

NATIONAL HERITAGE AREAS PROGRAM AND HOW IT AFFECTS BYWAYS



TELE-WORKSHOP SPOTLIGHT SPEAKERS

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Speaker Profiles:

Brenda Barrett serves as the National Coordinator for the Heritage Areas through the National Park Service in Washington, D.C. Prior to this position, she was the Director for the Pennsylvania Historic Preservation program and Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer for over 20 years. She graduated from the University of Colorado, received her master's degree in archaeology from the University of Wisconsin, and her law degree from the Dickinson School of Law – Penn State in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

Dan Rice accepted the position of president and CEO of the Ohio & Erie Canal Corridor Coalition (OECCC) in 1994. Since then, he has worked to develop and coordinate many of the Ohio & Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor programs. Dan also serves as a byway leader for Canal Way Ohio Scenic Byway. Dan holds a BA degree in history from the College of Wooster, Wooster, Ohio, and a master's degree in history from the University of Akron.

BEYOND DESIGNATION

The 23 National Heritage Areas established by Congress take great pride in their designation status just as National Scenic Byways and All-American Roads do. Beyond designations, the two programs offer each other insights and opportunities worth exploring.

Brenda Barrett, National Coordinator for National Heritage Areas, described the National Heritage Areas as places where culture and history shape the landscape. In these regions, citizens and government entities work together to manage conservation, interpretation, and other activities that celebrate heritage. "They're building partnerships beyond political boundaries. A National Heritage Area jumps over local fragmentation," she said. "It's about the shared heritage of a region... something people really care about."

According to the National Park Service Web site, "Each National Heritage Area is a settled landscape that tells the story of its residents. It is a landscape in which the land and the local environment, over time, have shaped traditions and cultural values in the people who live there, and where the residents' use of the land has, in turn, created and sustained a landscape that reflects their cultures."

The National Park Service's role is to evaluate proposed National Heritage Areas, to provide technical assistance on planning and resource conservation, and also to provide funds for staffing and project implementation. The National Heritage Area designation generates national attention for communities. "The National Heritage Areas also benefit from the association with our brand," Brenda said.

LOCAL AND NATIONAL INITIATIVES ACROSS AMERICA

Brenda reported that some 200 to 300 heritage area initiatives have blossomed

across the country. "Many are associated with byways," she noted. However, not all heritage area initiatives seek national designation. Some look for local designation or state recognition to achieve their goals. Often ad hoc groups, they may not fit the national format, but certainly see the value in preserving and celebrating significant landscapes.

That's just one trend that's emerging in the heritage arena. She said activities related to defining and protecting heritage areas have begun moving westward, particularly in Idaho and throughout the Rocky Mountain regions. In the past, most of the National Heritage Areas have sprung from eastern locales. This westward trend is expected to gain momentum, fueled by the strong resource conservation ethic in those regions.

Dan Rice, CEO of the Ohio and Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor, identified "better planning" among the trends in heritage areas today, too. Dan explained that the groups look for thematic or visible links to connect the many aspects of a large heritage area. Thematic links, such as steel or coal, challenge planners to define and focus their efforts. Visible links, such as a canal, create the opposite problem among visitors as well as planners. "People tend to focus on just that subject," Dan commented.

(continued inside)

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What is a National Heritage Area?

The National Park Service defines it this way on the Web site:

A National Heritage Area is a place 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 patterns make National Heritage Areas representative of the national experience through the physical features that remain and the traditions that have evolved in the areas. Continued use of the National Heritage Areas by people whose traditions helped to shape the landscapes enhances their significance.

National heritage areas are heritage areas that have been designated by Congress. However, they are not the only heritage areas. A number of states, including Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania and Utah, have heritage area programs. In addition, many heritage areas are self-designated. "If you act like a heritage area, you probably are a heritage area," said Brenda.

The assistance that nationally designated areas receive from the National Park Service, and the legislation designating the area, is tailored to the specific needs of the region. The legislation defines the area's significance and identifies a

management entity. Brenda noted, "Our agency's assistance includes working with the management entity to develop a management plan and offering other assistance on interpretation and resource conservation."

The designating legislation also authorizes the funding level for each area. For more recent areas, the funding formula has been \$10 million over 15 years, no more than \$1 million dollars a year. In FY 2003 the 23 heritage areas received a total allocation of \$14.3 million. Heritage areas must match these dollars.

BYWAYS AND NATIONAL HERITAGE AREAS: SIMILAR CONCEPTS

The National Park Service reviews the applications for designation and may testify before Congress. Similarly, the National Scenic Byways Program reviews designation applications and considers grant proposals from designated byways. The America's Byways Resource Center offers information and assistance in a similar capacity as the National Park Service, too.

The Ohio & Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor achieved national recognition in 1996 after 40 years of planning.



Unlike the National Scenic Byways Program, the National Park Service doesn't have official standards for intrinsic quality, such as archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities. Dan explained that his scenic byway developed the acronym "SEARCH" – Scenic, Environmental, Archaeological, Recreational, Cultural or Historical – as an informal criteria base.

According to its Web site, the National Park Service looks for four critical steps to be completed and documented by a proposed heritage area prior to congressional designation:

1. Completion of a suitability/feasibility study
2. Public involvement in the suitability/feasibility study
3. Demonstration of widespread public support among heritage area residents for the proposed designation
4. Commitment to the proposal from the appropriate players, which may include governments, industry, and private, non-profit organizations, in addition to the local citizenry

LEVERAGED PARTNERSHIPS

Just as byways have found value in forming partnerships, the heritage areas have developed diverse public and private collaborations. Some

are partnering with specific National Park Service units. In addition, the 23 nationally designated regions formed the Alliance of National Heritage Areas to work together. This group "advocates, facilitates and celebrates excellence and cooperative initiatives that:

- enhance quality of life for citizens and their communities
- attract national and international visitors to those communities
- provide distinguished examples for sustainable destination development for the nation."

Partnerships also help leverage funds. Designated National Heritage Areas receive technical assistance from the National Park Service and have the ability to seek financial assistance for a limited number of years following designation.

Like the National Scenic Byways Program, the National Heritage Areas Program allocates funds with matching requirements. The National Park Service requires a 1:1 match, meaning if it provides \$1, the National Heritage Area must match it with \$1, usually from a partner. National Park Service grants range from \$200,000 to \$1 million. Dan noted that some are matched 8:1, but this is less common in depressed areas.

Brenda explained that some National Heritage Areas align their funding mechanism with state governments. "A National Heritage Area should be a self-sufficient organization," she recommends. "Being tied to state government can lead to trouble with economic downturns."

Byways understand the constraints of depending on a single source. The National Scenic Byways Program advocates broad partnerships to leverage other financial resources beyond the grant program.

"Money isn't guaranteed," Dan cautioned about the National Heritage Areas. Each year Congress reviews funding requests from 23 individual bills. Annual funding has not been reduced despite decreases elsewhere. "This shows the responsiveness of Congress to local movements."

NO SLAM-DUNK DEALS

Still, there is no guarantee that Congress will approve a designation. Because each heritage area involves just one part of the country, its congressional representatives must work with other representatives from other parts of the county to gain their support. "Designation depends on political clout to get it through Congress," Dan said.

Dan and Brenda recommend that any group seeking designation contact the regional National Park Service office even before pursuing a feasibility study. "The office assigns a person to work with you," explained Brenda. This is especially helpful during development of evaluation materials.

A LONG ROAD

Brenda seems most excited about the locally driven enthusiasm for developing heritage areas. But she wants people to understand the work involved with earning national designation. "There are Heritage Areas with 6 million people. It takes a long time to reach a reasonable number of people," she said. Eight years isn't unexpected. "It takes a long time to build enthusiasm and a level of comfort," she added.

Dan agreed, "Each heritage area that's designated has an impact on the ones before it," Dan said. "The bottom line: we want everyone to be credible and successful." ★

Resources

The Alliance of National Heritage Areas

www.nationalheritageareas.com

National Heritage Areas

National Park Service

Mail Stop 3128-MIB,
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240
(202) 354-2222
www.cr.nps.gov/heritageareas

Charlene Cutler

Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley
National Heritage Area
(860) 963-7226

Larry Williams

Pennsylvania Heritage Regions
Department of Conservation and
Recreation
(717) 783-2659
www.Pennsylvaniaheritageparks.com

Institute for Heritage Development Center for Historic Preservation & Community Planning

College of Charleston
12 Bull Street, Charleston, SC 29401
(843) 953-6305 FAX: (843) 953-3900
Email: muldrowa@cofc.edu under

Q & A

Q. Are there state heritage area programs?

A. Some states designate heritage areas. A few have programs through a heritage tourism office, a division of state history, or perhaps through a parks-and-recreation program. Find a champion in state government, if you can. However, not having a state program is not a deterrent to national designation.

Q. Can we partner with tribal organizations?

A. Absolutely! Several Native American organizations are partnering with heritage area initiatives, especially in the West. Talk to the regional office for an appropriate Native American contact.

Q. Do heritage areas face resistance because of residents' concerns about private property rights?

A. Certainly. Like byways, designation for a National Heritage Area does not involve Federal regulation of private property. There's no Heritage Area Police and it's clearly stated in our materials. Maintaining local control and emphasizing the grassroots momentum helps to assure people that the designation belongs to the community.

Q. Is money the biggest hurdle?

A. No, not really. Money is not the issue that prevents defining a heritage area. Lack of vision, lack of cooperation, and lack of community support are bigger issues. Key partners may not see the relationship value or residents can't see the opportunity. Still, when local communities see that it works, they buy in. Again, because it's so locally developed—truly a grassroots effort—they feel like it's their project. National designation gives local communities tools to help themselves.



List of National Heritage Areas

The National Park Service currently works with 23 National Heritage Areas. Each is listed below with the year it received designation.

- Illinois & Michigan National Heritage Corridor (IL) 1984
- John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor (MA, RI) 1986
- Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor (PA) 1988
- Southwestern Pennsylvania Industrial Heritage Route - Path of Progress (PA) 1988
- Cane River National Heritage Area (LA) 1994
- Quinebaug & Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor (CT, MA) 1994
- Cache La Poudre River Corridor (CO) 1996
- America's Agricultural Heritage Partnership - Silos & Smokestacks (IA) 1996
- Augusta Canal National Heritage Area (GA) 1996
- Essex National Heritage Area (MA) 1996
- Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area (NY) 1996
- National Coal Heritage Area (WV) 1996
- Ohio & Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor (OH) 1996
- Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area (PA) 1996
- Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District Commission (VA) 1996
- South Carolina National Heritage Corridor (SC) 1996
- Tennessee Civil War Heritage Area (TN) 1996
- MotorCities-Automobile National Heritage Area (MI) 2000
- Wheeling National Heritage Area (WV) 2000
- Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area (AZ) 2000
- Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area (PA) 2000
- Lackawanna Heritage Valley National Heritage Area (PA) 2000
- Erie Canalway National Corridor (NY) 2000

America's Byways Resource Center

provides information, connections and expertise that help build better byways. State coordinators, local groups, volunteers and organizations with ties to nationally designated scenic byways look to us for hands-on assistance in planning, preserving, promoting and managing scenic byways.

2003 Tele-Workshop Topics

America's Byways Resource Center asked byway leaders for their suggestions for topics for the 2003 Tele-Workshops. In response, this year's training discussions focus on four major areas—marketing, funding, sustainability, and interpretation. Don't miss these valuable learning opportunities presented on the first Wednesday of every other month at noon CST:

February 5

Byway Integrity: Preliminary Patterns and Prospects
William J. Kelley, Eastern Washington University

April 2

National Heritage Areas Program and
How It Affects Byways
Brenda Barrett, National Heritage Areas Program
Daniel M. Rice
Ohio & Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor

June 4

A User-Friendly Guide to Tourism Research
Judy Randall, Randall Travel Marketing

August 6

Using the Community Tool Box for Byway Sustainability
Evelyn Swimmer, Rivers and Trails Conservation
Assistance Program, National Park Service

October 1

Is Your Byway Interpretation Going to Be Sustainable?
John Veverka, Certified Interpretive Planner

December 3

Scenic Conservation Strategies for Byways
Meg Maguire, Scenic America

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