



CHAPTER SIX: Consultation and Coordination

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Introduction

This chapter describes the required consultation procedures and public meetings and comments related to the preparation of the Blackstone River Valley Special Resource Study.

Notice of Intent

A notice of intent to conduct a Special Resource Study/ Environmental Impact Statement was published in the Federal Register on October 6, 2008.

Public Involvement

A public information brochure outlining the study process was posted to the project website, the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor (Corridor)'s website, and was made available in brochure racks at the Corridor's visitor centers in 2007. The general public was first made aware of the study process at the Scholars Panel Discussion in February 2008, when a brief introduction to the study process was presented during the opening remarks. The public information brochure was re-issued with an updated schedule in 2009. Also in 2009 a Project Update highlighting the significance findings was created and distributed in a similar manner.

In spring 2008, Ranger Chuck Arning of the Commission produced a 16-minute video presentation entitled "*What's Special about the Valley?*" that described the valley's resources, the scholars' site visit, and the special resource study process. The video was aired at the Commission's Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony in May 2008 and at numerous other meetings since that time. A 30-minute version of the video is being produced and is expected to air on local cable stations in Rhode Island and central Massachusetts in spring 2010.

A newsletter describing the full range of management options was distributed in June 2010, followed by a series of four public meetings held at various locations throughout the Blackstone River Valley in July 2010. Fourteen hundred copies were distributed via the project mailing list, and a pdf version was made available for download on the project website.

Following the release of the newsletter, a series of public meetings was held on July 7 and 8, 2010. On July 7, meetings were held at Cumberland and Slatersville in Rhode Island; on July 8, the meetings were held at Whitinsville

and Hopedale in Massachusetts. The meetings were publicized in local media as well as through the Corridor's electronic newsletter. Nearly 100 people participated in the meetings. The meetings were also videotaped and edited for broadcast on local cable access stations throughout the Blackstone River Valley. In addition to comments offered by meeting participants, the study team received nearly 40 sets of written comments.

The evening meetings were taped and their content made available on local cable access stations throughout the Blackstone River Valley from July 23 through July 30.

Based on feedback received at the public meetings, and via comment cards, electronic mail, and formal correspondence, a number of key points emerged. They are summarized below:

- There was overwhelming support for the designation of a national park unit in the Blackstone Valley. Roughly two-thirds of respondents indicated their support for a new park unit, a majority of whom expressed particular support for Management Option 3.
- About two-thirds of respondents supported a broader regional/ geographic and thematic scope that considers the many layers of historical and ecological values and embraces the whole Corridor.
- Many respondents expressed their desire to see the river and the canal included within the boundary of the proposed park. The bikeway and the recreational values of the river and canal were also elements for which respondents wanted to see NPS support.
- Several respondents expressed concern that the northern portion of the Valley was not adequately represented in any park proposal.
- There was also substantial and continuing support for a regional, community-based management structure that worked collaboratively in partnership with NPS.
- A number of respondents expressed their support for the Commission and "keeping things the way they are" and felt that keeping the Commission should be among the alternatives considered.

Consultation

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, and National Park Service Management Policies 2006, require formal consultation with State Historic Preservation Offices when special resource studies are conducted. Section 7 of the Endangered Species

Act requires all federal agencies to consult with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure that any action authorized, funded or carried out by a federal agency does not jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or critical habitat.

Consultation was conducted through the direct involvement of the State Historic Preservation Officers of Massachusetts and Rhode Island or their respective staffs in the evaluation of resources and development of alternatives. Per the direction of the New England Field Office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Section 7 consultation was undertaken by correspondence with the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management. NPS received a written response from the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species program indicating that there were no federally-listed threatened and endangered species in the Massachusetts portion of the study area. However, numerous state-listed species have been observed in the same area.

Tribal consultations have been or are in the process of being undertaken with Native American tribes associated with the Blackstone River Valley. Letters informing the associated Native American tribes of the Special Resource Study process were sent out in April 2009. The associated Native American tribes include the federally-listed Narragansett, Aquinnah Wampanoag, and Mashpee Wampanoag, and the Nipmuc Nation and the Nipmuc Indian Council. The Narragansett tribe based in Rhode Island was briefed on the study process at a meeting held in October 2009. The tribal representative for the Narragansett expressed particular interest in ceremonial landscapes that may occur in the Blackstone River Valley as well as a study being undertaken on a King Philips War site in North Smithfield. They are interested in working more with the NPS and the National Heritage Corridor to explore Native American history and culture in the valley. In June 2010, representatives of the Aquinnah Wampanoag tribe were briefed. Many of the same ideas were discussed, but a greater emphasis was placed on the continuing presence and involvement of the Native American community in the social, political, and economic history of the valley. The tribal representatives noted that it was important to acknowledge that the Native American community did not disappear after King Philip's (Metacomet's) War. A formal consultation meeting with the Nipmuc is anticipated in spring 2011.

List of Preparers

Core Team

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Massachusetts Historical Commission

Keith Stokes,
Acting Executive Director, RI Economic
Development Corporation

Richard Sullivan,
Secretary, MA Executive Office of Energy
and Environmental Affairs

List of Recipients

Cities and Towns in Massachusetts

Town of Blackstone
Town of Douglas
Town of Grafton
Town of Hopedale
Town of Leicester
Town of Mendon
Town of Millbury
Town of Millville
Town of Northbridge
Town of Sutton
Town of Upton
Town of Uxbridge
City of Worcester

Cities and Towns in Rhode Island

Town of Burrillville
City of Central Falls
Town of Cumberland
City of East Providence

Town of Glocester
 Town of Lincoln
 Town of North Smithfield
 City of Pawtucket
 City of Providence
 Town of Smithfield
 City of Woonsocket

Business & Tourism Interests

Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce
 Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
 Greater Worcester Chamber of Commerce
 Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce
 Worcester County Convention and Visitors Bureau

Government Agencies

Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission
 MA Department of Conservation & Recreation
 MA Department of Environmental Protection
 MA Department of Fish and Game
 MA Highway Department
 Massachusetts Historical Commission (SHPO)
 RI Department of Environmental Management
 RI Department of Transportation
 RI Historical Preservation
 & Heritage Commission (SHPO)
 RI Economic Development Corporation
 RI Economic Policy Council
 RI Statewide Planning
 US Fish & Wildlife Service

Preservation/Conservation Interests

Audubon Society of Rhode Island
 Blackstone Headwaters Coalition
 Blackstone River & Canal Commission
 Blackstone River Bikeway Association
 Blackstone River Coalition
 Blackstone River Conservation Alliance
 Blackstone River Watershed Association
 Blackstone River Watershed Council/
 Friends of the Blackstone
 Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce
 Corridor Keepers
 Council for Northeast Historical Archeology
 Grafton Land Trust
 Greater Worcester Land Trust
 Lake Singletary Watershed Association

Massachusetts Audubon Society
 Metacomet Land Trust
 National Trust for Historic Preservation
 Northern Rhode Island Trout Unlimited
 Preservation Massachusetts
 Preservation Worcester
 Preserve Rhode Island
 Providence Preservation Society
 Rhode Island Conservation Law Foundation
 Rhode Island Historical Society
 Save the Bay
 Society for American Archeology
 Society for Historical Archeology
 Society for Industrial Archeology
 Trust for Public Land
 Vernacular Architecture Forum
 Worcester Canal Task Force

Historic Sites & Museums

Chestnut Street Meeting House
 and Cemetery Association
 Daniels Farmstead Foundation
 Douglas Historical Society
 Friends of Hearthside
 Museum of Work and Culture
 Slater Mill Historic Site
 Waters Farm
 Worcester Historical Museum

Academic Institutions

Boston University (Department of Archeology)
 Brown University
 College of the Holy Cross
 Clark University
 Rhode Island College
 Roger Williams University
 UMASS-Amherst (Dept. of Anthropology)
 UMASS-Boston (Dept. of Anthropology)
 Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Tribal Interests

Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe
 Narragansett Indian Tribe
 Nipmuc Indian Council of Chaubunagungamaug
 Nipmuc Nation
 Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head/Aquinnah