BACKGROUND REPORT

**Mississippi Hills
National Heritage Area**

Prepared for the:
**Mississippi Hills
Heritage Area Alliance**

Revised:
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mississippihills
National Heritage Area

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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.
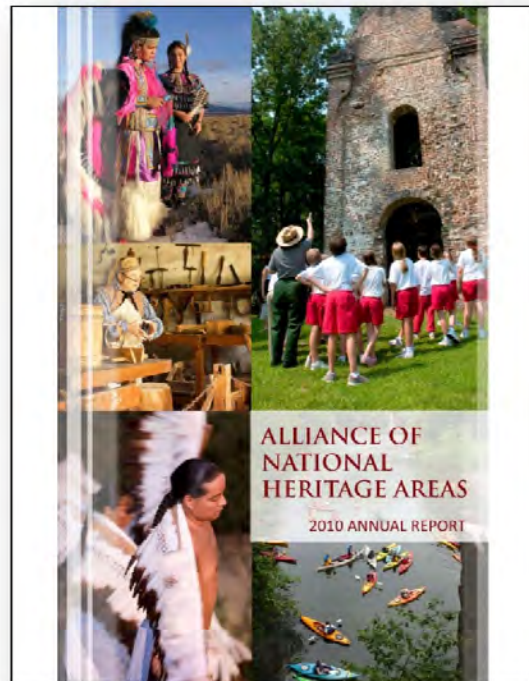

Source: Alliance of National Heritage Areas website

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).

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.

Continued on the following page …

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.

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. MHNHA 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 Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA), established via Section 8007 of the act. For a full copy of the legislation adopting the MHNHA, please see Appendix A of this report. This act is very typical of all National Heritage Area legislation over the pasts few years. Key highlights of this federal legislation include the following:

MHNHA Boundaries
The Heritage Area consists of all or portions of the following counties in Northeast Mississippi: Alcorn, Attala, Benton, Calhoun, Carroll, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Clay, DeSoto, Grenada, Holmes, Itawamba, Lafayette, Lee, Lowndes, Marshall, Monroe, Montgomery, Noxubee, Oktibbeha, Panola, Pontotoc, Prentiss, Tate, Tippah, Tishomingo, Union, Webster, Winston, and Yalobusha.

Local Coordinating Entity and Its Duties
The Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance is the local coordinating entity. The legislation further stipulates that the coordinating entity shall have the "cooperation and support of the University of Mississippi." While it is not indicated in the legislation, the Alliance is headquartered in Tupelo. Its duties include:

- Prepare and submit a Management Plan to the Secretary of the Interior.
- Assist units of local government, regional planning organizations, and nonprofit organizations in implementing the approved Management Plan.
- Conduct meetings open to the public at least annually regarding the development and implementation of the Management Plan
- 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. These requirements extend to other organizations receiving funding from the coordinating entity.
- Ensure that each county included in the Heritage Area is appropriately represented on any oversight advisory committee established under this section to coordinate the Heritage Area.

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.

One power that the entity does not have is the ability to "acquire any interest in real property" through the use of Federal funds acquired through this legislation.

Management Plan Requirements

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

(A) provide recommendations for the preservation, conservation, enhancement, funding, management, interpretation, development, and promotion of the cultural, historical, archaeological, natural, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area;

(B) specify existing and potential sources of funding or economic development strategies to protect, enhance, interpret, fund, manage, and develop the Heritage Area;

(C) include - (i) an inventory of the natural, historical, cultural, archaeological, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area; and (ii) an analysis of how Federal, State, tribal, and local programs may best be coordinated to promote and carry out this section;

(D) provide recommendations for educational and interpretive programs to provide information to the public on the resources of the Heritage Area; and

(E) involve residents of affected communities and tribal and local governments.

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 MHNHA;
- 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 MHNHA:

- 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.
- The authority of the Secretary of the Interior to provide financial assistance under this legislation terminates 15 years after its enactment.

B2. MHNHA 2007 STRATEGIC PLAN

While this Heritage Area did not have a formal feasibility study prepared in anticipation of Federal designation, there was a steady stream of research, public input and planning that occurred between 2002 and the 2009 Federal designation of the Heritage Area. The culmination of that lengthy planning effort was the Three-Year Strategic Plan created by the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance in 2007. That document featured the following sections:

- Section 1: The Cluster Approach
- Section 2: Assessing the Industry
- Section 3: Assessing the Region's Future
- Section 4: Assessing the Mindset
- Section 5: A Creative Economy
- Section 6: A Management Plan
- Section 7: Destination Development
- Section 8: Planning-Related Topics
- Section 9: Partnerships
- Section 10: The Role of the Alliance
- Section 11: Organizing Recommendations
- Section 12: Hills Institute
- Section 13: A Model for Success
- Section 14: Adapting the Model
- Section 15: Protection/Management Issues
- Section 16: Marketing Issues

See Appendix B for the Executive Summary of the Three-Year Strategic Plan. The text below provides a summary of the key ideas of this plan.

The Mississippi Heritage Area Alliance's Three-Year Strategic Plan, written in 2007, sets a foundation for this subsequent Management Plan.

2007 Strategic Plan Overview: Key Ideas

The contents of this 2007 plan were very instrumental in determining some of the key features of the ultimate National Heritage Area. For example, this plan established the boundaries that would be adopted for the NHA. Below are some of the key ideas of the 2007 plan.

Planning Approach

The 2007 plan document starts by referencing the National Trust for Historic Preservation's suggested four-step process for successful and sustainable cultural heritage tourism development:

- Step One - Assess the potential

- Step Two - Plan and organize
- Step Three - Prepare, protect and manage
- Step Four - Market for success

Management Plan
Section Six of the 2007 plan lays the groundwork for the Management Plan by describing what it is, why it is important, and what components it should have. It describes the Management Plan as follows:

- Provides a resource inventory which includes any property in the area which should be preserved, restored, managed, developed, maintained, or acquired because of its national historic, cultural, or scenic significance;

- Takes into account existing federal, state, and local plans, and coordinates those plans and present a unified public policy inventory for the area;

- Identifies potential market segments for the heritage area, including an analysis of what appeals to each segment and how to market most effectively to each target audience;

- Develops a historic, cultural, scenic, and natural resource interpretation strategy to interpret the resources of the area;

- Recommends a resource management strategy which considers and details the application of appropriate land and water management techniques, including the development of intergovernmental cooperative agreements, that will protect and interpret the area's historical, cultural, scenic, and natural resources in a manner consistent with supporting appropriate and compatible economic revitalization efforts; and

- Contains an implementation strategy, which includes estimated funding needs, project priorities, and schedule – and details the ways in which local, state, and federal programs may best be coordinated to promote the heritage area.

Role of the Alliance
The 2007 Strategic Plan describes the role of the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance as "creating programs and partnerships that stimulate cultural and heritage tourism growth at both the community and regional level." It also indicates that the Alliance should work closely with its CVB members to coordinate with their business and marketing plans, and CVBs and other organizations benefiting from local tourism taxes have the professional staff and expertise to pursue Heritage Area objectives. An example cited of this potential working relationship is the website www.mississippihills.org to be marketed through various CVB media schedules. Among the specific duties proposed for the Alliance are the following:

- Administrative: office operations, program director and contractual services,;

- Product Development: branding the Hills region, website maintenance/upgrades, creating an exploration guide and growing cultural and heritage events;

- Grant Development: grant pool, grant research, grant pursuit and grant supervision;

- Education & Training: developing a better understanding of community assets and where they fit in regional, state, national and international programs through workshops, seminars and special events;

- Sustainability: building effective public/private partnerships at all levels;

- Public Policy & Support: promoting cultural and heritage tourism as a major industry and as a key to helping communities increase their competitiveness as places to live, work and visit.

This section of the 2007 plan also proposes the organizational structure for the Alliance, as well as a funding approach relying heavily upon membership dues from the various counties. Due amounts would be tied to the amount of visitor spending for each county. For example, Tier 1 counties, which would pay $10,000 annually, are those with annual visitor spending of $25 million or more. On the other end of the spectrum, Tier 3 counties have annual visitor spending below $5 million and would only pay $1,000 annually. In addition to the Tier-based dues, the Alliance would also have a "Non-Voting/Associate Member" category with annual dues of only $500.

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 on the following page (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.
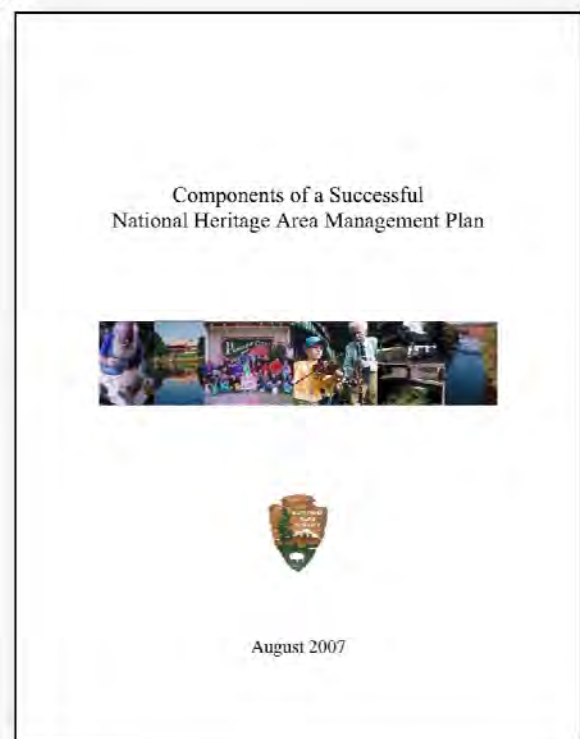
Written in 2007, this document outlines the many details of preparing a National Heritage Area Management Plan.

| PHASE 1 Planning to Plan	PHASE 2 Vision and Foundation Development	PHASE 3 Making Choices and Drafting the Plan
3-6 Months (internal)	6-12 Months	12-24 Months

TASKS:
 	
Step 0 - Select team members and/or consultant(s)
 	
Step 0 - Develop Cooperative Agreement with NPS
 	
Step 1 - Begin Foundation Statement
- Review:
  _ Authorizing Legislation
  _ Existing information:
    - feasibility study
    - previous plans
    - other information
 	
Step 2 - Develop Scope of Work:
  - Establish ground rules and internal operating procedures
 	
Step 3 and 4 - Develop Partner, Stakeholder and Public Involvement strategy
	TASKS:
	
	Step 5 - Develop/reaffirm Vision and Mission
	
	Step 6 - Develop/reaffirm Themes
	
	Step 7 - Develop/reaffirm Goals, Objectives and Strategies
	
	Step 8 - Gather information to develop alternatives
	
	Step 9 - Complete Foundation Statement
		TASKS:
		
		Step 10 - Develop and present preliminary alternatives or concepts
		
		Step 11 - Choose preferred alternative
		
		Step 12 - Draft Plan/EA/EIS
		
		Step 12 and 13 - Allow for Agency and Public review
		
		Step 13 - Final Plan/EA or EIS

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT: Key Stakeholders/Partners	**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT:** Implement Partner and Public Involvement Strategy, hold meetings and workshops	**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT:** Public meetings, Review of draft plan
NEPA: Identify Milestones Select EA or EIS	**NEPA:** Public Scoping, Agency consultation, Notice of Intent(NOI) [EIS only]	**NEPA:** EA/EIS, Public and Agency Review, FONSI/ROD
PRODUCT: Scope of Work	**PRODUCT:** Foundation Statement	**PRODUCT:** Management Plan

Plan Adoption and Approval

Source: NPS "Notebook" – pg. 13

Referred to more commonly as "the Notebook," this guide book 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. The Notebook was followed closely in the preparation of this Management Plan.

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.
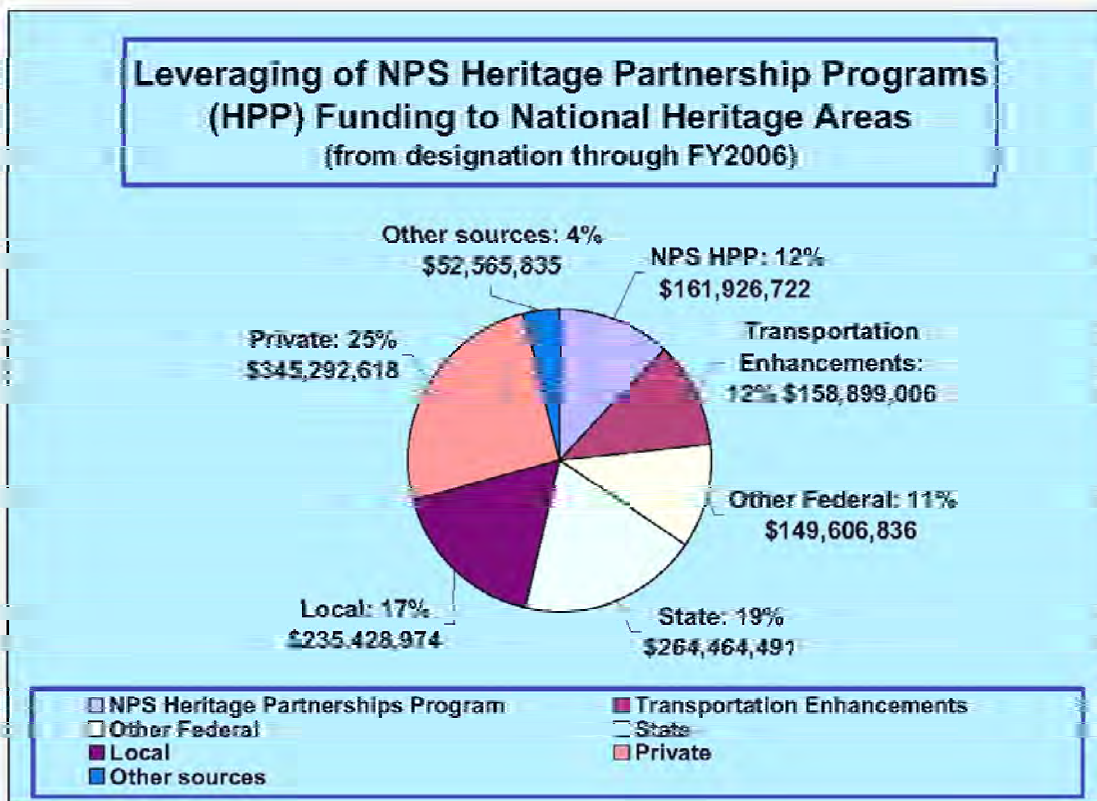
Source: NPS "Notebook" – pg. 41

The 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

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, along with cultural resources, draw people to the Mississippi Hills 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 Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance (MHHAA) to prepare the MHNHA Management Plan:

Task 1.0: Project Scoping & Start-Up
This initial step featured the following steps:

Task 1.1 Meeting with MHHAA
This meeting between key members of the Project Team and MHHAA representatives reviewed issues such as the tentative Scope of Work, project schedule, budget, needed data, and the public participation process. NPS staff was also involved.

Task 1.2 Foundation Statement
Based upon the MHNHA legislation and work achieved previously, the draft Foundation Statement was prepared for future testing with the public. It included key interpretive themes.

Task 1.3 Public Participation Strategy
This task built upon this tentative Scope of work contained here by fine-tuning the approach to soliciting public input throughout the project. An important step was the identification of the Heritage Area's many stakeholders beyond the general public. The most immediate issue was the Task 1.4 scoping meetings.

Task 1.4 Scoping: Public Meetings to Identify Issues
Four meetings in four different communities 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 local economies.

The first of four public scoping meetings was help in Tupelo at the offices of the MHHAA.

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 was revised for submission to the NPS for their review.

Task 1.6 Finalizing Scope of Work
Following feedback from all key parties, including the Alliance and NPS, the Scope of Work and corresponding budget were finalized.

Task 2.0: Research & Public Input
This task served as the research and diagnostic phase on which much of the balance of the work would rely. The Project Team performed 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
Before making the Task 2.0 trips to the Heritage Area, the Project Team gathered and reviewed key information to gain insights into the project's context. Such information included, but was not 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. This sub-task relied heavily upon data already assembled by the Alliance via its several years of work up to this point.

Task 2.2 Heritage Area Tour
The Heritage Area tour was led by MHHAA staff to better orient key members of the Project Team to the area. Additional follow-up work was performed by the Project Team as part of Task 2.3. During this task, the team was also 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 documented and evaluated the Heritage Area's general physical characteristics through the review of existing data, mapping, field notes and photography. Based upon that field research and existing data, the Project Team conducted an evaluation of the Heritage Area's existing conditions. The Task 1.4 public scoping meetings and NEPA/NHPA requirements largely determined the issues to be considered with respect to potential future impacts caused by the Heritage Area, and topics included 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, downtowns, etc.
- Tourism "infrastructure" - lodging, restaurants, retail, services, etc.
- Transportation and linkage between sites/attractions

The physical inventory and assessment of the MHHAA's cultural resources included its many historic downtowns.

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 conducted an economic and market analysis. This analysis determined the Heritage Area's potential and opportunities for tourism based on the following approach:

1. *Community Socio-Economic Base Analysis.* Conduct a socio-economic baseline analysis of the region and specific communities as a basis for further tourism and community economic development work related to specific tourism projects.

2. *Existing Tourism Base Analysis*
    a. Document Review. Collect and review existing documentation, project data, and research information available on tourism in the region. Review existing tourism and economic development plans and other relevant documentation.
    b. Tourist and Visitor Facility and Amenity Inventory. Identify and inventory all existing tourism attractions, cultural heritage sites, environmental / natural heritage resources, lodging and meeting facilities, recreation and park facilities, nature reserves, unique topographical or other biodiversity characteristics, retail and tourism-related services in the region and surrounding areas. This would include a cultural tourism asset Inventory that would be generated with the assistance of the team.
    c. Tourism Programs and Environment. Inventory existing tourism development programs and policies in the region. Describe the overall environment for tourism, in terms of location, physical conditions and tourism business support. Identify key opportunities and constraints on the tourism industry in the area.
    d. Tourism Industry Interviews. Conduct extensive in-person interviews with tourism professionals, entrepreneurs, and representatives of key facilities, services, and programs inventoried in Tasks 2(b) and 2(c). Collect data on attendance, occupancy, origin/destination, turnover trends, seasonality and routing, pricing, and other indicators of tourism flow and existing market conditions in the surrounding area.
    e. Other Stakeholder Interviews. Conduct interviews with other key stakeholders including religious leaders, government officials, and others as appropriate.
    f. Tourism Base and Employment Summary. Analyze and describe the existing tourism market base in the region, in terms of attendance and the number of annual visitors, visitor origin and profile, tourist expenditures, key attractions and purpose of visit/ visitor preferences, seasonality and regional routing, ownership structure and entrepreneurship, unique characteristics, employment impacts, and other factors. Place region's tourism in context of the state and southeast tourism flow.

3. *Tourism Development Project & Site Opportunities.*
    g. Identify Tourism Development Market Opportunities in the region, including tourism attractions, marketing linkages (e.g., heritage corridors), amenities, and services.
    h. Conduct Baseline Viability Assessments of these projects or sites to determine their general market and financial viability.
    i. Prioritize Project Opportunities. Prioritize these added projects for further market testing and analysis, based on their competitive positioning in the market and potential for employment creation.

4. *Marketing, Promotion, and Branding Strategy.* Prepare tourism marketing concepts and develop a tourism marketing strategy consistent with heritage tourism guidelines. The tourism marketing strategy would build on the findings from Tasks 2 and 3 to identify target niche markets for local tourism products. The overall strategy would be based on:
    j. Existing and potential tourism anchor projects

k. Existing and potential tourism flow
l. Existing and possible tourism support services
m. Linkages among existing and potential tourist attractions, cultural and environmental heritage sites, and other nodes
n. Key strengths and unique characteristics of the area's environment, heritage, attractions and services base, and people

5. *Tourism Management Strategy.* Recommend a coordinated approach for tourism marketing in the area, to include specific recommendations on:
   o. Staffing
   p. Skills
   q. Training
   r. Costs for marketing
   s. Support required from local municipalities or other levels of government
   t. Sources for funding tourism projects (such as those identified and prioritized in Task 3) and development
   u. Needs, strategies, and responsibilities for tourism safety and security
   v. Communication, project implementation, and monitoring of tourism among key stakeholders

6. *Tourism Support Infrastructure.* Identify physical infrastructure requirements as well as tourism services and other "soft" support infrastructure, based on the output from Tasks 2 and 3.

7. *Maximizing Community Participation in Tourism.* Recommend strategies for broadening opportunities to develop skills and maximize the ownership and economic benefits from tourism in various segments of the local community.

8. *Tourism and Economic Development.* Clarify role of tourism in local economic development. Identify ways to link tourism into existing LED initiatives, where appropriate.

9. *Strategic Action Plan.* Develop a strategic plan consolidating the findings and strategies from Tasks 3 through 8 and recommending specific actions, timetable, budget costing, and responsibility; to be utilized as the strategic plan for tourism development in the region. The specific roles and responsibilities for key stakeholders will be recommended as part of the plan.

10. *Draft and Final Recommendations.* A draft report will be submitted for review. Following incorporation of inputs, a final report will be produced.

Task 2.5 Stakeholder Focus Group Meetings

The Alliance staff identified key stakeholders who can provide useful information and perspectives on the various issues relevant to the Heritage Area. Up to six (6) meetings with various stakeholder groups were 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 lasted approximately one hour, and stakeholder groups included the following:

• Attraction/site operators
• Chamber and CVB representatives
• Business owners/operators and economic development representatives

• Institutional representatives
• Environmentalists and 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, with locations that are geographically spread apart to maximize opportunities for attendance. 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 Alliance 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 MHNHA. This four (4) day task will require strong teamwork between the Project Team and MHHAA staff, as the MHHAA will recruit and schedule all public participants with the guidance of the Project Team. Although the specific components of this task can be fine-tuned later based upon input from the MHHAA, 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 one or more others. 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 MHHAA 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, MHHAA representatives, business leaders, 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 Alliance 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. At some point relatively early on this day, the Project Team will meet with Alliance representatives to receive feedback on the ideas for the Alternatives generated up to this point.

Task 3.4 Alternatives Presentation (Day 4)
A widely-publicized meeting will occur on the evening of the final day. It will 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.

Socio-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. General impacts on people (social) will also be addressed.

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 MHNHA or at the NPS's Regional Office in Atlanta. Also, some meetings might occur between Alliance 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 MHNHA can be developed. Below is a very general potential document outline, but it will be revised and detailed as the project evolves.

Proposed outline for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area Management Plan

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 MHNHA 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 MHNHA, 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 MHNHA, the NPS, the State, and other entities and individuals, the final plan will be revised and submitted to the MHNHA 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 below illustrates the nineteen-county MHNHA boundaries.
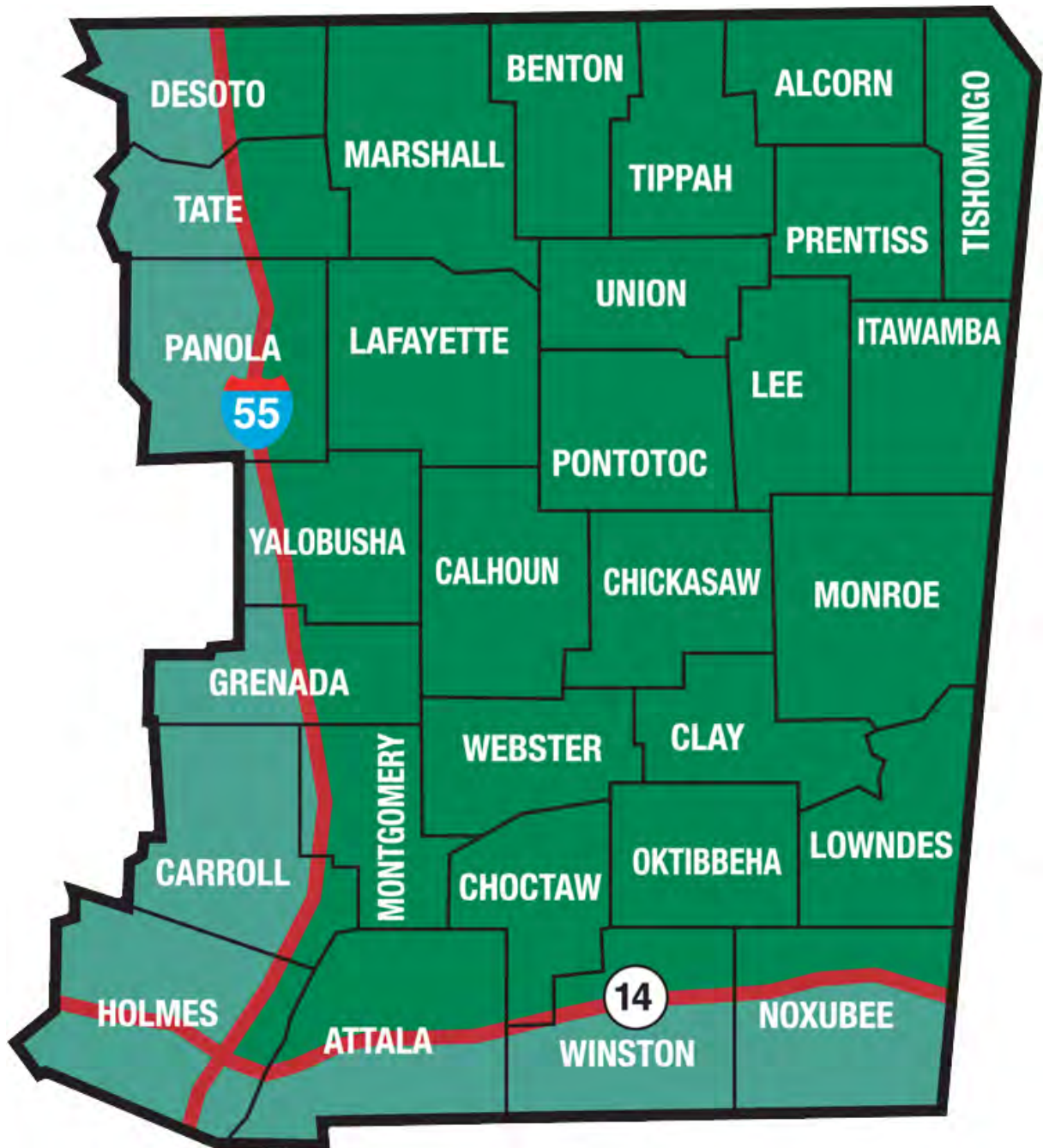
The MHNHA boundaries include the Tennessee state line on the north, the Alabama state line on the east, Highway 14 on the south, and Interstate 55 on the west.

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 Mississippi Hills 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 MHNHA, 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 MHNHA 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 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 prior to this Heritage Area's federal designation, as well as issues commonly raised in other heritage areas, the following issues are likely to arise:

- *Extent of authority and control that the MHNHA can exert* – can it condemn land, acquire property or impact zoning?

- *Disbursement of the federal funding to the MHNHA* – 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 MHNHA significantly increase tourism and positive economic impacts to the Heritage Area?

- *Impacts on environmental and cultural resources* – what are the 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 to date or are anticipated. If tourist-oriented development at a scale to negatively impact the 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 MHNHA's primary themes. Consequently, it will be important throughout the life of this planning project to emphasize with the public the primary 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 MHNHA as key destinations.

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:

Task 1.4   Scoping: Public Meetings to Identify Issues
Two public meetings will occur 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.

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 Assessment
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 assessment.   This assessment 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 MHNHA staff will identify key stakeholders who can provide useful information and perspectives on the various issues relevant to the Heritage Area.   Up to six (6) 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 and 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 MHNHA.

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, with locations that are geographically spread apart to maximize opportunities for attendance. 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 MHNHA 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, MHNHA represent-atives 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:

"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

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
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 central themes of the MHNHA. Each team will create their own strategy for addressing these 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 MHNHA 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 two (2) 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 us 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 MHNHA will utilize the following means to notify the public about public involvement opportunities:

- MHNHA website
- E-mail "blasts" to all individuals and organizations that are part of the MHNHA 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 MHHAA 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

Even before this Heritage Area's federal designation, the MHHAA embraced an appreciation for public input. In 2004, a public workshop was held for the original Concept Plan for the Heritage Area.
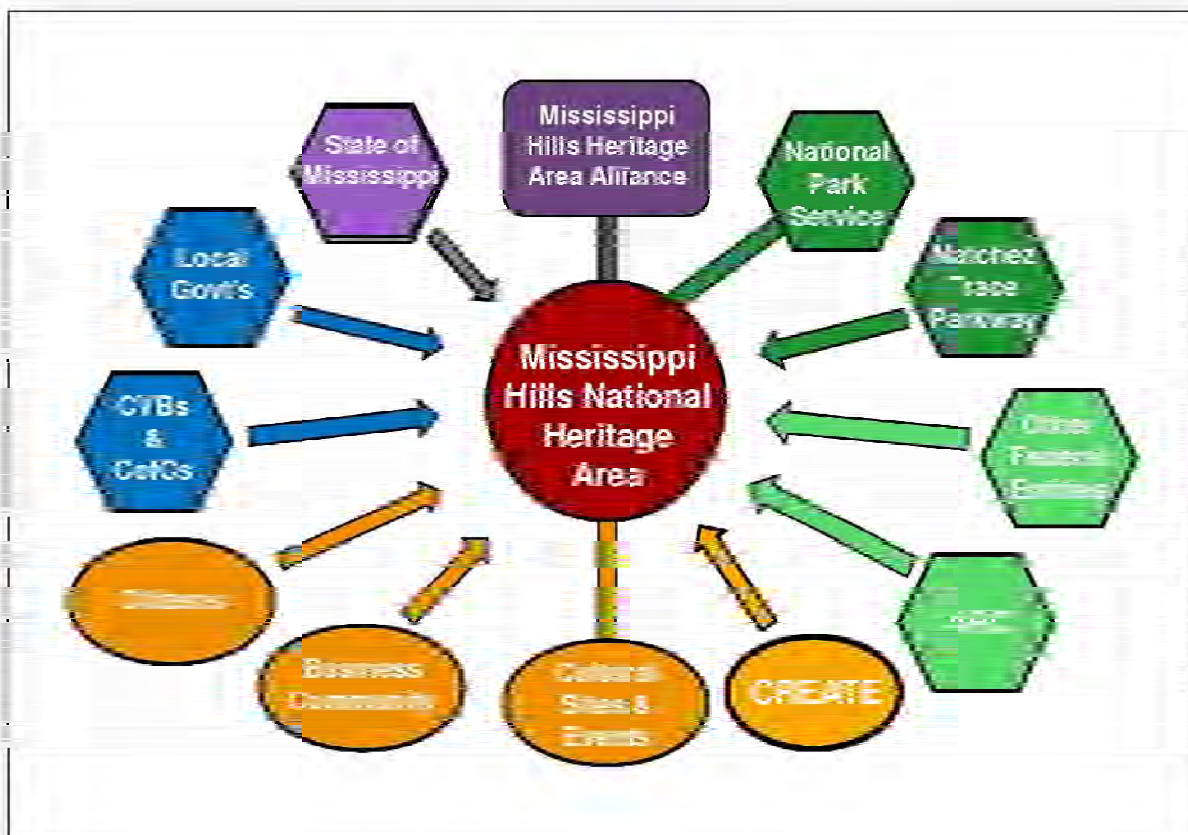
MHNHA key stakeholders

D. Foundation Statement

The National Park Service (NPS) publication "Components of a Successful National Heritage Area Management Plan," prepared in August of 2007, describes the Foundation Statement of a NHA Management Plan (see page 11) as follows:

> *"A foundation statement is a formal declaration of the heritage area's core mission. It provides guidance for the rest of the planning process and later project implementation. It defines the basic foundations of the heritage area – its purpose, vision, mission and goals. In many cases, the foundation statement builds upon and consolidates any previous work done before designation and the contents of the authorizing legislation. Completion of the foundation statement generally occurs in Phase 2 with partner and stakeholder involvement. However, the initial collection of information for the foundation can occur in Phase 1 as part of the 'planning to plan' process."*

To develop the Foundation Statement, a review of the authorizing legislation for the Heritage Area is necessary to understand its purpose and components. It is also instructive to review the feasibility study, previous plans for the area, and any other existing information to identify information that the planning process can build upon. The initial review of information for the Foundation Statement should also identify any information gaps that should be filled to complete components of the Management Plan and to complete the appropriate environmental analysis for NEPA and NHPA compliance. In short, preparation of the Foundation Statement makes a connection between information that is already provided in earlier documents and information that needs to be included in a the Management Plan.

D1. PURPOSE & VISION FOR THE MHNHA

Purpose of the MHNHA

While the federal legislation creating the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area lacks an explicit "purpose" section, it does list the following five duties for the MHNHA with regard to assisting "units of local government, regional planning organizations, and nonprofit organizations":

(i) establishing and maintaining interpretive exhibits and programs within the Heritage Area;

(ii) developing recreational opportunities in the Heritage Area;

(iii) increasing public awareness of, and appreciation for, natural, historical, cultural, archaeological, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area;

(iv) restoring historic sites and buildings in the Heritage Area that are consistent with the themes of the Heritage Area; and

(v) carrying out any other activity that the local coordinating entity determines to be consistent with this section;

Furthermore, the stated mission of the MHNHA's local coordinating entity, in accordance with its website and similar materials, is as follows:

"The mission of the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance is to preserve, enhance, interpret and promote the cultural and heritage assets of the hills region. Its key objectives are to increase jobs and visitation to the area and to develop and support projects and programs that sustain the heritage tourism industry within the region."

Based upon a review of the "Three Year Strategic Plan for the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area" prepared by the Mississippi Hills Heritage Alliance in 2007, which was built upon numerous public meetings throughout the Heritage Area, the purposes conveyed above are deemed valid and reaffirmed for this Management Plan.

Vision for the MHNHA

The 2007 Three Year Strategic Plan was rooted in numerous public meetings throughout the Heritage Area, and the plan's stated "Desired Outcomes" on page 40 of that plan warrant serious consideration. Those Desired Outcomes are generally comprehensive in nature, consistent with the authorizing federal legislation, and in line with the public meetings conducted prior to this management planning effort. Based on these considerations, the following Vision is stated for this Management Plan for the MHNHA:

The Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA) features numerous high-quality heritage sites and attractions that are tied directly to the NHA's primary interpretive themes. Through an effective collaboration at the state, regional, and local levels between development, tourism, and cultural preservation groups, the image of the heritage area's communities has been greatly enhanced. By employing innovative strategies for financing business and site development, the resulting benefits include significantly increased attendance at sites and communities, longer stays and greater expenditures from visitors, and increased revenues for communities and businesses. The overall result is a much stronger understanding of, and appreciation for, the region's heritage - both among its residents and as perceived beyond the heritage area.

D2. MISSION FOR THE MHNHA

There are multiple sources of previous work on planning for the MHNHA that can be drawn from in considering the formal mission of the Heritage Area. For example, the Guiding Principles for the Heritage Area stated on page 33 of the 2007 Three Year Plan were borrowed from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, as follows:

1. *Preserve and protect resources – plan for the preservation and protection of special places, sites and traditions that attract visitors.*

2. *Focus on authenticity and quality – ensure accuracy and quality when sharing these assets with visitors.*

3. *Make sites come alive with interpretation – a destination is a place with a story. Use creative methods in interpreting the stories, special cultural sites, traditions, events and personalities that make your community or region distinctive.*

4. *Find the fit between community and tourism – educate the community about cultural and heritage tourism and historic preservation…a community that understands itself will be a much more apt to provide funds, volunteers and political support.*

5. *Collaborate for sustainability – creative partnering will broaden support and the chance for success; package sites and events into a coherent visitor experience and cross-promote with other sites or communities to maximize exposure.*

Similarly, the stated duties of the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance on page 39 of the 2007 Three Year Plan are as follows:

• *Administrative: office operations, program director and contractual services,;*

• *Product Development: branding the Hills region, website maintenance/upgrades, creating an exploration guide and growing cultural and heritage events;*

• *Grant Development: grant pool, grant research, grant pursuit and grant supervision;*

• *Education & Training: developing a better understanding of community assets and where they fit in regional, state, national and international programs through workshops, seminars and special events;*

• *Sustainability: building effective public/private partnerships at all levels;*

• *Public Policy & Support: promoting cultural and heritage tourism as a major industry and as a key to helping communities increase their competitiveness as places to live, work and visit.*

While this set of principles and duties builds upon previous work supported by a consensus of stakeholders, a specific "Mission Statement" is contained on page 48 of the 2007 Three Year Plan:

The mission of the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance is to preserve, enhance, interpret, and promote the cultural and heritage assets of the hills region. Its key objectives are to increase jobs and visitation to the region, and to develop and support projects and programs that sustain the heritage tourism industry in regional communities.

Because this statement is still valid, it shall serve as the Mission Statement for this Plan.

D3. GOALS & OBJECTIVES FOR THE MHNHA

Based upon the federal legislation creating the MHNHA, the Three Year Plan previously completed by the Mississippi Hills Heritage Alliance, and the public input obtained prior to this management planning process, the following set of goals and objectives are suggested for subsequent testing with the public and refining. It should be emphasized that these goals and objectives are quite ambitious and viewed as a best case scenario contingent upon sufficient funding.

Goal 1: Develop the MHNHA's local coordinating entity – the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance – into a highly-effective organization capable of successfully implementing the Management Plan once completed.

- Objective 1-A: Establish a leadership program to help maintain the effectiveness of current board members, committees, and staff for the MHNHA, and to identify and groom potential future leaders.

- Objective 1-B: Secure dependable funding sources both to match available federal funding and to sustain the MHNHA in the long-term.

- Objective 1-C: Involve a broad cross-section of MHNHA stakeholders to benefit from a diverse set of perspectives and to build a strong grassroots foundation of support.

- Objective 1-D: Develop a network of partner sites, attractions, and events that meet minimum standards of quality to be included within the promotion of the Heritage Area.

- Objective 1-E: Establish a promotional program that not only markets the Heritage Area and its sites, attractions, and events, but that also markets the MHNHA as a destination.

Goal 2: Conduct research, education and interpretation related to the MHNHA's primary themes as a means of documenting and telling the story of the Heritage Area's unique cultural heritage.

- Objective 2-A: Support, sponsor or conduct additional research into MHNHA themes.

- Objective 2-B: Work with appropriate partners to establish an oral history program utilizing high school and/or college students within the MHNHA to record histories from individuals that address the Heritage Area's primary themes.

- Objective 2-C: Partner with various entities to create an educational curriculum within the NHA's grade schools and high schools centered around the MHNHA's primary themes.

- Objective 2-D: Explore the development of an interpretive center for the MHNHA.

- Objective 2-E: Utilize a variety of tools and media for interpretation, including regional theme-based tours/itineraries, as well as printed materials and new and emerging technologies.

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

- Objective 3-B: Collaborate with appropriate agencies to identify sources of technical assistance and grants to partner and emerging sites and attractions.

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

- Objective 3-D: Partner with existing historic preservation organizations and other entities to aid willing property owners in protecting historic resources through facade easements.

- Objective 3-E: Assist communities within the MHNHA in identifying sources of technical assistance to establish public policy tools which help preserve heritage assets and reinforce community character.

Goal 4:   *Encourage community enhancement and the development of tourism "infrastructure."*

- Objective 4-A: Aid communities in identifying sources of technical assistance for creating public policy strategies which improve quality of life and enhance community character.

- Objective 4-B: Explore the development of a wayfaring and wayfinding program that identifies the NHA boundaries along major thoroughfares within the region and also identifies key heritage area communities and heritage assets.

- Objective 4-C: Support the development and/or enhancement of outdoor recreational facilities and opportunities.

Goal 5:   *Establish MHNHA as a viable and attractive visitor destination through effective branding and innovative marketing.*

- Objective 5-A: Promote existing special events tied to the history, cultural traditions, and themes of the Heritage Area, and encourage the creation of new such events.

- Objective 5-B: Continue to maintain the MHNHA website, which highlights primary themes and key heritage attractions, features tours tied to the themes and a schedule of events, and includes links to other relevant websites.

- Objective 5-C: Utilize conventional means (ads, brochures, maps, rack cards), as well as internet-based social networking and other new and emerging technologies (downloadable phone apps, GPS, QR codes) to promote the Heritage Area and its resources to a variety of audiences.

E. Interpretive Themes & Stories

E1. THEMES OVERVIEW

The Mississippi Hills region has a rich prehistory and history that encompasses numerous themes. The federal legislation creating the MHNHA makes no reference to specific interpretive themes, but the several years of research and planning that led to that 2009 legislation explored a variety of themes. Of the many considered, there were four that stood out as being particularly defining of the area's identity and culture: African-American heritage, the Civil War, Arts and Architecture. While there are several other potential themes, such as Native American heritage and agriculture, those topics can serve as secondary themes that are not the MHNHA's focus, but that can provide a supplemental richness to the overall visitor experience. The following is an overview of Heritage Area's four primary interpretive themes, and it has been adapted from the previous research and writings of the MHHAA.

Summary of Interpretive Themes

African-American Heritage
- Freedom Arrives
- Reconstruction & Post-Reconstruction
- Civil Rights: An Arduous Journey

Civil War
- The Opening Clash of Amateur Armies
- The Quest for Vicksburg Begins
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E2. AFRICAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE

Freedom Arrives

Prior to the Civil War, the story of African-Americans in the Mississippi Hills was one of slavery and suffering. However, the Civil War greatly changed the circumstances of African-Americans. In 1862, with his eye on Vicksburg, General U.S. Grant faced a challenge in Corinth, where thousands of escaped slaves had fled seeking refuge. Because the escapees could not be classified as free, they could not be shipped north or west. Nor could they be colonized to Haiti or another Southern destination, a goal the future President Grant would later pursue. The answer then had to be the Contraband Camp. While it ultimately proved to be an opportunity lost, at the time Grant's solution created a model for the rest of the nation. Perhaps because the only surviving accounts are those of white observers and participants, this utopia was born and died under the misleading name of Contraband Camp.

Grant appointed the young chaplain John Eaton as General Superintendent of Contrabands for the Department of the Tennessee, and Chaplain James Alexander was made the commandant of the camp in Corinth. Alexander and the camp both quickly proved their worth. Under Alexander's

leadership, the camp almost immediately transformed itself into what would soon be recognized as a "well-organized village." The tents disappeared, replaced by cabins. Streets were laid out, wards organized, and public buildings were constructed, which included a school, a commissary, a hospital, and a church.

Skilled laborers from blacksmiths to carpenters to shoemakers to seamstresses began to ply their trades so that the camp was soon completely self-sufficient. By cultivating 400 acres of abandoned and confiscated lands, 300 acres of which were planted in cotton, the "contrabands" (as the former slaves were now called) were contributing a monthly profit of approximately $4,000 to the U.S. Treasury. The former slaves applied themselves to their own education and to their religion as diligently as they worked in the fields. As one missionary noted, "You will find them at every hour of the daylight at their books." Church attendance was nearly universal, with four black ministers taking up the call.

The newly freed slaves also took up the call to arms once it was finally issued. Months before it was officially allowed, Alexander organized a Camp guard company, and when the Union Army began to recruit blacks, Alexander resigned from his post to lead a black regiment. White Camp officials worried that a collapse might occur without the male workers, who had to a man volunteered for Army service. Instead the women and children took up the burden and productivity never lagged. In the regiment, the same drive for self-improvement was undimmed: soldiers each paid a monthly tax to employ regimental teachers and purchase more books. Unfortunately, even as the war was being won, this brave social experiment was fighting a losing battle. In 1864, when Sherman set out to capture Meridian, he ordered all garrisons back to Memphis. The Contraband Camp was abandoned, its people shipped north and eventually scattered. As quickly as this utopia had materialized, it disappeared. Still, with the war drawing to a close, African Americans were about to enter a new era. There was opportunity and freedom ahead, as well as danger and despair. In the Mississippi Hills, leaders and communities would arise to face those challenges.

Reconstruction & Post-Reconstruction

Once the war was over and freedom was attained, education was the next goal for African Americans in the Hills. In 1866 in Holly Springs, on the former site of slave auctions, Shaw University was established, only the second college in the nation founded for the express purpose of African American education. Over the next 150 years, Rust College (as the school would be renamed) became a center of social and educational excellence. However, it would be in the early decades of the school's founding that two leaders closely associated with the college would step forward to make history. One of those leaders, Hiram Revels, a Rust College teacher, made laws as the first African American to serve in the United States Senate. The other, Ida B. Wells, a Rust graduate, fought courageously against lawlessness and the vicious crime of lynching.

<u>Hiram Revels: 1827-1901</u>

Born a free man in North Carolina and educated as a minister, Revels literally prayed his way to the U.S. Senate. In 1869, he was elected to represent Adams County in the Mississippi state senate, and in 1870, he gave the opening prayer for the legislative session. The prayer so inspiring it convinced the rest of the legislative body to appoint him to fill the last year of an un-expired U.S. Senate term, in a seat once held by Jefferson Davis.

As a U.S. Senator, Revels proved to be an iconoclast, arguing for the reinstatement of African American legislators unfairly ousted from their posts in Georgia, while advocating amnesty and full restoration of citizenship to ex-Confederates who swore loyalty to the U.S. He also won a victory for African American workers who had been barred by their color from working at the Washington Navy Shipyards. After he returned to Mississippi, Revels continued to carve out his own path, turning against the Republican Governor Adelbert Ames and surprising many by aligning himself with the state's Democratic Party.

Hiram Revels- Rust College teacher and U.S. Senator

Ida B. Wells: 1862-1931

Born a slave, orphaned by yellow fever at 16 with five younger siblings to care for, Wells proved irrepressible. After graduation from Rust College, Wells secured her first job as at teacher at a county school. "I came home every Friday afternoon riding the six miles on the back of a big mule," she remembered later. But it was a ride

on a train that pushed Wells into activism, when in 1883 she was denied a seat in the ladies coach. Eighty years before Rosa Parks, Ida Wells filed suit. While her legal victory was overturned, her career and her outlook were forever changed. Writing about her cause convinced her to become a journalist, a post where she would achieve her true greatness in speaking out against the rising tide of violence in the post-Reconstruction South. So courageous was her opposition to lynching that death threats exiled her from her home for the next 40 years. Wells refused to back down, however, and remained politically active throughout her life, as a suffragist and as a founding member of the NAACP.

Ida B. Wells - Rust College graduate and Civil Rights pioneer

Columbus' African-American Experience

While life for many African Americans in the Mississippi Hills was fraught with difficulties, there were opportunities in communities such as Shakerag in Tupelo and Freedmen Town in Oxford. Columbus, in particular, was a community with opportunities. There had been free African Americans in Columbus since the early days of settlement when "the Big Black Tanner" William Cooper ran a tan yard and trading post where Europeans and Chickasaws did business. Cooper was not the only successful entrepreneur. Freed slave Horace King became one of the area's preeminent bridge builders, and before becoming a barber, grocer, and saloon owner, local businessman Jack

Raab made his first transaction with the purchase of his own freedom. In 1843, freemen Isaac and Thomas Williams built their four-room, two-story house that would come to be known as the Haven.

Columbus also provided havens for African American worship, even if they were found at first in the basement of another church (as in the case of Missionary Union Baptist Church) or in an outdoor brush arbor (as in the case of Shiloh Missionary Church). After the Civil War, those congregations were finally able to build their own sanctuaries, even as other churches such as the Concord CME Church were being formed.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Columbus' African American culture and commerce were thriving, particularly along Catfish Alley, the community's primary business district. The Queen City Hotel, constructed in 1909 by former slave Robert Walker, became a favorite stop for professional baseball players and for such nationally known performing artists as Louis Armstrong, Pearl Bailey, B. B. King, Duke Ellington, and James Brown. African Americans in the Mississippi Hills were finding their own paths and their own voice, in the streets and in the churches and in a new art form that arose from old traditions and that took on special characteristics here in the Hills. When the blues came north from the Mississippi Delta, the bluesmen of the Hills would create their own distinctive version.

Civil Rights: An Arduous Journey

As with much of Mississippi, the Hills are an area rich in civil rights history. Building upon the groundwork laid by people such as Ida B. Wells, there are several civil rights leaders associated with the Mississippi Hills. However, the best know was James Meredith.

James Meredith: Born 1933

An Air Force veteran born in Kosciusko in 1933, James Meredith attended Jackson State for two years before he applied to the University of Mississippi in Oxford. It took two tries and federal marshals to get Meredith through the University gates on October 1, 1962. That day sparked off violent rioting. Robert Kennedy called in 500 U.S. Marshals to take control, who were supported by soldiers from Fort Campbell, Kentucky. They created a tent camp and kitchen for the US Marshals. To bolster law enforcement, President John F. Kennedy sent in U.S. Army military police and called in

James Meredith entering Ole Miss

troops from the Mississippi Army National Guard and the U.S. Border Patrol. In the violent clash, two people died. More than 150 U.S. Marshals, one-third of the group, were injured in the melee, as were 40 soldiers and National Guardsmen. Meredith's entry into the university is regarded as a pivotal moment in the history of civil rights in the United States. Once order was restored, Meredith, like many African Americans in the Hills before him, persevered in a hostile environment. He graduated on August 18, 1963 with a degree in political science. Later, he

refused to be defined by his most famous moment. Not unlike Revels who aligned himself with Democrats, Meredith has over the years made surprising alliances, refusing to march to anyone's drummer but his own.

Southern Christian Leadership Conference
In 1966, when the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) launched its project for Grenada school integration, volunteers and civil rights leaders converged. The group included the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., Andrew Young, and singer/activist Joan Baez, who all came together at Grenada's Belle Flower Missionary Baptist Church where campaign events were coordinated and where the Reverend King inspired the faithful from the pulpit. The church was firebombed, but neither the building nor the movement could be destroyed. Only a year later, in his address at the annual SCLC meeting, Reverend King praised both the courage of Grenada citizens and the success of the project, calling the city "one of the most integrated school systems in America." Today at the Church, now listed on the National Register of Historic Places, faint shadows remain where flames licked the church walls, and where flowering justice would not be denied sanctuary.

Conclusions
So what makes the African-American experience in the Mississippi Hills region nationally significant and unique to this area? The geography of the Tennessee River lying just north of the Mississippi border and its proximity to Corinth - a strategic rail center - resulted in the Battle of Shiloh. The Union success there, and the subsequent abandonment of Corinth to Union forces, set the stage for the contraband camp established there in 1862. That camp was a pioneering experiment that resulted in it being replicated as a model for the rest of the South within Union-occupied areas. The contraband camps, in turn, became important targets for the recruitment of black troops, and most historians agree that the addition of roughly 180,000 African-American troops helped to tip the scales toward an eventual Union victory. In fact, these soldiers accounted for approximately ten percent of all Union forces, and about 90,000 of the black soldiers (half) were former slaves or "contrabands."

Another unique facet of the Mississippi Hills was the establishment of Shaw University in Holly Springs in 1866. As the second college in the country established for the sole purpose of educating African-Americans, it was renamed Rust College in the early 20th-century. Rust is associated with leaders such as Hiram Revels - a Rust College teacher who became the first African American to serve in the US Senate, and Ida B. Wells - a Rust graduate who became a nationally-recognized writer and advocate for civil rights. Their groundwork during the late-19th century and early-20th century helped pave the way for the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. James Meredith's entry into the University of Mississippi in October of 1962 was a national story because of the violence and required federal military involvement to usher in this new era in equal rights. That achievement, in turn, helped pave the way for African-Americans to enter other universities and colleges across the South that had previously enrolled only white students.

> *"Somebody must show that the Afro-American race is more sinned against than sinning, and it seems to have fallen upon me to do so."* - Ida B. Wells

E3. CIVIL WAR

The Opening Clash of Amateur Armies

As General U.S. Grant gazed down the rolling landscape of the Mississippi Hills, he saw two things: a slight obstacle and a large prize. The prize was Corinth - the "Crossroads of the Confederacy" - where the longest rail lines in the nation converged and crossed. The obstacle was the few hundred miles of hill country that Grant's armies would have to conquer to take Grenada, where Pemberton's fortifications guarded the grandest prize of all –Vicksburg - the "Gibraltar of the South." To Grant, the goal seemed simple enough. First, take Corinth, then in a two-pronged advance, lead his army down the Mississippi Central Rail line toward Grenada, while Sherman would take his forces down the Mississippi River toward Vicksburg. Grant envisioned Vicksburg being taken with hardly a shot. What Grant could not foretell were the challenges that laid ahead for the Union forces at places like Corinth, Iuka, and Holly Springs. He had not yet learned the concept of Total War – a concept that Grant and Sherman refined in Mississippi and that would produce a seismic shift in Civil War tactics.

Siege of Corinth: April 29 - May 30, 1862

The rail lines at Corinth were Grant's first objective, but to take them would first require the bloody battle of Shiloh, a conflict that left more American soldiers dead than all the casualties of previous wars combined. After their defeat, the Confederate Army under General P.G.T. Beauregard retreated to Corinth to care for the wounded and to expand the trenches and earthworks begun before Shiloh. As they followed the Confederates from Shiloh, the Union Army under the command of General Henry Halleck advanced slowly fortifying their own positions with earthworks along the way. The fortifications stretched for miles, setting up what was, in terms of manpower, the largest siege that would ever be conducted in the Western hemisphere.

Lacking siege guns and facing water and food shortages, Beauregard engineered a surprise retreat that would become as legendary as the siege itself. He began immediate evacuations by rail, and as the empty rail cars returned to the city, Confederates cheered as if greeting reinforcements. Buglers blew taps and campfires were stoked. Fake cannons – "Quaker guns" - made from logs and painted black, were installed along the lines. The next morning Halleck marched his men into a deserted city. Although Beauregard's army escaped, the critical rail lines were now taken and the city became a haven for the thousands of escaped slaves. Grant's army was now positioned in Mississippi, a fact that precipitated the next battle, which would occur to the east at Iuka.

Union troops at the Tishomingo Hotel - Corinth

Battle of Iuka: September 19, 1862

As Confederate General Braxton Bragg headed into his campaign in Kentucky, he worried Union General William Rosecrans in Mississippi might come north to join with Union forces in Middle Tennessee. To prevent that, he ordered Confederate General Sterling Price to advance on the Union storehouses at Iuka, where the Union commander simply set fire to his supplies and marched his men away. Price's army rushed in to save valuable rations and ordinance, while a furious Grant decided to strike immediately. He sent General E.O.C. Ord from the west and General Rosecrans

from the southwest, but because he wanted a coordinated attack, he gave Ord the command to hold his charge until he heard the sound of Rosecrans' army engaging. On the next day and well into the night, Rosecrans did engage with Price in intensive fighting. However, because of a north wind that caused an "acoustical shadow" that muffled the sounds, Ord's men stood idly while the fighting raged only a short distance away. Eventually, Price's army was able to slip away and join General Earl Van Dorn, now planning a strike to retake Corinth.

Battle of Corinth: October 3-4, 1862
After occupying Corinth in late-May of 1862, the Union Army set about expanding fortifications and adding a series of batteries, which would prove vital when Confederate General Earl Van Dorn's army assaulted the city. The Confederates broke through at points, engaging in fierce hand-to-hand combat. However, when they encountered the withering fire from Battery Robinette, their advance collapsed. The Confederates were repulsed in this battle – sometimes referred to as the

"Second Battle of Corinth" - and Van Dorn was stripped of his command. However, he would later make a comeback as a cavalry leader whose successful strike against Grant's supply base in Holly Springs would lead to a shift in Union tactics that would ultimately contribute to the Confederacy's undoing.

Battle of Corinth – Currier & Ives print

The Quest for Vicksburg Begins
Initially, Grant seemed unstoppable as he started south. The Confederates were on the run from Abbeville, and Grant's army swept into Holly Springs on November 12, 1862, where the general set up his headquarters. In fact, he was so confident of success that he installed his wife Julia, their son, and Julia's slave in the town's most lavish mansion – the Walter Place. Meanwhile, he pushed his army southward to capture Price's troops before they reached the fortifications of Grenada. In his eagerness to catch this retreating Confederate rear guard, Grant stretched his troops out more than fifty miles from his supply base in Holly Springs. Still, his advance cavalry under the command of Captain Theophilus Dickey continued to press on and harass the Confederate rear guard. At Coffeeville, the Confederates turned to lay a trap and Dickey unwittingly led his men straight into it. The Coffeeville ambush was the first great triumph for the Confederates in the West. It would demoralize the Union Army, energize Grant's rivals, set off a firestorm in the Northern press, and make his superiors question Grant's judgment. At a dress parade in Oxford, even some of Grant's soldiers refused to salute him and others made cat calls. And there was one more humiliation ahead for U.S. Grant, back in Holly Springs, where his officers were about to meet the newly rehabilitated Earl Van Dorn and his cavalry.

Van Dorn's Holly Springs Raid: December 20, 1862
Confederate General Van Dorn's raid on Holly Springs in December of 1862 caused a major disruption to Grant's military efforts to the south. Although the cost in human life was relatively light - 1,500 Union soldiers were captured and quickly paroled - the destruction of supplies was massive. Thousands of bales of cotton, intended for sale to finance Grant's army, were burned, as were railroad car packed with bacon. Estimates at the time set damages at $1 million for the loss of medical supplies alone.

The raid was the final humiliation for Grant and, without supplies, his army was forced to pillage their way northward. Still, for Grant those fires at Holly Springs had proven illuminating. As he explained later, until that time he had not believed that an army could survive without provisions. Being forced to "live off the land" showed him a new and destructive path toward success, a path that Sherman would later most famously take in his march to the sea that helped secure the Union victory.

The Play's Final Acts - 1864
In the Mississippi Hills during the waning days of the war, Union General Sherman would meet his own failures as the daring tactics of Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest cemented his reputation as one of the finest cavalry leaders in history.
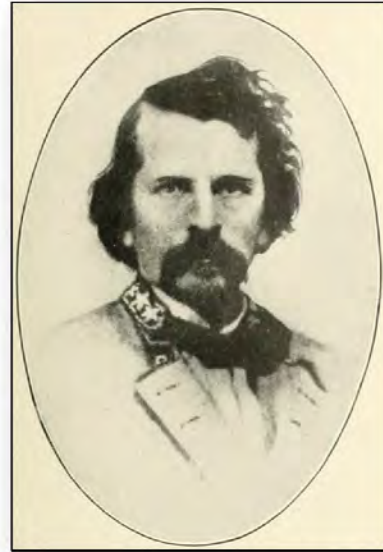
A native of Port Gibson, Mississippi, Earl Van Dorn was murdered in 1863 by a jealous husband in Spring Hill, Tennessee.

Okolona: February 22, 1864
In 1864, after the capture of Vicksburg, Sherman determined to advance east to the rail line at Meridian, and then, perhaps, south to Mobile. To that end, he ordered Union General William Sooy Smith to leave Memphis immediately with his 7,000 cavalry troops and meet him at Meridian. Smith delayed, however. Then picking up escaped slaves as he moved south, he chose to fight at Aberdeen and Prairie Station, and skirmished at Ellis Bridge in West Point, before Confederate Colonel Jeffrey Forrest finally drew Union forces into a swamp at Okolona, near the Tombigbee River. With aid from the reinforcements of General Nathan Bedford Forrest, the Colonel (and brother of General Forrest) ultimately forced a Union retreat. Jeffrey Forrest was killed in the fight by a Union bullet in the neck.

Brice's Crossroads: June 10, 1864
Later that same year, General Forrest determined that he would advance north into Middle Tennessee to strike at the line carrying supplies to Sherman's army in Georgia. Although Sherman sent a much larger Union column under General Samuel Sturgis to head off the attack, Forrest achieved a resounding success at the Battle of Brice's Crossroad near Baldwyn in Lee County. This victory helped to solidify the Confederate cavalry leader's reputation as a great military strategist. The battle remains a textbook example of an outnumbered force prevailing through better tactics, terrain mastery, and aggressive offensive action. Despite these attributes, the Confederates gained little through the victory other than temporarily keeping the Union out of Alabama and Mississippi.

Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest led the final key engagements fought in Mississippi during the Civil War.

Tupelo: July 14-15, 1864

A month after the Battle of Brice's Crossroads, Sherman ordered General A.J. Smith out of LaGrange, Tennessee, to stop Forrest and protect the Union supply lines. When Smith reached Pontotoc, Forrest was in nearby Okolona. Forrest's commander was Lt. General Stephen D. Lee, the officer then under General P.G.T. Beauregard who had requested the U.S. surrender of Fort Sumter before the first shots of the Civil War were fired. Lee advised against attack without reinforcements. Smith moved to Tupelo, where Lee launched a number of unsuccessful advances. Although he did not destroy Forrest's army, Smith effectively vanquished the threat to Sherman's lines, and the Battle of Tupelo signaled the beginning of the end of the war in the west. After the war, Stephen D. Lee resided in Columbus, Mississippi, and became the first President of Mississippi A&M College, known today as Mississippi State University.

Other Engagements in the Hills

There were many other small battles and skirmishes in the Hills, including more than 100 in and around the Corinth area and 60 different raids in Holly Springs. For example, after they left Holly Springs on their most famous raid, Van Dorn's cavalry encountered a smaller, but well-prepared, Union contingent at Davis Mill. When Grant made his final advance on Vicksburg, he employed a former music teacher to harass and confuse Confederate forces with a massive cavalry raid through the region. A man who hated horses after being kicked in the head by one as a child, Colonel Benjamen Grierson was nevertheless a ruthlessly effective cavalry leader. Beginning in LaGrange, Tennessee (just above the state line), the infamous Grierson's Raid through the Mississippi Hills left smoldering towns and charred bridges in its wake between April 17 and May 2, 1863.

Conclusions

Union General U.S. Grant is the single most significant aspect of the Civil War within the Mississippi Hills that had a bearing on the outcome of the war. Grant's early-war successes in the area in 1862 with victories at Corinth and related battles, as well as his use of the area as his staging area for the subsequent Vicksburg Campaign, led to his eventual command of the entire Union forces and his efforts that led to C.S. General Lee's surrender. Not only did Grant's early successes in the Mississippi Hills eventually lead to the war's outcome, but his return to North Mississippi following his initial failed attempt to take Vicksburg (caused by Van Dorn's raid on his supply base at Holly Springs) taught Grant that he could make a long march by living off the land. That critical observation became an invaluable lesson to his understudy - William Tecumseh Sherman, who later applied that principle in his infamous "march to the sea" in Georgia. The aftermath of the war that redefined the Mississippi Hills area was the freedom of the slaves, eventual critical gains in civil rights, and an economic devastation that caused the area to spiral into poverty - a condition that is still being overcome today.

E4. ARTS

The earliest art in the Hills region was created thousands of years ago by prehistoric Native Americans. During the later historic eras, the Chickasaw and Choctaw civilizations refined their own artistic expressions, although those civilizations were essentially extinguished by the deluge of white settlement that began here in the 1830s. While the term "arts" can be broadly applied to a wide range of visual and performing arts, within the context of the Mississippi Hills, "arts" applies

primarily to literature and music. The exception to this rule is the painting of Holly Springs' Kate Freeman Clark. It is the Hills' writers and musicians who are most widely known and who, starting in the late-nineteenth century, help to define the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area. Below is an overview of these arts sub-themes.

Pens & Brushes: Hills Literature & Painting

The Holly Springs Trio
In the late-1800s, a trio of women - writer Sherwood Bonner, painter Kate Freeman Clark, and writer and crusader Ida B. Wells - blazed a trail out of Holly Springs that, at the time, few women anywhere could have conceived.

Katherine Sherwood Bonner McDowell: 1849-1883
The daughter of an aristocratic family fallen on hard times, Katherine Sherwood Bonner McDowell did the unthinkable. In 1873, she left her husband and her baby daughter to head for Boston to carve out a career as a writer. The poet Longfellow soon became her mentor and patron, and her travel articles and short stories, written under the pen name Sherwood Bonner, began receiving national acclaim. Bonner's name might be as well known today as Longfellow's had yellow fever, and then cancer, not cut short her dreams when she was only thirty-four years of age.

Known as Sherwood Bonner, this Holly Springs native became a famous writer during the late-nineteenth century.

Ida B. Wells: 1862-1931
Death also touched Ida B. Wells at a young age, but it was the death of her parents when she was only sixteen, leaving her with five younger siblings to care for. At a time when Southern society hardly encouraged African Americans to even read or write, Wells went on to Rust College in Holly Springs, and then to her first career as a teacher. But when she was barred from a ladies railroad car, Wells found her true calling. Over 70 years before Rosa Parks' landmark court action, Wells sued for discrimination, and although the judgment in her favor was overturned, her writing career was launched as she took her argument to print. In 1889, she became co-owner of The Free Press, operated out of Beale Street in Memphis. Although Wells' courageous stance against lynching eventually forced her into exile from her native South, her voice was never silenced. See for a photograph and additional information on Wells.

Kate Freeman Clark: 1875-1957
Born into the wealthy and politically connected Walthall family, Kate Freeman Clark seemed destined for the typical life of the Southern belle, but her passion and talent led her to take up a life of painting in New York City, albeit with her mother and often her grandmother in tow as her chaperones. As a well-regarded protégé of noted American portraitist William Merrit Chase, Clark created more than 1,000 delicate and sophisticated still

Kate Freeman Clark of Holly Springs had a prestigious painting career in New York during the turn-of-the-century.

lifes and portraits, and saw her paintings recognized and exhibited in prestigious venues while she was still a young woman. However, when her mother, grandmother, and mentor all passed away within the span of a few years, Clark put all of her works into New York City storage, retreated to Holly Springs to the guise of mild-mannered spinster, and never painted again. It would be decades before the residents of Holly Springs would even learn of Clark's luminous talent, thanks to a bequest in her will for her very own museum to display her works.

William Faulkner: 1897-1962

Oxford resident William Faulkner made his mark on the literary landscape by dismantling forever the way novels would be read and written. Born "William Falkner," he began his career in the 1920s in a small room in the upstairs corner of his parents' home using corn liquor as a sometime companion as he tackled the myths and legends of family, region and man. By the early-1930s, Faulkner had married and bought a home - a dilapidated antebellum mansion he christened Rowan Oak. By this time he had already published *Sartoris*, *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying,* and *Sanctuary*, with even more great works to come. He is primarily known and acclaimed for his novels and short stories, many of which are set in the fictional Yoknapatawpha County, a setting Faulkner based on Lafayette County (where he most of his childhood) and Holly Springs and Marshall County.

Faulkner in 1954, eight years before his death.

Eudora Welty: 1909-2001

A native of Jackson, Eudora Welty was known for her short stories and novels about the South. From 1925 to 1927, Welty studied at the Mississippi State College for Women in Columbus, then transferred to the University of Wisconsin to complete her studies in English Literature. In 1936, she published "The Death of a Traveling Salesman" in the literary magazine *Manuscript*, and then proceeded to publish stories in several other notable publications, including *The New Yorker*. She solidified her place as an influential Southern writer when she penned her first book of short stories, *A Curtain of Green*. Her new-found success won her a seat on the staff of *The New York Times* book review, as well as a Guggenheim Fellowship grant that allowed her to travel to France, England, Ireland, and Germany. While abroad, she spent some time as a resident lecturer at Oxford and Cambridge. In 1960, she returned home to Jackson to care for her elderly mother and two brothers. She continued to write, and won a Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1973 for her novel *The Optimist's Daughter*. She then lectured at Harvard University and eventually turned the speeches into a three-part book entitled *One Writer's Beginnings*. Welty was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, among numerous awards. She was the first living author to have her works published by the Library of America, and she continued to live in her family home in Jackson until her death on July 23, 2001.

Tennessee Williams: 1911-1983

Thomas Lanier "Tennessee" Williams III was an American writer from Columbus, Mississippi, who worked principally as a playwright in the American theater. He also wrote short stories, novels, poetry, essays, screenplays and a volume of memoirs. His professional career lasted from

the mid-1930s until his death in 1983, and saw the creation of many plays that are regarded as classics of the American stage. Williams adapted much of his best known work for the cinema. Williams received   virtually all of the top theatrical awards for his works of drama, including several New York Drama Critics' Circle awards, a Tony Award for best play for *The Rose Tattoo* (1951), and the Pulitzer Prize for Drama for *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1948) and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955). In 1980, he was honored with the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Jimmy Carter and is today acknowledged as one of the most accomplished playwrights in the history of English speaking theater.

Tennessee Williams spent his childhood in both Columbus and Clarksdale, Mississippi.

<u>John Ray Grisham, Jr.: Born 1955</u>
John Grisham is an American lawyer and author best known for his popular legal thrillers. He graduated from Mississippi State University before attending the University of Mississippi School of Law in 1981 and practiced criminal law for about a decade. He also served in the House of Representatives in Mississippi from January 1984 to September 1990. He began writing his first novel, *A Time To Kill,* in 1984, and it was published in June 1989. As of 2008, his books had sold over 250 million copies worldwide. A Galaxy British Book Awards winner, Grisham is one of only three authors to sell two million copies on a first printing, the others being Tom Clancy and J.K. Rowling. Grisham's first best seller was *The Firm*. Released in 1991, it sold more than seven million copies. The book was later adapted into a feature film in 1993, and a TV series in 2012. Eight of his other novels have also been adapted into films: *The Chamber*, *The Client*, *A Painted House*, *The Pelican Brief*, *Skipping Christmas*, *The Rainmaker*, *The Runaway Jury*, and *A Time to Kill*. His books have been translated into 29 languages and published worldwide.

Mississippi Melodies: Music of the Hills
There are so many significant musicians from the Mississippi Hills that space does not exist to address them all. However, even as early as the 1920s, Hills artists were achieving major breakthroughs. After traveling the country working at everything from busking to minstrel and medicine shows, DeSoto County guitar greats Joe Callicot, Garfield Akers, Frank Stokes and Elijah Avery began their Memphis recording careers in the 1920s. Stokes was part of the Beale Street Sheiks, and Avery played with Gus Cannon's Jug Stompers.   Among the most notable of Mississippi Hills musicians are the following summarized below:

<u>Ruby Elzy: 1908-1943</u>
Born in Pontotoc, Ruby Elzy was educated at Rust College in Holly Springs, as well as at the Ohio State University and the Juilliard School to train as an opera singer. In 1936, Elzy made her concert debut with George Gershwin and the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, having already wowed critics and audiences alike with her performance as Serena in Gershwin's opera *Porgy and Bess*. Her big aria in that opera, which she performed over 800 times, was *My Man's Gone Now*, Serena's

A Pontotoc native, Elzy's career in opera lasted only seven years.

lament after her husband is murdered in a crap game. Elzy entertained at the White House, December 15, 1937, for First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt's lunch eon for the wives of U.S. Supreme Court Justices. She appeared with Paul Robeson in the film of *The Emperor Jones*, and also with Bing Crosby and Mary Martin in *Birth of the Blues*, though neither of these were starring roles. She sang at Harlem's Apollo Theater and in the Hollywood Bowl. Elzy still found time to come back home to sing in church in between performances on stage, in movies and on radio. She was about to make her debut as Aida when she died in 1943 at age 35.

Howlin' Wolf: 1910-1976

Chester Arthur Burnett, known as Howlin' Wolf, was an influential American blues singer, guitarist and harmonica player. A native of White Station – near West Point, Mississippi – he had a booming voice, looming physical presence, and is commonly ranked among the leading performers in electric blues. In 1951, the WWII veteran already had his own gig at a West Memphis radio station when he auditioned for Sam Phillips at the now famed Sun Records. By the mid-1950s, settled in Chicago, Burnett had hit the charts with "Evil" and "Smokestack Lightning." Musician and critic Cub Koda once declared, "no one could match Howlin' Wolf for the singular ability to

Known as Howlin' Wolf, Chester Burnette was a West Point native.

rock the house down to the foundation while simultaneously scaring its patrons out of its wits." A number of songs written or popularized by Burnett, such as "Smokestack Lightnin'", "Back Door Man", "Killing Floor" and "Spoonful", have become blues and blues rock standards. At 6 feet, 6 inches and close to 300 pounds, he was an imposing presence with one of the loudest and most memorable voices of all the 1950s Chicago blues singers. His rough-edged musical style was often contrasted with the less crude, but still powerful, presentation of his contemporary and professional rival - Muddy Waters. Howlin' Wolf, Sonny Boy Williamson (Rice Miller), Little Walter Jacobs, and Muddy Waters are usually regarded as the greatest blues artists who recorded for Chess in Chicago.

Elvis Presley: 1935-1977

Two years after Howlin' Wolf's first visit to Sun Records, a young truck driver named Elvis Presley visited the studios in 1953 to pay $3.98 to record a couple of demos that he reportedly gave to his mother. The next year when he sat in on a session with Sun regulars Scotty Moore and Bill Black, the three recorded Arthur Crudup's bluesy "That's All Right, Mamma." By the time he returned to his hometown of Tupelo to play the Mississippi-Alabama State Fair in 1956, Elvis was the first global superstar. RCA Victor acquired his contract in a deal arranged by Colonel Tom Parker, who would manage the singer for over two decades. Presley's first RCA single, "Heartbreak Hotel", released in January 1956, was a number one hit. He became the leading figure of the newly popular sound of rock and roll with a series of network television appearances and chart-topping records. His energized interpretations of songs, many from African American sources, and his uninhibited performance style made him enormously popular - and controversial. In November

1956, he made his film debut in *Love Me Tender*. Conscripted into military service in 1958, Presley rekindled his recording career two years later with some of his most commercially successful work.

Presley is regarded as one of the most important figures of 20th-century popular culture. He had a versatile voice and unusually wide success encompassing many genres, including country, pop ballads, gospel, and blues. He is the best-selling solo artist in the history of popular music. Nominated for 14 competitive Grammys, he won three, and received the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award at age 36. He has been inducted into multiple music halls of fame.

Elvis bought his first guitar as a boy at the Tupelo Hardware Store, which is still in operation.

Tammy Wynette: 1942-1998

Born in Tremont as "Virginia Wynette Pugh" and known professionally as "Tammy Wynette," this Mississippi Hills native was an American country music singer-songwriter and one of the genre's best-known artists and biggest-selling female singers. Trained at a beauty school in Tupelo, a pregnant Wynette left her husband and loaded her two small children into a car and headed for Nashville in 1966. Her first big hit, "Apartment #9," came out that same year, and by 1969 she had become the first female country artist to earn a gold record, selling more than a million copies of her Greatest Hits. Wynette was sometimes called the "First Lady of Country Music", and her best-known song, *Stand by Your Man*, was one of the best-selling hit singles by a woman in the history of the country music genre. Many of Wynette's hits dealt with classic

Tammy Wynette was considered the "First Lady of Country Music."

themes of loneliness, divorce, and the difficulties of man-woman relationships. During the late-1960s and early-1970s, Wynette ranked high in the country sales charts with 35 number-one songs. Along with Loretta Lynn, Lynn Anderson, and Dolly Parton, Wynette defined the role of women in country music during the 1970s. Wynette's marriage to the country singer George Jones in 1969, which end in divorce in 1975, created a country music "couple", following the earlier success of Johnny Cash and June Carter Cash. Jones and Wynette recorded a sequence of duet albums and single records that hit the charts throughout the 1970s.

Otha Turner: 1907-2003

In 1923 at the age of sixteen, Otha Turner carved his first fife out of sugar cane. He soon began to play with fife and drum musicians at parties and picnics around the Holly Springs and Como areas. Turner's propulsive style, sprung more from African rhythms than Colonial heritage, would influence later Hills musicians as they created their own style of blues. Back home in the hard-scrabble Hills, Otha Turner continued his own distinctive and distinctly "un-star-studded" path.

Unlike the acclaim that accompanied other Hills artists - or even Delta blues musicians, many of whom were finding their way to Chicago clubs and recording studios - Turner's fame was local and yet intense.

His fife and drum music became a prominent influence on other area bluesmen like Mississippi Fred McDowell, whose driving style would become known as "country blues." Turner's Rising Star Fife and Drum Band, which consisted of friends and relatives, primarily played at farm parties. They began to receive wider recognition in the 1990s. They released their critically acclaimed album *Everybody Hollerin' Goat* in 1998. This work was followed by *From Senegal to Senatobia* in 1999, which combined bluesy fife and drum music with musicians credited as "the Afrossippi Allstars". The title, *Everybody Hollerin' Goat*, refers to a tradition Turner began in the late-1950s of hosting Labor Day picnics where he would personally butcher and cook a goat in an iron kettle and his band would provide musical entertainment. The picnics began as a neighborhood and family gathering. It grew over the years to attract musical fans, first from Memphis and later from all over the world. The song, "Shimmy She Wobble", from *Everybody Hollerin' Goat* was featured in the 2002 film, *Gangs of New York*.

Como's Otha Turner mastered fife and drum music, which combined colonial era instruments with African music traditions.

Conclusions

Literature and music are perhaps the strongest suits for the MHNHA. Because of writers such as Faulkner, Welty and Williams, the area is home to some of the country's greatest writers. Furthermore, many of their stories were about the region and its history and culture, so the Hills region is directly tied to some of the country's most significant literature. As Faulkner's quote below echoes, "To understand the world, you must first understand a place like Mississippi."

While the neighboring Mississippi Delta region can lay claim to being the capital of the Blues music, the Hills region has an equally rich, yet more diverse, musical tradition. Elvis - the King of Rock and Roll and Tupelo native - embodies the Hill's geographic and cultural confluence of Appalachia and the Delta. His unique musical style reflects elements of both cultures, while Tammy Wynette's country music is more reflective of Appalachia and the white population, and Howlin' Wolf's and Otha Turner's forms of the Blues are representative of the Delta's black population.

> *"To understand the world, you must first understand a place like Mississippi."* - William Faulkner

E5. ARCHITECTURE

The original architecture of the Mississippi Hills consisted of villages comprised of thatched mud and plaster huts and magnificent burial mounds to honor the departed. By the early-1800s, log cabin homesteads of white settlers began to replace aboriginal architecture. During the brief period between early white settlement and Indian removal via the Trail of Tears, the occasional melding of two civilizations manifested itself in buildings. For example, the Choctaw Chief Moshulatubbee lived in a two-story four-room log home that a white builder constructed for him before he sold it for $100 and went west with his tribe after the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek.

Porches & Porticoes: Homes of the Hills

The designs were many: Greek Revival, Italianate, Neoclassical, Federal, Gothic Revival, Romanesque, Victorian, Empire, Prairie, Carpenter Gothic. The materials were equally diverse: Italian marble, slave-made brick, native stone, imported mahogany, home-grown clapboard. Many communities in the Mississippi Hills serve as architectural laboratories waiting to be explored. In Holly Springs, each of the city's antebellum jewels seems to have its own colorful story, whether it is of a doomed love affair or a secret passageway. In Aberdeen, cotton and commerce came together at the port on the Tombigbee River, and dueling fortunes sparked a frenzy of palace-building. Today, the community boasts five separate designated historic districts, including the famed Silk Stocking Victorian row. Many of the historic homes in Oxford have either been immortalized by Faulkner or lived in by him or members of his family, such as his own home Rowan Oak.

Columbus was home to another famous writer, Tennessee Williams, whose family lived in a Victorian rectory surrounded by elegant antebellum homes, many that have survived to this day in pristine condition. His home how serves as a visitors center for the area. The story of Columbus' African-American heritage is also represented through buildings such as "The Haven," a two-story residence built in 1843 by "freemen of color," and the Theodoric James home built in the early-1900s by the city's first African-American physician. These buildings illustrate the little-known side of an African-American culture flourishing in spite of tremendous obstacles and oppression.

Waverly, a grand antebellum mansion near West Point, has been restored to grandeur.

Buildings of Commerce: Commercial Architecture

A key defining element of the Mississippi Hills is its downtowns. Their physical form, courthouse squares, architecture, statues, and other components strongly reflect the rich and unique culture of the Hills. The backbone of these downtowns is their commercial buildings that dominant their urban environments. Many of the Hills' downtowns featured frame buildings during the early to mid-19th century, only to be replaced by brick structures after devastating fires. While their specific designs vary from building to building, the ever-

present traditional storefront lends the streetscapes a repetitive feature providing rhythm and human scale.

Worship, Learning & Governance: Institutional Buildings

Places of Worship
Sacred architecture of all denominations makes for another inspiring highlight of any architectural tour of the Hills. Among the countless in-town historic churches, Gothic Revival was an especially popular architectural style, and at least a few Catholic sanctuaries were built in homage to another beloved church. The Hills' sought-after architects for designing churches included R.H. Hunt and James B. Cooke. Outside the cities, one can still see the "vernacular" expression of sacred architecture in the form of white clapboard structures, pristine in their simplicity, that have sustained generations of Hills residents. Also, the sanctuary of the oldest African-American congregation in Northeast Mississippi, the Missionary Union Baptist Church built in 1871, is open for tours during Columbus' spring pilgrimage.

Academic Architecture
Perhaps the most iconic academic building in the Mississippi Hills is the Lyceum in Oxford – the University of Mississippi's original flagship building from the antebellum era. However, academic architecture of all shapes and sizes can be found throughout the region, from small elementary schools to large historic high schools. In addition to the campus of Ole Miss, collegiate architecture can be appreciated at places such as Mississippi State University, Rust College, the Mississippi University for Women, and Blue Mountain College.

Rust College in Holly Springs - 1918

Civic Buildings
The massively dignified courthouse is a common architectural feature across the Mississippi Hills. Often Greek Revival in design and always impressive in scale, these historic structures watch over their towns like benevolent giants, eternally steadfast even, as in the case of the Jacinto Courthouse, when their constituents are not. One of the nation's finest examples of the Federal style, the Jacinto Courthouse was constructed with walls two feet thick, yet its demographic foundation was crumbling even as the building was going up. Passed over for a railroad, the town would lose its status as county seat soon after and eventually became a ghost town. Yet the Courthouse would endure and adapt and, at the last moment, avoid the wrecking ball when concerned citizens stepped in to restore it. Often anchored by a grand courthouse like Jacinto's, the town square is the hardy perennial of the Mississippi Hills. Charming, picturesque, endlessly ingenious in its functionality, the town square stands at the heart of our way of life, flourishing economically even as it offers visitors and residents alike daily adventures in shopping, dining, business and social opportunities.

Architectural Salvage
Architectural rescues are another continuing theme of the Mississippi Hills in places like Grenada, where the magnificent 1920s Masonic Temple was saved from a developer bent on demolition.

Another example is Oxford, where John Grisham's donation of the historic Burns Church, known as the Belfry, will create an African American cultural resource. Historic character is something that is not only preserved in the Hills, but it is treasured, and the Mississippi Hills' communities are all the more vibrant for it.

Conclusions

In general, the architecture of the Mississippi Hills is not unique relative to similar architecture found in other regions of the South. However, the architecture is very reflective of the various times and places that constitute the heritage area's stories. For example, the many excellent examples of antebellum Greek Revival homes in communities such as Holly Springs, Oxford, Aberdeen and Columbus are intertwined with the slave-based cotton economy that brought so much wealth to the region prior to the Civil War. Similarly, the many institutional buildings reflect the institutional traditions throughout the heritage area, including academic, governmental, and religious. The many churches reveal the area's strong religious culture, and academic buildings such as those at Rust College and the adjacent site of the Mississippi Industrial College tell a story of the struggles to achieve educational opportunities for the area's African Americans. Almost every story worth telling for the MHNHA can be reinforced by showing casing its associated architecture.

Granada's 1920s Masonic Temple was saved from demolition and is currently serving as an antique mall. This architecturally significant building recently received a Certified Local Government (CLG) grant from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History to repair the building's windows.