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Chapter 5 • Preservation, Conservation & Resource Stewardship

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area includes a unique array of cultural and natural resources that reflect a heritage of regional, national and international interest and importance. Extending from the cataracts just above the American Falls to the outfall of the Niagara River into Lake Ontario, the primary portion of the heritage area includes all of the City of Niagara Falls and the Villages of Lewiston and Youngstown and the westernmost portions of the Town of Porter and Town of Lewiston all of which are located in Niagara County, New York. In addition, there are specific cultural and natural resources not contiguous with the primary portion of the heritage area that are located in Niagara and Erie counties. These properties are listed and described in Appendix XX. Within the primary heritage area boundary there is marked differences in character, appearance and issues between the urban areas of the City of Niagara Falls, the Villages of Youngstown and Lewiston, and rural areas in between. Also there are differing perspectives from the cultural groups that have historically inhabited the area.

This chapter outlines a program through which heritage area and its partners can support preservation of cultural resources, conservation of natural resources and stewardship strategies for both. It also focuses on established best practices and recent innovations through which cultural and natural resources are preserved and conserved. (Also refer to Chapter 6, Community Revitalization for issues and methods relating to community planning and revitalization.) Coordination with existing historic preservation and environmental conservation programs at the international, federal, and state levels along with the strengthening of local preservation and conservation efforts in identifying, designating, protecting, interpreting and promoting significant resources is a key factor in accomplishing the goals and objectives set forth by the heritage area. Success also depends upon the cooperation and collaboration of key cultural groups, academia, nonprofit organizations, the business sector, and governmental jurisdictions as important heritage area partners.

5.1 Vision and Goals for Preservation, Conservation and Resource Stewardship

The *Environmental Assessment for the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area* outlines the planning process through which this management plan was prepared. The ‘Purpose and Need’ (Chapter 1 of the Environmental Assessment) outlines the vision, mission, and goals that were developed for the heritage area as part of the planning process. In part, the heritage area’s vision states that the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area will enable “growth of a sustainable regional economy and the conservation of its natural and cultural resources in ways that benefit and unite its people and places.” Also the mission statement directs the heritage area organization to work directly with a network of partners. The effective and responsible stewardship of the heritage area’s cultural and natural resources will rely heavily on coordination and collaboration with the partnership network.

Nine goals were identified and adopted for the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area addressing various areas of interest and potential action that are stated in Chapter 1 of the management plan. Two of these goals closely address issues and actions associated with the preservation, conservation and stewardship of natural and cultural resources:

Historic Preservation – Maximize the heritage area’s significant cultural resources and landscapes as working community assets.

Nature and the River – Support restoration and enhancement of the heritage area’s natural resources and environment using a sustainable approach that engages the public and develops an appreciation for the Niagara River and its associated natural landscape.

To accomplish these goals, the NFNHA will assist its partners in developing and implementing projects and programs that contribute to the preservation, conservation, and stewardship of significant cultural and natural resources in the heritage area and the region as a whole.

5.1.1 The Historic Preservation Approach

In the Preferred Alternative adopted by the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Commission the following objectives were outlined in developing an approach for the goal for historic preservation:

- Develop historic context statements and engage researchers in using the region’s historic resources as a living laboratory.
- Collaborate with local partners in establishing and implementing an oral history project coordinated with the central database and research program noted above.
- Assist local and regional partners in establishing and supporting a central database for historical information, documents, and research.
- Encourage local governments to prepare/update preservation plans and historic inventories; and apply for the federal Certified Local Government (CLG) program with its planning grants and technical assistance.
- Support local advocacy organizations in preparing a regional preservation plan for the heritage area, building on state and local plans.
- Encourage local advocates in preserving historic resources, neighborhoods, and commercial centers
- Support comprehensive local efforts to stabilize, rehabilitate and restore historic buildings and structures in the National Heritage Area to revitalize neighborhoods and commercial districts.
- Maintain a clearinghouse of grant opportunities and other financial incentives for funding historic preservation projects and revitalizing local business districts across the Heritage Area.

The intent behind the Historic Preservation approach is to establish the heritage area organization as: 1) a leader, coordinator and advocate for historic preservation in the communities located within the primary heritage area boundary including the City of Niagara Falls, the Village of Lewiston, and the Village of Youngstown; 2) a facilitator in strengthening a countywide historic preservation action network in Niagara County; and 3) a partner with Preservation Buffalo Niagara in representing historic preservation interests, concerns and programs in the Erie/Niagara county area.

5.1.2 The Environmental Conservation Approach

In the Preferred Alternative selected by the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Commission the following objectives were outlined in developing an approach to Environmental Conservation (referred to as the ‘Nature and the River’ goal):

- Support other organizations in restoring ecosystems within and along the Niagara River, Escarpment, and Gorge.
- Encourage interpretation of Native American perspectives on relationships between culture and nature.
- Develop an incentive strategy to promote top-priority Niagara River Greenway projects.
- Provide educational and interpretive programming that support environmental goals and objectives set forth in the Niagara River Greenway plan. Accord greater consideration to applications for funding that is consistent with the plan's goals.
- Participate in and encourage local initiatives for restoring ecosystems along the river.
- Create and promote opportunities for visitors to enjoy local foods and beverages.
- Encourage appreciation of the region's agriculture resulting from the unique microclimate and natural resources, including Native American perspectives.
- Assist in the recognition, restoration and enhancement of resources and landscapes.

The general intent behind the Environmental Conservation approach is for the heritage area organization to communicate appropriate concerns, values, and best practices through its education and interpretive programs that promote sustainability, resource stewardship, and a conservation ethic. Heritage area projects will be designed, constructed, and implemented in a manner consistent with resource conservation and sustainability objectives. The heritage area organization will also maintain close communication with local and regional environmental conservation agencies and organizations and will consider partnering on projects that have shared objectives and outcomes.

5.2 Preservation, Conservation and Resource Stewardship at the Regional Level

Planning and implementation at the regional level is one of the key components for community success in the new economy. The State of New York has recently embraced this idea with the merging of its planning councils and economic development entities into a single, regional organization. Now referred to as Regional Economic Development Councils, each council is comprised of representatives who are regional leaders in business, industry, education and the non-profit sector. Each council also has local government representation consisting of elected officials from each county in the region who serve in an ex-officio capacity. Each regional council has prepared a vision statement and strategic plan specific to the needs of the respective region. State agencies have been directed by the governor to consolidate and prioritize the funding of projects using these strategic plans as a primary factor in the awarding of grants.

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area lies within the Western New York Regional Economic Development Council (WNYREDC) which consists of five counties--Niagara, Erie, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, and Allegheny. Tourism is identified as a targeted industry in the WNYREDC strategic plan with attention given to marketing and attraction development. Also the Niagara County Community College Culinary Institute and the Niagara Falls Experience Center are listed as a specific priority projects. However, an equally important component in developing an effective heritage tourism program is preserving and enhancing the built environment in the region's communities along with the natural and cultural landscapes of its rural areas. Such efforts improve the quality of life for residents and offer a scenic context for visitors touring the region.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area will develop a coalition of resource stewardship interests to form an alliance that promotes historic preservation and environmental conservation as an

economic development tool with the Western New York Regional Economic Development Council including a list of programs and projects that would have a regional impact.

Preservation Buffalo Niagara

Preservation Buffalo Niagara (PBN) is the region's leading historic preservation nonprofit and is involved with a variety of initiatives including special events, heritage tours, preservation technical assistance and cultural resource surveys. Although past efforts have focused primarily on Erie County, the organization's bylaws state that both Erie and Niagara counties are its primary area of focus. In addition, the organization's mission is to "identify, preserve, protect, promote and revitalize historically architecturally significant sites, structures, neighborhoods, commercial districts and landscapes in western New York" which is defined as a seven county area. PBN is recognized as a 'Preservation Colleague' with the Preservation League of New York State and a 'Local Partner' with the National Trust for Historic Preservation. A partnership with PBN that includes its Niagara County counterpart, The Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Society, would immediately align the heritage area with the strongest preservation advocacy organization in the region and expand preservation initiatives and programming in Niagara County. Also the heritage area organization should join forces with PBN, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, and other historic preservation interests in the region, to form a coalition that will approach the WNYEDC to include regional historic preservation efforts in the next WNYEDC strategic plan update.

ACTION: The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area should use technical and administrative resources available through Preservation Buffalo Niagara to strengthen historic preservation advocacy in the heritage area.

Niagara River Greenway

The vision statement for the Niagara River Greenway reads that it is to be "a world-class corridor of places, parks and landscapes that celebrates and interprets our unique natural, cultural, recreational, scenic, and heritage resources and provides access to and connections between these important resources while giving rise to economic opportunities for the region." The latest version of the Greenway plan was completed in April 2007 and includes an inventory of associated resources, identifies transportation issues, provides suggested matching fund sources, and potential organizational partnerships. The Greenway plan includes preservation and conservation issues and actions.

ACTION: The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area should approach the Niagara River Greenway Commission to develop, support, and advance heritage area projects and programs.

5.2.1 Regional Historic Preservation Plan

A regional historic preservation plan, perhaps for the seven county area, would identify historic resources, districts and cultural landscapes that need to be preserved and enhanced. The plan would also outline a regional preservation strategy for program participants including minimum standards, best practices, and effective incentives. Program participants should include local governments, regional and local preservation organizations, tourism-oriented businesses, and academic interests. Also smaller local governments and organizations in villages and rural towns that might not ordinarily have the means or technical expertise would benefit from a regional approach.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area will develop a coalition of regional historic preservation interests to collaborate on the preparation of a regional historic preservation plan that would

include historic preservation strategies and assistance to smaller local governments such as the Village of Youngstown and Town of Porter.

5.2.2 Regional Cultural Resource Inventory and Database

A regional cultural resource database would serve both as a comprehensive inventory for historic preservation efforts and as an information source for interested property owners, students and visitors. Subsections 5.3.3 and 5.3.4 below address the implementation of a similar program specific to the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area. These efforts can be combined or conducted separately depending on the degree of interest expressed by partner organizations, the amount of information to be captured, and the timing for project startup.

The inventory can build on the cultural resource database established and maintained by the State of New York. The inventory should: 1) be maintained in a digital format at the regional level by an appropriate organization or agency; 2) should be accessible online to heritage area partners and the general public with a user-friendly interface; 3) links should be embedded in the inventory to provide access to available research and publications associated with each resource; and 4) the information should be updated on a regular basis. Preservation Buffalo Niagara currently offers a similar database of this type on its website featuring historic resources in the City of Buffalo accessible at <http://buffaloah.com>.

ACTION: A strategy should be adopted by the regional historic preservation coalition to create a comprehensive regional cultural resource database that is user-friendly and accessible to the general public that includes an inventory of historic buildings and structures, sites, and cultural landscapes relating to the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area.

5.2.3 Designation of Significant Historic/Cultural Resources

Once the database and related inventories are completed, individual and groups of related historic/cultural resources should be analyzed for significance and nominated accordingly through established recognition programs at the statewide, regional, national and international levels. Agencies and organizations can then endeavor to conduct ongoing research for these significant resources and manage for the protection and enhancement of these resources beyond what is currently provided. This research would also inform the public interpretive program described in other chapters of this management plan. The interpretive program also creates awareness for residents and visitors about these significant resources, who then develop an appreciation and understanding for the resource, which then builds public support for resource protective measures, the heritage area program, and an improved quality of life.

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list in the United States of the historic places such as districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture of regional, statewide and local significance. The National Register program is administered by the National Park Service (www.nps.gov/nr/) with assistance provided by Tribal and State Historic Preservation Offices. Private individuals, organizations, local governments, and American Indian tribes often initiate this process and prepare the necessary documentation. A professional review board in each state considers the proposed nominations and makes a recommendation on its eligibility.

In addition to the honor of being recognized, listing in the National Register has certain benefits. Designated properties, along with properties considered eligible for designation, are to be given consideration in planning for federal, federally licensed, and federally assisted projects as outlined in

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Federal agencies are to allow all interested parties and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation an opportunity to comment on all projects affecting historic properties either listed in or determined eligible for listing in the National Register.

National Register properties are eligible for certain federal tax benefits. Owners of National Register properties may qualify for a 20 percent investment tax credit for the rehabilitation of income-producing certified historic structures including commercial, industrial, and rental residential buildings. Federal tax deductions are also available for charitable contributions for conservation purposes of partial interests in historically important land areas or structures.

It is also important to emphasize that owners of private property listed in the National Register are free to maintain, manage, or dispose of their property as they choose provided that no federal monies are involved.

ACTION: The heritage area organization should seek support from property owners, the New York State Historic Preservation Office, Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, and local governments for the nomination of eligible individual properties, historic districts, and multiple properties related by theme associated with the heritage area to the National Register of Historic Places.

National Historic Landmarks Program

A National Historic Landmark (NHL) is a historic building, site, structure, object, or district that represents an outstanding aspect of American history and culture. Also administered by the National Park Service (www.nps.gov/nhl/), NHLs are part of the National Register of Historic Places program. Properties that are so designated by the Secretary of the Interior are nationally significant historic places because they possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States of America. More than 2,400 historic places across the nation have received this designation which is less than three percent of the total number of properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places. There are more National Historic Landmarks in New York (262) than any other state in the nation, four of which are located in the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area.

Potential NHLs are identified primarily through theme studies undertaken by the National Park Service. These studies provide a comparative analysis of properties associated with a specific area of American history. Theme studies conducted by the National Park Service relevant to Western New York may found at www.nps.gov/nhl/themes/themes-allnew.htm.

The benefits for NHL listing include limited federal grants through the Historic Preservation Fund and funding through agencies in some states. In prioritizing grant funding, NHLs frequently receive higher priority than other National Register properties. There are also federal income tax incentives available for donating easements and for rehabilitating income-generating historic buildings. Owners of NHLs are eligible to receive a bronze plaque, available free of charge, to display on the property and historic preservation technical assistance available through the National Park Service.

The National Park Service is also responsible by law for monitoring the condition of NHLs. Information on the condition of landmarks and potential associated threats is provided in an update published online. The update and individual downloadable information sheets have frequently been used as valuable tools for fundraising and influencing public policy. This information is also used by the National Park Service to plan its assistance programs and aids in grant-making decisions.

ACTION: The heritage area organization should partner with the other National Heritage Areas in New York and associated preservation organizations in support of a National Historic Landmark Special Theme Study for the ‘Transportation and Industry along the Great Lakes’ theme that incorporates the eastern portion of the Great Lakes basin including the Niagara River, St. Lawrence Seaway, Hudson River, and Erie Canalway along with the nomination of associated eligible properties as National Historic Landmarks.

UNESCO World Heritage Sites

The UNESCO World Heritage Convention (www.whc.unesco.org/en/list) recognizes sites of outstanding universal value and global natural and/or cultural importance on the World Heritage List. The first step a country must take to nominate sites to the World Heritage List is to make an inventory of its important natural and cultural heritage sites located within its boundaries referred to as the ‘Tentative List.’ The list provides preliminary information on properties that a country may submit for consideration within the next five to ten years. The agency responsible for submitting the Tentative List for the United States is the National Park Service. Niagara Falls is not currently on the list.

Currently, there are 936 properties (725 cultural, 183 natural, and 28 mixed) in 153 different countries worldwide that have been designated and placed on the World Heritage List. An additional 1,504 properties from 162 different countries are currently on the Tentative List. The United States has 21 designated properties on the World Heritage List (eight cultural, twelve natural, and one mixed, with one considered as endangered) with an additional 13 properties on the Tentative List. Canada has 15 designated properties (six cultural and nine natural, none of which are considered endangered) with an additional nine properties on the Tentative List. The United States and Canada currently share the UNESCO ‘transboundary’ designation for two properties that cross international borders.

ACTION: The heritage area organization should seek support from the National Park Service and a Canadian partner organization for a joint nomination of Niagara Falls to the World Heritage List as a ‘mixed property’ of both natural and cultural significance.

UNESCO International Biosphere Reserves

These recognized sites must demonstrate an innovative approach to conservation and sustainable development by reconciling issues of biological and cultural diversity with economic and social development. They serve as testing grounds for sustainable development from a local to an international perspective. There are currently 553 Biosphere Reserve sites in 107 countries. In the United States, there are 48 designated biosphere reserves including seven that are located in National Parks that are also listed as World Heritage Sites: Everglades, Redwood, Glacier, Yellowstone, Olympic, Great Smoky Mountains and Hawaii Volcanoes.

It is worthy of note that Canada’s portion of the Niagara Escarpment is an International Biosphere Reserve designated under the UNESCO program (www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/ecological-sciences/biosphere-reserves/). Having powers similar to that of a Canadian municipality – deriving from the Canadian system of government, not the UNESCO program, which has no regulatory power – the Niagara Escarpment Commission in Ontario regulates zoning and land use for development on or near the escarpment. The Niagara Escarpment Plan provides land use designations, development criteria and related permitted uses, including farming, forestry and mineral extraction. It also outlines a strategy for creating a greenway of 130 existing and proposed parks and open spaces that are linked by the Bruce Trail, Canada’s oldest and longest hiking trail.

ACTION: The heritage area organization should use information provided by Ontario’s Niagara Escarpment Commission to provide interpretation for the New York portion of the escarpment that is located within the heritage area boundary.

5.3 Historic Preservation in Niagara County

On a smaller scale, the heritage area organization should seek to partner with historic preservation interests within Niagara County, including the County Historian, in forming a countywide network. This advocacy network would market historic preservation and heritage tourism as an economic development tool and would assist local governments in adopting or enhancing historic preservation regulations, standards and best practices. This alliance would also be a primary partner with Preservation Buffalo Niagara to strengthen preservation advocacy in the area and duplicate the successful programs of the PBN organization in Niagara County. The programs that could be offered include workshops, design and technical assistance for historic homeowners along with a historic preservation information clearinghouse for residents, property owners and organizations. The alliance, with support from PBN, could also offer to prepare design guidelines for historic neighborhoods and commercial districts and encourage local governments to provide tax incentives and eliminate code disincentives for the rehabilitation of historic properties.

Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Society, Inc.

The Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Society, Inc. is the only non-governmental group in Niagara County who advocates for historic preservation. The organization’s mission is to “discover, protect and revitalize the cultural heritage and related architectural beauty of the city and to continually educate our community and our visitors about our history.”

ACTION: The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area should partner with the Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Society (NFHPS) and other historic preservation interests in Niagara County, including the County Historian, to form a county-wide historic preservation network.

ACTION: The countywide alliance will partner with Preservation Buffalo Niagara to introduce and duplicate successful PBN programs in Niagara County.

ACTION: The heritage area organization, as part of the countywide alliance of historic preservation organizations described above, should approach representatives from Niagara County to determine if interest exists in establishing a countywide historic preservation program and, if so, seek Certified Local Government status (see subsection 5.4.8 below) to assist in achieving countywide historic preservation goals and funding related projects.

5.4 Historic Preservation in the National Heritage Area

Although it is imperative that the heritage area organization coordinate and partner with historic preservation organizations at the county and regional levels, the primary boundary of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area is entirely contained within five municipal jurisdictions in western Niagara County. The following subsections address in detail the historic preservation conceptual approach outlined in subsection 5.1.1 with respect to these jurisdictions. This information serves as the basis for establishing a framework for historic preservation in the heritage area.

5.4.1 Research and Historical Context Statements

An important aspect of historic preservation, and a successful heritage tourism program, is to have a clear and detailed understanding of the historical context for the heritage area and region. Although a

substantial amount of research about popular historical subjects, events and personalities has been conducted by professional and avocational historians, additional focused research is needed to represent the perspective of certain under-represented cultural groups, to fill some gaps in the historical record, and to assist with the evaluation of the significance of undesignated cultural resources and landscapes. This comprehensive body of work must then be publically shared and used to accurately inform the heritage area's interpretive program.

Potential actions have been identified for historical research and the development of historical context statements in the heritage area. These actions include the following:

- Establish an advisory group comprised of professional and avocational interests along with a representative from the National Park Service to outline a program for historical research and devise research protocols (see Subsection 5.4.2 below).
- The advisory group will provide oversight for the initial preparation of detailed historical context statements by qualified individuals to guide writing, research, and designations.
- The historical context statements will be posted in a location that is readily accessible to the general public and easily editable by appropriate parties.
- The historical context statements will identify subjects and topics where additional research is needed. Professional, avocational, and student researchers will be encouraged to focus their efforts on these areas of interest.
- The heritage area organization will devise a means to distribute information about the historical contexts, important stories, and new research associated with Niagara Falls National Heritage Area through historical publications, websites, newspaper articles, seminars, etc.

5.4.2 Research Advisory Group

The heritage area organization should take the initiative in hosting and sponsoring the research advisory group indicated above as one of the actions to take in the short-term. The group should consist of at least one representative from each of the following organizations: 1) the National Park Service; 2) a heritage attraction within the boundary of the heritage area; 3) a thematically related heritage attraction in Erie or Niagara County outside of the heritage area boundary; 4) a professor of history from a local college or university; 5) a local professional or avocational historian; 6) the official historian for Niagara County; 7) an interpretive planner or specialist; 8) a school district curriculum development coordinator; and 9) a history/social sciences teacher from a public or private secondary or elementary school. The group should be chaired by a member of the National Heritage Area Commission and seek to establish research protocols, citation requirements and overall best practices for those who will prepare the detailed historical context statements. The statements should be organized and prepared in a manner that follows the heritage area interpretive themes.

The suggested standards should then be reviewed by a specialist with the National Park Service who has a familiarity with the development of interpretive plans and historical context statements with comments provided. After review and approval of the standards by the governing body of the heritage area organization, individuals and organizations should be solicited to prepare the historical context statement(s). The research advisory group may serve as a selection committee to make recommendations on the proposals submitted with final decision made by the heritage area organization. It may also be useful for the group to review drafts of submittals provided by the individual or organization selected to prepare the historical context statements.

The advisory group should also advise the heritage area organization on a detailed outreach strategy to engage students' at all educational levels in research and projects that might assist the heritage area. The historical context statements should be incorporated into a website maintained by the heritage area organization. Although the integrity of the original document should be maintained in some capacity, there would be great benefit in creating an editable version that could be updated using an online "wiki" tool that is password-protected. Members of the research advisory group and an extended network of scholars and experts could be given access to this version so that ongoing updates and edits can be made. This would allow the historical context statements to be revised as new research is prepared and information revealed.

ACTION: The Research Advisory Group should be created as a subcommittee of the heritage area organization using the criteria outlined in this subsection.

5.4.3 Oral History Project

An oral history program will be developed in partnership with a local and/or regional historical organization to document the stories and experiences of current and past residents and individuals associated with the historical context statements and the interpretive themes of the heritage area. (Oral history is also addressed in subsection 4.5.2 in Chapter 4.) The research advisory group may be well-positioned to internally assist the heritage area organization in this endeavor as well. However, similar projects are already underway with partner organizations including the Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Society who should be recognized as a primary partner in this effort. Also coordination with other oral history initiatives in the larger region, such as the *Memories of Niagara* project in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, is suggested.

It is important that the collecting of oral histories conform to standards and best practices established by recognized authorities on the subject. One such authority is the Oral History Association, an internationally recognized organization comprised of historians, librarians, archivists, students, journalists, teachers, and academic scholars who provide professional guidance, technical advice and share research. An excellent definition for oral history is provided by the organization:

Oral history refers both to a method of recording and preserving oral testimony and to the product of that process. It begins with an audio or video recording of a first person account made by an interviewer with an interviewee (also referred to as narrator), both of whom have the conscious intention of creating a permanent record to contribute to an understanding of the past. A verbal document, the oral history, results from this process and is preserved and made available in different forms to other users, researchers, and the public.

Detailed information on principles and best practices for oral history is available on the organization's website at www.oralhistory.org.

ACTION: Coordinate with other historical organizations in the area including Preservation Buffalo Niagara and the North Star State Heritage Area in the City of Niagara Falls in conducting oral history interviews using professional standards and best practices.

5.4.4 Cultural Resource Surveys

Historic/cultural resource surveys are vital for effective preservation planning. A cultural/historic resources survey is the principal tool for the identification of historic properties, districts and cultural landscapes placing them in a local, state and/or national historic context and evaluating their significance.

Surveys provide an inventory of the built environment by systematically documenting historic properties by geographic location. Individual surveys may encompass an entire village, neighborhood in a city, rural landscape, or theme. Examples of a themed survey may be ‘the historic Rosenwald Schools of New York’ or ‘Properties in New York Associated with the Underground Railroad.’

Surveys produce varying levels of information depending on the type of the survey and intended use. A reconnaissance survey is typically broad in scope, incorporates a larger geographic area or topic, and provides summary information about several identified historic/cultural resources; whereas, an intensive survey provides deeper, focused research on a specific resource or subject matter. The New York Survey and Evaluation Unit, part of the State Historic Preservation Office, provides standards and technical assistance for cultural/historic resource surveys.

The resulting inventory that is developed after one survey or a series of interrelated surveys, enables agencies and organizations to make sound decisions about the overall protection of significant historic properties and the mitigation of properties that may be impacted by new development. It is important for the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area to surveys as part of its preservation planning framework for implementing the goals and strategies outlined in this management plan. Additional surveys can be conducted in partnership with the New York Office of Historic Preservation and municipal governments to assure that a comprehensive inventory of properties 50 years of age or older exist for all communities and areas within the primary heritage area boundary. This may be a means to partially fund the preparation of the historical context statements outlined in subsection 5.3.1 above and the regional cultural resource database described in subsection 5.2.2 above.

ACTION: The heritage area organization should partner with local communities and Preservation Buffalo Niagara to conduct historic/cultural resource surveys of historic properties, archeological sites, geographic areas and cultural landscapes that are not adequately documented within the heritage area.

5.4.5 Historic/Cultural Resource Database for the Heritage Area

The Research Advisory Group described in Subsection 5.4.2 above should assist the National Heritage Area in establishing an inventory of heritage area resources by creating a central database for historical information. This may be managed by the heritage area organization as part of the historical context statements initiative outlined above or separately by one of the heritage area partners. (For instance, an organization such as the Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University is likely to already have some of this information.) There may be a compelling reason to collect this data on a broader scale that conforms to the state’s tourism or economic development regional boundaries. Subsection 5.2.2 above addresses a regional approach to developing a cultural resource database.

It is suggested that the database include detailed information on all cultural resources in the heritage area. The cultural resource inventory maintained by the New York Historic Preservation Office should serve as a starting point for the list of individual resources and districts in the region and for the minimum data fields that should be incorporated into the database. The database will subsequently be expanded to include information and resources beyond what is maintained by the State of New York. It should be kept in mind that the database may ultimately be used as a source to render virtual cultural landscapes and historic settings for interpretive purposes so the capture of information of buildings and structures that no longer exist is equally important.

The database should be created with user-friendly data entry templates to allow editing and updating by members of the research advisory group and an extended network of scholars, agencies and experts.

Database capacity should accommodate multiple representative photographs for each cultural resource including current and historic images. The database should also be developed in a manner that provides a geographic information system (GIS) interface allowing resource locations to be mapped.

It is essential that an aspect of the database be accessible online to the general public in an intuitive, read-only format. An important exception is the display and provision of archeological site locations. It is standard public policy with federal and state agencies that access to such information is not publically distributed in an effort to minimize the destructive, and sometimes illegal, collecting of artifacts. The heritage area organization is strongly encouraged to conform to these policies for archeological sites located on both public and private lands.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area should seek an academic or private sector partner with established GIS credentials to develop a cultural resource database that includes an inventory of historic buildings and structures, archeological sites, objects and cultural features relating to the heritage area using the criteria outlined above.

5.4.6 Virtual Archives

Since the first known documented illustration of the falls by Father Louis Hennepin who was part of the 1678 La Salle expedition, a multitude of artists have captured their experience with the falls in a variety of mediums from pencil to film. Since the 19th century, the falls have been extensively featured in tourism promotions, materials and souvenirs. Today, according to Eastman Kodak Company, the most photographed natural feature in the world is Niagara Falls.

This incredible wealth of contemporary and historical visual media is an amazing and unique asset for this heritage area. No single archives or repository can likely house all of this available material. The research advisory group should identify and work with a network of local public and collegiate libraries and archives to support and build capacity for a shared digital repository for historical information, materials, images, documents, ephemera and photographs of objects relating to Niagara Falls and the heritage area. For the short term, the ‘virtual archives’ should provide an online searchable, annotated catalog of images accessible to the general public and be able to receive donated digital images by users. Eventually, the virtual archives should provide access to and be indexed with the central resource database described above; offer special online exhibits; and provide links to partner heritage attractions, in the context of stories and interpretive themes relating to the heritage area.

ACTION: The heritage area organization should partner with an organization to initiate work on the virtual archives using the criteria outlined above.

5.4.7 Preservation Planning in Heritage Area Communities

New York’s Municipal Home Rule Law empowers counties and municipalities to adopt and enforce local laws relating to the “protection and enhancement of its physical and visual environment” with historic/cultural resources clearly being a part of a community’s built environment. The State of New York also recognizes municipal authority to regulate and preserve these resources through the regulation of land use through local zoning ordinances, enactment of the State Historic Preservation Act of 1980, historic landmarks legislation, and the Certified Local Government Program. In fact, the only way significant historic properties may receive regulatory protection from incompatible alteration and demolition by a private owner is through enactment of a local historic preservation law. These laws may be implemented either through a local zoning ordinance, a separate historic preservation ordinance, or both. In addition, New York courts have recognized upheld this authority in established case law.

Even with a strong legal framework at the state level, the State of New York's Historic Preservation Plan, *Historic Preservation at a Crossroads*, states that only about 225 (11 percent) of the 1,600 municipalities in the state have adopted local historic preservation ordinances or related regulations to protect historic and cultural resources. Only four percent have become Certified Local Governments and only five municipalities were identified to have prepared stand-alone historic preservation plans. In addition, most municipal comprehensive plans only make a passing reference to historic and cultural resources and do not promote the adoption of historic preservation strategies.

The New York Historic Preservation Office has made it a priority to provide educational materials and training programs in an effort to assist local historic preservation planning efforts. New York State law and preservation practice offer many tools for advancing smart growth goals and protecting community character. The NY-SHPO has targeted the 14 regional planning commissions, preservation organizations and groups such as the New York Conference of Mayors to develop formal training programs and resource materials to educate municipal officials, in compliance with annual training requirements, about historic preservation planning tools and strategies.

The City of Niagara Falls and the Village of Lewiston have adopted several of the historic preservation planning tools and laws available to local governments in the State of New York. The Village of Youngstown, because it is a smaller government, should devise a comprehensive historic preservation strategy for its community by seeking assistance through the state preservation programs outlined above. Also assistance is available through professional circuit planners as part of the New York Planning Federation outreach programs.

ACTION: The heritage area organization should partner with local governments within the heritage area to prepare and implement the historic preservation planning tools necessary to identify, designate, preserve and protect the significant historic/cultural resources in their communities.

5.4.8 Certified Local Government Program

The Certified Local Government Program (CLG) available through the National Park Service and managed by the New York State Historic Preservation Office (NY-SHPO) provides federal funding and technical assistance for historic preservation planning to certified local agencies. Any city, county, town, or village can be a CLG, once a determination is made by the NY-SHPO that the local historic preservation program meets state and federal standards. The standards include adopting local historic preservation legislation and appointing a qualified preservation review commission. Once reviewed and approved by the state, applications are forwarded to the National Park Service for final certification. Program benefits as indicated on the NY-SHPO website include technical preservation assistance and legal advice; direct involvement in identifying properties that may be eligible for listing in the State and National Registers of Historic Places; training opportunities; grants designated exclusively for CLG projects; and membership in statewide and national CLG networks.

Currently, of the 74 municipalities participating in New York's Certified Local Government Program, 13 are located in Erie and Niagara counties. Within the primary boundary of the heritage area the City of Niagara Falls and the Village of Lewiston are certified as part of this program. There is potential benefit for the Village of Youngstown in pursuing this certification. Also, from a regional planning perspective, it may be worth considering that Niagara and Erie counties seek the certification which would facilitate and partially finance the preparation of a regional historic preservation plan described in subsection 5.2.1 above.

ACTION: The heritage area organization should facilitate a discussion with representatives from the Village of Youngstown to determine if seeking Certified Local Government status would assist the community in achieving their historic preservation goals and how such a program may be administered with a limited staff.

5.4.9 Historic/Cultural Resource Preservation and Protection

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area has many significant historic/cultural resources from several historical periods that still exist today in both public and private ownership. Many of these resources have been the focus of preservation efforts by individuals and organizations for many years. The heritage area organization provides a new forum through which preservation activities can be coordinated and directed. Appendix XX of this management plan provides an historical overview and inventory of the historic/cultural resources associated with the four interpretive themes of the heritage area.

Traditionally, historic preservation activities have focused primarily upon the preservation of individual historic buildings. While this is important, the concept of a heritage area seeks to broaden the range of recognized historic resources within its boundary. Heritage areas are viewed as ‘living landscapes’ where community character and appearance is valued and managed in ways that promote quality of life for current and future residents and provide historic context for visitors. The following objectives and implementation strategies provide a comprehensive approach for the preservation and management of these important historic/cultural resources.

The heritage area organization will identify on a continuing basis elements of the cultural landscape that remain from the past. It will also seek the appropriate management of the identified resources using established historic preservation best practices. When public use of and/or access to a resource is allowed, the heritage area organization will integrate it as an active component of the interpretive program. The sustainable use and operation of these resources will also be a priority consideration of the heritage area.

Historic Buildings and Districts

Traditional historic preservation programs, techniques, and planning tools are typically oriented to the preservation of historic buildings. Programs offered by the New York Historic Preservation Office, the New York Preservation League, Preservation Buffalo Niagara, and local preservation initiatives will continue to be important for the identification, recognition and preservation of historic buildings associated with the heritage area.

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Feasibility Study Report prepared by the National Park Service in 2005 identified several historic resources and sites associated with the four interpretive themes of the heritage area. Twenty-one of these properties are located within the primary heritage area boundary and are listed on the National Register of Historic Places of which four are National Historic Landmarks. Almost all of these identified resources are comprised of buildings, structures or contributing buildings and structures in a historic district. This list is not comprehensive because it does not take in to account the entire historic fabric of the heritage area’s communities. Also historic architectural surveys have not been completed for all portions of the heritage area. Preserving a community’s historic fabric and appearance is equally as important as protecting the individual historic resources ~~hta-tare~~that are significant to heritage area’s four interpretive themes.

The establishment of local historical commissions or historic architectural review boards can manage historic preservation efforts and promote public awareness at the municipal level. Boards or commissions can function at different levels with varying degrees of decision-making authority. The decision to establish a local historic commission, and the role of that commission, is determined by each

municipality. At one end of the range is the type of commission that serves in an advisory capacity and has no regulatory authority in dictating what can or cannot be done to historic buildings. Commissions serve as local advisors, providing information to homeowners about rehabilitation projects and offering technical advice in the form of voluntary project review or providing information on best management practices through hardcopy or online publications. The opposite end of the regulatory spectrum is the adoption of a strict preservation ordinance or zoning overlay that specifically identifies which buildings are to be regulated. The commission or board has final decision making authority in reviewing proposed changes to historic properties.

ACTION: Partner with the owners of historic properties that are important to the four heritage area themes in devising a strategy to preserve and protect the historical and architectural integrity these significant resources.

ACTION: Partner with local governments and Preservation Buffalo Niagara to develop historic preservation design guidelines for historic districts in the heritage area that provide guidance on the rehabilitation of historic buildings and the design of new infill construction.

ACTION: Partner with local governments and an appropriate easement receiving entity to consider implementation of a façade easement program in the heritage area that would preserve and protect the facades of significant historic buildings and offer possible incentives and tax benefits to property owners.

ACTION: Partner with local governments and Preservation Buffalo Niagara to implement a facade improvement matching grant program for owners and tenants of designated historic residential and commercial buildings.

ACTION: Initiate a partnership with other preservation organizations and agencies to establish a revolving fund for the acquisition, stabilization and restoration of significant historic resources.

Cultural Landscapes

A cultural landscape is defined by the National Park Service as "a geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein, associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values." There are four types of cultural landscapes: historic sites, historic designed landscapes, historic vernacular landscapes, and ethnographic landscapes. (An ethnographic landscape may contain an assemblage of natural and cultural resources that a group of people maintain a religious, artistic, aesthetic and/or cultural connection.)

For the heritage area, landscapes that retain cultural and natural elements that are significant to the four interpretive themes may include military engagement sites, sites of past encampments and fortifications, historic roads and pathways, scenic vistas/viewsheds, structural remnants, traditional resource utilization sites, ceremonial/sacred grounds, and industrial areas. Providing actual boundaries and the resources associated with these cultural landscapes is beyond the scope of this management plan. However, it is readily apparent that the heritage area contains several significant contexts and settings that warrant further study. This should be considered an early priority for the implementation of this management plan.

Continued research can help identify and document both historic and prehistoric sites associated with the four interpretive themes. Sites can then be assessed for their significance, integrity and subsequent preservation. Because of the high degree of growth and development in the City of Niagara Falls over the

past one hundred fifty years, particularly within the area closest to the Niagara Falls Reservation, only a limited number of buildings and structures have been preserved. A cultural landscape assessment approach could reveal some important findings and offer a variety of ways to commemorate and interpret several of the stories important to the heritage area that do not have tangible resources such as buildings and structures.

ACTION: Complete a cultural landscape inventory to better understand the distinct components of cultural and historic landscapes within the primary heritage area boundary and prepare a National Register of Historic Places nomination, if appropriate.

Archeological Sites

Archeological resources are frequently overlooked as part of a historic preservation program. However, such sites often contain invaluable information about the use or occupation of a property, add to the historical record, and provide excellent opportunities for interpretation. This is especially true when archeological investigations are in progress. Many known archeological sites associated with the heritage area have yet to receive serious attention. Also it is likely that there are many archeological sites that have not yet been discovered or identified. Because archeological investigations tend to attract attention, the exploration and interpretation of such sites in the heritage area would significantly contribute both to the body of scientific research and the interpretive program.

There are a range of archeological resources directly relating to the heritage area that potentially deserve attention. They include encampments (both prehistoric and historic), sites of military engagements, mill sites, and previous fortifications. There is also the possibility that former farmsteads, domestic sites, taverns, and other types of eighteenth and nineteenth century sites retain archeological integrity. These sites provide important information about the behavior, culture, and life-ways of former inhabitants of the Niagara region. Also the owners of known artifact collections should be approached in a manner that will allow the documentation of provenience and diagnostic artifact types.

The identification, documentation, and preservation of potential prehistoric, eighteenth and nineteenth century archeological sites should be an important activity of heritage area partners. An archeological predictive model can be prepared that would identify areas of known and likely archeological site location for use by local government officials. Where disturbance of potential archeological sites cannot be avoided, regulatory and other programs encouraging or requiring subsurface investigation should be implemented as a part of heritage area interests.

ACTION: To identify possible locations of undocumented archeological sites, the National Heritage Area should consult with a professional archeologist to prepare an archaeological predictive model and archaeological sensitivity map for use by local governments and preservation organizations within the heritage area boundary.

ACTION: When land development is proposed in areas of high archeological site probability as identified by the archaeological predictive model and shown on the archaeological sensitivity map, an archeological survey using a subsurface sampling methodology should be conducted by a professional archeologist. A data recovery strategy should be implemented for any significant archeological deposits or features that will be damaged or destroyed by the proposed development.

ACTION: The heritage area organization should actively solicit the assistance of individuals and organizations that possess knowledge of local prehistory and history in determining archeological site locations and cataloging private artifact collections.

ACTION: Partner with local governments and an appropriate easement receiving entity to consider implementation of a conservation easement program in the heritage area that would preserve and protect significant archeological sites and offer possible incentives and tax benefits to property owners.

5.5 Environmental Conservation in the Heritage Area

The heritage area organization should coordinate and partner with environmental conservation organizations at the local, county and regional levels. The following subsections address in detail the conservation and resource stewardship conceptual approach outlined in subsection 5.1.2. This information serves as the basis for establishing a framework for environmental conservation in the heritage area.

The parks and preserves within the primary heritage area boundary reflect the unique natural and environmental resources along the Niagara River. Improving public access and providing interpretive opportunities will help to increase awareness and appreciation of these valuable assets. The parks also offer recreational opportunities for visitors and provide a setting of natural and scenic beauty.

5.5.1 The State Environmental Quality Review Process

Although growth management and land use regulatory powers are primarily the domain of municipalities in New York, larger scale, both public and private, must address historic preservation and environmental conservation issues as part of the State Environmental Quality Review process (SEQR). The SEQR process requires that a local or state agency in charge of an approval process must take into account the impact of the proposed action on environmental factors associated with and in the vicinity of the project. The definition of 'environment' is broad and includes resources in the natural and built environment. The definition as provided in Part 617 of Title 6 of the New York Codes, Rules and Regulations reads as follows:

...the physical conditions that will be affected by a proposed action, including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, noise, resources of agricultural, archeological, historic or aesthetic significance, existing patterns of population concentration, distribution or growth, existing community or neighborhood character, and human health.

If an agency makes a determination that a significant resource will be impacted by the proposed action, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) must be prepared. The EIS must outline the proposed design, methods and techniques that will be used to mitigate the impact of the proposed action on the effected resource. The state process is similar to what is required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for proposed actions initiated by federal agencies.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area should monitor the SEQR process for projects located within the primary heritage area boundary to ensure that impacts on significant historic and environmental are adequately mitigated.

5.5.2 Environmental Conservation Issues

During the planning process associated with the preparation of this management plan several significant environmental conservation issues were identified. Locating, remediation and monitoring of Brownfield and Superfund sites is still one of the leading environmental issues for the region. Also the natural resource inventory is incomplete for Erie and Niagara counties and the potential for environmental research as part of the Great Lakes Basin has not been fully realized. Niagara Falls, the river, gorge, escarpment and its associated natural resources have not been fully recognized for its national and

international significance. Opportunities exist for natural resource conservation to play a stronger role in community revitalization for the City of Niagara Falls and other communities in the heritage area.

Existing environmental organizations in the region are working with the appropriate authorities to complete natural resource surveys for critical habitats and imperiled areas using criteria established by the New York Department of Environmental Conservation. Universities and governmental agencies maintain detailed natural resource databases for ecosystems in the western New York region and involve student researchers in the data collection. Several non-profit environmental advocacy organizations in the vicinity have developed strong volunteer corps to generate grassroots support for environmental protection and natural resource conservation. Also several environmental agencies and organizations are directly involved with implementing specific projects that are monitoring ecosystem health and restoring natural landscapes.

The concept behind the implementation actions listed below is to allow the National Heritage Area to partner and coordinate with local and regional environmental conservation advocates. The communities located within the primary heritage area boundary strongly support environmental conservation and seek to improve the quality of life for residents by implementing project and programs that improve and enhance the natural environment in the Buffalo-Niagara region.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area should provide interpretation for the heritage area's theme *Natural Phenomenon* in locations where significant resources are not currently interpreted.

ACTION: Through the National Heritage Area provide educational and interpretive programming for students, residents and visitors that promote an appreciation for natural resources in the heritage area and create an awareness of current environmental issues.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area should support the sustainable use of trails along the Niagara Gorge including closure of trail sections to allow natural regeneration where and when appropriate.

ACTION: The National Heritage Area should encourage, support, and facilitate the purchase of conservation land for environmental protection and the designation of environmentally sensitive/resource management areas by environmental agencies and organizations.

5.6 Preservation and Conservation Partners and Programs

The existing conditions assessment contained within the Environmental Assessment portion of the heritage area plan provides an overview of the specific organizations, programs, and planning processes related to historic preservation and environmental protection in the State of New York. On a broader scale, there are ten organizational tiers that have the potential to provide support for the preservation and conservation of significant resources in the heritage area:

1. Local nonprofit organizations comprised of grassroots advocates provide direct-benefit programs to residents and work to conserve and preserve significant resources;
2. Municipal and county governments integrate preservation and conservation goals and policies into planning documents, initiatives and regulations along with implementing associated public infrastructure projects;

3. Local and regional businesses along with national and international corporations provide the materials, labor, expertise, practical experience and sometimes funding for preservation and environmental causes;
4. Regional authorities, districts and public-private partnerships have been established with specific purposes to provide technical assistance, program implementation, and/or funding opportunities;
5. Nonprofit organizations at the regional, statewide and national level provide a comprehensive advocacy network as well as strategic educational and management programs;
6. Private foundations at the regional, statewide and national level provide direct funding to organizations with shared preservation and conservation objectives;
7. State government provides a comprehensive regulatory and program framework for regional authorities and local governments along with assistance in resource management, grant opportunities, and dedicated program funding; and
8. The federal government provides a comprehensive regulatory and program framework for state governments, technical assistance for interpretation, data collection and resource management, along with grant opportunities and dedicated program funding;
9. A bi-national network of public and private academic institutions with research and documentary capabilities is available with direct support provided by local colleges and universities; and
10. The World Heritage Center at the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is dedicated to linking and balancing the conservation of nature with the preservation of cultural properties.

Several of the other organizational tiers outlined above often play an important role in identifying and preserving cultural and natural environment resources, frequently as part of the local and state regulatory review process. Regional, state, national and international organizations play a significant role in providing vision, leadership, coordination, and incentives to encourage and support local action. Communicating and coordinating among the ten organizational tiers will be a critical task for the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area.

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area is well-positioned to take advantage of several grant funding opportunities. Even with recent budget cutbacks, the State of New York offers one of the most diverse state-funded grant programs in the nation. Also regional grant programs associated with power plant relicensing offer a substantial opportunity to leverage available heritage area funding. Additional information about grant funding opportunities is provided in the programs section below and in Chapter 7.

Rather than establish its own grants information clearinghouse, the heritage area organization should partner with other agencies, academic institutions, non-profit organizations and the Western New York Regional Economic Development Council region to create such a clearinghouse. This would avoid duplication of similar services and provide all agencies and organizations in the region with access to financial resources for projects and programs.

5.6.1 Programs in the New York Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area should consider the potential for pursuing funding, establishing partnerships and maintaining communication with the following state agencies within this Department:

Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau

The Bureau acts as the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for the State of New York managing all state and federal historic preservation programs that assist communities, municipalities, and individuals in identifying, evaluating, preserving, and protecting historic, archeological and cultural resources. The SHPO administers both state and national historic preservation programs, including the New York State Register of Historic Places, the New York portion of the National Register of Historic Places, the historic rehabilitation tax credits program, and the federal Certified Local Government program. The Bureau also provides preservation planning and environmental review services. These programs are implemented through a network of teams assigned to regions across the state.

A matching grant program to acquire, improve, protect, preserve, rehabilitate or restore properties listed on the National or State Registers of Historic Places is available to municipalities or nonprofits with an ownership interest. Also the agency provides matching grants to Certified Local Governments for National Register of Historic Places nominations and updates along with other historic preservation activities including architectural and archeological surveys and inventories.

ACTION: Work closely with staff in the Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau to identify and evaluate historic resources associated with the heritage area and solicit grant funds for related historic preservation projects.

Bureau of Historic Sites

Part of the Division of Historic Preservation, the Bureau of Historic Sites provides technical and program support to New York's state parks and historic sites for the protection and interpretation of significant natural, historic, and cultural properties owned and managed by the State. Using a collaborative approach, the Bureau provides technical assistance for the following topics: building and landscape preservation, historic collections conservation, curatorial services, collections management, archaeological research and preservation, interpretive program and project development, and historic property protection and security. The Bureau also assists state park Friends organizations in efforts to enhance and expand programs, properties, and collections at state historic sites and historic parks.

ACTION: Engage staff with the Bureau of Historic Sites to provide technical assistance in the implementation of the interpretation program historic preservation projects, and archeological research associated with state-owned historic and cultural properties in the heritage area.

Environmental Management Bureau

Located within the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, the Bureau assists in the responsible stewardship of natural resources in the state park system by protecting water and land; plants and animals; the environmental health and safety of patrons and employees; and in ensuring compliance with environmental laws and regulations. The Bureau works to balance visitor access with resource protection and cares for common and rare species, as well as natural communities in state parks.

ACTION: Consult with staff in the Environmental Management Bureau to identify common and rare animal and plant species in the heritage area for interpretive programs and to address issues of conservation and resource sustainability.

Council of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation

The Council consists of the Commissioner of State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; the Commissioner of Environmental Conservation; Chairs of the eleven Regional Parks Commissions; and the Chair of the State Board of Historic Preservation. The Council is charged with preparing and

producing an annual report highlighting issues and achievements associated with the management of the state historic preservation program and operation of state parks. The Regional Commissions are charged with acting as a central advisory body on all matters affecting parks, recreation and historic preservation within their respective regions, with particular focus on the operations of the State Parks and Historic Sites.

A matching grant program for the acquisition or development of parks and recreational facilities for projects to preserve, rehabilitate or restore lands, waters or structures for park, recreation or conservation purposes is available to municipalities or nonprofits with an ownership interest, for indoor or outdoor projects and must reflect the priorities established in the New York Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

ACTION: Present the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area management plan to the Council of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation for review and seek input from the Council on new projects and programs associated with parks in the heritage area.

ACTION: In partnership with the Regional State Parks Commission, seek SCORP funding for identified projects in the heritage area that will preserve, rehabilitate or restore lands, waters or structures for park, recreation or conservation purposes.

New York State Heritage Areas Program

Formerly known as the Urban Cultural Park System, the State Heritage Areas program is designed to be a partnership between state agencies and local governments and organizations to promote special areas of significance around the state. Individual communities and corridors encompassing several communities are eligible for designation, incorporating many of the state's significant natural, historic, and cultural resources and relating to themes defined in the State Heritage Trails program. Eighteen (18) State Heritage Areas have been established to date including the Western Erie Canal Heritage Corridor with a boundary that encompasses all of Niagara and Erie counties. An additional heritage area has been proposed, the Underground Railroad State Heritage Area located in the City of Niagara Falls. At the time that this National Heritage Area management plan was under preparation, a planning document was underway for the Underground Railroad State Heritage Area initiative despite the fact that the New York State Heritage Areas program has been subject to recent staff reductions and budget cuts.

A matching grant program was previously available for projects to preserve, rehabilitate or restore lands, waters or structures that are located within the boundary of a state heritage area although funding is not currently provided for this program in the budget for the State of New York. In 2007 the Heritage Development Resource Guide (<http://nysparks.com/historic-preservation/documents/HeritageDevelopmentResourceGuide.pdf>) was prepared by the program which provides a summary of statewide organizations and agencies that are involved or may assist with the development of heritage resources.

ACTION: Coordinate and partner with the management entities for the Western Erie Canal State Heritage Corridor and Underground Railroad State Heritage Area on shared preservation and conservation goals, projects and programs.

New York State Heritage Trails

This program was developed to highlight significant sites in New York that relate to four historical themes: 1) the American Revolutionary War, 2) the Underground Railroad, 3) Women's Heritage, and 4) President Theodore Roosevelt. The sites and heritage attractions associated with the four themes are featured on a state website and in trail-related promotional materials. Many of the sites also received

support from the New York State Office of Parks and Recreation and Historic Preservation to allow their programs to reach a larger visitor audience.

With funds provided by the Federal Highway Administration, a matching grant program for the acquisition, development, rehabilitation and maintenance of trails and trail-related projects is available to non-profit organizations, municipal, state and federal agencies, tribal governments and other public agencies and authorities. Funded projects must be identified in, or further a specific goal of, the New York Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) and must be accessible to the general public.

ACTION: Coordinate and partner with the New York State Heritage Trails program to identify, preserve and promote historic sites and heritage attractions in the heritage area that relate to the four heritage trail historic themes and seek matching grant funding for projects that meet the program's objectives.

5.6.2 Programs in the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area should consider the potential for pursuing funding, establishing partnerships and maintaining communication with the state agencies within the Department of Environmental Conservation as described below.

Great Lakes Protection Fund

This program provides an ongoing funding source regional and statewide research projects that will protect, restore and improve the health of the Great Lakes ecosystem in New York State. The program supports projects between government, academia, non-governmental and environmental groups to conduct research and exchange/apply information about remediating and sustaining the health of the plant, animal, and human elements of New York's Great Lakes ecosystem. Typical projects include collecting and analyzing environmental data; research on the economic, environmental and human health effects of environmental contamination; developing new and improved environmental cleanup technologies; research on the effectiveness of pollution-control policies; and monitoring the health of fish, wildlife, waterfowl and other organisms.

Environmental Justice Community Impact Grants

Environmental justice is defined as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Environmental justice efforts focus on improving the environment in communities, specifically minority and low-income communities, and addressing disproportionate adverse environmental impacts that may exist in those communities. Funding is available for a variety of projects including community gardens and green infrastructure, air and water quality monitoring, waste recycling in public housing, lead poisoning prevention, building deconstruction and recycling, and environmental education for urban and Native American youth. Typical grants range in amounts from \$5,000 to \$50,000.

ACTION: Partner with environmental conservation and community groups in the heritage area that may want to offer public environmental education programs and community improvements that relate to the goals and objectives shared between the Environmental Justice Community Impact program and this management plan.

Environmental Remediation Technical Assistance Grants

This program is available to eligible community groups to increase public awareness and understanding of remedial activities taking place in their community. Eligible community groups such as nonprofit organizations may apply to receive grants for up to \$50,000 per eligible site with no match requirement. Funds may be used for the purpose of obtaining independent technical assistance in interpreting existing environmental information about an eligible 'significant threat' site being remediated in the State Superfund Program or Brownfield Cleanup Program and sharing the information with the general public. An eligible community group must certify that its membership represents the interest of the community affected by the site, and that its members' health, economic well-being or enjoyment of the environment is potentially threatened by the Superfund or Brownfield site.

ACTION: Partner with community groups in the City of Niagara Falls to apply for funding from this program to assist in sharing information with the general public about the story of Love Canal and other contaminated industrial sites in the vicinity.

Urban and Community Forestry Program

Available to municipalities and nonprofit organizations, this program is designed to assist municipalities with implementation of sustainable local urban forestry programs. Grants are provided to increase tree cover on local streets and in parks; to assist in the proper care and maintenance of community trees; to conduct tree inventories and prepare management plans; and to create and distribute information on the value and benefit of urban trees.

ACTION: Partner with environmental conservation and community groups in the heritage area that may want to offer public conservation education programs and community improvements that relate to the goals and objectives shared between the Urban and Community Forestry Program and this management plan.

5.6.3 Programs in the New York Department of State

Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program

The New York State Department of State provides financial and technical assistance to municipalities and community-based (nonprofit) organizations to complete revitalization plans and implementation strategies for brownfield sites. In addition, the Department of Environmental Conservation provides technical assistance and advice to program applicants regarding site assessments on brownfield sites as part of the program. Funding is available to conduct the following: Step 1) a Pre-Nomination Study, a preliminary analysis of the area affected by brownfield sites including the potential for revitalization; Step 2) Nomination, an in-depth analysis of the site including an economic/market analysis and reuse strategy; and Step 3) Implementation Strategy, a detailed description of the techniques and actions that are necessary to implement the plan, proposed uses and improvements.

Currently the City of Niagara Falls has two Brownfield Opportunity Areas projects funded and underway. The first project is a Step 1, Pre-nomination Study for an approximate 1,100-acre area characterized with 30 to 45 brownfield sites located in the Buffalo Avenue corridor with project objectives to redevelop the corridor for new businesses, increased tourism activity, more open space, and environmental enhancement. The second project is a Step 2, Nomination Study in the Highland Community for an approximate 560-acre area characterized with 15 potential brownfield sites that the City intends to redevelop for residential and business enhancements.

ACTION: Assist the City of Niagara Falls in achieving project objectives relating to tourism objectives that tell the history of the Buffalo Avenue Corridor including public education and interpretation improvements and activities.

Local Waterfront Revitalization Program

For New York communities this comprehensive program is available to address the most critical issues facing the ongoing use and redevelopment of natural, public, working, or developed waterfronts. First, a planning document is locally prepared in partnership with the Division of Coastal Resources, with community consensus about the future of its waterfront. Once approved, the municipality is eligible for grant funding to implement the projects needed to achieve the vision.

The City of Niagara Falls has received a grant from this program to continue improvements to LaSalle Waterfront Park. Work items include installation of an entrance sign, park amenities, and landscaping.

ACTION: Assist and support municipalities located within the heritage area in designing and developing projects that will improve public access to the community's waterfronts, preserve and enhance significant resources, and provide interpretation about the natural and cultural history of the Niagara River.

5.6.4 Statewide Preservation and Conservation Organizations

New York Council for the Humanities

A nonprofit organization founded in 1975 to help all New Yorkers become thoughtful participants in the state's communities by promoting critical inquiry, cultural understanding, and civic engagement. The Council is the sole statewide proponent of public access to the humanities and receives Federal, State, and private funding. The grants program supports lectures, festivals, panel discussions, walking tours, and the planning and implementation of exhibitions and other ventures at small and large nonprofit institutions including museums, libraries, historical societies, and other cultural and educational organizations.

Parks and Trails New York

This is the statewide advocacy organization for parks and trails that works with community organizations and municipalities to plan, create, promote, and protect a growing network of parks and more than 1,500 miles of greenways, bike paths, and trails. The organization encourages improved maintenance and stewardship of the state park system, promotes bicycling for sustainable tourism and economic development, provides technical assistance and grants, and advocates for the creation a statewide trail network. Currently, Parks and Trails New York has a contractual agreement with the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Commission and National Park Service to provide a part-time administrative staff position for the heritage area.

Preservation League of New York State

The league is dedicated to the protection of New York's diverse and rich heritage which includes historic buildings, districts, and landscapes. It actively encourages historic preservation by public and private organizations, agencies, and individuals in communities throughout the state. Through the Endangered Properties Intervention Program the organization directly intervenes when historic buildings are threatened with disinvestment, neglect, and demolition by facilitating the purchase and rehabilitation of threatened historic properties.

New York Cultural Heritage Tourism Network

This network is a coalition of arts, culture and heritage sites and attractions from across the state that have joined forces to increase visitation for each member and grow cultural heritage tourism for the benefit of local economies, cultural & educational institutions, and visitors. The organization has prepared a statewide inventory of arts, culture and heritage destinations and venues numbering over 2,400 properties and is creating cultural heritage tour packages for on-line purchase.

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin | Interest expressed by tribal nation representative |
| • Onondaga Indian Nation (New York) | No response from tribal nation representative |
| • Cayuga Nation of Indians (New York) | No response from tribal nation representative |
| • Oneida Indian Nation (New York) | No response from tribal nation representative |
| • St Regis Mohawk Tribe (New York) | No response from tribal nation representative |

As required by federal regulations in the Environmental Assessment portion of this planning document, input from these tribal nations was solicited during preparation of the heritage area management plan. In addition, the successful implementation of the management plan will require the Native American perspective and ongoing participation by representatives of the three tribal nations listed below.

5.7.1 The Haudenosaunee Confederacy (The Six Nations of the Iroquois)

In the eyes of the Haudenosaunee Grand Council, the governing body for the Six Nations consists of fifty hereditary sachems. The Seneca or ‘Onondowahgah’ (meaning “People of the Great Hill”) have historically resided the furthest west in Iroquois Territory and are one of the original five nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. Today, the Seneca people have the largest population among the Six Nations. Those residing in the United States are divided among the two federally recognized tribal nations described below and a third, the Seneca-Cayuga Tribe of Oklahoma. The Tuscarora became the sixth nation of the Iroquois Confederacy in 1722 and maintain separate tribal nation status in the eyes of the United States government. Some people of Tuscaroran ancestry are said to still reside in North Carolina, their homeland at the time of European contact, but do not maintain any federally recognized tribal status. It is worthy of note that a significant number of Iroquois tribal members also reside on a reservation, the Six Nations of the Grand River, in Ontario, Canada.

The Tonawanda Band of Seneca Indians

One of the original Five Nations of the Iroquois, or ‘Haudenosaunee’, the Seneca are recognized as the “Keepers of the Western Door.” During the 19th century the Tonawanda Band sought a separate identity from the other Seneca Indians in New York in order to preserve their traditional practices, including selection of their lifetime leaders by family lineage. The Tonawanda Band of Seneca Indians is a separate tribal nation recognized by the United States government. Their reservation, located on the upper reaches of Tonawanda Creek at the eastern edge of Erie and Niagara counties and western edge of Genesee County, is one of three reservations granted to the Seneca Indians by the 1784 Treaty of Fort Stanwix. It is situated several miles from the primary heritage area boundary near Akron, New York where approximately 500 tribal members live. A representative of this tribal nation has been authorized to serve on the federal commission for the heritage area, but the seat remained vacant during preparation of the management plan.

The Seneca Nation of Indians

Forming a modern form of elected government in 1848, the Seneca Nation of Indians maintains five reservations in western New York. An estimated 7,800 members of this tribal nation live on both the Cattaraugus Reservation (Erie and Cattaraugus counties) and Allegany Reservation (Cattaraugus County) which were granted to the tribe in the 1784 Treaty of Fort Stanwix. Two of the three other smaller reservations were acquired by the tribal nation for gaming operations including the Niagara Falls Territory on which the casino in the City of Niagara Falls stands. Both representatives appointed by this tribal nation passed away during preparation of the heritage area management plan and the National Park Service is waiting for additional nominations from the tribal nation.

The Tuscarora Nation of New York

The sixth member of the Iroquois Confederacy, or Haudenosaunee, this tribal nation maintains a 9.3 square mile reservation just east of the primary heritage area boundary near Lewiston, New York where 1,150 tribal members live. The reservation is in the proximity of where their ancestral village was located in the early 19th century. A representative of this tribal nation serves on the federal commission appointed for the heritage area.

5.7.2 Stewardship of Native American Resources in the Heritage Area

Appropriate stewardship of resources associated with the Native American cultural context requires further identification and research along with ongoing communication with representatives of the federally recognized tribal nations in the vicinity of the heritage area. The types of preservation and conservation activities proposed include the following:

- Conduct interviews with representatives from each federally recognized tribal nation in the vicinity of the two-county area to provide opportunity beyond this management plan to retrieve information regarding traditions, stories, resources, landscapes, and activities within and related to the heritage area that are important to each tribal nation.
- Prepare a detailed cultural context statement for each tribe that still exists or once existed in the two-county vicinity that provides a background history, ethnographic information, biographies of past and present tribal leaders, location and names of villages, conflicts with other tribes, diagnostic artifacts, museum collections, and an annotated bibliography.
- Identify natural resources, environmental settings, ecological processes and cultural landscapes within the primary heritage area boundary that are significant to Native American tribal groups.
- Maintain an inventory and develop a predictive model for the location of prehistoric and proto-historic archeological sites associated with indigenous peoples in the two-county area.
- Preserve unprotected archeological sites through land acquisition or conservation easement programs.
- Mitigate adverse impacts using existing federal and state cultural resource management procedures when acquisition for protective purposes is not feasible.
- When and where appropriate, assist Native American tribal groups in sharing and interpreting ceremonies, traditions and activities with other Niagara County residents and visitors.