

# Chapter 4

*“Tellin We Story”:*

An Interpretation Framework for the  
Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor





#### **Chapter 4 divider photos (top to bottom)**

- James Bullock—historian and re-enactor – Castillo de San Marcos National Monument, St. Augustine, St. Johns County, FL (Photo Credit: Althea Natalga Sumpter)
- Charles “CC” Williams, Jr. – net making – Awendaw, Charleston County, SC (Photo Credit: Diedra Laird, Charlotte Observer)
- William Saunders – storytelling – John’s Island, Charleston County, SC (Photo Credit: NPS)

## **PURPOSE OF THE INTERPRETATION FRAMEWORK**

This chapter outlines the process by which the Commission would develop comprehensive, meaningful interpretation across the Corridor. It includes the Corridor's primary interpretive themes, audiences, and identifies various strategies for reaching the many audiences within and beyond the Corridor boundary. In addition, this document includes information about the process by which the Commission would formalize relationships with partners and partner sites that are already interpreting, or would like to interpret, Gullah Geechee history and culture.

This chapter is split into four sections.

### **PART 1: INTRODUCTION**

Part 1 is an introduction that answers the question, "What is Interpretation?" and includes the opportunities and challenges inherent in interpretation across such a large landscape.

### **PART 2: GULLAH GEECHEE CULTURAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR**

Part 2 highlights the primary interpretive themes and identifies audiences and strategies for interpretation that the Commission would pursue. Part 2 concludes by outlining the process by which the Commission would work with partners to enhance and link site-specific and partner-specific interpretation across the Corridor.

### **PART 3: HERITAGE TOURISM AND VISITOR EXPERIENCE**

Part 3 discusses heritage tourism, its application to the Corridor, and best practices for balancing visitation with resource protection. It also covers the type of visitor experiences that the Commission wishes to provide.

### **PART 4: SIGNAGE FRAMEWORK**

Part 4 outlines the signage framework that would be the basis for sign implementation.

Lastly, the resource inventory, partnership, and partner site applications and supporting documents are included in appendices C and F, respectively.

The overarching goal of interpretation throughout the Corridor is to raise awareness, understanding, and appreciation for the history of Gullah Geechee people, their contributions to the development of the United States, and connection to the African diaspora and other international cultures.

## PART 1: INTRODUCTION

### USE OF THE INTERPRETATION FRAMEWORK

This interpretation framework is intended to serve as a structure that the Commission can use to effectively implement comprehensive interpretation of Gullah Geechee history and culture across the Corridor. It is designed to outline a process by which the Commission would work with partner sites and other organizations, businesses, and individuals to interpret the Gullah Geechee story in many ways and to direct those efforts toward the various audiences identified. The applications and supporting explanatory documents included in appendix E have been developed for use by organizations, businesses, and individuals interested in participating as a partner or partner site of the Corridor.

### WHAT IS INTERPRETATION?

In its most simple form, interpretation can be defined as the art of telling a good story. It is, however, a term that means many things to many people. It can mean the translation of languages, perceptions about poems or other written works, how a person feels about a historic building, or the appreciation someone gains for a culture. The listing of facts about a resource, for example, does not mean that it is being interpreted; only that it is being described.

"The Gullah Geechee Heritage Corridor Act provides an opportunity for all of us to have direct contribution and input into telling the story of our foreparents, of our lives, of our family, of our community, of our heritage and traditions. . . no one else can tell our stories."

Thomasena Stokes-Marshall  
Mount Pleasant, SC – June 2009 Meeting

Interpretation lies in a deeper connection with resources and stories. In the National Park Service and in other contexts around the world, interpretation is the process of providing each visitor an opportunity to personally connect with a place. Interpretation seeks to answer the question "so what?" by illustrating the deeper meaning and facilitating a connection between the visitor and the subject. That is the essence of a good story. Stories make a connection between tangible things and intangible ideas by giving visitors an opportunity to experience something with their mind, heart, and soul, which is the essence of interpretation. Explaining the physical characteristics of a resource, such as the materials used to construct a building, the type of construction, architectural style, etc., is relatively easy to do. The more difficult task is to link the tangible elements that can be experienced with one's senses to the intangible ideas and emotions that lie beyond simple description. The opportunity inherent in interpretation is to engage visitors' senses in such a way as to elicit thoughts about a deeper meaning—encouraging visitors to look at history, resources, and stories in entirely new ways. Interpretation should seek to provide opportunities for visitors to care about places on their own terms.

Each individual may connect to a place in a different way; some may connect immediately, while others may realize the connection at some point in the future. The overall objective of interpretation is to provide everyone an opportunity to explore how that special place is meaningful to them, with an understanding that what is meaningful to one person may not be meaningful to another. Thus, using diverse strategies to reach a variety audiences is key to providing a range of ways to reach people and for them to experience a place and story on their own terms.

For one person, a tour guide's effective use of a metaphor in the discussion of a historic plantation might inspire an emotional connection. For another, an interpretive sign describing the traditional use and importance of a praise house may provoke a meaningful connection to the place and an understanding of the deeper history.

Effective interpretation is not easy; it takes effort. If done thoughtfully and intentionally, visitors would come away with not only an understanding of the resource, but also a personal connection to the stories associated with it.

## ROLE OF INTERPRETATION IN THE CORRIDOR

The role of interpretation within the Corridor is to use diverse interpretation strategies to create meaningful connections and understanding amongst visitors and residents; it is intended to connect people with the stories, past and present, of a dynamic, living, ever-evolving culture. Connecting both residents and visitors alike to the intangible meanings, expressions, viewpoints, and spirituality of the Gullah Geechee people—all of which are inherent to tangible places within the Corridor—is vital to the purpose of interpretation. Without a deep understanding of the people that live within the Corridor (including their history, culture, and traditions), the often distorted, one-sided description of history will continue to be perpetuated, resulting in continued misunderstanding. Implementation of this interpretation framework provides an opportunity for Gullah Geechee people to tell their own stories and to accurately communicate their culture to visitors and community members.

### The Opportunities

There are many opportunities inherent in developing a long-term interpretation framework for the Corridor. A few specifics are included here. When effectively implemented, there is an ability to provide visitors and residents with opportunities to connect with resources, while simultaneously conserving those resources. When managed appropriately, revenue can be generated for organizations, businesses, and individuals across the Corridor; the ability of governments to provide necessary public services through additional tax revenue can also be enhanced through increased visitor spending.

"Who am I? And in order to answer that you have to recognize where you came from, the land you came from, and your ancestors that did all that they could do to help you to be who you are."

Dr. Anita Hammond  
Jacksonville, FL – February 2009 Meeting

Examples of opportunities are:

- The Commission has a unique opportunity to develop Gullah Geechee-specific interpretation across the Corridor. Current interpretation within the Corridor is often either site specific or solely based on a historical period of time or event. For example, current interpretation at many historic plantations focuses on the institution of slavery and life on the plantation. It may or may not discuss the plantation economy and its significance to the development of the United States. If the plantation economy is discussed, it is often not expressed in terms of Gullah Geechee history or culture. The opportunity that is inherent in the congressional designation of this area as the Corridor is to raise the understanding and awareness of the history and culture of Gullah Geechee people, past and present, and to provide ways for people of varied backgrounds and life experiences to connect with and experience the multitude of resources within the Corridor.

- The Commission has an opportunity and the ability to link individual resources within the Corridor boundaries to the larger primary interpretive themes. Creating thematic relationships across the Corridor has not yet been accomplished in a way that is approachable and understandable by the public.
- The Commission has an opportunity to work with partners and partner sites to ensure that sites associated with Gullah Geechee history and culture are protected and preserved for future generations. The Commission would work to ensure that designated partners and partner sites are adequately and appropriately planning for and mitigating the potential for resource impacts.
- The Commission has an opportunity to increase visibility of the resources within the Corridor. Increased exposure can lead to increased visitation which, when managed in a responsible and thoughtful manner, has the potential to generate more revenue for individual sites. Not only would the individual site benefit, but the surrounding community would as well.

## The Challenges

Although interpretation can create memorable and meaningful experiences for residents and visitors alike and leave them inspired and eager to learn more, there are inherent challenges involved. The Commission is committed to working with all partners, to the extent practicable, to find innovative ways to collaborate, despite the challenges that exist.

Examples of such challenges are:

- The Corridor spans all or portions of 27 counties within four states, and includes a wealth of significant resources that are tied to the six themes identified by the Commission. Developing a long-range, comprehensive strategy to link resources to themes across this broad geography requires close coordination amongst the Commission, partners and partner sites.
- The Commission does not own, manage, or have regulatory control over land, sites, or resources. Therefore, developing comprehensive interpretation across the Corridor requires time and effort to organize disparate organizations, businesses, and individuals around a common objective.
- Developing meaningful interpretation in cooperation with partners and partner sites requires time, effort, and expertise, which means that significant financial resources have to be raised. Raising adequate funds to employ staff and implement this effort poses an ongoing challenge to partners, partner sites, and the Commission.
- Some resources are not easily accessible by the public. Safe public access is important and would be a necessary element for any partner or partner site offering public visitation.
- Some resources are difficult to interpret for a variety of reasons. For instance, the story of certain resources may be perceived as less dramatic than those of surrounding Gullah Geechee resources, or the location may not be as enticing as those of nearby sites. Visitors often have limited time to explore the Corridor, and as a result, must prioritize which resources they will visit. Developing and delivering strong interpretation that reflects enthusiasm for a resource and its significance is often more challenging at particular sites, however, that does not diminish the importance of the resource.

## GRAPHIC IDENTITY

The Commission would use a consistent graphic identity for all interpretation and marketing materials. The graphic identity would include the logo, color, format, fonts (letter styles), and other aspects of the visual identity of the Corridor. The graphic identity of the Corridor would be applied comprehensively to all Corridor publications, materials, and signage, to the extent practicable. Through a coordinated graphic identity, visitors and residents would recognize Corridor interpretation or marketing products regardless of the medium used. For example, print advertisements would have a similar graphic identity as the Web site. The signage system would have a similar graphic identity to rack cards and interpretation panels. A consistent graphic identity would reinforce the visitor's and resident's sense of place, whether online or within the Corridor.



FIGURE 15. OFFICIAL GULLAH GEECHEE CULTURAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR LOGO

## **PART 2: GULLAH GEECHEE CULTURAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR**

### **PRIMARY INTERPRETIVE THEMES**

Primary interpretive themes are the key ideas through which the nationally significant resource values are conveyed to the public. They connect resources to the larger ideas, meaning, and values of which they are a part. They are the building blocks—the core content—on which the interpretive program is based. Each theme may connect to a number of specific stories or subthemes. These elements are helpful in designing individual services and in ensuring that the main aspects of themes are addressed.

The primary interpretive themes of the Corridor are ideas, concepts, or stories that are central to the area's purpose, significance, identity, and visitor experience. Themes provide the framework for interpretation and education programs, influence the visitor experience, and provide direction for planners and designers of exhibits, publications, and audiovisual and interpretive programs. Tangible and intangible resources in the Corridor are associated with each of the heritage area's six primary interpretive themes.

- I. Origins and Early Development
- II. The Quest for Freedom, Equality, Education, and Recognition
- III. Global Connections
- IV. Connection with the Land
- V. Cultural and Spiritual Expression
- VI. Gullah Geechee Language

These six primary interpretive themes are represented by a myriad of resources, most of which are associated with one or more of the following five categories of cultural resources:

1. Ethnographic Resources
2. Archeological Resources
3. Structures and Districts
4. Cultural Landscapes
5. Museum Collections

Each of the six primary interpretive themes convey the broad stories to be shared with all audiences. Included within each of the broad primary interpretive themes are a myriad of stories about significant events, people, and periods of time. Therefore, specific key thematic topics have been developed for each interpretive theme to provide readers, potential partners, and partner sites with more information about the range of topics that comprise the overall theme. A pull-out box identifying the key thematic topics is included for each of the six primary interpretive themes. Additionally, primary interpretive themes would focus on other ways of linking the past to the present including the incorporation of descendent voices as sites of knowledge (Jackson 2011).

### **Theme I. Origins and Early Development**

The Corridor preserves and protects many elements essential to understanding the plantation economy such as the archeology of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, environmental particulars of sea island localities, the important challenges of areas of geographic isolation, processes of culture and



identity formation, traditions in heritage preservation, the technology of rice cultivation and other cash crops, and systems of work control and time management such as the task system.

Discussions about plantations evoke a variety of images, feelings, and memories; however, from the beginning it was enslaved human labor on which the entire structure of plantation agriculture and cash crop production rested (Jackson, A. 2004 and 2008a). The land was made valuable and remained valuable only through and by human labor. The following is an excellent summary of the situation:

“Our ancestors who came to this country from various nations in Africa came here, lived here, worked here, bled here, died here. So we respect the land. We respect what they did here.”

Rosalyn Browne  
St. Helena Island, SC – June 2009 Meeting

... before the intensive application of labor and system to the land in staple crop agriculture, the coastal plain yielded only those resources that could be extracted with little management and processing: timber and deerskins, for example. Sea island cotton and tidewater rice cultures, however, required shaping the land to enhance its productive potential. The land itself was made a valuable commodity by producing crops for sale and profit.

On the rice plantations, the land was engineered and shaped according to a scheme that streamlined the environment for a specific purpose.

Here the natural environment was not shaped primarily to the aspirations of moral purpose and community, nor was it seen as having a multitude of purposes, all revealing divine handiwork. Rather it was manipulated for its potential for profitable exploitation and to enhance the reputation of masters. Nature was simplified, and an artificial ecosystem was created by a massive application of human energy (Stewart 2002).

Sea Island rice plantations off the coast of the Corridor were a compilation of communities composed of Africans, primarily West Africans, and descendants of Africans. Public discourse about plantations at heritage sites typically provide one perspective—focusing on the culture, traditions, and life experiences of plantation owners and their families, while offering only generic sketches and interpretations of the lives of enslaved Africans. In such representations and interpretations, the complex and comprehensive role played by the majority of African communities in all aspects of plantation operation and management goes unrepresented.

Interpretations of plantations and the plantation economy in the context of the Corridor serve to broaden representations of enslaved Africans in antebellum plantation environments in the United States. These interpretations give much needed primacy to the labor, ingenuity, and expertise of enslaved African people and the role they played in plantation agriculture in the United States and the role they played in the global rice, indigo, and cotton economies throughout the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. In addition, interpretations of the Corridor underscore the role many enslaved Africans played in constructing and preserving rice ecosystems considered of international significance today on plantations such as Jehossee Island in South Carolina.

Africans and their descendants have left reminders of the reality of their daily life and labors embedded within coastal plantation landscapes and surrounding communities, which today remain forever altered by their presence. However, visitors to many of these plantation landscapes and post-bellum plantation tourist attractions are provided with limited information and typically no written

documentation (i.e., pamphlets, brochures, maps, and posters) about the historical significance of African presence on sea island plantations, including the significant role they played in all aspects of plantation life and economy (Jackson, A. 2008b).

## **I. Origins and Early Development**

### Key Thematic Topics

- ❖ The role of Gullah Geechee people in the plantation economy (agricultural production and knowledge systems)
  - Rice production techniques/technology (development of U.S. rice economy)
  - Tidal irrigation to improve efficiency of rice production (tidal rice agriculture)
  - Inland floodplain swamp rice production
  - Planting methods/techniques (hole and heel planting technique; open-broadcast seed sowing)
  - Indigo production techniques/technology
  - Sea Island cotton production
  - Inland cotton
  - Extraction of forest products
  - Culinary knowledge/techniques
- ❖ The role of Gullah Geechee people in the plantation economy (skilled labor/crafts and management techniques/systems/methods)
  - The task system: how it fostered Gullah Geechee culture
  - Wide range of plantation jobs and skilled labor applications (coopers, mechanics, boat builders, sailors, trunk minders, blacksmiths, brickmakers, cooks, sawyers, basketmakers)
- ❖ The role of Gullah Geechee people in the plantation economy (global market/worldwide sales of Sea Island rice)
- ❖ Post emancipation economy

The growth of the plantation as an agricultural unit of production and commercial enterprise on a global scale was built upon and fueled by a massive dispersion of African people, primarily West Africans. From the late-15th to the mid-19th century, enslaved Africans became an increasingly significant factor in Europe's (i.e., Britain) and U.S. growth and development (Walvin 2000). St. Clair Drake provides a good description of the historical reality under which plantations were formed and organized. He writes:

The complexities of the African Diaspora into the Western Hemisphere that began during the sixteenth century can only be understood if placed in the context of vast movements of people from many European areas journeying to the Americas as indentured servants or adventurous free men and women seeking expanded political and economic opportunity. For many of these Europeans, their interests and those of investors were best served having a sector in the new socioeconomic system where essential labor could not participate in the scramble for free land on the frontiers and could be bound permanently to the plantations that were growing sugar, indigo, rice, and other profitable commodities (Drake 1990).

For Europe, slavery became the solution of choice for advancing economic and social ambitions. Plantation owners and their families, such as Aiken (Jehossee Island Plantation, South Carolina), Kingsley (Kingsley Plantation, Florida), and Pinckney (Snee Farm Plantation, South Carolina), prospered under a socioeconomic system of power organized within the context of agricultural land units known as plantations (Jackson 2004).

## Theme II. The Quest for Freedom, Equality, Education, and Recognition

The Corridor provides opportunities for examining the evolution and development of significant institutions, events, and issues from the Colonial period to the present, including the period of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, religious and spiritual development, education, the Civil War and Reconstruction, civil rights and quality of life issues.

From the outset, many enslaved Africans found active or passive ways to resist their enslavement or regain their freedom; this continued throughout the antebellum period. Some quietly ran away by escaping to free territory in the north or west. Others fled southward to Florida, where they established maroon colonies or communities and were given sanctuary by the Spanish and Native Americans, especially the Seminoles. Enslaved Africans within the Corridor also saw the domestic turmoil generated by colonial and various Indian wars as opportunities to escape from bondage.

During the American Revolution, enslaved Africans served in both the British and American armies in return for promises of freedom, and when the British withdrew from the United States, they were accompanied by many formerly enslaved Africans from North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Some, like Thomas Peters, a formerly enslaved African from Wilmington, North Carolina, were among the founders of Freetown, Sierra Leone.

"My grandfather fought during the Civil War, was a Civil War veteran. The land that all of us, my mother and her siblings was born on, was in his name, Captain C. Gibbs. . . We got together and made that property a family cemetery."

Sam White  
Johns Island, SC – July 2009 Meeting

Free and enslaved African Americans participated in more extreme measures to gain freedom for their race. David Walker, a native of Wilmington, North Carolina, authored the *Appeal* in 1830, which caused consternation throughout the slaveholding south. The Stono Rebellion (1739) and Denmark Vesey's alleged insurrection (1822) demonstrated that overt physical violence were options in securing freedom. Enslaved Africans, free people of color, and formerly enslaved Africans and their descendants knew that the outcome of the Civil War was the difference between slavery and freedom, and they wholeheartedly supported the Union.



STONO REBELLION HISTORICAL MARKER  
CHARLESTON COUNTY, SC

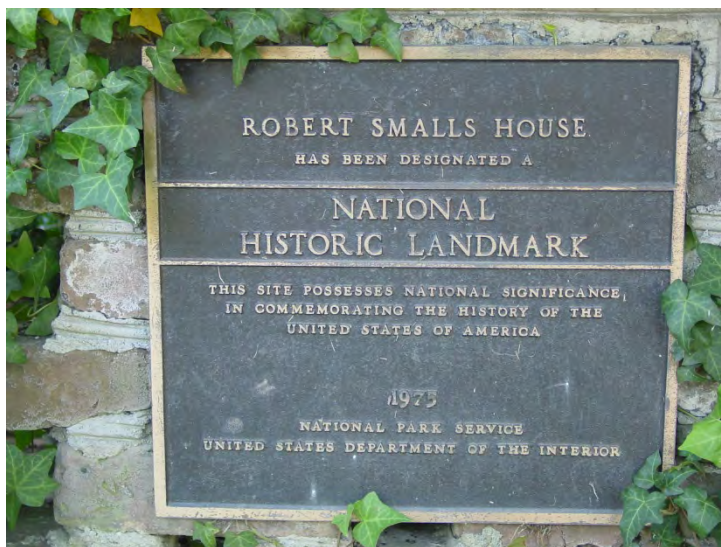


Territory within the Corridor was among the first that fell under Union control, and enslaved persons, contrabands, and refugees supported the Union by serving as spies, informants, guides, pilots, and laborers. They also furnished a significant number of recruits for the Union armed forces, especially the colored volunteers and the U.S. Colored Troops, many of whom participated in combat, combat support, and occupation missions throughout the Corridor.

The Union Army, U.S. government officials, and northern civilians sought to reconstruct the existing social and economic order within the Corridor. They provided freedmen with access to land, security, and assistance as they experimented with free education, market economy systems, and newly instituted social, fraternal, and religious institutions, as well as the Freedmen's Bureau.



**BENJAMIN BENNETT HEADSTONE  
PARKER ISLAND CEMETERY  
CHARLESTON COUNTY, SC**



**ROBERT SMALLS NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK  
BEAUFORT, BEAUFORT COUNTY, SC**

With the institution of military/congressional reconstruction in 1867, African Americans became the base and a significant element within the Republican Party, where they continued to press their demands for land, control over families, education, and civil and political equality, and protection from violence. With the end of Reconstruction, Redeemers (a conservative, pro-business, political coalition that sought to regain power in the southern United States) conspired against the advancement of the freedmen. Many of their gains were reversed and they ultimately were confronted with legalized

segregation, disfranchisement, debt peonage, and racial violence. Some Gullah Geechee people migrated out of the Corridor, while others attempted to create a meaningful life within the confines of Jim Crow (a racial caste system that relegated African Americans to the status of second-class citizens; Jim Crow laws allowed legal racial segregation in public facilities) by establishing business and professional services and recreation and leisure outlets that catered to the African American community. There were African American "main streets" or business districts in many communities, particularly in urban areas.



**ST. LUKE'S ROSENWALD SCHOOL  
SAPELO ISLAND, MCINTOSH COUNTY, GA**

During the antebellum period, a few private or denominational schools for free African Americans existed, primarily within urban areas of the Corridor, but most of these were closed on the eve of the Civil War. Access to education at all levels was a major priority of freedmen who believed that knowledge was power and education was the major route to upward mobility.

With emancipation, freedmen's schools, supported by northern religious denominations or the Freedmen's Bureau, sprang up throughout the Corridor, and

public school systems were instituted during Reconstruction. These schools were later augmented by Rosenwald Schools and institutions of higher learning. Collectively, they provided opportunities for basic education, industrial and vocational education, and post-secondary education, and prepared students for successful careers. Quite often these schools were the most important institution in a community and they were the only institutions that cut across all lines of economic and class status, and religion. But in their attempt to prepare students for entry into polite society and success in the modern world, these schools at times also attempted to strip students of their traditional culture, especially their language and speech patterns. The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision (1954) effectively ended legalized segregated schools and Jim Crow. However, the practical effects of the decision would not be realized unless they were implemented at local levels, and this was a major impetus for the modern Civil Rights Movement.

The Civil Rights Movement unfolded at different times in different places, and people within the present-day boundary of the Corridor made some original tactical or strategic contributions. On February 1, 1960, Joe McNeil of Wilmington, North Carolina, was one of the four students at North Carolina A&T College in Greensboro who initiated the modern "Sit-In." Esau Jenkins, a community leader, and Septima Clark, a public school teacher, both from Johns Island, South Carolina, conceptualized and developed the concept of "Freedom Schools," which were widely used to prepare potential black voters to pass literacy tests. The Civil Rights Movement, like the first Reconstruction, brought fundamental changes to the social and political structure, and provided Gullah Geechee people with increased opportunities for success.

## II. The Quest for Freedom, Equality, Education, and Recognition

### Key Thematic Topics

- ❖ The Quest for Freedom and Equality
  - Colonial wars
  - American Revolution
  - The Civil War
  - Reconstruction
  - Military and politics
  - Freedmen/Maroon Colonies/Underground Railroad
  - Civil Rights Movement
  - Up to and beyond development of the Corridor
- ❖ Education
  - Public and private schools
  - Segregation and post-*Brown v. Board of Education* impacts
  - Private schools before and after the Civil War
  - Education on the Sea Islands
  - Freedom schools
  - De-culturalization of Gullah Geechee in educational institutions
  - Schools and upward mobility – social/civic awareness

## Theme III. Global Connections

The Corridor offers opportunities to examine and understand the development and evolution of Gullah Geechee identity as part of a larger, global Creole cultural identity linked to diverse regions of the world, including Africa, primarily West Africa, the Caribbean, and Pacific Islands.

The Gullah Geechee story is one of human endurance, adaptation, reinvention, and survival on new ground. What happened along the coastal regions and Sea Islands of the Corridor is part of a larger story replicated in other places around the globe by African peoples responding to displacement and enslavement.

John Henrik Clarke's announcement that "the survival of African people away from their ancestral home is one of the great acts of human endurance in the history of the world" bears testimony to Gullah Geechee societies that developed and survived. These societies began to form whenever and wherever various African ethnic groups were enslaved together in large numbers, confined in isolated areas, when they were in the majority, and where there was a practice of "mixing" newly enslaved Africans with the existing slave population. Under these conditions, Gullah Geechee communities like those in and along the Corridor also formed in Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and in South America, Mexico, and the Caribbean. Moreover, they thrived and persist to this day.





FIGURE 16. MAP OF THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

The story began early in the 15th century when many Africans found themselves enslaved and displaced, regarded and sold as human property, and an integral part of the Transatlantic Slave Trade that dominated the world economy from the 15th through the 19th century. This world of buying and selling humans was composed of slave captors/dealers, the traders who transported them out of Africa to colonies in North and South America, and their eventual enslavers. Their labor was sought on coffee, tobacco, cocoa,

sugar, and cotton plantations; in gold and silver mining; in rice cultivation; construction; timber; and shipping.

The other key players were the Portuguese, British, French, Spanish, Dutch, and North Americans. Of the 12 million people taken out of Africa, primarily West Africa, 38% went to South America, 18.4% British America, 17.5% to the Spanish Empire, and 13.5% to French America. As in the case of Gullah Geechee communities that were established along the Corridor, other societies like it distinguished themselves from this larger population and cropped up as pocket communities wherever the right geography and living conditions prevailed.

Like those within the Corridor, these global communities maintain a strong memory of attachment and allegiance to African practices and beliefs, which sit at the center of their way of life. Wherever they reside, their influence on foodways, art forms, religious practices, music, language, beliefs, values, customs, and law is recognized by all who live around or among them. Their presence then and now is evidence of their persistence, survival, and endurance.

### III. Global Connections

#### Key Thematic Topics

- ❖ Gullah Geechee diaspora (internationally and domestically)
  - movement of people and culture
- ❖ Influence of ancestors
- ❖ Connection to Africa, particularly West Africa
- ❖ “Down Home” connection

## Theme IV. Connection with the Land

Gullah Geechee people have influenced the natural and cultural landscapes of the region, and their cultural identity is connected to a particular geographical setting. The ownership and retention of land and built environments, as well as access to significant cultural sites, are crucial to the continuation of Gullah Geechee culture.

"I'm not prepared to have plantation life celebrated,  
and people coming up and down this corridor  
to look at people weaving baskets and playing out a  
plantation play."

Elaine Brown  
Savannah, GA – June 2009 Meeting

the order was on heads-of-families, the hopes of the affected people to become stable families were raised to the extent that most of them began seeking their ambitions like ordinary free people. A substantial number of formerly enslaved people streamed to the Sea Islands and other parts of lowcountry South Carolina and Georgia.

"We are proud of our Gullah Geechee heritage. We  
rejoice in our Gullah Geechee family. We want to enjoy  
a future that reflects our past. We need to uphold our  
legacy by protecting our land. This is our most urgent  
quest. To protect the land."

Dwayne Blake  
Johns Island, SC – July 2009 Meeting

**Settlement in the Corridor.** The Corridor includes the area designated in 1865 by Special Order No. 15. This order, proposed by General William Tecumseh Sherman, promised that the land area, including the islands from Charleston, South Carolina, to the St. Johns River in Jacksonville, Florida, and 30 miles from the coast, would be set aside "for the settlement of Negroes" who had been emancipated. Because the focus of

Special Field Order No. 15 was rescinded in 1866. Even though hopes were dashed and ambitions severely curtailed, the quest for land within the proposed area continued. Eventually, a substantial number of families succeeded in acquiring acreage through donations, set-asides, and purchase, which promoted self-sufficiency, perhaps the most important factor in sustaining the Gullah Geechee culture.



**TRADITIONAL GULLAH GEECHEE HOME  
HOG HAMMOCK COMMUNITY  
SAPELO ISLAND, MCINTOSH COUNTY, GA**

**Traditional Land Tenure and Function.** In Gullah Geechee culture, a sense of self has depended largely on a sense of place and vice versa. Family land ownership has provided a sense of place (Jackson 2011). The land has held the family together because the family has always owned and worked the land together.

For generations, Gullah Geechee families have used the same parcels of land that were purchased soon after the Civil War to provide living space and to produce food. This created a substantial amount of ancestral land and promoted a kinship economy, meaning that bartering goods and services among family members was and continues to be common practice.



**FRAMED IMAGE IN GULLAH GRUB RESTAURANT  
ST. HELENA ISLAND, BEAUFORT COUNTY, SC**

Families have grown crops that relate to their West African ancestry, including okra, sweet potatoes (yams), watermelon, and benne (sesame). Gullah Geechee language; skills in blacksmithing; and boat, fishnet, and basket making, and other cultural norms were easily passed on from one generation to the next as a result of living in family compounds.

Land is widely considered the most valuable of all Gullah Geechee cultural assets. It has always been the base for economic and social development. Small family farms are often the source of income for those who live on the Sea Islands in isolation of employment centers. Churches, schools, and burial grounds have traditionally been on land that was oftentimes benevolently transferred for the good of Gullah Geechee people.

Thus, the relationship between land and Gullah Geechee culture is plainly reflected in the landscape of the Corridor, where a number of Gullah Geechee families began settlements after Special Field Order No. 15. These lands are where many of the family compounds exist today. Heirs' property is currently a critical land ownership issue affecting Gullah Geechee people, families, and communities. For more information, see chapter 2, "Land Ownership and Land Cover."

"You know, it's heartbreaking. I look at my children and I think about my grandchildren, and we're not going to have a place to call home. I'm not going to be able to bring my children home. I'm going to bring them to some subdivision, not the land that my grandfather plowed, not the cotton that my great grandmother lost her fingers picking."

Wanda Gumb  
Wilmington, NC – June 2009 Meeting

"I remember having a serious conversation with a friend of mine from Indiana, who said I went into the, you know, airport and I bought all this Gullah cuisine. And it's in this bag, and all you have to do is add water, and you stick it on the stove and you cook it. And I said, there is no such thing as instant Gullah food; that does not exist."

Zenobia Washington  
Georgetown, SC – May 2009 Meeting

## Theme V. Cultural and Spiritual Expression

The influence of Gullah Geechee people has made a lasting impact in all areas of society throughout the country, including music, the arts, handicrafts, foodways, and spirituality. Gullah Geechee festivals are annual events where entertainment is often enhanced by storytellers who share Gullah Geechee folktales that are passed on through generations. These festivals are also venues where Gullah Geechee foodways are showcased. Gullah

Geechee dishes, such as smoked mullet and other rice-based dishes, as well as fish or shrimp 'n grits, are among the favorite foods at festivals—in some Gullah Geechee communities the cuisine is served in restaurants.





SEWING HANDS, VERA MANIGAULT

**Sweetgrass Basketry.** Sweetgrass basketry is an African art form that has existed since enslavement. The baskets were commonly used on plantations to harvest rice and had other uses in slave quarters and plantation houses. Baskets are woven by hand with sweetgrass that grows naturally in marshes and tidal areas. Sweetgrass production has been adversely impacted in the Corridor, where development has disturbed ecosystems. The tradition has been passed on by generations of Gullah Geechee people who continue to make baskets today for many household uses. Sweetgrass baskets are artifacts in the permanent collections of many museums and cultural centers and are exhibited in the United States at the Smithsonian, and internationally.

Sweetgrass basket stands are an integral part of the cultural landscape that today lies along US 17 in the Corridor. Sweetgrass basket making is a cultural expression, and the stands reflect the individual styles of the family artists who make them. Many of the artists live in Mount Pleasant, where each year a Sweetgrass Festival celebrates the tradition, and artists exhibit their work. Sweetgrass basket stands are popular venues at Gullah Geechee festivals.

#### IV. Connection with the Land

##### Key Thematic Topics

- ❖ The impact of Gullah Geechee ancestors on the coastal landscape
- ❖ The built environment
  - Unique architecture (tabby houses)
  - Protection of natural environment
  - Spatial patterns of development
- ❖ Land gained and lost
  - Not consistent across the four states (South Carolina Land Commission; Florida was first-come/first served; Union Army land distribution)
  - Include cemeteries, praise houses
  - Education regarding preservation of family land (heirs' property)
  - Moving toward sustainable development patterns



**MARY JENKINS PRAISE HOUSE**  
**ST. HELENA ISLAND, BEAUFORT COUNTY, SC**

**The Ring Shout.** The ring shout is a musical folk tradition that evolved from former enslaved Africans who lived and worked on rice and cotton plantations that flourished throughout the barrier islands and coastal regions. The tradition has been passed down to current generations who help to keep it alive as a worship practice as well as through demonstration.

During enslavement, the ring shout began along the coast as a clandestine religious activity in brush arbors throughout many plantations that once encompassed the Corridor, particularly in the coastal communities of South Carolina and Georgia. Later, it was

practiced in praise houses, and after emancipation and up to today, at churches. The ring shout folk tradition can also be observed at concerts and Gullah Geechee festivals. The ring shout is performed most frequently on Watch Night, the evening leading up to New Year's Day.

During the ring shout, the song is set in a call-and-response format by the lead singer. Rhythm is applied to the song by the "stickman" who beats a wood stick on the floor or uses a washboard. "Basers" accompany the lead singer by responding to the song while adding vigorous handclapping. The women in the group, who are often primarily referred to as the "shouters," move counter-clockwise in a ring. The ring shout differs from dancing because the feet are never crossed while responding to the song. During demonstrations, shouters pantomime the song or make gestures in response to the basers and the stickman.

Today, the ring shout as well as Gullah Geechee spirituals are demonstrated at festivals and special events, and are part of the religious experience at churches.

## **V. Cultural and Spiritual Expression**

### Key Thematic Topics

- ❖ Spirituality
- ❖ Foodways
- ❖ Music, dance, arts
- ❖ Traditional skills and crafts – basket weaving
- ❖ Festivals
- ❖ Importance of family
- ❖ Revitalization of culture

## VI. Gullah Geechee Language

Prominent among the distinguishing characteristics of Gullah Geechee identity is a unique form of speech that has traditionally been referred to as "Gullah" or "Geechee," a distinctive Creole language. While the Gullah Geechee language has been developed, adapted, and spoken over the past, roughly 250 years, from an outsider's perspective it has historically been derided as substandard, or "broken" English. Beginning with Lorenzo Dow Turner's groundbreaking work, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* (Turner 1949), the language has increasingly come to be appreciated, even by outsiders, as a legitimate and remarkable language in its own right. Unfortunately, it is also an endangered language due to the encroachment of English.

Awareness of Creole as a distinctive language type has only been developed over the past several decades. Gullah Geechee as an English Creole has much in common with similar Creole languages that developed in Jamaica, Haiti, and other parts of the Caribbean, and in West Africa and the Pacific. Rather than being interpreted in terms of English, Gullah Geechee should be understood in terms of creolization and decreolization processes, language diffusion, and a continuum of linguistic forms from the "deepest" Gullah Geechee to standard English.

Gullah Geechee has had an influence on American English in general, and a particular influence on African American English. Words like *gumbo*, *yam*, *tote*, *biddy*, and *nanny* have come into English from Africa through Gullah Geechee. The rules of grammar and the sound system are not the same as English, and what might sound to cultural and linguistic outsiders as bad English may be good Gullah Geechee, as in '*E done cyaa um ta de sto*' ("He/she has already taken it to the store"). Besides words of African origin like *tote*, which means "carry," Gullah Geechee speech has many distinctive idioms, such as *day clean* for "morning." Expressions also used are: someone *da rake straw* (is getting ready to give birth), someone *broke e leg* (gave birth), and someone *ain crack e teet* (isn't opening his mouth to smile or isn't acting pleasantly).

There is a widespread interest in developing a better understanding of Gullah Geechee language, and a concern, especially among those who claim a Gullah Geechee heritage, that a precious linguistic legacy is in danger of fading into oblivion. When asked which features of Gullah Geechee culture must be protected, preserved, or continued, respondents in the Corridor consistently specified the Gullah Geechee language, including its vocabulary, idioms, and folklore.

## IDENTIFYING AUDIENCES WITHIN THE CORRIDOR

Different audiences would look for different experiences in, and would have different expectations of, the Corridor. Those living in the Corridor would expect something different from outside visitors; youth would expect something different than the elderly. In order to develop interpretive programs that meet and exceed these diverse expectations, it is necessary to gain an understanding of the various audience groups that the Commission would seek to inform. Recognizing the relationship between potential audiences and the interpretation strategies of the Corridor is an important step in connecting people to Gullah Geechee history and cultural resources. By identifying audiences, the Commission can develop interpretive opportunities with various partners that meet the needs of diverse audience groups throughout the region and enhance their experiences.

The Commission has identified nine audience groups: residents, youth, the elderly, homecoming groups, heritage tourists, pass-through tourists, virtual visitors, international visitors, and the scholarly community. These audiences are not mutually exclusive; an individual could fall into more than one group. Broad interpretation strategies have been developed to reach these various groups based on their respective expectations and needs (see table15 for strategies related to each audience



group). Interpretation would be particularly focused on those who identify with the Gullah Geechee culture in an effort to perpetuate the cultural heritage. Strategies differ in terms of the medium used and the depth of information conveyed.

## **Residents**

Local residents living within and near the Corridor make up one of the largest and most critically important audience groups. Developing programs in connection with Gullah Geechee community members to promote an understanding of Gullah Geechee heritage creates a positive impact on local communities. Cultivating local partners in sharing the primary interpretive themes of the Corridor is an important part of the effort to engage residents. Interpretive efforts that focus on residents can foster local pride, build community support, and develop lasting partnerships between different community groups. Creating greater understanding, awareness, and appreciation for the themes empowers local communities and residents.

## **Youth**

Youth, especially students, are an important audience for interpretive programming and educational outreach within the Corridor. Building understanding and awareness among Gullah Geechee youth in particular is needed to perpetuate the culture. Field trips, immersive experiences, learning craft skills, and group excursions create an opportunity for youth to engage directly with the tangible resources in order to understand and appreciate their intangible themes. Sharing the legacy and heritage of Gullah Geechee people with younger audiences would develop long-term stewardship and appreciation for the history and cultural resources within the Corridor.

## **Elderly**

The elderly are also a critically important audience group that provides a direct connection to the history and culture of the Corridor. Engaging this audience group through all of the established primary interpretive themes is a vital step in preserving cultural traditions and connecting directly to the past. Developing programs that encourage sharing of knowledge as well as personal stories and histories is a critical part of cultivating a relationship between this audience group and the work of the Commission.

## **Homecoming Groups**

Members of the Gullah Geechee community who live outside the Corridor, but who come back home to visit relatives, attend family reunions, weddings, funerals, festivals, and events, as well as those returning permanently, are important to Gullah Geechee history and culture. Their stories are vital to comprehensive interpretation because they connect the Corridor to areas outside the Corridor boundary; taking a broad view of interpretation means incorporating history and culture beyond the geography of the Corridor. Those who have left—to seek jobs elsewhere, to escape violence, or for any number of other reasons—carried the culture with them to other parts of the country. The reasons why people left the Corridor is a key part of the Gullah Geechee story and needs to be part of the overall interpretation effort. Although many people left the Corridor, their cultural “home” remained within the Corridor and the reverse migration that has been occurring for decades should be celebrated as a homecoming. For those who return, reconnecting with their history and culture is important to perpetuating the culture. Encouraging sharing of stories and histories between those who have stayed and those who have left and returned, whether for a few days or for extended periods of time, enhances the breadth of the primary interpretive themes and is

an important component of the Corridor's effort to share these themes within and outside the Corridor.

### **Heritage Tourists**

Heritage tourism is a growing trend within the tourism industry. Heritage tourists are generally well informed and center their visitor experiences on specific resources and events. They traditionally spend more time and money visiting the historic resources of a community than other tourists. This audience is primarily interested in cultural resources such as historic buildings, local traditions, and folklife. Developing deep connections to tangible and intangible resources through clear primary interpretive themes and strategies is an important step in reaching out to this audience group. Engaging this audience with the Corridor's primary interpretive themes would focus primarily on historic sites, museums, and cultural events.

### **Pass-through Tourists**

Pass-through tourists are people who have come to the Corridor without any knowledge of Gullah Geechee history or culture; they may just be driving through the region on their way to another destination, or they may be visiting friends or relatives. Pass-through tourists are an important audience for the interpretive programs within the Corridor. Given the overall geographic length and scale of the Corridor, opportunities for reaching pass-through tourists abound. Numerous strategies can be implemented to engage this audience while they are traveling within the Corridor. Strategically providing information at welcome and visitor centers throughout the region, creating brochures and regional maps, and developing a consistent signage program are all ways to expose this large audience group to the primary interpretive themes and resources of the Corridor.

### **Virtual Visitors**

In order to reach a larger audience and connect Gullah Geechee history and culture to the American public and the global community, there is a need to engage the virtual visitor—a very important audience for this interpretation framework. Achieving this would require using interactive, content-rich, ever-evolving online strategies. Through the creation of a well-maintained and interactive Web site, the interpretive message of the Corridor would be shared with a truly global audience. A strong Web-based presence would not only facilitate knowledge sharing, but also serve as a means to capture and archive Gullah Geechee resources and traditions in the form of text, audio, photo, and video. The virtual visitor would be able to interact with the Corridor in engaging and continuously evolving ways. Although this audience group may not physically visit the Corridor, the cultivation of a strong virtual visitor audience is a critical component of continuing the dialogue and improving understanding of the Corridor.

### **International Visitors**

The African diaspora is global in nature, extending from Africa across the Atlantic to the Caribbean basin, the southeastern United States, and elsewhere in Europe and South America, among other areas of the world. Individuals and groups from all over the world have an interest in learning about and experiencing Gullah Geechee history and culture. Sharing the themes with these visitors and engaging them through various strategies would broaden the reach of the Corridor's interpretation efforts beyond the Corridor boundary. Interpretation provides a mechanism to tell complete, comprehensive stories—rather than just pieces and parts—across continents.

## **Scholarly Community**

The scholarly community is composed of educators, researchers, and students. This community may or may not be familiar with Gullah Geechee history and culture; however, many would likely be wholly immersed in it. This audience is well educated and seeks out details and specific types of information. Engaging this audience with the Corridor's primary interpretive themes would require developing meaningful connections across many academic disciplines. Making connections with this audience in a way that inspires them to share the primary interpretive themes with the academic community, including students, would expand the reach of interpretation of the Corridor.

## **CONNECTING STRATEGIES TO AUDIENCES**

Table 20 illustrates the relationship between the interpretation strategies that would be used to reach out to and engage with the various audiences identified. It provides a greater understanding of the relationship between the strategies and audience groups. Linking the intangible themes of the Corridor to tangible interpretive services provides insight into how audiences would engage and connect to local resources. This connection is fundamental to the success of the Commission in meeting its goals, and ensures that the unique values and primary interpretive themes reach their target audiences.

## **REACHING ALL AUDIENCES**

Although audiences have been identified, the interpretation objective is to effectively communicate the primary interpretive themes to all audiences. Part of effectively communicating the themes is linking the sites, locations, and areas of the Corridor to the themes in such a way that every group would be able to access and understand the broad themes of the Corridor in their own way and according to their interests and needs. Each individual would have opportunities to be exposed to and learn about all of the primary interpretive themes of the Corridor. An understanding and awareness of all of the themes is important because they are all interconnected—one theme cannot be fully understood without the others.

## **IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES FOR PRIMARY INTERPRETIVE THEMES**

The interpretive strategies listed below support Corridor goals and provide visitor opportunities to connect to the primary interpretive themes inherent in the resources throughout the Corridor. When all recommendations are integrated in a seamless manner, residents and visitors would be able to experience, interact with, and learn about Gullah Geechee people and their history and culture.

## **Electronic Media Strategy**

The Commission would capitalize on existing and new electronic media platforms in reaching the varied audiences. One prime example would be the Corridor Web site ([www.gullahgeecheecorridor.org](http://www.gullahgeecheecorridor.org)), which would provide opportunities for the general public to learn about, interact with, and virtually explore the Corridor. The Web site would serve as a platform to raise awareness of the Corridor and its themes. The Commission would incorporate social media technologies and other popular online tools into the Web site or utilize them as stand-alone tools. Examples include virtual tours, audio and video podcasts, theme-related flash movies, and locations of Gullah Geechee resources, events, activities, programs, tours, etc. Beyond the Web site, the Commission would utilize new digital information technologies as they are developed and become viable.

### **Resource Inventory Strategy**

Appendix C includes the existing resource inventory developed throughout the management planning process. This inventory serves as a starting point for documentation of the resources within the Corridor. Additional work is needed to add to this inventory and to identify the location, historical significance, and existing conditions of resources as they become known. The ongoing effort to enhance the resource inventory would provide a deeper awareness and understanding of the resources themselves, as well as assist in linking tangible resources to the broader intangible themes of the Corridor.

### **Audience Strategy**

The Commission would work with partners to learn more about Corridor audiences, including the various types of visitors. The objective of this effort would be to use effective strategies for engaging and informing audiences over time in a way that is comfortable for them. This is particularly important given the ever-changing tools and mechanisms for engaging people. People's preferences and needs surrounding how they receive information are also ever-changing and the Commission's efforts would remain flexible to ensure that effective strategies are employed.

### **Signage Strategy**

The Commission would work with partners in all four states to ensure the implementation of consistent signage across the Corridor. More details about the categories of signs to be installed in the Corridor are included in part 4 of this chapter.

### **Publication Strategy**

The Commission would work with partners to develop a Corridor Publication Plan. Examples of items that might be included in this plan are site bulletins, brochures, trail and/or road maps, and rack cards on specific themes. In addition, the Web site could be used as a digital repository for these interpretation materials. As an initial step, a rack card would be produced and distributed at welcome centers, designated partner sites, chambers of commerce, and other appropriate locations.

### **Education Strategy**

The Commission would develop curriculum-based education and outreach programs. Specific efforts (such as development of a curriculum guide, field trip guide, and Teach-the-Teachers program) would be developed to connect with state curriculum standards, and would be implemented at the grade level with the most direct relevance to state standards. In addition, efforts such as a culture forum would provide a mechanism to reach out to diverse audiences throughout the Corridor, including youth. Working with partners to develop and distribute traveling exhibits within and outside the Corridor would also be a way of enhancing education and interpretation.

### **Public Relations Strategy**

The Corridor Web site would have, among other tools, a calendar of events. The calendar would provide information about upcoming events, activities, programs, opportunities to volunteer, etc. In addition, press releases, newspaper articles, radio and television interviews, and newsletters would be used to share information.



## **LINKING STRATEGIES TO AUDIENCES**

These strategies rely on various media types and communication methods in order to reach diverse audience groups. Through implementation of this plan, the Commission would share its rich legacy and primary interpretive themes with numerous audiences throughout the region in a variety of ways, including at Coastal Heritage Centers. Although Coastal Heritage Centers do not neatly fit into one of the strategies identified, they would serve as interpretation hubs within the Corridor. Multiple strategies could be used in various combinations at Coastal Heritage Centers. Signage, for example, would direct visitors and residents to Coastal Heritage Centers. Publication and educational material would be available within Coastal Heritage Centers and interpretation would be geared toward all ages, using digital and print formats. The centers would have ample space for interpretive exhibits and interactive experiences.

## **BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH INTERPRETATION PARTNERS**

As mentioned in the “Implementation Framework” section of chapter 3, although some of the strategies identified would be implemented by the Commission, implementation of interpretation strategies would be primarily employed by, or in cooperation with, partners. Therefore, the Commission has developed a process to develop formal relationships with organizations, businesses, and individuals throughout the Corridor and beyond its boundaries. Throughout implementation, the Commission would work to develop a network of partners and sites that are either (1) actively interpreting Gullah Geechee history and culture, or (2) establishing plans to interpret Gullah Geechee history and culture.

This network of partners would be composed of either (1) partners or (2) partner sites. These two categories of partners have been developed by the Commission to effectively formalize relationships and to facilitate efficient implementation of interpretation programming and services across the Corridor. The basic differences between the two categories is the following:

- Organizations, businesses, or individuals not associated with a physical location, but wishing to be involved with interpretation of the Corridor, would be considered part of the “partner” category.
- Organizations, businesses, or individuals that are associated with a physical location (a site) and are interested in incorporating and/or enhancing the interpretation of Gullah Geechee history and culture at their site would be considered part of the “partner site” category.

In order to effectively develop and facilitate a network of partners that interpret Gullah Geechee history and culture, the Corridor has developed a process to gather information from potential partners and partner sites. The basic process is:

- A representative of a potential partner or partner site would complete one of the applications in appendix E, to the extent practicable.
- The Commission would review and evaluate the information provided and other information obtained through phone conversations, face-to-face meetings, etc. The evaluation of proposals would be based primarily on the principles for implementation and project selection criteria described in the “Implementation Framework” section of chapter 3.
- The Commission would designate qualified applicant(s) as either a partner or partner site. The relationship would be solidified through a basic voluntary agreement.

The Commission is fully committed to ensuring that the process of building relationships with partners and partner sites across the four states and beyond is not overly burdensome, but mutually beneficial. This process is intended to be collaborative in nature and not bureaucratic. The Commission is committed to reaching out to as many potential partners as possible throughout the implementation process. Interested parties are encouraged to contact the Commission at any time to discuss ideas or ways to meet shared interests and goals. The Commission would welcome informal discussions about ways to partner and work together.

The first step is for a potential partner to determine the partner category that most accurately reflects the applicant's situation. Again, the two categories are: (1) partners, and (2) partner sites.

Interpretation is a common element within the partner and partner site designations. In the case of a partner site, it is a basic requirement for designation. In the case of partnerships, interpretation is just one of the many programs identified by the Commission.

The following is a list of examples to help determine who should apply to be a partner site versus partner. The list is not exhaustive, but a basic guide.

Given not only the large number of potential partners and partner sites across the Corridor, but also the varying types of applicants, staff levels, work histories, interpretation experience, etc., the ability to complete the applications in appendix E would also vary. The Commission is sensitive to differences among applicants and that is one of the reasons why the application form contains so many questions. By clearly understanding the nominated organization, business, or site, the Commission can make a more informed decision about whether a designation is appropriate at that time.

**TABLE 26. PARTNERSHIPS AND PARTNER SITES**

<b>Apply for a Partnership if you are or represent a...</b>	<b>Apply as a Partner Site if you represent a...</b>
Historical Society or Conservation Organization	Building or Structure (open to the public)
Theatrical Performer or Storyteller	District, Neighborhood, or Community
Festival or Special Event	Landscape or Natural Feature
Artist or Artisan	Restaurant, Art Gallery, or Theater
Historian or Researcher	Museum or Archive
Tourism Agency or Tour Guide	Visitor Facility or Welcome Center
Chamber of Commerce	Place of Worship

Please see appendix E on the CD for more information about how to become a partner or partner site.

## **PART 3: HERITAGE TOURISM AND VISITOR EXPERIENCE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

There are many definitions of cultural heritage tourism. A key point in all definitions is that cultural heritage tourism describes a type of tourism activity aimed at attracting visitors or tourists to a host location resulting in contact between visitors and hosts. However, contact between tourists and the local community represents one part of the tourism experience. The other defining aspect recognizes tourism as being a highly mediated/managed experience focused on attracting visitors typically unfamiliar with the site being visited. Resources associated with heritage tourism are sites, places, or experiences that are open to the public for interpretation of historical/cultural themes. They include, but are not limited to, tangible and intangible resources in the following categories: Archeological Resources, Structures and Districts, Cultural Landscapes, Ethnographic Resources, and Museum Collections.

The idea of tourism, with different names under the concept of travel, has been present in humanity for centuries, spanning all cultures worldwide, regardless of race or ethnicity, religion, level of development or education, gender, or geographic location. The relationship between culture and tourism is fundamental, as these two concepts are inextricably intertwined.

The Corridor is full of historical and cultural resources that, through interpretation by current members of Gullah Geechee communities, can support heritage tourism. Effective interpretation would illustrate the link between the historic origins of Gullah Geechee culture with modern-day practices.



**FRIENDFIELD PLANTATION NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK  
GEORGETOWN, GEORGETOWN COUNTY, SC**

## **CULTURE, TOURISM, AND DEVELOPMENT**

On almost every level imaginable, tourism is a highly mediated activity. It is mediated by representatives of an industry that is among the largest in the world—ranging from government officials, tourism planners, advertising and marketing agencies, associated “hospitality” industries such as the hotel and transportation companies, travel agents and guides, travel writers and publishers, preservationists, and even people who study tourism. Neither hosts nor guests in any tangible way, these individuals and agencies play important roles in determining where tourists go as well as what they see and do when they arrive at their destinations (Chambers 2010).

The rapid development of tourism in the past 50 years has positioned the industry as one of the major global economic activities. Tourism is now either the main source or an important subsidiary source of revenue for many destinations and their surrounding communities. Not only does tourism bring with it economic power, but it is also a powerful industry influencing local culture. If tourists are drawn by a living culture, the culture can serve as a justification to preserve that environment against contrary developments, while still providing economic benefits. In this way, the culture is retained without sacrificing economic security.

Tourism has many far-reaching impacts in a local economy that are important to consider in the management of a destination. Tourist spending increases tax revenues for the state, and the demand for visitor services creates new jobs in the tourism sector. In addition to these direct effects, there are countless tributary impacts that trickle into the many facets of community life.

The greatest paradox of tourism is its capacity to generate so many benefits and yet, at the same time, create pressures and problems (Said 1978). The challenge that many tourist destinations around the world, including the Corridor, are facing is finding balance between increased development and visitation, and conservation of culture and traditions, as well as social and economic improvement.

This is one of major factors that must be addressed throughout implementation of the management plan. Striking a balanced position for host communities must be an ongoing part of negotiations in order to capitalize on the economic development generated by tourism without compromising local culture, traditional values, and deep-rooted knowledge of the communities to which tourism is introduced.

## **TOURISM AND EDUCATION**

Tourism can be an effective tool through which education about Gullah Geechee culture can spread far beyond the boundaries of the Corridor. Considering that one aspect of the mission of the Corridor is “to educate the public on the value and importance of Gullah Geechee culture,” it is only reasonable that interpretation provided to tourists be a primary mechanism for the distribution of that education.

Since a visitor’s impression of a destination is not only influenced within formal interpretive programs, it is important to first educate the communities in which tourism is included. Providing education and training to members of the host community is a practical initiative to ensure continuity of interpretation. The goal is to develop responsible and enthusiastic hosts, so that informal, yet accurate interpretation can occur spontaneously between residents and visitors.



The second dimension of the relationship of education with tourism is direct education through interpretations aimed at visitors outside the culture, which would be accomplished through the partnerships established by the Commission with sites and organizations that can offer unique visitor experiences and contribute to visitor understanding of all aspects of Gullah Geechee culture. The ultimate goal is to inform visitors in a way that inspires enthusiasm motivates them with the desire to share their newfound knowledge with their own communities. In this way, Gullah Geechee culture can reach the ears and touch the hearts of audiences beyond those that have previously visited the Corridor.

### **Diversity, Tourism, and Education**

The Commission would seek to employ NPS policies and best practices as they relate to diversity, tourism, and education throughout implementation of the management plan. The Commission would seek out partnership opportunities with NPS sites within the Corridor and other program offices to more effectively address these practices throughout the Corridor.

Since its beginnings, the National Park Service has endeavored to preserve cultural and natural resources and the heritage of Americans; however, in recent years there has been an increased emphasis on incorporating the diversity of cultural groups comprising our society in public representations of national heritage. For the National Park Service, diversity is a strategic imperative, since the national park system represents the contributions of all Americans and belongs to every citizen of this nation (Murphy 2000; as cited in NPS 2011). The Commission also believes that diversity is a strategic imperative and would seek to work with a wide range of partners to enhance visitor experience by engaging the public in the richness and complexity of the American experience as reflected in the history and culture of Gullah Geechee people.

### **TOURISM BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**

The Corridor provides a contemporary example of how living communities address heritage management and cultural preservation issues and negotiate multiple stakeholder concerns. A major concern among tourist destinations that rely on heritage tourism is the challenge of maintaining the authenticity of the culture despite the changes brought by visitation and development. Unless effective strategies are in place to preserve the lifestyles and cultural values and traditions of an area, the influx of tourists (and the corresponding increase of cash flow to the local economy) can significantly change the dynamics of the community. With conscientious planning, however, tourism can be used as an effective mechanism to promote and protect cultural resources while avoiding loss of identity or acculturation.

One of the core principles of sustainable tourism is developing a balanced relationship between visitors and residents. The intention is to enhance the cultural encounter and promote mutual understanding and respect between the two parties. Residents seek, through tourism, to celebrate their culture with others, and visitors are looking for an enjoyable experience that is both humanistic and educational. The connection, therefore, is innately complementary, yet careful attention must be paid to ensure a harmonious relationship.

The Commission would work with its partners to implement the following best management practices to ensure that heritage tourism within the Corridor is both successful and sustainable:

- Create partnerships in both the public and private sectors, as outlined in this interpretive framework. With the help of partners, the Corridor can track visitation levels, gather information about visitors (demographics, reason(s) for visiting, areas of interest, etc.), and

monitor the effect of visitation on Corridor resources. All partner sites are asked to identify and describe what prevention strategies and/or mitigation measures are in place to protect resource(s) from visitor damage; the compilation of these strategies and measures would allow the Commission to further develop tourism best management practices.

- Coordinate actions for a unified effort to fulfill the vision, mission, and goals of the Corridor. One of the most critical overarching factors when developing heritage tourism in a destination is management and inter-institutional coordination. With an organized structure, more effective communication with visitors, residents, and partners would be possible, which would enhance the visitor experience and streamline marketing efforts.
- Manage the image, brand, and marketing of the Corridor under the business development program. Bringing visitors to a destination and informing them of the wide array of opportunities and services related to Gullah Geechee history and culture is a major function of a successful tourism initiative. A consistent image and brand would contribute to these efforts. In its unifying role, the Commission is in the best position to spearhead such an initiative.
- Maintain contact with the local communities, inviting their feedback and providing a means to keep in touch on a regular basis under the community outreach and training program. In any tourism program, and especially in those founded in cultural heritage, local buy-in and support from the community is of the utmost importance. Significant efforts should be dedicated to communicating with communities within the Corridor to ensure that a thorough and up-to-date understanding of community members' perceptions and opinions on tourism is considered at all times.
- Maintain the authenticity of the resources under the preservation program. The feedback gleaned from local residents can serve as a gauge of the level of authenticity in each community. If the Commission is made aware that resources or visitor experience is being degraded due to the level or type of visitation, it must take swift action (perhaps through partnerships) to protect the resource and restore cultural authenticity. Management actions would be determined based on tourism best management practices that would be further developed through partnerships. The development of a data system with qualitative and quantitative indicators to monitor the changes in local culture and society should also be considered.
- Develop various interpretive projects related to heritage tourism under the interpretation and explore the corridor programs. One of the main goals of interpretation is to inspire visitors to become stewards of the resources that are being interpreted. If visitors truly come to understand and appreciate Gullah Geechee history and culture, they would be able to do their part in protecting the resources of the Corridor.
- Develop educational projects related to being stewards of heritage tourism under the education and community outreach and training programs. If cultural pride and knowledge is fostered among community members of all ages, the culture can remain strong enough to resist the acculturation that is inherently a risk when more tourism is introduced. Coastal Heritage Centers would serve as hubs for community education and active participation in the culture.
- Collaborate with local authorities in cities and counties within the Corridor to develop appropriate policies and regulations for territorial planning and land use under the environmental sustainability and preservation programs. Connection with the land is one of the primary interpretive themes of the Corridor, and therefore, natural and cultural landscapes must not be compromised for the sake of tourism. Input from Gullah Geechee

representatives from the Commission or partner organizations in the development of such policies and regulations would help ensure the preservation of land-related resources.

- Create general policies for tourism under the Business Development program. Overall, it is important that tourism contribute to Gullah Geechee communities in a beneficial, not detrimental, manner. Policies must be in place to allow tourism to be managed in a sustainable fashion that does not compromise the resources of the Corridor. Furthermore, tourism policies must recognize that Gullah Geechee culture is a current way of life, not an isolated attraction that is removed from modern times.

## **Barriers to Successful Implementation**

Managing tourism inside the Corridor is a complex task due to the extensive territory within the Corridor's boundaries, and because of the number and diversity of organizations and jurisdictions at the local, state, and federal level. The management of such an intricate web of jurisdictions demands a high level of coordination and a clear and direct communication strategy to facilitate effective cooperation with different agencies and local communities.

The Corridor is relatively unique in that most important resources are tangible and intangible manifestations of a culture. The Commission is entrusted with assisting in the preservation of a living culture's survival. For that reason, public participation and involvement in the planning, decision, and operation processes are fundamental.

Finally, heritage tourism development in the Corridor must carefully avoid the mass tourism model and instead concentrate on a model of sustainable tourism.

## **VISITOR EXPERIENCE**

The interpretive planning process identifies and describes the intended visitor experience within the Corridor. It recommends ways to provide, encourage, sustain, facilitate, and assist the visitor experience. The Commission has identified a number of desired opportunities for residents and visitors.

The Commission would seek to provide opportunities for residents and visitors to:

- Gather information and stories associated with the primary interpretive themes, to the depth that they choose, through a variety of media.
- Educate visitors on various topics so that the message can be highly personalized to the individual.
- Understand the natural and cultural history of the Corridor. Gullah Geechee culture is alive and viable today; however, it cannot be fully appreciated without a firm grasp of the history that shaped it.
- Explore the diversity of the Corridor's natural and cultural resources and be inspired to participate in perpetuating the area's heritage.
- Cultivate an understanding and appreciation of the wealth of resources within the Corridor and the significance of the culture that has developed around those resources.
- Promote stewardship of the unique and valuable resources within the Corridor.
- Understand the history, complexity, and creativity of Gullah Geechee people and their contributions to the development of the United States of America. Accounts of Gullah

Geechee people are largely ignored in history books; if they do happen to be mentioned at all, the information is often incomplete. By visiting the Corridor, visitors have the opportunity to gain a more complete understanding of Gullah Geechee culture, historically and today. Visitors can begin to appreciate the depth and intricacy of what it means to be Gullah Geechee.

- Obtain enough information to safely, easily, and enjoyably visit the Corridor's resources. Visitors should be well accommodated within the Corridor. Resources and sites should be easily accessible to all, and the experience should not be burdensome. Information should be presented in a variety of ways to accommodate all audiences.
- Have an enjoyable experience without impairing the natural and cultural values or specific resources of the Corridor. The tourism best management practices above would seek to uphold the highest level of visitor enjoyment without compromising the resources of the Corridor. Visitors, too, have a responsibility to be conscientious guests while in the Corridor, and not degrade Gullah Geechee places and objects.
- Understand the historical and current lifestyles within the Corridor.



**SUGAR CANE SYRUP SALE AT THE RICEBORO RICEFEST 2011  
RICEBORO, LIBERTY COUNTY, GA**



## **PART 4: SIGNAGE FRAMEWORK**

### **REQUIREMENT**

The designating law states that one of the Commission's duties is to assist units of local government and other persons in implementing the approved management plan by "ensuring that clear, consistent, and appropriate signs identifying points of public access and sites of interest are posted throughout the Heritage Corridor." This section of the interpretation plan provides a framework to guide the Commission and partners in implementing this requirement.

### **ORIENTATION**

A consistent, integrated, informative, and attractive sign system is a primary component of the overall interpretation framework of the Corridor. A comprehensive signage system would enhance orientation, wayfinding, and communication with the public, providing visitors with strong visual cues.

Gateway signs on major routes would inform visitors of their entrance into the Corridor. Within the Corridor, visitors would encounter a clear, consistent, and easily understood system of signs that complement the other methods used to orient visitors to the Corridor and assist with wayfinding. Signage within the Corridor would direct visitors along US 17/A1A and to Coastal Heritage Centers. In addition, destination signs and/or interpretive panels would provide more in-depth information to visitors at affiliated sites. Additional methods of orientation would include brochures and maps, among others.

The signage system for the Corridor would be complemented by Web-based tools and applications to the extent possible to provide more information and content about the Corridor, as well as assistance with wayfinding and orientation. For example, travelers with mobile Web devices would be able to access online content about the Corridor and other tools and mobile applications in real-time to assist with wayfinding and orientation. As technology continues to advance, the Commission would continue to strive to enhance interpretation within the Corridor through the use of such technology.

Any sign installation for the Corridor would comply with all applicable federal and state laws.

### **SIGN IDENTITY**

The signage system would use the "graphic identity" of the Corridor to the extent possible. This would include logo, color, format, fonts (type styles), and other aspects of the visual identity of the Corridor. The graphic identity of the Corridor would be applied as consistently as possible to all Corridor signs. If the Corridor's graphic identity is found to not comply in any way with federal highway or state guidelines and requirements, then the Commission would work closely with the four states to identify an appropriate and consistent graphic identity for use in signage across the Corridor.

Through a consistent graphic identity, the visitor or resident who learns of the Corridor through a print advertisement, for example, would see the same graphic identity of the advertisement reflected on the Web site when they seek out more information online. And those visiting online would see the

same graphic identify present and reinforced through the sign system when visiting the Corridor in-person.

## CATEGORIES OF SIGNS

Given the large area of the Corridor, more than one signage type would be used as part of a comprehensive signage system. Signs would be carefully planned and designed to fulfill the important roles of providing information and orientation to visitors and residents. The signage system is divided into the following sign types:

- gateway signs
- wayfinding signs
  - identification signs
  - directional signs (turns and movements)
- destination signs
- interpretive panels (waysides)

### Gateway Signs

Gateway signs provide a clear sense of arrival to the Corridor. These signs are intended to welcome visitors to the Corridor. These signs would introduce or reinforce the graphic identity of the Corridor, and are intended to be welcoming and suggest the beginning of a quality experience. They are an important component of Corridor operations and another tool by which the Corridor can reach out to and engage with the public. This introductory sign to the Corridor would be reinforced through wayfinding signs, as well as destination signs and interpretive panels.



FIGURE 17. CONCEPT DESIGN FOR GATEWAY SIGN

Gateways signs should be significant in size and prominently located. These signs would include a note of arrival, “Welcome to the Gullah Geechee Heritage Corridor” and the Corridor logo.

### **Example Potential Gateway Sign Locations:**

#### *North Carolina*

- southbound US 17 at the Corridor boundary line
- southbound US 421 at the Corridor boundary line
- eastbound US 74 at the Corridor boundary line
- eastbound I-40 at the Corridor boundary line

#### *South Carolina*

- eastbound US 501 at the Corridor boundary line
- eastbound US 521 at the Corridor boundary line
- southbound US 52 at the Corridor boundary line
- eastbound I-26 at the Corridor boundary line
- southbound I-95 at the Corridor boundary line
- eastbound SC 22 at the Corridor boundary line
- southbound US 278 at the Corridor boundary line
- southbound US 321 at the Corridor boundary line
- southbound US 21 at the Corridor boundary line

#### *Georgia*

- eastbound I-16/404 at the Corridor boundary line
- eastbound US 25/341 at the Corridor boundary line
- eastbound US 82 at the Corridor boundary line
- southbound GA 21 at the Corridor boundary line

#### *Florida*

- eastbound US 1/301/23 at the Corridor boundary line
- eastbound I-10 at the Corridor boundary line
- northbound I-95 at the St. Johns County line
- northbound A1A at the St. Johns County line

## Wayfinding Signs

Signs in this category would be simple in design and intended to provide consistent and reliable information to travelers. These signs are the principal form of visitor orientation and direction within the Corridor, and should identify the Corridor by name and include the Corridor logo. These signs should be recognizable from a distance due to color and shape, rather than text or imagery. Wayfinding signs not only mark a route, but provide information in two key situations: (1) confirming that a traveler is still on the right path, and (2) directing traveler turns and movements. Therefore, two types of wayfinding signs are needed—identification signs and directional signs, described below.



FIGURE 18. CONCEPT DESIGN FOR IDENTIFICATION SIGN

**Identification Sign.** These signs would identify the US 17/A1A route throughout the Corridor. The Commission would work with partners to mark US 17/A1A from Pender County, North Carolina, to St. Johns County, Florida. These signs would be spaced approximately 25 miles apart, or a distance deemed reasonable during implementation, and include the name of the Corridor, the logo, and serve as the principal indicator identifying that the traveler is traveling within the Corridor. The prominent display of the logo would be an easy way for travelers to quickly identify Corridor signs, even while traveling at high speeds in a car, bus, or on a motorcycle. Additional routes may be marked with this signage type in the future, as appropriate.

[Note: The Commission intends to work with partners to explore obtaining scenic byway designation along US 17/A1A. To avoid the potential duplication of Wayfinding signs and Scenic Byway signs, if US 17/A1A designation occurs, the Commission would work closely with partners during the development of the signage plan to determine the appropriate phasing of effort regarding signage along US 17/A1A.]

## Example Potential Number of Identification Signs along US 17/A1A

Identification signs would be spaced approximately 25 miles apart along the length of US 17/A1A. Since gateway signs would mark the entrance to the Corridor, the first southbound sign placed in North Carolina would be approximately 25 miles south of the Pender County line. The number of identification signs presented here is an estimate and not based on actual sign locations.



**North Carolina**

- Approximately 10 identification signs

**South Carolina**

- Approximately 16 identification signs

**Georgia**

- Approximately 16 identification signs

**Florida**

- Approximately 8 identification signs

**Directional Signs (turns and movements).** Directional signs prompt travelers to perform turns or movements. These signs would identify the Corridor by name, include the Corridor logo, and have additional traveler information at the bottom of the sign that would include a basic message. The messages would often only be conveyed through the use of a symbol such as a directional arrow. In other instances, the message would be conveyed through both a symbol(s) and words, such as a right arrow with the words “In 100 yards.” Finally, the sign could only include text, such as “Right Lane Ahead” or “Exit 136-A.” These signs would comply with the Federal Highway Administration’s *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (2009 [or most recent] edition) in order to meet national standards for sign installation on public roadways.

Two types of directional signs would be used:

1. Those placed at exits that are near Coastal Heritage Centers.
2. Those used to direct travelers to US 17/A1A from interstates or other high-volume roadways and placed near or at intersections. For example, the exit off I-26 to US 17 (Septima Clark Expressway) would be a potential site for such a sign. To reduce costs, these signs could be added to existing exit assemblies. Freeway directional signs and arterial/surface street signs may both be needed and would be installed, as appropriate, in cooperation with partners.

**Example Potential Directional Sign Locations at Major Intersections**

**North Carolina**

- I-40 and I-140
- I-140 and US 17
- US 74 and US 17

**South Carolina** (North to South) – Note: these locations depict major route intersections with US 17

- US 17 and the US 17 Business Route
- US 17 and US 501
- US 17 and SC 544 (Duck Pond Road)
- US17 and I-26/Ravenel Bridge
- US 17 and SC 171/SC 61

- US 17 and SC 7/I-526
- US 17 and US 21
- US 17 and I-95 Exit 5

### *Georgia*

- I-16 and I-95 in both directions
- US 17 and I-95 near Richmond Hill
- US 17 and I-95 north of South Newport
- US 82 and I-95
- I-95 and US 17 south of Kingsland

### *Florida*

- I-295 and US 17 northeast Jacksonville
- US 17 and I-95 downtown Jacksonville
- I-295 and I-17 southwest Jacksonville
- County 202 and I-95
- I-295 and I-95 southeast Jacksonville
- US 1 and I-95 (Old St. Augustine Road)

**Destination Signs.** Destination signs welcome travelers upon arrival to sites designated as Affiliated Sites by the Commission. Affiliated sites are defined in more detail in the “Partner Site Support” document in appendix E. Destination signs would be similar in appearance to identification signs. Affiliated sites of the Corridor would be able to install official Corridor destination signs (see “Cost Breakdown” section). These signs would not be installed on highway right of ways, but on the property of individual affiliated sites and would comply with state and federal outdoor advertising policies.

**Interpretive Panels (Waysides).** Interpretive panels would be an additional sign type that could be installed at affiliated sites. They would provide general information about the Corridor, as well as site specific information. They should be designed to blend with the surrounding environment. In addition, they would include a map and illustrations, as appropriate.

There are many benefits of interpretive panels. They are available without the need for a staff presence and they use real locations and objects in their own setting as the object of interpretation. Moreover, they can illustrate a historical setting and/or phenomena not visible to modern-day visitors, and can alert visitors to potential dangers. Interpretive panels could be used to highlight important natural features, historically significant areas, or cultural communities and resources that are fundamental to Gullah Geechee people and their stories.

Two styles of interpretive panels would be used, an upright wayside sign and a tilted wayside sign. Tilted wayside signs would be primarily used in locations where the sign would be used to interpret a resource that the visitor would be able to see directly in front of them while reading the sign. Upright signs would be more appropriate in locations where obstructing a viewshed is not an issue. These

signs would not be installed on highway right of ways, but on the property of individual affiliated sites and would comply with state and federal outdoor advertising policies.

## **COORDINATION WITH EXISTING SIGN PLANS AND PROGRAMS**

Given the fact that the Corridor stretches across four states, the Corridor would work with the departments of transportation in each state to ensure that the final sign design guidelines conform to each state's requirements and all Federal Highway Administration requirements. The Corridor would work with state and local transportation departments and authorities to ensure consistency across the Corridor. Actual sign locations would be negotiated with partners during implementation.

### **Sign Placement Guidelines**

- Signs would be held to the minimum number, size, and wording required to serve their intended functions.
- Signs would be placed in such a manner and in such locations as to minimally intrude on the natural and historic setting.
- Signs would be placed so as not to interfere with visitor enjoyment and appreciation of Corridor resources.
- Signs would be placed to ensure the safety of residents and visitors.

## **COST BREAKDOWN**

As currently envisioned, the signage system to be developed over the life of the plan would consist of a minimum of 10 gateway signs; 50 identification signs; and an undetermined number of directional signs, destination signs, and interpretive panels. Sources of funding for signs in each of the categories would differ. For example, all costs associated with the production, installation, and maintenance of destination signs and interpretive panels would be the responsibility of officially designated affiliated sites, unless other agreements are negotiated with the Commission. Costs for gateway signs, identification signs, and directional signs would be shared between the Corridor and partners. Actual funding amounts would be negotiated and determined in the future. Actual sign locations would be identified in cooperation with partners at appropriate levels of government. Sign installation would be completed by partners.

## **SIGNAGE PLAN**

The Commission would develop a comprehensive signage plan as early as possible during implementation. The Commission would distribute a request for proposals if needed to develop the signage plan as an initial action (by end of 2013). Contractor selection and the actual development of a signage plan, as well as initial sign installation would all occur in the mid-range time frame (2014–2016). The signage plan would clarify sign categories as needed, include sign designs for each sign category, and identify locations for gateway and wayfinding signs. The plan would also include specific costs broken down by types (production, installation, maintenance) and identify specific sources of funding. A general overview map, as well as site-specific maps would be included. In addition, the signage plan would clarify phasing regarding Wayfinding signage and efforts to obtain Scenic Byway designation along US 17/A1A. The goal of this plan would be to facilitate sign installation. Actual sign design, production, installation, maintenance, replacement, etc., would be guided by existing sign standards and specifications for the four states and Federal Highway

*Administration Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (2009 or most recent edition). Note: If the NPS Arrowhead is to be used, the signage plan and individual signs must be approved by the Southeast Regional Office, Assistant Regional Director for Communications.

## **CONCLUSION**

Accurate, comprehensive interpretation of Gullah Geechee history and culture is critical to the overall success of the Corridor in meeting its goals and realizing its mission and vision. The development of engaging, comprehensive interpretation across the Corridor is a Commission priority. A clear and consistent signage system would be a critical component of the overall interpretation framework of the Corridor.