

CHAPTER I.

Planning Background

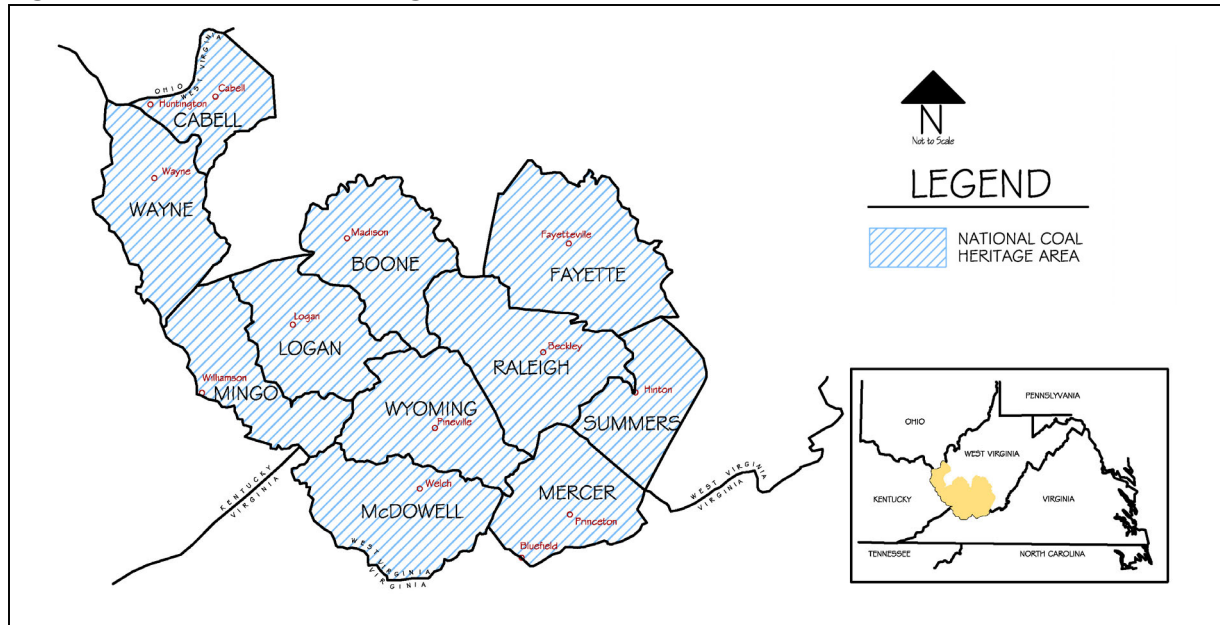
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1.0 PROJECT BACKGROUND

Establishment of the National Coal Heritage Area

In 1988, the United States Congress passed the Omnibus Public Lands and National Forests Adjustments Act (Public Law 100-699), authorizing the National Park Service (NPS) to prepare a feasibility study concerning an 11-county area in southern West Virginia known for its contribution to the coal mining industry in the United States (See Figure 1.1). The purpose of this study was to evaluate the feasibility of developing a plan to protect and preserve the significant cultural, historic and natural resources that contribute to the coal mining heritage of southern West Virginia. As a result, in 1991, the NPS published *Coal Fields, Communities & CHANGE*, which summarized the planning efforts to date, and laid the groundwork for the 1993 publication of *A Coal Mining Heritage Study: Southern West Virginia*, which identified and evaluated key resources in the area, and provided a starting point for the establishment of the 11-county National Coal Heritage Area.

Figure 1.1 National Coal Heritage Area



Subsequent to the NPS study, in 1996, Congress officially designated the region as the National Coal Heritage Area (NCHA), one of 23 national heritage areas supported by the NPS.

In January 1999, a NCHA Steering Committee was established by the State of West Virginia and the NPS to direct the planning efforts for the NCHA. Comprised of volunteers from varied fields all related in some manner to the NCHA; the Steering Committee includes professionals in the fields of tourism, historic preservation, economic and community development, and academia, as well as individuals representing local government, regional interests, state programs, and mining. (See Appendix D)

In late 1999, the NCHA began preparing a Management Plan (The Plan) to serve as a road map for the development and management of the NCHA. The Plan will:

- Identify the goals of the NCHA;
- Describe the major physical, social and cultural resources of the NCHA;
- Identify the major interpretive themes to be introduced to visitors to the NCHA;

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- Describe proposed improvements to the NCHA, including proposals for new and expanded visitor centers and a museum;
- Outline plans for the management of the NCHA;
- Describe the relationship of the Plan to other regional development trends and growth plans; and
- Identify the resources needed to implement the plan.

A significant milestone was reached in January 2001 when a Draft Plan, identifying a preferred alternative for the management of the NCHA, was presented to the NCHA Steering Committee. The Draft Plan was developed under the direction of the NCHA Steering Committee based on extensive outreach with affected interest groups and parties within the NCHA.

In 1969, Congress passed the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which requires that proposed federal actions be reviewed to determine whether they will result in significant impacts to the natural and manmade environment. *NPS Director's Order 12: Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis and Decision Making* sets forth the policies and procedures by which the NPS carries out its responsibilities under NEPA. In part, this requires that proposed Management Plans be developed through an open planning process involving the public that identifies and objectively evaluates alternatives with the potential for meeting the purpose and need of the proposed action. The NPS cannot adopt the proposed Plan until this environmental review process is completed.

This Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (Programmatic EIS) is intended to meet the requirements of NEPA and *NPS Director's Order 12* (DO-12). In conformance with these requirements, a Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS evaluating alternative plans for the management of the NCHA was published in the *Federal Register* on July 17, 2001. Since that time, the public has been provided additional opportunities to comment on the alternatives under consideration and the overall scope of the environmental document. These opportunities included an agency scoping meeting held in Charleston in August 2001 and three public scoping meetings held in September 2001 in Williamson, Beckley (Tamarack) and Huntington, West Virginia. During the meetings, public agencies and the general public were encouraged to provide guidance on alternatives for study and issues to be addressed in the EIS. Major issues identified during that scoping process are identified later in this section.

This EIS identifies and evaluates alternatives for the overall management of the NCHA, and is intended to provide the NPS and the public with broad assessments of the impacts of identified management alternatives including an assessment of the secondary and cumulative effects of the proposed alternatives. A "No Action" alternative is also evaluated, as required under NEPA and DO-12.

Upon adoption of an overall management plan for the NCHA, the NPS, in coordination with the NCHA Steering Committee and other affected parties, will prepare detailed plans for the implementation of the selected management approach. These actions will be the subject of subsequent environmental reviews and documentation, which will provide greater detail and specificity concerning their environmental effects. This "tiering" process, encouraged under NEPA, focuses on the actual issues immediately "ripe" for decision at each level of environmental review. This initial Programmatic EIS will provide the public with a broad understanding of the consequences of the area-wide plan for managing the NCHA. Subsequent environmental documents will detail the effects of localized actions proposed to implement the overall plan as resources permit them to become the subjects of decision making.

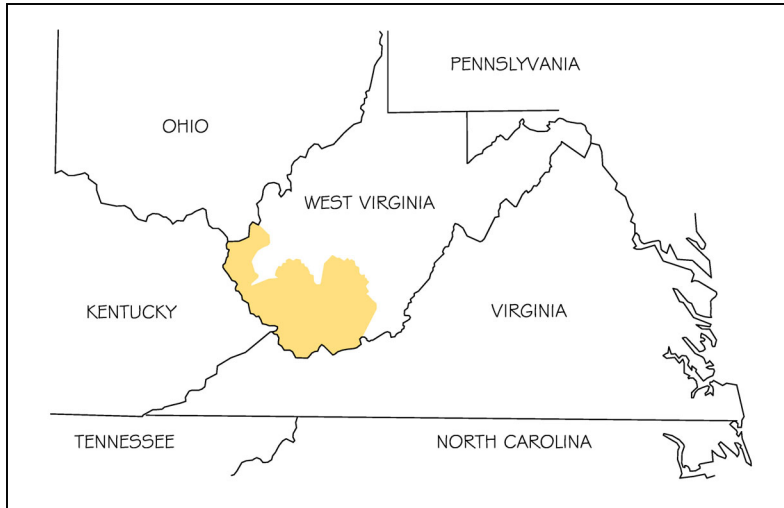
It is the desire of the NCHA to bring its Management Plan before the Secretary of the Interior for approval in mid-2002. Detailed environmental review of localized actions implementing the Plan will be completed after approval of the overall Plan.

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Brief Description of the NCHA

The NCHA encompasses 11 counties in southern West Virginia and is bordered on the southwest by the Commonwealth of Kentucky, on the southeast by the Commonwealth of Virginia, and on the north by other counties of the State of West Virginia. Additionally, a small portion of the NCHA borders the State of Ohio near Huntington, West Virginia (See Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2 Location of the NCHA



The NCHA encompasses over 5,000 square miles (more than 3 million acres) of mountainous terrain where miners labored to extract and transport the coal that shaped modern America. The landscape, culture and history of the region were altered significantly due to the extraction and transportation of bituminous coal. The land is strewn with historic coal mines, coal camps, and railroads; all evidence of what was once the State's dominant industry that drew thousands of immigrants to southern West Virginia.

1.1 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR NCHA MANAGEMENT PLAN

Overview of Purpose

The Department of Interior is considering the approval of a Management Plan as a major step in the designation of the NCHA.

The purpose of the NCHA Management Plan is to:

1. Set forth integrated cultural, historical and land resource management policies and programs to retain, enhance, and interpret the significant values of the lands, water, and structures of the NCHA;
2. Describe the guidelines and standards to which projects to be implemented must conform to preserve, restore, maintain, construct, operate, interpret, and promote buildings, structures, facilities and sites in the NCHA;
3. Set forth the responsibilities of the NPS, the State of West Virginia, units of local government, nonprofit entities, and other organizations needed to preserve historic sites and to oversee compatible economic revitalization in the NCHA;
4. Establish the organizational structure for the management of the NCHA; and
5. Describe the implementation schedule and financial requirements for programs and projects within the NCHA.

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Overview of Need

In meeting the stated purpose of the NCHA Management Plan, proposed alternatives need to:

- Provide for the preservation, conservation, and interpretation of culturally and historically significant sites, structures, and artifacts important to the coal mining heritage of the NCHA;
- Provide for the phased implementation of Plan components in conformance with existing and planned infrastructure in the NCHA;
- Provide for partnerships with community-based initiatives throughout the NCHA for the funding and development of proposed improvements;
- Allow for needed economic development in a region historically exposed to boom-and-bust economic cycles, including the encouragement of tourism within the NCHA;
- Provide for the continued involvement of a broad range of public and private stakeholders in the management of the NCHA; and
- Minimize impacts on the natural and manmade environment.

Issues and Impacts

A number of issues for potential assessment were identified during development of the Draft Management Plan. (See Table 1.1)

TABLE 1.1
Issues Identified for Assessment During Development of Draft Management Plan

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Historical Resources - Archaeological Resources • Open Space and Recreational Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regional Open Space and Recreational Resources - Local Attractions - Visitor Centers • Socioeconomic Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Population - Economy - Housing - Education - Employment - Poverty - Environmental Justice • Sacred Sites, Indian Tribal Resources and Tribal Lands* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Geology - Floodplains - Wetlands - Vegetation - Habitat - Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species - Prime and Unique Farmland - Ecologically Critical Areas - Air Quality - Noise - Water Quality - Wild and Scenic Rivers - Other Unique and Natural Resources • Land Use and Design of the Built Environment • Transportation Infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Roadways - Airports • Visual Quality • Hazardous Materials
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* Dismissed from Assessment in this DEIS.

All of these issues are assessed in this DEIS, except for the assessment of Sacred Sites, Indian Trust Resources and Tribal Lands, since no federally recognized Indian Tribes exist in the State of West Virginia. Upon further investigation with the State Historic Preservation Office, it has been confirmed that there are no Tribal Lands or sacred sites and the SHPO perceives no issues related to this impact topic.

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In addition to the issue areas identified during the early planning and environmental scoping processes, included in the EIS are evaluations of:

- Disproportionate adverse effects of the proposed alternatives on disadvantaged and minority populations, as required by Executive Order 12898 concerning Environmental Justice;
- The secondary and cumulative and effects of the proposed alternatives;
- Adverse impacts that could not be avoided if the action were implemented;
- Any irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources that would be involved if the alternatives were implemented.

Also included in the EIS is a discussion of the steps that were completed to involve the public in the development of the NCHA Management Plan and EIS, including a description of the results of such activities.

1.2 NCHA MISSION, GOALS AND THEMES

NCHA Purpose and Significance

West Virginia coal contributed directly to the industrialization of the United States. West Virginia's critical role as the primary source of energy supported the expansion and consolidation of the nation's manufacturing industries and the growth of large cities between the Civil War and the Great Depression. Coal production in the Mountain State did not become a major factor nationally until after 1880. Prior to that, the state contributed less than five percent to the nation's coal production. Subsequently, West Virginia coal production grew rapidly. Mine operators from the state shipped their product to the "River Trade"—serving Pittsburgh, Wheeling, Cincinnati and other manufacturing cities of the Ohio and Mississippi valleys; the "Lake Trade," wherein coal was shipped by rail to Great Lakes ports for distribution to industrial cities throughout the upper Midwest; and, above all, the "Seaboard Trade," embracing the cities and industries of the Mid-Atlantic and New England states, which West Virginia coal reached via rail connections to the ports of Chesapeake Bay.

Bituminous coal from West Virginia was particularly valuable because its various forms permitted its use for a broad range of uses. The coalfields of southern West Virginia produced "semi-bituminous coal," which offered the highest ratio of thermal energy to weight of any fuel except for the anthracite coal found in eastern Pennsylvania. "Smokeless" coal from the New River, Winding Gulf and Pocahontas coalfields of Fayette, Raleigh, Wyoming, Mercer and McDowell counties was especially valued as a marine fuel and was a major factor in the rise of Norfolk, Newport News and other Hampton Roads cities as naval and shipbuilding centers. Coal from the minefields of Boone, Logan, Mingo and McDowell counties contained higher proportions of the gases that produce smoke, and was ideal coking coal, which meant that, as steel replaced iron as the nation's leading primary metal after 1900, coke from southern West Virginia was critical to the expansion of the steel industry.

Mining and population in West Virginia grew rapidly after 1890 in response to these expanding markets. West Virginia surpassed Pennsylvania as the nation's leading coal producing state in 1927, with 145,000,000 tons, or 28 percent of national production. Seventeen percent of the coal produced in the state at this time came from the mines of southern West Virginia.

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NCHA Mission and Goals

During the development of the NCHA Draft Management Plan, citizens and stakeholders throughout the region provided guidance to the NCHA Steering Committee in the development of a mission statement, and related goals and strategies for the NCHA. The mission and goals are described below. Strategies can be found in Appendix E.

TABLE 1.2
NCHA Mission and Goals

MISSION STATEMENT	
The NCHA preserves, protects and interprets historic, cultural and natural resources associated with West Virginia's coal mining heritage to help stimulate tourism and economic development, thereby improving the quality of life for the region's residents.	
GOALS	
1. Identity, Marketing and Promotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NCHA will achieve ready recognition by the public by virtue of its strong brand name as a heritage tourism destination. • Develop and implement a marketing and promotional campaign focused on integrated coal heritage destinations targeted to a diverse group of visitors.
2. Organizational Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an organizational structure that will provide adequate financial, staff and other resources to ensure the NCHA's ability to implement this plan and maintain long-term viability.
3. Capacity Building and Partnering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop cooperative partnerships that nurture capable project sponsors and viable grass roots organizations that build human, technical and financial capacity and support plan implementation within the NCHA region.
4. Project Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a phased strategy of linked coal heritage experiences that engage visitors of varying levels of knowledge and interest while advancing cultural and resource conservation in the NCHA.
5. Interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpret the history, culture and technology of the mining era and, in a compelling and thought provoking manner, tell the story of the people of the region.
6. Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster an ethic of pride and stewardship of the residents who will understand the importance of coal mining.
7. Resource Protection, Preservation and Growth Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the protection and preservation of the region's rapidly vanishing artifacts, structures and sites from the mining era of the late 19th and 20th centuries.

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7. Resource Protection, Preservation and Growth Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage projects that balance conservation and growth issues to provide for economic development while protecting resources.
8. Access and Circulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage improvement of linkages between coal heritage visitor destinations in gateway counties and improve access and linkages to destinations in non-gateway counties.
9. Visitor Services and Community Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Foster a relationship between West Virginia’s hospitality and tourism industry and visitors, and provide assistance in exceeding visitor expectations, both in terms of quality and location of services.

Interpretive Themes

Coalfields’ history and culture contain many of the elements of American economic and social history – industrial might, labor struggles, distinctive communities and ethnic diversity. The coalfields story is a uniquely American story, one that can be told using five themes:

- *The Coal Business*
- *Working in Coal*
- *The Company Town*
- *Mining Technology*
- *Crisis and Renewal*

The Draft Management Plan provides detailed descriptions of each theme and how interpretation elements can be implemented through programs and projects.

1.3 RELATIONSHIP OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN TO OTHER PLANNING EFFORTS

NPS Heritage Areas Program

The NCHA is one of 23 National Heritage Areas throughout the United States, each of which is unique in its history and culture that it hopes to share with the rest of the nation. Introduced by the NPS, the Heritage Areas Program focuses on the preservation of our nation’s diverse history and heritage by people where they live and work. The NPS defines a national heritage area as:

“ . . . a place designated by Congress where natural, cultural, historic and scenic resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally distinctive landscape arising from patterns of human activity shaped by geography.”¹

¹ Statement of Denis P. Galvin, Deputy Director, National Park Service, Department of the Interior, Before the House Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands, Committee on Resources, Concerning H.R. 2532, to Provide for the Establishment of National Heritage Areas, October 26, 1999.

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The NPS is engaged in various levels of management and technical assistance in heritage areas located throughout the country. Every heritage area is charged with the task of developing a management plan, including a mission statement to provide for the protection, interpretation and preservation of area resources. Two National Heritage Areas have been designated in the State of West Virginia: the National Coal Heritage Area and the Wheeling National Heritage Area. The National Heritage Areas comprise the Alliance of National Heritage Areas – “a collaboration of 23 Congressionally-designated regions that represent the stories of nationally significant and distinct aspects of America's heritage.”²

Coal Heritage Trail

The NCHA’s planning initiative also parallels the development of the Coal Heritage Trail, a national scenic byway. The Coal Heritage Trail follows several highways through the core of the NCHA in McDowell, Mercer, Raleigh and Wyoming Counties. The purpose of the Coal Heritage Trail is to introduce and interpret coal heritage sites, structures, and stories.

Regional Planning and Development Councils

The West Virginia Development Office (WVDO) oversees eleven regional planning and development councils across the state, which:

- Engage in comprehensive planning;
- Prepare and recommend ordinances, rules and regulations;
- Prepare and publish studies for the region’s resources with respect to existing and emerging issues;
- Collect and analyze social and economic statistics for the region;
- Cooperate with, and provide planning and technical assistance to municipalities, counties and planning agencies within the region;
- Coordinate regional planning with the planning activities of the state, municipalities, and counties within the region, as well as neighboring areas;
- Apply for, accept and expend funds and grants for the purposes of departments or agencies of the federal, state, county, and local governments, and any other agency, public or private, whose interests are in harmony with the purposes of the council; and
- Perform development on a regional basis as necessary to undertake, complete or accomplish the goals and purposes of comprehensive planning in the region.³

Each regional council has a board consisting of individuals representing both public and private interests. Each regional council has an executive director that guides daily activity and reports to the board. The planning and development councils work with local government to create annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and the Regional Development Program (RDP) reports detailing the region’s socioeconomic characteristics, including a comprehensive list of possible community and economic development and improvement projects throughout the region.

² Alliance of National Heritage Areas website: <http://www.cofc.edu/~heritage/>

³ West Virginia Code, Chapter 8, Article 25. Intergovernmental Relations – Regional Planning and Development.

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1.4 EIS PROCESS

Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA require the preparation of three major documents in the EIS process:

- a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS),
- a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), and
- a Record of Decision (ROD).

Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)

This DEIS presents and evaluates reasonable alternatives with the potential for achieving the goals and objectives of the NCHA and identifies significant adverse impacts of the alternatives. As described previously, the scope of the DEIS was established through a public and agency scoping process, and conforms with CEQ and NPS requirements concerning the contents and format of environmental documents. The assessments included in this “programmatic” document provide a broad overview of the impacts of the NCHA Management Plan alternatives on the eleven county area encompassed by the NCHA designation. These effects will be more precisely detailed and quantified in subsequent “tiered” environmental documents evaluating site-specific projects implementing the Plan. These site-specific documents will be based, to the extent practicable, on the information provided in this programmatic document.

This DEIS has been prepared for public review. A Notice of Availability of this DEIS was published in the Federal Register on April 10, 2002. Copies of this DEIS have been sent to public officials, interest groups, and State and local agencies, as appropriate. In addition, the DEIS is also available for review at the following locations:

- Boone County, Boone-Madison Public Library – Madison, WV
- Cabell County Public Library – Huntington, WV
- Fayette County Public Library – Oakhill, WV
- Logan County, Buffalo Creek Memorial Library – Man, WV
- Logan County, Chapmanville Public Library – Chapmanville, WV
- McDowell County Public Library – Welch, WV
- Mercer County, Princeton Public Library – Princeton, WV
- Mingo County Public Library – Delbarton, WV
- Mingo County, Matewan Public Library – Matewan, WV
- Mingo County, Williamson Public Library – Williamson, WV
- Raleigh County Public Library – Beckley, WV
- Summers County Library – Hinton, WV
- Wayne County Public Library – Kenova, WV
- Wyoming County Public Library – Pineville, WV
- Division of Culture and History – Charleston, WV
- Division of Commerce and Tourism – Charleston, WV
- National Coal Heritage Area – Charleston, WV

A public hearing will be held during the public comment period to provide an opportunity for comment on the DEIS. The public comment period will remain open for receipt of public comment until Friday, June 21, 2002. All comments must be received by the NPS by June 21, 2002.

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Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)

A FEIS for the NCHA Management Plan will be prepared after receipt and evaluation of comments on the DEIS. The FEIS will identify and respond to comments received on the DEIS, describe the preferred Management Plan alternative, include an evaluation of all other reasonable alternatives considered and the reasons for their rejection, summarize the process used to involve the public in the preparation of the FEIS, identify measures proposed to mitigate any adverse impacts of the preferred alternative and document compliance with federal and State of West Virginia requirements.

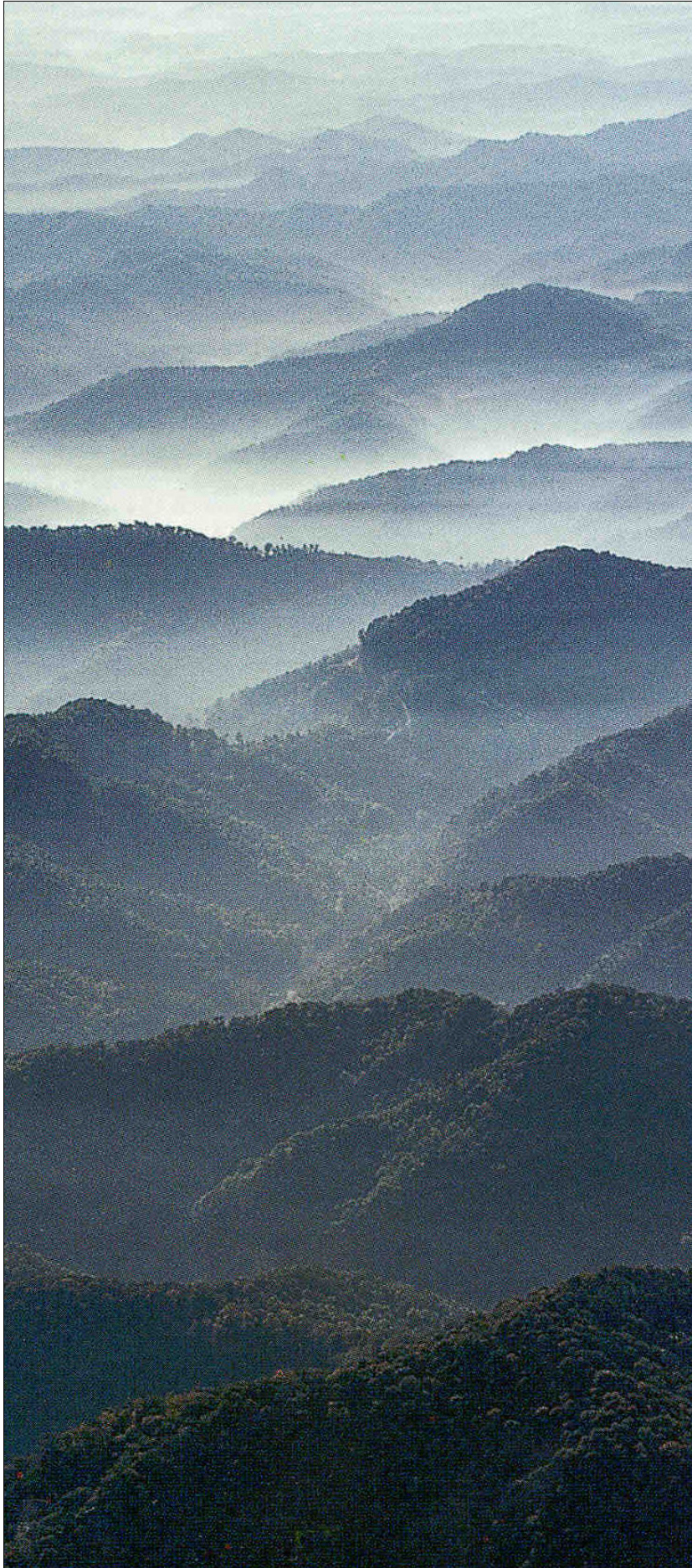
Once approved by NPS, the FEIS will be filed with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and transmitted for public review to federal, State of West Virginia and local agencies, public officials, and interested organizations and individuals. Copies of the FEIS will be made available at the same locations at which copies of the DEIS were made available to the public.

Record of Decision (ROD)

After approval of the FEIS, the NPS will prepare a Record of Decision (ROD), which will serve as the final federal finding regarding the preferred NCHA Management Plan, and explain, as appropriate, the reasons for selection of a preferred alternative, identify measures to be implemented to mitigate adverse impacts of the preferred alternative, and document other required regulatory approvals.

Subsequent Site-Specific Environmental Documents

Subsequent to approval of the overall NCHA Management Plan, site-specific environmental documents will be prepared, as necessary, for future actions implementing the Plan, detailing the effects of future actions as they become “ripe” for implementation. These “tiered” documents will draw upon, to the extent practicable, the information and evaluations included in this DEIS, and will more precisely detail site-specific effects, as their plans and designs become finalized. As required by NEPA, the public and agencies will be given opportunity to participate in the development and review of these actions as they are brought forward for implementation.



CHAPTER II.
Proposed Action
and Alternatives

Proposed Action & Alternatives

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a brief description of the process used to identify and develop Management Plan alternatives for the NCHA. Development of the alternatives followed a multi-step planning process of goal and strategy definition, data gathering and analysis, and alternatives development. Also provided are descriptions of the alternatives and a summary comparison of their major attributes and relative ability to meet the goals and objectives of the NCHA.

2.1 PROPOSED ACTION

The NPS proposes to adopt a Management Plan that will guide the development and management of the NCHA. The selected plan will include programs and policies, which once implemented, will help to preserve the culture and heritage of the coal mining industry of the 11-county area of southern West Virginia that constitute the NCHA.

2.2 RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES, REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES, AND ALTERNATIVES ELIMINATED FROM FURTHER STUDY

A range of Management Plan alternatives were developed during the planning process, several of which were eliminated from consideration based on an assessment of their relative inability to meet the goals and objectives of the NCHA. Several reasonable alternatives have been developed further and are presented in this DEIS for public review and comment.

2.3 ALTERNATIVES UNDER CONSIDERATION

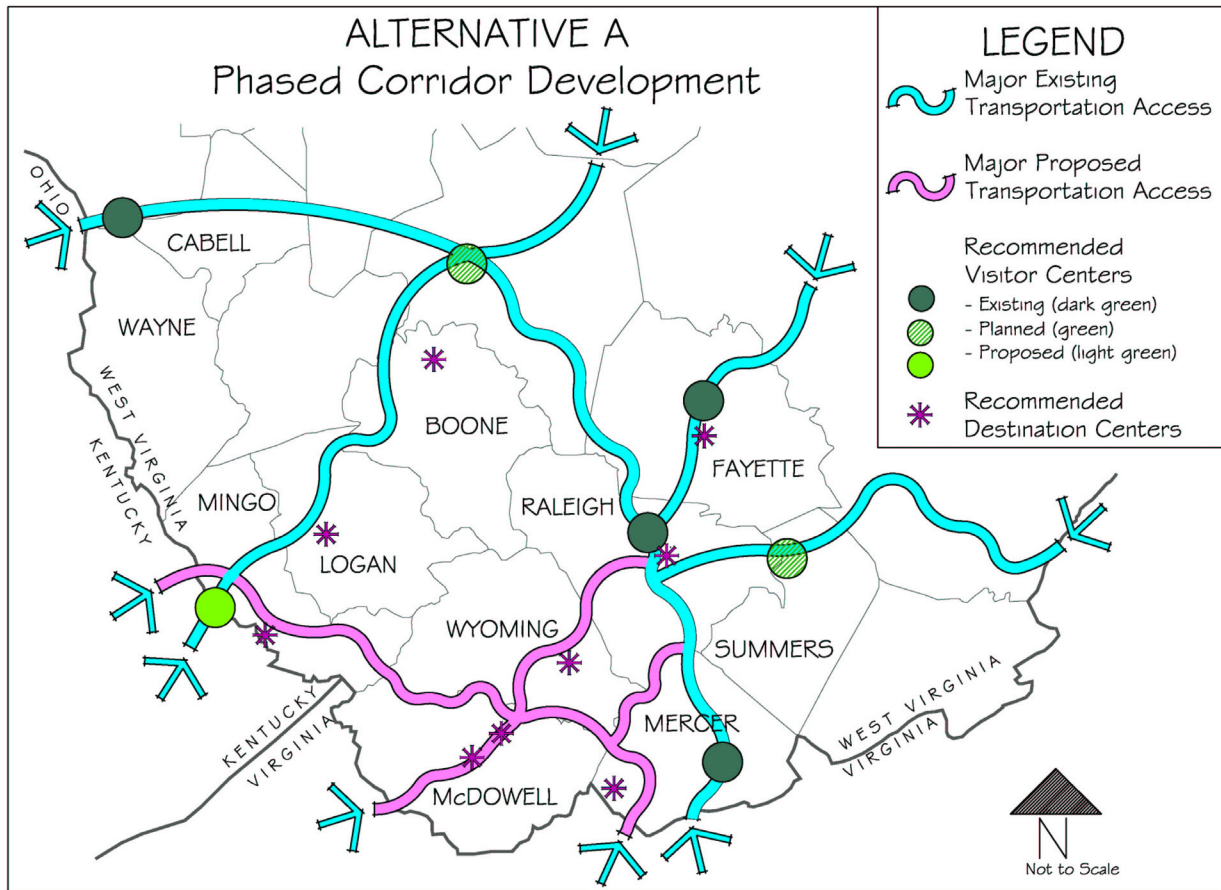
Overview and Plan Components

Four alternatives (Alternatives A, B, C and D) have been developed and evaluated for the NCHA. Three of these alternatives are “action” alternatives (Alternatives A, B and C) and one is a No Action alternative (Alternative D). Each alternative is comprised of six plan components, which together, create an approach that aims to achieve the goals of the NCHA. The plan components and elements are listed below.

- 1. Goals**
- 2. Management Component**
 - a. Structure
 - b. Staffing
 - c. Partnering
 - d. Community and Agency Coordination
 - e. Performance Standards and Evaluation
- 3. Funding Components**
 - a. Sources of Funding
 - b. Levels of Funding
- 4. Cultural Component**
 - a. Preservation and Conservation
 - b. Interpretation
 - c. Education
- 5. Marketing and Tourism Component**
- 6. Physical Component**
 - a. Visitor Centers
 - b. Destination Centers
 - c. Museum
 - d. Corridors

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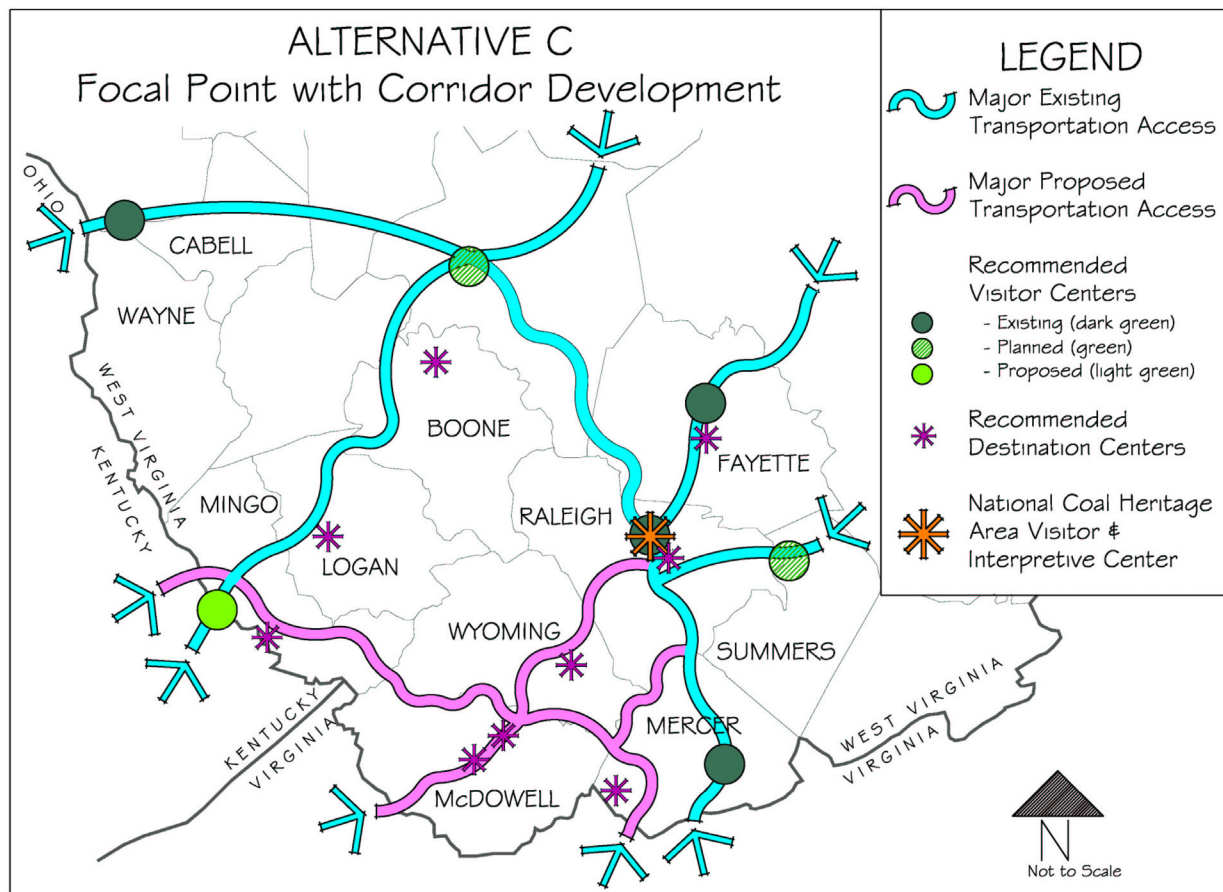
FIGURE 2.1
Alternative A: Phased Corridor Development



Alternative A, the Environmentally Preferred Alternative, is based on a phased corridor development approach with the NCHA central organization assuming a key leadership role in the development of partnerships among organizations and government, intergovernmental cooperation, capacity building and the preservation and protection of coal-related resources within the NCHA. Interpretation of coal-related resources would be decentralized. Interpretation and preservation efforts would be focused on the nine Destination Centers and tourism would be encouraged in the surrounding Experience Zones. A marketing plan would be developed and marketing materials would be distributed at Visitor and Destination Centers. Informational resources at existing Visitor Centers located at the gateways to the NCHA would be improved. Alternative A advocates improved roadway access to, and connections between, the Destination Centers. Implementation is tied to roadway access. Funding requirements for Alternative A is estimated at approximately \$38 million over a 10-year period.

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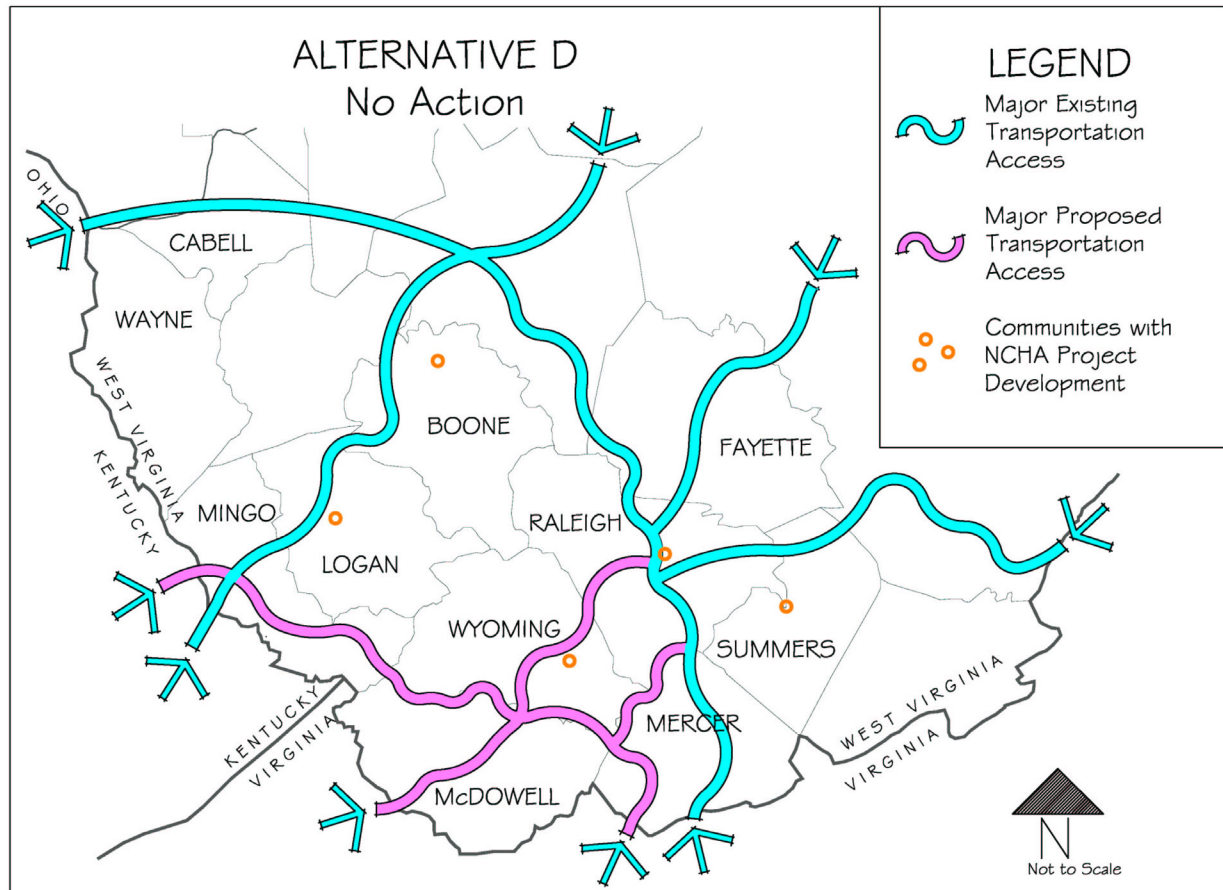
FIGURE 2.3
Alternative C: Focal Point with Corridor Development



Alternative C, the Preferred Alternative, is based on a combined focal point/corridor development approach and is a hybrid of Alternatives A and B. Alternative C is the same as Alternative A except for the following: Alternative C includes the nine Destination Centers and Experience Zones proposed in Alternative A **and** the development of a large-scale, state-of-the-art interpretive and educational museum/visitor center complex near Beckley proposed in Alternative B. Alternative C is estimated to cost approximately \$78 million over a 10-year period.

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FIGURE 2.4
Alternative D: No Action



Alternative D, the No-Action Alternative, does not propose any changes to the current operation/management of the NCHA. Under this alternative, there would be no development of goals or strategies, the current ad-hoc Steering Committee would continue and would remain part of state government. The NCHA executive director would assume all roles and responsibilities for marketing, managing, interpretation and the building of partnerships. Limited partnering activities would continue. Distribution of NCHA printed materials would be limited. Funding would continue at current levels (approximately \$200,000 per year) or would decline if the NPS decides to decrease funding. Alternative D is likely to have the least impact on the preservation of cultural resources and economic development.

Proposed Action & Alternatives

Elements Common to All Action Alternatives

Several components and elements are common to each of the action alternatives. Table 2.1 provides a brief description of the common elements.

TABLE 2.1
Elements Common to All Action Alternatives

PLAN COMPONENTS AND ELEMENTS	ALTERNATIVE A, B AND C	ALTERNATIVE D (NO ACTION)
GOALS	Identify goals to develop a set of strategies to implement the NCHA mission.	No Development of goals or strategies.
MANAGEMENT COMPONENT		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure 	Transition to a centralized organization structure; focus on implementation.	Continuation of current ad-hoc Steering Committee and remain part of state government.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing 	Phase hiring of new staff on basis of need and available funding.	Executive Director assumes all roles and responsibilities for marketing, managing, interpretation, and building partnerships.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Standards and Evaluation 	Evaluate implementation of Plan based on success in achieving milestones concerning visitation levels and similar measures.	None.
FUNDING COMPONENT		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sources of Funding 	Sources of funding are targeted, including: NPS; several different division of West Virginia State government; local government, state, regional, and local organizations; and private business.	Potential funding sources identified as projects become ready for implementation.
CULTURAL COMPONENT		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education 	Coordination with public school to enhance teaching of mining heritage for the elementary and secondary school curricula.	Limited to current curricula in elementary and secondary schools.

Proposed Action & Alternatives

Distinguishing Elements Between Alternatives

There are components and elements that differ for each alternative. Those distinguishing features are described in Table 2.2.

TABLE 2.2
Distinguishing Elements Between Alternatives

PLAN COMPONENTS AND ELEMENTS	ALTERNATIVE A <i>PHASED CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT</i>	ALTERNATIVE B <i>FOCAL POINT DEVELOPMENT</i>	ALTERNATIVE C <i>FOCAL POINT with CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT</i>	ALTERNATIVE D <i>NO ACTION</i>
MANAGEMENT COMPONENT				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnering 	Leadership role in developing partnerships among organizations and government.	Encourage development of partnerships among organizations and government.	Same as A.	Continuation of limited partnering activities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community and Agency Cooperation 	Targeted capacity building for local communities; NCHA leadership in intergovernmental cooperation.	Communities are responsible for local capacity building and intergovernmental cooperation.	Same as A.	No organized effort to support community and agency cooperation.
FUNDING COMPONENT				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding Requirements 	Least (estimated \$38 M for 10 years)	Middle (estimated \$44 M for 10 years)	Greatest (estimated \$78 M for 10 years)	Current Levels (estimated \$200 K per year) or less of NPS decreases funding.
CULTURAL COMPONENT				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preservation and Conservation 	Leadership role in preservation and protection of coal-related resources in the 11-county area; resources survey.	Preservation is based on community initiative.	Same as A.	Continue cooperation with SHPO.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interpretation 	Decentralized: nine Destination Centers (DCs) plus Experience Zones (EZs) .	Centralized: Museum plus community initiated projects.	Tiered: Museum, nine DCs plus EZs.	Partnering with state-initiated interpretation projects.
MARKETING AND TOURISM COMPONENT				
	Prepare marketing plan and distribute marketing materials at VCs and DCs.	Prepare marketing plan and distribute marketing materials at Museum to communities and/or attractions as requested.	Same as A.	Limited distribution of NCHA printed materials and slide presentation.

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PLAN COMPONENTS AND ELEMENTS	ALTERNATIVE A <i>PHASED CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT</i>	ALTERNATIVE B <i>FOCAL POINT DEVELOPMENT</i>	ALTERNATIVE C <i>FOCAL POINT with CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT</i>	ALTERNATIVE D <i>NO ACTION</i>
PHYSICAL COMPONENT				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor Centers (VCs) • Destination Centers (DCs) • Museum • Corridors 	<p>Improve informational resources at existing VCs located at the gateways to the NCHA, including I-64 at Huntington, I-77 at Princeton, Canyon Rim VC, and Tamarack near Beckley.</p> <p>Provide informational resources for programmed VCs at South Charleston and Sandstone, and proposed VC at Williamson.</p> <p>Interpretation and preservation efforts at nine DCs, plus encourage tourism in surrounding EZs; DCs located at Beckley</p> <p>None.</p> <p>Advocate for improved roadway access to and connections between DCs; implementation tied to transportation access.</p>	<p>Develop single VC in combination with Museum.</p> <p>None.</p> <p>Develop single VC in combination with Museum near Beckley.</p> <p>None.</p>	<p>Same as A.</p> <p>Same as A.</p> <p>Develop Museum near Beckley</p> <p>Same as A.</p>	<p>Currently, a VC is being planned by the WV Division of Highways at South Charleston, and another is under construction at Sandstone by the NPS.</p> <p>Project at Beckley, Itmann and Nellis are currently underway; each would progress without implementation of the Plan.</p> <p>None.</p> <p>On-going planning of roadway projects by WV Department of Transportation and local jurisdictions.</p>

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2.4 PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Alternative C is the preferred alternative because it best meets the legislative intent of the National Coal Heritage Area Act to “develop and implement integrated cultural, historical, and land resource management policies and programs to retain, enhance, and interpret significant values of the lands, water, and structures of the Area.” Alternative C would capture a broad range of visitors and encourage local capacity building simultaneously. It gives visitors several options for exploring the 11-county heritage area with a large interpretive center, several Visitor Centers and nine Destination Centers. Alternative C provides for strong central leadership that would take an active role in the development of a broad based preservation and conservation effort that is likely to result in increased investment in the NCHA and increased business and employment opportunities.

2.5 ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Based on an assessment of the environmental impacts of the four alternatives, Alternative A is the environmentally preferred alternative because it is likely to result in minimal adverse impacts to natural resources, while at the same time resulting in beneficial impacts for the preservation of cultural resources and socioeconomic development. Alternative B and C have the greatest potential for environmental impacts due primarily to new construction, which is likely to occur in areas that are already disturbed. Of the four alternatives, Alternative C is likely to have the greatest beneficial influence on the preservation of cultural resources and economic development. Alternative D is likely to have the least impact on the preservation of cultural resources and economic development.

Table 2.3 provides a summary comparison of potential impacts of the four alternatives. This table is duplicated at the conclusion of Chapter 4: Environmental Consequences.

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TABLE 2.3
Comparison of Potential Impacts

IMPACT CATEGORY	ALTERNATIVE A <i>PHASED CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT</i>	ALTERNATIVE B <i>FOCAL POINT DEVELOPMENT</i>	ALTERNATIVE C <i>FOCAL POINT with CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT</i>	ALTERNATIVE D <i>NO ACTION</i>
Cultural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly stated goals/strategies set clear path for preservation efforts. Proposed structure, staffing, partnering, community and agency cooperation consolidate and coordinate preservation efforts. Active NCHA organization leadership role – broad based preservation effort. Linkage of cultural resources through Destination Centers/Experience Zones would result in increased effectiveness of interpretive programs, enhanced visitor understanding and experience and increased visitation. Increased visitation could result in some degradation of cultural resources due to wear and tear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly stated goals/strategies set clear path for preservation efforts. Proposed structure, staffing, partnering, community and agency cooperation consolidate and coordinate preservation efforts to a limited degree. Community initiated preservation effort. Development of new visitor center/museum would enhance visitor understanding and awareness. Potential impacts of construction of visitor center/museum include disturbance of archaeological resources that might be located on the site, impairment of historic integrity of site. Increased visitation could result in some degradation of cultural resources due to wear and tear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly stated goals/strategies set clear path for preservation efforts. Proposed structure, staffing, partnering, community and agency cooperation consolidate and coordinate preservation efforts. Active NCHA organization leadership role – broad based preservation effort. Linkage of cultural resources through Destination Centers/Experience Zones would result in increased effectiveness of interpretive programs, enhanced visitor understanding and experience and increased visitation. Development of new visitor center/museum would enhance visitor understanding and awareness. Potential impacts of construction of visitor center/museum include disturbance of archaeological resources that might be located on the site, impairment of historic integrity of site. Increased visitation could result in some degradation of cultural resources due to wear and tear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of clearly stated goals/strategies does not set clear path for preservation efforts. With limited structure, staffing, partnering, community and agency cooperation, preservation efforts would continue to be fragmented and uncoordinated. Grassroots preservation effort. Limited distribution of interpretive information would entice fewer visitors to the NCHA. Potential loss of cultural resources due to continued neglect, deterioration and/or abandonment.
Open Space & Recreational Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No adverse impacts anticipated. Potential for increase in visitation to open space and recreational resources due to overall increased visitation to the area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No adverse impacts anticipated. Potential for increase in visitation to open space and recreational resources due to overall increased visitation to the area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No adverse impacts anticipated. Potential for increase in visitation to open space and recreational resources due to overall increased visitation to the area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No adverse impacts anticipated.

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IMPACT CATEGORY	ALTERNATIVE A PHASED CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT	ALTERNATIVE B FOCAL POINT DEVELOPMENT	ALTERNATIVE C FOCAL POINT with CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT	ALTERNATIVE D NO ACTION
Socioeconomic Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of demand for new jobs within the NCHA due to preservation efforts, marketing and creation of Visitor and Destination Centers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of demand for new jobs in Beckley due to development of visitor center/museum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of Demand for new jobs within the NCHA due to preservation efforts, marketing and creation of Visitor and Destination Centers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal to no impact.
Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any adverse impacts on natural resources at Destination Centers are anticipated to be minimal. Adverse impacts resulting from increased visitation are anticipated to be minimal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential impacts from construction of new visitor center/museum (to be quantified when project proceeds beyond the current conceptual level). Adverse impacts resulting from increased visitation are anticipated to be minimal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any adverse impacts on natural resources at Destination Centers are anticipated to be minimal. Potential impacts from construction of new visitor center/museum (to be quantified when project proceeds beyond the current conceptual level). Adverse impacts resulting from increased visitation are anticipated to be minimal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal to no impact.
Land Use & Design of the Built Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential impact on land use within/immediately adjacent to Destination Centers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential impact on land use in the vicinity of the proposed visitor center/museum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential impact on land use within/immediately adjacent to Destination Centers. Potential impact on land use in the vicinity of the proposed visitor center/museum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No adverse impacts anticipated.
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for increased travel on existing roadways. Potential for visual impacts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as A. Same as A. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as A. Same as A. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No adverse impacts anticipated. Same as A.
Visual Resources Hazardous Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No adverse impacts anticipated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No adverse impacts anticipated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No adverse impacts anticipated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No adverse impacts anticipated.