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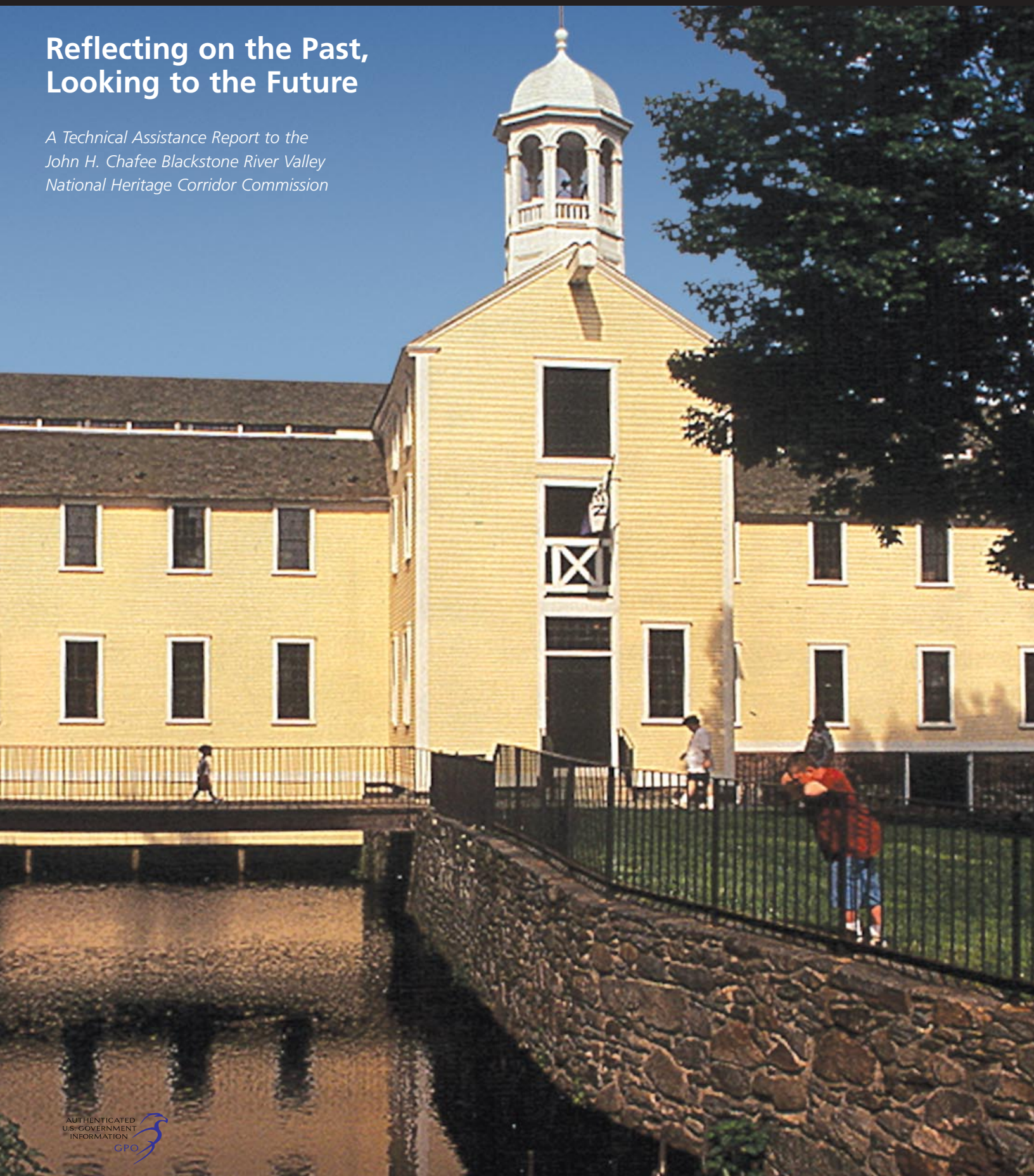
Reflecting on the Past, Looking to the Future

A Technical Assistance Report to the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission



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August 12, 2005

The John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission is pleased to present the enclosed evaluation report, Reflecting on the Past, Looking to the Future, as we envision the future of the Blackstone River Valley. When the Commission considered its 2006 legislative sunset, we approached this milestone with the same dedication to our mission demonstrated since we assumed our duties in May, 1988.

The Blackstone River Valley is not only one of the nation's richest and best preserved repositories of landscapes, structures and sites attesting to the rise of industry in America. It is also the home of Slater Mill, the virtual cradle of the industrial revolution. What Samuel Slater began in the Blackstone Valley over two centuries ago profoundly transformed the American landscape, economy, and culture.

Congress recognized the national significance of the Blackstone Valley when it passed legislation in 1986 that established the Heritage Corridor and Commission. The heritage area concept was new in 1986. Since that time the lessons learned here in the Blackstone Valley have helped lead the way in developing a national model of collaborative visioning and management for large, lived-in landscapes.

The Commission felt we could best assess the functioning and accomplishments of the Heritage Corridor and consider options for the future through an evaluation conducted by an outside "third party." To achieve this, we requested technical assistance from the National Park Service Conservation Study Institute. We used this strategy to look back at our past with a critical eye as we prepared for the future of the Corridor and its mission. We insisted on an open, honest, and inclusive process.

This report, which is the culmination of that process, eloquently captures the dramatic impact of leveraging energy and investment in a sophisticated partnership network to achieve preservation, stewardship, recreation, and community planning goals. In addition, it helped the Commission explore options for the management framework that would best serve the present and future stakeholders who will carry out the mission embodied in the original legislative designation. The Commission is indebted to the Conservation Study Institute's team for their expert services in conducting the study and preparing the report.. The team's design for the study, and their analysis and presentation of the results, have been exceedingly important in the Commission's decision-making process regarding future management and direction of the Corridor. Just as the Blackstone Corridor has become a model for the heritage areas that followed it, we believe this study will become a model for heritage area review and evaluation.

After many public meetings, much thoughtful reflection, and spirited debate, Commission members voted unanimously to seek Congressional reauthorization of federal support for the Corridor for an additional twenty years, including continuing the federal Commission and expanding its membership to include six additional voices – three each from Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Also, we have committed ourselves to creating another ten-year plan which will focus on finishing the Northern Gateway Visitor Center, linking the planned bikeway and

riverway from Worcester to Providence, growing the tourism network, increasing local planning capacity, improving the water quality of the Blackstone River to fishable and swimmable levels, and enhancing the sustainability of projects throughout the Corridor.

Many projects remain on the drawing board or in a stage of partial completion that speak to the compelling need to continue our work. A small sample includes:

City of Worcester, MA: The Worcester Historical Museum is considering a move to a new location that will include a Visitors' Center for the Heritage Corridor. The Museum's estimate of this project is $20 million, plus infrastructure improvements. The locale will link bikeway, greenway, and river elements, while providing a superior gateway experience. Also within the City are exciting plans to create a Canal District with water features that will interpret the Blackstone Canal. Indeed, the City of Worcester has integrated the vision of the Heritage Corridor in its master planning that will take a decade or more to complete.

Bikeways in Mass and RI: The planned bikeway that will link the City of Worcester south to Providence (and eventually to the East Coat Greenway to Florida), is about 20% completed. A significant portion of the design and construction will be completed in the next decade. The Heritage Corridor Commission and staff have acted in a crucial coordinating capacity to advance the bikeway link. The Study revealed that there is a large and diverse constituency for the bikeway that depend upon the Commission's role as coordinator to see this project through to completion.

Water Quality: The Commission is working with state and local partners to promote cleanup of the Blackstone River. The campaign, entitled "Fishable/Swimmable by 2015," has the goal of raising the Blackstone to Class B water quality. This would allow swimming and the consumption of fish caught in the Blackstone. The target date for achieving Class B status is 2015. Given the long lead time and complexity of partnerships required, it is imperative the Commission continue as coordinator to achieve success in cleaning up the river.

Partners were particularly vocal in their support of retaining the federal Commission to continue the work that has begun but has not been completed. The Commission framework has proven effective as a management entity for this bi-state Corridor by engaging two state governments, twenty-four local governments, regional authorities, nonprofit organizations, businesses, citizens, school children and other federal agencies.

We wish to offer our sincere appreciation to everyone who contributed in the myriad ways necessary to develop this comprehensive look. Having received recent notice that Congress has taken the next step toward new legislative authority for the Commission, we look forward with enthusiasm to building on our record of past achievement in order to fully realize the Corridor's vision for the future.

Sincerely,



Louise M. Redding
Commission Chairman

Reflecting on the Past, Looking to the Future

Sustainability Study Report

A Technical Assistance Report to the
John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley
National Heritage Corridor Commission

CONSERVATION AND STEWARDSHIP PUBLICATION NO. 7
Jacquelyn L. Tuxill, Nora J. Mitchell, Philip B. Huffman, Daniel Laven,
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background and Context

In 2004, the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission (Commission) initiated the Blackstone Sustainability Study to evaluate the past 18 years of work in the National Heritage Corridor (Corridor) and use this as a foundation for a dialogue about future management of the Corridor. The Commission and its Futures Committee, desiring external review and a transparent evaluation process, asked the National Park Service Conservation Study Institute (Institute) to provide technical assistance by conducting the Sustainability Study and providing opportunities for input from partners and the general public.

The Commission asked the Institute to examine four aspects of the Commission's work:

1. Evaluate the accomplishments of the Commission and the progress in achieving the strategies and goals set forth in the Commission's 1989 Cultural Heritage and Land Management Plan, as amended;
2. Analyze the National Park Service (NPS) investment and determine how these funds have leveraged additional funds;
3. Identify further actions and commitments that are needed to protect, enhance, and interpret the Corridor; and
4. Evaluate the Commission form of management, and identify and evaluate options for a permanent National Park Service designation and other management alternatives for achieving the national interest in the Blackstone Valley.

For the purposes of the study, the Institute's project team defined sustainability as *the strategy, framework, and resources necessary for continuing and expanding the efforts to successfully achieve the stated goals of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor.*

The Institute's project team gathered information in three key areas:

- **Heritage conservation and development within the Corridor,** documenting accomplishments and financial investment and leverage, and assessing further actions and commitments needed to fulfill the Corridor's purpose;
- **The partnership process in the Corridor,** evaluating how the Commission, staff, and partners work together toward Corridor goals, and examining the impact of this collaboration on the various organizations and individuals; and
- The management framework for the Corridor, analyzing the existing management framework, and identifying and analyzing a range of options for future management.

The project team obtained information from a variety of sources, including Corridor management plans, annual reports, and other project documentation of accomplishments and leverage. The team engaged members of the Commission, the Futures Committee, Corridor partners, and the public through interviews and meetings. To examine a range of management frameworks and gather insights and ideas for future conservation of the Corridor, the team convened a joint meeting of leaders from the Blackstone Valley and experts with diverse national and international experience in heritage areas and partnerships. After analyzing information from all the various components of the study, the team identified key ingredients of a successful partnership system in the Blackstone Valley, and provided advice for enhancing and sustaining this system.

The National Significance of the Blackstone Valley

In 1986 Congress established the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor to preserve and interpret the unique and significant contributions of the valley's resources and history to the nation's heritage. The Blackstone River Valley is one of the nation's richest, best-preserved repositories of landscapes, structures, and sites attesting to the rise of industry in America. The valley led in the social revolution that transformed an agricultural society into an industrial giant. These two forces, agriculture and industry, shaped the patterns of settlement, land use, and growth in the valley. Thousands of structures and entire landscapes still exist that represent the history of the American Industrial Revolution and the complex economic and social relationships of the people who lived and worked here.

Today, the most significant aspect of the Blackstone Valley is its "wholeness," the unique survival of representative elements of entire eighteenth- and nineteenth-century production systems. Few places exist where such a concentration of integrated historic, cultural, and natural resources is as accessible to interpretation, preservation, and other management strategies.

— From *Cultural Heritage and Land Management Plan for the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor (1989)*

The National Context for the Sustainability Study

Designation of national heritage areas began 20 years ago, and the Blackstone National Heritage Corridor was the second nationally designated area. It is therefore one of the earliest "experiments" with this model of conservation. Today, national heritage areas have become increasingly popular as a way of protecting important landscapes that have a regional identity formed by natural systems and shaped by history and culture. The heritage area concept is based in partnerships, engaging every level of government and the people who live there.

This sustainability study presents an important opportunity to evaluate the accomplishments of a national heritage area. It affords a chance to probe the way this work is carried out and reflect on the key ingredients for ongoing success. A better understanding of this collaborative approach can enhance development of sustainable strategies. Consequently, the findings of this study may be relevant to heritage areas nationwide and other places managed through partnerships, and to those people working on national policy or who are otherwise interested in the future of national heritage areas.

Transforming the Blackstone National Heritage Corridor: The Commission's Accomplishments and Leverage

Congress created a Commission to assist the two states, the municipalities, and other partners to develop cultural, historical, and land resource management programs to retain, enhance, and interpret the Corridor's resource values. The Commission, a bi-state, 19-member federally appointed body, serves as the Corridor's managing entity and works through partnerships to implement the Corridor's vision and management plan. In 1986, the Commission was originally authorized for five years with a five-year renewal. In 1996, after the first ten years, the Commission received a ten-year extension from Congress and a Corridor boundary expansion to the current 24 municipalities. At the Commission's request, the National Park Service has provided staff to the Commission since soon after the Corridor was established.

The Commission's initial planning process invited valley residents to share their priorities and values, and to collaborate in drawing up a unified vision for the Corridor's future. The Commission fostered a vision of the valley as a cohesive region—an interdependent place linked by cultural heritage and a common set of economic, natural, and cultural resources. The Commission then set an ambitious agenda for the Corridor that encompasses heritage education, recreation development, ethnic and cultural conservation, environmental conservation, historic preservation, land use planning, and heritage-based economic development.

To date, the Commission has directly sponsored or participated in more than 400 projects within the Corridor. Much of this work is managed through cooperative agreements that identify needs, common objectives, legal mandates, estimated time frames, and budget. The Commission has entered into 284 agreements with 87 Corridor partners to carry out the management plan. The Commission staff also provides technical assistance to other projects. Combined, the Commission has leveraged considerable public and private contributions, making it possible to support many more projects than could be supported by individual organizations or the National Park Service working alone.

The Corridor's authorizing legislation requires that the Commission's financial and technical assistance will be matched with private and public investments. Since 1987 the Commission has received a total of $23,638,600 from National Park Service funding programs to implement its management plan, of which $20 million has required a 1:1 match. Financial and in-house commitments from the two states, other federal agencies, communities, the private sector, and nonprofit organizations have leveraged the Commission's funds by an estimated 22 times—a public and private investment exceeding $500 million that contributes to the Corridor's goals and is either directly or indirectly attributable to Commission action.

The Commission's integrated approach and its ongoing role as facilitator and "keeper of the vision" encourage people to think and act across disciplinary and jurisdictional boundaries. A growing partnership base over time influences the breadth, scope, and complexity of the Corridor initiatives, often leading to a more ambitious, integrated vision.

Examining the Blackstone Model for Heritage Conservation and Development

To explore how the Blackstone Corridor programs work, the project team conducted an evaluation that asked the following questions: How do the programs deliver the Corridor's accomplishments? In what ways do programs impact organizations and communities in the valley? Are there ways the programs might be strengthened or improved in the future? This type of "process evaluation" is a well-developed, systematic research method for understanding how complex programs operate while documenting their impacts.

The evaluation is based on a "program model" that explains the way that programs in the Corridor achieve their goals. Interviews with 30 partners, conducted confidentially, were used to test and refine the model. The results of the evaluation suggest that the Commission is a central, integrating hub and a key partner in a complex and dynamic, multi-interest network. The Commission is able to connect widely differing interests in the Corridor while engaging both state and local governments. The Commission also adds significant credibility to the work and goals of partner organizations because of its federal stature and the connection to the National Park Service. Federal designation underscores the importance of the Corridor, while further reinforcing the regional focus of the programs.

Sustaining the Engines of Change

A. Exploring Management Options for the Futute

Building on an analysis of the existing framework, the project team examined a series of management options for the future. The options emerged from discussions with commissioners, partners, and outside experts; an examination of relevant models from other places; and considerations identified in evaluating the existing framework. Many of these options are not mutually exclusive and could be combined to best suit the valley's unique needs and circumstances.

1. **Extend the existing framework in its current form.** The Commission and its partners are comfortable with the framework and strongly support continuing it for at least another ten years to provide more time to sustain the momentum, strengthen the partner network, and further evaluate long-term options for Corridor management.
2. **Adjust the existing framework** which could include: (a) modifying or expanding the Commission's composition; (b) establishing an advisory council; (c) narrowing or shifting the staff's focus; (d) establishing a bi-state compact; and (e) cultivating a bi-state nonprofit organization to complement the Commission. More representation on the Commission from local governments and nongovernmental partners would be desirable, and partners, commissioners, and staff generally agree that the Commission's size could be increased without



adversely influencing its effectiveness. Establishing an advisory council would also provide for broader stakeholder involvement. Regarding staff responsibilities, the Commission, through administrative action, could shift staff involvement to work more deeply in fewer disciplines rather than being spread across a wider array of initiatives. Lead responsibility for certain priorities could be transferred to other willing and able entities. A bi-state compact established by the two governors would formalize the states' ongoing commitment to the Corridor and identify priority areas for cooperation and mechanisms for continued coordination and communication. A Corridor-wide nonprofit organization, cultivated to complement the Commission, could be more entrepreneurial in generating revenues and work toward a more diverse and secure funding base for Corridor initiatives.

3. **Establish a new management entity** to replace the Commission as the central hub by shifting to (a) a Corridor-wide nonprofit management entity or (b) a bi-state coordinating entity created by the two states. Either of these entities could receive federal standing and funding and NPS staff support if congressionally authorized. A new Corridor-wide nonprofit could be created for this purpose, or an existing nonprofit could expand its mission, structure, and capacity to play such a role. A coordinating entity created by the states would need formal joint action, such as a bi-state compact or parallel legislation in both states.
4. **Establish a permanent NPS presence in the Corridor** which could take several forms: (a) designate the Corridor as a permanent program of the National Park System; (b) designate a particular site or sites within the Corridor as a new unit of the National Park System; or (c) designate the entire Corridor as a new National Park System unit. The case for a permanent NPS presence is grounded in the valley's national significance, as reflected by congressional establishment of the Corridor. Any option involving a permanent NPS presence would require further evaluation by the NPS through a "new area" or "special resource" study, which would be conducted through an open, public process and conclude with a recommendation to Congress.
5. **Move forward with a management framework established by the states** as a replacement for a federally supported framework. The states could establish a new management framework through an interstate compact or similar mechanism, with coordination provided by a Corridor-wide nonprofit organization or a bi-state entity. Since the national heritage corridor designation is permanent, individual organizations and partner networks could continue to pursue Corridor goals under the umbrella of the designation.

B. Identifying Critical Incredients for Sustained Success of the Corridor's Partnership System

The sustainability study identified a set of critical ingredients acting in concert as a "partnership system." The critical ingredients of the Corridor's partnership system include (1) heritage as a "platform" for civic engagement; (2) a management framework that inspires trust and collaboration; and (3) a commitment to partnerships and a participatory process. In addition, the Corridor vision is central to the partnership system, anchoring it and serving as a guiding, sustaining force. Time is also an essential factor since it takes time to build a complex partnership system over a large, diverse region and to develop the effective partner relationships needed to successfully carry out joint projects. A strategic sequencing of projects over time is important as well, with early projects setting the stage for later work. Finally, time is required to build the partner capacity and secure the needed funding that will lead to sustainability.

Although most of the critical ingredients have been part of the Commission's work to date, not all are fully realized. Future investments can be directed to support this partnership system over the long term and enhance its capacity for success.

Looking to the Future

Thinking of the Blackstone National Heritage Corridor as a partnership system has implications for a future heritage conservation and development strategy within the Corridor. As the Commission deliberates on the future of the Corridor, it will need to consider how best to build upon past success to create a framework for the future. In order to complete valley-wide projects that relate to Corridor goals (e.g., the 2015 Fishable-Swimmable Campaign, the bikeway, addressing the challenges of land use and growth) and support and sustain success over the long term, two primary areas deserve consideration:

A. Sustaining and Building the Partnership Capacity to Meet Future Challenges
Many initiatives and opportunities for engagement have created a strong sense of ownership among partners throughout the Corridor. The Commission's careful attention to building partnerships has created a diverse network of enthusiastic partners, but some organizations and the network as a whole are still fragile. In addition, many valley residents are still unaware of the Corridor and its purpose.

Partnerships have always been at the center of the Commission's strategy, with the idea that partners would assume increasingly greater responsibility over time. The following commitments are needed to meet the long-term challenges of protecting the valley's heritage resources and character: (1) expand the partner network through ongoing education and public engagement; (2) build partner and network capacity; (3) encourage new leaders; and (4) foster stewardship by promoting the Corridor vision. These activities represent essential commitments that are needed to create a stable, sustainable partnership system. Because the Blackstone Valley is a living landscape, this work is ongoing. There will always be ebb and flow in the partnership system, and a need for sustaining existing members and cultivating new ones.

B. Management Considerations That Support the Partnership System
As the Corridor's management entity, the Commission has been a critical driver behind the partner network's accomplishments. Key aspects of the Commission's effectiveness include (1) excellent partnership-building by commissioners and staff, (2) a clear articulation of the Corridor vision, (3) a sincere commitment to public engagement, and (4) funding that leverages other investments. The Commission's federal stature has enabled it to bridge effectively the political divides of a bi-state Corridor.

One of the most important roles played to date by the Commission and its NPS staff, and very important for the growth and maturation of the partner network, is the role of central hub. Perhaps the most critical aspect of being an effective central hub is the collective ability of the Commission and staff to play a multitude of roles in interacting with partners. Every individual partnership is unique, and part of the sophistication needed to sustain the Corridor's partnership system is the ability to provide different assistance and levels of support to different partners. This surfaced strongly in the partner interviews as important to building partner capacity and strengthening the network. In the future, as partner capacity increases and stronger partners emerge as network leaders, the roles and responsibilities of network management may shift also. It will be important for the Commission to monitor these changes and adapt accordingly.

At this critical point in the evolution of the Corridor's partnership system, there is a clear need to sustain an effective coordinating framework for the Corridor that bridges the 2 states and 24 municipalities and supports the partnership system. This includes (1) a strong management entity to carry forward the vision, provide effective collaborative leadership, and serve as the central network hub; (2) an ongoing relationship with the NPS, given the Corridor's well-documented national significance; and (3) secure, sustainable funding from diverse sources.

Final Thoughts

The national heritage area "experiment" in the Blackstone Valley is all about conservation at the landscape scale. The Commission, its staff, and the network of partners are helping to build an understanding of how to conserve important natural and cultural heritage in lived-in landscapes. They are fostering a partnership culture in the Blackstone Valley that is leading to conservation of an important story and unique resources. At its core, their efforts revolve around connecting people to heritage and place, thereby kindling a sense of stewardship. In this process, shared heritage becomes a bridge between past, present, and future.


Jump in
...the water's [going to be] fine.
Help Us Achieve A Fishable/Swimmable Blackstone by 2015

CHAPTER 1

The Purpose of the Blackstone Sustainability Study

In 2004, the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission (Commission) formed a "Futures Committee" to address the 2006 sunset of the Commission. The Futures Committee felt that it was important to begin by assessing its past work as it began further dialogue about its future. The congressional delegation representing the Blackstone Valley was also very interested in the Commission's progress toward implementing the programs identified in the enabling legislation and associated planning documents. During the 108th Congress, the delegation introduced identical bills in both the Senate and the House (S. 2836 and H.R. 5014) that called for an evaluation of Commission activities and recommendations for future management of the Heritage Corridor. Although legislation never passed, the Commission itself initiated the Blackstone Sustainability Study to evaluate the past 18 years of work in the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor (Corridor) in Rhode Island and Massachusetts.

The Commission, desiring external review and a transparent evaluation process, asked the National Park Service Conservation Study Institute (Institute) to provide technical assistance by conducting the sustainability study and providing opportunities for input from partners and the general public. The Commission will use the results of this technical assistance project to inform the development of a strategy for future management of the Corridor.



A. The Scope of the Blackstone Sustainability Study

The Commission asked the Institute to examine four items pertaining to the Commission's work that were identified in the pending House and Senate bills:

1. Evaluate the accomplishments of the Commission and its progress in achieving the strategies and goals set forth in its 1989 Cultural Heritage and Land Management Plan, as amended;
2. Analyze the National Park Service (NPS) investment and determine how these funds have leveraged additional funds;
3. Identify further actions and commitments that are needed to protect, enhance, and interpret the Corridor;
4. Evaluate the Commission as a form of management, and identify and evaluate options for a permanent National Park Service designation and other management alternatives for achieving the national interest in the Blackstone Valley.

To further clarify the study's scope, the Institute created a working definition of sustainability for the purposes of the project, as follows:

The strategy, framework, and resources necessary for achieving the stated purpose and goals of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor.

In carrying out the study, the Institute's project team investigated the following three areas:

1. Heritage conservation and development within the Corridor

The project team:

- Documented accomplishments toward achieving the purpose of the Corridor set forth in the authorizing legislation and the goals set forth in the management plan;
- Documented financial investment and leverage; and
- Assessed further actions and commitments needed to fulfill the Corridor's purpose.

2. The partnership process in the Corridor

The project team evaluated the ways in which the Commission, staff, and partners work together toward Corridor goals and examined the impact of this collaboration on the various organizations and individuals.

3. The management framework for the Corridor

The project team:

- Analyzed the existing management framework;
- Compared the existing framework with those used in other selected nationally designated areas that are managed through partnerships; and
- Identified and analyzed a range of future options for the framework.

The project team obtained data from a variety of sources, including Corridor management plans, annual reports, and other project documentation of accomplishments and leverage. The team engaged members of the Commission, the Futures Committee, Corridor partners, and the public through interviews and meetings. To examine a variety of management frameworks and gather insights and ideas for future conservation of the Corridor, the team convened a joint meeting of leaders from the Blackstone River Valley and experts with diverse national and international experience in heritage areas and partnerships. For more information on project methodology and public engagement, see appendix B.

After analyzing all of this information, the project team identified the key ingredients of a successful partnership system, and provided thoughts for enhancing and sustaining this system in the Blackstone Valley.

B. The National Context for the Sustainability Study

Heritage areas are an important direction in conservation, as demonstrated by the growth in the number of initiatives at every level in the U.S. (see also chapter 2). Today, there are 27 congressionally designated heritage areas and corridors, and many proposals for additional national areas. Given this recent growth in public and congressional interest in national heritage area designation, NPS Director Fran Mainella asked the National Park System Advisory Board to look at the future of national heritage areas and their relationship to the National Park Service. The NPS Advisory Board, composed of 13 citizens with expertise on and commitment to the mission of the National Park Service, has the statutory responsibility to advise the NPS director and the secretary of the interior on policy and program matters. The Blackstone Sustainability Study will inform the work of the Advisory Board's Partnership Committee in preparing its 2005 report.

A better understanding of this collaborative approach, which in the Blackstone National Heritage Corridor is based on an inclusive partnership network and the ongoing active engagement of valley citizens, can enhance development of sustainable strategies.

The sustainability study presents an important opportunity to evaluate not only the accomplishments of a national heritage area but also to probe the way this work has been carried out and reflect on the key ingredients for ongoing success. There has been limited study of national heritage areas to date, even though the number of existing and proposed designations continues to grow. A better understanding of this collaborative approach, which in the Blackstone National Heritage Corridor is based on an inclusive partnership network and the ongoing active engagement of valley citizens, can enhance development of sustainable strategies. Consequently, the findings of this study may be useful and relevant to other existing and potential heritage areas nationwide and to other places managed through partnerships, as well as to those who are working on national policy or interested in the future of national heritage areas.

C. Organization and Terminology Used in the Report

There are five main sections in the remainder of this report. Following the background on national heritage areas and the Blackstone National Heritage Corridor, the section entitled "Transforming the Blackstone National Heritage Corridor" describes what has been accomplished by the Commission since its designation. The next section, "Examining the Blackstone Model for Heritage Conservation and Development," analyzes the management framework and network of partners. "Sustaining the Engines of Change" assesses the ingredients that make up the Corridor's partnership system and are essential to achieving Corridor goals over the long term, and presents management options for the Commission's consideration as it deliberates the Corridor's future. The final chapter, "Looking to the Future," presents the closing thoughts of the project team.

Following is an explanation of the terms used in the report:

Corridor: Refers to the physical place on the ground; that which was defined geographically at the time of designation in 1986, as amended in 1996; also, when used as an adjective, refers to the entire initiative (e.g., Corridor goals, Corridor purpose, Corridor vision).

Corridor programs: The collective body of activities and projects carried out within the Corridor to implement the management plan.

Commission: The federally appointed management body that coordinates the overall effort within the Corridor; generally also encompasses the National Park Service, which serves as staff at the invitation of the Commission.

Corridor partnership: The network made up of the Commission, staff, partners, and individuals who collaborate in carrying out Corridor activities and initiatives; occasionally used to refer to the Commission and its staff.

Corridor partner: An organization, institution, agency, or individual who collaborates with the Commission on specific initiatives that help implement the management plan; includes both "formal" partners (i.e., those working through cooperative agreements) and informal partners, who collaborate toward mutual goals (e.g., a developer who renovates a historic mill for reuse).

Management framework: Collectively encompasses the Commission, staff, purpose and vision, geographic scope, partner network, and funding, as well as the authorities granted to the Commission in order to carry out its mandate; sometimes used interchangeably with "management structure," although "management framework" (the term used in the authorizing legislation) is preferred.

Management entity: Refers to the specific body authorized to carry out Corridor coordination and management; in the Blackstone National Heritage Corridor, the Commission.

Partnership system: An interacting array of critical ingredients that creates the collaborative work in the Corridor.



CHAPTER 2

The National Heritage Area "Experiment" in the Blackstone River Valley

National heritage areas have become increasingly popular in the U.S. as a way of protecting important landscapes that have a regional identity formed by natural systems and shaped by history and culture. The heritage area concept is based on partnerships, engaging every level of government and the people who live there. Designation of national heritage areas began 20 years ago, but has its origin in the preceding decades. The Blackstone National Heritage Corridor was the second nationally designated area and is therefore one of the earliest "experiments" with this model of conservation.

A. The Antecedents of National Heritage Areas

The interest in heritage areas in recent decades has been fueled by numerous trends in conservation, such as the emerging strength of community-based conservation, driven by local initiative; the growth of partnerships and collaborative management; the linkage between conservation and social and economic objectives; the rise in place-based education; the integration of cultural and natural conservation; and the effectiveness of landscape-scale conservation. Among many other factors contributing to the momentum were several national studies conducted at the request of Congress in the mid-1970s, which discussed the potential for landscape conservation through local, state, and federal partnerships. At the state level, Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania created state heritage parks.[1]

In the 1980s, Congress asked the National Park Service to experiment with new models for parks and protected areas. In doing so, Congress was responding in part to the trends described above, but also to an evolving concept of parks and their purpose. These new park models embrace a wide diversity of settings, ecosystems, and stories across the country, including "lived-in" heritage landscapes. This evolution in the park concept reflects the extraordinary growth and diversification of U.S. society and culture. Today, parks conserve natural resources, commemorate important historical events, and reflect common experiences of American life and transcendent ideas and values.[2]

Many of these more recent parks were established with nontraditional, partnership-based management formulas.[3] Although partnerships were not new in the National Park Service and have been used for a number of years, management by partnerships gained momentum in 1978 with the creation of Lowell National Historical Park in Massachusetts. With Lowell's successful formula of mixing public and private investments in heritage preservation with NPS expertise in visitor services and interpretation, support grew in Congress to pursue parks based on collaborations with other public and private interests.

The first national heritage area designated by Congress was the Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor (I and M Canal) in 1984, followed two years later by the Blackstone National Heritage Corridor. Today there are 27 national heritage areas. Currently, national heritage areas receive federal funding and technical assistance from the National Park Service for a limited period of time, typically ten years. In some cases, such as the Blackstone and I and M Canal Corridors, federal commissions have been established to serve as the management entity. Although the designation of the corridor is permanent, federal support for these areas (i.e., funding, NPS assistance, and the federal commission) was originally anticipated to cease at the end of the specified time period. In practice, local partners and other stakeholders in national heritage areas have sought extensions to the federal support. In 2004, the first instance of the expiration of an area's federal funding and commission took place at the I and M Canal, although work there is continuing through the coordination of a nonprofit management organization.

The National Significance of the Blackstone Valley

The Blackstone River Valley is one of the nation's richest and best-preserved repositories of landscapes, structures, and sites attesting to the rise of industry in America. Thousands of structures and entire landscapes still exist that represent the history of the American Industrial Revolution and the complex economic and social relationships of the people who lived and worked here. The Blackstone Valley's distinguishing factors include:

- It was the birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution;
- It represents the first widespread industrial use of water power in the U.S.;
- It was where the "Rhode Island System" of manufacturing was developed;
- It was the first ethnically and religiously diverse area of New England; and
- Its industrial and transportation systems were crucial to the development of the second and third largest cities in New England.

Today, the most significant resource of the Blackstone Valley is its "wholeness," the unique survival of representative elements of entire eighteenth- and nineteenth-century production systems. Few places exist where such a concentration of integrated historic, cultural, and natural resources has survived and is accessible to interpretation, preservation, and other management strategies.

— From *Cultural Heritage and Land Management Plan for the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor (1989)*

The Blackstone River Valley is one of the nation's richest and best-preserved repositories of landscapes, structures, and sites attesting to the rise of industry in America.

B. The National Heritage in the Blackstone Valley

When Congress designated the Blackstone National Heritage Corridor, it recognized the valley's nationally significant contributions to the collective American experience (see box on this page). As the acknowledged birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution, the valley was in the forefront of a social revolution that transformed an agricultural society into an industrial giant. These two forces, agriculture and industry, shaped the patterns of settlement, land use, and growth in the valley. It was the uniqueness of the history and the fact that in the 1980s the heritage was still visible in the landscape (although in a declining state at the time) that led to the valley's designation as a national heritage area.

During much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Blackstone Valley led the nation in producing cotton and wool fabrics and textile machinery. Valley towns also gained prominence in manufacturing such specialized products as wire, rubber goods, ladies' hats, and edge tools. More than 40 dams were built along the Blackstone River and its tributaries to utilize water power to fuel the mills that led the region to prosperity and national prominence.

As manufacturing capability grew, the shift from farm to factory took place throughout the valley. Family after family abandoned the struggle with the rocky soil in return for steady wages from the mills. It was a shift that would be repeated in other parts of the nation. Workers were initially drawn from surrounding towns and farms, but, as production skyrocketed, immigrants from Ireland, Canada, Poland, Armenia, Holland, and other nations found employment in the valley's mills. Ethnic diversity became a valley characteristic. Entire villages, including housing, schools, and churches, grew up around many of the mills and were often built or subsidized by the mill owners themselves. These mill villages, clustered along the river, were distinctive in architecture and layout, contrasting with the hilltop and crossroads villages that grew up as part of the developing "trade routes" in the earlier agricultural era.

The mills prospered for more than a century. With the arrival of the Great Depression, however, the mills began closing, one by one, and a way of life faded. At the time of designation, the valley was in decline. Communities had turned their backs on the badly polluted Blackstone River. Many of the abandoned mills and other historic buildings were threatened with demolition, and the valley's heritage and unique cultural landscape were at risk. With widespread public concern over this decline and a desire to revitalize the Blackstone Valley both environmentally and economically, and with the backing of the Massachusetts and Rhode Island delegations, Congress in 1983 asked the National Park Service to assist the two states in developing a linear park system along the Blackstone River. At the same time, Congress asked the NPS to assess the potential eligibility of the valley for inclusion in the National Park System and to explore the opportunities for cooperative conservation efforts.[4]

C. The Heritage Corridor "Experiment"

Congress established the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor in 1986 to preserve and interpret the unique and significant contributions of the valley's resources and history to the nation's heritage.[5] In the authorizing legislation, Congress created the Corridor Commission to assist the two states, the municipalities within the Corridor, and other partners to develop and implement integrated cultural, historical, and land management programs to retain, enhance, and interpret the Corridor's resource values. The legislation authorized the Commission for an initial five years and provided for a possible five-year extension, which the Commission was granted. In 1996, Congress extended the Commission for ten more years, and expanded the Corridor's boundaries to the current 24 towns.[6] The current term for the Commission is set to expire in November 2006.

The authorizing legislation mandated the preparation of a management plan containing policies, programs, and strategies to accomplish the Corridor's purpose. The plan was to be approved by the governors of both states and the secretary of the interior, and would complement state plans and unify historic preservation and interpretation in the Corridor. The process of preparing the plan provided an opportunity for the general public and for stakeholders with diverse interests to share their priorities and values, and to collaborate on a unified vision and an agreed-upon list of projects to achieve that vision. Completed in 1989, the plan was amended in 1998.[7] Its implementation strategy emphasizes "integrated, linked actions rather than single, stand-alone projects," and observes that "balanced action in each of these areas is critical to achieving harmony among preservation, recreation, and development."[8]



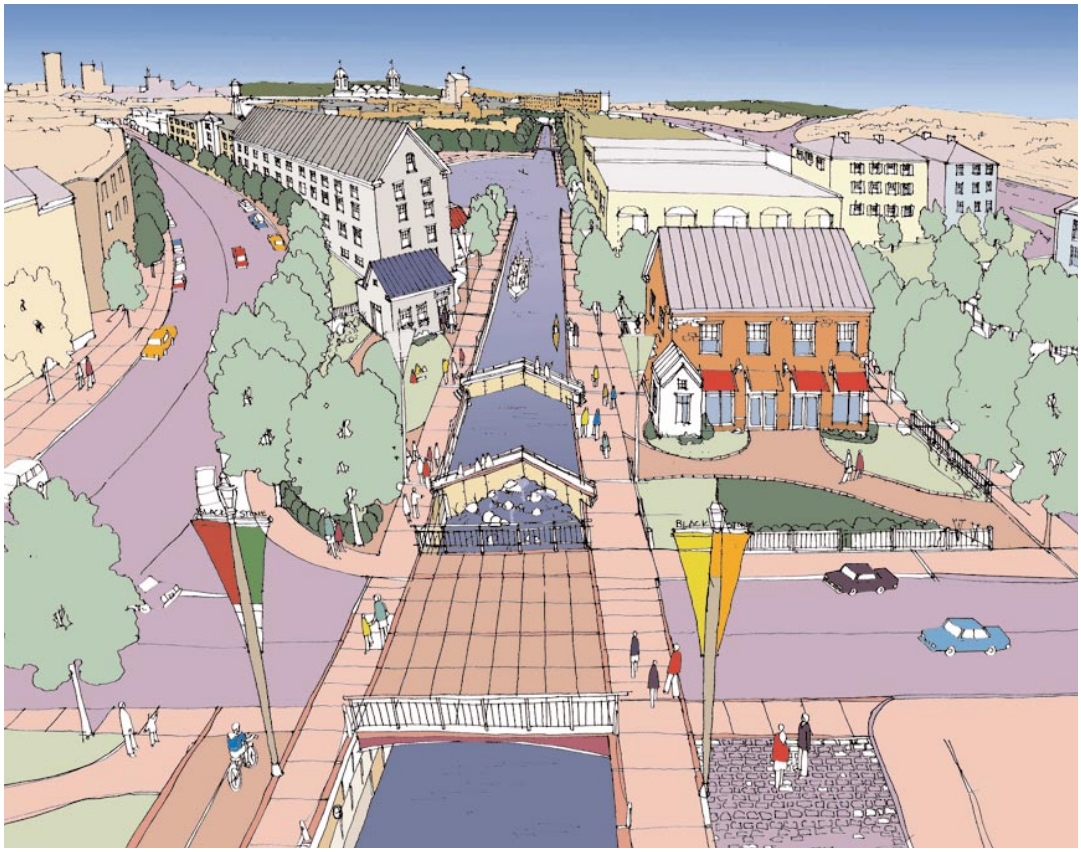
The Blackstone National Heritage Corridor represented an ambitious, fresh approach to thinking about regional places. Rather than viewing the valley as a set of self-contained, independent municipalities in two separate states, the Commission began to help residents envision the valley as a cohesive region—an interdependent place linked by cultural heritage and a common set of economic, natural, and cultural resources. The premise was that understanding the valley as an interconnected system might engender new attitudes that would help revitalize the area as a place to visit, live, work, and invest.

The Commission set an ambitious agenda for the Corridor: heritage education, recreation development, ethnic and cultural conservation, environmental conservation, historic preservation, land use planning, and heritage-based economic development. Its most widely used tools in advancing the regional vision have been (1) public education; (2) partnerships that pool local, state, and national resources; and (3) targeted investments that focus scarce public and private dollars on highly visible projects that reinforce the valley's national story and build local pride and enthusiasm.

Today, 18 years after designation, change is visible throughout the valley. Many of the mills and historic buildings have been renovated for reuses such as housing, business space, museums, and arts facilities. Along the Blackstone River, cleanup efforts have removed trash and debris from the river and its shoreline, and the river itself is beginning to recover. State and federal governments, local jurisdictions, historical societies, environmental organizations, businesses, sports groups, and private landowners are collaborating to promote and care for the qualities that make the area so special. The Corridor Commission is providing a model for how the federal government can work in partnership with others toward common goals of historic preservation, a cleaner environment, and revitalized communities.

The Commission's partnership work throughout the valley has led to other recent national recognition that acknowledges both the importance of the resources and the level of community involvement:

- Designation of the river in 1998 as an **American Heritage River**, which brings targeted federal assistance for economic revitalization, resource protection, and historic and cultural preservation (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency).
- Selection of the Blackstone River in 2003 as one of four pilot projects in the **Urban Rivers Initiative**, which will help coordinate river cleanup and restoration and related economic revitalization (Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and other agencies).
- Designation of the Corridor's 24 communities in 2004 as part of the **Preserve America** initiative, which supports community efforts to preserve the nation's cultural and natural heritage (White House initiative).



Notes

1. Charles E. Little, *Greenline Parks: An Approach to Preserving Recreation Landscapes in Urban Areas* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 1975); National Park Service, *National Urban Recreation Study, Technical Reports, Volume 1, Urban Open Space: Existing Conditions, Opportunities, and Issues* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Interior, 1978). For a more in-depth discussion, see Brenda Barrett and Nora Mitchell, editors, "Stewardship of Heritage Areas," special issue, *George Wright Forum* 20, no. 2 (2003); and Brenda Barrett, guest editor, and Elizabeth Byrd Wood, editor, "Regional Heritage Areas: Connecting People to Places and History," special issue, *Forum Journal* 17, no. 4 (2003), published by the Center for Preservation Leadership at the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

2. Paula A. Degen, *Branching Out: Approaches in National Park Stewardship* (Fort Washington, PA: Eastern National, 2003).

3. See Jacquelyn L. Tuxill and Nora J. Mitchell, editors, *Collaboration and Conservation: Lessons Learned in Areas Managed through National Park Service Partnerships* (Woodstock, VT: Conservation Study Institute, 2001); and Jacquelyn L. Tuxill, Nora J. Mitchell, and Jessica Brown, editors, *Collaboration and Conservation: Lessons Learned from National Park Service Partnership Areas in the Western United States* (Woodstock, VT: Conservation Study Institute, 2004). Both publications are available at http://www.nps.gov/csi.

4. National Park Service and the Rhode Island and Massachusetts Departments of Environmental Management, *Blackstone River Corridor Study: Conservation Options* (Draft) 1985.

5. Public Law 99-647, November 10, 1986.

6. Public Law 104-333, November 12, 1996.

7. *Cultural Heritage and Land Management Plan for the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor* (Woonsocket, R.I.: Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, 1989); and *The Next Ten Years: An Amendment to the Cultural Heritage and Land Management Plan* (Woonsocket, R.I.: Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission, 1998).

8. *Cultural Heritage and Land Management Plan for the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor* (1989).



CHAPTER 3

Describing the Corridor's Existing Management Framework

The authorizing legislation for the Blackstone National Heritage Corridor created a framework to facilitate coordinated development and implementation of a program to protect and interpret the valley's nationally significant resources and story. That framework consists of several components:

- purpose and vision;
- geographic scope;
- management entity;
- partner network; and
- funding and other support.

Each of these components is discussed briefly below.

A. Purpose and Vision

The fundamental starting point for the Corridor's management framework is the purpose for which the Corridor was established, as articulated in the 1986 authorizing legislation: "…preserving and interpreting for the educational and inspirational benefit of present and future generations the unique and significant contributions to our national heritage of certain historic and cultural lands, waterways, and structures within the Blackstone River Valley in the States of Massachusetts and Rhode Island…". Through the planning process that led to the initial management plan and its subsequent amendment, the Commission and its partners built upon this broad legislated purpose to define a far-reaching and yet integrated vision for the Corridor and the partnership. In working to achieve this vision, the Commission has concentrated its programming in five key areas:

- historic preservation,
- interpretation and education,
- river recovery and recreation,
- land use planning, and
- tourism and economic development.



B. Geographic Scope

The area included in the Corridor is another of the basic building blocks of its management framework because it defines the geographic scope of the resources to be addressed and the political jurisdictions and public constituencies that need to be involved in management. As defined in the 1986 legislation and the 1996 reauthorization, the Corridor includes approximately 400,000 acres across 13 towns and cities in Massachusetts and 11 in Rhode Island. The Corridor encompasses most of the watershed of the Blackstone River, plus some thematically linked areas downstream (in Providence and East Providence). The map on page 4 illustrates this geographic scope.

C. Management Entity

A central component of the framework created by the authorizing legislation is the Corridor Commission. This bi-state, federally appointed representative body serves as the coordinating entity for the Corridor and "assists federal, state, and local authorities in the development and implementation of an integrated resource management plan…" Key aspects of the Commission are summarized below.

1. Composition

The Commission consists of 19 members appointed by the secretary of the interior. Each state has nine members who are nominated by the governors, including:

- four representatives of local government;
- three representatives of state government—specifically, the heads of the state departments of historic preservation, environmental management/conservation and recreation, and economic development;
- two "at large" members to represent other interests.



The remaining member is the director of the National Park Service or his/her designee.

2. Staff
At the Commission's request, the NPS has provided staff to the Commission since soon after the Corridor was established. At the moment, there are 14 NPS staff assigned to Corridor activities. These include administrative staff, planners and landscape architects, resource management experts, and interpretive specialists (park rangers). The NPS also has several staff assigned to Roger Williams National Memorial Site in Providence, located at the southern end of the Corridor.

3. Authorities
The authorizing legislation specified the powers of the Commission to carry out its purpose. As is the case with designated management entities for all other national heritage areas, the Commission has the authority to receive and disburse federal funds. The Commission also has a variety of administrative authorities (e.g., to hire staff and consultants, hold hearings, receive and dispose of gifts, enter into cooperative agreements with other governmental units and organizations, establish advisory groups). The Commission has authority to acquire land and property, but only by gift, devise, or purchase from willing sellers using non-federal funding specifically given to the Commission for that purpose. In addition, the Commission must transfer any property it acquires under those terms to an appropriate public or private land managing entity as soon as practicable. The Commission does not have authority to regulate land use or acquire land through condemnation (eminent domain).

4. Responsibilities and roles
At a general level, the Commission's basic responsibilities have been to: (1) develop, revise, and implement a Corridor-wide management plan in partnership with the two states, Corridor communities, and other members of the partner network; and (2) account for the use of federal funds that have been appropriated to achieve Corridor goals. In carrying out these broad responsibilities, the Commission and its staff have played a wide variety of roles ranging from coordinator and convener to planner and strategist. The full range of these roles is discussed in greater detail in chapter 6 of this report.

D. Partner Network

The essence of the Corridor is a regional partnership between the Commission and all levels of government, other organizations, and individuals in pursuing the realization of the diverse goals identified in the authorizing legislation and subsequent management plans. Following is a brief summary of the ways in which each broad category of the partnership is involved.

1. Federal government
The Department of the Interior (DOI) and the NPS have lead federal responsibility for assisting the Commission and other Corridor partners. Federal funding appropriated specifically to the Commission and the Corridor flows through the DOI/NPS budget. The secretary of the interior is responsible for appointing commissioners and for approving the Commission's management plan and revisions. In addition to having a seat on the Commission and serving as its staff, the NPS provides discretionary funding and technical assistance to Corridor initiatives.

Other federal agencies (e.g., U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and others) provide funding and staff assistance to a variety of initiatives related to Corridor goals. In addition, in accordance with the authorizing legislation, all federal agencies are required to consult with the secretary of the interior and the Commission regarding any activities affecting the Corridor and, to the maximum extent practicable, conduct those activities in a way that will not adversely affect the Corridor.

2. State government
Each state has three seats on the Commission dedicated to specific agency heads (see "Composition" above). In addition, these and other state agencies have lead fiscal and management responsibility for many initiatives related to Corridor goals (e.g., managing state parks and historic sites, implementing state regulations, building infrastructure), and provide funding and staff assistance to other collaborative projects within the Corridor. Also, the governors are responsible for nominating the nine Commission members from each of their states.

3. Local government
The 24 towns and cities in the Corridor have a total of eight representatives on the Commission (four from each state). As with state agencies, local governments also have lead responsibility for many initiatives related to Corridor goals (e.g., managing local parks and historic sites, implementing local regulations, building infrastructure), and they participate in other collaborative projects within the Corridor.

4. Nongovernmental partners
Organizations and individuals outside of government, including nonprofit organizations, businesses, coalitions, and valley citizens, also are central to the Corridor partnership. These interests do not have explicitly dedicated seats on the Commission, but often have been nominated by the governors to fill "local government" or "at large" positions. Nongovernmental partners have lead responsibility for many initiatives related to Corridor goals (e.g., managing sites, environmental restoration, economic development planning), and support other collaborative projects and programs within the Corridor.

E. Funding and Other Support

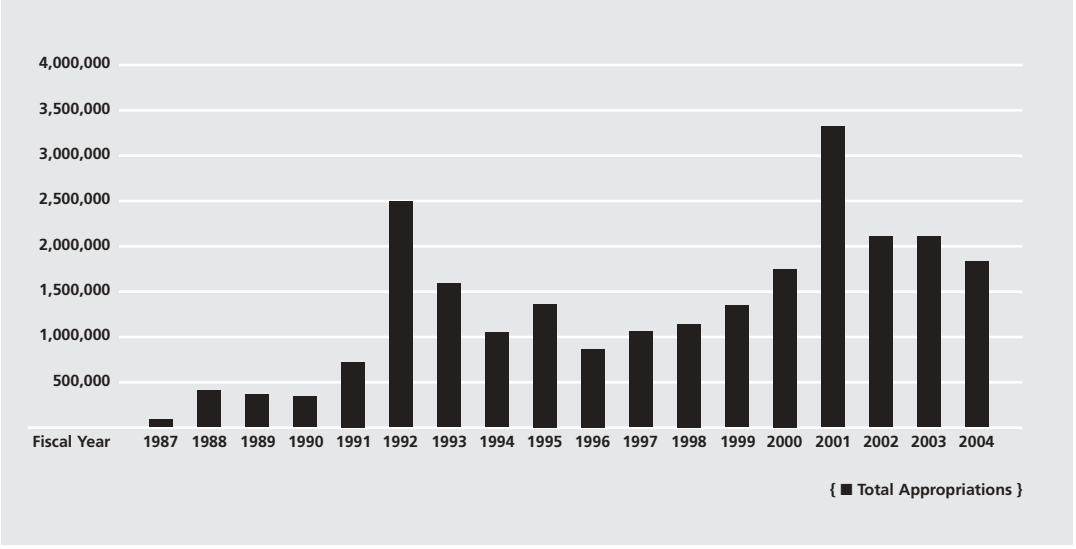
Through the legislation that established the Corridor and subsequent amendments, Congress has authorized the appropriation of federal funds to support the Commission's operations and the development and implementation of the management plan as amended. These federal funds are appropriated through the NPS budget process.

The Commission has received a total of $23,638,600 in National Park Service funding from fiscal years 1987-2004. Funding to support the Commission has come through various programs including: the NPS operations budget (ONPS), Statutory Aid, Technical Assistance; National Recreation and Preservation Program, Heritage Partnership Program; and Line Item Construction.

An important aspect of the Corridor's partnership model is that support for Corridor initiatives must be provided from all levels of the partnership. In accordance with the authorizing legislation, all federal funds provided directly to the Commission for its operations and projects require at least a 1:1 match. The additional discretionary funds that the NPS has provided through its operations budget do not require a match. Matches can be in a variety of forms, including financial assistance, in-kind contributions, and volunteer time. During FY1987–2004, approximately $20 million in federal funds was appropriated that required a match. (See chapter 4.B for a further discussion of the leveraging of federal funds.)

The funding history chart below details the funds received annually by the Commission through FY2004.

John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Funding History





CHAPTER 4

The Commission's Accomplishments to Date

A. Program Accomplishments

The 1989 Corridor management plan explicitly states that the Commission should give funding and assistance priority to projects that address multiple items on its agenda. The Commission's early projects ranged from developing inventories of historic resources and assisting municipalities with resource planning to fostering downtown revitalization through public visioning and coordinating river clean-up events. By covering such a broad range, these projects gave the Commission an opportunity to share its vision with different stakeholders, and gave residents an opportunity to contribute their thoughts on how to make the Blackstone Valley a better place to live. Early projects helped establish the Commission's reputation and also built the outside capacity necessary for later activities that would require a more committed and diverse partnership base and funding strategy. The Commission's commitment to ongoing public engagement and consensus-building often expanded participation in these projects and also broadened the project vision. The openness and flexibility that enabled the Commission to involve new partners as the project evolved added complexity to the process, but it also contributed to the project's progress and created the opportunity to affect a broader constituency.

Appendix A includes an inventory of the Commission's projects, both completed and ongoing. Projects on this list have been gathered from plans, project descriptions, annual reports, budget reports, Commission archives, and staff interviews.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief overview of Corridor accomplishments and highlight individual projects that demonstrate how project vision and collaboration have typically evolved over time. The discussion is organized according to the following key program areas identified in the management plan (although the projects often cross multiple program areas because of the Commission's integrated approach):

- historic preservation,
- interpretation and education,
- river recovery and recreation,
- land use planning, and
- tourism and economic development.

The highlighted projects illustrate the Commission's role as a facilitator and a constant, yet flexible, "keeper of the vision" across disciplinary and jurisdictional boundaries. In each example, a growing partnership constituency has caused the breadth, scope, and complexity of the project to expand to fill an evolving and ambitious vision. The projects demonstrate the Commission's ability to reach out to a multidisciplinary audience that by virtue of its diversity has influenced the way residents and organizations with vastly different priorities identify with the resources in the valley. These projects also illustrate the commonalities that exist across project focus areas and geographic scale, and their attributes contribute to sustained success for the Corridor (see chapter 8). Each of these projects:

- initially required basic education and assistance, which built the capacity required for project implementation;
- engaged an increasingly diverse (across jurisdictions and disciplines) mixture of partners over time;
- evolved in scope and goal-setting as new partners joined;
- demonstrated management flexibility and willingness to share responsibilities with new partners; and
- reached out to residents, agencies, and organizations; aligned their interests; and engaged them in the process.

1. Historic Preservation

One of the Commission's greatest challenges is preserving the character of a landscape within which people live and work. The valley is currently experiencing rapid growth, which brings a new sense of urgency to the need to preserve historic resources. As the Commission has no land use authority, its preservation strategy must rely upon economic, educational, and heritage values. The Commission works with universities, state preservation offices, the NPS, and the private sector to develop preservation plans for historic sites and landscapes; provides funding for restoration of critical sites; works with communities on visioning exercises; and markets the economic benefits associated with preservation. It also hosts statewide and regional forums such as the "Red Brick Elephants Conference," which brought together preservationists, bankers, developers, and businesses to tackle the issue of adaptive mill reuse.

Historic Preservation Project Highlight: Great Road Historic District



Description: Originally following Native American trails and later becoming one of the earliest colonial roads in America, the Great Road opened up the North Woods for settlement. Designated a National Register Historic District in 1974, the Great Road's buildings and viewsheds illustrate the layering of history that has taken place in the corridor. Within the three-mile section of road, one can see examples of frontier homesteads and buildings from the early Industrial Revolution. The Town of Lincoln, Rhode Island, and local organizations began concentrating land acquisition in the 1980s along the Great Road to preserve six historic properties and more than 100 acres of farmland. The Commission became involved in the work occurring in this living landscape to facilitate communication and encourage stakeholders to align their interests and goals in a unified interpretation and preservation strategy.

The overall landscape is now interpreted and promoted collaboratively through special events, tours, guidebooks, exhibits, and living history. Preservation and coordinated interpretation are ongoing at the Moffett Mill (now fully restored), Hearthside, Arnold House, and Valentine Whitman House. A gateway park provides parking and site access along a trail that will connect the string of historic sites. The partnership between the town, state agencies, Historic New England, and local organizations demonstrates integrated heritage preservation and interpretation activities within a defined landscape. For example, visitor services include a monthly open house when sites are open to the public and offer interpretive programming. An annual open house every October provides additional visitor opportunities, such as a free shuttle service and special activities. Chase Farm sponsors seasonal open-air concerts that showcase the Rhode Island Philharmonic, among other groups.

Initial project intent/goals: Preserve open space and the historic character of the community.

Critical to the process: The purchase of properties by the Town of Lincoln and the coming together of individual heritage sites.

Commission investment: Preservation planning; partial financial assistance in preservation planning, interpretation planning, and exhibit development.

Match: Federal enhancements from the Rhode Island Department of Transportation, purchase of historic properties by the Town of Lincoln, Friends of Hearthside operations support and fundraising efforts, Roger Williams University staff and student support.

Later additions: Transportation enhancements, park and trail development, special events, story-telling, preservation and educational leadership from local organizations.

Unintended consequences: Integrated activities among historic preservation, tourism, and transportation agencies.

Partners (initial partners in italics):

Federal: National Park Service, Federal Highway Administration

State: Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Rhode Island Department of Transportation, and *Rhode Island Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission*

Local: *Town of Lincoln*

Nonprofit: Friends of Hearthside, *Historic New England,* Blackstone River Theatre, Blackstone Historical Society, Friends of Valentine Whitman House

Other: *Private property owners, local historians*

Education is key to gaining local support for adoption of sensitive land use policies, and is integral to the funding and technical assistance strategy. Education about preservation tools and opportunities has motivated elected officials, planners, residents, and businesses to designate historic districts and adopt preservation plans. Early educational outreach, advocacy, and leadership have built the constituency necessary to embark on more complex projects that require broad regional consensus. More recent projects also utilize historic preservation as part of a strategy that integrates recreation, tourism, and land conservation.

2. Interpretation and Education

Interpretation and education programs help residents and visitors understand the meaning of the region's historic resources through stories and techniques that make the history of the American Industrial Revolution relevant to residents and visitors. The Corridor's identity system, an early component of the Commission's interpretive strategy, enables residents and visitors to understand partner sites, activities, and publications as part of a cohesive landscape and story. The Commission has also provided assistance to organizations to enable them to provide their own professional interpretative and educational programming. A monthly cable television show, "Along the Blackstone," was developed by NPS staff to highlight local stories

and places and make thematic connections throughout the Corridor. A network of visitor centers (highlighted later in this chapter) provides information that enables residents and visitors to explore the region's resources. The Blackstone Valley Education Network connects valley organizations that offer interpretive and educational programming and provides teachers with resources and tools that use valley resources to teach history and environmental science.

For visitors and residents, NPS rangers personify the valley's national significance. The rangers have played a major role in interpreting a historic landscape that is difficult to decipher without a comprehensive understanding of individual features. They have developed and presented tours, coordinated and presented special events, organized volunteers, provided training to volunteers and professionals in partner organizations, and integrated interpretation into preservation and development projects. The inherent challenges to interpreting a historic landscape that contains modern development demand innovation and creativity. Two Blackstone rangers have received the NPS Freeman Tilden "Excellence in Interpretation" award in recognition of their ability to meet this challenge.

Interpretation and Education Project Highlight: Blackstone River Theatre, Cumberland, Rhode Island



Description: Since 1984, the musical ensemble Pendragon has been playing Celtic-inspired music that celebrates the stories and cultural traditions of the Irish, Scottish, French Canadian, and other immigrant groups in the Blackstone Valley. In 1996, Pendragon signed a lease with the Town of Cumberland to renovate the former Unity Masonic Lodge into a cultural arts center committed to promoting the valley's immigrant heritage. Pendragon coordinated and led a group of volunteers to restore the derelict lodge into the Blackstone River Theatre, a nonprofit institution for music, dance, and folk arts traditions in the valley. The Commission, the Town of Cumberland, and several local businesses helped finance the renovation. Volunteer efforts since 1996 now total 19,000 hours and have averaged 2,000 hours per year since the theatre's opening in 2000.

The Blackstone River Theatre presents concert series, folk dances, children's events, and special events year-round. As part of its Heritage Arts Studio initiative, the theatre offers arts education outreach through classes and workshops. This school for the traditional arts encourages the local community to discover or reconnect with traditional art forms and become participants in the area's arts heritage. Since opening, more than 25,000 people have attended more than 350 events.

Initial project intent/goals: To establish a locally based artisan center where the music, dance, and folk arts traditions of the Blackstone Valley could be showcased, preserved, and taught.

Critical to the process: The ability of the founding theatre team to communicate its vision to others, dedicated volunteers, the Town of Cumberland's provision of a "free" lease agreement and financial support for building and property improvements, volunteer assistants who staff events and continue renovation.

Commission investment: Technical assistance and matching funds for infrastructure improvements, performances, and educational programming.

Match: Grants from the Rhode Island state legislative grant program, Town of Cumberland, various foundations.

Later additions: The Heritage Arts Studio, an outgrowth of the theatre, offers instructional classes in traditional art forms such as dance, music, theatre, weaving, and sculpture.

Unintended consequences: Sharing traditional arts through connections with culturally diverse audiences and other nonprofits.

Partners (initial partners in italics):

State: *Rhode Island State Council on the Arts,* Rhode Island State Legislature

Local: *Town of Cumberland*

Nonprofit: Friends of Hearthside, Slater Mill Historic Site

Other: *Pendragon*, national and international groups and individuals in the performing arts

3. River Recovery and Recreation
The river and its ecosystem are beginning to recover due to extensive clean-up efforts and changing perceptions of valley residents about the value of the river. Over the years, the Commission has advocated its potential as a clean river to a range of partners and prospective partners, from economic developers to environmental groups. The strategy has included interpreting the river as the core of a "riverway"—an integrated system of water, land, recreational opportunities, and resources. Aligning the interests of multiple partners is integral to making the riverway a destination, complete with a bikeway, boat launches, redeveloped mills, and healthy water in which residents can fish and swim. This vision is being achieved as increasing numbers of people use the bikeway and paddle and fish the river.

River cleanup efforts began during the 1960s, when Lincoln, Rhode Island, residents formed the Committee for the Advancement of Natural Areas in Lincoln to address pollution issues. In the 1970s, Project ZAP attracted 10,000 volunteers who built parks, planted trees, and retrieved tires, debris, cars, and appliances out of the river. The Blackstone's designation as an American Heritage River in 1998 spurred the adoption of new goals, including balancing water flows, bringing anadromous fisheries back to the Lonsdale Marsh, ensuring that waste water treatment plants met standards for effluent, and educating residents about nonpoint source pollution and land use impacts on the watershed.

Expedition 2000, a four-day paddling journey from Worcester, Massachusetts, to Narragansett Bay, fueled the creation of the Blackstone River Coalition and its Campaign for a Fishable/Swimmable Blackstone River by 2015. Since 2003, the Commission has provided funding, staffing, and technical assistance to the coalition's Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program, in which more than 75 volunteers sample more than 80 sites.

The Blackstone River Coalition has also formed a marketing campaign entitled "Jump In! The Water's (Going to be) Fine" to recruit members and build awareness of water quality issues, and hired a consultant to coordinate interagency issues and gain funding support at all levels. The coalition unites organizations, agencies, and communities in a common vision to achieve a fishable/swimmable river by 2015. Partners include the Environmental Protection Agency; U.S. Geological Survey; Natural Resources Conservation Service; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Army Corps of Engineers; NPS Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program; Rhode Island Department of Environment; Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection; watershed groups; tourism councils; and universities.



River Recovery and Recreation Project Highlight: Riverway Development

Description: Education, coalition-building, and cleanup and monitoring projects are improving people's perceptions of the river. Integrating the development of trails and river access points with the use and interpretation of adjacent sites fosters appreciation and stewardship of resources and infrastructure throughout the riverway. The 48-mile Blackstone River Bikeway, when completed, will connect Providence to Worcester, with side trails linking Corridor municipalities. State and federal funds have contributed greatly to this $40-million bikeway project, which has increased the river's value and catalyzed development along its banks. The Commission's comprehensive river access plan calls for publicly accessible sites for boating and recreation, and includes water access sites, portage trails, park improvements, parking, river safety, and interpretive exhibits. In Rhode Island, the Commission is coordinating the development of five river landing sites with the support of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, Department of Transportation, Friends of the Blackstone, and local communities. The first river access site opened in Central Falls in 2004. These sites accommodate public tour boats and provide boating access to the river. NPS rangers have developed corresponding interpretive programming that lets people experience the river while educating them about its history and recreational opportunities. The Commission has assisted the Massachusetts Audubon Society and the Friends of the Blackstone with purchasing canoes to provide programs that spread river awareness and advocacy. The Corridor sponsors a seasonal paddle club that teaches paddling skills to participants as they explore the river and nearby mill ponds. This twice-weekly gathering attracts novice paddlers and creates river advocates, many of whom later assist with the construction and maintenance of access sites.

Initial project intent/goals: Build a greenway along the river to develop and connect parklands and build constituencies for restoring the waterway.

Critical to the process: An overall strategy for public access to the river, funding and technical assistance to communities, funneling local support and local energies into volunteer-driven development projects, fostering public awareness through events and programming, and creating river stewards and advocates by providing opportunities for residents to experience the river.

Commission investment: Funding for design and project management; indirect funding for programming and events; direct funding for publications, such as the river and bikeway guide and the website.

Match: In-kind services and funding from state agencies, transportation enhancement funding, in-kind assistance from local communities, volunteer in-kind assistance from local watershed groups.

Later additions: Created constituencies to maintain and support river access sites and support partnership and stewardship activities, fostered stronger connections among agencies, and secured East Coast Greenway designation. Currently incorporating streambank restoration projects with development of river access points, installing interpretive signage, and continually increasing the number of river and riverway stewards.

Unintended consequences: Connecting and integrating historic resource preservation, the bikeway, and interpretation into the development of access sites; aligning and building the capacity of related organizations; raising awareness of and engaging private landowners and developers in preserving and creating riverway features.

Partners (initial partners in italics):

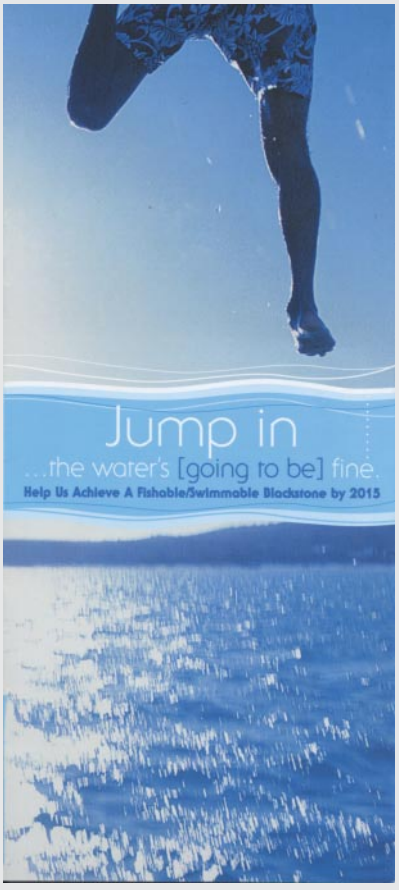
Federal/regional: *Federal Highway Administration, Environmental Protection Agency*

State: *Rhode Island Departments of Transportation, Environmental Management, and Historic Preservation; Massachusetts Departments of Conservation and Recreation, Highway, and Historic Preservation Commission,* Massachusetts Public Access Board

Local: *Municipalities,* planners and elected officials, *Blackstone Valley Tourism Council*, *Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce*

Nonprofit: *Blackstone River Watershed Association, Watershed Coalition,* Massachusetts Audubon Society, Greater Worcester Land Trust, Rhode Island River Rescue, Trust For Public Land, Friends of the Blackstone, Metacomet Land Trust, Grafton Land Trust, CorridorKeepers, *Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce*

Other: Private landowners and businesses



Land Use Planning Project Highlight: Leadership Blackstone Valley



Description: Leadership Blackstone Valley, an educational initiative of the Blackstone Valley Institute, is an intensive, hands-on program that has cultivated more than 80 community leaders throughout the area. The initiative was developed in partnership with the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce Education Foundation and Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce to provide emerging local leaders with opportunities to engage on issues that affect communities and the region as a whole. Now in its fifth class, the program has attracted business persons, residents, government and elected officials, and others to develop their leadership skills through an eight-month curriculum that is paid for jointly by the participant and his or her employer. The course exposes participants to the valley's history and resources and the national heritage corridor's history and future goals. It also provides participants with the knowledge and skills to address economic development issues, changing demographics and diversity, natural resources management, and citizen engagement. The goal is to graduate local leaders who will be valley advocates and who will guide land and resource conservation in their organizations and municipalities.

Initial project intent/goals: To develop a network of leaders to take on leadership roles within state, local government, and nonprofit entities and programs throughout the region.

Critical to the process: Aggressive recruitment by all parties, community support, Leadership Blackstone Valley Alumni Association support.

Commission investment: The Commission supports the leadership program through both staff support and direct funding assistance. Development of the program was supported by the Commission and the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce as part of each organization's desire to understand issues surrounding growth and development and to build stewards for the valley.

Match: Annual program fees, grants, and private donations.

Later additions: The initial program was offered every two years in eight half-day sessions. In response to participant feedback, the program is now offered annually in eight full-day sessions, allowing for a more intensive experience.

Unintended consequences: The Leadership Blackstone Valley Alumni Association, created by the first graduating class, has become a major recruiter for the program. The association publishes a newsletter and has established the CorridorKeepers, an advocacy organization that is seeking support for the continuation of the Commission. The Blackstone Valley Youth Leadership Academy, a recent outgrowth of Leadership Blackstone Valley, enhances the leadership skills of ninth- and tenth-grade students and strengthens their connections to the valley. The academy will run after school for ten sessions from December 2004 to May 2005.

Partners (initial partners in italics):

State: *Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce Education Foundation, Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce,* state agencies

Local: Municipalities

Nonprofit: Local nonprofits involved in cultural development, tourism, and regional conservation

Other: Rhode Island Foundation, Worcester Community Foundation, private businesses

4. Land Use Planning

The legislation creating the Blackstone Corridor precluded the Commission from using its authority to regulate or acquire land. Yet it challenged the Commission to protect historic and natural resources and the character of the region's distinctive landscape. Land use planning was therefore encouraged among local governments and residents through education and technical assistance to communities. Public visioning exercises, including Visions for the Future: The Second Revolution (1995) and a series of river visioning meetings (2003), have engaged residents and organizations in actively planning for their future. In 2001, the first Interstate Community Preservation SuperSummit attracted 250 residents to a day-long forum about the future of the Blackstone Valley. The event included a growth build-out analysis and a discussion of suggested strategies for managing future growth.

One outcome of years of working with communities and conducting facilitated workshops and visioning sessions has been the creation of the Blackstone Valley Institute. Through workshops and forums, one-on-one consulting, and technical assistance, the institute provides planners, local leaders, organizations, and citizens with the tools to discuss and tackle relevant land use issues. The institute's website provides the public with preservation, planning, and revitalization case studies; design review guidelines; examples of by-laws and ordinances; and links to zoning regulations and other planning resources.

5. Tourism and Economic Development
Heritage tourism has been used as an economic development tool in many community and river revitalization efforts. Over the years, the Commission has built solid working relations with chambers of commerce and tourism organizations in the Corridor. Tourism marketing, promotion, and development is now coordinated within the valley through the Tourism Triangle, a coalition of the two state regional tourism organizations and the Commission. Engaging valley residents, who represent additional tourism potential, brings added benefits to the region.

Since designation, the Commission has encouraged historic preservation planning and has hosted public visioning exercises that articulated a future for the valley through resource-based economic development. As Boston metropolitan growth began to expand into the Blackstone Valley in the late 1990s, developers became increasingly interested in the adaptive reuse of mill properties and brownfield redevelopment, which had been of little interest a few years before. The increased demand for housing is creating the kind of economic development that the region has sought for years, but is also placing new pressures on the land and historic structures that give the region its sense of place.

As riverway recovery and recreation, mill reuse, and redevelopment projects continue, quality-of-life issues are being monitored, assessed, and addressed through visioning workshops and public planning exercises such as the Super-Summit. Through workshops and discussions with residents and businesses, the Commission has adopted a strategy called Making Places, which promotes the tools that affect valley quality of life, including good jobs, provisions for parks, recreational opportunities, vital town and city centers, growth patterns that support good design principles and sensitivity to community character and the environment, cultural activities, and access to transportation modes. Tourism and economic development create both opportunities and challenges for the Commission as it makes decisions about which projects to support and advocate.



Tourism and Economic Development Project Highlight: Creating a Tourism-Centered Corridor Network

Description: A network of visitor centers provides residents and visitors with information about heritage corridor history, historic and recreational sites, events, visitor services, and programs. The network is a set of strategically located, interconnected hubs that provide visitors with information on the valley and its resources and direct them to nearby sites. The four main hubs are the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in Pawtucket, Rhode Island; the Museum of Work and Culture in Woonsocket, Rhode Island; River Bend Farm in Uxbridge, Massachusetts; and the Northern Gateway Center, under design in Worcester. Other visitor information sites exist at partner locations that include the Blackstone River and Canal Transportation Museum in Lincoln, Rhode Island, Broad Meadow Brook Sanctuary in Worcester, and Worcester Historical Museum.



The Commission works with visitor center managers and other partners to design and implement exhibits and to coordinate an information dissemination plan at each site. The network is supported by individual communities, the state heritage parks, and private nonprofit organizations that provide matching financial or in-kind support, including site maintenance and staffing. Once a visitor center opens, the Commission continues to support the site by providing for the distribution of tourism materials, information kiosks at tourism sites, assistance with exhibit design and fabrication, nearby way-finding signage and radio-transmitted messages, printed visitor guides and event calendars, web-based information, and professional marketing services.

Initial project intent/goals: Develop a strategic network of sites throughout the Corridor from which to provide visitors with basic information on resources, interpret the history of the Blackstone Valley, and encourage visitors to explore multiple sites and activities.

Critical to the process: Commitment by the host city, state park, or nonprofit to belong to the network; a willingness to seek outside development funds to match those of the Commission.

Commission investment: Assistance with exhibit design and fabrication and visitor support services. As the Commission's authorization mandates the support and development of visitor services and interpretation in the region, approximately $3.5 million has been dedicated toward tourism infrastructure and education projects.

Match: Approximately $15 million toward development of centers and services. Partners have provided annual operating funds to manage sites.

Later additions: Smaller visitor information sites, way-finding signage, and radio-transmitted messages were introduced to expand coverage and availability of information. Tourism-related businesses agreed to serve as hospitality sites. The sites train staff to disseminate information and support the regional tourism strategy advocated by the Commission.

Unintended consequences: Planning and development involved public and private organizations and sites and enabled the Commission to expand the geographic scope of its interpretive infrastructure and services. Many sites are standalone destinations, and provide supplemental education and interpretation activities. Others have become community meeting places for other activities, such as paddling, walks, and gallery openings. The kiosks, way-finding and site identification signage, and information distribution services at hospitality sites and in outlying areas reinforce the corridor's regional identity and benefit individual sites. Sites benefit from working under such a coordinated branding and marketing strategy because they are able to cross-market their products and programs and share resources and ideas. Their association with a region-wide network provides visitors with a context within which to understand the contributions of individual sites.

Partners (initial partners in italics):

Federal/regional: Federal Highway Administration, *National Endowment for the Humanities*

State: Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Massachusetts Department of Transportation, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, *Rhode Island State Parks, Massachusetts State Parks*

Local: *City of Pawtucket, City of Woonsocket, City of Worcester*

Nonprofit: *Old Slater Mill Association, Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, Rhode Island Historical Society, Massachusetts Audubon Society, Worcester Historical Museum, Waters Farm Preservation, Inc., Woonsocket Industrial Development Corporation*

Other: Private donors and foundations

B.Strategic Planning and Leverage

This section analyzes and documents the NPS investment in the Blackstone National Heritage Corridor and attempts to demonstrate how these federal funds have leveraged both private and public investments during the Commission's tenure. Although the project team was able to compile preliminary leverage figures and estimates for the program areas, it was not possible within the constraints of the sustainability study to conduct a more rigorous assessment. The Commission is committed to undertaking an analysis in the near future that will more thoroughly examine the "total economic value" associated with the Corridor's designation and Commission investments and leverage.

Within its broad agenda, the Commission takes guidance for setting priorities from its enabling legislation and from the 1989 Cultural Heritage and Land Management Plan and its 1998 amendment. Since 1987 the Commission has received a total of $23,638,600 from various National Park Service funding programs. Of this amount, the Commission has been required to demonstrate a match of 1:1 for $20 million that has gone into Corridor operations and development programs.

Research indicates that financial and in-house commitments from Massachusetts and Rhode Island, other federal agencies, communities, the private sector, and nonprofit organizations supporting Corridor goals have created an impressive leveraging portfolio. To date, the Commission has directly sponsored or participated in more than 400 projects within the Corridor. A conservative estimate for the Commission's leverage of NPS funds indicates a 22:1 match—a public and private investment in excess of $500 million attributable to either direct or indirect Commission involvement that contributes to the goals set forth in the management plan.

Taking direction from the two primary planning documents, the Commission has put in place processes and an organizational structure that have worked strategically toward both immediate preservation needs and long-term strategies. The Commission has an active strategic planning subcommittee that regularly examines the Commission's goals, active projects, and future needs in setting its annual work plans.

One issue that surfaced during the study is the uncertainty of annual fund allocations. Although the Commission has been successful over the years in receiving funds for operations and implementing its management plan, these funds fluctuate and are not considered "base-funded," meaning that the Commission begins each fiscal year with an uncertain funding amount. This hampers the Commission's ability to plan for and commit to longer-term programs and projects. Another issue is the difficulty of aligning partner and Commission funds during the same time frame. Commission money is frequently used as seed money to jumpstart projects. Often the upfront money and the later phased funding needs, coupled with the annual uncertainties, make it difficult for the Commission to place its funds strategically within a projected time frame.

Projects involving Commission funds are primarily managed through formal cooperative agreements that identify needs, common objectives, legal mandates, estimated time frames, and budgets. To date, the Commission has entered into 284 partner agreements with 87 Corridor partners in order to carry out the management plan. The Commission staff also provides technical assistance to numerous other projects. Combined, the Commission has leveraged its funds against other much larger public and private contributions, making it possible to support many more projects than could be supported by individual organizations or the National Park Service working alone.



A sampling of community leaders was interviewed during the study, and they identified three major ways in which the Commission provides assistance and has leveraged greater inputs: direct funding, technical and professional expertise, and political clout.

Direct funding works in several ways. It very often provides an organization with an all-important match for a grant, or with funds for initial permitting or for a study needed to receive approval for a project, or with seed money to make a project viable. The Commission, through its call for proposals process, challenges organizations and communities to think about their individual projects within the larger regional efforts, and encourages collaborative endeavors that contribute to Corridor goals. As one respondent stated:

The money is an incentive for people to think in terms of how they can put programs together and what kinds of programs are consistent with Corridor goals. …I think it leverages human commitment [and] intellect, and that is important capital… . It basically opens doors to leveraging individual money in a way that integrates and draws people into the process.

The **professional and technical expertise** the Commission brings to the valley and its ability to forge partnerships across jurisdictional lines is seen as a regional advantage.

I think the fact that the…Corridor [Commission] is engaged in these projects helps to make them successful…. The technical assistance is indeed important because …the technical skills that the Corridor [Commission] is able to field are not typically present in the communities in the Blackstone Valley.

The Commission's standing as a **bi-state nonpartisan entity** and its affiliation with the National Park Service provide a level of credibility that allows communities and organizations access to state and federal agencies they might not otherwise have.

Political power—when you can get four U.S. senators and eight congressmen all in support of a common vision for the Blackstone Valley—that speaks. When I'm out and about and my congressman looks me in the eye and says, "How's everything in the valley?" THAT speaks.

The Cost-Effectiveness of the Corridor's Management Structure

It is also important to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of the management structure. At the Commission's request, the NPS serves as staff and coordinates and implements the management plan, working primarily through partnerships to protect the valley's nationally important resources. The original assumption of the designation was that the heritage corridor management framework would be a less costly alternative to a traditional national park designation. While it may be difficult to compare the operations of a national heritage corridor and national park, it nonetheless demonstrates different funding scenarios and provides insights to the added value the NPS achieves through partnership management strategies. Below, we compare two national parks with the Blackstone National Heritage Corridor in terms of annual operating budget and staffing. The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park is a linear canalway traversing several states, and Lowell National Historical Park is an urban partnership park focused on industrial heritage.

Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park follows the route of the Potomac River for 184 miles from Washington, D.C., to Cumberland, Maryland, and encompasses 20,000 acres. The park manages a complex historic and natural resources program with an annual operating budget of $8.4 million and 122 full-time employees.

Lowell National Historical Park encompasses 141 acres within the City of Lowell, Massachusetts, and is responsible for preserving and interpreting numerous historic and cultural resources and celebrating the beginnings of America's industrial heritage. Lowell has an annual operating budget of $8.5 million and 112 full-time employees.

Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor encompasses an entire watershed of 400,000 acres and includes 24 cities and towns. It has a very broad mandate for the preservation, redevelopment, and interpretation of the cultural landscape. Blackstone has a current annual operating budget of approximately $1 million and 14 full-time employees.

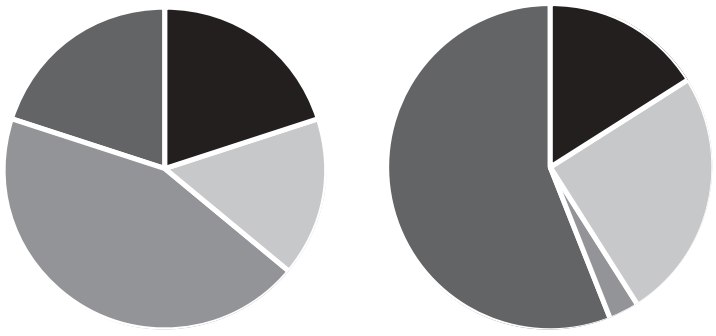
Historic Preservation: The Commission has invested approximately $3,560,000 with an estimated return on this investment that exceeds $132,705,000. These projects include such activities as historic preservation of national-register-eligible properties, cultural landscape assessments, collection management and curation of historic objects, archaeological studies, and community preservation plans.

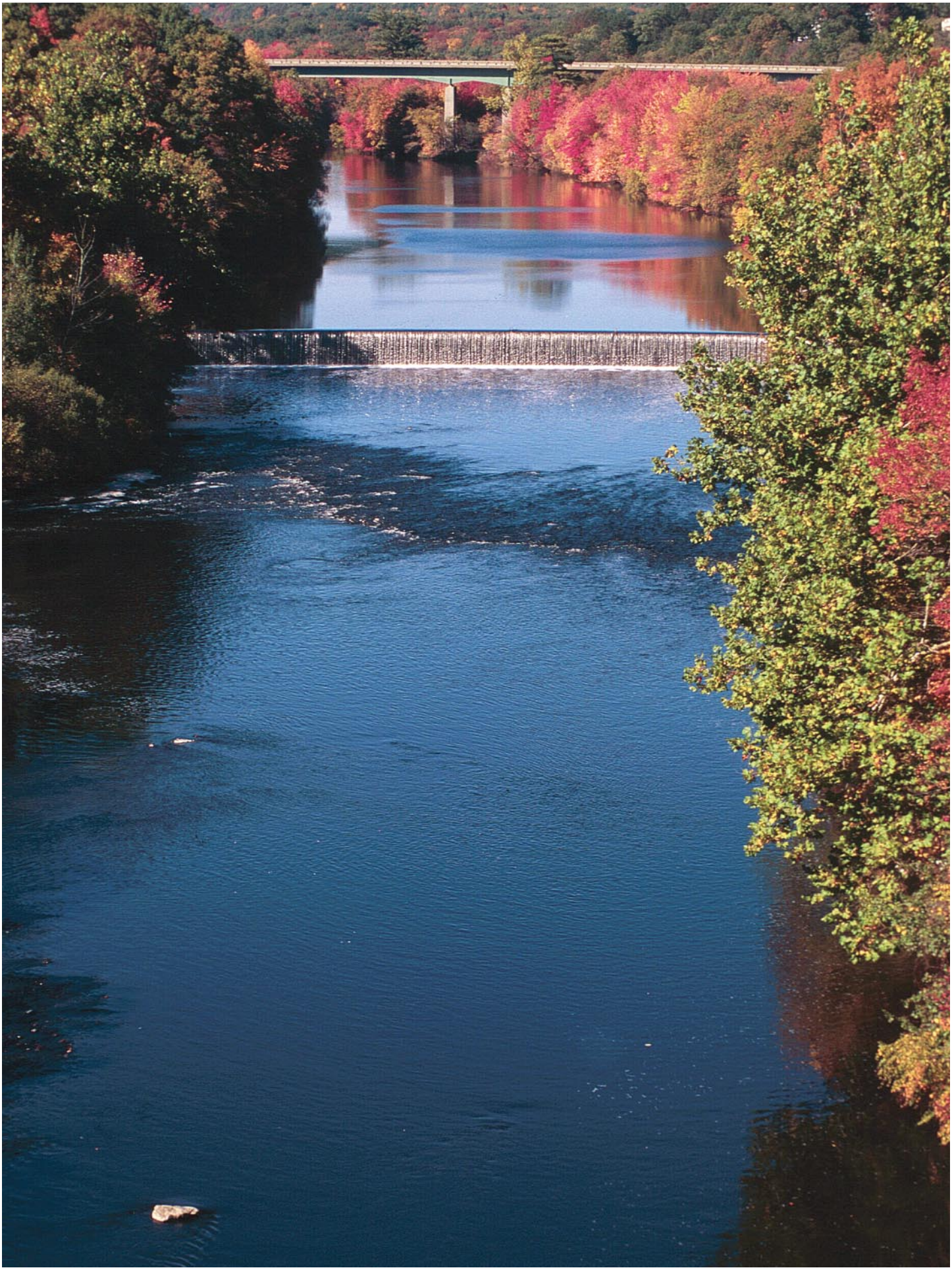
Interpretation, Education and Tourism Development: The Commission has invested approximately $9,966,000 in historical research, interpretive and cultural programs, and educational programs, with an estimated return on this investment that exceeds $17,700,000. These projects include such activities as NPS-ranger-guided tours and lectures, visitor center and museum development, exhibit design and fabrication, interpretive master plans for heritage sites and communities, curriculum development, support for cultural arts education and programming, development of interpretive brochures and websites, tourism marketing and promotion, a unified identity system, and public information program.

Community Planning and Economic Development: The Commission has invested approximately $4,667,000 to assist communities in developing strategies and plans that help to support Corridor heritage preservation and development goals. It is difficult to put a definitive dollar value on much of the leverage to this investment. An estimated $292,371,000 in leverage contributed toward community revitalization projects, regional visions, transportation improvements, master planning for historic mill villages, land preservation, regional economic development plans, revitalization of historic industrial properties, and the redevelopment of historic mills.

River Recovery and Recreation: The Commission has invested approximately $4,684,000, which has leveraged $79,121,000. These activities include developing parks, constructing the Blackstone River Bikeway, developing river landings and public access sites for boating and fishing, constructing trails, developing plans for the restoration of migratory fish, wetland and streambank restoration projects, upgrades to wastewater treatment plants, watershed-wide education programs, and water quality monitoring and protection programs.

Commission Leverage	Commission Investment	Partnership Leverage
Historic Preservation	$ 3,559,810	$132,704,834
Interpretation, Education and Tourism	$ 9,965,629	$ 17,713,372
Community Planning and Economic Development	$ 4,666,497	$292,370,886
River Recovery and Recreation	$ 4,684,340	$ 79,120,938





CHAPTER 5

Analyzing the Existing Management Framework

As discussed in chapter 3, a central purpose of the Corridor's authorizing legislation was to create a coordinating framework to develop and implement a program to protect and interpret the valley's heritage resources. As the Corridor approaches its twentieth anniversary and the scheduled termination of that framework, a critical aspect of the sustainability study involved reflecting on the effectiveness of the existing framework and presenting management alternatives for the Commission to consider for the Corridor in the future. To that end, this chapter provides an analysis of the existing management framework. Possible options for future management of the Corridor are discussed in chapter 7. For a review of the methods and sources used in conducting this analysis, see appendix B.

A. Purpose and Vision

The Corridor's broad purpose and vision serve as the foundation for the management framework. The broad scope reflects a holistic, integrated strategy for retaining those things that make the Blackstone Valley significant, sharing its story with the world, and fostering a sustainable future for its inhabitants. Moreover, the vision embraces a conviction that effective heritage conservation and development in the valley's lived-in, working landscape require an integrated approach across multiple disciplines (historic preservation, environmental restoration, community and economic development, etc.), rather than a more traditional approach that would address each of those concerns independently.

The Corridor's broad scope also represents an ambitious and demanding agenda, and is predicated on working through partnerships, which can be time-consuming and challenging. These factors have implications for staffing, as discussed below. Also, while the Commission and its partners have made considerable progress with limited resources in a relatively short amount of time, it is clear that the attainment of Corridor goals and the integrated vision is a long-term proposition. The breadth of the Corridor's mandate, the inherent challenges of cross-disciplinary work in a lived-in landscape, and the commitment to a partnership-based approach all require sustained energy, expertise, and resources over time if success is to be achieved and maintained.

B. Geographic Scope

The Corridor's geographic scale presents both challenges and opportunities. The challenges lie in the fact that it encompasses a large area of two states with a vast array of stakeholders, which makes managing a broad, integrated effort even more demanding. The opportunities result from the greater energy, capacity, funding, political clout, resilience, and similar characteristics that are inherent in a large, bi-state initiative relative to smaller, single-state ones. Within the backdrop of those challenges and opportunities, there appears to be a general consensus among Corridor partners that the current boundary is appropriate. Some suggest that certain areas within the boundary may be only tenuously connected to the primary aspects of the Corridor's significance, but those individuals also acknowledge that there is no need for nor any likely advantage to be gained from adjusting the boundary accordingly. It is important to note that the Corridor's bi-state scale has significant implications for other aspects of the management framework, particularly in relation to the management entity.

C. Management Entity

In general terms, all indications suggest that the Commission, with its NPS staff, has been very effective as the corridor's management entity. Together with partners throughout the valley, the Commission and its staff have achieved an extensive record of accomplishments toward the realization of Corridor goals (see chapter 4.A), used their federal funding to leverage substantial investments by others (chapter 4.B), and established the Corridor as a national and international leader in the heritage movement. Moreover, the Commission and its staff are widely credited for their professionalism and integrity, which have earned them overwhelming support among Corridor partners.

1. Composition

Given the Corridor's broad geographic and programmatic scope, its national significance, and its federal support, the balanced bi-state membership and federal representation provided through the Commission are clearly necessary and desirable characteristics of the management entity. For an initiative as big and diverse as the Corridor, and in comparison to the management entities for some other national heritage areas, the Commission's 19-member size

By all indications, it appears the Commission has very effectively filled the niche that was envisioned for it: providing coordination and leadership that transcend the Corridor's political boundaries and span the diverse range of programmatic commitments.

is relatively modest. This can be seen as a strength because it may help to make the Commission more manageable than a larger group might be. However, there are also potential drawbacks to the current size and composition. For instance, the number of local representatives (8) is relatively limited for the number of municipalities (24) within the Corridor. In addition, the lack of seats explicitly dedicated to nongovernmental partners means this critical component of the partnership is at best only lightly represented on the Commission (and only if the "at large" or local government representatives also happen to have such affiliations).

It is also worth noting that there is frustration among commissioners and staff with the cumbersome nature of the nomination and appointment process, which is typical for federal commissions. The process is long and staff-intensive, and has frequently resulted in extended vacancies, which raises problems because of the Commission's relatively small size.

2. Staff

The Commission's NPS staff has clearly been among the most important factors in the Corridor's success to date. The NPS staff presence is widely seen as providing a variety of benefits, including credibility, expertise, leveraging ability, visibility, and energy. As a result, the staff is often characterized as the Corridor's "glue." Had the Commission chosen to hire other staff that did not have the "imprimatur" of the National Park Service, it seems unlikely that the full range of benefits provided by the NPS staff would have been realized.

Corridor partners emphasized the importance of having the "right" kinds of people on staff because of the challenges presented by the Commission's broad, integrated agenda, its commitment to a partnership approach, and the realities of working in a large, lived-in landscape. Staff members must have diverse skills (including excellent "people" skills); must be patient, flexible, and "light on their feet"; and must possess the sophistication to work in a complex, constantly changing environment. Also, given the integrated agenda, some staff members are inevitably involved in initiatives that extend beyond the NPS's traditional areas of expertise (e.g., economic development). While this presents challenges and means that finding qualified candidates may be difficult, it also is seen as a strength that has helped to attract very dynamic, talented individuals to the Blackstone.

In addition, some Corridor participants suggested that the staff may be spread too thinly. This is an issue the Commission may wish to consider more directly. If a need for action is identified, the Commission could seek to expand the staff and/or reevaluate priorities and the staffing structure.

3. Authorities

The Commission's authorities are similar to those of other federal commissions that serve as management entities for other national heritage areas. These authorities appear to be adequate and appropriate for the Commission's responsibilities.

4. Responsibilities and roles

By all indications, it appears the Commission has very effectively filled the niche that was envisioned for it: providing coordination and leadership that transcend the Corridor's political boundaries and span the diverse range of programmatic commitments. The Commission's federal stature and diverse bi-state composition are seen as key factors in its success, giving it a level of impartiality, credibility, and political clout that no other organization within the Corridor is perceived to have. A further part of the Commission's effectiveness appears to stem from the fact that it is a governmental body with a clear connection to the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service, yet it has a degree of independence and thus is less encumbered than if it were completely within a governmental bureaucracy (e.g., the Commission is not wholly tied to the DOI/NPS chain of command). This helps the Commission to act effectively as a catalyst in initiating and supporting action by Corridor partners, both governmental and nongovernmental. As one partner expressed it in an interview, the Commission *"acts more like an entity just outside of government, and…I have learned in my work that the point of gravity for a lot of the [Corridor's] actions and campaigns needs to lie just outside of government."*

The Commission/NPS partnership has been very successful in raising awareness of the Corridor, and has acted as the primary protector of, and advocate for, an integrated, regional vision for the Corridor. (In fact, many partners have used the Corridor vision and goals to help define their own strategic organizational goals.) The Commission's strong sense of fiduciary responsibility and commitment to meaningful public engagement also are viewed as strengths.



While the Commission and its NPS staff have filled their niche with great success, certain considerations are important to note for the future. In particular, a significant dependency on the Commission and the staff is evident among the partner network. Many Corridor partners feel that if the Commission and NPS involvement were to terminate in 2006, the network would at the very least be significantly weakened and could regress toward the much less functional and productive state that existed before the Corridor's establishment. Beyond highlighting the significance of the Commission and the NPS, this finding illuminates two important points: first, that it takes a considerable amount of time and nurturing to build a durable partner network; and second, strengthening the network should be a high priority for the Corridor's next phase.

See chapter 6 for further discussion of the roles that the Commission and NPS staff have filled over the lifetime of the Corridor.

D. Partner Network

1. Federal government

Between its agreement to provide staff for the Commission and its commitment of discretionary funding and technical assistance, the NPS has made a significant investment in the Blackstone National Heritage Corridor. The NPS investment and on-the-ground presence in the Corridor are widely viewed among the partnership both as a crucial element in the success to date and as an appropriate commitment by the agency in light of the Corridor's documented national significance.

Other federal agencies, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Federal Highway Administration, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, and the U.S. Geological Survey have also made important contributions thus far with their commitments of substantial funding and other assistance to Corridor initiatives. The additional federal recognitions that have been given to the Blackstone since the Corridor's establishment (e.g., American Heritage River, Urban River Initiative) have been critical in stimulating many of those federal commitments. Regardless of what may be done with respect to the management framework in the future, there is a strong desire and rationale for ensuring the continuation of these commitments. In addition, there is some interest in greater involvement by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

2. State government

State government in both Massachusetts and Rhode Island clearly has been instrumental in the success of the Corridor to date. Elected and agency officials from both states played key roles in the Corridor's creation, and have continued to provide essential support during the time since—particularly to large-scale initiatives such as state parks, the bikeway, and the Route 146 enhancements at the northern gateway in Worcester. Nonetheless, there is interest in securing greater and more consistent involvement from both state governments that is less subject to political shifts over time.

Enhanced state involvement could entail:

- A more consistent commitment to the Corridor over time by the governors of the two states, including more direct involvement in Corridor affairs and greater accessibility for partners;
- Further involvement by both states' economic development agencies, which are perceived by some partners to be somewhat less consistently engaged in Corridor-related initiatives than other relevant state agencies;
- Additional outreach by the Commission to the governors and the state economic development agencies to encourage the enhanced involvement envisioned above; and
- Possible inclusion of the state transportation agency directors on the Commission.

3. Local government

The 24 towns and cities within the Corridor also have been an essential part of the partnership and its success. Much of the on-the-ground work toward Corridor goals occurs at the local level, as is evident in Pawtucket's riverfront revitalization, the adoption and implementation of land use policies and regulations in some communities, and many other initiatives.

Yet there are inherent challenges in working with 24 different municipalities in two different New England states that have affected the degree of success with local initiatives in the Corridor. Local leadership, staff, resources, and issues change frequently, making it difficult to sustain consistent involvement and direction from any given community, let alone all 24. Also, local government in New England often tends to be inward-looking rather than regional or collaborative, and even various boards within a given community may not coordinate closely on issues that cut across their jurisdictions. These factors combine to present a significant challenge to developing and sustaining a consistent and effective local stewardship strategy throughout the Corridor.

Looking to the future, there is a case to be made for increased local representation on the Commission, as noted above in the discussion of the Commission's composition. Also, recognizing both the importance of retaining landscape and community character throughout the valley and the primary authority of local governments for land use planning and growth management, there is widespread interest in seeking additional ways to support and enhance the capacity of local governments in these efforts. Given the challenges described above, time, patience, and sustained attention to local partners will be crucial to achieving further success at the local level.



4. Nongovernmental partners
Nongovernmental organizations in the Corridor have been an indispensable component of the overall partnership and its accomplishments to date. They complement and enhance the work of the Commission and governmental partners, providing crucial energy, capacity, financial resources, and advocacy on behalf of Corridor goals and initiatives. There is general agreement that some guaranteed representation of nongovernmental partners on the Commission would be desirable. In addition, the degree of organizational and financial development and stability varies widely among these partners, with some being well-established and stable while others remain quite fragile. As a result, a strong consensus exists about the need for additional attention to building partner capacity and leadership.

E. Funding and Other Support

The federal commitment of nearly $24 million to the Commission through the National Park Service, and the matching contributions and other investments those funds have leveraged, have had a huge impact on the Blackstone Valley over the past 18 years. Yet while this federal support has been critically important, the existing funding system is not necessarily ideal. In particular, the Commission has had to lobby for almost all of its budget each year because its only relatively secure "base funding" has come from the discretionary ONPS (Operations of the NPS) funds that the NPS has provided (which have averaged around $300,000 per year over the past five years). The very limited amount of secure funding has been a significant obstacle for the Commission because the uncertainty it creates makes long-range strategic planning, implementation of multi-year projects, and staff retention very difficult.

Looking to the future, another significant consideration with the existing funding system is that fully two-thirds of the Commission's total federal funding would be lost if the NPS were not part of the management framework for the Corridor. Thus, while the Commission and its partners clearly have achieved a great deal within the existing context, the challenges described here point to a pressing need to pursue more secure, predictable, and sustainable funding.



CHAPTER 6

Probing How this Place-Based Partnership Model Works[1]

This chapter focuses on how the Blackstone National Heritage Corridor programs work. In other words, how do the programs deliver the accomplishments described in Chapter 4-A? In what ways do the programs have an impact on organizations and communities in the Blackstone Valley? Are there areas in which the programs might be strengthened or improved in the future? To explore these issues, the sustainability study team conducted a research project called a "process evaluation" of Corridor programs. A process evaluation is designed to examine how complex programs function and to document their impacts. This research effort had two phases: the first phase was designed to build a model of how the Corridor programs operate, and the second phase tested this model through a series of interviews with Corridor partners (see Appendix C for a discussion of research methods).

The program model (presented on page 38) is a powerful tool in several important ways. First, it is a representation of how Corridor programs achieve their long-term goals and objectives. This model is useful since it characterizes a highly complex program in a simple yet logical manner. Such information gives the Commission and Corridor stakeholders an opportunity to reflect on how the Corridor programs have evolved and where the Corridor might be headed. In addition, the model provides a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of the Corridor because it represents the underlying logic of the programs. As such, it establishes a basis for tracking progress over time and can be a helpful adaptive management tool. Finally, the process of developing and testing the model is, in its own right, a useful public engagement tool. Developing models of this type requires thoughtful, reflective input from key stakeholders on issues relating to program objectives and previous and current program activities, as well as strategic planning for future directions.



A. The Program Model

The model is a simplified theory of how the Corridor programs operate in a highly complex, real-world setting. In this way, the model can help us understand how Corridor programs achieve their goals. The model is organized into five linked components.

The first component, "Blackstone Heritage," posits that heritage acts as an underlying, unifying concept for Corridor objectives and activities (Figure 6.1). Heritage creates a context for Corridor initiatives and provides a platform for engaging prospective partners. In this way, heritage has the potential to link people to place.



Figure 6.1

The second component of the model suggests that the Corridor and the Commission together provide a venue for a collaborative framework and a common vision for organizations throughout the Blackstone Valley region (Figure 6.2). Organizations with seemingly different missions appear to share a vision, or have realigned their vision, with that of the Corridor programs and have become partners in accomplishing the objectives.



Figure 6.2

The third component of the model implies that the National Park Service adds value to, and increases the effectiveness of, Corridor programs (Figure 6.3). This value lies with the agency's expertise in interpretation and in managing natural and cultural resources, as well as its national identity or "brand."

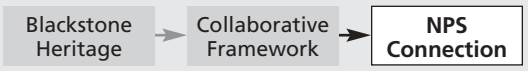


Figure 6.3

The fourth component of the model suggests that the first three steps contribute to a strong network of partners (Figure 6.4). This network consists of community leaders, municipal officials, state and federal agencies, and the business community, as well as environmental and preservation organizations. The network is knit together by the Corridor's shared, heritage-based vision, which helps to sustain the network while encouraging organizations to work across areas of interest. The network is also the primary instrument through which the Commission accomplishes projects.



Figure 6.4

The fifth component of the model indicates that, over time, a sustainable network system could develop (Figure 6.5). This network system would have the ability to undertake long-term projects while integrating economic and community development needs with resource conservation. As a result, a sustainable network system would significantly enhance the stewardship capacity of the Corridor programs.



Figure 6.5

Ultimately, the components described above work together in leading to the achievement of the Corridor's long-term goals (Figure 6.6).



Figure 6.6



B. Partner Interviews

Thirty Corridor partners were interviewed to test the program model. They included representatives from the business community, municipal governments, state and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, and community leadership. Some of the study participants have been connected with the Corridor for many years, while others are new partners. The interviews were done in a confidential manner and were designed to help the study team understand how Corridor programs work from the perspective of its partners. Analysis of interview data revealed five interwoven, related themes: 1) heritage: linking people to place; 2) basis for collaboration; 3) federal connection; 4) building a partner network; and 5) unintended consequences. The remainder of this section discusses these themes and related subthemes.

1. Heritage: Linking people to place

Subtheme: The story

Corridor partners emphasized the importance of understanding the "entire story" of the Blackstone Valley region. The story tells of the rise, decline, and reemergence of the Blackstone Valley. It emphasizes the impacts this cycle has had on the human and natural communities, while placing many of the Corridor's programs and objectives into a meaningful, contemporary context. One Corridor partner described it this way:

I think that the story of Worcester is the story of transformation from an agrarian to a manufacturing society. Like all of the old manufacturing cities in the Northeast, it had gone through a period of decline, with a kind of negative legacy. There is the ability to transform that perspective by talking about the positive changes that have happened and the opportunities to improve upon the past, and to repair some of what was broken during that process. I think of the Blackstone River and the opportunity to do some environmental remediation along it. That's why people have been embracing the story, because they do see the opportunity and they increasingly understand that their heritage can be a cornerstone for future prosperity.

Numerous partners describe the story as "the glue" that holds the region together. Thus, understanding the story not only helps to create a meaningful context for Corridor projects, it also serves as an organizing concept for the myriad groups and interests in the valley. Another partner described how the story provides a way for different people and organizations to engage each other around a shared sense of history. In this way, the story has the potential to transcend time and culture, and become a unifying theme within the valley:

It's telling the stories. Today, it's the same situation as [100 years ago]. You keep getting different waves of immigrant groups coming in. But guess what? Although they're doing different jobs, they're all probably in the same mills facing the same experiences and facing the same prejudices as previous immigrants. It's a very common experience and we find that when we delve into the different traditions, there's such a huge commonality when you get these groups together. I really think it serves to break down some of the natural barriers that people set up. So getting that story out there but not trying to sugarcoat it is important. There's a lot of bad stuff. But you know what? It's what we are, and it deserves to be told. That's what this really is about.

Several study participants also attributed direct, programmatic results to their greater understanding of Blackstone Valley heritage. In other words, the story is a "call to action" for partners, and Corridor programs and activities serve to underscore this call. A participant reflected on the process in this way:

This was all the result of greater appreciation for the history of our mill villages and the cultural heritage that our mill villages represent. There is about to be an initial planning meeting for one of the hilltop villages of the Blackstone Valley, which was the original European settlement pattern in the area when [it] was first settled for farming. So, there are two major planning efforts that were the result of a greater awareness of the cultural heritage of our area, and came out of the work of the Corridor [Commission] in instilling that sense of cultural identity.

Subtheme: Sense of pride and place

The notion of Blackstone Valley heritage continues to instill a strong sense of pride and place among Corridor partners. This has had a powerful impact on many Corridor partners, both as organizations and individuals. On an organizational level, a sense of place has helped to introduce the regional focus of Corridor programs to individual towns and local businesses. A number of study participants discussed how this has enabled them to think "more broadly" in terms of their organizational goals and objectives. While the Commission does not, in and of itself, create a sense of pride and place, there is a strong sense that Corridor activities have played a key role in moving this agenda forward among partner organizations. One study participant described it in this way:



We look at the pride that's been developed throughout the valley. People no longer slur the Blackstone Valley when they say where they are from. They practically wear it on their sleeve, "I'm from the Blackstone Valley," or "I'm from the Blackstone River"…. Is the Corridor Commission a hundred percent responsible for all of that? No, but it's that coalescing force that the Commission has brought about that has pushed this process along so much faster than it might [have gone] without…. The Commission has enabled people to think large and to think broadly and to not be afraid of talking to the people from another town.



Other study participants identified the Corridor programs' indirect, yet empowering role as an important factor for revitalizing the Blackstone Valley. Through supporting various improvement initiatives, the Commission has helped to cultivate a stronger sense of pride and place. This, in turn, has helped create a climate where organizations with seemingly different goals can find common ground:

I think the Corridor [Commission] has had an enormous impact because [it has] helped businesses and organizations that want to improve the infrastructure in the community. By pulling together people from different organizations with different goals, [it has] brought the community back to a place where [people] have a pride in being from the Blackstone Valley. This was really not there for many generations. The Blackstone Valley 20 years ago was a repressed, depressed area and not so many people claimed with pride the fact that they lived in the Blackstone Valley. Now that's changed. Not only are the people whose families have lived there for six and seven generations proud to be from the Blackstone Valley, but professional people are seeking to live there, too. It's now a destination community rather than the community of last choice.

For many individuals, this sense of pride has created opportunities for community engagement and revitalization efforts. Study participants who have lived in the valley for several decades describe this in terms of a psychological reemergence:

Rethinking our history and bringing it back up has been psychologically beneficial to people who were born and raised here… saying "Okay, the mills aren't going full steam any more," but you know something? They were a huge benefit to the whole nation at one time. For example, wool was made here for Civil War uniforms. This also gives that pride of place to the newcomer who says, "Well, this is really neat." I mean you can actually see people's faces light up when they hear some of the specific stories of the valley, and they tell those to their kids, and then that leads again to this pride of place.

Subtheme: Regional identity

The notion of heritage plays a strong role in creating a regional identity throughout the 24 cities and towns that comprise the Corridor. Several town officials described "local politics" as a potential impediment to undertaking long-term projects. For these Corridor partners, the notion of heritage provides political leverage with which to pursue objectives that are of town-level as well as regional interest. In describing the role of heritage, one town official said it "gives me a base [from] which to discuss my municipal and town projects." Other study participants described the ways in which the notion of heritage has helped to create energy for regional-scale projects:

It's funny, and I almost have to laugh because the Corridor has done the impossible here. They've gotten our town's land trust talking with the Economic Development Committee.

There's a psychological impact of being from the Blackstone Valley, and it gets you thinking in different ways. It gets you thinking about that bike trail and wouldn't it be great to link all of our towns together with a recreational resource? It gets you thinking about the canal and what that means to all of us as a common link in our history. It gets you thinking about all of the mills up and down the valley that, even though each had its own separate village, were part of an economic system that was internally consistent. Grafton's history is Northbridge's history, is Uxbridge's history, and so on.

Study participants also revealed the ways in which heritage has shaped or aligned their organizational visions. In many instances, this has reinforced the regional nature of Corridor goals and programs and fostered the sharing of resources across organizations:

Heritage brings the people in the region closer together. I think what it ends up doing is that, for a lack of a better term, we piggyback, so to speak. We actually gravitate toward supporting the Corridor's mission instead of expecting them to support us because our missions end up being entwined. Our organizations complement each other…. I guess that's a great way to look at it. They complement each other.

A number of Corridor partners describe heritage as the "defining" element for their organizations. For some, heritage is not something that necessarily affects day-to-day operations, but it is "present" because it helps reinforce organizational goals and objectives. For others, heritage is very much an explicit part of their identity and mission. One Corridor partner described the importance of heritage in this way:

Heritage defines the region and that is instrumental to our goals. If there is no regional entity, regional glue, then we are something totally different. The regional goal is bringing us together as a network. That's why our mission is about developing the network and community stewards. And it all goes back to what defines the Blackstone Valley: the national heritage and the natural resources.

2. Basis for collaboration

Subtheme: A vision for the future

Much of the Commission's value lies in its ability to engage a diverse set of partners in pursuit of a common vision. In doing so, the Commission has helped find points of consensus while facilitating dialogue between town officials, the business community, nonprofit organizations, state and federal government agencies, and a host of other partners. Study participants use words like "facilitator," "convener," "mediator," and "communicator" when describing the Commission in this capacity. One study participant explained the Commission's role like this:

I think the Commission does a lot of work to identify who the stakeholders are, and then does a lot of work to identify what the consensus points are. That's been valuable. And I think those two points are very important to any organization that's trying to affect progress in an area. From my perspective, those are two principal areas where I'd say the Corridor's been a big success.

In many instances, participation in this dialogue encourages organizations to redefine or readjust their ways of working. There are numerous examples in the interview data where study participants talk about a "light bulb going on" after participating in a Corridor-sponsored planning exercise. While individual organizations, businesses, and government agencies may still pursue their own objectives, these stakeholders are beginning to recognize the strategic advantages in working across multiple interests. For some, the experience has been quite humorous:

It's funny, and I almost have to laugh because the Corridor has done the impossible here. They've gotten our town's land trust talking with the Economic Development Committee.

Over time, this kind of dialogue may alter the way in which organizations and community leaders think about the future of the Blackstone Valley region. For the majority of study participants, this vision is now inclusive and integrates economic revitalization, community development, and natural/cultural resource stewardship:

When you ask municipal officials about integrating economic development, community development, and resource conservation, it's broadly understood these days that in fact all three of these areas are entirely mutually inclusive. Environmental quality actually helps drive economic revitalization.

Subtheme: Venue for partnerships

The Corridor also provides a place for partnership activities to occur. In addition, the Commission is a unique entity in the Blackstone Valley region and the combination of its regional focus and multi-interest objectives creates numerous partnership opportunities. Study participants noted that having an entity dedicated specifically to partnership activities has been very effective:



What the Corridor [Commission] has done is open up a number of constituencies. It brought them under an umbrella and that had not happened in the past. This has allowed a number of organizations to find opportunities to plug into various projects and programs.

For some partners, Corridor initiatives simply provide opportunities for reflection. This allows organizations to assess their strategies and goals in a broader context. One study participant commented on how this affected her work:

The Corridor hasn't really changed the landscape or the wild areas itself. But sometimes it has allowed communities to step back through various planning activities, and say, "Yes, these specific goals are part of our broader mission, which is community character." And there has been a little space in time and place in which local residents can think about the big picture.

The Corridor and the programs are, in many ways, both a physical venue and a conceptual space for various organizations to connect. This creates opportunities for ongoing dialogue and engagement, and resembles the function of a community center or town hall:

The Corridor is the place where the vision gets sorted out. And when I say "the Corridor," I don't mean the Corridor itself. What I mean is the events and the people they [the Commission] convene. They're sort of this lovely umbrella, and they invite everybody under to talk about things. And it's just wonderful, absolutely terrific.

Subtheme: Integrating objectives

Along with creating the context for broad-based partnership activities, the Commission has helped link economic and community development with the conservation of natural, cultural, and historic resources in numerous projects. Study participants talked about this integration on different scales, ranging from small efforts to massive redevelopment projects (e.g., the Route 146 project). Most study participants talk about this integration in terms of their own direct experience:

The mill project in our community is a good example. I'm not sure we would have taken it on 12 years ago because it was more community-based, and at the time we were certainly focused [on] the traditional areas of economic development. Quite frankly, what's caught our eye over the years is that the Corridor [Commission] not only says [it's] going to do something, [it] actually do[es] it.

Study participants from the business community recognize the value of environmental restoration efforts along the Blackstone River. The river is now considered an amenity and this has created opportunities for economic development. One participant described it this way:

The river was full of chemicals over the 20 years that I guess the Corridor has been in existence. The money and the focus that they've been able to create to bring the river quality back is essential…. Clearly, I would not be able to sell my building if that river were very polluted. So, the water quality and the condition of the river are critical to my ability to do this.

Through efforts to link economic development with resource stewardship, the Commission has become a credible, relevant partner for environmental, community, business, and preservation interests. According to study participants, this approach has allowed the Commission to integrate these potentially exclusive values across a variety of projects:

The Commission is extremely interesting in that [it] works with businesses, historic properties, unity groups, and preservation groups as well as environmental groups. What impresses me beyond comprehension is that [it has] a strong allegiance to the economic welfare of the valley, as [it does] with the environmental, as [it does] with the private restoration, as [it does] with groups like the chamber of commerce.

3. Federal connection

Subtheme: Major National Park Service roles

The National Park Service plays several important roles in the Corridor programs. First, NPS embodies the federal connection within the Corridor partnership, thereby reinforcing the notion that this is a bi-state, "umbrella" effort of national significance. Second, NPS provides an array of technical assistance and expertise in planning and management. As discussed in previous chapters, the Corridor contains a wealth of natural, cultural, recreational, and historic resources. Many of the partners responsible for managing these resources benefit from this relationship with the National Park Service. In some cases, NPS has directly "taught" various partners how to meet specific resource management needs. In other cases, NPS has connected Corridor partners with the appropriate expertise required for their particular projects. Third, study participants frequently acknowledged the work of specific individuals on the NPS staff. While this chapter has taken a systems-level focus, it is important to note that people play an extremely important role in Corridor programs. There is a strong sense among study participants that having the "right people in the mix" is a critical factor for success. Fourth, there is a strong sense that the NPS connection increases the credibility of the partnership because of its technical expertise and identity. For example, when study participants want to make "a strong impression," they request the services of an NPS ranger because there is something "special" about that presence. Finally, NPS is the leading federal agency in terms of interpreting natural and culture resources. This expertise is especially important because many Corridor programs use heritage to link people to place in the Blackstone Valley. For this to happen, the various interpretive sites within the Corridor must tell their stories in an effective and regionally coherent manner. Perhaps the most appropriate way to describe the NPS role is that of a "general resource provider." The agency is many different things to many different partners throughout the valley. One study participant put it this way:

You know, this is about injecting yourself in the veins of a community in every aspect. It's like looking at a body with all of its intricate parts and ways that the blood flows through. The Park Service has turned itself into that…. If you take away that life support of the blood out of a body, it falls apart. That is probably the best analogy at this point.

Subtheme: Branding and credibility

Many study participants commented on the value that federal designation brings to the region as well as to their specific organizational objectives. Some partners use the federal designation as a type of branding in an effort to create economic development opportunities. One member of the business community described the Corridor designation in these terms:

I entertain clients that are thinking about moving into the area–companies, businesses–and I give them a tour and they say, "It's beautiful here." I say, "Well, you're in the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor and there are so many cultural opportunities." They're concerned about quality of life for their employees. So the first thing I do is roll out all the information I have for the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor for this coming weekend and say, "This weekend, here's what we've got going on in the Blackstone River Valley" within 30, 40 miles. And they look at you like, "Wow, I didn't know that." And so this makes my job so much easier in trying to attract quality companies with new jobs and employees to this region.

Roles Played by the Commission and Staff in the Partner Network
Advocate
Agenda setter
Capacity increaser
Communicator
Convener
Coordinator
Credibility broker
Catalyst
Empowerer
Direct funder
Facilitator
Foundation
General resource provider
Glue
Inspiration provider
Institutional memory provider
Knowledge provider
Leader
Leverager
Mediator
Networker
Owner
Partner
Planner
Promoter
Strategist
Staff experience/guide
Sustainer
Technical assistance provider
Teacher
Vision holder

For other partners, the designation works as a leveraging and credibility tool. One study participant described how the designation affects his work in this way:

I think it's fair to say that the designation allows me to demand more from certain entities, in particular, federal government agencies, and to some extent state agencies as well. For example, when an agency says, "Well, we have so many things to deal with right now, we can't deal with the Blackstone," I can respond by saying, "Well, you know Congress made this an important project and we therefore need to get a little bit more than what you just said."

The value of federal designation, like the role of the NPS itself, is complex and means something different to different partners. Despite these differences, most study participants felt that federal designation reinforces and brands the regional identity of the Blackstone Valley while providing credibility to Corridor partner programs, activities, and objectives:

I am always aware that I'm working in a special circumstance. I think the way you could probably describe it best is that you behave one way in a McDonald's and another in a five-star restaurant. Well, similarly here. There's something special about the area.

4. Building a partner network
Subtheme: Central hub
Corridor programs have helped to build a complex network of partners in the Blackstone Valley region. The network is the primary instrument for achieving resource stewardship goals that are integrated into economic and community development initiatives. Some study participants use terms like "foundation," "catalyst," "leader," and "sustainer" when describing the Corridor Commission's role in the network. Others describe it as "agenda setter," "advocate," "convener," or "strategist." (See sidebar for the 31 terms used by partners to describe the roles played by the Commissioners and staff in the partner network.) Some partners rely on the Commission for seed funding or technical assistance, while others use it as a source of information, a marketing tool, or as a link to policy makers. The point is that different partners are connected in different ways at different times in a highly dynamic system. However, interview data suggest that the Commission is the "central hub," serving as the umbrella organization that maintains network functioning. Furthermore, nearly every study participant indicated that, at the present time, no other organization is capable of replacing the Commission in this capacity. One study participant described the Commission's role this way:

The Corridor has become the focal point for all these activities and it's provided the place for people to connect. There used to be all these individual groups running around on their own, and they were not really connected. The Corridor has since given them the ability to connect to each other, and I think there have been tremendous cooperative efforts as a result. I know the watershed groups in both states are now meeting on a regular basis. I know some of the environmental groups are now meeting on a regular basis. I know the activities relative to the annual cleanup are now coordinated across the length and breadth of the river. I think the Corridor [Commission] has really become the focal point for all of these efforts over the years.

Subtheme: Building capacity
According to study participants, the Commission plays a major role in building the capacity of partner organizations. Capacity building can come in many forms. For some organizations, capacity refers to their actual ability to do project work. One study participant described the Commission's capacity-building efforts in these terms:

There is a capacity-building role that no one else in this region provides, which works in two principal ways. The first is direct capacity building within the Corridor region by the importation of the energy, talent, and expertise of the people working in the Blackstone Valley because of the creation of the Corridor. The NPS staff brings a huge increase in talent and human capital into this region. The second thing is that through [the Commission's] grant making, local organizations have been able to build their own capacity. The goal, obviously, is to create capacity within Corridor organizations in terms of training, professionalism, expertise, etc., to do the work on the ground, on an organization[al], town-by-town, city-by-city basis.

For other organizations, capacity building refers to efforts aimed at improving organizational management and operations. Many partner organizations are small nonprofits that may lack professional experience, sophistication, and training in organizational management. For these partners, the Commission's efforts have helped increase their capacity to be more effective organizations:



The Corridor [Commission] has provided training to us as an organization on internal organizational matters. How do we do brainstorming effectively? How do we write a management plan? How do we learn about management planning processes? This has helped us grow as an organization and allowed us to do more.

The strength and effectiveness of the partnership network depends significantly on the stability of individual partner organizations, and on their ability to deliver results. In this way, building the capacity of individual organizations can strengthen and improve the network over time. This, in turn, may increase the likelihood of realizing long-term Corridor goals and objectives. One study participant put it this way:

The Corridor [Commission] provided us with consultancy help and organizational development help in this past year. For example, they connected us with a consultant who's listened to us and given us feedback as we reflect on our work. This has helped put things in perspective. So there's a resource that you wouldn't think that the National Park Service provides. Providing an organizational development consultant for a private nonprofit organization? But the Corridor [Commission] understands that the sustainability of your partner organizations is critical to the long-term health of what you're trying to accomplish. If we fold up, then they've lost a partner.

Subtheme: Critical factors

The interview data produced three critical factors that study participants deemed essential for growing and sustaining the network into the future. First, each study participant referenced time as a critical factor. It takes time for partner organizations to build sufficient trust to engage in partnerships. It takes time for new organizations to build enough capacity to be active in the network. It takes time for more "traditional," established organizations to see value in working across areas of interest. And it takes time to integrate resource conservation objectives with community and economic development goals. Next, the ability to identify and secure sustainable sources of funding surfaced as a critical factor for many study participants. The reasons for this are obvious—funding affects staff size, training and equipment budgets, and an organization's ability to make long-term project commitments. The constant pressure to secure funding may cripple smaller organizations in the network because it is very labor-intensive, thereby pulling limited staff resources away from project work. Finally, the notion of sophistication surfaced as a third critical factor. As discussed earlier, the Corridor program plays a multitude of roles in a complex and dynamic network system. This requires a high degree of sophistication, because failure to play the right role at the right time with the right partner can greatly reduce the overall effectiveness of Corridor initiatives and activities.

5. Unintended consequences
The term "unintended consequences" refers to impacts or outcomes that study participants did not anticipate from their involvement in the Corridor. In other words, what happened that Corridor partners did not expect? Study participants tended to express unintended consequences in either positive or negative terms.

Subtheme: Positive consequences
Most study participants described unintended consequences in very positive terms. Many partners did not anticipate the Corridor programs to generate so much "positive" momentum, energy, and success. Some described this as "personally sustaining," while others cited benefits this momentum has had on their organizations in terms of networking and capacity building. One study participant described it this way:

I never imagined that there would be so much positive activity and energy. I never imagined that I would know, or care, so much about what's going on in Rhode Island…. The Corridor [Commission] organized the expedition in 2000 and that was a major catalyst for future success in the Blackstone Valley because it knit people together in ways they hadn't been knit before. And people got excited about the river. So I honestly never imagined that there would be this degree of activity going on. And I link everything back to the Corridor [Commission] because I just never imagined it would get to this point without them.



For other study participants, the fact that organizations with diverse interests and political orientations could actually work together proved wholly unexpected:

The unintended consequence is to take the strong liberal environmental groups and to integrate them more thoroughly with the business community. And I never expected to be able to see the Audubon Society work with the chamber of commerce in concert with economic development, to enable both parties to get their long-term objectives accomplished. That was exceptionally unexpected. The other unexpected thing that happened is the ability [of] lawmakers, both Republicans and Democrats, to work together for a common goal. The consistent Park Service program has transcended party lines and enabled lawmakers to get results because of its bipartisan approach. Everyone has agreed with the objectives of the Corridor, whether Republican or Democrat, and because of that we have had tremendous results that we didn't expect.

A number of study participants were surprised by the degree to which the Corridor Commission could be a responsive federal government partner. For some, this represents a unique, successful way of working:

I sense the Corridor [Commission's] program as being much more grassroots than anything else I've seen, and yet it's the federal government, which is insane! I mean, wait a minute, a federal effort that is grassroots? Maybe they've turned the system upside down.

Subtheme: Negative consequences
Study participants described "negative" unintended consequences in highly varied and specific terms. Although this resulted in no single, coherent "negative" subtheme, documenting these individual experiences may help improve the Corridor programs.

One study participant "hates" the paperwork associated with the partnership, especially with respect to cooperative agreements. Another study participant felt that she often receives "mixed messages" from Commission staff. Her sense is that communication among Commission staff could be improved. Another study participant felt "extremely frustrated" when the Commission highlighted and strongly encouraged their partnership, then did not provide seed funding for an important project.

Perhaps the most salient "negative" unintended consequence is the issue of "too much success." One study participant noted that this may have stretched the Commission's capacity to follow through on every new idea:

One of the things you always realize is that you bump up against limited resources. There has been an explosion of ideas and programs, some of which are very good. One of the issues in terms of the success has been the limited capacity, to some degree, of the Corridor program to provide new services that continue to emerge. As a result of that, there are some initiatives that didn't get as far as people had hoped.

Another study participant described it this way:

The success of the Corridor programs has increased the value of being in the region–living, working, and playing. This has led to more pressure to further develop the Corridor region. So, I don't know if that's unintended or just a consequence of better planning and better management. But it has occurred and it increases the pressure for additional development. If not done wisely, this development could undermine what we're trying to do.

C. Insights from the Evaluation Process

Several themes emerged from the partner interviews that together reconfirm the program model, although without an organization like the Corridor Commission and its staff, it is unclear if the network can be stable and sustainable into the future. There are several reasons for this. First, study findings suggest that the Commission is the central, integrating hub in a complex and dynamic, multi-interest network.[2] The Corridor is able to connect the business community with the resource conservation community while engaging 24 municipal and two state governments. Second, the Commission functions as a key partner in the network. Study participants used 31 different terms to describe what the Commission does for their specific organization. Finally, the Commission adds significant credibility to the work and goals of partner organizations because of its federal stature and the connection to the National Park Service. Federal designation also underscores the importance of the Corridor, while further reinforcing the regional focus of the programs. In addition, study participants strongly felt that the National Park Service plays a critical role in the Corridor partnership. For some, NPS embodies and symbolizes the Corridor's federal status. For others, NPS provides a wealth of technical and staff expertise, and is seen to bring "the right people to the mix."

For study participants, three critical factors are essential for sustaining the network into the future. These critical factors are time, sustainable funding, and sophistication. First, the work of building an integrated, stable network of partners takes a great deal of time. Organizations need time to form partnerships and adjust to working across areas of interest. Second, securing sustainable sources of funding is a critical factor because this affects an organization's ability to make long-term project commitments and investments. Finally, the notion of sophistication surfaced as a critical factor. Because the Corridor plays a multitude of roles in a complex network system, this requires a high degree of sophistication. Failure to play the right role at the right time with the right partner can greatly reduce the overall effectiveness of Corridor initiatives and activities.

Notes

1. The authors would like to thank Professors Robert Manning, Curtis Ventriss, Jennifer Jewiss, and Daniel Krymkowski at the University of Vermont for their contributions to this chapter.

2. While study findings provide insight into the structure and function of the network, a network analysis can provide a more complete picture of the network and may be warranted. See D. Knoke, and J. Kuklinksi, *Network Analysis* (Beverly, CA: Sage Publications, 1982).



CHAPTER 7

Exploring Management Options for the Future

As described in the previous chapters, the Blackstone's existing federally supported management framework has been very effective and has contributed in many crucial ways to the progress made throughout the Corridor over the past 18 years. With that backdrop, this chapter explores a range of options for the Commission to consider in determining what framework would be most desirable for the future.

The options fall into five broad categories:

1. Extend the existing framework in its current form;
2. Make adjustments to the existing framework;
3. Establish a new management entity;
4. Establish a permanent NPS presence in the Corridor; and
5. Move forward without a federally supported framework.

Within several of those categories, more specific sub-options are presented. For each option and sub-option, a brief description of the concept is provided, followed by an analysis of important considerations. It is important to note that *many of the options are not mutually exclusive*, and selected ones could be combined in a package to best suit the unique needs and circumstances of the Blackstone Valley. The study team is not recommending any given option or combination of options, but instead is presenting information on the range of options for the Commission's consideration as it deliberates how best to proceed in the future.

The options presented in this chapter emerged from conversations held during the sustainability study, the team's examination of relevant models from other places, and its evaluation of the existing framework (see chapter 5). Readers are encouraged to refer to appendix B, which contains a synopsis of the workshop on future management of the Corridor held in Providence, Rhode Island, on October 26, 2004.

Option 1: Extend the existing framework in its current form

Description: The first option is to seek reauthorization of the current structure as is, continuing the key elements of the Commission with its current composition, NPS staff support, annual federal funding specifically allocated to the Corridor (both earmarks for the Commission and discretionary funding from NPS), and the current range of core commitments. This could be done on a temporary basis for perhaps 5, 10, or 20 more years to provide more time to sustain current momentum toward Corridor goals, strengthen the partner network, and further evaluate long-term options for Corridor management and federal involvement. Alternatively, a push could be made to try to make the current framework permanent.

Analysis: In some respects, this would be the simplest option because it would merely continue the framework that is already in place. The existing framework has clearly worked well thus far, and there is no reason to expect it would not continue to do so. Both the Commission and its partners are comfortable with the framework, and indeed are overwhelmingly supportive of continuing it for at least another ten years. (As several people suggested during the sustainability study, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it.")

Nonetheless, reauthorizing the existing framework would not address certain shortcomings of the current approach, such as the limited representation of local and nongovernmental partners on the Commission, the at-times-inconsistent involvement of the two states, and particularly the lack of secure funding over time. It is important to note that even a temporary reauthorization of the existing framework, to say nothing of a permanent one, would represent a precedent for national heritage areas nationwide. To date, no other such area has received federal funding and other assistance for more than 20 years,[1] and many participants in and observers of national heritage areas, including some members of Congress, argue strongly that federal support to these areas should only be for a limited duration.

Option 2: Make adjustments to the existing framework

There are a number of options that would involve retaining much of the current framework (including the Commission as management entity) to build upon its strengths, while making adjustments to address some of its limitations. Some of these adjustments could be fairly modest and straightforward, while others would be ambitious and significant.

Authorization of a modified version of the existing framework could be sought on either a temporary or permanent basis. As with Option 1, any extension of federal support for the Corridor would represent a precedent among national heritage areas.

Option 2.A: "Tweak" certain aspects of the existing structure to improve the Commission's functionality

Description: Two primary ideas emerged that would represent relatively modest changes in the current framework. First, the Commission's composition could be modified or expanded to provide better representation of key stakeholders in the Corridor; and second, authorization of interim appointments by the governors could be sought to avoid extended vacancies during the appointment process. Both of these changes would need to be made legislatively by Congress as part of a reauthorization of the Commission and the broader federally supported framework.

Analysis: There appears to be general agreement among the Commission, staff, and partners that the Commission's size could be increased somewhat (perhaps by as many as 10–12 members) without adversely affecting its functionality, and that more representation from local governments and nongovernmental partners would be desirable—both to address the existing shortage of such representation and because that is where some of the greatest energy in the Corridor resides. Some interest was expressed in possibly altering the composition of state government representation on the Commission (e.g., adding the transportation agencies), but no clear consensus emerged. Some partners expressed frustration over what they perceived as the limited participation of the states' economic development representatives in Commission meetings over time, but others felt it was appropriate and useful to keep those dedicated seats because of both the importance of economic issues to the overall Corridor vision and the other valuable ways in which those agencies have contributed.

If the Commission is retained as the management entity, the authorization of interim appointments by the governors would seem to be a small but useful step that could help the Commission to operate more effectively and efficiently. However, this idea could encounter resistance because of jurisdictional concerns and the question of whether it is constitutional for governors to make interim appointments to a federally established commission.

Option 2.B: Establish an advisory council

Description: Instead of expanding the Commission's membership, an advisory council to the Commission could be established to provide a formal mechanism for broader stakeholder involvement in Corridor management. This approach is used at the Boston Harbor Islands national park area, where a 28-member federally established advisory council provides advice and recommendations to the "Islands Partnership" that serves as coordinating body for the park. The advisory council has two seats in the Islands Partnership, and serves as the partnership's primary mechanism for engaging with the public on park planning and management. Members of the council include representatives of municipalities, educational and cultural institutions, environmental organizations, business and commercial interests, advocacy organizations, and Native American groups. (See www.bostonislands.org/manage for further description of the Boston Harbor Islands national park area approach.)

Analysis: Congress could create an advisory council legislatively as part of a reauthorization of federal support for the Corridor, or the Commission could establish one administratively under its existing authority.[2] Under either mechanism, an important consideration is that the council would likely be subject to the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, which requires advance notification of all meetings in the Federal Register along with other administrative procedures. If the council were created legislatively, it would also be subject to a similar nomination and appointment process to that which the Commission currently follows. These requirements, which are invariably time- and labor-intensive, would add a considerable administrative burden to the Commission's staff.



Nonetheless, the concept of an advisory council merits consideration in light of the broad range of stakeholders who share an interest in the management of the Corridor, and the need to keep the size of the actual management entity (i.e., the Commission) to a manageable number. It is also possible that broader regular stakeholder involvement with the Commission could be achieved through the less formal establishment of an external "friends group" or similar body, which would not necessarily be subject to the administrative requirements of an advisory council.

Option 2.C: Narrow or shift the staff's focus
Description: Two distinct concepts fall under this option. First, rather than continuing to play a lead role across the full spectrum of programmatic commitments, the Commission could focus its staff involvement primarily on a targeted subset of programs. Lead responsibility for other priorities on a Corridor-wide basis could gradually be transferred to other interested entities if they were willing and able—perhaps the Tourism Triangle for tourism-related initiatives, the Blackstone River Watershed Coalition for environmental protection and restoration, or a new "regional regeneration authority" for economic development. While other entities would thus assume the lead role for certain efforts, the Commission could continue to provide funding to help support them, and could retain lead responsibility for ensuring integration of the full range of programmatic commitments into an overall vision and agenda for the Corridor.

Second, rather than continuing to focus primarily on supporting and implementing projects related to the core commitments, the Commission could shift its role, both in the use of its funding and staff support, to place greater emphasis on building organizational capacity and stability among the Corridor's nonprofit partners. This could take several forms, including:

- providing direct financial support for this purpose;
- helping to generate financial support from other sources;
- providing staff assistance, training, information, and other non-financial support;
- partnering with other capacity-building organizations (e.g., community foundations) in a more formal or structured way.

Analysis: Either (or both) of these changes would be most appropriately implemented through administrative action by the Commission. (These changes could also conceivably be folded into legislation authorizing further federal support for the Corridor, but doing so is not necessary and could be limiting in the future.) The concept of narrowing the staff's focus was raised in several conversations during the study team's research, and would enable the staff to work more deeply in fewer disciplines rather than being spread more thinly across a wider array of initiatives. This approach would also help to reduce the dependency on the Commission that currently exists for leadership across all aspects of the Corridor's broad agenda.

Shifting to a greater emphasis on building organizational capacity and stability among nonprofit partners would help to address what is generally acknowledged to be one of the Corridor's most pressing needs. At the moment, some of these partners are very strong and stable, while others are much less so. Part of the dependency on the Commission that has developed is a result of this disparity in capacity, with less stable nonprofit partners relying more heavily on the Commission and staff. Also, there appears to be a relatively limited supply of philanthropic support for nonprofits in the Blackstone Valley,[3] which adds to the challenge for those organizations that have less capacity to start with.

Option 2.D: Establish a bi-state compact between Massachusetts and Rhode Island
Description: The governors of the two states could establish a bi-state compact or agreement that would formalize the states' ongoing commitment to the Corridor. This document could identify shared goals, priority areas for interstate cooperation, and mechanisms to ensure continued coordination and communication. (In addition to continued participation in the Commission, the latter topic might include such things as a periodic "Blackstone Valley Summit" involving the governors and staff from all relevant state agencies to discuss key issues and develop updated action agendas.) The recent agreement between the two states on management of Narragansett Bay could serve as a model.

Analysis: A formal agreement between the two states would further cement their already strong commitment to the Corridor. It would help to increase the consistency of the states' involvement over time by making it less subject to political changes within either state. Also, it could provide a vehicle for elevating the profile of the Corridor with the governors, and for helping to ensure sustained, committed involvement by key state agencies over time. The compact also could serve as the foundation for a state-level management framework for the Corridor, which likely would be the best alternative to a federally supported framework if it were terminated in 2006 or sometime further into the future.

Option 2.E: Cultivate a parallel bi-state nonprofit organization to complement the Commission
Description: The Commission and its partners could work to nurture a vigorous Corridor-wide nonprofit that would help the partnership in achieving its goals and vision for the Corridor. For example, such a nonprofit could help to secure additional funding and spearhead the creation of an endowment for the Corridor. To avoid competing directly with other organizations for current funding, the Corridor-wide nonprofit could be an "organization of organizations" that would concentrate on accessing funding from other sources that the Commission and its partners have difficulty obtaining (such as from large foundations, corporate sponsors, and workplace giving). The bulk of these funds could then be distributed to priority initiatives across the Corridor through the types of funding programs the Commission currently uses. Another possible role for a Corridor-wide nonprofit could be to take on leadership responsibility in areas in which the Commission might wish to scale back its efforts (as discussed under Option 2.C). For instance, the nonprofit could take the lead for sustainable heritage-based economic development in the Corridor, perhaps as a "regional regeneration authority." To achieve these various roles effectively, it would be valuable for the nonprofit to be given "standing" (i.e., recognition, credibility, and authority) through federal and/or state legislation.



An effective Corridor-wide nonprofit could be a valuable asset to the Commission and its partners.

At the moment, the only existing nonprofit that appears to have the requisite Corridor-wide geographic focus to potentially play this complementary role to the Commission is the new bi-state organization, Blackstone River Valley CorridorKeepers. This group currently has a relatively narrow mission (focused on securing reauthorization of federal support for the Corridor by 2006), but it is conceivable that the organization could evolve into the much broader type of role envisioned here over time. Alternatively, a new nonprofit could be created specifically for this purpose (either through legislation or separate action by the Commission and Corridor partners).

Analysis: An effective Corridor-wide nonprofit could be a valuable asset to the Commission and its partners. Indeed, some of the outside experts who participated in the workshop on October 26, 2004, saw the absence of such an organization as a significant flaw in the current framework. Such organizations typically are able to be more entrepreneurial in generating revenues than are federal commissions, and thus could help to reduce the partnership's reliance on federal funding and establish a more diverse, secure, and sizable funding base for Corridor initiatives. In addition, if a Corridor-wide nonprofit were able to assume lead responsibility for certain aspects of the Corridor's agenda, it could allow the Commission's staff to focus more on other aspects. (For instance, economic development is currently demanding a substantial commitment of time and energy by the staff, and lies outside the NPS's traditional areas of responsibility and expertise.) Also, a Corridor-wide nonprofit could further complement the Commission and the partnership by increasing the visibility of Corridor initiatives in the region and beyond, helping to broaden public understanding of the effort, and advocating for desirable actions (e.g., funding and policy decisions) by governmental and other partners. Further, an effective nonprofit working to support diverse initiatives on a regional basis could offer long-term stability for the Corridor by providing a back-up to the Commission in case it is terminated in the future.

Despite these possible advantages, there are also potential drawbacks and challenges to consider in deciding whether to pursue this option. The issue that generated the most concern among Corridor partners was possible competition for funding—that is, a fear that it would be difficult to ensure that a Corridor-wide nonprofit would not become a competitor to other nonprofits seeking funding from sources the other organizations rely on. There are ways to attempt to address this understandable concern as discussed above, but it is nonetheless a significant consideration to keep in mind. Another issue is possible overlap or duplication of effort between the Corridor-wide nonprofit and the Commission. To avoid this, careful and coordinated thought would be needed in carving out the respective niches for both organizations, and ongoing communication and coordination between them would be essential. A further issue is the current lack of a Corridor-wide nonprofit that is ready to step quickly into the type of role envisioned here. Undoubtedly, a significant investment of time, energy, and perhaps some start-up funding would be needed to get a fledgling nonprofit to a stage where it could make a meaningful contribution.

Option 3: Establish a new management entity

The Commission could be replaced by another type of entity that would fill the central hub/coordinating role the Commission currently does. Given the political geography of the Corridor, any new management entity would need to be bi-state in nature. This could be achieved in at least two different ways: shifting to a Corridor-wide nonprofit management entity, or shifting to a bi-state coordinating entity established by joint action of the two states. Either of these entities could receive federal standing, funding, and NPS staff support if authorized by Congress (although such further federal involvement would be a precedent for national heritage areas because no existing area has received federal support for more than 20 years). If federal standing and support were not provided, either of the alternative management entities would need state-level standing, and funding would need to be provided by the states and/or other sources.

Option 3.A: Shift to a Corridor-wide nonprofit organization

Description: For the majority of existing national heritage areas, Congress has designated a nonprofit organization to serve as the management entity (including the nearby examples of the Essex National Heritage Area in Massachusetts and the Quinebaug-Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor in Massachusetts and Connecticut). For the Blackstone, a new nonprofit organization could be created specifically to serve as the management entity, or conceivably an existing nonprofit in the Corridor could expand its mission, structure, and capacity to play that role (e.g., Blackstone River Valley CorridorKeepers).

Building on examples from other national heritage areas, the board of a nonprofit management entity for the Blackstone could take many different forms. For example, it could be structured to mimic the current (relatively small) membership of the Commission. (This approach is underway at the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor in Pennsylvania, where an existing federal commission that has served as the management entity has helped to create a new nonprofit whose board consists mostly of the same stakeholders as the commission. Although the nonprofit does not yet serve as the management entity, it provides a promising back-up to the Delaware and Lehigh Commission, which is facing a scheduled sunset in 2008. See www.delawareandlehigh.org for more information.) At the other end of the size spectrum, the board of a nonprofit management entity for the Blackstone could include a wide range of public and private members, including elected officials and agency representatives from all levels of government, from businesses, and from other nonprofits, as well as residents throughout the Corridor. (A good model is the nonprofit Essex National Heritage Commission, which includes more than 125 commissioners. See www.essexheritage.org for more information.) This more inclusive approach offers the advantage of increasing stakeholder participation and "ownership" in the management entity, but also raises potential logistical and administrative challenges. Another possibility is that the board composition could be somewhere in between those two ends of the spectrum, with somewhat broader representation than the current Corridor Commission but less so than the Essex model.

Analysis: The potential strengths and drawbacks related to a Corridor-wide nonprofit discussed under Option 2.E above are generally relevant to this option as well. In addition, based on observations from national heritage areas that have nonprofit management entities, certain other considerations are worth noting. For instance, while these entities receive and disburse federal funds for heritage area purposes, they typically have more flexible fundraising and revenue generating capacities and are not subject to many of the constraints (e.g., cumbersome appointment processes) as federally established commissions. Also, unlike federal commissions, nonprofit management entities are not subject to termination at the end of a defined period (although in all cases thus far their federal funding and NPS support have been authorized only for a limited duration). On the other hand, however, no NPS personnel have been assigned to serve as staff to any of the existing nonprofit management entities. And a nonprofit likely would not have the same degree of political clout at the federal or state level as the Commission has had due to its federal stature.

Among the many existing nonprofits in the Blackstone Valley, none appear ready to take over as management entity in the near term due to (1) insufficiently broad missions relative to the integrated bi-state vision for the Corridor, and/or (2) their stage of organizational development (i.e., not having sufficient organizational capacity and stability to undertake this demanding role). Therefore, this option seems more viable as a longer-term possibility that could be worked toward in the coming years, rather than as an immediate replacement for the Commission following its scheduled sunset in 2006. It is possible that a Corridor-wide nonprofit cultivated to complement the Commission under Option 2.E could eventually become a strong candidate to take over as the management entity.

Option 3.B: Shift to a bi-state coordinating entity established through joint action by the two states

Description: If the two states took formal joint action focused on the Corridor (such as the compact described in Option 2.D above or parallel state-level legislation), a provision could be included to establish a new bi-state coordinating entity that would assume management duties if the Commission were terminated. This entity, which could be in the form of a bi-state committee or public corporation, would be appointed by the governors and would include representation from a cross-section of the Corridor partnership in both states. The NPS would not necessarily be included, unless the states requested it and the NPS agreed to participate. The governors (or state legislatures) could assign particular agencies from each state with lead responsibility for providing administrative support to the coordinating entity, or it could hire its own staff if sufficient funding were available.

Analysis: A new bi-state coordinating entity established through state rather than federal action would be closely analogous to the Commission, and could have some of the same strengths (e.g., providing for substantive involvement of key partners throughout the Corridor) while not being subject to the cumbersome federal appointment process. It would likely raise fewer concerns about competition for





funding than a nonprofit management entity, but it would be more vulnerable to the effects of variable state budgets (including the level of agency support available) than the Commission or a nonprofit. Also, lacking federal authorization, it would not have the same political clout at the federal level.

Option 4: Establish a permanent NPS presence in the Corridor

Rather than having NPS involvement in the Corridor tied primarily to the continued existence of the Commission, Congress could make the NPS presence permanent. The case for a permanent NPS presence is grounded in the national significance of the Blackstone Valley's resources, as documented in the management plan. This significance has been reflected in several ways: by the congressional establishment of the Corridor, at which time it was judged that the Corridor met criteria for national significance; by the substantial investment the NPS and the federal government have made to the Corridor; and by the other federal recognitions that have been conferred in recent years (e.g., American Heritage River, Preserve America Initiative).

A permanent NPS presence in the Corridor could take one or more of several different forms:

- designate the Corridor as a permanent program of the National Park System;
- designate a particular site or sites within the Corridor as a new unit of the National Park System;
- designate the entire Corridor as a new unit of the National Park System.

These distinct concepts are described below. In each case, ongoing base funding would be provided through the operations budget of the NPS budget to support the NPS operations in the Corridor.

These options would require further evaluation by the NPS through a "new area" or "special resource" study, concluding with a recommendation to Congress. Such studies generally involve an evaluation of resource significance, consideration of the area's suitability and feasibility for inclusion in the National Park System, and an assessment of alternatives to NPS management. In addition, a study would address potential NPS role(s), authorities, type of NPS unit, geographic scope, etc., and could explore the possibility of combining two or more of the options described in this section. The study would be conducted through an open and participatory process with a variety of opportunities for public input and thorough consideration of any questions, concerns, or suggestions that might be raised.[4]

It should be noted that Congress has been somewhat hesitant to authorize such studies and new NPS units in recent years due to budget limitations, a maintenance backlog at existing sites, and other priorities for funding. However, the Blackstone National Heritage Corridor would be well-positioned to argue for a study given the area's documented significance and the NPS's more than 20 years of experience in the valley, which have given the agency a much deeper understanding of the resources, issues, opportunities, public attitudes, and other key factors than it has at the outset of most new area/special resource studies.

Option 4.A: Designate the Corridor as a permanent program of the National Park System

Description: Under this option, Congress would authorize the NPS to provide ongoing assistance to partners throughout the Blackstone Valley in working toward the long-term vision for the Corridor. This could include providing continued staff support to the Commission if Congress decided to extend its authorization. The scope of the NPS role would be addressed in the authorizing legislation.

Analysis: The establishment of a permanent NPS program under this option would not result in the Corridor technically being labeled as a "unit" of the National Park System (unlike in Options 4.B and 4.C below). Nonetheless, this option would ensure an ongoing NPS presence, which many people in the Blackstone Valley see as being one of the most crucial requirements for long-term success. The magnitude of NPS's authorized activities would depend on the amount of base funding appropriated annually for the program, but the budget would not be zeroed out at the beginning of each appropriations cycle (as is the case with most of the federal funding currently provided to the Corridor through the NPS).

The creation of a permanent program would be a precedent for NPS involvement and federal funding in a national heritage area because to date those commitments have been only for limited durations. However, such action would be analogous to the NPS's declared preference to make permanent its involvement in the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network. (See the Chesapeake Bay Special Resource Study Final Report at www.chesapeakestudy.org .) The

The case for a permanent NPS presence is grounded in the national significance of the Blackstone Valley's resources.

Gateways Network is a partnership system of parks, refuges, museums, historic sites, and trails in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, and shares many similarities with the partnership network in the Blackstone Valley.

Option 4.B: Establish a permanent NPS site or sites within the Corridor

Description: Congress could create a new unit of the National Park System consisting of one or more sites in the Corridor if they met established criteria.[5] The NPS would assume management responsibility for one or more of the designated sites, although additional sites managed by other public or nongovernmental entities could be included in the designated unit as well. (A good example is the Boston National Historical Park or "Freedom Trail," which is an association of eight historic sites that are owned and managed by federal, municipal, and private entities.) In addition to managing and interpreting the site(s) under its direct stewardship, the NPS could help other partners to "tell the story" of the Corridor as a whole to the public. And, if authorized by Congress, the NPS also could provide technical and/or operational assistance to other sites and organizations throughout the Corridor.

Analysis: The basic concept envisioned under this option—of an NPS unit embedded within the broader context of the Corridor, with the NPS managing and interpreting one or more sites—has precedents in several other national heritage areas around the country. These include Salem Maritime National Historical Site/Essex National Heritage Area in Massachusetts, Cane River Creole National Historical Park/Cane River National Heritage Area in Louisiana, and Cuyahoga Valley National Park/Ohio and Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor in Ohio. Also, Cuyahoga Valley National Park represents a situation where NPS has been given broader authority by Congress to provide technical and/or operational assistance to partner organizations in the surrounding national heritage corridor. This authority is not unlimited, though—the NPS must be invited to provide such assistance, it cannot acquire land outside the park boundary, and its assistance is subject to available funding, which is less assured than funding for park operations. (See www.nps.gov/cuya, www.ohiocanal.org, and www.ohioeriecanal.org for more information.)

Implementing this option would ensure that the NPS would have an enduring and visible presence in the Corridor, particularly at the site(s) for which it would have direct management responsibility. Indeed, this presence probably would be more visible to tourists and the general public than the more "behind-the-scenes" role that NPS staff would likely play under Option 4.A. In addition, if Congress gave the NPS broader authority to provide technical and/or operational assistance to partners throughout the Blackstone Valley, experience at Cuyahoga Valley National Park/Ohio and Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor suggests that NPS assistance could contribute significantly to the achievement of Corridor-wide goals.

Option 4.C: Designate the entire Corridor as a new unit of the National Park System

Description: Rather than creating a new NPS unit consisting of one or more sites within the Corridor, Congress could designate the entire Corridor as a new unit. Given the scale of the Corridor, the population base, the amount of private land, the long-established New England tradition of local control over land use, and other critical factors, this would need to be a very different kind of national park unit than most currently in the system. In this case, the NPS would not own or manage much, if any, land in the park. Instead, it would concentrate on working with diverse partners to achieve joint park/Corridor goals. The park/Corridor would be managed through a cooperative partnership, with a bi-state representative body (such as the Commission or a successor nonprofit) serving as the management entity and the NPS providing administrative support. Authority over land use regulation would remain in local hands.

Analysis: In many respects this option is an extension of the current situation, with the significant difference that the Corridor would officially become a full-fledged unit of the National Park System. While at one level it does not seem like a dramatic departure, this would be a largely new model for a U.S. national park unit. The concept has some parallels with Boston Harbor Islands national park area, which encompasses 34 islands owned by various public and private entities and is managed by a congressionally established partnership that includes the NPS. But it is even more similar to models used in other countries (for instance, the United Kingdom and Italy), where it is common practice for national parks to encompass communities and lived-in landscapes. In those countries, park goals explicitly include promoting the social and economic well-being of residents in addition to protecting park resources and providing for public use and enjoyment.



This approach would ensure significant ongoing NPS involvement in the Corridor, and presumably the continuation of federal funding to support the management entity for the park/Corridor. In addition, establishing the Corridor as a full unit of the National Park System could provide a stronger tool for marketing or "branding" the area, making the Blackstone Valley's significance more immediately evident to potential visitors and residents. This could have important benefits for stimulating tourism-based economic development and a stronger sense of place and pride among valley residents.

It should be noted that because this option in some respects would be a new model for the NPS, it would likely require a greater amount of public and intra-agency dialogue than Options 4.A and 4.B to fully shape the concept and address any questions or concerns.

Option 5: Move forward without a federally supported framework

Description: The final option for the Corridor's future management beyond 2006 is to move forward without any sort of federally supported framework (i.e., without the Commission, its NPS staff, the federal funding that has flowed through the NPS, or the requirement that other federal agencies must seek consistency with Corridor goals in their actions). The national heritage corridor designation is permanent and thus would remain, and individual organizations and partner networks would continue to pursue Corridor goals. The states could establish a substitute management framework (for instance, through the interstate compact discussed in Option 2.D), and coordination could be provided by a nonprofit organization or a bi-state entity as discussed in Options 3.A and 3.B, respectively. Federal funding through other agencies (e.g., for transportation and environmental restoration projects) would continue to be available for initiatives within the Corridor, and limited NPS technical assistance could be available on a competitive basis through broader programs (e.g., the Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Program).

Analysis: This option clearly would be a dramatic setback at least in the short- to mid-term for the Corridor partnership, and in all likelihood would significantly slow the pace toward realization of the broad, integrated vision for the Corridor. It is possible that some key characteristics of the current framework could still be provided (for instance, a new nonprofit or state-authorized management entity could successfully transcend the Corridor's political boundaries, sectors, and disciplines in a way similar to the Commission), but much would depend on the willingness and ability of the two states to play a greater leadership role and sustain it over time. And many important elements (e.g., funding, leverage, credibility) would be much more difficult, if not impossible, to sustain at comparable levels. At the very least, there would likely be a difficult and perhaps extended transition period as Corridor partners adjusted to life without the Commission for the first time in 20 years.

Notes

1. Federal support for the Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor, the only national heritage area older than the Blackstone Corridor, terminated in August 2004 after 20 years.

2. Public Law 99-647, Sec. 5.(i).

3. For example, there is limited foundation support focused on the bi-state area encompassed within the Corridor, and Rhode Island and Massachusetts recently ranked 48th and 49th, respectively, in personal giving to charities.

4. The factors and process that would be used in an NPS study are further described in the NPS's "Criteria for Inclusion," available on the web at www.nps.gov/policy/mp/chapter1.htm.

5. Corridor participants have mentioned Slater Mill Historic Site in Pawtucket most often among possible sites to be considered for inclusion in this type of NPS unit. The Old Slater Mill Association commissioned a report in 2003 exploring this and other NPS-related possibilities, entitled "Slater Mill Historic Site: Building a Stronger Connection with the National Park Service."


WATERS

CHAPTER 8

Identifying Critical Ingredients for Sustained Success of the Partnership System

Earlier sections of this report examined the existing management framework, probed how the Corridor programs developed and how the Corridor partnerships are currently functioning, and identified some of the important ingredients and relationships. In order to assess what is needed to sustain and enhance this work and the progress toward Corridor goals in the future, the project team thought further about the essential components and how they work together in this complex set of relationships. To gather additional information, the project team asked many people—commissioners, staff, Corridor partners, and others with management experience in partnership settings—to identify the ingredients they believed were critical to success.

The discussion that follows describes three distinct categories of critical ingredients that act in concert as a "partnership system" in the Blackstone National Heritage Corridor to influence the work and overall progress in accomplishing the Corridor's purpose. It is important to note that although most of the critical ingredients have been a part of the Commission's work to date, not all of the ingredients are fully realized (e.g., secure, sustainable funding) although they are acknowledged as essential to sustaining success over the long term. This partnership system is dynamic, and matures and changes over time. Although the project team has grouped the critical ingredients under organizing ingredients, guiding elements, and time, in reality these ingredients are interconnected and interactive.

A. Organizing Ingredients

The organizing ingredients can be further grouped as follows:

- Heritage as a "platform" for civic engagement;
- A management framework that inspires trust and collaboration; and
- A commitment to partnerships and participatory processes.

1. Heritage as a "platform" for civic engagement

A critical element for any broad grassroots action strategy is to build a common base of understanding that inspires people to act individually and collectively toward a common purpose. In the Corridor, this common platform is the shared heritage that links people to place and makes them aware of the significance of the valley's cultural landscape, providing opportunities for residents and visitors to better understand and experience this national story. Attention to *telling the valley's heritage story* helps to strengthen that link between people and place where it exists and kindle it where it does not. For valley residents and partners, this greater understanding of their heritage and its national significance has created a *sense of pride and place* that helps to fuel participation in Corridor projects and activities. Moreover, telling a coordinated story that connects historic sites and natural heritage Corridor-wide creates a *regional identity* that encourages people and communities to think and act from a broader regional perspective. As the story is *linked to contemporary issues and concerns* it becomes a powerful motivator for stewardship. Telling the story, and carrying out projects that integrate preservation of historic and natural resources with community revitalization and economic development, has enabled the Commission to *engage a wide diversity of partners* in Corridor programs.

2. A management framework that inspires trust and collaboration

The Corridor's national designation and congressionally established framework provide a *federal stature* with many vital dimensions. The perception of the Commission as a *nonparochial, nonpartisan management entity* that transcends political boundaries and sectors has been particularly important given the Corridor's 2 states and 24 municipalities. The Commission acts as a *central hub for the partner network*, an essential function given the diverse set of partners that are involved in most Corridor projects. With many partners in the network and with personnel changes and evolving partner relationships, *maintaining continuity and institutional memory* is critical. Also, partners place a very high value on the roles the NPS plays: serving as staff to the Commission, providing essential funding, connecting partners with an array of needed technical assistance and expertise, initiating and facilitating collaboration, and symbolically conveying the Corridor's national significance and providing credibility through the NPS "brand." Consequently, many partners stress *a*



continuing NPS role as crucial for sustaining success. Finally, *secure, sustainable funding from diverse sources* is key to sustaining success, with *leveraging capacity* an important part of the mix. These latter two ingredients, in many ways keystone ingredients, are not assured in the Corridor's partnership system.

3. A commitment to partnerships and participatory processes

With the Corridor's programs predicated on partnerships and an intent to expand the network, *attention to collaboration* is essential. This requires developing *collaborative leadership skills* and building relationships with partners that are based on trust, openness, respect, and frequent communication. A *commitment to ongoing public engagement* and a *transparent process* are important to success, as is *working inclusively*. Working across sectors and interests is demanding and takes time. *Capacity building* is essential because partner organizations need to have the appropriate skills and organizational stability to be effective participants in the network over time. *Having the right people* involved, who understand and are skilled at the process of building partnerships, is essential.

B. Guiding Elements

Although all of the critical ingredients are interconnected as a system, the *vision* is central because it anchors the system and serves as an important guiding sustaining force. The guiding vision for the Corridor is broad, inclusive, and integrated, and is founded in the nationally significant heritage of the region. Central to the vision is the *sense of shared heritage*, which is defined and reinvigorated over time through ongoing dialogue among the Corridor partners and the broader public. This sense of shared heritage, elicited through broad public engagement, catalyzes a process through which the vision is embraced throughout the Corridor by partners with widely differing interests and perspectives. Many partners can now articulate the vision and see how they and their organizations fit into this larger picture. Moreover, they see how organizations with missions quite different from theirs also fit within the vision, and they are inspired to work together. Because the vision is so important to sustaining success, partners have emphasized the value of the *"keeper of the vision" role* played by the Commission and staff.

The vision is supported by the preservation and development *implementation strategy* that provides tangible results. These *accomplishments* contribute to the Corridor partnership system in several ways. First, they serve as evidence of progress toward long-term goals. Second, the accomplishments are an essential part of a feedback mechanism. As projects are completed, the vision and overall strategy can shift, as can the partner network. Third, they provide an important focal point for celebrating successes and can inspire further action.

C. Time

Passage of time influences the system in several ways. First, it takes time to build a complex partnership system over a large, diverse region. It also takes time to create a strong, sustainable system because partner capacities vary and partner relationships rely upon trust and effective communication to carry out joint projects successfully. Second, in a partnership system such as the Blackstone National Heritage Corridor, there is a strategic sequencing to the projects, with early projects setting the stage for later work. In the Blackstone Valley necessary first steps included education, building awareness, creating the "identity infrastructure" of signs, and community visioning. Third, time is required to build partner capacity and secure the needed funding that will lead to sustainability. In such a system where time plays a critical role, patience and flexibility are also key to sustaining success.

All of these are part of a maturation process in the partnership network—a growing sophistication and complexity that evolves over time. As accomplishments are achieved and the relationships in the system become more robust, the threshold for what is possible is raised and more challenging, complex efforts can be undertaken. A maturing partnership system, such as that of the Corridor, brings with it a need for increasing specialization, technical expertise, and capacity building in order to sustain the momentum and the partner energy. Maturation may also change the nature of the Commission-partner relationship, with partners taking on greater leadership over time. This can open the door to further learning and strengthening of the network.

Thinking about the Corridor as a partnership system operating within the realities of a living landscape begins to redefine the Corridor effort—not as a set of projects, but as a frame of mind and a way of living and working that revolves around the nationally significant resources of the Blackstone Valley and the opportunities those resources present. This means that management concerns such as providing ongoing vision, leadership, and capacity building are critical to sustaining success in the Corridor. Thus, the sustainability of the Corridor's partnership system in part requires a management entity that works in a process-oriented way, which is an important consideration for the management structure that will take the Corridor into the future.




New Coat for Anna

CHAPTER 9

Looking to the Future

Since the inception of the Corridor, the Commission, staff, and partners have created an extraordinary foundation for future work through strategic investment in key valley-wide projects and partnerships. While a great deal has been accomplished toward Corridor goals (as reviewed in chapter 4-A), no one in the valley considers the effort to be completed. There are important projects underway that are essential to finish in order to achieve the Corridor's purpose. Initiatives that have raised general awareness and offered opportunities for engagement have created a strong sense of ownership among partners Corridor-wide, yet many residents are still unaware of what the Corridor does, or of the Corridor vision. Education will be a never-ending need and will require an expanded partnership network to further engage people regarding their role in and understanding of the Corridor. The Commission's careful attention to building solid partnerships with many different organizations, agencies, and institutions has created a growing network of enthusiastic partners, but some partner organizations and the network as a whole are still fragile.

As the Commission deliberates on the future of the Corridor, it will need to consider how best to build upon its past successes and create the framework for the future that will best support and sustain that success over the long term. In this final chapter, the study team offers concluding thoughts on the primary challenges facing the Commission and on further commitments that are needed. These are organized in the following categories: a) continuation of Corridor-wide, project-based initiatives, b) ongoing activities that sustain the partnership base over time, and c) management considerations that support the partnership system.

A. Continuation of Corridor-Wide Project-Based Initiatives

Because the Commission has effectively integrated its projects among the five program areas, the discussion that follows will address project-based initiatives in three general categories that cut across program areas:

- The riverway,
- Land use and growth, and
- Tourism and heritage-based economic development.

1. The riverway

In many ways the riverway is the flagship of the Corridor. It is central to the story—past and present—and is a touchstone for the natural and built heritage and for degradation and recovery, aesthetic values, recreational assets, and hope for the future. The major Corridor-wide initiatives that are underway—the bikeway, the canal restoration, the network of public access sites on the river and canal, the state heritage parks, and the 2015 Fishable-Swimmable Campaign—make up a large portion of the Commission's current action agenda. Once these projects are in place, it will be necessary to ensure ongoing preservation and maintenance in order to protect the public investment. There will also be a continuing need to work with the municipalities along the river and with the two states to ensure that land uses complement and make accessible the Corridor's heritage resources (see section 2 below). Riverway assets will remain important to ongoing public outreach and will offer numerous opportunities for volunteer and partner recruitment, as riverway users are potential volunteers, partners, and stewards.

2. Land use and growth

The Blackstone Valley, arguably in large part because of Commission and partner efforts, is now experiencing growth pressures spreading from the three adjacent urban centers of Boston, Providence, and Worcester (the three largest cities in New England). This growth provides economic opportunities but it must also be guided through sound policies at the local level in order to protect community and landscape character. Bob Durand, former secretary of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, predicted at a 2001 Blackstone Valley land use summit that the landscape of the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor will be defined in the next ten years.[1] The need to address such growth lends a special urgency to the Commission's ongoing efforts to promote an integrated, regional approach to conserving the Corridor's nationally significant heritage resources and landscape. The interviews and public engagement sessions conducted through the sustainability study indicate that there is widespread concern over growth and possible threats to the Corridor's resources and character. Partners believe that the Commission plays a vital nonpartisan role in these issues by promoting regional thinking and action.

The Commission has made progress in laying the foundation for guiding economic development, but much more remains to be done to strengthen and integrate economic development within the valley, and to boost economic vitality while conserving the heritage resources that contribute so much to the quality of life.

By investing in research related to land use impacts, and working directly with the communities on land use planning and such large-scale projects as the Route 146 corridor, the Commission and staff have put considerable effort into helping communities understand their relationship to a larger landscape and the role they can play in protecting the cultural values and character of that landscape. The Commission's leadership and strategic integrated approach are enabling people to find ways to seize exciting economic opportunities, such as mill redevelopment, while also focusing on protecting heritage resources. People are working together across interests to protect what they value, something quite different from the "environment or economy" polarization that characteristically pervades growth and development issues at the community level. Commission initiatives such as the Blackstone Valley Institute, Leadership Blackstone Valley, and the four-town community visioning project can help foster strategic thinking and support the emergence of new leaders at the local level who understand the importance of collaborating regionally on these issues. This work is long term, however, as it involves changing how people and organizations think.

Although the Commission is bringing valley residents together to act on common values, the critical mass for effective, sustainable action to address land use and growth concerns is not yet assembled, although the approach is bearing fruit in many of the other program areas. There is a continuing need to build local and regional capacity and promote a broad, integrated vision that will encourage the necessary stewardship over the long term. This will remain a difficult but crucial challenge in the foreseeable future if the integrity of the unique landscape in the Blackstone Valley is to be protected.

3. Tourism and heritage-based economic development

The Commission has made a significant investment to date in creating a strong interpretive platform—including message content and infrastructure—through which visitors and residents alike can learn about the Corridor and explore the valley's heritage. When the northern gateway visitor center is completed, all the planned anchor points for the Commission's visitor education infrastructure will be in place. There is a continuing need, however, to ensure a seamless story and programs that link the four visitor centers with the historic buildings and the other visitor attractions that lie throughout the Corridor.

Input from both Commissioners and partners indicates that considerable work remains to achieve the Corridor goals of a vibrant economy that reinforces the heritage values, makes the heritage accessible to residents and visitors, and protects the valley's historic, cultural, and natural resources. The Commission has made progress in laying the foundation for guiding economic development, but much more remains to be done to strengthen and integrate economic development within the valley, and to boost economic vitality while conserving the heritage resources that contribute so much to the quality of life. The Commission is well-positioned now, with its partnerships, message, and vision, to marshal a significant effort to bring economic development interests more fully to the Corridor "table."

B. Ongoing Activities that Sustain the Partnership Base

Partnerships have been at the center of the strategy for the Corridor from the beginning, with the concept being that partners would assume increasingly greater responsibility over time. For this strategy to be successful over the long term in protecting the valley's heritage resources and landscape character, attention and energy must be focused on the following activities:

- Expanding the partner network through ongoing public engagement;
- Building partner and network capacity;
- Encouraging new leaders; and
- Fostering stewardship by promoting the Corridor's broad vision.

These activities are central to sustaining success within the Corridor. They represent essential inputs that are needed to create the long-term capacity that will result in a sustainable partnership system. Furthermore, because the Blackstone Valley is a living landscape that is always changing, this work will be ongoing. There will always be ebb and flow in a partnership system, and a need for sustaining existing members and cultivating new ones.

1. Expanding the partner network through ongoing public engagement

In order to realize a healthy, effective partner network, both numbers and diversity are important. Together they provide the necessary stability, continuity, and growth to achieve a broad agenda that requires different perspectives and expertise. Today, despite the excellent outreach efforts of the Commission and staff, there is still a large segment of valley residents



who have little or no awareness of the Corridor and its goals. Some partners have indicated that the awareness exists primarily with conservation-oriented individuals and organizations. There is a need in the short term to expand awareness where it is still relatively low, either among certain sectors or perhaps in certain communities (geographic or ethnic) within the Corridor. In addition, new people are moving into the valley, and there will always be a certain turnover in population. Expanding the network and continually reaching out to engage new audiences is critical to addressing the most challenging issues on the Commission's agenda—river cleanup, protecting community and landscape character, and economic growth and development. A larger network means a stronger voice on issues and more volunteer power.

The project team heard from partners and commissioners that there was a need to engage and integrate the 2 states and 24 local communities more consistently in the Corridor partnership. At both levels there can be periodic turnover in personnel, which can affect the degree of participation in and attention given to a regional effort. At the state level, there are statewide agendas that draw the attention of the governors and state agencies. At the community level, local authorities are often overworked and may not be inclined to look beyond their local boundaries. These challenges will always be present to some degree, and it will require attention and ongoing communication to bring these important partners into closer alignment.

2. Building partner and network capacity
The Commission and staff work with a diverse set of partner organizations and institutions spanning a wide spectrum of size, experience, depth of expertise, and perspective. Considerable effort is involved in working with each partner—such as helping them flesh out project ideas and sort out issues, locating specific technical support, providing ongoing communication, and, at times, mentoring. This work has had several results: greater understanding by partners of the Corridor vision and the role they can play in it; enhanced partner capability to carry out that role; and considerable enthusiasm among partners for contributing to Corridor efforts. As the work in the Corridor has matured and become more sophisticated, partner capacity must also grow to sustain that success. Assistance to strengthen capacity can include leadership training, organizational development, fundraising skills, strategic planning, and partnership building with other capacity-building organizations such as community foundations.

In addition to working with individual partners, there is a need to enhance the capacity of the network as a whole. This involves connecting and communicating across the partner network as well as staying abreast of what is needed to maintain and enhance efficiency as the network grows. There are different theories about the maturation of networks that can help explain what is happening in the Corridor network.[2] At the time of designation, although there were many organizations working in the valley—and some of them working together—there was no valley-wide network per se. As the Commission and staff began working throughout the valley, they soon became a Corridor-wide hub of communication that linked the developing

network of partners. Today, the Commission is acknowledged as the central node of the Corridor network. At the same time, certain partners are beginning to take on a leadership role, which, over time, could develop into secondary nodes. The development of secondary nodes could indicate that partner organizations are assuming more responsibility within the overall Corridor effort. According to one network theorist, such increasing complexity and diversity demonstrates network maturation,[3] and at that stage effective management of the network becomes essential to maintaining efficient communication and maximizing the productivity of the network as a whole.

Above all, it is important to understand the partner network as a dynamic system that requires management, awareness of and adaptability to changing circumstances, and cultivation of emerging leaders. It will also be important to track network development and, as the network continues to evolve, adapt the network management accordingly.

3. Encouraging new leaders

Cultivating leadership within the network of partners takes time, and is a critical aspect of capacity building. Supporting emerging leaders within the network will help over the long term in transferring initiative from the Commission to partners, which can help make the partnership system more stable and sustainable. Partners, at whatever level and whether individuals or organizations, cannot realistically take the initiative until they understand what is at stake and can envision the role they can play, in concert with others, in achieving Corridor goals. The Blackstone Valley Institute and Leadership Blackstone Valley have been playing an important role in helping to foster this "transference of initiative" process within the partner network. The Commission may want to consider how programs like these can be enhanced and expanded to strategically assist this process. The Commission could encourage partners to participate in courses offered by other support organizations within the Corridor, such as the Association of Fundraising Professionals, and coordinate with these support organizations to develop programs specifically targeted to the needs of Corridor partners. Also, understanding how the partner network operates and managing the network with flexibility and periodic reflection will undoubtedly assist with the process of partners taking on more initiative.

4. Fostering stewardship by promoting the vision

Fostering a sense of shared ownership of the valley's significant heritage, among both partners and individuals, is critical to engendering stewardship over the long term. This is of central importance to sustaining the partnership system upon which the stewardship of the Corridor is predicated. The Commission has made a considerable investment in telling the heritage story, researching untold stories, and creating opportunities for experiencing the Corridor's heritage.[4] It is this combination of direct experience and engagement that will further stimulate a sense of regional pride, resulting in ever greater involvement and volunteerism on the part of valley residents. Fostering these connections to place and heritage and building the capacity for stewardship are crucial ongoing functions of the Corridor partnership.

Moreover, there will be a need to continually refine and update the heritage story to foster stewardship within a contemporary context. The valley's heritage story will always be about the nationally significant events that happened 150 years ago and how they influenced life in the valley down through the years. At the same time, it is also about what valley residents can do, guided by their vision for the Corridor, to protect their heritage resources and the cultural landscape. This contemporary stewardship message must be constantly honed to retain its freshness and application to the current situation.

C. Management Considerations that Support the Partnership System

At this critical point in the evolution of the Corridor's partnership system, there is a clear need to maintain an effective coordinating framework for the Corridor that bridges the 2 states and 24 municipalities and supports the partnership system described in chapter 8. This includes the following:

- A strong management entity to carry forward the vision, provide effective collaborative leadership, and serve as the central network hub;
- An ongoing relationship with the NPS, given the Corridor's well-documented national significance; and
- Secure, sustainable funding from diverse sources.

1. A strong management entity to carry forward the vision, provide effective collaborative leadership, and serve as the central network hub

Coordinating a complex national heritage area that spans 24 towns and 2 states is complicated, requiring a strong management entity with sophisticated management skills and expertise. Until the partner network is ready to assume a greater leadership role, the responsibility will rest with the management entity to provide the leadership and coordination necessary for the partnership system to function effectively. This includes continuing to promote the regional vision as a coalescing force for the partner network Corridor-wide; building partner diversity and engaging new audiences; nurturing partner relationships and, where necessary, bringing key partners into closer alignment; fostering and modeling collaborative leadership; and serving as the central hub in the Corridor's partner network.

2. An ongoing relationship with the National Park Service, given the Corridor's well-documented national significance

The nationally significant heritage in the Blackstone Valley is but one argument for an ongoing role for the NPS. Clearly the presence of the National Park Service has been an important asset to the valley, and the NPS involvement as staff to the Commission has been a central factor in the Corridor's success. The Blackstone Valley was described in the Cultural Heritage and Land Management Plan as one of the nation's richest and best preserved repositories of landscapes, structures, and sites attesting to the rise of industry in America. The greatest significance of the valley is in the "wholeness" of these elements that tell an important American story.

Few places exist where such a concentration of resources has survived and is accessible to interpretation, preservation, and other management strategies. There clearly seems to be support for the National Park Service to have a continuing presence in the Blackstone Valley, and an ongoing role would provide a sustained and visible acknowledgment of the significance of this national story.



Even so, the present situation offers the Commission an opportunity to think more deeply about the partnership system in the valley and the range of possible ways that the NPS could participate as a Corridor partner. We encourage the Commission to consider ways to facilitate the transference of initiative discussed in section B.3 above, and how that might be accelerated or hindered by a shift in the NPS-Corridor relationship.

There are also definite advantages to the National Park Service from a continuing relationship with the Blackstone Valley. As illustrated in this report, there are many lessons to be learned from the Corridor partnership about how to practice conservation in a lived-in landscape. Since this approach is on the cutting edge of conservation, the Corridor is in the vanguard of this work. Lessons from the Blackstone Valley could be shared throughout the National Park Service and with others doing similar work. If a special resources study is undertaken in the Corridor, there will be additional opportunities for exploration of the potential for an enduring NPS presence in the valley. The work that the NPS and Commission have undertaken to date indicates that a permanent NPS role can be performed with reasonable cost and administrative effectiveness and efficiency.

3. Secure, sustainable funding from diverse sources

Clearly, the direct federal investment in the Corridor through the NPS has been essential to the impressive progress made by the partnership thus far, in no small part because of the substantial (22:1) leverage the federal funds have generated (see chapter 4-B). Although this demonstrates the considerable leveraging power that the NPS funding brings to a partnership setting such as the Corridor, the existing funding arrangement is not ideal. Most of the operational funding and the support for the management hub come through variable annual appropriations and not through more secure and predictable "base funding." This lack of assurance and predictability year-to-year not only puts the critical hub function and the leveraging capacity at risk, it also presents obstacles for strategic planning, implementation of multi-year projects, and staff retention. More predictable and secure federal funding would help to alleviate these problems and open the door to even greater accomplishments in the future.

The search for secure, sustainable funding should extend well beyond direct federal commitments to the Corridor. Partners at all levels will need to continue to make the types of investments that have been instrumental in the success to date, and any opportunities for making those investments more secure over time should be sought. Also, the partner network should consider intensifying its efforts to obtain funding from other sources that have not historically supported Corridor initiatives (e.g., large foundations, corporate sponsors). Ultimately, the network's ability to achieve Corridor goals in the future will rest on its ability to attract secure, sustainable funding from a variety of sources. This is an ongoing challenge for the Commission, and will require a fundraising strategy that is comprehensive yet responds to partner concern about the potential for competition.

D. Final Thoughts

A few core ideas emerged for the project team in the course of conducting the sustainability study. First, reflecting on the critical ingredients and how they interact as a complex partnership system has informed greatly the team's understanding of the Commission's success to date. As the management entity for the Corridor, the Commission clearly has been a critical driver behind the partner network's accomplishments. It has been well supported by the excellent partnership-building skills of both commissioners and staff, a clear vision and the ability to articulate that vision, a sincere commitment to public engagement, and funding that leverages other investments. Furthermore, the Commission's federal stature has enabled it to bridge effectively the political divides of a bi-state Corridor. It is essential, however, to recognize that the management entity is just one piece of the overall management framework, and that it operates within the partnership system. It is incumbent upon the Commission to ensure that the full suite of critical ingredients comprising the partnership system is part of the future management framework for the Corridor.

Second, having an effective, sophisticated, central hub is very important for the growth and maturation of the partner network. This has emerged as one of the most important roles played to date by the Commission and its NPS staff. Perhaps one of the most critical aspects of being an effective central network hub is the collective ability of the Commission and staff to play a multitude of roles in their interactions with partners. Every partnership is unique, and part of the sophistication needed to sustain the Corridor's partnership system is the ability to provide different types of assistance and levels of support to different partners. This came out most strongly in the partner interviews as important to building partner capacity and strengthening the network. In the future, as partner capacity increases and stronger partners emerge as leaders in the network, the roles and responsibilities with respect to network management may shift also. It will be important to monitor these changes and adapt accordingly.

We would be remiss at this point not to restate the significant challenge facing valley residents to guide growth in the Corridor in ways that provide economic opportunity but do not threaten the integrity of the heritage landscape. If the landscape integrity is lost, then the story is in jeopardy. The diligent efforts of the Commission and its NPS staff have built a foundation that positions the partner network well for the future, as long as attention is paid to the partnership system that keeps the momentum moving forward.

Finally, the national heritage area "experiment" in the Blackstone Valley is all about conservation at the landscape scale. The Commission, its staff, and the network of partners are helping us understand how to conserve important natural and cultural heritage in lived-in landscapes. They are building a partnership culture in the Blackstone Valley that is leading to conservation of an important story and unique resources. It has everything to do with people and connecting them to heritage and place and kindling a sense of stewardship. In this process, a shared heritage becomes a bridge between past, present, and future.

Notes

1. SuperSummit 2001: Blackstone Valley Community Preservation was a conference on growth trends attended by 250 valley residents and sponsored by the Blackstone Commission, the R.I. Department of Environmental Management, and the Massachusetts Executive Officer of Environmental Affairs.

2. The project team reviewed two theories that describe arrangements similar to the Corridor's partner network. See Valdis Krebs and June Holley, "Building Sustainable Communities through Network Building," which can be found at http://www.orgnet.com. See also Gary E. Machlis and Jean E. McKendry, "The State of the CESU Network" in *The George Wright Forum*, Vol 21, no. 3 (2004), which can be found at http://www.georgewright.org.

3. See Krebs and Holley, "Building Sustainable Communities through Network Building."

4. See "Experiencing the Heritage Corridor," *The Next Ten Years: An Amendment to the Cultural Heritage and Land Management Plan*. Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission: Woonsocket, R.I. (1998).

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National Heritage Areas, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior: www.cr.nps.gov/heritageareas/

The 2004-5 Corridor Commission:

Robert Billington, **Chairman** *
The Honorable Richard T. Moore, **Vice-Chairman** *
Donna Williams, **Secretary** *
Michael D. Cassidy, **Treasurer** *
Marie Rust
Matthew Amorello *
Katherine Abbott
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Mary K. Connor
Michael McMahon
Patricia Mehrtens
Cara Metz
Louise M. Redding *
Edward Sanderson *
Burton Stallwood
Fred Vincent
And former Commissioner Nancy Benoit *

** member of the Commission's Futures Committee*

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We are indebted to all the staff of the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor for opening their files and reports and for giving so generously of their time in helping compile data for the study. They were always available to answer questions and help us with even the smallest detail. We extend a very special thank-you to Michael Creasey, who provided assistance in countless ways, including acting as tour guide and showing us many special places in the valley. We also thank the management team of Sue Andrews, Liz McConnell, and Halford Welch, as well as Mark Jewell, for their many contributions throughout the study, and Pauline Lozeau for her varied logistical assistance, always offered in a gracious manner.

We are most appreciative of the many Corridor partners who also welcomed us to the valley and who, throughout the study, took the time to attend the various public meetings and events and provide input. We especially thank those partners who participated in interviews and shared their experiences and their dreams for the Corridor's future.

We are also grateful to the people, both valley residents and those who came from a distance, who attended the October 26, 2004, workshop in Providence, Rhode Island. The thoughtful discussions of this group and the experiences and ideas they shared were very helpful to us in composing this report. We also express our sincere thanks to Marta de la Torre, Randy Mason, and David Myers, who in the project's formative stages shared their thoughts on evaluating heritage sites, based on their work with the Getty Conservation Institute.

Last, but definitely not least, we gratefully acknowledge the guidance and feedback provided by Robert McIntosh, Terrence Moore, Brenda Barrett, and Lawrence Gall throughout this technical assistance project. Their thoughtful advice was always constructive and contributed greatly to our articulation of key sections of the report.

The Blackstone Sustainability Study Team

The Conservation Study Institute's project team, with their primary areas of responsibility, included:

Suzanne Copping (assistant coordinator, National Heritage Areas, National Park Service), lead responsibility for documenting accomplishments

Gayle Gifford (president, Cause & Effect, Inc.), lead responsibility for facilitating public engagement

Philip B. Huffman (independent consultant), lead responsibility for management framework components

Daniel Laven (doctoral student, University of Vermont, and Conservation Study Institute fellow), lead responsibility for process evaluation

Jacquelyn L. Tuxill (director of partnership programs, Conservation Study Institute), project manager and lead responsibility for synthesis and report preparation

A team from the Blackstone National Heritage Corridor staff worked to support the project team by accessing and providing information, reviewing documents for accuracy and completion, and assisting during report production. The Corridor's team included:

Sue Andrews (director of heritage preservation and development)

Elizabeth McConnell (chief of administration)

The project management committee included:

Brenda Barrett (coordinator, National Heritage Areas, National Park Service)

Michael Creasey (then executive director, John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor)

Nora J. Mitchell (director, Conservation Study Institute)

APPENDIX A

Inventory of Accomplishments

The following is an extensive, though not comprehensive, compilation of projects the Commission has undertaken in partnership with a broad range of organizations, individuals, and local, state and federal agencies, or on its own in order to fulfill its legislated mandate. Projects were, and continue to be, selected based on the established policies, actions, and strategies for the priority areas as set forth in the Cultural Heritage and Land Management Plan for the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor. The corresponding guiding policies, actions and strategies are given for each program area followed by a listing of individual projects and/or initiatives.

Land Use Planning

Policies:

The Commission and its partners will seek to identify or provide incentives, adopt plans, and enact ordinances that preserve open space and the Blackstone River Valley character, manifested through such distinctive features as mill villages, rural landscapes, country lanes, and that encourage development consistent with that objective.

Actions and Strategies:

- Integrate Corridor Cultural Heritage and Land Management Plan into existing state and regional planning
- Provide information to the public about good land use practices
- Identify and inventory Corridor resources and conditions
- Enhance the character of the valley

Communities, civic groups, and individuals struggle with the need to provide solid infrastructures and economic growth while retaining the special characteristics of their village centers, main streets, hilltop settlements, and river corridors. The Commission assists with these efforts by providing professional assistance through public workshops to develop comprehensive plans that meet these needs and align with Corridor goals.

- Blackstone: Main Street revitalization plan
- Burrillville: Harrisville revitalization plan
- Douglas: Downtown design plan
- Glocester: Chepachet Village plan
- Leicester: Master plan
- Lincoln: Limerock Village land use plan
- Mendon: Land use plan
- Millbury: Downtown improvement initiative
- Millville: Riverfront redevelopment plan
- Northbridge: Whitinsville streetscaping
- Pawtucket: Downtown circulation design
- Smithfield: Greenspace forum
- Sutton: Historic landscape plan
- Uxbridge: Downtown revitalization plan
- Uxbridge: Stanley Woolen Mill brownfield redevelopment
- Whitinsville: Historic Foundry Building redevelopment
- Woonsocket: Historic overlay district
- Worcester: Quinsigamond Village revitalization plan

In addition to individual community plans, the Commission has undertaken special studies and developed a variety of regional plans that serve to strengthen regional planning efforts.

- Heritage Corridor Plan amendment – "The Next Ten Years"
- Economic survey and impact
- Natural resource inventory (appendix to 10-year plan)
- Land use planning manual
- Urban environmental design manual
- Economic development conference

A key component of the Commission's preservation strategy is the development of the Blackstone Valley Institute as a venue for educational outreach programs that offer ongoing workshops and courses designed to address key issues facing the valley. The Institute offers local leaders, organizations, and interested citizens both a forum to discuss topics of interest or concern and a practical means to find solutions to local issues.

- Growth management – Seminars to provide latest data and techniques
- Leadership Blackstone Valley – Annual training for community leaders
- See the Forest Program
- Institute seminar series
- Brownfields conference
- Preservation workshops
- Route 146 corridor visioning – Workshop to explore development issues
- Community visions – Conceptual designs for village centers and key historic locations
- Four-Town Initiative – Planning collaborative to address common issues
- Super Summit – Build-out analysis for each Blackstone Valley community depicting current zoning

Interpretation and Education

Policies

Much of what is considered natural along the Blackstone River is, in fact, "cultural." Interpretation activities that pull together many elements will be emphasized. Integrated approaches in communication will be emphasized as well, and the Commission will find ways to encourage valley interpreters to share ideas.

Actions and Strategies:

- Seek the development of museums/information centers in Pawtucket, Woonsocket, Uxbridge, and Worcester
- Develop consistent, Corridor-wide interpretation program
- Design and develop permanent, traveling, and wayside interpretive exhibits
- Sponsor ongoing historical research and publication
- Develop a sign program for the Corridor
- Design, produce, and distribute interpretive materials – such as maps, guidebooks, and brochures – that describe the historic, cultural, natural, and recreation resources of the Corridor
- Co-sponsor community interpretive-related programs and activities
- Train volunteer interpreters
- Establish a central repository of Blackstone Valley historical documentation, such as maps, studies, photographs, papers, and oral histories
- Develop school programs to communicate the history and significance of the Blackstone Valley
- Encourage the establishment of festivals for the celebration of art and culture in the Corridor
- Encourage local initiatives consistent with Corridor goals

The linear nature of the Heritage Corridor requires the development of a "critical mass" of visitor sites, programs, and services which will draw people to the valley and engage a diversity of interests in the textile heritage theme. A targeted investment in these core sites, programs, and services will be the Corridor Commission's physical legacy for the future.

- Worcester: Northern Gateway Project – Development of northern terminus visitor center in Worcester (planning underway)
- Pawtucket: Blackstone Valley Visitor Center – Development of southern terminus visitor center in Pawtucket (open)
- Woonsocket: Museum of Work & Culture – Development of visitor center in Woonsocket (open)
- Uxbridge: River Bend Farm & Visitor Center – Development of visitor center in Uxbridge (open)
- Worcester: Broad Meadow Brook Wildlife Sanctuary – Support for interim visitor center facility
- Grafton: Willard House & Clock Museum – Support for historic museum that provides visitor services
- Lincoln: Kelly House & Canal Museum – Development of exhibits on transportation themes and support visitor services along the Blackstone River Bikeway, and the Blackstone River and Canal
- Visitor Center Collaborative – Network of heritage sites to provide consistent and integrated visitor services and information
- Tourism development – Bi-state collaborative to integrate tourism related initiatives
- Corridor signage, exhibits, and identity system – Consistent signage program for village centers, historic sites, bikeway, riverway, visitor services, and interpretation
- Corridor Information and Communication Program – Development of interpretive and educational publications that include brochures, newsletters, web pages, etc.

The celebration and understanding of the Blackstone Valley's cultural legacy through education, the traditional arts, festivals and events, and coordinated activities among sites complement the physical infrastructure being developed. Heritage-related programming accommodates a variety of ongoing and new initiatives.

- Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce school program – "Blackstone Valley on the Move"
- Community interpretation – focused interpretive activities in historic village centers of Hopedale, Slatersville, and Whitinsville
- Slater Mill cultural and interpretive programming
- Blackstone River Theatre cultural arts education and performances
- Living history events and re-enactments such as Settlers Days
- Moffett Mill interpretive exhibits on early mill construction and operations
- Valley Falls Heritage Park – Interpretation of water power for manufacturing
- Blackstone Valley Explorer boat – Support for 49-passenger floating classroom
- Central Falls interpretive material – Interpretive brochure of historic structures and sites
- Cumberland Company Theatre Group – Development of Blackstone Valley interpretive play
- Grafton oral history – Recording of oral histories of mill workers
- River Bend Farm – Concerts along the canal
- Heritage Harbor Museum – P&W Railroad interpretive exhibit
- Pawtucket Preservation Society – Historic district architecture brochure
- Explore & Discover Museum exhibits – Interactive exhibits for children of all ages
- Corridor interpretive plan
- "Along the Blackstone" cable TV series – Inter-

pretive and educational programming
- Ranger activities, services, and educational programs, including lecture series, interpretive walks and talks, river activities, environmental education and river cleanups, and school programs
- Paddle Club – Seasonal paddling club to develop river stewards
- Special events – support for cultural festivals and events
- Volunteer In Parks – development of volunteer corps and coordination of individual site volunteer activities

Historic Preservation

Policies:

With its partners, the Commission will work to protect significant buildings, mill villages, districts, and the integrity of town, city, and rural areas. The Commission will recognize and champion good restoration efforts and good design review procedures to encourage compatibly-designed infill projects, and provide good maintenance and other information to the public.

Actions and Strategies:

- Continue to inventory historical and archaeological resources as a first step in safeguarding them
- Preserve key historic districts, properties, and sites that define the character of the Blackstone River Valley
- Provide professional planning assistance to Corridor towns and cities
- Provide information to the public about available professional assistance, grants, and guidelines for historic preservation, restoration, and maintenance

The Commission has been tasked with the responsibility not only for interpreting, but for identifying and preserving the historic, natural, and cultural resources in the valley that enhance the public's understanding of the American Industrial Revolution. The Commission's funds are targeted strategically to provide improvements to special places of interpretive value.

- Blackstone: BV Boys & Girls Club – Restore mill into education center.
- Blackstone Federated Church – Stabilization and restoration of 18th century structure
- Blackstone Grange – Investigation of structure and history
- Blackstone: Daniel's Farm
- Douglas: Old Douglas Common
- Douglas: E.N. Jenckes Store
- Glocester: Chepachet River Park
- Grafton: Fisherville Mill redevelopment
- Grafton: Hassanamesitt Woods preservation – site of 17th century Native American praying village
- Grafton Fire House research and restoration
- Hopedale: Little Red Shop – Historic structures report and management plan
- Hopedale: Draper Mill Complex – Adaptive re-use study
- Leicester: Towtaid Park
- Lincoln: Hearthside Mansion historic structures report
- Lincoln: Valentine Whitman House historic structures report
- Lincoln: Moffett Mill historic structures report and restoration, installation, and interpretation of original machinery and artifacts
- Lincoln: Great Road Historic District – Master plan for interpretation of historic sites along historic road that developed from Native American trail to modern roadway
- Millville: Chestnut Hill Meeting House preservation, restoration, and interpretation
- Northbridge: Whitin Machine Shop – Preservation and interpretation
- Northbridge: Whitin Park – Preservation of historic site and development of interpretive signs and brochure
- Northbridge: Whitinsville Community Center – architectural services and restoration
- North Smithfield: Slatersville Mill, first planned mill village in America
- Pawtucket: Slater Mill Historic Site HABS/HAER Survey and Reports
- Pawtucket Armory – Restoration and re-use
- Sutton – Marions Camp
- Sutton – Waters Farm research, restoration, master plan, barn restoration, and interpretation
- Sutton – Hancock-Hull House historic structures report
- Uxbridge: Preservation of New England common and historical markers
- Uxbridge: Farnum House Museum restoration
- Uxbridge: Inn preservation, restoration and re-use
- Upton: Historic resources inventory
- Woonsocket: Stadium Theatre restoration
- Woonsocket: Providence & Worcester train depot – Preservation and interpretation
- Woonsocket: Archaeology in the Blackstone Valley – Discovering Woonsocket's past
- Woonsocket: Cultural resource survey of Elder Ballou Meeting House Road
- Worcester: Quinsigamond School – Preservation and re-use

- Mill inventory & conference
- Blackstone Canal preservation – ongoing restoration and interpretation
- Waterways photographic exhibit – Salvatore Mancini

River Recovery and Recreational Development

Policies:

Conservation actions will focus on Corridor-wide protection of water resources…to enable Valley residents to take full advantage of the recreational opportunities on and along the river. The Commission will support greater public access to and use of the river-canal-towpath area…The Commission will work through state DEMs and other appropriate state agencies to fund and implement these activities, and will seek the help of interested nonprofit groups, the business community, and civic institutions to complement and supplement state actions plans.

Actions and Strategies:

- Improve the water quality of the Blackstone River
- Identify natural sites that are threatened, in need of action or assistance, and/or important to the completion or enhancement of state heritage parks
- Protect open space within the Corridor
- Support state, local, private, and individual efforts to enhance the environment
- Complete or enhance state and local parks and forests within the Corridor
- Implement construction, maintenance, and landscaping projects that provide greater public use and access to the river
- Produce recreation publications
- Endorse special events and activities that are consistent and compatible with Corridor goals

The impacts of the industrial revolution on the river system were extensive, leading today to both challenges and opportunities. The Commission focuses on education, support for recovery programs at various governmental and grassroots levels, and opportunities for the river to become a vital part of community and economic revitalization.

- Blackstone Gorge Bi-State Park – Development that includes parking, trails, overlook and river access
- River access program – Development of a series of portages and access sites for boating
- Pawtucket Riverfront – Plan to incorporate river-related activities with shopping, restaurants, businesses, and recreation
- Woonsocket Riverfront and Costa Park
- Trail development – Coordination of parks and trails to create a greenway/riverway system
- Bikeway advocacy – Coordination of bi-state Blackstone River Bikeway development
- Blackstone River Conservation Alliance – Coordination of conservation efforts valley-wide
- Blackstone River Coalition – Coordination of watershed-wide activities with local, state, and federal agencies
- Water quality testing – Citizen corps of river stewards to monitor the health of the river
- Lonsdale Marsh restoration – Conversion of derelict drive-in theater to marsh conservation area
- Anadromous fish restoration/fish ladders – Development of fish passages on lower four dams to allow migratory passage to Lonsdale Marsh spawning grounds
- Pollution prevention program – Educational program for homeowners on environmentally safe alternatives to household cleaners, fertilizers, and pesticides
- Storm drain stenciling – Educational program to minimize pollution from storm drains
- River cleanups – Annual trash removal from river and riverbanks
- Clean Water Festival – Environmental awareness festival
- Greenway Challenge – Annual eco-challenge to bring awareness to the Blackstone River and Bikeway
- Expedition 2000 – Four-day canoe trip down the Blackstone River to highlight issues
- Project ZAP—Multiple efforts to clean up the river
- Blackstone River watershed education – High school program to integrate watershed concepts across disciplines
- Blackstone Valley Explorer – 49-passenger educational tour boat
- Central Falls Landing – Public river access site
- Fishable/Swimmable 2015 – Campaign to restore the health of the Blackstone River

APPENDIX B

Sustainability Study Methodology

In carrying out the Blackstone Sustainability Study, the project team gathered data through a variety of means, including document review, a "process evaluation," and a variety of public engagement activities. Each of these categories is discussed in greater detail below. The information gathered from all of these sources contributed to the project team's collective understanding of the Corridor partnership's effectiveness to date. Similarly, the team relied on data and insights from all of the project components, as well as a process of group synthesis, in crafting its assessment of what is needed in the future to achieve successfully the goals of the Corridor.

B.1. Document Review

The project team, with the assistance of Corridor staff, reviewed many documents related to Corridor history, legislative background, management, and accomplishments. This included:

- Review of relevant Corridor materials, including Corridor enabling legislation, management plans, annual reports and budgets, project reports, and partner agreements; examination of public records; and reports from the series of Commission and staff retreats and partner focus groups held in 2002.
- Comparison of the Corridor's existing management framework with those used in other selected nationally designated areas that are managed through partnerships (e.g., other national heritage areas, partnership parks, etc.).
- Review of other relevant documents, including descriptions and analyses of possible management frameworks for other heritage initiatives (e.g., Champlain Valley, Upper Housatonic Valley).

B.2. Process Evaluation

The project team employed a type of evaluation research called a "process evaluation" to examine more closely how the Corridor's partnerships and programs function. The work involved designing a model of the Corridor program that was then tested through confidential interviews with partners. Such an evaluation is helpful in facilitating policy learning (i.e., helping programs to improve their operations). See appendix C for a more in-depth discussion of this research method

B.3. Public Engagement Activities

The team gathered information through a variety of activities that engaged commissioners, partners, and the general public, including the following:

- Individual interviews, conducted confidentially, with the Commission's Futures Committee, senior Corridor staff, and selected partners.
- Public meetings with commissioners and Corridor partners on September 16, 2004, in Worcester, Massachusetts, and on September 29, 2004, in Lincoln, Rhode Island.
- A day-long workshop with Blackstone Valley leaders and outside experts with diverse national and international experience in heritage areas and partnerships on October 26, 2004, in Providence, Rhode Island. A synopsis of the workshop follows in section B.4.
- Public Commission meeting on November 18, 2004, in Cumberland, Rhode Island, at which the project team gathered feedback on preliminary options from commissioners and Corridor partners.
- Public Commission meeting on February 2, 2005, in Whitinsville, Massachusetts, at which team members presented the draft study report.

B.4. Synopsis of October 26, 2004 Workshop

The workshop, "Reflecting on the Future: The John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor," brought together 30 people with diverse backgrounds from within and outside the Blackstone Valley to explore issues relating to the future management of the Blackstone National Heritage Corridor. The overall goal of the workshop was to examine potential alternatives for the Corridor's future, including possible changes to the current management framework. The group discussed the strengths of the current management framework and opportunities for change, examined critical ingredients for success that have been present in the Commission's work as well as in other partnership-based heritage initiatives, and discussed possible alternative partnership frameworks that might be applied, in whole or in part, to the future management of the Corridor, both near-term and long-term. The discussion during this workshop was instrumental in formulating this report. Participants included:

Sue Andrews (director of heritage and planning, Blackstone National Heritage Corridor)

Brenda Barrett (coordinator, National Heritage Areas, National Park Service)

Judith Benedict (land conservation and open space planning consultant)

Robert Billington (chair, Blackstone National Heritage Corridor Commission)

Paula Brouillette (vice president, Blackstone River Valley CorridorKeepers)

Michael Cassidy (commissioner, Blackstone National Heritage Corridor Commission)

Delia Clark (director of community engagement, Conservation Study Institute)

Suzanne Copping (assistant coordinator, National Heritage Areas, National Park Service)*

Michael Creasey (then executive director, Blackstone National Heritage Corridor)

John Debo (superintendent, Cuyahoga Valley National Park)

Marta de la Torre (former group director of research, Values of Heritage Project, Getty Conservation Institute)

Rolf Diamant (superintendent, Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park)

Jonathan Doherty (project manager, Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network, National Park Service)

Gayle Gifford (president, Cause & Effect, Inc.)*

Charles Hawkins (legislative assistant, The Honorable Senator Lincoln D. Chafee – R.I.)

Philip Huffman (independent consultant)*

Daniel Laven (University of Vermont/Conservation Study Institute doctoral fellow)*

Elissa Marsden (heritage development manager, Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor)

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Mary Means (principal, Mary Means Associates)

Brent Mitchell (vice president, Stewardship, QLF-Atlantic Center for the Environment)

Nora Mitchell (director, Conservation Study Institute)

Terrence Moore (chief, Park Planning and Special Studies, Northeast Region, NPS)

Art Norwalk (president, Slater Mill Association)

James Pepper (assistant regional director, Strategic Planning, Northeast Region, NPS)

Louise M. Redding (commissioner, Blackstone National Heritage Corridor Commission)

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Jacquelyn Tuxill (director of partnership programs, Conservation Study Institute)*

Halford Welch (director of special projects, Blackstone National Heritage Corridor)

Donna Williams (commissioner, Blackstone National Heritage Corridor Commission)

** denotes Blackstone Sustainability Study project team*

APPENDIX C

Research Methods for Chapter 6

The Sustainability Study Team employed a process evaluation approach for the research described in Chapter 6. Process evaluation refers to a well-developed, specific type of evaluation research designed to examine the ways in which complex programs function. Such studies are particularly helpful in facilitating policy learning (i.e., helping programs to improve their operations) and represent good examples of research informing management. Process evaluation research has not previously been conducted in the Blackstone National Heritage Corridor. The first section that follows explains the methodology of the process evaluation that was carried out during the Blackstone Sustainability Study. The second section provides the consent form agreed to by each partner interviewed, while the interview questions are set forth in the last section.

C.1. Corridor Program Model

The process evaluation was conducted in two phases. Phase I was designed to develop a model of the Corridor program. The model identifies the logic that underlies program actions and explains the specific causal links connecting program inputs to expected program outcomes. Because the model represents the underlying program logic, it serves as a "road map" for evaluating how the Corridor programs operate. The model was developed from document analysis, numerous site visits and participant observations, as well as informal interviews and meetings with NPS staff, Corridor Commissioners, and Corridor partners. This phase of research began in June 2004, and was very much an iterative, collaborative, stakeholder-driven process.

Phase II of the process evaluation was designed to test the model through confidential interviews with Corridor partners. During October and November 2004, a total of 30 open-ended interviews were conducted with key partners over the phone. The complexity of the Corridor program and associated partnership structures suggested that a purposeful sampling design would be most appropriate, and care was taken to invite a diversity of Corridor partners to participate. With the consent of each respondent, all interviews were recorded and transcribed (see C.2 and C.3). Interviews lasted approximately one hour and yielded transcripts ranging from 8 to 20 pages. Using a content analysis, data were analyzed for categories and themes across the 30 respondents.

C.2. Interview Consent Form

My name is Daniel Laven and I'm a graduate student at the University of Vermont. At the request of the Corridor Commission, I am conducting a study with the National Park Service to learn more about the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor. The purpose of this study is to learn how the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor works and to document the impact of the Corridor on the Blackstone Valley. As a result of your experience with the Corridor, you are in a unique position to describe what the program does and how it affects organizations within the Valley. And that's what the interview is about: your experiences with the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor and your thoughts about your experiences.

The responses from the 30 people I'm interviewing will be combined for my study. No individual or organization names will appear in the written report or presentations. As we go through the interview, if you have any questions about why I'm asking something, please feel free to ask. Or, if there's anything you don't want to answer, just say so. The purpose of the interview is to get your insights into how the program operates and how it affects organizations in the Valley.

Finally, I'd like your permission to record the interview so I don't miss any of it. I'll be taking notes, but I also don't want to slow the interview down, and it's very important that I capture your words exactly as you say them. The interview will remain confidential – your name and/or your organization will be removed from the transcript and replaced by a numbered code that will remain confidential. Once the interview has been transcribed, the tapes will be destroyed. I can also mail you a draft copy of the study findings for your review. So, if you don't mind, I'd very much like to use the recorder. If at any time during the interview you would like me to turn the tape off, please let me know and I will do so. May I use the tape recorder?

Any questions before we begin?

C.3. Interview Protocol

The first part of this interview is designed to help me learn about your current relationship with the Corridor Commission. By Corridor Commission, I am referring to the partnership, including the National Park Service that manages the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor

1. In what ways are you now connected, or do you currently work with the Commission?

2. How long have you been working with the Commission in this way?

3. In your view, what role(s) does the Commission play in this relationship?

A. Provides funding directly

B. Helps your organization to leverage funding from other sources?

C. Provides relevant information and good ideas?

D. Provides access to other potential partners (network conduit)?

E. Increase organizational capacity?

F. Provides additional credibility?

G. Role of leadership?

H. What other roles could the Commission play in the future that could be particularly helpful?

4. How has, if at all, your relationship with the Commission impacted the way you work?

A. Creates a shared understanding of opportunities and challenges in the Valley?

B. Other unintended consequences? By unintended consequences, I am referring to impacts that you didn't expect, or intend from this relationship. These can be either positive, negative, or neutral.

5. What formal, or informal, criteria do you use to evaluate the effectiveness of this relationship?

6. What factors influence you to continue to maintain this relationship?

7. What could the Commission do to improve this relationship in the future?

The next series of questions will help me to understand how you or your organization functions in the Blackstone Valley.

8. What are your organizational goals/mission in the Blackstone Valley?

9. What specific factors, if any, would increase the likelihood of achieving these goals? What specific factors would decrease the likelihood of achieving these goals?

10. How do you or your organization measure your effectiveness in achieving these goals?

This is the last section of the interview, and the questions are more general and reflective in nature. This is an opportunity for me to learn from you, in broad terms, about the impact of the Heritage Corridor Program in the Blackstone Valley.

11. In your opinion, over the life of the Corridor (the last 18 years), what impact has the Commission had on the following issues:

A. Conservation and restoration of natural, cultural, and historic resources?

B. Creation of heritage-based tourism and recreation opportunities?

C. Community development within the Blackstone Valley?

12. How, from your perspective, has the Commission integrated these multiple goals?

13. How, if at all, does National Heritage Corridor designation affect the way in which you work? For example, does this designation change you or your organization's, strategic thinking or long-term planning? How does this designation change the way in which you/your organization prioritize objectives?

14. I'm interested in learning how various organizations in the Blackstone Valley region have been influenced by the concept of "Blackstone Valley Heritage." By Blackstone Valley Heritage, I am referring to the industrial history and legacy of this region. What role does "Blackstone Valley Heritage" play, from your perspective, in the Heritage Corridor Program?

A. How do you think, if at all, the idea of "Blackstone Valley Heritage" plays a role in defining your organizational goals?

15. What is your or your organization's "vision" for the Blackstone Valley Corridor region in the future?

A. What else, from your perspective, needs to be done in the Valley region to achieve this vision?

16. What do you think the role of the Commission should be in realizing that vision?

17. As we think about how to move forward with this work in the Blackstone Valley, do you see any other organizations (existing or potential) that could play that role as or more effectively than the Commission?

18. Who do you consider to be your three most critical strategic partners in the Blackstone Valley?

19. In the future, which other people, or organizations, would you like to partner with in the Blackstone Valley but have yet to do so?

20. In your opinion, what has prevented these partnerships from occurring thus far?

21. That covers everything I wanted to ask. What else should I have asked you that I didn't think to ask?

Notes

1. Carol Weiss, *Evaluation*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998); Ellen Taylor-Powell, Boyd Rossing, and Jean Geran, *Evaluating Collaboratives: Reaching the Potential*, (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin-Extension, Cooperative Extension, 1998).

2. Darlene Russ-Eft and Hallie Preskill, *Evaluation in Organizations: A Systematic Approach to Enhancing Learning, Performance, and Change* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, 2001).

3. In fact, little theoretical or empirical work has been done in this regard in any of the nationally designated heritage areas in the United States.

4. For detailed discussions of program theory models, see Leonard Bickman, ed., *Using program theory in evaluation.* New Directions for Program Evaluation Series, no. 33 (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987); Carol Weiss, *Evaluation,* 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998); Joseph Wholey, ed., *Organizational Excellence: Stimulating Quality and Communicating Value* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1998).

5. Michael Patton, *Utilization-focused Evaluation: The New Century Text* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1997).

6. Matthew Miles and Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Source Book* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994).

7. Michael Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002).