

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Mississippi Hills
National Heritage Area

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

Revised:
April 21, 2014



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Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area Management Plan

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MANAGEMENT PLAN

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National Heritage Area

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prepared for the:
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April 21, 2014



There are two primary objectives in including this Executive Summary section of the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA) Management Plan. First, it provides an abbreviated version of a lengthy plan document that will allow the reader to understand the most basic components and ideas of the plan. It is noteworthy that a stand-alone “marketing” version of this Executive Summary will also been created with less detail and more graphics. The second objective is to explain how this plan meets the planning mandates of the federal legislation creating the heritage area. That part of this plan summary outlines the legislative requirements and explains how each requirement has been satisfied.

A. SUMMARY OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

In addition to the numerous supporting appendices, the Management Plan is comprised of three main sections – the Background Report, the Alternatives, and the Management Plan. The latter section consists of four components: Strategies, Interpretive Plan, Business Plan, and Implementation Plan. This “Management Plan” section is, not surprisingly, the most substantive and critical of the main three plan sections. Below is an overview of each section.

A1. BACKGROUND REPORT

Below is a list of this plan section’s seven components:

Background Report Contents

- A. Overview & Benefits of NHAs
- B. Related Policies & Studies
- C. Planning Methodology
- D. Foundation Statement
- E. Interpretive Theme Structures & Stories
- F. MHNHA Resources
- G. Economic & Market Assessment

What is a Heritage Area?

This section starts at the most fundamental level for readers who may have little background with heritage areas by making the following key points about what constitutes a heritage area. A heritage area is:

- A *program* whereby communities and leaders work together to preserve the natural and cultural resources that are important to them.
- A *partnership* of collaborative planning around a theme, industry and/ or geographical feature that influenced the region's culture and history.

- A *strategy* encouraging residents, government agencies, non-profit groups and private partners to agree on and prioritize programs and projects that recognize, preserve and celebrate the area's defining landscapes.

Why Would We Want a Heritage Area?

Once the reader has been educated on heritage areas, this part of the plan makes the case for heritage areas by explaining that they are:

- *Historic Preservation* – saving, enhancing and interpreting the area's historic resources.
- *Environmental Conservation* – preserving natural resources for a “greener” environment.
- *Recreational Development* – leveraging natural resources for hiking, boating, fishing and similar activities.
- *Heritage Tourism* – attracting visitors to spend money on lodging, dining and shopping.

Provisions of Federal Legislation for MHNHA

The key provisions of the federal legislation creating the MHNHA in 2009 include the following:

- *Local Coordinating Entity* - Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance
- *Cooperative Agreement* - spells out the local coordinating entity's working relationship with the National Park Service
- *Extensive public input* and coordination with federal agencies
- *Approved Management Plan* – requires NPS, Department of the Interior, and State approval
- *Federal Funding* - \$10 million total; \$1 million annual maximum amount; minimum 50% match from the coordinating entity, which can include in-kind services

Regarding the funding, while those figures are indeed in the legislation, the actual levels achieved by most NHAs are substantially less (typically closer to a third of that amount).

Management Planning Process

While this section explains the planning process in detail, the six key steps were as follows:

- 1.0: Project Scoping & Start-Up
- 2.0: Research & Public Input
- 3.0: Workshop & Alternatives Preparation
- 4.0: Evaluation & Selection of Alternatives
- 5.0: Draft Plan Preparation
- 6.0: Draft Plan Presentations, Reviews & Revisions

Public Involvement Strategy

This required component was developed early in the planning process and includes a broad range of methods to solicit public input. Examples of techniques contained in the public involvement strategy include public presentations at important stages of the project, posting of plan elements on the MHNHA website for public review, interviews and one-on-one meetings with various stakeholders, a series of key stakeholder meetings with groups sharing a common interest (public officials, economic development professionals, historians, etc.), a charrette public workshop for preparing the overall plan, as well as charrette public workshops for the two case study concept plans for a historic site and a downtown.

Foundation Statement

The required foundation statement consists of an overall mission statement, as well as a set of goals and supporting objectives. Although the lengthier objectives can be reviewed within the plan's full foundation statement, below are the mission statement and five goals:

Mission for the MHNHA:

"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."

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.

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.

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.

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

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

Interpretive Themes & Stories

The real core of any heritage area is the interpretive themes and stories that can be told. Below is a summary of those themes and sub-themes for the MHNHA:

Theme: Native-American Heritage

- Prehistoric Era
- Historic Era

Theme: African-American Heritage

- Freedom Arrives
- Reconstruction & Post-Reconstruction
- Civil Rights - An Arduous Journey

Theme: The Civil War

- The Opening Clash of Amateur Armies
- The Quest for Vicksburg Begins
- The Play's Final Acts - 1864

Theme: The Arts

- Literature
- Music



It is noteworthy that the Native-American Heritage theme did not materialize until the weeklong planning "charrette" occurred, which included a public workshop. While the existence of stories and cultural resources tied to this theme were clearly evident all along, their significance and potential tourism appeal were not fully appreciated until that phase of the planning project. Also, while it appeared earlier in the planning process that Architecture might be a primary interpretive theme, that subject was ultimately demoted to a secondary theme or topic that can be tied to the four primary themes.

MHNHA Resources

An inventory of natural and cultural resources was prepared as part of this project to document the MHNHA's resources and to serve as a planning tool for creating the plan's recommendations. The inventory of natural resources is also required as part of the NHA program and the federal legislation creating the MHNHA. In fact, because none of the natural resources identified in the research had a direct link to the MHNHA's interpretive themes, the ultimate purpose of that inventory was to anticipate any potential impacts to natural resources that the heritage area program might cause. As is the case with most of the Southeast, several endangered and threatened plant and animal species have been identified, including a wide variety of mussel types.

Natural Resources

- Landscapes and Waters
- Biological Resources
- Other Resource Types
- Categorical Exclusion

The general findings of the cultural resources inventory are that there is a rich assortment of cultural resources related to the MHNHA's interpretive themes. While cultural resources tied to the four key themes are relatively plentiful, most are privately-owned, and many are not accessible to the general public.

Cultural Resources

- Native American
- African American
- Civil War Cultural
- Arts (literature and music)
- Architecture

Economic & Market Assessment

This component of the plan is not legislatively mandated or commonly included in other national heritage area management plans, but it was deemed an important one for the MHNHA. The sections of this plan component were as follows:

- Economic & Tourism Sector Overview
- Heritage Tourism Asset Base
- Heritage Tourism Market Potentials
- Program & Project Concepts

This work identified several useful findings that fed into the subsequent planning work and should help to ground the management plan more strongly in economic realities. One important finding is that a significant portion of the MHNHA heritage tourism market will come from within the heritage area boundaries, in addition to external tourists who will travel to the heritage area. It also found strong correlations between an individual's age, education and income level with their propensity to engage in heritage tourism. In general, heritage tourists are older, better educated, and have more income than the average person. This work also highlighted the desire of heritage tourists for authentic and unique experiences and places, as opposed to generic experiences and places such as chain restaurants found in strip commercial highway corridors. Quantifiable unmet market demand exists for additional cultural events and various historic attractions, particularly museum space for the Native American interpretive theme. Finally, there is a strong need for enhanced strategic planning and curatorial and interpretive support for many of the heritage area's existing cultural sites and museums.

A2. ALTERNATIVES REPORT

This important and legislatively-mandated plan component features the following sections:

Alternatives Report Contents

- A. Federal Requirements for Alternatives
- B. Examples of Alternatives of Other NHA Plans
- C. Proposed Alternatives for MHNHA
- D. Comparison of the Proposed Alternatives
- E. Recommended Alternative for the MHNHA

As part of the management planning process, the National Park Service requires the consideration of various alternatives related to the heritage area's management. Because the provision of technical assistance to the various MHNHA partners is so important, this plan considered seven different alternatives for how interpretive centers might be utilized. One required alternative (Alternative A) is the "no action" option in which the MHNHA does not exist. The other alternatives considered were as follows:

Alternative B: Centralized Interpretation in which the NHA's sole interpretive center would be located in Tupelo and interpret all of the key themes for the MHNHA.

Alternative C: Thematic Multi-Anchored Interpretation in which there would be five interpretive centers in five different locations - each focusing interpretation on a particular MHNHA theme (with perhaps a sixth center for the Architecture secondary theme).

Alternative D: Non-Thematic Multi-Gateway Interpretation in which four interpretive centers would be provided. Each would be located at a gateway into the NHA and would interpret all of the themes.

Alternative E: Decentralized Interpretation in which there would be no MHNHA interpretive centers. Instead, interpretation would occur through various existing and new local interpretive centers not sponsored by the MHNHA.

Alternative F: Centralized and Northwest Gateway Interpretation in which only two NHA interpretive centers would occur (Tupelo and Hernando) and they would both interpret all of the key themes.

Alternative G: Multi-Anchored & Northwest Gateway Interpretation in which two NHA-sponsored interpretive centers occur in Tupelo and Hernando to interpret all of the key themes (Alternative F), while five locally-sponsored centers would each focus on one particular theme (a sixth center might also be created for the Architecture secondary theme).

Of those seven alternatives considered, Alternative G was selected as the best approach for the MHNHA. However, the plan also emphasizes that *no interpretive centers are being formally proposed* by this Management Plan. Instead, *it is recommended that feasibility studies be conducted* to first determine the viability of such centers.

A3. MANAGEMENT PLAN

As the real “meat” of the overall plan document, this portion is the most substantive and critical to laying out the details of the MHNHA’s vision and approach to managing the heritage area. Below is a summary of this plan component’s key sections:

Management Plan Contents

- A. Executive Summary
- B. Strategies
- C. Interpretive Plan
- D. Business Plan
- E. Implementation Plan
- F. Appendices

Below is a summary of this plan component’s four primary sections.

Strategies

The Strategies section of this plan serves as a key part of the “Planning Framework” within the context of federal environmental requirements per NEPA. This section was created by taking the plan’s earlier Foundation Statement section and expanding upon that outline with much greater detail with specific planning recommendations. Below are the five goals and supporting objectives that constitute the Foundation Statement and serve as the outline for the Strategies section.

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 heritage area'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: Provide technical assistance and collaborate with appropriate agencies to identify sources of 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 with 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.

Interpretive Plan

The Interpretive Plan provides a series of detailed recommendations on how to effectively tell the story of the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area. In addition to providing a series of theme-based interpretive statements and tying them the area’s inventoried cultural resources, it recommends techniques for interpretation. Among numerous recommendations are the following:

- Support and/or sponsor research into the various themes associated with the MHNHA. Encourage area universities and colleges, as well as subject matter experts, to research the MHNHA’s interpretive themes, and pursue grants for eligible research projects relevant to the MHNHA’s interpretive themes.

- Establish an oral history program within the MHNHA to address the heritage area's primary themes.
- Create an educational curriculum with public and private schools to teach the MHNHA's primary themes. Integrate the MHNHA's interpretive themes into the curriculum related to American History in the grade schools, and support field trips related to the MHNHA's interpretive themes for high school students.
- Explore the development of one or more interpretive centers for the MHNHA, including leveraging existing facilities. Feasibility studies would be necessary to determine locations and viability, and environmental review in accordance with state and federal regulations would be required for any development that might negatively impact the environment.
- Utilize technology to more effectively interpret history to an increasingly tech-savvy public, including the use of the MHNHA website, driving tour apps and other telecommunications mechanisms, and similar tours.
- Program living history demonstrations at historic sites and special events.
- Create a series of theme-based driving tours (tour maps are included in the Interpretive Plan)

Business Plan

Not only is the Business Plan component a legislatively required element of the plan, it is a good idea to increase the odds of success and financial sustainability for the heritage area. In addition to including a detailed five-year budget that provides line items for both revenues and expenditures, it makes the following recommendations:

Funding Sources

Among the primary funding sources for the MHNHA are the following:

- Federal & State Grants & Appropriations
- Memberships & Sponsorships
- Fundraising Events
- In-Kind Services
- Fee-Based Services
- Income-Generating Programs, Merchandise & Facilities
- Special Project Grants

Performance Goals, Monitoring & Metrics: Key Goals

Performance information can also be used to help leverage future funding, grants, in-kind, or investment support, by demonstrating the ability of the local coordinating entity and partners to implement successful projects. The plan provides detailed measuring objectives for each of the broader performance goals summarized below:

- *Capacity.* Develop the local coordinating entity (MHHAA) into a highly-effective organization capable of implementing the management plan.
- *Education & Interpretation.* Conduct research, education and interpretation relating to MHNHA's primary themes as a means of documenting and telling the story of the area's unique heritage.

- *Preservation & Enhancement.* Preserve and enhance the heritage area's numerous natural and cultural resources, particularly those with a clear link to the MHNHA's primary themes.
- *Community Enhancement.* Encourage and assist in community enhancement and development of tourist "infrastructure."
- *Marketing & Tourism Development.* Market and promote the heritage area through a number of vehicles to further brand the heritage area and increase heritage tourism as a means of economic development.

Benchmarking

Another approach to measuring the success of the MHNHA over the coming years is to use other similar NHAs as benchmarks. NHAs to consider as benchmarks for MHNHA include the following:

- Atchafalaya NHA – Southern Louisiana (Literary Heritage)
- Muscle Shoals NHA - Northwest Alabama
- Mississippi Delta NHA – Western Mississippi
- Upper Housatonic Valley NHA (Literary Heritage)

Implementation Plan

This component of the management plan is another legislatively-required section, but also critical to success. Below are some of the key elements:

Organizational Structure

The Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance (MHHAA) is in charge of the MHNHA, whose offices are housed in Tupelo. The organizational structure also includes a Board of Directors of representatives having a stake in the MHNHA. The staff and committee structure is summarized below:

Staff Structure

- Executive Director
- Administrative Manager
- Heritage Technical Specialist
- Tourism & Marketing Specialist
- Historian in Residence, volunteers, interns

Committees

- Cultural Resources & Preservation
- Conservation & Recreation
- Fund Raising
- Community Investment
- Education & Interpretation
- Marketing & Public Relations



Implementation Matrix

The matrix provided in this section of the plan summarizes each goal and objective from the Strategies section of the management plan and provides the following information:

- Alpha-numeric designation
- Page number within the Strategies section of this plan for greater detail
- Party or parties responsible for implementation
- Timeframe (near, mid and long term)

Consistent with the Strategies implementation matrix is a five-year work plan. The three distinct time-frames of this plan are organized as follows:

- Near Term: Year 1
- Mid Term: Years 2-3
- Long Term: Years 4-5

Projects & Programs

The balance of this final plan section revisits many of the projects and programs described earlier in the plan, but it provides yet another layer of detail that will be helpful for actual plan implementation. In addition to providing more detail on the ideas for exploring a series of interpretive centers, it also offers a set of principles for historic site and community enhancement. The latter topic is split between how to enhance strip commercial corridors to offer better gateways into communities and principles for downtown revitalization. In fact, the appendices section of the management plan includes a sample historic site enhancement concept plan and a sample downtown revitalization concept plan.

Relationship Between the Plan Sections

It is noteworthy that, because of the long duration of the NHA management planning process, some of the plan's ideas have evolved over time. For example, the interpretive theme of architecture was considered a "primary" theme earlier in the planning, but was demoted to a "secondary" theme having much less emphasis by the time the Alternatives section was developed. Nevertheless, the section on the architecture theme within the Background Report has been left intact to document the process and how the plan evolved. In short, to the extent that there may be minor inconsistencies between the earlier documents, such as the Background Report, and the Management Plan (Strategies, Interpretive Plan, Business Plan, and Implementation Plan), *the Management Plan's content should be considered the final word.*

B. MEETING LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Below is a list of key requirements in bold-faced text from the federal legislation that created the MHNHA. Accompanying each of these legislative requirements is an explanation of how the management plan and the planning process have satisfied those requirements:

- (A) describe comprehensive policies, goals, strategies, and recommendations for telling the story of the heritage of the area covered by the Heritage Area and encouraging long-term resource protection, enhancement, interpretation, funding, management, and development of the Heritage Area;**

Goals and objectives for interpretation, preservation, management and related activities are contained in the management plan's Foundation Statement. More detailed strategies and recommendations elaborate on the Foundation Statement in the management plan's Strategies section, Interpretive Plan, Business Plan, and Implementation Plan.

- (B) include a description of actions and commitments that Federal, State, tribal, and local governments, private organizations, and citizens plan to take to protect, enhance, interpret, fund, manage, and develop the natural, historic, cultural, educational, scenic, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area;**

The roles and proposed actions of various MHNHA partners are described throughout the management plan where applicable. Furthermore, this specific issue is addressed in a concise and comprehensive manner in the management plan's Implementation Plan under the heading "Roles and Actions of MHNHA Partners."

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

Funding and economic development strategies are contained in the management plan's Business Plan. That plan section includes a five-year budget with both revenues and expenditures. It also features supporting text that describes those revenue sources and the nature of expenditures. The Business Plan also includes specific projects and downtown revitalization principles that will lead to economic development within the MHNHA. The downtown revitalization principles are further expanded upon through a concept plan prepared for a specific downtown as part of this MHNHA planning project.

- (D) include an inventory of the natural, historic, cultural, educational, scenic, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area relating to the stories and themes of the Heritage Area that should be protected, enhanced, interpreted, managed, funded, or developed;**

The management plan's Background Report section features an inventory of natural and cultural resources. The natural resources inventory is located in the appendices section and organized by sub-topics (biological resources, land resources, water resources, etc.), while the cultural resources are organized by interpretive themes and sub-themes. Text describing the inventories is also included in the Background Report under the heading "MHNHA Resources." It makes conclusions regarding the extent of various resources, their conditions, threats, and similar characteristics important to their preservation and interpretation. This section also addresses the topic of a Categorical Exclusion (CE) within the context of federal NEPA requirements for environmental review.

- (E) recommend policies and strategies for resource management, including the development of intergovernmental and interagency agreements to protect, enhance, interpret, fund, manage, and develop the natural, historic, cultural, educational, scenic, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area;**

Policies and strategies for resource management are found in the management plan's Strategies section. Specifically, the following goal and its supporting objectives and

detailed recommendations are most relevant - *Goal 3: Preserve and enhance the Heritage Area's numerous cultural and natural resources, particularly those with a clear link to the MHNHA's three primary themes.* The topic of intergovernmental and interagency agreements is addressed in the management plan's Implementation Plan under the heading "Roles and Actions of MHNHA Partners."

- (F) describe a program for implementation of the management plan, including: (i) performance goals; (ii) plans for resource protection, enhancement, interpretation, funding, management, and development; and (iii) specific commitments for implementation that have been made by the local coordinating entity or any Federal, State, tribal, or local government agency, organization, business, or individual;**

These topics are all addressed in the management plan's Business Plan and Implementation Plan. The Business Plan addresses performance goals within the section entitled "Performance Goals, Monitoring & Metrics." The more detailed implementation issues related to resource protection, enhancement, interpretation, funding, management, and development are addressed in the management plan's Implementation Plan and expand upon the broader concepts first introduced in the Strategies section. And finally, the commitments for implementation made by the local coordinating entity and any other entities and individuals are covered by the management plan's Implementation Plan under the heading "Roles and Actions of MHNHA Partners."

- (G) include an analysis of, and recommendations for, ways in which Federal, State, tribal, and local programs may best be coordinated (including the role of the National Park Service and other Federal agencies associated with the Heritage Area) to further the purposes of this section; and**

The required analysis and recommendations for ways that federal, state, tribal, and local programs may best be coordinated to further the efforts of the MHNHA are addressed by the management plan's Implementation Plan under the heading "Roles and Actions of MHNHA Partners."

- (H) include a business plan that: (i) describes the role, operation, financing, and functions of the local coordinating entity and of each of the major activities described in the management plan; and (ii) provides adequate assurances that the local coordinating entity has the partnerships and financial and other resources necessary to implement the management plan for the Heritage Area.**

The important topics of the coordinating entity's operations (role, financing, etc.) and major activities, as well as the financial resources to fund those efforts, are thoroughly addressed in the management plan's Business Plan. The approach to partnerships is addressed throughout the management plan where applicable, but most specifically in the Implementation Plan's section entitled "Roles and Actions of MHNHA Partners."

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Mississippi Hills
National Heritage Area

STRATEGIES SECTION

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

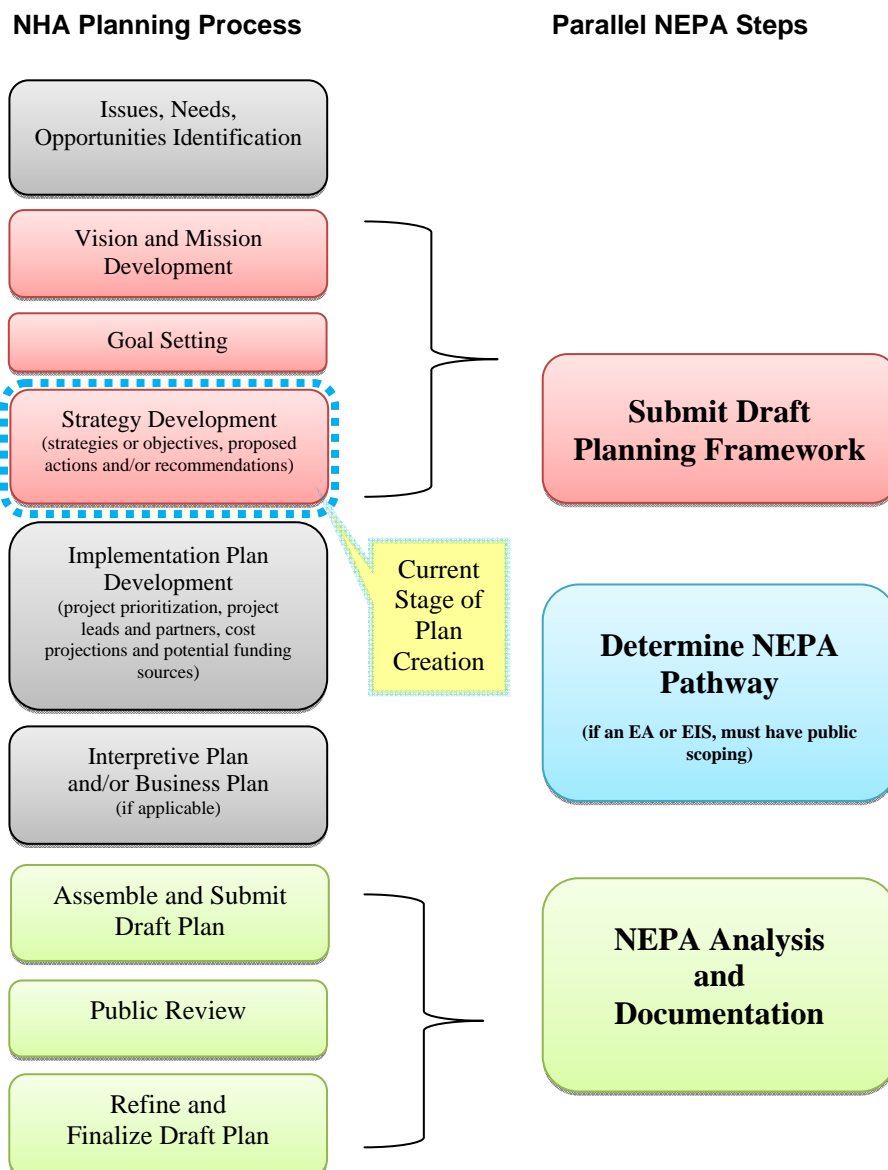
Revised:
February 9, 2014



A. Purpose & Approach to the Strategies

A1. STRATEGIES PURPOSE

This section of the Management Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA) elevates the research and planning conducted thus far to a more advanced level of detail. It builds upon the background work and analysis, as well as the Foundation Statement, to explain detailed strategies. As the graphic below from the “Draft NEPA Guide for NHA Management Plans” illustrates, this is the final step of the “Planning Framework.” The Framework is the composite of all of the Management Plan components created to date, including the Background Study and the Alternatives. Once the Draft Planning Framework is submitted to the National Park Service, a determination can be made as to whether a Categorical Exclusion (CE) or an Environmental Assessment (EA) will be needed.



Graphic Source:
“Draft NEPA Guide
for NHA
Management Plans,”
NPS, August 2012 –
Figure 2.1, page 4.

A2. STRATEGIES APPROACH

As noted previously, the Strategies section of the plan builds upon previous work and provides much greater specificity than previous plan sections. This Strategies section has been created using the following approach:

- 1) Utilize the previously-created Foundation Statement's five Goals and supporting Objectives as the framework for the Strategies.
- 2) Integrate the ideas conveyed in the previously-presented Concept Plan into the Foundation Statement's Goals and Objectives, and add more detailed ideas to expand upon the Foundation Statement.
- 3) Expand upon the other two steps above with additional new ideas to complete the Strategies component of this Management Plan



The Public Workshop utilized to help create the Task 3.0 Alternatives and Concept Plan was pivotal in generating ideas for this Strategies section of the MHNHA Management Plan. Above is one of the four break-out sessions organized by the NHA's key interpretive themes.

B. Strategies

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 MHHA, and to identify and groom potential future leaders.

The MHHA will take advantage of available useful programs rather than attempting to do their own in-house training. However, an occasional *MHHA-sponsored workshop* for board and committee members will be employed as needed to address issues specific to the MHNHA. Likewise, an *annual retreat* for board members (and perhaps committee members) will also be conducted to discuss issues that typical meetings do not address, including establishing yearly work plans and reviewing work accomplished. Other strategies will include the following:

- Continue membership in the Alliance of National Heritage Areas (ANHA) to provide networking opportunities with other NHAs and to benefit from the various forms of technical information and support that the ANHA provides. Full membership was recently decreased to \$2,500 annually, while Associate levels are \$500 annually. The MHHA is currently at the Associate level, but will consider full membership in the future if it is determined worth the cost.



The ANHA provides technical support to NHAs and offers a variety of membership levels at various price points.

- Send the MHHA Director to regional and national conferences of the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP). If funding is available, some board members will also be sent. Because NTHP conferences feature concurrent educational sessions, there are usually multiple sessions relevant to heritage tourism.
- Provide training for board members, committee members and staff through workshop sessions. The Mississippi Center for Nonprofits, based in Jackson, offers a wide variety of training options (www.msnonprofits.org). While the heritage area's key universities, such as the University of Mississippi and Mississippi State University, lack formal programs/degrees in nonprofit management, they do offer occasional relevant courses. Also, relevant conferences and training offered by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History will also be leveraged.



The Mississippi Center for Nonprofits is an excellent resource for board and staff development.

- Utilize local leadership development programs of Chambers of Commerce. For example, the Tupelo Chamber of Commerce sponsors the Jim Ingram Community Leadership Institute. This program is designed to enhance community leadership development and to enhance personal and professional growth. According to the Chamber's website, this two-year program consists of "one year of training and one year of community re-investment." Other chambers in other MHNHA communities offer similar programs, such as Leadership Lafayette, Leadership Lowndes County, Oktibbeha County Leadership FORUM, and Leadership Alcorn. Chambers such as Holly Springs' that currently lack such programs will be encouraged to start them. The MHHAA will need to discuss with the leaders of these various chambers whether the MHHAA would need to formally join each chamber to participate in its programs. If so, the programs will be used by individual MHHAA board members, depending upon their individual memberships.

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

While the federal legislation creating the MHNHA stipulates that the heritage area can receive up to \$1 million dollars annually for a ten-year period, the most recent average funding allocations for all NHAs has been much lower (closer to \$250,000 to \$300,000). The following strategies will be considered to achieve this objective:

- Continue the current MHHAA membership program for area Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVBs) in which they pay annual dues to achieve the highest level of benefits. The current program seems to work well in which there is a three-tiered membership structure for CVBs that is based upon their annual tourism-generated tax revenue as calculated by the State. This structure includes the following: Tier 1 - \$10,000; Tier 2 - \$5,000; and Tier 3 - \$1,000. Members in all three categories have voting privileges on the Board of Directors. At present, there are only members representing Tiers 1 and 2, so a push should be made to recruit some Tier 3 members. There is also a \$500 non-voting membership category.
- Establish an MHHAA membership program for individuals. An example from the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area is the following membership structure: Individual & Senior - \$25; Family - \$45; Supporting - \$75; Premium - \$125; Patron - \$250; Benefactor - \$500. Membership in the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition (an NHA in Akron, Ohio) is very similar, with membership options ranging between the Student and Senior levels as \$10 annually to Partner levels at \$100 annually. Benefits for membership in the Rivers of Steel NHA include: personalized membership card, 10% discount at their retail shop (discount valid on up to 4 tour tickets), e-mail updates, free admission to exhibits, invitations to member-only events and programming, supporting Members and above receive two complimentary Hard Hat Tour tickets. The MHNHA will need to further develop out in order for MHHAA membership to provide comparable benefits to its members.
- Pursue corporate sponsorships. There are many examples of NHAs that have been successful in securing sponsorships from area corporations, and such sponsorships can amount to substantial funding. As one example, the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition has two levels of "Canal Trailblazers." At the highest level of sponsorship is the "Platinum Level" at \$5,000 annually, while the regular level is at \$2,500 annually. One likely corporate sponsor for the MHNHA

would be the Toyota Motor Corporation given their significant investment in Blue Springs. In fact, they will be approached about a much more substantial sponsorship level than the \$2,500 and \$5,000 examples above, particularly since heritage areas encourage driving.



The Toyota Motor Corporation's investment into a manufacturing plant in Blue Springs has had a major economic impact on the area. They will be approached about a potential corporate sponsorship of the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area.

- Continue to pursue grants from various relevant programs. The MHAA has already exhibited a strong track record in securing grants even before it secured NHA status. Examples include funding secured from the CREATE Foundation based in Tupelo, the U.S. Forest Service, the University of Mississippi, the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), and similar entities for conducting research, planning and consensus building that led to the heritage area's establishment. Because of the need to secure non-federal dollars to match the federal dollars already coming from the National Park Service (NPS), State, regional and private foundations will be targeted.
- Utilize local universities and colleges for in-kind services to match grants. The University of Mississippi offers bachelor's, master's and doctorate degrees in History. The University's Center for the Study of Southern Culture also offers degrees in Southern Studies. Likewise, Mississippi State University offers bachelors and masters degrees in History. While Rust College does not offer history degrees, it does have a Division of Social Sciences, and the Mississippi University for Women offers a bachelors degree in History. Most of these same schools also offer programs and/or degrees in other issues related to heritage areas, such as marketing, business, and political science. Because some of these programs encourage hands-on experience gained through project work, there will be plenty of opportunities for student projects for the MHNHA that could also meet the in-kind service requirements for matching grants.
- Conduct events for both promotion and financial sustainability. Events are useful for a range of reasons. Not only can they raise awareness of the MHAA's mission and activities, but events can also be useful for raising money. With regard to the MHAA's potential sponsorship of

major outdoor “special events,” such as concerts and festivals, they might initially be too much of a distraction and energy drain compared to the benefits derived. However, as staff capacity grows in time, these types of events might be worthwhile endeavors. In the meantime, smaller “fundraising events” held just a few times a year and entailing a dinner party type event with an entertainment component might be the most viable option. This type of event could target key stakeholders (including business leaders and public officials), have a substantial ticket cost, and encourage donations as part of the event. There are existing models to borrow from, including various historic preservation and conservation non-profit entities in the state and region.

- Offer fee-based services to provide technical expertise and generate revenue. If in-house staff (including college interns) or occasional consultant support can be added to the MHHA having expertise in preservation, interpretation, marketing, and tourism, the MHHA will contract with various stakeholder entities in the heritage area for projects. The MHHA can perform the work for less money than consultants, especially if it can utilize area college students for acquiring hands-on experience. A good model for this approach is the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition, which has a similar program. Their “Conservation Collaborations” program provides technical assistance and support to their partners and the partners compensate the Coalition for their work. That program generates between \$15,000 and \$40,000 annually for the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition.
- Establish income-generating programs that also further the MHHA’s mission. Although most of the heritage area’s programs will likely cost money, some might actually generate income. As one example, the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition’s annual program income budget is \$120,000 and consists of “health and wellness” walking programs, fishing derbies for inner-city school children, and canal clean-ups. Because of corporate sponsorships, they raise \$60,000 through these programs. They not only further the heritage area’s mission, but they also raise money.



The Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition's health and wellness program actually raises money.

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.

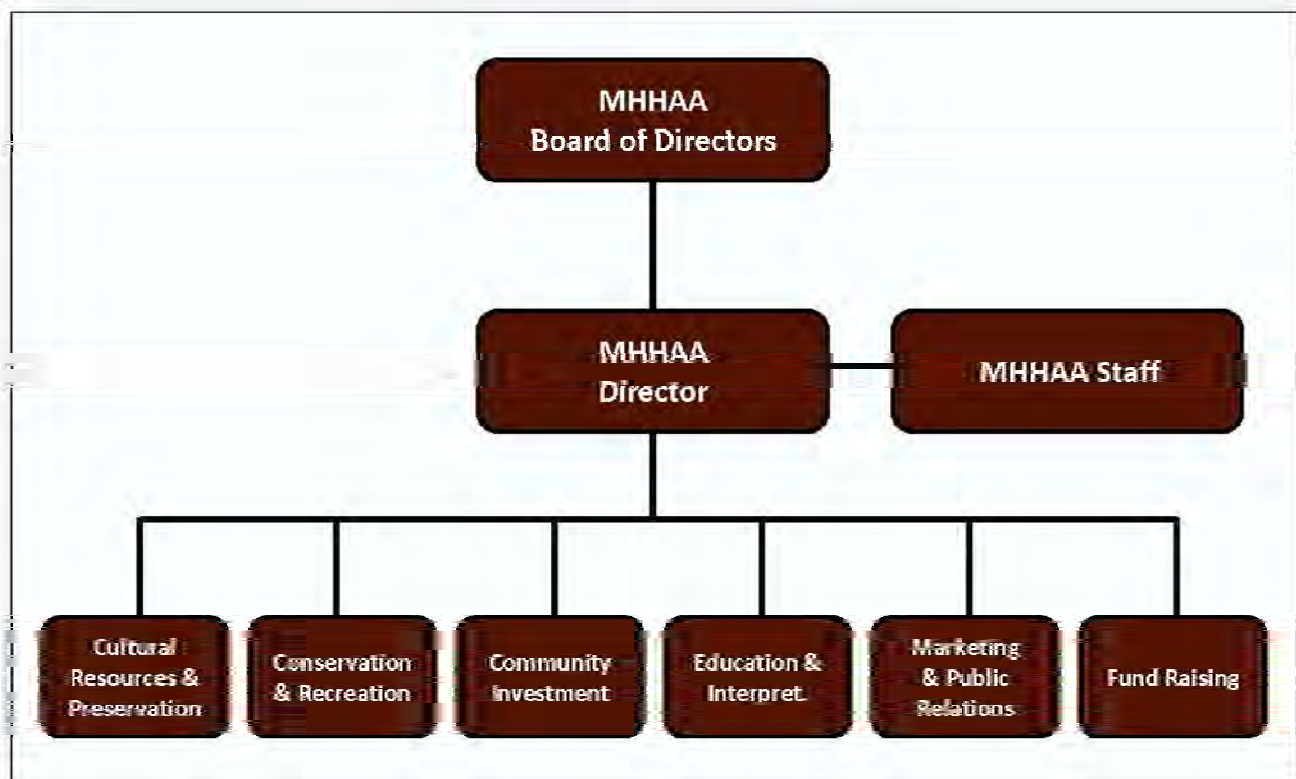
- Diversify the MHHA Board of Directors or Create a Supplemental Advisory Board. At present, the MHHA board is comprised solely of heritage area CVB directors. While this board composition provides plenty of representation and insights from the tourism facet of the MHNHA, it neglects other important facets related to research, interpretation, preservation, marketing, business, fund-raising, and similar heritage area functions. Depending upon what the current board finds most appropriate, one of the following two approaches will be pursued:

- *Diversify the Current Board Structure:* This option requires that the organization's by-laws specify a variety of board member types similar to the way that Certified Local Government (CLG) programs require specific historic zoning commission members by member type (property owner, architect, historian, etc.). If the MHHAA decides to take this approach, it will specify the member types noted above.
 - *Create a Supplemental Advisory Council:* If there are reasons that compel the MHHAA to continue with the current board composition of CVB members, a supplemental Advisory Council will be created in accordance with Section 9.03: Advisory Council of the current bylaws. This council would not have voting authority, but would represent a broad range of expertise and insights to fill the void that a CVB-only board would create.
 - Insure Full Participation of Board Members.
To address the issue of members who have not been active enough, the adopted bylaws Section 6:10: Attendance, which allows the Board to remove a member who has missed three consecutive meetings without a valid excuse, will be considered. Removal of any board members requires a two-thirds vote of the members in favor of the vote to remove such member.
-
- It is critical that board members attend most board meetings.*
- Create working committees to expand involvement in the MHNHA and to achieve key tasks.
Many organizations similar to the MHHAA utilize a series of committees to help implement their objectives and to broaden the range of individuals involved with the entity. Committee members do not need to be limited to board members. An example is the National Main Street Center's downtown revitalization program in which committees are based upon the "Four Point Approach" of organization, design, economic restructuring, and promotion. Six distinct committees will be established for the MHNHA. Some of those committees will assist with a particular function of the heritage area, while others will address a specific topic. Below is a list of each proposed committee (see the Implementation Plan for detailed descriptions):
 - The Cultural Resources & Preservation Committee
 - The Conservation & Recreation Committee
 - The Community Investment Committee
 - The Education & Interpretation Committee
 - The Marketing & Public Relations Committee
 - The Fund-Raising Committee
 - Leverage existing relevant organizations. There are numerous existing organizations within the MHNHA that have strong relevance to the MHHAA's mission. They already exist, they have supporting members, and they can be mobilized to support the MHNHA. They include the area's CVBs, local preservation organizations, local governments, and academic institutions.

Also, living history groups such as Civil War reenactors are another group to leverage. Other important groups include environmental and outdoor recreational entities such as those listed previously, local school districts and private schools, universities and community colleges, and economic development groups such as Main Street programs.



Existing groups in the MHNHA can be leveraged to further interpretation efforts, including Civil War reenactors.



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.

- Establish a designation system for sites, attractions and events that are deemed “visitor-ready.”
The intent of this program is to promote sites, attractions and events that meet a minimum standard based upon best practices so that visitors to the MHNHA are not underwhelmed by sites, attractions and events that fail to meet their expectations. Standards to determine visitor readiness will address the following issues: sufficient wayfinding, parking, bathrooms, standard days/hours of operation, physical maintenance of the site, historic authenticity and integrity, and accurate and

effective interpretation. Sites, attractions and events that meet the adopted standards will be officially deemed “visitor ready” and will receive full promotion benefits from the MHHAA.

- Establish a designation system for sites, attractions and events that are deemed “emerging.” This program will be intended for sites, attractions and events not yet deemed “visitor ready” per the best practices standards outlined above, but whose operators seek to achieve such status. To avoid failing to meet visitor expectations and potentially harming the MHNHA brand, emerging sites, attractions and events will not be promoted by the MHNHA. However, technical assistance will be provided to them by the MHHAA to help them ultimately achieve visitor ready status. Grant funding will also be sought by the MHHAA for such sites.

See this plan’s Implementation Plan for details on a committee to apply standards to designate sites.

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.

A great deal of promotional activity is already occurring, particularly through the MHHAA’s website. The following steps will occur:

- Integrate MHNHA logo into the marketing of individual sites, attractions and events. Although it will be limited to use only by sites, attractions and events designated by the MHHAA as being “visitor ready,” the existing logo will be used in numerous ways. It will be used for wayfinding signage, and it will be integrated into the marketing materials and websites of sites, attractions and events. Use of the logo will require formal approval by the MHHAA to insure that sites, attractions and events of inferior quality do not degrade the MHNHA brand.



The MHNHA is fortunate to have a highly-effective and attractive logo. It is simple, yet colorful and appealing. It is also easy to instantly identify, which is critical when viewed at a distance.

- Revise the MHNHA website. The current website has many positive attributes, including being well organized, containing useful information, and having a high-quality graphic appearance. However, the interpretive themes that it reflects are slightly inconsistent with those recommended in this Management Plan. Those currently on the website include: African-American Heritage, the Civil War, the Arts (music and literature), and Architecture. While the first three noted are consistent with this plan, the Architecture theme has been demoted slightly to become a secondary theme rather than a primary theme. Also, the new primary theme of Native-American Heritage has now been suggested in this plan. Therefore, the MHNHA website will be revised accordingly, including organizing the website’s suggested trip itineraries, which are theme-based, to be consistent with this plan’s theme structure.

- Create and distribute brochures for the MHNHA. The MHHAA has already created an excellent brochure giving a general overview of the heritage area, and much of the text and graphics needed for additional brochures is already contained on the MHNHA website. Other components might be borrowed or adapted from this plan, such as theme-based tour maps. Four supplemental brochures will be created, each focusing on one of the four primary themes of the heritage area. Once developed, they will be provided in brochure racks at all visitors' centers, at partner sites, and at relevant hotels and restaurants to the extent funding to do so is available. A digital version of each brochure will also be downloadable on the MHNHA website.
- Secure gateway signage for the MHNHA at key transportation gateways into the heritage area. This simple signage as used by other NHAs can be produced by the state highway department and it is typically brown in color to reflect a cultural site. It might also utilize the NPS logo, as well as the existing MHNHA logo. Such signage will definitely be placed at the north and south gateway points along I-55, at both ends of Highways 78 and 82 into the MHNHA. It was just recently placed by the NPS at both ends of the Natchez Trace as it enters the MHNHA. Where applicable, such signs will also indicate the first related stop for the MHNHA, such as any interpretive centers or attractions.



New gateway "welcome" sign for the MHNHA on the Natchez Trace Parkway

- Continue the development of positive relationships with local media and the generation of regular press releases about the MHNHA. Whenever any positive newsworthy occurrences avail themselves, the MHHAA staff will continue to prepare press releases. After doing this with enough frequency, the staff will develop (if it has not already) a feel for what types of news stories will be covered by certain media outlets and those that will not. Among the media outlets to continue to utilize are newspapers, television and radio stations, newsletters of various organizations, and internet-based media.
- Make regular presentations about the MHNHA both within the NHA and outside of it. This management planning process has resulted in the creation of several different PowerPoint presentations that can either be used "as are" or can be adapted as needed. Within the heritage area, staff and leadership from the MHHAA will make presentations to promote the heritage area to schools, fraternal organizations (Elks, Masons, Rotary, etc.), local governments, and similar groups. Beyond the MHNHA, presentations will be made at tourism/preservation conferences.

- Utilize social media to garner attention for the MHNHA. The MHHAA is already utilizing Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest. Additional sources might be considered, such as Linked-In. Being effective in the use of social media requires both knowledge of the medium and frequent interaction. If the MHHAA staff lacks expertise to utilize social media, either a Board member or an issue-based

Committee member will be asked to help with this effort.



While there are numerous social media outlets that can be utilized, only a couple are likely worth the effort.

- Develop strong relationships with travel writers. Travel writers prepare articles for magazines and other publications related to travel. Clearly, heritage tourism has a strong link to travel, and travel writers tend to focus particularly on places that are somehow unique and offer an authentic experience, depending upon the readers targeted. The MHHAA staff will utilize Travelwriters.com, a professional network of travel writers, editors and members of the public relations community. According to their website, "Travelwriters.com is based on a simple principle: to connect top-tier writers with editors, PR agencies, tourism professionals, CVBs and tour operators, nurturing the important link that so heavily influences the travel media." This resource and others will be leveraged to get the MHNHA out to the broader public nationwide. Another approach would be for the MHHAA staff to coordinate with the various CVBs to "Fam Tours" (familiarization tours) with travel writers and others.

Furthermore, given that literature is one of the key interpretive themes of the MHNHA, that theme will be linked to travel writers. One approach might be for the MHHAA to partner with the University of Mississippi to sponsor a conference either for travel writers or for literary-based travel. This approach could make the heritage area stand out as not just marketing itself to travel writers, but actually providing substantive discussion about literary heritage tourism and travel writing within the broader context of the MHNHA.

It is important that all promotional efforts be performed in close collaboration with the heritage area's other tourist entities, including the CVBs. Rather than duplicating efforts, it will supplement and reinforce current efforts. Promotional strategies will be spearheaded by the committee of heritage tourism representatives recommended previously under Objective 1-C (third bullet point).

Please see this plan's separate "Business Plan" element and the "Implementation Plan" element for more detail on ideas related to those issues.

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.

For additional detail on many of the topics covered by the objectives below, please see this Management Plan's supplemental Interpretive Plan.

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

As detailed in the Background Study of this Management Plan, there are four primary interpretive themes developed for the MHNHA: the Civil War, African-American Heritage, Native American Heritage, and the Arts (Music and Literature). Architecture is a secondary theme that relates to some of the primary themes. Each of these primary themes has a set of supporting sub-themes.

- Leverage the MHNHA's existing universities and colleges for conducting research into the MHNHA's interpretive themes. The University of Mississippi and Mississippi State University both offer a bachelor's degree in History, a master's degree in History, and a PhD in History. Furthermore, the University of Mississippi's Center for the Study of Southern Culture offers a master's degree in Southern Studies. While Rust College in Holly Springs does not have a history program, their Humanities Department does include a music program that could be involved with research into the music theme (part of the Arts) of the MHNHA. Likewise, the Mississippi University for Women (the "W") in Columbus offers a bachelor's degree in History. There are also programs in Public History at nearby University of North Alabama (UNA) in Florence and at Auburn University. All of these programs, among others across the country, offer a tremendous opportunity for the Heritage Area's themes to be researched. In particular, master's students needing a thesis topic will be encouraged to investigate topics relevant to the MHNHA.
- Pursue grants for eligible research projects relevant to the MHNHA's interpretive themes. There are numerous foundations that fund research on historic topics, and funding will be pursued for the MHNHA. Examples of funding entities include the following (see the Interpretive Plan for more detailed information on funding entities):
 - *National Endowment for the Humanities*
 - *American Historical Association*
 - *American Antiquarian Society*
 - *Lehrman History Scholars Summer Program*
 - *Phillips Fund Grants for Native American Research*

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.

There are multiple resources available to learn more about how to record oral histories. Just one example is the book entitled "The Oral History Workshop: Collect and Celebrate the Life Stories of Your Family and Friends" by Hart and Samson.

- Identify the topics to be documented through oral histories based upon the MHNHA's four interpretive themes and various sub-themes. Many of the Native American stories – both historic and lore - are orally-based and in need of recording. Perhaps the oral histories that are still most accessible are those associated with African American heritage and the Arts. Much of the African American heritage relates to the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, and many of those associated with the movement are still alive. Likewise, many people with a connection to the MHNHA's music and literature heritage can also be recorded.
- Consider an oral history program that is managed by college students, but conducted using area junior high and high school students. Since oral history documentation is an educational activity that can be performed by junior high, high school, and college students, it is recommended that all three categories of students collaborate on the research. As noted before, there are multiple universities and colleges within the heritage area with history programs. Working closely with the MHNHA based upon the four primary interpretive themes, college students can be charged with structuring an oral history recording program that is implemented by junior high and high school students.



Oral histories are a productive and interesting method of recording and conveying history.

While it is recognized that there are several potential obstacles to this concept, it is still worth pursuing. Because the heritage area covers 30 counties, numerous school districts will need to be approached about such a program. Some schools that are focused on a relatively narrow scope of curriculum and test scores to measure achievement may not have the flexibility to be involved with an oral history program. In such cases, college students might be used to conduct interviews rather than junior or high school students. Furthermore, the idea may not appeal to the area universities. Private schools will likely have more flexibility to accommodate an oral history program. Regardless of the challenges, it is a concept worthy of further exploration because of its potential benefits to research and interpretation for the heritage area.

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

- Work the MHNHA's four primary interpretive themes into the curriculum related to American History in the grade schools and junior high schools. Many school districts across the country place an emphasis on local history when learning about history in general. The MHNHA will work with the local school districts to create a curriculum for grade school and junior high students that teaches them the MHNHA's themes. According to the publication "2011 Mississippi Social Studies Framework," Mississippi history is taught in the 4th and 8th grades. Thus, the MHNHA's curriculum will be targeted to those grades. Once developed, these lesson

plans will be placed on the MHNHA website. At some point later, the heritage area can also develop lesson plans for environmental education. Similarly, the MHNHA can work with teachers to develop school tours or field trips as a part of their curriculum.

- Pursue hands-on experiences and field trips related to the MHNHA's interpretive themes for students. Assuming the teaching of the MHNHA's themes can occur as recommended above, area students will build upon that foundation of knowledge learned in the class room with more hands-on experiences. For example, they can travel to various historic sites in the MHNHA and witness (and even participate in) living history demonstrations. They might also participate in crafts and projects related to the MHNHA, such as flint-knapping or pottery making at a Native American site, or participating in camp life and military drills associated with the Civil War interpretive theme.



The MHNHA offers a wide range of potential destinations for school field trips.

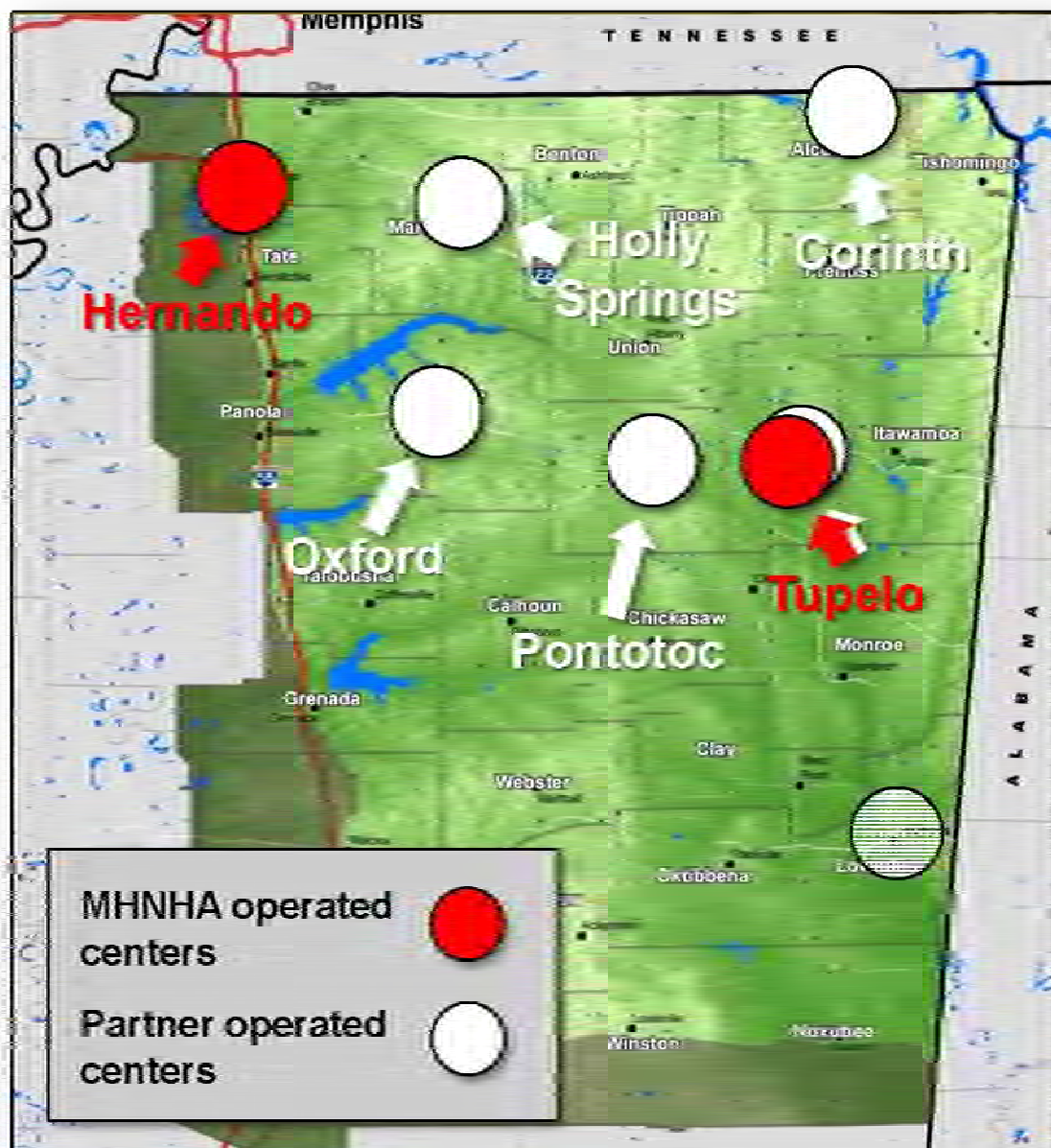
Objective 2-D: Explore the development of an interpretive center for the MHNHA.

Although this objective has existed since early in the management planning process for the MHNHA as part of this plan's Foundation Statement, it is recognized that the establishment of interpretive centers can be an ambitious and risky venture. In general terms, many interpretive centers across the country, including some associated with National Heritage Areas, have struggled financially and have even had to close their doors because of insufficient funding. While this trend should not be ignored, opportunities for success can still exist for some specific types of interpretive centers. As this plan's earlier Market Assessment concluded, there is clear demand for additional interpretive space for some of the MHNHA's primary interpretive themes – particularly Native American heritage. Much of the future success will depend upon a center's theme, its location, the existence of competing centers/attractions, its foundation of strategic planning, its organizational and funding structure, its marketing, and its substance. Thus, *potential new interpretive centers must be considered on a case-by-case basis.* It is beyond the scope of this Management Plan to include a feasibility study for any one particular interpretive center. **Rather than propose that the MHHAA will initiate one or more specific interpretive centers, this objective is to propose a process by which the MHHAA can thoughtfully explore the establishment of one or more centers, regardless of whether any centers ultimately come to fruition.**

Potential Concepts for Interpretive Centers

This Management Plan's Interpretive Plan and Business Plan will go into more detail on potential interpretive centers, but the following is a summary of the key ideas. The potential for interpretive centers served as the basis for the Management Plan's Alternatives that are typically developed for NHA management plans. In that section of this plan, it was proposed that a hybrid Alternative

combining “Alternative C: Thematic Multi-Anchor Interpretation” and “Alternative F: Centralized & Northwest Gateway Interpretation” be pursued for the MHNHA as the “Preferred Alternative.” This hybrid would *charge the MHNHA’s coordinating entity with exploring the development and operation the two interpretive centers featured in Alternative F* (northwest gateway center in Hernando and the main center in Tupelo), while the theme-specific interpretive centers featured in Alternative C would be the responsibility of MHNHA partners. *The MHNHA would function as a catalyst and technical supporter for the Alternative C theme-specific centers. The ultimate decision on whether to develop any of these potential interpretive centers will hinge upon the results of feasibility studies, which are beyond the scope of this management plan.* The map below illustrates the potential locations of the various potential interpretive centers, and each is also summarized in text below this map.



Note: The hash-marked circle at Columbus reflects the potential center interpreting the secondary theme of Architecture. It is an optional center that would be partner operated.

Below is a summary of the potential interpretive centers, which are explained in greater detail in this plan's Interpretive Plan.

- Potential MHNHA-Sponsored Interpretive Centers

Only two MHNHA-sponsored centers are suggested for further exploration, but both would provide a comprehensive and balanced interpretation of all of the heritage area's interpretive themes.

Main Interpretive Center – Tupelo

This center could feature either an expanded version of the existing small interpretive center that is currently part of the MHNHA's office on East Main Street or it could feature a new center located elsewhere in Tupelo.

Gateway Interpretive Center – Hernando

This center might be smaller than the one in Tupelo, but it's location on I-55 just south of Memphis would provide tremendous audience exposure to the heritage area. This section of I-55 experiences higher traffic counts than any other segment of roadway within the heritage area. Because Downtown Hernando is less than a mile from the interstate, it could be located there in an authentic historic downtown, and because this location overlaps geographically with the Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area (MDNHA), there may even be potential for a joint interpretive center.

- Potential Partner-Sponsored Interpretive Centers

These centers would only be viable if sufficient local interest and funding materializes, but each would be located where the greatest concentration of cultural resources exists for their particular interpretive theme, as follows:

Native American Heritage Interpretive Center – Pontotoc or Natchez Trace near Tupelo

If located in Pontotoc, this center would leverage the existing museum already found in the downtown post office building. Also, the Chickasaw Nation has proposed building their own interpretive center to be located on the Natchez Trace near Tupelo. If that idea materializes, perhaps it could be adapted to also interpret the broader Native American story for the MHNHA.

African American Heritage Interpretive Center – Holly Springs

This center would tell the story of Ida B. Wells, Rust College, and other African American personalities, resources and stories in Holly Springs and throughout the heritage area. An ideal location would be on the downtown square to help leverage economic spin-off benefits.

Civil War Interpretive Center – Corinth

While there is rich Civil War history throughout the heritage area, Corinth has the greatest single concentration, including an extensive system of earthworks. It is also the closest community to Shiloh and its many visitors. If space within the NPS-operated Corinth Civil War Interpretive Center cannot be secured to interpret the MHNHA, another possibility might be at the NPS-owned Curlee House in Downtown Corinth.

Arts Interpretive Center: Music – Tupelo

As the birthplace of Elvis Presley, Tupelo already draws thousands of music fans annually.

Possibilities to be explored for this center might include interpreting this theme within the MHNHA's main interpretive center in Tupelo, or perhaps even doing so at the Elvis Presley Birthplace & Museum.

Arts Interpretive Center: Literature – Oxford

In cooperation with the University of Mississippi, this center might be able to benefit from the university's related collections. A "storefront" location at the downtown public square could be a great compliment to that area's many businesses, including the highly-acclaimed bookstores.



The only secondary theme of the MHNHA is architecture. Given the rich architectural tradition of Columbus, that might be an appropriate location if an interpretive center were to be included for that interpretive theme as well.

It is critical to keep in mind that, with regard to the concept of partnering with any of the existing or proposed attractions that are owned and operated by other entities, their willingness participate will obviously be necessary. Also, as noted elsewhere, this Management Plan is not proposing the development of interpretive centers, but – instead – *the exploration of such centers through feasibility studies.* Finally, *National Heritage Areas cannot acquire property using federal NHA funding* and any development that might significantly impact the environment would require *environmental review per NEPA* and other related environmental regulations.

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.

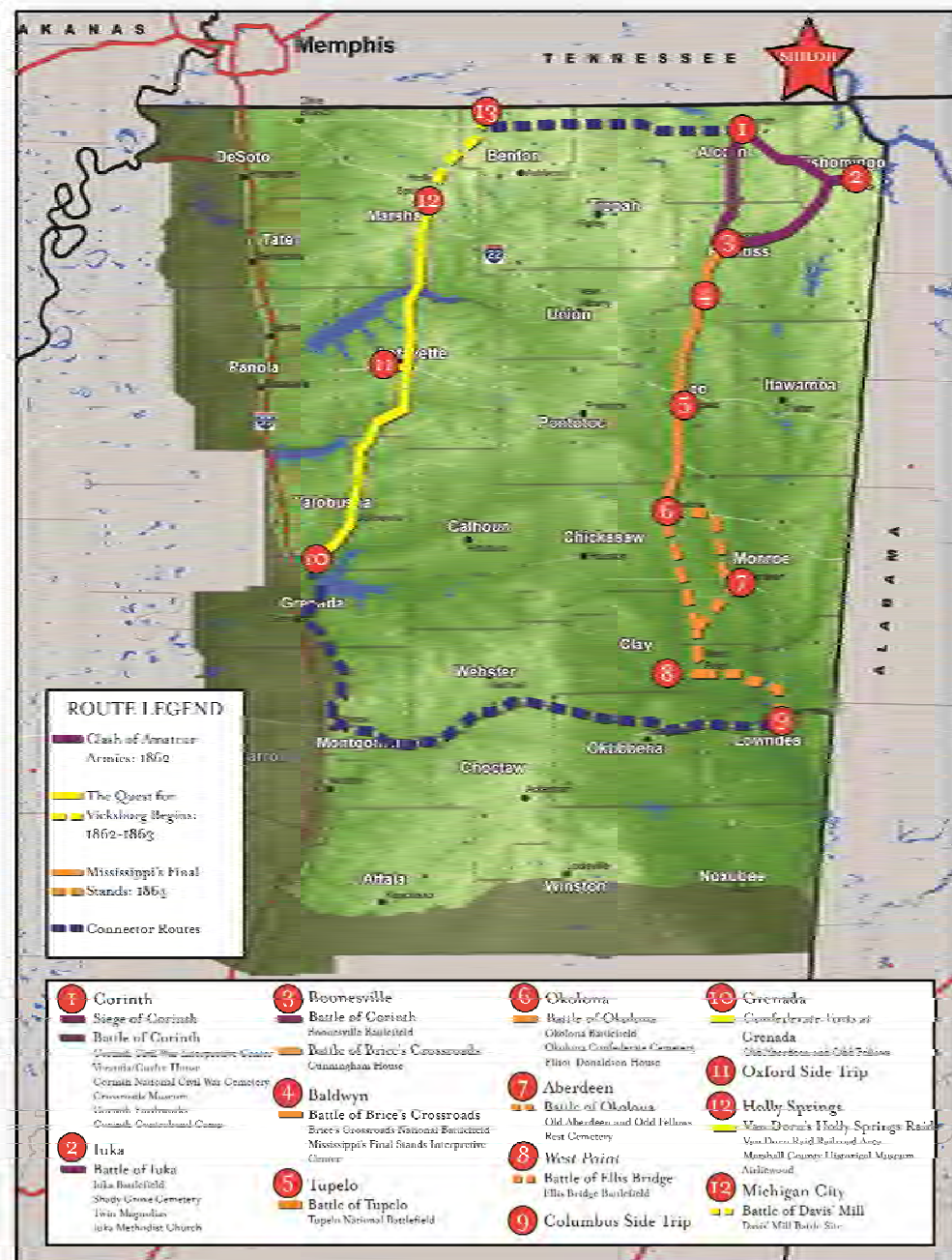
- Encourage the development of theme-based tours at the community level where they currently do not exist, but could exist. Many of the MHNHA's larger communities and those with particularly rich collections of architecture, such as Columbus, Oxford, and Aberdeen, already have web-based and printed tour brochures highlighting their local history and architecture. Other communities, however, lack such interpretive tools. Okolona, for example, has an especially strong Civil War history. While information on the community's history can be accessed on the Chamber of Commerce's website, they are currently in

need of a more formalized tour brochure.



Aberdeen's rich architecture not only warrants a pilgrimage tour of buildings, but it has also prompted the creation of a tour brochure.

- Develop a series of driving tours tied to the MHNHA's primary interpretive themes. For maps of this Management Plan's various proposed tours, please see the Interpretive Plan. However, below is just one example. This map for the Civil War theme has been broken up into multiple sub-tours that are associated with individual military campaigns, as well as separate routes connecting those sub-tours. Since the MHNHA's existing website already features a series of excellent theme-based trip "itineraries," it will be important to coordinate the website's existing itineraries with the proposed tour routes in the Interpretive Plan. That coordination may include adapting the existing itineraries, as well as creating new ones.



This proposed Civil War Tour for the MHNHA is organized around three key military campaigns, and it features two east-west "connector routes."

- Work to expand the fledgling Roots of American Music Trail. There is the opportunity of greatly increasing the marketing exposure and tourism potential of the region by designating a tour route focused on the Roots of American music that might incorporate Tupelo. This idea stems from an effort sponsored by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) and the Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments. Their idea features a tourism trail linking Nashville and Muscle Shoals, Alabama, along the Natchez Trace Parkway. However, it does not extend west to Memphis via Tupelo, as perhaps it should. Formalization of a broader triangle routing, development of interpretive sites and packages, marketing strategies, and recruitment of tour companies would establish a new format. This tour could form a triangle linking Nashville, Muscle Shoals, Tupelo and Memphis. The tour would be marketed through bus tour companies, but also for self-driving, biking, and motorcyclists. The advantage of such an effort, despite the fact that much of the tour is located outside of the MHNHA, is that it leverages a much larger and broader audience with national and international exposure. This concept is now moving forward for the Nashville to Muscle Shoals segment, and cell phone-based interpretation is in the process of being created.
- Utilize a variety of media for interpretation of theme-based tours.

Maps & Brochures – Maps and brochures are a very traditional approach to interpreting theme-based tours, but they are still quite effective regardless of more recent technological advances in interpretation. Most brochures for tour routes include a map. Such maps typically use symbols to identify sites on a particular map, and those symbols are coordinated with associated text about the sites within the brochure. Brochures of this type for the tour routes proposed above will be available on the MHNHA's website in a digital format that can be accessed by computers and cell phones, as well as in a downloadable format (PDF) that can then be printed and used as a hard copy.

At present, the MHNHA website features a series of "Itineraries," which includes American Cultural Icons, The March to Freedom (civil rights), Crossroads of the Confederacy, Southern Architecture, Outdoor Recreation, and Educational Heritage. While these are excellent itineraries, they are not organized consistently with the recommended four primary interpretive themes and they do not feature downloadable brochures. Therefore, the website and interpretive tools will be revised to be consistent with this plan.

Telecommunications Tools – There are a variety of telecommunications technologies that can be used for interpretation as well. A younger audience, in particular, uses such technology. Examples of telecommunications tools that will be considered for the thematic tours include the following:

- Cell Phone Audio Interpretation: One approach is to provide a call-in phone number on either a tour brochure or a marker at the site that is being interpreted.
- Cell Phone Apps: Applications software, also known as an application or an "app," is computer software designed to help the user to perform specific tasks. Apps can be free, GPS-enabled, and provide multimedia tours of historic areas via Smartphones.
- QR Codes: QR codes, which is an abbreviation for "Quick Response Codes," is the trademark

for a type of matrix barcode (or two-dimensional code). For historic interpretation, QR codes are linked to telecommunications resources that provide the same type of interpretive experiences (audio and video) described above for apps.

As one example of an NHA utilizing telecommunications, the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition is currently working with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation on the creation of a “Virtual Visitors Center” accessible on the internet and via Smartphones. Many of their partners, including Cuyahoga Valley National Park, are excited about this project since they believe it will save money and resources by allowing less reliance on paper brochures. *See this plan’s Interpretive Plan for more detail on telecommunications tools.*

Interpretive Exhibits

Two key types of exhibits for the MHNHA will include wayside exhibits and interpretive center exhibits. Wayside exhibits typically consist of a vertical, horizontal or angled two-dimensional panel that combines text and graphics to tell a story. Such exhibits are made durably to withstand the elements, and they are intended primarily to be read by a person standing in front of it, although they can sometimes be read by an individual in a vehicle parked extremely close to the exhibit. Most such exhibits made today are modeled after those utilized by the National Park Service (NPS).



Outdoor interpretive wayside exhibits should provide a hierarchy of information and high-quality graphics.

In designing exhibits for interpretive centers, it is important that potential new centers utilize “best practices” for exhibit design. Good exhibits do not need to rely heavily on the existence of artifacts, as the most important factor is that information and stories are conveyed in a simple but engaging manner. When possible, technology will be employed to help tell the stories. Such technology will be both visual and audio-based. The possibilities of computer-generated techniques are virtually endless.

Please see this plan’s Interpretive Plan for more detail on interpretive exhibits.

- Develop a series of brochures for the MHNHA. As described in greater detail in this document’s Interpretive Plan, the heritage area will have – among others - the following two types of brochures:
 - *MHNHA general brochure:* This brochure will provide an overview of the heritage area, including a general summary of the four primary themes and a map.
 - *Theme-based brochures:* These four theme-based brochures will feature information on the respective themes, as well as a map for a driving tour tied to the theme.

These brochures will include a website address for additional information, and they will be available in both hard copy format and a PDF digital format for downloading off of the MHNHA's website.

- Develop a “coffee table” type book for the MHNHA. The local historic society of many communities will produce a hardbound book having strong graphics to highlight the history and remaining cultural resources of the particular community. Such an approach would be useful to the MHNHA not only to convey the themes and stories more widely, but also as a means of fund raising for the heritage area. To create such a book, the MHNHA will be the sponsoring organization and partner with one of the area's universities to draft the text and secure historic photographs and similar graphics. A local photographer will also be needed to photograph existing resources. As with most concepts in this plan, this idea will be contingent upon available funding.
- Program the MHNHA with living history demonstrations at various key sites. The following demonstration types might occur at the following sites tied to the MHNHA's four primary interpretive themes:

Native American demonstrations: Flint-knapping, food preparation, pottery making, music, basket making, and ceremonial dancing activities should occur at sites such as the various mound sites along the Natchez Trace Parkway and any potential new Native American Heritage interpretive center.



Many Native American living history demonstrations are particularly appealing to children, such as basket weaving.

Civil War demonstrations: Civil War demonstrations (camp life, firing long arms and artillery, etc.) already occur at Corinth and should occur more frequently at other key sites in the MHNHA, such as Brice's Crossroads, Tupelo, Okolona, and Iuka. Of course, aggressive promotion of such demonstrations will be the key to their success, and they should generally be coordinated with other activities that would draw attendees on their own.

Music demonstrations: Activities related to song writing, playing music, and recording music should occur at a Music interpretive center if one should be established. Such programs could be modeled after those of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland and similar museums.

- Program the MHNHA with living history demonstrations at various events. The types of demonstrations described above could also be organized to occur at various special events throughout the NHA. Because of the need to sometimes bring history to the audience, rather than audiences being attracted to a particular site, MHNHA-sponsored demonstrations will be targeted to those events attracting the largest audiences, particularly those having a theme related to the heritage area. The MHNHA may need to compensate participants for their expenses in at least some instances.

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.

• Tourism-ready standards will be based on the following "best practices" considerations:

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



The Strawberry Plains Audubon Center at Holly Springs is an example of a clearly "tourist ready" site in the MHNHA.

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

- Tourism-ready standards will initially be applied by a special committee of representatives from other NHAs, and then applied by a local committee of the MHHA. Potential committee

members for the initial round of evaluations might consist of staff from other nearby NHAs, such as the Tennessee Civil War NHA, the Mississippi Hills NHA, and the Mississippi Delta NHA. Such a group will provide greater objectivity and provide some “political cover.” Once the initial round of evaluations occurs by this committee, the locally-based ongoing committee for this function might consist of CVB/tourism representatives, local historians and preservationists, and MHHA representatives. For more detail on these committees, please see this plan’s supporting Implementation Plan.

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

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

As indicated above, while both tourist-ready and emerging sites might be eligible for MHNHA technical assistance and grants – to the extent that it might be available, the emerging sites are generally considered to be in greater need. Thus, they will be given the top priority when the MHHA provides assistance and pursues grants for such sites. Potential agencies for the MHHA to collaborate with might include local planning and economic development agencies, chambers of commerce, convention and visitors bureaus, regional planning and development districts, Main Street programs, the area’s universities, the State (including the transportation, preservation and tourism agencies), federal agencies (Appalachian Regional Commission, Tennessee Valley Authority, US Department of Housing and Urban Development, US Economic Development Administration, etc.), and area non-profits such as CREATE. *A key needed area of assistance for many sites is strategic planning.*

- Technical Assistance: Technical assistance will be needed for a variety of issues, including historic resources preservation, site enhancement, curatorial services, interpretation, and marketing. This plan’s Business Plan identifies potential funding sources for funding to hire individuals with technical expertise on an as-needed basis. Also, although the MHHA staff will remain relatively small, staff members will be able to provide at least some level of technical assistance to partner sites and attractions needing help.

- Grants: In general, emerging sites will be given priority over the other partner sites that have already “arrived” with respect to tourist readiness. However, that general principle does not mean that meritorious projects of tourist-ready partners will not also be considered. When pursuing grants on behalf of the heritage area’s various partners, the following criteria will be applied by the MHHA in determining which ones to assist:
 - *Extent of Need*: The pursuit of grants should be limited to applicants who truly need it to achieve their missions.
 - *Benefits to the MHNHA*: Although grant funding might benefit a particular applicant, that does not mean it will be significantly beneficial to the heritage area. Projects that relate directly to the MHNHA’s four primary interpretive themes will be considered particularly beneficial. One litmus test for this consideration is “How does this project relate to the MHNHA Mission Statement?” Furthermore, projects considered for funding will be measured against this plan’s stated goals and objectives to insure consistency as another means of determining the project’s likely benefits to the MHNHA.
 - *Amount of Match & Leveraging*: In general, potential grant applicants who can match the sought funding with the highest percentage of match funding will be given a higher level of consideration for assistance. In fact, many grant programs will have specific match requirements. Likewise, leveraging other funding sources will be viewed favorably. While cash should be at least part of the potential applicant’s match, in-kind services should also be considered.
 - *Capability of the Prospective Grantee*: This consideration relates to the abilities of the entity seeking the MHHA’s assistance in pursuing funding. Partners with sufficient staffing to successfully implement the proposed project and with a positive track record on similar projects will be given the highest consideration for assistance in pursuing grants.

It is anticipated that most grant funding for MHNHA partners will come from other sources. However, to the extent that the MHHA might at some point be in a position to offer grant funding directly, grants will not be given for operational costs of sites or the acquisition of property. While it may not need to be completely precluded, funding of physical improvements should be allowed only in special cases, if at all. Any grant program of the MHHA will require a clear and systematic approach, including annual funding cycles, an application for those seeking funding, and the objective application of the criteria, such as those listed above. It will also require project monitoring, compliance, reporting, and similar activities. A grants manager may also be needed who is familiar with federal regulations such as NEPA and Section 106, matching requirements, and reporting requirements.

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

Conservation easements restrict the development of natural lands, while allowing the private owners to maintain ownership and use of the land. Land trusts are the entities that typically enter

an agreement with the subject property owner and enforce the easement. The Mississippi Land Trust (MLT) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) conservation entity with the mission of preserving open space throughout Mississippi. While there are other land trusts in the state that focus on specific areas, such as the coast and the southeast, no such groups exist specifically for the northeast “Hill” country. The MLT presently has only a few easements within the MHNHA, as most are concentrated in the Delta and just east and south of the Delta. It is noteworthy that *NHAs cannot acquire an interest in real estate using federal funding and have no land use and development regulatory authority*, but they can work with other groups as a catalyst to encourage easements.

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



Although the MLT has been most active in the state’s Delta region, there is strong potential to preserve more land within the MHNHA.

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

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

Facade easements function similarly to conservation easements. Instead of protecting land, however, they protect buildings. As in the case of conservation easements, there are often federal tax incentives available for those properties listed on (or eligible for) the National Register of Historic Places. This type of easement is an agreement between a willing owner and a willing easement-holding entity to preserve a historic building. Most facade easements focus on the building’s exterior, but, if written to do so, they can also protect interiors. The Mississippi Heritage Trust is one potential candidate for accepting facade easements.



The R.C. Brinkley House in Iuka was used as a headquarters by both Union generals Grant and Rosecrans. It would be a good candidate for a conservation easement if the owner is willing.

The MHHA will build a strong working relationship with the Mississippi Heritage Trust, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, and similar groups to continually look for façade easement opportunities. The MHHA will promote the existence of easements as a preservation tool, including their many benefits. To the extent that sufficient staffing capacity will exist, it will also help easement-accepting entities identify candidate properties and serve as a liaison between such groups and property owners interested in pursuing a façade easement. It is noteworthy that organizations such as the Mississippi Land Trust can also accept façade easements for buildings that are part of a land conservation easement property if they so desire.

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

While there are several areas whereby the MHHA can provide assistance or seek assistance from others, most can be categorized as preservation policies, community enhancement policies, and “other” types of policies. A summary of such policies is provided below, but more detail is provided in this Management Plan’s Implementation Plan.

- Preservation Policies

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

- *Open Space Planning* – Planning to conserve natural open space can be an important approach to preserving environmentally sensitive resources and open space in general, as well as to avoid fiscally-inefficient sprawl. Such planning can be implemented by adjusting zoning, encouraging conservation easements, and developing connected open space systems such as through greenways. The MHHA can also promote federal tax incentives for conservation easements.

- *Historic Zoning* – Although there are several communities within the MHNHA that have a comprehensive historic preservation program (historic resource inventories, locally-designated historic districts, and historic zoning), others within the heritage area will be encouraged to pursue a preservation program. As part of such a program, historic zoning would regulate demolitions, building alterations, building relocations, and new infill development within historic downtowns and neighborhoods. While NHAs have no regulatory authority related to local land use and development, they can provide consultation to local governments that have such powers.

- *Preservation Incentives* – Because regulations need to be balanced with incentives for successful preservation, the MHHA will provide assistance to help local governments identify incentives for preservation. One of the most common examples of local-level incentives is property tax abatements in which a property’s assessed value is frozen for a specific amount of time so that the property’s assessed value does not go up after a building rehabilitation. The MHHA will also promote federal and state tax credits for the rehabilitation of historic buildings.

- Community Enhancement Policies

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

- *Corridor Planning & Zoning* – A key threat to the effective branding of the MHNHA is the many unattractive corridors connecting communities and key attractions. Almost all of the larger communities have “gateways” featuring strip commercial development corridors lined with large competing signs, little landscaping, no sidewalks, and expansive parking lots punctuated with one-story franchise architecture. For most heritage tourists, this environment is the antithesis of what they are seeking in a heritage area. To provide a more inviting first and last impression, there are two techniques that can be applied in unison to these corridors. The first is a planning and design project that would transform a highway into an attractive rural parkway or a multi-modal urban boulevard, depending upon the surrounding context. The other complimentary technique is to revise the zoning and development codes of the adjacent lands to require a higher quality of development. The MHNHA can provide advice to local governments on such issues.

- *Revitalization Programs* – As noted throughout this plan, historic downtowns are the “backbone” of the MHNHA. One useful model for downtown revitalization is the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Main Street program. The Main Street program has existed for several decades now and it has a strong track record across the country. It utilizes the “four point approach” of organization, design, economic restructuring, and promotion. Several MHNHA communities are already Main Street communities, but more should be designated, and even many of the designated communities can use additional help.



The Mississippi Main Street program is a critical organization for the future success of the MHNHA. Downtowns are the location of much of a community’s history, authenticity, uniqueness, and locally owned businesses.

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

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.

See specific recommendations under Goal 3 – Objective 3-E above regarding how the MHHA can help communities acquire technical assistance to positively transform unattractive strip commercial corridors, revitalize downtowns, plan for open space, and enhance wayfinding. This plan’s Implementation Plan provides yet greater detail on this topic.

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.

Because some objectives of this plan can help to achieve multiple goals, there is necessarily repetition of some objectives that fall under multiple goals. Wayfinding was previously addressed as part of Objective 3-E and is expanded on in greater detail within the Implementation Plan. Likewise, gateway signage welcoming visitors to the MHNHA is already addressed in Objective 1-E of this Strategies section.

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

- Work with one or more partnering entities to develop a greenway system along the heritage area’s key streams and linking them with important sites and existing greenway systems. The majority of existing trails in the MHNHA are not part of an extensive and formal greenway system. Most of the trails in the area are primarily associated with parks and civic destinations and are intended for recreation and exercise rather than the additional objectives of transportation and linkages. One such example is the one-mile Oxford Depot Trail, a “rails to trails” project. The most extensive and ambitious greenway project in the MHNHA is the Tanglefoot Trail, another rails to trails project that is nearing completion. Stretching over 43 miles from New Albany to Houston, it follows the former Ripley Railroad (later renamed the

Gulf & Ship Island Railroad) built by William Faulkner’s great-grandfather (Colonel William C. Falkner) in 1872.



The final stages of development of the Tanglefoot Trail are now occurring in Houston.

The MHHA will support greenways, but not actually implement their development. A greenway plan should be created for the entire MHNHA, and the MHHA will serve as the catalyst organization that coordinates the plan's preparation through a joint effort with a variety of relevant entities. Among the potential partners for the MHHA to pursue the development of a greenway system throughout the heritage area are the following:

- Tennessee Tombigbee Development Authority
 - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 - Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)
 - NPS's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program
 - Planning & Development Districts (PDDs) within the MHNHA
 - Municipal parks and recreation departments
- Once the greenway system is more fully developed, encourage the sponsoring entities to establish a program for individuals and groups to “adopt” segments of the greenway for on-going maintenance and beautification efforts.

Similar to “adopt a highway” programs, such a program entails groups or individuals committing to help physically maintain specific segments of a trail or greenway in return for recognition on a small sign. It is proposed that the entity (or entities) that develop and operate the greenways manage such a program, but with support from the MHHA. Such support might be in the form of promoting the program at MHNHA events, on the MHNHA website, and perhaps by even sponsoring a segment of a greenway. An adoption program will require:



Sample adoption program sponsor signage

- A map to designate greenway segments for adoption
- A set of minimum standards of maintenance that adopting entities/individuals must meet
- A standardized sign to identify sponsors along their respective greenway segments

Sponsors should also be recognized in other ways, such as on the greenway entity's website and perhaps during annual awards events.

- Develop promotional and interpretive materials related to outdoor recreation, such as a trail guide book, a map highlighting access points to rivers, information on the plant and animal species of the heritage area, and similar materials. It is important that the MHHA not “reinvent the wheel” on this issue, as much of the information already exists in various forms. Two good sources of information on plant and animal species and other environmental resources are the National Park Service (including the Natchez Trace Parkway) and the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). Also, this plan's Background Report includes an inventory of endangered plant and animal species and fragile landscapes within the appendices section. By starting with readily available information from organizations such as these, the MHHA can integrate and package it into attractive and user-friendly materials in both digital and hardcopy formats.

- Encourage and promote the development of outdoor recreational businesses and services, such as outfitter stores, canoe rental and drop-off/pick-up services, and a network of outdoor guides who will take customers hiking, cycling, fishing, canoeing, and similar outdoor recreational activities. The establishment and/or recruitment of any businesses is an economic development issue, so the MHHA will work closely with Chambers of Commerce and other economic development entities throughout the heritage area. For jurisdictions having financial incentives for businesses, those incentives will be promoted by the MHHA.

The MHHA will also promote the area's outfitter stores, canoe rental businesses, outdoor guides, and related businesses in its marketing materials and website if possible. While many of these types of businesses will be located in relatively remote areas near the natural resources to be enjoyed (streams, lakes, trails, etc.), outfitter stores are a good fit for historic downtowns. Consequently, Main Street programs and other downtown revitalization entities will also be allies of the MHHA for this effort.



Keel Kreek Outdoors is an outfitter based in Pontotoc.

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.

- Existing Special Events – The MHNHA already benefits from many unique festivals and events, such as Pioneer Days (French Camp), the Howlin Wolf Blues Festival (West Point), the Elvis Festival (Tupelo), the Ragtime Music Festival (Starkville), the Tennessee Williams Festival (Columbus), the Hummingbird Migration and Nature Festival (Holly Springs), and the Southern Literary Festival (Blue Mountain). There is also a growing number of sporting events such as pro fishing tournaments, golf tournaments, 10k runs, and softball and other amateur athletic tournaments. Disc Golf has become popular in the region, and Tishomingo State Park has developed several major disc golf courses and attracts hundreds to its tournaments. These events are spread throughout the region, but with some concentrations in the larger communities.

According to this plan's Market Assessment, the MHNHA could capture a festival audience of up to about 224,000, an increase expected by 2017 of 12.8%. Atlanta, Memphis, and Nashville will generate the fastest growth in festival-goers captured by the MHNHA. However, the largest share of attendance would still be generated by residents of the 30-county heritage area region. Festival audience growth within the MHNHA will be relatively slow compared with audience growth generated by other core markets and other areas of the country. Since the vast majority of festival attendance is generated from local sources, the lack of audience growth within the 30-county core market suggests slow growth in support to the MHNHA festival market. The area only generates major festival attendance in the 20,000 to 30,000 range (with all event attendance estimated at around 100,000). This analysis indicates that *the market is under-served for larger festivals and could potentially attract larger regional and national audiences*. With current attendance at less than one-tenth of regional festival potential, there is the opportunity to expand on the existing festival offering.

- Potential New Events - There are several music festivals in the region that focus on specific genres. For example, there is the Down from the Hills Heritage Music Festival & Sparks Family Music Festival (Bluegrass), the North Mississippi Hill Country Picnic (Hill Country Blues), and Elvis Fest (Rock n Roll). There is also the opportunity of greatly increasing the marketing exposure and tourism potential of the region by establishing a regional music festival that captures the broad range of musical styles and genres that have been associated with the Mississippi Hills. This festival could include Hill Country Blues, Country & Bluegrass Music, and Rock n Roll, all of which have benefited tremendously from the Hills' influence. The music festival would complement, rather than compete with, other festivals and events in the region, and it would help strengthen the region's unique brand. The festival would bring together very diverse fans who share a love of all types of music, and diverse food and crafts would add to the cultural milieu. Key components of this festival would include:
 - A location with good access to key metro markets (i.e., Atlanta, Memphis, Nashville) and representative of the diverse geographic landscape of the MHNHA
 - A focus on Blues, Bluegrass, and Rock n Roll with a local connection

- An education component that builds on the region's unique musical contributions and characteristics
- Tie-ins that build on other music festivals, rather than competing with them
- Tie-ins with regional music marketing, including the "American Music Triangle" that includes Memphis, Nashville and Tupelo, as well as the "Roots of American Music," which ties together Nashville and Muscle Shoals, but could be expanded to include the MHNHA and Memphis
- Tie-ins with a more detailed local music tour route for destination travelers to the MHNHA

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.

As addressed previously in Objective 1-E, this objective has already been achieved, at least in its initial stage, via the website "www.mississippihills.org." This excellent website features high quality graphics and an extensive amount of useful information for people interest in experiencing the MHNHA. Once this Management Plan is adopted, the website will need to be slightly adjusted to be consistent with the plan. As one example, the website currently reflects four primary theme boxes to click onto for more information. Those themes include African-American Heritage, Architecture, the Arts, and the Civil War, and each has a suggested trip itinerary. Although three of these primary themes have remained intact per this plan, the Architecture theme has been demoted to a secondary theme, while Native American Heritage has been added as a primary theme. Thus, the website will require some minor tweaking to be consistent with the ideas ultimately confirmed by this plan. The website's existing itineraries will be coordinated with the proposed theme-based tours of this plan's Interpretive Plan, and new itineraries will be created for tours not already existing on the website.

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.

- Conventional Means to Promote the MHNHA

Below is a summary of how each of the three most conventional means of promotion will be used to promote the MHNHA:

Print Ads – Print advertisements for the MHNHA would most likely be for travel magazines and others such as "Southern Living" and "Garden & Gun." Such ads would not be inexpensive and, consequently, should be limited in their number and extremely targeted if implemented at all. For example, an ad for the MHNHA might be coordinated with an article related to the area. Such ads will be carefully considered based upon available funding versus projected benefits. Also, the MHNHA will consider a joint-marketing effort with the adjacent Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area.

Brochures – Brochures will be made available in both hard-copy format and a digital downloadable format on the MHNHA's website. At a minimum, there will be a separate

brochure for the following topics: 1) the MHNHA overview; 2) Native American Heritage; 3) African American Heritage; 4) the Arts; and 5) the Civil War. Fortunately, the MHNHA overview brochure already exists. To the degree that funding is available, hard-copy brochures will be made available at all of the typical locations, including interstate visitor centers, hotels, key restaurants, attractions, and similar sites. See this plan's Interpretive Plan for more detailed ideas on the development of effective brochures.

Maps – Maps are a critical item for any effective heritage area. NHAs naturally place a substantial focus on geography. In particular, maps are needed for navigating theme-based tours. Maps for the MHNHA can be integrated into a variety of formats, including brochures, the MHNHA website, and other marketing materials. In fact, this plan's Interpretive Plan features a series of maps illustrating theme-based tours, and these maps might be adapted for promoting the MHNHA and for using in MHNHA brochures.

- New/Emerging Technologies to Promote the MHNHA

As previously addressed in Objective 1-E under "Utilize social media to garner attention for the MHNHA," examples of social media for the MHNHA to leverage include Facebook, Twitter, and Linked-In. Being effective in the use of social media requires both knowledge of the medium and frequent interaction. If the MHNHA staff lacks expertise and experience in utilizing social media, either a Board member or issue-based Committee member will be asked to help with this effort.

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Mississippi Hills
National Heritage Area

INTERPRETIVE PLAN SECTION

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

Revised:
February 9, 2014



A. Introduction

The Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA) contains a varied and rich assortment of historic, cultural, and natural resources. Many resources are listed in the National Register of Historic Places or in the Mississippi Register. There are also several federal, state and local parks and wildlife management areas. Some resources have existing organizations dedicated to the interpretation of a major theme of the heritage area. Just one example is the NPS-operated Civil War Interpretive Center in Corinth. Other resources exist as annual festivals that help interpret a theme, such as the Tupelo Elvis Festival. There are numerous historical markers throughout the heritage area that support one or more of the major interpretive themes or sub-themes. Visitor centers in the heritage area offer an array of informational brochures. Some of these brochures are city or county-level products listing sites, events, and often including maps. Some brochures are site or event-specific, while others provide directions for a walking tour of historic architectural sites in neighborhoods and towns. The primary goal of this Interpretive Plan for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area is to: 1) identify the requirements for interpretation; 2) recap the interpretive themes of the heritage area and introduce the interpretive statements for each; 3) evaluate the current approaches and effectiveness of interpretation throughout the MHNHA; and 4) recommend specific techniques for interpreting the stories and resources of the MHNHA.

B. Requirements for Interpretation

FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

Interpretation is one of the key components of an NHA management plan and figures prominently in the legislation establishing the heritage area. The various requirements related to interpretation as stated in the legislation for the management plan include the following:

- *establishing and maintaining interpretive exhibits and programs within the Heritage Area;*
- *increasing public awareness of, and appreciation for, natural, historical, cultural, archaeological, and recreational resources of the Heritage Area;*
- *restoring historic sites and buildings in the Heritage area that are consistent with the themes of the Heritage Area;*
- *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;*
- *specify existing and potential sources of funding or economic development strategies to protect, enhance, interpret, fund, manage, and develop the Heritage Area;*
- *provide recommendations for educational and interpretive programs to provide information to the public on the resources of the Heritage Area;*

FOUNDATION STATEMENT REQUIREMENTS

The MHNHA's interpretive themes are based, in part, on the Mission Statement and Foundation Statement of this heritage area's Management Plan. The themes are intended to ensure that the interpretive goals reach the NHA's audience and meet the purpose of the heritage area. The Mission of the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area per this management plan is to:

"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."

After a series of public meetings and workshops, a number of goals and objectives were formulated for the management plan as part of the federally required Foundation Statement. One of these was 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."* Specific objectives included:

- 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.

It is noteworthy that, in transforming these goals and objectives into the plan's subsequent Strategies section, there have been some slight modifications. For example, Objective 2-B has been adapted to add junior high school students to the possible students for recording oral histories. The other student types already suggested for this work include high school and college students.



Oral histories are a productive and interesting method of recording and conveying stories from the past.

C. Themes, Sub-Themes & Interpretive Statements

To achieve this plan's Mission, interpretive themes for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area build upon the four primary themes of the region. These primary themes are: 1) Native American Heritage, 2) African American Heritage, 3) the Civil War, and 4) the Arts: Literature & Music. The MHNHA's one secondary theme is Architecture. Sub-themes and stories associated with the primary themes provide greater detail and insight into the area's rich trove of resources remaining on the cultural landscape.

OVERARCHING THEME: "The Mississippi Hills - Where Appalachia meets the Delta."

The following summary of the interpretive themes and sub-themes also introduces for the first time in this management plan an Interpretive Statement for each primary theme and sub-theme. These statements are based on the regional and national significance of the Mississippi Hills region and connect the region's resources to the themes in a tangible way. The Interpretive Statements are intended to communicate the relevance of the themes. The themes and sub-themes were presented previously in detail in the Background Study of this plan, but the overarching theme above was not.

PRIMARY INTERPRETIVE THEMES

Theme: Native-American Heritage

Sub-Theme: Prehistoric Era

Interpretive Statement: The region's rich ecosystem with numerous streams provided sufficient sustenance to nurture Native American cultures during the Paleoindian, Archaic, Woodland, and Mississippian periods that culminated in relatively complex mound-building societies prior to European occupation.

Sub-Theme: Historic Era

Interpretive Statement: The MHNHA is perhaps the most significant region in the country to the Chickasaw Nation, which included the 1832 Pontotoc Creek Treaty whereby the Chickasaws gave up all lands east of the Mississippi River in exchange for lands west of the Mississippi.

Theme: African-American Heritage

Sub-Theme: Freedom Arrives

Interpretive Statement: The Union Army's occupation of North Mississippi beginning in the spring of 1862 resulted in freedom for most of the area's slaves. The Contraband camp in Corinth was the first model for such camps that was replicated by countless Contraband camps across the South by the end of the war.

Sub-Theme: Reconstruction & Post-Reconstruction

Interpretive Statement: Following the Civil War, the Hills region saw some of the most significant - yet short term - educational and political gains for African Americans in the country, including the

establishment of Shaw University in Holly Springs in 1866 (later Rust College) and Hiram Revels filling the US Senate seat once held by former Confederate President Jefferson Davis. Rust College graduate Ida B. Wells became one of the country's most important civil rights activists and writers in the early-20th century.

Sub-Theme: Civil Rights - An Arduous Journey

Interpretive Statement: The Hills region is one of the most significant places in the country relative to the civil rights movement, including the early activism of Ida B. Wells, James Meredith's tumultuous enrollment into the University of Mississippi in 1962, and Grenada's 1966 Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which featured icons such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Andrew Young, and singer Joan Baez.

Theme: The Civil War

Sub-Theme: The Opening Clash of Amateur Armies

Interpretive Statement: Corinth was the target of Grant's Union forces in the spring of 1862 and prompted the first major battle in the Western Theatre of the war – the Battle of Shiloh. The subsequent capture of Corinth and related actions, such as the Battle of Iuka, represented the Union's first successful military campaign into the Deep South.

Sub-Theme: The Quest for Vicksburg Begins

Interpretive Statement: Upon securing Northeast Mississippi, Grant used the area as a springboard to push south toward his ultimate target – the Confederate stronghold at Vicksburg. However, logistical setbacks such as Van Dorn's raid on Union supply stores at Holly Springs stalled Grant's progress toward Vicksburg for roughly half a year.

Sub-Theme: The Play's Final Acts - 1864

Interpretive Statement: During the waning days of the war, Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest cemented his reputation as one of the greatest cavalry leaders in history with victories at Okolona and Brice's Crossroads. However, the defeat of his troops under General Stephen D. Lee at Tupelo marked the beginning of the end for Confederate efforts in Mississippi.

Theme: The Arts

Sub-Theme: Literature

Interpretive Statement: Based upon writers such as Oxford's William Faulkner, Columbus' Tennessee Williams, the Mississippi University for Women's Eudora Welty, Holly Spring's Ida B. Wells, Southaven's John Grisham, and many others, the Hills region can be considered the cradle of Southern Literature. The landscape, history and culture of the region have richly colored the writings of its authors.

Sub-Theme: Music

Interpretive Statement: Musicians such as Ruby Elzy, Elvis Presley, Howlin' Wolf, Tammy Wynette, and Otha Turner have helped to cement the Hills region's reputation as an incubator for diverse genres of music rooted to the South. Much of the region's music reflects the Hill's geographic and cultural intersection of Appalachia and the Delta.

D. Current Approaches to Interpretation

Before specific ideas to interpret the cultural resources and stories of the MHNHA can be formulated, a basic understanding of the current approaches must be achieved. Furthermore, their relative levels of effectiveness should be recognized. The summary of current approaches is split into two categories – 1) historic sites and museums and 2) downtowns and neighborhoods.

INTERPRETATION BY RESOURCE TYPE

Historic Sites & Museums

Historic Sites

The MHNHA's historic sites range from the Tennessee Williams Home in Columbus to Civil War sites and ancient Indian mounds throughout the heritage area. The historic sites are generally clustered around themes focused on renowned southern literary figures and musicians, the Civil War, historic homes, agriculture, civil rights, and Native American heritage. However, the region's Native American heritage appears to lack the level of research, interpretation, and promotion that other themes enjoy. Few of the Native American mound sites in the region are marketed or interpreted proactively, although there is written information available to help interpret many of the sites. Pharr Mounds may have the highest attendance of Native American sites due to its scale and some marketing of the site. While there are exceptions to the following generalization, below is a list of the typical components of an interpretive experience at the heritage area's various historic sites:

- Website that interprets the site using text and graphics
- Brochure that interprets the site using text and graphics
- Outdoor wayside exhibits that interpret the site using text and graphics

While the three key approaches above can be found at many sites, some utilize additional means of interpretation, such as guided tours and living history demonstrations. However, there is little use of technology at most sites, such as audio tours or apps tied to Smartphones.

Museums

Nearly 50 museums have been identified in the MHNHA as part of this management planning process. The broad range of museums covers music, literature, transportation, local history and events, science, art, and various specialties, such as the Apron Museum in Iuka. While many museums are found in the larger cities, a number of smaller towns have museums. The region's universities, including Mississippi State, the University of Mississippi, Rust College, and others are



The Jacinto Courthouse in Alcorn County is interpreted, in part, by weathered looking wayside exhibits.

important repositories of art, literature and historical artifacts. Several universities have their collections displayed in museum facilities, although much of the universities' collections are housed in buildings buried within the campuses and having very limited public exposure.

As with historic sites, the range of interpretation approaches and their effectiveness varies. Many of the smaller museums having very limited funding use a traditional and minimally effective approach featuring simple exhibits in which artifacts are placed behind glass cases with interpretive labels. At the other end of the spectrum are museums such as the Corinth Civil War Interpretive Center. Benefiting from the funding and capabilities of the National Park Service, there are numerous high-tech and interactive exhibits, as well as a video.



The Mississippi's Final Stands Interpretive Center in Baldwin is an example of a museum with a minimal budget and relatively few artifacts that has still achieved effective interpretation.

Downtowns & Neighborhoods

The MHNHA is home to at least 90 downtowns and historic districts. Regardless of size, each community has an opportunity to interpret the unique history and culture of its area. In addition to the larger downtowns in Tupelo, Columbus, Starkville, Corinth, and Oxford, there are quaint town centers like Olive Branch's Old Towne and other communities offering interest to the heritage tourist. Many of these downtowns are home to unique locally-owned retail and other businesses. At least 50 such "unique" retail businesses have been inventoried over the course of this planning project, ranging from Square Books in Downtown Oxford to Tupelo Hardware in Downtown Tupelo (where Elvis's mother purportedly purchased his first guitar), to Annie's Soul Food in Downtown Holly Springs. There are also at least 15 historic theatres and other venues in the area. Some are restored and operating successfully as both film and live event venues, while others are awaiting funding for restoration. The larger cities like Columbus, Tupelo, and Oxford also offer significant historic districts with dozens of homes listed on the National Register.

There is already a relatively extensive amount of interpretation occurring in the heritage area's downtowns and neighborhoods. Most of the larger communities have both web-based and hard copy driving and/or walking tour brochures. Some focus on the downtowns and others on the adjacent historic neighborhoods.

Even communities as small as Aberdeen have historic architecture tour brochures. In fact, Aberdeen has such a rich collection of historic architecture that the community has an annual Pilgrimage tour of historic homes. The 38th Annual Aberdeen Southern Heritage Pilgrimage will occur this April 5-7, 2013. Not surprisingly, the MHNHA's larger



Aberdeen is one of many MHNHA communities with an effective architectural tour brochure.

communities that are rich in architectural history host similar pilgrimages, such as Holly Springs, which will host its 75th annual pilgrimage April 12-14, 2013. To supplement the interpretation that occurs on the home tours, most of these events feature living history demonstrations as well.

Overall, the interpretation that currently occurs in the heritage area's various downtowns and neighborhoods is relatively effective. Although many of the existing tour brochures can be accessed and downloaded on websites, most still need to keep up with changing technology by offering apps and similar Smartphone-based interpretive tools.

INTERPRETATION BY THEME

Native American Heritage

Native American heritage is the least researched, understood and interpreted theme in the heritage area. Few of the associated prehistoric sites are identified or interpreted, other than some minor interpretation of a few mound sites, such as those interpreted by the NPS along the Natchez Trace Parkway. With respect to the historic era, there are a few sites that celebrate the heritage of Tishomingo, the last great Chickasaw Chief, and some collections have been integrated into local museums, such as the one at the Pontotoc post office. However, those collections tend to consolidate all pre-historic and historic Native American cultures into a single exhibit, which are typically focused on arrowheads.



Because of current limited funding, Pontotoc's post office museum is one that could benefit from improved exhibits and interpretation.

Beyond displaying stone relics, there is generally little interpretation of the lifestyles, history, or culture of prehistoric Natives nor of the historic Chickasaw and Choctaw nations. Furthermore, few of the sites are actually controlled or operated by the Indian nations themselves, although the Chickasaws are planning an interpretive center to be located on the Natchez Trace Parkway near Tupelo. Clearly, there are opportunities for partnerships between MHNHA, the area's universities, and the Indian nations on developing opportunities to interpret this rich heritage.

African American Heritage

As in the case of Native American heritage, while there are individual sites that interpret African American heritage - including the civil rights struggle, there is a need for enhanced linkages to more effectively tell the story of how this region played an important role in the broader African American national story. The interpretation of sites and the overall tour routing should be considered as a sort of "screenplay" of the story of African-American culture, history, and struggle for civil rights. As with most of the heritage area's other interpretive themes, much of the region's exceptional African-American history cultural materials are archived within the "ivory tower" of universities where they are not very accessible to the public. Even at historically-black Rust College, the university's African art collection is housed in quarters that are not readily accessible on an ongoing basis during normal working hours. Moreover, the interesting history of that university is not yet interpreted thoroughly for visitors. Having rotating exhibitions of university

collections at more public venues in Main Street locations (whether through interpretive centers, sites, or museums) can help enhance exposure and create more tourism draw to the region that could spin-off economic and social benefits to the local communities.

Civil War

The Civil War heritage at some key sites, such as Corinth, Brice's Cross Roads, and Tupelo, is well-interpreted with the backing of funding from the federal government or other key sources. The Corinth Civil War Interpretive Center, in particular, is a state-of-the art facility with effective interpretation that utilizes modern technology well. These sites have also benefited from exposure during the Sesquicentennial that has brought more visitors to many of the Civil War sites nationwide. Corinth, in particular, benefits from its geographic proximity to Shiloh just across the state border. However, the important battles of Iuka and Okolona have very limited interpretation, and it is difficult for visitors to understand the battles or even get a sense of the land areas involved. Those same battlefields could also benefit greatly from the acquisition of more lands for protection. Another interpretation issue with room for improvement throughout the heritage area is the lack of a more extensive interpretation of the role of African-Americans during the war and its aftermath, which can be easily integrated with the story of the African-American struggle for civil rights.

The Arts: Literature & Music

Although there are other areas of the South with relatively rich Native American, African American, and Civil War history, the MHNHA is exceptionally rich in literary and musical heritage. There are several key sites that successfully interpret this heritage, but there are also opportunities for enhancing the overall access and interpretation of this interpretive theme for education and tourism.

Literature

Many of the same issues impacting the interpretation of the region's other themes impact interpretation of the region's rich literary heritage. The Hills features several literature-related sites that are not geographically linked in formalized tour routes other than sites plotted on a map. Some of the best vehicles for interpretation are in the form of the homes of literary figures, such as the homes of William Faulkner (Oxford), Tennessee Williams (Columbus), and Ida B. Wells (Holly Springs). Blue Mountain gave birth to the Southern Literary Festival and the event has returned to the area recently. As noted before, the area's universities house important literary collections, but they are not readily accessible to the public. There is also the opportunity for developing a Southern Literary Tour in conjunction with the festival that would promote the Mississippi Hills at the core of this effort, but would also encourage expansion to other noteworthy literary "hot spots" in the South. Linking the various sites and events can help enhance interpretation and promote the region more effectively for heritage tourism.

Music

The MHNHA's musical heritage is currently interpreted through individual sites and disparate tour routes that could be made stronger and more integrated. For example, many Elvis fans travel from cities such as Memphis, Nashville and New Orleans to visit his birthplace in Tupelo. Likewise, Howlin' Wolf fans are directed through the Mississippi Blues Trail to visit his museum in West Point. Integrating these diverse aspects of the Mississippi Hills, consistent with the overarching theme of "Where Appalachia meets the Delta," can strengthen the overall interpretation. Individual collections like the Ragtime and music business collections at MSU and

the Blues collection at Ole Miss are housed internally at those universities and do not have a presence “on the street” that engages with the visitor. Exposure, such as through museums and festivals help to bring visitors to Main Street and create more beneficial spin-offs for local businesses and downtown preservation. Tour routes that connect these sites more effectively will help maximize that exposure.

SUMMARY OF CURRENT INTERPRETATION IN THE MHNHA

Below are summarizing points to understanding the current state of interpretation in the MHNHA:

- Some interpretive themes warrant greater research and interpretation. The Native American heritage theme, in particular, needs interpretation that better differentiates the various chronological/cultural eras of pre-history and history.
- Many of the web-based and hard copy interpretive tools (maps, brochures, etc.) should be rewritten to tell a more compelling story and reformatted for greater visual appeal and user-friendliness.
- Greater use of telecommunications-based technology will need to be utilized, such as apps for theme-based tours that can be accessed by Smartphones.
- Some of the material culture collections presently housed in universities should be made more readily accessible to the general public.
- Individual sites and attractions are generally not linked together interpretively so that a “big picture” is provided for the various interpretive themes.



While the many historic markers that exist throughout the MHNHA are useful in conveying the most basic information about historic sites and events, they are not a very effective tool for telling an interesting and vivid story that will engage the reader.

E. Recommended Approaches to Interpretation

LINKING THEMES, SITES & EVENTS

The following plan section points out some of the key sites and events that will be strongly linked to their associated interpretive themes to help tell their respective stories. A more complete inventory of cultural resources is available in the appendices section of this management plan's Background Study. Also, a series of proposed tour route maps for each of the four primary interpretive themes is provided after these narrative descriptions of key sites.

Native American Heritage

The MHNHA lies at the heart of the Chickasaw Nation homeland. Place names throughout the region, especially north of U.S. Highway 82, testify to the heritage of the Chickasaw people. Just a few examples include Pontotoc ("Land of Hanging Grapes"), Itawamba ("Bench Chief"- Levi Colbert), Tishomingo (or Tisho Minko, "Assistant Chief," the last great Chickasaw Chief), and Okolona ("peaceful" or "blue water"). South of what is now U.S. 82, the Choctaw predominated long before Europeans entered the region. Tombigbee is a Choctaw word meaning "Coffin Maker" and Noxubee means "stink." The Chickasaw and Choctaw shared a close history and culture. Their languages are similar and words such as Yalobusha, meaning "Tadpole Place," are found in both cultures. Both the Chickasaws and Choctaws were forcibly removed to Oklahoma along the Trail of Tears. The area has an equally rich prehistoric cultural heritage. Key Native American sites in the MHNHA that will be thematically linked include the following:

Woodland Period

- Nanih Waiya (Middle Woodland period mound in Winston County sacred to the Choctaw and listed on the National Register. The date of the site's return became a Choctaw Nation holiday)
- Bynum Mound and Village Site (six Middle Woodland period mounds, 28 miles southwest of Tupelo, one of the largest Middle Woodland ceremonial sites in southeast)
- Pharr Mounds (eight Middle Woodland mounds - 23 miles northeast of Tupelo)
- Ingomar Mounds (Middle Woodland period – Union County)
- Brogan Mound (Middle Woodland period - Clay County)

Mississippian Period

- Thelma Mound Archeological Site (Houston)
- Bear Creek Mound and Village Site (Mississippian period site - 45 miles northeast of Tupelo)
- Owl Creek Site (Five Mississippian period platform mounds - 18 miles southwest of Tupelo)
- Walls Indian Mounds (operated by Desoto County Museum)

Historic Period

- Site of Chickasaw National Council House (Pontotoc)
- Site of Allen's Tavern ("town hall" of Chickasaw villages - Pontotoc)
- Topulka's (Chief's House, Cate's Place - Pontotoc)
- Pontotoc City Cemetery (burial of Chickasaw and whites)
- Statues of Chief Tishomingo (at/near Tishomingo State Park)
- Tishomingo County Historical Museum (Chickasaw exhibit)
- Chief Tishomingo Home Site (near Baldwin)

- Council House of Greenwood LeFlore – Choctaw Chief (French Camp – on Natchez Trace)

Multiple Periods Interpreted

- Pontotoc Post Office Town Square Museum (features Native American exhibits and relics)
- Natchez Trace Parkway (interprets Native American trail history)
- Oren Dunn Tupelo City Museum (has pre-history exhibits)
- American Indian Artifacts Museum (Columbus)

Also, if the interpretive center being contemplated by the Chickasaw Nation (to be located on the Natchez Trace Parkway near Tupelo) comes to fruition, that site will clearly be a critical one to link with. In fact, it would likely become a springboard for Native American heritage tours throughout the MHNHA. *See page 15 for the suggested tour route map for this theme's interpretation.*

African American Heritage

Among the most enduring images of African American Heritage and the struggle for civil rights are the heroic steps taken by James Meredith to enroll in the University of Mississippi. What started as a personal journey became a flashpoint in American history memorialized in images of Meredith entering the university under armed guard among rioting demonstrators. While such images paint a raw picture of Northeast Mississippi during the civil rights era, they also provide a reference point for the tremendous and hard-fought progress that has occurred in the region and nation-wide since that time. Some of the region's key sites associated with African American heritage include the following:

- Black History Museum of Corinth
- Corinth Contraband Camp
- Rust College (Holly Springs)
 - Donald Trousdale African Art Collection
 - Mississippi Industrial College Campus
 - Roy Wilkins Collection
- Ida B Wells Barnett Museum (Holly Springs)
- Hill Crest Cemetery (resting place of Hiram Revels and others)
- Historic Colored School (Burnsville)
- Saints Academy (slave history of plantation - Lexington)
- University of Mississippi (Oxford)
 - The Lyceum
 - Civil Rights Monument and James Meredith Statue
 - Center for the Study of Southern Culture
 - Blues Music Collections
- Columbus area African-American churches homes, etc. (including Catfish Alley)
- James Meredith hometown of Kosciusko
- Okolona College (historically black college on National Register)
- Belle Flower Missionary Baptist Church (Civil Rights Movement – Granada)
- Pontotoc Cemetery (resting place for jazz singer Ruby Elzy)

See page 16 for the suggested tour route map for this theme's interpretation.

Civil War

The Civil War presents an important component of interpretation for the region, even though Northeast Mississippi did not witness the most major battles of the war. However, located not far from the area is Shiloh National Military Park, one of the major Civil War historical sites and a key driver for heritage tourism throughout the broader region, attracting about 70,000 visitors per year. Located just over the state line in Tennessee, Shiloh is easily accessible via Routes 57/25 and U.S. 45 from the MHNHA. Various places in the region saw significant battles during the Civil War, such as the siege and battle of Corinth, as well as battles at Iuka, Brice's Cross Roads, Okolona, and Tupelo. Confederate General Earl Van Dorn's raid on Holly Springs in December of 1862 also greatly impacted Grant's initial push toward Vicksburg. Key Civil War sites in the MHNHA include:

- Airliewood (General Grant's Holly Springs headquarters / held Christmas party here)
- Walter Place Estate (General Grant's family was housed here during the Union occupation)
- University of Mississippi Civil War Collections (Library), Ventress Hall (dedicated to Confederate Veterans), and Lyceum (used as hospital during war)
- College Hill Presbyterian Church (Oxford) – Used as Sherman's headquarters during occupation
- Van Dorn Raid Driving Tour (Holly Springs)
- Hill Crest Cemetery (Holly Springs), Confederate Cemetery (Oxford), Shady Grove Cemetery (Iuka), Corinth National Cemetery, Friendship Cemetery (Columbus), Okolona Confederate Cemetery, Grenada Confederate Cemetery, Old Aberdeen and Odd Fellows Rest Cemetery (Jeffrey Forrest)
- Battle of West Point (Sakatonchee Creek/Ellis Bridge)
- Battle of Iuka (site adjacent to highway) and related sites - Twin Magnolias (CS headquarters), Brinkley House (US & CS headquarters), and Iuka Methodist Church (hospital)
- Battle of Mud Creek (Cane Brake)
- Booneville Battlefield (Prentiss County)
- President Grant papers (de facto Presidential Library, MSU)
- General Stephen D Lee Home (Columbus)
- Tupelo National Battlefield
- Corinth Civil War Interpretive Center, Battery F, and Earthworks, Curlee House
- Corinth Contraband Camp
- Brice's Cross Roads National Battlefield Site / Mississippi's Last Stands Interpretive Center
- Tishomingo County Museum (Civil War exhibit)
- Okolona Battlefield
- Elliot-Donaldson House – Nathan Bedford Forrest treated for wounds here in 1865 (Okolona)
- Davis' Mill Battlefield (Michigan City, Benton County)
- Golladay House – Jefferson Davis stayed there in 1861 (Hernando)
- Confederate Earthworks – Grenada Lake (Grenada)

See page 17 for the suggested tour route map for this theme's interpretation.

The Arts: Literature & Music

Literature

The MHNHA region stands out in American culture as the home of so many iconic writers and literary figures, with an exceptional impact on Southern literature. William Faulkner was not only born in the region (New Albany), he established his home at Oxford and provided some of America's greatest literature from his home at Rowan Oak. Tennessee Williams, one of the country's greatest playwrights, was born and lived his early years in Columbus. One of America's most recognized present-day writers, John Grisham, is from Southaven and has presented personal papers and other materials to his alma mater, Mississippi State University in Starkville. Below are some of the key sites affiliated with this interpretive theme:

- Rowan Oak - Home of William Faulkner (Oxford)
- St. Peter's Cemetery (Faulkner family - Oxford)
- College Hill Presbyterian Church – where Faulkner was married (Oxford)
- University of Mississippi - J.D. Williams Library (46,000 rare books & manuscripts)
 - Faulkner Room and collections of Barry Hanna, Larry Brown, Ellen Douglas, Beth Henley, Ace Atkins and other literary figures
 - Reading Room - Hallway used for research and exhibitions
 - Center for the Study of Southern Culture
- Tennessee Williams Home & Columbus Welcome Center (moved from its original site)
- St. Paul's Episcopal Church (Williams' baptism - Columbus)
- Mississippi University for Women Galleries (Eudora Welty alma mater) - Columbus
- Mississippi State University (Starkville)
 - John Grisham Room
- Faulkner Literary Garden (Union County Heritage Museum – New Albany)
- Bryan Reading Park (busts of literary figures) at West Point Library
- Square Book bookstore (Oxford)
- Ida B. Wells - Barnett Museum (Holly Springs)

Music

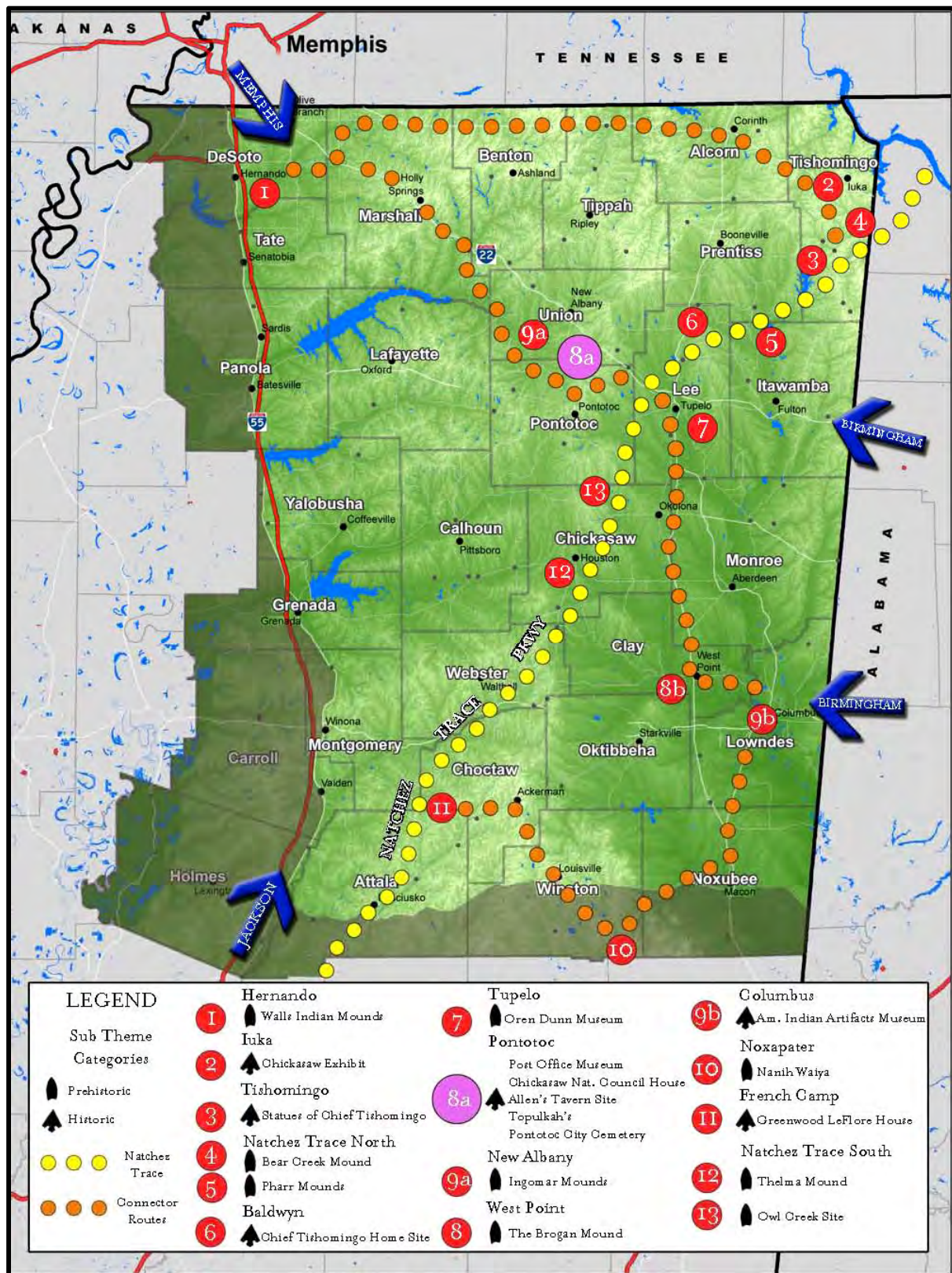
The MHNHA has a unique place in the history of American music. Due in part to its location at the crossroads of Appalachia and the Delta, this region gave birth to a blending of musical genres ranging from dulcimer-driven mountain music to Hill Country Blues. The amalgam of musical styles was perhaps best captured by the King of Rock 'n Roll, Elvis Presley, born in Tupelo. The Elvis Birthplace and Museum thoughtfully acknowledges the various influences on Elvis's music, including gospel, country and Delta blues. In addition to Elvis, the region gave birth to such iconic music figures as country music queen Tammy Wynette and famed blues singer Howlin' Wolf. Out of this mix of music and genres, one could argue that Rock n Roll itself was born in the Mississippi Hills.

- Elvis Presley Birthplace & Museum (Tupelo)
- Tupelo Hardware (Elvis' first guitar)
- Johnnies Drive-In (a favorite Tupelo restaurant for Elvis)
- University of Mississippi - J.D. Williams Library (46,000 rare books & manuscripts)
 - Blues Collections (music, posters, personal effects some of which temporarily displayed in Faulkner Room, but otherwise having no permanent exhibition space)

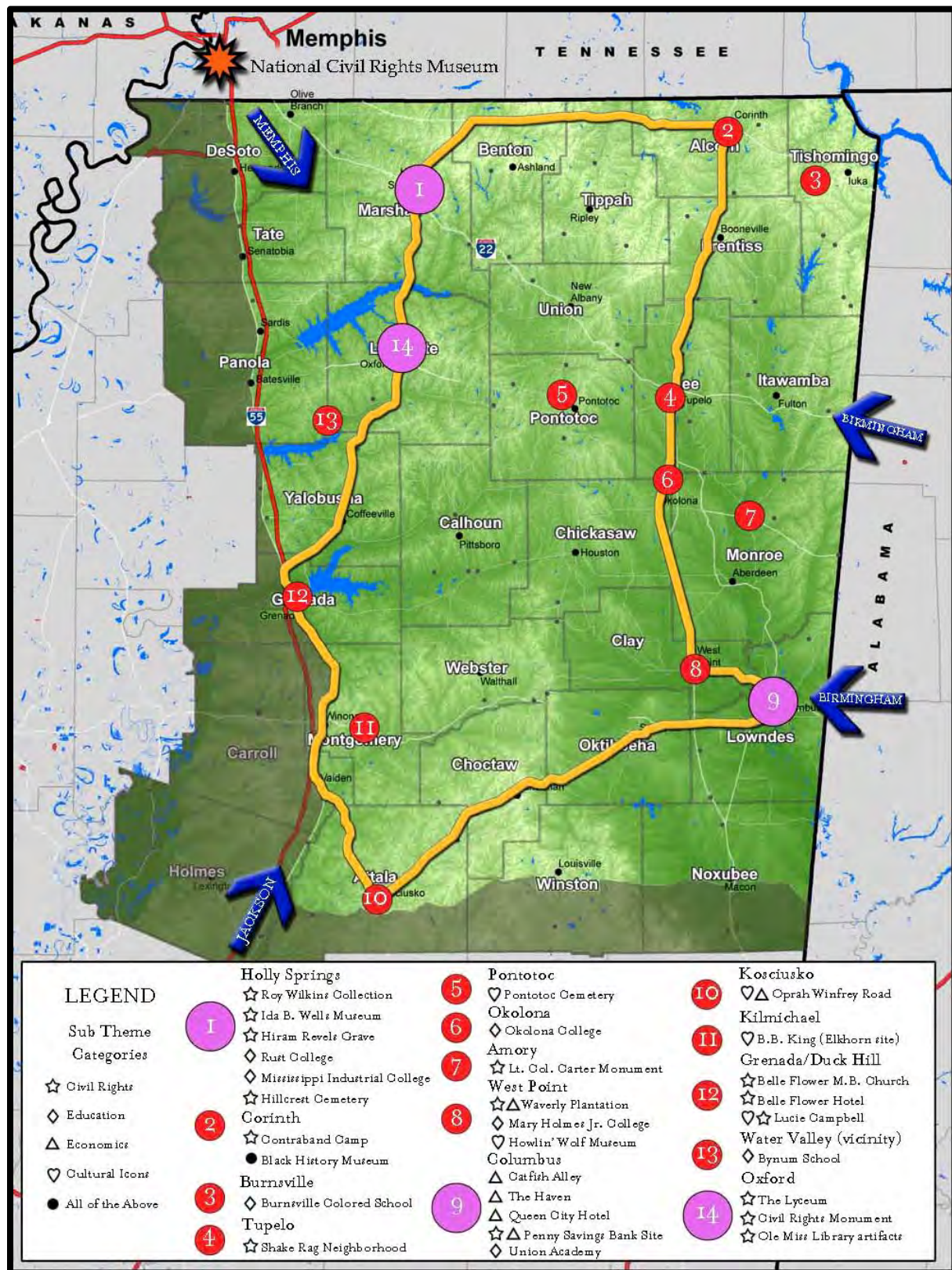
- Center for the Study of Southern Culture
- Mississippi State University
 - Charles H. Templeton, Sr. Ragtime Music Museum
- Starkville City Jail – Johnny Cash jailed here and it inspired his song “Starkville City Jail”
- White Station Juke Joints (Wolf Birthplace)
- Walter “Shakey” Horton (blues) hometown – Horn Lake
- Jimmie Lunceford (jazz) hometown - Fulton
- Mainstreet Vintage Guitars (Tupelo)
- Tammy Wynette (country) hometown – Tremont
- Elvis & Priscilla Honeymoon Cottage – Horn Lake (DeSota County)
- Memphis Minnie (blues) gravesite – Walls (DeSota County)
- Jerry Lee Lewis (rock n roll, country) current home (Nesbit)
- Howlin’ Wolf Blues Museum (West Point)
- Opry Family Theatre (Amory)
- Sandyland Road Juke Joint (Noxubee County)
- Graceland Too – shrine and museum dedicated to Elvis Presley (Holly Springs)
- Ruby Elzy (jazz singing great) Burial – Pontotoc Cemetery

See page 18 for the suggested tour route map for this theme’s interpretation.

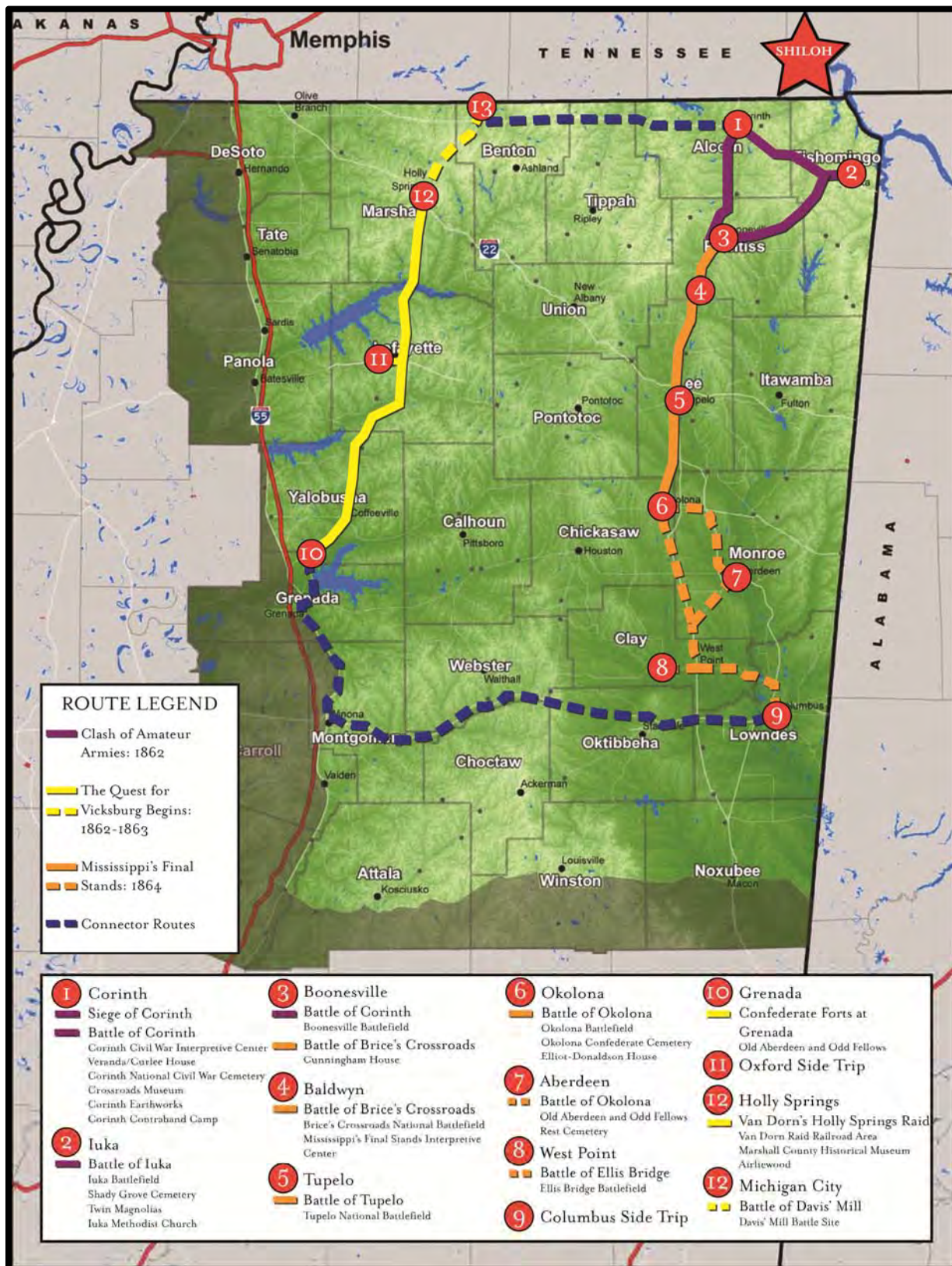
NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE TOUR



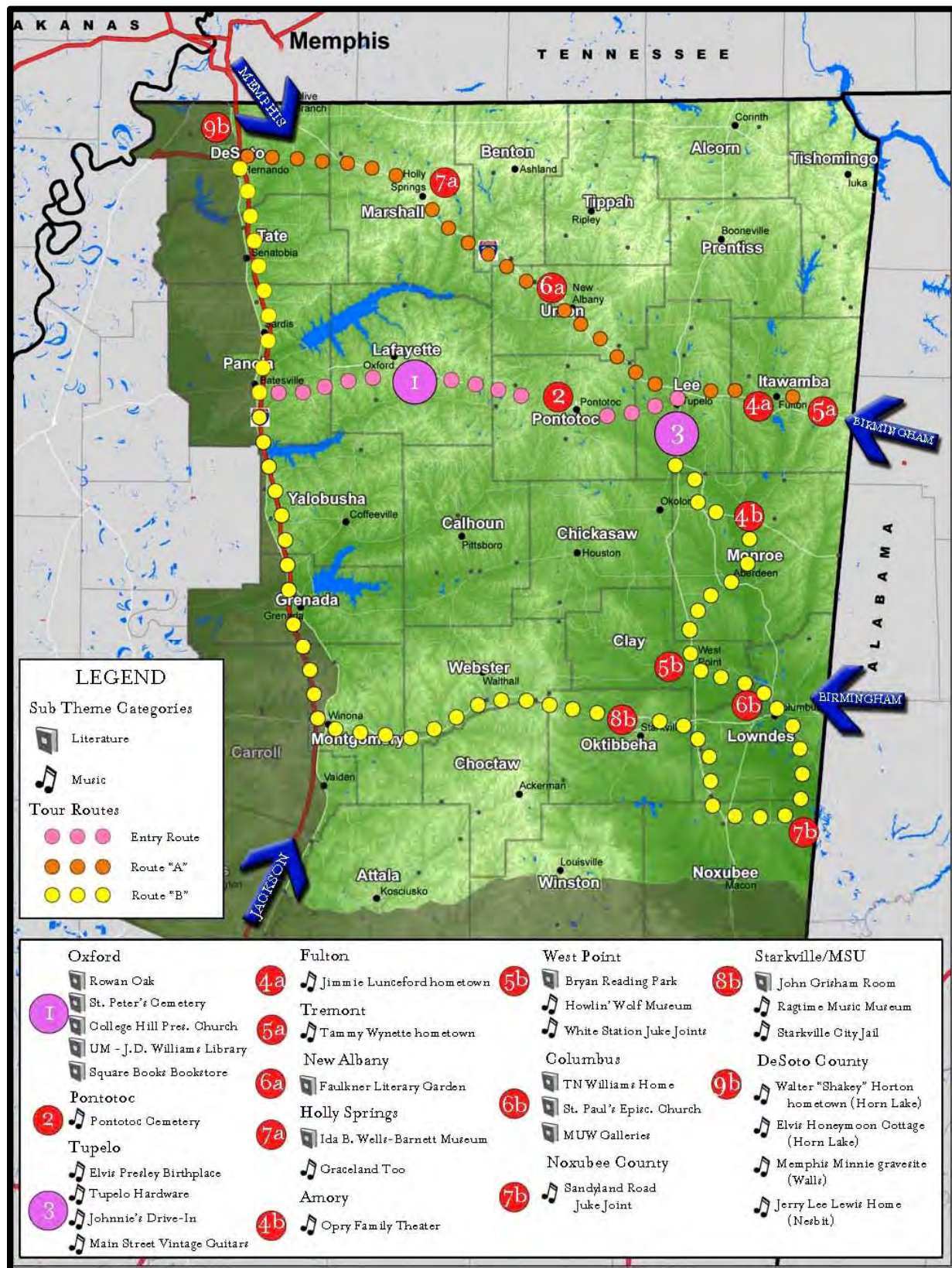
AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE TOUR



CIVIL WAR TOUR



ARTS TOUR: LITERATURE & MUSIC



SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

The Strategies section of this Management Plan is very comprehensive in addressing all of the key issues for the management of the MHNHA. Of the Strategy section's five goals and supporting objectives, only one specifically addresses interpretation, as follows:

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.

The balance of this Interpretive Plan will reiterate each of Goal 2's five objectives and concisely summarize the ideas associated with each objective as contained in the Strategies section, but will not repeat them in detail. However, this section will go a step further by including additional supplemental ideas for interpretation within the MHNHA.

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

As detailed in the Background Study of this Management Plan, there are four primary interpretive themes developed for the MHNHA: the Civil War, African-American Heritage, Native American Heritage, and the Arts (Music and Literature). Architecture is a secondary theme that relates to some of the primary themes. Each of these primary themes has a set of supporting sub-themes.

Summary of the Objective 2-A Strategies from the Strategies Section

- *Leverage the MHNHA's existing universities and colleges for conducting research into the MHNHA's interpretive themes.*

Elaboration of the Objective 2-A Strategies from the Strategies Section

- *Pursue grants for eligible research projects relevant to the MHNHA's interpretive themes.* To expand upon the more concise list contained in the Strategies section, below is a more detailed list of potential funding sources for research:
 - National Endowment for the Humanities (America's Historical & Cultural Organizations planning and implementation grants)
 - American Historical Association (Bernadotte E. Schmitt Grants, the Albert J. Beveridge Grant for Research in the History of the Western Hemisphere, the Michael Kraus Research Grants, and the Littleton-Griswold Grants)
 - American Antiquarian Society (offers visiting research fellowships for those interested in American history from colonial times to the Reconstruction era following the Civil War)
 - Lehrman History Scholars Summer Program (the Teaching American History grant program awards \$100 million of U.S. Department of Education funds to help teach American history in the country's schools)

- Phillips Fund Grants for Native American Research (offers grants for the study of Native American linguistics and ethno-history)
- Mississippi Archaeological Research Grant Program (the first grant year in 2006 provided nearly \$25,000 in grants to seven projects – each to a university conducting research)

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.

There are multiple resources available to learn more about how to record oral histories. Just one example is the book entitled “The Oral History Workshop: Collect and Celebrate the Life Stories of Your Family and Friends” by Hart and Samson.

Summary of the Objective 2-B Strategies from the Strategies Section

- *Identify the topics to be documented through oral histories based upon the MHNHA’s four interpretive themes and various sub-themes.*
- *Consider an oral history program that is managed by college students, but conducted using area junior high and high school students.*

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

Summary of the Objective 2-C Strategies from the Strategies Section

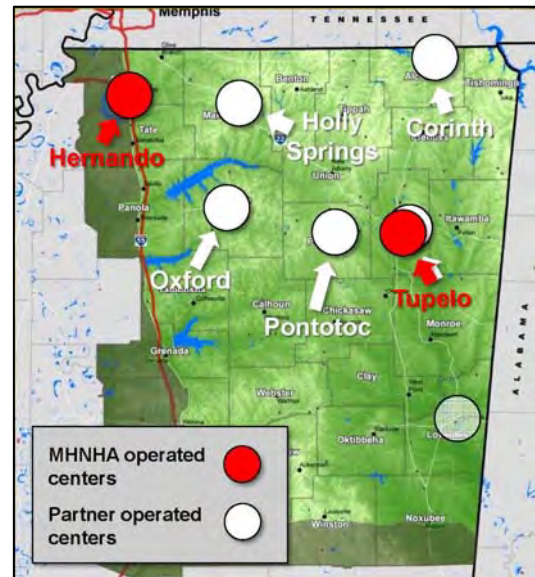
- *Work the MHNHA’s four primary interpretive themes into the curriculum related to American History in the grade schools and junior high schools.*
- *Pursue hands-on experiences and field trips related to the MHNHA’s interpretive themes for students.*

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

Potential new interpretive centers must be considered on a case-by-case basis. It is beyond the scope of this Management Plan to include a feasibility study for any one particular interpretive center. Rather than propose that the MHNHA initiate one or more specific interpretive centers, *this objective is to suggest a process by which the MHNHA can thoughtfully explore the establishment of one or more centers*, regardless of whether any centers ultimately come to fruition. It is critical to remember that federal NHA funding cannot be used to acquire real estate, and any development that might impact environmental resources will require following NEPA and similar regulations.

Summary of the Objective 2-D Strategies from the Strategies Section

- *Potential MHNHA-Sponsored Interpretive Centers:*
 - Main Interpretive Center: Tupelo
 - Gateway Interpretive Center: Hernando
- *Potential Partner-Sponsored Interpretive Centers:*
 - Native American Heritage Interpretive Center: Pontotoc or Natchez Trace near Tupelo
 - African American Heritage Interpretive Center: Holly Springs
 - Civil War Interpretive Center: Corinth
 - Arts Interpretive Center: Music: Tupelo
 - Arts Interpretive Center: Literature: Oxford



Elaboration of the Objective 2-D Strategies from the Strategies Section

Although potential locations for interpretive centers are summarized above and explained in this Management Plan's Strategies section, it has been emphasized that a feasibility study should be conducted to determine the viability and location of potential new centers. In fine-tuning these ideas, the following principles will be utilized for the siting of interpretive centers:

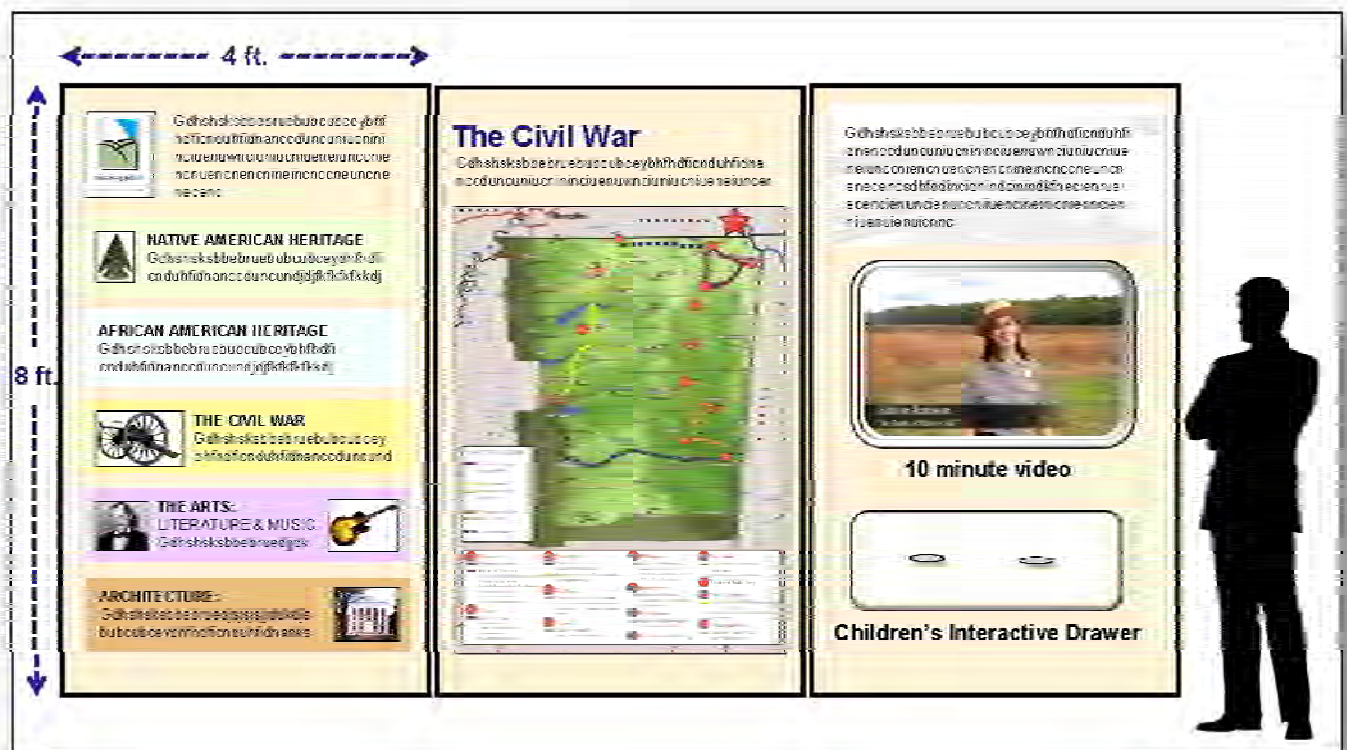
Principles for Locating MHNHA Interpretive Centers

- When possible, locate interpretive centers on or near key major transportation corridors, particularly at gateway locations into the MHNHA (I-55, Natchez Trace Parkway, etc.).
- When possible, locate interpretive centers near important cultural resources that relate to the theme of the particular interpretive center.
- When possible, locate interpretive centers in historic downtowns or similar significant places where the interpretive center can leverage economic spin-off benefits for the immediate area.

Exhibit Design

It is important to keep in mind that an interpretive center does not have to be large or extensive to be an effective center. Even an existing modest building can be adapted into use as an interpretive center while continuing to serve its previous function. For example, an existing historic house museum or a visitor's center could double as an interpretive center by simply dedicating one room (or even part of a large room) for interpretive space. The following page features a graphic for how to transform a space into an interpretive resource with the use of a multi-paneled exhibit. It is noteworthy that the principles conveyed by this graphic are consistent with many of the

characteristics found on the interpretive exhibits currently on display at the MHNHA offices in Downtown Tupelo.



Among the cost-effective approaches that might be used lieu of the development of new interpretive centers is to install interpretive panels in existing facilities. This concept illustrates a potential design.

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.

Summary of the Objective 2-E Strategies from the Strategies Section

- Encourage the development of theme-based tours at the community level where they currently do not exist, but could exist.
- Develop a series of driving tours tied to the MHNHA's primary interpretive themes. See pages 10-18 of this Interpretive Plan for more information on this idea.
- Work to expand the fledgling Roots of American Music Trail.
- Develop a "coffee table" type book for the MHNHA.

Elaboration of the Objective 2-E Strategies from the Strategies Section

- Develop a series of brochures for the MHNHA.

INTERPRETIVE BROCHURES: GETTING THE MESSAGE RIGHT

There are numerous opportunities in the MHNHA for the creation of brochures to assist in tourism development and site interpretation. As new brochures are developed and existing ones are enhanced, the following guidelines will be considered:

- **Develop your Theme** - The theme is the single big message that you need to present to the target audience and should be kept to one sentence. The content of the brochure then continues on the inside to continue and expand the story.
- **Know Who Your Audience Is** - Determine who your target audience is and the kind of audience who would visit your site on a regular or seasonal basis. Select the images which would best get their attention.
- **Create an Attention-Getting Cover** - The reader needs to be able to understand within five to ten seconds of looking at the cover what the subject of the attraction or site might be, what it offers, and if it looks of interest.
- **Create Interior Content Easy to Read** - The interior content should be able to tell the reader, through narrative and images, what they will learn, why the site or attraction is important, and why they should want to visit. Does the brochure have a clear theme or central message?
- **Do You Have Sufficient Maps or Directions?** - Sites and attractions should be easy to find through easy to read maps.
- **How Will You Distribute the Brochure?** - Will the brochure be designed to be mailed? If so then it will need to be designed to fit into a standard envelope. If it is to be distributed, how will this be accomplished and to whom for the greatest exposure to your market.

- *Utilize a variety of media for interpretation of theme-based tours.*

Telecommunications Tools – There are a variety of telecommunications technologies that can be used for interpretation. A younger audience, in particular, uses such technology. Examples of telecommunications tools that should be considered for the MHNHA's thematic tours include the following:

Cell Phone Audio Interpretation

Wayside exhibits, brochures and historic markers are now being created that have a call-in phone number at the site that is being interpreted. The viewer calls the number and gets an

audio message as they are standing at the site. This approach would be particularly applicable for the Civil War tour and for tours of properties in the downtown area and neighborhoods.

Cell Phone Apps

A cell phone app, sometimes called a mobile app, is any cell phone *application*, particularly those that are directly purchased and installed by phone users. These are Smartphone add-ons that perform functions other than making a phone call. The term "app" can be used to refer to any application for any device, but when used alone, it most commonly refers to software downloaded onto cell phones. An example of how apps can be used to interpret historic sites is Boston's Freedom Trail, which has 16 marked historical sites. This app has a written explanation, as well as a professional-quality audio and HD video component. There is also a map feature providing the viewer with specific directions along this walking trail.



The History Channel is one of many businesses and organizations that have developed historical tour applications for cell phones.

QR Codes

QR codes, which is an abbreviation for "Quick Response Codes," is the trademark for a type of matrix barcode (or two-dimensional code). This system has become popular due to its fast readability and large storage capacity compared to standard barcodes. The code consists of black modules (square dots) arranged in a square pattern on a white background. For historic interpretation, QR codes are linked to telecommunications resources that provide the same type of interpretive experiences (audio and video) described above for apps.

Interpretive Exhibits

PRINCIPLES OF SUCCESSFUL WAYSIDE INTERPRETIVE EXHIBITS

Successful panels attract the eye by guiding people to a historic landscape filled with compelling stories. These panels are designed to spark a desire for the reader to know more and connect people to place. The following are tips to achieve that success:

1. Identify the experience you want the visitor to have. After you identified the theme for your exhibits, specify what you want your visitor readers to know, feel, or do after they read them. Make sure every sentence in your text sticks to the purpose of the exhibit.
2. Give the story offered by the exhibit a name instead of the topic it introduces. Example: Instead of "*Corinth's Civil War Earthworks*" call it "*Defending the City.*"

3. Use photos, maps and images to tell the story. Use interesting graphics that avoid duplicating the view at hand.
4. Text supports the graphics, headings, and captions, not the other way around. Typically, text introduces the idea, sets the context, or leads the reader to further experiences.
5. Wayside exhibits should contain less than 100 words and feature no more than 4 graphic images.
6. Make your text interesting to read through the use of active verbs and by avoiding descriptive adjectives.
7. Think about how the story would be relevant to today's readers.
8. Make the MHNHA and other supporting organization logos visible and identifiable, but secondary to the overall story and graphics.
9. Create a mock-up of the final draft – if the narrative catches your eye more than the graphics, then you should rethink your design.
10. Make sure your text is correct – mistakes on wayside exhibits are expensive to change and can make the visitor question the accuracy of their experience.
11. Do a trial run with the design with potential audience members to get comments before implementation and creating the actual wayside exhibit.

- *Program the MHNHA with living history demonstrations at various key sites.*
- *Program the MHNHA with living history demonstrations at various events.*

The following demonstration types might occur at the following sites and event types tied to the MHNHA's four primary interpretive themes:

Native American Heritage Demonstrations

Because so much more is known about the lifestyles of the historic era Native Americans, as opposed to the prehistoric eras, it is recommended that most demonstrations occur at sites and events associated with the historic eras, which includes the various recognizable tribes (Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, etc.). Furthermore, most individuals who perform such demonstrations have Native American ancestry that can be traced to the historic era rather than the prehistoric era. Examples of the types of demonstrations that might occur include flint-knapping, finger-weaving, gorget-making, stickball, drum-making, woodcarving, blacksmithing, basket-making, pottery-making, and stone pipe-making. It is noteworthy,

however, that many of these demonstration types did occur during prehistoric eras as well, so such activities could occur at prehistoric sites (flint-knapping, gorget-making, woodcarving, basket-making, pottery-making, and stone pipe-making). These types of activities should occur at the following Native American sites in the MHNHA:

- Pontotoc Post Office Town Square Museum (features Native American exhibits and relics)
- Site of Chickasaw National Council House (Pontotoc)
- Site of Allen's Tavern ("town hall" of Chickasaw villages - Pontotoc)
- Topulkah's (Chief's House, Cate's Place - Pontotoc)
- Chief Tishomingo Home Site (near Baldwyn)
- Council House of Greenwood LeFlore – Choctaw Chief (French Camp – on Natchez Trace)

Living history should also be a key component of the potential new Chickasaw Interpretive Center being proposed by the Chickasaw Nation on the Natchez Trace Parkway near Tupelo if that project should come to fruition.



African American Heritage Demonstrations

Because the main topics associated with African American heritage are related to slavery, the civil rights movement, and similar topics, it is a theme that does not lend itself to living history demonstrations. However, there are some topics related to African American heritage that have themes with strong associations with other primary themes that can be interpreted through living history. Examples include the Civil War (African American Union soldiers) and the Arts (African American writers and musicians). Potential venues for living history demonstrations related to the Civil War might include the Black History Museum of Corinth and the Corinth Contraband Camp. Although writing is a difficult theme to interpret through living history, music clearly is not. Thus, the music of regional greats such as Howlin' Wolf and Otha Turner can be readily interpreted at relevant historic sites and special events.

Civil War Demonstrations

Civil War demonstrations (camp life, firing long arms and artillery, etc.) could occur at a wide variety of locations throughout the MHNHA, including the Corinth Civil War Interpretive Center and related Corinth sites (Contraband Camp, Curlee House, etc.), Brice's Crossroads Battlefield NPS park, Tupelo Battlefield NPS site, Iuka Battlefield sites, and the Okolona Battlefield sites, to name just a few. Because of the Civil War Sesquicentennial (150th anniversary) that is currently occurring, the timing for Civil War demonstrations at various sites

and events is particularly relevant and time-sensitive, as they can leverage strong heritage tourism gains that will not be available for another fifty years after 2015.

Arts Demonstrations: Music

As noted previously, literature does not generally lend itself to living history demonstrations. However, music clearly does. Not only can live music demonstrations occur at related historic sites, such as the Elvis Presley Birthplace & Museum in Tupelo and the Howlin' Wolf Blues Museum in West Point, but they are particularly well-suited for special events. There are already numerous music events in the region that, perhaps inadvertently, interpret the area's musical heritage, such as the North Mississippi Hill Country Picnic. However, Hills music should be introduced to other events that do not otherwise highlight the region's music, including literary events such as the Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference held in Oxford each July. Another potential venue for such music might be the Eudora Welty Writers' Symposium in Columbus.

**North Mississippi
HILL COUNTRY
PICNIC**

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1465 Old Oxford Road Waterford, MS

JUNE 24-25
TICKETS \$25.00/DAY

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NORTH MS ALLSTARS DUOLOCO	ROBERT BELFOUR
DUWAYNE BURNSIDE	SHANNON MCNALLY
GARRY BURNSIDE	ERIC DEATON
BLUE MOUNTAIN	JOHN WILKINS
JIMBO MATHUS	JOE AYERS
DAVID KIMBROUGH	DUFF BURROUGH
RIISING STAR PIPE & DRUM BAND	ROCKET 88
CEDRIC BURNSIDE PROJECT	TATE MOORE
	BLUE MOTHER TUPELO

Camping onsite \$15.00 • BYOB, Ice Chest \$10.00
Children 12 & Under: FREE • Food Vendors on Premises
WWW.NMSHILLCOUNTRYPICNIC.COM

The annual North Mississippi Hill Country Picnic is an event that inadvertently interprets the MHNHA's music heritage.