

Trail Study News

Chisholm and Great Western NHT Feasibility Study and Environmental Assessment

Greetings!

In March 2009, Congress passed the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 (P. L. 111-11), one section of which called for the Secretary of the Interior to study the Chisholm and Great Western trails for their potential designation as national historic trails.

Some 10 million cattle moved north from Texas to the central plains states on these trails. After the Civil War, Texas was cash-poor but cattle-rich, and there was no easy or cheap way to bring longhorns from Texas to markets in the midwestern and eastern states.

But trader Jesse Chisholm had pioneered a route that spanned much of that gap, and a visionary cattle buyer named Joseph G. McCoy transformed the region's postwar economy in 1867 when he built stockyards in Abilene, Kansas, and coaxed Texas drovers to head north. By 1870 a new market had emerged along the so-called Chisholm Trail. Texas rebounded from its economic depression and the cowboy became an American icon that would prove an enduring symbol of courage, grit, and devil-may-care adventure.



Trail markers such as this one just south of Enid, Oklahoma, have been erected along the Chisholm Trail throughout Oklahoma and southern Kansas.

The Chisholm Trail was a major trail through the early 1870s, but westward settlement forced the drovers onto the new Western Trail, which carried the trade well into the 1880s. Continued settlement and new railroad construction forced the closure of the cattle trails, but as a symbol of the west, these trails and their legacy remain as vivid as ever.

What is a National Historic Trail?

A national historic trail (NHT) is an extended trail that follows as closely as possible the original routes of travel associated with important historic events.

Examples of other national historic trails include the Oregon Trail, Santa Fe Trail, Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo), and El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro. Trail designations are continuous from end to end, but may include sections of land areas, land or water segments, or other specific sites.

Some historic sites and trail segments are in private ownership, and other sites and segments are in public ownership. Participation in national historic trail programs is voluntary, and private landowners along the trail retain all legal rights to their property.

Message from the Superintendent

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the Chisholm and Great Western National Historic Trail Feasibility Study and Environmental Assessment project. We wish to announce the start of this project and invite you to participate.

The study process will be conducted in consultation with federal, state, and local agencies, American Indian nations and other interested organizations as well as individuals in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas and Nebraska.

Staff from the National Park Service's National Trails Intermountain Region in Santa Fe, New Mexico, will lead the effort.

You will have the opportunity during the study process to provide your thoughts on this important project. Your participation is important, and we urge your involvement as the study proceeds. My staff and I look forward to meeting you!

Sincerely,



Aaron Mahr Yáñez
Superintendent
National Trails Intermountain Region
National Park Service

What is a Feasibility Study?

Completion of a feasibility study by the National Park Service will meet the intent of legislation passed by Congress to consider adding the Chisholm and Great Western cattle trails to the National Trails System.

Associated with the feasibility study is an environmental assessment, which identifies, evaluates, and documents the potential effects of designating the routes as a national historic trail.

The feasibility study will consider several important questions with input from the general public.

To qualify for designation as a national historic trail, a trail must meet all three of the following criteria, which are taken from the National Trails System Act of 1968 (P.L. 90-543):

i) It must be a trail or route established by historic use and must be historically significant as a result of that use. The route need not

currently exist as a discernible trail to qualify, but its location must be sufficiently known to permit evaluation of public recreation and historical interest potential.

ii) It must be nationally significant. To qualify as nationally significant, historic use of the trail must have had a far reaching effect on broad patterns of American culture. Trails significant in the history of Native Americans may be included.

iii) It must have significant potential for public recreational use or historical interest based on historic interpretation and appreciation.

The feasibility study will make a recommendation on national significance that will be sent to the National Park System Advisory Board for concurrence.



Walking anywhere from 8-20 miles per day, Texas longhorns were driven over 800 miles to Kansas and Nebraska. Some were shipped to eastern markets, but others were purchased by ranchers or government Indian agents. A typical herd exceeded 2,500 head, requiring at least 10 cowboys to prevent stampedes and deter theft.

Chisholm and Great Western National Historic Trail Feasibility Study and Environmental Assessment



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Together with their partners, staff at the National Trails Intermountain Region offices in Santa Fe and Salt Lake City administers 9 of the 19 national historic trails in the National Trail System.

National Trails Intermountain Region
PO Box 728
Santa Fe, NM 87504-0728

Phone
505.988.6098

E-mail
lodi_administration@nps.gov

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Get Involved in Your Trail History!

There are many ways for you to learn more about these trails and to get involved with the planning process.

- Attend a feasibility study scoping meeting
- Review the draft study
- Tour a trail-related historic site or museum
- Visit a trail-related route or walk in a trace

To learn more about this planning project, go to:

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/ntir>

What is the planning meeting schedule?

Public meetings will be held at the following locations:

June 8 – Fort Worth, Texas

Hyatt Place Stockyards

12-2 pm – 132 E. Exchange Avenue

June 9 – Austin, Texas

Robert E. Johnson Conference Center

12-2 pm – 1501 N. Congress Avenue

June 9 – San Antonio, Texas

San Antonio Public Library, Auditorium

5:30-7:30 pm – 600 Soledad Street

June 10 – Menard, Texas

Menard County Community Center

5-7 pm – 303 Travis Street

June 11 – Albany, Texas

Shackelford County Courthouse

12-2 pm – 309 S. Second Street

June 12 – Altus, Oklahoma

Southwest Technology Center

12-2 pm – 711 W. Tamarack Road

June 12 – Duncan, Oklahoma

Chisholm Trail Heritage Center

4-6 pm – 1000 Chisholm Trail Parkway

June 21 – Ogallala, Nebraska

City Hall, City Council Chambers

5-7 pm – 411 E. Second Street

June 22 – Dodge City, Kansas

Boot Hill Museum, Banquet Room

3-5 pm – 500 Front Street

June 23 – Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Oklahoma History Center

3-5 pm – 800 Nazih Zuhdi Drive (northeast of state capitol)

June 24 – Wichita, Kansas

Wichita-Sedgwick County

Historical Museum

5-7 pm – 204 S. Main Street

June 25 – Abilene, Kansas

Abilene Civic Center

5-7 pm – 201 N.W. Second Street

Trail Study News (May 2010) was produced for the Chisholm and Great Western NHT Feasibility Study and Environmental Assessment

Comments or questions?

Contact:

Frank Norris, Historian
National Trails Intermountain Region
National Park Service
505.988.6005
frank_norris@nps.gov