

## Chapter 8

# EVALUATION ACCORDING TO FEASIBILITY CRITERIA

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If enacted, the National Heritage Partnerships Act will formalize the feasibility/suitability requirements of proposed National Heritage Areas. These are expected to be similar to the National Park Service's currently suggested criteria for assessing the eligibility of a region for designation. According to those suggestions, a suitability/feasibility study should include analysis and documentation for the following 10 criteria.

- (1) The area has an assemblage of natural, historic or cultural resources that together represent distinctive aspects of American heritage worthy of recognition, conservation, interpretation, and continuing use, and are best managed as such an assemblage through partnerships among public and private entities, and by combining diverse and sometimes noncontiguous resources and active communities.**

Section 3 of this Feasibility Study identifies the assemblage of heritage, nature, open-space, and outdoor recreational resources within the proposed Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area. These resources are significant at both the regional and national levels, and together, they represent and convey the unique contribution of the Santa Cruz Valley to American heritage. This region was the center of some 12,000 years of Native American cultural developments; a corridor of Spanish exploration, colonization, and missionary activity; a frontier of Mexican and early American mining, ranching, and agriculture; and a fertile ground for the development of a United States-Mexico borderland culture. These and other regional themes are important parts of the national story not told in any existing National Heritage Area.

The resources related to these themes are therefore deserving of national recognition, and their conservation, interpretation, and continuing use is in the national interest. Management under the framework of a National Heritage Area would link related resources to better preserve them and tell their stories, and would be built on community-based, voluntary partnerships among public and private stakeholders. Currently separate conservation and interpretation efforts could be coordinated through regional planning within a National Heritage Area structure. A National Heritage Area designation would also provide increased opportunities for combining existing funding with new sources, and would help tell the important stories of this region to visitors from other states and countries.

- (2) The area reflects traditions, customs, beliefs, and folk life that are a valuable part of the national story.**

The Santa Cruz Valley has many flourishing cultural traditions that are important parts of the national story. The particular combination of Native American, Spanish, Mexican, and American Old West customs, crafts, music styles, foods, and other types of folk life that are maintained and celebrated here cannot be found in any other region of the United States. The

distinctive mix of folk traditions in the Santa Cruz Valley is a result of its long history as a desert frontier and borderland corridor. It represents the Spanish Colonial and Mexican periods in the history of the Southwest, which are less well-known, but important, counterparts to English and French colonialism in North America and the early history of the United States.

This region has been the focus of the nation's attention several times: during the search for a possible railroad route from the Rio Grande to California as part of the Gadsden Purchase negotiation after the Mexican-American War, during a series of gold and silver rushes after the California Gold Rush played out, and during the Apache Wars and campaigns against Pancho Villa. Beginning in the 1880s, this became one of the leading copper-producing regions in the nation. With its dry air and warm climate, this region has been a destination for health seekers since the 1890s, and since the 1920s, local guest ranches have drawn visitors searching for a taste of the Old West. The dramatic landscapes of this valley have been etched into the minds of generations of Americans by hundreds of Western films made here since the 1930s. This region is internationally renowned as a leading center of research in desert ecology, climate history research, archaeology, astronomy, and optics. In sum, the Santa Cruz Valley has been the stage of important moments and movements in the national experience, and its scenic landscapes, colorful history, and vibrant folk traditions are fundamental parts of the national consciousness and character.

**(3) The area provides outstanding opportunities to conserve natural, cultural, historic, and/or scenic features.**

The wealth of heritage, nature, and scenic resources in the Santa Cruz Valley is considerable, and there are a number of existing and planned programs and projects to conserve them. Many of these efforts involve partnerships between private organizations and government agencies, and they receive funding from both government and private sources.

*Examples of New Conservation Activities in the Proposed National Heritage Area*

- ◆ The land base of Tumacácori National Historical Park has been expanded by 300 acres to include a portion of the Santa Cruz River, as well as the historic orchard and spring that supported the mission.
- ◆ The National Park Service is developing partnerships with local governments and nonprofit groups to develop the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail along the Santa Cruz River.
- ◆ The National Park Service and the University of Arizona are working together to inventory five native cat species in southern Arizona, and to develop a management plan for their survival.
- ◆ Coronado National Forest is revising its Forest Land and Resources Management Plan.
- ◆ The Arizona State Parks department is developing the new San Rafael State Park and Natural Area, has recently expanded its Sonoita Creek State Natural Area, and is

developing plans to expand Catalina State Park, and is negotiating the purchase of conservation easements on properties along the Santa Cruz River.

- ◆ Pima County's Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan is working to preserve critical wildlife habitats, riparian areas, open spaces, working ranches, historic buildings, and archaeological sites in the Santa Cruz Valley through purchases of properties and conservation easements with public bond funding.
- ◆ In the Paseo de Las Iglesias project, Pima County and the Army Corps of Engineers are planning the restoration of the Santa Cruz River flow and riparian habitats between the San Xavier mission and the City of Tucson over a distance of approximately seven miles.
- ◆ Using its allotment from the Cental Arizona Project canal, the San Xavier District of the Tohono O'odham Nation is reviving irrigated farming and restoring a riparian area in the river floodplain.
- ◆ The City of Tucson is developing the Tucson Origins Heritage Park, including partial reconstructions of the Spanish period mission and presidio, and is planning an archaeological park on a prehistoric site.
- ◆ The City of Marana is developing the Marana Heritage Park, an archaeological park on a prehistoric site, and is also working with the Tucson Audubon Society to restore riparian areas along the Santa Cruz River.
- ◆ The City of Nogales is working with Friends of the Santa Cruz River to restore a riparian area along South River Road.
- ◆ The Empire Ranch Foundation is restoring buildings of a historic ranch in the Cienega Valley.
- ◆ The Arizona Nature Conservancy is conducting an ongoing species inventory in its Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Preserve, and is working to broker conservation easements between private landowners and the Arizona State Parks department on properties along the Santa Cruz River.

Currently, these and other conservation activities in the region have a project-specific focus and involve a small number of partnerships and funding sources. Communication and coordination among these projects is limited. Designation of a National Heritage Area will provide a more effective framework to coordinate partnerships among various levels of government and different kinds of private-sector involvement. Through a National Heritage Area framework, public and private funding sources will also be combined more effectively, and a regional planning process will allow better long-term management of resources on a voluntary basis. In sum, the designation of a Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area will provide new opportunities for voluntary resource conservation, allow more effective planning and funding for conservation, and will create a synergy between ongoing conservation activities.

**(4) The area provides outstanding recreational and educational opportunities.**

The outdoor recreational resources of the Santa Cruz Valley were summarized in Chapter 3 of this Feasibility Study. Among those resources are 1.5 million acres of public lands, 2 National Parks, 4 state parks, 6 large county parks, 4 major lakes, 2 designated scenic highways, more than 600 miles of backcountry trails, about 500 miles of urban bikeways, 14 developed campgrounds, and 37 highly rated birdwatching spots. These and other recreational resources significantly contribute to the quality of life for area residents and are a major draw for visitors from other states and countries.

Several educational programs about the cultural and natural history of the region are operated by government agencies and private organizations. All the national and state park units and most of the 32 museums related to local nature or heritage have interpretive signs, printed guides, and docents. Many of them also have exhibits and websites, and some have classroom outreach programs. Newsletters, websites, tours, lectures, and other educational media and events are sponsored by many of the 20 nature-related organizations, 16 outdoor recreation organizations, and 32 heritage organizations in the proposed National Heritage Area. Educational exhibits are included in many of the 10 nature-themed annual events and 40 heritage and cultural annual events in the region. Pima County, the City of Tucson, the Town of Marana, and the Town of Oro Valley are all developing heritage parks focused on interpreting local history and cultural traditions.

While there are many recreational and educational resources and activities in the region, many local residents, civic leaders, and visitors are inadequately informed about their availabilities. Most recreational areas need more facilities and maintenance, and there are many important historic sites and natural areas in need of identification, study, and interpretation. Often, related resources are not linked through regional guides or interpretive materials. A National Heritage Area framework will create many new opportunities to improve and maintain recreational facilities, and to develop new interpretive materials, exhibits, and programs to educate the public about the unique environment and cultural history of this region.

*Possible Educational Programs of the Proposed National Heritage Area*

- ◆ Educational programs for school age students that integrate the stories of the regions natural and cultural sites and places them in a broader regional context.
- ◆ Web sites that offer regional educational resources and link together the area's stories.
- ◆ Intergenerational learning programs that explore the area's cultural and natural heritage.
- ◆ Lecture and speakers programs that provide regional or cross-disciplinary perspectives.
- ◆ Leadership programs that offer tours of the region's heritage sites and resources to emerging community leaders and young professionals.
- ◆ "Doors Open Days" when local cultural and natural sites invite the community in for free tours and special behind-the-scenes programs.

- ◆ A regional volunteer corps to monitor and care for heritage resources and spread the word.

**(5) Resources that are important to the identified theme or themes of the area retain a degree of integrity capable of supporting interpretation.**

An important criterion for inclusion in the inventory of significant heritage sites and nature resources in Chapters 3 and 4, as well as in Appendices A-C, was that they retain sufficient integrity to convey their significance and to support interpretation. Because this level of integrity was a requirement for inclusion, a large number of heritage sites in this inventory are currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and almost all of the others are judged to be eligible for inclusion. In addition to being well preserved, many of the listed heritage sites are open to the public. Similarly, most of the listed nature resources are currently being conserved to some degree and are accessible to the public.

By linking related resources through the themes identified in Chapter 4, these resources can be interpreted in terms of larger historical, ecological, and geographical contexts that will better highlight their meaning and significance. A National Heritage Area designation will also provide opportunities to increase the number of resources that are preserved, restored, and interpreted in the region. By expanding the assemblage of resources with high levels of integrity, the stories of the Santa Cruz Valley can be told even more powerfully through the themes identified in this Feasibility Study.

**(6) Residents, business interests, nonprofit organizations, and governments within the proposed area are involved in the planning, have developed a conceptual financial plan that outlines the roles for all participants including the federal government, and have demonstrated support for designation of the area.**

Chapter 1 of this Feasibility Study summarizes the history of the local effort seeking a National Heritage Area designation, including the diversity of interest groups who participated in the working group that developed the National Heritage Area concept described in Chapter 2. While there were between 10 and 25 participants at each of the monthly meetings held since April 2003, the working group consisted of about 50 persons, in aggregate, over time. Represented in this planning group were interested residents of the region, local farmers and ranchers, nonprofit organizations dedicated to heritage and nature conservation, groups and agencies involved in community development and economic development, organizations working to promote the region for tourism, local resorts and small businesses that benefit from tourism, state park units, and local governments. Advising this group were the superintendents of two National Parks within the proposed National Heritage Area, with Tumacácori National Historical Park in the role of primary National Park Service partner. The participants in the working group are listed in Appendix D.

*Interests Represented in the Working Group for Planning the Proposed National Heritage Area*

- ◆ Local governments
- ◆ Local state park units

- ◆ Historic preservation
- ◆ History education
- ◆ Nature conservation
- ◆ Environmental education
- ◆ Tourism
- ◆ Resorts
- ◆ Small businesses
- ◆ Agriculture
- ◆ Ranching
- ◆ Housing development
- ◆ Economic development
- ◆ Community development.



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As can be seen from the list above, a broad range of interests in the public and private sectors have been involved in the planning of the proposed National Heritage Area. The management entity will have a Partnership Council that will include a representative cross section of stakeholders who will be involved in developing the Management Plan following designation (see Chapter 6). Through rotating seats on the Board of Directors and the Partnership Council, the management entity will provide opportunities for participation by interested organizations wishing to become involved in planning and programming for the National Heritage Area.

The group of stakeholders in the working group also helped develop the conceptual financial plan presented in Chapter 7 that outlines the roles for all participants, including the National Park Service. The plan includes an assessment of possible local funding sources; an estimate of the amount of Congressional funding needed in the first year; ideas for building a base of earned income; a strategy for obtaining donations, endowments, and grants; revenue projections; an operating budget for the first year of operations; and recommendations for achieving economic independence and sustainability.

The breadth of local support for the National Heritage Area designation is demonstrated by the variety of interest groups involved in the planning (see Appendix D), by the range of public and private funding sources for this Feasibility Study and related public outreach (see Chapter 1), and by the numerous resolutions and letters of support presented in Appendix E. The vision of this National Heritage Area has brought together a remarkably diverse group of local stakeholders interested in recognizing, preserving, interpreting, and promoting the heritage resources, cultural traditions, and natural beauty of this region.

**(7) The proposed management entity and units of government supporting the designation are willing to commit to working in partnership to develop the heritage area.**

Several units of government have been directly involved in the planning and funding of this effort seeking a National Heritage Area designation. The commitments of state agencies, local governments, and tribes to partner with the management entity are reflected by their resolutions and letters of support, by their participations in the planning process, and by their financial contributions toward preparation of this Feasibility Study. Representatives of local governments and tribes have provided input to this Feasibility Study, including Chapter 6, which outlines the roles of all parties. Local governments and tribes will also provide inputs

to the Management Plan when it is prepared after designation. To ensure that governmental interests are represented in the planning and programs of the National Heritage Area, the proposed management entity will include representatives of state and local governments and tribes on its Board of Directors, and on an advisory Partnership Council. Local units of the National Park Service, the National Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management will serve in advisory roles.

**(8) The proposal is consistent with continued economic activity in the area.**

Creation of a National Heritage Area will not adversely affect current economic activity because designation will not bring any changes in private property rights, land-use zoning, or property taxes. Based on the performances of 24 studied National Heritage Areas, designation is expected to stimulate the economy of the region in several ways. Increased heritage tourism and nature tourism will have positive impacts on local business revenues, tax revenues for local governments, and job creation. If this new National Heritage Area can match the average performance of existing areas, the total economic impacts of tourism will approximately double within 10 years of designation. This would add some \$1.8 billion into the local economy and create 40,000 new jobs related to tourism. New types of jobs will also be created in the areas of historic preservation, nature conservation, resource interpretation, community development, and regional planning.

With a National Heritage Area in place, there will be additional support for public and private partnerships for preservation, as well as an increase in related investment opportunities. Rehabilitation of historic buildings will create new housing and help revive downtown. All of these activities will support an industry related to rehabilitation materials and construction. The National Heritage Area will provide tax credit education and assistance for owners of historic properties. A Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area will also improve the quality of life in the region. In sum, voluntary, community-based preservation supported by a National Heritage Area designation is anticipated to lead to sustainable economic and community development.

*Anticipated Economic Effects of an National Heritage Area Designation*

- ◆ Increases in business and tax revenues from growth in heritage tourism and nature tourism
- ◆ Job creation, including opening of new job sectors
- ◆ Increased investment opportunities related to historic preservation
- ◆ Housing creation through rehabilitation of historic buildings
- ◆ Economic revitalization of historic downtowns
- ◆ Incubation of an industry in rehabilitation construction and materials
- ◆ Education and assistance for federal and state historic rehabilitation tax credits.

**(9) A conceptual boundary map is supported by the public.**

The conceptual boundaries of the proposed National Heritage Area, as described in Chapter 2, are not for regulatory purposes, but rather, mark an area for regional planning, preservation, interpretation and promotion of heritage, nature, open-space, and outdoor-recreation resources on a voluntary basis. Alternative boundaries were considered at the beginning of the National Heritage Area designation effort. The boundaries proposed in this Feasibility Study were selected for three reasons:

- ◆ To the extent possible, the conceptual boundaries follow the natural boundaries of the upper and middle watershed of the Santa Cruz River, creating an effective area for resource conservation planning and management.
- ◆ The conceptual boundaries enclose sufficient resources with the integrity necessary to support the proposed interpretive themes.
- ◆ The conceptual boundaries include a sufficient number and diversity of resources to provide representative experiences to residents and visitors.

Large color maps depicting the conceptual boundaries have been displayed at every stakeholder meeting and public presentation (see lists of meetings and presentations in Chapter 1). Support has been uniformly favorable, and there is consensus among local stakeholders that these will be appropriate and effective boundaries for a Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area.

**(10) The management entity proposed to plan and implement the project is described.**

Chapter 6 of this Feasibility Study describes the organizational structure of the proposed management entity for this National Heritage Area. Following designation, this management entity will be responsible for: (1) developing the Management Plan; (2) negotiating 5-year cooperative agreements and annual amendments with its National Park Service Partner; (3) developing committees and other mechanisms to assess stakeholder opinions and incorporate that information into prioritized plans; (4) selecting projects and programs to support through local and federal funding; (5) administering annual federal appropriations; and (6) fundraising from local sources. Including a Board of Directors and a Partnership Council, it is designed to meet several criteria.

- ◆ The singular role is planning and management of the National Heritage Area.
- ◆ A wide variety of local interest groups are represented.
- ◆ Its members have experience in, and commitment to, preservation of nature and heritage resources and education about their significance and values.

- ◆ It has the support of the public and local governments, tribes, and organizations that wish to participate in the activities of the National Heritage Area.
- ◆ It has the capability to obtain local funding to match federal contributions for a 10-year period, and then to achieve self-sustainability.

The roles and structure of this management entity are expected to evolve during preparation of the Management Plan and implementation of its first projects and programs, as its needs, goals, and capabilities are defined over time. The primary financial goals of this management entity are to create new public/private funding partnerships, to efficiently use federal match funding to leverage local contributions and to help implement programs, and to achieve self-sustainability within 10 years of designation.

