



Atchafalaya National Heritage Area

Congress designated the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area in October 2006. The area includes the parishes of Ascension, Assumption, Avoyelles, Concordia, Iberia, Iberville, East Baton Rouge, Lafayette, Pointe Coupee, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary Terrebonne, and West Baton Rouge.

The state of Louisiana is enlisting the help of the National Park Service in the development of the management plan. The following provides important information on the planning process.

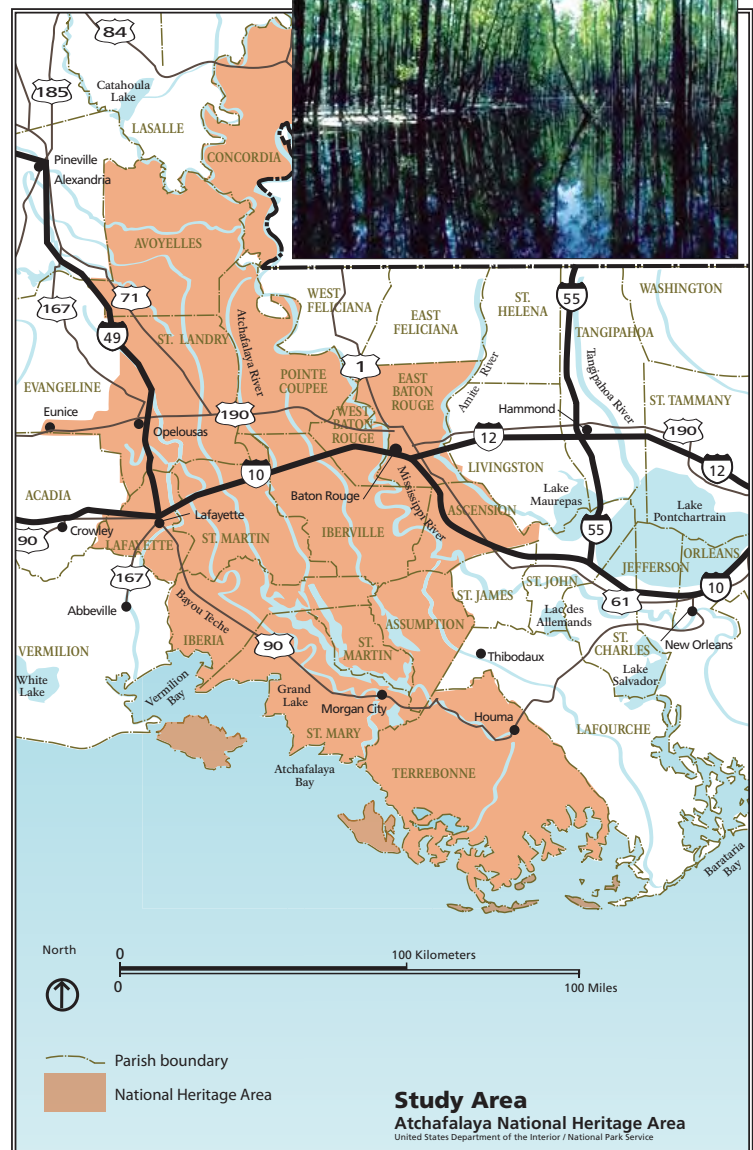
WHAT IS A NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA?

A heritage area is both a place and a concept. Physically, heritage areas are regions with concentrations of significant natural, scenic, cultural, historic, and recreational resources. Most of the properties in a heritage area are in private ownership and will remain in private ownership. Heritage areas are places known for their unique culture and identity, as well as for being good places to live in or visit. As a concept, heritage areas are partnerships where residents, businesses, local governments, and state and federal agencies collaborate to create more livable and economically sustainable regions.

WHAT IS A NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN?

A management plan provides a foundation to guide programs, tell stories, and establish partnerships. The plan sets priorities for actions that enhance visitor understanding and appreciation of the area, provide for resource stewardship, and develop partnerships to assist the area's constituents and the public, for the next 10 to 15 years.

The planning process focuses on why the national heritage area was recognized by Congress; the result is a



collective vision of the resource conditions and visitor experiences that will best fulfill the needs of the community and partners, and best fulfill the purpose of the national heritage area over time.

The environmental assessment that accompanies the plan analyzes the national heritage area as a whole and as part of a larger ecological, cultural, and socioeconomic system. As part of this analysis, current public

use patterns and the condition of sensitive cultural and natural resources will be evaluated. This comprehensive approach includes coordination with national heritage area partners, other land managing agencies, and the public to help ensure that the decisions made through this management planning effort are widely supported and sustainable over time.

National heritage area management plans guide constituents and partners to focus their activities on achieving the conditions and experiences prescribed by the plan. However, they generally stop short of directing specific activities, recognizing that constituents and partners may have to continuously adapt their activities based on changing information or influences.

As directed by Congress in the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area Act, the management plan will include 1) An inventory of the resources in the heritage area that includes properties that relate to the purposes of the heritage area and that should be protected because of their significance, and an assessment of cultural landscapes within the heritage area; 2) provisions for the protection, interpretation, and enjoyment of the resources of the heritage area; 3) an interpretation plan for the heritage area; and 4) a program for implementation of the management plan that includes actions to be carried out and the identification of existing and potential sources of funding for implementing the plan.

MAJOR STEPS IN DEVELOPING THE NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

Producing a national heritage area management plan involves many steps and will take about two years to complete. The management plan process for Atchafalaya is just beginning. The planning team includes staff from the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation & Tourism, and technical specialists from Jean Lafitte National Park and Preserve and the National Park Service offices in Atlanta, Georgia, and Denver, Colorado. The team will be working with the public, government agencies, and other stakeholders throughout the process. The following is a preliminary schedule and lists the general steps of the planning process.

Project Startup	March 2008
Develop and Evaluate Alternatives	October 2008
Prepare and Publish the Draft Management Plan / Environmental Assessment	August 2009
Publish the Final Management Plan / Environmental Assessment	April 2010
Implement the Approved Plan	August 2010

FOUNDATIONS OF THE PLAN

PURPOSE STATEMENT

Purpose statements provide the foundation for the management and use of the national heritage area; they also reaffirm the reason why the area was established. The following purpose statement is based on the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area's establishing legislation as well as laws and policies governing management of all national heritage areas.

The purpose of the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area is to establish and maintain interpretive sites; increase public awareness of and appreciation for the natural, historic, and cultural resources of the heritage area; and implement programs that recognize the important resource values of the national heritage area.

SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENTS

Significance statements build on the national heritage area's purpose and clearly state why, within a national context, the national heritage area's resources and values are important enough to warrant the area's designation as a national heritage area. These statements identify the resources and values that are central to managing the area and express the importance of the area to our natural and cultural heritage. The following are the significance statements for the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area.

The Atchafalaya Basin is significant because...

- It is the largest example of an alluvial bottomland and swamp in the United States, and provides outstanding habitat for a number of federally listed species.

- It possesses exceptional value in illustrating and interpreting many of the natural themes of our nation’s heritage, including river systems and lakes, recent geologic history (i.e., the processes of alluviation and deltaic land building), bottomland and swamp components of the eastern deciduous forest, aquatic ecosystems, and streams.
- It possesses exceptional value in illustrating certain cultural themes, particularly water control technology and unique, ongoing American ways of life.
- It offers a rare opportunity for scientific study of active delta building processes, and provides a significant opportunity to study disturbance regimes, primary succession, population-level ecological processes, and south-eastern bottomland species.
- The quality of recreational opportunities provided by the basin indicates the Atchafalaya has the potential to become a nationally significant recreational resource.

PRIMARY INTERPRETIVE THEMES

Interpretive themes are ideas, concepts, or stories that are central to the heritage area’s purpose, significance, identity, and visitor experience. Primary themes provide the framework for interpretation and educational programs, influence the visitor experience, and provide direction for planners and designers of exhibits, publications, and audiovisual programs. The following themes were identified for the area when it was a state heritage area.

Dynamic Convergence

1. Changing Shapes: The story of America’s Largest Swamp Ecosystem.
2. Gumbo and Creolization: A Region’s Evolving Identity.

Making-Do

1. First Lessons from the Native Americans.
2. Navigating the Swamp: Ferries, Dug-outs, Pirogues, Steamboats, Horses and Cars
3. Beyond the Law: Freedom and Order
4. Different Ways of Living off the Land: Home Use and Local Consumption; Corporations and International Markets; Global Impact of the Atchafalaya
5. Sickness and Health: Disease and Healing Arts

The Many and the One

1. The Native American Foundation
2. The French and Spanish Influence
3. Les Americans
4. African-Americans: Slavery and Freedom
5. A Southeast Asian Community Takes Root
6. The interplay of Catholic, Protestant and African Religions
7. Mythic Perceptions: The Emergence and Evolution of an Imagined Culture

Changing Nature

1. Flood of ‘27
2. Flood of ‘73 and Delta Building
3. Hurricane Andrew
4. The Corps of Engineers
5. The Modern Environmental Movement
6. Getting Around: Canals, Roads and Highways
7. Adapting to Seasonal Fluctuations

Authentic Expressions

1. Material Culture
2. Architecture
3. Political Life: Conflict, Harmony, Coalitions and Accomplishments
4. Religious Rites, Practices and Customs
5. Festivals and Rounds
6. Musical Styles: Swamp Pop, Cajun, Zydeco, Gospel, Blues
7. Contemporary Language: Words and Place Names
8. Stories and Story Tellers
9. Foodways: The Social Meanings of Food
10. Crawfish: from Swamp to Table
11. Legendary Characters
12. At Home: Family Ways





HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE PLANNING EFFORT

The next step of the process involves collecting your thoughts on opportunities and concerns regarding the future management of Atchafalaya National Heritage Area. Your involvement throughout the planning process is a key component for the success of the management plan. Please take a moment to fill out the enclosed comment form and return it to the planning team by **July 23, 2008**. Your thoughts and concerns provide valuable information on the goals and issues to be addressed in the plan.

Over the course of the project you will have several other opportunities (through correspondence and meetings) to share your concerns, ideas, and comments. You will receive future correspondence and be informed of meeting times, dates, and locations.

For more information about the planning process and to comment on this plan, you can contact the heritage area at 225-342-3413 or log onto the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area home page at www.Atchafalaya.org.

Please plan to attend one of the initial scoping meetings to find out more about this planning project. During these June meetings, you will be able to meet some of the planning team and express your ideas about the heritage area. The meetings will be held as open houses with no formal presentations. Please see the enclosed schedule for open house locations.

We hope to see you there!

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