



Freedom's Way Heritage Association

**Freedom's Way Heritage Area
Feasibility Study Addendum**

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THE PROPOSED FREEDOM'S WAY NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA AND COMPLIANCE WITH THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE INTERIM CRITERIA FOR NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA DESIGNATION

(An Addendum to the 1997 Freedom's Way National Heritage Area Feasibility Study)

April, 2001

Introduction

This document supplements the Freedom's Way Heritage Area Feasibility Study that was prepared for the Freedom's Way Heritage Association, Inc. and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management by ICON architecture, inc. in 1997. It sets forth an assessment of a proposed Freedom's Way National Heritage Area as it relates to the National Park Service's Interim Criteria for National Heritage Area designation. These criteria were articulated by NPS Deputy Director Denis Galvin in testimony before the House Resources Committee on October 26, 1999.

The Freedom's Way Heritage Area Feasibility Study, and its accompanying technical report, contain preliminary listings and analyses of the region's nationally distinctive natural, cultural, and historical resources, potential interpretive themes, and alternative, conceptual heritage area approaches reviewed by the public. It also contains recommendations relating to the Freedom's Way Heritage Association including early actions to be pursued. Freedom's Way Heritage Association has taken the steps outlined in the feasibility study to broaden its membership, increase its public information activities including publication of a newsletter and development of a web page, form topic related subcommittees, and continues to promote coordination with regional and community organizations and residents. The Association has also simplified its preliminary themes for the heritage area after consultation with Ms. Judy Hart, program leader for National Heritage Areas, of the National Park Service.

On March 14, 2001 Congressman John Olver (for himself, Mr. Meehan, Mr. Tierney, Mr. McGovern, Mr. Bass, and Mr. Markey) introduced H.R. 1027 to provide for the designation of the Freedom's Way National Heritage Area. On March 26, 2001, the bill was referred to the Subcommittee on National Parks, Recreation and Public Lands, and Executive Comment was requested from Interior. It is anticipated that the measure will be scheduled for a hearing shortly. This assessment of how the proposed Freedom's Way National Heritage Area meets NPS National Heritage Area criteria is intended to assist the National Park Service in preparation of testimony on the proposed legislation, H.R. 1027.

The concept of a Freedom's Way National Heritage Area has been well defined by the aforementioned feasibility study. Priorities speak to linkages through education and preservation of the region's nationally distinctive resources. Freedom's Way objectives include:

1. elevation of the importance of nationally distinctive regional resources through a coordinated educational and preservation effort;

2. mobilization of the region's communities by assisting and supporting their local institutions, both private and governmental, to build partnerships focused on stewardship of natural, cultural, and historic connections to the region;
3. engagement of the region's populace in the understanding and celebration of the unique heritage that affects their daily lives through education and interpretation;
4. protection and enhancement of existing open space; cultural and historic assets including Minuteman National Historical Park, and the Great Meadows and Oxbow National wildlife Refuges by maximizing intelligent land use practices on surrounding lands.

The vision for Freedom's Way (which will be expanded upon in a future management plan) is a landscape that retains its traditional New England character; a place where residents and visitors may truly experience and appreciate the rich heritage associated with a region that contributed immensely to social experimentation and literature, our national ethic and democracy; where theme related physical remnants of importance are preserved and interpreted; and, where communities and citizens understand the need for, and are actively engaged through partnerships in maintaining the rich resources and history that helped to shape our way of life. Designation of Freedom's Way, as a National Heritage Area will make that vision a reality.

Critical Steps in National Heritage Area Designation

1. Completion of a Suitability/Feasibility Study

The Freedom's Way National Heritage Area Feasibility Study was completed in 1997 by ICON architecture, inc. under supervision of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management. The study resulted in two main documents: 1. The Summary Report (and Summary Report Brochure), and 2. The Technical Report.

The Summary Report includes:

- A. an introduction and explanation of the planning process;
- B. a summary description of natural, open space, cultural, and historic resources and potential related themes for the heritage area;
- C. alternative scenarios for heritage area implementation and associated management implications; and,
- D. strategic recommendations including those relating to the Freedom's Way Heritage Association, the National Heritage Area designation process, development of a management plan, and early actions to be pursued to enhance designation and public participation.

The Technical Report provides an overview containing the study area; suggested themes; a preliminary inventory of natural, cultural, and historic resources in the region; an inventory of major existing visitor, interpretive, and other relevant facilities, as well as brief historical descriptions and the results of local workshops conducted during the study.

Since completion of the feasibility study, Freedom's Way Heritage Association, Inc. has continued to refine the document through stakeholder meetings throughout the region. This

refinement process has already led to a simplification of themes from the original four to three: Rediscovering the American Landscape; Inventing the New England Landscape; and Shaping the Landscape of Democracy.

A descriptive map and brochure about Freedom's Way has been developed and distributed throughout the region. The area boundary of this map, that includes forty cities and towns, has been proposed as the National Heritage Area boundary.

2. Public Involvement in the Suitability/Feasibility Study

The steering committee that oversaw and advised on the development of the Freedom's Way National Heritage Area Feasibility study represented a wide range of stakeholder interests in the region. These included representatives of government, area organizations and institutions, and knowledgeable local citizens. Additionally, a committee of over 350 citizens, and government and community leaders was formed as contact persons representing each of the towns within the study area. Three well-attended public meetings were conducted. Participants were notified of the meetings through published announcements in local newspapers, and, directly, by the contact persons in each town. Public information and participation has continued through a series of stakeholder meetings, prospective partner breakfasts, a web site, the Freedom's Way map/brochure and newsletters. Public interest in and response to the possibility of a National Heritage Area designation for the region remains exceptionally high.

3. Demonstration of Widespread Public Support Among Heritage Area Residents for the proposed Legislation

Support for National Heritage Area and the proposed legislation that will accomplish designation is exceptional. The Freedom's Way Heritage Association maintains a current mailing list for notices and newsletters of 1200 interested individuals. The board representation of 22 separate organizations and local liaisons within each community are fully supportive of designation, as well as numerous Mayors, Selectmen, local commissions and boards. Membership in Freedom's Way includes towns, area museums, cultural and educational institutions, as well as citizens of the region. Letters of support from over 100 state and municipal bodies, citizens and organizations are available for inspection.

In late 2000, representatives of the Northeast Regional Office of the NPS visited the Freedom's Way region and had the opportunity to meet a wide variety of people in local leadership positions who expressed excitement at the prospect of designation and support for the Freedom's Way National Heritage Area.

4. Commitment to the Proposal From the Appropriate Players Which May Include Governments, Industry, and Private, Non-Profit Organizations in Addition to the Citizenry

Freedom's Way Heritage Association has on file letters of support from legislators, mayors, selectmen, town committees and boards, over 50 cultural institutions, 6 Chambers of Commerce, and 24 businesses. Additionally, the organization continues to expand its

membership to include other committed interests. Major commitments have been received from the Massachusetts Development Finance Agency (which provides office space to the Association and assisted in the development of the Freedom's Way brochure), the Massachusetts Historical Commission and Massachusetts Historical Society, the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism, the Department of Environmental Management. The Massachusetts legislature has provided a grant of \$250,000 contingent upon a federal appropriation of 1 million dollars. Private non-profits that are committed to the heritage area include the Massachusetts Audubon Society, Nashua River Watershed Association, Museum of Our National Heritage in Lexington, Concord Museum, Fitchburg Art Museum, Fitchburg Historical Society, Lunenburg Historical Society, Fruitlands Museum, Cyrus Dallin Museum, the Beaver Brook Association, and many others. Local Chambers of Commerce have also expressed support of and commitment to the legislation.

Many of the above organizations view potential designation as a way to enhance and compliment their own programs and activities through the umbrella that a National Heritage Area will provide. They view the role of the Freedom's Way Heritage Association as one that will facilitate a cohesive strategy for interpretation and protection of the region's resources and serve as a vehicle to increase visitation to and understanding of the role it has played in the history of our nation.

Additional evidence of commitment of area organizations to participate meaningfully in the Freedom's Way National Heritage Area can be provided to the National Park Service upon request. We believe it safe to say that no previous heritage area has been proposed that enjoyed, at that formative time, the level of support and commitment that exists among the interested publics of Freedom's Way. The fact that congressional representatives from all portions of the region, both in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, are sponsors of H.R. 1027 is testimony to that reality.

Components of a Suitability/Feasibility Study

The Freedom's Way National Heritage Area Feasibility Study was done prior to the development of the interim criteria for designation by the National Park Service. However, the study does include analyses and documentation for almost all of the criteria. The primary exclusion was "a conceptual financial plan that outlines the roles for all participants, including the federal government." This supplement contains the necessary analysis and documentation to fulfill this criterion.

- 1. The Area Has an Assemblage of Natural, Historic, and 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.***

The feasibility study for Freedom's Way clearly documents not only the assemblage of distinctive aspects of American Heritage, but also its nationally significant resources including Minuteman National Historical Park and the Great Meadows and Oxbow National Wildlife

Refuges. The entire region possesses a vast collection of National Register Districts, National Historic Landmarks, and National Register properties. Its natural and physical resources epitomize the New England landscape and community character. This region, perhaps more than any other, is important in our nation's founding, and in our enlightened philosophies of freedom, conservation, and justice. This is the land of Thoreau and Hawthorne, the Shakers, Transcendentalists, Millerites, and Great Awakening revivalism. Here, the rudiments of democracy were practiced a century before the American Revolution. Here, too, the revolution was ignited at Lexington and Concord - places and events known to all Americans, young and old.

Clearly, the best way to manage and ultimately protect the rich resources of the region is around common interpretive themes shared by diverse partnership interests. Today, emerging development patterns endanger portions of the landscape and its cultural and historic values. Promoting appreciation and stewardship of these resources by residents and visitors will be significantly enhanced through designation of a National Heritage Area. Of equal concern, is the continuing protection of the existing federal investment in Minuteman National Historical Park and the two National Wildlife Refuges. National Heritage Area designation can have a positive benefit by exposing local governments to the importance of these resources and through training and education in better land use techniques that can be employed in the region. A federal, state, and local partnership focused on resource protection and appreciation is the key to the future viability of the region.

2. Reflects Traditions, Customs, Beliefs, and Folklife That are a Valuable Part of the National Story.

The feasibility study summarizes the region's history and documents the fact that it is replete with a multitude of tradition, belief, and folklife that in many cases are not only valuable but, indeed, critical to the national story. In Freedom's Way, the "democratic way" has been handed down through generations by the early practitioners, and town meetings are still held in the same manner they were prior to the Revolution. This region, too, is the New England landscape of free thinkers and social experimenters that with their ideas shaped so much of our current belief structure. Examples of early conservation theories, the mystique of Walden Pond, and the philosophy surrounding the close association of land and people continues today in our national efforts at conservation. In this region, people have explored a myriad of religious and social beliefs and formed unique communities in which to practice them. The difficulty confronting Freedom's Way is not the scarcity of tradition, belief, and folklife. Rather, it is sifting through the abundance of this heritage to articulate and interpret it in a cohesive, understandable fashion. That can only be accomplished as a heritage area management plan unfolds for the region.

3. Provides Outstanding Opportunities to Conserve Natural, Cultural, Historic, and/or Scenic Features.

The feasibility study documents the many areas of Freedom's Way characterized by exceptional natural beauty and ecological, cultural, and historical importance. While a portion of the region is protected through past public acquisition and the efforts of non-profit organizations, much remains to be accomplished to maintain the assemblage for future generations. As suburban

sprawl encroaches on the region, the viability of the remaining open space and traditional character of communities are being threatened. National Heritage Area designation provides the most important opportunity for the future of the region's currently unprotected resources. As stated previously, it will also serve to promote the need for compatible land use practices in areas surrounding existing federal holdings. The process of conducting the feasibility study clearly demonstrated that a multitude of citizens and organized interests in the region are willing to work together under an umbrella that fosters appreciation of the benefits of preserving, protecting, and enhancing our remaining unprotected resources in a manner that accommodates compatible economic development. A primary focus of the future heritage area management plan will be to devise the strategies that will enable this to occur.

4. Provides Outstanding Recreational and Educational Opportunities.

The feasibility study documents the array of recreational and educational resources in the region and abundant opportunities exist to increase both passive and active recreational experiences and educational linkages. Freedom's Way is truly a path into history and has outstanding recreational, educational and cultural facilities and programs associated with its natural and historic landscapes, and the man-made environment. What is currently missing is a cohesive strategy to interweave these resources into common themes that will increase the recreational and educational experience for residents and visitors alike. Theme related tourism and educational endeavors will tie together existing resources to enhance visitor experiences and solidify local understanding of the region and its heritage. The various alternatives presented in the feasibility study demonstrate the wealth of outstanding recreational and educational opportunities that can be achieved through a National Heritage Area designation.

5. The Resources Important to the Identified Theme or Themes of the Area Retain a Degree of Integrity Capable of Supporting Interpretation.

The feasibility study documents the integrity of the many natural, cultural, and historical resources of Freedom's Way. It also categorizes the resources by the preliminary themes developed during the study process. Numerous resources in the region are already the subjects of individual interpretative programs. By providing a common set of heritage themes, these existing efforts will be enriched and fit into the larger interpretive plan for the region.

6. Residents, Business Interests, Non-Profit Organizations, and Governments Within the Proposed Area are Involved in the Planning, and Have Developed a Conceptual Financial Plan That Outlines the Roles for All Participants Including the Federal Government, and Have Demonstrated Support for the Designation of the Area.

Over the years, Freedom's Way Heritage Association has been bringing together representatives of both the public and private sector. The Freedom's Way Board is comprised of representatives of Chambers of Commerce, regional planning and environmental organizations, local selectmen, mayoral appointees, city planners, town administrators, area museums, and business interests including newspaper publishers. Additionally, African and Native Americans, federal land managers, farmers, community non-profits, and trails advocates are represented. All of the above and many others in the region have been involved, and will continue to be involved in

planning efforts affecting the heritage area. As indicated previously, the level of state, regional, and local support for designation is exceptionally high. As the feasibility study notes, hundreds of citizens of the region participated in the study through workshops, or as municipal contacts in each of the region's communities.

The conceptual financial plan that follows outlines the roles of the various players, potential costs of operations, and sources of funding for the Freedom's Way National Heritage Area. It defines the role of the Federal Government in financial and technical assistance terms, and provides for strong relationships with Minuteman National Historical Park and other federal facilities in the region.

Five Year Revenue Projection

Total Revenues - \$10,000,000

Revenues in Each Column Might be Adjusted Based on Actual Federal Appropriations

Anticipated Federal Appropriations	Anticipated State Contributions	Local Matching Requirement for Grants to other Organizations	Other Federal, State, or Private Grants, Local Contributions, Donations, and Miscellaneous Income
\$5,000,000	\$1,250,000	\$2,500,000	\$1,250,000

The revenue projections assume an average of \$1,000,000 per year in heritage area Federal grants to the Freedom's Way Heritage Area Association and yearly contributions averaging \$250,000 from the participating States. As stated previously, the Association is currently the recipient of a \$250,000 initial grant from the State of Massachusetts, pending appropriation by Congress, for the use of tourism enhancement programs. It is anticipated that one half of the Federal Contributions will be used for local grants requiring a 50% match of the recipients. Other Federal, State, and private grants (TEA 21, foundation and corporate donations, etc.) and local contributions are expected to average \$250,000 per year. Should Federal heritage area appropriations fall short of the amounts anticipated above, grants to other organizations and various revenue projections might be reduced proportionately.

Freedom's Way Heritage Association has portrayed its anticipated revenue during this five-year period in a conservative manner. The Association expects that other potential revenue sources will permit us to exceed the required minimum federal match requirement of 50%.

Five Year Expense Projection

Total Expenditures - \$10,000,000

Expenditures in Each Column Might be Adjusted Based on Actual Federal Appropriations With the Exception of the Heritage Area Management Plan

Administration and Operations	Development of Heritage Area Management and	Grants to Local Organizations (50% Match Requirement)	Heritage Area Projects (Signage, Interpretive Programs)

	Interpretive Plan	Provided by Grantees)	and Exhibits, Trails, Uni-Grid Brochure, Special Projects and Events, Etc.)
\$2,000,000	\$250,000	\$5,000,000	\$2,750,000

Freedom’s Way Heritage Association anticipates yearly operating costs averaging \$400,000 including personnel, office expenses, and administrative functions. The heritage area management and interpretive plan is expected to cost \$250,000 over a two-year period. Grants to local organizations are estimated to consume 50% of the total Federal appropriations for projects that add significant value to the heritage area. These grants will be matched by a 50% contribution from recipients as stated above. The Heritage Area Projects category is expected to average \$550,000 per year. This latter category is expected to be leveraged significantly by the contributions of other partners involved in the heritage area projects. The Association also believes that a number of grant related and heritage area category projects will directly or indirectly benefit Minuteman National Historical Park and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Refuges that are located within the boundaries of the proposed heritage area.

The Association is eager to receive National Park Service technical assistance in the development of the heritage area management plan, interpretative programming, historic and cultural resource protection, and land and water protection techniques. We view the National Park Service as a key partner in achieving the resource protection objectives of Freedom’s Way and look forward to a close working relationship with NPS offices and personnel.

Freedom’s Way Heritage Association is prepared to provide additional detail on this conceptual financial plan if desired by the National Park Service. We believe that the financial resources to undertake a successful heritage area program exist within the region and that the support among local governments, community organizations, businesses, and the people living in our communities will make our financial projections a reality.

7. The Proposed Management Entity and Units of Government Supporting Designation are willing to Commit to Working in Partnership to Develop the Heritage Area.

As the feasibility study and the past experience of the Freedom’s Way endeavor clearly indicate, the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association, Inc. and a wide array of state, regional, and local governmental units are prepared to undertake the partnership necessary for the success of the heritage area. Indeed, these partnerships have been active for a number of years. Agencies of government have already committed substantial financial and in-kind contributions to the Association. Many of these are also represented on the Board of the Association. The Association also enjoys a productive working relationship with Minuteman National Historical Park and the two units of the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service and looks forward to forging an even closer partnership upon designation. The Association has no doubt that the Superintendent of Minuteman will play an even more active role in the heritage area and welcomes the continuing relationship.

8. The Proposal is Consistent with Continued Economic Activity in the Area.

As the feasibility study maps indicate, Freedom's Way is impacted by the corridors of Routes 128, 495, and 2. The region is growing in population and associated development of residences and commercial and industrial establishments. The designation will increase visitation to the region by tourists, and within by residents, and result in additional economic benefit consistent with other economic advances. Of prime importance, however, is the potential that National Heritage Area designation provides for promoting the management of future growth in a manner that maintains the traditional character of the region and its precious natural, cultural, and historic resources, while accommodating compatible economic development. It is important to note, too, that MassDevelopment, a Commonwealth entity charged with significant development activities at the former Fort Devens Army Post and surrounding areas is a strong partner of the Freedom's Way effort. Area Chambers of Commerce and businesses also support the designation.

9. A Conceptual Boundary Map is Supported by the Public.

The feasibility study presents a boundary map that was used as the study area. The current boundary in the proposed legislation is the product of the public workshop discussions and additional public input since the study was completed. Recently, public interest has increased from cities outside the original study area. The published Freedom's Way Map is well received and supported by the public. It represents a clear delineation of the assemblage of resources in the region that relate to the Freedom's Way preliminary themes. The boundary includes portions of two states, and has been exposed to public comment in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. During a recent visit by Northeast Regional Office, National Park Service personnel, there was ample evidence of support for the boundary by individuals in local leadership positions in both states.

10. The Management Entity Proposed to Plan and Implement the Project is Described.

The feasibility study describes the Freedom's Way Heritage Association, Inc. as the future management entity for the National Heritage Area and provides guidance on the steps that should be taken by the Association to improve its structure and develop a heritage area management plan. These structural steps have been accomplished since the study was completed. Freedom's Way Heritage Association, Inc. is a Section 501(c)(3) non-profit organization established in the State of Massachusetts. Previous sections of this supplement have described the membership of its Board of Directors and the various linkages it has to other governmental agencies and community organizations. The Association was responsible for undertaking the heritage area feasibility study and is fully prepared and capable of administering the tasks associated with National Heritage Area designation. Freedom's Way Heritage Association, Inc. is the designated management entity proposed in H. R. 1027

Conclusion

Freedom's Way Heritage Association, Inc., and the many partners who have come together to plan for and support National Heritage Area designation for this region of nationally significant and distinctive resources, believe that Freedom's Way meets the criteria for designation. We submit that in so many ways, the effort here surpasses the minimum requirements of the criteria. This is a region of truly great natural, cultural, and historical resources; one filled now with the excitement of having the opportunity of celebrating the heritage that our forebears gave to us and to the American people in a coordinated fashion, and; a region prepared to work together with our respective governments as citizens to make sure that our precious heritage related resources are protected and appreciated by all. We hope that the National Park Service will recognize the opportunities for resource protection that we represent, the important national and regional stories that we have to tell, and our potential to be an effective partner to achieve the visions we hold for Freedom's Way. We are prepared to elaborate on any of the points above, or to provide further documentation that Freedom's Way meets the criteria for designation.