



CHAPTER FOUR: Management Options

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The study team has identified a range of *management options* describing different ways that the resources identified in the Blackstone River Valley could be protected and interpreted for the benefit of the public. Management Option 1 (the “status quo” alternative) is organized somewhat differently from Management Options 2 and 3 to better describe the present condition as well as the possible conditions after the Commission expires in October 2011.

Management Option 1. John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Continues to Operate Under Current Authorities

Concept

Under this management option, no new unit of the National Park System would be proposed. The John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor (“Corridor”) would continue to be recognized as a federally designated national heritage corridor. In compliance with Public Law 109-338, the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Reauthorization Act of 2006, the Corridor Commission (“Commission”) would continue to operate under its present authorities and receive operating funds from the National Park Service until October 2011. The Corridor is authorized to receive development funds through 2016. In the absence of the Commission, there would be no dedicated federal operational funding and no federal staff to operate the Corridor.

Commission staff would continue to provide planning support and technical assistance to state and local partners, and uniformed National Park Service rangers would continue to be available for visitor programming and public outreach as long as the Commission remains in operation. In the absence of the Commission, a cadre of volunteers and docents in combination with the staff of key institutions like the state parks, the Museum of Work and Culture, and Old Slater Mill would continue to offer the same visitor programs and exhibits they do now. Existing visitor facilities would be maintained and made available to the public by their respective owner/operators.

The Commission is currently in the process of developing a strategic plan to address the transition from a commission to a non-federal operating body. This process is

being undertaken independent of, but in coordination with, the Special Resource Study.

Visitor Experience

As with many heritage corridors, it is up to the visitors to craft their own experience, making use of the informational materials made available by the management entity and its partners. The Commission, as a federal body, has previously been staffed by the National Park Service, whose uniformed NPS interpretive ranger staff has been a constant presence in the Valley.

Many visitors begin their experience at one of the four existing facilities located throughout the Blackstone River Valley:

- The Blackstone Valley Visitor Center, Pawtucket, RI
- Kelly House, Blackstone River State Park, Lincoln, RI
- The Museum of Work and Culture, Woonsocket, RI
- River Bend Farm/ Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park, Uxbridge, MA

Each of these facilities is operated by a Corridor partner and provides exhibits focusing on a different facet of the Blackstone River Valley’s history. Each facility has rack cards and brochures highlighting other destinations in the Valley including a series of guides for walking tour prepared by Commission staff and its partners for many of the Blackstone River Valley’s industrial villages. The NPS interpretive rangers and volunteers offer guided walks, lectures, school programs, and provide staff support to key partners (e.g., Old Slater Mill).

The Commission staff also spearheads numerous regional events and initiatives that attract many participants and user groups. These include the Greenway Challenge (a hike, bike, and paddle event across the entire Blackstone River Valley), Footsteps in History (an initiative that coordinates the development and promotion of history-based programming), and continued development of the Blackstone River Bikeway. The Commission also worked with its own network of partners and with state and local agencies to develop a uniform, regional signage system that would make visitors aware of the Corridor and the resources associated with it.

After the expiration of the Commission, the presence of NPS interpretive rangers will end. Programs previously offered by the NPS rangers could be undertaken by the new management entity or by its many partners as staff-

ing permits. While the use of static media (e.g. exhibits, brochures, etc.) would continue and could be updated as needed; personal services (e.g. guided walks, lectures, etc.) would likely become less available to visitors.

Museums and visitor facilities would continue to operate within and collaborate with the Corridor, remaining available to the visiting public. The new management entity of the Corridor would continue to coordinate and promote regional programs and initiatives, working with state and local agencies and a network of partners to maintain the regional signage system throughout the Valley.

Management Entity

The activities and initiatives of the Corridor would continue to be provided by the bi-state, federally appointed 25-member Commission until its authorization expires in October 2011 as directed by P.L. 109-338. The Commission was established by Congress in 1986 to work with the states, the municipalities, and other partners in developing cultural, historical, and land resource management plans that would retain, enhance, and interpret the Corridor's resource values.

The Commission would also continue to develop, revise, and implement a Corridor-wide management plan in partnership with the two states, Corridor communities, and other members of the partner network; and to account for the use of federal funds appropriated to achieve Corridor goals. The Commission would continue to consult and coordinate with other federal agencies' project review and compliance procedures to assure that such projects are carried out, to the maximum extent feasible, in a manner consistent with congressional purposes of the Corridor. The Commission would also continue to provide planning support and financial and technical assistance to state and local partners.

Until October 2011, the National Park Service would continue to provide staff to the Commission to support a variety of functions including interpretive services, planning and project support, and technical assistance. The Commission would continue to make matching funds available to support selected projects throughout the Blackstone River Valley. P.L. 109-338 also authorizes development funds for the Corridor through 2016.

After October 2011, the Commission would cease operation, and the Corridor would be managed by a non-profit organization, the recently incorporated Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, Incorporated ("Black-

stone Corridor, Inc.>"). Similar to the existing Commission, the new management entity would be locally based and broadly representative of interests throughout the Valley and would play a similar role in the Corridor. The new management entity would be eligible for potential funding support under existing authorities of the National Park Service, but would largely be responsible for raising its own operating budget. In the absence of the Commission, National Park Service staff would no longer be available to the Corridor.

National Park Service/ Federal Role

Prior to the Commission's expiration in 2011, the National Park Service would continue to provide operational funding and staff support to support its current role and function in the Blackstone River Valley. Uniformed NPS rangers would continue to be available for visitor programming and public outreach.

Partnerships

Functionally, the Corridor is a regional partnership among the Commission and all levels of government, other organizations, and individuals who support and seek to advance the vision and goals of the Corridor. Each state has multiple agencies represented on the Commission, and the governors of each state are authorized to appoint Commission members from each of their states. State agencies have fiscal and management responsibilities for a number of initiatives that relate to and support the Corridor's vision and goals (e.g., development of the Blackstone River Bikeway and preservation planning for the Blackstone Canal). State agencies also provide funding and staff assistance for collaborative projects within the Corridor. In addition, the Corridor's cities and towns have some representation on the Commission and, like the state, they assume responsibility for many initiatives supportive of the Corridor's vision and goals (e.g., protecting historic resources).⁵⁵ While organizations and individuals do not have dedicated seats on the Commission, they too are central to the Corridor's network of partners. The Corridor's non-governmental partners are involved in numerous management and collaborative project activities (e.g., Old Slater Mill, the Museum of Work & Culture, and the Campaign for a Swimmable & Fishable Blackstone by 2015).

⁵⁵ Not all cities and towns within the Blackstone River Valley are represented on the Commission at any given time. The composition of the Commission changes as terms expire and new appointments are made.

Though this network of partners does not necessarily dissolve after the Commission expires in October 2011, the overall construct could change. Old Slater Mill, the state parks, the Museum of Work and Culture, and other organizations would continue to provide visitor and educational programs and support resource protection initiatives. The newly formed non-profit Blackstone Corridor, Inc. could continue to work with the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce, and others to promote heritage tourism and engage in joint fundraising. Additionally, Blackstone Corridor, Inc. could coordinate fundraising efforts, as well as regular programs and special events among existing organizations and institutions.

Resource Protection

Until October 2011, the Commission would continue to champion resource protection through its educational and interpretive programs; financial and technical support for resource protection initiatives undertaken by state and local agencies, as well as private organizations and institutions; and coordination of multi-party efforts to seek funding and support for resource protection efforts throughout the Blackstone River Valley. The Commission would continue to consult and coordinate with other federal agencies' project review and compliance to assure that such projects are carried out, to the maximum extent feasible, in a manner consistent with congressional purposes of the Corridor.

The new management entity, Blackstone Corridor, Inc., would continue to promote and advocate for resource protection and for the support of local organizations and institutions whose missions support the purposes of the Corridor. The management entity's role and function could extend to providing technical assistance and planning support if it can muster a sufficient level of professional staffing and funding.

Interpretive and Educational Programming

The Commission would continue to employ uniformed NPS park rangers to perform a variety of visitor service and educational functions until October 2011. These include developing and executing a comprehensive interpretive plan; developing of exhibits and other interpretive media; conducting walking tours; providing operational support to Corridor visitor centers; supporting special programs and events in the Blackstone Valley; and giving interpretive talks at numerous venues throughout the Valley.

Until October 2011, the Commission staff would provide continued support to develop and maintain visitor facilities at key locations throughout the Valley and would support the development of interpretive media and visitor programming at each site. A system of interpretive waysides and signage has also been developed and deployed throughout the Blackstone River Valley with the continued assistance of the Commission. Visitor centers operate at Pawtucket, Woonsocket, and River Bend Farm in Uxbridge.

After the Commission expires, NPS staff will no longer be available to the Corridor. The new management entity, Blackstone Corridor, Inc., would continue to work collaboratively with local agencies and institutions to coordinate the development and delivery of visitor services.

The Commission would continue to support updating and replacing interpretive signage, exhibits, and walking-tour brochures. After the Commission ceases operation in October 2011, this function would have to be undertaken by each community and its institutional partners, working in concert with the new management entity.

Recreational Opportunities

Until the Commission expires, its staff would continue to be actively engaged in long-term efforts to develop a Blackstone River Bikeway. They would continue to work with state agencies to develop and install interpretive signage along the trail.

After the Commission ceases operation in October 2011, the new management entity, Blackstone Corridor, Inc., could become an advocate for the continued development of the Blackstone River Bikeway and for the continued clean-up of the Blackstone River.

Finance

Until October 2011, the Commission would continue to receive operating funds from the National Park Service's operating budget and through the Heritage Partnership Program. Per its authorizing legislation, the federal contribution to the Commission could not exceed 50 percent of its annual operating costs.

The Commission was authorized to provide funds for the following purposes: preservation and restoration of properties on or eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places; design and development of interpretive exhibits to encourage public understanding of the resources of the Blackstone River Valley; and cultural or environmental educational programs related to environ-

mental awareness or historic preservation. Funds made available for these purposes are subject to a 50:50 matching requirement.

After the Commission ceases operation, some Corridor-related projects may be eligible for technical and financial assistance through existing competitive funding and grants offered by state and federal programs, including those programs within existing NPS authorities (e.g. RTCA). The new management entity would have to raise funds to support its operations and initiatives.

Legislative Requirements

In anticipation of the October 2011 expiration of the Commission, legislation amending the Corridor's enabling act would be required to authorize the new management entity.

Cost Estimates

Note: This reflects the Commission's budget through the end of Fiscal Year 2011.

Annual Costs

Operations (salaries and other operational costs)

\$ 923,000

Technical Assistance/ cooperative agreements

\$744,000

One-Time Costs

Research

\$0

Planning (Update Corridor Management Plan)

\$20,000

Construction

\$0

Management Option 2: Old Slater Mill National Historic Site

Concept

This management option proposes that the Old Slater Mill National Historic Landmark District be considered as a potential unit of the National Park System that would be jointly operated, preserved, and maintained by the Old Slater Mill Association (OSMA) and the National Park Service. The site would continue to be owned by OSMA, though the National Park Service would acquire a preservation easement on the property to ensure its preservation for future generations. The National Park Service would enter into a cooperative agreement with OSMA that would define the roles and responsibilities of each party in the operation and management of the site. The proposed boundary would coincide with the boundary of the National Historic Landmark District as depicted in Figure 2 in Chapter Two: Historical Overview and Resource Description.

In order to convey the full influence of Old Slater Mill on the early development of the American textile industry, NPS would be authorized to enter into cooperative agreements with private and public entities to engage in the interpretation of Old Slater Mill National Historic Landmark District and the Rhode Island System of manufacture as it existed in the Blackstone River Valley.

Visitor Experience

Repeat visitors to Old Slater Mill Historic Site and Museum would be unlikely to notice any substantial changes to the overall sense of place or the nature and quality of the programs offered to the public. However, some aspects of the experience may be reshaped in some tangible ways. Under this alternative, the present Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in Pawtucket could be expanded and retooled to serve as administrative, orientation, exhibit, and education space specifically serving the national historic site. Visitors could arrive at the Visitor Center, learn about Old Slater Mill and the industrial heritage of the Blackstone River Valley, purchase admission tickets, register for programs offered by NPS or its partners, and peruse the bookstore. They would also be offered a printed guide or downloadable program that would assist them in touring the many related industrial heritage locations that dot the Blackstone River Valley. Computer kiosks could be developed for the

visitor center that would enable visitors to customize a tour of the valley based on their interests and time constraints.

At the Visitor Center, visitors would be greeted by NPS staff and/or by docents from Old Slater Mill. After receiving an orientation, they would venture across Roosevelt Avenue to participate in regularly scheduled tours and demonstrations at the Old Slater Mill, Wilkinson Mill, and the Sylvanus Brown House. Tours may be offered by NPS and museum staff or volunteers. Community events and other outdoor activities that have traditionally taken place on the grounds would continue. Programs and activities currently offered by the museum, such as those associated with the current Fiber Arts program, would also continue.

A fundamental interpretive message for Old Slater Mill acknowledges it as the launch point for a well-defined pathway to American industrialization – the Rhode Island System of manufacture – that is evident throughout the Blackstone River Valley and beyond. Visitors would be encouraged to venture out into the Valley to learn more about this important American story.

National Park Service/ Federal Role

NPS Ownership

The Old Slater Mill Historic Site and Museum would continue to be owned by the OSMA. The National Park Service would also seek the conveyance of a protective easement on the buildings and property within the NHL district to ensure that it is preserved for the benefit of future generations of Americans. NPS would seek to acquire or lease the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center for redevelopment and use for visitor orientation, education, and administrative purposes.

Resource Protection

The National Park Service would have the authority to enter into cooperative agreements with OSMA to jointly operate, interpret, preserve, and maintain the Old Slater Mill, Wilkinson Mill, Sylvanus Brown House, and other character-defining features on the property and to assist in educational programs, research, and interpretation of the Old Slater Mill and related industrial heritage sites throughout the Blackstone River Valley.

NPS would work with OSMA to prepare a general management plan for the property and would provide assistance to Old Slater Mill in support of planning, resource protection, interpretive and educational programming, and operations.

Interpretation and Visitor Services

NPS could also work cooperatively with OSMA and the City of Pawtucket to update, expand, and staff the existing visitor center located directly across the street from the historic site through donation of the property to, or under a lease with, the National Park Service. Orientation exhibits could continue to include information about related sites throughout the Blackstone River Valley, but would also include more orientation material for Old Slater Mill. The visitor facility could be expanded inside the building to allow for the introduction of flexible program space that could accommodate school groups and other visitor needs as well as for additional administrative offices.

In order to convey the full influence of Old Slater Mill on the early development of the American textile industry, the National Park Service would be authorized to enter into cooperative agreements with the states of Massachusetts and Rhode Island and other relevant agencies and organizations to provide assistance related to the interpretation of the Old Slater Mill National Historic Landmark District and the Rhode Island System of Manufacture as it existed in the Blackstone River Valley. NPS would also provide assistance to agencies and organizations engaged in the protection and interpretation of the Blackstone River and its tributaries, Blackstone Canal, and the larger rural landscape as well as those working on the development of recreational trails that link industrial heritage resources.

Role of Partners/ Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, Inc.

Resource Protection

OSMA would continue to own and operate the museum and be the lead organization responsible for the long-term protection of its structures, landscape features, archeological resources, and collections. As a unit of the National Park System, the historic site would be required to comply with NPS policies and standards. Through its cooperative agreement with the National Park Service, OSMA would have access to the operational support and technical assistance in the provision of visitor services, development of interpretive media and exhibits, and preservation of the site's resources.

Interpretation and Visitor Services

The Corridor would continue to exist independent of this NPS unit. The park could work in partnership with the Corridor or any one or more organizations engaged in the

preservation/ interpretation of industrial heritage resources and their context. While the park's interpretive focus would be the region's industrial heritage, the Corridor would take the lead in interpreting other facets of the Blackstone River Valley's history and development.

Finance

If authorized, funding for this proposed new unit of the National Park Service would be available through the operating budget of the National Park Service. Federal assistance funds would require a match.

Legislative Requirements

Legislation authorizing the establishment of a new unit of the National Park System would be required.

Cost Estimates

Annual Costs

Operations (salaries and other operational costs)

\$1,100,000

One-Time Costs

Research (HRS, CLRs, HSRs, NRHP docs)

\$250,000

Planning (GMP/Preservation Plans)

\$450,000

Construction/Rehabilitation (Create/Outfit flexible program space and offices at Blackstone Valley Visitor Center; preservation assistance to OSMA)

\$2,000,000

Upgrade Exhibits at gateway visitor centers

\$250,000

Research could include the completion of a Historic Resource Study (HRS), Cultural Landscape Report (CLR), Historic Structures Report (HSR), and updated National Register documentation. Planning would include the development of a general management plan (GMP) and a preservation plan. Remaining one-time costs would address upgrading existing exhibits and creating flexible program and office space at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center.

Management Option 3. Blackstone River Valley Industrial Heritage National Historical Park

Concept

This management option envisions that a new unit of the National Park System would be created by an act of Congress. The new unit would include specific nationally significant sites and districts located within the Blackstone River Valley that possess high resource integrity and effectively convey the industrial heritage themes of the Valley. The park would engage in visitor programs and resource protection primarily for the sites and districts that would be named in potential legislation establishing the park including:

- Old Slater Mill National Historic Landmark District, Pawtucket, RI
- Slatersville Historic District, North Smithfield, RI
- Ashton Historic District, Cumberland, RI
- Whitinsville Historic District, Northbridge, MA
- Hopedale Village Historic District, Hopedale, MA
- Blackstone River and its tributaries
- Blackstone Canal

The non-contiguous historic districts named above and as depicted on maps found in Chapter Two: Historical Overview and Resource Description would form the boundary of the proposed park unit.

These areas of national significance and NPS interest are where potential acquisition could occur in full or partial-fee. Properties in which NPS acquires a partial interest (e.g., a preservation easement) could also be cooperatively managed if appropriate. The following properties are possible candidates for full or partial-fee acquisition by NPS:

- Old Slater Mill National Historic Landmark District, Pawtucket, RI
- Blackstone River State Park, Kelly House/ Old Ashton segment, Lincoln, RI (adjoins Ashton Village Historic District in Cumberland, RI)
- Centennial Memorial Park, Slatersville, North Smithfield, RI
- The Parklands, Hopedale, MA
- Castle Hill Farm, Whitinsville, Northbridge, MA

The NPS may also seek to acquire and develop other locations in the village historic districts for interpretive purposes (e.g., a residence could be acquired and developed

to interpret a mill worker's daily life). The NPS may also acquire properties along the Blackstone River and Canal that are historically significant or that provide for continuous linkage, supporting public access, and resource protection. A General Management Plan would be developed for the park that identifies priorities for acquisition (full fee or partial fee), and protection and public use of the resources. Any NPS acquisition would occur on a willing-seller basis, and properties currently in public ownership could be acquired only by donation.

In addition to land acquisition authority, within the park's authorized boundaries NPS would have the authority to enter into cooperative agreements to provide assistance for resource protection and interpretation. The park would also be authorized to provide interpretive assistance to thematically-related resources located throughout the Corridor.

The National Historical Park would be operated by the National Park Service in cooperation with a regional partner that could be specifically identified in the park's enabling legislation and with other local management partners, as appropriate. The NPS would be authorized to enter into a cooperative agreement with the regional partner to undertake activities that support the purposes of the park. The regional partner would assume a lead role in preserving, protecting, and interpreting related industrial heritage resources throughout the Corridor that fall outside of the park's boundary, as well as the region's larger rural and agricultural landscape. The regional partner is likely to be Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, Inc. ("Blackstone Corridor, Inc."), a newly formed 501(c)3 non-profit organization that will assume responsibility for the Corridor after the Commission expires in October 2011.

Visitor Experience

The visitor experience could begin at any one of the four pre-existing gateway facilities at key locations in the Blackstone River Valley:

- The Blackstone Valley Visitor Center, Pawtucket, RI
- Captain Wilbur Kelly House, Blackstone River State Park, Lincoln, RI
- The Museum of Work and Culture, Woonsocket, RI
- River Bend Farm/ Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park, Uxbridge, MA

A fifth gateway facility is planned and presently under development in Worcester, MA.

Each gateway facility would offer a uniform orientation exhibit introducing visitors to the park's sites and districts as well as the larger context of the Blackstone River Valley. Visitors would also be made aware of the Blackstone River Bikeway, river access along the Blackstone River and its tributaries, local trails, and other opportunities to view and experience the region's industrial heritage resources.

Visitors would be greeted by NPS or museum staff or volunteers and would be able to view an exhibit orienting them to the industrial heritage of the entire Blackstone Valley and introducing them to the major components of the park. They would also be able to obtain park brochures and other publications.

While visitors would be made aware of the historical sequence of events in the Blackstone River Valley's development and influence, they would be able to develop their own itinerary for their visit. For example, computer terminals could be available at each visitor facility, allowing visitors to plan their trip based on individual interests, time constraints, etc.

At the park's sites and districts, visitors could participate in guided or self-guided walking tours enhanced by interpretive waysides and/or an audio presentation and, at some locations, view indoor interpretive exhibits highlighting some facet of the Blackstone Valley's industrial heritage. Uniformed park rangers and volunteers would be present and would offer regularly scheduled park programs. The development of interpretive media such as directional signage, interpretive waysides, published guides and brochures, and audio tours would be supported by NPS and could be undertaken in partnership with others.

National Park Service/ Federal Role

NPS Ownership

NPS ownership would be limited to those structures or sites within the boundary of the park that are appropriate and necessary for preservation, rehabilitation, and interpretation as they relate to the purposes of the park. For instance, NPS might consider the direct acquisition of a residential property to develop an interpretive exhibit on mill housing. NPS may also acquire properties along the Blackstone River and Canal that are historically significant or that provide for continuous linkage, supporting public access and resource protection.

NPS would also seek the conveyance of preservation easements on key historic properties and open spaces with-

in the park boundary, such as the Old Slater Mill National Historic Landmark District, on a willing-seller basis or by donation.

Other acquisition could be undertaken in full or partial fee and would likewise be on a willing seller basis. The development of NPS facilities in the Corridor could also be accomplished through long-term lease or cooperative agreements with existing owners and managers. These facilities could include the gateway visitor facilities and administrative office space for park headquarters in Woonsocket, Rhode Island.

Resource Protection

Because much of the property within the boundary of the park would remain in private hands, the park and its regional partner would work in partnership with the local community and property owners to ensure the long-term protection of these resources. At a minimum, NPS would provide assistance to support the creation of local historic districts that would be overseen by the local historical commissions. The park, its regional partner, and the affected communities would work together to develop a preservation plan for each site or district within the park boundary. Eligibility for further assistance would require consistency and compliance with the approved General Management Plan and the relevant preservation plan. NPS would have the authority to enter into cooperative agreements with state and local governments and agencies as well as private interests for resource protection and interpretation.

The potential National Historical Park and its regional partner would collaborate in the development of a General Management Plan (GMP) for the park that would also result in a strategic plan guiding the related work of the regional partner. The park would work collaboratively with its regional partner to support and enhance existing visitor facilities and certain recreational amenities that have been developed over time as gateways to and pathways through the Blackstone Valley. The park and its regional partner would also take steps to encourage the long-term protection of related resources that are outside of the park's boundary or authorities, such as the Blackstone Valley's larger rural landscape, the Blackstone River and Canal, and the many remnant industrial heritage resources located throughout the area. The GMP would identify priorities for land acquisition and would provide long-term policy guidance for park operations and development.

Interpretation & Visitor Services

The NPS would play a substantial role in the development and delivery of interpretive and educational programs, including an NPS ranger presence in the park's sites and districts. NPS would work with local private and public partners to enhance interpretive media and visitor facilities.

Under this management option, the park would take advantage of the existing visitor facilities and amenities throughout the Blackstone Valley. The visitor facilities at Pawtucket, Woonsocket, and Lincoln, Rhode Island, and at Uxbridge in Massachusetts would all function as orientation centers. A uniform exhibit orienting visitors to the Blackstone Valley's overall context and the park's sites and districts would be developed and installed at each venue. NPS staff and volunteers may provide limited visitor services support at these locations.

At sites or in districts where little visitor infrastructure exists, the park would work collaboratively with the local community to introduce signage, interpretive exhibits, brochures, and other visitor amenities to ensure a positive and interesting visitor experience. The National Park Service may directly acquire one or more appropriate properties to be developed for interpretive, visitor services, and/or administrative purposes.

The park and its regional partner would work with state and local agencies to support the development of the Blackstone River Bikeway and other alternative transportation opportunities that link the park's sites and districts and ties them into the greater Blackstone Valley. The park would work with state and local agencies to encourage the use of interpretive media (e.g., signage; podcasts, etc.) on recreational routes through the Corridor. The park would also support continuing local efforts to improve water quality in the Blackstone River and Canal and to encourage their recreational use.

Role of the Regional Partner and the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Area

The National Park Service would enter into a cooperative agreement with the regional partner to enable their collaboration to advance the purposes of the park.

Resource Protection

The regional partner would assume a leadership role along with the National Park Service in working with local

communities and other key partners to develop the General Management Plan for the park and preservation plans for the park's sites and districts. One of the principal roles of the regional partner in this context would be to serve as a convener and a bridge to enhance communication among the park, community residents, local and state agencies, and other key stakeholders.

The regional partner would take the lead in pursuing the long-term protection of the Blackstone River Valley's larger rural landscape, the Blackstone River and Canal, and remnant industrial heritage resources and would work collaboratively with NPS to complete the inventories and evaluations necessary to identify priorities for protecting the valley's larger rural landscape and remnant industrial heritage resources. The regional partner would also provide assistance to related industrial heritage resources in the Blackstone Valley. NPS would work with its regional partner to create a strategic plan identifying priorities, strategies, and actions necessary to protect these resources.

NPS and its regional partner would support continuing local efforts to improve the water quality in the Blackstone River and Canal and work with state and local agencies to ensure that the historic industrial infrastructure located in and along the river (e.g., locks, gates, and dams) and their historic values are considered in any proposals for change and development along the river corridor.

In its capacity as the management entity for the Corridor, the regional partner would continue to advocate for the identification, protection, and interpretation of resources that represent the many other facets of the Blackstone River Valley's heritage (e.g., Native American culture and history, early settlement, transportation, etc.).

Interpretation & Visitor Services

The regional partner would take a leadership role in offering visitor programming in other areas of the Blackstone Valley possessing resources that support park themes or are otherwise relevant to the park's purposes (e.g., collaboration on special events, guided walking tours, development of visitor guides, etc.). Working within state curriculum guidelines and in collaboration with local school districts, the regional partner and NPS would build on existing efforts to conduct educational outreach and provide programming to local schools.

The regional partner, in its capacity as the management entity for the Corridor, would also continue to work with

a wide range of interests in the Blackstone River Valley to interpret its rich and complex history.

Finance

Funding for this potential new unit of the National Park System would be requested and authorized through the operating budget of the National Park Service. The regional partner identified in the proposed park's authorizing legislation would also be eligible to receive assistance for its work in support of the purposes of the park.

Legislative Requirements

Legislation authorizing a new unit of the National Park System and designating a regional partner as a formal park partner would be required.

Cost Estimates

Annual Costs

Operations (salaries and other operational costs)

\$3,500,000

One-Time Costs

Research (HRS, CLRs, HSRs, NRHP docs)

\$815,000

Planning (GMP/Preservation Plans)

\$1,100,000

Construction/Rehabilitation (Rehab/Reuse structures at 4 locations)

\$4,000,000

Exhibits (Develop/Install uniform orientation exhibits at 4 existing VCs)

\$200,000

Research could include the completion of a Historic Resource Study (HRS), Cultural Landscape Reports (CLR) for each site or district, Historic Structures Reports (HSR) for buildings anticipated to be rehabilitated for interpretive use within the historic districts, and updated National Register documentation. Planning would include the development of a General Management Plan (GMP) and a series of preservation plans that would address the specific preservation requirements of each site or district. Remaining one-time costs address developing and installing uniform orientation exhibits at four existing visitor centers and creating rehabilitating structures at up to four locations for interpretive purposes.

Other Recommendations

During the course of the study process, the study team made other observations that did not directly apply to this particular assessment of the Blackstone River Valley, but that do merit further consideration. These recommendations could have broader implications for the Blackstone River Valley and beyond.

Industrial History Theme Study

The National Park Service should consider updating the 1966 Industrial History Theme Study to reflect contemporary interpretations of the nation's industrial development and consider the varying pathways to industrialization as articulated by Walter Licht of the University of Pennsylvania and others. In recent years, NPS has undertaken many studies considering the possible inclusion of industrial heritage resources in the National Park System. With each of these efforts, the study team has been confronted with the same set of questions relative to evaluating national significance. An updated Industrial History Theme Study would provide the necessary context for consistent evaluation of these resources.

Native Americans in Southern New England Study

The Blackstone River Valley was a cross road for commerce and communication among a number of Southern New England tribes, many of which are federally recognized. These Native American communities continue to be part of the historical, social, political, and economic fabric in the region. Their influence is evident in the pattern of Native American and colonial settlement, regional conflict (King Philip's War), agriculture, regional road systems, etc. While it is assumed by many that Native Americans simply disappeared from the region centuries ago, Indian tribes relate that they were part of the social and economic fabric of the region after King Phillip's War, and were important participants in the economy that grew up in the Valley. NPS should consider undertaking a collaborative research project to document this history and the ongoing legacy of the tribes in the Blackstone Corridor and surrounding areas of Southern New England.

Alternatives Considered but Dismissed

Designating the Blackstone River Valley as a whole as a unit of the NPS

The study team considered but dismissed the possibility of designating the Blackstone River Valley as a whole as a unit of the NPS, due to feasibility considerations related to administration and resource protection in a large geographic area, where there would be limited public ownership and a substantial and complex overlay of jurisdictions.

Reauthorization of the Corridor Commission and making it a permanent federal body

The study team considered but dismissed the possibility of designating the Commission as a permanent federal body, because Public Law 109-338, the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Reauthorization Act, was clear in extending the Commission's authority only until October 2011. Any extension of the Commission's authority beyond that date would need to be congressionally initiated.

Creating a National Park unit with multiple units and having an advisory/operating commission similar to that at Keewenaw National Historical Park

The study team considered but dismissed the possibility of creating a park with an advisory/operating commission, due to concerns about the clarity of roles and responsibilities and additional layers of bureaucracy that such a management structure seemed to imply.

Creating a Bi-State National Historic Reserve, as an affiliated area of the National Park System

The study team considered but dismissed the possibility of creating a bi-state national historic reserve as an affiliated area of the National Park System, because existing fiscal conditions, combined with concerns about a lack of a proposed federal body to provide cohesion between the states, made such a proposal unworkable.

Blackstone River Valley Industrial Heritage Network

The study team considered but dismissed the possibility of establishing a permanent program that would recognize

industrial heritage resources throughout the Valley and provide assistance for their long-term protection and interpretation. This alternative was presented to the public in a June 2010 newsletter and at subsequent public meetings in July. The resulting feedback indicated that there was little to no support for this alternative and that it was a source of great confusion within the context of the Corridor. It was difficult to distinguish between the roles of the network and the Corridor.

Blackstone River Valley Pathway to Industry National Historical Park

The study team considered but dismissed the possibility of establishing a unit of the National Park System that would encompass Old Slater Mill, Slatersville, and Ashton (all in Rhode Island). This alternative was presented to the public in a June 2010 newsletter and at subsequent public meetings in July. Comments received at this time highlighted the limited scope of this alternative and its failure to address the later period of development in the Blackstone River Valley's industrial history.

Environmentally Preferred Alternative

The NPS is required to identify the environmentally preferred alternative in its NEPA documents for public review and comment. The NPS, in accordance with the Department of the Interior policies contained in the Departmental Manual (516 DM 4.10) and the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) NEPA's Forty Most Asked Questions, defines the environmentally preferred alternative (or alternatives) as the alternative that best promotes the national environmental policy expressed in NEPA (Section 101(b) (516 DM 4.10). In their Forty Most Asked Questions, CEQ further clarifies the identification of the environmentally preferred alternative, stating "Ordinarily, this means the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment; it also means the alternative which best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural, and natural resources" (Q6a).

Management Option 3: Blackstone River Valley Industrial Heritage National Historical Park would be considered the Environmentally Preferred Alternative for the following reasons:

- This management option best supports the project goals articulated in Part One of the study. These goals call for a regional approach to protecting

and interpreting industrial heritage resources, thus addressing the protection of the natural, cultural, recreational, and scenic values that provide its context and the connections among non-contiguous resources.

- Through the proposed relationship with a regional partner that would be tasked with working beyond the park boundary, this management option offers the greatest opportunity for NPS to support **both** interpretive and protection efforts throughout the Blackstone Valley; and could bring about a greater level of resource protection; and could foster a greater level of public understanding and appreciation of these resources than either Management Options 1 or 2.

Most Efficient and Effective Alternative

In addition to being considered the Environmentally Preferred Alternative, Management Option 3: Blackstone River Valley Industrial Heritage National Historical Park, is also considered to be the "Most Efficient and Effective Alternative." The partnership approach described under this management option would increase the potential for preservation, restoration, and rehabilitation of industrial heritage resources throughout the Blackstone River Valley. In addition to enhancing the climate for resource protection, this management option also maximizes opportunities for a more complete understanding of the significance of the Samuel Slater and the Rhode Island System of manufacture and its role in the industrial development of the United States.

The partnership nature of this management option would foster greater opportunities to work with state and local governments, non-profits, and academic institutions to engage in collaborative research. It would also provide for further leveraging of federal financial contributions for resource protection and interpretation with matching state, local, and private financing.

Under this management option, visitors would continue to be provided an integrated resource-based experience in which individual sites would provide coordinated and integrated interpretive programming. This integrated approach is the best way to convey the story of the emergence of the American textile industry as it evolved in the Blackstone River Valley and influenced the course of American industrial history.