



# Heritage Areas 101

PLACE-BASED, COMMUNITY-DRIVEN  
CONSERVATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## What are NHAs?

National Heritage Areas (NHAs) are designated by Congress as places where natural, cultural, and historic resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally important landscape. Through their resources, NHAs tell nationally important stories that celebrate our nation's diverse heritage. NHAs are lived-in landscapes. Consequently, NHA entities collaborate with communities to determine how to make heritage relevant to local interests and needs.

NHAs are a grassroots, community-driven approach to heritage conservation and economic development. Through public-private partnerships, NHA entities support historic preservation, natural resource conservation, recreation, heritage tourism, and educational projects. Leveraging funds and long-term support for projects, NHA partnerships foster pride of place and an enduring stewardship ethic.

## Benefits of NHAs

Some of the long-term benefits of NHA activities include:

- **Sustainable economic development** – NHAs leverage federal funds (NHAs average \$5.50 for every \$1.00 of federal investment) to create jobs, generate revenue for local governments, and sustain local communities through revitalization and heritage tourism.
- **Healthy environment and people** – Many NHAs improve water and air quality in their regions through restoration projects, and encourage people to enjoy natural and cultural sites by providing new recreational opportunities.
- **Improved Quality of Life** – Through new or improved amenities, unique settings, and educational and volunteer opportunities, NHAs improve local quality of life.



Paddlers on the Schuylkill River outside Philadelphia, PA. Schuylkill River National Heritage Area coordinates the annual Schuylkill River Soujourn - a 7-day, 112 mile guided canoe and kayak trip, which provides a wealth of learning opportunities for participants. D. Creighton Photo.

- **Education and Stewardship** – NHAs connect communities to natural, historic, and cultural sites through educational activities, which promote awareness and foster interest in and stewardship of heritage resources.
- **Community Engagement and Pride** – By engaging community members in heritage conservation activities, NHAs strengthen sense of place and community pride.

## The NHA Program

NHAs further the mission of the National Park Service (NPS) by fostering community stewardship of our nation's heritage. The NHA program, which currently includes 49 heritage areas, is administered by NPS coordinators in Washington DC and seven regional offices - Anchorage, Seattle, Oakland, Denver, Omaha, Philadelphia and Atlanta - as well as park unit staff.

NHAs are not national park units. Rather, NPS partners with, provides technical assistance, and distributes matching federal funds from Congress to NHA entities. NPS does not assume ownership of land inside heritage areas or impose land use controls.

## NHA Facts

Forty-nine NHAs have been designated by Congress since 1984. Each NHA is created through individual federal law.

NHA designation recognizes the national importance of a region's sites and history.

Through annual Congressional appropriations, NPS passes funds to NHA entities. Although most entities are authorized to receive up to \$1 million annually over a set period of time, actual annual appropriations range from \$150,000 – \$750,000.

The financial assistance component of the program is secured with legal agreements, accountability measures, and performance requirements for NHA entities.

NHA designation does not affect private property rights.

# The National Heritage Areas



Students collecting water quality samples along the Quinebaug River as part of the Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program administered by Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor.



Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area mobilized community members to raise funds needed to operate and maintain two Arizona state parks, including the Yuma Territorial Prison State Park (pictured here).



Skipper Russell, Seasonal Produce Farms, NC. Blue Ridge National Heritage Area provided funds to the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP), which links new farms to available land and stimulates farm tourism. ASAP photo.

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For more information visit  
[www.nps.gov/history/heritageareas](http://www.nps.gov/history/heritageareas)

**ALABAMA** – Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area

**ALASKA** – Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area

**ARIZONA** – Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area

**COLORADO** – Cache La Poudre River Corridor • Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area • South Park National Heritage Area

**CONNECTICUT** – \*Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor (CT, MA) • \*Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area (CT, MA)

**FLORIDA** – \*Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor (FL, GA, NC, SC)

**GEORGIA** – Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area • Augusta Canal National Heritage Area • \*Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor (FL, GA, NC, SC)

**IOWA** – Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area

**ILLINOIS** – Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area • Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor

**KANSAS** – \*Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area (KS, MO)

**LOUISIANA** – Atchafalaya National Heritage Area • Cane River National Heritage Area

**MARYLAND** – Baltimore National Heritage Area • \*Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area (MD, PA, VA, WV)

**MASSACHUSETTS** – Essex National Heritage Area • \*Freedom's Way National Heritage Area (MA, NH) • \*John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor (MA, RI) • \*Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor (CT, MA) • \*Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area (CT, MA)

**MICHIGAN** – MotorCities National Heritage Area

**MISSISSIPPI** – Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area • Mississippi Gulf Coast National Heritage Area • Mississippi Hills National Heritage Area

**MISSOURI** – \*Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area (KS, MO)

**NEVADA** – \*Great Basin National Heritage Area (NV, UT)

**NEW JERSEY** – Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area

**NEW HAMPSHIRE** – \*Freedom's Way National Heritage Area (MA, NH)

**NEW MEXICO** – Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area

**NEW YORK** – \*Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership (NY, VT) • Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor • Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area • Niagara Falls National Heritage Area

**NORTH CAROLINA** – Blue Ridge National Heritage Area • \*Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor (FL, GA, NC, SC)

**NORTH DAKOTA** – Northern Plains National Heritage Area

**OHIO** – Ohio & Erie National Heritage Canalway • National Aviation Heritage Area

**PENNSYLVANIA** – Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor • \*Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area (MD, PA, VA, WV) • Lackawanna Heritage Valley • Oil Region National Heritage Area • Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area • Schuylkill River National Heritage Area

**RHODE ISLAND** – \*John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor (MA, RI)

**SOUTH CAROLINA** – \*Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor (FL, GA, NC, SC) • South Carolina National Heritage Corridor

**TENNESSEE** – Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area

**UTAH** – \*Great Basin National Heritage Area (NV, UT) • Mormon Pioneer National Heritage Area

**VERMONT** – \*Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership (VT, NY)

**VIRGINIA** – \*Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area (MD, PA, VA, WV) • Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District

**WEST VIRGINIA** – \*Journey through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area (MD, PA, VA, WV) • Wheeling National Heritage Area • National Coal Heritage Area • Path of Progress National Heritage Route

\*Denotes NHA that spans multiple states.