



2011 Strategic Plan

New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route

PDF, Part 1 of 2

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2011 Strategic Plan New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route





2011 Strategic Plan

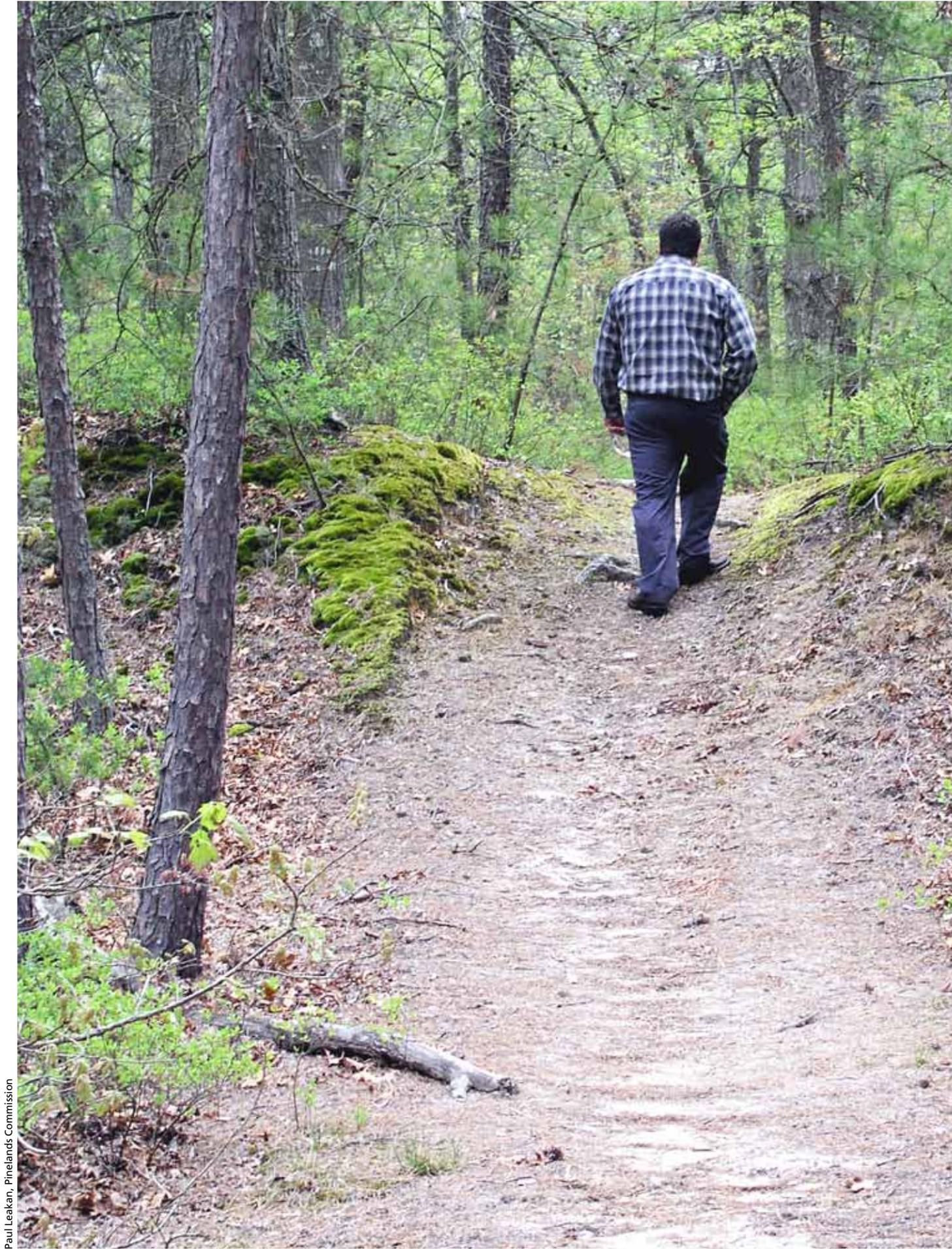
New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route

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After September 30, 2011, communication should be directed to:

New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route
c/o Division of Interpretation and Education
National Park Service, Northeast Region
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

***Opposite: East Point Lighthouse,
Cumberland County, New Jersey.***



Paul Leakan, Pinelands Commission

Contents

Executive Summary 5

Introduction 11

Vision and Mission 13

History and Current Status of the Trail 15

Trail Accomplishments 23

Issues 35

Organizational Options Summary 41

Public Engagement Process 51

Acknowledgments 59

Appendices

Appendix A: Legislation, 1988-2008 61

Appendix B: Trail Implementation Guide 69

Appendix C: Staffing History and Administrative Review Recommendations, 2003 149

Appendix D: Funding History, Construction and Operations 151

Appendix E: Budget Analysis–Implementation Plan vs. Actual Appropriations 153

Appendix F: List of Trail Partner Destinations 155

Appendix G: Public Engagement Process:

Meeting Agenda and Organizations/Agencies Represented 159

Appendix H: Resolutions, Written Comments, and Correspondence 163

Appendix I: Meeting Announcements and Media Coverage 189

Opposite: Batona Trail, Pinelands National Reserve.

Right: Harold N. Peek Preserve, Cumberland County, New Jersey.





Executive Summary

Background

Enabling Legislation and Original Intent and Mission

The New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route (hereafter Trail) was established by federal legislation under Public Law 100-515 (Appendix A) in 1988 to promote awareness, stewardship, and protection of natural and cultural resources along nearly 300 miles of New Jersey coastline using interpretation and promotion rather than federal ownership. The legislation authorized the Secretary of the Interior to designate a vehicular tour route linking important natural and cultural sites, to provide technical assistance in the development of interpretive materials and conservation methods, to prepare and distribute informational material for public appreciation of sites along the route, and to erect signs to guide the public.

The National Park Service (NPS) has had the lead responsibility from the beginning with assistance from three state of New Jersey agencies [Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Parks and Forestry (that includes the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office); Division of Travel and Tourism; and the Pinelands Commission (significant portions of the Pinelands National Reserve overlap with the Trail)].

Project Area

The enabling legislation defined the Trail's project areas as generally to the east of the Garden State Parkway, from Sandy Hook to Cape May and south of State Route 49 along the Delaware Bay. The project area (see Figure 1) was expanded later to include a portion of the coast along the Raritan Bay from Sandy Hook westward to the City of Perth Amboy. The Trail includes portions of eight counties (Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean, Burlington, Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland, and Salem) and six Congressional districts (2, 3, 4, 6, 12, and 13). The project area is divided into five regions.

Implementation Plan

The *Implementation Guide, New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route* (Appendix B) was completed in early 1993. Five interrelated interpretive themes—Maritime History, Coastal

Habitats, Wildlife Migration, Relaxation & Inspiration, and Historic Settlements—are used to explore the heritage of the New Jersey coast. The Trail has been organized as a public driving trail that links non-contiguous destinations under the five themes.

The *Guide* called for an initial five-year implementation period with the NPS and state of New Jersey cooperatively managing the Trail, followed by a diminished role by the NPS and an expanded role by the state of New Jersey.

Legislative History

Congress made various changes to the Trail's legislation and funding over the years. Current legislation calls for a strategic plan and a sunset date. According to the legislation, the strategic plan should describe both "opportunities to increase participation by national and local private and public interests in the planning, development, and administration of the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route;" and "organizational options for sustaining the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route." Six public meetings and additional briefings have been held about the future of the Trail, and a set of four organizational options has been developed.

As of July 2011, the Trail has a sunset date of September 30, 2011, beyond which the NPS will no longer have authority to manage or participate in the Trail.

Status of Trail Implementation

The Trail has five interpretive themes (Maritime History, Coastal Habitats, Wildlife Migration, Relaxation & Inspiration, and Historic Settlements). The first three of these themes are in operation. Planning is incomplete for the remaining two themes. There are nearly sixty locations or facilities associated with the Trail as "Sites," "Points of Interest," "Welcome Centers," and "Local Information Centers." Two of the proposed five welcome centers have been fully developed.

Staffing and Funding

Trail Staff: During the initial years of Trail implementation, the staff consisted of 5-6 NPS

Figure 1. The map opposite shows the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route's project area (green).



Managing partner logos: (1) New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Parks and Forestry; (2) New Jersey Division of Travel & Tourism; and (3) New Jersey Pinelands Commission.

full-time equivalents (FTE). Current staffing consists of 2.5 FTE. Due to a deteriorating financial situation, the New Jersey Division of Parks and Forestry has only been able to provide one and occasionally two part-time seasonal positions most years to supplement NPS staff.

Trail Funding: Overall actual NPS construction and operational support between FY 1993 and FY 2011 has been closer to \$4.5 million compared to planning projections of \$10.9 million. This explains, in part, why the initial implementation has yet to be completed.

Partnerships

The Trail works through partnerships with federal, state, and local government agencies; nonprofit organizations; and corporate interests. All destinations are owned and managed by partners; the Trail neither owns nor manages any land or resources directly. The Trail demonstrates the potential of public/private partnerships that allow the National Park Service to meet its core mission of natural and cultural resource preservation along with interpretation and public education in a cost-efficient manner through technical assistance while reducing operational responsibilities.

Trail Accomplishments

The Trail has provided partner destinations with various forms of technical assistance in collaborative efforts to protect and promote significant natural and cultural resources in the Trail's project area.

Wayside Exhibit Program

With over 1,000 wayside exhibits provided to partners, the Trail manages the largest such program in the entire National Park System. The NPS has generally provided the majority of new interpretive wayside exhibit panels and frames at no cost to the partner. In return, the partner destination agreed to display Trail orientation waysides and to install and maintain wayside exhibits.

Welcome Center Partnerships

Two of the proposed five welcome centers (one for each Trail region) have been fully developed: one at Fort Mott State Park in Salem County and one at the Ocean View Service Area on the Garden State Parkway in Cape

May County. An interim welcome center is located at the Sandy Hook Unit of Gateway National Recreation Area. Except for Sandy Hook, Trail welcome centers are owned and staffed by non-NPS partners with all operating costs covered by the partner agencies. The Trail has provided exhibit design and installation while partners rehabilitated the exhibit facilities.

Promotional Brochures

An NPS full-color unigrid brochure provides a general introduction to the Trail with a map of the overall project area and the location of welcome centers. In addition, the Trail has developed a series of regional brochures with detailed information on individual destinations.

Website Presence

The Trail has its own NPS webpage at www.nps.gov/neje. This website includes all of the information found in the Trail's general and regional brochures and includes links to partner destinations.

Research/Resource Publications

Three reports were researched and published that consolidated important historical information related to the Trail's five themes for the benefit of the public and to provide the basis for Trail interpretation.

Highway Directional Trailblazer Program

In cooperation with the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT), an approved Trail logo was developed for use on highway trailblazers. The Trail has always provided the trailblazers, some highway sign posts, and the accompanying panels identifying the type of destination. NJDOT installed the initial trailblazers in the early-to-mid 1990s on state highway locations, and the counties installed signs on county and local roads.

Interpretive Training and Other Assistance

The NPS Trail staff has provided training to destination staff on interpretive principles and wayside exhibit development. The New Jersey Division of Parks and Forestry adopted statewide the NPS model for developing management and interpretive plans. The Trail has assisted through a variety of other state and federal programs such as: Pinelands Interpretive Program, National Historic Landmarks Program, New Jersey Scenic Byways Program,

Wild & Scenic Rivers Program, Park Flight Program, and National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program.

Issues

The Trail has proven popular with partners and the public. However, as a large and complex project, a number of issues have influenced Trail management and implementation over the years.

Financial Support, Projected Versus Actual

Projected operational support was initially close to \$5.8 million; actual between FY 1993 and FY 2011 was approximately \$3.7 million. Projected construction appropriations to complete initial Trail implementation were estimated at \$5.1 million; actual federal line item construction expenditures were \$0.8 million.

Staffing Limitations

Due to budget shortfalls, both NPS and state staffing have been less than projected through most of the Trail's history.

Changes to Legislative Authority

Unlike permanent units of the NPS, the Trail is an affiliated area without permanent NPS management authority. The sunset clauses in the Trail's legislation have affected Trail implementation. Twice, sunset provisions have gone into effect and brought NPS management of the Trail to a standstill for 3.5 out of the last seven years.

Highway Signs

The system of highway signs guiding travelers to Trail destinations has never been fully satisfactory, due to budget shortfalls, the complexity of partners and sites, and design/installation challenges.

Size of Project Area

The size of the Trail's project area has been another management challenge. It can take as long as three hours to get from one portion of the Trail to another. This, as well as the breadth of themes and resources, limits regular interaction among Trail management and destination managers.

Organizational Options to Sustain the Trail

This plan presents basic management options as requested in P.L. 109-338.

Option 1: No further NPS management of the Trail after sunset date of September 30, 2011.

The Trail's current federal legislation includes a sunset date that precludes direct NPS management of the Trail after September 30, 2011. In the absence of renewed authorization, Trail partners and supporters could consider establishing a nonprofit organization or state or local government management of the Trail. Locally-managed scenic byways now cover portions of the Trail and could be used as a model for creating new byways that would assume a role similar to that of the Trail.

Visitors studying a wayside exhibit at the Glades Wildlife Refuge, Cumberland County, New Jersey, a remote location with limited electronic accessibility.



NPS

Option 1 is the only option that would not require new legislative action by Congress.

The NPS retains authority under its Pinelands National Reserve legislation to provide interpretive and technical assistance to resource destinations within the Pinelands National Reserve. This would include those significant portions of the Trail's project area that are within the Reserve.

Option 2: Limited time NPS management to transition to a new management framework.

This alternative would allow the NPS to continue temporarily its leadership role in Trail management and operations to assist with the transition to a new management structure that would not include long-term NPS management of the Trail. There was significant public support for this option. It would require action by the U.S. Congress to reauthorize the NPS role in managing the Trail for a limited time frame. However, it is unlikely that Congress would have time to take the necessary legislative action before September 30, 2011. It is very likely that a lapse in NPS authority to manage the Trail will occur.

Option 3: A new federal role for or within the Trail project area.

This option would involve establishment of possible new and different federal authorities for all or a portion of the Trail project area. Such new authorities would generally require a prior study, public support, and Congressional review and authorization.

The most likely prospect would be the establishment of a new National Heritage Area. This would involve a study to determine eligibility of resources within all of or a portion of the Trail project area. Congress could authorize a new study—or a private study could be undertaken—to determine if National Heritage Area designation would be appropriate. An effort to seek National Heritage Area designation is already under way for the portion of the Trail along the Delaware Bay.

A variation on the idea of new federal authorities would be to add new NPS authorities to an existing NPS project area or unit. The Pinelands National Reserve has areas of significant overlap with the Trail. Congress could, for example, give additional authorities to the

Pinelands National Reserve to enable the NPS to provide technical and/or operational assistance to portions or all of the Trail's project area outside the boundary of the Pinelands National Reserve.

Option 4: Permanent authorization for the Trail.

As with Options 2 and 3, this option of permanent authorization for the Trail would require Congressional action. Such action would give the Trail an additional level of security and continuity by eliminating the periodic sunset and authorization issues. There was public support for this option. Again, it is unlikely that Congress would have time to take the necessary legislative action to reauthorize the NPS Trail authority before September 30, 2011. It is very likely that a lapse in NPS Trail authority will occur.

In the meantime, the NPS will continue to facilitate discussions about future management options up until the September 2011 sunset date. In the absence of new authorization, the NPS will be implementing contingency plans to close the Trail's New Jersey field office by September 30, 2011, reassign staff, and distribute materials associated with the Trail. There remain, however, other NPS conservation and preservation assistance programs to which local communities and agencies in the Trail area can apply.

Public and Partner Input on the Future of the Trail

During the strategic planning process, eight meetings were held to obtain input from Trail partners and the public. Responses were very positive regarding the benefits of the Trail to partners and the public, and the excellence of Trail products. People said that the Trail facilitated partnerships, bringing agencies and organizations with shared missions together and enabling them to share resources. Participants said the Trail has promoted tourism and economic development. The "cachet" of the NPS "brand" was mentioned often. Participants valued the presence of the NPS and its contribution to increasing the region's visibility on a national level. Partner sites appreciated the funding and technical assistance, which sometimes leveraged additional state funding at certain sites.

People said the Trail mission was still valid and important. Meeting participants observed that while the conservation aspect is difficult to measure, the Trail educates and creates awareness, and that the tourism draw of the Trail does help support conservation. People pointed out that no other entity is doing anything like the Trail, and that there is much more that can be achieved.

The use of new technologies came up repeatedly in each of the public meetings. Many recommended using podcasts, cell phone links and smart-phone applications for Trail interpretation to attract younger audiences and to save on the cost of printed materials and exhibits. There were also many good suggestions for special events to draw more people to the Trail.

People emphasized repeatedly the importance of continued NPS involvement with the Trail. There was a strong preference for continued, if not permanent, NPS management of the Trail. Most agreed that in the current economic climate, no state agency or single non-profit organization will be able to take on the role that the NPS has played, and for this reason, Trail partners need the NPS presence more than ever. Partners had suggestions for assisting with or gradually transitioning to a new management structure. These included forming an advisory or steering committee; organizing the counties and/or various non-profit partners into a task force or consortium; or perhaps forming a new organization headed by a major existing non-profit partner. In any of these cases, however, people thought that continued NPS assistance, even if temporary, was essential for guiding a transition and maintaining the Trail in the meantime.

New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail volunteers help participants sign in as they arrive at the March 1, 2011, afternoon public strategic planning meeting in Monmouth County, New Jersey.

***Below:* Representatives from the public and partner destinations discuss the future of the Trail in Toms River, New Jersey, on March 24, 2011.**



NPS



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Introduction

The New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route (hereafter Trail) was established by federal legislation in 1988 to promote awareness, stewardship, and protection of natural and cultural resources along nearly 300 miles of New Jersey coastline using interpretation and promotion rather than federal ownership.

The National Park Service (NPS) has had the lead responsibility from the beginning, with assistance from three state of New Jersey agencies: Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Parks and Forestry (that includes the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office); Division of Travel and Tourism; and the Pinelands Commission.

Following an *Implementation Guide* developed in 1993 (Appendix B), the NPS organized the Trail as a public driving trail that links non-contiguous destinations under five interrelated interpretive themes: Maritime History, Coastal Habitats, Wildlife Migration, Relaxation & Inspiration, and Historic Settlements. The Trail has provided voluntary partner destinations with various forms of technical assistance in collaborative efforts to interpret, protect, and promote significant natural and cultural resources in the project area.

The U.S. Congress made various changes to the Trail's legislation and funding over the years. Current legislation (enacted 2006 and modified 2008; see Appendix A) calls for a strategic plan and a sunset date of September 30, 2011, which would end NPS involvement in the Trail. According to the legislation, the strategic plan should describe both "opportunities to increase participation by national and local private and public interests in the planning, development, and administration of the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route;" and "organizational options for sustaining the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route." In the absence of any further action from Congress, after September 30, 2011, the NPS will no longer have authority to manage or participate in the Trail.

During 2010 and 2011, an NPS planning team conducted a public engagement process. The purpose was to get a sense of the Trail's success and value from the point of view of Trail

partners and the public, and to discuss various alternative management futures for the Trail.

The following strategic plan documents the history and accomplishments of the Trail; explains the key management issues that have influenced the Trail during NPS leadership; presents four organizational options for sustaining the Trail; and describes public and partner views on the Trail's mission, accomplishments, and possible future organizational structure.

As of summer 2011, it appears that the "sunset" provision in the Trail's current legislation will take effect on September 30, 2011, and the NPS will cease to manage or be involved in the Trail. While the NPS was charged, through federal legislation, with developing a strategic plan for the Trail, at this writing it is unknown who will manage the Trail or carry out the plan. It will be up to whatever group, organization, agency, or partnership takes on some or all of the Trail's management, to revisit the Trail mission and determine what is most desirable and feasible with the available resources.



Vision

[From *Implementation Guide*, 1993]
“With the blossoming of spring, New Jerseyans’ thoughts turn to the Jersey Shore. This stretch of Atlantic coastline is a study in contrasts—a mixture of crowded beaches and secluded coves, colorful boardwalks and remote wildlife refuges, teeming casinos and quaint historic villages. Each year these attractions draw city dwellers not only from New Jersey but also from New York City, Philadelphia, and beyond for seasonal rest, recreation, and inspiration.

Nearby there is a second Jersey Shore—an undiscovered and relatively untouched area along the Delaware Bay. This is a quiet land that invites visitors to appreciate the flight of an osprey, the richness of the coastal marshes and wetlands, and the spirit of hard work and adventure behind the fishermen’s boats and homes that are an integral part of the setting. Experiences here are very different from those along the coast. Pristine rivers and streams empty into the bay, wildlife abounds, and small towns, farms and fishing villages provide evidence of living and working with nature.

The resources of both Jersey Shores will soon be interpreted as part of the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail. The trail concept will provide the context for discovery, and the resources within these two distinct areas will offer visitors the opportunity to choose from experiences as varied as the landscape.”

When Congress first authorized the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail in 1988, its vision was of enhanced public understanding and enjoyment of sites and resources associated with the coastal area of New Jersey. The Trail was conceived and developed as a cooperative effort in which local, state, and federal agencies and numerous private entities would work together to recognize and promote the natural and cultural heritage of the New Jersey coastal region. Inherent in the vision was the concept that greater public awareness and appreciation would lead to improved stewardship and protection of that heritage. It was also envisioned that promoting New Jersey’s coastal heritage and making sites more accessible year-round would bring more visitors from both near and far, thus contributing to local and state economic development.

Mission

The mission of the Trail is to enhance public awareness, appreciation, understanding, and conservation of the natural and cultural heritage of coastal New Jersey by assisting with developing educational materials and conservation methods for the sites along the route.



Laurie Pettigrew, New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife

History and Current Status of the Trail

Enabling Legislation and Original Intent/Mission

The New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route (hereafter Trail) was established by federal legislation (P.L. 100-515, October 20, 1988; see Appendix A) to promote awareness, stewardship, and protection of natural and cultural resources along nearly 300 miles of New Jersey coastline.

The legislation authorized the Secretary of the Interior to designate a vehicular tour route in coastal New Jersey and to prepare an inventory of sites along the route. An interpretive program was also mandated to provide for public appreciation, education, understanding, and enjoyment of important fish and wildlife habitats, geologic and geographical landforms, cultural resources, and migration routes in coastal New Jersey. The Secretary was authorized to provide technical assistance in the development of interpretive materials and conservation methods, to prepare and distribute informational material for sites along the route, and to erect signs displaying the Trail logo to guide the public.

The Trail links national wildlife refuges, national parklands, National Historic Landmarks, and National Register sites with important historic communities, state parks, natural areas, and other resources to tell the story of New Jersey's role in shaping U.S. history and in providing internationally important habitats for bird and other migrations. The Trail is one of the first efforts by the National Park Service to use interpretation alone rather than federal ownership to protect important resources.

Unlike the situation for National Heritage Areas, the Trail's enabling legislation did not specify a managing entity such as a formal commission or nonprofit organization. The NPS has had the lead responsibility from the beginning with assistance from three state of New Jersey agencies [Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Parks and Forestry (that includes the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office); Division of Travel and Tourism; and the Pinelands Commission (because significant portions of the Pinelands National Reserve overlap with the Trail)].

The Trail is prohibited from funding major building construction, and the act specifies that no funds were to be used for the "operation, maintenance, or repair of any road or related structure." (P.L. 100-515).

Project Area

The enabling legislation (P.L. 100-515, October 20, 1988) defined the Trail's project areas as follows:

The route shall follow public roads, which are generally located to the east of the Garden State Parkway, linking the New Jersey portion of Gateway National Recreation Area, known generally as the Sandy Hook Unit, with the national historic landmark in Cape May and that area north and west of Cape May in the vicinity of Deepwater, New Jersey. The Secretary may, in the manner set forth in section 1, designate additional segments of the route from time to time as appropriate to link the foregoing sites with other natural and cultural sites when such sites are designated and protected by Federal, State, or local governments, or other public or private entities.

The project area (see Figure 1) was expanded later to include a portion of the coast along the Raritan Bay from Sandy Hook westward to the City of Perth Amboy. The Garden State Parkway and State Route 49 along the Bayshore region serve as the main access corridors for the Trail. The project area has also been defined to include the area one mile west of the Parkway and one mile north of Route 49. The Trail includes portions of eight counties (Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean, Burlington, Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland, and Salem) and six Congressional districts (2, 3, 4, 6, 12, and 13).



NPS



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Top: Twin Lights State Historic Site, Monmouth County, New Jersey.

Bottom: The Nature Conservancy's Cape May Migratory Bird Refuge, Cape May County, New Jersey.

Implementation Plan

Following passage of the 1988 enabling legislation, the National Park Service began a multi-year planning process on how best to implement the federal legislation. A Trail planning office was established and a planning team designated through the Denver Service Center. The resulting *Implementation Guide, New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route* (Appendix B) was completed in early 1993.

The plan specifies five interrelated interpretive themes to explore the coastal heritage of the New Jersey coast: Maritime History, Coastal Habitats, Wildlife Migration, Relaxation & Inspiration, and Historic Settlements. Each theme illustrates the interaction of natural and cultural influences and the coastal environment. The Trail has been organized as a public driving trail that links non-contiguous destinations under one or more of the five themes. The Trail's official name is frequently confusing to visitors, as it is neither a pedestrian hiking trail nor does it follow a specific route.

Because of its length, the project area has been divided into five regions (Figure 1). North to south, the regions are: Sandy Hook, Barnegat Bay, Absecon, and Cape May that explore the Raritan Bay and Atlantic Coast portions of the Trail; and the Delsea Region that covers the portion of the Trail project area along the Delaware Bay and River.

Trail destinations and facilities are classified as "Sites," "Points of Interest," "Welcome Centers," and "Local Information Centers." Sites are defined as full service destinations, usually with staff, exhibits, restroom facilities, and a minimum number of regular hours that the facility is open to the public. Points of interest are generally unstaffed destinations with fewer or no visitor services.

The 1993 *Implementation Guide* calls for the establishment of five welcome centers, one for each region. Each welcome center is designed to have orientation materials (videos, brochures, and exhibits) about the Trail overall as well as expanded exhibits that explore in more detail one of the five Trail themes.

Except for the interim welcome center at Sandy Hook, Trail welcome centers are owned

and staffed by non-NPS partners with all operating costs covered by the partner agencies. The Trail's role has been to provide the exhibit designs and fabrication, and promotional literature. The five regional welcome centers are supplemented by local information centers that may not themselves be Trail resource destinations but can be sources of information and literature about Trail destinations and activities. Examples include county tourism offices, museums, ferry terminals, etc.

Participation in the Trail is voluntary with interested site owners/managers submitting an application to the state of New Jersey for review and determination of the applicant's level of significance. The application is then passed to the National Park Service for further review, selection, and official designation, if appropriate. Selection is based on evaluation against approved criteria for location, significance, ability to assist in interpreting one or more of the Trail's themes, public access, resource protection, and management.

Trail information includes a general Trail-wide brochure in the form of a traditional NPS park "unigrid" brochure explaining the project area and overall theme concept, and regional brochures with expanded theme information and descriptions of all Trail destinations within each region. Each destination is also evaluated for the need/appropriateness of interpretive wayside exhibits or other interpretive media to be developed in partnership with destination managers and staff.

The *Implementation Guide* also called for highway directional signs/trailblazers to guide visitors to resource destinations, welcome centers, and local information centers. Signs guide visitors from major local intersections to each destination. Highway signs consist of two components—a Trail logo trailblazer (approved by NJDOT) and a secondary panel identifying the type of destination ("Site," "Point of Interest," "Welcome Center," etc.). It was decided early on that it would be too costly to identify individual destination names on the highway signs.

Sign location and installation responsibility are determined in consultation with the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) and the appropriate county road department.



NPS

Cape May Region Welcome Center in Ocean View, New Jersey, on the Garden State Parkway.

The Trail has provided the highway sign trailblazers, secondary panels, and some sign posts. Installation costs were initially absorbed by NJDOT and the individual county road departments, although this became an issue with NJDOT as the state’s fiscal situation deteriorated.

The *Implementation Guide* called for an initial five-year implementation period with the NPS and state of New Jersey cooperatively managing the Trail. At the end of the implementation period, there was to be an assessment of the Trail and the state’s ability to manage it. According to the approved 1993 *Guide*:

The Park Service will provide long-term stability for the trail by anchoring it in the north at the Sandy Hook unit of Gateway National Recreation Area; special trail-related exhibits will eventually be located there. In addition, a special resource study of the Delaware Bay that is currently being conducted by the Park Service may recommend long-term NPS involvement in southern New Jersey, providing another trail anchor site. A trail headquarters may eventually be located at one of the two anchor sites. The

NPS presence in the north and potentially in the south will provide a federal base for the trail.

Following initial implementation, the *Guide* called for a diminished role by the NPS and an expanded role by the state of New Jersey. Unfortunately, almost from the beginning and long before the current economic crisis, the state has not had the financial resources to provide the level of support anticipated. Budgets and staffing for all three lead agencies have been diminishing year after year. The Pinelands Commission, for example, has had its budget cut by 25% and its staff reduced by 31% in the past five years.

As noted below in the Legislative History section, Congress also made changes to the Trail’s legislation, including the addition of a sunset clause that imposed a deadline for NPS involvement in managing the Trail.

Legislative History

The initial 1988 Trail legislation (P.L. 100-515) described above did not include a sunset date.

The change caused by the loss of authorization was not obvious to the public because the Trail essentially remained “open.”

The May 4, 1994, legislation (P.L. 103-243) modified the original legislation as follows:

1. Increased the authorized appropriations ceiling to \$1 million.
2. Specified that funds were to be used solely for technical assistance and the design and fabrication of interpretive materials, devices, and signs and prohibited the use of funds for operation, maintenance, repair, or construction except for construction of interpretive exhibits.
3. Limited the federal share of project funds to 50 percent and allowed the non-federal share to be in the form of cash, materials, or in-kind services.
4. Extended the authorities provided by the act for five years to May 4, 1999.

The next legislation was passed on April 8, 1999 as P.L. 106-18. It made two changes to the legislation:

1. Increased the authorized appropriations ceiling from \$1 million to \$4 million.
2. Extended the authorization of the Trail for an additional five years to May 4, 2004.

New Trail legislation was not passed by Congress in time to meet the May 2004 sunset date. The next legislation was not passed until October 12, 2006. During this interim period of two-and-a-half years while the Trail had lost its authorization, the Trail staff and funding were transferred to focus attention on the Pinelands National Reserve and implementation of components of the 1994 *Pinelands Interpretation Plan*.

The change caused by the loss of authorization was not obvious to the public because the Trail essentially remained “open.” Wayside exhibits stayed in place at partner destinations, highway signs continued to direct visitors, and Trail brochures remained available. The Trail’s field office remained open with the focus of work switched to Pinelands issues. (In fact, current staff position descriptions remain assigned to the Pinelands rather than to the Trail). With no authorization to continue work on the Trail, there was no progress on completing initial implementation of the Trail, including development of the remaining Trail themes or remaining welcome center facilities.

The October 12, 2006, reauthorization of the Trail occurred as part of the National Heritage Areas Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-338) and made the following changes to the Trail legislation:

1. Removed the \$4 million authorization ceiling and replaced it with authorization of “...such sums as are necessary to carry out this Act.”
2. Extended the authorization of the Trail for less than one year to September 30, 2007.
3. Called for the development of a strategic plan for the future of the Trail “Not later than 3 years after the date on which funds are made available...”

According to the 2006 legislation, the strategic plan should describe both “opportunities to increase participation by national and local private and public interests in the planning, development, and administration of the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route”; and “or-

The Nature Conservancy’s Cape May Migratory Bird Refuge, Cape May County, New Jersey.



NPS

ganizational options for sustaining the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route.”

This 2006 reauthorization of the Trail presented three problems that made it impossible for the NPS to comply with the strategic plan requirement:

1. It was recognized that the extension of the Trail’s authorization for less than one year to September 2007 did not allow sufficient time for strategic plan development.
2. The use of appropriations was limited by the Trail’s legislation to providing technical assistance and funds for the design and fabrication of interpretive materials, devices, and signs. It was determined that the authority did not include using funds for the strategic plan.
3. The Trail’s legislation also required that all federal funds be matched one-to-one by non-federal funds.

On July 12, 2007, Janet Snyder Matthews, then NPS Associate Director for Cultural Resources, testified before the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands, Committee on Natural Resources regarding proposed legislation (H.R. 1815) to reauthorize the Trail once again. The NPS acknowledged that additional time was needed to complete the strategic plan and supported amendment of the draft legislation “. . .to authorize the Secretary to use federal funding to complete the strategic plan since the current authorization does not allow for funds to be used for this purpose.”

Following another lapse in authorization between October 1, 2007, and May 8, 2008, the Trail was reauthorized (P.L. 110-229) most recently in May 2008 as Section 475 of the Consolidated Natural Resources Act of 2008. The legislation made the following changes:

1. It reauthorized the Trail through September 30, 2011.
2. It authorized the use of federal funds for the preparation of the strategic plan.
3. It exempted the strategic plan from the requirement for matching non-federal funds.

This report meets the strategic plan requirement.

Status of Trail Implementation

Three of the Trail’s five interpretive themes are in operation with destinations selected and interpretive assistance provided for the Maritime History, Coastal Habitats, and Wildlife Migration themes. Planning is incomplete for the remaining two themes (Relaxation & Inspiration and Historic Settlements). There are nearly sixty locations or facilities associated with the Trail as “Sites,” “Points of Interest,” “Welcome Centers,” and “Local Information Centers.”

Two of the proposed five welcome centers (one for each Trail region) have been fully developed. Welcome centers are located at Fort Mott State Park in Salem County (exhibits focusing on the Maritime History theme) and at the Ocean View Service Area on the Garden State Parkway in Cape May County (exhibits

Examples of publications produced by the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route.



The NJCHTR connects individual sites' stories with sites that would not otherwise interact with each other. "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts."

associated with the Relaxation & Inspiration theme). The Sandy Hook Unit of Gateway National Recreation Area hosts an interim welcome center for the Sandy Hook Region. Expanded exhibits (Coastal Habitats theme) are pending development of a new visitor center/administrative facility. Welcome center locations have not been designated for the Barnegat Bay Region or Absecon Region.

The Trail has provided technical assistance to destinations through brochures (such as the new 2010 color *Guide to Delsea and Cape May Regions*), historic resource publications (3 completed; one nearly done), outdoor wayside exhibits, regional welcome center exhibits, interpretive training, etc. The Trail manages the largest outdoor wayside exhibit program of any park in the entire NPS system with over 1,000 exhibits located at its 60+ destinations. The NPS website at www.nps.gov/neje includes and promotes destinations, and highway directional trailblazer signs guide visitors to destinations. The Trail has supplied the majority of the wayside exhibits and highway signs, with the individual destinations responsible for installation and maintenance. More detail on each of these Trail activities is included in the Trail Accomplishments chapter.

Staffing and Funding

Trail Staff

During the initial years of Trail implementation, the staff consisted of 5-6 NPS full-time equivalents (FTE). The Trail lost two positions in 2002 and a third in 2004, leaving just two full-time positions. Since 2008, staffing has consisted of 2.5 FTE (Project Director, Program Assistant, and half-time NPS seasonal). The New Jersey Division of Parks and Forestry has, in spite of its own fiscal difficulties, provided one and occasionally two part-time seasonal positions most years to supplement NPS staff as part of the required matching non-federal support. A more detailed discussion of Trail staffing and its implications can be found in the Issues chapter.

Trail Funding

Funding for the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route began in FY 1990 with initial planning and construction line item support (See "Funding History, Construction and Operations", Appendix D). Overall actual NPS con-

struction and operational support between FY 1993 and FY 2011 has been closer to \$4.3 million compared to planning projections of \$10.9 million (see "Budget Analysis—Implementation Plan vs. Actual Expenditures," Appendix E). NPS annual line item ONPS operational appropriations and construction funding for the Trail have also been supplemented over the years with other internal NPS project funds (i.e. Challenge Cost Share Program and Park Flight Migratory Bird Program) and external grants (e.g. National Park Foundation, National Recreational Trails Program, state of New Jersey transportation enhancement grants, Partnership for the Delaware Estuary, Delaware River & Bay Authority, Sandy Hook Foundation, and others). The Issues chapter of the report has a more detailed examination of Trail funding and the effects of sunset dates and the temporary losses of authorization.

Partnerships

The Trail works through partnerships primarily with federal, state, and local government agencies and nonprofit organizations. Only two businesses are destination owners because of the specialized circumstances associated with the Belford Seafood Cooperative and the Public Service Enterprise Group's (PSEG) Estuary Enhancement Program.

All destinations are owned and managed by partners; the Trail neither owns nor manages any land or resources directly. The Trail demonstrates the potential of public/private partnerships that allow the National Park Service to meet its core mission of natural and cultural resource preservation along with interpretation and public education in a cost-efficient manner through technical assistance while reducing operational responsibilities. No Federal funds are used for operations, maintenance, or repair of any road or related structure.

The Trail's legislation allows technical assistance with welcome center exhibits, outdoor wayside exhibits, highway signs, brochures, etc., but prohibits funding of major capital construction projects such as visitor centers. In these situations, partners have rehabilitated facilities to serve as Trail welcome centers (see Trail Accomplishments chapter), and the NPS role has been to design and install exhibits for these spaces.



Game Fish of Island Beach

Sporting Pursuits
Relaxation & Inspiration

Fishing for Striped Bass in the Surf on the New Jersey Coast (1882) by Arthur Burdett Frost.



Reproduction courtesy of Bentley Publishing Group.

Striped Bass

(Morone saxatilis)

Striped bass are the most sought after fish along the ten-mile beach at Island Beach State Park. The best “striper” fishing occurs in late April, May, June, and again in October and November when the bass are migrating. Trophy striped bass can grow to over 50 pounds.



Bluefish

(Pomatomus saltatrix)

There is nothing more exciting to surf anglers than a bluefish “blitz.” Large schools of marauding bluefish chase bait, churning the surf into a froth. Nearly every cast lands a fish! Bluefish prefer warmer water in the mid-60’s to 70’s and usually arrive at Island Beach in late April and stay through June. They also show up in the surf again in October and November as the water temperature begins to fall.



Weakfish

(Cynoscion regalis)

Weakfish, named for their weak, almost paper-thin mouths, are primarily an excellent bay and river fish. Their occasional presence in the surf, however, makes them a sporty game fish. Commonly called “sea trout,” weakfish arrive in New Jersey in late April and May and spread out into the local rivers and bays. The best weakfish action is during the summer and early fall.



Summer Flounder

(Paralichthys dentatus)

Summer flounder, commonly referred to as “fluke,” are a bottom-dwelling, flat fish. They are relatively sedentary fish that lie waiting for their prey to come within striking distance. The best time to catch summer flounder in the surf is in late summer or early fall when they begin to migrate offshore.



Thank you to Paul ‘Pete’ McLain and the Rutgers University Marine Field Station for the research and review of this text.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



State of New Jersey
Department of
Environmental Protection



State of New Jersey
Division of Parks & Forestry



The New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route (NJCHTR) is developing as a partnership among the National Park Service, the State of New Jersey, and many organizations working to preserve the state's natural

and cultural heritage. Look for NJCHTR signs during your travels and discover how New Jersey's inhabitants—plant, animal, and human—have evolved from their unique coastal resources.

A Guiding Light

Aids to Navigation
Maritime History

The East Point Lighthouse guards the eastern shore of the Maurice River Cove. This lone sentinel once provided hundreds of Delaware Bay oyster schooners with a guiding light to the ports at Port Norris and Port Elizabeth.

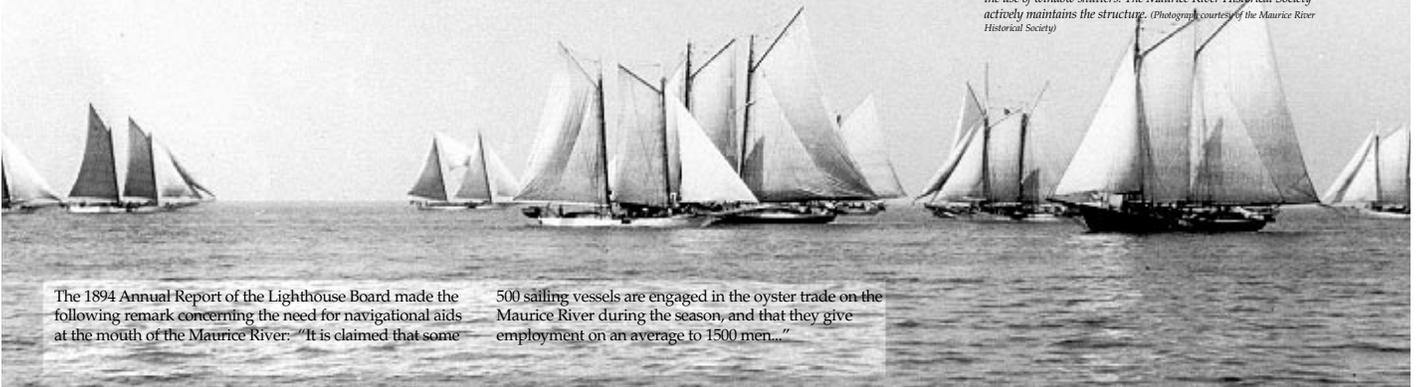
Constructed in 1849, it is the second oldest lighthouse still standing in New Jersey—only the Sandy Hook lighthouse on the North Jersey shore is older.

After nearly a century of service for commercial oyster fishing operations, East Point was deactivated in 1941. Local pressure convinced the Coast Guard to reactivate it in 1980, making it the only functioning “onshore” lighthouse on the Delaware Bay.

The “Cape Cod” design used at East Point also influenced eight of the first nine lighthouses built on America’s west coast in the late 1800s.



East Point Lighthouse as it appeared in 1913. Note the developed porch areas at the entry door and in front of the kitchen, as well as the use of window shutters. The Maurice River Historical Society actively maintains the structure. (Photograph courtesy of the Maurice River Historical Society)



The 1894 Annual Report of the Lighthouse Board made the following remark concerning the need for navigational aids at the mouth of the Maurice River: “It is claimed that some

500 sailing vessels are engaged in the oyster trade on the Maurice River during the season, and that they give employment on an average to 1500 men...”



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



State of New Jersey
Division of Parks & Forestry



The New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route (NJCHTR) is developing as a partnership between the National Park Service, the State of New Jersey, and many organizations working to preserve

the state's natural and cultural heritage. Look for other NJCHTR signs during your travels and discover how New Jersey's inhabitants—plant, animal, and human—have evolved from their unique coastal resources.

Trail Accomplishments

It has been twenty-three years since the Trail was initially authorized in 1988 and eighteen years since the Trail's first theme trail (Maritime History) and first welcome center at Fort Mott State Park were opened to the public in 1993. This chapter outlines a range of Trail accomplishments in providing partner destinations with various forms of technical assistance in collaborative efforts to protect and promote significant natural and cultural resources along the 300 miles of New Jersey coastline included in the Trail's project area.

Wayside Exhibit Program

In its use of interpretation as a means to promote awareness, stewardship, and ultimately protection of natural and cultural resources, the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route has relied heavily on the use of outdoor interpretive and orientation exhibits (known as wayside exhibits) located at partner destinations. This form of interpretive technical assistance has been used for a variety of reasons:

- The majority of Trail destinations have limited or no interpretive staff available to provide one-on-one guided interpretive experiences for visitors.
- More remote sites, such as along the New Jersey shore of the Delaware Bay have limited or sporadic cell phone service that would limit the use of wireless forms of social media communication.
- The Trail has never had funding to provide NPS Park Ranger interpretive staff for the purpose of providing one-on-one guided experiences to visitors.
- Outdoor wayside exhibits provide information to visitors twenty-four hours per day. As budgets and interpretive staff have been reduced at many destinations, partners have cited the increasingly important role that these outdoor wayside exhibits play in educating visitors about resource issues.
- Wayside exhibits can provide a high quality and consistent resource message to visitors.
- Wayside exhibits can explain not only what people may be seeing in front of them at the moment, but also what visitors might expect to see at other times of the day, in other seasons, etc.

- Wayside exhibits are cost effective, with a life expectancy of 5-10 years or more, depending on fabrication method and specific exposure to the elements, including sun and sand. Depending on size, material, and number of exhibits and frames produced at one time, costs can range from under \$100 to under \$1,000 per exhibit. The Trail has relied largely on fiberglass embedments of paper prints that are then mounted in standard NPS anodized aluminum frames.

Since 1993 when the first wayside exhibits were provided to initial destinations, the Trail has developed over 200 different designs for orientation and interpretive wayside exhibits. The exhibits range from small 12" x 9" nature trail identification panels to 36" x 48" orientation panels. Eighty (80) different plants and animals are included in the nature trail panels that can be used by destinations to create individualized, site-specific nature trails for visitors. Larger 36" x 24" wayside exhibit panels are the standard interpretive exhibits used.

As the Trail introduced each theme, staff developed accompanying wayside exhibits for destinations to use. The majority of these exhibits are associated with the Maritime History, Coastal Habitats, and Wildlife Migration themes that are the Trail's three most fully developed interpretive themes. The Trail staff has created exhibits specific to a single destination and generic exhibits that explore broader concepts or resources found at multiple locations.

The majority of the designs and layouts for these wayside exhibits have been created in-house by Trail interpretive staff in consultation with destination managers and resource specialists. In other instances, partners have provided varying levels of assistance, ranging from photographs, resource data, draft text, and occasionally draft layouts.

A range of funding sources has been used to develop and fabricate these wayside exhibits, with the majority of Trail staff labor covered by NPS funds. Overall funding sources have included NPS operational and competitive

In fact, as the interpretive signs provide wonderful artwork, photography, and detailed information, the NJCHTR signage is the primary source of information at the EEP sites. [Brenda Evans, PSEG Estuary Enhancement Program (EEP), March 22, 2011, letter (see Appendix H)].

project funds, NPS Challenge Cost Share Program partnership grants, 20% fee program funds, National Park Foundation grants, New Jersey state recreational trails program grants, state transportation enhancement grants, etc. In a few instances, the New Jersey Division of Parks and Forestry has provided direct funding for creation of specific exhibits, and one corporation (the utility, Public Service Enterprise Group or PSEG) has funded fabrication of wayside exhibits customized to include the corporate logo.

In addition to wayside exhibits for the Trail and its destinations, the office has developed wayside exhibits for other NPS programs. These include the Pinelands National Reserve (under the Pinelands Interpretive Program) and the NPS Wild & Scenic Rivers Program (with orientation waysides created for the Maurice River Scenic and Recreational River). Both projects overlap portions of the Trail's project area. In addition to creating and providing wayside exhibits directly, the Trail has provided some interpretive training to destination managers to help make them more self-sufficient in wayside exhibit development.

In consultation with partner destinations, the NPS has generally provided the majority of new interpretive wayside exhibit panels and frames at no cost to the partner. In return, the partner destination agreed to display Trail orientation waysides, to work collaboratively on any new site-specific waysides, and to install and maintain wayside exhibits. The Trail has maintained a significant inventory of back-up and replacement wayside exhibits. The NPS design center at Harpers Ferry, WV, maintains an even larger inventory of back-up paper prints of wayside panels available to be embedded in fiberglass and distributed as needed.

In the early 1990s before the Trail started working with partners, visitors traveling to state wildlife management areas found little to welcome them or to explain why the resource had been protected. They now find Trail waysides, auto driving trail orientation waysides, and other additional waysides created by the partner destination.

For a relatively modest investment, the Trail's program of wayside exhibits has had a significant impact on interpretation and the visitor

experience throughout the entire project area of the Trail. In fact, the Trail currently manages the largest program of wayside exhibits in the entire National Park Service system. The NPS has provided over 1,000 copies of wayside exhibits to the Trail's destinations—all contributing to the visitor experience and to resource awareness and protection.

Welcome Center Partnerships

Because of its size, the Trail project area is divided into five regions (Figure 1). The *Implementation Guide* calls for the establishment of five welcome centers, one for each region. Each welcome center is designed to have orientation materials (videos, brochures, and exhibits) about the Trail overall as well as expanded exhibits that explore in more detail one of the five Trail themes. The Trail is authorized in its legislation to provide interpretive exhibits, but is prohibited from funding major building construction. The welcome centers are all about partnerships.

Delsea Region Welcome Center, Fort Mott State Park

Day-to-day management and operation of the Delsea Region Welcome Center at Fort Mott State Park rest with the New Jersey Division of Parks and Forestry that maintains the facility, provides necessary staffing, and covers utilities and other operating costs. The welcome center is located in the historic ordnance building at Fort Mott State Park in Salem County.

The New Jersey Division of Parks and Forestry and the NPS worked collaboratively on development of the partnership facility. The Division of Parks and Forestry organized and funded the renovation of the building, while the Trail staff developed, fabricated, and installed the initial exhibits with design assistance from the NPS Harpers Ferry Design Center. The design includes a reception area, office area, multi-purpose theatre/meeting space, and exhibit area. In addition to orientation exhibits about the Trail and about Fort Mott, there are other exhibits focusing on the Trail's Maritime History theme. Visitors can view two audiovisual programs. One is an orientation to the Trail, and the other is an introduction to the region in an abridged version of the film, "Down Jersey" created in a partnership among the NPS, Citizens United

to Protect the Maurice River and Its Tributaries, and New Jersey Network (NJN).

Cape May Region Welcome Center, Ocean View Service Area, Garden State Parkway

The Cape May Region Welcome Center is located at the Ocean View Service Area (Milepost 18.3) on the Garden State Parkway in Cape May County. This is a more complicated partnership arrangement than that at Fort Mott State Park. The Garden State Parkway is now managed by the New Jersey Turnpike Authority. The Ocean View Service Area facilities are leased by the Turnpike Authority to HMS Host that operates the concession.

In turn, HMS Host has provided a portion of the facility to the New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism that staffs and operates a visitor center in the space in collaboration with the Cape May County Chamber of Commerce. The Division of Travel and Tourism agreed to provide a portion of the available space to the Trail to function as the Trail welcome center. As at Fort Mott, there are orientation exhibits about the Trail and the same two audiovisual orientation programs.

An adjoining room to the original visitor center was made available to the Trail as exhibit space for the Trail's Relaxation & Inspiration theme. Installed in 2000, these exhibits explore everything from Indian settlements,

whaling, early settlement of the Cape May Region, development of vacation communities and religious retreats, to contemporary recreational activities and even casinos. The Trail created and installed these exhibits along with the audiovisual equipment. The Division of Travel and Tourism provides the staff, and the Trail has no responsibility for day-to-day operating costs.

Sandy Hook Region Welcome Center, Sandy Hook Unit, Gateway National Recreation Area

An interim welcome center for the Trail's Sandy Hook Region is located at the Sandy Hook Unit of Gateway National Recreation Area in Monmouth County and is co-located with the park's visitor center in the historic Spermaceti Cove Life Saving Service Station. Staffing and all operational expenses are provided by the Sandy Hook Unit of Gateway.

The Sandy Hook Unit has planned a new administrative and visitor center facility in the historic Fort Hancock Building #25. The Trail participated in a design and planning process in 2003 and 2004 with Sandy Hook staff and the design firm, Whirlwind and Company. The visitor facility was planned to function, in part, as a regional welcome center for the Trail. The long-term plan calls for the Sandy Hook Region Welcome Center to have exhibits that focus on the Trail's Coastal Habitats theme.

Delsea Region Welcome Center, Fort Mott State Park, Salem County, New Jersey.



Barnegat Bay Region Welcome Center

Early on in the planning and implementation of the Trail, Double Trouble State Park in Ocean County near Toms River, New Jersey, was initially designated as the future location for the Barnegat Bay Region Welcome Center. The state's Division of Parks and Forestry was investing over \$2.0 million in restoration of the Cranberry Sorting and Packing House and Sawmill in the historic Double Trouble village. A new visitor center building was being planned that would serve jointly as the park visitor center, Barnegat Bay Region Welcome Center for the Trail, and eastern gateway facility for the Pinelands National Reserve's approved *Pinelands Interpretation Plan*. This center was to highlight the Trail's Historic Settlements theme.

A location for the new building was selected, Pinelands Commission approval obtained, and preliminary conceptual designs for the space realized through a collaborative planning process with assistance provided by the Trail staff and the Harpers Ferry Design Center. State transportation enhancement funding of nearly \$1 million was awarded to the Pinelands Commission for the proposed exhibits. Just as the Division of Parks and Forestry was about to solicit bids from architectural firms to design the building, the state's long-term fiscal crisis reared its head, and progress was halted. No alternate site has been designated or developed to serve as the Trail's Barnegat Bay Region Welcome Center. In the meantime, the transportation enhancement funding for the planned exhibits was withdrawn.

Absecon Region Welcome Center

The Absecon Region of the Trail includes a portion of Atlantic County. A Trail welcome center has not been designated for this region, although the Trail theme to be addressed was to be the Wildlife Migration theme. Informal discussions were held with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service about the possibility of co-locating a shared visitor center at the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge.

Except for the interim welcome center at Sandy Hook, Trail welcome centers are owned and staffed by non-NPS partners with all operating costs covered by the partner agencies. The Trail's role has been to provide the exhibit designs, exhibit fabrication, and promotional literature.

Promotional Brochures

The use of brochures has been one of the primary mechanisms for promoting both the Trail and individual destinations. From the time the Trail opened its first theme trail to the public in 1993, there has been an NPS full-color unigrid brochure. This brochure has provided a general introduction to the Trail with a map of the overall project area and the location of welcome centers. The five regions and five themes were described, but there was no information about individual destinations. A completely new and expanded NPS unigrid brochure was created through the Harpers Ferry Design Center in 2002 and revised and reprinted in 2007.

In addition to the general, full-color unigrid brochure, the Trail has developed a series of regional brochures with detailed information on individual destinations. These brochures included a brief description of each destination along with hours of operation, directions, and a contact phone number. The five Trail regions were covered by four regional brochures with the Cape May and Absecon regions combined in a single brochure because of the limited number of destinations in the Absecon Region. Up through 2009, the Trail created three different versions of these regional brochures.

The latest version of the regional brochure was developed in 2010 with a full-color guide combining destinations in the Delsea and

Guide to Delsea and Cape May Regions produced in 2010.



Cape May regions. This guide has the overall Trail map of the project area along with maps of the two regions showing the locations of destinations. The descriptions of individual destinations have been expanded to include a website address, GPS coordinates, and a web search address to assist with mapping travel routes and determining travel times.

Distribution of brochures has been controlled because of limited funding. Welcome centers have been supplied with the Trail's general unigrid brochure as well as all of the regional brochures. Individual destinations and local information centers have been given only the general brochure and the one regional brochure for the region in which the destination or local information center is located. New Jersey partner agencies (Division of Travel and Tourism, Pinelands Commission, and Division of Parks and Forestry) have also been supplied with brochures for distribution.

Website Presence

One of the benefits of being linked with the Trail that is frequently cited by destination managers is the credibility and cachet of the association with the National Park Service. One place where this is particularly true is the NPS website. The general NPS website, www.nps.gov, has links to individual parks and projects. The Trail has its own NPS webpage at www.nps.gov/neje. This website includes all of the information found in the Trail's general and regional brochures, including specific details on individual destinations. The NPS

website link gives Trail destinations, large or small, national and international exposure that might not be available to the destination itself.

Research/Resource Publications

In the early stages of development, Trail staff found that background resource information associated with the Trail's five interpretive themes was scattered, fragmented, and incomplete. Three Trail publications consolidated this historical information for the benefit of the public and provided the basis for interpretive efforts:

1. *Historic Themes and Resources within the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route, Southern New Jersey and the Delaware Bay: Cape May, Cumberland, and Salem Counties*, 1991 (reprinted 1995 with support from the Delaware River and Bay Authority).
2. *Resorts and Recreation, an Historic Theme Study of the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route, The Atlantic Shore: Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean, Burlington, Atlantic and Cape May Counties*, 1995, (printed with support from the Sandy Hook Foundation).
3. *From Marsh to Farm: The Landscape Transformation of Coastal New Jersey*, 1992.

The first publication on the Delaware Bay region spurred development of a subsequent film on the region, "Down Jersey," in partnership with Citizens United to Protect the Maurice River and its Tributaries, Inc. and New Jersey Network (NJN). Additional support was provided by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and NOAA-Local Coastal Planning Grant, PSE&G, and the NPS Challenge Cost Share Program. Citizens United went on to develop a teachers' guide to accompany the film and provided training and copies of the publication to teachers throughout the region. An abbreviated version of the half-hour film was adapted for use as orientation films at the Fort Mott State Park (Delsea Region) and Ocean View Service Area (Cape May Region) welcome centers.

As part of its partnership with New Jersey Audubon, the Trail provided Challenge Cost Share Program funding to support revision and reprinting of Audubon's *Delaware Bay-shore Birding & Wildlife Trails* guide. Two other publications were initiated but have

New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route website home page.



not been completed at this writing. One is a maritime history focusing on the Delaware Bay region. The contracted vendor did not complete the project to the satisfaction of the NPS within the time frame of availability of the funds obligated for the project. The second of these publications, *The Abel & Mary Nicholson House: A Charette for a National Historic Landmark*, is close to completion by the Northeast Region Preservation Assistance team staff. Funded through the NPS Challenge Cost Share Program, it uses the 1722 Abel & Mary Nicholson House NHL as a prototype for engaging gatherings of specialists for a three-day intense charette to develop alternatives and options for the future of important vernacular architectural resources.

Highway Directional Trailblazer Program

The NPS, in cooperation with the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT), developed a Trail logo and a highway sign system. The plan was to guide visitors from the nearest major intersection to each destination. This is important because the Trail is not a continuous single defined route, but links discrete destinations.

Representatives of the Trail, NJDOT, and individual county road departments met to review destinations county by county and to determine both the best locations for highway directional signs and which agency would install each sign.

In addition, each destination was asked to install trailblazers on its property to tell visitors that they have arrived at a destination.

Because of limited funding, the highway signs do not include the names of individual destinations. Instead, a separate sign panel defining the type of destination accompanies each trailblazer. Depending on size of the trailblazer (large or small), each sign would say “Site” (or “Historic Site”), “Point of Interest,” “Welcome Center,” or “Info” (or “Information”) for local information centers.

The Trail has always provided the trailblazers, some highway sign posts, and the accompanying panels identifying the type of destination. Initial trailblazers were fabricated using opaque inks on reflective sheeting. They had a short life before the colors faded, and they were not reflective at night because of the opaque inks. Subsequent trailblazers were produced using transparent inks on engineering grade reflective sign material. They have been much longer-lasting and provide the desired reflectivity at night.

NJDOT installed the initial trailblazers in the early-mid 1990s at no cost to the NPS on state highway locations, and the counties installed signs on county and local roads. As the state’s fiscal difficulties increased, NJDOT indicated for a time that it could not install new signs without an outside source of funding (which the Trail did not have). County road depart-

Sample “Site” panel mounted below the Trail’s road sign trailblazer.



NPS

ments have generally been very responsive to requests for assistance, but have been reluctant for liability reasons to do installations (or replacements) on state highway locations. See the Issues section for additional discussion of challenges associated with the highway directional signs.

Interpretive Training and Other Assistance

Another goal of the Trail has been to provide direct training to partner organizations to give staff members the necessary skills to improve interpretive services and make them more self-sufficient.

The NPS Trail staff has provided training to destination staff on interpretive principles and wayside exhibit design and development. Assistance was provided to the New Jersey Division of Parks and Forestry on the development of both a general management plan and interpretive plan for Double Trouble State Park. This process was subsequently adopted as a model for developing similar plans in other state parks. The Trail assisted with interpretive training for staff from other NPS units and projects including Statue of Liberty/Ellis Island, Edison, Gateway, and the Maurice River Scenic and Recreational River. Unfortunately, with the loss of interpretive staff positions, the Trail has been unable to provide similar training in recent years.

Assistance with Resource Protection through Other Programs

The Trail staff has supported resource awareness and protection in southern New Jersey through a variety of other state and federal programs:

Pinelands Interpretive Program

In addition to managing the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route, the Trail office has also been responsible for the interpretive program for the New Jersey Pinelands National Reserve. The Reserve was established in 1978 (P.L. 95-625, Section 502) as the nation's first National Reserve and designated as a U.S. Biosphere Reserve in 1983. It is the largest open space on the eastern seaboard between Boston, MA, and Richmond, VA. Covering 1.1 million acres or 20% of New Jersey's land area, it is home to over 850 plant and 500 animal species, including many threatened or endangered species. The Reserve protects an important aquifer containing an estimated 17 trillion gallons of water, enough to cover the state to a depth of 10 feet.

The Reserve includes portions of seven counties, fifty-six municipalities, and four Congressional districts. There are over 700,000 permanent residents living within the Reserve. Approximately 53% of the land within the Reserve is permanently protected. The Pinelands National Reserve overlaps with the

Canoeists exploring the world-class resources in the Pinelands National Reserve.



New Jersey Division of Parks and Forestry



1722 Abel and Mary Nicholson House
National Historic Landmark, Salem
County, New Jersey.

Trail's project area along both the Delaware Bay and Atlantic Coast.

Congress amended the Pinelands enabling legislation in 1988 (P.L. 100-486) to direct the NPS to develop an interpretive plan for the Reserve. The *Pinelands Interpretation Plan* was developed by Trail staff jointly with the Pinelands Commission and New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Parks and Forestry and was approved in 1994. The 1988 legislation authorized \$3,000,000 to implement the recommendations of the study, "the Federal share of which may not exceed 75 percent of the total cost."

The U. S. Congress has never provided regular annual funding to carry out the interpretive plan. The annual Pinelands National Reserve appropriation of \$297,000 goes to the Pinelands Commission to support resource monitoring (including water quality studies). Limited implementation of the plan has been accomplished through state transportation enhancement funds and whatever support has been possible periodically through the Trail office.

A Pinelands National Reserve logo was developed and appears on highway signs marking Reserve boundaries. The first ever Pinelands

NPS unigrid brochure was completed under Trail staff management in 2008, thirty years after the Reserve was established. Six state forests and parks have been designated as initial, official Pinelands interpretive destinations and have been provided with outdoor orientation and interpretive wayside exhibits managed by the Trail office. In 2010 a new brochure was developed for the Batona Trail, a fifty mile hiking trail linking three state forests. Currently, a project funded by the Trail office is under way to develop a modest visitor center at the Pinelands Commission headquarters as an interim step in the absence of funds to develop the gateway facilities and major interpretive center called for in the Pinelands interpretive plan.

National Historic Landmark Program

There were no National Historic Landmarks along the New Jersey shore of the Delaware Bay until the Trail participated in the designation of the 1722 Abel and Mary Nicholson House as a National Historic Landmark in 2000. This important Quaker patterned-end brick house is the only NHL in either Salem County or Cumberland County. Subsequent to this designation, it has received both New Jersey Historic Preservation Trust and national Save America's Treasures grants. It was also the subject of a planning charette



Bayshore Discovery Project

The historic oyster schooner, *A.J. Meerwald*, also New Jersey's official tall ship, sails within sight of the East Point Lighthouse, Cumberland County, New Jersey.

funded through the NPS Challenge Cost Share Program that used this NHL as a model for planning studies to protect vernacular architecture. The report on this charette should be completed shortly by the NPS Northeast Region Preservation Assistance team.

Save America's Treasures Program

As noted above, designation of the 1722 Abel and Mary Nicholson House in Salem County made it eligible for support from the Save America's Treasures Program (SAT). The SAT program funding has supported stabilization including exterior masonry re-pointing of the entire structure. SAT funds are also supporting installation of some monitoring wells to evaluate the impact of localized flooding from a breached dike nearby that threatens the house. The SAT funding serves as matching funds for a state grant from the New Jersey Historic Trust.

New Jersey Scenic Byways Program

The Trail office initially proposed and assisted with the designation of the Bayshore Heritage Byway Scenic Byway, a 122-mile scenic byway along the New Jersey Bayshore that is largely in the Trail's Delsea Region. Designated in 2009 as a state scenic byway by NJDOT, the Byway opens the door to alternative funding from the Federal Highways Works Admin-

istration (FHWA) for interpretation, visitor support, and tourism promotion. Funding is in place to proceed with the corridor management plan, the next step on the way to designation as a National Scenic Byway. Once the corridor management plan is completed, the byway could seek National Scenic Byway designation and be eligible for capital construction projects not possible through the Trail.

Wild & Scenic Rivers Program

The Maurice Scenic and Recreational River and the Great Egg Harbor Scenic and Recreational River are both located in southern New Jersey and overlap in places with the Pinelands National Reserve and Trail. Limited assistance has been provided including development of an interpretive plan and orientation wayside exhibits for the Maurice Scenic and Recreational River. The Trail maintains the inventory of replacement Maurice orientation wayside exhibits.

Park Flight Program

The Trail has participated in the NPS Park Flight Program since 2001 through a partnership with New Jersey Audubon. The partnership has supported studies and international volunteer intern exchanges related to shorebird and songbird migrations and habitat

protection. One study involved the use of Doppler radar and acoustical sound recording to track nighttime songbird migrations. In FY 2010, the Trail was one of only thirteen NPS parks nationwide participating in the Park Flight Program.

National Park Foundation, Park Stewards Program

In FY 2010 and FY 2011 the Trail and New Jersey Audubon have also been partnering with support from the National Park Foundation through its Park Stewards Program. Under this project, high school and middle school teachers were provided with professional development through a summer institute to provide teachers with a solid foundation in the park's resources and in developing service learning projects. High school students have been engaged in learning about park resources and in developing their own service learning projects for middle school students. The students and teachers are from the Toms River School District and are exploring Trail resources within the Barnegat Bay Region.

National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program

New Jersey played a significant role in the Underground Railroad, but it had no sites designated in the NPS National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program until the Trail office assisted with designation of the Abigail and Elizabeth Goodwin Home in Salem, New Jersey, as the first New Jersey site accepted into the program. As a result of this designation, Salem County is developing a driving trail called "Seven Steps to Freedom" that explores sites in the county associated with the history of slavery, the abolitionist movement, and the Underground Railroad. Podcasts supported by New Jersey Network (NJN), an exhibition (both onsite and virtual) supported by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) using photographs to interpret history, a website, and a curriculum component are all planned.

Public and Partner Comments on Accomplishments

All of the public and partner agency meetings included discussion of Trail accomplishments and benefits. Meeting participants were asked specifically what has worked or not worked

in support of resource awareness, conservation, education, tourism, etc. Comments were nearly universally positive in supporting the specific means and partnership efforts made by the Trail to promote resource awareness and protection and to expand tourism opportunities. Numerous additional ways were proposed for the Trail to enhance and expand its efforts. Participants repeatedly cited the importance of a continuing role by the NPS in Trail management. One individual suggested that "...the NJCHTR has exceeded its mission" and that "The loss of the NJCHTR at any level would be devastating to the individual sites and to the general public." See the Public Engagement Process chapter for a more detailed discussion of public and partner comments on accomplishments.

Opposite: Abigail and Elizabeth Goodwin House, Salem County, New Jersey, a designated site for the NPS National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program.



Salem County Historical Society



SEABREEZE ↗
↖ CEDARVILLE
↖ NEWPORT
↖ FORTESCUE
↖ GANDY'S BEACH
↖ DIVIDING CREEK
↖ PORT NORRIS

NJ
Coastal
Heritage
Trail

Point of
Interest →

Issues

The Trail has proven popular with partners and the public. However, as a large and complex project, a number of issues have influenced both Trail implementation and public perception of the Trail over the years. Development and implementation of facilities, themes, publications, and services for the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route have not met the ambitious timeline and funding projections proposed within the *Implementation Guide* (Appendix B). The *Guide* included, for example, a timeline that showed initial establishment of all five interpretive themes and five interim regional welcome centers within three years. The timeline also projected completion of three fully-developed regional welcome centers in years four and five. This section of the strategic plan report outlines a number of issues and factors that have affected Trail development or perceptions:

- Financial support, projected versus actual.
- NPS and state of New Jersey staffing, projected versus actual.
- Breaks in and changes to legislative authority.
- Implementation status and partnership management issues.
- Trail name.
- Highway sign system.
- Size of project area.

Financial Support

Funding for the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route (see Appendix D, Funding History, Construction and Operations) began in FY 1990 with initial planning and construction line item add-ons. FY 1993 was the first year the Trail was base-funded with ONPS dollars. Between FY 1993 and FY 2011, approximately \$3.7 million was appropriated in ONPS support. This does not include appropriations for FY 2005 and FY 2006 when the Trail had lost its authorization for 2.5 years when the P.L. 106-18 sunset went into effect on May 4, 2004. During this period, staff members were reassigned to the Pinelands Interpretive Program as described above in the Legislative History section of the History and Current Status chapter. By comparison, the Trail's *Implementation Guide* funding estimates (see Budget Analysis – Implementation Plan vs. Actual Expenditures chart, Appendix E) were based

on projected support in the neighborhood of \$450,000 - \$500,000 in annual ONPS support for a total of closer to \$5.8 million through FY 2011.

Review of annual ONPS appropriations in the NPS Green Book budget requires some additional clarification. Starting with FY 2006, what were previously separate Trail and Pinelands line items in the Green Book have been combined as a single line item. Again, this occurred during the period when the Trail's authorization had lapsed from May 2004 to October 2006. Funding has varied slightly from \$702,000 to \$709,000, with approximately \$245,000 (35%) designated for the Trail, \$297,000 (42%) transferred directly to the Pinelands Commission for resource monitoring (particularly water quality studies), and the balance of 23% reallocated for other purposes by the NPS Northeast Regional Office.

An even larger difference exists between projected construction development and actual line-item add-ons. *Implementation Guide* projections estimated the need for \$5.1 million in construction funding to complete initial Trail implementation. In reality, actual line item construction add-on appropriations between FY 1993 and FY 2010 totaled only \$1.4 million. However, of this amount, \$600,000 was withdrawn and reprogrammed for the FY 2003 national fire fighting shortfall during the FY 2004 – FY 2006 time frame when the Trail had lost its authorization.

Overall actual NPS construction and operational support between FY 1993 and FY 2011 has been closer to \$4.3 million compared to planning projections of \$10.9 million. This is important in understanding the success of the Trail in achieving major portions of the planned initial Trail implementation with limited staff and funding (see the Trail Accomplishments chapter), but it also explains, in part, why the initial implementation has yet to be completed with two themes, three welcome centers, etc. incomplete eighteen years after the initial Maritime History theme trail was opened to the public in 1993.

NPS annual line item ONPS appropriations and construction funding for the Trail have

also been supplemented over the years with other internal NPS project funds (i.e. Challenge Cost Share Program and Park Flight Migratory Bird Program) and external grants (e.g. National Park Foundation, National Recreational Trails Program, state of New Jersey transportation enhancement grants, Partnership for the Delaware Estuary, Delaware River & Bay Authority, Sandy Hook Foundation, etc.) Eligibility for internal NPS project fund sources has been quite limited because most require federal ownership or direct management of land or resources to qualify. One example is the NPS 20% Fee Program that distributes a portion of admission income from parks nationwide among parks that do not charge admission. Eligibility has been limited to projects on federal land, so the only time the Trail has been able to apply was for projects on National Wildlife Refuge properties that are Trail destinations.

The Trail's legislation (Appendix A) was modified in 1994 (P.L. 103-243) to include a requirement for a 1:1 match of non-federal funds for every federal dollar spent. The match was allowed as cash or in-kind services. Over the years, much of this match has been met through partner operation and staffing of facilities that serve as welcome centers for the Trail. There are two such Trail welcome centers. One is in the historic ordnance building at Fort Mott State Park in Salem County operated by the New Jersey Division of Parks and Forestry. The state renovated the building and continues to staff and operate the facility. The NPS through the Trail provided a design for the interpretive spaces and most of the exhibits.

The other welcome center is located at the Ocean View Service Area on the Garden State Parkway in Cape May County above Cape May. The management partnership is more complicated here. The facility is owned by the New Jersey Turnpike Authority and leased to HMS Host that has the concession there. HMS Host, in turn, has made available to the New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism a portion of the space for a visitor/welcome center facility. The center is staffed by the Division of Travel and Tourism with some support from the Cape May County Chamber of Commerce. HMS Host made available an additional adjoining room for Trail exhibits asso-

ciated with one of the Trail's five interpretive themes, Relaxation & Inspiration. All operational costs are provided by these Trail partners and count toward the required match.

NPS and State of New Jersey Staffing

The *Implementation Guide* (Appendix B) projected Trail staffing during a proposed initial implementation phase of five years between 1993 and 1997 as ranging from six to eight full-time positions. Following initial implementation, staffing needs were projected as six full-time positions that would be split between the NPS and state of New Jersey.

In reality, initial staffing was provided by the NPS with 5-6 full-time positions from 1993 up into 2002. Included were a Project Director, Trail Manager, Chief of Interpretation, Administrative Officer, Interpretive Specialist, and for a time, administrative assistant. In 2002 the Trail lost two positions with the retirement of the Superintendent/Project Director and transfer of the Chief of Interpretation. An Administrative Review at that time (2003) recommended that the Trail have six (6) FTE to accomplish its mission (see Appendix C, Staffing History and Administrative Review Recommendations, 2003). The Trail Manager position was not filled when the person in that slot was appointed Project Director in 2002.

The Administrative Officer position became vacant and was eliminated in 2004, leaving just two full-time positions (Project Director and Interpretive Specialist). The Interpretive Specialist retired in early 2007, leaving the Project Director as the sole full-time position for much of the year. In 2008 a new position of Program Assistant was created to combine administrative and interpretive functions along with a part-time seasonal Office Clerk position. Since then, staffing has consisted of 2.5 FTE (Project Director, Program Assistant, and half-time NPS seasonal). Thus, the Trail has operated between 2004 and 2011 with only about one-third of the recommended full-time staff.

The state of New Jersey has only been able to provide limited staff support to the Trail from the mid-1990s to the present in response to a deteriorating state financial situation. The New Jersey Division of Parks and Forestry is



NPS

Fort Mott State Park, Salem County, New Jersey.

currently operating at only 41% of projected staffing needs. The position of Director for the Division was vacant or only filled in an acting capacity through another existing position for a period of over four years. A new lead position as Assistant Director was appointed in 2011.

In spite of its internal staffing and funding challenges, the Division of Parks and Forestry has still been a significant partner and contributor to the Trail. The largest block of Trail destinations is staffed and managed on a day-to-day basis by Division staff. Staff members from individual parks and forests continue to develop publications, wayside exhibits, and other interpretive media that serve Trail visitors. In spite of its own fiscal limitations, the Division has continued for many years to provide one—and sometimes two—part-time seasonal positions that are recruited and funded by the state, but assigned to work exclusively on Trail projects at the direction of Trail staff.

The New Jersey Pinelands Commission, as another of the leading Trail partner agencies, has also faced financial difficulties. It has reduced its staff by 31% since 2007. The third lead managing partner for the Trail is the New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism that has also faced significant staff and budget cuts over the years.

Breaks in and Changes to Legislative Authority

The New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route was established at a time when Congress was exploring alternative ways to protect and promote natural and cultural resources without the traditional federal approach of government ownership and direct management. Congress was establishing National Heritage Areas at the same time, but the Trail had its own unique legislation that was—and continues to be—unlike any designated group of NPS projects or affiliated areas such as National Trails, National Heritage Areas, etc. Although unique and not subject to the same guidelines, the Trail has frequently been lumped together with National Heritage Areas whenever it came time for new legislation.

Unlike official, permanent units of the NPS, the Trail is an affiliated area without permanent NPS management authority. At national parks where the NPS has direct responsibility for maintenance and protection of facilities, historic resources, and natural resources, there is a mandate and priority to maintain these resources “for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.” In times of fiscal constraints and existing maintenance backlogs, it is fully understandable that priority might go to protect resources under direct NPS ownership and management.

The addition of a sunset clause in 1994 (see History and Current Status of the Trail chapter) to the Trail’s initial enabling legislation has affected both internal and external perceptions of the Trail. The sunset clauses in the Trail’s legislation have also affected and slowed Trail implementation. There have been two different time periods totaling nearly half of the time between 2004 and 2011 when these sunset provisions have gone into effect and brought NPS management and development of the Trail to a standstill.

Loss of authorization and/or impending sunset dates have also affected the availability of project funds to advance Trail implementation components. New internal NPS project funding was understandably not awarded to the Trail during periods without legislative authorization. Activity was focused on the office’s additional responsibility for implementation

of the Pinelands interpretive program that continued under alternate Pinelands National Reserve authority (P.L. 100-486, October 13, 1988). Most recently, 2011 project funds intended for exhibit development at two existing Trail welcome centers were withdrawn when it was realized that the work could not be completed by the upcoming September 2011 sunset date.

Implementation Status and Partnership Management Issues

The reductions in NPS staffing and funding for the Trail, comparable changes within the Trail's three leading management partners (Parks & Forestry, Pinelands, and Travel & Tourism), and the effect of two significant lapses in legislative authority have resulted in a clear loss of momentum for the Trail. Major components of the Trail remain incomplete with only two of the five projected welcome centers in place and two of the five themes not fully developed. Of the original state of New Jersey partner agency personnel who participated in initial planning for the Trail and committed to its development, all have moved on to other positions or retired.

Trail Name

Even its official name, New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route, has been a source of confusion and problems for the Trail. The word "Trail" implies to many that we are talking about a project involving a pedestrian hiking trail rather than an automotive tourism initiative. The word "Route" similarly has been confused by many who assume that the Trail follows a specific defined set of roads that link the destinations. Instead, the Trail links discrete destinations by theme rather than sequential physical proximity along a defined road corridor. Visitors are encouraged to get away from major highways to explore back roads and byways as part of the visitor experience. Highway signs are placed at major intersection to guide visitors to individual destinations. Placement of signs is not intended to guide visitors along a continuous, specific route. In this way, the Trail is very different than a scenic byway that depends upon a defined road corridor.

Highway Sign System

The highway sign system has been one of the more problematic aspects of the Trail. Designation of highway sign locations, the inability to list individual destination names, installation, maintenance, and replacement have all been issues.

Another concern has been the potential proliferation of signs for destinations that are associated with multiple programs. A single site could be a destination for the Trail, Pinelands National Reserve, Watchable Wildlife, scenic byway, etc. The Trail did some initial experiments with signs that combined logos for multiple designations on a larger sign, but did not have the resources to transition to a new overall sign system. Responsibility for Trail highway signs will continue to be an issue in the future.

Size of Trail Project Area

The size of the Trail's project area (Figure 1) has been another management challenge. It can take as long as three hours to get from one portion of the Trail to another. This limits the ability for regular interaction by Trail management with destination managers and opportunities for them to know and interact with one another and to develop an overall appreciation for and understanding of other sections of the Trail. The designation of five different Trail interpretive themes including both natural resource and historical categories also links very different resource management and protection constituencies that may not normally overlap or see areas of shared concern. This has distinct implications for establishment of a new management entity responsible for linking this breadth of themes, resources, and distance.

In spite of these issues and limitations, significant accomplishments (see Trail Accomplishments chapter above) have been achieved for the Trail, for the additional responsibility of managing the implementation of the *Pinelands Interpretation Plan* (1998), and for other NPS programs and projects in southern New Jersey.



Laurie Pettigrew, New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife



Organizational Options Summary

This plan presents four basic management options for the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route strategic plan as requested in P.L. 109-338. The legislation requested that the plan describe:

(A) opportunities to increase participation by national and local private and public interests in the planning, development, and administration of the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route; and

(B) organizational options for sustaining the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route.

The four options are:

Option 1: No further NPS management of the Trail after sunset date of September 30, 2011.

Option 2: Limited time NPS management to transition to a new management framework.

Option 3: A new federal role for or within the Trail project area.

Option 4: Permanent authorization for the Trail.

Organizational Options, Explanation and Analysis

Option 1: No further NPS management of the Trail after sunset date of September 30, 2011.

Note that this is the only option that would not require new legislative action by Congress.

The Trail's current federal legislation includes a sunset date that precludes direct NPS management of the Trail after September 30, 2011. This will mean the end of NPS funding and NPS staff positions assigned to the Trail. NPS website promotion of Trail destinations will end along with project funding to assist partners with interpreting Trail resources to visitors.

In the absence of renewed authorization, Trail partners and supporters could consider the

following choices to continue operation of the Trail without NPS management or funding:

Option 1 (A): Establish a nonprofit organization to assume or support Trail management.

Such a new nonprofit could seek funding from sources where government partners are ineligible to apply. Alternatively, an existing nonprofit organization could step up and expand its current mission.

Instead of continuing the Trail in its current format, a nonprofit organization could also seek state of New Jersey Scenic Byway and eventual federal National Scenic Byway designation for all or parts of the Trail project area. Portions of the Trail project area are already included in the state-designated Pine Barrens Byway and Bayshore Heritage Byway.

Option 1 (B): Establish state or local government management of the Trail.

This could be accomplished through:

- A new management structure with representation from state agencies and other interested local agencies and organizations.
- Management of the Trail through an existing state agency or department.
- Management of the Trail through an existing local government agency or coalition of agencies.

State and local government agencies or nonprofit partners could apply to the NPS Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program for assistance with organizational development and trail management planning or to NPS preservation assistance programs.

Note that the NPS retains authority under its Pinelands National Reserve legislation to provide interpretive and technical assistance to resource destinations within the Pinelands National Reserve. (Section 502 of the National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978, Public Law 95-625, as amended by Public Law 100-486, October 1988). This would include those significant portions of the Trail's project area that are within the Reserve.

I would like to see the CHT (Coastal Heritage Trail) reauthorized. I believe the work done by NPS on behalf of the CHT is important in helping raise awareness of New Jersey's amazing history, our rich maritime heritage, our cultural contributions, and our varied and plentiful natural resources. (Laurie Pettigrew, New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife, March 27, 2011, letter)

Analysis of Option 1

Under this option, the NPS role in providing management and leadership for the continued implementation and long-term management of the Trail would end. Without any action by the U.S. Congress, this NPS management role will end on September 30, 2011, when the Congressional authorization for NPS involvement expires. Without authorization, the NPS will have no legal authority to continue any activities associated with the Trail after this date.

The end of NPS management would mean:

- Loss of direct NPS funding, management, and technical support to destination partners (except as available or granted through other continuing NPS authorities/ programs).
- Loss of NPS support as the state of New Jersey struggles with its current fiscal crisis.
- Loss of NPS promotion of destinations through the NPS website.
- The end of access by most Trail partners to NPS partnership programs such as Park Flight, Park Stewardship, Challenge Cost Share Program, etc. Local entities could apply for assistance through other NPS existing authorities.
- Loss of the “cachet” or recognition associated with being linked with the NPS.
- Loss of the NPS presence in much of the project area, except where other authorities (such as through the Pinelands National

Reserve or Maurice or Great Egg Harbor Scenic and Recreational Rivers (part of the NPS Wild & Scenic Rivers Program) continue.

- Loss of NPS ability to support related resource protection activities in areas that fall outside other continuing federal designations [such as New Jersey Revolutionary War resources outside the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area).

If state or local interests choose not to--or are unable to--establish a new nonprofit or government management entity for the Trail, implications include:

- No entity to oversee completion of the Trail's implementation, leaving two theme trails and three welcome center facilities absent or incomplete.
- No entity to manage inventories of replacement wayside exhibits and frames, highway directional signs, brochures, resource publications, etc.
- Gradual deterioration of over 1,000 outdoor wayside exhibits and dozens of highway directional signs in the field if left unmanaged.

Input from Agency Briefings and March 24th Public Meetings on Option 1

The management options for this strategic plan had not been developed at the time of either the September 2010 public meetings in Cumberland County or the March 1, 2011, meetings in Monmouth County. They were, however, presented in draft form at the March 24, 2011, Ocean County meetings and at two agency briefings in Trenton, New Jersey.

At all of the public meetings there was discussion about the impacts of the current economic climate and the cuts that have been made to existing state and local government agencies and nonprofit organizations. There was consensus that this was a particularly difficult time to consider establishment of a new nonprofit organization (or expansion of the role of an existing nonprofit organization). There was also concern about the ability of such a nonprofit organization to attract members and financial support across such a large distance and across the many different constituencies of the Trail.

Cedar swamp, Cheesequake State Park, Middlesex County, New Jersey.



NPS

The loss of the NJCHTR at any level would be devastating to the individual sites and to the general public. I have seen the benefit from the NJCHTR both in my professional career and personal life. I applaud you and your staff's efforts, and look forward to continuing our long-standing relationship.
(Rob Auermuller, Superintendent, Wharton State Forest, April 2, 2011, email)

The same issues came up in consideration of state or local government management of the Trail. A planner from Monmouth County suggested establishing some form of county council including the eight counties in the Trail's project area. It was thought that greater involvement of county economic development/tourism offices particularly and possibly road departments could engender greater support and cooperation.

There was significant discussion about scenic byways at most of the public meetings and agency briefings as an alternative to provide the types of services currently offered by the Trail. A new scenic byway, however, would also face a similar challenge in finding a citizens group, nonprofit organization, or local government agency as its required management entity. Although the Pine Barrens Byway has completed its corridor management plan, the Bayshore Heritage Byway is just now beginning the same process that is scheduled to take eighteen months or so. Public meeting participants expressed interest in a scenic byway along some or all of the Atlantic Coast portion of the Trail (especially for Monmouth County), but that multi-year process has not been initiated.

There was strong support at all the meetings for continued NPS management of the Trail. One meeting participant in evaluating the potential loss of NPS involvement called Option

1 "doom and gloom" when compared to the "wine and roses" scenario of permanent reauthorization of NPS involvement (see Option 4 below). Another participant suggested that "Without the federal government, the Trail would be a lost resource." Still another attendee suggested that the loss of NPS management would be "devastating" and that the Trail would fall apart except for a few sites.

Potential Next Steps for Option 1

If the September 30, 2011, sunset goes into effect, this would not be the first time the NPS has lost its authority to manage the Trail. There have been two other occasions when the NPS Trail authorization has lapsed. During these lapses in Trail authority, the Trail staff and funding were temporarily transferred to work on projects associated with the implementation of the approved *Pinelands Interpretation Plan*. On these occasions, the NPS field office in Newport, Cumberland County, New Jersey, remained open, and Trail materials and supplies were maintained until reauthorization occurred.

In the absence of Congressional action to continue NPS management of the Trail beyond September 30, 2011, the NPS can continue to facilitate discussions about future management options, but only up until that sunset date. In the meantime, the NPS is implementing contingency plans regarding reassignment of staff; closure of the Newport, New Jersey, field office; and distribution, management, or disposal of interpretive materials, brochures and publications, highway signs, wayside exhibits, resource files, artifacts, equipment, etc. associated with the Trail.

Considering the difficulty of establishing a new nonprofit organization or the challenge of having an existing agency/organization manage the entire Trail project area, one meeting participant submitted a follow-up email proposing that different organizations share responsibility by assuming management of perhaps a single region of the Trail where that organization is located.

Option 2: Limited time NPS management to transition to a new management framework. Current management responsibility for the Trail rests primarily with the NPS along with support from the three lead managing part-

Rural scene near Newport, Cumberland County, New Jersey.



NPS



NPS

Island Beach State Park, Ocean County, New Jersey.

ners (New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Parks and Forestry; New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism; and the New Jersey Pinelands Commission). This alternative would allow the NPS to continue its leadership role in Trail management and operations, for a limited time frame (perhaps 4-5 years, similar to extensions provided to some heritage areas) to assist with the transition to a new management structure that would not include long-term NPS management of the Trail. This option would require action by the U.S. Congress to reauthorize the NPS role in managing the Trail for a limited time frame. This option could receive NPS/federal support if authorized and appropriated.

Analysis of Option 2

A temporary continuation of the NPS management role for the Trail along with appropriate funding could allow a period of time to:

- Complete Trail implementation goals per the approved *Implementation Guide*.
- Allow NPS interpretive assistance, technical support, promotion, and project grant support to continue.
- Allow time to strengthen partnership relationships and transition to another management structure.
- Give partners additional time to recover

from the current state and national economic crisis in order to assume greater management responsibility.

- Gradually transfer selected lead responsibilities, such as promotion (marketing) to other Trail partners, while focusing NPS expertise on completing interpretation goals and facilitating the development of a new management framework.
- Establish an expanded management group to facilitate more regular and broader involvement by Trail partners, and to assist with the transition to a new management framework. One suggestion from a county representative at the public meetings was to establish greater involvement and designated representatives from each of the eight (8) counties that include portions of the Trail project area.

Input from Agency Briefings and March 24th Public Meetings on Option 2

The same public discussion about impacts of the current economic climate and the cuts that have been made to existing state and local government agencies and nonprofit organizations applied to this option as it did for Option 1. There was support for additional time to make such a transition to another management structure or entity. However, there was also sentiment that the NPS role was critical



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Hancock House State Historic Site,
Salem County, New Jersey.

and could not be replaced. One state government agency representative suggested that continuing NPS involvement for a limited time under this option would be “just kicking the can down the road”—namely just deferring an inevitable end of the Trail because of his perception that there would not be any agency or organization able to step up and manage the Trail without continued NPS involvement.

Potential Next Steps for Option 2

Unlike Option 1, Option 2 would require direct action by the U.S. Congress. Such action would be needed to reauthorize the Trail for a limited time to allow the transition to another management structure as described above. However, it is unlikely that Congress would have time to take the necessary legislative action to reauthorize the NPS Trail authority before September 30, 2011. It is very likely that a lapse in NPS authority to manage the Trail will occur.

As with Option 1 above, the NPS could continue to facilitate discussions about future management options, but only up until the September 2011 sunset date. In the meantime, the NPS will also be implementing contingency plans regarding staff and materials associated with the Trail. Unlike previous occasions when the NPS field office was maintained

during lapses in authorization, work is under way to close down the NPS field office by September 30, 2011.

Option 3: A new federal role for or within the Trail project area.

This option would involve establishment of possible new and different federal authorities (to replace those associated with the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route legislation) for all or a portion of the Trail project area. Such new authorities would generally require a prior study, public support, and Congressional review and authorization—generally a multi-year process.

The most likely prospect would be the establishment of a new National Heritage Area. Such a designation process would involve conducting a study to determine eligibility of resources within all of or a portion of the Trail project area. Congress could authorize a new study—or a private study could be undertaken—to determine if National Heritage Area designation would be appropriate.

There was a previous NPS study (*Reconnaissance Study: New Jersey Shore of the Delaware Bay*, 2001) of the portion of the Trail project area along the New Jersey side of the Delaware Bay (known as the Trail’s Delsea Region). This

study determined that this portion of the Trail was eligible for consideration as a National Heritage Area should there be sufficient community interest in pursuing this option.

A variation on the idea of new federal authorities would be to add new NPS authorities to an existing NPS project area or unit. The Pinelands National Reserve has areas of significant overlap with the Trail. Again, this would require Congressional action, but Congress could give additional authorities to the Pinelands National Reserve that would enable the NPS to provide technical and/or operational assistance through its Pinelands authorities to portions or all of the Trail's project area that fall outside the boundary of the Pinelands National Reserve.

Analysis of Option 3

Exploration of alternate federal authorities as a means of providing the sorts of interpretive and technical assistance now being provided through the Trail would have both benefits and drawbacks:

- Designation of portions or all of the Trail project area as a heritage area would provide an alternate source of NPS support through the NHA program that historically has provided up to \$10 million in funding over 15 years.
- NHA designation might provide more consistent authorization of support for the 15 year NHA time frame, unlike the Trail that has been subject to frequent sunset clauses and interruptions in authorization over the past 18 years.
- The Bayshore portion of the Trail project area has already met preliminary National Heritage Area eligibility requirements as outlined in the 2001 *Reconnaissance Study: New Jersey Shore of the Delaware Bay*.
- There would, however, be an inevitable interruption in NPS involvement/support while awaiting authorization and funding for the initial study (unless completed privately) as well as the time needed to achieve potential designation by Congress if a study supports eligibility of resources.
- Once designated, National Heritage Areas are required to have a local managing entity, and this could present the same problem as finding a new/alternate management entity for the current Trail itself.

Note that as of this writing, the National Heritage Area program has had its funding cut by 50% in the President's proposed budget for FY 2012.

Input from Agency Briefings and March 24th Public Meetings on Option 3

Support was expressed at the public meetings for the idea of turning the Trail into one or more National Heritage Areas. Participants also asked about the possibility of managing the Trail through another existing NPS unit or project such as the Pinelands National Reserve, the Sandy Hook Unit of Gateway National Recreation Area or the America's Great Outdoors Program. Someone also raised the question of whether or not the Trail could be managed through a different federal agency such as the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge (part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). Another participant asked if Barnegat Lighthouse could be designated as an NPS unit and then serve to oversee the Trail.

Potential Next Steps for Option 3

For the possibility of National Heritage Area designation to be applied to portions or all of the Trail project area, there would need to be local community interest in pursuing a study to evaluate the eligibility of the area for such a designation. As noted above, such a study could be performed by the NPS, if authorized by Congress, or it could be performed independently. The South Jersey Bayshore Coalition is a group of environmental and historical organizations collaborating in the Bayshore region to raise awareness about resource issues. One of its priorities is to seek National Heritage Area designation for the Bayshore region.

If it were determined that a portion or all of the Trail's project area met the eligibility criteria for NHA designation, there would still be the steps required to achieve Congressional designation and to establish the appropriate management entity. All of the above would be a multi-year process. A lapse of NPS involvement in the region would be inevitable. Similarly, a lapse in NPS or other federal involvement would occur for suggestions that Congress reassign Trail management responsibilities to another NPS unit or an alternative federal agency. In the meantime as noted above, the NPS is implementing plans to close its Newport, New Jersey, field office.

Option 4: Permanent authorization for the Trail.

As with Options 2 and 3, this option would require Congressional action to provide permanent authorization for the Trail. Such action would give the Trail an additional level of security and continuity by eliminating the periodic sunset issues that have resulted in Congressional reauthorization actions for the Trail in 1999, 2006, and 2008. Permanent authorization would also eliminate the types of interruptions in authorization that occurred from May 2004 to October 2006 and again between October 2007 and May 2008.

Analysis of Option 4

If authorized by Congress, permanent authority could have the following effect on the Trail:

- It would eliminate interruptions in the Trail's authorization that have been disruptive and have stopped progress on Trail initiatives.
- It would also change the perception of the Trail as only a temporary project not equivalent in stature to those projects or parks with permanent authority.
- It would also run counter to current Congressional intent that the Trail should eventually become self-sustaining without ongoing federal support.
- The Trail is often compared to and treated as though it were a National Heritage Area, but permanent authority would run counter to legislation and policies that only provide Heritage Areas with limited support for a current maximum of fifteen (15) years.

Bass River State Forest, Burlington County, New Jersey.



PineLands Commission

Input from Agency Briefings and March 24th Public Meetings on Option 4

Some meeting participants suggested that continuing NPS leadership in the management of the Trail was essential to the Trail’s survival, especially in the current economic climate. There was clear support for permanent authorization of Trail management by the NPS—the “wine and roses” alternative to the potential loss of NPS involvement in Option 1. A meeting participant suggested that “Permanent status is not the biggest stretch.”

For more detail, see the Public Engagement Process chapter.

Potential Next Steps for Option 4

This option would require direct action by the U.S. Congress. However, in the limited time between completion/release of this strategic plan and the September 30, 2011, sunset, it is unlikely that Congress would have time to take the necessary legislative action to reauthorize the NPS authority associated with the Trail. It is very likely that a lapse in NPS Trail authority will occur.

In the meantime, however, as with other options, the NPS could continue to facilitate discussions about future management options, but only up until the September 2011 sunset date. The NPS will be implementing plans to close the Newport, New Jersey, field office. As this is written, no legislation has been introduced in either house of Congress to reauthorize NPS management of the Trail either temporarily or permanently.

Options Considered but Rejected

Several other options or variations on the above options were considered but rejected following additional review. These include:

Establishment of additional, new permanent NPS sites within the project area of the Trail

The project area includes the Sandy Hook Unit of Gateway National Recreation Area, three National Wildlife Refuges, numerous National Historic Landmarks, and other resources that could be considered for designation as NPS units. Congress could create a

Tea Burning Monument, Greenwich, Cumberland County, New Jersey.



NPS

new unit of the NPS consisting of one or more sites in the project area if they met established criteria. The NPS could assume management of the designated sites while also providing technical and/or operational assistance to other sites and organizations within the corridor. An example is the Boston National Historical Park or “Freedom Trail”, an association of multiple sites owned and managed by federal, municipal, and private entities. Precedents also exist in several national heritage areas.

In the absence of current clear evidence for natural or cultural resources that would meet NPS criteria for significance, feasibility, and suitability, this idea was also rejected. This is not to say that there are not significant resources in the Trail’s project area, but any such review would include evaluation of the presence of similar resources in the NPS system and the question of whether or not the resources are already receiving protection through other federal, state, local, or nonprofit efforts.

Establishment of a National Historic Trail or National Scenic Trail

This idea was based on the possibility of transforming the Trail’s current authority to that of another federal program. Although often confused with other heritage area or trail programs, the Trail’s legislation is unique. It is not classified as either an official National Heritage Area nor is it designated as a National Historic Trail or National Scenic Trail. One idea considered was to investigate whether or not the Trail (in total or in part) could be designated as either a National Historic Trail or National Scenic Trail. However, this idea was rejected when review of eligibility criteria for both types of National Trails did not show an appropriate “fit.”

Glades Wildlife Refuge, Cumberland County, New Jersey.



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Public Engagement Process

Six public meetings were held throughout the Trail project area for both Trail partners and the general public. These were publicized by formal email announcements to a large mailing list, as well as through press announcements in local media and two radio interviews.

Two meetings were held at the offices of key state agency partners. These were arranged through telephone calls and emails.

The purpose of all meetings was to inform people about the current status of the Trail and the strategic planning process, to ask for input about future Trail management and options for sustaining the Trail and the Trail partnership, and to alert the public about the upcoming “sunset” in the federal legislation that would end NPS management of the Trail. (See Appendix G for the public meeting agenda.)

The schedule of public meetings was as follows:

September 20, 2010

2-4 pm and 6-8 pm
Vineland, Cumberland County, New Jersey
Combined total attendance: 26 people
(excluding NPS staff).

March 1, 2011

2-4 pm and 6-8 pm
Lincroft, Monmouth County, New Jersey
Combined total attendance: 12 people
(excluding NPS staff).

March 24, 2011

2-4 pm and 6-8 pm
Toms River, Ocean County, New Jersey
Combined total attendance: 37 people
(excluding NPS staff).

The schedule of state agency meetings was as follows:

April 21, 2011

New Jersey Department of Transportation, Ewing, New Jersey – attended by four people (excluding NPS staff).

May 11, 2011

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Parks & Forestry, Trenton, New Jersey—attended by ten people (excluding NPS staff), representing management staff from New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism, New Jersey Department of Transportation, New Jersey Scenic Byways Program, New Jersey State Park Service, Natural & Historic Resources, and the Pinelands Commission. This meeting included the agency leads from the three state agencies that have been the managing partners with the NPS from the establishment of the Trail (New Jersey Division of Parks and Forestry, New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism, and the Pinelands Commission).

Summary of Public Meeting Comments

Comments on Trail Accomplishments

Responses were very positive regarding the benefits of the Trail to partners and the public, and the excellence of Trail products. There was much praise for the quality of Trail signs, wayside exhibits, welcome centers, the regional brochures, and other printed products.

People said that the Trail facilitated partnerships, helping to link the partner sites, bringing agencies and organizations with shared missions together and enabling them to share resources.

Participants said the Trail has created good tourism opportunities. They felt that people following the Trail map and brochure definitely helped increase visitation at some of the more remote sites (although this is an assumption and not based on specific counts or interviews). The “cachet” and credibility of the NPS “brand” was mentioned often; the NPS logo on wayside exhibits makes people stop and pay more attention, and enhances the marketability of sites. Some said the Trail helps to bring local citizens, as well as tourists, to partner sites, helping them get to know places within their communities and also taking them to places off the beaten track.

One person stated, “There wouldn’t be a Trail without NPS. No one else could do it.”

Some people thought that the Trail still has some unrealized potential, that it can help to draw and retain even more tourists than it already does, but that it doesn’t work as well as it could, perhaps due to insufficient marketing (see “Comments on Trail Mission” below for more about this).

Participants valued the presence of the NPS in the region and its contribution to increasing the region’s visibility on a national level. They appreciated the funding and assistance with interpretation that wouldn’t otherwise happen at under-funded and under-staffed partner sites. In some cases the NPS funding and technical assistance leveraged additional state funding at certain sites. Some participants asserted that the Trail has had a beneficial economic impact on the region, which was one of the original intentions of the Trail.

While participants had some concerns about the name “Trail” for an unspecific driving route and a number of good suggestions for improving marketing of the Trail, their appreciation for the accomplishments of the Trail was enthusiastic without reservation. The letters and emails received expressed most of these same thoughts in more detail.

Comments on Trail Mission

Most people said the mission was still valid and important. One person suggested add-

ing to it “help people understand human impacts.” Although some questioned the extent to which resource conservation has occurred as a direct result of the Trail, others observed that the conservation aspect is difficult to measure but that the Trail educates and creates awareness, which many believe leads to conservation. “If people understand, they will care.” Some thought the Trail has helped to create appreciation of what’s special about the coastal region as a whole. People pointed out that no other entity is doing anything like the Trail, and that there is much more that can be achieved.

The mission question elicited a number of comments about the need for increased marketing and greater public awareness of the Trail. Some suggested that the marketing of the Trail should overlap with the New Jersey beaches, the commercial aspects of which have significant “marketing machines.” Social media were recommended as another marketing tool. Of all those who attended the public meetings, there was a handful of people who said they had not heard of the Trail until they saw an announcement for the meeting. People said that the tourism aspect of the mission is important, but that the first audience should be local residents.

The use of new technologies came up again and again in each of the public meetings.

New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route headquarters located within the Glades Wildlife Refuge, Newport, Cumberland County, New Jersey.



NPS

There is no question that we would like to see the Trail continue. (participant at a state agency meeting)

The Trail does have a web presence on the NPS website, but many meeting participants thought that much more could be done with site and resource interpretation and partner linkages on the web. The idea of using podcasts, cell phone links, and smartphone applications for Trail interpretation was a popular theme. People observed that the Trail is somewhat lagging in this aspect, and that it's essential in particular for engaging young audiences. They also pointed out that web and cell phone information are more flexible & easily updated, and may represent significant cost savings over print materials and wayside exhibits in the long run.

At some of the meetings, a number of ideas bubbled up that would enhance both interpretation and marketing. Among these were packaging discrete mini-tours or bus tours; offering more information on camping, cycling, and other facilities; developing a geo-caching program; and holding special events or piggy-backing on related special events such as Coast Day and the New Jersey Lighthouse Challenge. People suggested making the Trail more tangible with various "give-aways" or collectibles such as puzzle pieces; a passport for collecting stickers or stamps; baseball cards; and a scavenger hunt.

Comments on the Future of the Trail Partnership

The NPS staff presentation on this topic was somewhat different on each of the three public meeting dates. At the September 20 meetings, NPS staff explained that the Trail would "sunset" on September 30, 2011, if Congressional reauthorization did not occur before then; at this point, reauthorization still seemed possible. At the March 1 meetings, NPS staff explained the "sunset" again, but since no reauthorization legislation was pending at the time, it appeared almost certain that NPS management of the Trail would end on September 30. At the March 24 meetings, NPS staff presented the draft options being considered for future management of the Trail. (See Organizational Options Summary chapter.)

Key Points from Public Meetings

Key points from September 20 meetings:

There were many ideas about ways the Trail could enhance and expand services. Participants suggested an annual forum for sites and partners to come together to discuss Trail status and new ideas. They suggested that the NPS facilitate meetings with partners to explore mutual benefits and do cooperative marketing. They agreed that more cooperation among partners and sites would be helpful, and that no single entity needed to take full responsibility.

Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge, Atlantic County, New Jersey.



U.S. Division of Fish & Wildlife



Finn's Point National Cemetery, Salem County, New Jersey.

An advisory committee was suggested for sharing information and bringing in new partners. Another suggestion was a regular short email newsletter, using an existing service, to keep reminding Trail partners that they're part of the Trail and to help them communicate with each other. One comment was that cities and towns, as well as the New Jersey Department of Transportation, should be more involved and contribute funds.

One person stated, "There wouldn't be a Trail without the NPS. No one else could do it." Many participants expressed this sentiment in various ways. Others cited the national recognition, credibility, and cachet that NPS involvement brings to the Trail. Participants were pleased with what the Trail has accomplished, and universally expressed the hope that NPS involvement would continue.

Key points from March 1 meetings:

Participants talked about the success of the Trail in providing a cohesive identity to diverse destinations, increasing visitation, and providing economic returns to communities. They variously described the Trail as a "great idea," "major accomplishment," "tremendous success," and "cheap" for what it has accomplished at modest cost. There was emphasis

on the need to "brand" and further promote the Trail and to involve new social media outreach technologies. Political or media personalities were suggested as spokespersons for the Trail. Participants cited the increasing value of the Trail's interpretive efforts (particularly the outdoor wayside exhibits) as destinations reduce on-site staff.

Participants suggested that the partners get together and form an entity to lead the Trail. A county representative said that the counties should provide leadership and collaboration. Another person said the major partners and county tourism agencies should form a steering committee. It was pointed out that the New Jersey governor is currently supporting tourism as an important economic driver in the state, and that there is finally a new executive director for the New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism.

One observation was that NPS has been a strong leader and needs more time to help with the transition to another management structure. Another was that as long as the NPS has been involved and providing strong leadership, the state and counties did not feel the need to "step up" and become more involved. One suggestion for greater partner in-



NPS

Fortescue State Marina, Cumberland County, New Jersey.

volvement was the establishment of a council representing the eight (8) counties within the Trail project area.

Key points from March 24 meetings:

The presentation of the four draft organizational options distinguished the March 24th meetings from the previous public meetings. Participants were very concerned about the future of the Trail, saying emphatically that the Trail is too important to let go; that the end of NPS management will be devastating; that the Trail will fall apart except for a few sites. They stated that the Trail has assisted sites up and down the coast. There are even fewer state and local resources now (due to the economic recession); attendees suggested that the state and partner sites need the Trail and the NPS more than ever.

Many people said that NPS maintenance of what's already there is essential. This would not be replaced by lower levels of government (or if so, only very minimally). State and local agencies are unlikely to take on any new projects at this time; if and when finances improve, the first priorities will be increasing staffing of state and local agencies and maintenance of state and local sites. However, it was noted that the New Jersey Lieutenant-Governor is very sup-

portive of eco-tourism and might be a champion for the Trail.

Suggestions were made, such as: (1) Organize a new group, perhaps headed by a major non-profit partner such as the Littoral Society or New Jersey Audubon; (2) Get some nonprofit organizations to "partner" and provide leadership; (3) Form an advisory committee or task force for each region, to work on a plan.

Some thought that the Trail is too broad to be managed by one nonprofit organization. It was suggested that a new management structure could be a consortium of many organizations. (Cited example: The Appalachian Trail has 14 cooperating organizations.)

There were questions about the possibility of the Trail partnering with or being managed out of another federal site in the project area, such as Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge or Sandy Hook (a unit of Gateway National Recreation Area). One person asked if the Trail might be merged with Gateway in terms of coastal awareness and conservation. There was discussion of possible partnering and overlap with the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area. One person asked about the possibility of designating

a new NPS unit, such as Barnegat Lighthouse, and possibly managing the Trail from there.

In response to the draft organizational options, one participant described Option 1 (no further NPS management of the Trail) as “doom and gloom” and Option 4 (permanent reauthorization of the Trail) as “wine and roses.” As noted above, there was concern expressed that the Trail would not survive without continuing NPS involvement. There was support for maintaining the Trail in its current form, for making NPS involvement permanent (Option 4) and for maintaining the Trail for a limited time to make a transition to another management structure (Option 2). No participants expressed support for Option 1 that would end NPS management of the Trail on September 30, 2011, because of the current legislative sunset date. This is, however, the default option of what will happen without Congressional action to reauthorize NPS involvement with the Trail.

Summary of New Jersey Agency Meetings

April 21, 2011

New Jersey Department of Transportation, Ewing, New Jersey:

There was much discussion of the New Jersey Scenic Byways Program and whether any current or potential byway efforts could take over management of portions of the Trail. State scenic byways are sponsored by citizen or private groups, so this decision would be up to an existing or future byway sponsor.

There was discussion of NJDOT’s dramatic cutbacks in funding and staffing in recent years. The agency deals with state highways only; funding to install Trail signs is problematic. There may be some funding for maintenance.

May 11, 2011

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Parks & Forestry, Trenton, New Jersey:

Some participants said that Organizational Option 2, “Limited time NPS management to transition to a new management framework,” made sense. There was considerable discussion about whether any senators or congressmen are addressing the future of the Trail, and

whether state agency representatives or non-governmental partners might be helpful in this regard.

It was stated that the Trail wayside exhibits help New Jersey sites, and that the Trail’s publications are “fabulous.” “There is no question that we would like to see the Trail continue.”

There was discussion of scenic byway options. However, the state cannot initiate a scenic byway; there must be a citizen group or private organization to sponsor the initiative.

New Jersey Division of Parks and Forestry is at 41% staffing level due to budget problems. The agency can partner on events and programming but not help financially. The agency is willing to consider managing the remaining inventory of waysides, other signs, frames and backup panels, if NPS is de-accessioning, but would rather have the Trail (the NPS) still manage them.

Additional Public Comments and Actions

Subsequent to the public meetings and partner agency briefings, there were some additional public comments that can be found in Appendix H, “Resolutions, Written Comments, and Correspondence.”

Two counties passed resolutions supporting reauthorization of the Trail. The Salem County Board of Chosen Freeholders passed a resolution on June 22, 2011, and the Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders passed a resolution on June 23, 2011. Copies of the resolutions are included in Appendix H.



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We appreciate that nearly ninety individuals representing Trail destination partners, state agencies, Congressional offices, the National Park Service, and members of both the media and public attended the six public meetings and two agency briefings held as part of this planning process for a strategic plan for the future of the Trail. Still others took the time to respond with written comments and suggestions about the Trail's accomplishments and future opportunities. Thanks go to the staffs of Cumberland County College, the Monmouth County Park System, and the Toms River Branch of the Ocean County Library for making available the wonderful facilities used for the public meetings. Trail volunteers traveled with the NPS staff to assist with set-up and registration for the meetings.

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