

# HERITAGE TOURISM AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Federal Heritage Tourism Summit I

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In conjunction with its regular quarterly meeting, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) hosted a summit meeting of Federal agencies November 14, 2002, to discuss cultural heritage tourism. Many Federal agencies are already supporting heritage tourism in various ways through their missions and programs. This meeting provided an opportunity for comparing notes on these activities, and to begin discussing ways to improve the coordination and consistency of such efforts.

In addition to members, observers, and staff of the ACHP, the meeting included representatives from eight cabinet departments and fourteen bureaus and independent agencies. Federal attendees included the Departments of Agriculture (Natural Resources Conservation Service, Forest Service), Commerce (Economic Development Administration, International Trade Administration), Defense (Army, Corps of Engineers, Navy), Education, Energy, Housing and Urban Development, Interior (Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service), and Transportation (Federal Highway Administration), as well as the General Services Administration, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Smithsonian Institution.

The agenda included remarks from John Nau, ACHP Chairman; Douglas Baker, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce; Carolyn Brackett, ACHP Member (and National Trust for Historic Preservation Senior Associate, Heritage Tourism Program); Dan Smith, Special Assistant to the Director of the National Park Service; Dennis Adams, National Scenic Byways Program, Federal Highway Administration; and Douglas Stephens, Enterprise Team, USDA Forest Service. Following the presentations there was an opportunity for open moderated discussion. Agencies were asked to share their views on three issue areas:

- Should there be changes in existing Federal policy or programs to provide greater support for heritage tourism as an economic development strategy as well as for other purposes?
- What are Federal agencies currently doing to promote heritage tourism, and what additional steps can they take to ensure that the historic and cultural resources they manage are more fully integrated into local, Statewide, and regional heritage tourism initiatives throughout the country?
- What specific cooperative efforts might be undertaken by Federal agencies to better coordinate heritage tourism activities and share information and ideas among themselves and with non-Federal parties?

### **Key Points from Federal Heritage Tourism Summit**

- A case for the public value of heritage tourism to the Nation should be made and shared among policymakers and decisionmakers.
- Connections to both economic development potential and educational value and opportunity need to be maintained and stressed in program and policy development on heritage tourism.
- There is an important linkage between appropriate management of Federal heritage assets, and regional and local economic development potential, and this message needs to be conveyed to decisionmakers.

- Many Federal agencies are engaged in some aspect of heritage tourism development and support, but often these efforts are not well coordinated with those of other Federal entities or with other governmental or private activities.
- Open dialogue, information and experience sharing, and pooling of success stories and best practices among Federal agencies should be encouraged and continued.
- There is clearly a need for a central clearing house for inter-agency sharing of information on available technical assistance as well as resource management as it relates to heritage tourism. The current compartmentalization of program efforts leads to everyone reinventing the wheel.
- Successful business planning models and practices need to be developed and shared.
- The value and importance of sustainable public-private partnerships as a key ingredient to successful heritage tourism initiatives should be emphasized; partnership failures as well as successes should be shared and the principles for successful partnerships clarified and articulated.
- Agencies should be encouraged to identify policy and practical obstacles to successful heritage tourism partnerships.
- Opportunities like the Lewis and Clark bicentennial initiative need to be exploited to learn what works and what does not when it comes to heritage tourism program development and sustainability in larger scale multi-agency, multi-State, and/or multi-community ventures.
- Strategies for Federal agencies to support and interact with state and tribal programs should be examined, and states and tribes lacking strong heritage tourism programs assisted in developing them.
- Training, facilitated workshops, and other awareness/outreach tools for sharing information on the benefits and methodology of successful heritage tourism need to be supported.
- The ACHP is well situated to assist in interagency and intergovernmental coordination efforts in support of heritage tourism policies and programs as a convener, facilitator, and clearinghouse promoter.

## INTRODUCTION

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**The Honorable Bob Young, Mayor of Augusta, Georgia and Chair of the Preservation Initiatives Committee, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation**, opened the meeting and indicated the planned agenda and format (A copy of the meeting agenda is provided in Attachment 1). He introduced ACHP members in attendance. Members present for all or part of the meeting included ACHP Chairman John L. Nau, III, Vice Chair Bernadette Castro, and members Carolyn Brackett, Michael Carman (representing the Governor of Arizona), Bruce Judd, Arva McCabe, Ray Soon, and Parker Westbrook, as well as ACHP member agency representatives Emil Frankel (DOT), Philip Grone (DOD), Kelly Sinclair (EPA), and Dan Smith (DOI).

Mayor Young then invited agency representatives seated around the table to introduce themselves. In addition to members and staff of the ACHP, the meeting included representatives from eight cabinet departments and fourteen bureaus and independent agencies. Federal attendees included the Departments of Agriculture (Natural Resources Conservation Service, Forest Service), Commerce (Economic Development Administration, International Trade Administration), Defense (Army, Corps of Engineers, Navy), Education, Energy, Housing and Urban Development, Interior (Bureau of Land Management [BLM], Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service [NPS]), and Transportation (Federal Highway Administration [FHWA]), as well as the General Services Administration, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration [NASA], the National Endowment for the Arts [NEA], and the Smithsonian Institution. (See Attachment 2 for a complete list of attendees.)

Mayor Young then introduced John L. Nau, III, Chairman of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

## HERITAGE TOURISM AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

**John L. Nau, III, Chairman, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation**, began the meeting by noting the important role that Federal agencies can play in heritage tourism. He pointed out that retiring baby boomers and their interest in “visiting the past” present a tremendous economic opportunity for localities, States, and the Nation, as well as a public policy challenge.

There is a growing desire among the American public to reconnect with their heritage, particularly in the wake of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The Federal Government needs to be able to address this desire, working in partnership with others. Federal assets can be incorporated into State or regional tourism networks and plans, and Federal agencies could provide grants and technical assistance to facilitate planning and development.

The tourism industry is already in place, poised to provide an infusion to the economy while imparting lessons on America's heritage and values. Rural America in particular can benefit from such efforts, because carefully planned heritage tourism can promote sustainable preservation. These benefits are well worth public investment and public policy attention.

Federal agencies must be "good neighbors" and work to help communities exploit the symbiotic benefits of heritage tourism in conjunction with Federal resources. Information on Federal assets needs to be shared, and important heritage resources made accessible to the public. Partnerships are key, and Federal agencies need to work closely with States, tribes, communities, and the private sector.

**Douglas Baker, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Travel, Tourism, and Service Industries, Department of Commerce**, noted that heritage tourism helps to create "depth" in tourism and identifies and presents the places where American values were created. Certainly heritage tourism can also play an important role in the Nation's economy and in local and regional economic development. The International Trade Administration of Commerce compiles travel statistics which are quite revealing.

More than one-fourth of U.S. adults and one-third of overseas visitors have visited a historic site or museum on their trips. Heritage tourists take longer trips, spend more money, and stay longer. Heritage tourism creates jobs (they estimate that 1,000 heritage tourists equals 10 jobs), creates new markets for local and regional arts and crafts, and builds community pride.

While heritage tourism as a significant part of the overall tourism industry is important worldwide, safety and security related to the threat of terrorism are important concerns that are having a substantial effect on the tourism industry. By 2006, overseas visitation to the U.S. will be higher than ever, but this will not happen quickly. The Commerce Department estimates that pre-9/11 levels of visitation will not be met until 2004. This indicates the need for a greater reliance on the domestic travel market and local tourism. The interagency Tourism Policy Council, chaired by the Assistant Secretary of Commerce, has been reinvigorated to address these issues, particularly safety and security, and ensure better coordination among the Federal agencies whose decisions influence and shape tourism policy.

## **CULTURAL HERITAGE TOURISM AND THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN THE UNITED STATES**

**Carolyn Brackett, Citizen Member, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and Senior Associate, Heritage Tourism Program, National Trust for Historic Preservation**, gave a presentation on "The Tourism Industry and the Role of Cultural Heritage Tourism."

She noted that according to the Travel Industry Association of America, tourism is big business. It is the third largest retail sales industry, amounting to about \$584 billion in 2000. Tourism is one of the Nation's largest employers, with 7.8 million direct employees, and an estimated 11.5 million indirect employees.

Top tourism activities and destinations include shopping (33 percent), outdoor (14 percent), **historic sites and museums (14 percent)**, beaches (10 percent), cultural events and festivals (10 percent), and visiting national and State parks (10 percent). Travel trends for 2001-2002 are revealing. In spite of setbacks from September 11, leisure travel was up 3 percent in 2001, and up 2 percent in the first half of 2002. Much of

this travel was domestic, with in region trips up 8 percent in the first half of 2002. Travelers identified the importance of connecting emotionally with family and friends, and taking “feel good” trips that included visiting heritage sites. Eighty-three percent of travelers believe travel is important to the economy, and 84 percent believe they should be able to travel whenever and wherever they want.

“Cultural heritage tourism” may be defined to mean traveling to experience the places, artifacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past. It includes cultural, historic and natural resources. A 2001 Travel Industry Association (TIA) publication, compared to a baseline study released in 1997, shows some of the trends in the field. For example, there was a 10 percent increase in heritage travel from 1996 to 2000.

Two-thirds (65 percent) of American adult travelers included heritage or culture on a trip; this translates into approximately 92.7 million travelers per year. Heritage travelers typically stay 4.7 nights on trips compared to 3.4 nights for others. They stay longer and spend more money—an average of \$631 per trip, compared to \$457 for other travelers. Such travelers are more likely to stay in a hotel, motel, or bed and breakfast, and 18 percent spend \$1,000 or more on a trip (a higher percentage than other travelers).

Forty-four percent include shopping (compared to 33 percent for other travelers), and heritage shoppers look for unique items that represent the destination. Such travelers are more likely to take a group tour, and include a broader variety of activities in their itineraries. Heritage travelers tend to be older, and are more likely to have a post-graduate degree. In 2001, Thirty million U.S. travelers lengthened their trip because of culture or heritage, and 26 percent stayed two or more extra nights.

There are a number of factors that affect heritage tourism. These range from the popularity of weekend travel, packages, and local itineraries to the ready availability of information on the Internet. With aging of the baby boomer population, heritage travel is becoming more popular. There is a growing interest in understanding America’s heritage and exploring distinct communities and other destinations. This is especially true in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks, and the economy is also having an effect on the number of people confining their travel to regional automobile trips. Communities that have heritage resources also have a growing awareness of their capacity to attract and cater to visitors.

Heritage tourism programs are housed in a wide variety of locations—tourism offices, humanities councils, historical societies, arts councils. Although there have been some successes in adding staff positions to convention and visitors bureaus, and some regional efforts are growing, there are also an increasing number of challenges to confront. At least two States that have had active heritage tourism initiatives have had to eliminate staff and other resources because of State budget cuts. Other States face similar threats.

Those interested in developing heritage tourism policies and programs must consider a broad range of issues. Sustainability, capacity, and resident concerns are critical factors, both as they affect the resources themselves and as they relate to communities looking to capitalize on tourism potential. There is increasing competition with other types of attractions, including commercial ventures, and there needs to be close cooperation with commercial tour operators and other parts of the tourism industry.

In spite of these and other issues that will need to be confronted, heritage tourism has tremendous potential for helping promote a preservation interest, sensibility, and ethic, while at the same time educating Americans about their country’s past and contributing to the economy.

## FEDERAL BEST PRACTICES: WHAT WORKS?

Mayor Young introduced the next panel of presenters from three different Federal agencies.

### Views from the National Park Service

**Dan Smith, Special Assistant to the Director, National Park Service**, highlighted three ways in which the Department of the Interior is supporting heritage tourism.

Through the National Heritage Areas (NHAs) Program, there are 23 NHAs that have been designated by Congress, with an additional 37 proposed in this session of Congress (none passed). NHAs represent a synergy of Federal, State, local government, and private efforts to manage and promote the cultural and natural heritage of a region.

The Federal Government, through NPS, provides coordination, technical assistance, and funding as authorized by Congress for management plans and implementing projects. Pennsylvania, and now Utah, are star examples. There is increasing interest in NHAs in the West. NHAs are a particularly good example of the potential impact of heritage preservation and tourism in rural areas.

A second area of focus has been through the National Register of Historic Places, with its travel itineraries. These itineraries and maps to properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places are prepared and distributed through partnerships among NPS, the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions, and local community partners as well as other Federal agencies. There are currently 24 itineraries available in print or online.

A third area is in recognizing the valuable role played by gateway communities. A Gateway Communities "Partnerships for Tourism and Conservation" Conference will be held in December 2002 in New Mexico. The Department of the Interior is co-chairing this conference with the Department of Agriculture, with organizational assistance from the Western States Tourism Policy Council.

Secretary of the Interior Gail Norton and Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Lou Gallegos will be speakers. Gateway communities are a great example of partnerships or potential partners for Federal agencies that are already in place and have a stake in the management and promotion of Federal parks, forests, and other areas.

In 2002, the Department's Bureau of Reclamation celebrated its centennial. In 2003, there will be the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial observance, involving many of the Interior agencies as well as many others; the Centennial of Flight (also involving the Smithsonian Institution, NASA, the Air Force, and the Federal Aviation Administration, among others), as well as the centennial of the National Wildlife Refuge System, managed and administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Such anniversaries offer great opportunities for heritage tourism promotion and project development.

## **National Scenic Byways Program**

**Dennis Adams, Consultant, National Scenic Byways Program, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)**, gave a presentation on the National Scenic Byways program.

There are 95 nationally designated routes in 39 participating States (20 All-American Roads, and 75 National Scenic Byways), and approximately 400 State scenic byways. The program was originally established in 1991, and was reauthorized in 1998. It is up again for reauthorization in 2003. Since its inception, there have been nearly 1,300 projects assisted and \$177 million in grant funds provided.

Approximately \$26.5 million is authorized per year, with about \$60 million annually in funding requests. Byways must be designated at the State level (or by NPS, U.S. Forest Service, BLM, or Fish and Wildlife Service), and there must be an acceptable local organization and corridor management plan.

The goal is to create a distinctive collection of American roads, their stories and treasured places. Byways are scenic, but not just scenic—they are about people and the places they treasure. Byways help tell stories. They are an excellent vehicle for resource recognition, protection, and promotion through tourism. FHWA encourages States to plan and then helps fund implementation.

Both State and federally designated byways can apply for funds, which are prioritized by the State. Grants require a minimum 20 percent match, and leveraging is a key factor. Eight activities are eligible for funding: State plans; corridor plans; interpretation; marketing; transportation safety improvements; byway facilities (such as visitor centers); access to recreation; and key resource protection.

Byways use images, brands, portals, and signage to mark identity. A Web site, [www.byways.org](http://www.byways.org), is their mechanism for reaching out to the public. It recently had one million hits in one day.

## **Heritage as a Business: USDA Forest Service Pilot Projects**

**Doug Stephens, Enterprise Team, Region 2, U.S. Forest Service**, gave a presentation on the Rocky Mountain Heritage Society Partnership.

A new initiative, labeled the Rocky Mountain Heritage Society Partnership, has been formed in the Rocky Mountain Region of the Forest Service. The Rocky Mountain Region has 1,000 underutilized or abandoned historic buildings, representing a wide range of types. It is looking at creative ways to manage them; the alternative is de-accessioning them. The program seeks to treat them as assets and approach their management like a business.

The basic idea is to link historic buildings with public demand for heritage tourism. However, the Rocky Mountain Region had lack of in-house expertise and resources, so the Forest Service has created an internal “company” focusing solely on heritage tourism development—the Enterprise Team.

Many of the buildings need rehabilitation and maintenance, but there is no Forest Service money. The solution is partnering with the private sector. For example, the Grizzly Creek Guard Station has been

rehabilitated as a rental property. A business and market analysis was done first to see if the property would be self-sustaining and how much Federal revenue would be needed. The management, including maintenance plan and interpretive plan, has been contracted out.

While the new Rocky Mountain Heritage Society was not involved in that effort, it was developed specifically to help the Forest Service with such initiatives. It is a 501(c)(3) organization. For Crescent Moon Cabin, efforts were focused on raising occupancy rates, and these were doubled despite the property being closed in peak season because of fires. In another case, that of Interlaken Lodge, the Forest Service is working with the State and the local community to see how the property can fit into local heritage tourism plans. They are seeking ways to reopen.

Local groups have noted the problem of lack of continuity in Federal staff, and this has been solved somewhat by the new Enterprise Team. Elements that make the program successful include a focus on high standards of business management, considering properties as assets, being flexible and taking a corporate view, establishing true partnerships, and dedicating sufficient resources for startup.

The mission must have public value—in this case, historic preservation and economic development—and objectives must be politically sustainable (in this case, it will help solve a pressing deferred maintenance problem). Management strategies must be operationally feasible. The program fits into the agency's existing recreation strategy and can eventually be self-sufficient.

## **DISCUSSION: AGENCY PERSPECTIVES ON THE ISSUES**

### **Developing National Policy**

#### **Making the Case for Heritage Tourism—**

A general question was raised about supporting data to help make the case for heritage tourism and its value, including statistics. For example, did the two State heritage tourism programs that were “dismantled” have data to support them? States struggle to quantify heritage tourism versus tourism in general, and there is a lack of detailed, focused research because it is expensive.

In general, heritage tourism advocates have not made a strong economic case for the public value of such programs and initiatives, and State legislatures need to be educated. Too often, such programs are viewed as subsidies rather than investments.

#### **Broad Views of Cultural Heritage—**

The is working with the National Trust for Historic Preservation on “Share Your Heritage” workshops; this raised the issue of the terminology employed to describe these efforts, and the varying connotations of “heritage tourism” and “cultural tourism.” It is important to remember that arts are part of a community's heritage. Both State arts agencies and State folklorists can be good resources and allies in the development of cultural heritage tourism initiatives.

### **Heritage Education—**

A second question related to public value was raised about analysis of the educational content of heritage tourism programs and sites. Texas has looked at that issue, but there are no statistics. It would certainly be useful to have “hard numbers” on the educational benefits of heritage tourism, something that is not available now. Authenticity and quality of the heritage tourism experience is critical to telling the stories of our past.

It is very important for student groups looking for an educational experience, and one should also not overlook the value of “edutainment” for adults. We also need to pay attention to unexpected achievements of heritage tourism—what it brings to members of local communities who often cannot or do not travel—as well as the benefits to local school children.

The point was made that education has to be incorporated in all discussions of Federal heritage tourism. The potential is tremendous. For example, the Department of Education is involved in planning for both the Centennial of Flight and the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial. In conjunction with Lewis and Clark, there will be an Internet hub of education pages. NPS has a traveling exhibit with a tie-in to local events, and there will be satellite links of special events for States off the trail.

It was acknowledged that the residual, long-term value of such initiatives needs to be carefully considered. Materials for many of these initiatives are being developed for classroom use. However, there remains a question of where educational resources will be housed long term and who will maintain the Web site information after the commemorations.

There has been a lot of focus on the baby boomer market because of the near term impact of retirees and the relative wealth. However, the student market for heritage tourism should not be discounted. There is an opportunity to develop the future clientele and instill a conservation ethic, for example through partnerships with schools.

### **Federal, State, and Local Roles**

#### **Intergovernmental Cooperation—**

BLM described its work at Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area, including its relationship with a broad range of partners that includes sister agencies ( Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Reclamation), local governments, tribes, and many others. BLM lands are within and extend out from the heritage area, and there is a plan for a multiagency visitor center. Federal land managers need to work together and reach out to communities.

It is also important to recognize State level activity, and the fact that there is a hunger in the States for networking and training support. The Department of Transportation noted that DOT grant programs are built around broad discretion by States. Such programs should be permissive, supportive, and encouraging.

The Department of Agriculture described the Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) program administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The program includes a network of locally

led RC&D councils that determine community priorities. RC&D areas have done a lot of agritourism, and some are involved in the Lewis and Clark observance. RC&D program assistance is helping participants obtain funding for an interpretive center which will continue in use after the bicentennial.

More information about heritage tourism opportunities should be shared with RC&D councils so that they can incorporate such considerations in their conservation and development planning.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) noted that heritage tourism infrastructure is an eligible activity under Community Development Block Grant funding, but HUD has no specific heritage tourism program. However, the consolidated planning process among local government recipients on how they will spend their HUD dollars is an opportunity for heritage tourism proponents to influence planning and resource allocation.

### **Model Programs and Best Practices**

#### **Practical Issues, Opportunities, and Challenges—**

The General Services Administration (GSA) mentioned various partners they have engaged to help with their public buildings program. GSA is involved with NPS, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, NEA, and the National Endowment for the Humanities on Save America's Treasures, and in helping to support staff, print materials, and other work.

GSA is also trying to get the word out about the potential, under the Public Buildings Cooperative Use Act, to bring communities into public buildings for use of their meeting and public spaces. GSA is partnering with the DC Heritage Tourism Coalition on retention and interpretation of Clara Barton's historic office, and will provide a long-term lease on the space.

ACHP Vice Chairman Castro observed that the Forest Service's Rocky Mountain Heritage Society Partnership program is a great prototype. It is important to create lodging; heritage tourists want to spend the night, but not necessarily in a tent. Mayor Young noted the importance of having a viable business plan and of identifying ways to sustain programs economically. This is certainly an issue that was highlighted at the ACHP meeting on heritage tourism in New Mexico.

NEA noted that through its involvement in Lewis and Clark and providing support for the National Trust's Share Your Heritage workshops it recognizes the critical place of training and communication in addressing some of these issues. For example, there is a proposal for a multi-agency rural tourism Web site, but funding from partners needs to be identified.

As a final note, the Department of Defense (DOD) mused how American values might be conveyed through DOD's historic assets. DOD is still wrestling with how to support the spirit of heritage tourism on military lands, given security and other practical concerns. How can public access and interpretation be integrated with the active operation of such facilities? Are there opportunities to use the military's historic assets in recruitment and retention of personnel?

## CONCLUSION

In summary, Mayor Bob Young noted several of the suggestions from the Española, New Mexico, meeting on how the Federal Government could do a better job with heritage tourism (see Appendix 3) and observed that we have already discussed many of these issues.

ACHP Chairman John Nau thanked the participants and noted that many good things are happening: some are focused on preservation, some on partnerships. Clearly, though, Federal assets have to be better integrated into State planning. There needs to be a one-stop-shopping source of information to learn how to jump-start a program, who to call, and how to seek out partners. Education is, and needs to be, a fundamental component. There is obviously a critical linkage between utilizing assets and economic development, but there remains a disconnect between Federal land areas and many gateway communities.

It is now the ACHP's job to figure out how to maintain the dialogue, and move on to engage the States in the discussion.

Participants agreed that the session was useful and informative, and expressed a desire to continue the dialogue in a second follow-up meeting in spring 2003. This report will be made available on the ACHP Web site at [www.achp.gov](http://www.achp.gov), along with the report on an earlier issues forum on "Heritage Tourism and the Federal Government: Northern New Mexico Perspectives" that was held by the ACHP with stakeholders in Española, New Mexico, in August 2002.