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Cultural Management Plan

Newsletter #1

February 2009

Telling The World of our Unique Heritage

Dear Gullah/Geechee Community members and partners:

The Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor is a remarkable place with unique traditions, people, and resources. When Congress established the cultural heritage corridor, it also established a 25-member commission, which I chair. Part of the commission's responsibilities is to develop a management plan for the corridor that will provide guidance and direction over the next 10-15 years. In order to develop this plan, we need your help because you, the members of the community, truly understand and appreciate the unique cultural dynamics found within the Gullah/Geechee communities. There will be many ways for you to participate, including responding to newsletters, attending meetings, interacting with websites and speaking directly to the commissioners in your state. Public meetings will be held in four states. You will be notified of these meetings, their dates, locations, and times in future correspondence from us.

The first of these public meetings will be held in Jacksonville and Fernandina Beach along Florida's First Coast during Black History Month on February 19 and 20, 2009. At that time, the Commission will also hold its first quarterly business meeting, which is open to the public. I cordially invite you to attend any of the public or business meetings. Your participation is vital to the success of the development of this plan. Information on these meetings is contained in this newsletter.

Throughout the planning process, commissioners from each state will be contacting and speaking with educators, preservationists, historians, clergy, community advocates, grassroots organizations, and government officials to receive input, ideas, and concerns. The Commission will be seeking partnerships to fulfill their vision "to recognize and sustain an environment that celebrates the legacy and continuing contributions of Gullah/Geechee people to our American heritage."

Please join us in this effort. Read this newsletter, attend the meetings, and use the enclosed response card to share your thoughts about the future of the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor.

Yours truly,

Emory S. Campbell, Chairman
Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

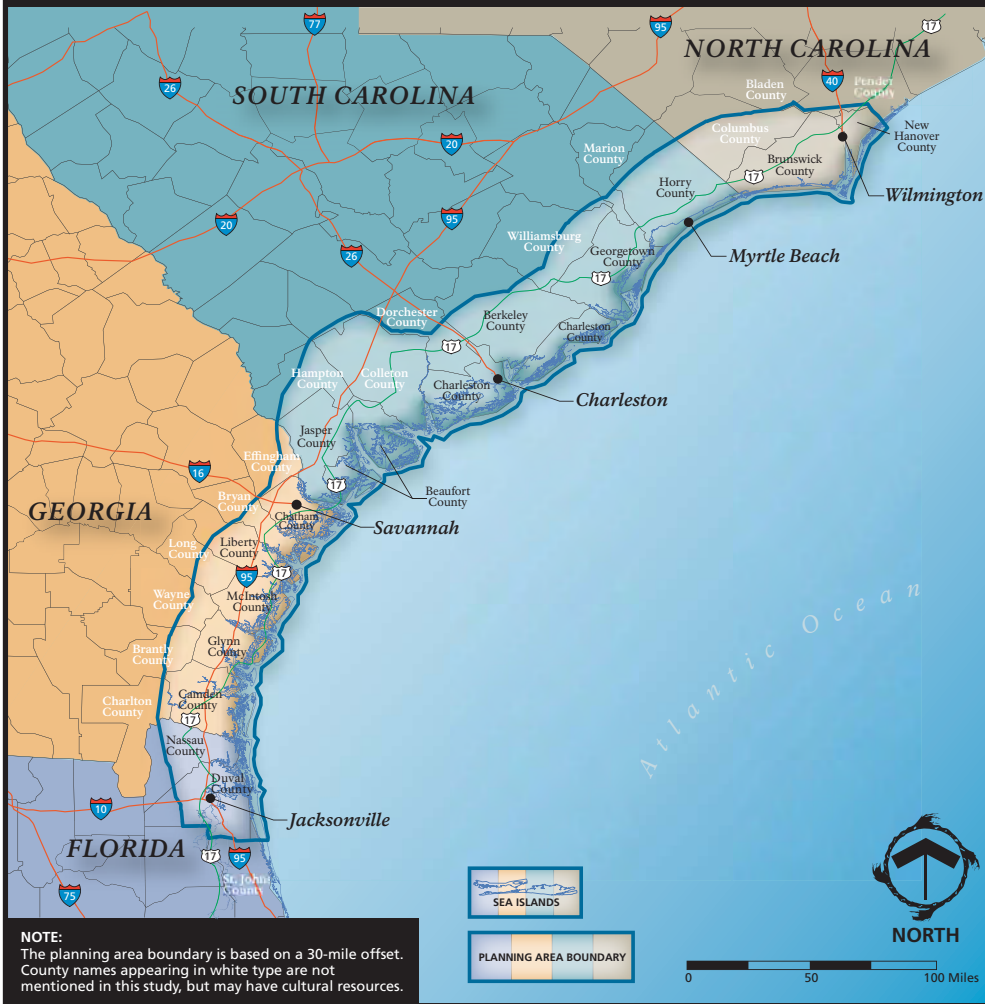


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PLANNING AREA



What is a Cultural Heritage Corridor?

A cultural heritage corridor is part of the National Park Service's National Heritage Area program. Cultural heritage corridors generally cross state boundaries and are linear in nature. These corridors are locally-managed places designated by the United States Congress where natural, cultural,

historic and recreational resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally-distinctive landscape arising from patterns of human activity shaped by geography. These areas are built and sustained by community partnerships and are planned around a region's shared heritage.

How is a Cultural Heritage Corridor Different From a National Park?

A national park preserves and interprets a unique feature not found anywhere else in the United States. A cultural heritage corridor preserves and interprets a community's pride in its history and traditions and its success depends largely on the level of involvement from the community. Preserving the integrity of the cultural landscape and local stories means

that future generations will be able to understand their relationship to the land and their heritage. Cultural heritage corridors, which are National Heritage Areas, provide educational and inspirational opportunities that invite the public and residents to visit and learn about an important aspect of our American culture.



CREATING THE GULLAH/GEECHEE CULTURAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR

The Gullah/Geechee people survived the Middle Passage to America as enslaved Africans who were captured from the rice-producing regions of West Africa. In the United States, they lived in isolation on the sea island communities while working on vast plantations in semi-tropical conditions. Because of their isolation, they were able to maintain the Gullah language, traditions, arts, crafts, and resources. Today, much of this heritage remains in the communities.

The journey to preserve Gullah/Geechee culture began in 2000 when the National Park Service was authorized by Congress to conduct a Special Resource Study. The Low Country Gullah Culture Special Resource Study documented the national significance of the Gullah/Geechee people and their culture. The National Trust for Historic Preservation included the Gullah/Geechee culture on its 2004 annual list of most endangered resources. The special resource study recommended the establishment of a cultural heritage area to protect these endangered resources. The full text of the study can be found at www.nps.gov/sero/planning/gg_srs/gg_res.htm.

As a result of the special resource study findings, Congress established the heritage corridor in 2006 (Subtitle I of Public Law 109-338). The heritage corridor was created to recognize the important contributions made to American culture and history by Africans and African Americans known as Gullah/Geechee who settled in the coastal regions of the four states. The legislation designated the barrier islands and coastal regions along the Atlantic Ocean as the heritage corridor. The emerging National Heritage Area spans a geographical area encompassing over 12,000 square miles along the coast through four states: South Carolina, Georgia, North Carolina, and Florida. The legislation established the commission as the local coordinating entity and assigned the duty of preparing and submitting a

management plan to the Secretary of the Interior. (The full text of the legislation can be found at www.nps.gov/legal/laws/109laws.htm, click on item 32 P.L. 109-338, search for Subtitle I, Gullah / Geechee Heritage Corridor.)

THE COMMISSION

The Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor is managed by a commission. The commission has many responsibilities including coordinating and supporting planning for and development of the cultural heritage corridor. Their duties include planning for and implementing interpretation and preservation opportunities, identifying important resources, seeking partners and funding to implement actions called for in the management plan. The Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission was assembled when the heritage corridor was designated. Commissioners were recommended by each state, the National Park Service and the public. Fifteen commissioners and 10 alternate commissioners were appointed. The names and states of the commissioners appear on the front page of this newsletter. (For additional information please visit this web address: <http://clyburn.house.gov/district-gullah.cfm>) The commission officers are:

- Chairman, Emory Campbell, South Carolina. Mr. Campbell is president of Gullah Heritage Consulting Service conducting lectures, short courses and Gullah Heritage Trail Tours on Hilton Head Island. He is the author of Gullah Cultural Legacies and was the former director of the Penn Center on St. Helena Island for 22 years. In 2008 the Association of African American Museums presented its Lifetime Achievement Award to Mr. Campbell.
- Vice Chairman, Eulis Willis, North Carolina. Mr. Willis is the mayor of the city of Navassa.
- Secretary, Ms. Jeanne Cyriaque, Georgia. Ms. Cyriaque coordinates African American programs in Georgia's state historic preservation office.
- Treasurer, Mr. Ralph Johnson, Florida. Mr. Johnson is the director of the Center for the Conservation of Architectural & Cultural Heritage at Florida Atlantic University.



Penn Center, SC

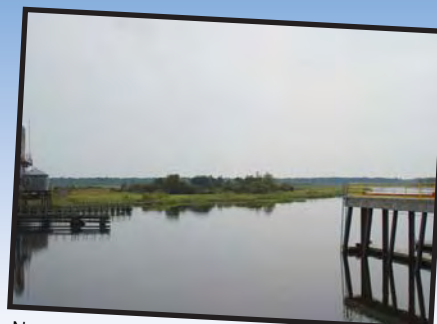


First African Baptist Church, GA

THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission is beginning to develop the management plan and an accompanying environmental assessment (EA) for the heritage corridor as called for in the legislation. This management plan/EA will provide a foundation to help the commission guide programs and set priorities for resource stewardship, visitor interpretation and education, and the development of partnerships; it will provide direction for the development of the cultural heritage corridor over the next 10-15 years. The plan will assist federal, state, and local governments; grassroots organizations; and public and private entities in interpreting the story of the Gullah/Geechee culture and preserving associated folklore, arts, crafts, and music. The plan will also outline the preservation needs of historical sites and artifacts unique to the Gullah/Geechee people.

Some of the items that must be contained in the management plan are 1) comprehensive policies, strategies, and recommendations for conservation, funding, management, and development of the heritage corridor; 2) consideration of existing state, county and local plans; and 3) descriptions of the actions that governments, private organizations, and individuals have agreed to take to protect the historical, cultural, and natural resources of the heritage corridor.



Navassa, NC



Kingsley Plantation, FL



We Need Your Help To Develop The Plan

Planning is grounded in the vision, mission, and purpose of the heritage corridor. The commission has drafted the following statements for your review and comment. We now need your thoughts. A mail-in comment form is attached for your convenience in responding to these ideas and to additional questions about the management plan.

VISION – The vision statement describes the kind of place the heritage area should be in the future. The vision for the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor is to

- recognize and sustain an environment that celebrates the legacy and continuing contributions of the Gullah/Geechee people to our American heritage.

MISSION – The mission statement describes how the commission and their partners intend to make the vision a reality. The mission of the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor Commission is to

- nurture pride and facilitate an understanding and awareness of the significance of the Gullah/Geechee history and culture within the Gullah/Geechee communities;
- sustain and preserve land, language, and cultural assets within the coastal communities of South Carolina, Georgia, North Carolina, and Florida; and
- educate the public on the value and importance of the Gullah/Geechee culture.

PURPOSE – The purpose statements describe why the cultural heritage area was designated. These statements help neighbors, visitors, partners, and other users understand the framework in which decisions are made. The purpose of the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor is to

- recognize the important contributions made to American culture and history by African Americans known as the Gullah/Geechee who settled in the coastal counties of South Carolina, Georgia, North Carolina, and Florida;
- assist state and local governments and public and private entities in South Carolina, Georgia, North Carolina, and Florida in interpreting the story of the Gullah/Geechee and in preserving Gullah/Geechee folklore, arts, crafts, and music; and
- assist in identifying and preserving sites, historical data, artifacts, and objects associated with the Gullah/Geechee for the benefit and education of the public.

TOPICS FOR INTERPRETIVE THEME DEVELOPMENT

Interpretive themes contain ideas, concepts, or stories that are central to the heritage corridor's purpose, identity, and visitor experience. Visitors should have the opportunity to learn about these themes. While the themes have not been developed, the following topics have been identified in the special resource study:

- Development of the plantation economy
- The quest for freedom
- Tidal irrigation methods improve efficiency of rice production
- The role of Gullah/Geechee people in the plantation economy
- The task system: how it fostered Gullah/Geechee culture
- The impact of Gullah/Geechee ancestors on the coastal landscape



Please Attend One of the Public Meetings:

Thursday, February 19, 2009

Public Input Program 7:00 - 9:00 pm

- Reflections: Nassau County's Gullah/Geechee History
- Meet and Greet Session

*Peck Community Center
Willie Mae Hardy Ashley Auditorium
510 South 10th Street
Fernandina Beach, FL 32034*

Friday, February 20, 2009

Commission Business Meeting (Open to the Public)
9:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Public question and answer session
11:00 to 11:30 a.m.

*University of North Florida
Board of Trustees Room 1058-B
University Center
12000 Alumni Dr.
Jacksonville, FL 32224*

Public Input Program 6:30 - 8:00 pm

- Reflections: Duval County's Gullah/Geechee History
- Meet and Greet Session

*Edward Waters College
Milne Auditorium
1658 Kings Road
Jacksonville, FL 32209*

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Your participation throughout the planning process is very important. There are several ways to get involved including reading newsletters, sending us your opinions and comments, visiting our website, and attending a public meeting. We encourage you to attend one of the public meetings held this February 19 and 20, 2009, to gain information, ask questions, and to provide your input and comments personally.

Planning for the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor will require input from everyone who is interested in the future of this special area. The commission, in cooperation with the National Park Service, invites you to join them in developing the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor management plan. We hope you will be able to participate in this comprehensive and collaborative planning effort.

For information on the plan and to submit your comments, please visit the planning website: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/guge> or by contacting Michael Allen at 843-881-5516 x12.

WHAT'S NEXT

The next step in developing the management plan is to hear from you. Your involvement is a key component for the success of the plan. Please take a moment to fill out the enclosed comment form and return it to the planning team.

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



For more information, please contact:

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PLANNING SCHEDULE

Producing a management plan involves many steps and will take about three years to complete. We are now beginning the process of producing the management plan for the Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor. The following is a list of the general steps of the planning process.

STEP	TIMEFRAME	PLANNING ACTIVITY	PUBLIC INVOLEMENT OPPORTUNITY
1	July 2008- January 2009	Project Startup. Determine the scope of the project, design the process for carrying out the project, determine issues and concerns, and gather and analyze information.	Completed
2 We are here	February-June 2009	Identify the Planning Context. We are currently in this step. Reaffirm the vision, mission, purpose, and interpretive theme categories. Continue to gather and analyze information.	1. Read newsletter #1 2. Send us your comments 3. Attend public meetings
3	May-October 2009	Develop goals, policies, resource management strategies, partnerships, and sources of funding	1. Stay informed via web postings
4	October 2009- January 2010	Develop and Evaluate Preliminary Alternatives. Develop a reasonable range of alternative futures for the cultural heritage corridor.	1. Read newsletter #2 2. Send us your comments 3. Attend public meetings
5	February- September 2010	Prepare and Publish the <i>management plan/environmental assessment</i>. The management plan/EA will be prepared and distributed for public review. The plan will describe the planning context, management alternatives, and impacts.	1. Read the plan 2. Send us your comments
6	October 2010- March 2011	Secretary of the Interior approval of the plan	1. Stay informed via web postings
7	April 2011	Publish the Finding of No Significant Impact	30-day public notice
8	May 2011	Implement the Plan. After the "Finding of No Significant Impact" is issued, the management direction in the plan will be carried out.	