

# DRAFT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Muscle Shoals  
National Heritage Area



Prepared for:  
The Muscle Shoals National  
Heritage Area

Draft:  
January 15, 2013



## A. ORGANIZATION & RESOURCES

### A1. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE MSNHA

Graphically displayed in the chart below, the key components of the Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area's coordinating entity are as follows (in order of authority):

- University of North Alabama (UNA) President
- UNA Sponsored Programs
- MSNHA Director & Staff
- Advisory Board
- Committees

Each component of this organizational structure is described on the following pages.

### *UNA's Top Tiers of the MSNHA*

#### UNA President

As the chief executive officer of the university, UNA's President is ultimately responsible for all facets of the MSNHA organization since UNA has been designated via federal law as the heritage area's coordinating entity. Although the MSNHA has a Steering Committee, that body has very limited powers. Fortunately, UNA's vital role in the heritage area brings many resources to the MSNHA, as evidenced by other NHA's housed in universities. One nearby example is the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area housed at Middle Tennessee State University. Similarly, to date, the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area is housed at Delta State University, although the contents of its yet-to-be completed Management Plan will determine if that is an ongoing arrangement.

#### UNA Sponsored Programs

This UNA office supports the acquisition of external support in the form of grants and contracts to help University faculty and staff fully participate in research and creative activities. Among other things, this office provides assistance to faculty and staff with associated grant and contract pre-award activities such as locating funding sources, reviewing proposals, legal review processing, obtaining appropriate endorsements, and other related efforts. The Office of Sponsored Programs also oversees the post-award administration of grants and contracts, as well as providing guidance on meeting sponsor requirements for fiscal compliance, record keeping, reporting and evaluation.

### *Staffing*

At present, the MSNHA's staffing includes a Director, a part-time Administrative Assistant, and an intern. It is proposed that the MSNHA's staffing consist of two components – a Director and technical assistants. Although the hiring of an administrative assistant was considered, it is proposed that the technical assistants perform such duties. Because of technological advances in recent years, such as e-mail and more automated approaches to large mailings, most organizations have found less need for administrative assistants.

#### Director

The MSNHA Director position should be responsible for the following activities:

- Overseeing the MSNHA offices day-to-day operations
- Reporting to the UNA President
- Supervising all staff (interns might be supervised by Technical Assistants)
- Representing the MSNHA at various meetings and events
- Working with a UNA accountant in overseeing the budget
- Soliciting financial support for the organization
- Preparing agendas for all MSNHA meetings
- Assisting board and committee chairs in running meetings
- Implementing the MSNHA work program

This position should be budgeted for between \$65,000 and \$85,000 annually, plus benefits, commensurate with experience and/or capabilities.

#### Technical Assistants

It is recommended that the following two full-time technical assistant positions be created to support the Director:

*Preservation & Interpretation Specialist*

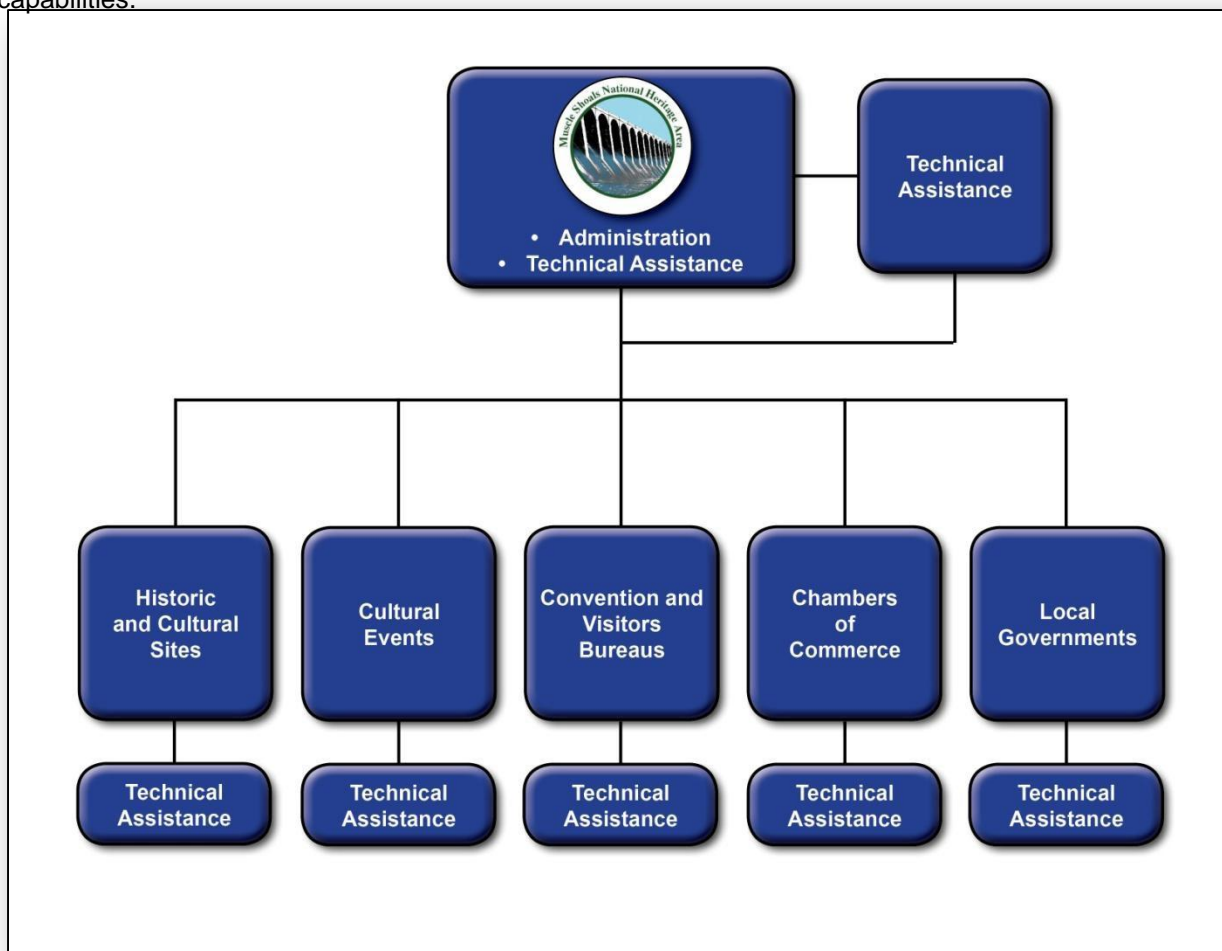
This individual should have expertise and experience in historic preservation, history, interpretation, museums, historic site management, and similar related activities. This plan has pointed out elsewhere that curation expertise is a sorely missing component throughout the heritage area for its many museums and historic sites. This person should help to fill that void. An example of their role

would be to work with local sites to pursue grant funding, to help draft RFPs for hiring professionals, helping with the selection of such professionals, and overseeing their work. In other cases they would be the ones providing the primary expertise to various historic sites.

#### *Marketing & Tourism Specialist*

This individual should have a strong background in market research, marketing, tourism, special events, social media, and related disciplines. While not absolutely critical, skills with website development and/or graphic art would be pluses. This person can also work on PowerPoint presentations, website updates, development of marketing materials, and working with other professionals to create marketing materials. They would also work closely with CVBs, chambers of commerce, the Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association, the Natchez Trace Compact, economic development officials, and with business development.

These Technical Assistant positions should also supervise interns, and each should be budgeted for between \$45,000 and \$75,000 annually, plus benefits, commensurate with their experience and/or capabilities.



## **Use of Technical Assistance**

### Non-Permanent Staff

UNA recently began a master's degree program in Public History, making it only the second such program in the state. Auburn University has the other Public History program. Although UNA's

program presently has only six students, it is expected to grow to thirty students within the next year. Because such programs tend to emphasize hands-on experience gained through project work, there should be plenty of opportunities for student internships with the MSNHA. While UNA's program would be the first program to approach, Auburn students should also be considered, as well as students at other universities in similar programs. As a starting point, it is recommended that one intern position be created and budgeted for 12-16 hours per week at approximately \$10 per hour. Such an intern could be utilized as needed.

Another potential for non-permanent staff would be an occasional historian-in-residence who might be recruited every one-to-three years through regional or national competitions to work with the MSNHA on specific research or interpretation projects. This individual's tenure would be funded through sponsored grants and source institutions. The "historian" may also include musicians, writers, scientists, or others with a specific research link to one of the area's three primary themes.

### *Board, Committees & Members*

In addition to those who would be paid to work for the MSNHA, volunteers will be critical to the ultimate success of the heritage area. The following three types of volunteers are recommended:

#### Advisory Board

The MSNHA's existing "Steering Committee" should be renamed as an "Advisory Board." Although it would not have the authority level of a governing board because that authority rests with the UNA President, this body would recommend policy direction to the MSNHA Director. The board should be appointed by the UNA President, it should have between 10 and 15 members, and it should be comprised of a broad range of interest types, including the following:

- CVB directors
- Local government officials
- Main Street managers / economic development professionals
- Tourism-related business owners (lodging, dining, retail)
- Historic preservationists and historians
- Conservationists
- Site and attraction operators
- Marketing professionals
- Finance and fund raising

Other members should include representatives of the National Park Service (Natchez Trace Parkway), TVA, U.S. Forest Service (Bankhead), Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (Joe Wheeler State Park), and the Alabama Historical Commission. While such institutional positions would typically be non-voting ex officio members, because this board is only advisory and the ultimate authority rests with the UNA President, such a distinction is unnecessary. The MSNHA should develop operating guidelines that govern board terms and insure periodic rotations off the board. While these guidelines should be proposed by the MSNHA staff and approved by the board, one potential approach might be three-year terms not to exceed three consecutive terms per member (or nine total consecutive years per member).

#### Committees

As already explained in this plan's Strategies section, six specific topic-based committees are recommended. Committee members should not be limited to board members. Some of these committees should assist with a particular function of the MSNHA, while others should address a specific topic. The recommended committees include the following:

- *The Natural Resources & Conservation Committee* should focus on natural lands conservation efforts, including acquisition of open space for public use and conservation easements for private lands. This committee should include representatives from the state and regional land trusts, as well as governmental entities involved with conservation (TVA, Alabama Department of Conservation &



Natural Resources, etc.) and private entities like the Sierra Club. This committee has a strong link with the heritage area's "River" theme.

- *The Recreation Committee* should concentrate on outdoor recreational activities within the heritage area, such as boating, fishing, hunting, hiking, cycling, canoeing, rafting and similar activities. Among committee members should be Parks & Recreation Department staff from the various local governments, as well as leaders of area clubs for fishing, hunting and related activities. As with the committee described above, this committee will have a clear connection with the MSNHA's River theme.
- *The Community Investment Committee* should address everything that is "bricks and mortar" for the heritage area. It should involve investing in the physical aspects of the heritage area to improve its condition and make it more livable, more attractive to visitors, residents and businesses, and to help improve the overall quality of life. Key participants for this committee should include Main Street program managers, planning directors, and community redevelopment officials within the various heritage area communities.
- *The Education & Interpretation Committee* should be comprised of local historians, history academics from area universities (Public History Department representatives from UNA, etc.), museum operators, anthropologists (including archeologists and ethnographers), and others with expertise and interest in the area's history and culture.
- *The Marketing & Public Relations Committee* should be comprised of marketing and public relations professionals, CVB representatives, Alabama Lakes Tourist Association, Natchez Trace Compact, and others involved with tourism, including tourism-related businesses.
- *The Fund-Raising Committee* may be the most important committee of all because of the critical nature and unique issues associated with fund-raising. As noted previously, anticipated changes to the NPS's treatment of NHAs and their funding will only make this issue even more significant. This plan's Business Plan section addresses fund-raising strategies in detail.

These six working committees do not include the additional committee suggested in Objective 3-A of the Strategies section of this plan for determining "tourist ready" versus "emerging" sites and attractions. That committee would only meet as needed following an initial round of evaluations by a smaller group of representatives from other NHAs.

### Members

As a means of both generating revenue and encouraging commitment among those who will benefit from and contribute toward the MSNHA, two different categories of memberships are proposed:

#### *Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVBs)*

It is recommended that each of the MSNHA's six CVBs be encouraged to join at an annual membership level of up to \$5,000. The MSNHA Advisory Board should work with staff to establish the specific amount, which might even vary according to the population and/or annual sales tax revenues associated with each CVB.

#### *Other Member Types*

Beyond the membership of CVBs, it is recommended that the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area's membership structure be used as a model. It features the following membership structure:

Individual & Senior - \$25; Family - \$45; Supporting - \$75; Premium - \$125; Patron - \$250; Benefactor - \$500. Benefits for membership in this NHA, which are also a good model for the MSNHA, include: personalized membership card, 10% discount at their retail shop (discount valid on up to 4 tour tickets), e-mail updates, free admission to exhibits, and invitations to member-only events and programming.

---

### *Other Personnel*

The other personnel that will be necessary to carry out the mission of the MSNHA include technical consultants and individuals with legal and financial expertise.

### Technical Consultants

As first proposed in this plan's Alternatives section and as illustrated in the previous chart, it is proposed that technical expertise be provided through both in-house staff and consultants. The staff technical expertise has already been addressed both in terms of the specific positions and their pay ranges. It is recommended that technical consultants be employed as needed to the extent that the staff technical assistants lack the time or level of expertise needed for specific projects. For the purposes of planning and budgeting, it will be assumed that approximately half of the time for consultants will be hired directly by the MSNHA, while the heritage area's various partners will account for the balance of the time for consultants utilizing funding from the MSNHA.

### Legal and Financial Expertise

An organization such as the MSNHA will periodically need legal and financial expertise. Examples of needed legal expertise might include reviewing draft contracts with consultants, as well as addressing legal liability issues for board members and for sponsoring special events. Examples of financial expertise that might potentially be needed include preparing financial statements, setting up bank accounts, dealing with audits, and similar accounting needs. One approach to satisfy these needs is to appoint board members who can volunteer these areas of expertise. While that should be a fallback approach here, it is proposed that UNA employees with such technical capabilities be the first option to pursue. In either scenario, it will be assumed that no expenses will be incurred for this expertise.

## *A2. RESOURCES*

In addition to staffing, volunteers and hired expertise, resources that will be required to support the efforts of the MSNHA include office space, transportation and other resources.

### Offices

The MSNHA office is currently housed in UNA's Bibb Graves Hall, which is conveniently located near a key parking lot with spaces reserved for visitors. The existing space will accommodate three staff members, which is consistent with the recommended staffing for the MSNHA, not including interns and other part-time staffing. This space is presently provided at no cost. It is recommended that, for at least the first few years of the MSNHA's operations, this space continue to be utilized. However, within a few years, consideration should be given to seeking slightly larger and more independent offices within or near the university's campus. Such space would help to give the heritage area's coordinating entity a bit more an independent

and autonomous image, which would likely be positively received by the MSNHA's other communities beyond Florence.



*The MSNHA's current offices in UNA's Bibb Graves Hall should be suitable for the next few years.*

Transportation

One advantage of the MSNHA relative to much larger NHAs (such as the Mississippi Hills NHA at 30 counties and the Tennessee Civil War NHA at the entire state) is that the six-county size makes travel within it relatively unchallenging. While staff will definitely need to circulate regularly throughout the heritage area, it is not recommended that the MSNHA purchase or rent one or more vehicles. Instead, it is recommended that employees utilize their own vehicles and keep a mileage log to be reimbursed according to mileage. The current State rate effective January 1, 2009 is \$.55 per mile according to a formal letter from the State Comptroller dated November 25, 2008.

Other Resources

Other resources that will be required to keep the MSNHA's coordinating entity going will include the typical office support resources, such as office furniture (desks, chairs, etc.), office equipment (computers, a printer, a digital projector, telephones, cell phones, cameras, etc.), various office supplies (ink cartridges, paper, folders, envelopes, labels, etc.), utility and telecommunications expenses (phone bills, website hosting, internet, etc.), and related items. Although office furniture and equipment will be purchased infrequently after the initial investment, for budgeting purposes it should be estimated that approximately \$10,000 will be spent annually on this category of expenses.

