

ALTERNATIVES

ALTERNATIVE A: NO ACTION

The history, meaning, and significance of the Old Spanish Trail are being interpreted, commemorated, and preserved in varying degrees along the trail. Protection and commemoration of the Old Spanish Trail would continue to be left to initiatives by federal agencies, state and local governments, and others.

Management

Sites, structures, and trail segments associated with the Old Spanish Trail are currently owned by federal, state, and local governments, as well as by the private sector.

Visitor Use and Interpretation

A number of developed and undeveloped historic sites and trail segments can be found along the trail and several guidebooks exist. With the current interest in the trail, other visitor use opportunities are likely to be developed. The Old Spanish Trail Association promotes visitor use, interpretation, preservation, and commemoration of the trail. The association has chapters that work on the local level, and has a newsletter and website. Many other organizations and agencies are taking action at the local level to recognize and commemorate the Old Spanish Trail (see "Potential Partnerships" section).

Various levels of interpretation on the Old Spanish Trail can be found along routes of the trail. The quality of interpretation varies from area to area, and no one area tells the entire Old Spanish Trail story.

Resource Preservation

Many Old Spanish Trail resources have not been located or documented. Sites, structures, and trail segments continue to be damaged and destroyed, particularly in areas of urban development. Opportunities are lost to record and document tangible remains of the trail. A number of sites, structures, and trail segments remain under the control of federal, state, local, and private-sector organizations that continue to protect the areas. Information evaluated in this study helps to underscore that the Old Spanish Trail has state and local historical significance, making its routes and sites potentially eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Estimated Costs

There would be no direct costs for new programs, but available federal, state, local, and private funds are being spent on a variety of programs, but there is no central coordination. The precise costs cannot be determined because the preservation and interpretation of the Old Spanish Trail are components of larger preservation and interpretive programs by various organizations.

ALTERNATIVE B: ESTABLISH THE OLD SPANISH TRAIL THROUGH OTHER DESIGNATIONS

In order to provide a variety of options for consideration, an alternative that does not require federal action is offered. A variation of the alternative that would have increased federal involvement is also presented. In Section 8(a) of the National Trails System Act, there is a provision that

the Secretary of the Interior is directed to encourage States to consider, in their comprehensive statewide outdoor recreation plans and proposals...needs and opportunities for establishing park, forest, and other recreation and historic trails on lands owned or administered by States, and recreation and historic trails on lands in or near urban areas. The Secretary is also directed to encourage States to consider, in their comprehensive statewide historic preservation plans and proposals...needs and opportunities for establishing historic trails.

The trail states could take the lead in developing "state historic trails." This would be a new program, which could be based on parallel state commemorative programs like "state register" programs or state historic site programs.

State historic trails or other retracement routes could be designated as National Recreation Trails. A series of such trails could be developed through state, local, and private sector initiatives and, where appropriate, with federal land management agencies on whose lands the Old Spanish Trail is located. Establishment of National Recreation Trails would not require federal land acquisition. Trails that meet appropriate criteria can be designated as National Recreation Trails by the Secretary of the Interior through the National Trails System Act.

Through this alternative, visitors would have an opportunity to travel along trail systems that evoke the Old Spanish Trail. Where possible, the routes could closely follow the original trail but in other areas they may only parallel the trail. A variety of natural resources (deserts, forests, and rivers) and cultural resources (archeological sites, trail-associated structures, and trail remnants) along these trail systems would help to bring this story alive.

Management

Implementation of this alternative does not require action by Congress. The National Park Service does not need to initiate it, and it could be undertaken by a local/state agency or land management interests. Management would be at the discretion of the states. Administrative activities could also be undertaken by a private organization, such as the Old Spanish Trail Association and its local chapters, which could work with the states to coordinate trail programs.

A management option for Alternative B would involve Congress establishing an Old Spanish Trail commission to oversee trail programs and providing it with annual operating funds. It would be independent of any single government agency, but could nonetheless seek federal financial and technical assistance. The commission would administer the trail. It would have the resources—different from those of the National Park Service—to enhance the visitor experience by increasing the number of interpretive programs and activities commemorating the Old Spanish Trail. The commission would offer approaches to providing interpretation beyond the designated trail(s) and immediate resources.

The commission could enlist the support of communities, volunteer groups, special interests such as school districts, and others to join an umbrella organization in support of Old Spanish Trail interpretation and commemoration. Greater participation would support a wide variety of programming and activities, including preservation, interpretation, and celebration of Old Spanish Trail resources. Experiential activities, festivals, community activities, and other programs would offer local people, as well as national visitors, the opportunity to both visit the trail and participate in activities year-round. Additionally, visitors would have access to "take-home" interpretive materials emphasizing trailwide context and meaning beyond regional, site-specific, and route information. The Old Spanish Trail commission would have the authority over actions such as officially recognizing participating sites and segments, coordinating with participating state governments, soliciting and distributing funds, and developing a copyrighted logo and signs.

The commission could serve as a clearinghouse to provide technical and grant information concerning the preservation of Old Spanish Trail resources. The commission could develop a catalog of all Old Spanish Trail sites and trail segments, starting with those named in this study and extending new research to identify additional sites and segments, and general history. This research could extend to scholarly work in Spain, Mexico, and the United States, and could add to the body of knowledge on the trail.

Visitor Use and Interpretation

Under this alternative, people would follow marked state historic trails or new recreational trails commemorating representative Old Spanish Trail segments. The primary visitor experience would include traveling through landscapes and visiting sites and other resources associated with the Old Spanish Trail story. Individual land managers and agencies would develop trail opportunities and propose them for recognition by the Secretary of the Interior as National Recreational Trails.

The extent of trail development might vary depending on the interest of the individual states and the federal agencies on whose land the Old Spanish Trail is found. This concept could primarily involve using existing trails and roads, with some new trails being developed using funding from government and non-government sources. States could be encouraged to designate commemorative highways that parallel trail routes. Highways that meet the appropriate criteria could be designated as scenic byways. This could provide the potential to garner federal cost-share funds through state highway departments to help interpret the trail and provide recreation opportunities.

Interpretation would focus on the Old Spanish Trail and the broad historic heritage along the trail corridor. A trail guide could be developed to lead people from one site or cultural or natural resource to another. Individual sites or segments would be interpreted in a variety of ways, including guided tours on the trail(s), or media identifying and interpreting cultural and natural features along the trail(s).

An interrelated network of state historic and national recreation trails would offer a range of trail-related activities. The trails could be in, or accessible to, urban areas, or within federal and state parks, forests, or other recreational areas. Wherever possible, significant natural and cultural features associated with the Old Spanish Trail in the area would be incorporated into the trail network. Trails could be located in such a way as to take advantage of abandoned rights-of-way, existing trails, and existing roads, though these may not follow historic routes. Additionally, the trails would be designed for a variety of users.

Resource Preservation

There would be no additional federal funds for preservation under this concept, and no federal land acquisition would be authorized. However, the designation of National Recreation Trail(s) would carry with it the recognition of being part of the National Trails System. State and local governments, as well as the private and non-profit sectors, may be encouraged by these designations to set a high priority for projects that include resources related to the Old Spanish Trail.

The information found on trail sites and segments in this document could be used by the State Historic Preservation Offices or others to begin work on National Register of Historic Places nomination forms for sites and segments of the trail. This designation would allow for additional protection and recognition of these areas, and could result in funding for their preservation.

Estimated Costs

A number of federal cost-sharing programs could be used to defray expenses of trail development and interpretation, and state and local or private-sector funding sources could be sought to implement trail programs. Projects could qualify for funding from Federal Highway Administration enhancement funds, which are generally administered through state highway departments. National Recreation Trails are eligible for limited National Park Service Challenge Cost-Share Program funding through the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program under National Park Service cooperative agreement authorities. Projects on lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management, the USDA Forest Service, and the National Park Service might qualify for cost-share or other funding by those agencies.

Should the management option to establish a commission to administer the designated recreation trail be chosen—there would be operating costs for the commission. Based on the focus and decisions of the commission, and the funding they receive from federal aid and private contributions, the cost may vary. National Park Service experiences with operating commissions suggest that the basic operating expenses would be in the range of \$300,000 to \$600,000 per year.

ALTERNATIVE C: ESTABLISH AN OLD SPANISH TRAIL NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL

This feasibility study finds that the Old Spanish Trail is nationally significant, meets the criteria for designation as a National Historic Trail, and proposes that Congress could enact legislation to authorize the National Historic Trail. Under this alternative, the Old Spanish Trail from Santa Fe to Los Angeles, including the Northern Route, the North Branch and the Armijo Route would be designated by Congress as the Old Spanish Trail National Historic Trail and would become a unit of the National Trails System.

Other identified variants of these routes were studied in the preparation of this feasibility study, including the western fork of the North Branch, the Fishlake Cutoff, and the Kingston Cutoff. These three variants are included as part of the overall study area and met the criteria for National Historic Trail designation, but are not recommended for designation at this time, because data is lacking to show that they were used in conducting trade and commerce between New Mexico and California during the period 1829-1848. Future investigations may uncover additional information on these variants that shows they were used for trade and commerce during the period of significance. Because these routes have met all other study requirements of the National Trails System Act, this alternative includes the suggestion that any legislation developed to designate the Old Spanish Trail should also authorize the

Secretary to administratively add these trail variants to the National Historic Trail if sufficient documentation is presented to verify their association and use.

Management

When designating the route, Congress would identify a lead federal agency to administer the trail in cooperation with a variety of management partners, including state, local, and other federal agencies, American Indian tribes, local communities, private landowners, and others.

The administrative activities would include preparing a comprehensive management and use plan; identifying sites and segments with significant potential for public recreational use or historical interest; developing cooperative agreements; certifying qualified sites; and stimulating, assisting, and coordinating preservation and interpretive activities. The administering agency would also develop a uniform marker (logo) and, where appropriate, mark the trail and auto tour route and manage the official logo for proper use. Other activities include providing technical and limited financial assistance; assisting and conducting historical and archeological research; carrying out monitoring to ensure the preservation and quality of certified sites, segments, and facilities; and establishing approaches to interpretation and preparing interpretive materials.

The purpose of the comprehensive management and use plan would be to help achieve consistent and effective preservation, public use, and interpretive strategies. Section 5(f) of the National Trails System Act (Appendix A) identifies the items to be addressed in such a plan.

The comprehensive management and use plan could include provisions to work cooperatively with state and local governments and landowners to help preserve the natural landscapes along the Old Spanish Trail.

The voluntary process for certifying sites along the proposed Old Spanish Trail National Historic Trail would be similar to the process used for other National Historic Trails. Certified trail properties would be non-federal historic sites, trail segments, and interpretive facilities that meet the standards of the administering agency for resource preservation and public enjoyment. Certification is a partnership or a type of cooperative agreement that has the flexibility to meet the landowner's needs while helping ensure protection and appropriate public use. Under the National Trails System Act, private owners of certified sites may be enrolled in the agency's volunteer program. Volunteer status provides liability protection for activities that are within the scope of the volunteer agreement.

Visitor Use and Interpretation

A range of visitor use opportunities could be developed on appropriate public lands and private properties that have been certified with landowner consent. Easements might also be acquired to provide for public use. Such use would be managed so that there would not be any degradation of archeological or historic sites. Existing trail systems could be expanded for activities such as hiking and horseback riding, and new trails could be developed to allow retracement of the original route.

Interpretation refers to activities designed to convey important information, to educate, to reveal relationships related to natural and cultural resources, and to foster further inquiry and stewardship. The interpretation of the Old Spanish Trail would focus on three areas; the story and significance, the place and landscape, and the people.

From a distance, much of the landscape of the route of the Old Spanish Trail today generally resembles its appearance during its period of significance. Designation as a National Historic Trail would provide opportunities for visitors to retrace the historic route and see the same patterns today. They could imagine the feelings of traveling through the forested mountains or across the seemingly barren Mojave Desert. Many of the same enticing vistas, cool rivers, and hot, desert expanses are still there for visitors to experience and appreciate.

Future planning efforts would identify interpretive facilities and media. Consistency would be needed in information, design, and visitor use guidelines. Media and program design should be accomplished with the involvement of interested and knowledgeable groups and individuals.

Facilities would include visitor centers, contact stations, and unattended kiosks. The federal administering agency normally would not construct or operate visitor facilities for the trail unless it was in partnership with appropriate state and private organizations with broad public support and a demonstrated ability to raise the funds needed to build and operate such facilities. However, the federal agency could provide, based on the availability of funds, technical and financial assistance to others in the planning, development, and overall approach to interpretation, including museum exhibits with original or replica artifacts, text and graphic panels, audiovisual programs, interactive computer programs, models, dioramas, and other media. Traveling exhibits would also be possible.

The federal administering agency could also develop, in partnership with others, outdoor interpretive media. A standardized exhibit design would be used to reflect the flavor of the Old Spanish Trail and to help reinforce the public's perception of an integrated trail system. Wayside exhibits are outdoor panels that generally contain text and graphics. Audio stations can also be developed at outdoor locations. Such exhibits and audio would be considered at any locations that met the following criteria: something important and interesting happened here, was here, or is visible from here; and the location is accessible and safe for visitors. Waysides can be placed at road pullouts, vistas, historic sites or features, or trailheads and along trails.

Interpretive publications could also be developed, such as a trailwide brochure, as well as a variety of books, pamphlets, and site folders. Other interpretive media include audio tape/audio compact disc tours, multimedia CD-ROM programs, and a trail web page.

Resource Preservation

The administering agency would work cooperatively with landowners and land managers to protect the remaining historic resources of the trail including, where appropriate, the trail landscapes. Under the National Trails System Act, the administering federal agency could provide technical assistance and limited financial assistance for resource projects and could ensure that development is done in a manner that will avoid or mitigate resource impacts. The agency can also assist with development of resource inventories and monitoring, trail mapping and Geographic Information Systems, studies of visitor carrying capacity, archeological surveys, and other resource studies.

Federally assisted, sponsored, or funded projects would be subject to compliance with a variety of resource preservation laws including the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the Historic Preservation Act. Trail sites and segments could be studied and nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

Land acquisition and easements can be used to protect resources on National Historic Trails. Recent trail designation legislation has limited federal land acquisition to willing-seller/willing-buyer

situations. Landowners could donate land or easements to federal, state, and local agencies or to private organizations, such as historical societies or land trusts.

Estimated Costs

National Historic Trail costs are discussed in more detail in the "Feasibility and Desirability" section. It is estimated that \$400,000 annually would be required to provide a minimum level of professional staff and support services to operate a multi-state National Historic Trail such as the Old Spanish Trail. Development of the trail's Comprehensive Management and Use Plan would cost about \$400,000 over a two-year period. Because the much of the route is on federal lands, national historic trail designation may require revisions to existing land use/management plans, resulting in additional planning costs for affected agencies. Funding for large-scale projects such as major museum exhibits, films, and so forth would require special authorization. Depending on the availability of annual cost-share funds, several small projects could be done annually.

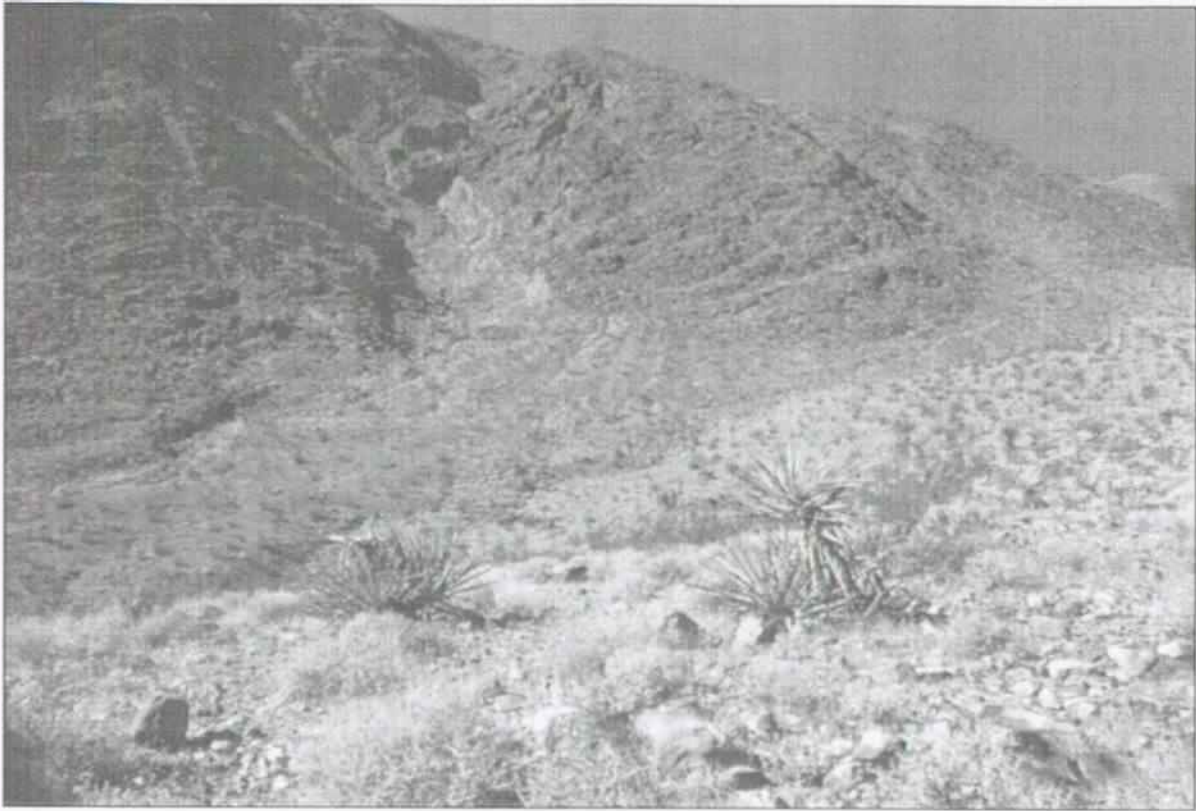


Figure 4: Emigrant Pass, California