

Partnerships

The NCHA cannot pursue its goals by working alone. Developing and nurturing cooperative partnerships through all eleven counties is a high priority strategy for the National Coal Heritage Area. Communities, groups and individuals within the area must share a commitment to the vision and the recommendations contained in this plan. This will require a level of regional cooperation that is perhaps unique in the modern era of southern West Virginia. Communities and groups must become partners with a shared vision of coal heritage. This requires a commitment to common goals, participating in area initiatives and the allocation of resources to achieve specific strategic objectives.

Outreach efforts to cultivate partners and sponsors for historic preservation, cultural conservation, development and fundraising efforts must begin early and continue over the life of the coal heritage initiative. Cooperative partnerships will help to build organizations and interest groups that can transcend political boundaries in seeking region-wide improvements. Only through a long-term and regional strategy can the initiative attain its dual goals of preservation and tourism-based economic development.



Strong, cooperative partnerships are necessary to transcend political and geographic borders.



4.1 Build Strong Regional Partnerships

To succeed in fulfilling its mission, the NCHA must forge closer and more effective partnerships with major regional stakeholders. This is especially critical with regard to leadership, management and access to resources. Although the region has abundant historic, cultural and natural resources, regional leadership resources need to be strengthened. Leadership resources currently are strained as a core group of enthusiasts and activists provides much of the support at the community and regional level. Leadership depth is thin, considering the magnitude of the challenges and the size of the heritage area. After all, a core of corporate leadership and management expertise departed West Virginia along with the miners who left after the introduction of mechanized coal mining. Owners and managers of energy and transportation companies no longer live and work in the region, though their economic interests remain there. It is incumbent on the NCHA to develop and strengthen relationships with these owners and managers and use them to leverage resources and to gain access and ownership to key area sites and artifacts.

Alliances with major economic stakeholders should be strengthened. Partners such as the outdoor recreation and hospitality industries share common objectives with the coal heritage initiative. Partnering strategies for the area must achieve involvement of such partners in the leadership structure of the NCHA. Forging alliances between stakeholder groups can provide support in lobbying, fundraising and marketing.

Initial efforts to support coal heritage initiatives have had some success. More than a dozen groups are active and as many are in the formative stage. Local organizations, non-profits, and units of local government sponsor and maintain relatively modest preservation, conservation and interpretation activities. These groups, which are committed to preserving and interpreting various types of resources should be asked to support broad conservation and preservation strategies recommended in this plan. At some point, these groups could be sufficiently capable to form a stewardship alliance with a mission to preserve and conserve irreplaceable area resources.



4.2 Federal Partnership Opportunities

The NCHA enjoys special status as a federally designated heritage area. A benefit of this status is the partnerships this creates between the heritage area and other federal agencies, and the National Park Service in particular. To date, the National Park Service has played an important role in the coal heritage movement, from early concept and feasibility studies to current technical and financial assistance. This relationship between federal heritage areas is expected to continue, but may evolve in response to budgetary and policy changes.

may be reevaluated if the park service is determined to be critical to the preservation or interpretation of important resources. If critical resources within the heritage area become so endangered or their national significance so threatened that alternative remedies are not practical, an expanded park service role may be advisable.

In addition to the support provided from NPS regional offices, the National Park Service is actively involved in preserving and interpreting important coal heritage resources in the New River Gorge National River Area, including the Kaymoor Mining Complex and abandoned coal camps along Fayette Station Road. The National Park Service is also a partner organization with the Coal Heritage Trail Association, and it plays a leadership role in regional recreation, conservation and cultural conservation initiatives. Consistent with its mission and within existing programs, the Park Service can provide technical support and assistance in accomplishing conservation and interpretation actions within the heritage area.



This plan does not recommend the expansion of National Park Service holdings. However, this issue



4.3 Strengthen State Partnerships

The NCHA is unique within the State of West Virginia. Although the state's extensive park system is dedicated to making recreation, cultural, and historic opportunities available, no statewide heritage areas programs exist. A state sponsored program dedicated to nurturing the heritage area concept during the critical start-up and capacity building phase is essential to achieving long term success. The coal heritage area initiative in West Virginia is new and fragile. Unlike many federally designated heritage areas, the coal region has no major population centers and has at best modest accessibility to major markets. The coal heritage story, while important and compelling, has marketing challenges related to regional stereotypes and also to stereotypes about mining that provoke negative images. Local government and community leadership alone cannot surmount these obstacles. A state-supported program to partner with the federal government and build local capacity is needed, at least through the first critical years.

Forging stronger partnerships within the state and its affected agencies—including the Division of Tourism, Division of Culture and History and the Governor's Office of Community Development—can contribute greatly to the area's efforts in resource management, access to financial resources, and policies to support vision and goals. In addition to state agency support, outreach to the West Virginia House of Delegates and Senate is important. A coalition of House and Senate legislators can help to maintain focus and support for the heritage area through support on legislative and

policy initiatives. Convening collaborating legislators and agency heads periodically to provide updates and discuss legislative needs and opportunities is recommended.



4.4 Forge New Partnerships and Build Local Capacity

Developing new relationships is another key objective of the NCHA's partnering and outreach efforts. Several opportunities for new partnerships in the form of energetic groups and organizations were identified during the planning process. An overarching strategy of this initiative is to assist local groups in developing their planning, managing and fundraising capabilities.

Building local capacity poses a particularly difficult long-term challenge to this initiative and to southern West Virginia due in large part to the cultural history of the region. During the coal boom era, the majority of residents were employed by companies headquartered outside of the area, and lived in houses and shopped in stores owned by such companies. Residents literally had most of the necessities of life provided to them in exchange for their labor. With industry changes and the migration of population out of the area, the capacity to organize, plan and implement was further diminished. In order to achieve the goals of the heritage area, local capacity must be built to organize, develop and maintain projects that communicate the region's important stories and events. Building local capacity to launch and manage successful projects such as destination centers and community initiatives requires effective partnering.

Developing local capacity takes time as well as hard work. Groups will need funding assistance, organizational support, and technical assistance. Local groups should be able to compete for project grants, particularly in cases when obtaining or stabilizing an

endangered structure or artifact is proposed. Beyond support from early action grants and the proposed loan and grant program, NCHA should assist local partners in strengthening their fundraising capabilities so they may be able to compete for a broader range of funding resources, and in doing so lessen their reliance on the NCHA for long-term support. The focus should be on helping to build long-term organizational effectiveness, which covers a range of capabilities from management to fundraising. Capacity-building activities should include grantsmanship training, strategic planning, and targeted training and workshops. Leadership for capacity building should originate with the NCHA or regional planning associations, with support from state, federal and foundation resources.



Capacity development starts at the local level with partnership and planning initiatives.



<i>Partnerships Within Destination Zones</i>	INITIATIVES						
	Coal Heritage Commission	Miner's Museum & Memorial	Destination Centers	Tourism & Infrastructure	Public Relations	Preservation	Capital / Fundraising
<i>Federal Agencies</i>							
National Parks Service	●					●	●
Federal Highway Administration				●			●
Corps of Engineers						●	●
Environmental Protection Agency							●
National Trust for Historic Preservation	●		●		●	●	●
<i>State of West Virginia</i>							
Division of Tourism	●	●	●	●	●		●
Division of Culture and History	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Governor's Office of Community Development	●	●	●	●		●	●
State Historic Preservation Office	●		●			●	
Department of Transportation	●			●			
Department of Parks							
Department of Environmental Protection							
Department of Education	●	●	●		●	●	
<i>Regional and Local Organizations</i>							
Coal Heritage Trail Association	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Coalfields Expressway Authority	●						
Tamarack	●	●		●	●		
Hatfield-McCoy Recreation Authority	●		●			●	●
Whitewater Association	●						●
Southern West Virginia Convention & Visitors Bureau	●		●	●		●	●
Planning and Development Councils	●		●	●		●	
County Government	●		●			●	
Local Government	●		●			●	
Private & Non-Profit Corporations	●	●	●		●	●	●
Civic Organizations	●		●			●	●
Foundations	●		●		●	●	●

Strengthening existing and developing new partnerships is key to plan implementation. Long-term sustainability is built from successful local, state and federal collaborative efforts.



4.5 Execute Interlocal Agreements and Initiate an Interlocal Organization

An element of partnership development is the formalization of agreements. Each of the eleven counties of the heritage area should be a signatory to an agreement that commits each county to supporting the preservation, conservation and interpretation initiatives. Each county, as well as other local governments of a sufficient size could nominate members to an interlocal advisory committee that meets periodically to advise the Coal Heritage Area Commission on plan initiatives and activities.



4.6 Initiate a Grant and Loan Program

Opportunities to tell the coal heritage story are broad and diverse. Each family, coal camp, community and county contributes uniquely to the story. Telling the story begins at the community level—first by building awareness and pride in communities of their own contributions, and then by communicating the story to a broader audience. Resources to achieve these objectives are scarce in the region’s communities. Groups and organization will require financial assistance in preserving properties related to the region’s industrial history, and in developing programs, events, and educational opportunities to explore coal heritage themes. Creation of a grant and loan program is recommended. This program could replace or supplement the current early action project grants that have been approved by the NCHA. A primary purpose of the loan and grant program is providing financial assistance for projects consistent with the vision and goals of the heritage area. Early action projects funded to date include the Nellis Church Archives in Boone County, the John Henry Park in Summers County and the Ansted Heritage Interpretive Trail in Fayette County. A grant and loan project will encourage and support conservation, preservation and interpretation efforts. Eligible activities could include preservation of historic artifacts, documents or records; acquisition of historic or significant structures; programs with educational objectives; development of interpretative and marketing materials; and other activities consistent with the NCHA mission.

Funds made available through federal heritage area designation may be used for this program. Grants and loans will be made available for eligible projects as determined by the NCHA in consultation with a grant and loan committee. The commission or their designated committee will set goals and review guidelines for the grant and loan program and establish application guidelines, grant award cycles, and procedures for completing program requirements. A grant and loan committee will review and evaluate applications and forward recommendations for approval to the NCHA. Although it is the intent to provide an open competition for grant and loan funds, evaluation guidelines should encourage projects that meet certain minimum criteria, including:

- consistency with the vision and goals of the NCHA;
- potential for furthering the strategic recommendations of this plan;
- effective interpretation, conservation or promotion of the coal heritage themes identified in this plan;
- potential for creating economic value and becoming self-sustaining;
- demonstrating the organizational capacity for long-term viability.



A process to evaluate grant and loan awardee accomplishments in terms of the requirements of funding agreements must be developed. The performance of awardees should be audited at least once over the life of each project.

