

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Mississippi Hills
National Heritage Area

BUSINESS PLAN SECTION

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

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A. Introduction

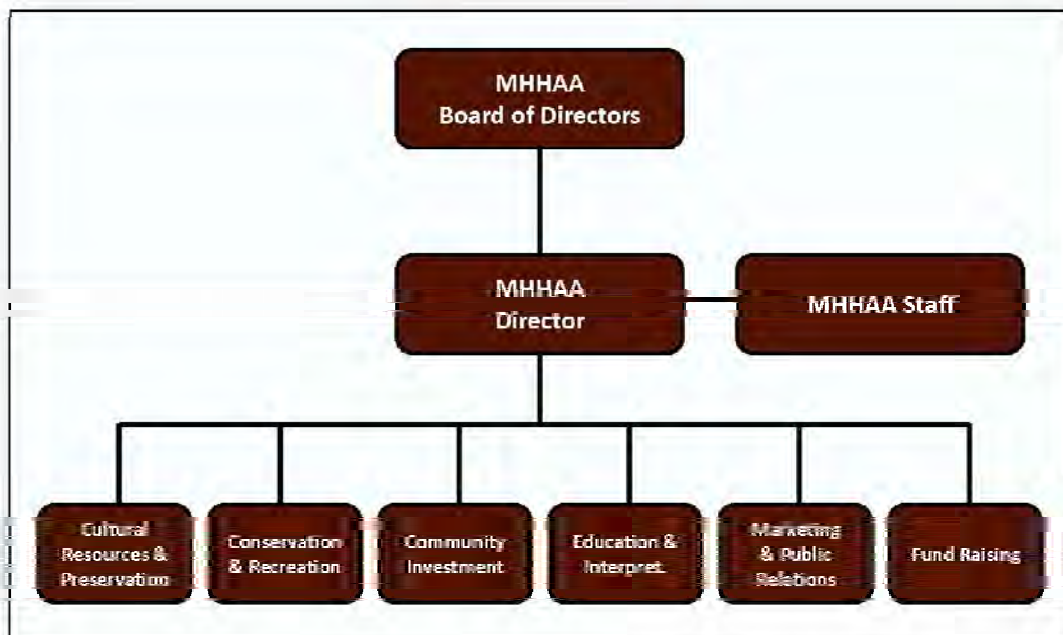
The National Park Service (NPS) recommends that every heritage area have a business plan to guide the local management entity and various heritage area activities. According to the NPS, the business plan “describes the role, operation, financing and functions for the local coordinating entity and of each of the major activities contained in the management plan; and provides adequate assurances that the local coordinating entity has (or will have) the partnerships, and financial and other resources necessary to implement the management plan for the National Heritage Area.”

B. Coordinating Entity Structure

This section describes the overall structure of the coordinating entity for the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA). An “organogram” is provided below which graphically summarizes the overall structure of the coordinating entity, the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance (MHHA). Included in this section is a description of the role of the coordinating entity as a facilitator for cooperation among various partners. The section also describes the key functions in terms of the types of tasks for which the entity is responsible. Finally, the section summarizes the overall operating structure, which includes a description of prospective staff responsibilities.

DESCRIPTION

The MHHA operates the Mississippi Hills Exhibit Center, located in Tupelo. Having its own offices and a small interpretation space with street-front location in one of the region’s primary tourism hubs provides a benefit in terms of exposure and marketing.



The management plan has proposed a primarily a facilitation role for the MHNHA's coordinating entity. The MHHA would help coordinate with partner entities in support of heritage tourism development, heritage preservation, and conservation through its partner's capacity, external resources and collaborations. A more diversified advisory board will support the MHHA through the committee structure and will help broaden the pool of resources for cultural resources and preservation, conservation and recreation, community investment, education and interpretation, marketing and public relations, and fund raising.

Partners

The MHHA benefits from a potentially broad and diverse array of partner organizations, as noted in the Strategies section of the management plan. Such organizations include the various universities, chambers, heritage associations, convention and visitors' bureaus, and others. A sample partner organization list is found in the Appendix of this Business Plan. The MHHA will engage with these partners to leverage funding and technical expertise in support of the heritage area's mission.



The heritage area's many universities are among key potential partners for the MHNHA.

Summary

The MHNHA local coordinating entity, the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance (MHHA), operates an office and small exhibit center in Downtown Tupelo. Because of its location in a major tourism hub, exposure for the MHNHA is automatically enhanced. The entity will focus on coordination and facilitation, and will benefit from a more diversified advisory board to assist the MHHA Director and staff in specific program areas. The MHHA will provide technical assistance and grant funding to the extent that such funding is available, and will also help leverage partnerships and funding for outside technical expertise.

KEY FUNCTIONS

The management plan proposes a set of key functions for the MHHA that relate primarily to *coordination and facilitation* of various program activities, as specified in the Strategies component of this management plan. The key functions include the following, summarized below:

- Secure Dependable Funding Sources in support of the MHNHA mission
- Engage a Diverse Set of Stakeholders to provide grass-roots support
- Establish Standards for Tourism-Ready Sites
- Engage in Marketing & Promotion for heritage sites and area as a whole
- Leverage Support and Expertise for research, education and interpretation

Secure Program Support

The Strategies section of the plan proposes the diversification of revenue sources for MHHA programs and services, above and beyond grant-based income (which it will still continue to pursue). For example, it is proposed that the MHHA expand its current membership programs to

include individuals. However, the MHHAA will also pursue more corporate sponsorships, which can help broaden and diversify the sources of funding over the long term. Building partnerships with local colleges, universities and other institutions can provide a ready source of in-kind contributions and services that help the MHHAA provide a broader range of services to its constituent counties and communities. Small fundraising events can also help broaden and diversify the funding mix, especially if logistics and operations are handled through partnership organizations. Occasional internships and consultant support will be contracted so that the MHHAA can provide fee-based services and other income-generating programs as possible.

Engage Diverse Stakeholders and Partners

The MHHAA will develop an even stronger regional network of sites, attractions and events by coordinating with key stakeholders and operators. The coordinating entity will continue to build leadership, such as by networking and joining key organizations, attending conferences, and accessing available leadership programs. The MHHAA will further diversify its board, create working committees, and further coordinate with existing associations and organizations. Also, in support of its program activities, the MHHAA will develop its fundraising capacity through various public and private partnerships, by establishing membership programs, pursuing corporate sponsors and grants, working with in-kind technical assistance providers, and conducting fundraising events. The MHHAA will also monitor challenges and success of efforts to meet its program goals and objectives, using a series of benchmarks and metrics as outlined later in this Business Plan.

Establish Tourism Standards

Strategies have already been proposed for the MHHAA to establish a system of standards for designating sites, attractions and events as “visitor ready” and “emerging,” to further develop the region’s tourism base. As such, the MHHAA and its partners will play an integral role in strengthening the overall visitor experience, thereby promoting the region’s heritage resources for tourism.



As a National Park Service park, the Brice's Crossroad battlefield is already a “visitor ready” site.

Engage in Marketing and Promotion

The MHHAA will expand its marketing and promotion of the area to increase heritage tourism as a means of enhancing the region’s economic development. In addition to strengthening and branding marketing collateral, signage, social and other emerging media, and web sites, the MHHAA will build a strong relationship with regional and national media to promote the region. A priority for the MHHAA will be to create and distribute theme-based maps and materials that build strong branding and thematic touring for the heritage area, above and beyond lists of sites. Such maps will include sites and attractions throughout the heritage area. The MHHAA will promote existing events and encourage the development of new events in the region tied to the heritage area’s primary themes.

Leverage Support for Research, Education and Interpretation

The MHHAA will leverage the region’s well-regarded colleges and universities to coordinate research into the MHNHA’s themes. The MHHAA will work with these universities and other

institutions to identify topics and pursue grants for eligible research and oral history projects relevant to the heritage area's themes. The MHHA will also work to encourage the incorporation of heritage area themes into the region's school curricula, youth experiences, and field trips.

It has been proposed in this management plan's Strategies and Interpretive sections that the MHHA develop a process for assessing the feasibility of interpretation center development, with several concepts proposed as a result of this management planning process. These concepts include a mix of MHNHA-sponsored and partner-sponsored centers. As noted previously, the market and financial viability of one or more interpretive centers would be tested thoroughly, including an identification of not only grant income sources, but also independent, site-generated revenue streams to support operations. Testing the operational feasibility of such centers will help improve the likelihood of sustainability of one or more centers. Regardless of future decisions regarding one or more interpretive centers, *federal NHA funding cannot be used for the acquisition of real estate or the development of interpretive centers. Also, NHAs have no land use and development regulatory authority*, and developments that might impact the natural and social environment would require following *federal environmental regulations* based upon NEPA and other relevant laws.

The MHHA will also encourage the development of theme-based tours at the local level where they do not currently exist. Again, a critical role for the MHHA in interpretation, marketing and promotion of the heritage area is the development of hiking, biking and driving tours tied to the MHNHA's primary themes and illustrated through maps. The MHHA can also help support and strengthen the Roots of American Music trail now under development. To the degree that funding is available, maps and other media will be developed for interpretation of the theme-based tours through communication tools, interpretive exhibits, brochures, books, and living history demonstrations.

Preservation and Enhancement

The MHHA will assist and collaborate with other agencies to identify sources of grants to assist and enhance "emerging" visitor sites. The MHHA will also provide (or collaborate with others to provide) technical assistance to the region's communities on implementation of heritage preservation and community enhancement policies. The MHHA will explore development of wayfaring and wayfinding programs throughout the heritage area. The MHHA will support development and enhancement of outdoor recreation facilities, such as greenways, along with associated businesses in the region. Finally, the MHHA will work with existing land trust organizations, historic preservation organizations, and willing land owners to protect heritage area lands through conservation or façade easements where appropriate. As noted elsewhere in this management plan, such an approach will not involve heritage area federal funding in land acquisition and it will not feature a regulatory approach – it will rely exclusively on the involvement of willing parties.



New Albany's segment of the regional greenway system is just one example of the enhancements that can occur at the community level.

OPERATIONS

To carry out the functions described above, the MHHAA will continue to operate as an independent non-profit entity. Staff currently includes two full-time members: a Program Manager and a Project Coordinator. Assuming this plan's budgeting projections can be met, on a more permanent basis, the entity will operate with two additional staff members who will bring to the organization additional expertise in heritage preservation, interpretation, funding, marketing, and tourism development. In addition to the four paid staff, the MHHAA will work with its partners to bring various external specialists in-house on a pro-bono or fee-for-service matching grant basis, depending on the project and the recipients' resources. This operating structure is defined in more detail below.

Permanent Positions

The four permanent positions will include an Executive Director (or "Program Manager"), Administrative Manager (currently "Project Coordinator"), Tourism and Marketing Manager (currently a part-time contractor), and Heritage Technical Specialist (a new position), as described below.

Executive Director - The Executive Director (currently operating as the "Program Manager") will direct and provide oversight for all operations of the MHHAA. The director will have primary responsibility for external relations, marketing, and partnership development; and will maintain and promote existing partnerships with the various tourism and heritage preservation organizations throughout the region. The Director will also direct fundraising efforts and build relationships with corporate sponsors with a goal of establishing a diverse and sustainable mix of funding sources to support MHHAA operations and assistance to community organizations.

Administrative Manager - The Administrative Manager (currently operating as "Project Coordinator") will continue to manage the administrative functions of the MHHAA, including in-house accounting, budgeting, non-research grant proposal writing, logistics, board meeting minutes, contracts and procurement, basic research, and other administrative activities as necessary.

Heritage Technical Specialist - This heritage research, conservation, preservation, education and outreach specialist will manage all research, technical assistance, and grants for heritage interpretation, preservation, and enhancement. This person will secure and manage partnerships for providing technical assistance (with a specialty in interpretation, preservation, and curatorial services); and will manage internship and pro bono historian-in-residence programs. This technical specialist will also provide technical expertise and assistance relating to strategic planning, funding, design, and the operation of heritage sites. This individual will oversee education programs, including transportation grants for school field trips to sites. The technical specialist will also help the Executive Director with grant writing and fundraising for heritage development programs.

Tourism and Marketing Specialist - A full-time marketing specialist position will be established to replace the current part-time contract marketing position. This person will oversee not only development and maintenance of the website and marketing materials, but also promotions, tour design and coordination, CVB and tourism services partnership development, database

management, and economic development promotion. The position will require a background in tourism marketing and management.

Volunteer and Non-Permanent Positions

The entity will benefit from the assistance of volunteers, interns, and grant-based temporary technical specialists as follows.

Historian-in-Residence (Non-Permanent Grant) - With sufficient funding, an occasional historian-in-residence can be recruited every 2-5 years through regional or national competitions to work with the MHHA on specific research or interpretation projects. This individual's tenure will be funded through sponsored grants and source institutions. The "historian" may also include musicians, writers, scientists, or others with a specific research link to one of the area's key themes.

Volunteers - Through its executive board, the MHHA will continue to seek the assistance of volunteers, particularly those with specialist technical backgrounds, to work on fundraising, events management, special projects, and other activities as required.

Interns and Assistantships - Students will be recruited through partnerships with area universities to gain credit for internships and assistantships through the MHHA. These individuals will work pro bono, but will more likely receive academic credit or a stipend for their work.

C. Budget & Funding Sources

The National Park Service requests that the management plan outline the budget amounts required for the operation of the coordinating entity to complete heritage area projects or initiatives. The costs and funding sources are to be identified in dollar amounts and in-kind contributions from anticipated or known partners. Identification of partner commitments helps provide reassurance that the heritage area has broad support and its program is sustainable.

OPERATING INCOME AND EXPENDITURES

The MHHA has already been operating with \$147,000 in federally-appropriated funds, plus another \$100,000 in State Division of Tourism Development funding and income generated through membership dues and contributions. Overall, the MHHA has a \$389,000 operating budget in FY2013, including \$95,040 in FY12 funds carried-forward. More than \$105,000 of the total budget was allocated for completion of the Management Plan, which is a one-time expense. For the purposes of this Business Plan, MHHA income and expenditures were forecasted for the five-year period from FY2014 through FY2018.

Income

State funds, membership dues, and in-kind contributions have helped the heritage area meet the matching requirements for receipt of the \$147,000 in federal funds. Ultimately, one key budgetary objective will be to further diversify the funding base for the MHHA so that it is less dependent on federal and state appropriations and is more financially independent over time.

As part of the strategy to diversify its funding base, it is assumed that income will be generated from a broadened combination of federal and state appropriations, sponsorships, membership dues, fundraising events, special project grants, and earned income. This budget is predicated on the assumption that the MHHA will continue to be awarded a National Park Service (NPS) appropriation through the Heritage Partnership Program, but with a higher target amount of \$250,000. At the same time, a decrease in state funding is anticipated over time based on the experience of state allocations nationwide. While there is absolutely no guarantee of federal (or state) appropriations, which tend to vary from year to year, it is important to set targets for meeting the objectives set forth by the Management Plan. The following table summarizes key budget targets for the MHHA.

TABLE 1. INCOME AND EXPENDITURES FORECAST, MHHA, 2014-2018					
Income	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
NPS Heritage Partnership Program	\$ 145,000	\$ 145,000	\$ 250,000	\$ 250,000	\$ 250,000
Mississippi Development Authority - Tourism	\$ 100,000	\$ 75,000	\$ 75,000	\$ 75,000	\$ 70,000
Corporate Sponsorships	\$ -	\$ 7,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 25,000	\$ 30,000
In-kind Contributions	\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 35,000	\$ 40,000	\$ 50,000
Special Project Grants	\$ -	\$ 1,000	\$ 8,500	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
Membership Dues	\$ 70,000	\$ 75,000	\$ 80,000	\$ 85,000	\$ 90,000
Earned Income / Technical Assistance	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 4,000	\$ 6,000	\$ 8,000
Fundraising / Events, Rentals	\$ -	\$ 5,000	\$ 8,500	\$ 12,000	\$ 12,000
TOTAL	\$ 345,000	\$ 338,000	\$ 476,000	\$ 503,000	\$ 520,000
Expenditures					
<u>Administration & Operations</u>					
Personnel (2) (Salary+Benefits)	\$ 108,000	\$ 114,000	\$ 144,000	\$ 150,000	\$ 158,000
Office Rent, Insur., Supplies & Contracts	\$ 43,000	\$ 45,100	\$ 48,300	\$ 50,400	\$ 52,500
Travel & Conferences	\$ 3,000	\$ 4,000	\$ 8,000	\$ 9,000	\$ 10,000
Exhibit Center Operations	\$ 10,000	\$ 11,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 13,000	\$ 14,000
Utilities	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 6,000	\$ 7,000
Membership Dues & Prof. Development	\$ 6,000	\$ 7,000	\$ 9,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 11,000
<u>Heritage Resource Development</u>					
Personnel (Salary+Benefits)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 55,000	\$ 57,700	\$ 60,000
Project Assistance Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 25,000	\$ 27,500	\$ 30,000
School Transportation Grants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5,000	\$ 7,000	\$ 9,000
Research Materials / Exhibit Center	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000
Resource Development & Interpretation	\$ 2,500	\$ 5,000	\$ 10,000	\$ 12,000	\$ 14,000
<u>Tourism & Marketing Specialist</u>					
Personnel (Salary+Benefits)	\$ 32,000	\$ 34,000	\$ 45,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 55,000
Collateral and Production	\$ 15,000	\$ 17,500	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000
Media	\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 30,000	\$ 32,500	\$ 35,000
Events/Festival Grants	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Web Site / New Technology	\$ 12,500	\$ 15,000	\$ 17,500	\$ 20,000	\$ 22,500
TOTAL	\$ 262,000	\$ 282,600	\$ 438,800	\$ 474,900	\$ 508,000
Surplus or Carryover / (Deficit)	\$ 83,000	\$ 55,400	\$ 37,200	\$ 28,100	\$ 12,000
*Note:	Includes volunteer hours, local administrative & technical assistance, professional services, research apprentice, etc.				
Sources:	MHHA Strategy, Comparable heritage areas, and RGDE.				

A conservative target has been set for special project grants or those grants generated by foundations and others for project or program-specific uses and not available for administrative operations. This amount should increase over time with the addition of technical staff. Based on FY2013 membership dues collections, it is anticipated that \$70,000 will be generated in FY2014 through member dues. However, other forms of fundraising will gradually supplant some of the dues requirements over time. FY2014 income will also include in-kind contributions with a volunteer value that will continue to be applied as part of the match. It is assumed that the MHHA will not generate any earned income in FY2014, but can grow such income over time with the addition of a technical staff member specialized in heritage conservation, preservation and interpretation.

Expenditures

The MHHA will generate expenditures relating to administration and operations, heritage resource development, and marketing and tourism. Under administration and operations, there will be two staff members (Executive Director and Administrative Manager) employed. In addition to personnel, administrative expenses include office equipment and supplies, conferences and travel, contracts, and memberships. It is assumed that there will be reduced professional service fees (e.g., for accounting) when such services are offered on a pro bono basis.

Heritage resource development (conservation, preservation, and interpretation) will be managed by one technical specialist, although interns and pro bono assistance will also be provided on a project-by-project basis. To the extent funding is available, other expenses will include: the issuance of project assistance grants (for outside consulting), transportation or other education and outreach grants; and costs for research materials, interpretation center materials, printing and distribution.

Marketing and tourism expenses include personnel (one tourism and marketing technical specialist), plus the cost of development and dissemination of marketing materials. Regular media expenses are included and any special media projects will be funded by outside sources. There will continue to be costs for revisions to and maintenance of the website and databases. It is hopeful that, sometime following the first five years of MHNHA operations, festival and event grants can be provided. Such grants can provide a “return on investment” for the NHA’s communities, but also build brand recognition for the heritage area and strengthening the area’s cultural heritage event products. Overall, the budget is balanced and will even yield end-of-the-year “carryover” funds, but it is based largely on “targets” for NPS and state appropriations, which are uncertain.

FUNDING SOURCES

As noted previously, the MHHA will be funded during the next five years through a broadened combination of federal and state appropriations and grants, fee-based services, project-related grants, donations, memberships, sponsorships, in-kind services, and fundraising events. Some of the key sources of funding are discussed below.

Federal and State Grants & Appropriations

The MHHA receives National Park Service (NPS) Heritage Partnership appropriations of \$147,000 per year, which is very close to the average amount (\$148,000 per annum) received by

heritage areas nationwide. Nevertheless, it is likely that the MHNHA will, over time, qualify for larger matching funds in the range of \$250,000. To help the heritage area meet its stated objectives, and to more effectively distribute resources and assistance to the large geographic area covered by the MHNHA, the proposed budget has set a target for \$250,000 in federal heritage area funding by FY2016. Aside from heritage area funding, the MHHA can also access grants from other federal agencies such as the National Endowment for the Arts, the Department of Agriculture, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Economic Development Administration, the Appalachian Regional Commission, and other federal agencies.

The State of Mississippi currently provides funding at \$100,000 per year through its Mississippi Development Authority/Tourism. The proposed budget conservatively estimates a reduction in the funding level to approximately \$75,000 per year by FY2015. These target amounts are based on the experience in other states, where funding for heritage areas has been reduced due to budget shortfalls.

Memberships & Sponsorships

The strategy for this management plan has reaffirmed the existing system of tiered memberships for board members, but proposes diversifying the board beyond only CVB representatives. The strategy also proposes the establishment of membership programs for individuals and businesses. Dues for these memberships are also set forth through the suggested strategy. Large corporations will be recruited as sponsors for major programs and initiatives, above and beyond regular membership fees. In return, corporations will receive recognition through branding and other rights associated with events, tour routes, merchandising, and similar means. Similarly, individuals and others will be encouraged to make donations above and beyond regular memberships, in return for various forms of recognition.

Fundraising Events

The MHHA has the opportunity to increase the scope and scale of fundraising events. Annual dinners, concerts, festivals, auctions, and other events could become an important fundraising tool for the heritage area. These events can also be used to bring stakeholders together from throughout the broad region that comprises the heritage area.



The MHNHA already has many established events to build upon.

In-Kind Services

Valuable contributions can be made in the form of technical assistance provided pro bono or through credited programs from Ole Miss, Mississippi State, and other institutions. The MHHA can help coordinate and access this assistance for the benefit of heritage area communities, sites, attractions, events, businesses, organizations, and tourism agencies throughout the region.

Fee-Based Services

In addition to technical services provided through partnerships with Ole Miss and others, the MHHA will also provide some fee-based services to assist various stakeholders. Ultimately, member organizations receive a number of benefits, including some free technical assistance and/or training. However, there will also be fee-based services available for larger projects or programs

(e.g., strategic plans) available through a competitive grant process for communities and attractions to the extent that such funding is available.

Income-Generating Programs, Merchandise and Facilities

Over time, the MHHA can generate additional earned income through programs, merchandising and facilities that serve the broader market base. The MHHA can contract for the development of branded merchandise to be sold throughout the heritage area, with profits shared between the site and the MHHA. The MHHA might, at some stage, opt to collaborate with other entities on the development of tour programs, or participate in the operation of a venue or facility where rentals or entrance fees might be charged for users. The advantage of these programs, merchandising strategies, and facilities is that they can provide a recurring income stream for heritage area operations, thereby reducing dependency on project grants and federal or state funding.

Project & Program Grants

The MHHA will continue to apply for various project and program grants through regional, national and international foundations, trusts, and other non-governmental organizations. There are a number of corporate foundations. For example, the Ford Foundation (\$413 million per annum), Chevron, Rockefeller, de Beers, and others focus some or all of their funding on arts and cultural heritage. Ford also has a focus on Native American arts and culture that could consider grants relevant to the MHNHA's themes. Community foundations provide funding for various local programs and projects. Conservation grants, also relevant to the heritage area, are sourced from a variety of organizations.

A variety of corporations provide sponsorships and grants for education programs, including museum interpretation and use of emerging technologies in interpretation. Companies and government agencies with important operations in the region will be targeted for corporate giving. Such companies include:

- Renasant Bank (HQ in Tupelo)
- BancorpSouth
- Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Mississippi, Inc. (TMMMS)
- Fusion Hospitality

Because these companies are headquartered or have major operations in the region, they are more likely to contribute to or sponsor heritage area activities in order to gain public relations exposure.

D. Performance Goals, Monitoring & Metrics

Performance measures are provided here to help evaluate management activities and project success. Performance goals are developed for the local coordinating entity (Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance - MHHA) and for the heritage area in general. The National Park Service (NPS) has stated that performance goals, benchmarks and evaluation provide useful feedback on heritage area efforts to indicate success and to determine if operational changes are required. In

addition, NPS notes that “Cooperative Agreements between the local coordinating entity and the Park Service may be a useful tool for evaluation because they define what work is to be done over a year period and lay out specific tasks each year. They can be used as benchmarks when compared to the actual work completed at the end of the year.” 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.”

KEY GOALS

Key goals and objectives have been established in the Strategy section of the management plan. The metrics and other performance measures should relate directly to the ability of the coordinating entity (MHHA) in meeting these goals.

- 1. Capacity & Diversification.** Develop the local coordinating entity (MHHA) into a highly-effective organization capable of implementing the management plan. A key element of this effort will be the broadening and diversification of board composition, partnerships, and funding sources.
- 2. Education & Interpretation.** Conduct research, education and interpretation relating to the MHNHA’s primary themes as a means of documenting and telling the story of the area’s unique heritage.
- 3. 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.
- 4. Community Enhancement.** Encourage and assist in community enhancement and development of tourist “infrastructure.”
- 5. 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.

KEY METRICS

As noted above, the measures for success should relate directly to the goals established for the coordinating entity, the MHHA. The following describes several key metrics for tracking, monitoring and measuring success. It should be noted that the goals have been established as ongoing tasks rather than as final targets. For example, preservation itself is an ongoing task; it does not “end” once the physical assets of a heritage site are preserved but is rather, an ongoing process of ensuring that the region’s historical sites will be available for interpretation, education, and enjoyment of future generations.

1. **Capacity & Diversification.** Enhancing the capacity of the coordinating entity to implement the management plan is a critical goal, particularly in these early stages of operations, as a prerequisite to that all other goals can be achieved. Key metrics include:
 - a. Stable or generally increasing operating funding levels over time.
 - b. Number of funding sources, illustrating the diversity of funding sources and sustainability of operations (with a lack of dependency on any one funding source).
 - c. Amount of funding leveraged from non-governmental sources.
 - d. Amount of earned income generated (through technical assistance programs, rentals, fundraising events, and other activities outside of grants or appropriations).
 - e. Staffing levels and professional and technical capacity.
 - f. A leadership program established for board members, committees and staff.
 - g. Board and committee members representing various heritage, tourism, demographic and economic factions in the region (illustrating the diversity of the board). Geographic diversity and coverage is also important, given that the MHNHA covers a vast geographic area.
 - h. Number and diversity of partner organizations providing direct support illustrating a broad base of partnerships. The number of new partnerships developed should also be tracked over time.
 - i. “Repeat” contributors and supporters (indicative of ongoing support), illustrating sustainable and ongoing support from a strong “stable” of partners and supporters.
 - j. Quality standards in place to rate “visitor-readiness” among the various sites, attractions, and events.
 - k. Number of volunteers and value of volunteer hours.
 - l. Value of external in-kind support, such as technical assistance.
2. **Education & Interpretation.** Research, interpretation and education are critical components of the overall mission of the MHNHA and its coordinating entity. Key metrics for tracking success in this arena include the following.
 - a. Numbers of students gaining access to area sites and programs with assistance from transportation grants and educational curricula leveraged or developed by the MHHAA.
 - b. Increased awareness of the region’s heritage (determined through surveys, etc.).
 - c. Number and value of research projects associated with the heritage area and its primary themes that are leveraged through MHHAA partnerships.
 - d. Number of publications and films generated based on research conducted or facilitated by the MHHAA and its partners.
 - e. Number and value of technical assistance projects provided (such as through partnerships enabled by MHHAA) for interpretation.
 - f. Design of themed tours, creation, and dissemination of interpretation material (maps and tour guides, etc). The creation of branded routes and maps is especially important, given the large geographic area covered by the heritage area and the need for linkages and tourism corridors to ensure the broadest appropriate coverage.
 - g. Number and types of media materials generated for interpretation services.

- h. Number of activities (e.g., feasibility studies for interpretation centers, funding of temporary or permanent street-front galleries, or touring shows) that are leveraged to help to bring collections closer to the public.
 - i. Funding secured for, and implementation of, interpretation signage.
 - j. Number of sites assessed and improvements in standards made for “visitor ready” sites through programs developed by the MHHAA.
 - k. Increased number of visitor-ready sites, attractions, and events.
 - l. Increased attendance at educational venues (lectures, films, forums, and museums).
- 3. **Preservation & Enhancement.** One of the primary issues impacting on the success of the MHNHA is the condition and operation of existing heritage sites, attractions and events. There is a need for strategic planning, preservation, and sustainable operation of the existing sites within the heritage area.
 - a. Number and value of technical assistance projects leveraged (such as through collaborations) for preservation and curatorial services at “emerging” sites.
 - b. Number of successful collaborations which have brought technical assistance to establish policies which reinforce community character or preserve sites.
 - c. Number of successful collaborations which resulted in the establishment of conservation and/or façade easements.
 - d. Number of “tourism-ready” sites.
 - e. Number of additional heritage sites meeting preservation and conservation standards.
- 4. **Community Enhancement.** The physical environment and context is very important in marketing the region for heritage tourism. There is a need to ensure that the environment is conducive to promoting heritage tourism. The coordinating entity, the MHHAA, can play an important role in coordination and facilitation for bringing technical expertise to communities to help them develop plans and strategies for enhancing their physical assets and leveraging tourism.
 - a. Number and value of technical assistance or facilitation initiatives leveraged for regional and municipal planning and other agencies to develop plans and policies, and to leverage infrastructure improvements to enhance community character.
 - b. A wayfinding/wayfaring program initiated.
 - c. Value of infrastructure funding and other investment leveraged through the use of plans, incentives and policies generated with the help of technical assistance leveraged by the MHHAA through partnerships and collaborations.
 - d. Number of recreational facilities or activities established (or further developed) through promotions and collaborations initiated by the MHHAA.
 - e. Number and value of technical assistance or facilitation initiatives on tourism services and support infrastructure leveraged through collaborations for municipal economic development or Main Street organizations.
- 5. **Marketing & Tourism Development.** The role of the MHNHA and its coordinating entity, the MHHAA, in tourism development should be measured and tracked over time to ensure maximum success. Possible metrics for measuring this success include the following:

- a. Number of events promoted, in part, through contributions (in-kind or financial) made by the MHNHA.
- b. New events established, in part, based on promotion, facilitation, and/or financial contributions made by the MHNHA.
- c. Number of articles written about the MHNHA in regional and national publications.
- d. Number of broadcast media output about MHNHA.
- e. Changes to the website, which include more diversity in terms of geographic coverage, and more tour maps and guides relating to the heritage area's key themes.
- f. Number of hits on MHNHA website, or on Twitter, Facebook and other social networking media.
- g. Use of apps and hand-held tour technologies in the MHNHA region.
- h. Requests for information received by MHNHA.
- i. Growth in attendance at MHNHA heritage sites, attractions, tours, and events over time. While such growth (or decline) cannot be attributed directly to the actions of the MHNHA, there should be some general indication of impact. Impacts can be assessed, for example, based on visitor surveys and interviews with operators.
- j. Increase in lodging room-nights, revenues, and tax revenues over time. Again, such growth (or decline) cannot be attributed directly to the actions of the MHNHA, but there should be some general indication of impact. This impact can also be assessed through regular visitor surveys and operator interviews.
- k. Increase in retail sales and tax revenues over time (with attribution based on surveys and interviews with Main Street organizations, operators, and others).
- l. Economic impacts of MHNHA, as determined from above (collected as through an economic impact study) on a regular basis (once per 3-5 years).

BENCHMARKS

In addition to regular monitoring and measuring of MHNHA progress in meeting key goals, there is also the need to benchmark MHNHA performance. Clearly, the closest and easiest comparable programs available for benchmarking are other national heritage areas recognized by the NPS. Perhaps most relevant are those national heritage areas located in the region, as well as those that offer similar themes and approaches for interpretation and tourism. Possible heritage areas with which to benchmark progress on a regular basis are the following:

- Mississippi Delta NHA
- Muscle Shoals NHA
- Upper Housatonic Valley NHA (Literary Heritage)
- Atchafalaya NHA (Literary Heritage)



The Muscle Shoals NHA is one of several potential "benchmark" NHAs for the MHNHA.

Progress against these other heritage areas will be benchmarked in terms of growth in attendance, fundraising, volunteer hours, in-kind contributions, and other factors outlined above.

Sample Partner Organizations For the MHNHA

Below is a sample of potential public and non-profit organization partners. The Implementation Plan features a more comprehensive list and indicates the role of each partner. The Appendices section includes letters of support and statements regarding their various roles in implementation.

US Fish & Wildlife Service
Mississippi Sweet Potato Council
US Forest Service
Mary Holmes College
Mississippi State Parks
Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway
University of Mississippi
Columbus Cultural History Foundation
Mississippi University for Women
Columbus Air Force Base
Rust College
Noxubee County Historical Society
Mississippi State University
Tippah County Historical Society
Southern Literary Festival (once located in
MHNHA)
TAP - Tishomingo/Alcorn/Prentiss County
Alliance
Tishomingo County Historical Society
Tanglefoot Trail
Chickasaw Nation
Mississippi Archeological Association

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Mississippi Hills
National Heritage Area

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN SECTION

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

Revised:
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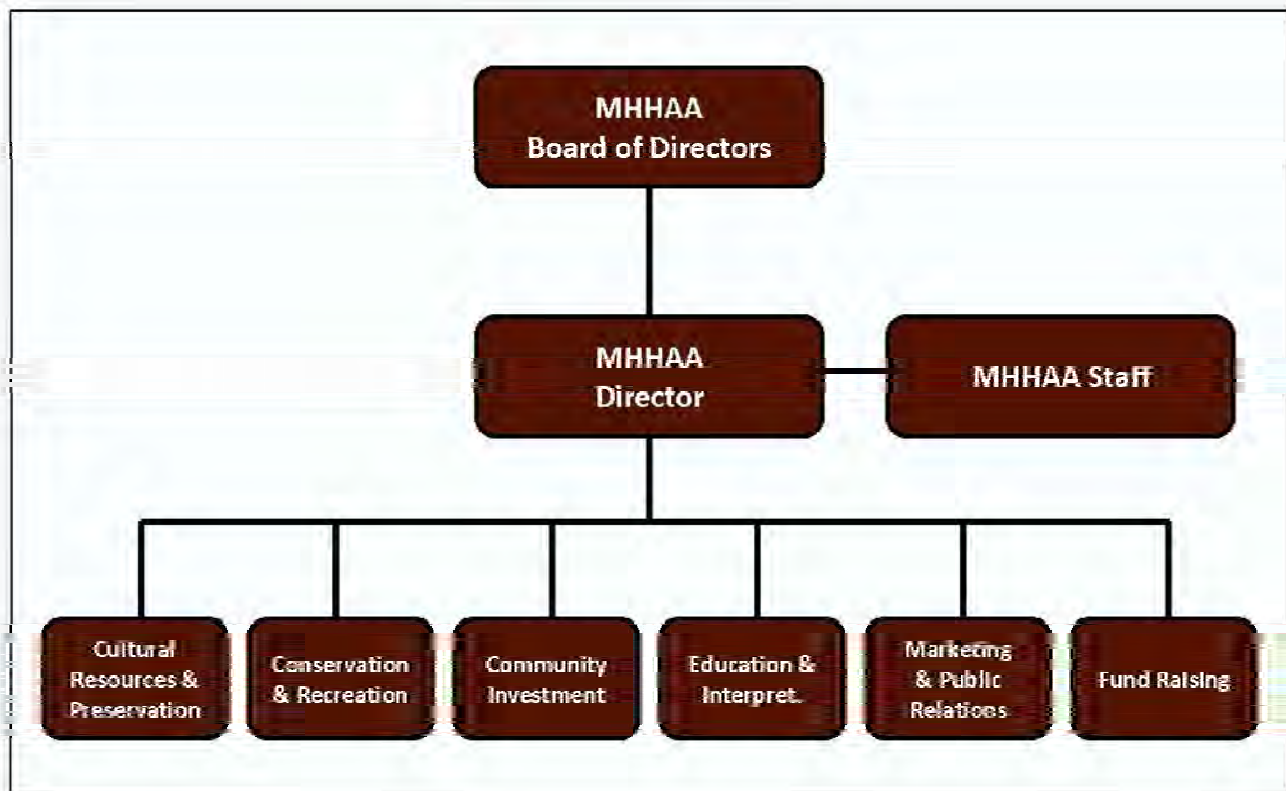
A. ORGANIZATION & RESOURCES

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE MHNHA

Graphically displayed in the chart below, the key components of the Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area's coordinating entity – the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance (MHHA) are as follows (in order of authority):

- MHHA Board of Directors
- MHHA Director
- MHHA Staff
- Committees

Each component of this organizational structure is described below.



MHHA Board of Directors

Objective 1-C of this plan's Strategies section states the following: "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." It further states that the MHHA should either diversify the Board of Directors or create a supplemental Advisory Board. At present, the MHHA board is

comprised solely of heritage area CVB directors, thereby neglecting other important facets related to research, interpretation, preservation, marketing, business, fund-raising, and similar heritage area functions. Diversifying the Board structure will require that the organization's by-laws specify a variety of board member types. If there are reasons that compel the MHHAA to continue with the current board composition, the supplemental Advisory Council should be created in accordance with "Section 9.03: Advisory Council" of the current bylaws.

Staffing

The four permanent positions will include an Executive Director (currently "Program Manager"), Administrative Manager (currently "Project Coordinator"), Tourism and Marketing Manager (currently a part-time contractor), and Heritage Technical Specialist (a new position), as summarized below and described in more detail in this plan's Business Plan.

Director

The Executive Director will oversee all operations of the MHHAA. They will have responsibility for external relations, marketing, maintaining and promoting partnerships with tourism and heritage preservation organizations, directing fundraising efforts, building relationships with corporate sponsors, and supervising staff.

Administrative Manager

The Administrative Manager (currently operating as "Project Coordinator") will continue to manage the administrative functions of the MHHAA, including in-house accounting, budgeting, non-research grant proposal writing, logistics, board meeting minutes, contracts and procurement, basic research, and other administrative activities as necessary.

Heritage Technical Specialist

This heritage research, conservation, preservation, education and outreach specialist will manage all research, technical assistance, and grants for heritage interpretation, preservation, and enhancement. They will also secure and manage partnerships for providing technical assistance, and they will provide technical expertise and assistance relating to strategic planning, funding, design, and the operation of historic sites.

Tourism & Marketing Specialist

Replacing the current part-time contract marketing position, this person will oversee maintenance of the website, development of marketing materials, promotions, tour design and coordination, CVB and tourism services partnership development, database management, and economic development promotion.

In addition to paid full-time staff, the MHHAA will also benefit from the assistance of volunteers, interns, and grant-based temporary technical specialists, as listed below and explained in more detail in this plan's Business Plan:

- Historian-in-Residence (Non-Permanent Grant)
- Volunteers
- Interns and Assistantships

Committees

Six specific topic-based committees will be established. Committee members will not be limited to board members. Some of these committees will assist with a particular function of the MHNHA, while others will address a specific topic. The proposed committees include the following:



Cultural Resources & Preservation Committee

Since the heritage area is dependent upon the preservation of cultural resources, this committee is critical. It will address all issues related to cultural resources and related preservation efforts. The committee's focus on cultural resources will be limited primarily to resources with a direct link to the MHNHA's primary interpretive themes - Native American heritage, African American heritage, the Civil War, and the Arts. Committee members should include individuals involved with cultural resource management and historic preservation, including directors and board members of organizations that manage historic sites, members of local historic preservation commissions, academic institution history teachers/professors, and local historians.

Conservation & Recreation Committee

This committee will focus on natural land conservation efforts, including acquisition of open space for public use and conservation easements for private lands. As noted throughout this plan, *federal funds obtained through the NHA cannot be utilized toward property acquisition. Nor does the NHA have land use and development regulatory powers.* This committee will include representatives from the state and regional land trusts, governmental entities involved with conservation, and private entities such as the Sierra Club. In addition to natural resources, this committee will address outdoor recreational activities, such as boating, fishing, hunting, hiking, cycling, canoeing, and rafting. Committee members focusing on this mission will include Parks and Recreation Department staff from local governments and leaders of clubs for fishing, hunting and related activities.

Community Investment Committee

This committee will address everything that is “bricks and mortar” for the MHNHA. It will be involved with investing in the physical aspects of the heritage area to improve its condition and make it more livable, more attractive to visitors, residents and businesses, and to help improve the overall quality of life. Key participants for this committee will include Main Street program managers, planning directors, and community redevelopment officials from the MHNHA's various communities.

Education & Interpretation Committee

This committee will be comprised of local historians, history academics from area universities (University of Mississippi, Mississippi State, Rust College, Mississippi University for Women, etc.), museum operators, anthropologists (including archeologists and ethnographers), and others with expertise and interest in the area's history and culture.

Marketing & Public Relations Committee

This committee will consist of marketin and public relations professionals, CVB representatives,

Natchez Trace Compact, and others involved with tourism, including tourism-related businesses (hospitality, dining, specialty retail, etc).

Fund-Raising Committee

This committee may be the most important committee of all because of the critical nature and unique issues associated with fund-raising. As noted previously, anticipated changes to the NPS's treatment of NHAs and their funding will only make this issue even more significant. This plan's Business Plan section addresses fund-raising strategies in detail.

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

Members

To both generate revenue and encourage commitment among those who will benefit from and contribute toward the MHNHA, two different categories of memberships shall occur:

Convention & Visitors Bureaus (CVBs)

The current three-tiered membership structure for CVBs will be continued. It is based upon their annual tourism-generated tax revenue as calculated by the State and 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, and there is also a \$500 non-voting membership category.

Other Member Types

The Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area has been offered as a potential model for other membership types. It includes the following categories: Individual & Senior - \$25; Family - \$45; Supporting - \$75; Premium - \$125; Patron - \$250; Benefactor - \$500. While there is a range of benefits for membership in the Rivers of Steel NHA, the MHNHA will need to develop further for MHHAA membership to provide sufficient benefits to its members to be attractive.

This plan's Strategies section also includes a proposal for corporate sponsorships.

Other Personnel

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

Technical Consultants

Technical expertise will be provided through both in-house staff and consultants. The staff technical expertise has already been addressed both in terms of the specific positions and their pay ranges within this plan's Business Plan. Contingent upon sufficient funding, technical consultants will be employed as needed to the extent that the staff technical assistants lack the time or level of expertise needed for specific projects. For the purposes of planning and budgeting, it is assumed that approximately half of the time for consultants will be hired directly by the MHHAA, while the heritage area's various partners will account for the balance of the time for consultants utilizing funding from the MHNHA.

Legal & Financial Expertise

An organization such as the MHHA may occasionally need legal and financial expertise. Needed legal expertise might include reviewing draft contracts with consultants and addressing legal liability issues for board members and for sponsoring special events. Examples of financial expertise that may be needed include preparing financial statements, setting up bank accounts, dealing with audits, and similar accounting needs. An approach used by many such organizations is to appoint board members who can volunteer these areas of expertise. Consequently, this plan's Business Plan assumes that no expenses will be incurred for these areas of expertise.

RESOURCES

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

Offices

The MHHA office is currently housed on Main Street in the Fair Park District on the edge of Downtown Tupelo. The existing space should be able to accommodate the four recommended staff members, not including interns and other part-time staffing. It is proposed that this space continue to be utilized, although the use of interns and other part-time staffing may require that additional space within the same building be provided. Because the landlord has office furniture and equipment provided that is on-loan for the short term, it is estimated that some office furniture purchases will be necessary in the future. Although not tied to staffing needs, the potential expansion of the interpretive exhibit space currently adjacent to the

MHHA offices could impact the office space as well.



The MHHA's offices on the edge of Downtown Tupelo should be suitable for future needs.

Transportation

While the Mississippi Hills NHA covers a relatively large area with 30 counties, the office headquarters in Tupelo are somewhat centrally located (although a bit to the east of center). While staff will definitely need to circulate regularly throughout the heritage area, it is not proposed that the MHHA purchase or rent one or more vehicles. Instead, employees will utilize their own vehicles and keep a mileage log to be reimbursed according to mileage. If taking this approach results in significant dissatisfaction among the staff or other problems, the idea of buying a MHHA-owned vehicle should be revisited. At this point, ownership of a vehicle has not been factored into the budget within this plan's Business Plan, although "travel" has been budgeted to accommodate reimbursements.

Other Resources

Other resources that will be required to keep the MHHAA functioning include the typical office support resources, such as office furniture (desks, chairs, etc.), office equipment (computers, a printer, a digital projector, telephones, cell phones, cameras, etc.), various office supplies (ink cartridges, paper, folders, envelopes, labels, etc.), utility and telecommunications expenses (phone bills, website hosting, internet, etc.), and related items. Because the MHHAA already has office furniture and equipment in its offices, it is estimated that future such purchases will be infrequent, although supplies and similar expenses will be ongoing.

B. STRATEGIES SEQUENCING & RESPONSIBILITIES

The matrix provided on the following two pages 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)

Although the timeframe only addresses the first five years of the MHNHA's existence upon completion of this plan, the heritage area is clearly expected to exist long beyond that time horizon. However, attempting to forecast this plan's implementation steps beyond that timeframe would not be a useful exercise given that the plan will need to be revisited by that time since much will have changed.

The objectives contained on the following two pages have been organized by the Strategy sections five goals. Below is an overview of each:

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.

This goal focuses on building the MHHAA as an entity so it can effectively accomplish the goals for the heritage area. With the exception of leveraging organizations such as chambers of commerce, the National Park Service (NPS), and the Alliance of National Heritage Areas (ANHA), this goal's supplemental objectives will rely exclusively on the efforts of the MHHAA. Furthermore, each objective will be initiated during the first year ("near term") following this plan's adoption and will continue throughout the MHNHA's existence.

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.

Two of the strategies proposed for this goal - research into interpretive themes and utilizing tools/media for interpretation - will be initiated during the first year ("near term") after this plan's adoption, while the balance will occur during years two and three ("mid term"). The strategies that

are considered more pressing are those that relate directly to interpreting the heritage area, such as further research into themes, the development of thematic tours, the creation of interpretive materials (brochures, web-based tools, etc.), and the programming of living history demonstrations. Strategies considered less urgent are those such as the establishment of oral history programs and educational curriculum for area schools. While it would be desirable to have the potential interpretive centers developed within the near term, it is recognized that this strategy is the most ambitious and will take time. Thus, the serious exploration of this concept is suggested for the years two and three (mid term) timeframe. While the MHHAA will need to spearhead these strategies, most will require partnerships with other entities, such as the local schools.

3) Preserve and enhance the Heritage Area’s numerous natural and cultural resources, particularly those with a clear link to the MHNHA’s primary themes.

The strategies tied to this goal that will be initiated during the first year after this plan’s adoption relate to the improvement of the quality of various historic sites and attractions. Because the heritage area will have only one chance to make a first impression on heritage tourists, it is vital that sites and attractions that the MHHAA might promote have a high level of quality to avoid disappointing visitors and giving the heritage area a negative reputation. Tasks to be initiated during the second and third year timeframes (mid term) relate to less pressing issues, such as land preservation, historic building preservation, and the enhancement of commercial corridors and historic downtowns. Key partners for these efforts will include local governments, property owners, and historic preservation and conservation groups.

4) Encourage community enhancement and the development of tourism “infrastructure.”

This goal consists of only three strategies – the enhancement of quality of life and community character, a wayfaring and wayfinding program, and the development and/or enhancement of outdoor recreational facilities and opportunities. Because all three issues cannot come to fruition overnight, they have been deferred to the mid term (years two and three) timeframe. They will also require partners to the MHHAA who will need to take the lead role, including local governments, chambers of commerce, Main Street programs, and similar other entities.

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

All three of the strategies for this goal will be initiated in year one (near term) because they are all marketing efforts that can be accomplished within a relatively brief amount of time and they are important to jump-starting increased tourism. One of these tasks – continued maintenance of the MHNHA website – will only require some recommended revisions generated by this plan. Likewise, networking using social media is a tool that can be implemented quickly at very little cost. Of this goal’s three strategies, the only one that cannot be achieved solely by the MHHAA will be the promotion and establishment of special events, which will rely on the joint participation of partners.

The following two pages feature the matrix just summarized above.

No.	Recommendation (page numbers reference the Strategy section of the plan)	Page #	Responsible Party	Time-Frame
1	Develop the MHAA (local coordinating entity) into a highly-effective organization			
1-A	Establish a leadership program to help maintain the effectiveness of current board members, committees, and staff	3-4	MHAA	Near Term (Yr. 1)
1-B	Secure dependable funding sources both to match available federal funding and to sustain the MHNHA in the long-term	4-6	MHAA	Near Term (Yr. 1)
1-C	Involve a broad cross-section of MHNHA stakeholders for diverse perspectives and to build a strong grassroots foundation	6-8	MHAA	Near Term (Yr. 1)
1-D	Develop a network of partner sites, attractions, and events that meet minimum standards of quality to be promoted in the MHNHA	8-9	MHAA	Near Term (Yr. 1)
1-E	Establish a promotional program that markets the NHA's sites, attractions, and events, as well as the MHNHA as a destination	9-11	MHAA	Near Term (Yr. 1)
2	Conduct research, education and interpretation related to the MHNHA's primary themes			
2-A	Support, sponsor or conduct additional research into MHNHA themes	12	MHNHA	Near Term (Yr. 1)
2-B	Establish an oral history program utilizing high school and college students to record histories from individuals	12-13	MHAA & area schools	Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3)
2-C	Create an educational curriculum within the NHA's grade schools and high schools to teach the primary themes	13-14	MHAA & school districts	Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3)
2-D	Explore the development of an interpretive center for the MHNHA	14-17	MHAA & partners	Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3)
2-E	Utilize a variety of tools and media for interpretation, including tours/itineraries, printed materials, and new technologies	17-21	MHAA & partners	Near Term (Yr. 1)
3	Preserve and enhance the Heritage Area's numerous natural and cultural resources			
3-A	Adopt minimum standards of quality to insure "tourism readiness" for partner sites and to be an incentive to "emerging" sites	22-23	MHAA	Near Term (Yr. 1)
3-B	Provide technical assistance and help identify grants for tourist-ready and emerging sites and attractions	23-24	MHAA	Near Term (Yr. 1)
3-C	Work with existing land trust organizations and willing land owners to protect lands through conservation easements	24-25	MHAA, land trusts & owners	Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3)
3-D	Partner with preservation groups to work with willing property owners to protect historic resources with facade easements	25-26	MHAA, pres. orgs. & owners	Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3)
3-E	Assist communities with technical assistance to establish public policy tools to preserve resources and reinforce character	26-27	MHAA & communities	Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3)
4	Encourage community enhancement and the development of tourism "infrastructure"			
4-A	Help identify technical assistance for public policy strategies to improve quality of life and enhance community character	28	MHAA & communities	Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3)
4-B	Explore the development of a wayfaring and wayfinding program	28	MHAA & partners	Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3)
4-C	Support the development and/or enhancement of outdoor recreational facilities and opportunities	28-30	MHAA & partners	Mid Term (Yrs. 2-3)

No.	Recommendation	Page #	Responsible Party	Time-Frame
5	Establish the MHNHA as a viable and attractive visitor destination through branding and marketing			
5-A	Promote existing special events tied to the history, cultural traditions, and themes of the MHNHA, and create/promote new events	31-32	MHHAA & partners	Near Term (Yr. 1)
5-B	Maintain the MHNHA website to highlight the primary themes, attractions, tours, and a schedule of events	32	MHHAA	Near Term (Yr. 1)
5-C	Utilize conventional means to promote the MSHHA and its attractions, as well as internet-based social networking, etc.	32-33	MHHAA	Near Term (Yr. 1)

C. FIVE-YEAR WORK PLAN

Consistent with the Strategies Summary matrix contained in the previous section of this Implementation Plan, below is a list of strategies for each of the timeframes during the MHNHA's first five years following this Management Plan's adoption. The three timeframes are organized as follows:

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

The timeframe associated with each strategy below indicates *the timeframe during which each strategy will be initiated*. Depending upon the type of strategy, many of them will occur continuously after their initiation. For example, "Strategy 1-A: Establish a leadership program to help maintain the effectiveness of current board members, committees, and staff..." is a strategy that will continue throughout the life of the heritage area. However, some strategies will occur only as long as needed for their achievement. An example would be "Strategy 2-D: Explore the development of an interpretive center for the MHNHA." Once a feasibility study is prepared for one or more potential interpretive centers, and once the viable centers (if any) are developed, this strategy will obviously not require ongoing implementation.

NEAR TERM: YEAR 1

The initial year of the MHNHA's operation after the adoption of this management plan will focus on strengthening the coordinating entity, interpretation, and marketing. In particular, the easy and/or inexpensive projects ("low hanging fruit") will be pursued. An example of a project that will not be pursued at this point is the exploration of the development of one or more potential interpretive centers. This does not mean that meetings and early planning should not occur, but such a substantial undertaking will be difficult to focus on without distracting from the various strategies listed below for Year 1. Below are the near-term tasks organized by goals:

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.

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

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.

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

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.

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

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

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

MID TERM: YEARS 2-3

The strategies listed below focus on research, education, and interpretation, as well as the preservation and enhancement of cultural resources and places, and community improvements. Below are the mid-term tasks organized by goals:

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.

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

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.

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

conservation easements.

- 3-D: Partner with existing historic preservation organizations and other entities to aid willing property owners in protecting historic resources through facade easements.
- 3-E: Assist communities within the MHNHA with technical assistance to establish public policy tools which help preserve heritage assets and reinforce community character.

4) Encourage community enhancement and the development of tourism “infrastructure.”

- 4-A: Aid communities in identifying sources of technical assistance for creating public policy strategies which improve quality of life and enhance community character.
- 4-B: Explore the development of a wayfinding and wayfinding program that identifies the NHA boundaries along major thoroughfares within the region and also identifies key heritage area communities and heritage assets.
- 4-C: Support the development and/or enhancement of outdoor recreational facilities and opportunities.



A small part of the needed wayfinding program for the MHNHA was recently addressed when the NPS installed signage indicating entry into the heritage area at gateway points along the Natchez Trace Parkway.

LONG TERM: YEARS 4-5

Although a three-tiered timeframe was initially determined as a reasonable approach to implementation of this plan's recommendations, that idea was ultimately abandoned. Once detailed consideration was given to each of the plan's strategies, it was concluded that none of them warranted waiting four or more years to initiate implementation. However, as plan implementation evolves in the future and the plan is reconsidered and updated, it may make sense to push some of the strategies into the "long term" phase of four to five years out.

D. KEY PROGRAMS & PROJECTS

The various programs and projects described below have already been explained in this plan's previous Strategies section. However, rather than addressing the broader aspects of these concepts, the text below will focus on their more detailed implementation considerations.

PROGRAMS

There are several programs to be carried out by the MHHA, including: initiating a leadership program (Objective 1-A), offering fee-based services to provide technical expertise and generate revenue (Objective 1-B), and establishing an oral history program utilizing high school and/or college students (Objective 2-B). However the most significant program warranting further elaboration here is the program of designating "visit ready" and "emerging" sites/attractions to insure a minimum level of standards to elevate the quality of visitor experiences (Objective 3-A). This program is explained in further detail below.

Visitor Ready & Emerging Sites/Attractions Program

The purpose of this program for "visitor ready" resources is to be able to promote sites, attractions and events that meet a minimum standard based upon best practices so that visitors to the MHNHA are not disappointed by resources that fail to meet their expectations. Conversely, the parallel program of "emerging" sites and attractions will identify those that are not yet deemed visitor ready per the best practices standards, but whose operators seek to achieve such status. The benefit of being determined "visitor ready" is that the MHHA will aggressively market them, while the advantage of being designated "emerging" is that technical assistance and other resources will be targeted toward them. Standards to determine visitor readiness will address the following key factors:

Standards for Site/Attraction Evaluations

- Sufficient wayfinding
- Parking
- Visitor comfort amenities
- Standard days/hours of operation
- Physical maintenance of the site
- Historic authenticity and integrity
- Accurate and effective interpretation

These considerations are expanded upon further within the Strategies section of this plan. Because of the potential political nature of applying the standards and the need for clear objectivity, it is recommended that a small panel of experts (3 to 5) be appointed to administer the standards and to make the designations. Ideally, for the initial round of evaluations, the panel's experts will live and work outside of the MHNHA, and it is proposed that they consist of staff from other NHAs. Once

that initial round of evaluations occurs, a more local panel (5 to 10 people) will likely be needed and might be comprised of area CVB representatives and similar professionals. Each of the evaluation considerations listed above could be rated on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest score and 10 being the highest.

First Steps

1. Fine-tune the criteria, if needed
2. Assemble the evaluation panel
3. Implement the initial round of evaluations

Project Assistance Grants Program

It is explained in this plan's Strategies section that the heritage area will establish a grants program to help its various partners secure technical assistance as needed. 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. The following criteria will be applied to grant applications by the MHNHA organization:

Selection Criteria for Grants

Extent of Need: Funding should be limited to applicants who truly need it to achieve their missions.

Benefits to the MHNHA: While funding might benefit a particular applicant, that does not mean it will be significantly beneficial to the heritage area. Projects that relate directly to the NHA's three primary interpretive themes should be considered particularly beneficial. One litmus test question for this consideration is "How does this project relate to the MHNHA Mission Statement?"

Amount of Match & Leveraging: In general, applicants matching the sought funding with the highest percentage of match funding should be given a higher level of consideration. Similarly, leveraging other funding sources will be viewed favorably. While cash should be at least part of the applicant's match, in-kind services should also be considered.

Capability of the Grantee: This consideration relates to the abilities of the entity seeking funding. Applicants with sufficient staffing to successfully implement the proposed project and with a positive track record on similar projects should be given the highest consideration.

Grants will not be given for operational costs of sites/organizations or the acquisition of property. While it may not need to be completely precluded, funding of physical improvements will be allowed only in special cases, if at all. An exception might be the emergency preservation of some threatened cultural resource closely associated with one of the MHNHA's primary interpretive themes.

A grant program will require a very clear and systematic approach, including annual funding cycles, an application for those seeking funding, and the objective application of the criteria listed above. It

will also require project monitoring, compliance, reporting, and similar activities. A grants manager, who should be one or both of the recommended staff Technical Assistants, will need to be familiar with federal regulations such as NEPA and Section 106, matching requirements, and reporting requirements.

First Steps

1. Fine-tune the criteria
2. Prepare the grant application using good models
3. Initiate the funding once a pool of funds are adequately budgeted

PROJECTS

While MHNHA “programs” tend to be on-going activities, “projects” are generally one-time actions having a clear beginning and ending point. Examples of projects include the development of thematic tours and various marketing materials. While this plan proposes a broad range of projects, the largest and most critical projects that call for greater detail than is already offered in the Strategies section of this plan include the potential development of interpretive centers, the enhancement of historic sites, and community enhancement projects. Each of these three project types are elaborated on below.

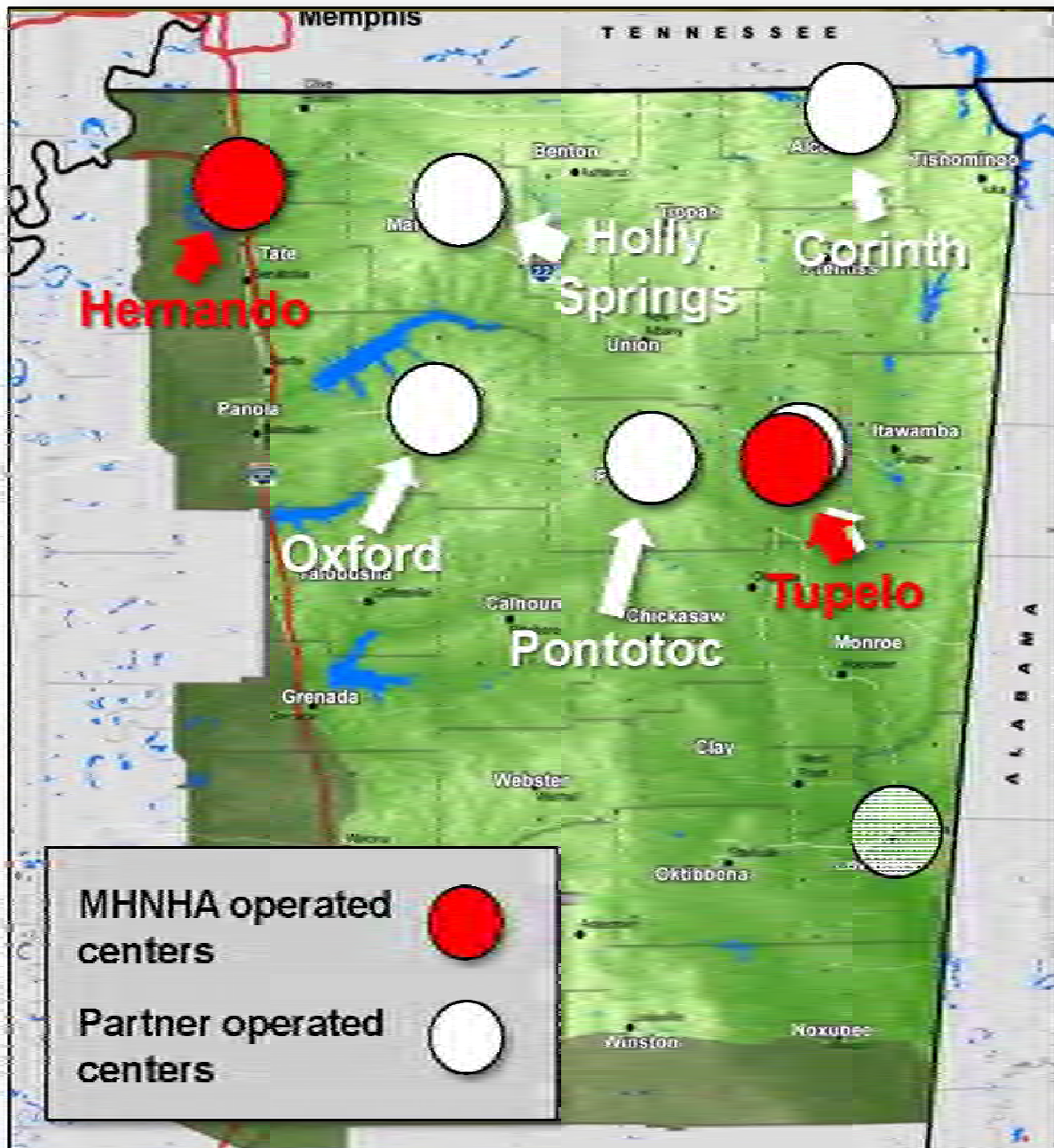
Exploring the Development of Interpretive Centers

The general ideas for the potential interpretive centers were previously described in Objective 2-D of the Strategies section of this management plan, as well as within this plan’s Interpretive Plan. In fact, the corresponding map is repeated below. While the Strategies section of this plan focuses on the rationale for the various locations that might be considered, their relative merits, and the stories that might be interpreted, this section of the Implementation Plan will focus more on what interpretive centers might entail and the approaches for exploring and potentially initiating their development. It must also be emphasized that *this plan has not recommended the development of interpretive centers per se, but rather that they be considered via feasibility studies. Also, federal NHA funding cannot be used for land acquisition or development, and any development that might impact the environment would require environmental review per state and federal laws.*

Interpretive centers do not necessarily require a large amount of square footage, but they should feature the following key components:

Components of an Interpretive Center

- Wayfinding – An effective signage system to guide visitors to the center
- Parking – A sufficient amount to meet anticipated needs, including for touring buses
- Comfort Amenities – Including restrooms, water fountains, trash receptacles, etc.
- Interpretive Space & Tools – Including an orientation film, exhibits (including interactive high-tech options)
- Programming – Including living history demonstrations, lectures, and related events



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.

Potential Scale & Costs

Although these ideas are for very preliminary planning purposes, modestly-scaled interpretive centers should be expected to require between 5,000 and 10,000 square feet of space. Based upon examples of other interpretive centers and depending upon the level of quality, development costs (planning and design, property acquisition, development, and exhibit installation) might range between approximately \$400 and \$500 per square feet. If utilizing an existing structure, as has been encouraged by this plan where possible, the physical development costs might be less. Regardless, a

general cost range of \$2 million to \$5 million can be expected per interpretive center until preliminary planning can occur. *These figures should be refined based upon the necessary feasibility studies that should occur.*



Built in the late-1990s in Beaverton, Oregon, the Tualatin Hills Interpretive Center contains 4,845 square feet of space and cost \$1,936,257 to build. It was built to fit into a rustic environment and won awards for its environmental-friendly construction. It cost just under \$400 per square foot (not including land acquisition).

Interim Versus Ultimate Centers

Although feasibility studies for the potential interpretive centers may determine that no centers are viable, they might also determine that one or more interim centers are viable, to be later followed up by one or more “ultimate” centers. Because of the ambitiousness of pursuing the development of multiple interpretive centers within the MHNHA in light of likely funding challenges, it is important to have a two-tiered strategy for centers that identifies a more modest initial phase for a center that utilizes an existing facility. If the ultimate vision for a new interpretive center fails to materialize over time, the “interim center” might need to become the “ultimate center.” Feasibility studies may determine that one or more interpretive centers are not viable prior to such projects even gaining traction. Regardless, below are concepts for each proposed center:

POTENTIAL MHNHA-SPONSORED INTERPRETIVE CENTERS

Main Interpretive Center – Tupelo

Potential Interim Location:

- Existing small interpretive center connected to the MHHA offices on Tupelo’s Main Street

Potential Ultimate Location:

- Expansion within the existing interpretive center connected to the MHHA offices in Tupelo
- Another location within Downtown Tupelo yet to be determined

Gateway Interpretive Center – Hernando

Potential Interim Location:

- Existing downtown building to be determined

Potential Ultimate Location:

- Existing or new downtown building to be determined

POTENTIAL PARTNER-SPONSORED INTERPRETIVE CENTERS

Native American Heritage Interpretive Center

Potential Interim Location:

- Existing downtown Post Office museum in Pontotoc

Potential Ultimate Location:

- Existing or new downtown building in Pontotoc
- New building on Natchez Trace near Tupelo (as proposed by the Chickasaw Nation)

African American Heritage Interpretive Center – Holly Springs

Potential Interim Location:

- Partnership with the existing Ida B. Wells Museum to utilize their existing or expanded space
- Utilizing existing space at Rust College

Potential Ultimate Location:

- Existing or new downtown building (preferably on the town square)

Civil War Interpretive Center – Corinth

Potential Interim Location:

- Existing NPS-operated Corinth Civil War Interpretive Center

Potential Ultimate Location:

- Existing NPS-owned Curlee House in Downtown Corinth
- Existing or new downtown building

Arts Interpretive Center: Music – Tupelo

Potential Interim Location:

- Existing small interpretive center connected to the MHHAA offices on Tupelo's Main Street

Potential Ultimate Location:

- Expansion within the existing interpretive center connected to the MHHAA offices in Tupelo
- Another location within Downtown Tupelo yet to be determined
- Partnership with the Elvis Presley Birthplace & Museum at their existing facilities

Arts Interpretive Center: Literature – Oxford

Potential Interim Location:

- Existing space within the University of Mississippi

Potential Ultimate Location:

- Existing or new downtown building

Some of the suggested “interim” locations for consideration would be ill-suited for the “ultimate” center under any circumstances because of their location. Examples include housing the African American Heritage center at Rust College or housing the Arts center for Literature at the University of Mississippi. Both centers would be effectively “buried” within a relatively insular campus when a more accessible “storefront” location having high visibility would be needed for long-term success. For some of the other the potential “interim” centers to successfully become long-term centers, they would need improvements in a variety of ways. For example, adapting the existing Post Office museum in Downtown Pontotoc would require a major overhaul of the existing space layout, exhibits, and general interpretive methods.

First Steps

1. Perform a feasibility study for the centers
2. Perform a site selection study for the centers
3. Create preliminary design documents
4. Develop a fund-raising plan for the centers

Historic Site Enhancements

As indicated throughout this plan, one important approach to improve the MHNHA will be to help improve the many cultural sites and attractions that already exist and are operational. Working with site operators on upgrades will be one of the duties of the MHHA's Technical Assistant for preservation and interpretation. Likewise, the heritage area's efforts to help sites secure grants will be targeted to sites needing assistance, including those designated as “emerging.” While each site's needs will differ, the following principles will apply to many (these principles have been adapted from the considerations recommended elsewhere in this plan for determining whether a site is “tourist ready” or “emerging.”):

Principles for Site Enhancements

- *Sufficient wayfinding must be available so patrons can easily find the site:* Can the site be found solely via directional signage upon entering the community from one or more key corridors? Are there any gaps in signage that could cause the patron to get lost? Can the site also be readily found using printed maps and/or telecommunications (internet mapping, apps, etc.)? These are all questions that should be posed.
- *Parking should be in sufficient amounts and convenient to the site for a broad range of transportation modes without detracting from the site itself:* At a minimum, there should be plenty of parking for conventional automobiles and trucks. For the most popular sites, bus parking should also be available. While parking should be within a comfortable walking distance from the key anchors of the site, they should not visually impact the site's overall character and integrity.
- *Visitor comfort amenities should make for an enjoyable visit:* Every historic site or cultural attraction should have adequate public restrooms, water fountains and similar amenities within an indoor facility. Outdoor amenities should include paved pathways that are ADA accessible (per the federal Americans with Disabilities Act), benches, trash receptacles and lighting. Opportunities for picnicking should also be considered.
- *Sites/attractions should have standard days and hours of operation:* Since weekends are the peak tourist days of the week, most sites should attempt to be open on weekends. Preferably, sites should

also be open most days of the week. Many tourist-oriented businesses that are closed one day per week choose Mondays, and cultural sites should consider the same policy. However, some may also choose Sundays to be closed for religious purposes.

- *Sites/attractions should be physically maintained at a high level:* Physical maintenance is important for two reasons in particular. First, maintenance is the best method for preserving cultural resources. Without cultural resources, heritage areas have difficulty succeeding. Secondly, well-maintained sites and attractions are more appealing to visitors and project a more positive image to help market the heritage area.
- *Historic authenticity and integrity should be preserved and reinforced:* As experience has confirmed, a key aspect sought by most heritage tourists is authenticity. It is important that any improvements to historic sites and attractions be done with a high level of authenticity. There are various guidelines that can be utilized for this principle, such as the federal government's Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Historic Rehabilitation. Those particular standards are used to determine whether qualified historic building rehabilitation projects can earn the lucrative federal investment tax credits.
- *Accurate and effective interpretation must be provided at historic sites and attractions:* It is important that the stories told are factual and of interest to patrons. An example of making interpretation interesting to a broader range of the tourist market is the recent trend for most Civil War sites. Rather than simply telling the story of names, dates and military strategy, interpretation now addresses issues such as the civilian experience, African-Americans in the war, the role of women, and similar topics aimed at a broader and more diverse audience. Interpretation should also include the use of creativity and interactive technology when possible.

For an example of how these principles might be applied to a single site within the MHNHA, please see Appendix 1 for a Concept Plan created as part of this project for the Brice's Crossroads Battlefield. Specifically, this plan is for a proposed new tour stop on the battlefield driving route that interprets the heroic actions of the United States Colored Troops (USCT) at this battle.

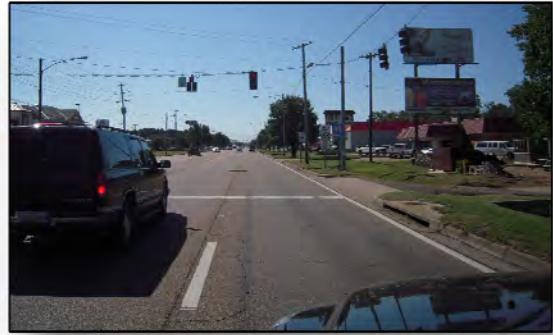
Community Enhancements

The MHHAA will work with the various planning and development districts, municipal planning agencies, downtown revitalization entities, and others to enhance communities as a means of overall "product improvement" for the heritage area. Below is a summary of the three areas especially in need of focus by the MHHAA, all of which are already explained in greater detail in Objective 3-E of this plan's Strategies section ("Assist communities within the MHNHA with technical assistance to establish public policy tools which help preserve heritage assets and reinforce community character.")

Highway Corridors

As noted throughout this plan, heritage tourists place a high value on authenticity and environments that are unique and historic in character. However, the typical highway corridor that serves as the gateway to provide a first and last impression for the MHNHA's key communities is anything but authentic, unique or historic. Instead, most of these corridors are unattractive and dominated by generic "franchise" architecture. The two key elements needed for transformation of strip commercial corridors are as follow:

- 1) Redesign and redevelopment of the road profile within the public right-of-way to introduce landscaping, human-scaled lighting, sidewalks, and other pedestrian-friendly amenities; and
- 2) Revised zoning and design standards for the adjacent private realm to minimize the size and quantity of signage, to place buildings closer to the road, to relocate more of the parking to the rear and side of buildings, and to provide cross-access between adjacent properties.



This strip commercial corridor serving as a gateway for one MHNHA community could be anywhere in America.

As emphasized throughout this plan, *NHAs do not have the authority to impact local land use and development regulations.*

Downtowns

In most respects, historic downtowns are the opposite of strip commercial corridors. They are typically historic, authentic, unique and pedestrian-friendly. Also, they generally have a much higher percentage of unique locally-owned businesses than do strip commercial corridors. They should serve as the heritage area's backbone for visitor shopping, dining and – when possible – lodging. Many of the MHNHA's key communities already have Main Street programs or some other type of revitalization entity. The MHHA will work closely with those organizations where they exist and encourage their establishment where they are lacking. The State Main Street program is another important partner. In many cases, the starting point for revitalization is a public input process and master plan, including a market analysis to determine which uses and business types are economically viable. In other cases, the planning and analysis has already been completed and implementation should be the focus, assuming the previous planning and analysis has not become outdated. It is proposed that the National Main Street Program's "Four Point" Approach be applied, which treats downtowns holistically, as follows:

- Organization: including a board of directors, issue-based working committees, and paid staff
- Design: streetscape, building rehabilitations, infill development, signage, landscaping
- Economic Restructuring: market analysis, optimal tenant mix, incentives, business development
- Promotion: logo development, website, social media, special events, joint advertising

E. ROLES AND ACTIONS OF MHNHA PARTNERS

One of the many requirements of the federal legislation creating the MHNHA is to identify the roles and duties that might occur between the MHNHA's local coordinating entity (MHHA) and the various partners, including institutions, non-profits, businesses and individuals. Based upon the management plan's Strategies section, Interpretive Plan, Business Plan, and Implementation Plan, below is a description of the roles and actions of the MHNHA partners. While review and input into the Management Plan can apply to any MHNHA stakeholders, including the average citizen, that function has been specifically noted for some of the key entities listed below because of their critical role in that regard (Native American Tribes, NPS, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, etc.). See Appendix 3 for letters of support expanding on commitments from many of these partners.

Partner	Role/Action in Partnership with the MHNHA
National Park Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review and approval of the Management Plan - Provision of MHNHA gateway signage on Natchez Trace - Provision of partial MHNHA annual funding - Greenway planning w/ NPS Rivers, Trails & Cons. Assist.
Other NHAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participate on resource teams to identify "tourist ready" and "emerging" sites/attractions per MHNHA standards
Appalachian Regional Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grants for specific projects (greenways planning, etc.)
Area Colleges & Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expertise for research and interpretation (example: University of Mississippi's Center for the Study of Southern Culture) - Leading oral history programs tied to interpretive themes - Intern opportunities with MHHA for students - Making theme-related collections more accessible - Collaborating with potential interpretive centers (Rust College: African American Heritage; Univ. of Mississippi: Arts (literature); etc.) - Assistance with community enhancement (example: Mississippi State University's Carl Small Town Center)
Miss. Dept. of Archives & History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review and approval of the Management Plan - Review and approval of National Register sites/districts - Certified Local Gov't program/grants for MHNHA towns - Technical assistance to communities and sites - Strong consideration to fund specific projects - Host workshops on various preservation issues in the NHA
Mississippi Main Street Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of joint programs for MHNHA MS communities - Addition of new MS communities within the MHNHA where sufficient local support and funding exists - Potential collaboration with MHHA on a forum for MS programs in the NHA to focus on leveraging heritage tourism
Miss. Dev. Authority - Tourism Div.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of project-based grants

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Highlighting MHNHA on website and other promo sources - Potential co- sponsoring of a workshop with MHHA for attractions operators to be more effective - Consulting to attraction operators directly
Miss. Dept. of Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of approved signage for the MHNHA and key sites - Potential project-based grants (transport. enhancement, etc.)
Miss. Arts Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consulting on the proposed oral history program - Consulting on the development of regional K-12 curriculum - Potential assistance/funding of cultural programs and events
MHNHA Native American Tribes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review and input into the Management Plan - Explore potential Native American interp. center (Chickasaws) - Technical input into interpretive and living history programs - Participation with oral history programs
Planning & Development Districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identification and/or provision of project-based grants - Working with local gov'ts on community enhancements by sponsoring workshops and providing technical assistance
Mississippi Land Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continued pursuit of conservation easements with willing owners
Mississippi Heritage Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continued pursuit of facade easements with willing historic property owners - Promotion of properties needing or achieving preservation via their "Ten Most Endangered..." and "Heritage Awards" programs - Continued advocacy to keep the historic rehab tax credits - Hosting preservation conferences and workshops
Local Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pursuing community enhancements (highway corridors, etc.)
Downtown Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pursuing downtown revitalization
Private Non-Profit Economic Development Organizations (Community Development Foundation, CREATE Foundation, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of services and discounted office space for MHHA (CDF's Renasant Center incubator)
School Districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creation of curriculum, oral history programs, and field trips
Convention & Visitors Bureaus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotion of communities, areas, and the entire MHNHA - Dues paying memberships to support MHHA operations
Local Museums & Hist. Societies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Theme-based research, interpretation and promotion - Improvements in strategic planning, curation, interpretation

WORKING WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ON COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENTS

Because there are numerous local governments within the MHNHA, thereby offering a wide range of possibilities for how the heritage area might assist each government, this potential relationship has only been generalized in the chart above. However, this section will provide an example of how such a relationship might work.

Identification of Corridors Enhancement Project

As noted throughout this plan, heritage tourists place a high value on authenticity and environments that are unique and historic in character. However, the typical highway corridor that serves as the gateway to provide a first impression for the MHNHA's key communities is anything but authentic, unique or historic. Instead, most of these corridors are unattractive and dominated by generic "franchise" architecture.

To provide just one example community of many, the corridors leading into Columbus could be greatly enhanced. In particular, Highway 45 from the north is greatly in need of physical enhancements, and gateway corridors such as Highway 82 from the east and west have the potential to evolve into unattractive strip commercial highways. Thus, efforts for Highway 45 would need to be remedial, while those for the other gateways would be more preventative in nature.



Columbus has some attractive corridors to serve as models to transform strip commercial corridors such as Hwy. 45.

Project Initiation & Roles

Once the MHNHA has identified the issues summarized above, we will approach the Planning and Development District having jurisdiction in Columbus – the Golden Triangle Planning & Development District (GTPDD). Since they work regularly with the various local governments within the region (Choctaw, Clay, Lowndes, Noxubee, Oktibbeha, Webster, and Winston Counties), they can function as an effective liaison entity between the MHHAA and the City of Columbus. The GTPDD also deals with regional transportation issues and is well-versed in obtaining state and federal grants that might be used for both planning and implementation components of the project. Once the GTPDD is on board with the project, they might help to initiate a meeting between the City, the GTPDD, and the MHHAA staff. Again, *Columbus is just one of many potential examples being used here to illustrate the process of implementation.*

Preparation of a Plan

The details of this type of project have already been outlined under Objective 3-E of this plan's Strategies section, as well as under the "Community Enhancements" section of section "D. Key Programs & Projects" above. The technical expertise, as well as the man-hours required, is typically beyond the level that can be provided by either a Planning and Development District or a City government. Thus, it is likely that, once sufficient funding can be identified, a request for proposals (RFP) would be issued to hire a consultant. Once selected based upon specific criteria, a contract would be entered between the City and the consultant. An exception might be if the primary funding source is through the PDD, in which case they might be the contracting entity, but with input from

the City. The key two elements of a plan to transform a strip commercial corridor, as well as to avoid them where they have not yet evolved, are as follow:

- 1) Roadway Redesign - Redesigning the road profile within the public right-of-way would introduce landscaping, human-scaled lighting, sidewalks, and other pedestrian-friendly amenities. It would also entail the concept of “complete streets” that make the road more user-friendly for non-motorized forms of transportation, including pedestrians and cyclists. It would also feature “context-sensitive” design that recognizes the context of the road for any given segments. Thus, a rural road design would be employed for rural contexts, while an urban street profile would be used for urban contexts.
- 2) Zoning & Design Standards – To address the privately-owned lands adjacent to these corridors, revised zoning and design standards should be pursued to minimize the size and quantity of signage, to place buildings closer to the road, to relocate more of the parking to the rear and side of buildings, to increase site landscaping, and to provide cross-access between adjacent properties. Design standards would address both site design and architectural design issues. *It is important to note that the MHNHA has no legal authority with respect to local zoning and development regulation issues*, but that would not preclude the heritage area from serving as a catalyst for community enhancement initiatives such as corridor improvements.

Once the planning process starts, representatives from the MHHA will be closely involved, such as serving on any project steering committee that might be appointed, as well as attending all meetings at which input might be solicited.

Plan Implementation

Until a planning process is carried out, it is difficult to predict much about plan implementation. Such issues would be determined by the plan’s contents, but regardless the MHHA will need to remain engaged in the project. In fact, since funding may be a key hurdle, MHHA representatives will be prepared to assist in seeking funding and serving as political “cheerleaders” to turn the plan into tangible results.

F. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Because future implementation of this management plan may result in significant impacts to natural and/or cultural resources, a set of steps based upon “best practices” in historic preservation and environmental conservation need to be in place. This section will cover two key issues: the types of regulations that might apply and a potential series of steps that might be followed by the MHHAA.

POTENTIALLY APPLICABLE REGULATIONS

This management plan’s Background Report under sub-section “B4. Environmental Policies and Requirements,” which is under the broader section heading of “B. Related Policies and Studies,” already provides an overview of the relevant state and federal regulations. Below is a summary of that information, which has been expanded upon for some issues:

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

The 1970 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was a landmark act for Federal environmental policies, and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) is an agency created to help implement the act. NEPA requires that every federal agency prepare an in-depth study of the potential impacts of major federal actions having a significant effect on the environment, as well as alternatives to those actions. It also requires that each agency make that information an integral part of its decisions. Furthermore, NEPA mandates that agencies make a diligent effort to involve the public before they make decisions affecting the environment. Individual projects resulting from the strategies of this plan are subject to further environmental review under NEPA, as well the NHPA and other applicable laws. Those potential paths are summarized below:

Categorical Exclusions (CEs)

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

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

Environmental Assessments (EAs)

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

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

Environmental Impact Statements (EISs)

An environmental impact statement (EIS) is a document required by NEPA for certain actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. An EIS is a tool for decision making. It describes the positive and negative environmental effects of a proposed action, and it usually also lists one or more alternative actions that may be chosen instead of the action described in the EIS. An EIS acts as an enforcement mechanism to ensure that the federal government adheres to the goals and policies outlined in NEPA. An EIS should be created in a timely manner as soon as the agency is planning development or is presented with a proposal for development. The statement should use an interdisciplinary approach so that it accurately assesses both the physical and social impacts of the proposed development. In many instances an action may be deemed subject to NEPA's EIS requirement even though the action is not specifically sponsored by a federal agency, such as when private entities pursue actions that receive federal funding, federal licensing or authorization, or that are subject to federal control.

On the following page is a chart comparing CEs, EAs, and EISs from page 10 of the Draft NEPA Guide for NHA Management Plan (August 2012).

Other Key Regulations

Endangered Species Act (ESA)

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

Executive Orders 11988 and 11990, Floodplain Management and Wetland Protection

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

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106

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

Table 3.1 A Comparison of NPS CEs, EAs, EISs

	CE	EA	EIS
Key Steps	<p>*Public Notice of CE (in combination with public review of draft plan)</p> <p>Categorical Exclusion Form</p>	<p>Public Scoping (in combination with NHA public involvement activities)</p> <p>Alternatives development and impact analysis</p> <p>Public review of EA (minimum 30 days)</p> <p>Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or decision to prepare EIS</p>	<p>Publication of Notice of Intent (NOI) in Federal Register</p> <p>Public Scoping (in combination with NHA public involvement activities)</p> <p>Alternatives development and impact analysis</p> <p>Publication of notice of availability (NOA) of Draft EIS in Federal Register</p> <p>Public review of Draft EIS (minimum 60 days)</p> <p>Preparation of Final EIS</p> <p>Publication of NOA of Final EIS in Federal Register</p> <p>30-day waiting period</p> <p>Record of Decision (ROD)</p>
Typical Length of Document	CE Form is typically 1-2 pages with Environmental Screening Form attached	Between 30 -50 pages	Several hundred pages, CEQ regulations suggest a maximum of 300 pages
Typical Time Involved	A few months	6 -18 months	Between two and four years depending upon complexity of issues and impacts

*This is a requirement of the NHA Program.

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

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

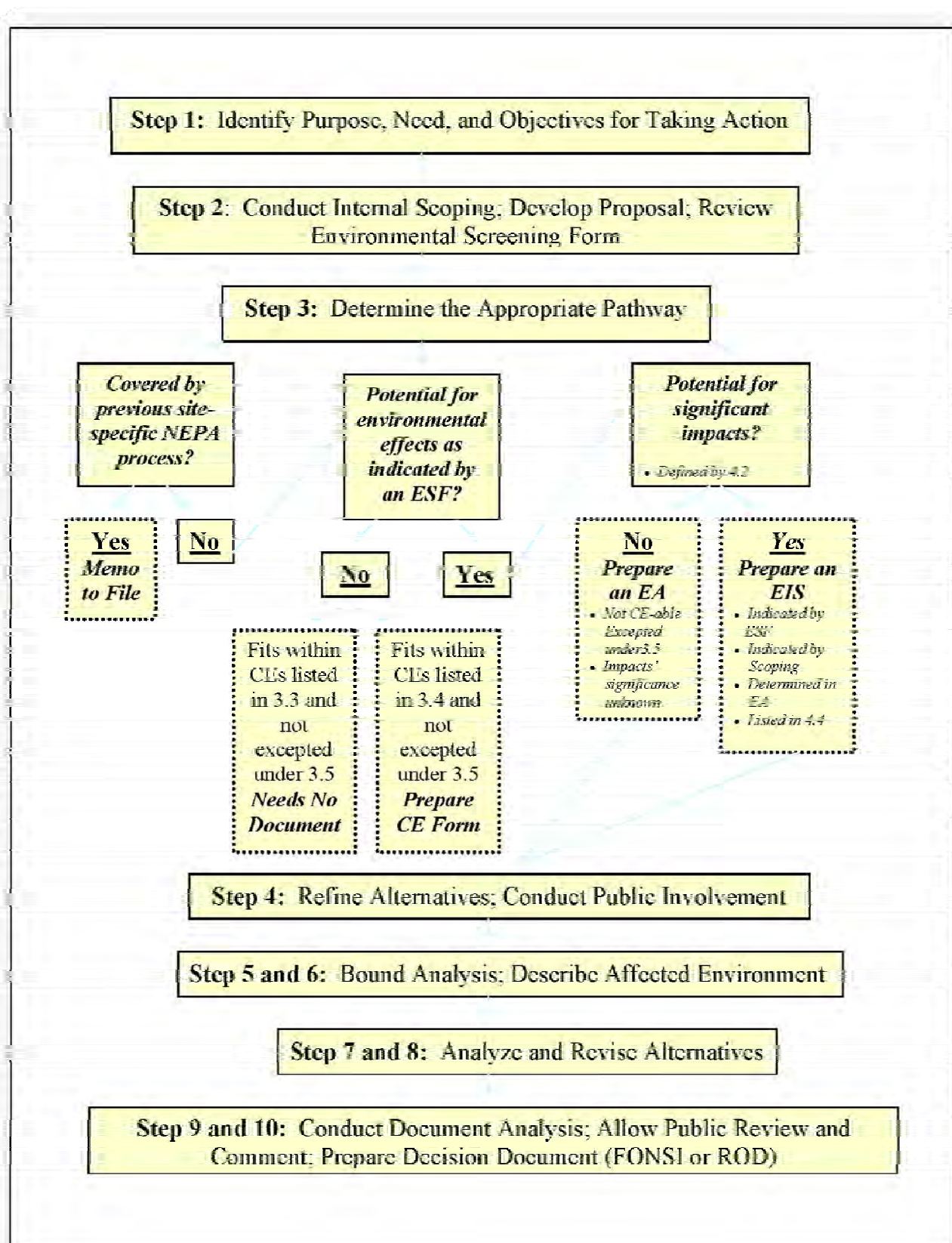
Secretarial Order 3175 and ECM95-2

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

STEPS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Note: NPS will help us provide appropriate language here per their 1.10.14 review.

XXXXXXXX



Below is a summary of the steps required for an EA or an EIS:

- Public Scoping - If it is determined during the preliminary pathway determination that an EA or EIS is the correct pathway than, public scoping should be coordinated with public involvement in the planning process.
- Alternatives development - Alternatives should be based on environmental considerations, rather than logistical solutions for structuring a heritage area coordinating entity, and must be presented in sufficient detail for readers to understand their environmental effects.
- Impacts analysis - Impact analysis predicts the degree to which resources will be affected. Through internal scoping, environmental screening, and public scoping processes, issues and impact topics should be confirmed and refined.
- Identification of a preferred and an environmentally preferable course of action - The preferred alternative is the preferred course of action at the time a draft EIS or a public review EA is released. The environmentally preferable alternative is the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment and best protects, preserves, and enhances historical, cultural, and natural resources.
- Decision Documents - When an EIS has been prepared, the preferred alternative, mitigation measures, and the rationale for decision are documented in a Record of Decision (ROD). When an EA has been prepared, a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is the required decision document. A FONSI must explain, based on the impact analysis in the EA, why the selected action will not have significant impacts on the human environment. If the impact analysis in an EA indicates the proposed action has the potential to have significant impacts on the human environment, then an EIS and ROD must be prepared.

REVIEW ROLE FOR THE MHHAA

Environmental review involves numerous entities and individuals. In accordance with the recommendations contained on a 2011 NPS draft of the guidelines for carrying out NEPA for NHAs, the following role is considered appropriate for NHAs.

Each NHA must ensure adequate NHA NEPA compliance and coordination with the NPS. NHA coordinators with the local coordinating entity (MHHAA), working under the guidance and authority of the Superintendent or NHA Program Manager, are responsible for the following:

- 1) Providing early consideration of NEPA in project planning and ensuring NEPA compliance for all NHA projects.
- 2) Internal and external scoping and ensuring that appropriate IDT (subject matter experts) members are included in the process and participate in the preparation of the Environmental Screening Form (ESF) in PEPC.
- 3) Preparing or overseeing the preparation of NHA NEPA documents, including ESFs, Memorandums to File, CEs, EAs, EISs, FONSIIs, and RODs with the assistance of NHA staff and/or the IDT.

- 4) Providing quality control and ensuring technical adequacy of all environmental documents prepared by NHA staff or their contractor.
- 5) Ensuring that NEPA documents are submitted to the NPS for plan review and approval prior to public release.
- 6) Ensuring that NEPA documents are placed on the PEPC website for SERO and public review.
- 7) Maintaining Administrative Records (AR) (files/records/correspondence).
- 8) Notifying the NPS of NEPA projects that may be controversial or have significant environmental effects.
- 9) Facilitating and coordinating internal NHA staff and/or partners review of NEPA and other environmental documents.

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2. Documentation of Draft Plan Meetings
3. Letters of Support and Partnership

USCT Tour Stop Concept Plan: Brice's Crossroads Battlefield

Baldwyn, Mississippi

A Project of the
**Mississippi Hills National
Heritage Area**

Revised: November 22, 2013



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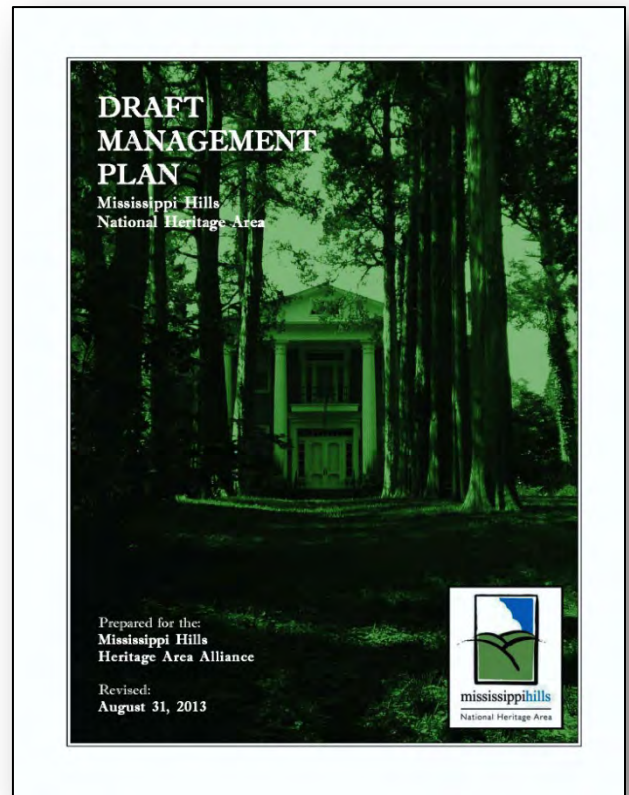
Background

Heritage Area Management Plan

The federal legislation that created the 30-county Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area (MHNHA) in 2009 requires the creation of a Management Plan to spell out the objectives of the NHA and how they will be achieved. Although this Concept Plan for a new tour stop at Brice's Crossroads Battlefield is not specifically required, it has been included as a means of illustrating the Management Plan's recommended principles for the enhancement of existing historic sites within the MHNHA. Those recommended principles are summarized below.

Historic Site Enhancements

As indicated throughout the MHNHA Management Plan, one important approach to improve the MHNHA will be to help improve the many cultural sites and attractions that already exist and are operational. Working with site operators on upgrades will be one of the duties of the Mississippi Hills Heritage Area Alliance's (MHHA's) Technical Assistant for preservation and interpretation. While each site's needs will differ, the following principles will apply to many. Because this Concept Plan is for a single new tour stop and not the entire battlefield, some of these principles will be irrelevant or only somewhat relevant.



Principles for Site Enhancements within the MHNHA

The principles below, each of which is explained more fully within the main body of the MHNHA Management Plan, are accompanied with a brief statement regarding how they relate to this Concept Plan:

Sufficient wayfinding must be available so patrons can easily find the site.

Response: The battlefield currently features a driving tour map and wayfinding signage. The proposed new tour stop will be integrated into this wayfinding system.

Parking should be in sufficient amounts and convenient to the site for a broad range of transportation modes without detracting from the site itself.

Response: The Concept Plan proposes sufficient parking for automobiles in a number consistent with other stops, as well as one handicapped space and a bus parking space. It will also be landscaped to soften its appearance.

Visitor comfort amenities should make for an enjoyable visit.

Response: The battlefield's existing interpretive center has public restrooms and similar amenities, and this tour stop can accommodate benches, trash receptacles, lighting, and perhaps even a picnic table.

Sites/attractions should have standard days and hours of operation.

Response: The tour stop will follow the same policies of operation as the other existing stops. Because of its access to a local road and no proposed gate, this tour stop should be accessible at all times.

Sites/attractions should be physically maintained at a high level.

Response: The tour stop will be worked into the regular maintenance program that already exists for the balance of the battlefield.

Historic authenticity and integrity should be preserved and reinforced.

Response: Because the proposed tour stop will not feature any historic resources other than the battlefield landscape, this principle is not substantially relevant.

Accurate and effective interpretation must be provided at historic sites and attractions.

Response: This principle is the most relevant of all of them to this Concept Plan. The proposed new tour stop will include wayside exhibits that convey the interpreted stories in an engaging and effective manner, and they will be based upon sound historical research.

Need for the Tour Stop

This Concept Plan is for a proposed new tour stop on the Brice's Crossroads Battlefield driving route that interprets the heroic actions of the United States Colored Troops (USCT) at this battle. While the role of the USCT troops is addressed within the existing interpretive program (interpretive center, tour materials, brochures, etc.), the focus is relatively modest and warrants a much stronger emphasis. This situation is not unusual. Based upon 2013 national research entitled "A Closer Look at Those USCT Monuments & Markers," there are a total of 141 markers and monuments addressing the USCT's role in the Civil War. Of those 141 markers, only 65 give a primary focus on the USCT, while others simply address the topic indirectly. Furthermore, only two markers were identified in the study as existing in Mississippi. The study also cites existing markers that should reference the USCT, but do not, including markers at Olustee (FL), Morris Island (SC), Honey Hill (SC), and Tupelo (MS).



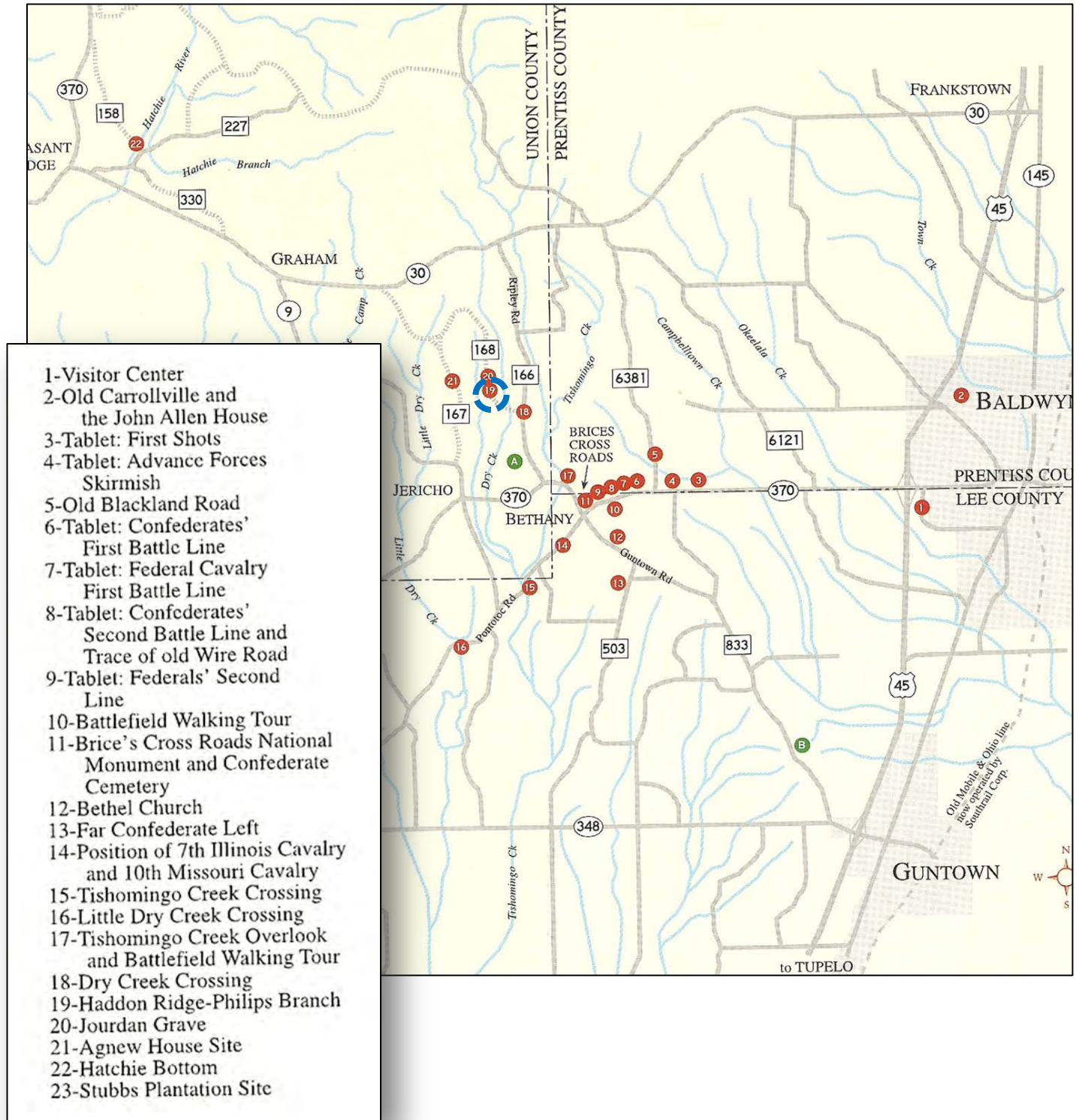
African American Civil War Memorial in Washington, DC



Monument at Contraband Camp historic site in Corinth, MS

Proposed Tour Stop Location

The map below is adapted from the *Blue & Gray* magazine article on the Battle of Brice's Crossroads (August, 1999). The approximate location of the proposed new tour stop is circled in a blue dashed circle.



Recommendations Summary

Conceptual Site Plan

Two key factors impacting the layout of this site plan are the existing topography and power lines. There is a limited relatively flat area located near the adjacent road, as the grade of the site begins an abrupt drop to the west. Also, the overhead lines make the provision of a monument challenging to do so in a manner that avoids the lines from visually detracting from the site's integrity. The key features proposed for this tour stop, which are consistent with the highest-quality existing stops, are as follow:

- *Concrete or asphalt apron at the road access point* - This feature will enhance driver safety for those accessing and departing the tour stop, and help keep gravel off the road if a gravel lot surface is provided.
- *Asphalt parking lot with striped parking spaces* - To include a bus parking area, gravel is an acceptable alternative paving material should financial resources be unavailable for asphalt paving.
- *One handicapped space with paved access* - This space will be located at the north end of the lot for the closest proximity to the interpretive waysides and monument.
- *Paved walkway connecting the proposed monument with the parking area* - This feature will include three wayside exhibits on the west side that are sequenced consistent with the interpretation.
- *Site amenities* - Although they are not specified on the conceptual site plan, amenities could include lighting, benches, trash receptacles, and picnic tables.

See pages 6-7 for the conceptual site plan. The proposed interpretation and monument are described below.

Interpretation & Monument

Three interpretive wayside exhibits and one monument are proposed, as follows:

Interpretation

The three proposed wayside exhibits include the following headings and content:

- *United States Colored Troops: USCT* – an overview of the history of USCT soldiers in the Civil War
- *USCT Regiments at Brice's Crossroads* – a description of the three USCT regiments/battery at this battle
- *A Brilliant Record: USCT's Performance at Brice's Crossroads* – a summary of the USCT at Brice's Crossroads

See pages 8-10 for the proposed wayside exhibit panels. These panels have been designed using PowerPoint software and can be easily revised as needed if edits are required, different graphics be desired, or similar changes are needed.

Monument

Rather than suggesting what the monument should look like, it is recommended that a design competition be conducted by soliciting proposed designs from artists. Many communities seeking new public art use such a process, so there are numerous model request for proposal (RFP) documents available. Existing processes can also be used as a model for the process. While artists are not typically compensated for their proposals, the winning artist benefits by then being hired to oversee the detailed design and fabrication of the monument.

Linkages to Other Tour Stops

It is proposed that the existing trail that currently connects tour stops #20 and #21 be extended to the proposed new tour stop. See page 11 for a diagrammatic map illustrating the potential trail connections.

Implementation

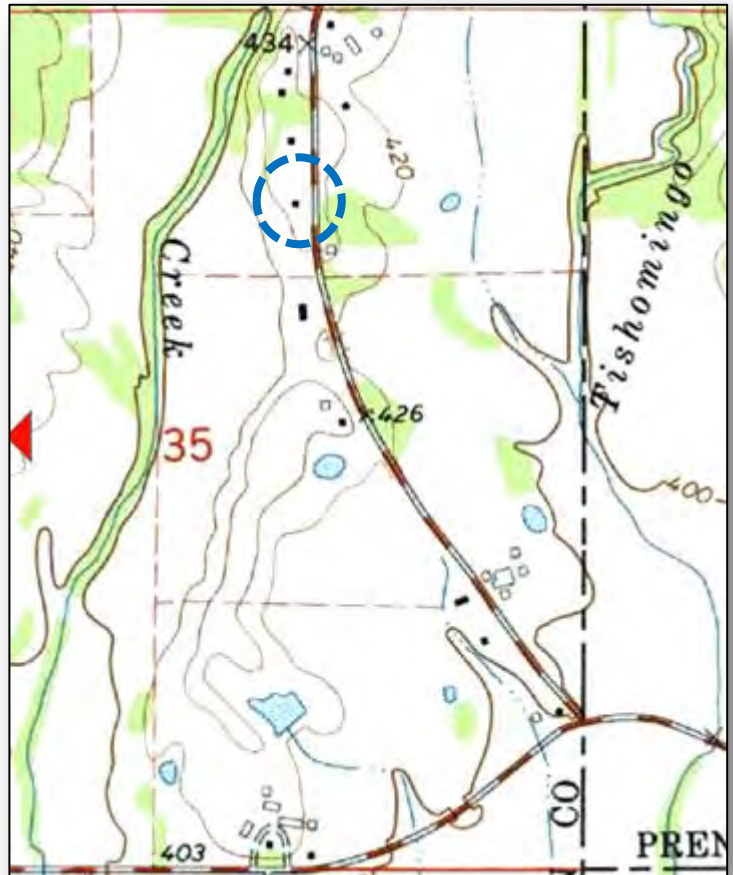
Three key components will be necessary to turn this broad concept into a specific reality:

- *Implementing Entities* – The Brice's Crossroads Battlefield Foundation, with support from the MHNHAA
- *Detailed Design & Engineering* – Site engineers and landscape architects will be needed for the site; exhibit designers will be needed to adapt the proposed wayside exhibits and oversee fabrication; and a design competition is recommended for the monument.
- *Funding* – The NPS's American Battlefield Protection Program may be able to support planning and design, but the more costly capital improvements may require fund-raising with the private sector.

Site Context & Model Tour Stop

Site Context

As revealed in the United States Geological Survey (USGS) map at right, this site selected for the new tour stop (identified by a blue dashed circle) is located on a modest ridge in which the topography drops off in grade to the west where it leads to a creek.

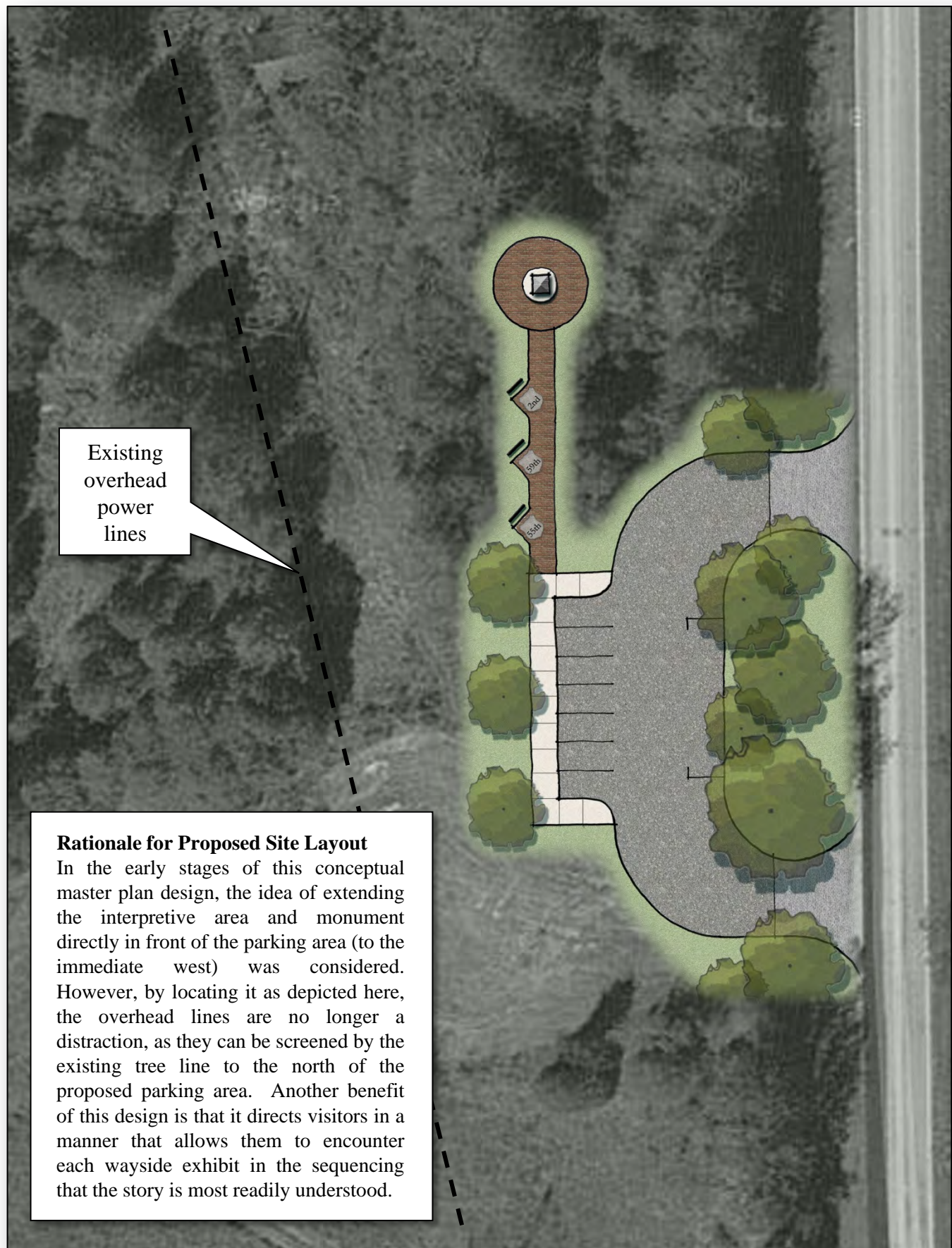


Model Tour Stop

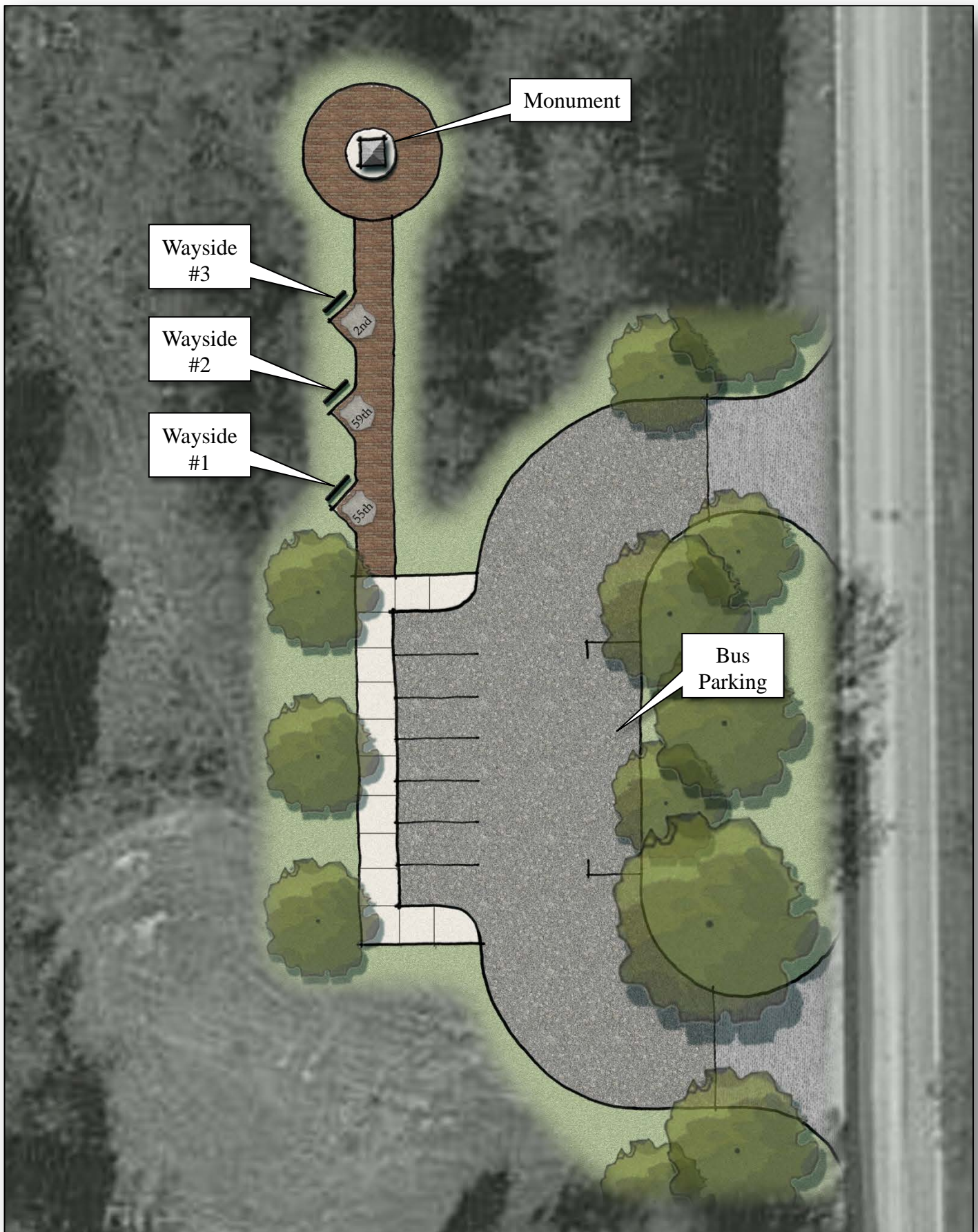
Tour Stop #20 - Jourdan Grave - is the one following the proposed stop in the tour sequencing (see page 3 for the tour stop map). It is being used as an ideal model for the proposed tour stop.



Conceptual Site Plan: Overall Context



Conceptual Site Plan: Detailed View



Wayside Exhibit: #1 – United States Colored Troops

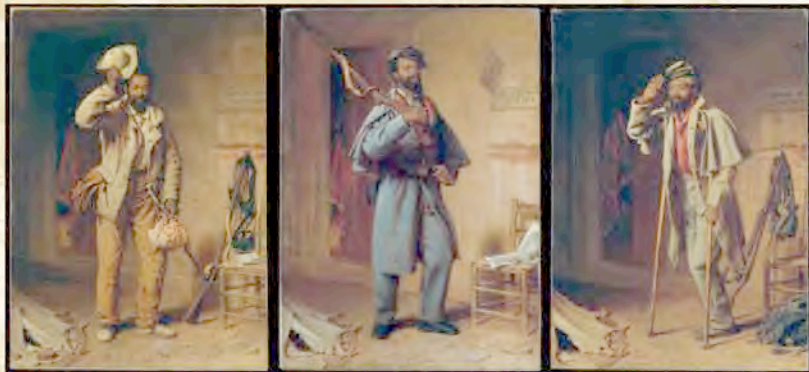
United States Colored Troops

USCT

The initial recruitment of African-Americans into the Union Army began shortly after the Emancipation Proclamation took effect in January of 1863. On May 22, 1863, the US War Department issued General Order 143 to establish the Bureau of Colored Troops to help facilitate recruitment. Regiments for infantry, cavalry, artillery and engineers were recruited from all states of the Union and were known as the United States Colored Troops or USCT. During the last two years of the war, approximately 175 regiments were raised comprised of more than 178,000 free African Americans. They represented one tenth of the Union Army.

While white soldiers were paid \$13 per month, black soldiers earned only \$10 per month, and \$3 of that was deducted for their clothes. White soldiers, on the other hand, were provided an additional \$3.50 for clothes. It was not until March of 1865 that black soldiers received equal compensation. Another insult was that only rarely did they achieve a rank above that of a private.

USCT soldiers suffered 68,178 losses, of which only 2,751 were from combat. As with the case of white soldiers, the majority of deaths were tied to diseases. However, they were instrumental to in several key Northern victories, including the battles of Port Hudson (LA), Nashville (TN), and the Crater at Petersburg (VA).



This trilogy painting depicts three stages of life for one man: former slave, Union soldier, and maimed veteran. Despite their heroic service, most USCT veterans returned to a post-war life of oppression and poverty.

"Once you let the black man get upon his person the brass letter, U. S., let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder and bullets in his pocket, there is no power on earth that can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship."

-Frederick Douglass

Wayside Exhibit: #2 – USCT Regiments at Brice's Crossroads

USCT Regiments at Brice's Crossroads

The Battle of Brice's Crossroads featured two infantry regiments and one artillery battery of the United States Colored Troops (USCT):

55th USCT Infantry Regiment

On May 21, 1863, the 1st Alabama Infantry Regiment of African Descent was organized at Corinth, Mississippi, with approximately 1,000 men. On March 11, 1864, the regiment was reorganized as the 55th USCT, and on June 10 it fought at the Battle of Brice's Crossroads. Afterwards it was stationed in Memphis and fought minor engagements in North Mississippi before being deployed to Louisiana in February 1865. It was mustered out in December of 1865.

59th USCT Infantry Regiment

The 1st Tennessee Infantry Regiment of African Descent was organized on June 6, 1863, at LaGrange, Tennessee. On March 11, 1864, the regiment was reorganized as the 59th USCT, and it fought at Brice's Crossroads in tandem with the 55th. Other noteworthy engagements of the 59th included the Battle of Tupelo on July 14-15, 1864, and the repulse of Forrest's cavalry at Memphis on August 21, 1864. The regiment was mustered out of service in January of 1866.

2nd USCT Light Artillery Regiment – Battery F

This battery was organized from the Memphis Light Battery of African Descent on March 11, 1864, and it was initially designated as Battery D. On April 26, 1864, it was renamed Battery F. It fought with the 59th USCT at Memphis in August of 1864 and was mustered out in December of 1865.

From Slaves to Soldiers



Following a month-long siege of Corinth, Mississippi, that ended on May 30, 1862, the Union forces gained full control of the area. Referred to as "contraband," many slaves fled to the Union lines for freedom. The federals established a small community for them referred to as a contraband camp. In addition to the occupants being educated through a school operated by the American Missionary Association, the camp served as a key target for recruiting fresh Union troops.



These brothers in arms display a look of comradery and determination.

"Without the military help of the black freedmen, the war against the south could not have been won."

- Abraham Lincoln
1865



This war-time illustration appearing in Harper's Weekly is entitled "A Negro Regiment in Action."

Wayside Exhibit: #3 – A Brilliant Record

A Brilliant Record

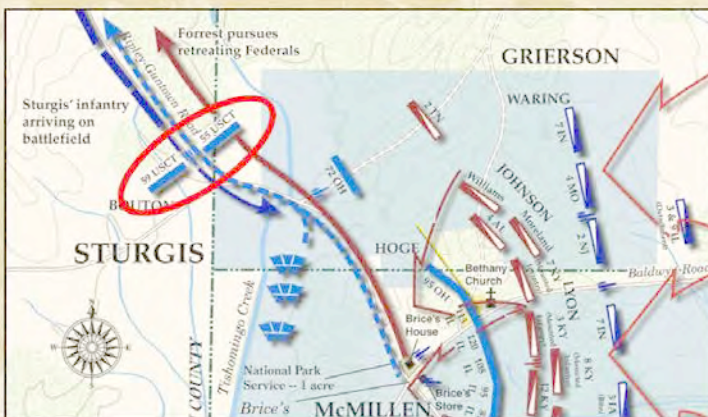
USCT's Performance at Brice's Crossroads

The Battle of Brice's Crossroads began at about 9:30 AM on June 10, 1864, when Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest's brigade of Kentuckians engaged Union Brigadier General Samuel Sturgis' cavalry, which had been pursuing a Confederate patrol east of the crossroads. Once Sturgis' infantry arrived the battle raged for roughly four hours near the crossroads where the Brice family's house was located. By 5:00 PM the Confederates flanked both ends of the Federal lines and caused Sturgis to withdraw toward Memphis. Their retreat was slowed by an overturned wagon on the Tishomingo Creek bridge, putting the US forces in dire straights.

Fortunately for the Union forces, the 55th and 59th USCT infantry regiments under Colonel Edward Bouton were thrown into the fight just west of the bridge to cover the army's retreat. Prior to the battle these troops took an oath to avenge Forrest's Fort Pillow "massacre" and each soldier wore a badge reading "Remember Fort Pillow." However, they were held in reserve for the first part of the battle to guard the army's 200 wagons. Strengthened by the 2nd USCT Light Artillery once needed, they made several critical stands that saved Sturgis' withdraw from being a total route. Of the 223 Union soldiers killed in the battle, half belonged to Bouton's Brigade, and most served with the 55th and 59th USCT infantry regiments.



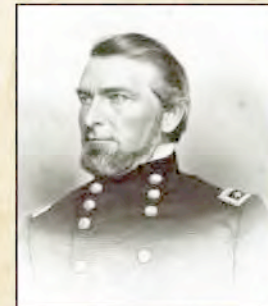
These soldiers with the 4th USCT Infantry Regiment served in the eastern theatre of the Civil War by fighting in Virginia and North Carolina. The USCT soldiers at Brice's Crossroads were similarly dressed and equipped.



USCT soldiers posing for the camera.

High Praise from a General

Major General
Cadwallader
Washburn -
commander of
the District of
West
Tennessee -
described the
performance
of the USCT
soldiers at
Brice's
Crossroads:



"The colored troops made for themselves on this occasion a brilliant record. Their gallant and soldierly bearing and the zeal and persistence with which they fought, elicited the warmest encomiums from all officers of the command. Their claims to be considered as among the very best soldiers of our army can no longer, in my opinion, be seriously questioned."

Official Records - Series 1, Vol. XXXIX, pt 1, p 87

Linkages to Other Tour Stops

In the current sequencing of the driving tour, the two stops following the proposed new stop are stop #20 (Jourdan Grave) and stop #21 (Agnew House Site). As illustrated below, there is an existing trail that connects stops #20 and #21 (highlighted with the light blue coding below). An extension of this trail to the link with the new tour stop is designated below in purple.

