
Goal 3: Preserve and enhance the Heritage Area's numerous natural and cultural resources, particularly those with a clear link to the MSNHA's three primary themes.

Objective 3-A: Adopt a set of minimum standards of quality to insure "tourism readiness" for partner sites and attractions, as well as for an incentive to "emerging" sites and attractions.

- Tourism-ready standards should be based on the following "best-practices" considerations:
 - *Wayfinding* – The site should be relatively easy for visitors to find.
 - *Accessibility* – The site should be easy for pedestrians to travel both to and within the site, including meeting the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements
 - *Parking* – Parking should be available in sufficient amounts based upon current/future visitation numbers to the site. It might include on-site or nearby off-site parking lots, as well as adjacent on-street parking. Bus parking may be needed for key attractions.
 - *Visitor Comfort Amenities* – Bathrooms, water fountains, picnic tables, and similar amenities should be available for visitors to have a positive visitor experience.
 - *Days and Hours of Operation* – The site should be open to the public within a reasonable range of days and times so that most visitors can enjoy it. While it is recognized that some site operators may have religious and/or personal reasons for closing on Sundays, that is also a key tourism day, so this consideration can sometimes be challenging to negotiate.
 - *Interpretation* – The approach to interpretation should be effective and compelling, and the information should be accurate.



Ivy Green in Tuscumbia is an example of an existing attraction within the MSNHA that is already "tourist ready."

Because of the wide range of site types that these considerations will be applied to, a quantifiable scoring system will be difficult to craft. Instead, each site might be evaluated with the criteria above based on a range of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest score and 10 being the highest.

- Tourism-ready standards should be applied by a special committee of the MSNHA comprised of the following types of individuals:
 - CVB/tourism representatives
 - Local historians and preservationists
 - MSNHA representatives

This group should provide a balanced mix of insights and expertise related directly to the standards listed previously. For example, the CVB/tourism representatives should be able to provide informed opinions regarding a site's effectiveness with wayfinding and visitor comfort amenities, while the local historians and preservationists should be able to provide the same regarding a site's interpretation. It is recommended that between five and ten people make up this committee. It would not be one of the other six working committees that meet regularly and that are described in Objective 1-C.

- The initial round of site evaluations should be confirmed by a small group of peers from beyond the NHA: Even with a sound set of standards and a qualified committee to apply the standards, it will be

difficult to avoid “politics” and the common circumstance of committee members to feel pressured into deeming certain sites as being tourist ready. Consequently, it is recommended that a small team of peers (three to five) from other geographic areas be utilized for at least the initial round of site evaluations to confirm the determination of the committee. Potential team members might be staff from other nearby NHAs, such as the Tennessee Civil War NHA, the Mississippi Hills NHA, and the Mississippi Delta NHA. While using such a group will provide greater objectivity and some “political cover” for the MSNHA’s decisions, it would not be practical to utilize such a group every time a new site is considered. Assuming that the other NHAs might be interesting in utilizing similar peer groups for various activities, it is hopeful that partnering NHA staff would be willing to offer their services in return for getting their expenses compensated.

- The designation “tourist ready” should designate which MSNHA sites are most aggressively promoted as well as which ones receive technical assistance and funding. Whether a site is designated as “tourist ready” or “emerging,” there are benefits for either scenario, as explained below:
 - *Tourist Ready Sites:* The advantage to this designation is that these sites can be vigorously promoted as part of the broader MSNHA, as they meet a minimum level of quality that reinforces the image and reputation of the heritage area rather than detracting from it.
 - *Emerging Sites:* While emerging sites have not yet achieved a level that would warrant their promotion within the MSNHA, the positive aspect of such designation is that emerging sites would receive the highest level of priority when competing with other sites for grants and technical assistance from the MSNHA.

Objective 3-B: Provide technical assistance and grants to tourist-ready and emerging sites and attractions.

As indicated above, while both tourist-ready and emerging sites might be eligible for MSNHA technical assistance and grants, the emerging sites are generally considered to be in greater need. Thus, they would be given the top priority for assistance and grants.

- Technical Assistance: Technical assistance will be needed for a variety of issues, including historic resources preservation, site enhancement, curatorial services, interpretation, and marketing. This topic is addressed in detail in both the “Alternatives” section of this plan and the “Implementation Plan.” However, in short, it is recommended that the following three approaches be used for providing the MSNHA organization and its partner sites with technical assistance:
 - *In-House Assistance:* At least one or two technical assistants should be employed full-time or part-time as employees to the MSNHA. If two can be afforded, it is recommended that one be a preservation and interpretation specialist, while the other would be a marketing specialist.
 - *MSNHA-Hired Assistance:* Such technical assistants would typically be consultants with highly-specialized skills in disciplines related to NHAs. They would be hired on a contract basis directly by the MSNHA organization.
 - *Partner-Hired Assistance:* These assistants would typically be consultants as with the “MSNHA-Hired Assistance” option, but they would instead be hired directly by the partners needing the assistance. If MSNHA funding were involved, the MSNHA organization would participate in the selection of the consultants.

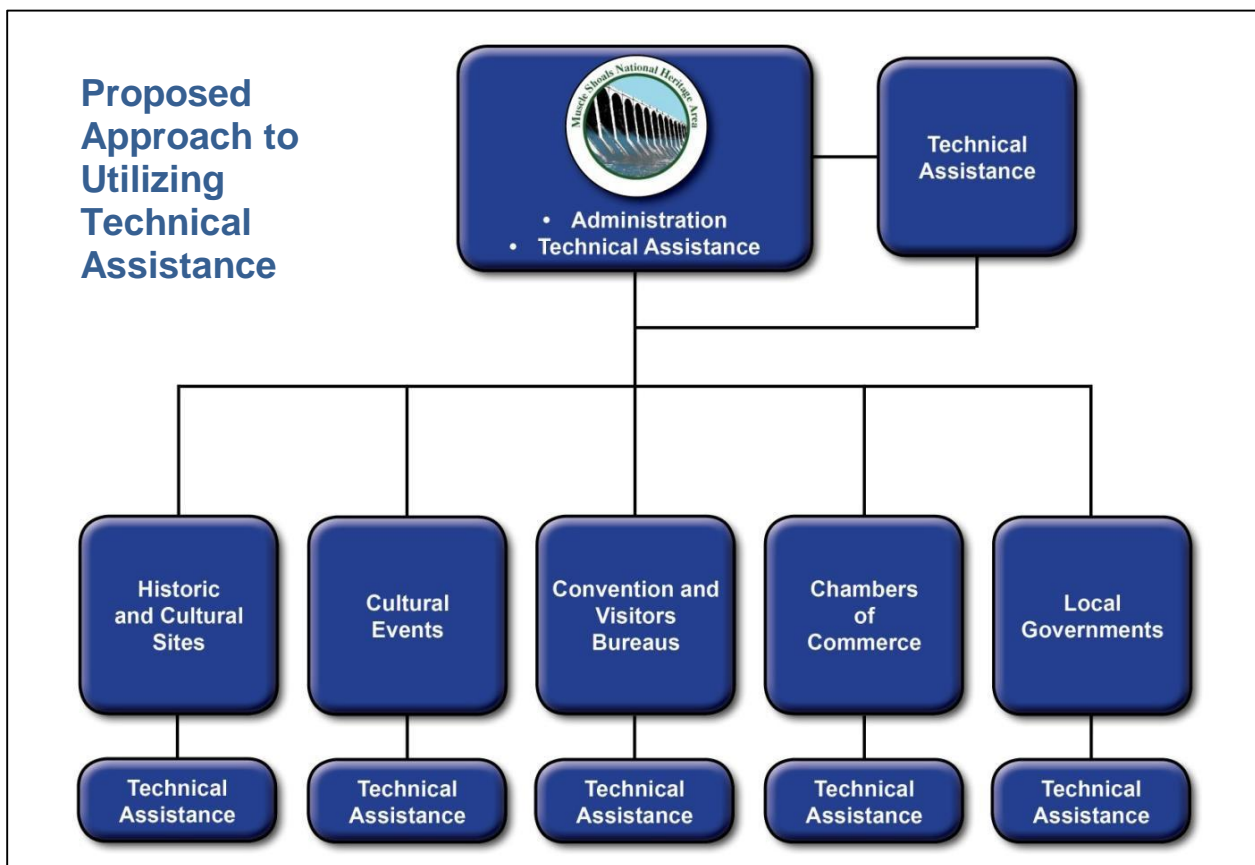
See the chart on the following page that illustrates this recommended approach to utilizing technical assistance.

- Grants: In general, emerging sites should be given priority over the other partner sites that have already “arrived” with respect to tourist readiness. However, that general principle does not mean

that meritorious projects of tourist-ready partners should not also be considered. The following criteria should be applied to grant applications by the MSNHA organization:

- *Extent of Need:* Funding should be limited to applicants who truly need it to achieve their missions.
- *Benefits to the MSNHA:* While funding might benefit a particular applicant, that does not mean it will be significantly beneficial to the heritage area. Projects that relate directly to the NHA's three primary interpretive themes should be considered particularly beneficial. One litmus test for this consideration is "How does this project relate to the MSNHA Mission Statement?"
- *Amount of Match & Leveraging:* In general, applicants matching the sought funding with the highest percentage of match funding should be given a higher level of consideration. Similarly, leveraging other funding sources will be viewed favorably. While cash should be at least part of the applicant's match, in-kind services should also be considered.
- *Capability of the Grantee:* This consideration relates to the abilities of the entity seeking funding. Applicants with sufficient staffing to successfully implement the proposed project and with a positive track record on similar projects should be given the highest consideration.

It is recommended that grants not be given for operational costs of sites or the acquisition of property. While it may not need to be completely precluded, funding of physical improvements should be allowed only in special cases, if at all. A grant program will require a very clear and systematic approach, including annual funding cycles, an application for those seeking funding, and the objective application of the criteria listed above. It will also require project monitoring, compliance, reporting, and similar activities. A grants manager will need to be familiar with federal regulations such as NEPA and Section 106, matching requirements, and reporting requirements. This work alone could keep a single staff person relatively busy.



Objective 3-C: Work with existing land trust organizations and willing land owners to protect lands through conservation easements.

Conservation easements restrict the development of natural lands, while allowing the private owners to maintain ownership and use of the land. Land trusts are the entities that typically enter an agreement with the subject property owner and enforce the easement. There are at least two land trusts that are active within the MSNHA – the Alabama Land Trust and the Land Trust of Huntsville & North Alabama. Below is a summary of each:

- Alabama Land Trust: This organization is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) conservation entity with the mission of preserving open space in Alabama. They have a strong partnership with the Georgia Land Trust in order to share resources, and their offices are based in Piedmont, Alabama. They currently hold over 140 easements throughout the state and protect over 60,000 acres of land. Their website's map of their easement locations illustrates that they are particularly concentrated in Northeast Alabama and just south of Tuscaloosa. However, there are two easements in Franklin County.
- Land Trust of Huntsville & North Alabama: This member-supported not-for-profit organization's stated sole purpose is to protect North Alabama's natural lands and scenic areas. Incorporated in 1987 as Alabama's first land trust, nearly 6,000 acres have been protected. They maintain three major Nature Preserves and over 38 miles of trails that are open to the public. They have three full-time and three part-time staff members, as well as over 100 active volunteers, and they receive no federal support for their operations.

While a strong preservation focus of the MSNHA will be on man-made cultural resources, natural resources are also important in serving as an appealing context that adds to a tourist's visitor experience, as well as for the benefit of NHA residents. Also, depending upon the potential level of land value loss that an easement might cause, there are federal income tax benefits available to those who donate conservation easements. It is recommended that the MSNHA work closely with both land trusts identified above in promoting the concept of easements and in identifying potential lands to conserve. In particular, a focus should be placed on the following two land types:

- 1) Lands containing (or adjacent to) historic sites and cultural attractions having a strong relationship to the MSNHA's three primary interpretive themes, and
- 2) Lands that can be linked to other lands to create green corridors for outdoor recreation, such as greenways located along streams and floodplains.

Objective 3-D: Work with willing property owners to protect historic resources with facade easements.

Facade easements function similarly to the conservation easements. Instead of protecting land, however, they protect buildings. As in the case of conservation easements, there are often federal tax incentives available for those properties listed on (or eligible for) the National Register of Historic Places. This type of easement is an agreement between a willing owner and a willing easement-holding entity to preserve a historic building. Most facade easements focus on the building's exterior, but, if written to do so, they can also protect interiors. While the Alabama Historical Commission holds over 80 easements, they are no longer accepting new easements. Fortunately, however, the private nonprofit Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation (ATHP) does have an active easement program.



Sweetwater in Florence would be a prime candidate for facade and conservation easements with sufficient owner interest.

It is recommended that the MSNHA build a strong working relationship with the ATHP and continually look for façade easement opportunities. The MSNHA should promote the existence of easements as a preservation tool, including their many benefits. It should also help the ATHP identify candidate properties and serve as a liaison between the ATHP and property owners interested in pursuing a façade easement. It is noteworthy that organizations such as the two land trusts described previously can accept façade easements for buildings that are part of a land conservation easement property.

Objective 3-E: Provide technical assistance to individual communities within the MSNHA to establish public policy tools to help preserve natural and cultural resources and to reinforce community character.

While there are several areas whereby the MSNHA can offer assistance, most can be categorized as preservation policies, community enhancement policies, and “other” types of policies.

- Preservation Policies

If the qualities that make the MSNHA special and unique are not conserved, there will be nothing to attract visitors. Thus, the following types of policies should be pursued for communities that may need them, but do not have them:

- *Open Space Planning* – Planning to conserve natural open space can be an important approach to preserving environmentally sensitive resources (wetlands, endangered species habitat, etc.) and open space in general. It can also help to curb fiscally-inefficient sprawl on the edges of communities. Such planning will identify implementation tools to turn the planning concepts into reality by adjusting zoning, encouraging conservation easements, and developing connected open space systems such as in the form of greenways.

- *Historic Zoning* – There are only two Certified Local Governments (CLGs) (communities with a formal preservation program) within the MSNHA – Decatur and Sheffield. The other communities lack a comprehensive program of historic resource inventories, locally-designated historic districts, and historic zoning. More communities within the heritage area should be encouraged to pursue CLG status, including adopting historic zoning that would regulate demolitions, building alterations, building relocations, and new infill development within historic downtowns and neighborhoods. The Alabama Historical Commission and the Alabama Trust for Historic Preservation can offer model ordinances from other communities in the state that have successful preservation programs. Those two organizations can also offer technical support and advocate for the importance of preservation with key local decision-makers, such as elected officials. Only CLG communities are eligible for CLG preservation grants for district nominations, preservation plans, design guidelines, and similar projects.



This historic building in Moulton has been altered by the ground-floor façade being bricked-in. Historic zoning could have avoided it.

- *Preservation Incentives* – Because regulations (“sticks”) need to be balanced with incentives (“carrots”) for successful preservation, the MSNHA should help local governments identify incentives

for preservation. One of the most common examples of local-level incentives is property tax abatements in which a property's assessed value is frozen for a specific amount of time (5 years) so that the property's assessed value (and tax bill) does not go up after a building rehabilitation. Such an incentive would require guidelines, such as a minimal investment amount and following local design guidelines. Also, Alabama allows for historic commercial buildings to be assessed at only 10% of their value compared to the normal 20% rate, and this program is unrelated to any rehabilitation projects for the subject property. At the national level, another important incentive for income-producing buildings listed on (or eligible for) the National Register and following federal preservation standards is the 25% investment tax credit for qualified building rehabilitations.

- Community Enhancement Policies

Examples of public policies that can enhance communities within the MSNHA include corridor planning and zoning, revitalization programs and wayfinding, as explained below.

- *Corridor Planning & Zoning –*

One of the greatest threats to the effective branding of the MSNHA is the many unattractive corridors connecting communities and key attractions. Highways such as Hwy. 72 (both sides of the river) and Hwy. 31 have segments, particularly within and on the edges of communities that are dominated by strip commercial development. Such corridors are lined with large competing signs, very little landscaping, a lack of sidewalks, and parking lots located between the road and its associated one-story franchise architecture. For most heritage tourists, this sort of environment is the antithesis of what they are seeking in a heritage area – authenticity and historic character.



This segment of Hwy. 72 is at odds with the MSNHA's desired image.

There are two techniques that can be applied to these types of corridors. The first is a planning and design project that would transform a highway into a multi-modal rural parkway or urban boulevard, depending upon the surrounding context. Features such as sidewalks, planting strips, street trees, on-street parking (in some cases), and landscaped or specialty-paver medians can be introduced. While these improvements would be shouldered by the local government, and perhaps by assessments of adjacent property owners, the balance of the improvement would need to be private sector financed.

The local government would also revise the zoning and development codes of the adjacent lands to require a higher quality of development, including relocating most of the parking to the rear and sides of buildings, parking lot landscaping, cross-access between properties, and buildings that physically related better to the street. Because all existing development would be "grandfathered in," such new standards would only apply to new development and the expansion of existing development. Although a complete transformation of such corridors might take decades, the natural redevelopment cycles of land would eventually result in much better corridors.



These “before” (left) and “after” (right) images illustrate how highway corridor planning and redevelopment (the public realm), combined with new zoning and development codes for adjacent property (the private realm), can greatly enhance the connections between NHA attractions.

- *Revitalization Programs* – Revitalization programs can be applied to both downtowns and neighborhoods in need. However, given the importance of downtowns as the potential backbone of the MSNHA, as well as the relatively low number of heritage tourists that will likely visit the area’s neighborhoods, the focus here will be on downtowns. One useful model for downtown revitalization is the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Main Street program. The Main Street program has existed for several decades now and it has a strong track record across the country. It utilizes the “four point approach” of organization, design, economic restructuring, and promotion. In Alabama, the Alabama Historical Commission sponsors the statewide Main Street program. At present, there are only two Main Street communities within the MSNHA – Athens and Florence. Thus, the MSNHA should encourage other communities to become Main Street communities, including Sheffield and Tuscumbia. In fact, given their proximity to one another, Sheffield and Tuscumbia might even be able to team up with Florence and share Main Street staff. It is also noteworthy that a community does not have to formally join the Main Street program to have a revitalization program. Many communities across the country have highly effective independent programs. Decatur, for example, has an active downtown revitalization program (Downtown Decatur Redevelopment Authority) without being part of the Main Street program.

- *Wayfinding* – Wayfinding is the process of utilizing signage and similar tools to guide visitors so they can find their way around a particular area. Effective wayfinding is critical to the success of heritage areas, as it is critical that visitors can navigate the area and find their destinations. While brochures with maps have already been addressed and there are various digital means of wayfinding, such as I-phone maps and GPS (global positioning systems), signage remains a staple for wayfinding. Effective wayfinding signage generally has the following characteristics:

- 1) Graphic consistency: A single color and logo that identifies the signage as part of the NHA
- 2) Theme-based colors and/or symbols: Colors and symbols are tied to specific NHA themes
- 3) Multiple messages: Information is combined on a single sign
- 4) Strategic locations: Located at key intersections and using arrows to direct toward destinations

For communities lacking existing effective wayfinding, an NHA’s development offers an attractive and straightforward opportunity to establish wayfinding. However, it is more challenging to usher in NHA wayfinding within communities that already have relatively effective wayfinding, such as Decatur and Florence. Because it is usually not financially viable to do a wholesale replacement of all wayfinding signage where it already exists, an intermediate step is to add the MSNHA logo to such existing signage, as well as to add additional panels to an existing sign.

With regard to funding, it is recommended that the MSNHA fund the design of wayfinding signage, and share the costs of fabrication and installation with the individual communities. A 50/50 match would be one option for cost-sharing between the MSNHA and the individual communities. There are only a few communities within the MSNHA that have effective wayfinding systems currently in place.



Decatur is one of the MSNHA's few communities with an effective wayfinding signage system.

Other Policies

Once the MSNHA's communities begin the process of stepping back and viewing themselves through the eyes of visitors, other policy issues will inevitably surface. As just one example, many heritage tourists appreciate bed-and-breakfasts (B&Bs) as a lodging option. However, not all communities have policies to accommodate the establishment of B&Bs. B&Bs are most commonly located in historic downtowns and historic residential areas surrounding downtowns. While they are generally a compatible use in downtowns, B&Bs sometimes conflict with neighbors in residential neighborhoods. Parking is especially an issue to be resolved. A B&B ordinance that designates specific areas and that regulates their design and activities is often the answer to accommodating them, and the MSNHA can offer consultation to communities lacking enabling policies, including sharing model B&B ordinances.

Goal 5: Encourage and assist in community enhancement and the development of tourism “infrastructure,” such as dining, lodging and tourism-oriented retail.

Goal 3 above already addresses the issue of community enhancement in Objective 3-E under “Community Enhancement Policies.” However, tourism infrastructure is addressed below.

Objective 5-A: Provide technical assistance for public policy strategies to enhance strip commercial corridors and to revitalize historic downtowns and neighborhoods.

See specific recommendations and illustrating graphics under Goal 3 – Objective 3-E above regarding how the MSNHA can help communities to positively transform unattractive strip commercial corridors and to revitalize downtowns.

Objective 5-B: Encourage the development of dining, entertainment, and lodging that would appeal to cultural tourists visiting the MSNHA.

While the MSNHA does not need to single-handedly spearhead the recruitment or start-up of businesses, it should work closely with local Chambers of Commerce, CVBs, Main Street programs and other economic development entities in that regard. The MSNHA should encourage local governments to provide incentives for such businesses, which might include property tax abatements, tax increment financing (TIF), and similar tools. Below are the types of businesses that should be sought for the heritage areas.

- *Dining:* New dining options within the MSNHA should be locally-owned “mom and pop” type restaurants that reflect the region and some level of authenticity. Exceptions to this rule might include regional chains/franchises focusing on Southern food, such as barbeque. Because downtowns exhibit much greater authenticity and historic character than suburban strip centers and highways, new compatible dining should be steered toward the MSNHA’s historic downtowns.

Also, some heritage areas have become heavily involved with supporting local farmers and locally produced food, and this approach may hold promise for the MSNHA. For example, the South Carolina National Heritage Corridor (SCNHC) works closely with the Heritage Corridor Farmers Association. The Farmers Association members work with the heritage corridor on cross promotion, marketing, special events and special programming. They have also developed an Agricultural Tourism Trail, which is featured on an interactive map on their website. This partnership gives the farmers a financial stake in promoting the heritage corridor.

- *Entertainment:* Given that one of the MSNHA’s three primary interpretive themes is music, that form of entertainment is an obvious focus for development. As explained previously in Objective 2-D, it is proposed that an Interpretive Center for Music be developed in Sheffield. There have been several planning efforts in recent years to revitalize Downtown Sheffield, and they have also attempted to promote more live music in its bars and restaurants. Although Sheffield does not have one of the MSNHA’s few formal Main Street programs, it should probably pursue such a program, and one of its roles could be to stimulate more live music opportunities.



One of the few existing venues in the Muscle Shoals area featuring regularly-scheduled live music is at Swampers in the Marriott Hotel in Florence.

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- *Lodging:* One type of lodging that is particularly appealing to heritage tourists is Bed and Breakfasts (B&Bs) and inns. Decisions on the establishment of these types of businesses are typically a private sector choice by individual property owners and generally cannot be “willed” by a heritage area. However, as noted previously in Objective 3-E under “Other Policies,” not every community has a regulatory environment to accommodate these less conventional lodging options. B&Bs, in particular, are usually located in historic residential areas on the periphery of a downtown. Because of their potential impacts on parking and occasional nuisance issues, some communities have not addressed the issue head-on with a B&B ordinance. The MSNHA can encourage local governments to accommodate zoning for B&Bs and offer model B&B ordinances to use as a model.

Objective 5-C: Encourage the development of retail closely linked to the Heritage Area, such as authentic regional products associated with the culture and an outfitters store for outdoor recreation.

The MSNHA is fortunate to have at least a few retailers that have a national following, such as Billy Reed and Alabama Chanin, both based in Florence. However, even these strong retailers are not tied to the region’s authenticity, including the MSNHA’s interpretive themes. At present, there is a general lack of retailers selling products having a strong regional connection, as well as a lack of outfitters stores for outdoor recreation. As in the case of other business types that constitute the area’s “tourist infrastructure,” the MSNHA should support local economic development entities in the establishment and recruitment of such businesses.

Goal 6: Market and promote the Heritage Area through a number of vehicles to increase heritage tourism as a means of economic development.

Objective 6-A: Promote existing special events tied to the history, cultural traditions, and themes of the Heritage Area, and help in the creation and promotion of new such events.

- Existing Special Events - According to this plan's market assessment, a sample of festivals in the region determined that total attendance averages more than 617,000 per year, although the total head count (which excludes repeat visitors) is closer to 300,000. The highest attendance was recorded at the W.C. Handy Festival, which is said to attract an average of 135,000 visitors over the course of the week-long event, with a total head count estimated at 33,750. The Trail of Tears Ride attracts an average of roughly 65,000 (estimated head count of 32,500) to attend and participate in the motorcycle ride and pow wow. The Helen Keller Festival attracts 50,000 attendees (estimated 38,500 people). Although less than 20% of attendees at most of the local festivals are visiting from outside of the area, the Handy, Keller, Trail of Tears Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddler's Convention, and a handful of other events attract visitors from a broader region or nationwide. Among the largest visitor-driven events are sporting activities like the Racking Hose Celebration, Alabama Charity Horse Show, fishing tournaments, and softball tournaments. It is projected that the MSNHA could capture a festival audience of 302,500, an increase expected by 2016 of 10.5%. Nashville, Huntsville and other parts of the country will generate the fastest growth in festival-goers to be captured by the MSNHA.
- Existing MSNHA Theme-Based Events - At present, there are several events tied to the MSNHA's music theme, including Sam McCracken Days Bluegrass Festival, Sam Phillips Commemoration Week, UNA's Presidential Mentors Academy (PMA) Cultural Music Fest, W.C. Handy Music Festival, SoulStock, Delmore Days, and the Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddler's Convention. There are also two events tied to the Native American theme: Oka Kapassa – Return to Cold Water Native American Festival and the Trail of Tears Commemoration and Motorcycle Ride / Pow Wow. However, there are no major events tied directly to the river theme.
- Proposed River-Themed Event - It is recommended that a new festival be established in honor of the animal that gave the region its name and supported the economic and cultural development of the region over millennia. Mussel cooking contests, recognition and protection of remaining varieties of mussels in the Tennessee River, and competitions for use of mussel shells are among the kinds of activities that could help strengthen the unique identity of the area for heritage conservation and tourism.

In the United States alone, there are Mussel Festivals in Washington State (Penn Cove and Coupeville Dock), a Mussel and Wine Festival in Bar Harbor, and a Beer and Mussels Festival in St. Louis. However, there do not appear to be any major mussel festivals in the South. Certainly if any region in the U.S. should host a mussel festival, it should be the Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area, which owes much of its early success to these animals.



Mussel-eating contest in Washington State

Objective 6-B: Develop a MSNHA website targeting tourists that highlights the primary themes and attractions, features tours tied to the Heritage Area themes and a schedule of events, and that includes links to other relevant websites.

This objective has already been achieved, at least in its initial stage, via the website “msnha.una.edu.” This excellent website features high quality graphics and an extensive amount of useful information for people interest in experiencing the MSNHA. It is likely that, once this Management Plan is adopted, the website will need to be slightly adjusted to be consistent with the plan. As just one example, the bottom of the homepage offers ten different themes to “explore.” Of those ten themes, only three constitute the MSNHA’s three primary themes, although some of them are sub-themes of primary themes. In short, the ten themes, as currently presented on the website, may confuse website audiences and may require some minor tweaking to be consistent with the ideas ultimately confirmed by this plan. Also, to better convey the MSNHA’s autonomy, it is recommended that the website be changed to “msnha.com” or “msnha.org” rather than remaining as part of the UNA website system.



The MSNHA’s existing website is a high-quality tool that will require only minor adjustments upon the completion of this plan.

Objective 6-C: Utilize social networking systems to promote the Heritage Area.

As already summarized in Objective 1-E under “Utilize social media to garner attention for the MSNHA,” examples of social media for the MSNHA to leverage include Facebook, Twitter, and Linked-In. At present, the MSNHA is using Facebook and Twitter. Being effective in the use of social media requires both knowledge of the medium and frequent interaction. If the MSNHA staff lacks expertise to utilize social media, it is recommended that either a Steering Committee member, issue-based Committee member, or someone with UNA be asked to help with this effort. A UNA intern may well be the most effective and affordable option.

Objective 6-D: Utilize conventional means of promotion, such as print ads, brochures, and maps to promote the MSNHA and its various attractions. Below is a summary of how each of the three most conventional means of promotion might be used:

- Print Ads – Any print advertisements for the MSNHA would likely be for travel magazines and others such as “Southern Living” and “Garden & Gun.” Such ads would not be inexpensive and, consequently, should be limited in their number and extremely targeted. For example, an ad for the MSNHA might be coordinated with an article related to the area. It is recommended that such ads be carefully considered based upon available funding versus projected benefits.
- Brochures – Brochures should be made available in both hard-copy format and a digital downloadable format on the MSNHA’s website. At a minimum, there should be a separate brochure for the following topics: 1) the MSNHA overview; 2) Native American Heritage; 3) The River; and 4) Music. Hard-copy brochures should be made available at all of the typical locations, including interstate visitor centers, hotels, key restaurants, attractions, and similar sites.
- Maps – Maps are a critical item for any effective heritage area. NHAs naturally place a substantial focus on geography. In particular, maps are needed for navigating theme-based tours. Maps for MSNHA can be integrated into a variety of formats, including brochures, the MSNHA website, and other marketing materials.