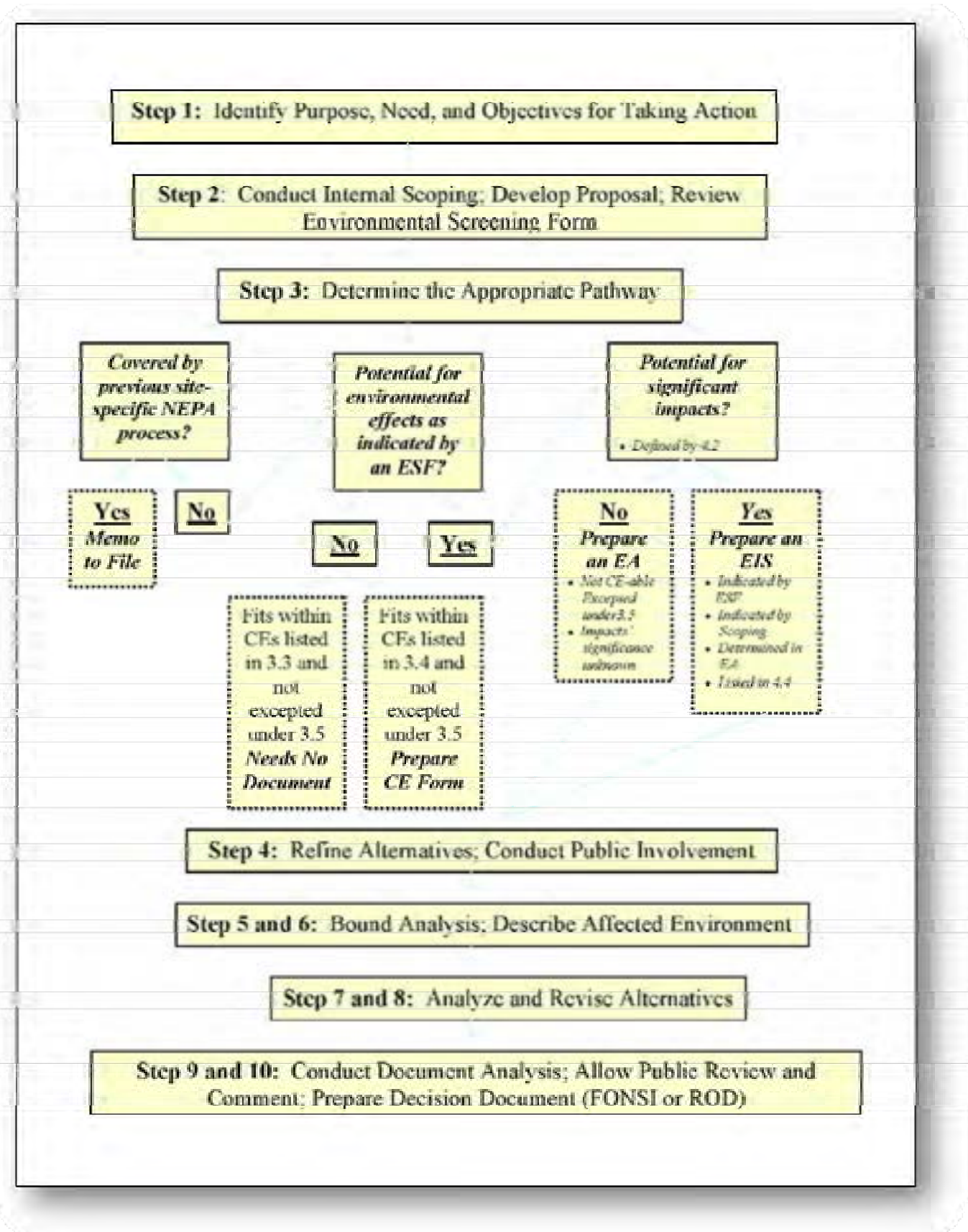
| Table 3.1 A Comparison of NPS CEs, EAs, EISs | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| | CE | EA | EIS |
| Key Steps | *Public Notice of CE (in combination with public review of draft plan) Categorical Exclusion Form | Public Scoping (in combination with NHA public involvement activities) Alternatives development and impact analysis Public review of EA (minimum 30 days) Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or decision to prepare EIS | Publication of Notice of Intent (NOI) in Federal Register Public Scoping (in combination with NHA public involvement activities) Alternatives development and impact analysis Publication of notice of availability (NOA) of Draft EIS in Federal Register Public review of Draft EIS (minimum 60 days) Preparation of Final EIS Publication of NOA of Final EIS in Federal Register 30-day waiting period Record of Decision (ROD) |
| Typical Length of Document | CE Form is typically 1-2 pages with Environmental Screening Form attached | Between 30 -50 pages | Several hundred pages, CEQ regulations suggest a maximum of 300 pages |
| Typical Time Involved | A few months | 6 -18 months | Between two and four years depending upon complexity of issues and impacts |

*This is a requirement of the NHA Program.

STEPS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

While it is unlikely that the MHHAA staff will have the technical expertise or available time/funding to perform formal environmental review, it will be appropriate that staff would be well-versed in the basics of NEPA and remain constantly on the lookout for situations in which environmental review might be required. Within the context of this management plan, the most likely scenarios that might require such review would be for greenway development, the creation of public access to the Tennessee River, and the development of interpretive centers in a “greenfield” location. It should be noted that this plan has already encouraged that most centers be created in urbanized areas to facilitate economic spin-off benefits for adjacent businesses, as well as the utilization of existing buildings when possible.

The NPS internal scoping and environmental screening processes help determine the appropriate NEPA pathway. If there is no potential for environmental impacts, the project may be categorically excluded from further NEPA analysis. If there is a potential for such impacts, an EA or EIS will be prepared. NHA staff will consult with the NPS in the preparation of environmental screening forms and other analysis to aid in the appropriate determination. The *DO-12 Handbook* provides extensive information on the format, content, analysis and decision documentation requirements (see sections 5.4 – 5.6 for EAs and sections 4.5 – 4.8 for EISs). NHA and NPS staff should follow the procedures and processes outlined in these sections and as illustrated on the following page.



REVIEW ROLE FOR THE MHHAA

Environmental review involves numerous entities and individuals. In accordance with the recommendations contained on a 2011 NPS draft of the guidelines for carrying out NEPA for NHAs, the following role is considered appropriate for NHAs.

Each NHA must ensure adequate NHA NEPA compliance and coordination with the NPS. NHA coordinators with the local coordinating entity (MHHAA), working under the guidance and authority of the Superintendent or NHA Program Manager, are responsible for the following:

- 1) Providing early consideration of NEPA in project planning and ensuring NEPA compliance for all NHA projects.
- 2) Internal and external scoping and ensuring that appropriate IDT (subject matter experts) members are included in the process and participate in the preparation of the Environmental Screening Form (ESF) in PEPC.
- 3) Preparing or overseeing the preparation of NHA NEPA documents, including ESFs, Memorandums to File, CEs, EAs, EISs, FONSIIs, and RODs with the assistance of NHA staff and/or the IDT.
- 4) Providing quality control and ensuring technical adequacy of all environmental documents prepared by NHA staff or their contractor.
- 5) Ensuring that NEPA documents are submitted to the NPS for plan review and approval prior to public release.
- 6) Ensuring that NEPA documents are placed on the PEPC website for SERO and public review.
- 7) Maintaining Administrative Records (AR) (files/records/correspondence).
- 8) Notifying the NPS of NEPA projects that may be controversial or have significant environmental effects.
- 9) Facilitating and coordinating internal NHA staff and/or partners review of NEPA and other environmental documents.

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3. Letters of Support and Partnership

USCT Tour Stop Concept Plan: Brice's Crossroads Battlefield

Baldwyn, Mississippi

A Project of the
**Mississippi Hills National
Heritage Area**

Revised: November 22, 2013



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The background of the page is a sepia-toned illustration of a group of soldiers in a field. In the center, a large flag is being held up by several men. Other soldiers are visible in the foreground and background, some holding rifles. The scene appears to be a military encampment or a moment of preparation for a battle.

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Background

Heritage Area Management Plan

The federal legislation that created the 30-county Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA) in 2009 requires the creation of a Management Plan to spell out the objectives of the NHA and how they will be achieved. Although this Concept Plan for a new tour stop at Brice's Crossroads Battlefield is not specifically required, it has been included as a means of illustrating the Management Plan's recommended principles for the enhancement of existing historic sites within the MHNHA. Those recommended principles are summarized below.

Historic Site Enhancements

As indicated throughout the MHNHA Management Plan, one important approach to improve the MHNHA will be to help improve the many cultural sites and attractions that already exist and are operational. Working with site operators on upgrades will be one of the duties of the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance's (MHAA's) Technical Assistant for preservation and interpretation. While each site's needs will differ, the following principles will apply to many. Because this Concept Plan is for a single new tour stop and not the entire battlefield, some of these principles will be irrelevant or only somewhat relevant.



Principles for Site Enhancements within the MHNHA

The principles below, each of which is explained more fully within the main body of the MHNHA Management Plan, are accompanied with a brief statement regarding how they relate to this Concept Plan:

Sufficient wayfinding must be available so patrons can easily find the site.

Response: The battlefield currently features a driving tour map and wayfinding signage. The proposed new tour stop will be integrated into this wayfinding system.

Parking should be in sufficient amounts and convenient to the site for a broad range of transportation modes without detracting from the site itself.

Response: The Concept Plan proposes sufficient parking for automobiles in a number consistent with other stops, as well as one handicapped space and a bus parking space. It will also be landscaped to soften its appearance.

Visitor comfort amenities should make for an enjoyable visit.

Response: The battlefield's existing interpretive center has public restrooms and similar amenities, and this tour stop can accommodate benches, trash receptacles, lighting, and perhaps even a picnic table.

Sites/attractions should have standard days and hours of operation.

Response: The tour stop will follow the same policies of operation as the other existing stops. Because of its access to a local road and no proposed gate, this tour stop should be accessible at all times.

Sites/attractions should be physically maintained at a high level.

Response: The tour stop will be worked into the regular maintenance program that already exists for the balance of the battlefield.

Historic authenticity and integrity should be preserved and reinforced.

Response: Because the proposed tour stop will not feature any historic resources other than the battlefield landscape, this principle is not substantially relevant.

Accurate and effective interpretation must be provided at historic sites and attractions.

Response: This principle is the most relevant of all of them to this Concept Plan. The proposed new tour stop will include wayside exhibits that convey the interpreted stories in an engaging and effective manner, and they will be based upon sound historical research.

Need for the Tour Stop

This Concept Plan is for a proposed new tour stop on the Brice’s Crossroads Battlefield driving route that interprets the heroic actions of the United States Colored Troops (USCT) at this battle. While the role of the USCT troops is addressed within the existing interpretive program (interpretive center, tour materials, brochures, etc.), the focus is relatively modest and warrants a much stronger emphasis. This situation is not unusual. Based upon 2013 national research entitled “A Closer Look at Those USCT Monuments & Markers,” there are a total of 141 markers and monuments addressing the USCT’s role in the Civil War. Of those 141 markers, only 65 give a primary focus on the USCT, while others simply address the topic indirectly. Furthermore, only two markers were identified in the study as existing in Mississippi. The study also cites existing markers that should reference the USCT, but do not, including markers at Olustee (FL), Morris Island (SC), Honey Hill (SC), and Tupelo (MS).



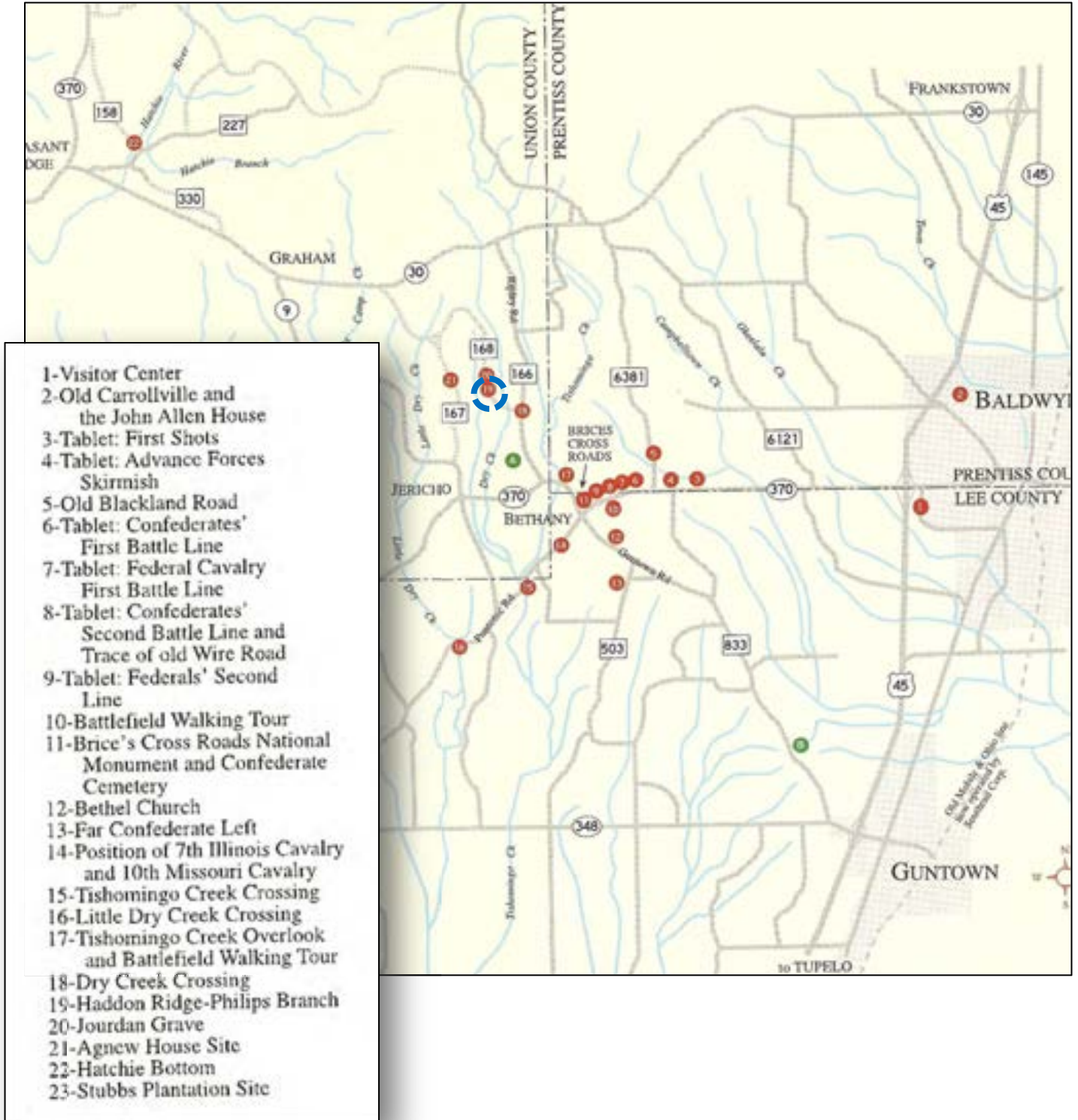
African American Civil War Memorial in Washington, DC



Monument at Contraband Camp historic site in Corinth, MS

Proposed Tour Stop Location

The map below is adapted from the *Blue & Gray* magazine article on the Battle of Brice's Crossroads (August, 1999). The approximate location of the proposed new tour stop is circled in a blue dashed circle.



Recommendations Summary

Conceptual Site Plan

Two key factors impacting the layout of this site plan are the existing topography and power lines. There is a limited relatively flat area located near the adjacent road, as the grade of the site begins an abrupt drop to the west. Also, the overhead lines make the provision of a monument challenging to do so in a manner that avoids the lines from visually detracting from the site's integrity. The key features proposed for this tour stop, which are consistent with the highest-quality existing stops, are as follow:

- *Concrete or asphalt apron at the road access point* - This feature will enhance driver safety for those accessing and departing the tour stop, and help keep gravel off the road if a gravel lot surface is provided.
- *Asphalt parking lot with striped parking spaces* - To include a bus parking area, gravel is an acceptable alternative paving material should financial resources be unavailable for asphalt paving.
- *One handicapped space with paved access* - This space will be located at the north end of the lot for the closest proximity to the interpretive waysides and monument.
- *Paved walkway connecting the proposed monument with the parking area* - This feature will include three wayside exhibits on the west side that are sequenced consistent with the interpretation.
- *Site amenities* - Although they are not specified on the conceptual site plan, amenities could include lighting, benches, trash receptacles, and picnic tables.

See pages 6-7 for the conceptual site plan. The proposed interpretation and monument are described below.

Interpretation & Monument

Three interpretive wayside exhibits and one monument are proposed, as follows:

Interpretation

The three proposed wayside exhibits include the following headings and content:

- *United States Colored Troops: USCT* – an overview of the history of USCT soldiers in the Civil War
- *USCT Regiments at Brice's Crossroads* – a description of the three USCT regiments/battery at this battle
- *A Brilliant Record: USCT's Performance at Brice's Crossroads* – a summary of the USCT at Brice's Crossroads

See pages 8-10 for the proposed wayside exhibit panels. These panels have been designed using PowerPoint software and can be easily revised as needed if edits are required, different graphics be desired, or similar changes are needed.

Monument

Rather than suggesting what the monument should look like, it is recommended that a design competition be conducted by soliciting proposed designs from artists. Many communities seeking new public art use such a process, so there are numerous model request for proposal (RFP) documents available. Existing processes can also be used as a model for the process. While artists are not typically compensated for their proposals, the winning artist benefits by then being hired to oversee the detailed design and fabrication of the monument.

Linkages to Other Tour Stops

It is proposed that the existing trail that currently connects tour stops #20 and #21 be extended to the proposed new tour stop. See page 11 for a diagrammatic map illustrating the potential trail connections.

Implementation

Three key components will be necessary to turn this broad concept into a specific reality:

- *Implementing Entities* – The Brice's Crossroads Battlefield Foundation, with support from the MHNHAA
- *Detailed Design & Engineering* – Site engineers and landscape architects will be needed for the site; exhibit designers will be needed to adapt the proposed wayside exhibits and oversee fabrication; and a design competition is recommended for the monument.
- *Funding* – The NPS's American Battlefield Protection Program may be able to support planning and design, but the more costly capital improvements may require fund-raising with the private sector.

Site Context & Model Tour Stop

Site Context

As revealed in the United States Geological Survey (USGS) map at right, this site selected for the new tour stop (identified by a blue dashed circle) is located on a modest ridge in which the topography drops off in grade to the west where it leads to a creek.

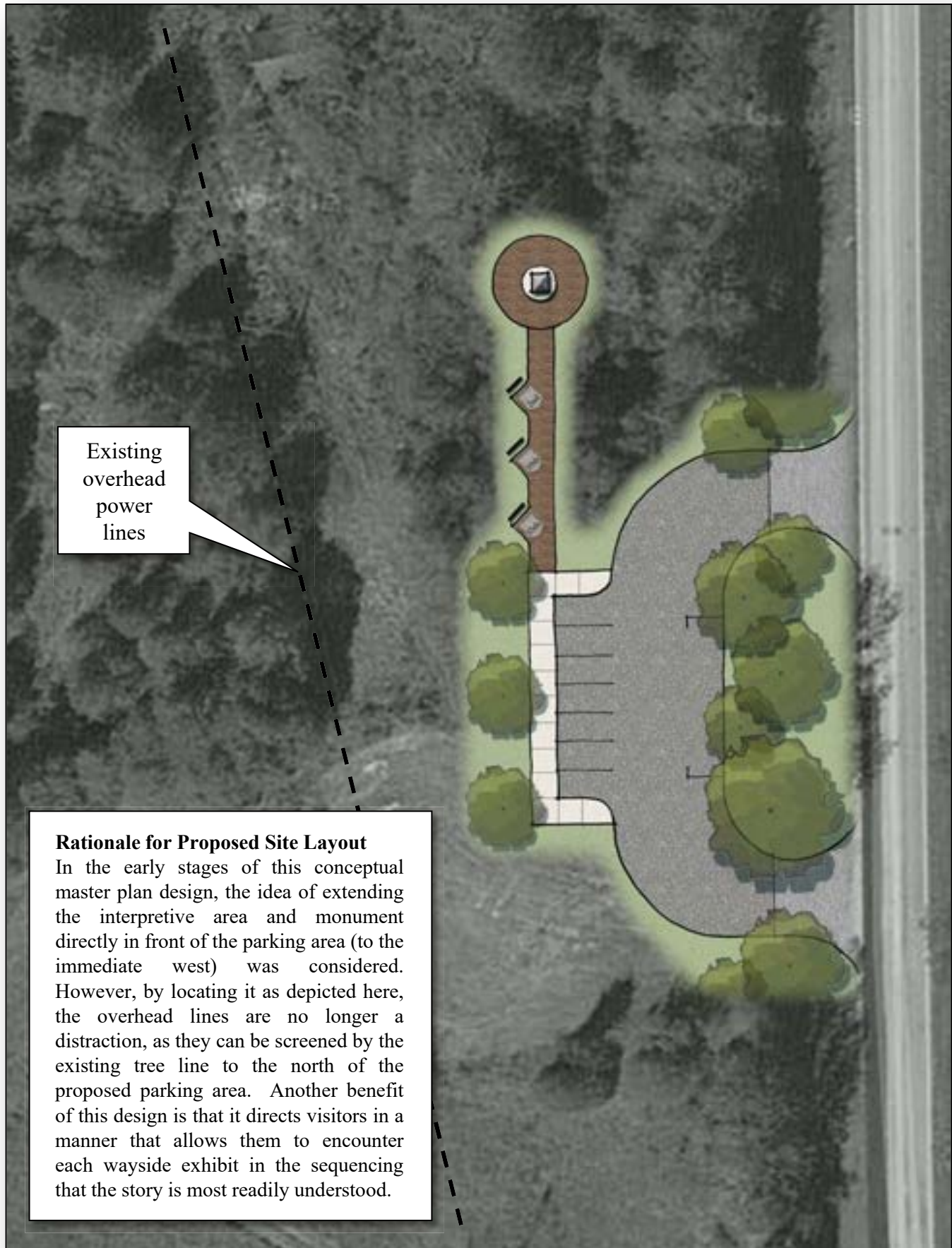


Model Tour Stop

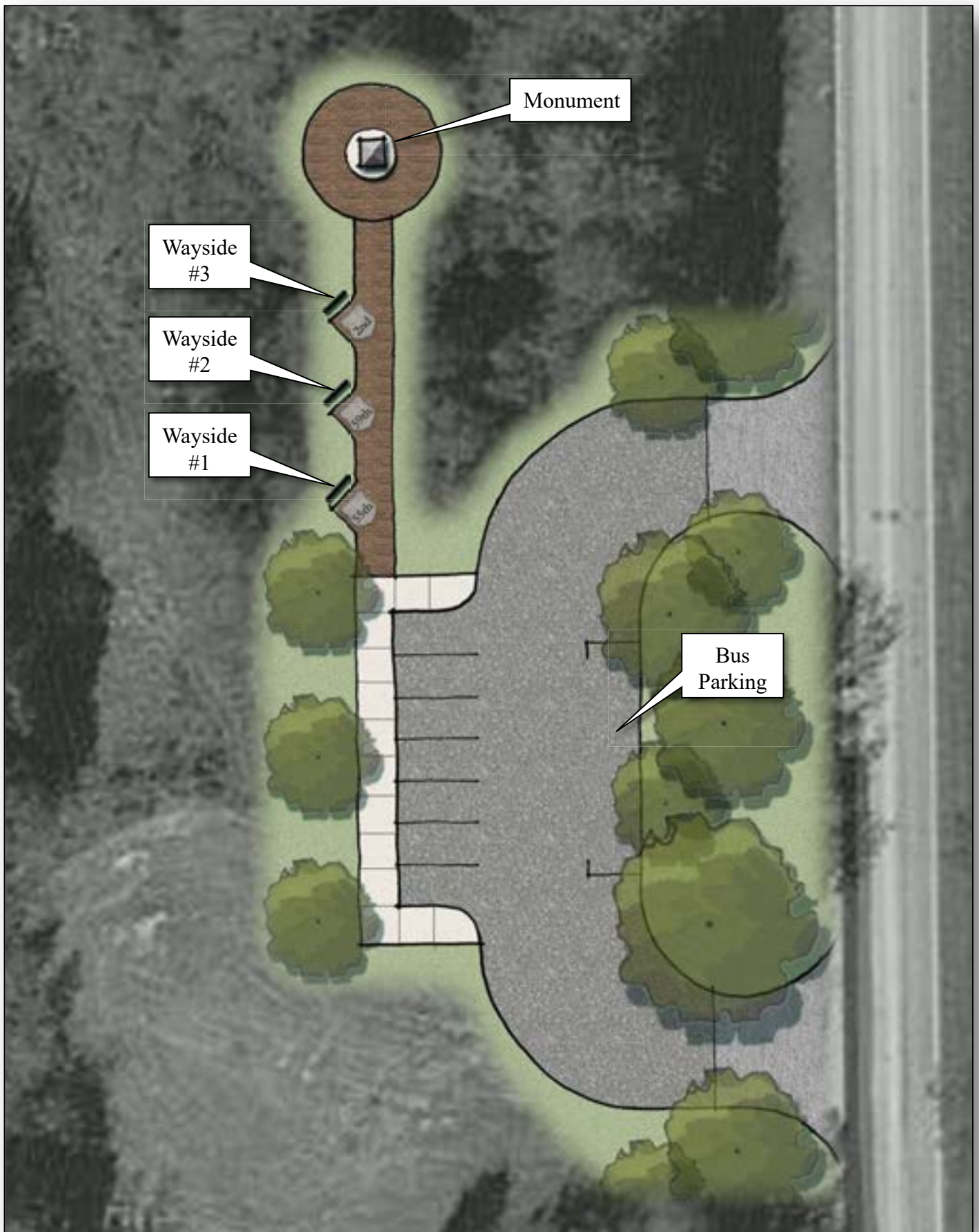
Tour Stop #20 - Jourdan Grave - is the one following the proposed stop in the tour sequencing (see page 3 for the tour stop map). It is being used as an ideal model for the proposed tour stop.



Conceptual Site Plan: Overall Context



Conceptual Site Plan: Detailed View



Wayside Exhibit: #1 – United States Colored Troops

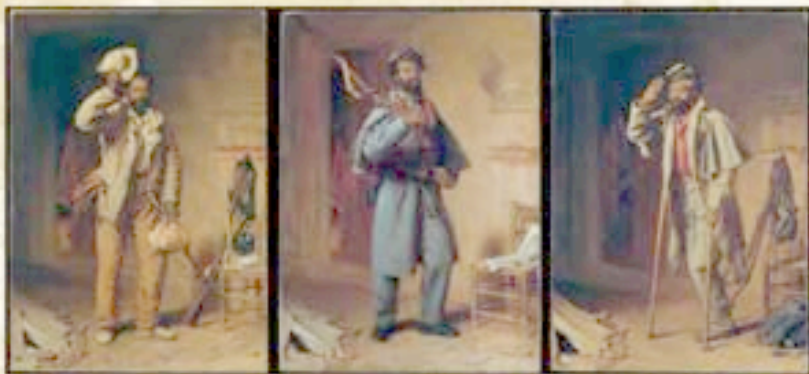
United States Colored Troops

USCT

The initial recruitment of African-Americans into the Union Army began shortly after the Emancipation Proclamation took effect in January of 1863. On May 22, 1863, the US War Department issued General Order 143 to establish the Bureau of Colored Troops to help facilitate recruitment. Regiments for infantry, cavalry, artillery and engineers were recruited from all states of the Union and were known as the United States Colored Troops or USCT. During the last two years of the war, approximately 175 regiments were raised comprised of more than 178,000 free African Americans. They represented one tenth of the Union Army.

While white soldiers were paid \$13 per month, black soldiers earned only \$10 per month, and \$3 of that was deducted for their clothes. White soldiers, on the other hand, were provided an additional \$3.50 for clothes. It was not until March of 1865 that black soldiers received equal compensation. Another insult was that only rarely did they achieve a rank above that of a private.

USCT soldiers suffered 68,178 losses, of which only 2,751 were from combat. As with the case of white soldiers, the majority of deaths were tied to diseases. However, they were instrumental to in several key Northern victories, including the battles of Port Hudson (LA), Nashville (TN), and the Crater at Petersburg (VA).



This triptych painting depicts three stages of life for one man: former slave, Union soldier, and maimed veteran. Despite their heroic service, most USCT veterans returned to a post-war life of oppression and poverty.

"Once you let the black man get upon his person the brass letter, U. S., let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder and bullets in his pocket, there is no power on earth that can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship."

-Frederick Douglass

USCT Regiments at Brice’s Crossroads

The Battle of Brice’s Crossroads featured two infantry regiments and one artillery battery of the United States Colored Troops (USCT):

55th USCT Infantry Regiment

On May 21, 1863, the 1st Alabama Infantry Regiment of African Descent was organized at Corinth, Mississippi, with approximately 1,000 men. On March 11, 1864, the regiment was reorganized as the 55th USCT, and on June 10 it fought at the Battle of Brice’s Crossroads. Afterwards it was stationed in Memphis and fought minor engagements in North Mississippi before being deployed to Louisiana in February 1865. It was mustered out in December of 1865.

59th USCT Infantry Regiment

The 1st Tennessee Infantry Regiment of African Descent was organized on June 6, 1863, at LaGrange, Tennessee. On March 11, 1864, the regiment was reorganized as the 59th USCT, and it fought at Brice’s Crossroads in tandem with the 55th. Other noteworthy engagements of the 59th included the Battle of Tupelo on July 14-15, 1864, and the repulse of Forrest’s cavalry at Memphis on August 21, 1864. The regiment was mustered out of service in January of 1866.

2nd USCT Light Artillery Regiment – Battery F

This battery was organized from the Memphis Light Battery of African Descent on March 11, 1864, and it was initially designated as Battery D. On April 26, 1864, it was renamed Battery F. It fought with the 59th USCT at Memphis in August of 1864 and was mustered out in December of 1865.

From Slaves to Soldiers



Following a month-long siege of Corinth, Mississippi, that ended on May 30, 1862, the Union forces gained full control of the area. Referred to as “contraband,” many slaves fled to the Union lines for freedom. The federals established a small community for them referred to as a contraband camp. In addition to the occupants being educated through a school operated by the American Missionary Association, the camp served as a key target for recruiting fresh Union troops.



These brothers in arms display a look of comradeship and determination.

“Without the military help of the black freedmen, the war against the south could not have been won.”

– Abraham Lincoln
1865



This war-time illustration appearing in Harper’s Weekly is entitled “A Negro Regiment in Action.”

Wayside Exhibit: #3 – A Brilliant Record

A Brilliant Record

USCT's Performance at Brice's Crossroads

The Battle of Brice's Crossroads began at about 9:30 AM on June 10, 1864, when Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest's brigade of Kentuckians engaged Union Brigadier General Samuel Sturgis' cavalry, which had been pursuing a Confederate patrol east of the crossroads. Once Sturgis' infantry arrived the battle raged for roughly four hours near the crossroads where the Brice family's house was located. By 5:00 PM the Confederates flanked both ends of the Federal lines and caused Sturgis to withdraw toward Memphis. Their retreat was slowed by an overturned wagon on the Tishomingo Creek bridge, putting the US forces in dire straights.

Fortunately for the Union forces, the 55th and 59th USCT infantry regiments under Colonel Edward Bouton were thrown into the fight just west of the bridge to cover the army's retreat. Prior to the battle these troops took an oath to avenge Forrest's Fort Pillow "massacre" and each soldier wore a badge reading "Remember Fort Pillow." However, they were held in reserve for the first part of the battle to guard the army's 200 wagons. Strengthened by the 2nd USCT Light Artillery once needed, they made several critical stands that saved Sturgis' withdraw from being a total rout. Of the 223 Union soldiers killed in the battle, half belonged to Bouton's Brigade, and most served with the 55th and 59th USCT infantry regiments.



USCT soldiers posing for the camera.



These soldiers with the 4th USCT Infantry Regiment served in the eastern theatre of the Civil War by fighting in Virginia and North Carolina. The USCT soldiers at Brice's Crossroads were similarly dressed and equipped.

High Praise from a General

Major General Cadwallader Washburn - commander of the District of West Tennessee - described the performance of the USCT soldiers at Brice's Crossroads:



The colored troops made for themselves on this occasion a brilliant record. Their gallant and soldierly bearing and the zeal and persistence with which they fought, elicited the warmest encomiums from all officers of the command. Their claims to be considered as among the very best soldiers of our army can no longer, in my opinion, be seriously questioned.

Official Records - Series I, Vol. XXXIX, pt 1, p87



Linkages to Other Tour Stops

In the current sequencing of the driving tour, the two stops following the proposed new stop are stop #20 (Jourdan Grave) and stop #21 (Agnew House Site). As illustrated below, there is an existing trail that connects stops #20 and #21 (highlighted with the light blue coding below). An extension of this trail to the link with the new tour stop is designated below in purple.



Documentation of Draft Plan Meetings

Acknowledgements

Special Thanks to:

U.S. Senator Thad Cochran

U.S. Senator Roger Wicker

U.S. Representative Alan Nunnelee

Senator Terry C. Burton, Mississippi Senate

Senator Eugene S. Clarke, Mississippi Senate

Senator Angela Burks Hill, Mississippi Senate

Senator John Horhn, Mississippi Senate

Senator Melanie Sojourner, Mississippi Senate

Senator J.P. Wilemon Jr., Mississippi Senate

Representative Scott DeLano, Mississippi House of Representatives

Representative Herb Frierson, Mississippi House of Representatives

Representative Steve Holland, Mississippi House of Representatives

Representative Jerry R. Turner, Mississippi House of Representatives

Current MHHA Board Members:

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Jennifer Gregory – Starkville Convention and Visitors Bureau

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Sean Johnson – New Albany Marketing and Tourism

Neal McCoy – Tupelo Convention and Visitors Bureau

Lakisha Mitchell-Buffington – Holly Springs Tourism and Recreation Bureau

Stephanie Moody-Coomer – Tupelo Convention and Visitors Bureau

Kim Terrell – DeSoto County Tourism Association

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Duane Bullard – Tippah County Development Foundation, Ripley

Martha Coleman – Pontotoc County Historical Society

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Arma Ruth DelaCruz – Starkville Convention and Visitors Bureau

Glenn Duckworth – Union County Development Association

Norman Easterbrook – Ford Center for the Performing Arts, University of Mississippi

Hillary Hamblin – Baldwyn Area Chamber of Commerce

Betsey Hamilton – Union County Heritage Museum; Tanglefoot Trail

(continued)

Mary-Kathryn Herrington – Oxford Convention and Visitors Bureau
Linda Butler Johnson – Tupelo Convention and Visitors Bureau
Stephanie Movre – Holly Springs Tourism and Recreation Bureau
Richard Ramsey – Howlin’ Wolf Society of West Point, Mississippi;
West Point/Clay County Community Growth Alliance
George Rowland – N. Central MS Resource Conservation & Development Council, New Albany
Amber Smith – West Point/Clay County Community Growth Alliance
Jill Smith – Union County Heritage Museum, New Albany
Deborah Stubblefield – Aberdeen Visitors Bureau
Hugh Stump – Oxford Convention and Visitors Bureau
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James Tsisminakis – Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau
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Debbie Brangenberg – Downtown Tupelo Main Street Association
Mike Clayborne – CREATE Foundation
Jan Eastman – CREATE Foundation
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Sarah McCullough – Mississippi Development Authority-Tourism Division
Danny McKenzie – Blue Mountain College
Sandra Perkins – Appalachian Regional Commission
Kenneth H. P’Pool – Mississippi Department of Archives & History
David Preziosi – Mississippi Heritage Trust
Lisa Stevens – Northeast Mississippi Planning and Development District
Mary Margaret White – Mississippi Arts Commission
Bob Wilson – Mississippi Main Street Association

Meeting Participants:

Emily Addision – Community Development Foundation, Tupelo
Wayne Andrews – Yoknapatawpha Arts Council, Oxford
Betty Jo Backstrom – Backstrom’s Country Bed and Breakfast, Columbus
Kim Bennett – Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau
Phylis Benson – Golden Triangle Planning and Development District, Starkville
Christina M. Berry – City of Columbus

(continued)

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Scott Blackley – Itawamba Community College
Rebecca Bourgeois – Holly Springs Chamber and Main Street
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Bill Brekeen – Tishomingo State Park, Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks
Amber Brislin – Columbus Main Street
Kenny Brown – North Mississippi Hill Country Picnic
Sara Brown – North Mississippi Hill Country Picnic
Sherry Brown – Mississippi Development Authority-Alcorn County Welcome Center
Libbi Bryant – Ripley Main Street
Kelvin Buck – Mayor of Holly Springs
Whirlie Byrd – Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau Board Member
Brenda D. Caradine – Tennessee Williams Tribute, Columbus
Edwina Carpenter – Mississippi’s Final Stands Interpretive Center, Baldwin
Lucy Carpenter – County Circuit Clerk, Holly Springs
Chelius H. Carter – Preserve Marshall County and Holly Springs, Inc.
Clencie Cotton – Rust College Community Development Corporation
George Crawford – Golden Triangle Planning and Development District
Doyce Dees – Tupelo Historic Preservation Commission
Vickie Duke – New Albany Main Street Association
Victoria Evans – Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau
Pat Faulkner – City of Tupelo Development Services
Shamecca A. Fitts – Holly Springs Tourism and Recreation Bureau
Shanette Folsom – Holly Springs Main Street/Chamber
Bob Franks – Itawamba County Development Council
Theresa Glenn – The Olde Place Bed and Breakfast, Columbus
Kim Graham – Itawamba County Development Council
Mary Ann Grant – Tishomingo County Tourism
Tommy Green – Community Development Foundation
Chris Gurner – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sardis Lake
Dick Guyton – Elvis Presley Birthplace, Tupelo
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Mickey Howley – Water Valley Main Street
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Sam Kaye – Stephen D. Lee Home and Museum
Dr. Gloria Kellum – Vice-Chancellor for University Relations (ret.), University of Mississippi
Tim Liddy – Alderman-at-Large, Holly Springs
Molly Loden – Southern Studies student, University of Mississippi
Chris Marsalis – Ripley Mayor
Jeremy Martin – Mississippi Secretary of State’s Office, Tupelo
Kristen Maxfield – Interpretive Park Ranger, Natchez Trace Parkway
Matt McCarty – Community Development Foundation
Ann Miller – Mississippi Development Authority-Itawamba County Welcome Center
Jan Miller – Mississippi Main Street Association
Jennifer Miller – Painted Lady Bed and Breakfast, Columbus
Annie Moffett – Annie’s Restaurant, Holly Springs
Harvey Myrick – Grilliary on the River
Sy Oliver – Holly Springs
Brad Prewitt – Prewitt Group Law Firm, Tupelo
Mary Sloan – Yocona International Folk Festival, Oxford
Lee Eric Smith – Eddie L. Smith Foundation, Holly Springs
Nellie J. Smith – Ida B .Wells-Barnett Museum, Holly Springs
Joseph St. John – Jackie O. House Bed and Breakfast, Columbus
Linda Turner – Byhalia Chamber of Commerce
Rufus Ward – Billups Garth Foundation
Allie West – Downtown Tupelo Main Street Association
Susan Worthey – Mississippi State University
Al White – Action Communication & Education Reform
Lewis Whitfield – CREATE Foundation
Mary Beth Wilkerson – Mississippi Development Authority-Tourism Division
Agnes Zaiontz – Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway
Jeannie Zieren – Mississippi Main Street Association

(continued)

The Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance also wishes to thank:

Lolly Barnes, Executive Director, Mississippi Heritage Trust
David L. Beckley, President, Rust College
Jim Borsig, Ph.D., President, Mississippi University for Women
Dr. Alice Clark, Vice Chancellor for Research and Sponsored Programs, University of MS
Juanita Floyd, CREATE Foundation
Sharon Gardner, Executive Director, Northeast Mississippi Planning & Development District
Judy Glenn, Corinth Realty
Matt Harris, Rutledge, Davis & Harris
Jennifer Jameson, Folk and Traditional Arts Director, Mississippi Arts Commission
Rupert L. "Rudy" Johnson, Executive Director, Golden Triangle Planning & Dev. District
Daniel W. Jones, M.D., Chancellor, University of Mississippi
Vernon R. (Randy) Kelley, III, Executive Director, Three Rivers Planning & Dev. District
Dr. Gloria Kellum, Vice-Chancellor for University Relations (ret.), University of Mississippi
Candise Kola, Chair, Board of Directors, North Mississippi Hill Country Picnic
Bobby Martin, President, Peoples Bank of Ripley
Mindy Maxwell, Northern District Director, U.S. Senator Thad Cochran
Alfred Moore, Director, Holly Springs Community Development Corporation
Mabel M. Murphree, District Director, U.S. Congressman Alan Nunnelee
Cindy W. Nelson, Founding President, Tishomingo County Historical & Genealogical Society
Mary Risser, Superintendent, Natchez Trace Parkway
David Rumbarger, President and CEO, Community Development Foundation
Dennis Seid, *Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal*
Cam Sholly, former Superintendent, Natchez Trace Parkway
Kyle Steward, Executive Director of External Affairs, Office of the President, MS State Univ.
Sue Stidham, Director, Winona Main Street; Montgomery County Chamber
Mike Tagert, Commissioner, Northern District, State of Mississippi Transportation Commission
Malcolm White, Director of Tourism, Mississippi Development Authority
Terry Wildy, Chief of Interpretation, Natchez Trace Parkway
Dale Wilkerson, former interim Superintendent, Natchez Trace Parkway
Judd Wilson, CDF

Current and former members of:

- Columbus CVB Board of Directors
- Corinth Area CVB Board of Directors
- DeSoto County Tourism Association Board of Directors
- Holly Springs Tourism and Recreation Bureau Board of Directors
- New Albany City Council
- Oxford CVB Board of Directors
- Starkville CVB Board of Directors
- Tishomingo Tourism Council Board of Directors
- Tupelo CVB Board of Directors

Public Outreach and Participation Documentation

The Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance's (MHHA) public involvement strategy heavily utilized social media and electronic communications.

To inform the public of upcoming meetings, the Alliance issued press releases and/or specially-formatted email notices ("e-blasts") that were sent to media contacts as well as a 4,000+ email address distribution list. This list consists of email addresses of persons who had attended prior meetings and planning sessions (dating back to 2003), as well as addresses of additional local stakeholders provided by members of the Alliance's Board of Directors.

Meeting notices were also included in MHHA and partner e-newsletters, as well as Facebook and Twitter posts. E-blasts were forwarded to specific individuals with a personal note from staff encouraging them to attend. Board members were encouraged to bring members of their own boards, and other local stakeholders, to planning events.

Articles and television coverage of meetings kept the public informed of the progress of planning efforts and provided additional opportunities for interested citizens to contact the Alliance about attending future events and becoming involved in the planning process. The Alliance would often post links to media coverage (including editorials and blog entries) on its Facebook page, and also occasionally wrote its own follow-up articles for its e-newsletter.

See sample documentation below, including:

- e-blasts
- press release
- e-newsletters
- Facebook and Twitter posts
- media coverage (television and newspaper)

(Please note sticky notes/comments throughout.)

Subject: MHAA Presentation of Alternatives Meetings Notice

From: Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance (kentbain@mshills.org)

To: kentbain@yahoo.com;

Date: Wednesday, December 5, 2012 1:35 PM

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**PRESENTATION OF ALTERNATIVES
December 18 and December 19**

Please join us for a presentation of the Alternatives for the 10-year Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area on Tuesday, December 18th at 11:30 in the MHNHA Exhibit Center (located at 398 E. Main St. in Tupelo), or Wednesday, December 19th at 10:00 at the Oxford Convention Center (located at 102 Ed Perry Blvd.)

Please contact Kent Bain at kentbain@mshills.org or (662) 844-1276 to reserve seating or for additional information.

Handwritten signatures of Kent Bain and Bobby King.

Project Manager
(662) 844-1276
kentbain@mshills.org

Program Manager
(662) 844-1277
bobbyking@mshills.org

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MS Hills NHA Draft Management Plan Presentations (41)

Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance
To Me
Jun 28, 2013



Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area Draft Management Plan Presentations

The Walker Collaborative of Nashville, TN, will give two presentations concerning the full draft of the Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area. The plan has been under development for the past two years, and these presentations will provide additional opportunities for public education and feedback.

The first presentation will be at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, July 9th at the Mississippi Hills Exhibit Center (398 East Main Street) in Tupelo, and the second will be at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, July 10th at The Smiling Phoenix Cafe (144 South Memphis Street) in Holly Springs.

The presentations are open to the public; please R.S.V.P. to Kent Bain, Project Coordinator, at (662) 844-1276/kentbain@mshills.org.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'K+Bain'.

Kent Bain
Project Coordinator

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SEPTEMBER 11TH MANAGEMENT PLAN WORKSHOP AND SEPTEMBER 13TH FOLLOW-UP PRESENTATION

The next step in the development of the Federally-mandated Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA) will be the Task 3.0 Workshop and Follow-Up Presentation. Phil Walker of the Walker Collaborative in Nashville and his team will be in the heritage area for 4 days to conduct this part of the project.

"Although the project Work Plan has been designed to encourage strong public input throughout the life of this project, Task 3.0 offers the single greatest opportunity for meaningful 'hands-on' involvement of key stakeholders and the general public, as well as Alliance representatives and public officials," Walker stated. He continued, "The goal of the public workshop is to provide a forum for the public to achieve a consensus on the various Alternatives for the future of the Heritage Area. The most tangible outcome of the workshop will be the finalizing of the Heritage Area's Foundation Statement, as well as the creation of the Alternatives for the MHNHA."

The Workshop will be held at 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, September 11th at the Mississippi Hills Exhibit Center (located at 398 East Main Street, Tupelo) and is open to the public.

Stakeholders from all communities within the heritage area are encouraged to attend and provide input into the Management Plan development process. The Workshop will feature breakout groups that address themes, marketing and implementation strategies, among other issues. (The Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance's Board of Directors will also meet at 11:30 a.m. that same day.)

The Management Plan Team will then work Tuesday evening and Wednesday to prepare Alternatives for various aspects of the heritage area, which will be covered at the Follow-Up Presentation on Thursday, September 13th, at 1:30 p.m. in the Exhibit Center. Please contact Kent Bain or Bobby King for additional information or to reserve seating at these events.

Project Manager
(662) 844-1276
kentbain@mshills.org

Program Manager
(662) 844-1277
bobbyking@mshills.org

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Subject: Mississippi Hills NHA Management Planning Meetings

From: Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance (kentbain@mshills.org)

To: kentbain@yahoo.com;

Date: Friday, August 19, 2011 8:02 AM

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Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area Management Planning Meetings Set for Tupelo and Columbus

Two regional meetings are being held in August to gather input for the federally-mandated Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA).

"These meetings are part of a broader process for developing the plan, which will guide the management of the heritage area over the next ten years," said Kristy White, Executive Director of the Corinth Area Convention and Visitors Bureau and President of the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance, the legislatively-appointed local coordinating entity for MHNHA. "Our heritage area is one of only forty-nine National Heritage Areas, which are charged with conserving and interpreting some of America's greatest cultural, historic and natural treasures," White commented.

The first meeting will be from 10:00 a.m. until noon on Tuesday, August 23 at the Renasant Center for IDEAs in Tupelo. The Center is located at 398 East Main Street, directly across from the Tupelo Convention and Visitors Bureau. Stephanie Moody-Coomer, deputy director of the CVB, is a board member of the Alliance and chair of its marketing committee. "We anticipate that the development of the heritage area will aid in increasing visitation to Tupelo and the region, and hope to have good participation in these planning meetings," Coomer remarked.

The second meeting will be from 10:00 a.m. until noon on Wednesday, August 24 at the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Development Authority headquarters, which is located at 318 7th St. North in Columbus. Agnes Zaiontz, business manager of the Development Authority, offered to host the meeting in support of the planning process. "Columbus is a key community within the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area, with tremendous heritage assets. The Tenn-Tom Waterway is also a major resource for the region, and it is important for both Columbus and the Waterway to be represented in the planning process," Zaiontz stated.

Stakeholders and the general public are invited to attend these meetings, which will introduce participants to the project and solicit public input on various related issues, including potential impacts of the Heritage Area on existing cultural and natural resources. The meetings are not restricted to residents of Tupelo and Columbus, and interested persons from surrounding communities are invited to attend. Two previous meetings were held at the end of June in Oxford

and Starkville for the same purpose.

The meetings will help to fulfill federal legislative requirements for the Management Plan, as well as compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act. The sessions will be conducted by Phil Walker of the Walker Collaborative in Nashville, TN, in cooperation with MHHAA staff. Please contact Project Coordinator Kent Bain for additional information: kentbain@mshills.org or (662) 844-1276.

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Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area Management Planning Meetings

**10:00 - Noon, Monday, June 27, Oxford Convention Center, and
10:00 - Noon, Tuesday, June 28, Greater Starkville Development Partnership**

Stakeholders and the general public are invited to attend these meetings, which will introduce participants to the project and solicit public input on various related issues, including potential impacts of the Heritage Area on existing cultural and natural resources. The meetings will help to fulfill federal legislative requirements for the Management Plan, as well as compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

The sessions will be conducted by Phil Walker of the Walker Collaborative, in cooperation with the staff of the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance, the local coordinating entity for MHNHA. Please contact Project Coordinator Kent Bain to reserve seating or for additional information: kentbain@mshills.org or (662) 844-1276.

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CP Designs, Inc. | 72 Shell Drive | Pontotoc | MS | 38863

On Friday, June 1, 2012 7:46 AM, Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance <kentbain@mshills.org> wrote:
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June 19th Annual Meeting and Management Plan Status Report/Background Findings Presentation

The Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance, the local coordinating entity for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA), will hold its Annual Meeting from 10:00-10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, June 19th at the Mississippi Hills Exhibit Center, located in the Renasant Center for IDEAs, 398 E. Main Street, Suite 128, Tupelo, MS.

Also, at 12:30 p.m. on June 19th in the same location, Phil Walker of The Walker Collaborative will give a status report on the Management Plan for the MHNHA, which will be followed by a presentation on Background Findings.

The public is welcome to attend both events. Please contact Project Coordinator Kent Bain or Program Manager Bobby King to reserve seating or for additional information.

Project Manager
(662) 844-1276
kentbain@mshills.org

Program Manager
(662) 844-1277
bobbyking@mshills.org

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Subject: MS Hills NHA Management Planning Meetings

From: Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance (kentbain@mshills.org)

To: kentbain@yahoo.com;

Date: Wednesday, June 22, 2011 9:50 AM

Having trouble viewing this email? [Click here](#)



Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area Management Planning Meetings June 27 & 28

Dear Board Members,

*The first Management Planning meetings are scheduled for:
10:00-noon, June 27th, Oxford Convention Center (102 Ed Perry Blvd.),
and 10:00-noon, June 28th, Greater Starkville Development Partnership
(200 E. Main St.)*

*Phil Walker will conduct these meetings, and this will be a good opportunity
for you to invite board members, elected officials and stakeholders to learn
more about this important initiative.*

*Please have anyone planning to attend r.s.v.p. to kentbain@mshills.org.
We hope to see you on the 27th or 28th.*

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NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: August 15, 2011

Contact: Kent Bain
[Email: kentbain@mshills.org](mailto:kentbain@mshills.org)

Mississippi Hills NHA Management Planning Meetings

TUPELO, MS – Two regional meetings are being held in August to gather input for the federally-mandated Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA).

“These meetings are part of a broader process for developing the plan, which will guide the management of the heritage area over the next ten years,” said Kristy White, Executive Director of the Corinth Area Convention and Visitors Bureau and President of the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance, the legislatively-appointed local coordinating entity for MHNHA. “Our heritage area is one of only forty-nine National Heritage Areas, which are charged with conserving and interpreting some of America’s greatest cultural, historic and natural treasures,” White commented.

The first meeting will be from 10:00 a.m. until noon on Tuesday, August 23 at the Renasant Center for IDEAs in Tupelo. The Center is located at 398 East Main Street, directly across from the Tupelo Convention and Visitors Bureau. Stephanie Moody-Coomer, deputy director of the CVB, is a board member of the Alliance and chair of its marketing committee. “We anticipate that the development of the heritage area will aid in increasing visitation to Tupelo and the region, and hope to have good participation in these planning meetings,” Coomer remarked.

The second meeting will be from 10:00 a.m. until noon on Wednesday, August 24 at the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Development Authority headquarters, which is located at 318 7th St. North in Columbus. Agnes Zaiontz, business manager of the Development Authority, offered to host the meeting in support of the planning process. “Columbus is a key community within the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area, with tremendous heritage assets. The Tenn-Tom Waterway is also a major resource for the region, and it is important for both Columbus and the Waterway to be represented in the planning process,” Zaiontz stated.

Stakeholders and the general public are invited to attend these meetings, which will introduce participants to the project and solicit public input on various related issues, including potential impacts of the Heritage Area on existing cultural and natural resources. The meetings are not restricted to residents of Tupelo and Columbus, and interested persons from surrounding communities are invited to attend. Two previous meetings were held at the end of June in Oxford and Starkville for the same purpose.

The meetings will help to fulfill federal legislative requirements for the Management Plan, as well as compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act. The sessions will be conducted by Phil Walker of the Walker Collaborative in Nashville, TN, in cooperation with MHHAA staff. Please contact Project Coordinator Kent Bain for additional information: kentbain@mshills.org or (662) 844-1276.

-30-

About Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area.

The Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA) was designated by Congress and the President in April of 2009. Although its exact boundaries are spelled out in its enabling legislation, MHNHA's borders are, roughly: the Tennessee and Alabama state lines to the north and east, and Interstate 55 and Highway 14 to the west and south. MHNHA covers 19 full counties and portions of 11 others. The Mississippi Hills Heritage Alliance is the coordinating entity for MHNHA. For more information on Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area, please visit www.mississippihills.org.

Subject: Mississippi Hills July 2013 Newsletter

From: Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (kentbain@mshills.org)

To: kentbain@yahoo.com;

Date: Thursday, July 25, 2013 1:16 PM



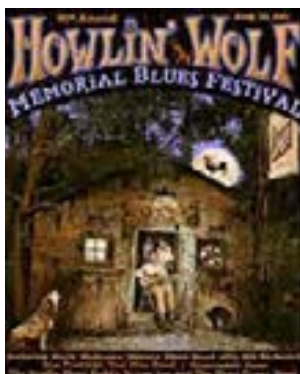
VOLUME 4, NO. 4

www.mississippihills.org

July, 2013



Mississippi Hills Heritage Area



A WHOLE LOTTA BLUES HOWLIN WOLF * OTHA TURNER

Labor Day weekend, fans of Mississippi Hills music will be treated to a double shot of down-home blues with two events that celebrate the rich musical heritage of our region.

Click [here](#) to read the full article.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE MISSISSIPPI HILLS

COLUMBUS

AUGUST 1-4

Artesia Days

A festival of fun in Downtown Columbus.

Call (662) 272-5104 or click [here](#) for all the details.

AUGUST 23-24

Roast-N-Boast



CIVIL WAR RE-ENACTMENT IUKA, MS * LABOR DAY WEEKEND

This will be a weekend family event where those dusty old history books will come alive. There will be a spectacular battle re-enactment, field demonstrations, a large living history village, living history activities tents, guest speakers, and an extensive sutler area. Hundreds of re-enactors from across the nation will be staging the battle re-enactment. Visit the camps, learn about Civil War medicine, music, weapons and daily life.

Festival including live music and a barbeque cooking contest.

ADMISSION

Call (662) 549-5054 or click [here](#) for more information.

SEPTEMBER 3-8

Tennessee Williams Tribute & Victorian Home Tour

Tribute honoring America's most prolific playwright, Tennessee Williams.

ADMISSION for some events.

Call (800) 327-2686 or click [here](#) for a complete schedule and details.

CORINTH

JULY 8 - AUGUST 2

Honor and Courage WWII Exhibit

Crossroads Museum
221 N. Fillmore Street

Click [here](#) for more information.

AUGUST 3 AND SEPTEMBER 7

Green Market

Crossroads Depot
8am until 2pm

Click [here](#) for more information.

AUGUST 8-11, 15-18

"To Kill A Mockingbird"

Corinth Theatre Arts Playhouse
303 Fulton Drive

Click [here](#) for more information.

DESOTO COUNTY

MAY 3 THRU OCT. 25

Olive Branch Farmers' Market

Olive Branch Municipal Court Building
6900 Highland St., Olive Branch
2 - 6pm: Free

Fresh locally grown fruits, veggies, sauces, jams, jellies, honey and more. For more information, call (662) 893-0888 or [click here](#).

APRIL 20 - OCT. 26

Hernando Farmers' Market

Hernando Courthouse Square
2535 Hwy 51 South, Hernando
Each Saturday morning 8am - 1pm
Over 50 vendors, the market offers a wide variety of local goods while providing a fun, neighborly spot for

For a complete schedule of events, [click here](#).



FINAL STAGES OF MANAGEMENT PLAN DEVELOPMENT

On Tuesday, July 9th and Wednesday, July

10th, The Walker Collaborative gave a presentation covering the draft of the full Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area. The plan has been under development for over two years, and although prior public presentations have covered various sections of the plan, this was the first look at the full draft.

The presentations were made at the MS Hills Exhibit Center in Tupelo and at the Smiling Phoenix Coffee Café in historic downtown Holly Springs. Project leader Phil Walker was joined by team members Randy Gross with Development Economics in Washington, DC, and Lee Jones with Third Coast Design Studio in Nashville. The presentations included a summary of the Background Report and Alternatives, as well as an overview of the Strategies, Interpretive Plan, Business Plan and Implementation Plan.

The Tupelo event was attended by Natchez Trace Parkway interim superintendent Dale Wilkerson, as well as representatives from DeSoto County Tourism, Columbus CVB, Three Rivers Planning and Development District, CREATE Foundation, MS Secretary of State's Office and MS Final Stands Interpretive Center. WTVA and the *Northeast MS Daily Journal* provided coverage of the event.

The Holly Springs presentation was coordinated by LaKisha Buffington, director of the Holly Springs Tourism and Recreation Bureau and member of the



families to visit.

For more information, call (662) 280-6546 or [click here](#).

AUGUST 17

Tri-State Blues Festival

LANDERS Center
4560 Venture, Southaven
6:30pm

Click [here](#) for more information or call (662) 470-2131.

HOLLY SPRINGS

Foxfire Experience Weekly Blues Concert

Every Sunday 4pm
1465 Old Oxford Road, Waterford
Click [here](#) for more information.

SEPTEMBER 6-8

Hummingbird Migration Celebration & Nature Festival

Strawberry Plains Audubon Center
285 Plains Road, Holly Springs

For more information, call (662) 252-1155 or click [here](#).

TISHOMINGO

AUGUST 15-17

Hollis Long Memorial Dulcimer & Ole Tyme Music Festival

Click [here](#) for more information or call 662-423-6515.

AUGUST 30-SEPTEMBER 1 151st Battle of Iuka Anniversary

Civil War Re-Enactment

Call 1-800-FUN-HERE (386-4373) or click [here](#) for more details.

OXFORD

AUGUST 27

Oxford Art Crawl

Click [here](#) for more information.

JULY 30

OxFilm Challenge

The Lyric Theatre at 6pm. FREE
Click [here](#) for more information.

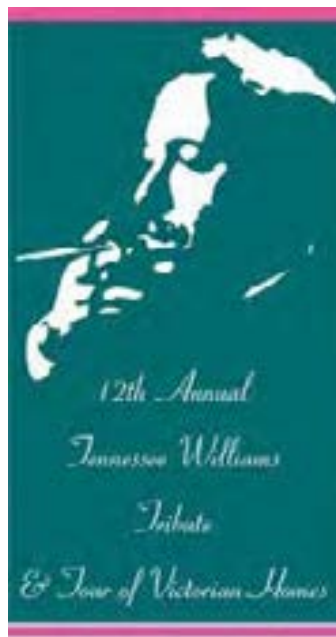
SEPTEMBER 5

Artist's Lecture: The Intimate Landscape of Rowan Oak

University Museum, Noon - 3pm

Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance's board of directors. It was held in conjunction with a ribbon cutting for the Smiling Phoenix Coffee Café, which was presided over by Holly Springs' Mayor Kelvin Buck.

The Smiling Phoenix is located in an historic commercial structure just off the square, and is owned by Chelius Carter, President of Preserve Marshall County & Holly Springs and new interim director/curator of the Marshall County Historic Museum. [Full article.](#)



12TH ANNUAL TENNESSEE WILLIAMS FESTIVAL IN COLUMBUS September 3-8

The play, "Period of Adjustment" -- a Tennessee Williams comedy as fresh as the day it was first performed on Broadway in 1961 -- teases out a love story (or two) in which the earth really does move. Paula Mabry is the director. Four nightly performances during the week-long 12th annual festival in Columbus, MS are interspersed with the "Moon Lake Party" on Thursday night, featuring "Autumn Song", composed by George Maurer with lyrics from the poems of

Tennessee Williams and Rainer Maria Rilke, starring baritone Jared Oxborough as Tennessee and Dieter Bierbrauer as Rilke in a performance of the Provincetown, Mass. Players, accompanied by musicians on saxophone, cello, percussion and bass. [Full article.](#)

[Download Complete Brochure.](#)



HUMMINGBIRD MIGRATION AND NATURE FESTIVAL Strawberry Plains Audubon Center September 6-8

Visitors get to: view the banded,



mississippihills
National Heritage Area

Enews



FINAL STAGES OF MANAGEMENT PLAN DEVELOPMENT

On Tuesday, July 9th and Wednesday, July 10th, The Walker Collaborative gave a presentation covering the draft of the full Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area. The plan has been under development for over two years, and although prior public presentations have covered various sections of the plan, this was the first look at the full draft.

The presentations were made at the MS Hills Exhibit Center in Tupelo and at the Smiling Phoenix Coffee Café in historic downtown Holly Springs. Project leader Phil Walker was joined by team

members Randy Gross with Development Economics in Washington, DC, and Lee Jones with Third Coast Design Studio in Nashville. The presentations included a summary of the Background Report and Alternatives, as well as an overview of the Strategies, Interpretive Plan, Business Plan and Implementation Plan.

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The Holly Springs presentation was coordinated by LaKisha Buffington, director of the Holly Springs Tourism and Recreation Bureau and member of the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance's board of directors. It was held in conjunction with a ribbon cutting for the Smiling Phoenix Coffee Café, which was presided over by Holly Springs' Mayor Kelvin Buck.

The Smiling Phoenix is located in an historic commercial structure just off the square, and is owned by Chelius Carter, President of Preserve Marshall County & Holly Springs and new interim director/curator of the Marshall County Historic Museum.



The presentation was attended by Mayor Buck, alderman-at-large Tim Liddy and other city officials, Ripley mayor Chris Marsalis, as well as representatives from the MS Arts Commission, Oxford CVB, Tanglefoot Trail, Byhalia Area Chamber of Commerce, Ripley Main Street, Ida B. Wells-Barnett Museum, North MS Hill Country Picnic, local businesses and the *South Reporter* newspaper.

Relevant feedback from the two presentations will be incorporated into the document, and a .pdf of the draft Management Plan will be posted on our website in the near future. A notice of the opening of the review and comment period will be sent out along with a link to the document.

We are pleased to be nearing the completion of this later phase in the Management Plan development process. Once the draft of the plan has been finalized, it must undergo a review process with the National Park Service, during which they may suggest improvements or request changes. After the Management Plan receives final NPS approval, the MS Hills National Heritage Area will be eligible for higher levels of federal funding through the Heritage Partnership Program. The approved plan will also provide a valuable roadmap for the development of the heritage area during the coming years.

Our goal is to build a program that is worthy of the rich and diverse heritage of the Mississippi Hills—a tall order, but we believe that we're up to the challenge!

Subject: Mississippi Hills Summer Newsletter

From: Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (kentbain@mshills.org)

To: kentbain@yahoo.com;

Date: Thursday, August 9, 2012 4:40 PM

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VOLUME 3, NO. 2

www.mississippihills.org

August, 2012



Mississippi Hills Heritage Area

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE MISSISSIPPI HILLS?

DESOTO

August 18, 6:30pm
10th Annual Memphis Tri-State Blues Festival

Entertainment by Bobby Rush, Sir



New Associate Director is Decorated Veteran and Former Law Enforcement Officer

(National Park Service News Release)

WASHINGTON - National Park Service Director Jonathan B. Jarvis today named Cameron (Cam) Sholly as the Associate Director for Visitor and Resource Protection. As associate director, Sholly

will manage a \$125 million annual budget and a portfolio that includes 20 service-wide program areas including law enforcement, security and emergency services, fire and aviation management, risk management and occupational safety, public health services, regulations and special park uses, wilderness stewardship and the National Park Service component at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center.

"I am excited to have Cam on my senior management team," Jarvis said. "Cam has a great blend of experiences within the National Park Service and in outside organizations. He also has a proven record of achievement in managing large field operations and headquarters programs. His expertise in visitor and resource protection will help us set a positive trajectory for those programs as we move into our second."

For the past three years, Sholly has been superintendent of Natchez Trace Parkway where he managed a three-state national parkway corridor that traverses 41 county and municipal jurisdictions and was the eighth most visited national park in the country. During his tenure, the Parkway completed a multi-million dollar rehabilitation of the Meriwether Lewis death and burial site.

[Click Here for Full Article.](#)



Pioneer Day

The Tombigbee Pioneer Group will perform living history demonstrations that show the challenges faced and creative solutions developed by those Americans who lived in the area from the 1700s to 1840.

Natchez Trace Parkway Visitor Center (located at milepost 266 near Tupelo, Mississippi)

For more information, call 662-680-4027 or 1-800-305-7417 or email

Amy_genke@nps.gov

September 13, 6:30pm

Down on Main Free Summer Concert Series
Down On Main Summer Concert Series at Fairpark Music - Family - Friends - Good Times. There's a little fun down on main for everyone. Festivities start at 6:30 PM. Entertainment includes Della Mae Emmitt and the Nershi Band.

For more information, call 662-841-6598 or click [here](#). FREE

tourism industry in the United States. These are the individuals making their mark in convention and visitors bureaus, destination management organizations, lodging, transportation, education and partners of tourism.

On October 31 through November 2 all of the Forty for the Future honorees will gather and be personally recognized and celebrated during a special presentation at the Southeast Tourism Society Fall Forum in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

These are Mississippi's five representatives on the Forty for the Future:

Selah Havard, Director of Sales
Natchez CVB

Mary-Kathryn Herrington*, Director of Tourism
Oxford CVB

Neal McCoy*, Executive Director
Tupelo CVB

Stephanie McKinney*, Executive Director
Holly Springs Tourism & Recreation Bureau

Alex Thomas, Music Development Program Manager
Mississippi Development Authority

Congratulations to each of these accomplished leaders.
For a complete list of all honorees, click [here](#).

*Members of the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area's Board of Directors

PROJECT COORDINATOR NOTES

MANAGEMENT PLAN WORKSHOP AND PRESENTATION

The next step in the development of the Federally-mandated Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area will be the Task 3.0 Workshop and Follow-Up Presentation. Phil Walker of the Walker Collaborative in Nashville and his team will be in the heritage area for 4 days to conduct this part of the project.

The Workshop will be held at 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, September 11th at the Mississippi Hills Exhibit Center (located at 398 East Main Street, Tupelo) and is open to the public. Stakeholders from all communities within the heritage area are encouraged to attend and provide input into the Management Plan development process. The Workshop will feature breakout groups that address themes, marketing and implementation strategies, among other issues. (The Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance's Board of

GO MOBILE!



Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area has launched a mobile version of the Mississippi Hills website. Accessible from any web-enabled phone or smartphone, the

MISSISSIPPI HILLS' SOCIAL NETWORKS



NEW!

"Follow" our boards on Pinterest by clicking the link above.

Pinterest is a virtual pinboard that allows Mississippi Hills to share with the public what the area has to offer. Mississippi Hills has established boards for each of our members. These include Corinth, Desoto County, Holly Springs, New Albany and Union County, Oxford, Starkville, Tishomingo County, Tupelo, and the University of Mississippi. We also have a Mississippi Hills board to showcase what the rest of the Hills have to offer.

Directors will also meet at 11:30 a.m. that same day.)

The Management Plan Team will then work Tuesday evening and Wednesday to prepare Alternatives for various aspects of the heritage area, which will be covered at the Follow-Up Presentation on Thursday, September 13th, at 1:30 p.m. in the Exhibit Center. Please contact me for additional information or to reserve seating at these events.

PROMOTIONAL VIDEO

Check out the new minute-and-a-half promotional video for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area and let us know what you think. It's a shortened version of a longer video we're working on, which you hear more about in the next e-newsletter.

FUNDING UPDATE

We are working closely with MDA Tourism to secure the \$100,000 that the Mississippi Legislature appropriated for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area. These funds will allow us to match our Federal appropriation, and our current guidance from the National Park Service indicates an FY13 Federal award of \$143,000.

site connects visitors to the Mississippi Hills region by providing information about local attractions, as well as upcoming events and things to do. The site also has a city locator that allows visitors to find towns close by based on their location.

To check out the new Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area mobile site, just go to <http://mississippihills.3seventylocal.com> or scan the QR code.



"Like" us on Facebook by clicking the link above.



"Follow" us on Twitter by clicking the link above.

[Bookmark the Mississippi Hills site](#)

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Mississippi Hills | 398 East Main Street | Suite 132 | Tupelo | MS | 38804



Subject: Mississippi Hills Newsletter

From: Mississippi Hills (carolyn@cpdesignsinc.com)

To: kentbain@yahoo.com;

Date: Friday, June 17, 2011 12:26 PM

Having trouble viewing this email? [Click here](#)



VOLUME 2, NO. 4

www.mississippihills.org

June 2011

2011 NORTH MISSISSIPPI HILL COUNTRY PICNIC



■ Mississippi Hills Heritage Area



Beginning Friday, June 24th at 4:30 pm, the annual North Mississippi Hill Country Picnic will kick off for its sixth year at Fox Fire Ranch in Waterford, MS. Musical artists will provide memorable entertainment, while creating the perfect atmosphere for a relaxing weekend. This family friendly event will occur until midnight on Friday, June 24th and from 10:00 am until midnight on Saturday, June 25th. Tickets are \$25 per day, and children 12 and under may attend for free.

Details available at www.nmshillcountrypicnic.com

What's Happening in The Hills

DESOTO COUNTY

Cedar Hill Farm Pick Your Own Vegetables

June 1-July 3 - [More Info](#)

Blueberry Picking at Nesbit Blueberry Plantation

Mid June 7am-7pm,
Contact: (662) 449-2983 (farm phone number)

[More Info](#)

CORINTH PROMOTIONAL VIDEO WINS INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

Corinth tourism video highlighting the people and places of Corinth and Alcorn County has won a 2011 Telly Award. The approximately 8-minute video showcases Heritage, Arts & Music, The Outdoors, Agritourism, Shopping and Food.



Horn Lake Farmer's Market

June 4-Oct 29, 2pm-7pm,

Contact: (662) 393-6187

[More Info](#)**"Sunset on the Square" Summer Concert Series**

June 16 and 23, 7pm-9pm

[More Info](#)**Olive Branch Farmer's Market**

Contact: (901) 517-2396

[More Info](#)**Hernando's Farmer's Market**[More Info](#)**The 9th Annual Memphis Tri-State Blues Festival**

August 13, 6:30pm, Tickets are \$50.75, \$45.75, and \$40.00.

[More Info](#)**HOLLY SPRINGS/MARSHALL COUNTY****North Mississippi Hill Country Picnic Blues Festival**

June 24 & 25

[More Info](#)**Bikers & Blues in the Historic Alley**

July 14, 21, 28 & August 4, 11 at 6pm

[More Info](#)**Ida B. Wells Festival**

July 15-17

[More Info](#)**OXFORD****Mid-Town Farmer's Market**

Wednesdays 12-5pm June 22 and 29; July 6,

13, 20, 27 & Saturdays 7-11am June 18, 25;

July 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

[More Info](#)**Taylor Farmer's Market**

Saturdays 8am-12pm June 18, 25, & July 2,

9, 16, 23, 30

[More Info](#)**TUPELO****Junior Ranger Program-Whose Track is That?**

June 18, 25 July 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 at 10am

free event

Contact: 1(800) 305-7417

[More Info](#)**Wildflower Walk**

June 18 at 9am, free even

Contact: 1(800) 305-7417

[More Info](#)**Pioneer Day**

June 25 & July 23 10am-4pm, free event;

Contact 1(800) 305-7417

[More Info](#)**Dulcimer Day**

July 9 & August 13, 10am-1pm, free event;

Contact: 1(800) 305-7417

[More Info](#)

The Telly was awarded to Tupelo, MS-based video production company Palmtree Productions, Inc., which produced the project for Kristy White and the Corinth Convention and Visitors Bureau.



"Working with Kristy White and the entire staff at the Tourism Office has been a delight," remarks Palmtree president Anne Palmer. "Team effort and the wonderful, down-to-earth people we met around Corinth and Alcorn County, MS are what make this video special."

The video can be viewed at www.corinth.net/media.htm.

"We are very fortunate to have the talented, visionary Anne Palmer and her staff just minutes down the road in Tupelo. Anne has been working in Corinth for almost five years and has captured its essence in the video promoted as part of a Preserve America Grant."

Since 1978, the Telly awards have honored outstanding local, and regional TV commercials and programs, as well as film and video productions. Winning entries represent the best work of advertising agencies, production companies, TV stations, cable operators and corporate video departments around the world. Winners represent the best work of the most respected advertising agencies, production companies, television stations, cable operators, and corporate video departments in the world.

The Corinth Visitors Bureau has incorporated the video to promote via its website, on-line magazines across the Southeast; and in Welcome Centers across the State.

Palmtree Productions, Inc. (palmtreestudios.biz) is a full-service video production company serving clients across the State of Mississippi and the Southeast.

New exhibits and sites open at Brice's Crossroads-Tupelo/Harrisburg battlefields



Newly interpreted sites and an expanded exhibit were opened Wednesday at Mississippi's Final Stands Interpretive Center and Battlefields (formerly Brice's Crossroads Visitor's Center and Battlefield) at 607 Grisham Street in Baldwyn.

More than 50 people attended the ribbon cutting and exhibit opening and several enjoyed a driving tour of new sites at Brice's and Tupelo/ Harrisburg. The 1200 sq. ft. expansion includes a gallery that interprets both

the Battles of Brice's Crossroads and the Battle of Tupelo/ Harrisburg, and the second day of the battle at Old Town Creek through interactive exhibits and maps. The diary of Rev. Samuel Agnew is featured in the front gallery of the center and includes his daily accounts of events, both at home and abroad, for 50 years between 1852 and 1902.

This newly created center, Mississippi's Final Stands Interpretive Center and trails project, is the result of Transportation Enhancement Act funding in the amount of a 1.5 million grant administered through the Mississippi Department of Transportation and the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. The Brice's Crossroads National Battlefield Commission applied for and was granted money that funded construction of the expansion and the design of a permanent exhibit interpreting the two last major battles in Mississippi during the summer of 1864.

[Click for complete article.](#)



Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA) Management Planning Meetings

TISHOMINGO**Champions Tenn -Tom Team Trail Fishing Tournament**

June 25, July 16, & August 6; located at J.P. Coleman State Park

American Bass Anglers Fishing Tournament

June 25, located at P.P. Coleman State Park
[More Info](#)

COLUMBUS**Hitching Lot Farmers' Market**

Mondays from 5pm-7pm, Thursdays from 6am-10am, Saturdays from 7am-10am;
Contact-(662) 328-6305
[More Info](#)

CORINTH**Green Market at the Depot**

July 2 & August 5, 6; 8am-2pm;
free admission;
Contact: Karen Beth Martin (662) 287-8300
or email karenbeth@corinth.net
[More Info](#)

JUNE AND JULY

Junior Ranger Program
Each Saturday · 10:00

**June 18**

Wildflower Walk · 9:00

For more details on any Natchez Trace events, visit www.nps.gov/natr

10:00-noon, Monday, June 27th, Oxford Convention Center, and 10:00-noon, Tuesday, June 28th, Greater Starkville Development Partnership

Stakeholders and the general public are invited to attend these meetings, which will introduce participants to the project and solicit public input on various related issues, including potential impacts of the Heritage Area on existing cultural and natural resources. The meetings will help to fulfill federal legislative requirements for the Management Plan, as well as compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act. The sessions will be conducted by Phil Walker of the Walker Collaborative, in cooperation with the staff of the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance, the local coordinating entity for MHNHA. Please contact Project Coordinator Kent Bain to reserve seating or for additional information: kentbain@mshills.org or (662) 844-1276.

OXFORD CVB ANNOUNCES NEW WEBSITE

The Oxford Convention and Visitors Bureau is pleased to announce the launch of a new website to promote tourism in Oxford. The site, which features new logos, branding and content all designed to promote Oxford as a tourism destination and work as a resource for potential visitors planning travel to Oxford, went live over this past weekend.

"We are so excited to finally launch this new site," said Mary-Kathryn Herrington, Director of Tourism, "Our old site was more than 5 years old and was in need of updating. We feel like our new site is much more user friendly and offers many more features for those looking for information about Oxford."

In addition to a new format, the site offers several new components that make navigating all the information easier for visitors. In addition to searching for information on lodging, dining, shopping and history, visitors can book hotel rooms directly through the site and see a list of upcoming events. The CVB Grant guidelines are also available for download on the site as well as pre-planned itineraries for groups. The CVB is also using social media to promote Oxford including a blog and facebook and twitter pages that offer opportunities to share things that might not normally be on a website. These pages are linked from the CVB homepage.

There are still a few components being tweaked, the majority of the site is now functioning. "In the coming months we will continue to update the website and add more interactive components to the site," said Herrington. The new webpage was designed by Webz Media, an award winning creative company that focuses on community branding.

The Oxford Convention and Visitors Bureau is organized to promote and develop Oxford as a tourist destination. By encouraging tourism in Oxford and Lafayette County, the Bureau is able to increase economic development in the community as well as cultivating a strong cultural life in Oxford. In 2004 the Oxford Tourism Council and the Oxford Conference Center merged and operate together under the name Oxford Convention and Visitors Bureau.

To learn more about the Oxford Convention and Visitors Bureau, visit <http://www.oxfordcvb.com>

Subject: News from the Greater Starkville Development Partnership

From: Robyn Cain (rcain@starkville.org)

To: kentbain@yahoo.com;

Date: Friday, June 24, 2011 10:21 AM

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Greater Starkville Development Partnership

E-View

June 24, 2011

Join us for a Grand Re Opening
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Mary Virginia's Children's & Maternity
Consignment
Friday, July 1
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Come support this Partnership
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**Join us in
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Don't forget to visit the
Starkville Community
Market Saturday
Mornings beginning at
7:30 a.m.!

Dogs Days of
Summer Events





**10:00 - Noon, Tuesday, June 28,
Greater Starkville Development
Partnership**

Stakeholders and the general public are invited to attend this meeting, which will introduce participants to the project and solicit public input on various related issues, including potential impacts of the Heritage Area on existing cultural and natural resources. The meetings will help to fulfill federal legislative requirements for the Management Plan, as well as compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

The sessions will be conducted by Phil Walker of the Walker Collaborative, in cooperation with the staff of the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance, the local coordinating entity for MHNHA. Please contact Project Coordinator Kent Bain to reserve seating or for additional information: kentbain@mshills.org or (662) 844-1276.

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Broadcast Media provides video production, Web and duplication services. The project can be seen at www.getBMGNow.com. A complete list of Telly Winners for the 32st annual competition is available at www.tellyawards.com. For more information on Broadcast Media, contact Robbie Coblentz at (662) 324-2489 or robbie@broadcastmediagroup.com

MSU Summer Camps and

MS Hills National Heritage Area

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MS Hills National Heritage Area ... Timeline 2013

MS Hills National Heritage Area July 9, 2013 near Tupelo, MS

Join us at the Mississippi Hills Exhibit Center this morning at 10:00am to hear the Walker Collaborative present the first draft of the MS Hills NHA [Management Plan](#). You can express your input into the future plans of this organization that focuses on the preservation of the culture and heritage found in North MS. The MS Hills Exhibit Center is located in the Resurgent Center for Ideas on East Main Street in Tupelo.

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After two years of planning and preparation, the Tanglefoot Trail has a grand opening date set. Continue reading →

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MS Hills National Heritage Area changed their cover photo.

July 9, 2013

Chat (18)

Management Plan

MS Hills National Heritage Area

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MS Hills National Heritage Area ... Timeline 2013

MS Hills National Heritage Area July 3, 2013

The Walker Collaborative of Nashville, TN, will give two presentations concerning the full draft of the [Management Plan](#) for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area. The plan has been under development for the past two years, and these presentations will provide additional opportunities for public education and feedback.

The first presentation will be at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, July 9th at the... See More

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MS Hills National Heritage Area July 1, 2013 near Ercottville, VA

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MS Hills National Heritage Area ... Timeline 2011

WTVA.com - Mississippi Hills Heritage Area meets



Mississippi Hills Heritage Area meets

Looks for input on regional tourism.

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Tupelo and Columbus Management Planning Meetings, Aug. 23 and 24

<http://www.facebook.com/Tupelo.php?Tupelo=346&vid=120285681340919>

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April 19, 2011

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MS Hills National Heritage Area

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MS Hills National Heritage Area Timeline 2011

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Read "Director Jarvis addresses National Heritage Areas" in this month's NHAs News. Excerpt: "In the preservation business, heritage areas are probably one of the finest examples of thinking outside the box that there is. ... [NHAs are] places where small investments pay huge dividends ... and where we invite new generations to join us in preserving the places that are so uniquely representative of the American story."

Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area Management Planning Meetings

Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA) Management Planning Meetings
10:00 noon, Monday, June 27th, Oxford Convention Center, and
10:00 noon, Tuesday, June 28th, Greater Starkville Development Partnership

Stakeholders and the gen...
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https://www.facebook.com/photos/mississippi-hills-national-heritage-area/mississippi-hills-national-heritage-area-management-planning-meetings(214627498967) attended the 3rd annual Cultural Management Plan

MS Hills National Heritage Area

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MS Hills National Heritage Area Timeline 2012



MS Hills National Heritage Area shared a link.

SEPTEMBER 11TH MANAGEMENT PLAN WORKSHOP AND SEPTEMBER 13TH FOLLOW-UP PRESENTATION

The next step in the development of the Federally-mandated [Management Plan](#) for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA) will be the Task 3.0 Workshop and Follow-Up Presentation. Phil Walker of the Walker Collaborative in Nashville and his team will be in the heritage area for 4 days to conduct this part ... See More

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MS Hills National Heritage Area Timeline Now Highlights

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JUNE 19th ANNUAL MEETING AND MANAGEMENT PLAN STATUS REPORT/BACKGROUND FINDINGS PRESENTATION

The Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance, the local coordinating entity for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA), will hold its Annual Meeting from 10:00-10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, June 19th at the Mississippi Hills Exhibit Center, located in the Parasent Center for IDEAs, 398 E. Main Street, Suite E28, Tupelo, MS.

Also, at 12:30 p.m. on June 19th in the same location, Phil Walker of The Walker Collaborative will give a status report on the Management Plan for the MHNHA, which will be followed by a presentation on Background Findings.

The public is welcome to attend both events. Please contact Project Coordinator Kent Bain (944-1276 or kentbain@mshills.org) or Program Manager Bobby King (944-1277 or bobbyking@mshills.org) to reserve seating or for additional information.

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Heritage plan for north Mississippi nears completion

[Video](#) [Images](#)



Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area makes plans



Reported by: Wayne Hereford
Email: whereford@wtva.com



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TUPELO, Miss. (WTVA)—According to tourism professionals, north Mississippi has a unique and diversified cultural heritage.

From its historic Civil War battles, country blues and bluegrass music, literary giants- the area has a lot to offer.

However, tourism experts say we often overlook what is in the area.

"But what we don't know is how many people come every year. Thousands upon thousands that show up to come to these events and come to these sites that they had no idea was here. Or that their interest is Civil War or Civil Rights or it's agri-tourism. Whatever it might be, we have it here and people need to come and see," says Kim Terrell, president of the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area.

The Mississippi Hills Heritage Area has been planning now for the past two years to tackle that issue.

Phil Walker, of Nashville, has helped the organization draw up a three year plan to make the entire 30 county area an attraction.

"All you have to do is look at other heritage areas that are further along in their development. And, they've had some great results, because anytime you can draw more people into your area and they're spending time that just naturally translates into more dollars in the area," said Walker.

Walker says there is a financial side to the plan, and it will enlist government monies to get rolling.

Natchez Trace Superintendent Dale Wilkerson agrees.

"It appears that the heritage area has a nice conservative plan and they've established realistic targets. So, I think they're on the right track here," said Wilkerson.

The National Park Service will have to approve the plan before it is implemented.

Wilkerson says National Heritage Areas are specially set aside by Congress to insure the correct interpretation of culture history across the United States.

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Consultant says area needs more visitors centers

by Associated Press

Published: December 20, 2012

Tags: [consultant](#), [consulting](#), [cultural](#), [culture](#), [Heritage](#), [history](#), [marketing](#), [tourism](#), [tourist](#), [travel](#), [vacation](#), [visitor](#), [visitors center](#)

NORTH MISSISSIPPI — A consulting firm has recommended seven to eight visitors centers to capitalize on the cultural and tourism heritage in north Mississippi.

The *Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal* reports Phil Walker, of Nashville-based Walker Collaborative, and his team presented findings to the board of the Mississippi Hills Area Alliance.

The Alliance board is in charge of the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area, a federally recognized region bordered by Interstate 55 on the west, Mississippi 14 on the south, the Tennessee state line on the north and the Alabama state line on the east. The group is funded with local, state and federal money.

The board has been working with the consultants for several months to put together a management plan for the heritage area.

The preferred plan Walker presented called for interpretive centers to be in Tupelo, Hernando, Oxford, Holly Springs, Corinth, Pontotoc and Columbus.

The centers in Tupelo and Hernando would have interpretive information for all of the themes African-American, Civil War, music and literature, Native American and architecture while the other centers would focus on a specific theme.

After another meeting in Oxford, the consultants will tweak the plan and start putting together cost estimates and a proposed budget.

— *Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal*



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NEWS SPORTS BUSINESS LIFESTYLE OPINION OBITUARIES BLOGS SUBSCRIPTIONS

Consultants: Hills region needs concise identity

Posted on September 14, 2012 by Chris Elkins in Business, News

By Carlie Kollath Wells/NEMS Daily Journal

TUPELO – Consultants on Thursday recommended to Northeast Mississippi tourism leaders that they capitalize on their African-American, Civil War, Music & Literature and Native American heritage. The recommendations came as part of a research process from the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance, which manages the Hills national heritage area. The information came partly from focus groups gathered Tuesday to hear what residents and tourism leaders thought was important to market to tourists. The focus group feedback led consultants to replace an architecture theme with the Native American theme. The consultants, led by Phil Walker of Nashville-based Walker Collaborative, also recommended a better marketing approach for the region. "We're trying to figure out how to give the Mississippi Hills more of a concise identity," said Randy Gross of Randall Gross Development Economics. "People around the world get the Delta. They know what it is and they think Delta Blues. International tourists don't know what the Mississippi Hills are." They proposed "Mississippi Hills: Where Appalachia meets the Delta" as a possible marketing phrase. The ideas will be incorporated into a management plan for the heritage area. The national heritage area is a federally recognized region bordered by Highway 55 on the west, Highway 14 on the south, the Tennessee state line on the north and the Alabama state line on the east. The region gets local, state and federal funding. As part of the national heritage area program, the board must develop a management plan. It's paying Walker \$150,000 to do the research and put together the plan. carlie.wells@journalinc.com

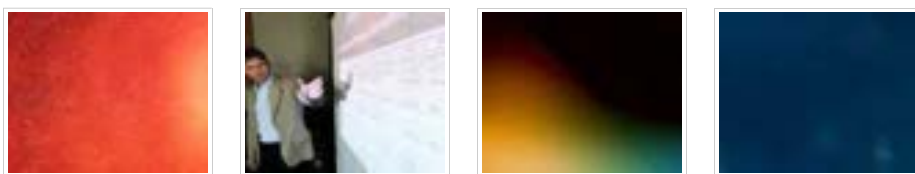
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NEWS SPORTS BUSINESS LIFESTYLE OPINION OBITUARIES BLOGS SUBSCRIPTIONS

Consultants encourage leaders to focus

Posted on **June 20, 2012** by **Chris Elkins** in **Business**

By Carlie Kollath

By Carlie Kollath
 Daily Journal

TUPELO – Tourism leaders from around the region met Tuesday to help drill down what makes Northeast Mississippi special to travelers.

The overarching themes for the region – as identified by a preliminary report from consultants – were black history, the Civil War, the Arts and architecture. The board of the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance also discussed an itinerary themed around the region’s Native American history.

The board is responsible for overseeing the Hills national heritage area, a federally recognized region that gets local, state and federal funding.

As part of the national heritage area program, the board must develop a management plan. It’s paying Phil Walker of Nashville-based Walker Collaborative \$150,000 to do the research and put together the plan.

The board is made up of representatives from member communities throughout Northeast Mississippi. Attractions include everything from Elvis’ birthplace to the contraband camp in Corinth to William Faulkner’s house in Oxford.

“It’s tricky because there are a lot of stories,” Walker told the group. “But you have to focus if you want to market it. ... If you have a visitor from San Diego, you can’t throw everything at them. You have to have an elevator speech that you can sum up why people should come here.”

Consultant Randall Gross is working with Walker on the plan. During Tuesday’s six-hour meeting, he said the region has many strengths and weaknesses.

He said the region has a wonderful diversity of attractions, but that the size of the region and the many attractions make it challenging to market one message to visitors.

According to his research, almost 60 percent of the region’s visitors to heritage sites came from the South, with many signing in from small towns.

International travelers make up 5 percent of the area’s tourists, he said.

He encouraged the board to use the research to help market to the appropriate segments.

For example, his research found that the music heritage attractions, such as Elvis and the Blues, draw more affluent, international and big-city visitors.

His research shows that festivals have the fastest growing audience of heritage events and the board should market to festival-goers in Memphis, Jackson and throughout the immediate region. He also found that the fastest growing audience support is for art/music/design venues, followed by Native American museums, then science and industry and history.

He reiterated that much of heritage tourism is driven by education. The more education a person has, the more likely he or she is to visit a museum or a historic site.

“Only one in 10 people with less than high school education will visit those,” he said.

carlie.kollath@journalinc.com

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Hills heritage area rolls out management plan

Posted on July 10, 2013 by Dennis Seid in News

By Dennis Seid/NEMS Daily Journal



TUPELO – After years of development, the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance has a draft management plan to boost tourism in the region. The Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area – one of 49 federally funded heritage areas across the country – comprises 30 counties bordered by Interstate 55 on the west, Highway 14 on the south, the Tennessee state line on the north and the Alabama state line on the east.

The management plan, presented Tuesday by Nashville-based Walker Collaborative, pulls together ideas garnered via focus groups and studies. It focuses on four primary themes: Native American

heritage, African-American heritage, the Civil War and the arts (focusing on music and literature). “We’ve been working on this for two and a half years with the management plan, and this is our first look at the full plan,” said Kent Bain, MHNHA project coordinator. The marketing theme for MHNHA is “where Appalachia meets the Delta,” and seeks to tap into the growing popularity of cultural heritage tourism. “The plan is grounded in economic realities,” said Phil Walker. “What will people come to see?” Under the plan, two major Mississippi Hills interpretive centers would be in Hernando and Tupelo. Then, each theme would have its own interpretive centers, to serve as a springboard for other destinations related to the major theme. Pontotoc would be the center for Native American heritage, Holly Springs would represent African-American heritage and Corinth would represent the Civil War. Tupelo would be the starting point for music, while Oxford would represent literature. “You’ve already got great events tied to the themes, but there are other abundant opportunities,” Walker said. “Heritage tourism is not just seeing things, it’s also about experiencing the culture.” Over the next few months, officials will seek public input about the management plan, then submit paperwork to the National Park Service. Once approved, the plan will be posted on the NPS website and distributed to the relevant parties. Walker hopes that will happen in the next few months. From there, the real work begins – finding funding to implement and maintain the plan. Federal and state funding are available, but not guaranteed, so the business plan includes fundraising, sponsorships, memberships and other activities. dennis.seid@journalinc.com

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More visitors centers recommended for the area

Posted on **December 19, 2012** by **Chris Elkins** in **Business**

By Carlie Kollath Wells/NEMS Daily Journal

TUPELO – Consultants on Tuesday recommended seven to eight visitors centers be used to interpret the region’s heritage for tourists. Phil Walker, of Nashville-based Walker Collaborative, and his team presented findings to the board of the Mississippi Hills Area Alliance, as the members continue to research the best way to interpret and monetarily capitalize on the cultural and tourism heritage in the region. The Alliance board is in charge of the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area, a federally recognized region bordered by Highway 55 on the west, Highway 14 on the south, the Tennessee state line on the north and the Alabama state line on the east. The group is funded with local, state and federal money. The board has been working with the consultants for several months to put together a management plan for the heritage area. The preferred plan Walker presented Tuesday called for interpretive centers to be in Tupelo, Hernando, Oxford, Holly Springs, Corinth, Pontotoc and Columbus. The centers in Tupelo and Hernando would have interpretive information for all of the themes – African-American, Civil War, music and literature, Native American and architecture – while the other centers would focus on a specific theme. Participants at Tuesday’s meeting suggested looking at partnering with an existing visitors center in Kosciusko. They also suggested that the plan be open to other towns that could house the centers. Walker is having another meeting today at 10 a.m. at the Oxford Convention Center to present his findings and gather input. Then, he and the consultants will tweak the plan and start putting together cost estimates and a proposed budget. carlie.wells@journalinc.com

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NEWS SPORTS BUSINESS LIFESTYLE OPINION OBITUARIES BLOGS SUBSCRIPTIONS

Tourism group seeks input

Posted on August 19, 2011 by Chris Elkins in News

By Carlie Kollath/NEMS Daily Journal

TUPELO – A regional tourism group will host two meetings next week to get input about the direction of the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area.

The heritage area is federally designated and is governed by the National Park Service. The Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance, which is based in Tupelo, is responsible for coming up with a management plan for the area.

“These meetings are part of a broader process for developing the plan, which will guide the management of the heritage area over the next ten years,” said Kristy White, executive director of the Corinth Area Convention and Visitors Bureau and president of the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance.

The first meeting is in Tupelo on Tuesday from 10 a.m. until noon at the Renasant Center for IDEAs. The second meeting is Wednesday from 10 a.m. to noon in Columbus at the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Development Authority headquarters.

Two previous meetings were held in June in Oxford and Starkville.

The meetings are open to the public and stakeholders in the region’s tourism industry are encouraged to attend.

The meetings, according to a press release, will introduce participants to the project and solicit public input on various issues, including potential impacts of the heritage area on existing cultural and natural resources.

The Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area was designated by Congress and the president in April 2009. The rough borders of the area are the Tennessee and Alabama state lines to the north and east, Interstate 55 to the west and Highway 14 to the south.

carlie.kollath@journalinc.com

Want to Go?

THE MISSISSIPPI HILLS Heritage Area Alliance will have to public meetings next week to gather input:

- Tuesday 10 a.m. to noon at Renasant Center for IDEAs in Tupelo
- Wednesday from 10 a.m. to noon at Tennessee Tombigbee Waterway Development Authority headquarters in Columbus For more information, contact project coordinator Kent Bain at kentbain@mshills.org or (662) 844-1276.

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Tourism group to gather research for region's future

Posted on September 11, 2012 by Chris Elkins in Business, News

By Carlie Kollath Wells/NEMS Daily Journal



TUPELO – The Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance has a workshop at 1:30 p.m. today to discuss the future of the region's national heritage area.

The group is gathering input to form the management plan for the area. The free workshop is at the Mississippi Hills exhibit center, which is inside the Renasant Center for IDEAs at 398 E.

Main St. in Fairpark.

The national heritage area is a federally-recognized region bordered by Highway 55 on the west, Highway 14 on the south, the Tennessee state line on the north and the Alabama state line on the east. The area covers 19 full counties and portions of 11 others in the northeastern part of Mississippi.

The alliance board met in June and heard research findings from Phil Walker of Nashville-based Walker Collaborative. He said Northeast Mississippi has many stories to tell, but it needs to focus on a few things that are easy to market to visitors.

The overarching themes for the region – as identified by a preliminary report from consultants – were black history, the Civil War, the arts and architecture. The board of the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance also discussed an itinerary themed around the region's Native American history.

The board is responsible for overseeing the Hills national heritage area, a region that gets local, state and federal funding.

As part of the national heritage area program, the board must develop a management plan. It's paying Walker \$150,000 to do the research and put together the plan.

The organization's managers in a news release said stakeholders from all the communities within the heritage area are encouraged to attend and provide input this afternoon. The workshop will feature breakout groups that address themes, marketing and implementation strategies.

On Thursday, Walker and his team will have a follow-up presentation with what they've done this week. The presentation is at 1:30 p.m. in the exhibit center.

carlie.wells@journalinc.com

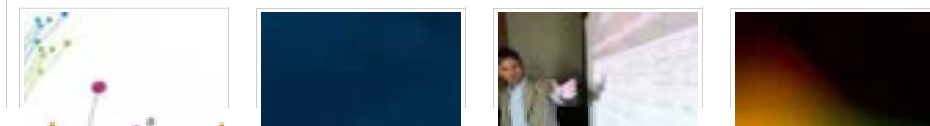
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NEWS SPORTS BUSINESS LIFESTYLE OPINION OBITUARIES BLOGS SUBSCRIPTIONS

OUR OPINION: Tourism, culture alliance holds potential for region

Posted on July 11, 2013 by Chris Elkins in Opinion

By NEMS Daily Journal



Tuesday's delivery of a management plan by a Nashville consulting firm to the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance substantially increases the possibilities for coordinated tapping of cultural resources in 30 northern counties – an effort under development for a decade. The draft management plan from Nashville-based Walker Collaborative is a big step forward in presenting a final plan for approval to the southeastern region of the National Park Service. Then, after qualifying as a full participant, the alliance would be able to compete for federal funds with 48

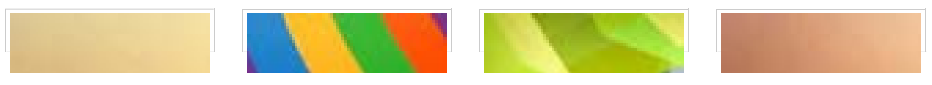
other heritage alliance areas nationwide. It is capped at receiving \$150,000 per budget year from federal sources, and all of it must be matched dollar for dollar. The alliance has been able to fully fund the match from local government, the state, memberships and other supporters. It has a \$325,000 operating budget, but it could gain more funding once a management plan is in place. Corinth resident Kent Bain and Tupelo resident Bobby King, a professional marketer, have guided the alliance. King said being able to raise the matching amount and go with money in hand to the next levels of funding has been a big plus. King said on Wednesday he hopes a marketing plan can be presented to the NPS regional office by Oct. 1, the beginning of the federal fiscal year. The national heritage area covers all of the area from I-55 on the west, Alabama on the east, Tennessee on the north and Mississippi Highway 14 on the south. King said the management plan would provide the marketing structure for the area, with retiring Baby Boomers as a primary demographic target for tourism. The plan focuses on four primary themes: Native American heritage, African-American heritage, the Civil War and the arts (focusing on music and literature). The heritage areas have been capped at least temporarily at 49, so the time is ripe for taking advantage of every opportunity. The primary focus sites would be spread across the area from Corinth to DeSoto County, with Tupelo, Oxford and Pontotoc playing key roles. The idea has been carefully developed, and the payoff could be enriching.

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Live from Mississippi Hills mtg 9/11/12

[with 79 comments](#)

We're live at the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area workshop. We're at the exhibit center, which is inside the Renasant Center for IDEAs.



The board members and all interested stakeholders are here to help flesh out tourism themes for the hills. The group is gathering input to form the management plan for the area ([previous coverage in today's paper](#)).

The national heritage area is a federally-recognized region bordered by Highway 55 on the west, Highway 14 on the south, the Tennessee state line on the north and the Alabama state line on the east. The area covers 19 full counties and portions of 11 others in the northeastern part of Mississippi.

There are about 20 people here, include reps from MS Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, MS Corps of Engineers, Tupelo city planning, Tupelo CVB, Downtown Tupelo, De Soto County and Tishomingo County.

Disclaimer: I'm typing as people are talking. There may be typos. People also have a tendency to talk at the same time, so I can't always hear everything.

And, I'm not typing every word. Think of this more as the highlights of the meeting.

Something doesn't make sense? Corrections? Have questions? Ask.

—

The meeting started at 1:30.

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Phil Walker of Nashville-based Walker Collaborative is leading the conversation. He’s going over his background information from before (what is a heritage area, etc.) A lot of this is a repeat from his presentation in June that we covered. [Click here to read his report about the region’s strengths and challenges.](#)

Today, the goal is to have breakout groups to discuss the various themes. Judge the validity of the themes on this criteria:

- Does the theme have significance to the region’s story?
- Are there substantial resources to interpret?
- How unique is the theme withing a broader national context?
- How inherently is the theme (degree of market appeal)?



The themes:

1. African-American

- Freedom Arrives – Contraband camp
- Reconstruction and post-reconstruction – Hill Crest Cemetery, Union Academy
- Civil Rights – Civil Rights monument at Ole Miss

2. Civil War

- Clash of amateur armies – Iuka Methodist Church
- Quest for Vicksburg – Grenada Lake
- Play’s Final Acts – Brice’s Crossroads and Tupelo

3. Arts

- Literature
- Music

4. Architecture

- The idea of Appalachia meets Delta. A subtheme worth pursuing?
- Residential
- Commercial architecture
- Worship, learning and governance

Should there be a 5th theme - Native American?

We’ve done inventory for all of these themes. Native American is more difficult because the people who know them are more covert because they don’t want them to be pilfered.

Lots of crowd discussion that there’s a lot of Native American history here – names of towns, creeks, battles, homes, trails, etc.

Crowd comment: I would put Native American before architecture theme. What if we combined Arts & Architecture?

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Walker: We'll come back to this in the breakout groups and Thursday when we present the findings.

—

Now for an **economic update from Randy Gross:**

In 10 years, you've lost 30,000 manufacturing jobs. You've got an opportunity to fill that void with heritage tourism.

You've got a lot going on here, but it's hard for someone in California to understand what the Hills is.

(Carlie note: he's doing a lot of the same presentation from June. We liveblogged that presentation. [Read it by clicking here.](#))

More than one-third of your current visitors at the attractions are coming from within the hills – people from Tupelo visiting Corinth.

Some of your key markets:

- Memphis
- Jackson
- Birmingham
- Dallas-Fort Worth
- Atlanta
- Chicago
- Nashville

Five percent of your visitors are coming from overseas. Musical and heritage sites are very popular for overseas visitors. The visitor base at your attractions are very different. Visitors at Elvis Birthplace are very different from visitors at Brice's Crossroads.

Participation in heritage areas have been slightly declining in past years. This is partly because school groups that used to visit a site now can look it up and "visit" it online.

25 percent of people visit heritage sites. After age 70, rates drop because of a decrease in mobility.

Survey data: The more educated a person is, the more likely he/she is likely to visit a cultural or heritage site such as a museum or historical home.

This heritage area has the potential to attract up to about 75,000 additional visitors by 2017. Fastest support will be in art/design/music, then in history/Native American and then in science & industry.

Your events and festival audience is supposed to grow 9.5 percent by 2017. This potential growth is generated from outside the core areas.

—

Walker:

Time to break up into four planning teams:

1. Civil War
2. African-American
3. Arts & Lit
4. Architecture

Questions for each team:

- Key resources in heritage area for this theme to promote and interpret (historic sites, museums, districts, etc.)?
- Approach to preservation, enhancement and stewardship for resources?
- Key sub-themes and stories to interpret
- Approach to interpretation (tour routes, interpretative centers, interpretation mediums, etc.)
- Approach to marketing the theme and the MS Hills National Heritage Area
- Implementation strategies (management, funding, phasing, etc.)






The audience is breaking out into groups. It's 2:40 now and they are planning to brainstorm for the next hour. Then, they'll get back together and discuss some of their ideas.

The four consultants will take all the ideas and spend the next two days refining them and coming up with a plan. The plan will be presented at 1:30 p.m. Thursday at the exhibit center. The meeting is open to the public. But, if you can't make it, we'll be here live-blogging it.

We've got to write some stories so we can't stick around for the brainstorming, but we'll be back Thursday with eager ears.

Questions so far?

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Written by [Carlie Kollath Wells](#)
 September 11, 2012 at 2:22 pm

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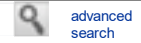
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Mississippi Hills planning meeting comes to Columbus

Dispatch Staff Report
August 21, 2011 12:36:00 AM

TUPELO -- Two regional meetings are being held in August to gather input for the federally-mandated Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA).

"These meetings are part of a broader process for developing the plan, which will guide the management of the heritage area over the next 10 years," said Kristy White, executive director of the Corinth Area Convention and Visitors Bureau and president of the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance, the legislatively-appointed local coordinating entity for MHNHA.

"Our heritage area is one of only 49 National Heritage Areas, which are charged with conserving and interpreting some of America's greatest cultural, historic and natural treasures," White commented.

The first meeting will be from 10 a.m. until noon on Tuesday, Aug. 23, at the Renasant Center for IDEAs, 398 E. Main St., Tupelo.

The second meeting will be from 10 a.m. until noon on Wednesday, Aug. 24, at the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Development Authority headquarters at 318 7th St. North in Columbus.

Agnes Zaiontz, business manager of the Development Authority, offered to host the meeting in support of the planning process. "Columbus is a key community within the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area, with tremendous heritage assets. The Tenn-Tom Waterway is also a major resource for the region, and it is important for both Columbus and the Waterway to be represented in the planning process," Zaiontz stated.

Stakeholders and the general public are invited to attend these meetings, which will introduce participants to the project and solicit public input on various related issues, including potential impacts of the Heritage Area on existing cultural and natural resources.

The meetings are not restricted to residents of Tupelo and Columbus, and interested persons from surrounding communities are invited to attend. Two previous meetings were held at the end of June in Oxford and Starkville for the same purpose.

The meetings will help to fulfill federal legislative requirements for the Management Plan, as well as compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act. Sessions will be conducted by Phil Walker of the Walker Collaborative in Nashville, Tenn., in cooperation with MHHAA staff.

Contact Project Coordinator Kent Bain for additional information at kentbain@mshills.org or 662-844-1276.

Heritage Area

The MHNHA was designated by Congress and the president in April 2009. Although its exact boundaries are spelled out in its enabling legislation, the borders are, roughly, the Tennessee and Alabama state lines to the north and east, and Interstate 55 and Highway 14 to the west and south.

MHNHA covers 19 full counties and portions of 11 others. For more information, visit mississippihills.org.

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Firm includes Columbus among sites recommended for cultural center

The Associated Press
December 20, 2012 11:29:53 AM

TUPELO -- A consulting firm has recommended seven to eight visitors centers to capitalize on the cultural and tourism heritage in north Mississippi.

The Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal reports that Phil Walker, of Nashville-based Walker Collaborative, and his team presented findings to the board of the Mississippi Hills Area Alliance.

The Alliance board is in charge of the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area, a federally recognized region bordered by Mississippi Highway 55 on the west, Highway 14 on the south, the Tennessee state line on the north and the Alabama state line on the east. The group is funded with local, state and federal money.

The board has been working with the consultants for several months to put together a management plan for the heritage area.

The preferred plan Walker presented Tuesday called for interpretive centers to be in Tupelo, Hernando, Oxford, Holly Springs, Corinth, Pontotoc and Columbus.

The centers in Tupelo and Hernando would have interpretive information for all of the themes African-American, Civil War, music and literature, Native American and architecture.

After another meeting in Oxford, the consultants will tweak the plan and start putting together cost estimates and a proposed budget.

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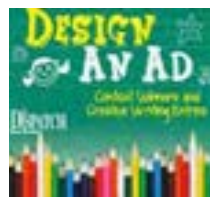
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Planners roll out tourism strategies

By SUE WATSON
Staff Writer

Consultants for the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance recently held a public hearing in Holly Springs to explain what heritage area tourism is all about in Northeast Mississippi.

The MHAA exists to enhance, interpret and promote the cultural and heritage assets of the Hills region. It exists to increase jobs and visitations to the area and support projects that sustain the heritage tourism industry.

[Full Story](#)

By SUE WATSON
Staff Writer



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Letters of Support and Partnership

Letters of Commitment

- Mike Armour, Director, Mississippi Appalachian Regional Office
- Malcolm White, Director of Tourism, Mississippi Development Authority
- Bob Wilson, Executive Director, Mississippi Main Street Association
- Kenneth H. P'Pool, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Mississippi Department of Archives and History
- Lolly Barnes, Executive Director, Mississippi Heritage Trust
- Jennifer Jameson, Folk and Traditional Arts Director, Mississippi Arts Commission
- Mike Tagert, Commissioner, Northern District, State of Mississippi Transportation Commission
- Daniel W. Jones, M.D., Chancellor, University of Mississippi
- Mark E. Keenum, President, Mississippi State University
- Jim Borsig, Ph.D., President, Mississippi University for Women
- David L. Beckley, President, Rust College
- Sharon Gardner, Executive Director, Northeast Mississippi Planning and Development District
- Vernon R. (Randy) Kelley, III, Executive Director, Three Rivers Planning and Development District
- Rupert L. "Rudy" Johnson, Executive Director, Golden Triangle Planning and Development District, Inc.
- David Rumbarger, President/CEO, Community Development Foundation (Tupelo)
- Mike Clayborne, President, CREATE Foundation
- Christy Burns, Executive Director, Corinth Area Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Kim Terrell, Executive Director, DeSoto County Tourism Association
- Jennifer Gregory, Chief Executive Officer, Greater Starkville Development Partnership/Starkville Convention and Visitors Bureau
- LaKisha Mitchell Buffington, Executive Director, Holly Springs Tourism and Recreation Bureau
- Sean Johnson, Executive Director, New Albany Marketing & Tourism
- Neal McCoy, Executive Director, Tupelo Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Mary Allyn Hedges, Director, Visit Oxford
- Theresa W. Cutshall, Administrator, Tishomingo County Tourism Council

Letters of Support

- Mary Risser, Superintendent, Natchez Trace Parkway
- Alfred Moore, Director, Holly Springs Community Development Corporation
- Candise Kola, Chair, Board of Directors, North Mississippi Hill Country Picnic
- Clencie L. Cotton, Director, Rust College Community Development Corporation
- Cindy W. Nelson, Founding President, Tishomingo County Historical & Genealogical Society; Tishomingo County Archives & History Museum
- Sue Stidham, Director, Winona Main Street; Montgomery County Chamber



**STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR**
PHIL BRYANT, GOVERNOR

APPALACHIAN REGIONAL OFFICE
MIKE ARMOUR
DIRECTOR

March 6, 2014

To: National Park Service/Department of the Interior

As the State Director of the Appalachian Regional Commission in Mississippi, I would like to express our intent to assist the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance in the implementation of the Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA).

ARC Mississippi has supported the heritage area initiative in years past through multiple grants and the participation of personnel in planning efforts, board meetings, and other events. ARC has also involved the Alliance in a technical assistance program targeted at tourism attractions in disadvantage counties.

Particularly given the substantial overlap between the official ARC Mississippi and MHNHA's geography, we will continue to look for opportunities to support the Alliance and the counties and communities in our shared area. We will give consideration to specific project proposals that are of mutual benefit to MHNHA and Mississippi's ARC counties and which meet the criteria for our grant programs.

We have reviewed the draft Management Plan and the Goals & Objectives for MHNHA and will assist MHNHA in achieving those which fall under our organizational mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mike".

Mike Armour
Director
Mississippi Appalachian Regional Office



STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
PHIL BRYANT, GOVERNOR
MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
BRENT CHRISTENSEN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

March 11, 2014

National Park Service/Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

To: National Park Service/Department of the Interior,

As the director of the Tourism Division of the Mississippi Development Authority, I would like to express our intent to assist the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance in the implementation of the Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA).

MDA Tourism promotes the many historic communities and heritage assets within MHNHA to national and international markets, and our personnel have been involved with the planning and development of the heritage area since its inception in the early 2000s.

One potential opportunity for collaboration would be for MDA Tourism to co-host a workshop with MHNHA for tourist attractions to educate them on ways to enhance the visitor experience, promote their sites more effectively, and increase tourism. This could lead to staff consulting with individual attractions more on a more in-depth basis.

We have been afforded the opportunity to review the entire draft Management Plan and have also been provided with a copy of the Goals & Objectives for MHNHA. Having reviewed the Goals & Objectives closely, we are committed to assisting MHNHA in achieving those which fall under our organizational mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Malcolm White".

Malcolm White, Director of Tourism
Mississippi Development Authority



March 3, 2014

To: National Park Service/Department of the Interior

As the executive director of the Mississippi Main Street Association (MMSA), I would like to express our intent to assist the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance in the implementation of the Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA).

MHNHA includes more than 20 official MMSA communities, and our organization has supported the heritage area initiative in years past through the participation of personnel in planning efforts, board meetings and other events, and most recently, at a wayfaring presentation sponsored by the Greater Starkville Development Partnership and the Alliance.

The downtowns of regional communities are collectively among the strongest assets within the heritage area. Although many of the key communities within MHNHA are already members of the Mississippi Main Street Association, others are not, and we will fully support the addition of new communities where adequate local support and funding exist.

We have been afforded the opportunity to review the entire draft Management Plan and have also been provided with a copy of the Goals & Objectives for MHNHA. Having reviewed the Goals & Objectives closely, we are committed to assisting MHNHA in achieving those which fall under our organizational mission.

We envision an ongoing partnership with the Alliance as they seek to preserve, develop and promote the heritage assets within their region, and we will gladly partner with them on specific projects. One possibility for collaboration would be for MMSA to partner with MHNHA to host a forum with existing Main Street programs within the region on how downtowns can leverage being included in the NHA for various purposes.

We will of course continue to support the individual Main Street communities within MHNHA, helping to enhance these vital centers of community identity and economic growth.

Sincerely,

Bob Wilson
Executive Director
Mississippi Main Street Association

**MISSISSIPPI MAIN STREET
ASSOCIATION**

THE ELECTRIC BUILDING
308 E. PEARL ST | SUITE 101
JACKSON, MS 39201
PHONE: 601.944.0113
FAX: 601.353.3469
INQUIRIES@MMSMAINSTREET.COM

DISTRICT OFFICES

426 NORTHPOINTE LAKE DRIVE
OXFORD, MS 38655
601.941.5409

P.O. BOX 445
COLUMBUS, MS 39703
662.364.0435

2515 DEMARET DRIVE
GULFPORT, MS 39507
228.365.8090



HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION
P. O. BOX 571
Jackson, MS 39205
601-576-6940 Fax 601-576-6955
mdah.state.ms.us

April 14, 2014

To: National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior:

On behalf of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH), I would like to express our agency's support for and intent to assist the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance in the implementation of the Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA). MDAH regularly funds projects and programs that positively impact the communities and historic resources within MHNHA, and MDAH personnel have been involved with various stages in the planning and development of MHNHA, including the Management Plan process.

There are numerous National Register sites and districts within MHNHA, as well as over fifteen Certified Local Government (CLG) communities. MDAH will continue to review and approve appropriate sites for inclusion on the National Register and to work with qualifying local governments on their "certification" into the CLG program.

Further, MDAH will continue to provide technical assistance to communities and sites within the MHNHA and will strongly consider proposals from the Alliance for projects and events that benefit the historic resources in the region.

In an effort to provide technical assistance to communities, MDAH regularly sponsors workshops for communities seeking to add new National Register or locally designated historic districts, as well as directs efforts to encourage various local preservation programs. Future workshops will cover preservation ordinances, preservation commissions, historic districts, and design review guidelines, and we would be pleased to co-sponsor these with MHNHA. Another possible means by which MDAH might be able to support MHNHA could be to modify the selection criteria for our grant programs to add bonus points to applications from any community in an NHA.

MDAH has been afforded the opportunity to review the entire draft Management Plan and has also been provided with a copy of the Goals & Objectives for MHNHA. Having reviewed the Goals & Objectives closely, we are committed to assisting MHNHA in achieving those which fall under our organizational mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken P'Pool". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized script.

Kenneth H. P'Pool
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

March 21, 2014

To: National Park Service/Department of the Interior

Dear Sir or Madam:

It is my pleasure to write this letter of support for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area. The Mississippi Heritage Trust is committed to assisting the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance in the implementation of its Management Plan.



The Mississippi Heritage Trust works to save and renew places meaningful to Mississippians and their history, including the diverse architectural heritage of the Mississippi Hills region, through programs including the "10 Most Endangered Historic Places in Mississippi" and "Mississippi Heritage Awards", which highlights preservation successes throughout the state. Our organization has lobbied successfully for the passage and reauthorization of the state historic tax credit, which has encouraged the rehabilitation of many wonderful historic places throughout the heritage area.

We have been afforded the opportunity to review the draft Management Plan and have also been provided with a copy of the Goals & Objectives for Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area. To assist the heritage area in its efforts to meet these goals and objectives, the Mississippi Heritage Trust will continue to provide technical assistance to communities and sites within the heritage area and will welcome proposals for collaboration from the Alliance involving projects and events that benefit the historic resources in the region.

A wonderful example of our partnership is the 2014 Historic Preservation Conference and Heritage Awards, which will be held in beautiful downtown Tupelo, the headquarters of the Alliance. We look forward to working with the Alliance's helpful and welcoming staff members to bring people from all over Mississippi together to learn about historic preservation, celebrate our many preservation victories and explore the diverse cultural heritage of the Mississippi Hills.

Mississippians care about their history. It is through the dedication and hard work of groups like the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area Alliance that the stories of our rich and colorful past will continue to be told. The Mississippi Heritage Trust applauds their efforts and welcomes the opportunity to be a part of this exciting endeavor.

Sincerely,


Lolly Barnes
Executive Director

Mississippi Heritage Trust

Post Office Box 577

Jackson, Mississippi 39205

(601) 354-0200

(601) 354-0220 Fax

www.mississippiheritage.com



March 20, 2014

To: National Park Service/Department of the Interior,

As the Director of Folk and Traditional Arts at the Mississippi Arts Commission (MAC), I would like to express our intent to assist the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance in the implementation of the Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA). MHNHA's mission to "preserve, enhance, interpret and promote the cultural and heritage assets of the hills region" falls right in line with our commitment to cultural sustainability, and we will continue to serve as an advisor to the project in years to come. I look forward to serving as a consultant for various initiatives of MHNHA's Management Plan, such as the proposed oral history project, the development of region-specific K-12 curriculum, and in the production of accessible programs and events related to the cultural traditions of the Heritage Area.

MAC funds projects and programs that positively impact the arts organizations and communities within MHNHA. MAC may continue to provide technical assistance and funding to arts groups and projects within the MHNHA, and will strongly consider proposals from the Alliance for projects and events that benefit arts in the region.

We have been afforded the opportunity to review the entire draft Management Plan and have also been provided with a copy of the Goals & Objectives for MHNHA. Having reviewed the Goals & Objectives closely, we are committed to assisting MHNHA in achieving those which fall under our organizational mission.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Jameson
Folk and Traditional Arts Director
Mississippi Arts Commission

jjameson@arts.ms.gov
601-359-6034



State of Mississippi
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

COMMISSIONER MIKE TAGERT
NORTHERN DISTRICT

March 19, 2014

National Park Service
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Sir or Madam:

As the Commissioner of the Northern District of the Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT), I would like to express our intent to assist the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance (MHAA) in the implementation of the management plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA).

MDOT has provided staff support and technical assistance to the Alliance during the development of its management plan, specifically on the issue of signage. Most recently, we participated in a wayfaring presentation hosted by the Greater Starkville Development Partnership and the Alliance. We will continue to assist the Alliance on all relevant matters, and give all due consideration to proposals for directional signage or other projects that fall within MDOT's established guidelines.

We have been afforded the opportunity to review the entire draft management plan and have also been provided with a copy of the goals and objectives for the MHNHA. Having reviewed the goals and objectives closely, we are committed to assisting the MHNHA in achieving those which fall under our organizational mission.

There are many vibrant communities and important historical resources throughout the Northern District and MDOT will make every effort to support the Alliance as it engages in its important work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Tagert".

Mike Tagert
Commissioner



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MISSISSIPPI
OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

March 20, 2014

To: National Park Service/Department of the Interior

The University of Mississippi played a vital role in the development of the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area, and faculty and staff members have been involved in various planning phases for MHNHA. Both the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Public Relations (under the leadership of Dr. Gloria Kellum) and the Office for Research and Sponsored Programs (under the leadership of Dr. Alice Clark) were instrumental in obtaining federal designation. In 2004, the university hosted a Heritage Area Conference at the Ford Center for the Performing Arts, and Norman Easterbrook, the director of the Ford Center, previously served on the Board of Directors for the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance.

In 2006, the University established the Mississippi Hills Institute for Heritage Resource Management to assist with the development of MHNHA. In its current role as the university's official point of liaison with MHNHA, the Institute will continue to foster relationships between MHNHA and the university to benefit the heritage area.

We have been offered an opportunity to review the entire draft Management Plan and have also been provided with a copy of the Goals & Objectives for MHNHA. The university welcomes the opportunity to continue to work with MHNHA in support of those Goals & Objectives that fall under our institutional mission. The University possesses expertise related to the key interpretive themes of the heritage area as well as expertise in leading oral history programs, and we welcome opportunities for collaboration in these areas. Potential partners within the University include the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and the Southern Foodways Alliance. Additionally, internship opportunities for University of Mississippi students will be encouraged; in fact, one of our seniors is interning with the Alliance this spring semester.

We believe collaborations between the Alliance and the Institute would benefit both the communities of MHNHA and the university. We are committed to fostering these relationships.

Sincerely,

Daniel W. Jones, M.D.
Chancellor



MISSISSIPPI STATE
UNIVERSITY

Office of the President

April 14, 2014

To National Park Service/Department of the Interior,

Mississippi State University played a supporting role in the development of the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area, with faculty and staff members from the MSU Extension Service, Carl Small Town Center, Department of Landscape Architecture and other university units involved in various planning phases.

As the Alliance seeks to implement the MHNHA Management Plan, there are numerous logical partners within the University, including those previously mentioned as well as the John C. Stennis Institute of Government and others, whose involvement could strengthen the Alliance's efforts.

We have been afforded the opportunity to review the draft Management Plan and have also been provided with a copy of the Goals & Objectives for MHNHA. We look forward to collaborating with MHNHA to assist in achieving goals and objectives which fall under our institutional mission. For example, Mississippi State possesses the expertise to aid in research and interpretation initiatives related to the key interpretive themes of the heritage area as well as oral history programs tied to these themes.

A vibrant collaborative partnership between the Alliance and the University could yield substantial benefits for the communities of the MHNHA region and our faculty, staff and students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Mark E. Keenum", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark E. Keenum
President

March 13, 2014

www.muw.edu

To: National Park Service/Department of the Interior,

As the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance seeks to implement the Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area, there are logical partners within the Mississippi University for Women whose involvement would benefit the Alliance.

For example, MUW possesses the expertise to assist with research and interpretation related to the key interpretive themes of the heritage area and could also support MHNHA through internships.

We have been afforded the opportunity to review the entire draft Management Plan and have also been provided with a copy of the Goals & Objectives for MHNHA. Having reviewed the Goals & Objectives closely, we are committed to assisting MHNHA in achieving those which fall under our institutional mission.

A vibrant collaborative partnership between the Alliance and MUW could yield substantial benefits for both the communities of MHNHA and our staff and students.

Sincerely,



Jim Borsig, Ph.D.
President



RUST COLLEGE

Holly Springs, MS 38635 • Phone (662) 252-2491/252-8896 • Fax (662) 252-8863

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
David L. Beckley
www.rustcollege.edu

March 3, 2014

To: National Park Service/Department of the Interior:

Rust College played a supporting role in the development of the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA) with staff members involved in various planning phases. As the Alliance seeks to implement the MHNHA Management Plan, there are logical partners within the college whose involvement would benefit the Alliance.

We have been afforded the opportunity to review the entire draft Management Plan and have also been provided with a copy of the Goals and Objectives for MHNHA. Having reviewed the Goals & Objectives closely, we are committed to assisting MHNHA in achieving those which fall under our institutional mission. Our faculty and staff in the Humanities and the Social Sciences are available to assist with research and interpretation related to the key interpretive themes of our area. It is also noted that the College is the owner of one of the estates mentioned in the plan (Airliewood). We also see the project as a possible internship agency for our students interested in community development.

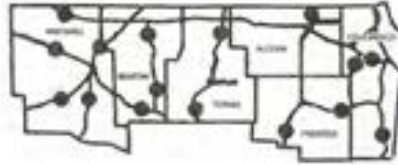
A vibrant collaborative partnership between the Alliance and the College could yield substantial benefits for both the communities of MHNHA and our staff and students.

Sincerely,

David L. Beckley
President



"An Institution of the United Methodist Church"



NORTHEAST MISSISSIPPI PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

619 E. PARKER DRIVE + POST OFFICE BOX 600
BOONEVILLE, MS 38829

SHARON GARDNER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TELEPHONE
(662) 728-6248
Fax (662) 728-2417
AREA AGENCY ON AGING
(662) 728-7038
1-800-745-6961

March 17, 2014

Mr. Kent Bain, Project Coordinator
Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance
398 East Main Street, Suite 115
Tupelo, MS 38804

To: National Park Service/Department of the Interior,

As the Executive Director of the Northeast Mississippi Planning and Development District (NEMPDD), I would like to express our intent to assist the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance in the implementation of the Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA).

Our organization works to assure that communities have the physical infrastructure necessary for self-sustaining economic development and improved quality of life, and we assist them in gaining access to financial and technical resources to help build dynamic local economies.

NEMPDD has provided staff support and technical assistance on heritage-area-related grants prior to the establishment of MHNHA, and our organization's support of the initiative helped lay the groundwork for federal designation.

In the future, we will look for opportunities to support the Alliance as it implements its Management Plan. Assistance could take the form of grant identification, preparation of grant applications, financial reporting, periodic and grant-closeout reporting and other related tasks.

As but one example, NEMPDD could assist MHNHA in working with local governments on community enhancement projects: holding workshops devoted to transforming strip commercial corridors or offering technical assistance to individual communities interested in pursuing enhancements.

Mr. Bain
March 17, 2014
Page 2

We have been afforded the opportunity to review the entire draft Management Plan and have also been provided with a copy of the Goals & Objectives for MHNHA. Having reviewed the Goals & Objectives closely, we are committed to assisting MHNHA in achieving those which fall under our organizational mission.

MHNHA covers all counties served by NEMPDD, and helping the Alliance be successful in its efforts is yet another way we can serve our designated counties.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sharon Gardner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sharon Gardner, Executive Director
Northeast Mississippi Planning and Development District

THREE RIVERS

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PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT, INC.

P.O. BOX 600
75 SOUTH MAIN ST.
TRICOR, MISSISSIPPI 39243
TACUMBLE, MISSISSIPPI 39273
POST OFFICE, MISSISSIPPI 39209

March 18, 2014

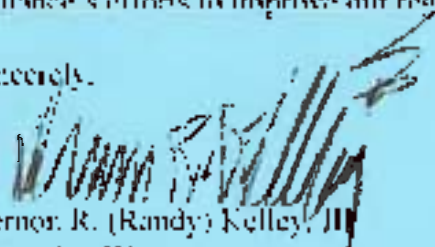
To: National Park Service-Department of the Interior,

As the Executive Director of the Three Rivers Planning and Development District (TRPDD), I would like to express our support for the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance in the implementation of the Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA).

TRPDD remains open to exploring opportunities to assist the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area. Assistance could take the form of research, preparation of grant applications or technical assistance.

MHNHA covers all 8 counties served by TRPDD, and we support the Alliance's efforts to improve our region.

Sincerely,



Vernon R. (Randy) Kelley, III
Executive Director
Three Rivers Planning and Development District



GOLDEN TRIANGLE Planning and Development District, Inc.

Post Office Box 828 • Starkville, MS 39760-0828 • Telephone (662) 324-7860 • Fax (662) 324-1911

Cecil Hamilton
President

Robert E. Boykin
Vice President

Jimmie Oliver
Secretary / Treasurer

Rupert L. "Rudy" Johnson
Executive Director

April 8, 2014

To: National Park Service/Department of the Interior,

As the Executive Director of the Golden Triangle Planning and Development District (GTPDD), I would like to express our intent to assist the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance in the implementation of the Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA).

GTPDD staff members have been involved with the planning process for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area. In the future we will look for opportunities to support the Alliance as it implements its Management Plan. Assistance could take the form of grant identification, preparation of grant applications or technical assistance.

We have been afforded the opportunity to review the entire draft Management Plan and have also been provided with a copy of the Goals & Objectives for MHNHA. Having reviewed the Goals & Objectives closely, we are committed to assisting MHNHA in achieving those which fall under our organizational mission.

MHNHA covers all seven (7) counties served by GTPDD, and helping the Alliance be successful in its efforts is yet another way we can serve our designated counties.

Sincerely,

Rupert L. "Rudy" Johnson
Executive Director,
Golden Triangle Planning and Development District, Inc.



Community Development Foundation
398 East Main Street, CDF Center
P.O. Box A
Tupelo, MS 38802-1210

March 3, 2014

To: National Park Service/Department of the Interior,

As the President/CEO of the Community Development Foundation (CDF), I would like to express our intent to assist the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance in the implementation of the Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA).

CDF has been a long-time supporter of the Alliance and will continue to assist the organization in its efforts. CDF has provided ongoing staff support and substantial in-kind donations to the Alliance during the past several years.

The Alliance was approved as a client of the Renasant Center for IDEAs (Tupelo/Lee County's business incubator, operated by CDF) in 2006, and has remained in the facility since then.

Typically, CDF prefers for clients of the incubator to 'graduate' within a three-year time frame and move to a permanent business location, but we have viewed the Alliance—as the local coordinating entity for a National Heritage Area—differently and allowed them to remain with us.

In addition to its management office, the Alliance also operates the Mississippi Hills Exhibit Center in our business incubator. By providing reduced-cost space and business-support services for both these enterprises, we have helped ensure the sustainability of the heritage area, and we will continue to provide this source of support as long as it is beneficial to this important regional initiative.

We have been afforded the opportunity to review the entire draft Management Plan and have also been provided with a copy of the Goals & Objectives for MHNHA. Having reviewed the Goals & Objectives closely, we are committed to assisting MHNHA in achieving those that fall under our organizational mission.

We will also look for additional ways to aid the Alliance as it implements its Management Plan and works to preserve and promote the region's heritage and expand the cultural & heritage sector of the region's broader tourism economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'David Rumbarger', is written over a faint, larger version of the same signature.

David Rumbarger
President/CEO,
Community Development Foundation

662.842.4521 Phone
800.523.3463 Toll-free
662.841.0093 Fax
info@cdfms.org
www.cdfms.org



CREATE

NORTHEAST MISSISSIPPI'S
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Guy Mitchell, III
Counsel

March 3, 2014

To: National Park Service/Department of the Interior,

As the President of the CREATE Foundation, I would like to express our intent to assist the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance in the implementation of the Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA).

CREATE and its Commission on the Future of Northeast Mississippi have been long-time supporters of the heritage area, with CREATE providing funding, staff support, technical assistance and grant-administration services in support of the initiative.

The Mississippi Hills Heritage Area was adopted as a Special Project by our organization and the Commission officially endorsed the project as part of its regional economic development strategy, of which tourism is a key component. CREATE and the Commission will continue to look for ways to support the Alliance as it implements its Management Plan.

We have been afforded the opportunity to review the entire draft Management Plan and have also been provided with a copy of the Goals & Objectives for MHNHA. Having reviewed the Goals & Objectives closely, we are committed to assisting MHNHA in achieving those which fall under our organizational mission.

In closing, as but one example of our continued commitment to the project, we have placed Phil Walker of the Walker Collaborative (the lead consulting firm on the Management Plan) on the agenda for our Annual State of the Region meeting this May to give a presentation on MHNHA.

Sincerely,

Mike Clayborne
President,
CREATE Foundation



Corinth Area Convention
and Visitors Bureau
215 N. Fillmore Street • Corinth, MS 38834
662.287.8300 / FAX 662.286.0102 / 800.748.9048
www.corinth.net

March 10, 2014

To: National Park Service/Department of the Interior,

As the Executive Director of the Corinth Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (CACVB), I would like to express our intent to assist the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance in the implementation of the Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA).

CACVB has been a dues-paying member of the Alliance since 2008, providing funding and staff support to the organization. Our staff members have served on the Alliance's Board of Directors and participated in numerous Management Plan events, and we have helped promote MHNHA through our website.

We have been afforded the opportunity to review the entire draft Management Plan and have also been provided with a copy of the Goals & Objectives for MHNHA. Having reviewed the Goals & Objectives closely, we are committed to assisting MHNHA in achieving those which fall under our organizational mission.

CACVB will continue to support and help guide the Alliance and promote MHNHA. We will of course continue to promote Corinth and its many heritage assets, as well, showcasing the resources that make our community a vital and contributing part of the Mississippi Hills NHA.

We will look for additional opportunities to partner with the Alliance on projects of mutual benefit, and aid the organization as it works to preserve, enhance and promote the diverse heritage assets within our community and our region. We will assist the Alliance as it works to expand its partnership base and involve other key groups within our community.

Corinth has many valuable heritage resources—including the Corinth Civil War Interpretive Center and the Crossroads Museum—to protect and promote, and many intriguing stories to tell.

Corinth looks forward to continuing its partnership with the Alliance as it expands its critical work in service of our community and the entire MHNHA.

Sincerely,

Christy Burne
Executive Director,
Corinth Area Convention and Visitors Bureau

HISTORY IS ONLY HALF OUR STORY.



April 4, 2014

To: National Park Service/Department of the Interior,

As the Executive Director of the DeSoto County Tourism Association (DCTA), I would like to express our intent to assist the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance in the implementation of the Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA).

DCTA has been a dues-paying member of the Alliance since 2008, providing funding and staff support to the organization. Our staff members have served on the Alliance's Board of Directors and participated in numerous Management Plan events, and we have helped promote MHNHA through our website and e-newsletter.

We have been afforded the opportunity to review the entire draft Management Plan and have also been provided with a copy of the Goals & Objectives for MHNHA. Having reviewed the Goals & Objectives closely, we are committed to assisting MHNHA in achieving those which fall under our organizational mission.

DCTA will continue to support and help guide the Alliance and promote MHNHA. We will of course continue to promote DeSoto County and its many heritage assets, as well, showcasing the resources that make our county a vital and contributing part of the Mississippi Hills NHA.

We will look for additional opportunities to partner with the Alliance on projects of mutual benefit, and aid the organization as it works to preserve, enhance and promote the diverse heritage assets within our region. We will assist the Alliance as it works to expand its partnership base and involve other key groups within our county.

DeSoto County has many valuable heritage resources—including the DeSoto County Courthouse and DeSoto County Museum—to protect and promote, and many intriguing stories to tell.

DeSoto County Tourism Association looks forward to continuing its partnership with the Alliance as it expands its critical work in service of our county and the entire MHNHA.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kim Terrell", is written over the typed name and title.

Kim Terrell
Executive Director,
DeSoto County Tourism Association

SoDeSoto.com



Greater Starkville
Development Partnership

Greater Starkville
Development Partnership
Starkville Convention and Visitors Bureau

March 5, 2014

To: National Park Service-Department of the Interior:

As the CEO of the Greater Starkville Development Partnership/Starkville Convention and Visitors Bureau (GSDP/SCVB), I would like to express our intent to assist the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance in the implementation of the Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA).

SCVB has been a dues-paying member of the Alliance since 2008, providing funding and staff support to the organization. Our staff members have served on the Alliance's Board of Directors and participated in numerous Management Plan events, and we have helped promote MHNHA through our website.

We have been afforded the opportunity to review the entire draft Management Plan and have also been provided with a copy of the Goals & Objectives for MHNHA. Having reviewed the Goals & Objectives closely, we are committed to assisting MHNHA in achieving those which fall under our organizational mission.

SCVB will continue to support and help guide the Alliance and promote MHNHA. We will of course continue to promote Starkville and its many heritage assets, as well, showcasing the resources that make our community a vital and contributing part of the Mississippi Hills NHA.

We will look for additional opportunities to partner with the Alliance on projects of mutual benefit, and aid the organization as it works to preserve, enhance and promote the diverse heritage assets within our community and our region. We will assist the Alliance as it works to expand its partnership base and involve other key groups within our community.

Starkville has many valuable heritage resources – including the John Grisham Room at Mississippi State University Library and the Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge – to protect and promote, and many intriguing stories to tell.

Starkville looks forward to continuing its partnership with the Alliance as it expands its critical work in service of our community and the entire MHNHA.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Gregory
Chief Executive Officer,
Greater Starkville Development Partnership/
Starkville Convention and Visitors Bureau



HOLLY SPRINGS TOURISM AND RECREATION BUREAU
148 East College Avenue, Holly Springs, MS 38635
Phone: 662-252-2515 Fax: 662-252-2696
www.visithollysprings.com

Date April 3, 2014

To: National Park Service/Department of the Interior,

As the Executive Director of the Holly Springs Tourism and Recreation Bureau (HSTRB), I would like to express our intent to assist the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance in the implementation of the Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA).

HSTRB has been a dues-paying member of the Alliance since 2008, providing funding and staff support to the organization. Our staff members have served on the Alliance's Board of Directors and participated in numerous Management Plan events, and we have helped promote MHNHA through our website.

We have been afforded the opportunity to review the entire draft Management Plan and have also been provided with a copy of the Goals & Objectives for MHNHA. Having reviewed the Goals & Objectives closely, we are committed to assisting MHNHA in achieving those which fall under our organizational mission.

HSTRB will continue to support and help guide the Alliance and promote MHNHA. We will of course continue to promote Holly Springs and its many heritage assets, as well, showcasing the resources that make our community a vital and contributing part of the Mississippi Hills NHA.

We will look for additional opportunities to partner with the Alliance on projects of mutual benefit, and aid the organization as it works to preserve, enhance and promote the diverse heritage assets within our community and our region. We will assist the Alliance as it works to expand its partnership base and involve other key groups within our community.

Holly Springs has many valuable heritage resources—including numerous antebellum homes, extant slave dwellings, an Audubon site, historic Rust College and more—to protect and promote, and many intriguing stories to tell.

Holly Springs looks forward to continue its partnership with the Alliance as it expands its critical work in service of our community and the entire MHNHA.

Sincerely,

LaKisha Mitchell-Buffington
Executive Director,
Holly Springs Tourism and Recreation Bureau



March 3, 2014

To: National Park Service/Department of the Interior,

As the Executive Director of New Albany Marketing & Tourism (NAMT), I would like to express our intent to assist the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance in the implementation of the Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA).

New Albany has been a dues-paying member of the Alliance since 2010, providing funding and support to the organization. New Albany civic leaders have served on the Alliance's Board of Directors and participated in numerous Management Plan events.

We have been afforded the opportunity to review the entire draft Management Plan and have also been provided with a copy of the Goals & Objectives for MHNHA. Having reviewed the Goals & Objectives closely, we are committed to assisting MHNHA in achieving those which fall under our organizational mission.

NAMT will continue to support and help guide the Alliance and promote MHNHA. We will of course continue to promote New Albany and its many heritage assets, as well, showcasing the resources that make our community a vital and contributing part of the Mississippi Hills NHA.

We will look for additional opportunities to partner with the Alliance on projects of mutual benefit, and aid the organization as it works to preserve, enhance and promote the diverse heritage assets within our community and our region. We will assist the Alliance as it works to expand its partnership base and involve other key groups within our community.

New Albany has many valuable heritage resources—including our historic downtown, the Union County Heritage Museum and Tanglefoot Trail—to protect and promote, and many intriguing stories to tell.

New Albany looks forward to continuing its partnership with the Alliance as it expands its critical work in service of our community and the entire MHNHA.

Sincerely,

S. Johnson

Sean Johnson
Executive Director,
New Albany Marketing & Tourism



April 9, 2014

To: National Park Service/Department of the Interior,

As the Executive Director of the Tupelo Convention and Visitors Bureau (TCVB), I would like to express our intent to assist the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance in the implementation of the Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA).

TCVB has been a dues-paying member of the Alliance since 2008, providing funding and staff support to the organization. Our staff members have served on the Alliance's Board of Directors and participated in numerous Management Plan events, and we have helped promote MHNHA through our website.

We have been afforded the opportunity to review the entire draft Management Plan and have also been provided with a copy of the Goals & Objectives for MHNHA. Having reviewed the Goals & Objectives closely, we are committed to assisting MHNHA in achieving those which fall under our organizational mission.

TCVB will continue to support and help guide the Alliance and promote MHNHA. We will of course continue to promote Tupelo and its many heritage assets, as well, showcasing the resources that make our community a vital and contributing part of the Mississippi Hills NHA.

We will look for additional opportunities to partner with the Alliance on projects of mutual benefit, and aid the organization as it works to preserve, enhance and promote the diverse heritage assets within our community and our region. We will assist the Alliance as it works to expand its partnership base and involve other key groups within our community.

Tupelo has many valuable heritage resources—including the Elvis Presley Birthplace and Museum and the Natchez Trace Parkway Headquarters and Visitors Center—to protect and promote, and many intriguing stories to tell.

Tupelo looks forward to continuing its partnership with the Alliance as it expands its critical work in service of our community and the entire MHNHA.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Neal McCoy", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Neal McCoy
Executive Director,
Tupelo Convention and Visitors Bureau

TUPELO CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

P.O. Drawer 47 ■ 399 E. Main St. ■ Tupelo, MS 38802

Phone 662-841-6521 ■ Toll Free 1-800-533-0611 ■ Fax 662-841-6558 ■ www.tupelo.net



April 3, 2014

Visitors Center 415 SOUTH LAMAR BOULEVARD
OXFORD, MISSISSIPPI 38655 | phone 800.758.9177

To: National Park Service/Department of the Interior,

As the Executive Director of Visit Oxford (formerly the Oxford Convention and Visitors Bureau), I would like to express our intent to assist the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance in the implementation of the Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA).

Visit Oxford has been a dues-paying member of the Alliance since 2008, providing funding and staff support to the organization. Our staff members have served on the Alliance's Board of Directors and participated in numerous Management Plan events, and we have helped promote MHNHA through our website.

We have been afforded the opportunity to review the entire draft Management Plan and have also been provided with a copy of the Goals & Objectives for MHNHA. Having reviewed the Goals & Objectives closely, we are committed to assisting MHNHA in achieving those which fall under our organizational mission.

Visit Oxford will continue to support and help guide the Alliance and promote MHNHA. We will of course continue to promote Oxford and its many heritage assets, as well, showcasing the resources that make our community a vital and contributing part of the Mississippi Hills NHA.

We will look for additional opportunities to partner with the Alliance on projects of mutual benefit, and aid the organization as it works to preserve, enhance and promote the diverse heritage assets within our community and our region. We will assist the Alliance as it works to expand its partnership base and involve other key groups within our community.

Oxford has many valuable heritage resources—including William Faulkner's *Rowan Oak*, the L.Q.C. Lamar Home, the University of Mississippi Lyceum building, the historic Lafayette County courthouse and town square, and many others—to protect and promote, and many intriguing stories to tell.

Visit Oxford looks forward to continuing its partnership with the Alliance as it expands its critical work in service of our community and the entire MHNHA.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Allyn Hedges".

Mary Allyn Hedges
Director,
Visit Oxford

**Tishomingo County Development Foundation
Tishomingo County Economic Development Authority
Tishomingo County Tourism Council**

An Economic Development Partnership of the Board of Supervisors, City of Belmont, City of Burnsville, City of Golden, City of Iuka, City of Paden, City of Tishomingo, Tishomingo County Electric Power Association, and the Private Sector
1001 Battleground Drive Iuka, Mississippi 38852 USA
Telephone: 662-423-8933 Toll free: 800-386-4373 Fax: 662-423-1017 e-mail: info@tishomingo.org Web Site: www.tishomingo.org

March 4, 2014

To: National Park Service/Department of the Interior,

As the Administrator of the Tishomingo County Tourism Council (TCTC), I would like to express our intent to assist the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance in the implementation of the Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA).

TCTC has been a dues-paying member of the Alliance since 2008. We have served on the Alliance's Board of Directors and participated in numerous Management Plan events, and also, helped promote MHNHA through our website.

We have been afforded the opportunity to review the entire draft Management Plan and have also been provided with a copy of the Goals & Objectives for MHNHA. Having reviewed the Goals & Objectives closely, we are committed to assisting MHNHA in achieving those which fall under our organizational mission.

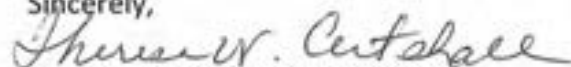
TCTC will continue to support and help guide the Alliance and promote MHNHA. We will continue to promote Tishomingo County and its many heritage assets, as well, showcasing the resources that make our county a vital and contributing part of the Mississippi Hills NHA.

We will look for additional opportunities to partner with the Alliance on projects of mutual benefit, and aid the organization as it works to preserve, enhance and promote the diverse heritage assets within our county and our region. We will assist the Alliance as it works to expand its partnership base and involve other key groups within our county.

Tishomingo County has many valuable heritage resources—including Tishomingo State Park, J.C. Coleman State Park, Woodall Mountain and the Iuka Battlefield—to protect and promote.

Tishomingo County looks forward to continuing its partnership with the Alliance as it expands its critical work in service of our county and the entire MHNHA.

Sincerely,



Theresa Cutshall, Administrator

Tishomingo County Tourism Council



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Natchez Trace Parkway
2680 Natchez Trace Parkway
Tupelo, Mississippi 38804



A22 (NATR)

May 15, 2014

Kent Bain, Project Coordinator
Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance
Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area
398 E. Main Street, Suite 115
Tupelo, MS 38804

Dear Mr. Bain:

On behalf of the Natchez Trace Parkway, we would like to express our support of the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance as they seek to obtain approval for, and begin implementation of, the Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area.

We have been given the opportunity to review the draft Management Plan and will assist the Alliance in achieving their goals and objectives that fall under our organizational mission and benefit both the local and regional communities.

We value the opportunity to contribute to this regional initiative and to support the Alliance as it seeks to preserve, enhance, interpret and promote the historic, cultural, natural, scenic, and recreational treasures of the Mississippi Hills.

Sincerely,

Mary Risser
Superintendent



250 Suite C Whaley Drive, Holly Springs, MS 38635 P.O. Box 516, Holly Springs, MS 38635 (Office) 662-278-9459

May 22, 2014

Mississippi Hills
398 East Main Street, Suite 132
Tupelo, MS 38804

To: National Park Service / Department of the Interior

We wish to express our support of the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance as they seek to obtain approval for, and begin implementation of the, Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area.

We have been given the opportunity to review the draft Management Plan and will assist the Alliance in achieving goals and objectives that fall under our organizational mission and benefit the local and/or regional community.

We value the opportunity to contribute to this regional initiative and to support the Alliance as it seeks to preserve, enhance interpret and promote the historic, cultural, natural, scenic, and recreational treasures of the Mississippi Hills.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alfred Moore".

Alfred Moore,
Director

AM/gc

★ 2014 ★
NORTH MISSISSIPPI
HILL COUNTRY PICNIC
JUNE 27 & 28

NMSHCP PO Box 392
Potts Camp, MS 38659
www.nmshillcountrypicnic.com

May 15, 2014

To: National Park Service/Dept. of the Interior

The North Mississippi Hill Country Picnic [501C(3)] wish to express our support of the Mississippi Hills Area Alliance as they seek to obtain approval for, and begin the implementation of, the Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area.

We have been given the opportunity to review the draft Management Plan and as a local annual cultural event in its 9th year will whole heartedly assist the Alliance in achieving goals and objectives that fall under our organizational mission and benefit the local and regional community.

We value the opportunity to contribute to this regional initiative and to support the Alliance as it seeks to preserve, enhance, interpret and promote the historic, cultural, natural, scenic and recreational treasures of the Mississippi Hills.

Thank you very much for your sincere consideration.

Respectfully,

Candise Kola
Chair, NMSHCP Board of Directors



Rust College Community Development Corporation

150 Rust Avenue, Holly Springs, MS 38635 • Phone (662) 252-4590 • Fax (662) 252-8884

May 20, 2014

Mississippi Hills
398 East Main Street, Suite 132
Tupelo, MS 38804


To: National Park Service / Department of the Interior

We wish to express our support of the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance as they seek to obtain approval for, and begin implementation of the, Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area.

We have been given the opportunity to review the draft Management Plan and will assist the Alliance in achieving goals and objectives that fall under our organizational mission and benefit the local and/or regional community.

We value the opportunity to contribute to this regional initiative and to support the Alliance as it seeks to preserve, enhance interpret and promote the historic, cultural, natural, scenic, and recreational treasures of the Mississippi Hills.

Sincerely,



Clencie L. Cotton,
Director

CLC/ge



Tishomingo County Archives & History Museum

Division of Tishomingo County Historical & Genealogical Society
203 East Quitman Street, P.O. Box 273, Iuka, Mississippi 38852

(662) 423-3500
www.tishomingohistory.com

May 14, 2014

National Park Service
Department of the Interior

Re: Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area Management Plan

I am writing to endorse the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area Alliance (MHNHA). Having founded the Tishomingo County Historical & Genealogical Society (TCHGS) in 1996, I am fully committed to Mississippi's history and heritage.

MHNHA, like TCHGS have sought to preserve Mississippi's past and create opportunities to learn from the past. TCHGS looks forward to working with MHNHA toward achieving our common goals for many years to come.

I have had an opportunity to review the draft management plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area on the National Park Service's PEPC website and am endorsing the full support of my organization in securing approval for the plan.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Cindy W. Nelson

Founding President, Tishomingo County Historical & Genealogical Society and its Tishomingo County Archives & History Museum



WINONA MAIN STREET • Montgomery County Chamber

POB 248701 Summit Street • Winona, MS 39067

PHONE: 662.283.4828 • FAX: 662.283.0886

mscdp@chickensoil.net • www.mscdps.org

May 13, 2014

To: National Park Service/Department of the Interior:

As a member of the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance, we support their efforts to seek to obtain approval for, and begin implementation of, the Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area.

We have been given the opportunity to review the draft Management Plan and will assist the Alliance in achieving goals and objectives that fall under our organizational mission and benefit the local and/or regional community.

We value the opportunity to contribute to this regional initiative and support the Alliance as it seeks to preserve, enhance, interpret, and promote the historic, cultural, natural, scenic, and recreational treasures of the Mississippi Hills.

Warm Regards,

Sue Stidham, Director