

Freedom's Way Heritage Area

Addendum Summary

Freedom's Way has examined the National Park Service criteria and we believe they are well thought out and are directly related to the purpose of what basic standards should exist in all National Heritage Areas. We have strived to exceed these criteria, and we have continually evaluated Freedom's Way Heritage Area as a potential National Heritage Area against those criteria. Not only do we believe that we have ample documentation that we do meet them, the Department of Interior Statement at the Senate Parks Subcommittee Hearings in June of 2002 confirmed this.

The concept of the Freedom's Way Heritage Area has been well defined by a feasibility study, a technical document, an addendum, a map, and the continuing refinement of the themes through additional, ongoing stakeholder meetings and newsletters.

Priorities speak to linkages through education and preservation of nationally significant resources. The focus of the entire effort will be the conservation of a nationally significant area. While preservation efforts will include bricks and mortar requests, paint eventually deteriorates: education is forever. One of our major goals is an educational effort to accomplish the following:

- To elevate the importance of nationally significant regional resources through a coordinated educational and preservation effort;
- To mobilize communities by assisting their public and private institutions to build partnerships to focus on furthering stewardship of the natural, cultural and historical connections of the region;
- To work with existing interpretive sites that have educational and interpretive programs in place to engage citizens in the understanding and celebration of their unique heritage using the Freedom's Way themes;
- To expand current National Park exposure through thematic linkages;
- To use existing facilities and sites without acquiring new land;

An objective is to use visitor sites that are already locally, or nationally recognized as interpretive centers. The goals of these institutions are: increased exposure through the national designation; the establishment of linkages through theme-related efforts; the creation of partnerships to further define each institution's focus to eliminate duplication and to tell a richer story through the expansion possibilities of shared themes.

Protecting precious resources requires developing a future constituency by providing theme-related educational and interpretive materials and activities.

Success will evolve through the recognition that a National Heritage Area designation will bring, standing and local pride, and encourage efforts toward further protection and preservation and increased local investment.

Each of the participating institutions already has interpretive programs relating to the Freedom's Way themes but they lack the cohesiveness necessary to tell the entire story. Local site managers recognize the potential of cooperative efforts connected to one overall endeavor that has been given national recognition.

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The Minute Man National Park will play an important role in connecting the Freedom's Way themes. There are four main cores or areas of focus of cultural heritage sites. Each one has the combined resources of a solid open space component adjacent to or proximate to, a cultural/heritage visitor center. An example is the core of cultural heritage sites that are connected to the theme-related open space and recreational areas at MinuteMan National Park and in the Concord/Lexington/Lincoln area. This combination is repeated in three other areas: the central area that includes Fruitlands and the Oxbow NWR, the western area that includes Wachusett Mountain and the Gardner Heritage State Park and the northern area including Nashua and Beaver Brook in New Hampshire.

The Freedom's Way Heritage Area sites represent the possibility of partnerships between all levels of government, especially local to local, as well as public and private non-profit organizations. Open space examples are: Minute Man National Park, U. S. Fish and Wildlife's Great Meadows and Oxbow Wildlife Complexes, Massachusetts State Parks, Massachusetts Audubon Society, Beaver Brook Association, and local Conservation Commission lands. Cultural heritage site examples are: Minute Man National Park, Concord Museum, Great Meadows Visitor Center, Massachusetts Audubon's Drumlin Farm, Fruitlands Museum, the National Heritage Museum and local historical society facilities.

Many other resources offer potential for recognition; some local resources with national importance are unrecognized. The inventory, at this point, is a work in progress. Designation will help to refine theme development.

Freedom's Way has undertaken the following four critical steps:

1. Completion of a suitability/feasibility study

- The Freedom's Way suitability/feasibility study (1997) was completed, under the supervision of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management and conducted by ICON architecture, inc.
- The study resulted in two main documents: I. The Summary Report (and Summary Report brochure) and, II. The Technical Report, an initial data base of natural and cultural resources.
- The study included hundreds of participants, public meetings and four monthly newsletters.
- Freedom's Way has continued the public participation process through stakeholder meetings, and newsletters to refine the results of the feasibility study.
- This refinement process has already led to a simplification of themes from four to three: Rediscovering the Native Landscape, Inventing the New England Landscape, and Shaping the Landscape of Democracy.
- A descriptive map/brochure about Freedom's Way has been developed and is being distributed throughout the region.

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- As National Park Service Criteria have changed and matured, we completed an Addendum to our Feasibility Study to ensure all of the present criteria are fully addressed.

2. The Public was involved in the feasibility study.

- The public participation during the feasibility study included four Area-wide public meetings, which were well attended.
- Participants were invited from the general public through published announcements in local papers and through a committee of liaison or contact people representing each town.
- A steering committee representing a wide range of interests oversaw the study. The representatives were: Nancy Nelson, Superintendent of Minute Man National Park; James Baecker, Project Director, Mass Department of Environmental Management; Mildred Chandler, Marge Darby, Robert Farwell, Freedom's Way; Judith McDonough, Commissioner of Massachusetts Historic Commission; Judith Alland, Metropolitan Area Planning Commission/Minuteman Advisory Group; George Krusen III, Minute Man Historical Societies; George Kahale, Montachusett Regional Planning Commission; Thomas Leavitt, Museum of Our National Heritage; Robert Levite, Nashua River Watershed Association; Deborah LaPointe, Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce; Elizabeth Tennessee, Nipmuc/African American History; Janet Kennedy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife.
- Public participation has continued through a series of stakeholder meetings, prospective partner breakfasts, a web site, and newsletters. Since the conclusion of the feasibility study Freedom's Way Heritage Association has given frequent public presentations and mailed out more than two newsletter/updates per year.

3. There is widespread public support among heritage area residents for the proposed legislation

- A current mailing list of 1500 receives important notices and newsletters.
- Board representation of 23 organizations
- Forty-three town liaisons
- Commitments from Mayors, Town Selectmen, local Commissions and Boards in every Freedom's Way community.
- Membership in Freedom's Way includes towns, museums, cultural and educational institutions
- Letters of support numbering more than a hundred.

4. Freedom's Way can demonstrate a commitment to the proposal that includes governments, industry, and private, non-profit organizations, and the local citizenry.

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- FWHA has on file letters of support from legislators, mayors, selectmen, town committees and boards, over 50 cultural institutions, six Chambers of Commerce, 24 businesses, 16 legislators, 67 municipal boards, and can show an expanding membership.
- The support from units of government includes: federal and state legislators; mayors and local town executives; MassDevelopment Finance Agency; Massachusetts Historical Commission, Massachusetts Historical Society, Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism, Massachusetts Office of Environmental Management, and Dept. of Environmental Protection.
- Private non-profits such as: Massachusetts Audubon Society, Nashua River Watershed Association, Museum of Our National Heritage, Concord Museum, Fitchburg Art Museum, Fitchburg Historical Society, Lunenburg Historical Society, Fruitlands Museum, Cyrus Dallin Museum, the Beaver Brook Association and many others.

Components of feasibility study.

1. The area has a unique assemblage of natural, historic, and cultural resources that together represent distinctive aspects of American heritage worthy of recognition.

- The assemblage is evident in the Feasibility Study conclusions.
- Additional data has been compiled since the study.
- The proposal fills a need that is not currently being met by any other regional, state or federal agency. John Ott, Director of the Museum of Our National Heritage states clearly that, "No other organization is doing what Freedom's Way has plans to do." There are no entities available to take on the task of providing a regional network through a national heritage designation to enhance regional educational efforts.

2. The area's traditions, customs, beliefs, and legacies are a valuable part of the national story.

Evidence and examples of early traditions, customs, beliefs and folklife still exist within the region.

- Evidence of Native American life still. Example: Eliot's Praying Village of Nashoba, and archaeological digs.
- Many Towns were founded 100 years before the Revolutionary War.
- Village folklife focused around common property and interdependence as a process for town development.
- A citizenry accustomed to self-governance and independence is linked to Freedom. Town Meeting form of government is still actively practiced in its purest form.
- Shakers, Transcendentalists, Millerites, African American, Native American, early tri-racial and other ethnic communities experimented in ways of living

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Examples of the continuation of the earliest national efforts at conservation as well as the evolution of Democracy offer a unique educational opportunity to teach how old ideas can still stimulate new actions.

3. Freedom's Way provides outstanding opportunities for linkages.

- The three themes: Rediscovering the Native Landscape, Inventing the New England Landscape, Shaping the Landscape of Democracy will provide outstanding opportunities to conserve natural, cultural, historic, and/or scenic features.
- The rediscovered landscape combines the concept of preserving the natural and native landscape with the conservation movement. It is still possible to walk from the Town of Westford to Concord through a wild and natural landscape. Thoreau's "Walk to Wachusett" can still be accomplished with only a few present day interruptions.
- By developing a network of educational opportunities through thematic connections, future stewards of the land will emerge.
- Conservation Trusts, Municipal Conservation Commissions, US Fish and Wildlife, and local conservation commission land managers offer outdoor educational opportunities.
- Cultural and historic sites offer unique opportunities to teach conservation and preservation: area museums, National Historic Landscapes, National Historic Sites, Shaker Villages, Town centers, churches, and town commons are only a few.
- The Massachusetts Community Preservation Act shows a strong desire on the part of the state to preserve the historical and political makeup of communities, e.g.: rural flavor, commons and the town meeting form of government. Nothing exists to help the communities pull together as a region. The Freedom's Way linkages will help them to recognize the value of a regional preservation effort.

4. The area also provides outstanding recreational and educational opportunities.

- The Map shows there are existing recreational and educational opportunities. By thematic connections the opportunity for enhancing use of these sites is exponential.
- Massachusetts sites begin 30 minutes from Boston, and the New Hampshire sites are one hour away. This indicates the strong potential for use by major city residents and foreign visitors.
- The Map/Brochure shows how the sites can be integrated as part of the interpretation of the themes. There is at least one major recreational area paired with each cultural/heritage site.

5. The resources important to the identified themes of the area are capable of supporting interpretation

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- The themes reinforce each other and provide a method for viewing the region to maintain integrity of place.
- The proposed Interpretive Centers are stable, substantial, and well organized. Such centers already in existence give ample opportunity for establishing and enhancing mutually beneficial relationships.
- This is an ideal place to teach democracy. The resources for such an effort are strong: museums, open land, interpretive centers.
- Illustrating the ideas of Freedom, resources show, for example, how Democracy predated the Revolutionary War; the Revolutionary War and its consequences. The native landscape, geological formations that still remain undiminished by development, resources that show the birth and development of the conservation movement; attractive village centers once required by law; the farmlands and mills reveal the evolution of land use. Altogether, these can be used to maintain a setting, the integrity of place.
- Designation will bring the cohesive force necessary to accomplish the work.

6. A broad range of interest groups were involved in the planning.

- Over the years Freedom's Way Heritage Association has been bringing together representatives of the public and private sector.
- The Freedom's Way Board is comprised of representatives of the following entities: Chambers of Commerce, regional environmental organizations, area museums, regional planning commissions, local Select boards, mayoral appointees, city planners, Town Administrators, business owners, Native Americans and African Americans, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, local historians, federal land managers, farmers, local community non-profits, local planning boards, and trails advocates.
- Having established working relationships with many public and private not-for profit entities through the feasibility process, planning is underway through stakeholder meetings and partnership meetings to refine roles of all participants. The stated focus is for Freedom's Way to facilitate linkages and partnerships to strengthen the role of participants in educational efforts.
- The legislature of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts appropriated the funding for the Feasibility Study. Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism, with a matching grant from MassDevelopment, helped produce the Freedom's Way Map. MassDevelopment also supplied facilities, resources and utilities.
- The management plan will help to identify additional financial resources.
- Freedom's Way has developed a list of major corporate entities. Through the local Chambers of Commerce, the association is actively seeking corporate support. Partnerships with Chamber members and companies will be explored in depth.
- Business partners express quality of life issues as a shared concern.

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- The Study Addendum shows projected budget and other financial details.
- 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**
- A MinuteMan National Park representative attended feasibility study meetings.
 - The heritage designation will permit further participation of the National Park Service and a working relationship with Minute Man National Park.
 - Mass Development Agency, Mass Department of Conservation and Recreation, Regional Planning Commissions, US Fish and Wildlife and Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism are all committed to supporting the designation. Many municipalities have joined as members.
 - At least three levels of government have offered potential headquarters for Freedom's Way. MassDevelopment currently provides office space without fee.
 - MassDevelopment has made a major contribution in addition to providing the office space for Freedom's Way: the donation of office furniture and utilities and a matching grant for the Map/brochure. Nashoba Valley Chamber of Commerce provides office assistance.
- 8. The proposal is consistent with economic activity in the area.**
- From the beginning, we have had the full support of MassDevelopment a Commonwealth entity charged with overseeing the economic development of the Devens communities, their abutters and beyond. All of these communities are in Freedom's Way.
- 9. A conceptual boundary map is supported by the public**
- The Freedoms Way Map, the feasibility study workshops, subsequent meetings and stakeholder meetings, technical data and expanding library illustrate the public's participation and acknowledgement that this area is Freedom's Way.
- 10. The management entity proposed to plan and implement the project is described.**
- Freedom's Way Heritage Association is described in the legislation and in the Feasibility Study. The public has access to material through the web site, the office and regular mailings.
 - The federal money will be used for this major regional effort by helping the communities to find ways to develop their own linkages through participation and cooperative partnerships. We will:
 1. Focus on the three main themes in order to teach about and connect the major trails that will be marked.

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2. Improve both the usage and meaning of significant sites within the trails through interpretation;
3. Develop an educational curriculum based within the community to benefit teachers, children, visitors, and residents;
4. Bring increased recognition to Minute Man National Park as well as the regional museums through the benefit of a broader based effort;
5. Connect to the National Park Service nation-wide heritage themes to gain additional linkages and exposure through the stories that relate to the Freedom's Way themes. It is an advantage to connect the telling of the entire story of American Democracy through each region's participation.
6. Link major federal land protection efforts with historic and cultural themes adding synergy and broader exposure to the efforts of two Department of the Interior services.
7. Act as a clearinghouse, or regional resource to help communities learn the methods for land preservation and conservation that are available to them through a regional educational program focused on town planning issues relating to sustainability.
8. Cultivate a working relationship with other educational institutions such as Harvard University and U. Mass.

Conclusion:

The Department of Interior's Senate Testimony at the 2002 Parks Subcommittee Hearing is that Freedom's Way fully complies with all stated criteria. Following designation a cultural resource study and a detailed management plan will be developed and submitted to the Secretary. The purpose will be to support the work of regional educational and planning entities, focusing on a regional approach. Long term by products will be livable communities, smart growth and sustainable development. Locally determined growth, including heritage tourism, will yield significant economic benefits as a byproduct of all the collaborative work.

**This document is the 2003 update of the original Feasibility Study Addendum of April, 2001. For reference see Congressional testimony of Marge Darby, July, 2007.*