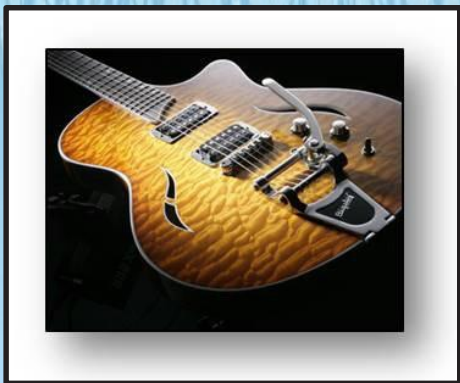


DRAFT BACKGROUND REPORT

Muscle Shoals
National Heritage Area



Prepared for:
The Muscle Shoals
National Heritage Area

Revised:
January 18, 2012

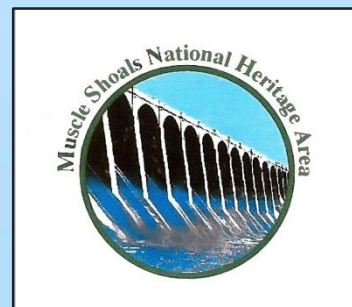


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A. Overview and Benefits of National Heritage Areas

A1. OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL HERITAGE AREAS

As explained by the National Park Service's website: *"National Heritage Areas (NHAs) are designated by Congress as places where natural, cultural, and historic resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally important landscape. Through their resources, NHAs tell nationally important stories that celebrate our nation's diverse heritage. NHAs are lived-in landscapes. Consequently, NHA entities collaborate with communities to determine how to make heritage relevant to local interests and needs."*

NHAs are a community-based approach to historic preservation and economic development that utilize public-private partnerships. NHA organizations are involved with historic preservation, natural resource conservation, recreation, heritage tourism, and educational projects. Leveraging funds and long-term support for projects, NHA partnerships foster "pride of place" and an ongoing ethic of stewardship. NHAs are not National Park Service (NPS) units and do not purchase land or impose land use controls. Instead, the NPS partners with NHA entities and provides them with technical assistance and distributes matching federal funds from Congress.

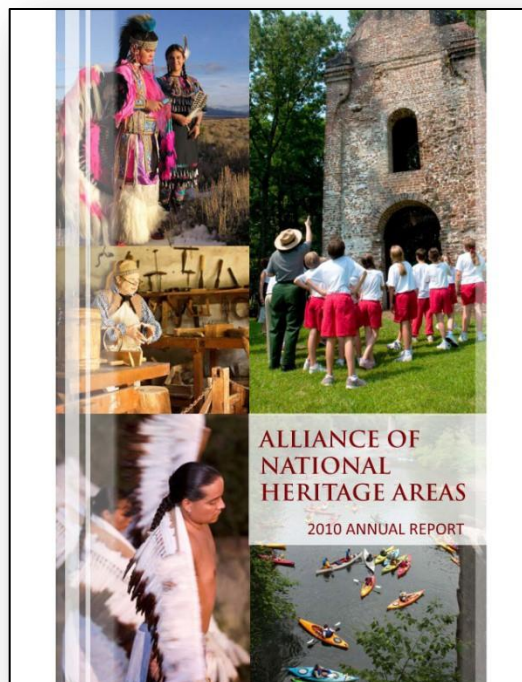
National Heritage Areas are designated by Congress and there are currently 49 NHAs across the country (see map below). Each NHA is governed by its own authorizing federal legislation and operates under provisions that are unique to its resources and goals. For an area to be considered for designation, its landscape must have distinctive natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources that tell a unique story about our country. A feasibility study is typically conducted prior to a designation attempt.



Map of current NHAs, including the identification of those that are members of the Alliance of National Heritage Areas (ANHA). The MSNHA is highlighted in red for this report. Source: ANHA website

A2. BENEFITS OF NATIONAL HERITAGE AREAS

NHA designation benefits are both tangible and intangible. Heritage conservation activities are rooted in a community's pride in its history and culture, and in citizen involvement in preserving and interpreting the landscape for future generations. NHAs offer a collaborative approach to conservation that does not compromise traditional local control over and use of the landscape. Heritage areas offer an innovative vehicle for citizens, in partnership with local, state, and Federal governments, as well as non-profit and private sector groups and individuals, to shape the future of their communities. These partnerships create the opportunity for a diverse range of people to unite and articulate a range of visions for their area. Partners collaborate to shape a plan and implement a strategy that focuses on the distinct qualities that make their region special. NHAs appeal to a broad range of people. Some feature opportunities for walking, hiking, cycling and paddling. Others offer festivals to attend and museums to visit. Many heritage areas provide volunteer opportunities, group tours, and multi-day excursions.



2010 Annual Report of the Map of the Alliance of National Heritage Areas (ANHA).

Source: ANHA

BENEFITS OF HERITAGE AREAS: THE ALLIANCE OF NATIONAL HERITAGE AREAS

The following NHA benefits are highlighted in the ANHA's 2010 annual report:

National Heritage Areas are an investment, not an expense, for the federal government.

Few government programs can boast a funding ratio of \$5.50 to every \$1 of federal investment. NHAs leverage federal funds to create jobs, generate revenue for local governments and sustain local communities through revitalization and heritage tourism. They are managed at the local level, keeping citizens engaged and government limited.

National Heritage Areas result in job creation.

Utilizing a formula created by the U.S. Department of Commerce that measures the dollars needed to create one job from heritage preservation/tourism funds in each state, NHAs have created 16,520 jobs in 32 states through the \$171,163,484 federal investment.

National Heritage Areas are models for public engagement in difficult economic times.

The model works because we continue to remain relevant to the specific needs of our individual communities. The grassroots nature of the NHA Program lends itself to meeting the needs identified by and for the local people. It is a model that encourages and requires public input and local investment and is a model that garners enormous support from the constituents we serve and partners we support.

Continued on the following page ...

The National Heritage Area Program is a citizens' movement that has proven track records of success.

In the 2004 report "Charting a Future for National Heritage Areas," Douglas Wheeler, Chairman of the National Park System Advisory Board stated: "National Heritage Areas represent a significant advance in conservation and historic preservation: large-scale, community-centered initiatives collaborating across political jurisdictions to protect nationally important landscapes and living cultures. Managed locally...this is a citizens' movement of high purpose and great benefit to the nation."

"A national heritage area is a region that has been recognized by the United States Congress for its unique qualities and resources. It is a place where a combination of natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources have shaped a cohesive, nationally distinctive landscape."

Alliance of National Heritage Areas website

B. Related Policies and Studies

B1. MSNHA FEDERAL LEGISLATION

In January of 2009, the 111th Congress of the United States adopted the “Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009” (short title), which established multiple National Heritage Areas. Among those was the Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area (MSNHA), established via Section 8009 of the act. For a full copy of the legislation adopting the MSNHA, please see Appendix A of this report. This act is very typical of all National Heritage Area legislation over the past few years. Key highlights of this federal legislation include the following:

Purposes of the MSNHA

Below is an excerpt from the legislation:

- (1) to preserve, support, conserve, and interpret the legacy of the region represented by the Heritage Area as described in the feasibility study prepared by the National Park Service;
- (2) to promote heritage, cultural, and recreational tourism, and to develop educational and cultural programs for visitors and the general public;
- (3) to recognize and interpret important events and geographic locations representing key developments in the growth of the United States, including the Native American, Colonial American, European American, and African American heritage;
- (4) to recognize and interpret the manner by which the distinctive geography of the region has shaped the development of the settlement, defense, transportation, commerce, and culture of the region;
- (5) to provide a cooperative management framework to foster a close working relationship with all levels of government, the private sector, and the local communities in the region to identify, preserve, interpret, and develop the historical, cultural, scenic, and natural resources of the region for the educational and inspirational benefit of current and future generations; and
- (6) to provide appropriate linkages between units of the National Park System and communities, governments, and organizations within the Heritage Area.

MSNHA Boundaries

The Counties of Colbert, Franklin, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Limestone, and Morgan comprise the MSNHA. These counties are adjacent to the Tennessee River and comprise the northwest corner of the State of Alabama.

Local Coordinating Entity and Its Duties

The Muscle Shoals Regional Center is the local coordinating entity. While it is not indicated in the legislation, this center is housed in the University of North Alabama in Florence. Its duties include:

- Prepare and submit a Management Plan to the Secretary of the Interior.
- Submit an annual report for each fiscal year that the local coordinating entity receives Federal funds.
- For each fiscal year that the local coordinating entity receives Federal funds, make available for audit all information pertaining to the expenditure of the funds and any matching funds.
- Encourage economic development that is consistent with the purposes of the Heritage Area.
- Serve as a catalyst for the implementation of projects and programs among diverse partners in the MSNHA.

Local Coordinating Entity Authorities

The entity has the following powers:

- Make grants to the State, political subdivisions of the State, nonprofit organizations, and other persons.
- Enter into cooperative agreements with, or provide technical assistance to, the State, political subdivisions of the State, nonprofit organizations, Federal agencies, and other interested parties.
- Hire and compensate staff.
- Obtain funds or services from any source, including funds and services provided under any other Federal law or program.
- Contract for goods or services.
- Support activities of partners and any other activities that further the purposes of the MSNHA and are consistent with the approved Management Plan.

One power that the entity does not have is the ability to “acquire any interest in real property” through the use of Federal funds.

Management Plan Requirements

The plan must include the following components as stated specifically in the legislation:

- (A) describe comprehensive policies, goals, strategies, and recommendations for telling the story of the heritage of the area covered by the Heritage Area and encouraging long-term resource protection, enhancement, interpretation, funding, management, and development of the Heritage Area;
- (B) include a description of actions and commitments that Federal, State, tribal, and local governments, private organizations, and citizens plan to take to protect, enhance, interpret, fund, manage, and develop the natural, historic, cultural, educational, scenic, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area;
- (C) specify existing and potential sources of funding or economic development strategies to protect, enhance, interpret, fund, manage, and develop the Heritage Area;
- (D) include an inventory of the natural, historic, cultural, educational, scenic, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area relating to the stories and themes of the Heritage Area that should be protected, enhanced, interpreted, managed, funded, or developed;
- (E) recommend policies and strategies for resource management, including the development of intergovernmental and interagency agreements to protect, enhance, interpret, fund, manage, and develop the natural, historic, cultural, educational, scenic, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area;
- (F) describe a program for implementation of the management plan, including: (i) performance goals; (ii) plans for resource protection, enhancement, interpretation, funding, management, and development; and (iii) specific commitments for implementation that have been made by the local coordinating entity or any Federal, State, tribal, or local government agency, organization, business, or individual;
- (G) include an analysis of, and recommendations for, ways in which Federal, State, tribal, and local programs may best be coordinated (including the role of the National Park Service and other Federal agencies associated with the Heritage Area) to further the purposes of this section; and
- (H) include a business plan that: (i) describes the role, operation, financing, and functions of the local coordinating entity and of each of the major activities described in the management plan; and (ii) provides adequate assurances that the local coordinating entity has the partnerships and financial and other resources necessary to implement the management plan for the Heritage Area.

Also, if the plan is not completed within three years of Federal funding being provided for the plan's creation, additional Federal funding will be terminated.

Property Owners and Regulatory Protections

It is explicitly stated that nothing in the legislation shall:

- Abridge the rights of any owner of public or private property, including the right to refrain from participating in any plan, project, program, or activity conducted within the MSNHA;
- Require any property owner to permit public access to the property;
- Alter any adopted land use regulations, approved land use plan, or any other regulatory authority of any Federal, State, or local agency, or tribal government;
- Convey any land use or other regulatory authority to the local coordinating entity;
- Authorize or imply the reservation or appropriation of water or water rights;
- Diminish the authority of the State to manage fish and wildlife; and
- Create any liability of any private property owner with respect to any person injured on the private property.

Appropriations for Funding

The following provisions apply to funding of the MSNHA:

- A total of up to \$10,000,000 of Federal funding may be provided to the local coordinating entity, with no more than \$1,000,000 being made available for any fiscal year.
- The Federal share of the total cost of any activity shall be no more than 50 percent.
- The non-Federal contribution may be in the form of in-kind contributions of goods or services.
- Nothing precludes the local coordinating entity from using Federal funds from other sources not part of the MSNHA Federal funding.
- The authority of the Secretary of the Interior to provide financial assistance under this legislation terminates 15 years after its enactment.

Legislative History of the Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area

The following summary is contained on page 6 of the MSNHA's Background Study (and updated here), which is described starting on the following page of this report.

July 25, 2001: H.R. 2628 legislation introduced by Congressman Robert Cramer

February 7, 2002: Testimony presented to the Department of the Interior Subcommittee

December 17, 2002: P.L. 107-308 authorization of the Feasibility Study

October 1, 2005: Submission of the Draft MSNHA Feasibility Study

July 2006: Approval of the Draft MSNHA Feasibility Study (conditioned on additions)

January 11, 2007: Introduction of designation legislation

February, 2007: Submission of additions to the Feasibility Study to the NPS

July 12, 2007: Testimony presented to the Department of the Interior Subcommittee

October 24, 2007: Approval of designation legislation by House of Representatives

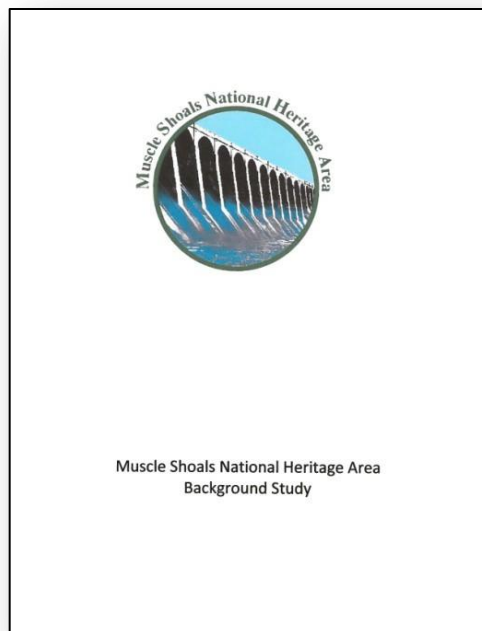
January 2009: Approval by Congress of the MSNHA

B2. MSNHA FEASIBILITY STUDY

Prepared in 2008 by a consultant as the basis for the Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area's establishment, this study featured the following seven sections:

- Chapter 1: Background and Study Approach
- Chapter 2: The Affected Environment
- Chapter 3: The Muscle Shoals Story: Themes and Historical Contributions
- Chapter 4: Evaluation of the Muscle Shoals Region According to Federal Criteria
- Chapter 5: Management Alternatives
- Chapter 6: Environmental Consequences
- Chapter 7: Conclusions

See Appendix B of this report for the Executive Summary of this study. The following text provides a summary of the key findings of the Background Study.



This Background Study served essentially as the feasibility study for the Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area.

Background on the Study

This 2008 study was prepared by a consultant for the Muscle Shoals Regional Center at the University of North Alabama. Prepared in consultation with the National Park Service (NPS), its preparation featured more than two-dozen community meetings and over 400 participants. The conceptual boundaries for the MSNHA included Colbert, Franklin, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Limestone and Morgan Counties in the northwest corner of Alabama. The study explains that the "Muscle Shoals are a series of five areas along the Tennessee River in which there is a concentration of shoals and shallow water, with the central most of the five areas being considered the "Big Muscle Shoals."

Criteria for MSNHA Boundaries

Page 9 of the study cites the following criteria for boundary-setting:

- An examination of place names in early maps and documents;
- A determination of place identity through local informants;
- Physical features and parameters such as the land fall and obstructions in the river, geological, climate, flora and fauna, drainage and topography;
- Aboriginal evidence of occupancy;
- Settlement patterns, linguistics, agriculture, trading area, political divisions, voting patterns, transportation routes;
- Contemporary issues such as print and broadcast media's area of dominant influence, commuting shed, power distribution, retail markets, and a variety of historical markers that help to define the distinctive sub-region of the Tennessee Valley called the Muscle Shoals.

Key Themes for the MSNHA

Three key themes are contained in the Feasibility Study and served as the basis for the Federal legislation designating the Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area. Below is an overview of each theme as stated in the study's Executive Summary, as well as a bullet-point list of the subsections for each theme within the main body of the study (pgs. 21-38):

Mounds and Mussels: The Muscle Shoals Prehistory and Settlement

This theme focuses on how the obstacles presented by the rocky shoals affected trade routes and ultimately America's settlement toward the southwest.

- The Mussel in Muscle Shoals
- The Mounds of Prehistory
- Early Routes Converged in the Muscle Shoals
- Trail of Tears Route Through the Muscle Shoals

"When we approached the Muscle Shoals rapids they had a dreadful appearance to those who had never seen them before. The water was high and made a terrible roaring, which could be heard from some distance among the driftwood heaped frightfully among the points of the island, the current running in every possible direction. Here we did not know if we would be dashed to pieces, and all our troubles ended at once".

John Donelson's Diary – 1779
Source: MSNHA Background Study (pg. 23)

Harnessing the Mighty River: The Muscle Shoals in Times of War and Peace

This theme presents a compelling story of the region's role in national defense and regional development epitomized by successfully building a system of canals, constructing Wilson Dam and establishing the Tennessee Valley Authority.

- Early Efforts at Bypassing the Muscle Shoals: Canals and Railroads
- The Plantation Economy Thrives on Dependable Transportation
- The Muscle Shoals Becomes a Strategic Element in the Civil War
- The Post-Civil War Era Brings the First Successful Canals
- From Bypassing to Harnessing: From An Obstacle to an Asset
- The Tennessee Valley Created as a Model of River Basin Development
- Engineering Innovation and Masterpieces
- World War II Brings Another Opportunity to Serve the National Defense

The 1916 National Defense Act directed the Army Corps of Engineers to build locks and a dam at Muscle Shoals to generate hydroelectric power to make nitrates for weaponry for World War I. To house the influx of worker for the Sheffield nitrate plants, a residential subdivision was built in 1918. Its street pattern formed the shape of the Liberty Bell, and "Liberty Village" featured 85 bungalow-style houses, a school and officers' barracks. Today, the distinctive houses with their stucco cladding and tile roofs constitute a National Register of Historic Places Historic District (see photograph at right).

Source: MSNHA Background Study
– pgs. 29-30



Music and Modern Times: The Muscle Shoals and the River that Sings

The third theme relates the story about how the now legendary Muscle Shoals sound tradition emerged onto the world music stage.

- The Muscle Shoals Gives the World “The Father of the Blues” (W.C. Handy)
- A Native Son is the “Father of Rock and Roll” (Sam Phillips)
- A Muscle Shoals Native Becomes a Legendary Music Publisher (Buddy Killen)
- Music Publishing Hits Big Time in the Muscle Shoals
- Muscle Shoals Labeled “Hit Recording Capital of the World”
- The Muscle Shoals Sound Continues Today

Management Alternatives

Only two management alternatives for the MSNHA were considered in the Background Study, and both are summarized below:

Alternative 1: No action and continuation of existing practices

This alternative is based upon no National Heritage Area designation occurring for the area. It would be a continuation of the pre-MSNHA scenario in which there would still be various entities and individuals involved with historic preservation, interpretation, tourism and related activities, but all of those efforts would continue to occur in an uncoordinated fashion. The study also points out that it would be very unlikely that an entity such as the State would step in to fill the void that would otherwise exist without the MSNHA.

Alternative 2: National Heritage Area designation

This alternative is described with a very general overview of National Heritage Areas as they function elsewhere. It recognizes that an entity would manage the Heritage Area with help from the National Park Service and many local partners. It lists the various types of activities with which the NHA would be involved, and it notes the gains that would be achieved in preservation, interpretation and heritage tourism. This section of the study concludes with a statement that “national heritage area designation is the highly preferred management alternative” (pg. 53).

Environmental Consequences

This section of the study examines the two management alternatives addressed above: 1) no action versus 2) NHA designation. It compares those two alternatives based upon the following environmental issues:

- Wildlife
- Hydrologic features and wetlands
- Forest and park lands
- Rare, threatened and endangered species
- Economic activity
- Archeological resources and Native American heritage
- Historic places
- Historic town centers and neighborhoods
- Cultural and unique educational sites

With respect to Alternative 1, maintaining the status quo would result in no significant impacts to the environment. The only noteworthy impacts would be those that would normally occur based upon growth and development occurring in the area regardless of heritage tourism.

Alternative 2 recognizes the potential to better preserve and enhance some existing resources because of funding and activities associated with NHA designation. For example, “Educational and interpretive programs established as a result of the MSNHA would help create awareness of environmental issues and consequences, which over [the] long term could help reduce the pressure on environmental systems” (pg. 56). While most impacts of NHA designation were determined to be insignificant, one

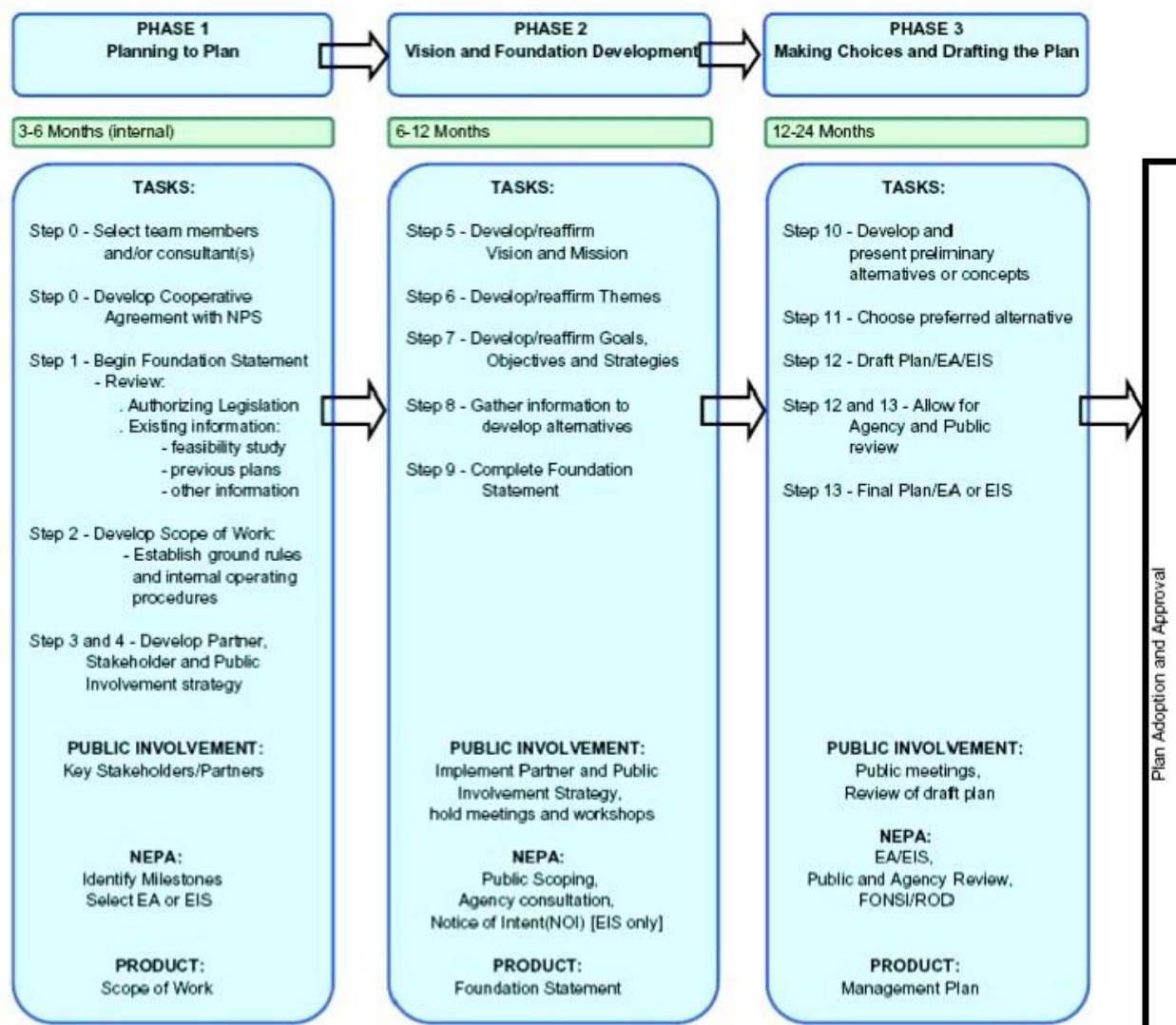
exception is on economic activity, which would be enhanced through increased tourism. Another potential impact on historic town centers and neighborhoods would be incompatible development in communities lacking sufficient protective regulations. This section concludes by stating that NHA designation “would have no adverse impacts on the natural or built environments” (pg. 58).

B3. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE GUIDES FOR NATIONAL HERITAGE AREAS

In addition to Federal legislation providing parameters for this Management Plan, there are two documents created to assist those preparing Management Plans – “Components of a Successful National Heritage Area Management Plan” and “The DO-12 Handbook.” Each is summarized below:

Components of a Successful National Heritage Area Management Plan

Prepared by the National Park Service (NPS) in 2007, the stated purpose of this manual “is to provide information to National Heritage Areas and National Park Service (NPS) staff on the management planning process and the components of a successful management plan” (pg. i). It focuses on the management planning process, as well as a plan’s contents. The process is best summarized by the graphic below (which has been slightly modified by eliminating peripheral elements not necessary to a general understanding of the process). This chart is featured on page 13 of the manual.



Source: NPS “Notebook” – pg. 13

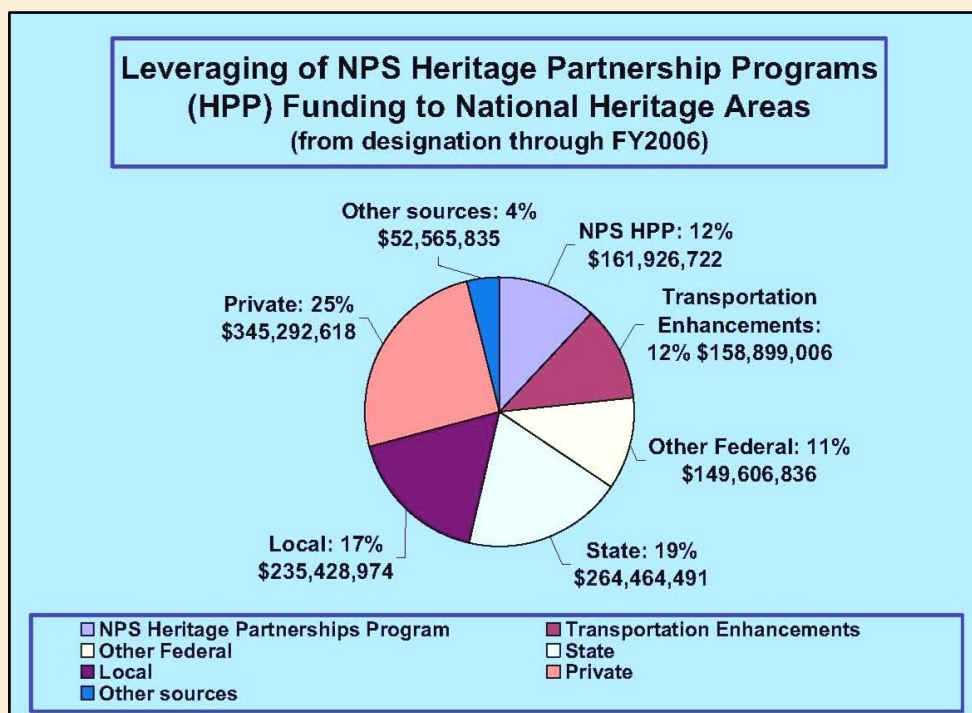
Referred to more commonly as “the Notebook,” it emphasizes at the outset that each Heritage Area is unique and has very different circumstances. Therefore, the Notebook is intended as a general guide and the methodology and contents for each Management Plan must be tailored to fit its Heritage Area. Below is a convenient check-list of components of a typical Management Plan (Appendix F – pg. 19).

Management Plan Component Checklist

	National Heritage Area Overview and Significance
	Related Plans and Activities
	Vision and Mission Statement
	General Interpretive Theme Structures and Stories
	Resource Inventory
	Area goals and objectives, for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - resource protection - interpretation/education - partnership development - public participation - tourism/ economic development
	Alternative Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Roles of partners and state/local/private/NPS/other federal agencies - General Implementation Approach (for each alternative)
	Affected Environment
	Environmental impacts of each Alternative
	Implementation Plan (with short-term action plan) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - priority initiatives
	Interpretive Plan
	Business Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local coordinating entity description - Cost and funding sources; \$ and in-kind anticipated/known, including partner commitments
	Partner Roles and Commitments
	Evaluation and Accountability Benchmarks/Success (Framework for Evaluation)
	Preferred Alternative and/or Environmentally Preferred Alternative
	List of preparers and participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Management planning team - Advisory committees or Task forces

Source: NPS “Notebook” – Appendix F - pg. 19

One of the most critical issues for the long-term sustainability of NHAs is a balanced set of funding sources. The graphic on the following page is found on page 41 of the Notebook and it illustrates the findings of a series of surveys of NHAs as of December 2006 – just prior to the Notebook’s creation – on their funding sources. Interestingly, at the time of the most recent survey, 25% of the total funds were from private sources, underscoring the leveraging potential of NHAs.



Source: NPS "Notebook" – pg. 41

The Notebook was followed closely in the preparation of this Management Plan. Thus, rather than needing to describe the manual's contents in detail, this Management Plan will strongly reflect its contents.

The DO-12 Handbook

The 1970 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was a landmark act for Federal environmental policies. In turn, NEPA created the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), an agency of the President's office that would be the "caretaker" of NEPA. Several "handbooks" have been created by the CEQ over the years to assist organizations and individuals with compliance with NEPA requirements. The DO-12 Handbook is the latest in that series and is extremely useful for those preparing NHA Management Plans. As stated at the beginning, "This handbook never conflicts with the CEQ regulations, although the NPS has added some requirements that go beyond those imposed by CEQ to help facilitate the requirements of the law that established the NPS (the Organic Act) and other laws and policies that guide our actions" (pg. 2). The key topics addressed in this handbook are the following:

Categorical Exclusions (CEs)

Until recently, CEs were not frequently applied to NHA Management Plans. CEs result when there is a determination that no significant impacts will occur to natural resources, cultural resources, the economy, and the social fabric of the area due to the NHA's development. NEPA requirements for inventorying and analyzing these facets of the area still apply, as do requirements for an extensive public participation process. However, a CE determination means that the Alternative Scenarios developed later in the planning process do not have to be evaluated based upon their potential impacts.

Environmental Assessments (EAs)

An EA requires the same inventory and analysis work and public input as required for a CE at the front end of the management planning process. However, unlike the CE route, the plan's subsequent

Alternative Scenarios must be carefully evaluated in light of their potential impacts. While the least impacting Alternative is not necessarily required to be the Preferred Alternative, mitigating actions to counter impacts must be identified. Until the NPS's recent determination that CEs can be a reasonable option for many NHAs, EAs were the most common NEPA route for NHAs.

Environmental Impact Statements (EISs)

An EIS is similar to an EA, but the level of documentation, analysis and public engagement is more intense, as is the evaluation of the Alternative Scenarios based upon potential impacts. It has never been a common occurrence for EISs to be required as part of the NHA management planning process.

B4. ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND REQUIREMENTS

Overview of National Environmental Policy Act

As explained in the previous section, the 1970 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was a landmark act for Federal environmental policies, and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) is an agency created to help implement the act. NEPA requires that every federal agency prepare an in-depth study of the potential impacts of major federal actions having a significant effect on the environment, as well as alternatives to those actions. It also requires that each agency make that information an integral part of its decisions. Furthermore, NEPA mandates that agencies make a diligent effort to involve the public before they make decisions affecting the environment.

Stated Purpose of NEPA: Section 2

“... to encourage productive and enjoyable harmony between man and his environment; to promote efforts which will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment and biosphere and stimulate the health and welfare of man; and to enrich the understanding of the ecological systems and natural resources important to the Nation....”

Because the two most relevant NEPA routes for the MSNHA are the Categorical Exclusion (CE) and the Environmental Assessment (EA), those two paths will be summarized below:

Categorical Exclusions (CEs)

NPS has two lists of categorically excluded actions. One list requires no NEPA documentation, and no internal scoping is required. However, the agency may choose to prepare a memorandum for the record to show that environmental effects were at least considered. The process in utilizing the second list is more complex. While the types of actions in the list not requiring documentation would rarely cause environmental impacts, the actions for the list requiring documentation do have the potential for measurable impacts. The six categories of actions are as follow:

- Actions related to general administration
- Plans, studies and reports
- Actions related to development
- Actions related to visitor use
- Actions related to resource management and protection
- Actions related to grant programs

Environmental Assessments (EAs)

An EA should be prepared if: A) additional analysis and public input is needed to know whether the potential for significant impact exists; or B) preliminary analysis indicates there will be no significant impacts, but some level of controversy over the proposed action exists. An EA must lead to a FONSI (finding of no significant impact) or an NOI (notice of intent) and an EIS. Therefore, if an EA process finds that a proposal action has the potential for significant impacts, an EIS is required (unless section

5.4(f)(3) applies). However, if an analysis of the proposed action via an EA finds that no impact will result, a FONSI should be issued.

Other Key Regulations

While the following other key regulations overlap to a great extent with NEPA, they deserve individual recognition, as follows:

Endangered Species Act (ESA)

Section 7 of the ESA requires all federal agencies to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the National Marine Fisheries Service on any action that might affect endangered or threatened species (and “candidate” species), or that may result in adverse impacts to critical habitat. An EA or EIS may provide sufficient information to serve as a biological assessment for Section 7 of the ESA.

Executive Orders 11988 and 11990, Floodplain Management and Wetland Protection

These Executive Orders direct NPS to avoid, to the extent possible, adverse impacts caused by modifying or occupying floodplains and wetlands. They also require NPS to avoid support of floodplain or wetland development whenever there is a reasonable alternative. If a proposed action would result in an adverse impact to a regulated floodplain or wetland, there must be a statement of findings with the finding of no significant impact (FONSI) or the record of decision (ROD).

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106

Section 106 of the NHPA requires federal agencies to consider the effects of their proposals on historic properties, and to provide state historic preservation officers, tribal historic preservation officers, and, as necessary, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation a reasonable opportunity to review and comment on these actions. “Section 106 review” and NEPA are two distinct processes that should occur simultaneously. Documents can be combined, but one is not a substitute for the other. They should, however, be coordinated to avoid duplication of public involvement or other requirements. The information and mitigation gathered as part of the Section 106 review should be included in the NEPA document, and the Section 106 process must be completed before a FONSI or ROD can be approved for a proposed action that impacts historic properties.

Executive Order 12898, Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations

This Executive Order requires federal agencies to determine whether their actions have disproportionately high and adverse impacts on human health or the environment of minority and low-income populations. It requires an analysis and evaluation of the impacts of the proposed action on minority and low-income people and communities, as well as the equity of the distribution of the benefits and risk of the decision in the NEPA document.

Secretarial Order 3175 and ECM95–2

These memoranda require agencies to explicitly address environmental impacts of their proposed actions on Indian Trust Resources in any environmental document.



NEPA and other environmental regulations are important to protect the natural resources that draw people to the Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area.

C. Planning Methodology

C1. MANAGEMENT PLAN SCOPE OF WORK

Below is the detailed Scope of Work for the consultant team employed by the Muscle Shoals Regional Center at the University of North Alabama to prepare the MSNHA Management Plan:

Task 1.0: Project Scoping & Start-Up

This initial step will feature the following steps:

Task 1.1 Meeting with MSNHA

This meeting between key members of the Project Team and MSNHA representatives will review issues such as the tentative Scope of Work, project schedule, budget, needed data, and the public participation process. NPS staff might also be involved.

Task 1.2 Foundation Statement

Based upon the MSNHA legislation and Background Study, the draft Foundation Statement will be prepared for future testing with the public. It will include key interpretive themes.

Task 1.3 Public Participation Strategy

This task will build upon this tentative Scope of work contained here by fine-tuning the approach to soliciting public input throughout the project. An important step will be the identification of the Heritage Area's many stakeholders beyond the general public. The most immediate issue will be the Task 1.4 scoping meetings.

Task 1.4 Scoping: Public Meetings to Identify Issues

Multiple public meetings will occur (likely two) to inform the public about the project and begin to identify issues that the plan should address. In particular, potential topics will be considered for focusing the NEPA process in anticipation of impacts caused by the Heritage Area, such as the natural resources, prehistoric/historic resources, and the local economy.

Task 1.5 Revisions to Draft Scope of Work

Based upon the input and findings generated by the Task 1.1 and 1.4 meetings, as well as the Task 1.3 public participation strategy, the draft Scope of Work will be revised for submission to the NPS for their review.

Task 1.6 Finalizing Scope of Work

Following feedback from all key parties, including the MSNHA and NPS, the Scope of Work and corresponding budget will be finalized.

Task 2.0: Research & Public Input

This task will serve as the research and diagnostic phase on which much of the balance of the work will rely. The Project Team will perform the sub-tasks described below during multiple trips to the Heritage Area, as well as through work conducted prior to and following these trips.

Task 2.1 Review of Background Information

Prior to making the Task 2.0 trips to the Heritage Area, the Project Team will gather and review key information to gain insights into the project's context. Such information will include, but not be limited to: natural resources, prehistoric and historic resources, written histories, existing land uses, key public policies, previous plans and studies, economic and demographic data, tourism data, infrastructure, base map data, and aerial photo maps. A series of existing condition maps will also be prepared using available GIS data.

Task 2.2 Heritage Area Tour

The Heritage Area tour will be led by MSNHA staff to better orient key members of the Project Team to the area. Additional follow-up work will be performed by the Project Team as part of Task 2.3. During this task, the team will also be provided with any available information not previously provided up to this point.

Task 2.3 Physical Inventory & Assessment

As part of the initial fieldwork for the project, the Project Team will document and evaluate the Heritage Area's general physical characteristics through the review of existing data, mapping, field notes and photography. It is anticipated that the Heritage Area's existing Background Study will be an excellent starting point for existing data. Based upon that field research and existing data, the Project Team will conduct an evaluation of the Heritage Area's existing conditions. Although the Task 1.4 public scoping meetings and NEPA/NHPA requirements will largely determine the issues to be considered with respect to potential future impacts caused by the Heritage Area, likely topics include some of the following:

- Natural resources - water bodies, wetlands, topography, wooded areas, plant and animal species, etc.
- Prehistoric and historic resources - archeological sites, federally and/or locally designated and/or eligible historic resources and districts, etc.
- Tourism attractions - natural sites, historic sites, recording studios, etc.
- Tourism "infrastructure" - lodging, restaurants, retail, services, etc.
- Transportation and linkage between sites/attractions

Task 2.4 Economic & Market Analysis

To understand the Heritage Area's overall economic and tourism market context, and to subsequently create a reality-based Management Plan, the Project Team will conduct an economic and market analysis. This analysis will determine the Heritage Area's potential and opportunities for tourism based on the following:

- Economic profile, including economic and demographic trends, to understand the "drivers" of demand for various sites and attractions
- Interviews with key tourism industry representatives; business owners and/or operators; historic sites operators; environmental representatives; economic development and business association representatives; institutional representatives
- Review of inventory and visitation of existing historic and environmental attractions generated in Task 2.3
- Analysis of factors impacting the Heritage Area's overall marketability, including a review of existing attractions and their quality, pricing, management, access, attraction mix, trends in tourism, and similar factors

Conduct a Market Analysis

To identify market potentials/opportunities as input to the subsequent planning:

- a. Site assessments and tourism base trends analysis
- b. Concept identification
- c. Define target markets/market areas
- d. Conduct market area demographic analysis
- e. Forecast attendance/visitor growth potentials
- f. Identify comparable and competitive projects
- g. Determine concept potentials in terms of attendance, sales, visitor flow
- h. Identify tourism services opportunities based on core attraction attendance projections
- i. Determine market potentials for visitor services (e.g., lodging, retail) in room nights and expenditures
- j. Provide strategic recommendations for marketing of concepts and development of visitor services, including type of infrastructure required to support visitor services

Task 2.5 Stakeholder Focus Group Meetings

The MSNHA staff will identify key stakeholders who can provide useful information and perspectives on the various issues relevant to the Heritage Area. Up to ten (10) meetings with various stakeholder groups will be conducted by key members of the Project Team, with each meeting including up to ten (10) individuals having a common interest in the Heritage Area. Each meeting will last approximately one hour, and examples of potential stakeholder groups might include the following:

- Attraction/site operators
- Chamber and CVB representatives
- Business owners/operators and economic development representatives
- Institutional representatives
- Environmentalists
- Historic preservationists
- Public officials

Task 2.6 Preliminary Findings Presentations

Based upon the work achieved to date, key members of the Project Team will present the preliminary findings to the public. It is proposed that two evening meetings occur, one in the Athens/Decatur area and one in the Florence/Muscle Shoals/Tuscumbia area. A substantial amount of time will be devoted to public discussion.

Task 3.0: Workshop & Alternatives Preparation

Although the proposed project Scope of Work has been designed to encourage strong public input throughout the life of this project, Task 3.0 offers the single greatest opportunity for meaningful “hands-on” involvement of key stakeholders and the general public, as well as MSNHA representatives and public officials. The goal of the public workshop is to provide a forum for the public to achieve a consensus on the various Alternatives for the future of the Heritage Area. The most tangible outcome of the workshop will be the finalizing of the Heritage Area’s Foundation Statement, as well as the creation of the Alternatives for the MSNHA. This four (4) day task will require strong teamwork between the Project Team and MSNHA staff, as the MSNHA will recruit and schedule all public participants with the guidance of the Project Team. Furthermore, this task will involve the largest number of Project Team members for any single trip to the Heritage Area, including the three-person Heritage Area Managers Advisory Group (they will be involved in the first three days of the four-day task). Although the specific components of this task can be fine-tuned later based upon input from the MSNHA, the following sub-tasks should be considered:

Task 3.1 Field Work & Informal Meetings (Day 1)

This task will give Project Team members already familiar with the Heritage Area another opportunity prior to the Day 2 Public Workshop to build on previous impressions gained during Tasks 1.0 and 2.0, while it will be an orientation for the three Heritage Area Managers. Also, any information not previously obtained, but since recognized as necessary, can be gathered as part of this task. Similarly, additional informal meetings that might be needed can occur on this day.

Task 3.2 Public Workshop (Day 2)

Prior to Task 3.0, the MSNHA staff will recruit participants to be involved in the Public Workshop. Participants should be key stakeholders representing a variety of interests in the Heritage Area. Among the stakeholders, MSNHA representatives and public officials whose buy-in is critical should be well-represented. The Project Team and Public Workshop participants will gather at the workshop facility (to be determined) and achieve the following steps over an approximately three-hour period:

Workshop Orientation

The Team will present the following:

- Workshop Purpose & Overview
- Background Research Findings
- Foundation Statement
- Results of the Public Input to Date

- Workshop Instructions

Planning Session

The specific method used to engage the public in the process for identifying the Alternatives for the Heritage Area will be determined in the Task 1.3 Public Participation Strategy. There are a variety of techniques that might be used. Among them is the approach of splitting participants into teams and each team creating their own set of Alternatives for the Heritage Area. Another approach is to similarly break participants up into teams, but to ask a series of questions that will build consensus, but would stop short of deciding on specific Alternatives. Other techniques will also be considered with the MSNHA representatives.

Workshop Team Presentations & Wrap-Up

Following the completion of the Planning Session, the Workshop Teams will reassemble into a single group and one or more members of each team will briefly present their ideas for the Heritage Area Alternatives. After each presentation, there will be time for questions and comments. Following the Workshop Team presentations, the Project Team consultants will conclude the workshop by identifying common elements between the various ideas, and suggest how those ideas might be combined to form the basis for the selected Alternatives that the Project Team consultants will test out in the subsequent Management Plan.

Task 3.3 Draft Alternatives (Day 3)

Based upon all of the work completed to date, as well as the results of the Public Workshop, the Project Team will develop the Management Plan's Alternatives to be tested per the NEPA standards. This work will constitute the final day of participation for the Heritage Areas Management Advisors. The ideas generated will serve as the framework on which the Management Plan and associated NEPA review will be based.

Task 3.4 Alternatives Presentation (Day 4)

At some point relatively early on this day, the Project Team will meet with MSNHA representatives to receive feedback on the ideas for the Alternatives generated up to this point of Task 3.0. That evening a widely-publicized meeting will occur and include the following components:

- Opening Comments & Project Methodology
- Overview of Research Findings
- Foundation Statement
- Explanation of the Public Input Results
- Presentation of the Heritage Area Alternatives

The majority of time will be dedicated to the Alternatives, as opposed to the background information. Because of the importance of public interaction, a generous amount of time will also be provided for an open discussion.

Task 4.0: Evaluation & Selection of Alternatives

Once the Alternatives have been developed for the Heritage Area, they must be objectively evaluated. The number of Alternatives for most heritage areas typically ranges between three and four Alternatives. One Alternative to be tested will be the "No Action" option. Also, Task 4.0 will keep in mind that the "Environmentally Preferred Alternative" may be different from the overall "Preferred Alternative."

Task 4.1 Evaluation of Alternatives

This task will tie back into the issue scoping that occurred with the public at the outset of this planning project. The various Alternatives will be tested against the most significant considerations initially identified with the public's help. In particular, this task will include the following components:

Environmental & Resource Assessment

This assessment will address the natural environment, including air quality, water bodies, floodplains,

wetlands, and plant and animal wildlife, as well as potential impacts to prehistoric and historic resources. Most of the impacts evaluated would be caused by associated land development and increased tourism activities, including traffic.

Financial Assessment

The Project Team will conduct a baseline financial assessment to determine the indicative capital and operating budgets for sustainable management and operation as input to the discussion of the Alternatives being considered. Opportunities will be identified for public-private partnerships and cross-subsidy (such as through development of commercial operations - lodging, retail, etc.) in support of the heritage/conservation activities in the Heritage Area. It might be decided later that the detailed work on this assessment will be performed during the Task 5.0 plan preparation, and that only the key issues are addressed more generally as part of this particular task.

Economic Impact Assessment

The Project Team will assess the baseline economic impacts of each Alternative scenario to assess the relative benefits of each as input to the planning process. Opportunities will be identified to maximize economic benefits while minimizing environmental impacts.

Task 4.2 Alternatives Presentations

It is proposed that two public meetings occur for key members of the Project Team to present the Alternatives and address their respective merits and drawbacks in light of NEPA, NHPA and other measuring sticks. As with all public participation for this project, public comments will be documented.

Task 4.3 Meeting with NPS

At this point it is difficult to predict the number of meetings with Park Service officials that might be necessary, as well as whether they might occur within the MSNHA or at the NPS's Regional Office in Atlanta. Also, some meetings might occur between MSNHA and NPS staff without Project Team members. Regardless, for budgeting purposes, at least one meeting in Atlanta is being anticipated for key Project Team members.

Task 5.0: Draft Plan Preparation

Once the Preferred Alternative can be selected, the specifics for managing the MSNHA can be developed. Below is a very general potential document outline, but it will be revised and detailed as the project evolves.

<p>General Plan Outline</p> <p>Executive Summary</p> <p><u>Background</u></p> <p>How the MSNA Came About</p> <p>Relevant Federal Laws</p> <p>Goals, Objectives & Foundation Statement</p> <p>Project Methodology</p> <p><u>Heritage Area Context</u></p> <p>Public Policy Context</p> <p>Social & Economic Context</p> <p><u>Inventory & Assessment of Resources</u></p> <p>Natural Resources</p> <p>Prehistory & History</p> <p>Existing Sites, Attractions & Cultural Events</p> <p><u>Heritage Area Alternatives</u></p> <p>Summary of Alternatives</p>	<p>Evaluation of Alternative 1</p> <p>Evaluation of Alternative 2</p> <p>Evaluation of Alternative 3</p> <p>Preferred Alternative</p> <p>Mitigating Actions</p> <p><u>Heritage Area Strategy</u></p> <p>Interpretation Plan: Themes & Methods</p> <p>Improvements to Sites, Attractions & Events</p> <p>Marketing Plan</p> <p>Business Plan</p> <p>Funding Strategy</p> <p>Partnerships & Responsibilities</p> <p>Implementation: Performance Goals, Priorities & Phasing</p> <p><u>Appendices</u></p> <p>MSNHA Legislation</p> <p>Resource Inventories</p> <p>Record of Public Input, Reviews & Support</p>
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Task 6.0: Draft Plan Presentations, Reviews & Revisions

This final task of the project will feature the following three steps:

Task 6.1 Draft Plan Presentations

Key members of the Project Team will make a series of public presentations of the draft plan. The meetings will be designed to encourage an open dialogue with the public to solicit their views on the draft plan.

Task 6.2 Plan Review Period

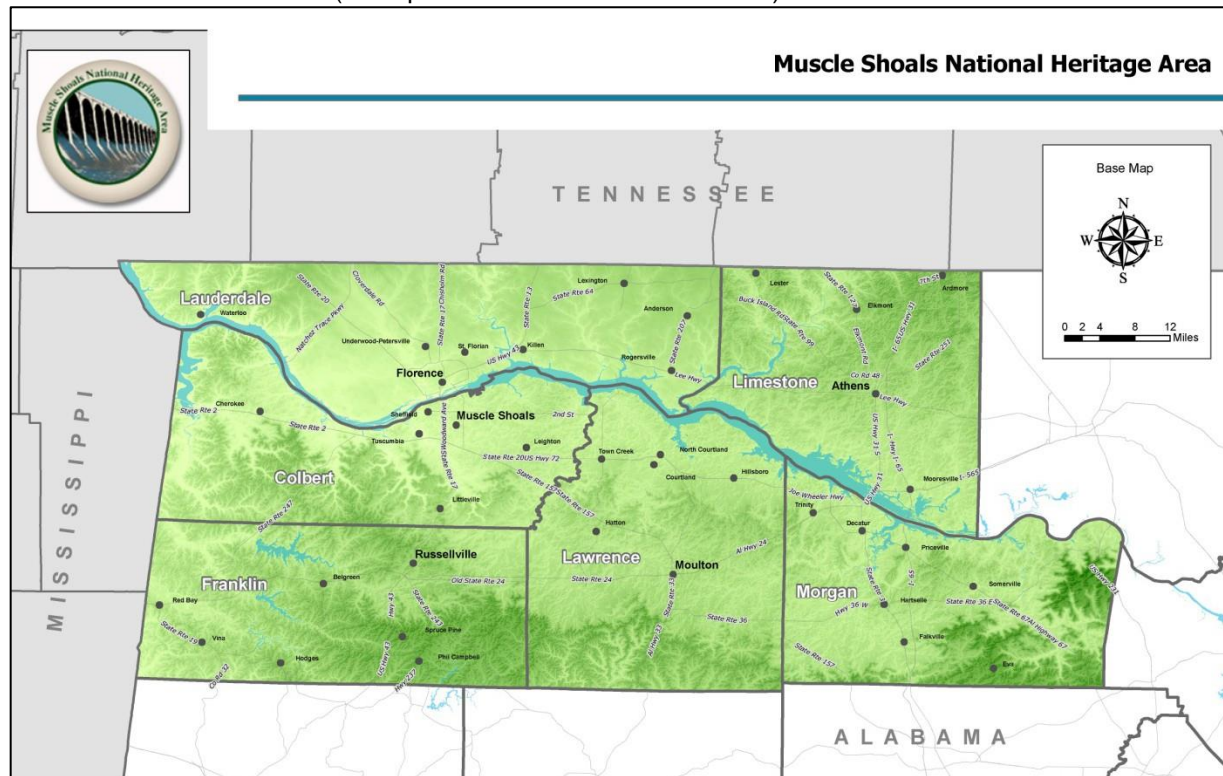
In addition to the MSNHA and NPS, a variety of other entities and individuals will need to thoroughly review the plan document and provide feedback for possible revisions. Each reviewing party should be asked to submit a single “red lined” mark-up to serve as a composite for all comments from individuals within their respective entities. This approach will be the most efficient one for the Project Team and the MSNHA, and it will allow each party to resolve any conflicting comments within their own group.

Task 6.3 Final Plan Revisions

Based upon the feedback provided by the MSNHA, the NPS, the State, and other entities and individuals, the final plan will be revised and submitted to the MSNHA and the federal Secretary of the Interior in both hard copy and digital formats. Per the NPS reviews, the plan will be accompanied by a FONSI/ROD. The final plan document will include an Executive Summary to serve as a marketing piece to inform a broader audience.

The map on the following page illustrates the six (6) county MSNHA boundaries.

STUDY AREA BASE MAP (to be provided as an 11 X 17 fold-out)



**INSERT
11 X 17 FOLD-OUT OF SCOPE MATRIX
HERE**

C2. Public Involvement Strategy

Purpose of the Public Involvement Strategy

The following purposes exist for soliciting public input throughout the life of the management planning process for the Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area:

- 1) To keep the public informed regarding the Heritage Area, the management planning process, and the contents of the Management Plan.
- 2) To obtain from the public information, ideas, and an understanding of their preferences regarding issues relevant to the Management Plan.
- 3) To build public support by involving the public in a meaningful manner in the Management Plan's creation.
- 4) To help attract and nurture potential financial sponsors and partnering sites/attractions for the Heritage Area.
- 5) To satisfy all requirements related to the public's involvement with the NEPA process.

Who is the Public?

To be able to involve the public in the management planning process, the "public" must first be identified. Broadly speaking, the public includes all citizens living and/or working within the MSNHA, as well as visitors to the Heritage Area living elsewhere. However, there are also various sets of key stakeholders among residents and employees within the MSNHA having a particularly significant stake in the Heritage Area. Such stakeholders include public officials, economic development and tourism professionals, environmentalists, historic preservationists, operators of historic sites and attractions, and operators of tourist-oriented businesses. See Appendix C of this report for the current list of stakeholders. An understanding of the composition of the public is critical to the understanding of potential issues of concern, as different stakeholders will have different interests and concerns.

Potential Issues of Concern and Levels of Controversy

To develop an effective public input strategy, it is helpful to anticipate potential issues that may concern the public. Based upon the public meetings held to date, the following issues have been raised:

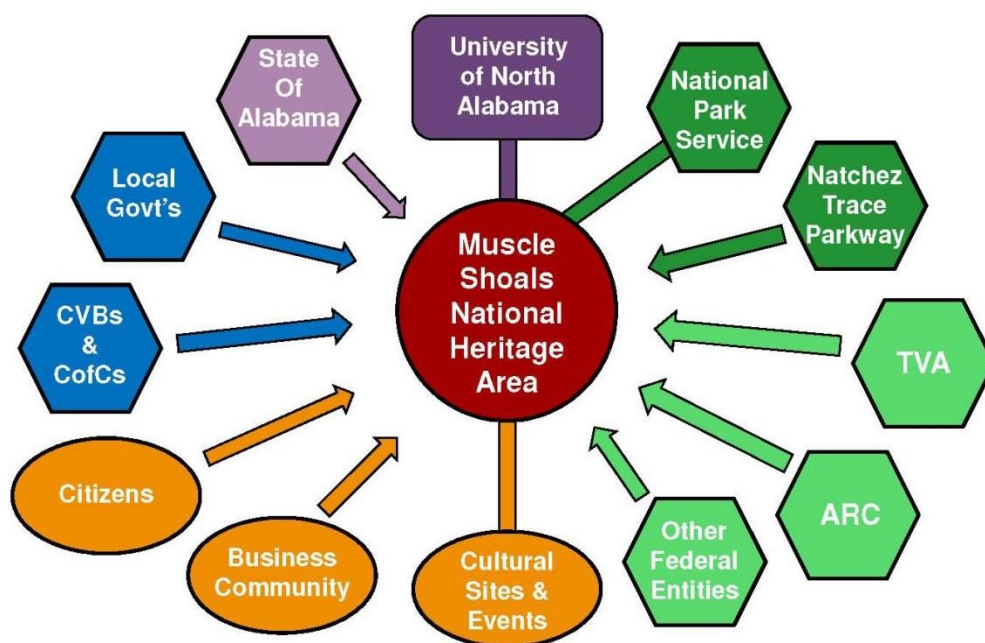
- *Extent of authority and control that the MSNHA can exert* – can it condemn land, acquire property or impact zoning?
- *Disbursement of the federal funding to the MSNHA* – how much money goes to the Heritage Area, what sort of match is required, how long will federal funding last, and how can local partners tap into this funding?
- *Requirements of local governments and attraction operators to be part of the Heritage Area's programs* – do historic sites have to participate and will local governments be expected to contribute financially?
- *Opportunities for tourism-related businesses such as dining and lodging* – will the MSNHA significantly increase tourism and positive economic impacts to the Heritage Area?

Although raised only minimally by the public to date, other likely issues that might be raised include potential negative impacts on environmental resources, archeological resources, and other cultural resources.

With respect to the potential levels of controversy that might be related to the Heritage Area, no significantly controversial issues have been identified or are anticipated. If tourist-oriented development at a scale to negatively impact the river's natural environment and generate large levels of vehicular traffic were contemplated, significant controversy would likely result. However, such proposals have not been raised to date and are not anticipated.

There is one area of concern that may occur that is unrelated to potential impacts on the natural or built environment. There are numerous sites and attractions within the Heritage Area that are related to history and natural sciences. Many of these sites and attractions have strong tourism potential and are supported by enthusiastic stakeholders. However, not all of these sites and attractions have a direct link to the MSNHA's three primary themes. Consequently, it will be important throughout the life of this planning project to emphasize with the public the three themes and the need to tell as focused story for the area. It is likely that some stakeholders will be disappointed that their sites and attractions are not highlighted by the MSNHA as key destinations.

Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area



Approaches to Public Input by Project Phase

While public input needs to occur throughout the life of a Heritage Area management planning process, it will take on different characteristics and objectives at different stages of the process. Below is a description of each key phase and the associated approach to public input. Task numbers coordinate to the tasks that comprise the scope of work for this planning project. The "phase" names and numbers are specific to the public input facet of the project.

PHASE 1: PROJECT EXPLANATION & ISSUES IDENTIFICATION

This initial phase explains the management planning project to the public and identifies key issues to be considered in the planning process, particularly potential environmental impacts that will need to be addressed through the NEPA process. The following public input events were part of this initial phase:

Public Officials Meetings (no task number)

Because this first set of meetings was not in the project scope of work, it has no task number. This initial round of meetings consisted of one meeting with public officials in each of the six counties within the MSNHA. Consisting primarily of mayors, city and county commissioners, municipal staff, and tourism and economic development officials, the primary intent was to inform this set of stakeholders about the planning project prior to holding larger public meetings within their respective counties.

Task 1.4 Scoping: Public Meetings to Identify Issues

Two public meetings occurred to inform the public about the project and begin to identify issues that the plan should address. In particular, potential topics were considered for focusing the NEPA process in anticipation of impacts caused by the Heritage Area, such as the natural resources, prehistoric/historic resources, and the local economy.

PHASE 2: GATHERING INFORMATION & OPINIONS

This phase of public input is intended for the Project Team to obtain needed information, as well as to better understand the opinions and preferences of the public with regard to a host of issues relevant to the Heritage Area.

Task 2.4 Economic & Market Analysis

To understand the Heritage Area's overall economic and tourism market context, and to subsequently create a reality-based Management Plan, the Project Team will conduct an economic and market analysis. This analysis will determine the Heritage Area's potential and opportunities for tourism based on a number of input types, including the following:

- Interviews with key tourism industry representatives; business owners and/or operators; historic sites operators; environmental representatives; economic development and business association representatives; institutional representatives

Task 2.5 Stakeholder Focus Group Meetings

The MSNHA staff will identify key stakeholders who can provide useful information and perspectives on the various issues relevant to the Heritage Area. Up to ten (10) meetings with various stakeholder groups will be conducted by key members of the Project Team, with each meeting including up to ten (10) individuals having a common interest in the Heritage Area. Each meeting will last approximately one hour, and examples of potential stakeholder groups might include the following:

- Attraction/site operators
- Chamber and CVB representatives
- Business owners/operators and economic development representatives
- Institutional representatives
- Environmentalists
- Historic preservationists
- Public officials

PHASE 3: EDUCATION OF PUBLIC & CONFIRMATION OF FINDINGS

This phase is intended to educate the public by informing them of the findings resulting from the Project Team's research and analysis. If any of the information conveyed during this phase is incorrect or incomplete, the public can bring that to light. Also, this phase is important because the public needs to be fully informed before they can effectively engage in the subsequent planning process for the MSNHA.

Task 2.6 Preliminary Findings Presentations

Based upon the work achieved to date, key members of the Project Team will present the preliminary findings to the public. It is proposed that two evening meetings occur, one in the Athens/Decatur area and one in the Florence/Muscle Shoals/Tuscumbia area. A substantial amount of time will be devoted to public discussion.

PHASE 4: GENERATION OF IDEAS

While prior phases will provide opportunities for the public to share their knowledge and opinions related to the Heritage Area, this phase will solicit their ideas. This phase is the most creative and hands-on for public participants, and it is critical to generating the sense of ownership that will be needed for successful implementation. It is noteworthy that the explanation of the “Planning Session” within the original scope of work was intentionally vague and open-ended so that it could be refined as part of this Public Involvement Strategy, as it has been below.

Task 3.2 Public Workshop (Day 2)

Prior to Task 3.0, the MSNHA staff will recruit participants to be involved in the Public Workshop. Participants should be key stakeholders representing a variety of interests in the Heritage Area. Among the stakeholders, MSNHA representatives and public officials whose buy-in is critical should be well-represented. The Project Team and Public Workshop participants will gather at the workshop facility (to be determined) and achieve the following steps over an approximately three-hour period:

Workshop Orientation

The Team will present the following:

- Workshop Purpose & Overview
- Background Research Findings
- Foundation Statement
- Results of the Public Input to Date
- Workshop Instruction

“While public involvement during the feasibility study may have focused on promotion of the heritage area concept and assessment of public support, successful management plans include community member participation as a way to build consensus and refine the vision, mission and goals.”

Components of a Successful National
Heritage Area Management Plan – pg. 19

Planning Session

This session will consist of splitting public participants into multiple Workshop Teams of approximately ten (10) participants each, and each team will create their own set of Alternatives for the Heritage Area. Each team will have their own table and chairs, a base map of the study area, colored markers, and a note pad for recording ideas unrelated to geography. The Planning Session will be organized around the three central themes of the MSNHA – the Tennessee River, Native American heritage, and music. Each team will create their own strategy for addressing these three themes with respect to preservation, education, interpretation, and tourism development.

Workshop Team Presentations & Wrap-Up

Following the completion of the Planning Session, the Workshop Teams will reassemble into a single group and one or more members of each team will briefly present their ideas for the Heritage Area Alternatives. After each presentation, there will be time for questions and comments. Following the Workshop Team presentations, the Project Team consultants will conclude the workshop by identifying common elements between the various ideas, and suggest how those ideas might be combined to form the basis for the selected Alternatives that the Project Team consultants will test out in the subsequent Management Plan.

PHASE 5: PUBLIC FEEDBACK LOOPS

Although it will be comprised of several work tasks, this final phase of public involvement will consist of multiple feedback loops in which ideas are presented by the Project Team and the public responds with their thoughts. This incremental process allows the plan ideas to be shaped step-by-step with public input being provided at each level. The first task within this phase will closely follow the final task of the previous phase.

Task 3.4 Alternatives Presentation (Day 4)

At some point relatively early on this day, the Project Team will meet with MSNHA representatives to receive feedback on the ideas for the Alternatives generated up to this point of Task 3.0. That evening a widely-publicized meeting will occur and include the following components:

- Opening Comments & Project Methodology
- Overview of Research Findings
- Foundation Statement
- Explanation of the Public Input Results
- Presentation of the Heritage Area Alternatives

The majority of time will be dedicated to the Alternatives, as opposed to the background information. Because of the importance of public interaction, a generous amount of time will also be provided for an open discussion.

Task 4.2 Alternatives Presentations

It is proposed that two public meetings occur for key members of the Project Team to present the Alternatives and address their respective merits and drawbacks in light of NEPA, NHPA and other measuring sticks. As with all public participation for this project, public comments will be documented.

Task 6.1 Draft Plan Presentations

Key members of the Project Team will make a series of public presentations of the draft plan. The meetings will be designed to encourage an open dialogue with the public to solicit their views on the draft plan.

Approaches to Communications

A public involvement strategy is of limited use if word does not effectively reach the public about the various opportunities for public participation in the management planning process. It is important that efforts be made to communicate with the broad spectrum of those who would constitute “the public,” both geographically within the Heritage Area and demographically. Consequently, the MSNHA will utilize the following means to notify the public about public involvement opportunities:

- MSNHA website
- E-mail “blasts” to all individuals and organizations that are part of the MSNHA e- mail database
- Newspaper advertisements in major newspapers within the Heritage Area
- Press releases to various media outlets
- Social media – Facebook, Twitter, etc.
- Targeted notifications for “hard to reach groups” via minority churches, college media, etc.
- Presentations by MSNHA staff to various community groups to inform them of the project
- Word of mouth – sometimes initiated by an announced meeting date at a previous related meeting



This planning process includes numerous public forums, including this scoping meeting held in Athens