



Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail Draft Comprehensive Plan

May 2026



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**National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior**

**Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail
Comprehensive Plan**

**Arizona, Arkansas, California, Missouri, New
Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas**

May 2026

Draft

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SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Reader,

The National Park Service is pleased to present this Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail Draft Comprehensive Plan. Congress added the trail to the National Trails System on January 5, 2023. The designation of the trail commemorates the impact of the Overland Mail Company, which held a US Mail contract to transport mail and passengers across the country between 1858 and 1861. The transportation route, over 3,000 miles long, connected the far ends of our country and was traversed in just over 24 days—a remarkable feat of the time.

Since the trail's designation, National Park Service staff have been building relationships and collaborating with local, state, Tribal, and nonprofit partners. These partners have been critical in the development of this draft comprehensive plan. The purpose of this plan is to establish administrative objectives, processes, and guidelines necessary to encourage preservation, development, and promotion for the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail.

As administrator of the trail, the National Park Service looks forward to sharing this piece of American history with the public. Through trail organizations, historians, community members, researchers, and Tribes' expertise, points of interest along historic routes can be showcased today for future generations. It is only through these partnerships that the congressional goals for National Historic Trails can be accomplished.

We thank you for sharing your time, stories, energy, and expertise for the benefit of the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail and the American people.

Sincerely,

Patrick Malone, Superintendent
Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail
National Historic Trails, Intermountain Region, National Park Service

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Park Service administers the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail, which was added to the National Trails System by the US Congress on January 5, 2023. The legislation authorizing the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail identified approximately 3,152 miles of trail on the "Ox-Bow Route" extending from St. Louis, Missouri, and Memphis, Tennessee, to San Francisco, California, and passing through the states of Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The designation of the trail commemorates the impact of the Overland Mail Company, which held a US Mail contract to transport mail and passengers across the country between 1858 and 1861. This route was established to create reliable transportation and mail service to and from the new US territory in the West that avoided extensive international boundary crossings. The Butterfield Stage did this precisely, completing the journey in just over 24 days. This mail route, as well as the sites and segments along it, made significant contributions to broad patterns of our nation's history by connecting the far ends of our country in dependable, efficient ways.

The purpose of this draft comprehensive plan is to fulfill the requirements of Section 5(f) [16 U.S.C. § 1244(f) (2023)] of the National Trails System Act: identification of all significant resources to be preserved, details of anticipated cooperative agreements, carrying capacity and its implementation plan, marking plan, a protection plan for high potential historic sites and route segments, and a discussion of general development plans.

Since the trail's designation, NPS staff have consulted with the public, Tribes, and federal land managers to create this draft comprehensive plan. A public review and comment period will follow the distribution of this draft. After the comment period, the NPS planning team will evaluate suggestions and make appropriate changes to produce the final document. This plan facilitates the work of partners in accomplishing specific goals that fulfill the future vision of the trail.

This draft comprehensive plan is an administrative and programmatic planning document that provides guidance, planning direction, and best practices for the administration of the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail. It does not authorize, fund, permit, or approve any site-specific actions, construction, land acquisition, visitor use restrictions, or ground-disturbing activities.

Consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as amended, Department of the Interior NEPA regulations, and the Department of the Interior *Handbook of National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Procedures* (516 DM 1, February 2026), this plan qualifies for a categorical exclusion applicable to administrative and planning actions that have no potential to cause environmental effects. This comprehensive plan does not trigger any of the extraordinary circumstances identified in Department of the Interior NEPA regulations (43 CFR 46.215), including but not limited to impacts to protected species, cultural resources, Tribal interests, and public health or safety.

Any future site-specific actions that may result from this plan—including but not limited to development, signing, and visitor use management actions—will be subject to site-specific environmental compliance, including but not limited to NEPA, National Historic Preservation

Act, and Endangered Species Act review, as appropriate, by the entity with jurisdiction over the proposed action.

The document will be considered final for the purposes of the National Trail System Act but is envisioned as a living document and will be updated by trail administrators as needed based on changing conditions, information, and administrative goals. Per the enabling legislation of the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail, Public Law 117-345, the United States shall not acquire land for the trail outside the exterior boundary of any federally administered area without the consent of the owner of the land. This law also denies the creation of a buffer zone outside the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail and does not limit, control, regulate, or determine the conduct or management of activity or use outside of the trail. The trail shall not prohibit, hinder, or disrupt the development, production, or transmission of energy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Planning for a new national historic trail is a nationwide effort that affects many people and organizations, big and small. It is vital that the National Park Service supports communication, discussion, development, consultation, and coordination at many levels. Below is a summary of National Park Service staff's outreach efforts. Please refer to Appendix A for a full overview of outreach efforts for this draft comprehensive plan.

In late 2023 and early 2024, National Park Service staff traveled across the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail route to conduct public outreach meetings. We'd like to thank the following communities for hosting these meetings: Jefferson City, Missouri; Little Rock, Arkansas; Springfield, Missouri; Fayetteville, Arkansas; Fort Smith, Arkansas; Atoka, Oklahoma; Sherman, Texas; Fort Belknap, Texas; Abilene, Texas; Fort Davis, Texas; El Paso, Texas; Mesilla, New Mexico; Tucson, Arizona; Yuma, Arizona; Temecula, California; Los Angeles, California; Bakersfield, California; and San Jose, California.

It is the intent of the National Park Service to maintain continuing efforts of communication and collaboration with Tribes along the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail, as they are interested and available. We would like to express our gratitude to the following for their thoughts and time spent to date: Dr. Iris PrettyPaint, Chickasaw Nation, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, Quapaw Nation, Osage Nation, Pala Band of Mission Indians, Campo Band of Diegueno Mission Indians, Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation, Rincon Band of Manuel Nation, Gila River Indian Community, Tule River Indian Tribe of California, Comanche Nation, Tohono O'odham Nation, Ione Band of Miwok Indians, Cherokee Nation, Alabama-Coushatta Tribe, Rincon Band of Luiseno Indians, Pechanga Band of Indians, Big Sandy Rancheria of Mono Indians, Captain Grande Band of Diegueno Mission Indians of California, Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, Soboba Band of Luiseno Indians, Fort Sill Chiricahua Warm Springs Apache, and Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians.

In 2024 and 2025, National Park Service staff traveled across the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail route again, this time documenting and evaluating high potential historic sites and high potential route segments. This work would not have been possible without the kind and generous assistance of the following people, to whom we are most grateful: John Fahey, Gerald Ahnert, Susan Dragoo, Bob Crossman, Jim Sappington, Larry Ludwig, Dan Aranda, and Kirby Warnock.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE DRAFT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAILS

National historic trails identify and commemorate historic and prehistoric routes of travel that are of significance to the entire nation. They must meet all three criteria listed in Section 5(b)(11) [16 U.S.C. § 1244(b)(11) (2023)] of the National Trails System Act as follows:

1. It must be a trail or route established by historic use and must be historically significant as a result of that use. The route need not currently exist as a discernible trail to qualify, but its location must be sufficiently known to permit evaluation of public recreation and historical interest potential. A designated trail should generally accurately follow the historic route, but may deviate somewhat on occasion of necessity to avoid difficult routing through subsequent development, or to provide some route variation offering a more pleasurable recreational experience.
2. It must be of national significance with respect to any of several broad facets of American history, such as trade and commerce, exploration, migration and settlement, or military campaigns. To qualify as nationally significant, historic use of the trail must have had a far-reaching effect on broad patterns of American culture.
3. It must have significant potential for public recreational use or historical interest based on historic interpretation and appreciation. The potential for such use is generally greater along roadless segments developed as historic trails, and at historic sites associated with the trail. The presence of recreation potential not related to historic appreciation is not sufficient justification for designation under this category.

Designated national historic trail routes offer visitors opportunities to visit surviving historic sites, trail segments, and defining places of history. These routes weave through lands with many different owners, private and public. Existing guidance for those jurisdictions remains in place, not to be superseded by the direction in this draft comprehensive plan. Historic sites and segments associated with the trails on private property are only made accessible to the public through landowner consent. National historic trails do not place any federal restrictions or requirements on private landowners.

Section 5(f) [16 U.S.C. § 1244(f) (2023)] of the National Trail System Act requires a comprehensive plan to include details of anticipated cooperative agreements, identification of all significant resources to be preserved, carrying capacity and its implementation plan, a marking plan, a protection plan for high potential historic sites and route segments, and a discussion of general and site-specific development plans.

TRAIL ADMINISTRATION VERSUS MANAGEMENT

The responsibility of trail administration is delegated to the National Park Service by the Secretary of the Interior. Administering a trail differs in function from managing a trail, which is conducted at a more local level.

Administration of the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail rests with the National Park Service. As administrator of the trail, the National Park Service works to enhance trail wide coordination between and among agencies, partner organizations, and landowners in planning, marking, certification, resource preservation and protection, resource inventories and mapping, interpretation, cooperative/interagency agreements, and financial assistance to other cooperating government agencies, landowners, interest groups, and individuals. The trail administrator also oversees trail site and segment development and coordinates development of trail maintenance standards with other agencies, partner organizations, and landowners.

Management of the national trail is needed for site-specific tasks and is carried out by various governmental, community, and private entities that own, direct, or care for lands along the trail. Management responsibilities often include inventorying resources, mapping, planning, and developing trail segments and sites. Managers also ensure compliance with federal and state laws, provide appropriate public access, mitigate resource damage, develop site interpretation, oversee trail maintenance, carry out trail marking, protect resources and viewsheds, and manage visitor use.

Together, trail administrators and managers work to promote the national historic trail.

NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY

Prior to this draft comprehensive plan, the National Park Service (2018a) completed the *Butterfield Overland Trail Special Resource Study* in May 2017. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the significance, feasibility, suitability, and desirability of designating the “Ox-Bow Route” associated with the Butterfield Overland Trail as a national historic trail, in accordance with Section 5(b) [16 U.S.C. § 1244(b) (2023)] of the National Trails System Act. This was completed through assessing the trail’s route, historic use, national significance, cost of administration, and potential for public recreational use and historic interest. Additionally, alternative measures besides national historic trail designation were assessed to evaluate the proper recommendation.

The National Park Service determined the Butterfield Overland Trail met the criteria for national significance and was feasible, suitable, and desirable for designation as a national historic trail. The Butterfield Overland Trail was established by historic use—the transportation of mail and passengers from the Mississippi River to California between 1858 and 1861—and was, as a result, well known to many Americans. The trail is also historically significant on a national level, having shaped broad patterns of US history. In a moment of rising sectionalism just prior to the American Civil War, the trail provided a critical communication and transportation link with California and the Southwest, helping to ensure the future of these regions as part of the United States. As a transcontinental stagecoach route across the American Southwest, the resources of

the Butterfield Overland Trail are unique and not otherwise represented in the National Trails System; they differ in form, function, and purpose from other national historic trail resources.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY OF BUTTERFIELD OVERLAND NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL

The Senate bill introducing the trail designation was led by Senators John Boozman (R-AR), Roy Blunt (R-MO), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), John Cornyn (R-TX), Tom Cotton (R-AR), and Krysten Sinema (D-AZ) on January 19, 2022 (S. 3519). On January 5, 2023, the bill became Public Law 117-345 with a signature from President Biden.

Section 5(f) [16 U.S.C. § 1244(f) (2023)] of the National Trails System Act requires a comprehensive plan to be developed for all designated national historic trails. Public Law 117-345 for the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail also includes the following stipulations for land managers.

- The United States shall not acquire for the trail any land or interest in land outside of the exterior boundary of any federally administered area without the consent of the owner of the land or interest in land.
- No management plan for the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail creates a buffer zone outside of the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail.
- The fact that an activity or use of land outside the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail can be seen, heard, or detected from land or an interest in land acquired for the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail shall not preclude, limit, control, regulate, or determine the conduct or management of the activity or use.
- No management plan for the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail shall prohibit, hinder, or disrupt the development, production, or transmission of energy.
- The Secretary of the Interior may not use eminent domain or condemnation.

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE

The period of significance for the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail is 1858 to 1861 (see Appendix B for full historic context). Developments before and after this narrow span of three years—explosion of the population of California, congressional authorization of postal contracts, varied trajectories of Overland Mail Company associates in the Civil War, importance of “the old stagecoach road” in that same conflict, and further operations of the company along the central route—are critical for contextualizing the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail. The official period of significance, however, is limited by congressional designation of the three-year span during which the Overland Mail Company actively operated on the southern "Ox-Bow Route". As such, National Park Service partnerships, support, interpretation, and signing will generally be limited to historical sites, actors, and events that can be directly linked to operations on the "Ox-Bow Route" in the three-year window of 1858 to 1861.

NATURE AND PURPOSE OF BUTTERFIELD OVERLAND NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL

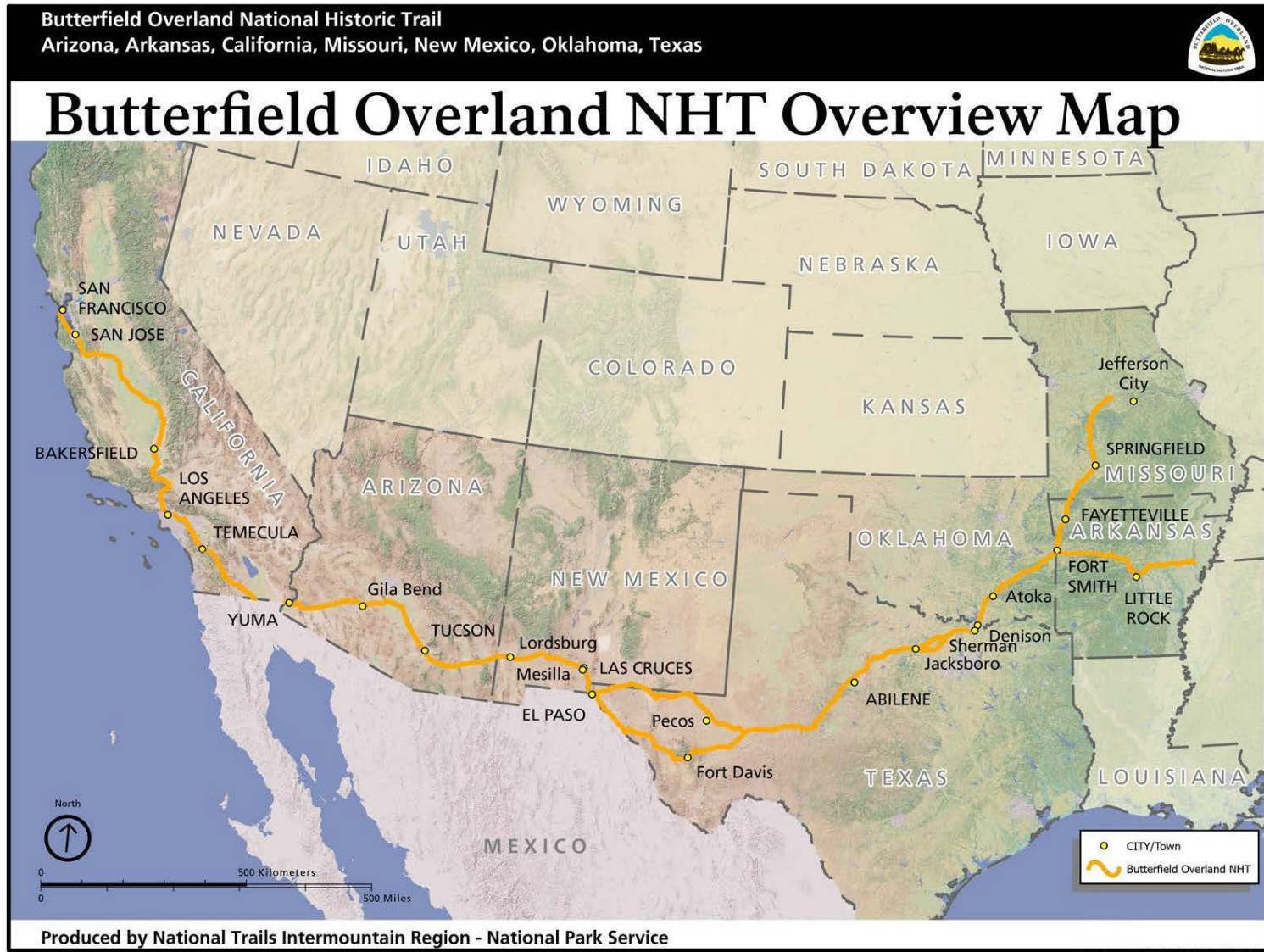
The term *nature and purpose* is used to describe the character, characteristics, and congressional intent for a national historic trail, including resources, qualities, values, and associated settings of the areas through which the trail may pass; primary use or uses of the trail; and activities promoting the preservation of, public access to, travel within, and enjoyment and appreciation of the trail.

The purpose of the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail is to facilitate a vicarious experience of the trail and use that experience to convey the historic significance of events along the trail.

Appendix C gives detailed descriptions of the nature of the various major ecoregions the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail passes through. The trail generally transitions from a humid climate into a vast arid desert region before moving northward into the grasslands and agricultural fields of California's interior.

TRAIL ROUTE DESCRIPTION

The route of the Overland Mail Company is well documented in historic sources, maps, and by field research. The "Ox-Bow Route" of this trail extends from the eastern termini of St. Louis, Missouri, and Memphis, Tennessee, to the western terminus in San Francisco, California, passing through Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The estimated total mileage of the stage line mail route was over 3,000 miles; however, not all those miles were designated by Congress as part of the national historic trail. Excluded are those portions of the route that dip into Mexico and the rail lines at the eastern end of the trail that connected the stage lines to St. Louis, Missouri, and Memphis, Tennessee. The trail alignment only follows the stagecoach route during the period of significance (1858–1861). See Map 1 and Appendix D for the congressionally designated national historic trail route of the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail.



Map 1. Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail overview, showing the congressionally designated historic route from St. Louis, Missouri, and Memphis, Tennessee, to San Francisco, California

CHAPTER 2. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

The National Trails System Act provides in Section 7(h) [16 U.S.C. § 1246(h) (2023)], that when deemed to be in the public interest, the Secretary of the Interior may enter into written cooperative agreements—with states or their political subdivisions, landowners, private organizations, or individuals—to operate, develop, and maintain any portion of a national historic trail either within or outside a federally administered area.

It is through public and private partnerships with the trail community that the National Park Service trail administrator fulfills the core purpose of national historic trails: protection, development, and promotion of national historic trails for public use and enjoyment. The trail community includes, among others:

- Tribal nations
- federal land managers
- state land managers and agencies
- county, city, and local government agencies
- volunteers and volunteer organizations
- historical societies/organizations
- universities, researchers, and students
- private organizations
- willing landowners
- other community members

The National Park Service may enter into cooperative agreements with nonfederal partners under the following legal authorities: 54 U.S.C. §101702(a) Cooperative Agreements, Transfer of Service Appropriated Funds and 16 U.S.C. § 1246(h)(1) Agreements to Operate, Develop, and Maintain Portions of National Trails.

Not all partnerships require a formal agreement. The National Park Service provides technical assistance to trail communities, including assistance with interpretation, site design, preservation, historical research, mapping, strategic planning, and trail marking. All partnership initiatives are voluntary and strive to meet the goals established in the trail's comprehensive plan.

PARTNERSHIP CERTIFICATION

Partnership certification begins with a conversation between the landowner or manager and the federal trail administrator about the historical significance and management needs of a particular trail-related property. Then, the landowner or manager and the National Park Service may enter into a voluntary partnership to manage, protect, and interpret the site for visitors. Commitment to that partnership is formalized with a simple, legally nonbinding partnership certification agreement that states the parties will work together toward those mutual goals.

As stated in partnership certification agreements, “[the owner/manager] retains all legal rights to the property and nothing in this agreement is to be construed as granting any legal authority to the National Park Service over the property or any action by [owner/manager].”

For details on how to become a certified partner, please contact the National Park Service.

CHAPTER 3. HIGH POTENTIAL RESOURCES

SIGNIFICANT NATURAL, HISTORICAL, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES OF THE TRAIL

Section 5(f)(1) [16 U.S.C. § 1244(f)(1) (2023)] of the National Trails System Act calls for the identification of all significant natural, historical, and cultural resources to be preserved along the trail. Because the criteria for high potential historic sites and high potential route segments capture the trail-significant natural, historical, and cultural resources, it is the determination of the trail administrator that this requirement is fulfilled through the identification of high potential historic sites and route segments (HP resources). It is important to note that archaeological resources are addressed under the National Historic Preservation Act, regardless of whether they are called out as HP resources. High potential resources should be identified using the guidance found in Appendix E. Archaeological resources should be identified using the guidance of the appropriate land manager or, in the case of private land, guidance from the appropriate State Historic Preservation Office.

HIGH POTENTIAL HISTORIC SITES AND ROUTE SEGMENTS

Identification of a high potential historic site or route segment is evaluated at a specific point in time, meaning that high potential historic sites and route segments may change over time. An area identified as a high potential historic site or route segment is meant to guide and encourage land management decisions, administrative strategies, priorities for preservation, and interpretive developments.

High potential historic site and route segment identifications are not actions or undertakings under the National Environmental Policy Act or the National Historic Preservation Act. There is no potential to affect or to impact the resources by identifying high potential historic sites or route segments. No federal action, funding, permits, licenses, or substantial involvement with any activity is implied by the trail administrator with a high potential resource identification.

National Park Service staff visited sites and segments in 2024 and 2025 in conjunction with local partners to determine whether resources merited status as high potential historic sites or high potential route segments under the National Trails System Act. The list of sites and segments identified through this fieldwork is not exhaustive. Included in this draft comprehensive plan is an initial list of HP resources. The trail administrator alone will maintain the most current inventory of HP resources and may update or modify it as appropriate in the future. For any inquiries about the current list of HP resources, or to suggest a new HP resource be added to the inventory, contact the National Park Service.

Sites

A broad variety of historic sites are associated with this trail, ranging from archaeological sites (trail trace, historic artifact scatters, ruins), river crossings, geographic landforms, cemeteries, and intact buildings that served as stage stations, offices, post offices, supply stores, hotels, residences, forts, and more. However, a large percentage of structures related to the trail and trail era were either short-lived or destroyed by time, fire, flooding, or deliberate demolition, leaving only a

small fraction of original structures standing at least partially intact or as visible surface ruins. Fieldwork for this plan focused on stage station locations; 158 sites were evaluated, 69 of which met criteria for high potential historic site status. Sites meeting criteria are listed and described in Appendix F.

Segments

In many cases, the physical traces of the mail route are gone, but the general travel corridor is relatively easy to identify. Quite often, physical evidence of the Butterfield Overland Trail has been obscured by later use, urban developments, or other human-made changes. However, there are segments remaining which can provide visitors with opportunities to experience the landscape of the trail as it was during the period of significance (1858–1861). Fieldwork for this plan focused on segments with trail trace; 31 segments were evaluated, 22 of which met criteria for high potential historic segment status. Segments meeting criteria are listed and described in Appendix G.

PROTECTION PLAN

The National Trails System Act, Section 5(f)(3) [16 U.S.C. § 1244(f)(3) (2023)], requires the trail administrator to provide a protection plan for high potential historic sites and high potential route segments. Appendices F and G provide a suggested high-level protection plan for each high potential historic site and high potential route segment identified in this draft comprehensive plan. As additional high potential resources are added, the appendices will be updated with accompanying protection plans. Land managers should tailor these high-level protection plans to their unique circumstances. The National Park Service does not have authority to implement or enforce these protection plans but offers them as stewardship guidance for landowners and land managers.

The following are objectives and best practices for the trail at large.

Objectives

- Wherever possible, preserve the entire trail in its current state or rehabilitate it to its condition during its era of use.
- Protect the trail from overuse, inappropriate use, and vandalism.
- Encourage uses of adjacent lands that complement the protection and interpretation of trail resources.
- Provide the minimum facilities necessary and environmentally compatible to allow for the enjoyment and protection of resources.
- Ensure safe and informative experiences for all visitors.
- Increase and improve public access to trails and trail-related educational opportunities.
- Maintain resource and social conditions appropriate to the continuum of trail settings.

Best Practices

- Document baseline conditions of the trail and historic site settings using a visual resource inventory.
- Evaluate trail resources for visitor use (and other) impacts. Implement visitor use management techniques to avoid, reduce, or mitigate impacts.
- Monitor adjacent land uses for potential to impact trail resources and settings.
- Design facilities and interpretive waysides that are compatible with the trail setting. Use universal design principles (accessible and usable for the largest possible audience).

CHAPTER 4. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENTS AND INTERPRETIVE THEMES

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENTS

Historical significance statements describe the ways in which a national historic trail is nationally significant. These statements are linked to the purpose of the trail and are supported by data, research, and consensus. They provide a foundation to develop and revise interpretive work along the trail and may inform the assessment and management of trail resources. Significance statements are fluid and are not binding. They may, in light of new research, be added to or changed in the future.

The first historical significance statements below were generated by researchers at the National Park Service, working in conjunction with trail historians and other partners. Tribal nations whose historic or contemporary homelands were crossed by the trail have been invited to contribute historical significance statements as well. These statements are also included below and are verbatim from the Tribal nations. The National Park Service will continue to incorporate Tribal significance statements into this document as we receive them.

Nations wishing to contribute should contact the National Park Service. Readers should place Tribal significance statements on equal footing with National Park Service historical significance statements.

National Park Service Significance Statements

A Remarkable Logistical Feat

- The creation and operation of the Butterfield Overland Mail was a remarkable logistical undertaking. The Overland Mail Company scouted, assembled, and built a continuous route across an enormous expanse. This required raising a huge amount of capital. It required building and improving roads that were previously passable only by people on foot or horseback. It required hiring employees, building or buying stations (and finding water sources for these stations), and finding supply networks to provision the company with livestock, fodder, food for workers and passengers, coaches, spare parts, and other necessities. When operations began, it required precise coordination to change teams and resupply stagecoaches on a relay journey that ran 24 hours a day and covered nearly 3,000 miles. All of this had to be accomplished without even the aid of a telephone. And it was accomplished quickly, from contract to first run in less than a year.

A Projection of the State

- The Butterfield Overland Mail was an early federal presence in much of the Southwest. Federal expansion in this area was realized primarily through two institutions—the US Army and the US Mail. In the case of the Butterfield trail, the army and the mail in fact leapfrogged one another westward. Like the US Army, the Overland Mail also brought

federal dollars to far-flung territories through employment, purchases, and supply contracts.

A Unifying Force

- The Overland Mail played a significant role in tying the West and, more specifically, California to the rest of the Union. After it was established in 1858, Butterfield stages carried letters and passengers back and forth from California more quickly and more dependably than ocean steamers had before them. As a result, economic and social ties between California and established parts of the United States in the Midwest, East, and South deepened. People could more easily maintain contact with friends and relatives. Business partners could have quicker and more reliable communications. Arriving on the Butterfield Stage, newspapers and letters also kept Westerners engaged with national politics and goings-on in Washington, D.C., New York, Boston, New Orleans, St. Louis, Charleston, and other major metropolitan areas.
- Equally important, the Overland Mail demonstrated the US government's financial and political commitment to California and its new residents. Remarkably, all of this occurred in a time of unprecedented sectional tensions. The Overland Mail stitched the United States together even as it was actively coming apart.

A New Road

- The Overland Mail Company created the vast majority of its route from existing roads, which had often themselves been laid over paths used by Indigenous peoples for millennia. By stitching together a disparate road system, improving significant portions of it, and linking it to dependable sources of water, John Butterfield (see Appendix B) and his employees created a highway into portions of the West and Southwest that had previously been more isolated. The road is an important part of Butterfield's legacy, its impact far outlasting the operations of the Overland Mail Company. As roads do, it brought change to the places it traversed. For some Native communities, this change was economically beneficial. For others, it accelerated displacement and the loss of ancestral lands.

A Cultural Force

- Although the Overland Mail Company operated along the southern "Ox-Bow Route" for only two-and-a-half years, the first transcontinental stage route resonated with Americans. Later generations, thanks to Western novels, motion pictures, and television, recognized the stagecoach as an iconic symbol of the American West, and, today, "the Butterfield" is a name well known to many. Roads, parks, and commercial establishments along the trail corridor bear the names Butterfield Trail, Butterfield Stage, Old Stage Coach Road, and other variations, reflecting a continued presence of the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail in American culture and the collective memory of an American past.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

- Through active participation in the establishment of the Butterfield Overland Mail route, the Choctaw Nation asserted and reinforced its self-governing authority – rights retained and guaranteed by treaties with the federal government – over its lands and communities. The Butterfield Overland Mail Company operated in collaboration with the Choctaw Nation, relying on established roads, settlements, and systems of travel and communication shaped by Choctaw governance and land use. Rather than introducing entirely new systems, the route built upon and integrated existing infrastructure.
- Choctaw communities were actively engaged in regional trade, agricultural production, and local enterprise at this time. The Butterfield operated successfully through Indian Territory by utilizing the Nation’s networks, labor, and services. This approach complemented and expanded long-standing practices before the route’s untimely disruption and termination.
- Choctaw Nation’s involvement with the Butterfield was a strategic decision. It underscored the Nation’s ability to shape economic and social life on its own terms while maintaining authority amid increasingly complex internal and external pressures. The route also became part of a broader effort to transform a landscape marked by trauma of removal into one defined by resilience, sovereignty, and self-determination. In legacy, the Butterfield Trail is remembered not simply as a mail route, but as evidence of Choctaw resilience and governance, reflecting how the Nation engaged with expanding American systems while maintaining its right to protect the land, economy, and resources for future generations.

The Chickasaw Nation

How did tribes support (or not) Butterfield operations in their homelands?

- The Chickasaw Nation played a complex role in the operation of the Butterfield Overland Mail route. Chickasaws were not passive observers of the events precipitating the new mail route - we were a sovereign nation with our own government, laws, and interests.
- The Chickasaw Nation supported the Overland Mail’s operations, in a negotiated and conditional manner. Chickasaws leased station rights, supplied livestock, forage and food, or worked at Butterfield stations. This cooperation reflected pragmatic choices: the Nation was still rebuilding its economy after the forced Removal from our ancestral Homeland during the 1830s.
- The mail service itself offered limited economic benefits, but the route’s strategic path in the Chickasaw Nation, and the general improvement to the road infrastructure provided by Butterfield, led to increased traffic across the Red River to and from Texas.
- However, this support was not universal, nor was it unqualified. There were concerns about encroachment, and the precedent, seen in the Homeland, of federal infrastructure and interests becoming a wedge for deeper US intervention in Indian affairs. Chickasaw leadership had already seen how quickly the federal government could establish logistical

operations in Indian Territory without full tribal consent and saw the Butterfield as an extension of federal incursion. So, while some individuals and communities found opportunity, the Chickasaw Nation as a whole was careful to guard its sovereignty.

- The route of the Butterfield itself followed some Chickasaw Removal routes on its course through Indian Territory. Both Boggy Depot, which got its name for its use as a supply depot for removed Chickasaws and was the location of the Chickasaw Agency for many years, and Blackburn Station, which was formerly known as Brushy Creek Depot, are on the route. Colbert, Oklahoma – site of another Butterfield Station, and the ferry across the Red River – was owned and managed by members of the Chickasaw Colbert family, who had for several generations produced leaders in the Homeland and in Indian Territory.

How did the arrival of Butterfield personnel, stations, and land claims affect tribal communities and tribal relationships with the federal government?

- The presence of the Butterfield line in Chickasaw territory was one more sign that federal reach was growing across the continent, even inside a region legally defined as Indian Territory.
- Although the Chickasaw Nation were legally guaranteed our own sovereign territory, the establishment of stage routes, especially permanent investments like roads and bridges paid for by federal dollars, began to erode the practical boundaries of tribal control over our own land.
- Butterfield drivers were likely often not Native, but many station owners and auxiliary personnel in Indian Territory were. The US Army soldiers at Ft. Washita were served by the mail lines, which allowed it to communicate more effectively with the rest of the Federal forces in the area. This made it easier for regional army forces to protect the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations from the Republic of Texas and from the tribes who lived in the area prior to Chickasaw Removal. It also made it easier for the Indian Agents assigned to the Choctaw and Chickasaw, including the one at Boggy Depot, to communicate the needs and concerns of their respective tribes to the Bureau of Indian Affairs.
- These events eroded the Chickasaws' relationship with the federal government. What had once been a government-to-government relationship, grounded in treaties, had begun to gradually shift toward a more paternalistic model. The Chickasaw Nation was forced to deal with an expanding federal presence in our territory. The Butterfield marks another point where the Chickasaw Nation had to fight for the second time in a century to retain our property and lands. These challenges laid groundwork for future conflicts over railroad rights-of-way, allotment policies and statehood.

How did the Butterfield Line affect, change, or reshape the relationship of affected tribes with other parts of the United States? Who did it bring in? Who did it allow to leave?

- The Butterfield Line reshaped Chickasaw connections with the United States in several ways: geographically, economically, politically, and socially.

- It brought more outsiders in. Station workers, passengers, government agents and soldiers traveled through Chickasaw land. With them came outside influences, ideas and expectations. For some Chickasaws, this exposure provided opportunities for new business ventures and easier access to remote education. However, it also represented a deepening threat to tribal autonomy and cultural continuity.
- It increased the width and depth of communication; before the Overland Mail, Chickasaw relations with distant parts of the US were mediated through treaties, federal agents and slow, unreliable letter delivery. The arrival of the route in the Chickasaw Nation began a new era of Chickasaw relations with a growing flurry of American travelers, a concept that accelerated further after the Civil War. Though the Chickasaw had long catered to travelers through our Homeland along the Natchez Trace and the Federal Road, such relationships became more commercial and impersonal in Indian Territory, driven by federal logistics and the demands of the mail service. Eventually, using the roads laid by the Butterfield, later railroad lines, thousands of Americans took up residence as legal and illegal residents in the Chickasaw Nation in the decades preceding the Dawes Era and allotment. Visitors from the United States, seeing the land for themselves, developed an increased desire to own the land within the Chickasaw Nation.
- The mail line also signaled a shift in the way the US government saw Indian Territory - not just as a place to settle tribes whose homelands had been appropriated, but as a corridor - a place to pass through on the way to the new, burgeoning western territories, and one that would eventually need to be permanently secured.
- In short, though the Butterfield Overland Mail Line started as a venture to deliver mail and passengers to the west coast, it was not only a communication route - but a watershed moment. It changed Indian Territory from a distant frontier to an eventual obstacle to the growing borders of the United States. Chickasaws recognized this dual nature: for some it became a tool for economic growth, and for others it was a vector of further intrusion and control. The tribe's response to this complicated issue was pragmatic, protective, forward-thinking and strategic - characteristics that defined our dealings with the Europeans from the earliest contact.

Osage Nation

- The Osage Nation would like it known that the existing trails that were used by European settlers in the eastern portions of the Butterfield Overland Trail were originally Osage Trails.

Cherokee Nation

- Although the Butterfield Overland NHT does not travel through the boundaries of Cherokee Nation's reservation in Oklahoma, it intersects with routes taken during Cherokee Nation's forced removal to Indian Territory as well as Civil War sites connected to Cherokee regiments. These intersections occur on the east-west portion of the trail

(Forest City, AR to Fort Smith, AR segment) and the north-south portion of the trail (Springfield, MO to Fort Smith, AR segment).

- The history of the Butterfield Overland trail should not overshadow these critical moments in Cherokee Nation’s history. Additionally, the Butterfield Line’s establishment resulted from the United States’ efforts related to westward expansion, which threatened tribal sovereignty in Indian Territory.

INTERPRETIVE THEMES

Interpretation along the trail explores the dynamic relationship between the trail’s physical resources and the broader meanings they represent. Interpretive media builds awareness of the trail and its national significance among the public and trail communities. It strengthens understanding of National Park Service roles and partner responsibilities in trail administration, preservation, and interpretation. Interpretation assists partners in identifying the most compelling stories along the trail and delivering them through accessible, inclusive media and programming. Programming provides opportunities for visitors to understand the contributions and cultural heritage of the diverse people whose histories are intertwined with the trail. Importantly, interpretation promotes resource stewardship that emphasizes connections between visitors, place, and the trail’s enduring values.

Interpretive themes frame these efforts by capturing the trail’s purpose, significance, and values. Themes address broad, overarching ideas and allow for subthemes that reflect the trail’s many layered stories—from Indigenous homelands and political borders to transportation history, economic development, and cultural continuity. Themes answer the essential question, “Why does this matter?” They support interpreters in creating engaging, relevant interpretive experiences for all visitors.

Interpretive themes were developed by National Park Service interpretive specialists. Tribal nations whose historic or contemporary homelands intersect the trail have also been invited to contribute themes. These statements are also included below and are verbatim from the Tribal nations. The National Park Service will continue adding Tribal contributions as they are received. Nations wishing to participate should contact the National Park Service. Readers should regard Tribal interpretive themes as equal in importance to interpretive themes developed by the National Park Service.

National Park Service Interpretive Themes

The following interpretive themes are preliminary statements that reflect the trail’s foundational stories and resource connections, but they are not intended to replace a long-range interpretive planning process. These themes may be refined and expanded through future collaborative work with trail stakeholders, Tribal nations, partner organizations, and associated communities to promote interpretive services that fully represent the diverse perspectives and experiences connected to the trail.

Experiencing the Trail Today

- The Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail offers today’s visitors opportunities to explore the people, places, and stories of the route and to experience—through today’s landscapes, travel corridors, and trail activities—elements of the challenge, adventure, and sense of discovery that historical travelers once knew.
- *Main Ideas:* (1) Visitors encounter segments and sites that retain the atmosphere of the historic route, allowing them to experience its beauty, isolation, and environments through activities such as traveling historic alignments, hiking, cycling, horseback riding, or exploring station locations and trail landscapes. (2) The trail’s varied regional settings reveal how the route represents different things in different places, shaping distinct uses, encounters, and cultural perspectives. (3) Modern trail experiences, whether physical travel, virtual interpretation, or community-based storytelling, highlight enduring connections between past and present.
- *Connections:* Trail segments, road traces, landscapes, station sites, and travel corridors allow visitors to physically encounter the environments of historic travelers, fostering an intangible understanding of journey, challenge, curiosity, and discovery.

Perceptions of the West

- The Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail route reveals how perceptions—accurate or not—shaped national understanding of the West, influencing expectations of travel, assumptions about land use, cultural identity, and the stories communities carry forward today.
- *Main Ideas:* (1) Romanticized expectations of the West contrasted sharply with difficult environmental and experiential realities. (2) Misunderstandings about “empty” land obscured long-standing Indigenous presence and land use patterns. (3) Communities interpreted the trail as intrusion or opportunity, forming complex local identities and adaptation to changes brought by the route. (4) Popular culture continues to influence how the trail is remembered.
- *Connections:* Historical accounts, illustrations, community narratives, and the real landscapes themselves reveal the contrast between imagined and lived experience, deepening understanding of identity, nostalgia, expectation, myth, and cultural memory.

Power, Tension, and the Politics of Connection

- The Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail embodies the political tensions, fears, and power struggles of a nation on the brink of civil conflict, illustrating how control of information, communication, and secure trade routes shaped decisions about the trail’s creation and alignment.
- *Main Ideas:* (1) The trail was intentionally routed to satisfy political priorities and provide an overland path to the Pacific. (2) Speed and reliability of communication are forms of

power. (3) Border regions were fragile spaces—ecologically, politically, and culturally. (4) Government, military, and corporate interests shaped the trail’s development.

- *Connections:* Route alignment, military posts, mail contracts, relay station sites, and political documents provide physical evidence of the intangible forces of fear, national tension, ambition, and struggles for control and influence.

Building and Operating a Continental Road

- The Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail represents a major human effort to construct, supply, and sustain a coordinated transportation and communication system across remote and challenging landscapes, spreading information, and linking people and cultures across the continent.
- *Main Ideas:* (1) The trail depended on extensive infrastructure, labor, and logistical planning. (2) It integrated existing Indigenous, military, and settler routes with new structures and supply systems. (3) Surviving components demonstrate how fragile connections sustain movement across harsh environments.
- *Connections:* Station ruins, roadbeds, artifacts, supply infrastructure, and engineered features embody intangible qualities of resilience, ingenuity, labor, cooperation, and the human drive to overcome environmental challenges.

Forces Shaping Route Alignment

- The alignment of the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail reflects the intersection of geography, sectional politics, military strategy, Indigenous and settler travel patterns, resources, and environmental constraints that shaped how people moved across the continent.
- *Main Ideas:* (1) The route followed both practical needs—water, geography—and strategic ones—military, political, and economic. (2) Harsh desert stretches demonstrated the realities of overland travel. (3) Travelers encountered both hardship and wonder in the landscapes. (4) The route reveals layers of movement through time, from Indigenous corridors to federal mail lines to multiple uses today.
- *Connections:* Tangible mapped routes, landscape features, water sources, forts, and earlier paths make visible the intangible influences of decision-making, cultural priorities, resource knowledge, and contested visions of national movement and expansion.

Indigenous Nations: Impact, Adaptation, and Continuity

- The Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail affected Indigenous nations in varied and enduring ways, reflecting both the disruptions and opportunities of a permanent overland route and highlighting the resilience, adaptability, and sustained presence of Tribal communities across the region.
- *Main Ideas:* (1) Impacts differed by location, era, and Tribe. (2) Intercultural contact intensified around a fixed route. (3) Communities demonstrated adaptability and agency

as the route brought new perspectives and opportunities. (4) Tribal homelands and relationships with land persist as foundational to understanding the trail.

- *Connections*: Indigenous homelands, archaeological sites, traditional cultural landscapes, oral histories, and places of encounter physically anchor intangible concepts of resilience, identity, sovereignty, adaptation, and long-term cultural continuity.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Interpretive Themes

Sovereignty

- Choctaw leaders oversaw the establishment of the route and official stage stops demonstrating active governance. (2) The route affirmed Choctaw territorial boundaries and the Nation's legal authority over non-Choctaw travel and commerce.

Nation-Building and Infrastructure Development

- The trail introduced and expanded roads, stations, and communication routes that the Choctaw Nation continued to use for decades. (2) The trail extended down through Boggy Depot, which served as a vital hub for both the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations, and as the Capitol of Choctaw Nation around this time. (3) The route contributed to internal mobility and administration cohesion within the Nation.

Economic Integration and Tribal Enterprise

- Choctaw citizens established services such as stage stops and food provisioning. (2) The trail created new commercial opportunities while enabling the Choctaw Nation to regulate economic activity.

Diplomacy and Navigating Federal Pressure

- The Choctaw Nation's engagement with the Butterfield Overland Mail route reflects the complex diplomacy required to maintain tribal autonomy amid US expansion. (2) Accepting the route was both a strategic choice and a negotiation of power with federal authorities.

Cultural Continuity

- Infrastructure associated with the trail (ex. Edwards Store and Boggy Depot) became part of Choctaw Nation's historical memory and landscape.

Self-Determination

- The trail's operation demonstrated how tribal nations pursued economic development on their own terms. (2) Choctaw leaders used the presence of the trail to reinforce national identity, political independence, and long-term strategic planning.

Cherokee Nation Potential Interpretive Themes

Trail of Tears

American Civil War

Westward Expansion

Tribal Sovereignty

CHAPTER 5. ROUTES OF THE BUTTERFIELD OVERLAND NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL

In the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail Designation Act (Public Law 117-345), the trail's authorized mileage is listed as approximately 3,152 miles based on the congressionally designated national historic trail route as displayed within the *Butterfield Overland Trail National Historical Trail Special Resource Study* (2018a). The Geographic Information System calculated mileage (USA Contiguous Albers Equal Area Conic USGS) ¹ for the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail is approximately 3,152 miles based on the congressionally designated national historic trail route as displayed within the draft comprehensive plan maps.

The draft comprehensive plan includes the initial mapping for the national historic trail and the federal trail administrator maintains and is the authoritative source for the official authoritative set of trail maps and datasets as outlined in the Federal Trail Data Standard for the national historic trail. This includes the authorized congressionally designated national historic trail route (NHT1), associated heritage resources (NHT2—route/sites including high potential sites, high potential segments, trail trace, and associated cultural resources), and associated recreation or interpretive route/sites (NHT3—recreational, retracement, interpretive trails or sites) (Federal Geographic Data Committee 2011).

Local land managers, state historic preservation offices, and Tribal historic preservation offices maintain more detailed and up-to-date archaeological inventory data regarding associated heritage resources including trail trace and cultural resources. Local land managers maintain more detailed data and information regarding associated recreation or interpretive routes and sites. The list of high potential sites and high potential segments will be maintained and updated as needed by the federal trail administrator. As new documentation or research is conducted and as high-potential site and segment conditions change, the congressionally designated national historic trail route can be refined, and high potential sites and segments can be updated, added, or removed by the federal trail administrator. All inquires regarding the congressionally designated national historic trail route, official datasets of the national historic trail, current status of mapping for the national historic trail, and spatial data requests must be directed to the federal trail administrator.

For more information regarding mapping of the national historic trail, please [contact](#) the National Park Service.

ROUTE MAPPING METHODOLOGY

Mapping the authorized congressionally designated route of a national historic trail involves gathering appropriate historic information (from primary and secondary sources) along with various geospatial data. Compiling and examining these voluminous sources is time-consuming, but it is essential to ensure accurate delineation of the national historic trail and that the

1. This is the specific geographic projection used when calculating the mileage of the authorized congressionally designated national historic trail route.

alignment is based on the best available historic documentation. Sources can include various period accounts, government documents and contracts, newspaper articles and advertisements, General Land Office land patents and cadastral survey plat maps, county plat maps, railroad plat maps, city and town plat maps, Texas general land office plat maps, military maps, USGS topographic quad maps, and river survey maps. Geospatial sources include data generated from historic maps, historic aerial photography, Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR), the USGS Geographic Names Information System (GNIS), archaeological inventory spatial data, US Census Bureau road data, and high-resolution imagery. See Appendix D for full methodology and maps.

It is important to note the authorized congressionally designated national historic trail route does not need to match exactly the archaeological/historical alignment to meet the purpose of the National Trails System Act. The National Trails System Act, Section 3(a)(3) [16 U.S.C. § 1242(a)(3) (2023)], specifies the authorized congressionally designated national historic trail route will “follow as closely as possible and practicable the original trails or routes of travel of national historic significance.”

Route Refinement

The trail administrator maintains the authoritative, authorized, congressionally designated national historic trail route mapping and spatial data. The trail administrator updates mapping and spatial data for the authorized congressionally designated national historic trail route as appropriate in coordination with land managers and others and makes refinement decisions on a case-by-case basis when new research demonstrates the historical route of travel is not consistent with the current authorized, congressionally designated national historic trail route. No new routes or substantial additional mileage can be added to the national historic trail, and minor differences specifically relating to mapping scale do not require updates to the mapping or data for the authorized congressionally designated national historic trail.

To request a route refinement, requesters should create a complete proposal with adequate data to support it. For full details on proposal requirements and submission guidelines, please contact the National Park Service.

RIGHT OF WAY

The National Trails System Act, Section 7(a)(2) [16 U.S.C. § 1246(a)(2) (2023)], requires the Secretary of the Interior to “select the rights-of-way” for a national trail. A right-of-way (hereafter referred to as the trail corridor) is meant to encompass the settings, resources, and values for which the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail was designated. The corridor does not impose any restrictions on land management decisions, nor does it affect land ownership. Instead, the trail corridor acts as a tool for land managers to consider the cultural and historic significance of their resources in relation to the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail when making land use decisions.

The National Trails System Act, Section 7(a)(2) [16 U.S.C. § 1246(a)(2) (2023)], requires trail administrators to come to “agreement” with federal land managers on the national trail right-of-way and to publish notice of the final right-of-way in the *Federal Register*. In selecting rights-of-

way for trail purposes, the Secretary of the Interior shall obtain the advice and assistance of the states, local governments, private organizations, landowners, and land users concerned. This process will begin after the completion of the draft comprehensive plan.

CHAPTER 6. CARRYING CAPACITY

The National Trails System Act, Section 5(e)(1) and Section 5(f)(1) [16 U.S.C. § 1244(e)(1) and (f)(1) (2023)], requires that carrying capacity be addressed for a national trail, including a plan for its implementation. Carrying capacity, now referred to as visitor capacity by the Interagency Visitor Use Management Council (IVUMC; 2019), is defined as “the maximum amounts and types of visitor use that an area can accommodate while achieving and maintaining the desired resource conditions and visitor experiences that are consistent with the purposes for which the area was established.”

Visitor capacities were identified using best practices from other plans across the National Park Service using the following IVUMC guidance: determining the analysis areas, reviewing existing direction and knowledge, identifying limiting attributes, and then identifying visitor capacities.

National Historic Trails are not end-to-end constructed trails; they are primarily administrative designations meant to recognize the impact of nationally significant historic events. National historic trails cross multiple federal, state, Tribal, regional, and local jurisdictions, as well as private lands. Visitor use levels vary widely across the diverse portfolio of lands and waters found along the trail. Following IVUMC guidance, the level of analysis for visitor capacity identification is determined on a sliding scale depending on impact risk, issue uncertainty, stakeholder involvement, and controversy level related to the plan scope.

A portfolio planning approach is used for implementing visitor capacities for a trail. Portfolio planning includes implementation-level planning by local land managers as well as the identification and implementation of visitor capacities. The National Park Service may provide technical assistance to landowners wishing to establish site-specific visitor capacities and management strategies. The federal trail administrator does not have authority or jurisdiction to manage visitor use at sites they do not manage. However, the National Trails System Act, Section 5(e)(1) and Section 5(f)(1) [16 U.S.C. § 1244(e)(1) and (f)(1) (2023)], does require trail administrators to identify capacities for designated trails.

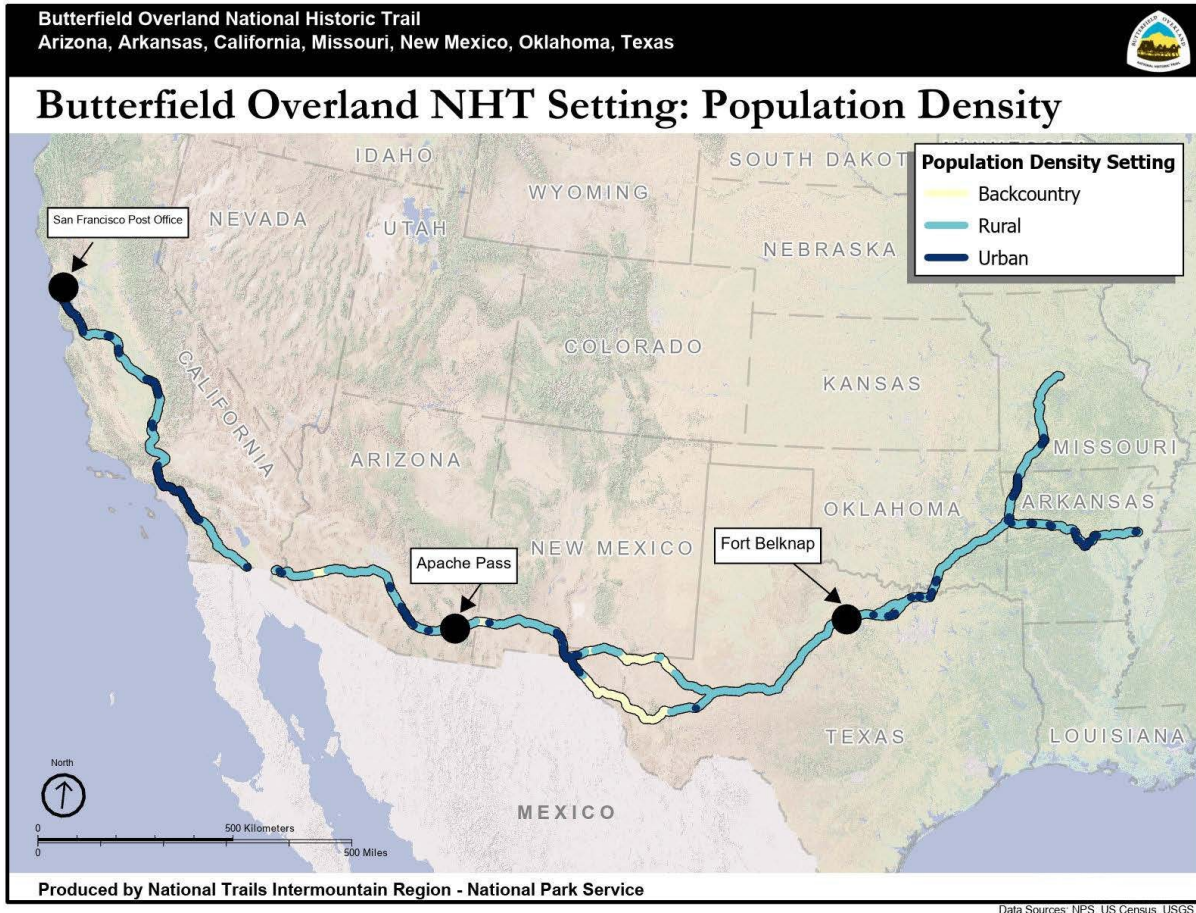
National historic trail settings offer a range of recreational opportunities and experiences. The condition of trail-related resources includes, among other things, the visual integrity of cultural sites and landscapes, the ecological integrity of the area crossed by the trail, and the condition of the trail surface. This desired visitor experience includes levels of visitor encounters, congestion, and crowding that affect solitude, and the opportunity to vicariously experience the nature of the trail.

ANALYSIS AREA AND EXISTING DIRECTION

The Recreational Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) (USFS 2024), which characterizes a continuum of recreation opportunities in terms of setting, activity, and experience is used in this process to characterize typical national historic trail settings, ranging from urban to backcountry, and reflects desired conditions along the trail.

For the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail, there are exemplar localities that represent each of the three types of trail settings from the ROS spectrum (see Map 2). The ROS settings are

being used as desired conditions and have been applied throughout the trail for all segments. For each trail setting, an example site has been provided. The example sites informed the development of the threshold and visitor capacity that were developed by setting for different segments (see Map 2). In the future, site-specific analysis areas may be identified by local land managers.



Map 2. Setting of the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail, using the Recreational Opportunity Spectrum (ROS, adapted) characterizations

Urban

Urban trail segments are characterized by a built environment. Typically they are paved trails or roads with durable surfaces and the expectation of higher visitor encounter rates and congestion. This trail type and location could support increased levels of use or a high visitor capacity. For example, the San Francisco Post Office: although the original building is gone, this site remains a working US Postal Service office in downtown San Francisco, California. This site is along the trail, is not owned or managed by the National Park Service, and has been designed to accommodate frequent foot traffic. Visitors expect to see high levels of use in urban areas such as San Francisco and at popular destinations such as a post office.

Rural

Rural trail segments are characterized by a somewhat natural setting. Views are afforded, and trail types include gravel or two-track roads or may not be present. This trail type and location would accommodate lower levels of use, and given the rural locations visitors would expect lower visitor encounter rates, suggesting a moderate to low level of use, or a lower visitor capacity than areas within the urban classification. Fort Belknap, for example, is a state historic site (a fort) located near Newcastle, Texas, and in a rural environment. This is a designated national historic landmark offering special events and daily opportunities. Visitors arrive at destinations like this with expectations that they will encounter other visitors.

Backcountry

Backcountry trail segments are characterized by a remote, natural setting and no formal trails. These segments of the trail may not have facilities or trail routes for visitors to travel. Visitors to these areas would expect infrequent visitor encounters, and these segments would support a low level of use and a lower visitor capacity than urban and rural areas. Apache Pass Station, for example, is located at Fort Bowie National Historical Site in southeastern Arizona. A visitor to this area could expect to find a historical marker and see the location of the Battle of Apache Pass. Visitors would expect to see few other visitors or infrastructure to support their visit.

MONITORING

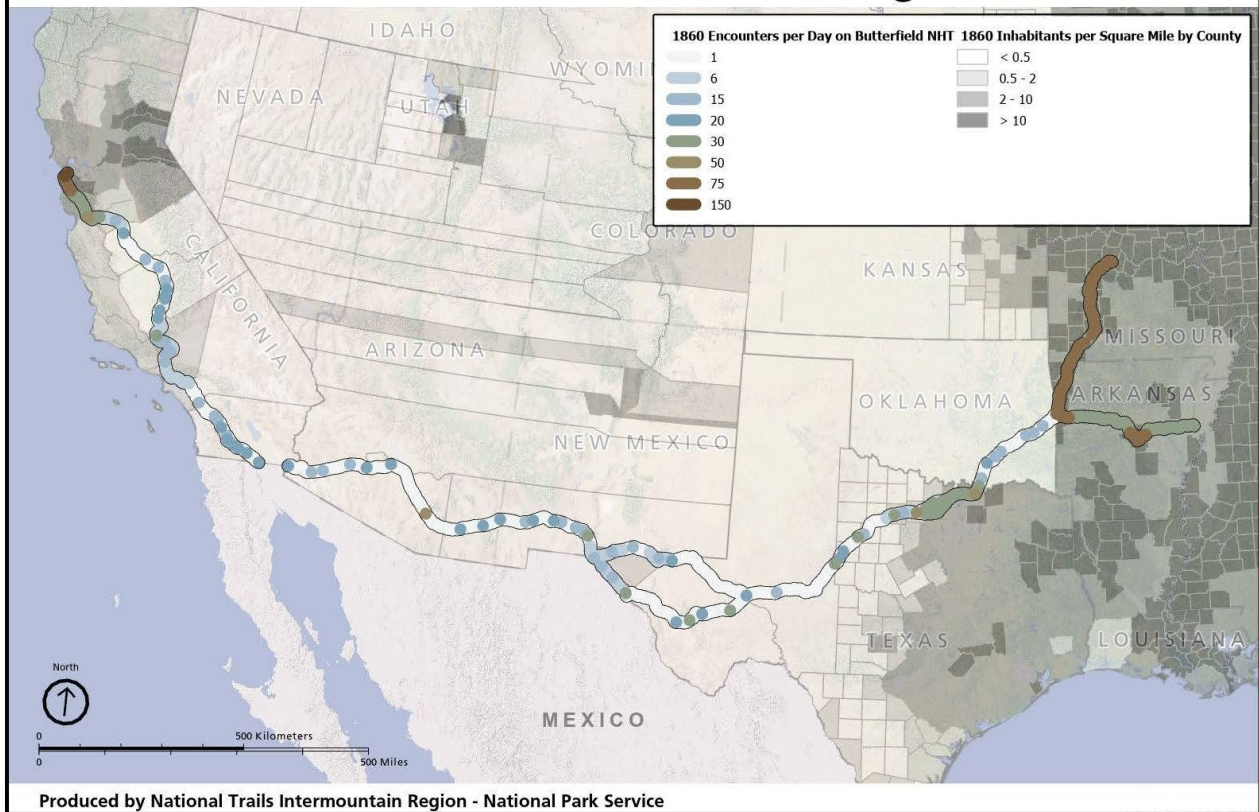
For the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail, the capacity analysis focuses on the desired conditions that would provide a vicarious experience, as articulated in the National Trails System Act in Section 12(2) [16 U.S.C. § 1251(2) (2023)]. These complement the ROS spectrum and include the vicarious experience of the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail, which can be defined as an experience that allows modern visitors to experience conditions similar to what 19th-century travelers experienced along the overland mail route during its period of significance (1858–1861). Monitoring conditions along the trail informs management of adjustments needed to achieve and maintain desired conditions, specifically the vicarious experience of the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail. The goal is to understand the number of visitor encounters along the trail, congestion and crowding at trail sites, and opportunities to experience the natural and cultural settings of the trail.

To understand social conditions, this draft comprehensive plan used data from the 1860 census (Manson et al. 2025) and Overland Mail Company records to represent the desired conditions of a vicarious experience (see Map 3).²

2. Estimated daily human encounter values were designed as rough, conservative figures rather than exact counts, based on what is known about Butterfield stage stations, travel patterns, and nearby population levels. Where population data were missing, the absence of records was treated as evidence of frontier conditions and assigned very low values, with all estimates chosen to reflect broad regional differences without overstating precision.



Butterfield Overland NHT Social Setting: 1860



Map 3. Social setting of the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail, showing the number of encounters a traveler would have in 1860, during the period of significance

Indicators

Indicators translate broadly desired conditions into measurable attributes (e.g., encounter rates) that can be tracked over time to evaluate changes in desired conditions. The planning team for this draft comprehensive plan considered many potential issues and related indicators that would identify impacts of concern.

Thresholds

Thresholds represent minimum acceptable conditions for each indicator, considering qualitative descriptions of desired conditions, data on existing conditions, relevant research studies, and staff management experience. Although defined as minimally acceptable, thresholds still represent acceptable conditions. Also, establishing thresholds does not imply that no action would be taken prior to reaching the threshold. Thresholds identify the point at which visitor use effects on desired conditions are anticipated to become enough of a concern that a management action is needed to achieve and maintain desired conditions.

The primary indicator used to measure the social conditions of the vicarious experience is group encounter rate (group size per hour). The visitor experience along the trail is the limiting attribute; the encounter rate indicator serves as a measure of crowding, congestion, and solitude, and therefore serves as the basis for identifying visitor capacities. The planning team selected a representative site within each of the three trail settings to illustrate current and desired conditions for each of the settings, along with an established threshold (see Table 1). These example sites informed the development of the encounter rate threshold per hour that is applied to the trail setting for all segments.

Table 1. Encounters per Hour at Example Locations for Each National Historic Trail Setting

Trail Setting	Example Sites	Current Condition	Desired Condition	Threshold*
Urban segments	San Francisco Post Office	40**	50	197
Rural segments	Fort Belknap	2***	10	55
Backcountry Segments	Apache Pass Station	1****	1	2

* See Map 4.

** Calculated as follows: 10,105 visits/week = 1,444 visits/day = 120 visits per hour (over 12 hours) = group encounter rate of 40, assuming a group size of 3 (Office of Inspector General 2017). This is a minimum estimate based on number of postal customers.

*** Calculated as follows: 30,000 visitors/year = 576 visitors/week = 82 visitors/day = 7 visitors/hour (over 12 hours) = group encounter rate of 2, assuming a group size of 3 (Neighbours 1995).

**** Calculated as follows: 8483 visitors/year = 163 visitors/week = 23 visitors/day = 2 visitors/hour (over 12 hours) = group encounter rate of 0.64, assuming a group size of 3 (NPS 2024a).

The thresholds established for the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail are informed by adjusted-for visitor use levels. To approximate what 19th-century travelers experienced along the overland route, historical encounter levels were adjusted to reflect changes in regional population between 1860 and 2020. This produces a modern equivalent of historic conditions that helps guide monitoring and visitor capacities designed to preserve the sense of space, remoteness, and movement experienced by original Butterfield travelers (see Map 4).

Each site described below includes data on current conditions (observed 2024–2025), desired conditions for the historic period (1860), and threshold (adjusted 1860 capacity, as discussed above). Each land manager along the trail must consider the individual, environmental, and experiential dimensions for their site when determining site-specific visitor capacity. The datasets for desired conditions and thresholds are available upon request from the trail administrator.



Butterfield Overland NHT Social Setting: Present-Day



Map 4. Social setting of the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail, showing the number of encounters a traveler would need to have in 2020 to have an equivalent experience as those in 1860

National Park Service staff determined the present-day experiential equivalence size (E_{modern}) by applying a population-based coefficient, calculated by comparing population density in 2020 (D_{2020}) to population density in 1860 (D_{1860}) for the same areas. The historical encounter numbers (E_{1860}) were multiplied by this coefficient—using a moderated (square-root) version of the ratio—to account for the fact that people experience crowding and isolation relative to their own time (see Figure 1). Extremely low population values were adjusted to avoid unrealistic results, and the scaling was softened so differences were not exaggerated. The final values are not exact counts but a modern equivalent that helps guide decisions about how to maintain the feeling of the original travel experience along the Butterfield route.

$$E_{modern} = \text{round} \left(E_{1860} \times \sqrt{\frac{D_{2020}}{\max(D_{1860}, 0.5)}}, 1 \right)$$

Where:

- E_{modern} = modern experiential encounter equivalent
- E_{1860} = estimated daily encounters in 1860
- D_{2020} = population density in 2020
- D_{1860} = population density in 1860
- $\max(D_{1860}, 0.5)$ = minimum threshold applied to prevent extremely low values

Figure 1. Equation used to calculate the present-day experiential equivalence size shown in Map 4

VISITOR CAPACITY AND IMPLEMENTATION

A portfolio of plans, or a portfolio planning approach, is recommended for implementing visitor capacities for the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail; this includes implementation-level planning. Local land manager plans could include the identification and implementation of visitor capacities. The National Park Service can provide technical assistance to landowners wishing to establish site-specific visitor capacities and management strategies.

Federal trail administrators do not have authority or jurisdiction to manage visitor use at sites owned or managed by other agencies, landowners, or National Park Service units/organizations. This draft comprehensive plan provides administrative guidance, objectives, and best practices including desired conditions that should be followed by landowners/managers and inform the identification of visitor capacities. Visitor use studies (including data collection and evaluation) may be required for to develop visitor capacity. Relatedly, landowners/managers should evaluate visitor use trends to determine whether site-specific visitor capacity achieves desired conditions (described above). Landowners/managers should also monitor social conditions.

Subsequent visitor use management actions may be needed by landowners/managers to achieve desired conditions and remain within established thresholds; these can include modifying the type of use, visitor behavior, information to inform visitor expectations, timing of use, and spatial distribution of use, among other techniques. The *Visitor Capacity Guidebook* (IVUMC 2019) can be a resource to landowners/managers for identifying visitor capacity and implementing visitor use management actions.

This draft comprehensive plan establishes a framework consistent with the National Trails System Act which includes desired conditions, monitoring, and visitor capacities. The trail administrator will work with partners to implement the guidance outlined in this draft comprehensive plan.

CHAPTER 7. DEVELOPMENT AND SIGNING

TRAIL DEVELOPMENT

Developing trail resources can strengthen and enhance local community connections to the trail and its story. Trail gateway communities and historic sites along the trail can be important leaders in trail resource development, with the support of the National Park Service through ensuring consistency with trail signage, interpretation, and the preservation and protection of trail resources.

Some examples of development are activities that connect local communities to trail resources, developing trail-related education programs for local and national use, integrating the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail into existing recreational trails, coordinating development with communities for tourism, connecting the trail with existing local and regional route designations, and more.

Trail resource development also requires coordination and collaboration with state, county, agency, preservation, and trail master plans. The National Park Service seeks to participate in existing local and regional community planning and development networks. The National Park Service also emphasizes development associated with high-potential sites and segments located near existing communities. Priority may also be given to projects that expand the range of visitor experiences and recreation opportunities associated with the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail.

ROAD, PEDESTRIAN, AND SITE SIGNING

Signing for the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail will follow official national historic trail and Federal Highway Administration sign guidelines, as outlined in the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (Federal Highway Administration 2023; Chapter 2D.57). Developed jointly by the National Park Service and the Federal Highway Administration, these standards are used to mark public roadways. Nonmotorized trail signage (aka pedestrian signage) is designed to align with these established road sign standards. The role of the National Park Service is to set and maintain signage and interpretive standards and manage the use of the official trail uniform marker.

Trail signage is a vital component of establishing the trail's public identity, aiding in wayfinding, and increasing visibility along its full extent, regardless of land ownership. The uniform marker developed for the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail has been incorporated into the standard triangular shape of the National Trails System (Figure 2). The marker is a unifying emblem representing the trail and all its partners. As a federal insignia this marker is protected against unauthorized uses. The trail superintendent retains approval authority for all uniform marker use along the trail. All managers and owners of trail-related sites with public access will be encouraged and supported to use official national historic trail road and pedestrian signs featuring the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail uniform marker.



Figure 2. Draft Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail uniform marker

The family of national historic trail signs (Figure 3) is designed to help visitors locate, follow, and experience the trail. These signs typically feature a brown background to signal recreational or historical interest, with the official trail uniform marker providing clear identification and trail branding. The suite of sign types includes vehicular, pedestrian-scale, and site identification signs to mark roadways, trails, trailheads, and national historic trail sites. Examples of the standard family of national historic trail signs and their intended uses can be viewed below.

The National Park Service may lead the development of sign plans in close collaboration with a wide range of partners, including nonprofit trail organizations, state departments of transportation, federal and state land management agencies, city and county governments, private landowners, and other stakeholders. Local partners contribute essential, site-specific knowledge of roads, trail segments, and historical context, while the trail administrator provides technical guidance and ensures consistency with national trail standards.

Each sign plan developed will specify the types of signs to be used, their proposed locations, and all relevant installation details. Once drafted, the plan will be submitted to the appropriate road-managing jurisdiction—such as a state department of transportation, county, city, or other landowner/manager—for review and approval. The National Park Service will work closely with these entities to ensure full coordination and support throughout the process.

Trail development, signage, and interpretive installations described in this plan are conceptual in nature. Specific projects may be proposed, reviewed, and implemented independently by the appropriate landowner or managing agency.

National Historic Trails
Generic Family of Road Signs



Historic Route Sign
24" x 36" (two panels):
Marks the historic route
of the national historic trail



*Historic Route lower panel
sign option*
24" x 12":



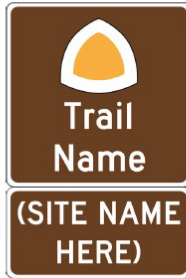
*Historic Route lower panel
arrow options*
21" x 15":



Crossing Sign
24" x 36" (two panels):
Marks where the historic
route of the national historic
trail crosses a road



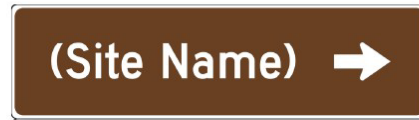
Site Name Sign
24" x 36" (two panels):
**Not available for state or
federal road jurisdictions*



Site ID Sign
Custom size - 72" x 42" typical:
Marks a site associated with the national historic trail



Directional Site Sign
Size varies:
Directs people to sites associated with the national historic trail



Updated August 2022

Figure 3. National historic trails generic family of road signs

APPENDIX A: OVERVIEW OF OUTREACH EFFORTS TO DATE

PUBLIC OUTREACH

From fall 2023 through spring 2024, National Park Service staff held 18 in-person and 1 virtual public outreach meetings for the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail. National Park Service staff collected contact information from at least 212 individuals who attended these meetings. Listed locations and dates are given in Table 2.

Table 2. In-Person Public Outreach Meetings 2023–2024

Location	Date
Jefferson City, MO	November 13, 2023
Springfield, MO	November 14, 2023
Little Rock, AR	November 29, 2023
Fort Smith, AR	November 30, 2023
Fayetteville, AR	November 30, 2023
Atoka, OK	December 12, 2023
Sherman, TX	December 12, 2023
Graham, TX	December 13, 2023
Abilene, TX	December 13, 2023
Alpine, TX	January 10, 2024
El Paso, TX	January 11, 2024
Las Cruces, NM	January 11, 2024
Tucson, AZ	January 24, 2024
Yuma, AZ	January 25, 2024
Temecula, CA	February 6, 2024
Los Angeles, CA	February 6, 2024
Bakersfield, CA	February 7, 2024
San Jose, CA	February 7, 2024
Virtual	March 21, 2024

National Park Service staff offered one-on-one meetings for anyone who could not attend one of the previously listed meetings. One land manager meeting was held in April 2024, and one

landowner meeting was held on March 21, 2024. National Park Service staff maintained communication with interested members of the public throughout 2024 and 2025, while conducting site visits for national historic trail planning.

In December 2024, National Park Service staff traveled to northwest Arkansas to meet with regional planners and partners and to visit trail-related sites in Fayetteville, Rogers, Bentonville, and Springdale. The participants of the envisioning meeting held on December 16, 2024, continue to meet quarterly to discuss trail initiatives.

In February 2025, National Park Service staff traveled to Fort Smith, Arkansas, and across Oklahoma to meet with partners, including Tribal nations, and to visit trail-related sites. At Eastern Oklahoma State College-Wilburton campus, staff gave a presentation on how communities and institutions can partner with the National Park Service.

LAND MANAGER OUTREACH

To identify land managers along the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail, the National Park Service conducted a geographic intersect with the authorized congressionally designated national historic trail route of the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail. To create a list of federal and nonfederal land managers along the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail, NPS staff used data from the USGS Protected Areas Database of the United States (<https://www.sciencebase.gov/catalog/item/61794fc2d34ea58c3c6f9f69>).

The National Park Service identified 2,115 land management entities within the 2-mile corridor of the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail. Table 3 presents a breakdown of the management types identified and is a summary of land manager data; to request access to the dataset, please contact the National Park Service.

Table 3. Types and Number of Land Managers Identified

Management Type	Number of Entities
Regional agency special district	119
Federal	172
Joint	41
Local government	1,630
City	1,299
County	313
Local park	6
Local recreation area	3
Private conservation	2
Unknown easement	7

- Tribal Contact Data (Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD] database): <https://hudgis-hud.opendata.arcgis.com/maps/tribal-contact-data/about>
 - Tribal Directory Assessment Tool (HUD web app): <https://egis.hud.gov/tdat/>
- Bureau of Indian Affairs AIAN Tribal Statistical Areas (database): <https://onemap-bia-geospatial.hub.arcgis.com/datasets/BIA-Geospatial::bia-aian-tribal-statistical-areas/about>
- Bureau of Indian Affairs AIAN Land Area Representations (database): <https://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=e21128c26386412ca682accf7a57361a>

From this data, the National Park Service identified 54 federally recognized Tribes that the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail likely affected:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians • Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas • Apache Tribe of Oklahoma • Augustine Band of Cahuilla Indians • Big Sandy Rancheria of Western Mono Indians of California • Buena Vista Rancheria of Me-Wuk Indians of California • Cachil DeHe Band of Wintun Indians of the Colusa Indian Community • California Valley Miwok Tribe • Campo Band of Diegueño Mission Indians • Capitan Grande Band of Diegueño Mission Indians • Cherokee Nation • Chickasaw Nation • Choctaw Nation • Cloverdale Rancheria of Pomo Indians of California • Comanche Nation • Fort Sill Chiricahua Warm Springs Apache Tribe • Gila River Indian Community • Ione Band of Miwok Indians • Jicarilla Apache Nation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas • Kiowa Tribe • La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians • La Posta Band of Diegueño Mission Indians • Los Coyotes Band of Cahuilla and Cupeño Indians • Mechoopda Indian Tribe of Chico Rancheria • Mescalero Apache Tribe • Morongo Band of Mission Indians • Muscogee (Creek) Nation • Osage Nation • Pala Band of Mission Indians • Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians • Pechanga Band of Indians • Picayune Rancheria of Chukchansi Indians of California • Quapaw Nation • Quechan Tribe of the Fort Yuma Indian Reservation • Ramona Band of Cahuilla • Rincon Band of Luiseño Indians • Round Valley Indian Tribes • San Carlos Apache Tribe • Santa Rosa Band of Cahuilla Indians • Santa Rosa Indian Community of the Santa Rosa Rancheria |
|---|---|

- Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Mission Indians
- Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians
- Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians
- Table Mountain Rancheria
- Tohono O’odham Nation
- Tonto Apache Tribe of Arizona
- Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians
- Tule River Indian Tribe
- Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians
- United Auburn Indian Community
- White Mountain Apache Tribe
- Ysleta del Sur Pueblo
- Yuhaaviatam of San Manuel Nation

Using this outreach list, Kauffman and Associates Incorporated sent an announcement letter to each of the Tribes in November 2023, followed by an additional letter to Tribal leadership in January and February 2024. These letters provided the registration link and listed the dates, times, and locations of all planned in-person outreach sessions, and it invited Tribes to request formal Tribal consultation or one-on-one engagement via Zoom or at a location convenient to the Tribe.

The National Park Service and Kauffman and Associates Incorporated hosted eight initial meetings with Tribes, the locations and dates of which are listed in Table 4. Eighteen Tribal nations participated in these meetings, amounting to 40 Tribal leaders or representatives engaged. The specific participants are not listed here; to request a list of participants, contact the National Park Service.

Table 4. In-Person Tribal Engagement Sessions 2024

Location	Date
Oklahoma City, OK	March 18, 2024
El Paso, TX (session canceled due to the registered Tribe opting to join a later session instead)	March 25, 2024
Phoenix, AZ	March 28, 2024
Sacramento, CA	March 29, 2024
Tulsa, OK	April 8, 2024
Temecula, CA	April 10, 2024
Fresno, CA	April 29, 2024
El Cajon, CA	May 2, 2024
Rancho Mirage, CA	May 3, 2024

National Park Service staff maintained communication with Tribal nations throughout 2024 and 2025, while conducting site visits for the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail planning. In March 2025, National Park Service employees sent out invitations to the 54 Tribes to attend

Tribal historic significance statement information sessions. Two sessions were offered via Microsoft Teams. These were held on April 7, 2025, and April 14, 2025. Four Tribal nations participated in these meetings, amounting to 9 Tribal leaders or representatives engaged. Then in September 2025, National Park Service employees sent out invitations to the 54 Tribes to attend Tribal interpretive theme information sessions. Two sessions were offered via Microsoft Teams. Due to the government shutdown in October 2025, the sessions were rescheduled to December 10, 2025, and December 11, 2025. Eleven Tribal nations participated in these meetings, amounting to 17 Tribal leaders or representatives engaged.

In late 2025 and early 2026, National Park Service staff held several one-on-one meetings with Tribes to respond to questions about and work on developing interpretive themes after the initial information sessions. On January 27, 2025, National Park Service staff sent out a follow-up email to the 54 Tribes, reminding them about the opportunity to contribute historic significance statements for this draft comprehensive plan. To date, the National Park Service is still accepting Tribal interpretive themes and historic significance statements from Tribes to be included in this draft comprehensive plan.

DRAFT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FEEDBACK

In 2026, National Park Service staff compiled an email distribution list for the draft comprehensive plan internal review process. This list consisted of federal land managers, Tribal nations, trail associations, and a select group of private citizens and historians who had been collaborating with the National Park Service closely during the draft comprehensive plan process. On March 2, 2026, the Draft Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail Draft Comprehensive Plan was distributed to 252 people for internal review. National Park Service staff received nearly 300 individual comments on the plan from 28 individuals. These comments were then considered by the trail administrator and incorporated where appropriate.

The internal review period for the draft comprehensive plan was March 2, 2026, to March 20, 2026. National Park Service staff sent out a save-the-date email on February 18, an official review request with the draft comprehensive plan attached on March 2, and a final reminder email on March 13. Staff also held two optional draft comprehensive plan orientation sessions on March 9 and March 10, the invitation links to which were shared in the March 2 review request email. There were 5 participants at those meetings.

The next opportunity for public input on the draft comprehensive plan is in June 2026 when the plan is posted publicly to the National Park Service Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website. National Park Service staff will send out a reminder email of the PEPC posting to the public distribution list, collect public comments on the plan, incorporate appropriate comments, and then complete final formatting and post the plan to the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail website.

National Park Service staff maintain, to the best of their ability, a database of all city, county, federal, nonprofit, private citizen, private organization, state, Tribal, and university contacts; outreach efforts; and communication related to the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail to date and will continue updating it in the future.

APPENDIX B: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE BUTTERFIELD OVERLAND NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL

On October 11th, 1858, in San Francisco’s Portsmouth Square, Waterman Ormsby stood up before an enthralled crowd, gathered to witness the arrival of the first Overland Mail coach from Missouri. A reporter for the *New York Herald*, Ormsby was not yet 24 years of age. Despite his youth, he was a bit weathered, having ridden the stages of John Butterfield’s Overland Mail Company for the past 23 days straight, stopping only for meals and short breaks on a journey of nearly 3,000 miles. As the crowd quieted, Ormsby began. He spoke first of the beauty, diversity, and fertility of the vast country he had just transited. Then, he spoke of the “the vast advantages to be derived from this enterprise to the territory along the route, as well as to California” and of “the advantages to our own agricultural, mineral, and postal interests.” The Butterfield Overland, as the reporter described it, was more than just a mail route. It was a means of expansion and development that would transform the United States.³

BACKGROUND AND BEGINNINGS

The annexation of Texas (1845), the Oregon Treaty (1846), the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), and the Gadsden Purchase (1854) together added more than 1 million square miles to the territory of the United States, increasing its size by more than half in only a decade. For this still young nation, the acquisition of such a massive amount of territory presented both enormous opportunities and enormous challenges. And then came the Gold Rush. Following the discovery of gold at Sutter’s Mill in January 1848, laborers, prospectors, and settlers—primarily from the United States but also Europe, Mexico, Chile, and China—poured into the former Mexican territory of Alta California, as many as 300,000 people arriving in just over 10 years.

As the population of California grew, transportation and communication links with the rest of the United States remained expensive and unpredictable. Traveling from the Atlantic seaboard, for example, required one of three options. First, passengers could travel by ship around Cape Horn and then north to California. Second, passengers could travel by boat to Panama and then cross the isthmus by mule or on foot to the Pacific Ocean, where they would board another vessel and steam or sail to California. Third, travelers could follow one of several overland routes. The most popular were the California and Oregon trails that departed from the Missouri River, followed the Platte River west, and then split into a multiplicity of routes crossing the Cascades and Sierra Nevada. Other “overlanders” followed the Gila Trail across the Southwest or the Cherokee Trail originating in Oklahoma.

In January 1855, the Panama Railroad bridged the 48-mile-wide isthmus connecting North and South America. This railroad link represented a huge improvement in the transportation of both passengers and mail across the isthmus, reducing the time required from days to hours. Letters could now travel between New York and San Francisco in 26 to 30 days, or as few as 22 under ideal conditions. Still, the Panamanian route required mail and passengers to make risky ocean

3. “Mass Meeting at San Francisco,” *The Daily National Democrat*, October 15, 1858.

voyages (illustrated dramatically by the 1857 sinking of the US Mail steamer *Central America*) and transit foreign territory in order to reach California.

Californians began to advocate for transportation and communication that was safer, more reliable, and within the territorial boundaries of the United States. In 1856, they sent 75,000 petitions to Congress calling for action. Four congressmen—two California senators and two Missouri representatives—submitted bills funding an overland mail service. On August 18 of that year, Congress enacted a post roads bill that established a postal route “from San Diego, via El Paso, to San Antonio [sic], Texas.”⁴ Congress passed a second act on February 17, 1857, that allotted \$200,000 to establish a wagon road from El Paso west to Fort Yuma on the California side of the Colorado River. A third piece of legislation was passed on March 3, 1857, funding a transcontinental stagecoach line connecting California with the Mississippi River valley. The bill authorized a six-year contract for up to \$300,000 per year for a semi-monthly service, \$450,000 for a weekly service, and \$600,000 for a semi-weekly service.

Tensions between a free industrialized North and a slave-holding agricultural South were, in the late 1850s, on the cusp of launching the American Civil War. In this polarized context, the route of the stage line—which might reasonably have begun in any major Mississippi River city, whether St. Louis, Memphis, or New Orleans—was a subject of great controversy. The route was made even more contentious by the supposition that a transcontinental railroad might eventually follow the path of the overland mail. Congress’s compromise was one of ambiguity. Rather than designating a city of origin, the bill solicited bids for a route “from such point on the Mississippi River, as the contractors may select, to San Francisco, in the State of California,” in effect leaving the eastern terminus undetermined.

The winning bid came from a group of investors and transportation entrepreneurs headed by John Butterfield of Utica, New York. Butterfield and his associates had in fact submitted three bids. One proposed St. Louis as the eastern terminus, a second proposed Memphis. A third—and the eventual winner—called for a “bifurcated” route that headed west from both cities and met “at the most suitable point” before continuing west to California. As awarded, the contract called for semi-weekly service and a \$600,000 annual subsidy. Beginning in both Memphis and St. Louis, the two routes would meet at Fort Smith, transit Indian Territory heading southwest, cross Texas and the New Mexico Territory (which then included Arizona), and finally enter southern California at Yuma before swinging north toward San Francisco. Known as the “Ox-Bow Route” for the broad southern sweep of its path, the trail was intended to avoid the winter snows that could slow travel on more northerly routes. On September 16, 1857, Butterfield and his associates signed a six-year contract with the US Post Office Department. The contract called for the line to be in operation within one year.

Born in 1801 in New York State, John Butterfield had been working in and around stagecoaches since the age of 10. By age 19, he had become a driver in Albany. He moved to Utica 10 years later in 1830 and, soon afterward, purchased the necessary equipment to start his own stage company. His success was remarkable. By the mid-1840s, he controlled most of the important mail and

4. U.S. Congress, U.S. Statutes at Large, vol. 18 (Washington, D.C.: Government Publishing Office, 1875), <https://www.loc.gov/item/lsl-v18/>

passenger stage lines in northern and western New York. Butterfield also held interests in packet boats, steamships, and railroads. In 1850, his express firm merged with one led by Henry Wells and another involving William G. Fargo to form the American Express Company. Butterfield was widely recognized, both inside and outside government, as one of the foremost transportation leaders of his day, possessing both the financial resources and technical expertise to construct and manage a long-distance stagecoach line. Still, the construction and operation of the line across a vast expanse of largely undeveloped territory was an unprecedented logistical challenge.

Butterfield, and those that worked for him, recognized the enormity of the task. He dispatched employees to make initial surveys of the chosen routes, provide improvements to roads where appropriate, and locate potential station sites. The biggest challenge lay in the area between Fort Belknap, Texas, and Warner's Ranch, California, a patchwork of autonomous Native lands, dotted with only sporadic American settlements and military posts.

Relay stations—where passengers could embark or disembark, horse or mule teams could be changed, and animals could be stabled in readiness for the next stage—numbered about 140 when operations began. By the time stage service on the “Ox-Bow Route” ended in 1861, additions and changes in the route meant the company had built or equipped more than 200. Constructing and equipping these stations was an enormous undertaking. In addition to constructing buildings and corrals in areas where there were no preexisting structures, the Overland Mail Company hired more than 750 workers (of whom 150 were experienced drivers), purchased and distributed some 1,800 horses and mules (and the feed to sustain them), and purchased and distributed some 500 vehicles. These included wooden-roofed Concord or “Southern style” coaches, canvas-topped celerity wagons made especially for the company, and an array of freight, utility, and water wagons. The company also constructed wells, cisterns, water tanks, and water diversion devices in the arid Southwest. Overall, preliminary expenditures totaled approximately \$1 million. This was an enormous sum in 1858 and an investment nearly double the \$600,000 annual allocation by the Post Office Department.

The result was a network of stations on average fewer than 20 miles apart, spanning the entirety of the estimated 3,247-mile line. Nine division superintendents oversaw station agents and supervised drivers and conductors. For the portion of the route between Memphis and Fort Smith, Butterfield decided not to run a point-to-point stage line and instead used subcontractors, steamboats, and horsemen to cobble together passenger and mail service.

CHANGES IN THE ROUTE

Over the course of its 1858–1861 operations, the company made two permanent changes to the route, both in Texas. A third section, between Memphis and Fort Smith, was subject to environmental and political pressures that produced ongoing variability.

Gainesville to Jacksboro By Way of Bridgeport, Texas

The original route proceeded southwest from Gainesville through Cooke, Montague, Wise, and Jack counties. The route passed in proximity to the current towns of Rosston, Sunset, south of Cundiff, until reaching Jacksboro. In 1859, a group of investors and boosters received a state charter to build a bridge on the West Fork of the Trinity River near today's Bridgeport, Texas.

Their aim was to reroute the Butterfield and bring increased commerce to the town of Decatur. The Overland Mail Company accepted the rerouting proposal and shifted its route in August 1860.⁵

Horsehead Crossing to El Paso By Way of Fort Davis, Texas

The original route or “Upper Road” through this portion of Texas panhandle followed the Pecos River upstream from Horsehead Crossing to near the New Mexico border where it turned west and headed to El Paso. The company had hoped that water at Hueco Tanks—which turned out to be unreliable—and a series of artesian wells drilled by a man named John Pope—who never succeeded in bringing significant quantities of water to the surface—would sustain the coaches through the parched stretch between the Pecos River and the Rio Grande. Company officials also soon realized that this portion of the route was set deep in the territory of well-armed and powerful Comanches. In search of more dependable water sources and taking advantage of a string of new military forts constructed on a more southern “Lower Road,” the Overland Mail Company shifted operations in West Texas in June 1859.⁶

Memphis, Tennessee, to Fort Smith, Arkansas

On the first run of the Memphis-Fort Smith line, in September 1858, the mail was brought by rail from Memphis to Madison, Arkansas, where it was placed in a small stage and transported to Desarc. From there, it was transferred to a stagecoach operated by subcontractor Chidester, Reeside & Co. and carried via Atlanta, Cadron, Lewisburg, and Norristown to Fort Smith. Another buggy carried mail from Little Rock to Atlanta, where it was transferred to the Chidester stage. Over time, this route was subject to multiple variations.

Citizens of Little Rock objected almost immediately to being excluded from the main line. Possibly as early as the first months of 1859, the company diverted Chidester stages to pass directly through the city. Butterfield, however, had another plan entirely. His intention had been to transport mail from Memphis to Fort Smith by steamboat, and he had purchased a vessel, *The Jenny Whipple*, for this purpose. Water levels in the Mississippi and Arkansas Rivers, however, did not always cooperate and were frequently low enough to render the rivers impassable. Conversely, roads in this riverine region were subject to frequent flooding. The result was a route that shifted between stage and steamer, subject to variation in response to both low water in the rivers and high water on the roads. To make the matter even more complicated, mail and passengers would sometimes travel by different routes, particularly when road conditions limited the use of stages and other vehicles but would still allow the passage of a rider, with company mailbags, on horseback.⁷

5. For further information, see Glen Sample Ely, *The Texas Frontier and the Butterfield Overland Mail, 1858–1861* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016), p. 69–76.

6. For further information, see Ely, p. 221–246.

7. For further information, see collection “Description and history of the Memphis to Fort Smith branch by Ted Worley,” Box 1, Folder 2 in Butterfield Overland Mail Centennial Commission Records. Arkansas State Archives.

Note: While the Overland Mail Company used various means to transport mail and passengers, the congressionally designated route of the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail is only for the segments historically navigated by stagecoach (rather than railroad or steamboat) and within the United States (a small portion of the route that ran through Mexican territory is excluded from the designated route as well).

OPERATIONS

On Thursday, September 16, 1858—one year to the day after the contract had been signed—the Overland Mail Company commenced operations. In St. Louis, John Butterfield escorted two small leather pouches from the post office to the nearby train station and then boarded the waiting train, which left promptly at 8 a.m. headed west. At Tipton at 6:01 p.m., Butterfield transferred the mail pouches to a waiting Concord stagecoach. Nine minutes later, Butterfield and his son (also named John Butterfield) headed south along the Boonville mail road toward Springfield. On board was a full complement of passengers, including Waterman Ormsby of *The New York Herald*, who had agreed to write a series of news articles about the ride and the countryside he encountered. Butterfield, father and son, rode only as far as Fort Smith. Ormsby, however, would ride all the way to San Francisco. (After appearing in the *Herald*, his account was eventually published in book form and is still in print today.) At 7:30 a.m. on October 10, 1858, a weary Ormsby still aboard, the first stage drove into Portsmouth Square in downtown San Francisco. Its journey had taken 23 days and 23 and a half hours, comfortably under the 25 days Congress had stipulated in the March 1857 authorization bill. On September 15, a day before this first westbound mail left St. Louis, the first eastbound stagecoach had departed San Francisco. That stage, with postal inspector Goddard Bailey and five other passengers on board, also made good time, arriving in St. Louis on October 9, 24 days after it had departed.

These initial runs were followed by others that operated on a regular, twice per week schedule. Stages ran day and night, seven days per week, regardless of weather and road conditions. The only scheduled stops were at relay stations, where horse or mule teams were changed and passengers were given 10 minutes for personal needs or 40 minutes if a meal was served. Passengers stopped for meals twice per day. Opinions on the food were mixed. While one journalist described the food as “better than could be expected so far from civilized districts,” another cautioned that, “the fare could hardly be compared to that of the Astor House in New York.”⁸

A long-distance ride in a Butterfield coach could be a test of endurance in other respects as well. Traveling on often rough and unimproved roads, passengers were packed tightly to maximize space. In Waterman Ormsby’s (1858) words:

When the stage is full, the passengers must take turns at sleeping. Perhaps the jolting will be found disagreeable at first, but a few nights without sleeping will obviate that difficulty, and soon the jolting will be as little of a disturbance as the rocking of a

8. Roscoe Platt Conkling and Margaret Badenoch Conkling, *The Butterfield Overland Mail, 1857-1869: Its Organization and Operation Over the Southern Route to 1861; Subsequently Over the Central Route to 1866; and Under Wells, Fargo and Company in 1869* (A.H. Clark Company, 1947).

*cradle to a suckling babe. For my part, I found no difficulty in sleeping over the roughest roads, and I have no doubt that anyone else will learn quite as quickly.*⁹

Initial rates were \$200 from St. Louis or Memphis to San Francisco but just half that for eastbound passengers. Starting in May 1859, after demand had proved high for transit in both directions, tickets were \$150 for all passengers. Passengers paid for their own meals along the way, and those traveling shorter distances paid 10 cents per mile.

LOCAL IMPACTS

For the communities, regions, and Indigenous nations it passed through, the Butterfield was more than just a mail service route. Overland Mail Company operations brought significant capital, in cash payments and contracts, to the communities where the company regularly purchased labor, livestock, fodder, and food for employees and passengers. The Butterfield Overland Trail was also just that: a trail. While some newcomers came in stagecoaches, others followed the road by their own means of conveyance—settlers, speculators, emigrants, military officers, and government officials.

In Anglo-American communities, this influx was mostly welcomed, albeit not universally. The horn blown by the Butterfield stage as it approached a town could create a great amount of excitement. As one San Francisco reporter put it, “The blast of the stage horn . . . cheers and gladdens the heart of the pioneer . . . he knows that it brings tidings from the hearts and homes he left behind him; it binds him stronger and firmer to his beloved country.”¹⁰ Lofty sentiments aside, small settlements along the route could certainly count on the stage for an influx of cash.

In Indian Territory, today’s Oklahoma, members of the Choctaw and Chickasaw Nations, removed from their homelands in the Southeast some 30 years earlier, entered into contracts with the Overland Mail Company to operate toll gates, bridges, ferries, and relay stations. Choctaw and Chickasaw roads, stations, and crossings—some built with enslaved labor—feature prominently in the accounts of Butterfield travelers, particularly Colbert’s Ferry on the Red River, operated by Chickasaw citizen Benjamin Colbert.

Not all communities, however, experienced the stage line in the same way. For many Native communities intent on preserving their own ways of life rather than being displaced by others, the stages and the road were a means of Anglo migration and settlement. Additionally, the Overland Mail Company frequently claimed land for stations in Tribal territories where no official treaties had been negotiated. In arid portions of California and the Southwest, Butterfield stations monopolized water sources and depleted limited pasturage.

Violent episodes, however, were relatively rare. The company’s policy was to remain prepared but generally to avoid conflict:

9. Waterman Lilly Ormsby, *The Butterfield Overland Mail* (Huntington Library Press, 2007), p. 94.

10. San Francisco Bulletin, June 13, 1859, quoted in LeRoy Reuben Hafen, “The Overland Mail 1849-1869: Promoter of Settlement, Precursor of Railroads” (A.H. Clark, 1926), p. 99.

A good look out should be kept for Indians. No intercourse should be had with them, but let them alone; by no means annoy or wrong them. At all times an efficient guard should be kept, and such guard should always be ready for any emergency. ¹¹

At more remote stations in Texas and New Mexico, theft of stock was frequent, although perpetrators were of varied backgrounds and included Anglos, Hispanics, Comanches, Apaches, and others. At times, stations were also subject to Native peoples' demands for company supplies and stores. At the Apache Pass stage station, in what is now southeastern Arizona, Chokonon Apaches received government and company rations in exchange for allowing travelers and mail stages to pass freely. They also supplied the station with wood and hay, all of this indicating a relationship of mutual accommodation, albeit probably a tense one.

The relationship quickly deteriorated, however, following the so-called Bascom Affair of January 1861, a development that illustrates the Butterfield's close association with the other preeminent frontier institution of the time—the US Army. ¹² In the Southwest, many stations were co-located with Army forts, whose troops provided escorts and other support for Overland Mail Company operations. This also meant, however, that locals and Native peoples might hold the company responsible for US Army actions and vice versa. Both were, after all, arms of the federal government.

Pima and Maricopa (Akimel O'otham and Piipash) peoples, who farmed irrigated fields along the Gila River, allowed the Overland Mail Company to build stations and for stages to pass freely across their lands. They also sold the company large quantities of wheat and other produce that sustained employees and passengers through one of the line's most punishing segments. Company claims on Pima-Maricopa land surrounding Overland Mail Company stations, however, were contested by the Tribe, who had been granted a reservation (today's Gila River Indian Community) in February of 1859, just after Butterfield commenced operations in September of 1858.

FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

By 1860, Butterfield's Overland Mail Company was a proven logistical success. The immense network of stations, functioning in concert, allowed stages to pass quickly and predictably across vast distances.

Given Butterfield's insistence on a high-quality, well-funded operation—and operating under the assumption that the company would have until 1864 to recoup its investments—Butterfield's line

11. Overland Mail Company, "Overland Mail Employee's Notebook," <https://postalmuseum.si.edu/collections/object-spotlight/overland-mail-employees-notebook>. (accessed April 22, 2025).

12. Known to Apaches as "Cut the Tent," the events of 1861 began with the kidnapping of a 12-year-old Felix Martinez by unknown perpetrators, led to the attempted kidnapping of Apache leader Cochise and his family by the US Army, and ended with the killings of both Apaches and Anglos. For more information, see Douglas C. McChristian and Larry L. Ludwig, "Eyewitness to the Bascom Affair: An Account by Sergeant Daniel Robinson, Seventh Infantry," *The Journal of Arizona History*, v. 42, no. 3 (2001), p. 277–300.

served effectively as a regularly scheduled passenger and mail service between the Mississippi River Valley and the Pacific Coast. As one journalist noted, “the Overland is the most popular institution of the Far West . . . So regular is its arrival that the inhabitants know almost the hour and the minute when the welcome sound of the post horn will reach them.”¹³ As a result, California had become far less isolated.

During this period, the line became increasingly popular for mail service. Evidence suggests that the number of letters more than quintupled between December 1858 and July 1859. The postal volume continued to increase to the point that the total postal receipts quadrupled between 1859 and 1860.

Demand for passenger service increased similarly. “At first,” noted one historian, “there was a sharp demand for seats at the San Francisco terminus, and one passenger reported that over one hundred persons were on the waiting list when he left in November 1858.”¹⁴ Both “through passengers” and “way passengers” used the service. Destined for forts and communities along the route, stages frequently carried notable passengers—Army officers, politicians, lobbyists, international travelers, and others.

Despite the appeal of the Butterfield line, however, the Overland Mail Company’s success as an economic venture remained uncertain. Recognizing Butterfield was continuing to spend more on the line’s operations than the government was providing in subsidy, Overland Mail Company officers became increasingly concerned with the company’s finances. This situation became acute when Congress, in 1859, failed to pass its annual US Post Office Department appropriation bill, an action that temporarily held up payment of the company’s quarterly subsidies. In March 1860, after the Overland Mail Company defaulted on a loan from Wells, Fargo, & Co., John Butterfield was removed from the presidency and replaced by William B. Dinsmore. Despite changes in leadership and financial challenges, operations continued on the “Ox-Bow Route” for another year, until March 1861. At that time, following the secession of Texas from the Union (then the seventh southern state to do so), Overland Mail Company operations shifted northward to a new route connecting St. Joseph, Missouri, to Salt Lake City and San Francisco.

Operations on the “Central Route”—roughly the same as that used by the famed Pony Express—continued for another five years until December of 1866, when the Overland Mail Company was purchased by Wells, Fargo, & Co. and ceased to exist as an independent corporate entity.

THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

On November 6, 1860, Abraham Lincoln won the presidency. Six weeks later, on December 20, 1860, representatives from South Carolina voted to secede from the union. In mid-January 1861, five more of the southern states did the same. On February 1, Texas followed. Three days later, representatives from the seven seceded states met in Montgomery, Alabama, and formed the

13. *San Francisco Bulletin*, June 13, 1859, quoted in LeRoy Reuben Hafen, *The Overland Mail 1849-1869: Promoter of Settlement, Precursor of Railroads* (A.H. Clark, 1926), p. 99.

14. Rupert N. Richardson, “Some Details of the Southern Overland Mail,” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, v. 29, no. 1 (1925), p. 8.

Confederate States of America. On March 2, 1861, Congress voted to order the Overland Mail Company to relocate from the southern or "Ox-Bow Route" to a more central route. On March 6, the last eastbound stage left Tucson while the last westbound stage left for San Francisco in early April. Both stages made it through Texas safely.

As the company's operations wound down on the "Ox-Bow Route", company agent Hiram Rumfield wrote to his wife from Mesilla, New Mexico, on May 9, 1861:

*I came up here from El Paso some days ago with Mr. Fuller for the purpose of closing up on our affairs with the Superintendent of the Division . . . and have the satisfaction of knowing that I am now ready to start for home. I will leave this evening for El Paso with Mr. Giddings . . . His influence will be a sufficient guarantee for my safety in Texas, and he has promised to furnish me with letters to prominent men in the city of New Orleans and other southern cities so that I can work my way toward St. Louis without any hinderance.*¹⁵

As Rumfield labored in Texas and New Mexico to bring the company's southern operations to a close, the return trip to his home in Ohio had become a risky proposition. It is telling that, less than two months after the company suspended operations along the "Ox-Bow Route", a company agent had to rely on personal connections and letters of introduction from southern associates to make his way safely through Confederate territory.

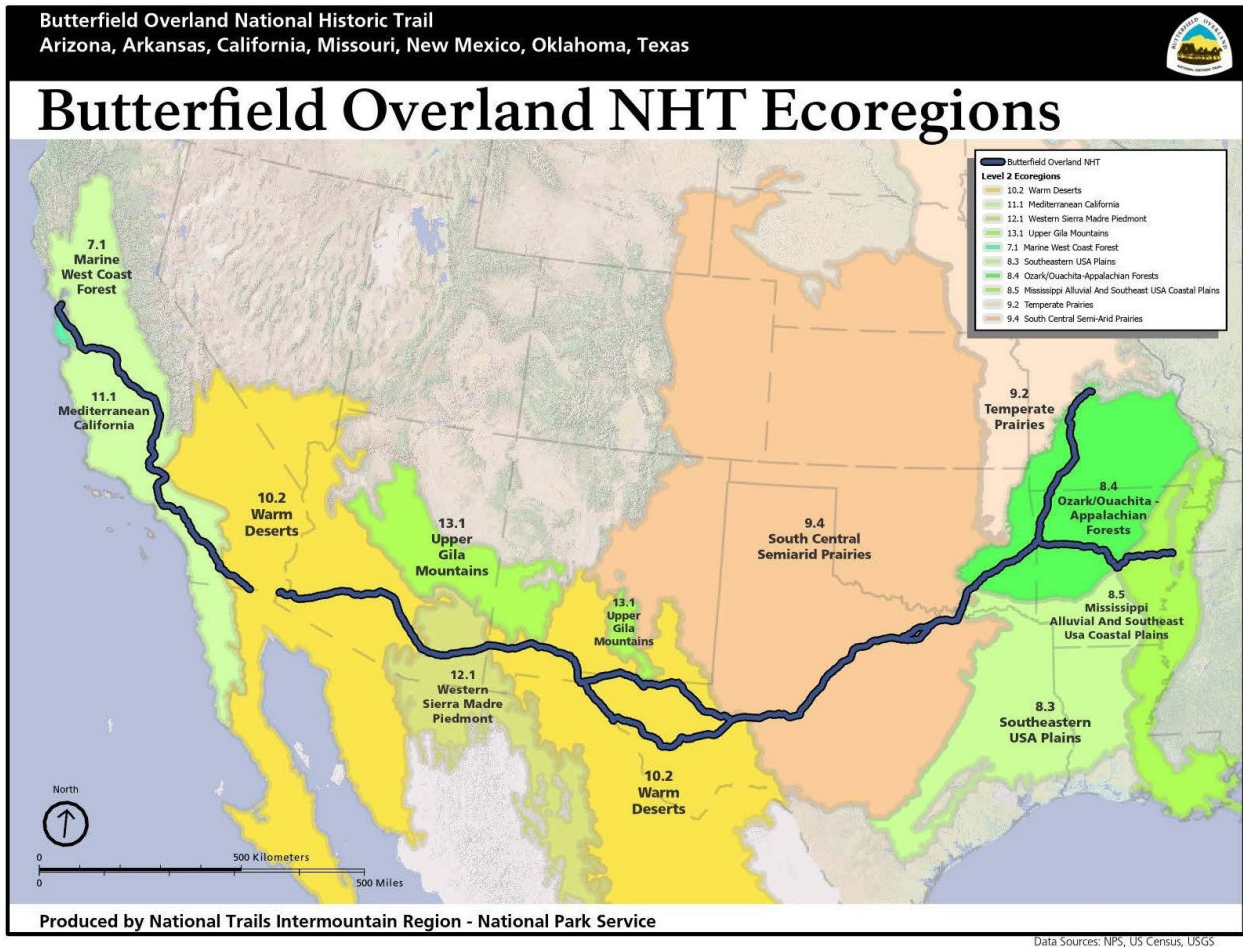
END OF THE LINE

South Carolina's shelling of Fort Sumter began roughly a month before Rumfield wrote to his wife from Mesilla. Nearly three months later, on July 1, 1861, the first Overland Mail Company stage departed St. Joseph, Missouri, on the new Central Route, reaching San Francisco on July 18. The Battle of Bull Run, the first major confrontation of the Civil War, took place near Manassas, Virginia, only three days after, on July 21, 1861.

While war between the states had spelled the end of the "Ox-Bow Route", new technologies—the telegraph and the railroad—would render nearly all American stage lines obsolete in the coming decades. Some Butterfield stations at the eastern and western ends of the line continued to operate as taverns, stores, and farmhouses as they had prior to September 1858. Others would be burned or used as makeshift field hospitals during the war. Still others, particularly in the Southwest, were abandoned and began a slow process of deterioration, eventually subsumed by the same landscapes from which they had risen. Use of certain segments—sometimes carrying the name of Butterfield Road or Old Stage Coach Road or Old Wire Road—continues to this day.

15. Hiram Rumfield to Francis "Frank" Rumfield, May 19, 1861, *Overland Mail Collection*, Huntington Library.

APPENDIX C: ECOREGIONS ALONG THE TRAIL



Map 5. Ecoregions along the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail

8.5 MISSISSIPPI ALLUVIAL AND SOUTHEAST USA COASTAL PLAINS

The southeastern terminus of the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail is located near the Mississippi River in eastern Arkansas.

Traditionally the Mississippi River Valley was characterized by rich soils that supported flood-tolerant hardwood forests, wet meadows, swales, and prairies. By the time the Butterfield Stage was in operation in the 1850s, a substantial amount of this land had been drained and/or cleared for agriculture.

Today, the river's level and course is largely controlled by artificial levees. Despite significant urbanization along its course, an array of protected areas support populations of fish, migratory waterfowl, birds, mussels, mammals, and amphibians.^{16 17}

8.4 OZARK, OUACHITA-APPALACHIAN FORESTS

Heading south and west from its northeastern terminus, the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail transits the Ozark Mountains and surrounding uplands. This hill country region stretches from St. Louis, Missouri, south to the Arkansas River and is primarily a karst topography of limestone, dolomite, and chert, producing a landscape abundant with caves, sinkholes, and natural springs. Hilltops are forested with oak woods and small pockets of shortleaf pine. At lower elevations during the period of significance (1858–1861), Butterfield stagecoaches rolled atop rich floodplain soils that supported bottomland forests of cottonwood, willow, green ash, sycamore, box elder, and silver maple. Today, much of this region has been modified for agricultural use.^{18 19}

9.4 SOUTH CENTRAL SEMIARID PLAINS

Spanning from south-central Texas to the northern border of Kansas, the semiarid plains extend east to the Rocky Mountains. Neither flat nor featureless, the region is topographically diverse. Its geographical features include the rocky canyons of the Pecos River, the undulating plains of Kansas, and the volcanic plains of New Mexico. With this diversity of landscapes comes an abundance of wildlife, including characteristic plains ungulates like deer, bison, elk, and antelope.

During the trail's period of significance (1858-1861), the southern plains were a mosaic of Indigenous territories largely devoid of visible permanent structures and western-style agriculture. Perhaps for this reason (or the increasing aridity), stagecoach passengers often noted the transition to short-grass prairie in central Texas as marking the beginning of "The Great West." Today, the region is a mix of farmland, urban areas, rangeland operations, preserved grasslands, and energy production.²⁰

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16. National Park Service, "Mississippi River Facts," Mississippi National River & Recreation Area, <https://www.nps.gov/miss/riverfacts.htm> (accessed February 15, 2025).
 17. Raymond Strasser, "What is the Mississippi River Valley?," Aboutriver.com, <https://www.aboutriver.com/what-is-the-mississippi-river-valley/> (accessed November 5, 2023).
 18. Central Arkansas Library System, "Arkansas' Regional Identity," Encyclopedia of Arkansas, <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/arkansas-regional-identity-5857/> (accessed March 21, 2025).
 19. Missouri Department of Conservation, "Forests and Woodlands," <https://mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/habitats/forests-woodlands> (accessed April 16, 2025).
 20. National Park Service, "Geodiversity Atlas—Southern Plains I&M Network Index," <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/geology/geodiversity-atlas-southern-plains-network-index.htm> (accessed February 21, 2025).

12.1 WESTERN SIERRA MADRE PIEDMONT

In a small portion of southwestern New Mexico and a larger portion of southeastern Arizona, the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail transits the Western Sierra Piedmont ecoregion. As a transitional zone of arid basins and scattered mountain ranges known colloquially as “sky islands,” the piedmont is both a bridge and a barrier between two major North American mountain ranges—the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Madre Occidental.

The climate is generally dry with mild winters and hot summers. Basins are primarily grassland. Grass species in these areas are accompanied by a variety of larger plants including mesquite, sotol, yucca, ocotillo, agave, and various cacti. Mountain foothills support Madrean oak-juniper woodlands, characterized by multiple varieties of oak, juniper, and piñon pine. Higher elevations are more heavily forested with pine and fir. Wildlife includes mule deer, antelope, cougar, jaguar, coyote, raven, turkey vulture, elf owl, western diamondback rattlesnake, and others.²¹

10.2 WARM DESERTS

The warm desert region includes the southern parts of Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas crossed by the national historic trail. This environment is arid due to persistent high-pressure systems, rain shadow effects, and seasonal jet stream patterns. For a few months each summer, however, monsoon rains result in large amounts of precipitation. These seasonal rains account for the majority of the region’s annual precipitation.

Sandstone, shale, and limestone are common and can be seen in picturesque layers across buttes and other rock formations. Common flora include shrubs, drought tolerant trees, cacti, and—at higher elevations—coniferous trees. Typical fauna are javelinas, mountain lions, raptors, rattlesnakes, and a variety of smaller invertebrates.^{22 23}

11.1 MEDITERRANEAN CALIFORNIA

The national historic trail enters California through the Mojave Desert region before heading north into the state’s more fertile interior, eventually reaching California’s lush Central Valley. As 20,000 square miles, this valley is one of the most notable structural depressions in the world, bounded by the Cascade Range to the north, Sierra Nevada to the east, Tehachapi Mountains to the south, and the Coast Range and San Francisco Bay to the west.

The Central Valley serves as a large drainage basin for the mountain ranges surrounding it. With water continuously running through the region and out to the San Francisco Bay, the area was historically abundant with wetlands, riparian areas, and grasslands. Gold Rush settlers in the late

21. Ed Wiken et al., 2011, *North American Terrestrial Ecoregions—Level III*, (Montreal, Canada), p. 97.

22. National Park Service, “Series: Defining the Southwest,” <https://www.nps.gov/articles/series.htm?id=C98B3C2A-0779-F0D4-9531EC2CD76D8132> (accessed April 16, 2025).

23. National Park Service, “Animals—Science of the American Southwest,” <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/swscience/animals.htm> (accessed December 12, 2014).

1840s began a dramatic transformation of the valley into an agricultural powerhouse. By the time the Butterfield Overland Stage made its way through here in the late 1850s, this transformation was already well under way.

Today the region is among the most agriculturally productive places on earth, growing over 8% of US outputs on 1% of US farmland. Still, small pockets of the traditional ecosystem persist.

Wildlife refuges provide habitat and food for invertebrates, waterfowl, migrant birds, and more. ²⁴

²⁵ ²⁶

24. US Fish and Wildlife Service, "Habitat Management," Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge, <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/sacramento/what-we-do> (accessed April 16, 2025).

25. US Geological Survey, "California's Central Valley," California Water Science Center, <https://ca.water.usgs.gov/projects/central-valley/about-central-valley.html> (accessed April 16, 2025).

26. Britannica, "Central Valley," Geography & Travel, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Central-Valley-California> (accessed April 7, 2025).

APPENDIX D: MAPS AND FULL ROUTE MAPPING METHODOLOGY

FULL ROUTE MAPPING METHODOLOGY

Trail Alignment

Trail alignment is the task of mapping historic routes associated with the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail.

It is important to note the authorized congressionally designated national historic trail route does not need to match exactly the archaeological/historical alignment to meet the purpose of the National Trails System Act. The National Trails System Act, Section 3(a)(3) [16 U.S.C. § 1242(a)(3) (2023)], specifies the authorized congressionally designated national historic trail route will “follow as closely as possible and practicable the original trails or routes of travel of national historic significance.”

The Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail’s authorized congressionally designated national historic trail route was delineated via the following methods.

Historical Documentation

The first step in mapping is to gather appropriate information to document the location of historic routes. It is essential to ensure that the historical evidence is solid, and that more than one independent source confirms the location of the route. It is not enough to know the beginning and end of a route; it is important to have intermediate points that allow the identification of the specific route followed by the trail. Historical documentation can include both primary and secondary sources accounting the trail, personal stories from the trail, historical maps, archeological reports, and more.

Historical Maps

Various large-scale (geographic) historic maps from the 19th and 20th centuries were utilized to delineate the alignment. These included General Land Office plat maps, Texas General Land Office plat maps, county plat maps, property survey maps, military maps, land grant maps, railroad right-of-way plat maps, Sanborn maps, and US Geological Survey quad maps. These maps vary in scale (1:100,000 or larger) and content, but in many cases they display the roads/trails and heritage resources associated with the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail. These various maps were georeferenced or used as references, and spatial data were digitized based on them to delineate the alignment of the national historic trail.

Aerial Photography, High Resolution Imagery, and LiDAR

Remote sensing technology has become the most heavily relied upon technique for mapping the authorized congressionally designated route of the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail and its associated heritage resources. Aerial photography became common in the 1930s, due to technological advances between the two World Wars and its widespread adoption for land surveys by US government land-management agencies such as the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the US Forest Service, and the US Geological Survey. Historic aerial

photography can be very helpful in areas that have seen major changes in land use since the trail's period of significance. Aerial photographs from as early as the 1930s may display the trail trace or other heritage resources before they were destroyed by agricultural production, urban development, road construction, water reservoir development, or other actions. Where available, these data can settle specific issues in relatively small geographic areas, especially in cases where there are visible traces of the trail.

High-resolution satellite imagery has proven useful for detecting the trail's alignment or locations of other related heritage resources. In many cases, trail trace can be identified from high-resolution imagery due to linear disturbance features or linear changes in vegetation.

The newest remote sensing technique for mapping national historic trails is through Light Detection and Ranging, or LiDAR, which has become one of the most accurate, reliable, and effective mapping methods currently available. Using light pulses from sensors on fixed-wing aircraft, digital elevation models (DEMs) are generated to display the bare earth surface. These bare earth surfaces strip away the vegetation and built environment. Mimicking low-sun-angle photography, raster hillshades are generated from the DEMs to display subtle elevation change linear features. This is particularly helpful and efficient in detecting trail trace in heavily vegetated areas or in locations where trail trace is not detectable in satellite imagery or pedestrian archaeological survey.

Putting Lines on the Maps

Once systematic historical documentation and geospatial data has been collected, the route needs to be digitized within a geographic information system (GIS). Combining different sources and data, the alignment for the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail was digitized utilizing National Park Service and Federal Trails Data Standards. Given the varying sources of scales for the associated data, the intended scale of the national historic trail alignment is 1:100,000, but in many cases the individual segments of the alignment are at a larger scale, meaning they are more detailed.

Ground Truthing

Using the remote sensing technologies described above, on-the-ground evidence can be gathered to validate or modify if necessary the information from historical documents. Swales, ruts, and remnants of old trails are often still visible in the trail corridor; however, not all visible road traces are associated with Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail. Trail researchers need to search historical records for documents that provide information on the development and use of such sites and segments.

Route Refinement

The trail administrator maintains the authoritative authorized congressionally designated national historic trail route mapping and spatial data. The trail administrator updates mapping and spatial data for the authorized congressionally designated national historic trail route as appropriate in coordination with land managers and others. The trail administrator makes refinement decisions on a case-by-case basis when new research demonstrates the historical route of travel is not consistent with the current authorized congressionally designated national historic trail route. No new routes or substantial additional mileage can be added to the national

historic trail, and minor differences specifically relating to mapping scale do not require updates to the mapping or data for the authorized congressionally designated national historic trail.

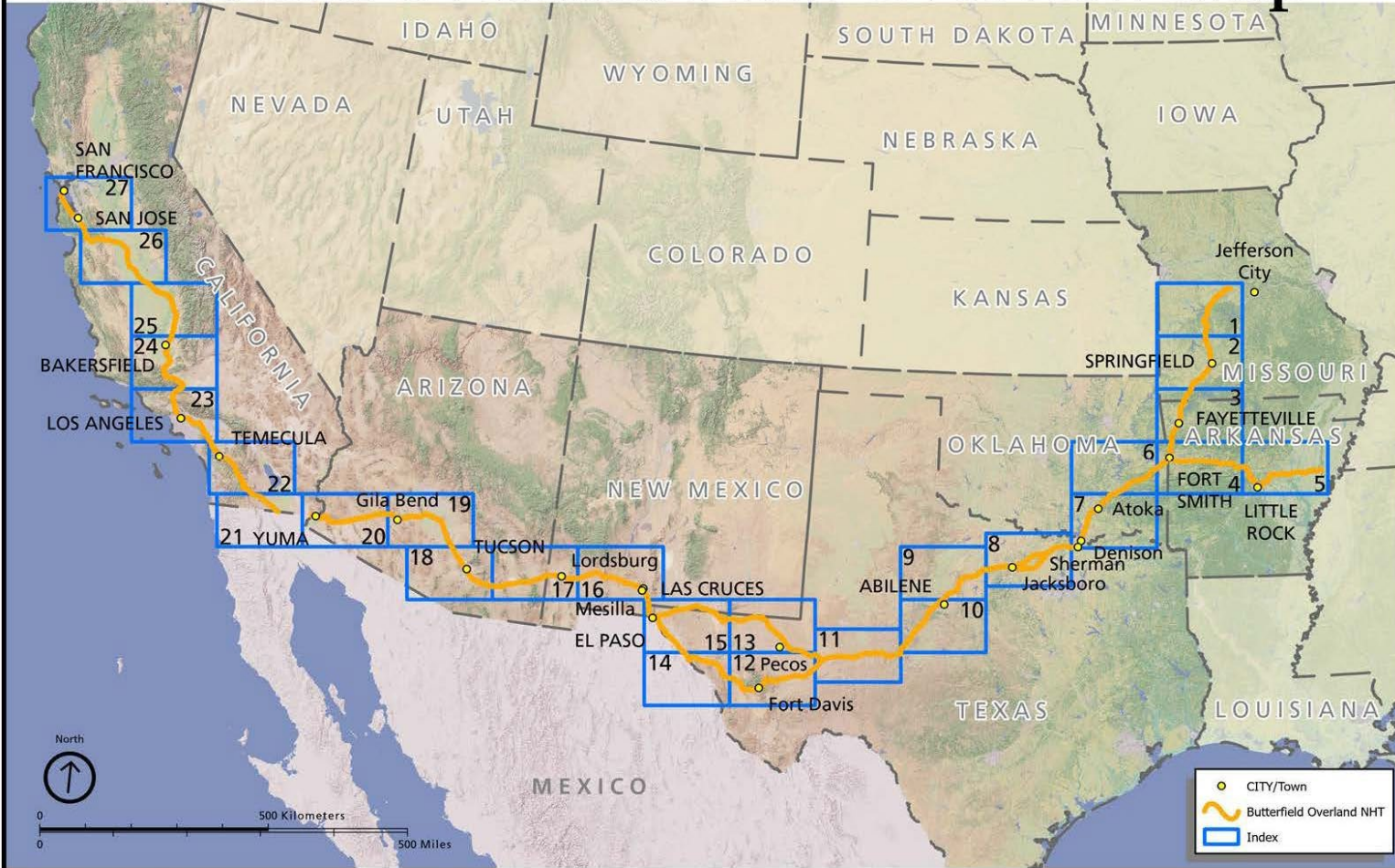
To request a route realignment, requesters should work with trail partners to create a complete proposal with adequate data to support it. For full details on proposal requirements and submission guidelines, please contact the National Park Service.

MAPS

On the following pages, Map 6 shows an overview of the trail route at a 1:11,458,059 scale and Maps 7–33 show details of the route at a 1:708,000 scale.



Butterfield Overland NHT Overview Map



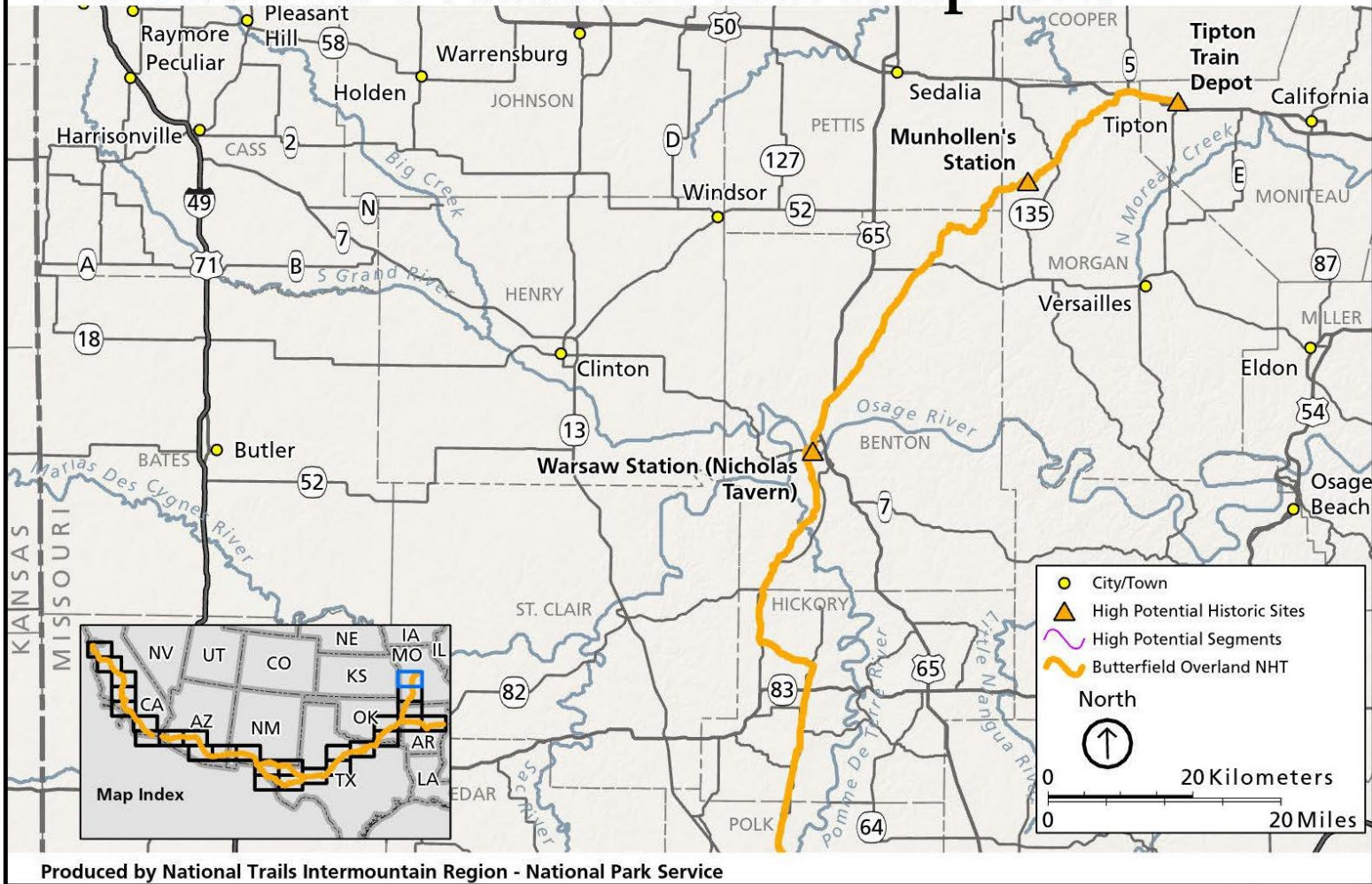
Produced by National Trails Intermountain Region - National Park Service

Data Sources: NPS, US Census, USGS

Map 6. Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail with index sections for Map 7 through Map 33



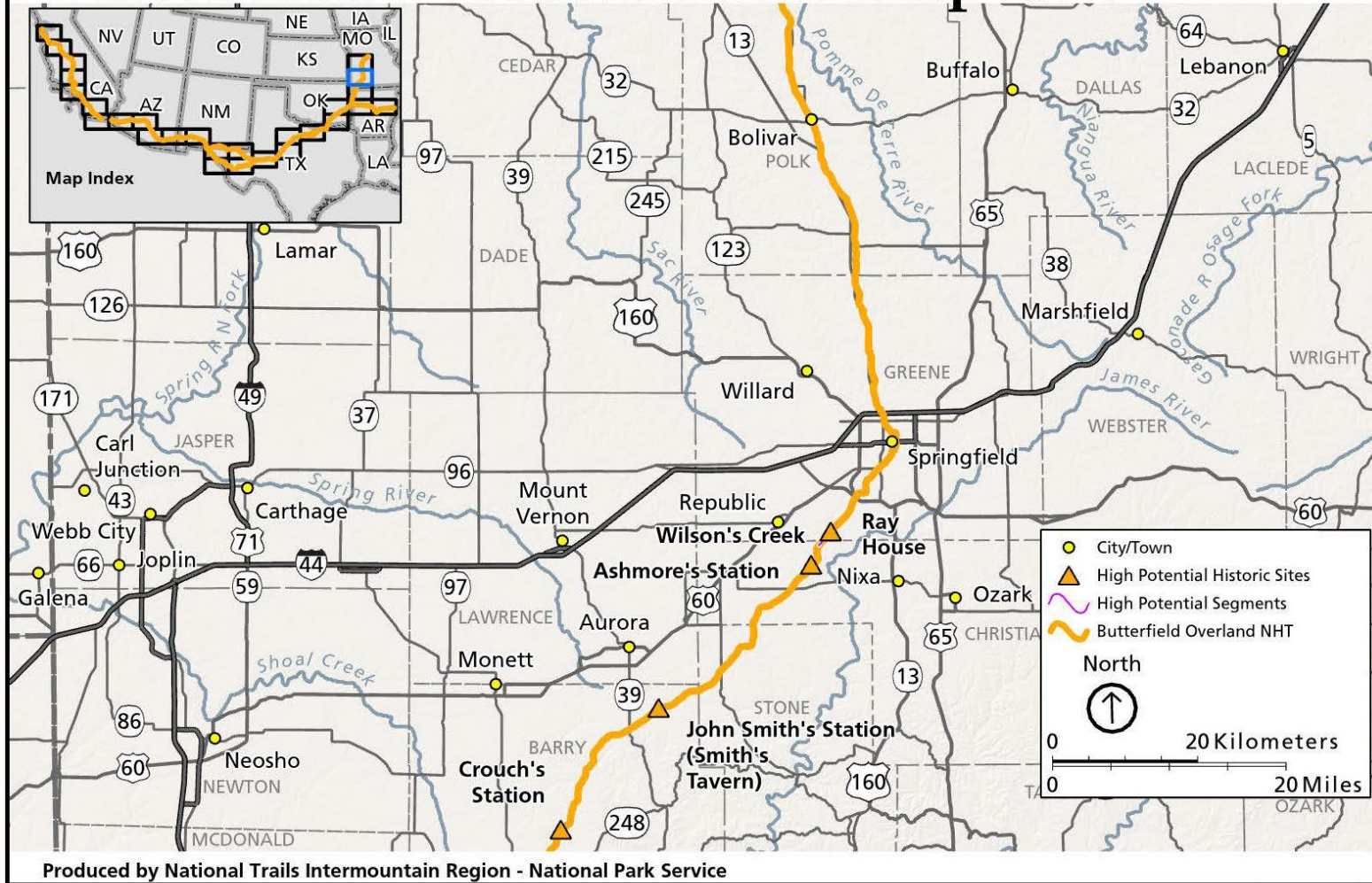
Butterfield Overland NHT Map 1/27



Map 7. Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail from Tipton, Missouri, to Polk County, Missouri



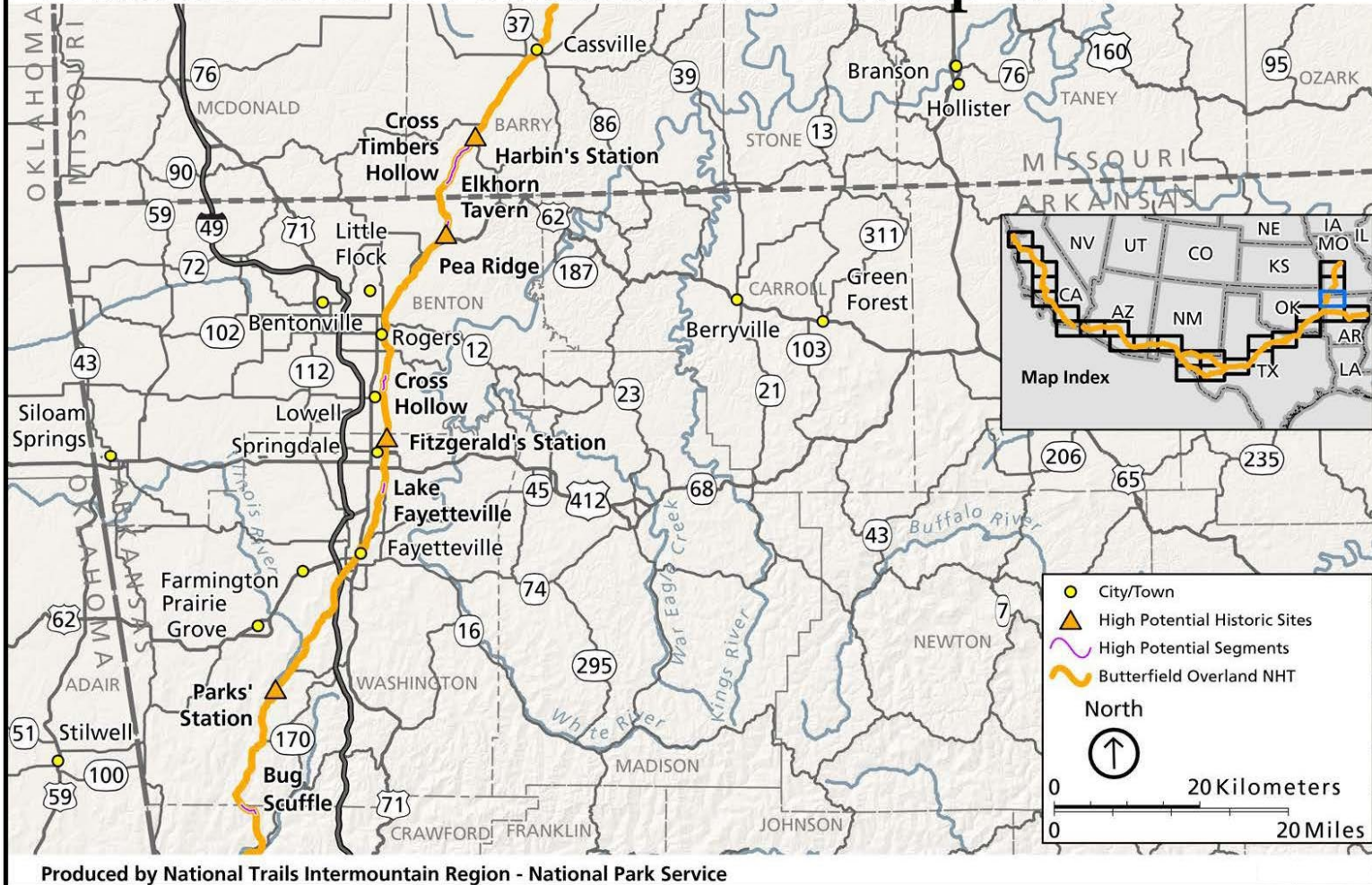
Butterfield Overland NHT Map 2/27



Map 8. Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail from Bolivar, Missouri, to Barry County, Missouri



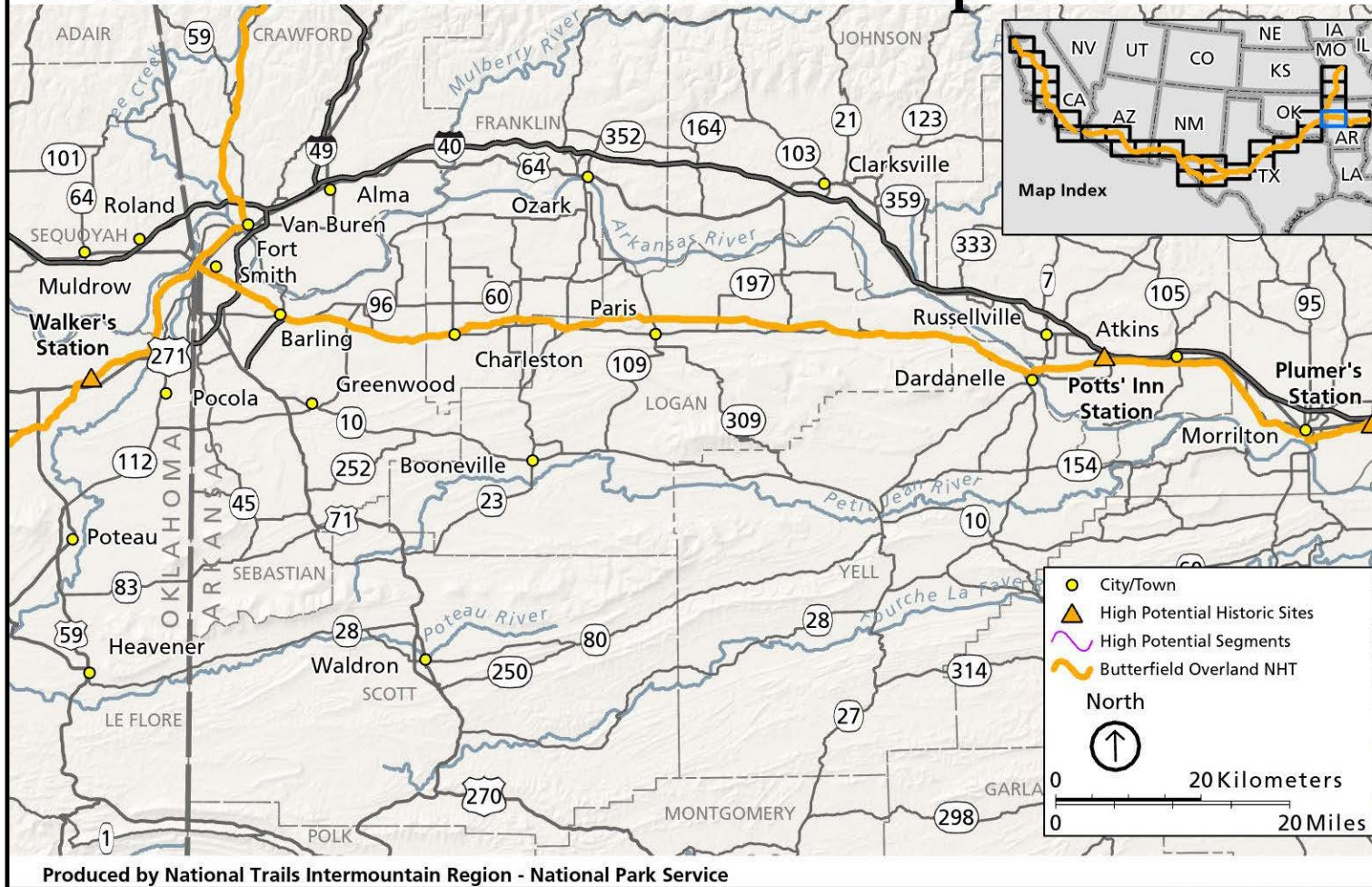
Butterfield Overland NHT Map 3/27



Map 9. Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail from Cassville, Missouri, to Crawford County, Arkansas



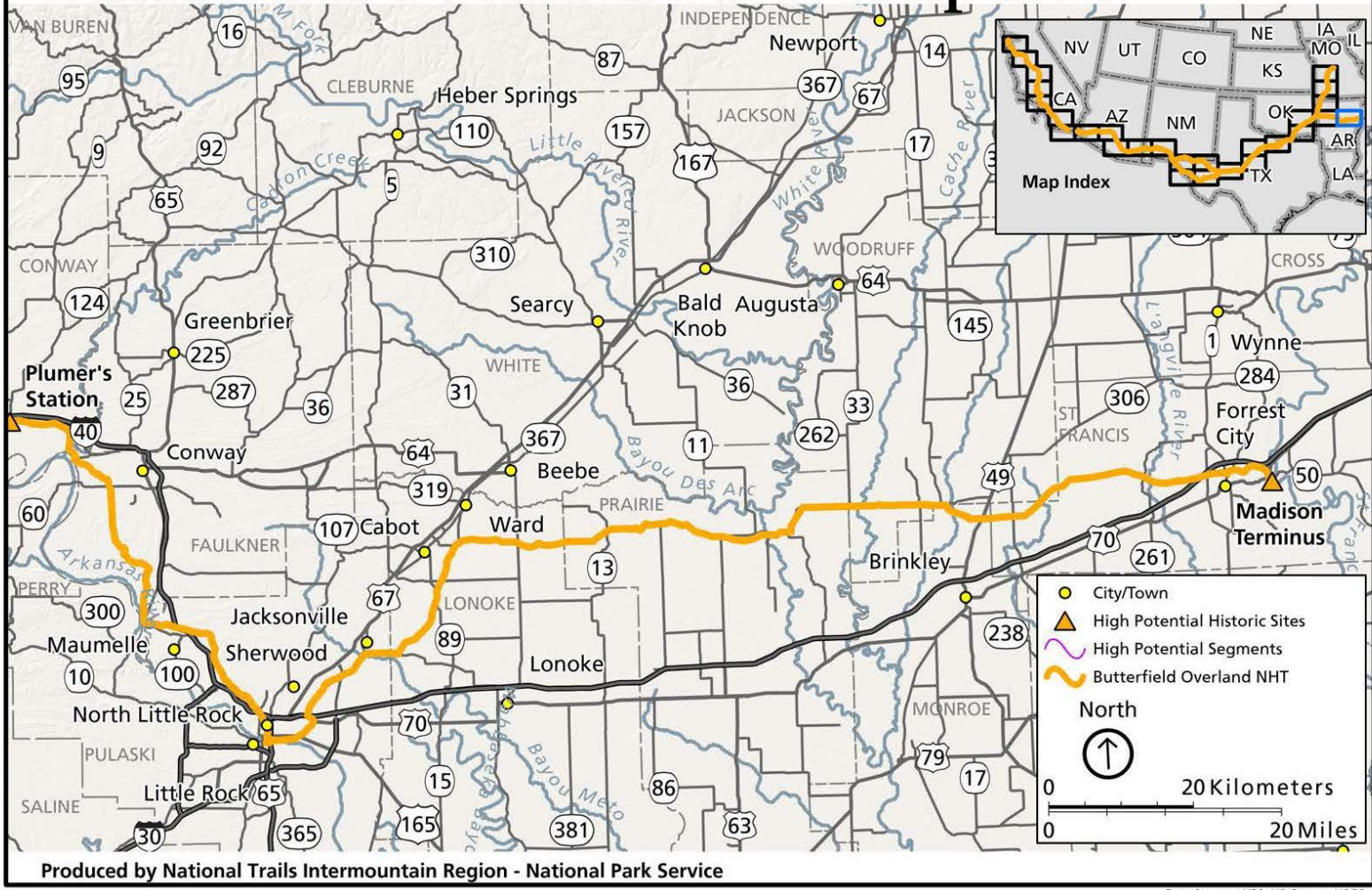
Butterfield Overland NHT Map 4/27



Map 10. Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail from Crawford County, Arkansas, in the north and Morrilton, Arkansas, in the east to Le Flore County, Oklahoma



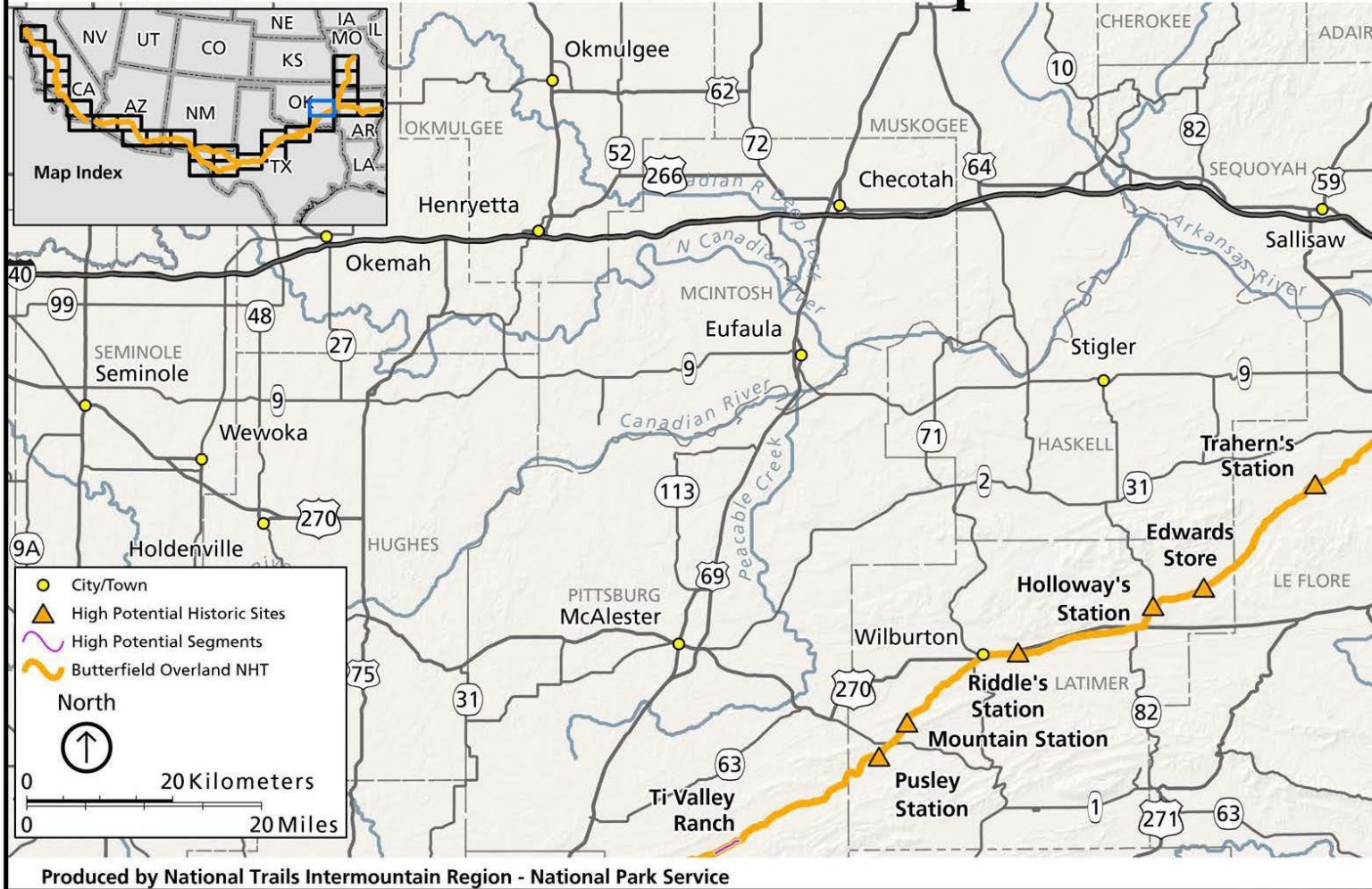
Butterfield Overland NHT Map 5/27



Map 11. Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail from Forrest City, Arkansas, to Conway County, Arkansas



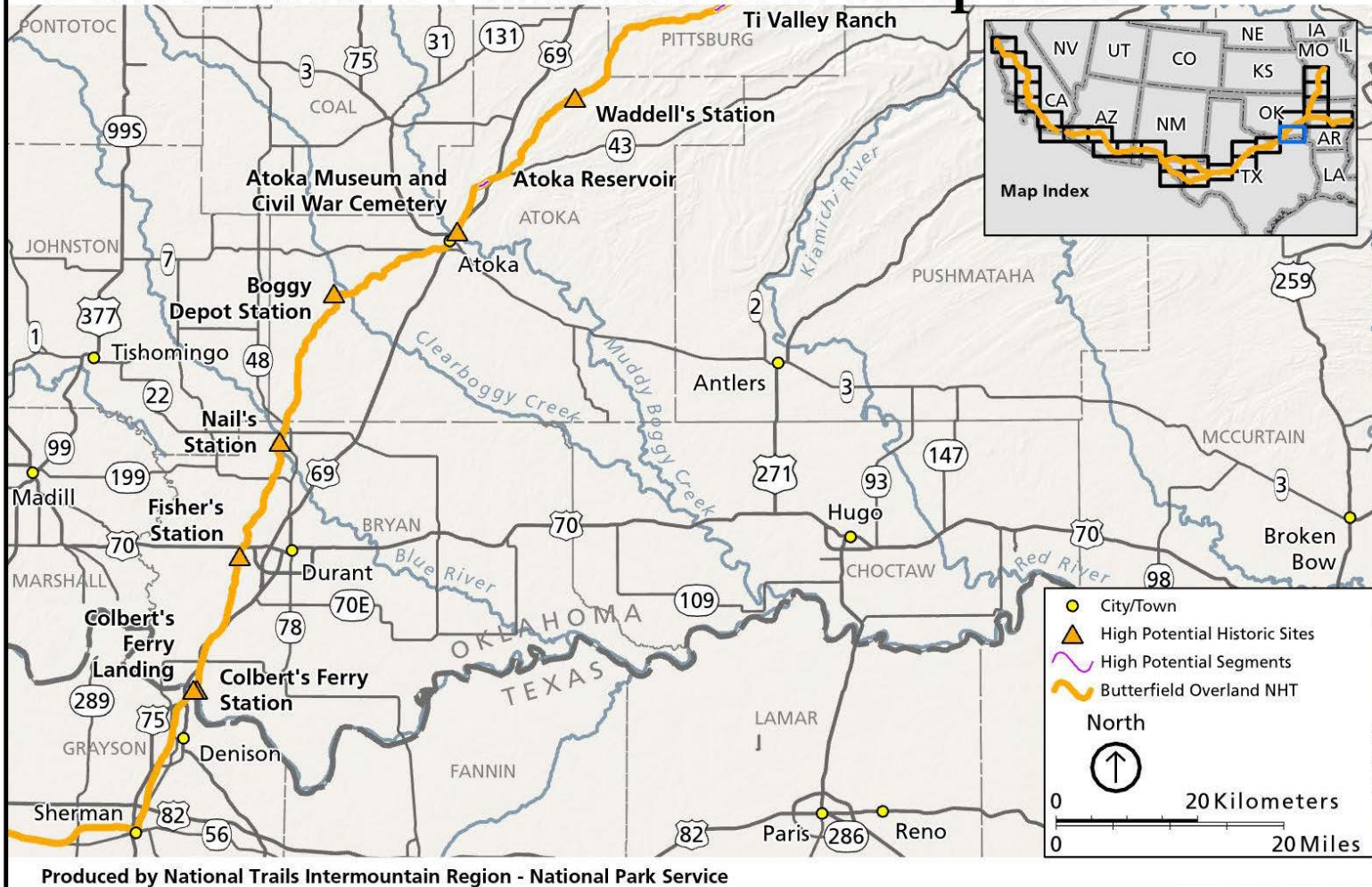
Butterfield Overland NHT Map 6/27



Map 12. Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail from Le Flore County, Oklahoma, to Pittsburg County, Oklahoma



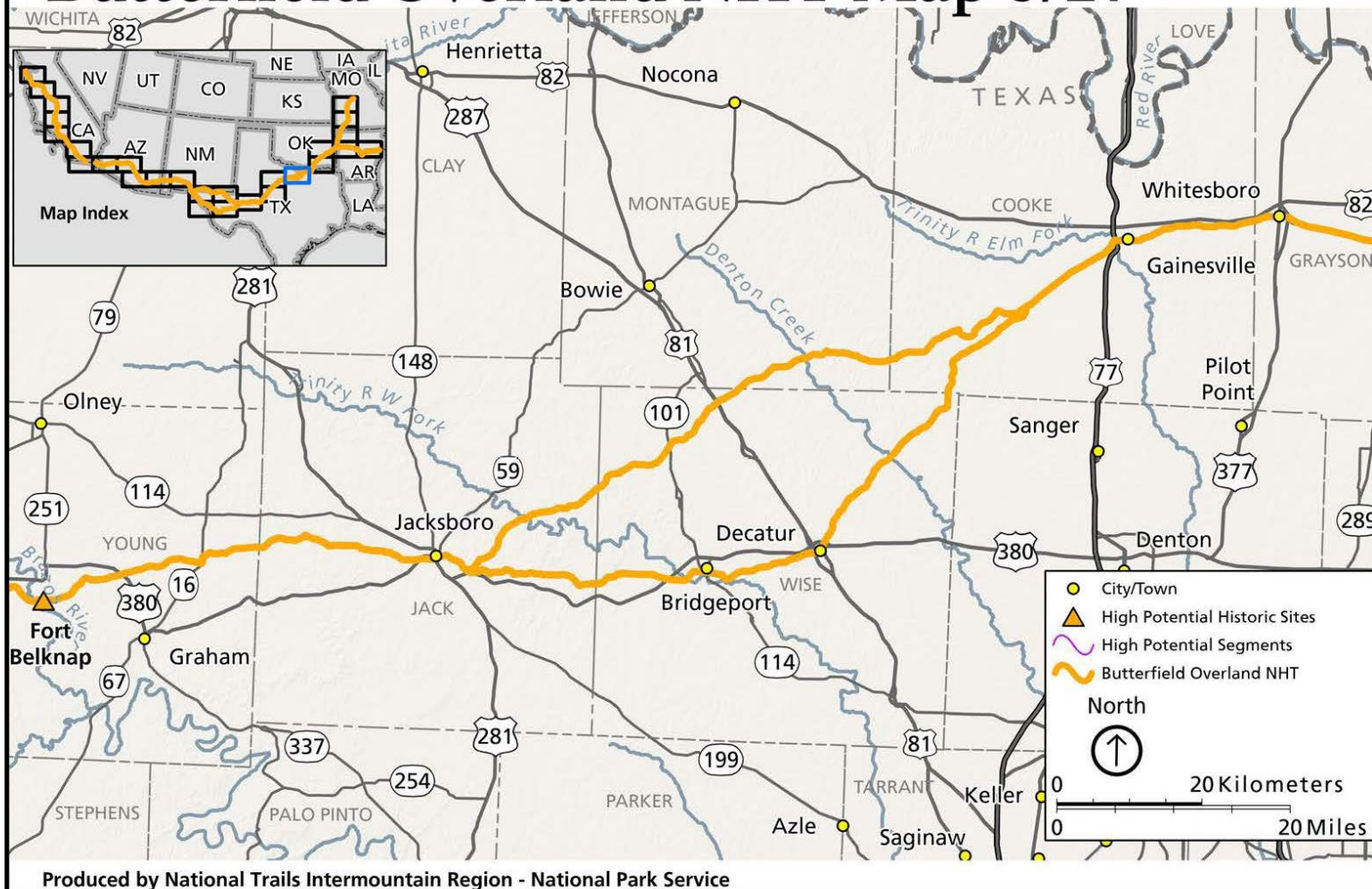
Butterfield Overland NHT Map 7/27



Map 13. Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail from Pittsburg County, Oklahoma, to Sherman, Texas



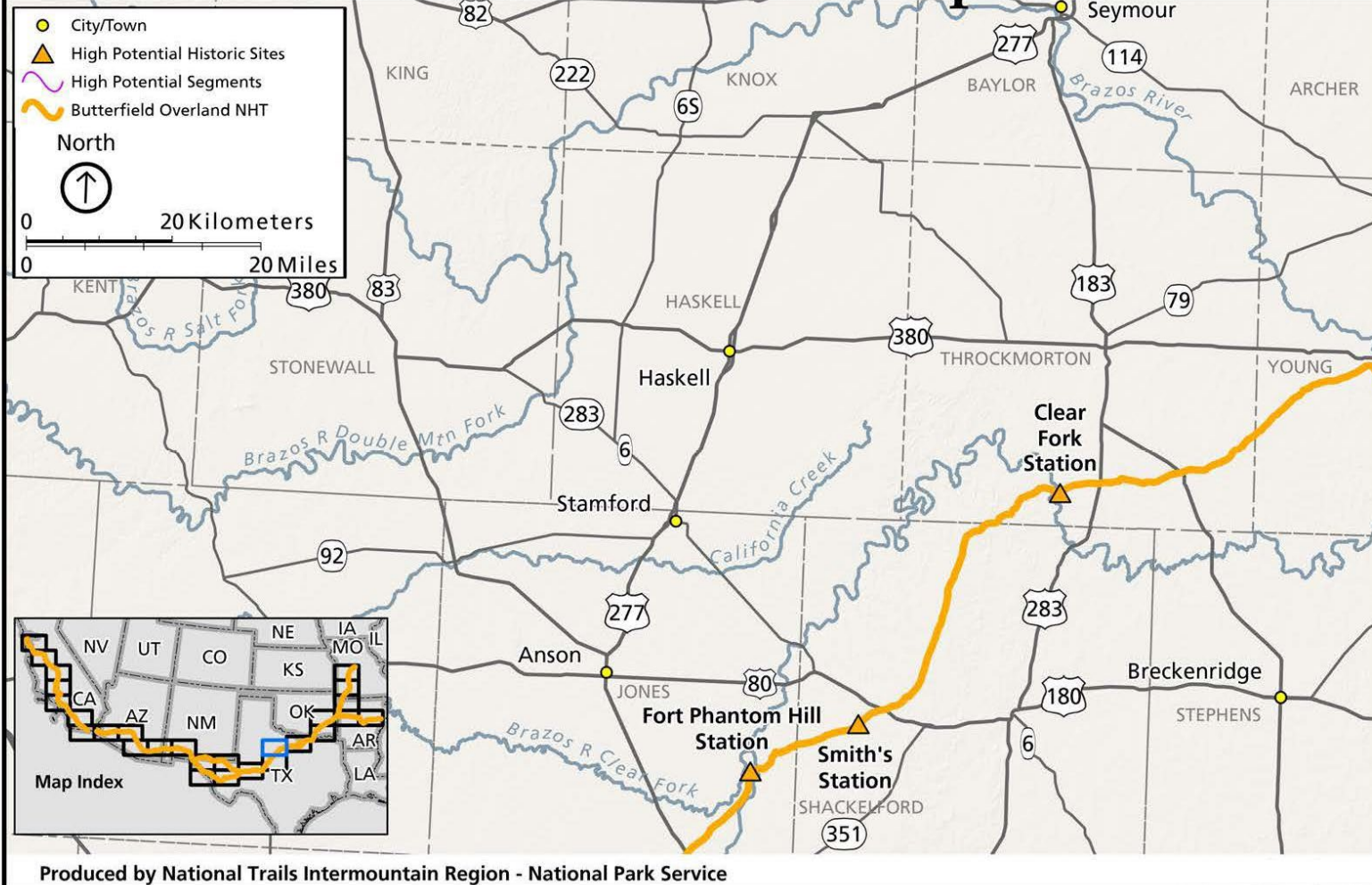
Butterfield Overland NHT Map 8/27



Map 14. Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail from Whitesboro, Texas, to Young County, Texas



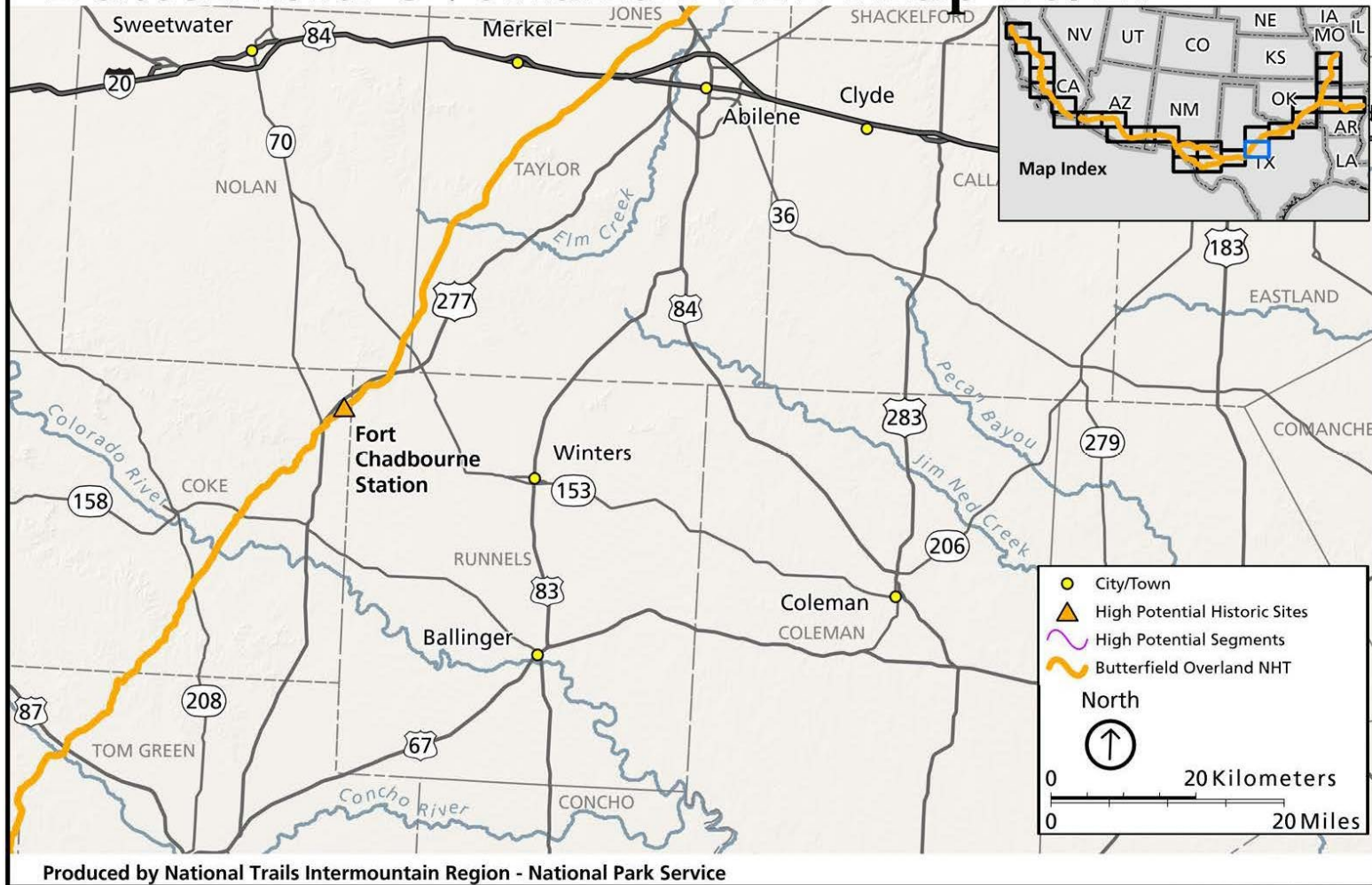
Butterfield Overland NHT Map 9/27



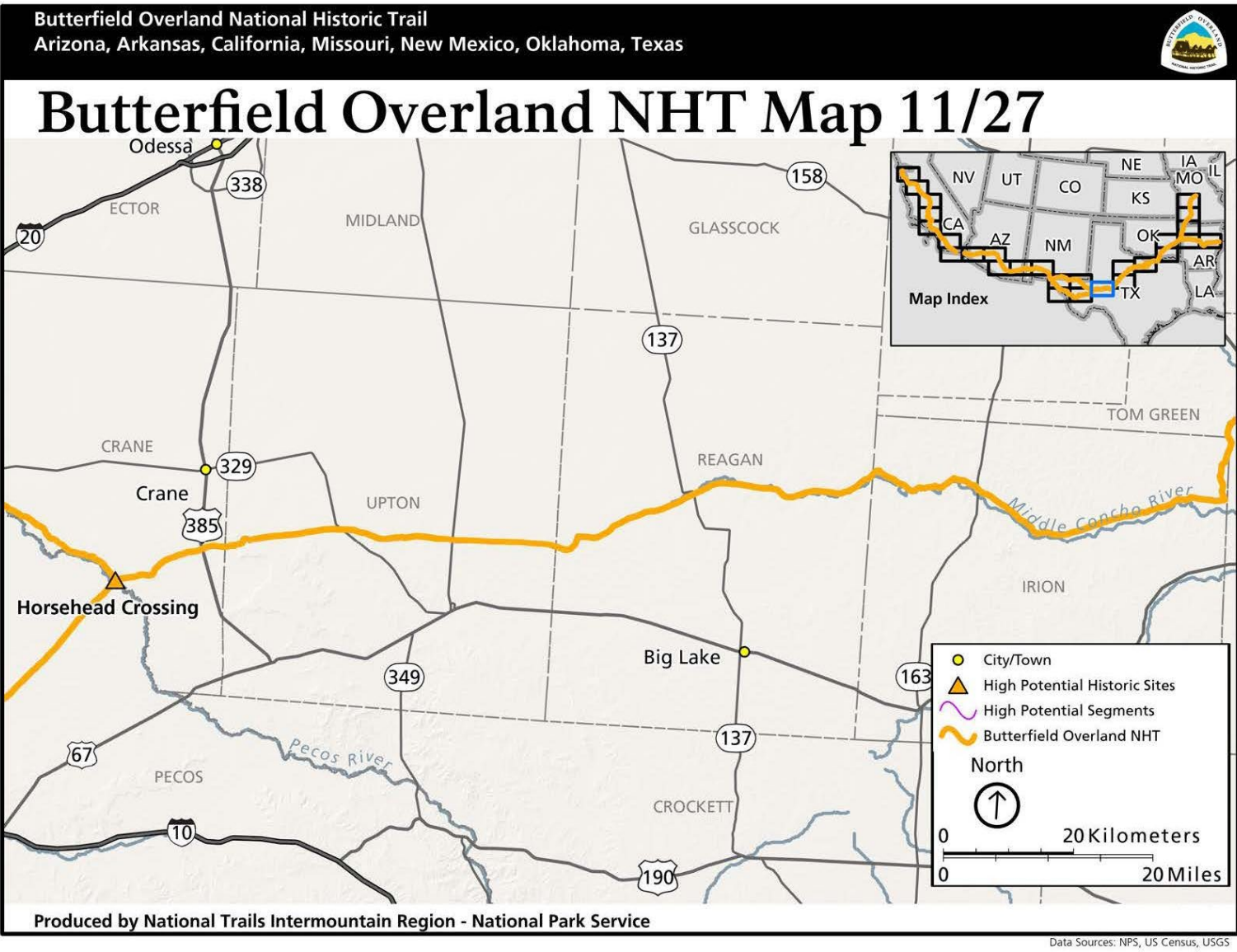
Map 15. Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail from Young County, Texas, to Jones County, Texas



Butterfield Overland NHT Map 10/27



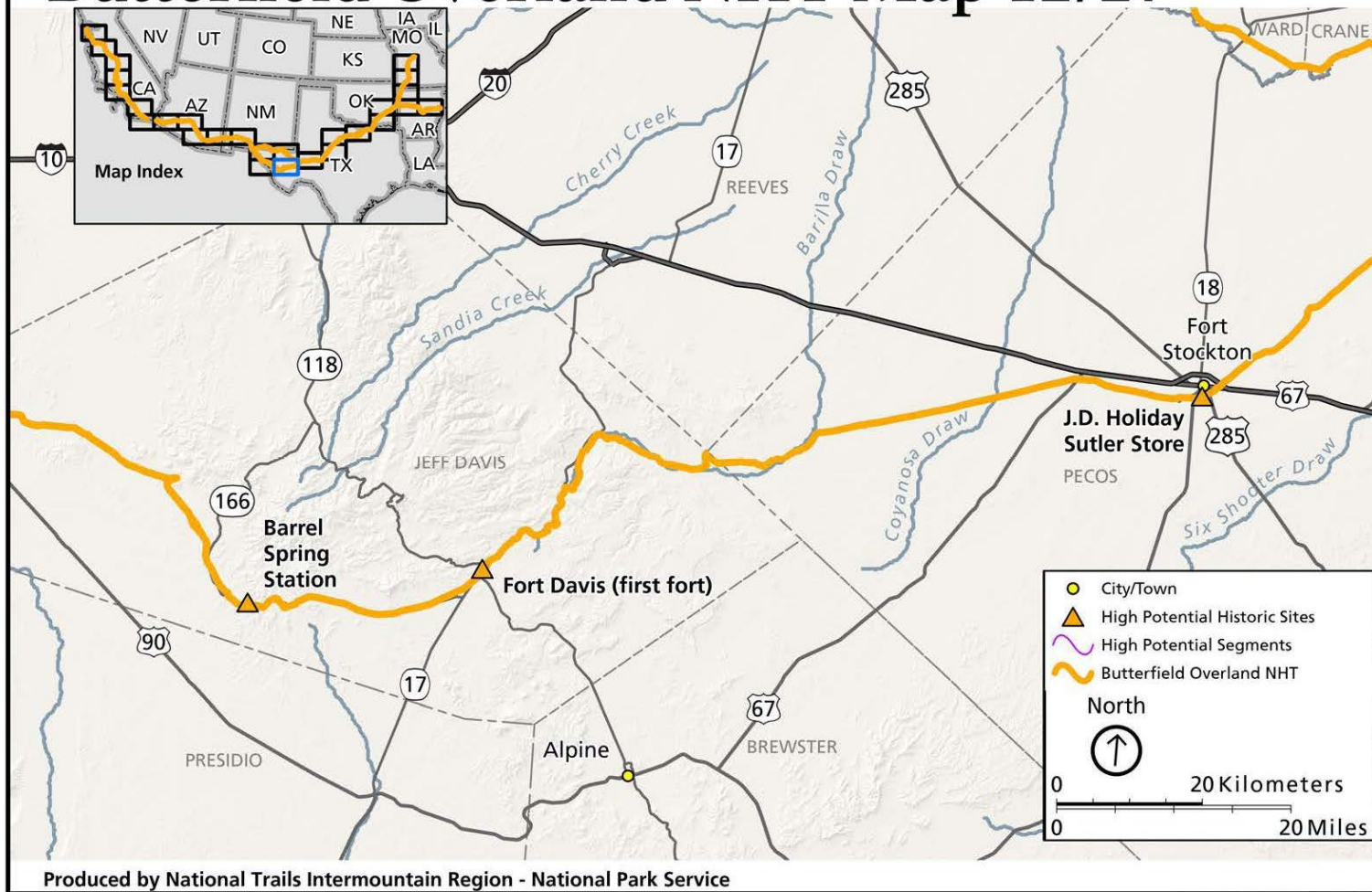
Map 16. Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail from Jones County, Texas, to Tom Green County, Texas



Map 17. Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail from Tom Green County, Texas, to Crane County, Texas, forking at Horsehead Crossing into northern and southern routes



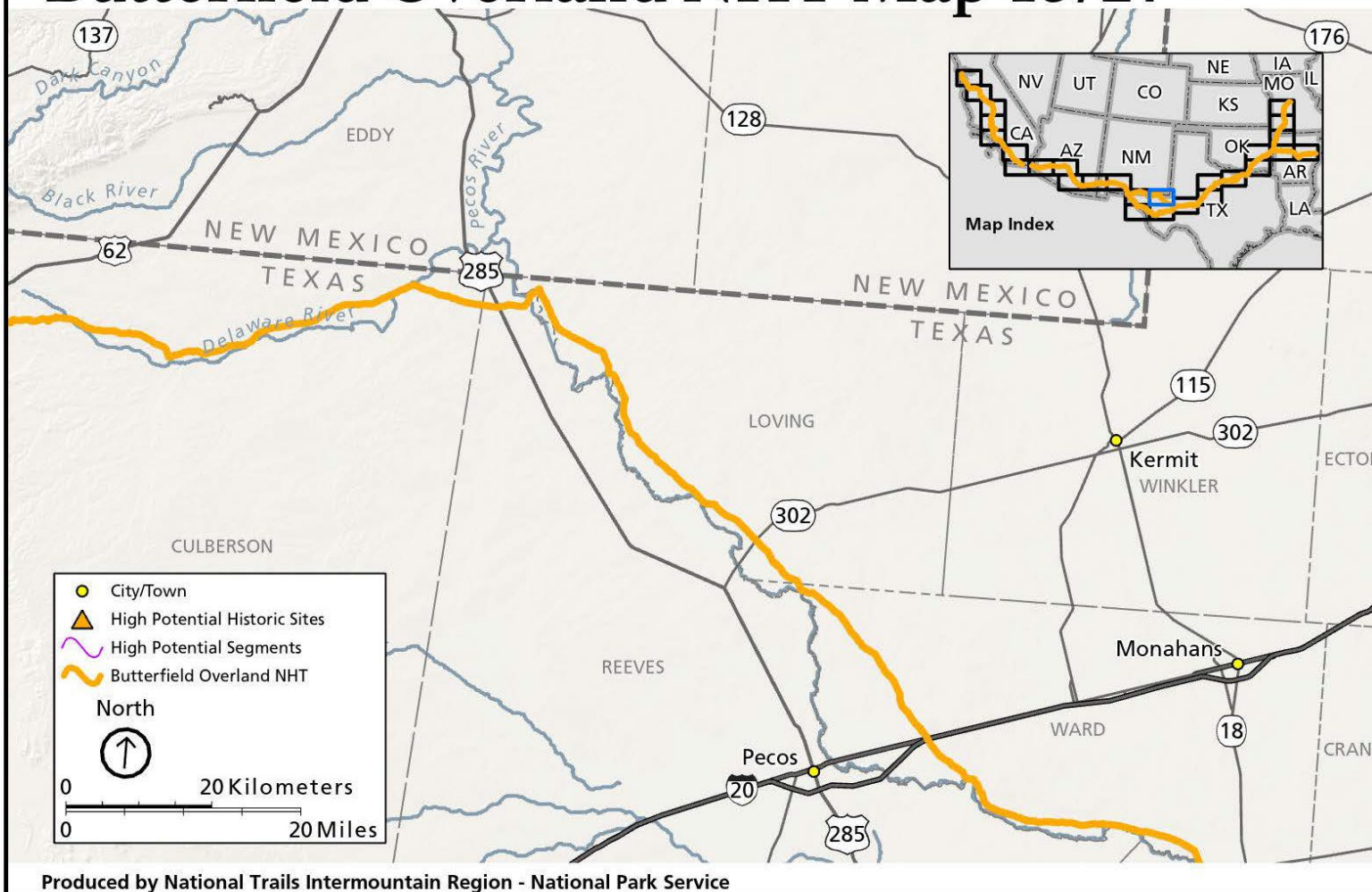
Butterfield Overland NHT Map 12/27



Map 18. Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail from Pecos County, Texas, to Jeff Davis County, Texas, with a section of trail visible to the north, crossing from Crane County, Texas, to Ward County, Texas



Butterfield Overland NHT Map 13/27



Produced by National Trails Intermountain Region - National Park Service

Data Sources: NPS, US Census, USGS

Map 19. Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail from Ward County, Texas, to Culberson County, Texas



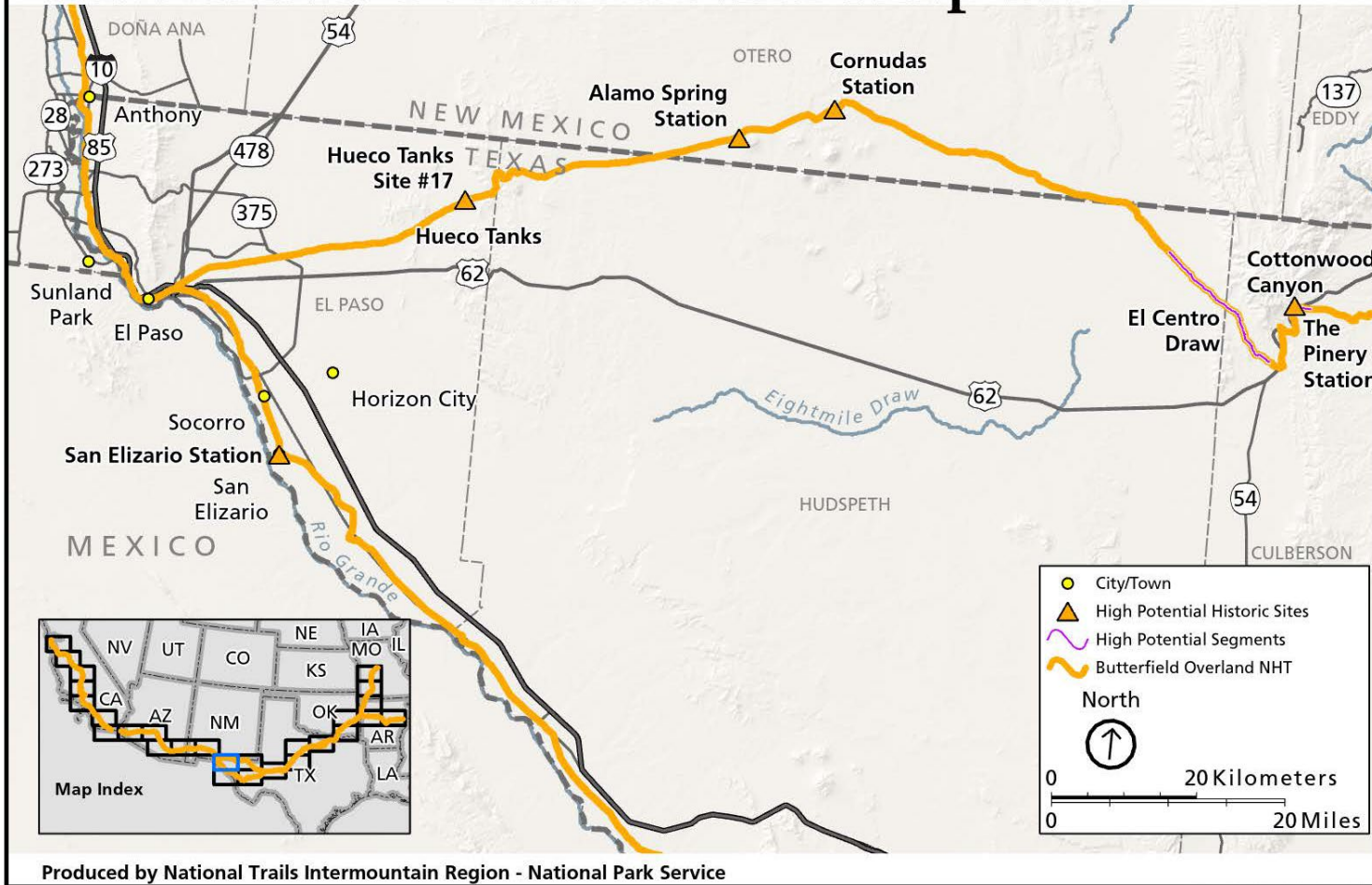
Butterfield Overland NHT Map 14/27



Map 20. Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail from Jeff Davis County, Texas, to Hudspeth County, Texas



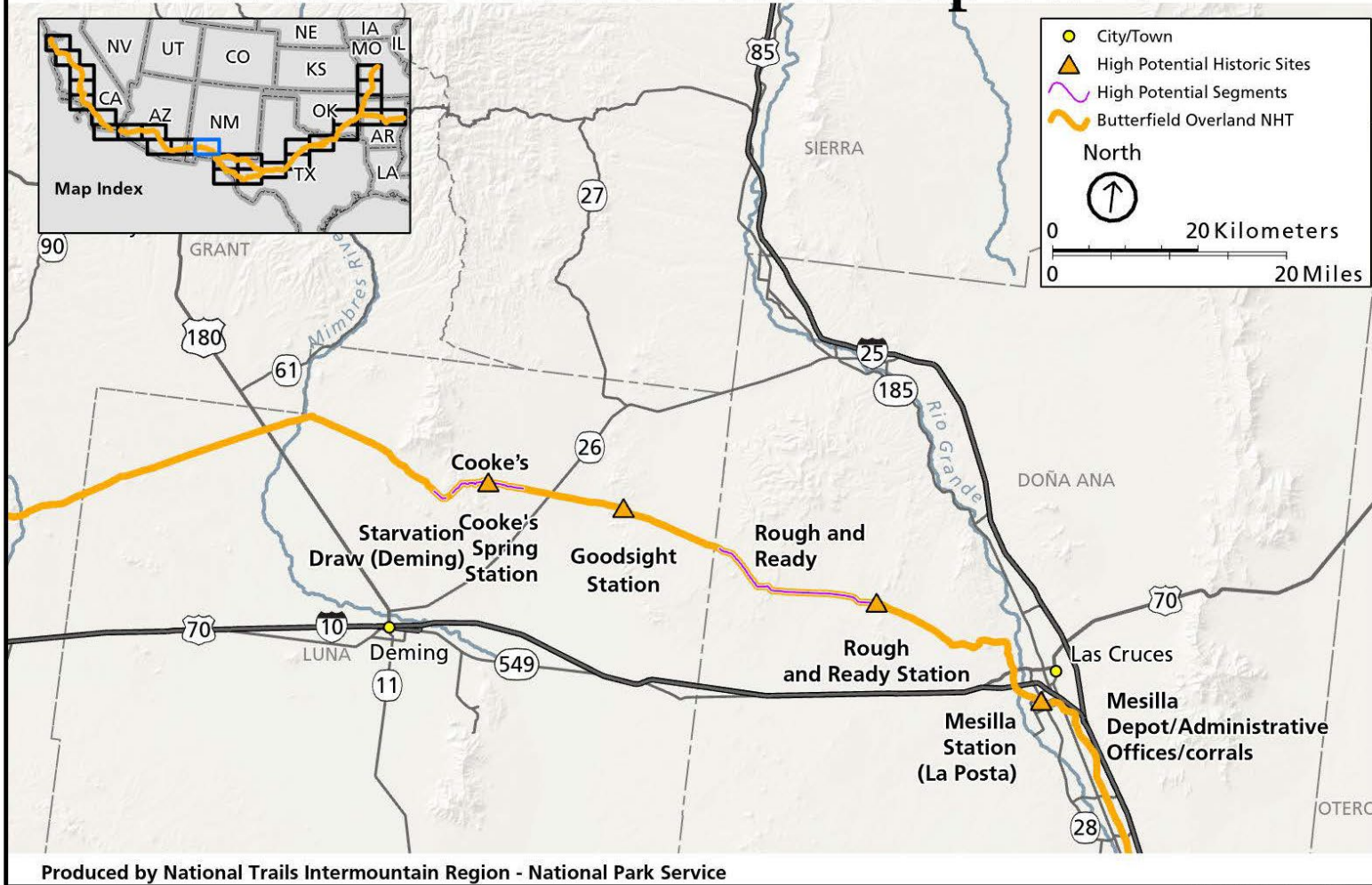
Butterfield Overland NHT Map 15/27



Map 21. Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail, with northern and southern routes converging in El Paso. In the north, the trail goes from Culberson County, Texas, to El Paso, Texas, then into Doña Ana County, New Mexico. In the south, the trail goes from Hudspeth County, Texas, to El Paso, Texas, then into Doña Ana County, New Mexico.



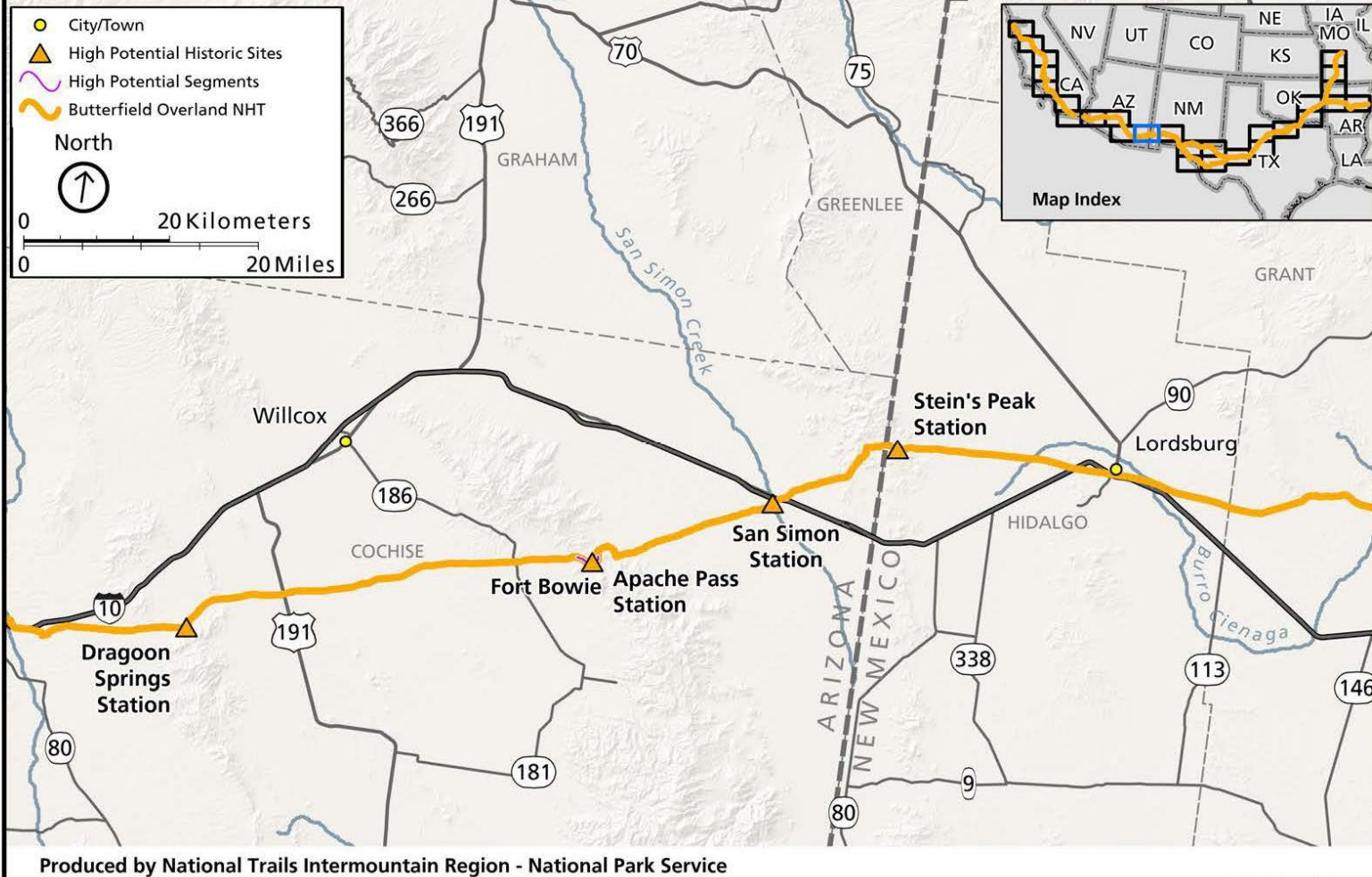
Butterfield Overland NHT Map 16/27



Map 22. Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail from Doña Ana County, New Mexico, to Grant County, New Mexico



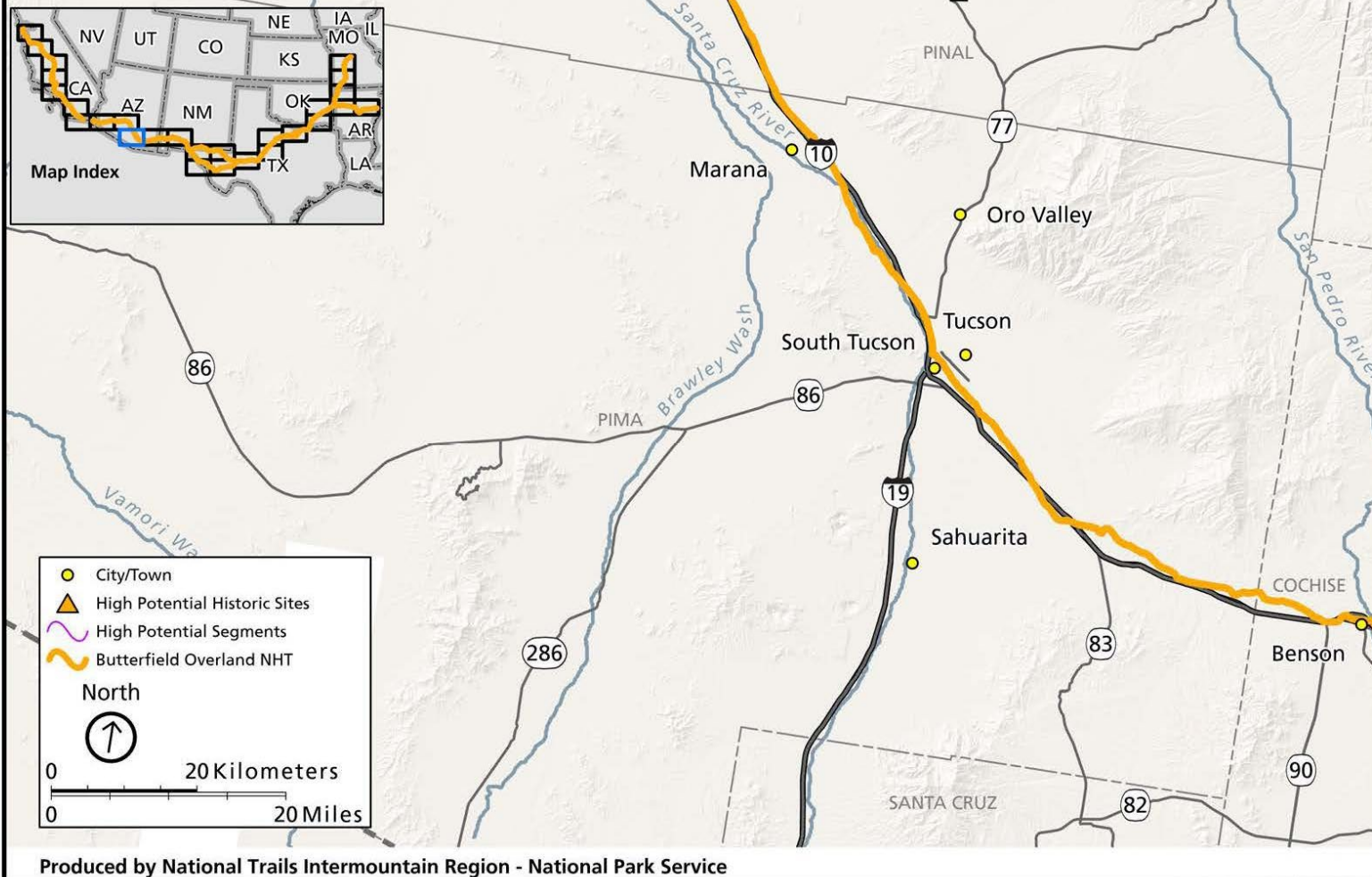
Butterfield Overland NHT Map 17/27



Map 23. Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail from Grant County, New Mexico, to Cochise County, Arizona



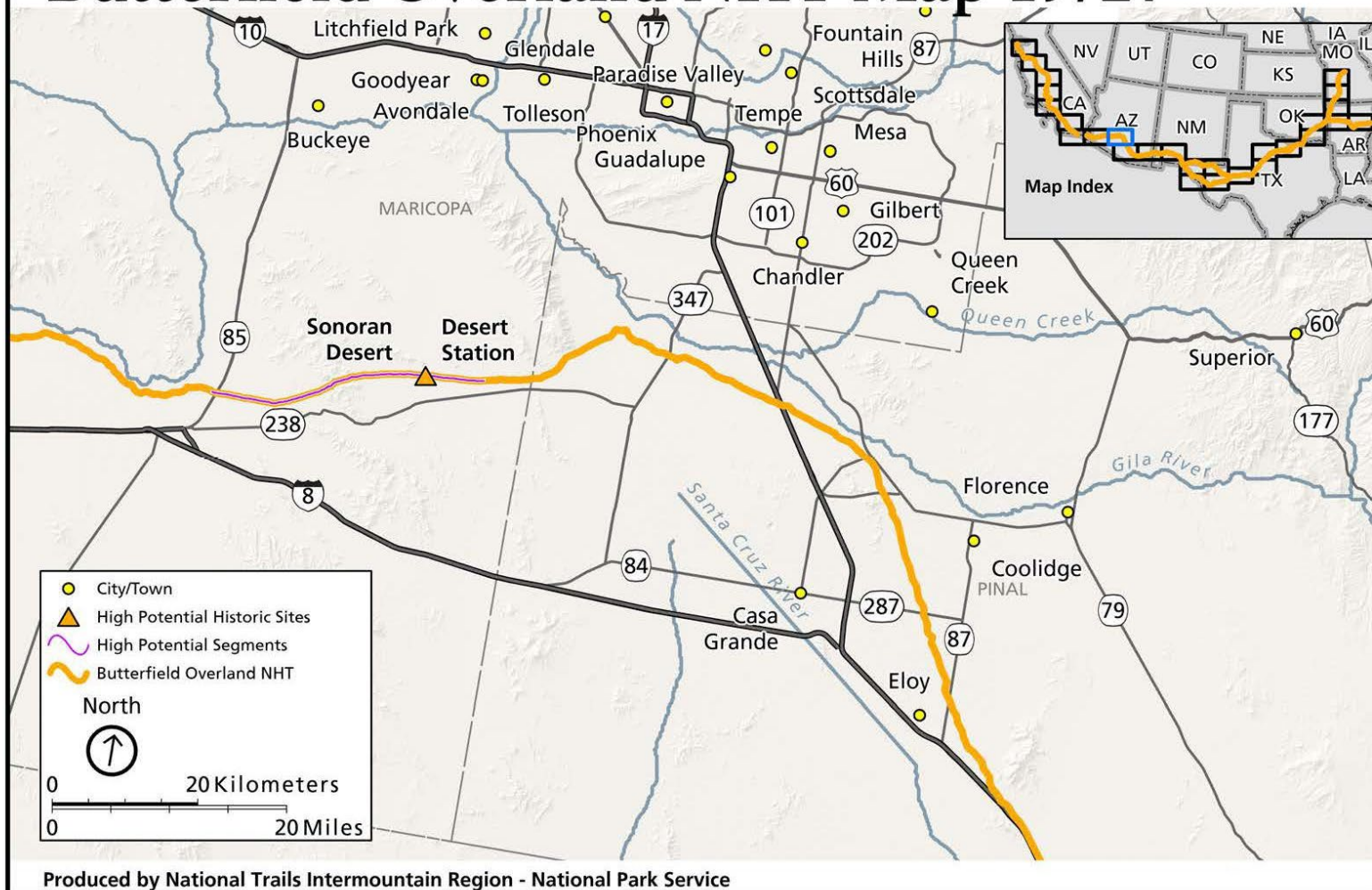
Butterfield Overland NHT Map 18/27



Map 24. Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail from Benson, Arizona, to Pinal County, Arizona



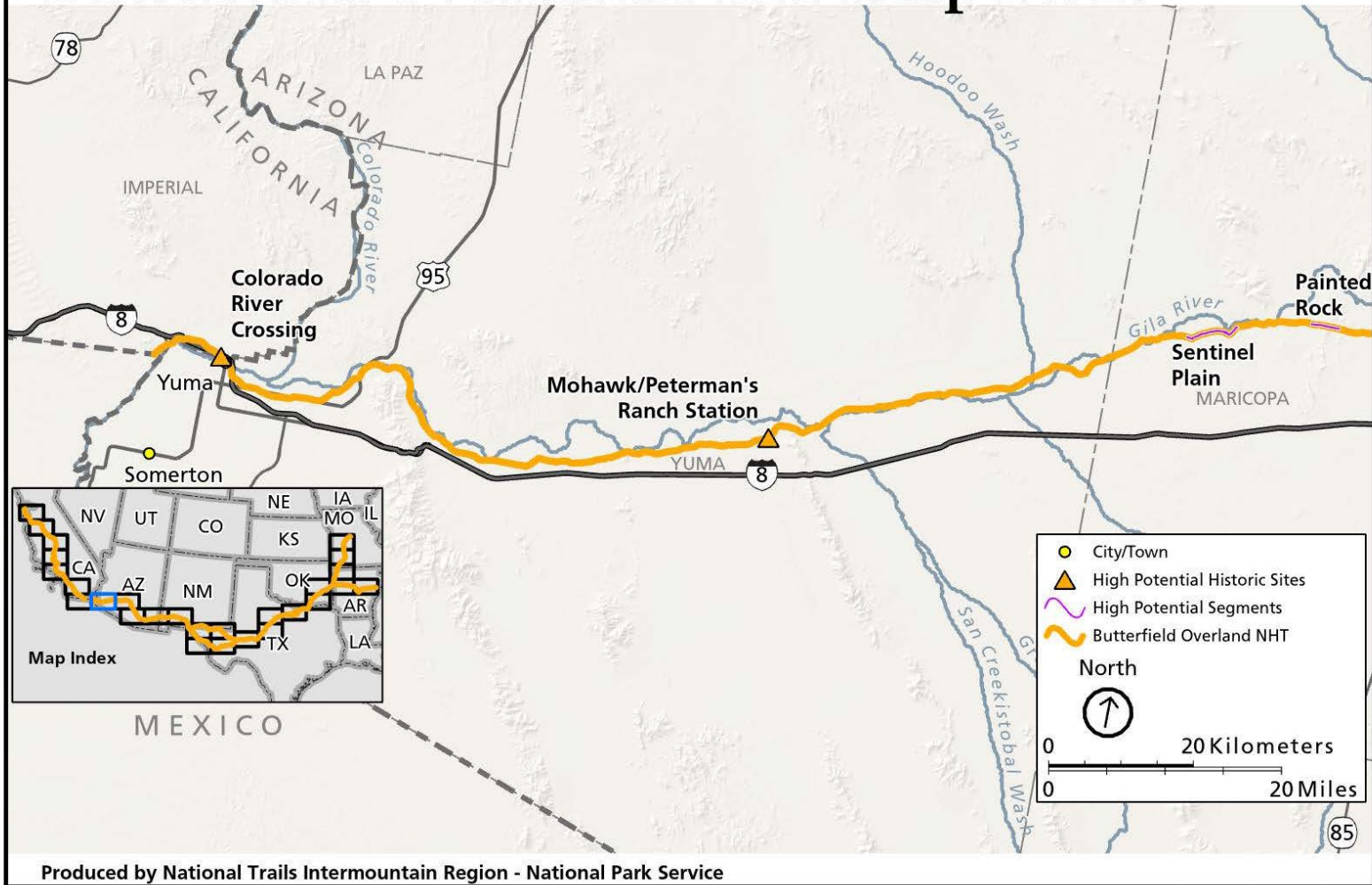
Butterfield Overland NHT Map 19/27



Map 25. Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail from Pinal County, Arizona, to Maricopa County, Arizona



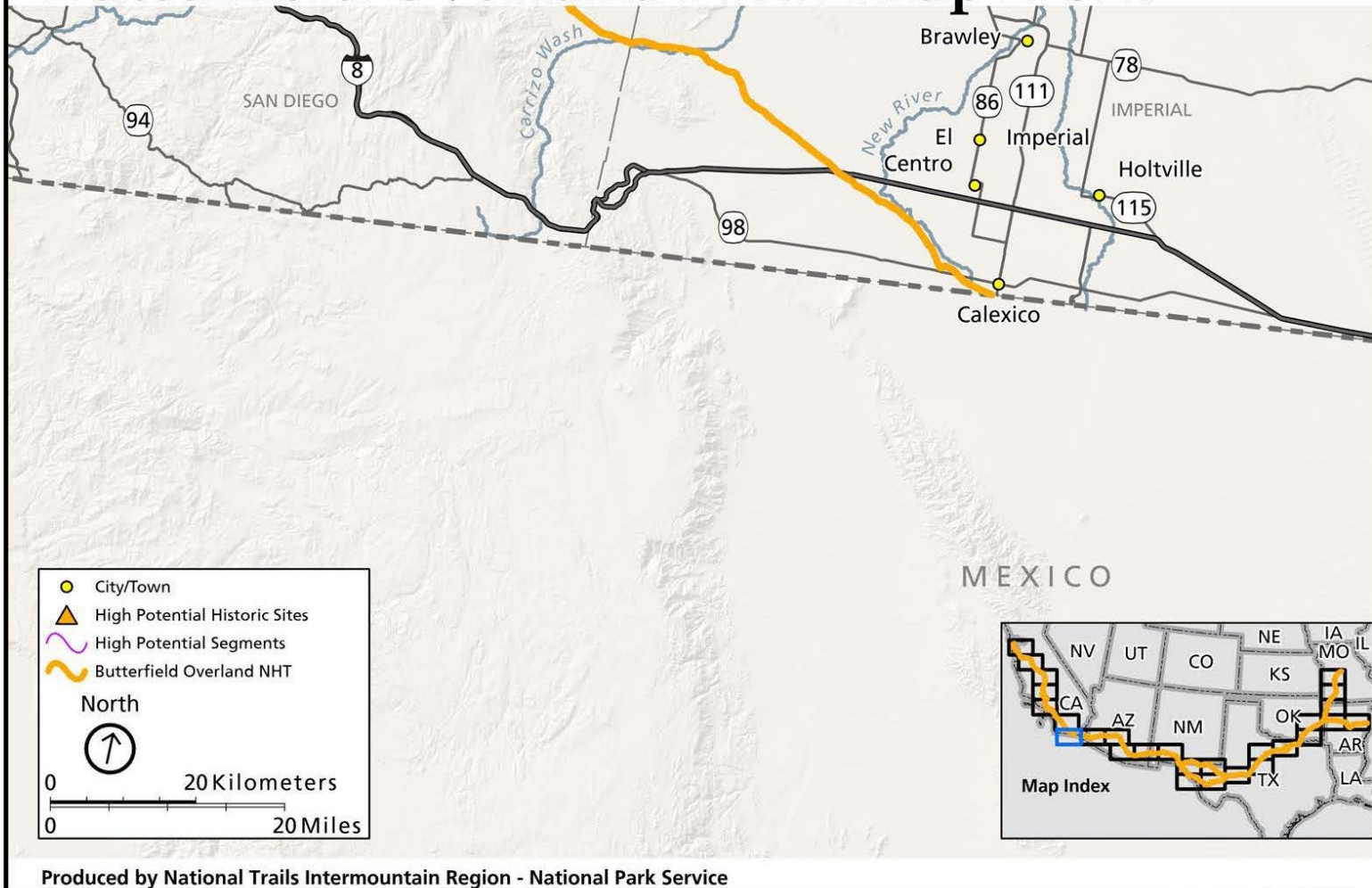
Butterfield Overland NHT Map 20/27



Map 26. Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail from Maricopa County, Arizona, to where the trail enters Mexico near Yuma, Arizona



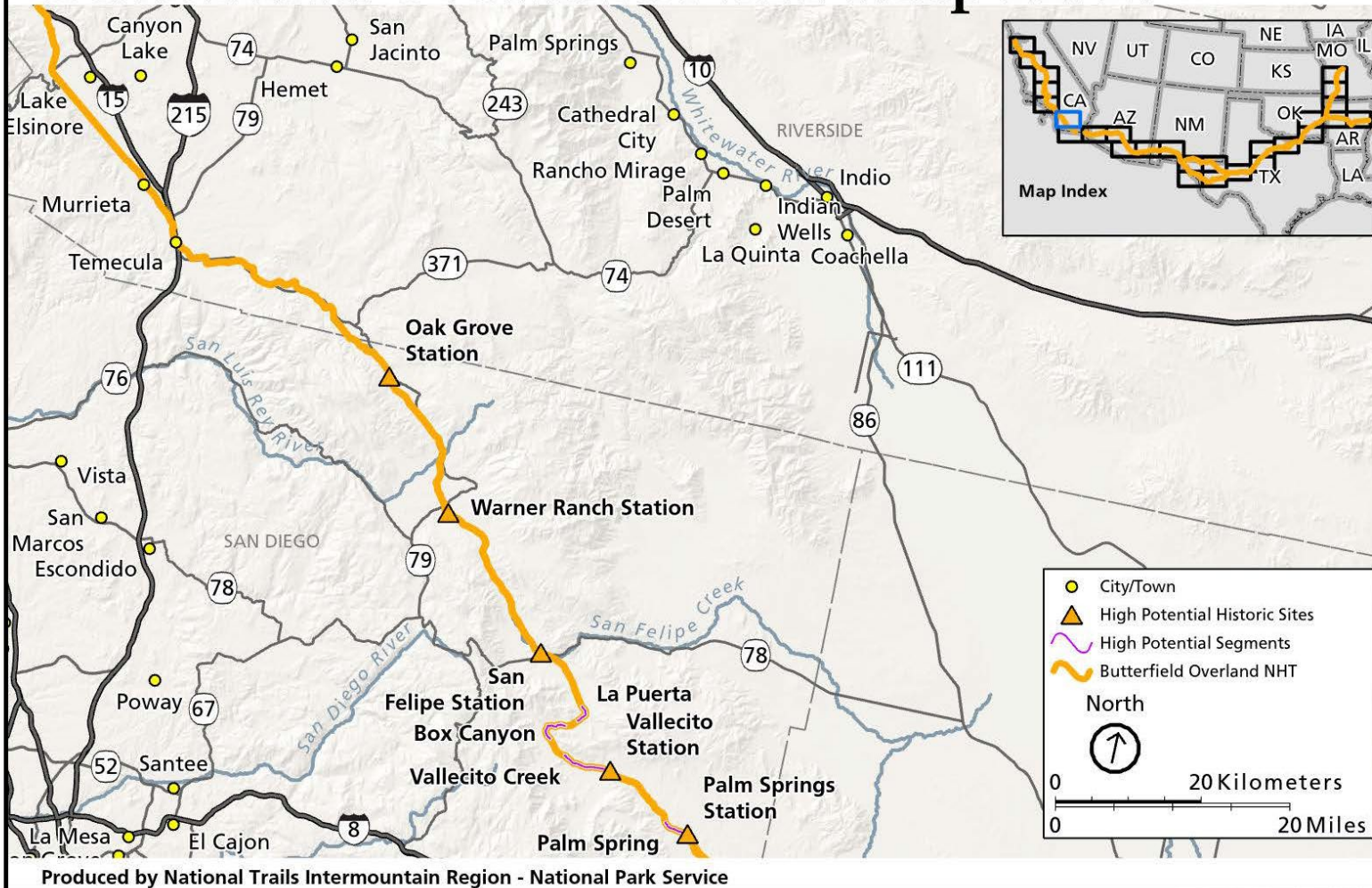
Butterfield Overland NHT Map 21/27



Map 27. Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail from where the trail exits Mexico in Calexico, California, to San Diego County, California



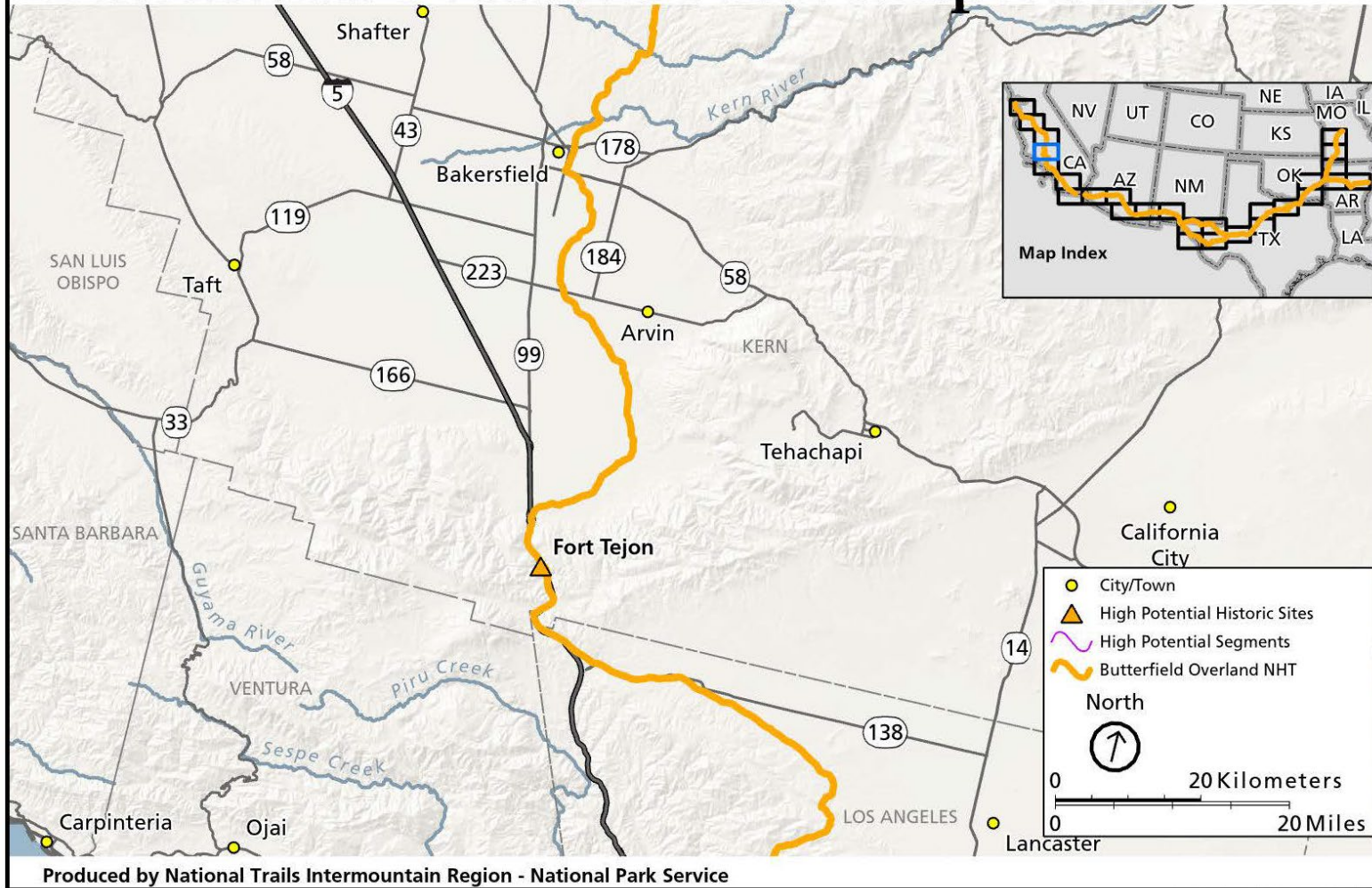
Butterfield Overland NHT Map 22/27



Map 28. Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail from San Diego County, California, to Lake Elsinore, California



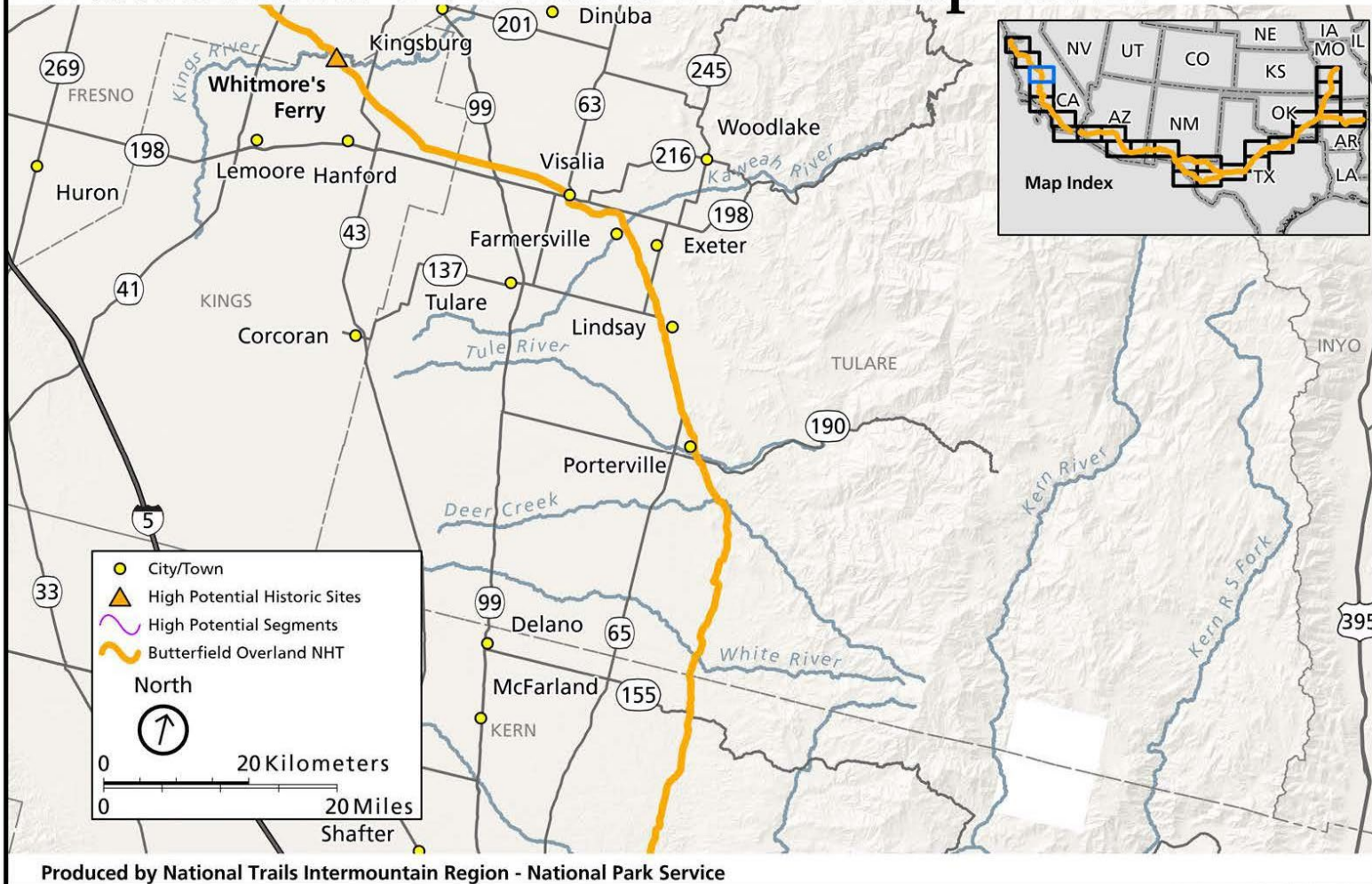
Butterfield Overland NHT Map 24/27



Map 30. Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail from Los Angeles County, California, to Kern County, California



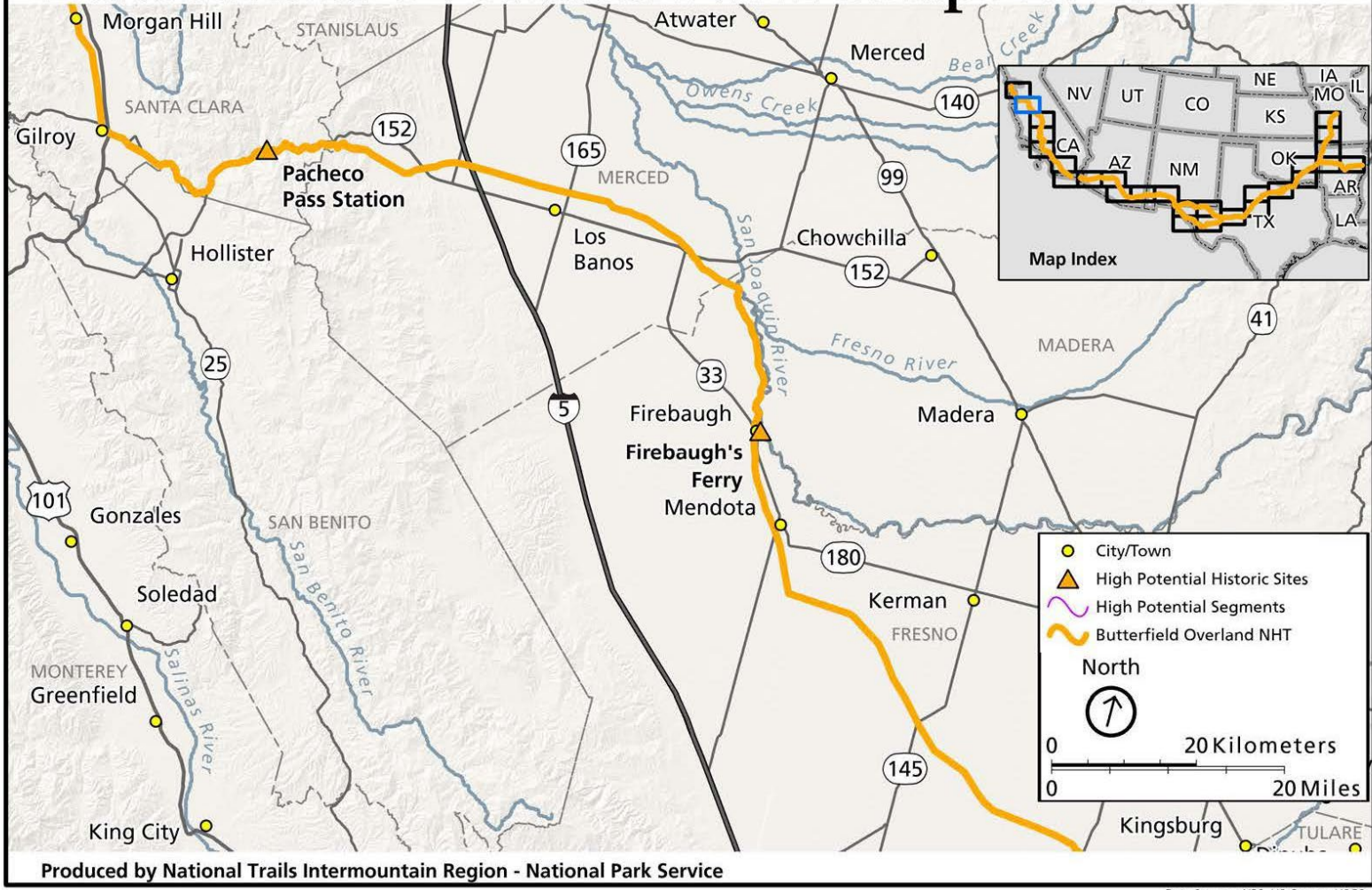
Butterfield Overland NHT Map 25/27



Map 31. Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail from Kern County, California, to Fresno County, California



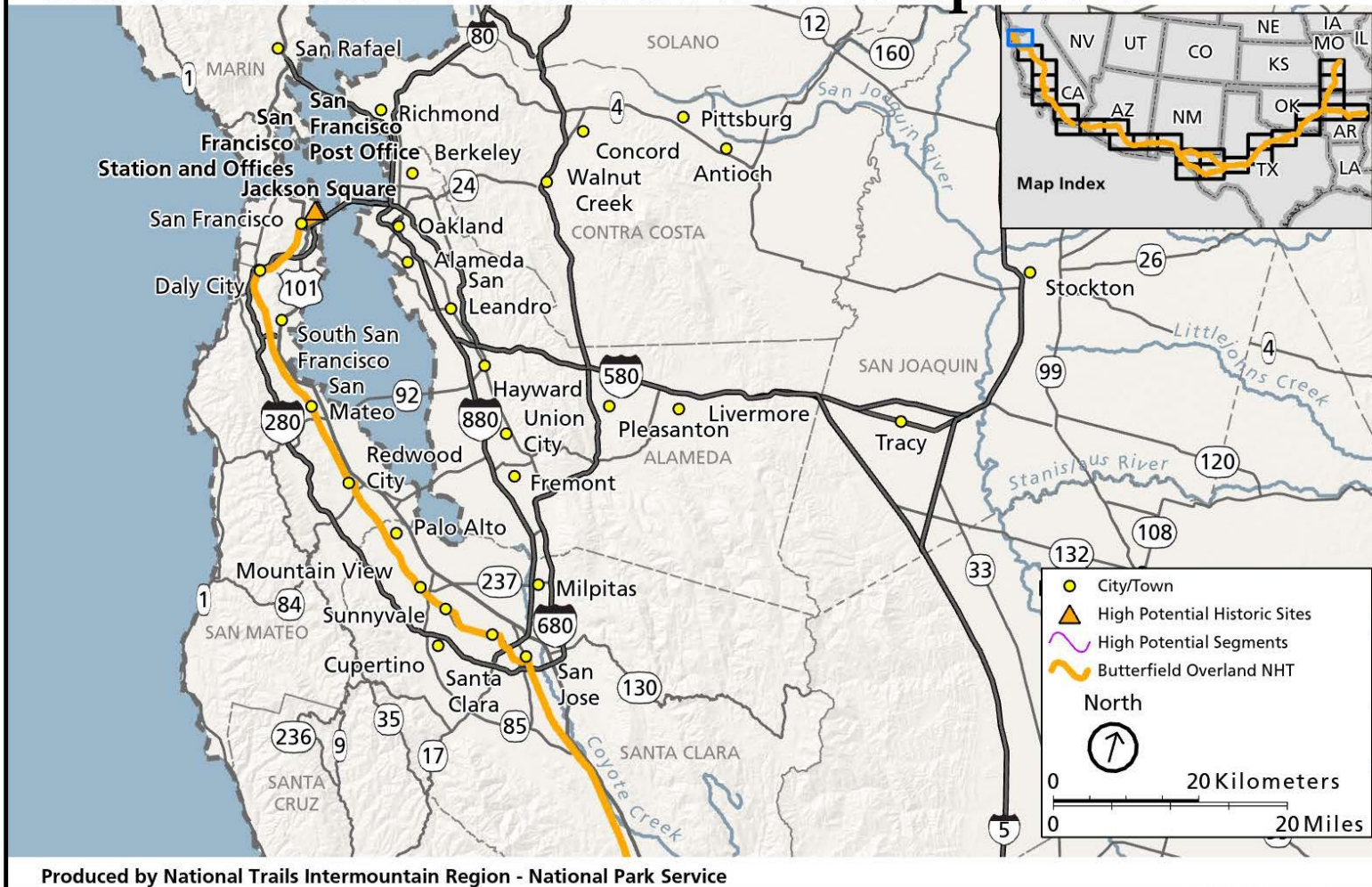
Butterfield Overland NHT Map 26/27



Map 32. Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail from Fresno County, California, to Morgan Hill, California



Butterfield Overland NHT Map 27/27



Map 33. Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail from Santa Clara County, California, to San Francisco, California

APPENDIX E: FULL HIGH POTENTIAL SITES AND SEGMENTS PROTOCOL

BACKGROUND

The National Trails System Act (The Act) was passed October 2, 1968, establishing the Appalachian and Pacific Crest Scenic Trails, and a decade later was amended to include national historic trails. The Act has been amended numerous times over the years as new trails are added to the system, but the requirement that national historic trails have identified high potential historic sites and route segments (HPSS) has remained consistent throughout. Section 12(1) [16 U.S.C. § 1251(1) (2023)] of The Act offers the following definition for a high potential historic site:

The term "high potential historic sites" means those historic sites related to the route, or sites in close proximity thereto, which provide opportunity to interpret the historic significance of the trail during the period of its major use. Criteria for consideration as high potential sites include historic significance, presence of Visible historic remnants, scenic quality, and relative freedom from intrusion.

Section 12(2) [16 U.S.C. § 1251(2) (2023)], goes on to define a high potential route segment as:

The term "high potential route segments" means those segments of a trail which would afford high quality recreation experience in a portion of the route having greater than average scenic values or affording an opportunity to vicariously share the experience of the original users of a historic route.

Please note that the evaluation of whether a given site or segment merits high potential status is an administrative action not subject to the National Environmental Policy Act.

DEFINITIONS

Any HPSS list reflects a current snapshot of historic sites or route segments that met established criteria. There are actions that could degrade a trail resource to the point that it no longer merits high potential status, just as there are actions that could elevate a resource to high potential status. For instance, building a shopping mall directly over a high potential site and paving a square-mile area around it would degrade the site to the point that it has lost all visible historic remnants and scenic quality and would not be free from intrusion. But a historically significant site could also be improved upon to remove intrusive features and enhance the vicarious experience to such an extent that it may then qualify as a high potential historic site.

This evaluation guide was crafted using the following definitions.

Remnant—Human-made items, defined as something that remains or is left behind with a usually small part, member, or trace remaining.²⁷ By this definition, landmarks are not remnants but swales, ruts, inscriptions and artifacts are.

27. "REMNANT Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster." Accessed May 28, 2026. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/remnant>

Scenic value—The critical aesthetic or visual qualities of a landscape are those that are similar to the historic appearance of the trail and its setting, connecting people to the historic landscape and facilitating a vicarious experience of trail travel. More specifically, the visual elements that reflect an action, event, or episode (i.e., the experience of the historic trail) are the scenic values the National Park Service seeks to preserve.²⁸

Vicarious experience—Vicarious is defined as an imaginative experience of the feelings or actions of another person. A vicarious experience does not require a person to be physically present at a given historic site or route segment.

Intrusion—Defined here as an inappropriate or unwelcome addition, with the baseline for appropriateness stemming from the period of significance for a given trail.

Site—The location of an event or activity which took place in a static location (e.g., camp, water source, trail decision point, grave, resupply point, etc.).

Segment—A portion of trail that conveys a sense of movement through a particular area on a designated national historic trail route.

SITE OR SEGMENT

A guideline for determining whether a given resource is a historic site or a route segment is that sites are static, whereas segments are meant to convey a sense of movement. While the length needed to convey movement may differ from person to person, in general, segments should have at least a half-mile of continuous national historic trail. There is flexibility in this guideline. If a given resource best fits the evaluation criteria for a segment, and there is enough information about the resource to fulfill the requirements of the nomination package, but the resource is less than a half mile in length, please contact the National Park Service for guidance.

CRITERIA AND SCORING

The National Park Service uses the following criteria for evaluating high potential sites: (1) Confidence of location, (2) historic significance, (3) opportunity to interpret the trail's significance, (4) Visual similarity to historic landscape, (5) inappropriate nonvisual intrusions, and (6) the presence of Visible historic remnants.

The National Park Service uses the following criteria for evaluating high potential segments: (1) Confidence of location, (2) high-quality recreation experience, (3) opportunity for vicarious experiences, (4) Visual similarity to historic landscape, and (5) inappropriate nonvisual intrusions.

It is important to note that for the scoring process, each criterion is weighted evenly, although some criteria are split into two parts with the average used as the criterion score. In addition, every aspect of the evaluation criteria is in reference to how the nominated site or segment fits

28. "SCENIC Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster." Accessed May 28, 2026. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/scenic>

into the period of significance for the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail. Evaluation and scoring is to be done for the current conditions of the nominated resource.

The nomination package for the resource must also include supporting documentation, maps, photographs, and other items. A full list of what is needed in the package and information about submitting it is presented in the “Nomination Package” section below.

EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR HIGH POTENTIAL HISTORIC SITES

Criterion 1: Confidence of Location

Varying levels of documentation are associated with the trail and its individual components (events, places, resources, etc.). Because high potential resources are allocated significant amounts of time, money, and other resources, it is important to gauge how well the location of the nominated resource will stand up to scrutiny. This criterion is not in reference to a site’s proximity to the trail or the accuracy of the mapping method but rather in reference to the confidence that the purported event took place at the proposed location. This criterion’s scoring is made relative to the amount of documentation available for the trail and includes the nominator’s assessment of the state of consensus (or lack thereof) within the community of people knowledgeable about the trail. Documentation can be of any form, including but not limited to oral history, written sources, and archaeological data. This criterion has five scoring options, of which only one is selected.

Criterion 1 Question: How well documented is this site’s historic location and what is the trail community’s confidence in this location?

1. Minimal documentation and contested location
 - Resources meriting this score are those with relatively little documentation and the location is contested within the trail community.
2. Minimal documentation and uncontested location
 - Resources that net this score may have relatively little documentation, but the location is not contested in the trail community.
3. Some documentation and uncontested location
 - This score is appropriate for resources that have average to slightly less than average documentation, but the trail community does not contest its location.
4. Some documentation and generally accepted location
 - This score is appropriate for resources that have average documentation, and the trail community agrees the location is supported by the documentation.
5. Well documented and widely accepted location
 - This score is reserved for resources with greater-than-average documentation, and the trail community widely accepts the location is supported by the documentation.

Criterion 2: Historical Significance

Eligibility status for listing on the National Register of Historic Places is not a requirement for a site to be considered a high potential historic site. This criterion seeks to capture how influential or noteworthy the proposed site is in relation to the trail. This criterion has five scoring options, of which only one is selected.

Criterion 2 Question: How noteworthy is the site in relation to the trail?

1. Not historically noteworthy
 - This rating means the site may be historic or even historically significant in its own right, but has no significance that pertains to the trail during the trail’s period of significance.
2. Historically present but not associated with the trail
 - This rating is appropriate for sites that were present during the trail’s period of significance but played no functional role in the trail itself. Good examples are structures that would have been in the viewshed of the trail but were not actually (or were rarely) visited or used by travelers on the trail.
3. Historically associated with the trail
 - Sites in this category were clearly associated with the trail in some way but did not especially stand out in the experience of the trail user.
4. Critical location and/or location of critical events for some trail users
 - Critical is defined here as “of, relating to, or being a turning point or especially important juncture.” Major water crossings, wayfinding features, milestones, and historical events are all examples of what would qualify as critical for this criterion. The term “some users” is also key for this score, as not every critical location or event affected the experience of all trail users.
5. Critical location and/or location of critical events for majority of trail users
 - This criterion is the same as the previous criterion but with a key difference of how many trail users were affected by the location or event.

Criterion 3: Opportunity to Interpret the Trail’s Historic Significance

The National Trails System Act, Section 12(1) [16 U.S.C. § 1251(1) (2023)], states that high potential historic sites are those “which provide an opportunity to interpret the historic significance of the trail during its period of major use” (as defined in the trail’s planning document). An opportunity to interpret is based on the story to be told and the means of telling that story. This criterion seeks to evaluate how well the site speaks to the story(ies) of the trail and the means (i.e., logistics and resources available) of telling that story. There are five scoring options for Part A and Part B, of which one is selected for each part and the average is the final score for this criterion.

Criterion 3 Question—Part A: How well does the site convey administrator-established, trail-related themes?

1. Site story(ies) do not convey trail themes.

2. Site conveys trail themes, but there is no specific site story.
3. One story that is specific to the site conveys one trail theme.
4. Multiple specific-to-the-site stories convey one trail theme, or one specific-to-the-site story conveys multiple trail themes.
5. Multiple specific-to-the-site stories convey multiple trail themes.

Criterion 3 Question—Part B: What is the site’s current means (ability) to present interpretive stories?

1. There is future potential to present an interpretive story.
2. Means to present an interpretive story are identified.
3. Means to present an interpretive story are in a planning document.
4. Means to present an interpretive story are in development.
5. Means to present an interpretive story already exist.

Criterion 4: Visual Similarity to Historic Landscape

This criterion seeks to quantify how similar the visual setting of the site is today to the visual setting during the trail’s period of significance. Visual similarity to the historic landscape can be a key component in facilitating a vicarious experience, interpreting the history of the trail, and contributing to a high-quality recreational experience.

It is important to note that it is the similarity of the setting that is evaluated, not whether the setting is identical in every way. The landscape is always changing, but not all changes detract from the historical setting. For example, a farmhouse built last week has the potential to be evocative of a farmhouse that was present during the trail’s period of significance. It is also important to note that the degree of similarity is also evaluated; this is not a presence/absence criterion. The baseline for comparison in this criterion is a high-level summary of the landscape, not a comparison to very specific details one might find in a trail diary.

It is helpful to think in terms of percentages or dominance for this criterion. For example, a barbed wire fence may extend from one end of the viewshed to the other, but it may not necessarily take up a large percentage or otherwise dominate your attention. For landmark nominations, the point that provides the best view of the landmark from the trail is selected for use in this analysis.

To provide a more accurate evaluation of visual similarity, this criterion is broken into two parts. Both Part A and Part B use the same five scoring options. One scoring option is selected for Part A and one for Part B; then, the two scores are averaged to yield the final, single score for this criterion.

Criterion 4 Question—Part A: How visually similar is the site’s specific location today to its appearance during the trail’s period of significance?

Note that the nominating party is responsible for designating and defining what constitutes the “specific location.”

Criterion 4 Question—Part B: How visually similar is the site’s entire viewshed today to its appearance during the trail’s period of significance?

Note that the “viewshed” is defined as everything that can be seen in 360° from the perspective of the “specific location”, excluding the site-specific area identified in criterion 3A.

1. No similarities to the period of significance
 - There is nothing to be seen that is similar to the period of significance. Likely to apply only to very urban, heavily industrialized, and/or heavily developed settings.
2. A few visual elements are appropriate to the period of significance
 - The casual observer can identify a few visual elements appropriate to the period of significance, but the view is otherwise overwhelmed by elements that are not appropriate.
3. Roughly half of the visual elements are appropriate to the period of significance
 - There is a good mix of elements similar to the period of significance and dissimilar to the period of significance, with neither category being visually dominant.
4. Most visual elements are appropriate to the period of significance
 - There may be a few elements that are not appropriate to the period of significance, but they are minor and not overly distracting.
5. Visual elements are virtually indistinguishable from the period of significance
 - The casual observer would not be able to tell the difference between the setting during the period of significance and the setting today.

Criterion 5: Inappropriate Nonvisual Intrusions

What visitors hear, smell, and feel can affect the quality of their experience. This criterion seeks to round out the quantification of how closely the setting reflects that of the period of significance. Note that missing nonvisual elements from the period of significance do not lower the score. Temporary intrusions (e.g., construction) are not included. For landmark nominations, the single best point on the trail is selected for use in this analysis. This criterion has five scoring options. One score is selected for each part, then the two scores are averaged for the final score for this criterion.

Criterion 5 Question—Part A: How often are nonvisual intrusions (such as sounds and smells) inappropriate to the period of significance experienced at the site?

1. Continuous nonvisual intrusions
2. Frequent nonvisual intrusions
3. Periodic nonvisual intrusions
4. Rarely occurring nonvisual intrusions
5. No nonvisual intrusions

Criterion 5 Question—Part B: How intense are the nonvisual intrusions experienced at the site?

1. Significantly distracting
2. Distracting

3. Somewhat distracting
4. Not distracting
5. Not present

Criterion 6: Visible Historic Remnants

Historic remnants can play an important role in facilitating a vicarious experience and are called out specifically as desirable attributes within the National Trails System Act, Section 3(a)(3) and Section 12(1) [16 U.S.C. § 1242(a)(3) and § 1251(1) (2023)]. While it is ideal that historic remnants are from the period of significance and in their original location (in situ), other historic remnants can serve the same function. It should be noted that remnants may be located within a display (indoors or outdoors) or “in the field.” Remnants are defined as human-made items: “something that remains, or is left behind” and “a usually small part, member, or trace remaining.” By this definition, landmarks (e.g., Pilot Peak, La Bajada, or South Pass) are not remnants, but swales, ruts, inscriptions, and artifacts are. Note that landmarks may be nominated as sites themselves and also may factor into criterion 4 (visual similarity) for adjacent sites and/or segments. This criterion has five scoring options.

Criterion 6 Question: What kind of Visible historic remnants are present at the site, if any?

1. No Visible historic remnants
 - No historic remnants are visible. Subsurface historic remnants may be present, but to score higher than 1, the remnants must be visible.
2. Only non-trail-related or not-from-period-of-significance visible historic remnants
 - Remnants are visible but are either not from the period of significance or are not related to the trail.
3. Possibly trail-related visible historic remnants
 - Visible historic remnants are present, but it is unclear what their association with the trail or period of significance may be.
4. Trail-related visible historic remnants
 - Trail-related visible remnants from the period of significance are present.
5. In situ, trail-related, visible historic remnants
 - Trail-related Visible historic remnants from the period of significance are present, and they are in their original location (i.e., in situ; this does not include remnants in a display case or which have been arranged into a display).

EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR HIGH POTENTIAL SEGMENTS

Criterion 1: Confidence of Location

Varying levels of documentation are associated with the trail and its individual components (events, places, resources, etc.). Because high potential resources are allocated significant amounts of time, money, and other resources, it is important to gauge how well the location of the nominated resource will stand up to scrutiny. This criterion is not in reference to a segment’s proximity to the trail or the accuracy of the mapping method but rather in reference to the confidence the purported event took place at the proposed location. This criterion’s scoring is

relative to the amount of documentation available for the trail and includes the nominating party's assessment of the state of consensus (or lack thereof) within the community of people knowledgeable about the trail. Documentation can be of any form, including but not limited to oral history, written sources, and archaeological data. This criterion has five scoring options, of which only one is selected:

Criterion 1 Question: How well documented is this segment's historic location, and what is the trail community's confidence in this location?

1. Minimal documentation and contested location
 - Resources meriting this score are those with relatively little documentation, and their location is contested within the trail community.
2. Minimal documentation and uncontested location
 - Resources meriting this score may have only relatively little documentation, but their location is not contested within the trail community.
3. Some documentation and uncontested location
 - This score is appropriate for resources that have average to slightly less-than-average documentation, but the trail community does not contest their location.
4. Some documentation and generally accepted location
 - This score is appropriate for resources that have average documentation, and the trail community agrees that their location is supported by the documentation.
5. Well-documented and widely accepted location
 - This score is reserved for resources with greater-than-average documentation, and the trail community widely accepts that their location is supported by the documentation.

Criterion 2: High-Quality Recreation Experience

Section 12(2) [16 U.S.C. § 1251(2) (2023)] of the National Trails System Act describes high potential route segments as “those segments of a historic trail which would afford a high-quality recreation experience.” Diversity and frequency of change in the landscape, natural features, and historic elements all contribute to motivating movement through a given trail segment, making for a high-quality recreation experience. This criterion addresses aspects of a high-quality recreation experience in two parts; Part A addresses landscape and natural features, and Part B addresses historic elements. Historic elements may include but are not limited to archaeological artifacts and features (e.g., wagon parts, swales, horse shoes), interpretive features (e.g., wayside exhibits, trail markers), and landmarks and locations of events. Both parts have five scoring options. One score is selected for each part, then the two scores are averaged for the final score for this criterion.

Criterion 2 Question—Part A: What is the diversity of and frequency of change in landscape and natural features?

1. Low diversity and low frequency of changing landscape and natural features
2. Moderate diversity or moderate frequency of changing landscape and natural features
3. Moderate diversity and moderate frequency of changing landscape and natural features

4. High diversity or high frequency of changing landscape and natural features
5. High diversity and high frequency of changing landscape and natural features

Criterion 2 Question—Part B: What is the diversity of and frequency of historic elements?

1. Low diversity and low frequency of historic elements
2. Moderate diversity or moderate frequency of historic elements
3. Moderate diversity and moderate frequency of historic elements
4. High diversity or high frequency of historic elements
5. High diversity and high frequency of historic elements

Criterion 3: Opportunity for Vicarious Experiences

While every site or segment could theoretically have endless opportunities for a vicarious experience, this criterion seeks to quantify the variety and current availability of those opportunities. Types of opportunities should be distinctly different from one another. For example, ten books constitute one type of opportunity, but a book, an on-site interpretive panel, a website, and a walking tour constitute four types of opportunities. This criterion has five scoring options, of which one is selected.

Criterion 3 Question: How many types of opportunities for trail-related vicarious experiences are currently available for the segment, and how easily are they accessed by the public?

1. No opportunity for vicarious experience
 - There are currently no opportunities to facilitate a vicarious experience.
2. Few types of opportunities but not easily/readily accessible to most
 - There are a few types of opportunities, but they are either difficult to arrange (e.g., on private land) or are difficult to find (e.g., journal articles in obscure sources, sources not available to the general public, etc.).
3. Few types of opportunities easily/readily accessible to most
4. Many types of opportunities but some are not easily/readily accessible to most
5. Many types of opportunities easily/readily accessible to most

Criterion 4: Visual Similarity to Historic Landscape

This criterion quantifies how similar the visual setting of the segment is today to the visual setting during the trail's period of significance. Visual similarity to the historic landscape can be a key component in facilitating a vicarious experience, interpreting the history of the trail, and contributing to a high-quality recreational experience.

It is important to note that it is the similarity of the setting that is being evaluated, not whether the setting is identical in every way. The landscape is always changing, but not all changes detract from the historical setting. For example, a farmhouse built last week has the potential to evoke a farmhouse that was present during the trail's period of significance. The degree of similarity is also being evaluated; this is not a presence/absence criterion. The baseline for comparison in this criterion is a high-level summary of the landscape, not a comparison to specific details one might find in a trail diary.

It is helpful to think in terms of percentages or dominance for this criteria. For example, a barbed wire fence may extend from one end of the viewshed to the other, but it may not necessarily take up a large percentage or otherwise dominate viewers' attention.

To provide a more accurate evaluation of visual similarity, this criterion is broken into two parts. Both Part A and Part B use the same five scoring options listed below. For every half-mile along the segment, one scoring option is selected for Part A and one for Part B. To obtain a single score for Part A, all selected scoring options for Part A are averaged. To obtain a single score for Part B, all selected scoring options for Part B are averaged. The two scores for Part A and Part B are then averaged to become the final, single score for this criterion.

Criterion 4 Question—Part A: How visually similar is the segment's specific location today to its appearance during the trail's period of significance?

The nominating party is responsible for designating and defining what constitutes the "specific location."

Criterion 4 Question—Part B: How visually similar is the site's entire viewshed today to its appearance during the trail's period of significance?

Viewshed is defined here as everything that can be seen in 360° from a given point on the trail.

1. No similarities to the period of significance
 - Nothing can be seen that is similar to the period of significance. This score likely applies only to very urban, heavily industrialized, and/or heavily developed settings.
2. A few visual elements are appropriate to the period of significance
 - The casual observer can identify a few visual elements appropriate to the period of significance, but the view is otherwise overwhelmed by elements that are not appropriate.
3. Roughly half of the visual elements are appropriate to the period of significance
 - There is a good mix of elements similar to the period of significance and dissimilar to the period of significance, with neither category being visually dominant.
4. Most visual elements are appropriate to the period of significance
 - There may be a few elements that are not appropriate to the period of significance, but they are minor and not overly distracting.
5. Visual elements are virtually indistinguishable from the period of significance
 - The casual observer would not be able to tell the difference between setting during the period of significance and setting today.

Criterion 5: Inappropriate Nonvisual Intrusions

What visitors hear, smell, and feel can affect the quality of their experience. This criterion seeks to round out the quantification of how closely the setting reflects that of the period of significance. Please note that missing nonvisual elements from the period of significance do not lower the score. Temporary intrusions (e.g., construction) are not included.

To provide a more accurate evaluation, this criterion is broken into two parts, each with five separate scoring options. For every half-mile along the segment, one option is selected for Part A and one is selected Part B. Then, a single Part A score is obtained by averaging all of the selected scores for Part A. A single score for Part B is obtained by averaging all of the selected scores for Part B. Lastly, the single Part A score and the single Part B score are averaged to yield the final, single score for this criterion.

Criterion 5 Question—Part A: How often are nonvisual intrusions (such as sounds and smells) inappropriate to the period of significance experienced along the segment?

1. Continuous nonvisual intrusions
2. Frequent nonvisual intrusions
3. Periodic nonvisual intrusions
4. Rarely occurring nonvisual intrusions
5. No nonvisual intrusions

Criterion 5 Question—Part B: How intense are the nonvisual intrusions experienced along the segment?

1. Significantly distracting
2. Distracting
3. Somewhat distracting
4. Not distracting
5. Not present

NOMINATION PACKAGE

Supporting documentation for each evaluation criterion is required. Incomplete or inadequate supporting documentation may result in a lower score or the return of the nomination without review. While the nominating party is urged to be thorough in their submission, they are also encouraged to present information that is primarily directly relevant to each criterion. The nominating party is encouraged to reach out to the National Park Service before official submission to ensure the package is complete and the information is clear. Nomination packages should be submitted digitally when possible and assembled as follows.

1. Cover sheet
2. Matrix summary
3. Maps
 - a. Overview of the site/segment's location, typically 1:24,000 scale
 - b. Site/segment boundary
 - i. This is the boundary that must be used when addressing sites criteria 1, 2, 4a, 5, and 6 and segments criteria 1, 2, 4a, and 5.
 - c. Site/segment viewshed boundary (approximate)
 - i. This is the boundary that must be used when addressing criterion 4b.
4. Supporting documentation
 - a. Documentation for scoring

- i. Provide documentation that supports each criterion's selected score.
 - ii. Each criterion should have a separate section in the nomination package that contains its documentation. For two-part criteria, documentation for the parts may be arranged separately or jointly.
 - b. Cited sources
 - i. Sources should be clearly sited.
 - ii. If sources are not readily available, include a digital copy of the source material.
 - iii. Oral histories are acceptable sources; provide a transcript. If a transcript is not available, provide the citation for the audio/video or a copy of your personal notes.
 - c. Photographs
 - i. Photographic evidence is required for sites criteria 4a, 4b, and 6 and for segments criteria 4a and 4b.
- 5. Bibliography
- 6. Landmark nominations
 - a. Include GPS coordinates for the analysis points used in criteria 3 and 4 for both sites and segments.

APPENDIX F: HIGH POTENTIAL HISTORIC SITES ON THE TRAIL

Note: Photos of the high potential historic sites are meant to convey the setting of the site. The National Park Service opted to use photos that protect resource location information when required.

SITES (EAST TO WEST)

North alignment (Tipton to Fort Smith)

- Tipton Train Depot
- Munhollen's Station
- Warsaw Station (Nicholas Tavern)
- Ray House
- Ashmore's Station
- John Smith's Station (Smith's Tavern)
- Crouch's Station
- Harbin's Station
- Elkhorn Tavern
- Fitzgerald's Station
- Parks' Station

South alignment (Madison to Fort Smith)

- Madison Terminus
- Plummer's Station
- Potts' Inn Station

Walker's Station

Trahern's Station

Edwards Store

Holloway's Station

Riddle's Station

Mountain Station

Pusley Station

Waddell's Station

Atoka Museum and Civil War Cemetery

Boggy Depot Station

Nail's Station

Fisher's Station

Colbert's Ferry Landing

Colbert's Ferry Station

Fort Belknap Station

Clear Fork Station

Smith's Station

Fort Phantom Hill Station

Fort Chadbourne Station

Horsehead Crossing

North alignment (Horsehead Crossing to Franklin)

- The Pinery Station
- Cornudas Station
- Alamo Spring Station
- Hueco Tanks Site #17

South alignment (Horsehead Crossing to Franklin)

- J.D. Holiday Sutler Store
- Fort Davis (first fort)
- Barrell Spring Station
- San Elizario Station

Mesilla Depot/Administrative Offices/Corrals

Mesilla Station (La Posta)

Rough and Ready Station

Goodsight Station

Cooke's Spring Station

Stein's Peak Station

San Simon Station

Apache Pass Station

Dragoon Springs Station

Desert Station

Mohawk/Peterman's Ranch Station
Colorado River Crossing
Palm Springs Station
Vallecito Station
San Felipe Station
Warner Ranch Station
Oak Grove Station
Campo de Cahuenga Station
San Fernando Mission Station
Beale's Cut
Francisquito Canyon
Fort Tejon
Whitmore's Ferry
Firebaugh's Ferry
Pacheco Pass Station
San Francisco Station/Portsmouth Square
San Francisco Post Office

TIPTON TRAIN DEPOT

Description: When the Overland Mail Company began operations in 1858, Tipton was the western terminus of the Pacific Railroad. It was Tipton Train Depot where mail and passengers were transferred from train to stagecoach, beginning the long journey west to California. While the Overland Mail Company station and offices are no longer present in Tipton, a portion of the original railroad platform and possibly some of the original track remain. The site is commemorated by a historical marker installed in 1955. The viewshed consists primarily of structures built after the national historic trail's period of significance.

Location: Moniteau County, MO

Sources: Conkling and Conkling (1947) v. 1, p. 161–162; Missouri State Fair Foundation (2026)

Score: 24

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—3
 - Site—4
 - Setting—2
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing on-site visual setting. Maintain current integrity of historic railbed.



Figure 4. Tipton Train Depot historic depot area with railroad platform/track remnants

MUNHOLLEN'S STATION

Description: Munhollen's Station was owned and operated by James Munhollen, who acquired the property from James Scoggins in the early 1850s. The relay station, located southeast of the mail road near Florence in today's Morgan County, was a single-story log house with chimneys of red brick and stone. A barn stood on the opposite side of the road. Both structures are now gone, but a largely intact viewshed remains, and the site is commemorated by a Butterfield centennial marker.

Location: Morgan County, MO

Source: Conkling and Conkling (1947) v. 1, p. 168

Score: 21.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—4
 - Stories/themes—3
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—2
 - Site—1
 - Setting—3
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—3.5
 - Frequency—3
 - Intensity—4
- Visible historic remnants—3

Protection plan: Maintain alignment and current nature of existing road, which is also the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail.



Figure 5. Munhollen's Station in 2024, showing a rural roadside setting near the former station location, with a Butterfield centennial marker

WARSAW STATION (NICHOLAS TAVERN)

Description: First settled around 1820, Warsaw grew into a small trading hub on the banks of the Osage River. Located on the Old Wire Road (also known as the Boonville-Springfield Road), the settlement was home to one of the region’s largest blacksmith shops in the 1850s and 1860s. For these and other reasons, the Overland Mail Company located a relay station in Warsaw at the Nicholas Tavern, which also served as a hotel. This historic building still stands and is today incorporated into a local business—Reser’s Funeral Home.

Location: Benton County, MO

Sources: Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 1, p. 170–173; Alexander and Legends of America (2025)

Score: 23.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail’s historic significance—4.5
 - Stories/themes—4
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—3
 - Site—4
 - Setting—2
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2
 - Frequency—2
 - Intensity—2
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain current integrity of station remnants.



Figure 6. Nicholas Tavern, showing the historic tavern building, now incorporated into a business

RAY HOUSE

Description: John Ray, a Tennessee native, began constructing the Ray House in 1851. As postmaster of Wilson Township, Ray operated the house as the local post office starting in 1858. Although it was not an official Overland Mail Company relay station, its location along the stage route and its status as a US Post Office made it a “flag stop,” where passing stagecoaches occasionally exchanged mail and passengers. In 1861, the Ray family witnessed the Battle of Wilson’s Creek. Today the site is preserved within Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield.

Location: Greene County, MO

Sources: Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 1, p. 184; National Park Service (n.d.c)

Score: 25

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—3
- Opportunity to interpret the trail’s historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.5
 - Site—5
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2.5
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—4
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Maintain current integrity of trail trace and historic structure. Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities. Maintain existing nonvisual setting.



Figure 7. Ray House, showing the historic farmhouse associated with a Butterfield flag stop

ASHMORE'S STATION

Description: Located in Polk Township, Christian County, Ashmore's was a relay station operated by John Ashmore, originally from Tennessee, and his wife Lydia. While the original station burned down, likely during the Civil War, remnants of the foundation and historic trail trace can still be observed near the site (though the remnants are on private property). The site is in a predominately rural area and the historic viewshed remains partially intact. Ashmore's is commemorated by two historical markers on an adjacent public road, one of which was installed on the Butterfield centennial in 1958.

Location: Christian County, MO

Source: Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 1, p. 184–185

Score: 21.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—4
 - Stories/themes—3
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—2
 - Site—1
 - Setting—3
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—1.5
 - Frequency—2
 - Intensity—1
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain or improve existing interpretation. Maintain current integrity of the trail trace. Shield footprint of station ruins from ground-disturbing activities.



Figure 8. Ashmore Station in 2025, showing two Butterfield stage station markers

JOHN SMITH'S STATION (SMITH'S TAVERN)

Description: Smith's Tavern, or John Smith's Station, (not to be confused with the James H.M. Smith Station, also in Missouri) was an Overland Mail Company relay station. Smith's was well known for its proximity to a hillside spring, known as Wise Spring, that produced abundant water year-round. Wise Spring and remains of the station foundation are still visible at the site today. The setting remains reasonably intact and is commemorated by two historical markers, one of which was installed on the Butterfield centennial in 1958.

Location: Barry County, MO

Source: Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 1, p. 186

Score: 24.5

- Confidence of location—4
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—4.5
 - Stories/themes—4
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—3
 - Site—3
 - Setting—3
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—4
 - Frequency—4
 - Intensity—4
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Maintain current integrity of the well remnant. Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities.



Figure 9. Smith's Tavern in 2025, showing a wooded hillside spring area with stone foundation remnants and a nearby historical marker

CROUCH'S STATION

Description: Relatively little is known of Crouch's Station. This Overland Mail Company relay station was operated by John D. Crouch, a Virginia-born merchant, and his wife Martha. Crouch acquired the property in March 1857. Today, the station site and possible historic remnants are on private land adjacent to a public road. The setting remains largely intact, and the site is commemorated by a historical marker.

Location: Barry County, MO

Source: Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 1, p. 187–188

Score: 21.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—4
 - Stories/themes—3
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—2.5
 - Site—1
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—3
 - Frequency—4
 - Intensity—2
- Visible historic remnants—3

Protection plan: Maintain alignment and current nature of existing road, which is also the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail.



Figure 10. Crouch's Station in 2025, showing a roadside view near the former station site with a historical marker and open landscape

HARBIN'S STATION

Description: For California-bound stages, Harbin's was the last relay station in Missouri. It was a modest affair, consisting of a log house and corral located on the west side of the mail road. The station was named for its operator, John G. Harbin, who migrated from Tennessee in 1845 and purchased the property in 1857. While the original log structure burned in the 1940s, the historic road and a series of foundation stones still mark its location. Located on a private agricultural property, the setting maintains some of its 19th-century appearance.

Location: Barry County, MO

Sources: Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 1, p. 189–191; Lemke and Worley (1957)

Score: 21

- Confidence of location—4
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—2.5
 - Stories/themes—4
 - Current means—1
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—3
 - Site—3
 - Setting—3
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—1.5
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—2
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing on-site visual setting. Maintain current integrity of the trail trace. Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities.



Figure 11. Harbin's Station, showing a historic road trace near the former station site

ELKHORN TAVERN

Description: Built around 1833 by William Reddick and his son-in-law Samuel Burks, Elkhorn Tavern predates Overland Mail Company service by 25 years. Shortly before overland mail began in 1858, Burks sold the property to Jess and Polly Cox, who continued operating it as a tavern. Though never an official Overland Mail Company station, it functioned as a well-known “flag stop” where stages exchanged passengers and mail. During the Civil War Battle of Pea Ridge, the tavern served as a hospital, headquarters, and telegraph station. Rebuilt after wartime destruction, it is now preserved there.

Location: Benton County, AR

Sources: Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 1, p. 195–197; Lemke and Worley (1957); National Park Service (2025c)

Score: 25.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—3
- Opportunity to interpret the trail’s historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.5
 - Site—5
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—3
 - Frequency—2
 - Intensity—4
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities. Maintain existing nonvisual setting. Maintain or improve current integrity of historic structure remnants.



Figure 12. Elkhorn Tavern, showing the restored historic tavern building at the battlefield site, with adjacent historic road trace

FITZGERALD'S STATION

Description: Located on the former State Road connecting Fayetteville to southern Missouri, Fitzgerald's was a popular tavern, landmark, and Overland Mail Company relay station. John and Mary Fitzgerald settled in Arkansas in the early 1830s and established an inn and tavern on their property. The site became a key waypoint on the State Road—also known as the Military Road, Old Missouri Road, and Old Wire Road—and witnessed thousands of Cherokees traveling the Northern Route of the Trail of Tears. Today, the privately owned site retains a historic barn and structure, and the surrounding viewshed remains partially intact.

Location: Washington County, AR

Sources: Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 1, p. 201; National Park Service (2026)

Score: 24

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—3.5
 - Site—4
 - Setting—3
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—1.5
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—2
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities. Maintain or improve current integrity of barn.



Figure 13. Fitzgerald's Station in 2025, showing the old stone barn associated with the former station stop

PARKS' STATION

Description: Located on the west side of the historic mail road, Parks' Station was operated by local landowners John (1808–1892) and Mary Parks. Here southbound Overland Mail Company stages would generally switch from horses to mules for the long climb up Boston Mountain that lay ahead, widely considered one of the most difficult stretches of the trail. Today, the station site is on private property, and no standing structure remains. Historic remnants, however, are visible from an adjacent public road, and the rural setting maintains a close resemblance to the period of significance.

Location: Washington County, AR

Sources: Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 1, p. 207–208; Worley (n.d.)

Score: 21.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—3
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—1
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4
 - Site—4
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2.5
 - Frequency—3
 - Intensity—2
- Visible historic remnants—3

Protection plan: Maintain existing on-site visual setting. Maintain current integrity of the root cellar remnant. Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities.



Figure 14. Parks' Station, showing a rural wooded landscape at the station with historic root cellar visible

MADISON TERMINUS

Description: John Butterfield and the Overland Mail Company initially planned to use a Memphis-to-Little Rock railroad that was under construction when service began. Because the tracks did not extend beyond the St. Francis River until the 1870s, Madison became the point where mail and passengers transferred from rail to stagecoach, marking the start of stage service on the Memphis to Fort Smith route from 1858 to 1861. As with many southern-branch stations, documentation of operations is limited. The railroad line and St. Francis River Bridge remain, and the surrounding rural landscape closely resembles its historic appearance.

Location: St. Francis County, AR

Source: Lemke and Worley (1957), p. 11

Score: 23.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—2.5
 - Stories/themes—4
 - Current means—1
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4
 - Site—5
 - Setting—3
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—3
 - Frequency—3
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting on-site. Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities.



Figure 15. Madison Terminus, showing an open agricultural field at the terminus with a gravel track in the foreground and a steel railroad bridge in the background marking the transition from rail to stage travel

PLUMMER'S STATION

Description: Samuel Plummer of Boston purchased a small cabin and land in present-day Conway County, Arkansas, in 1837. During the 1830s, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Cherokee people traveling during forced removal may have camped there and obtained supplies. Over the following decades, Plummer expanded the cabin with additional rooms and a leather workshop, transforming it into a stagecoach relay station. Originally a stop on the Little Rock-to-Fort Smith route, the station also served the Memphis-to-Fort Smith branch of the Overland Mail Company route beginning in 1858. Despite fire damage, much of the structure remains, including portions of the original 1830s log cabin, within a largely intact rural setting.

Location: Conway County, AR

Sources: National Register of Historic Places #75000378; Central Arkansas Library System (2025b); Preserve Arkansas (n.d.)

Score: 22

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—3
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—1
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—3.5
 - Site—4
 - Setting—3
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—1.5
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—2
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain or improve existing on-site visual setting. Maintain current integrity of station remnants. Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities.



Figure 16. Plummer's Station, showing the historic wooden building, a surviving structure associated with the former station stop

POTTS' INN STATION

Description: Kirkbride Potts moved to Arkansas from Pennsylvania in 1828 and, using the labor of two enslaved families, oversaw construction of a two-story log home completed in 1858. Potts served as a local postmaster, and the house functioned as an inn and relay station on the Butterfield Overland Mail route. Built from local timber and brick fired on-site, the structure remains a rare and well-preserved example of antebellum architecture in Arkansas. Now the Pope County Museum, it displays original and period furnishings, including a mail desk used during Butterfield operations.

Location: Pope County, AR

Source: National Register of Historic Places #70000123

Score: 21

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—3.5
 - Site—5
 - Setting—2
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing on-site visual setting. Maintain current integrity of historic structures.



Figure 17. Potts' Inn in 2025, showing the two-story historic building (*photo courtesy of Kara Bowers of the Potts Inn Museum*)

WALKER'S STATION

Description: Walker's was a relay station and meal stop in the town of Skullyville, Oklahoma, the former Choctaw Agency headquarters and home of Choctaw Governor Tandy Walker. Today the site is marked by a plaque placed by the Oklahoma Historical Society, commemorating the Butterfield centennial in 1958. While the original structure stood until 1947 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, today only an active spring, historic well, and remnants of the historic road remain. The area is mostly forested and offers a partially intact viewshed.

Location: Le Flore County, OK

Sources: National Register of Historic Places #72001074; Dragoo (2024) p. 73–79; Evans and Wright (1948), p. 90; Fabvssa (2025)

Score: 24.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—2.5
 - Site—3
 - Setting—2
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—3
 - Frequency—3
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain current integrity of the trail trace, spring, and station well. Improve or maintain existing visual on-site setting.



Figure 18. Walker's Station, showing visitors walking across the former station site where no standing structures remain

TRAHERN'S STATION

Description: Judge James N. Trahern was born in the Choctaw Nation probably in 1815. Trahern's home, which he shared with his wife, Sarah, later served as an Overland Mail Company relay station. Located a short distance south of the Musholatubbee Council House (today a spring marks the location of the former council house), Trahern's Station was likely a traditional log structure accompanied by a barn and corral. Today, no structures remain, but the site of the station is marked by a large tree and evidence of several tombstones, including those of James and Sarah Trahern, which have been moved for safekeeping. The site and viewshed remain largely intact.

Location: Le Flore County, OK

Sources: National Register of Historic Places #72001073; Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 1, p. 239–240; Dragoo (2024), p. 73–80

Score: 22.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—3.5
 - Site—4
 - Setting—3
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—3
 - Frequency—3
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—2

Protection plan: High potential status linked to historic significance of location only.



Figure 19. Trahern marker in 2025, showing the largely intact historic landscape where Trahern's Station once stood

EDWARDS STORE

Description: Edwards Store was built by English-born Thomas Edwards, who settled on Choctaw Nation land in the 1840s and married a Choctaw woman named Nancy Hardaway. Today the store is the only standing structure in Oklahoma that was directly involved in Overland Mail Company operations. While not an official relay station, Edwards Store was a regular stop where westbound drivers and passengers could purchase a meal after departing Fort Smith. Today the structure is actively being restored but is open to visitors. The site and viewshed remain largely as they were during the trail's period of significance.

Location: Latimer County, OK

Sources: Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 1, p. 237; Dragoo (2024), p. 90–96; The Edwards Store, Inc. (n.d.)

Score: 25

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—4
 - Stories/themes—3
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.5
 - Site—5
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2.5
 - Frequency—2
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Maintain current integrity of the historic structure. Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities.



Figure 20. Edwards' Store in 2026, showing the historic log store building with a restored roof and porch

HOLLOWAY'S STATION

Description: Holloway's Station was a Butterfield relay station located at the Narrows, a mountain pass along Brazil Creek. It was also the site of a turnpike and tollgate authorized by the Choctaw Council in conjunction with the initiation of Overland Mail Company operations. The station house structure is no longer evident, although there are remnants of a historic cemetery and a short trace of the stagecoach road. Little is known about the origins or fate of station keeper William Holloway, one of the few Indian Territory station keepers who was evidently not a Choctaw or Chickasaw citizen but who may have been in the employ of the Overland Mail Company.

Location: Latimer County, OK

Sources: National Register of Historic Places #72001070; Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 1, p. 247-249; Dragoo (2024), p. 112-114

Score: 20.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—4
 - Stories/themes—3
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.5
 - Site—5
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—1

Protection plan: Maintain existing on-site visual setting. Shield footprint of site and graveyard from ground-disturbing activities.



Figure 21. Holloway's Station, showing the plaque placed by the Oklahoma Historical Society commemorating the Butterfield centennial in 1958

RIDDLE'S STATION

Description: John Riddle operated both a relay station and a toll bridge on the Fourche Maline, a tributary of the Poteau River. In a 1937 interview, Riddle's grandson claimed his grandfather's toll bridge was "the first bridge that was ever built on the Butterfield Stage Line." Born in Mississippi in 1809, John Riddle was Irish and Choctaw and a member of the Choctaw Council. While the station no longer stands, the site is commemorated by a 1958 Butterfield centennial marker. Trace of the original trail is visible on-site, and the Riddle family cemetery can be observed nearby.

Location: Latimer County, OK

Sources: National Register of Historic Places #72001072; Dragoo (2024), p. 109–110

Score: 21.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—2
 - Site—2
 - Setting—2
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2.5
 - Frequency—2
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—3

Protection plan: Maintain current integrity of possible station remnants. Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities.



Figure 22. Riddle's Station in 2025, showing a gravel road approaching the former station stop and farm buildings in the distance marking the historic station area

MOUNTAIN STATION

Description: While never an official Overland Mail Company relay station, Mountain Station was an important watering stop for horses and passengers after the hard climb up Blue Mountain. The site was likely the location (or near it) of a famed accident involving photography and motion picture pioneer Edward Muybridge, who was thrown from a Butterfield coach in an incident that led to the death of fellow passenger Andrew Mackey. Today the historic site shares the area with the Mountain Station Cemetery, where a marker for Andrew Mackey was placed by his family some years after his death. The site is on mixed timber and grassland, and the viewshed, apart from the modern highway, remains largely intact.

Location: Latimer County, OK

Sources: Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 1, p. 254–255; Dragoo (2024), p. 112–121

Score: 22.5

- Confidence of location—4
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail’s historic significance—4.5
 - Stories/themes—4
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4
 - Site—5
 - Setting—3
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—3
 - Frequency—4
 - Intensity—2
- Visible historic remnants—3

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities. Maintain existing nonvisual settings.



Figure 23. Mountain Station in 2025, showing a small stone marker near a wire fence at the former station location

PUSLEY STATION

Description: Pusley was an official Overland Mail Company relay station, owned and operated by Silas Pusley and located west of Blue Mountain in today's Oklahoma. Captain George Pusley was a successful farmer who lived the majority of his life on the Natchez Trace of Mississippi and was directly involved in the US government's removal of Native peoples from the Southeast. Captain Pusley had three sons, the oldest of which (Calvin) was Silas Pusley's father. Today, the Pusley Station structure is no longer standing, but the station well and Pusley family graveyard remain on the site. Located in a rural area, the station site and surrounding viewshed remain much as they were during the trail's period of significance. In the National Register of Historic Places nomination, Oklahoma historian Kent Ruth described Pusley Station as among the best places "to get the 'feel' of the [historic] route."

Location: Latimer County, OK

Sources: National Register of Historic Places #72001068; Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 1, p. 255–257; Drago (2024), p. 121–125

Score: 25.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—4
 - Stories/themes—3
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4
 - Site—5
 - Setting—3
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—3.5
 - Frequency—4
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing on-site visual setting. Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities. Maintain integrity of historic remnants (if any).



Figure 24. Pusley Station, showing the largely intact historic setting where the station once stood

WADDELL'S STATION

Description: Comparatively little is known of Waddell's, an official Overland Mail Company relay station in today's Atoka County. The station may have been owned and kept by William B. Waddell of Pony Express Fame or perhaps by a cousin, Walter Waddell. In the decades after Overland Mail Company operations had shifted north (then ended all together), the site became known as "the old Beale place" for its subsequent owners. The Beale house, which remained standing well into the 20th century, was a log house in a style typical of the region before the Civil War. Today this structure no longer stands, but a historic graveyard and well remain. The site and viewshed maintain a resemblance to the trail's period of significance and are commemorated by a historical marker.

Location: Atoka County, OK

Sources: National Register of Historic Places #72001054; Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 1, p. 261–262

Score: 23.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—2.5
 - Site—2
 - Setting—3
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain current integrity of the well remnant. Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities.



Figure 25. Waddell's Station, showing the stone building at the former station stop

ATOKA MUSEUM AND CIVIL WAR CEMETERY

Description: The burial ground at the Atoka Museum and Civil War Cemetery was first established by travelers on the Butterfield trail at a spring that served as an important watering and camping spot just north of the Middle Boggy River (now known as Muddy Boggy). During the Civil War, Confederate forces kept an outpost at the spring to guard the route to Boggy Depot, which lay some 15 miles to the southwest. The on-site “Confederate Cemetery” is the final resting place of soldiers of the 19th Arkansas Infantry, who perished from a measles epidemic in the winter of 1862. Additional unmarked graves likely belong to trail travelers from the Butterfield period and before. A granite marker placed on the trail trace commemorates the national historic trail.

Location: Atoka County, OK

Sources: National Register of Historic Places #72001051; Dragoo (2024), p. 156–157; Oklahoma Historical Society (n.d.)

Score: 22.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail’s historic significance—4
 - Stories/themes—3
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—3
 - Site—4
 - Setting—2
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—1.5
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—2
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing on-site visual setting. Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities.

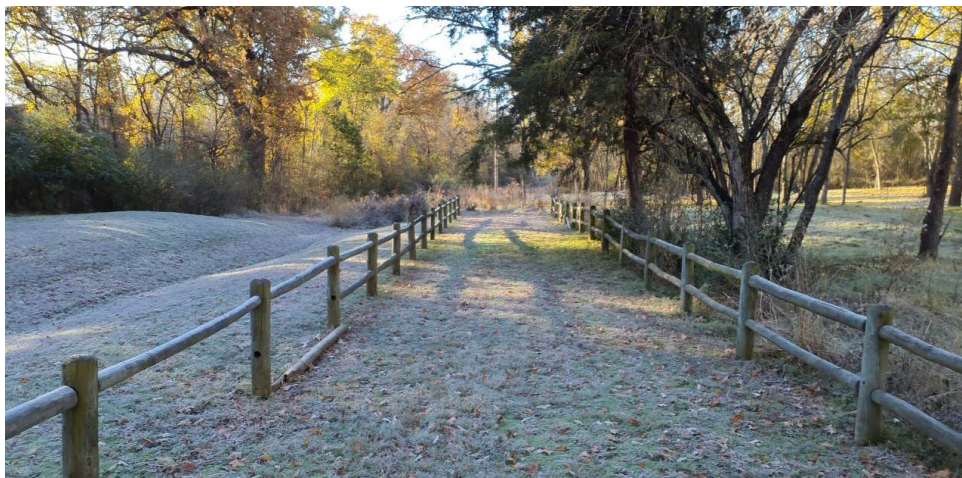


Figure 26. Middle Boggy Battle Site and Confederate Cemetery Trail Trace in 2025, showing a fenced grassy path through a wooded area, marking the preserved historic landscape of the Civil War engagement

BOGGY DEPOT STATION

Description: The town of Boggy Depot was founded by Choctaws and Chickasaws in 1837, shortly after the forced removal of these Tribes to Indian Territory (today's Oklahoma) in the early 1830s. By the middle of the 19th century, Boggy Depot was a thriving commercial center, home to several trading centers, a sawmill and gristmill, a brick church, and a substantial number of homes. From 1858 to 1861, it was also the site of a relay and resupply station for the Overland Mail Company. While no historic structures remain in this flood-prone area, trail trace and stone foundations are still visible. The location and viewshed still resemble their appearance during the period of significance.

Location: Atoka County, OK

Sources: National Register of Historic Places #72001050; Dragoo (2024), p. 160–166; The Chickasaw Nation (2026)

Score: 26

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4
 - Site—4
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—3
 - Frequency—3
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities. Maintain current integrity of trail trace and cistern.



Figure 27. Boggy Depot in 2025, showing an open pasture with a wire fence, marking the location of the former depot site

NAIL'S STATION

Description: Born in Mississippi, Jonathan Nail came from a prominent Choctaw family. He relocated to Indian Territory in the 1840s and built a large log house near the Blue River. Beginning in 1858, the house was used as an Overland Mail Company relay station. Nail likely also maintained a bridge over the Blue River (a bridge was under construction when Waterman Ormsby rode the first westbound Overland Mail Company stage in 1858). While the station house no longer stands and the bridge has long since washed away, foundation stones and a historic well are still visible at the site. The former station site remains isolated from development and offers a remarkably pristine viewshed. It is memorialized by an Oklahoma Historical Society Butterfield centennial marker.

Location: Bryan County, OK

Sources: National Register of Historic Places #72001059; Dragoo (2024), p. 167–174

Score: 29

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—5
 - Site—5
 - Setting—5
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—5
 - Frequency—5
 - Intensity—5
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Maintain integrity of historic structures. Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities. Maintain existing nonvisual setting.



Figure 28. Nail's Station, showing the overgrown wooded area with a small stone marker visible among brush, indicating the former location of the Butterfield relay station

FISHER'S STATION

Description: Fisher's was an Overland Mail Company relay station, located in an area later known as Carriage Point. The operator of Fisher's Station was David Osborn Fisher, a Choctaw citizen who was married to a Chickasaw woman and was also adopted into the Chickasaw Tribe. Fisher was born in 1825 in Mississippi and moved to Indian Territory with the Choctaws in 1832. Today, no structure stands on the spot, but the station well remains. Located in a rural area, the site is undeveloped and the viewshed remains mostly intact. Fisher's Station is commemorated by an Oklahoma Historical Society Butterfield Centennial Marker, placed in 1958.

Location: Bryan County, OK

Sources: National Register of Historic Places #72001058; Dragoo (2024), p. 181–183; Dragoo (2025)

Score: 25

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—4.5
 - Stories/themes—4
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—3.5
 - Site—4
 - Setting—3
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—3
 - Frequency—3
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities. Maintain existing on-site visual setting.



Figure 29. Fisher's Station in 2025, showing an open grassy field with scattered leafless trees under blue sky

COLBERT'S FERRY LANDING

Description: Benjamin Franklin Colbert, of Chickasaw heritage, owned and operated a ferry on the Red River, on the border of Indian Territory (today's Oklahoma) and Texas. He was supported by the labor of approximately 25 enslaved workers. Colbert's Ferry carried Overland Mail Company stages across the Red River. Today the site of Colbert's Ferry is marked by a road trace descending to the river. Aside from the remains of a washed-out bridge, the site and viewshed at this historic crossing of the Red River remain quite similar to the period of significance.

Location: Bryan County, OK

Sources: National Register of Historic Places #72001057; Dragoo (2024), p. 188–196

Score: 20.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—5
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—3
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—1
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.5
 - Site—5
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—1

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities.



Figure 30. Colbert's Ferry Landing, showing the riverbank with a gently sloping shoreline and water crossing

COLBERT'S FERRY STATION

Description: Benjamin Franklin Colbert, owner and operator of Colbert's Ferry on the Red River, built a fine log home on high ground east of the river that operated as an Overland Mail Company relay station. Passengers on the Butterfield stage often commented on the abundance and quality of the fare available there. While the house itself was destroyed by fire in 1898, traces of the historic well and possible foundation footings remain. The site is now part of a private ranching operation. Because the surrounding area has remained dedicated primarily to agriculture, the viewshed has remained somewhat similar in appearance to the trail's period of significance.

Location: Bryan County, OK

Sources: National Register of Historic Places #72001057; Dragoo (2024), p. 188–196; Morrison (1938), p. 314

Score: 25

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4
 - Site—4
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities.



Figure 31. Colbert's Ferry Station in 2025, a wide open pasture with grazing cattle

FORT BELKNAP STATION

Description: Fort Belknap was established by the US Army in June of 1851 on the Brazos River, as the easternmost of a string of frontier forts stretching from the Brazos River to the Rio Grande. Importantly, the US Army also built and improved a road connecting these forts. For the Overland Mail Company, this route offered both efficient passage and protection, important considerations in a borderland region where settlers and Native peoples continued to vie for power and control. During the period of significance, Fort Belknap Station provided critical support for Overland Mail Company operations, including military escorts at particularly contentious moments. Located half a mile west of Butterfield's Belknap Station site, the fort today is owned and maintained by Young County. Some of the historic buildings on-site are reconstructions; others were built after the trail's period of significance. The historic well and powder magazine, however, date from the early 1850s and were both present during Overland Mail Company's operations. Limited agricultural development in the area makes for a viewshed that is mostly intact.

Location: Young County, TX

Sources: National Register of Historic Places #40970971; Ely (2016); Neighbours (1995)

Score: 25.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—3
 - Site—3
 - Setting—3
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—3.5
 - Frequency—4
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing on-site visual setting. Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities. Maintain integrity of historic remnants.



Figure 32. Fort Belknap, showing the stone magazine, a surviving military structure associated with protection of the Butterfield Overland Mail Company route

CLEAR FORK STATION

Description: Clear Fork was a Butterfield relay station, aptly named for its location at a crossing of the Clear Fork Brazos River. Alternatively known as “Jackson’s,” the station was managed by Tryal Evan Jackson, assisted by a man named John G. Irwin. The station consisted of a two-room log house with a detached kitchen, a smaller “picket” house, corrals, and a well. Today, the site is on private property, and while none of the original structures still stand, the station’s stone well remains. Limited development in the region makes for a viewshed that resembles its appearance during the trail’s period of significance.

Location: Throckmorton County, TX

Source: Ely (2016), p. 129–131

Score: 23.5

- Confidence of location—4
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail’s historic significance—3
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—1
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—3.5
 - Site—3
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—4
 - Frequency—4
 - Intensity—4
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Maintain current integrity of the well remnant. Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities.



Figure 33. Clear Fork Station, a wide dirt road descending through open landscape with scattered trees and distant hills, following the historic travel corridor

SMITH'S STATION

Description: Adjacent to a small water course, Smith's was an Overland Mail Company relay station in West Texas near the modern town of Abilene. The station, in this region of little timber, was built from stone. Today, the station no longer stands but a local landowner has reconstructed the structure's chimney from the many stones remaining in the area. The nearby Chimney Creek was likely named for the reconstruction. A stone foundation is also clearly visible and was likely rebuilt. Located in a very remote area, the site and viewshed closely resemble their appearance during the trail's period of significance.

Location: Shackelford County, TX

Source: Ely (2016), p. 138

Score: 28

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—4.5
 - Stories/themes—4
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.5
 - Site—5
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—5
 - Frequency—5
 - Intensity—5
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Maintain integrity of historic structures. Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities. Maintain existing nonvisual setting.



Figure 34. Smith's Station in 2025, showing a stone chimney and a reconstructed low stone wall at the former Butterfield Overland Mail Company stage station site

FORT PHANTOM HILL STATION

Description: Fort Phantom Hill was one of several frontier forts established by the US Army in West Texas in the early 1850s. In an area of scarce timber, the fort's most prominent structures were built from stone. The fort was abandoned by the US Army in 1854 and badly damaged by fire shortly thereafter. In 1858, employees of the Overland Mail Company rebuilt and repurposed the remaining structures as a relay station. The Fort Phantom Hill Station (which structure exactly is unknown) took advantage of the existing stable and well and used the fort's magazine as a storehouse. The station was managed by a couple, the Burlingtons. Today, Historic Fort Phantom Hill is managed by the Fort Phantom Foundation and is open to the public. Located in a remote part of West Texas, the site and surrounding area closely resemble their appearance during the trail's period of significance.

Location: Jones County, TX

Sources: Anderson (2020); Ely (2016), p. 139–142; Fort Phantom Foundation (2026)

Score: 22

- Confidence of location—4
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4
 - Site—4
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—3

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities. Maintain or improve current integrity of station remnants.



Figure 35. Fort Phantom Hill, showing one of the three buildings remaining at the fort associated with the Butterfield Overland Mail Company route in Abeline, Texas (*photo by Carol M. Highsmith [n.d.], retrieved from the Library of Congress*)

FORT CHADBOURNE STATION

Description: Fort Chadbourne Station was one of several frontier forts established by the US Army in West Texas in the early 1850s. Named for Lieutenant Theodore Lincoln Chadbourne, killed in the Mexican–American War of 1846–1848, the fort was a timetable station (where stage schedules were regulated and equipment maintained) and divisional headquarters of the Overland Mail Company beginning in August 1858. Today the stage station, constructed of sandstone and consisting of five rooms and a corral, has been painstakingly rebuilt and restored. The fort and restored structure are managed by the Fort Chadbourne Foundation and are open to the public. Located in a largely rural area amid a restored and rebuilt historic fort, the site and viewshed closely resemble their appearance during the trail’s period of significance.

Location: Coke County, TX

Sources: National Register of Historic Places #73001962; Davis (1995); Ely (2016), p. 167–169

Score: 26.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—5
- Opportunity to interpret the trail’s historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.5
 - Site—5
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Maintain integrity of historic structures. Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities.



Figure 36. Fort Chadbourne Station in 2024, showing the stone barracks at the historic military post associated with the Butterfield Overland Mail route

HORSEHEAD CROSSING

Description: Horsehead Crossing was an important ford on the Pecos River for Comanches traveling south from the Llano Estacado into Mexico. Beginning in 1858, it was also the site of an Overland Mail Company relay station (and from 1866 onward an important crossing on the Goodnight-Loving Cattle Trail). The site was named for the large numbers of horse skulls that littered the banks of the Pecos River, remains of animals that perished in the crossing. Butterfield's company built its windowless adobe relay station upstream from the ford on the east bank of the river. Today nothing remains of the station structure. Located in a rural and largely undeveloped area, the site and viewshed, however, still bear resemblance to their appearance during the trail's period of significance. The site is commemorated by markers erected by the State of Texas and the Texas State Historical Survey Committee.

Location: Pecos County, TX

Sources: Ely (2016), p. 202–205; Texas Historical Commission (2026)

Score: 23.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4
 - Site—5
 - Setting—3
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2.5
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—4
- Visible historic remnants—3

Protection plan: Improve existing visual setting on-site and maintain existing visual setting in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities.



Figure 37. The Pecos River at Horsehead Crossing in 2024, showing a winding river channel bordered by low bluffs and sparse vegetation in an open, arid landscape historically used by the Overland Mail Company

THE PINERY STATION

Description: Built from limestone slabs mortared with mud and adobe and named for the surrounding pine forest (or perhaps the nearby Pine Spring), The Pinery Station was constructed by the Overland Mail Company in 1858 specifically to serve as a relay station and meal stop. The stone station building performed these functions until August of 1859, when the route through West Texas shifted south, taking advantage of more reliable water sources and greater military protection. Today the former station is in a state of partial ruin, with some of its original limestone walls still standing. The Pinery Station is currently located within Guadalupe Mountains National Park. Despite a close proximity to US Highway 62, the immediate area is undeveloped, and the site and viewshed maintain a strong resemblance to their historic appearance.

Location: Culberson County, TX

Sources: National Register of Historic Places #74000281; Ely (2016), p. 239; National Park Service (2024c)

Score: 24.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail’s historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4
 - Site—4
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—1.5
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—2
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain current integrity of the building (ideally restore to the historic period appearance). Maintain site setting to current standards or better (e.g., relative lack of modern elements).



Figure 38. The Pinery Station in 2025, showing a stone foundation and reconstructed wooden supports at the former stage station

CORNUDAS STATION

Description: One of two Overland Mail Company stations located in the Cornudas Mountains of southeastern New Mexico, Cornudas Station (named for horn-like formations on nearby mountain peaks) was used only for the first 11 months of the company’s operations, after which the route shifted south to take advantage of better water sources and military protection. Cornudas was notable for the presence of Thorne’s Well, a cavern at the base of the mountain concealing a small spring. Named for Herman Thorn, the well had been an important resource for generations of Native peoples as well as California-bound emigrants in the early 1850s. Like nearby Alamo Spring Station, Cornudas was constructed by Overland Mail Company employees specifically for use as a watering and relay station. Like other water sources on the upper Butterfield route in West Texas, however, Thorn’s could (and did) go dry at times. Today the station is no longer standing, but a stone foundation remains. Located in an extremely isolated area, the location and viewshed are nearly indistinguishable from their historic appearance.

Location: Otero County, NM

Sources: Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 1–3, p. 398–404; Ely (2016), p. 243–244

Score: 26

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail’s historic significance—3
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—1
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—5
 - Site—5
 - Setting—5
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—4
 - Frequency—4
 - Intensity—4
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Maintain current integrity of the building remnants. Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities. Maintain existing nonvisual setting.



Figure 39. Cornudas Station, showing prominent rocky outcrops of the Cornudas Mountains rising from an open desert plain with sparse shrubs, marking the landscape near the former stage station

ALAMO SPRING STATION

Description: Alamo Spring Station, also known as Cottonwood Spring Station, was one of two Butterfield relay stations in the Cornudas Mountains of southeastern New Mexico. Named for a former grove of cottonwoods, the site relied on multiple springs—possibly as many as seven—that provided a vital water source in an otherwise arid landscape. The station was constructed by the Overland Mail Company and used only during the first 11 months of operations, before the route shifted south in 1859 for more reliable water and military protection. Today, substantial portions of the stone walls remain standing within a largely intact Chihuahuan Desert setting.

Location: Otero County, NM

Sources: Ely (2016), p. 244; Hackler (1926), p. 39–46

Score: 26

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail’s historic significance—3
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—1
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—5
 - Site—5
 - Setting—5
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—4
 - Frequency—4
 - Intensity—4
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Maintain current integrity of the building remnants. Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities. Maintain existing nonvisual setting.

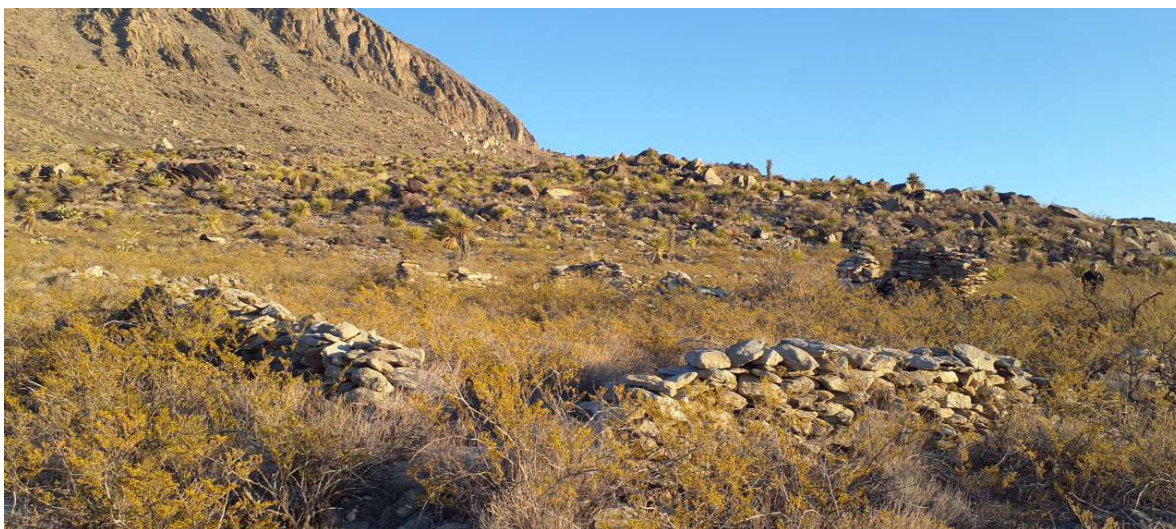


Figure 40. Alamo Spring Station in 2025, showing low stone wall ruins, marking the site of a former Butterfield Overland Mail stage station

HUECO TANKS SITE #17

Description: Hueco Tanks is a low mountain range in West Texas marked by limestone depressions that seasonally collect fresh water. This resource supported Overland Mail Company operations from late 1858 until August 1859, when Butterfield stages shifted to a more southerly route. Although no physical remains of the relay station survived, nearby “Site 17” preserves Indigenous petroglyphs, pictographs, and historic inscriptions. One inscription, bearing the name of stage driver J.A. Terry and the date 1858, is directly associated with the Butterfield route. Today, the site is protected within Hueco Tanks State Park and Historic Site, where the surrounding landscape remains largely intact.

Location: El Paso County, TX

Sources: National Register of Historic Places #71000930; Ely (2016), p. 245; Ribas-Normand (2017)

Score: 26

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail’s historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4
 - Site—4
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—3
 - Frequency—3
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing on-site visual setting. Maintain integrity of historic remnants.



Figure 41. Hueco Tanks Site, showing a close view of a rock overhang with historic inscriptions and carved names and dates etched into the darkened stone surface

J.D. HOLIDAY SUTLER STORE

Description: While nothing remains of the Overland Mail Company’s Fort Stockton Station, the nearby structure known as Camp Stockton Sutler Store or simply “Oldest House” was likely built on the post sometime in the 1850s. The Sutler Store—a civilian-run store located on an army post and catering to the needs of the soldiers and surrounding settlers—was owned and operated by John D. Holliday of Kentucky. Holiday was a station manager for the Overland Mail Company, division manager for the San Antonio-San Diego mail line, and all-around frontier entrepreneur. Holiday’s store would almost certainly have catered to Butterfield passengers (in addition to soldiers at the post) crossing this long and arid portion of the Texas frontier. Today the Sutler Store is an adobe ruin owned and preserved by the Fort Stockton Historical Society. The site is memorialized by multiple historic markers.

Location: Pecos County, TX

Sources: Ely (2016), p. 17; Preservation Texas (n.d.)

Score: 22.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—3
- Opportunity to interpret the trail’s historic significance—4.5
 - Stories/themes—4
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—2.5
 - Site—3
 - Setting—2
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2.5
 - Frequency—2
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain integrity of historic remnants. Shield site from ground-disturbing activities.



Figure 42. Ruins of the J.D. Holiday Sutler Store, showing a partially collapsed adobe structure enclosed by a chain-link fence surrounding the site

FORT DAVIS (FIRST FORT)

Description: Established in 1854 and named for Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, Fort Davis was the largest US Army garrison on the Texas frontier, housing up to 400 soldiers in the 1850s. Overland Mail Company operations began there in 1859, when the Butterfield route shifted south into the Davis Mountains, with a relay station located on the post's southwest corner. Butterfield coaches relied on the fort for protection, particularly from Comanche and Mescalero Apache groups. Today, Fort Davis National Historic Site preserves structures from before and after the Butterfield period. Although the exact station building is uncertain, its foundation is likely visible, and the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail still passes through a largely intact historic landscape.

Location: Jeff Davis County, TX

Sources: National Register of Historic Places #66000045; Ely (2016), p. 284–285; National Park Service (2018b)

Score: 25

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—3.5
 - Site—4
 - Setting—3
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2.5
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—4
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing on-site visual setting. Maintain or improve current integrity of historic structure remnants. Maintain existing nonvisual setting.



Figure 43. Fort Davis (first fort) in 2025, showing a row of restored 19th-century stone barracks and officers' quarters with chimneys, low stone foundations, and a marked privy site in the foreground

BARRELL SPRING STATION

Description: Barrel Spring was an Overland Mail Company relay station located at the mouth of a canyon on the southwestern edge of the Davis Mountains. The station structure was stoutly built with 11-foot walls and located a mile down the canyon from the water source for which it was named. Today, all that remains of the structure are scattered foundation stones. With the notable exception of Texas State Highway 166, the site and viewshed appear much as they did during the trail's period of significance.

Location: Jeff Davis County, TX

Source: Ely (2016), p. 285–286

Score: 21.5

- Confidence of location—4
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—2
 - Stories/themes—3
 - Current means—1
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.5
 - Site—5
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—3
 - Frequency—3
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—4

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities.



Figure 44. Barrel Spring Station in 2025, showing a dry, rocky desert hillside covered with low shrubs and scrub, indicating the setting of the former station

SAN ELIZARIO STATION

Description: San Elizario Station, a traditional adobe building that still stands today in San Elizario, Texas, was designated a post office in 1855. In August 1859, when the Overland Mail Company route through West Texas shifted south, the former post office also became a meal stop and relay station for the company. Today the former station is located on Paseo del Convento, southeast of the historic center of San Elizario, Texas. Though maintained and improved over the years, the structure still bears some resemblance to its historic appearance.

Location: El Paso County, TX

Sources: National Register of Historic Places #97000205 (San Elizario Historic District); Ely (2016), p. 313

Score: 24.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail’s historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—3
 - Site—4
 - Setting—2
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2.5
 - Frequency—2
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing on-site visual setting. Maintain current integrity of historic structure.



Figure 45. San Elizario Station, showing an adobe building with a flat roof and stepped parapet, with a yucca plant and paved roadway emphasizing the historic border community setting

MESILLA DEPOT/ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES/CORRALS

Description: Mesilla was the site of both a relay station and a divisional headquarters of the Overland Mail Company. These functions were performed by two separate structures separated by only a few hundred yards. Passengers embarked and disembarked at the present location of La Posta restaurant on the southeast corner of Mesilla Plaza. Across Calle de Guadalupe to the west, in the location of today's El Patio bar and restaurant, Overland Mail Company employees worked in the company office and workshop, while a substantial corral held livestock. Today Mesilla is unique in being one of the only urban areas along the trail with significant period architecture in the vicinity of historic Butterfield sites. As such, La Mesilla Historic District is the most intact historic built environment along the trail. This district, which includes the historic Mesilla Plaza, features multiple plaques and other commemorations of the city's role in Overland Mail Company operations.

Location: Doña Ana County, NM

Source: National Register of Historic Places #82003323

Score: 27.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—5
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.5
 - Site—5
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—3
 - Frequency—3
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing on-site visual setting. Maintain current integrity of historic structure.



Figure 46. Mesilla Depot, showing an adobe building with a long, low profile and flat roof, with parked cars along the street highlighting its continued use within the historic Mesilla streetscape

MESILLA STATION (LA POSTA)

Description: Mesilla was the site of both a relay station and a divisional headquarters of the Overland Mail Company. These functions were performed by two separate structures separated by only a few hundred yards. Passengers embarked and disembarked at the present location of La Posta restaurant on the southeast corner of Mesilla Plaza. Across Calle de Guadalupe to the west, in the location of today's El Patio bar and restaurant, employees worked in the company office and workshop, while a substantial corral held livestock. Today Mesilla is unique in being one of the only urban areas along the trail with significant period architecture in the vicinity of historic Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail sites. As such, La Mesilla Historic District is the most intact historic built environment along the trail. This district, which includes the historic Mesilla Plaza, features multiple plaques and other commemorations of the city's role in Overland Mail Company operations.

Location: Doña Ana County, NM

Sources: National Register of Historic Places #82003323; Hackler (1926), p. 57–70

Score: 26

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—5
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—3.5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—2
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.5
 - Site—5
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—3
 - Frequency—3
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing on-site visual setting. Maintain current integrity of historic structure.



Figure 47. La Posta, showing an adobe building with whitewashed walls and desert plants, stone accents, and signage flanking the doorway, with curbside parking signage visible in front

ROUGH AND READY STATION

Description: North and west of Mesilla, named for the Rough and Ready Hills, is Rough and Ready Station, run at the time of company operations by New York-born Bob Sackett. Like other Overland Mail Company relay stations in the area, Rough and Ready was of stone construction, possibly with adobe elements. While no standing structure remains today, foundation stones and other remnants of the structure are clearly visible on-site. Located in a remote area of Chihuahuan desert, the site and viewshed are entirely undeveloped. Except for a few fence lines, the area maintains a remarkably similar appearance to the trail's period of significance.

Location: Doña Ana County, NM

Source: Hackler (1926), p. 85-90

Score: 24.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—2
 - Stories/themes—3
 - Current means—1
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.5
 - Site—5
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—4
 - Frequency—4
 - Intensity—4
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Maintain existing nonvisual setting. Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities.



Figure 48. Rough and Ready Station in 2025, showing a flat, sandy desert landscape dotted with low creosote bushes, scattered rocks, and faint depressions and disturbed ground in the foreground

GOODSIGHT STATION

Description: The Butterfield relay station known as Goodsight was of the same rock and adobe construction typical of other Overland Mail Company stations in the Southwest. Goodsight Station sits high on a grassy plain—a situation that perhaps led to its name, a “good sight” for anyone with hungry stock to feed. Today no remnants of the structure remain (aside from possible rock scatter), but traces of the old trail are still visible. Located in a remote and undeveloped area, the site and viewshed are almost entirely intact.

Location: Luna County, NM

Sources: Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 2, p. 111–112; Hackler (1926), p. 103–111

Score: 24

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail’s historic significance—2
 - Stories/themes—3
 - Current means—1
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—5
 - Site—5
 - Setting—5
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—5
 - Frequency—5
 - Intensity—5
- Visible historic remnants—3

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). If remnants are from the station, shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities.



Figure 49. Goodsight Station, showing an arid desert plain with a fence line, windmill, and low hills rising in the midground

COOKE'S SPRING STATION

Description: Named for Phillip St. George Cooke, commander of the “Mormon Battalion” that fought in the Mexican–American War, Cooke’s Spring was an important water source in a very arid region. The accompanying Cooke’s Spring Station was a stone relay station built by the Overland Mail Company in 1857–1858. Today, the nearby ruins of the US Army’s Fort Cummings (which was built after the Overland Mail Company suspended operations on the southern “Ox-Bow Route”) are more substantial, but remnants of the station remain on-site as well, to the east of the fort and spring. Located in an isolated area of Chihuahuan desert, the site and viewshed remain quite similar to their appearance during the trail’s period of significance.

Location: Luna County, NM

Source: Hackler (1926), p. 113–124

Score: 29

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail’s historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—5
 - Site—5
 - Setting—5
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—5
 - Frequency—5
 - Intensity—5
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Maintain current integrity of the building remnants. Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities. Maintain existing nonvisual setting.



Figure 50. Cooke’s Spring Station 2025, showing a desert landscape with rocky, gravelly ground and scattered low shrubs

STEIN'S PEAK STATION

Description: Stein's Peak Station was one of several fortified stone stations built by the Overland Mail Company in the ancestral homelands of the Apache. Located on a slope between Doubtful Canyon and the prominent rise for which it was named, the station is just east of today's Arizona–New Mexico border. Although there is no plaque, marker, or monument to commemorate them, the partially standing ruins of the historic stone structure are a dramatic testament to the challenges faced by the Overland Mail Company in this particularly arid portion of the Southwest. Profoundly isolated, the station site and viewshed are largely indistinguishable from their appearance during the trail's period of significance.

Location: Hidalgo County, NM

Source: Ahnert (2025), p. 49–52

Score: 25

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—3
 - Stories/themes—3
 - Current means—3
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—5
 - Site—5
 - Setting—5
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—3
 - Frequency—3
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities.



Figure 51. Stein's Peak Station, showing an open desert plain with sandy, lightly rutted ground and scattered creosote bushes

SAN SIMON STATION

Description: Located on the east bank of the San Simon River, San Simon was an Overland Mail Company relay station. Then as now, the river and nearby cienegas (marshes) created a dependable permanent water supply at the station, critical to the company's operations in the arid Southwest. Today, the station is located in Arizona just over the border from New Mexico. While past researchers were able to observe an earthen mound where the adobe structure once stood, today nothing definitive of the former station remains. Traces of the historic trail, however, are still present. Located in an isolated and undeveloped area, the site and viewshed still look much as they did during the period of significance.

Location: Cochise County, AZ

Sources: Ahnert (2025), p. 3–56; Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 2, p. 130–131

Score: 21

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—2.5
 - Stories/themes—4
 - Current means—1
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.5
 - Site—5
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—3

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities.



Figure 52. San Simon Station, showing a wide desert landscape with gravelly ground and scattered low grasses and creosote bushes

APACHE PASS STATION

Description: Apache Pass Station was a stone relay station built by the Overland Mail Company to access a critical water source in the Chiricahua Mountains, an area long used by the Chokonen Band of Chiricahua Apache. Relations between station employees and local Apaches were generally peaceful until 1861, when a violent encounter with the US Army known as the Bascom Affair occurred nearby. Shortly thereafter, the station and the southern "Ox-Bow Route" were abandoned at the outbreak of the Civil War. In 1862, the Army established Fort Bowie at the pass. Today remains of both the fort and the Butterfield station, along with a clear trail trace, are preserved within Fort Bowie National Historic Site.

Location: Cochise County, AZ

Sources: National Register of Historic Places #83002985; Ahnert (2025), p. 57–62

Score: 28

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4
 - Site—4
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—5
 - Frequency—5
 - Intensity—5
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Maintain current integrity of the building remnants. Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities. Maintain existing nonvisual setting.



Figure 53. Apache Pass Station, showing low stone foundation walls outlining the remains of the former stage station in a grassy desert valley, with weathered rock alignments forming rectangular rooms

DRAGOON SPRINGS STATION

Description: The Overland Mail Company relay station at Dragoon Springs was built near a critical water source in the Dragoon Mountains, in the Chiricahua Apache homelands of southeastern Arizona. Constructed in August and September 1858, just before mail and passenger service began in September the same year, the station was a fortified stone structure with substantial 8-foot walls and a thatched roof. Today, Dragoon Springs Station is located on land owned and managed by the US Forest Service. Ruins of the station are prominent, including partially standing walls and an intact visible foundation. Located in a remote and mountainous area, the site and viewshed appear much as they did during the trail's period of significance.

Location: Cochise County, AZ

Sources: National Register of Historic Places #79000415; Ahnert (2025), p. 67–74

Score: 28.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.5
 - Site—5
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—5
 - Frequency—5
 - Intensity—5
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Maintain current integrity of the building remnants. Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities. Maintain existing nonvisual setting.



Figure 54. Dragoon Springs Station, showing ruins with low, partially collapsed stone walls arranged in rough rectangular enclosures on a reddish dirt floor

DESERT STATION

Description: Between Maricopa and Gila Bend, the Butterfield trail transited a waterless stretch known to Overland Mail Company drivers as “The Forty Mile Desert.” Stages were supported through this parched stretch by two watering tanks and a relay at Desert Station. The station was established at some point in 1859, when it became clear to company administrators that stages needed more support on this part of the trail. Desert Station is notable in that it had no water source and was supplied by water wagons that traveled between the stations at Maricopa Wells and Gila Ranch. Today rock scatter marks the site of the old station; the landscape is as parched and isolated as it ever was. Aside from a modern stock tank, the site and viewshed remain intact.

Location: Maricopa County, AZ

Sources: Ahnert (2025), p. 123–128; Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 2, p. 171–172

Score: 24

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail’s historic significance—2.5
 - Stories/themes—4
 - Current means—1
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.5
 - Site—5
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—3
 - Frequency—4
 - Intensity—2
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Maintain current integrity of the building remnants. Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities.



Figure 55. Desert Station, showing a broad, open desert plain with sparse, low creosote bushes and grasses

MOHAWK/PETERMAN'S RANCH STATION

Description: In the early 1850s, the area known as Peterman's Ranch was a lonely outpost in western Arizona, where a Mr. Peterman was the only Anglo settler for miles. Peterman's bid to make his home and property the site of a relay station for the Overland Mail Company was apparently successful, however, and Peterman's was among the original company relay stations operating in 1858. In 1860, for unknown reasons, the station name was changed to Mohawk, perhaps for the town of that same name in John Butterfield's home state of New York. The original log structure, in the floodplain of the Gila River, has long since washed away, as have the later adobe structures built on the same site. Today, the location of the historic relay station is marked by trail trace and a scattering of artifacts. Located on a small strip of Sonoran Desert, the site still resembles its historic appearance. The viewshed, however, is dominated by commercial agriculture.

Location: Yuma County, AZ

Source: Ahnert (2025), p. 161–163

Score: 22

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—3
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—1
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—2.5
 - Site—2
 - Setting—3
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—3
 - Frequency—3
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities.



Figure 56. Mohawk/Peterman's Ranch Station, showing a flat, sandy desert clearing with faint tire tracks in the foreground and dense low creosote and mesquite brush beyond

COLORADO RIVER CROSSING

Description: The Colorado River Crossing at Yuma has been a strategic location for different peoples in different times. For Butterfield stages, this crossing marked the entry into California (although lasting escape from heat and aridity was still some distance away). In the Butterfield years, the ferry at this site was operated by Louis John Frederick Jaeger, whose headquarters on the northern (California) side of the river were also a relay station known as Jaeger's. Today, the Arizona side of the crossing is located within the Colorado River State Historic Park, part of the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area. While the whims of the Colorado River have left no historic remnants behind, both sides of the crossing are surrounded by lush vegetation, limiting the view of surrounding development.

Location: Imperial County, CA

Sources: Ahnert (2025), p. 179–184; National Park Service (2024d)

Score: 20.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—5
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—3
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—1
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.5
 - Site—5
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—1

Protection plan: Preserve overall setting of crossing as seen from riverbank.



Figure 57. Colorado River Crossing, showing the crossing site with glassy water reflecting cottonwood and willow trees

PALM SPRINGS STATION

Description: Before Palm Springs Station was an Overland Mail Company relay station, it was an important watering stop for early Mexican settlers, for forty-niners on the Southern Emigrant Trail, and for coaches on the San Antonio-to-San Diego Mail Line. The spring's namesake palms remained on-site during the years of company operations. Today the palms are gone but the spring is still present, and the site is marked by a California state historic marker. Located in a remote area, the station site and surrounding area are undeveloped. Visual elements and viewshed are largely appropriate to the period of significance.

Location: San Diego County, CA

Sources: California Historical Landmarks (2016b); Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 2, p. 228-229

Score: 23

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4
 - Site—4
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—4
 - Frequency—4
 - Intensity—4
- Visible historic remnants—1

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Maintain existing nonvisual setting.



Figure 58. Palm Springs Station in 2025, showing a small stone monument and plaque set among dense desert shrubs

VALLECITO STATION

Description: An oasis in an expanse of desert, Vallecito has long been an important respite and watering place. Reported to be a seasonal Indigenous village by Spanish explorers in the late 18th century, by 1850 the US Army had established a permanent presence, building a supply depot that would later be enlarged and used as a stage station by the San Antonio-to-San Diego Mail Line. Beginning in 1859, the Overland Mail Company would utilize the depot as a relay station as well. The adobe station has been rebuilt, and today the structure and surrounding land are a San Diego County park, complete with a California state historic marker. Visual elements on-site, in addition to the wider viewshed, remain largely appropriate to the period of significance.

Location: San Diego County, CA

Sources: California State Parks (2026d); Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 2, p. 229–231

Score: 25

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail’s historic significance—4.5
 - Stories/themes—4
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4
 - Site—5
 - Setting—3
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2.5
 - Frequency—2
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain current integrity of the building (ideally restore to the historic period appearance). Maintain site setting to current standards or better (e.g., relative lack of modern elements).



Figure 59. Vallecito Station, showing an adobe structure with thick earthen walls and a central chimney, partially sheltered by a shallow roof overhang, and with caution tape and stabilization equipment surrounding the building

SAN FELIPE STATION

Description: San Felipe was an adobe structure that served as an Overland Mail Company relay station, located in an area of dense Indigenous settlement in the San Felipe Valley. While the original structure and much of the old roadway have since been washed away by floodwater from nearby San Felipe Creek, remnants of a stone foundation are still visible at the station site. Reasonably removed from the roadway, the site and surrounding viewshed remain largely in keeping with their appearance during the trail's period of significance. A California state historic marker commemorating the station is located on San Felipe Road, three-tenths of a mile north-northeast of the station site.

Location: San Diego County, CA

Sources: California State Parks (2026c); Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 2, p. 236–237

Score: 24

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—2.5
 - Stories/themes—4
 - Current means—1
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—5
 - Site—5
 - Setting—5
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2.5
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—4
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Maintain existing nonvisual setting. Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities.



Figure 60. San Felipe Station in 2025, showing a broad field of tall, golden grasses with a small group of people standing near scattered mesquite shrubs

WARNER RANCH STATION

Description: In 1830, Jonathan Trumbull Warner traveled west on the Santa Fe Trail, later establishing a large cattle ranch in present-day San Diego County. Located along the Southern Emigrant (Gila) Trail, the ranch served as a stopping place for US Army forces during the Mexican–American War. After Warner lost the property in 1857, it became an Overland Mail Company relay station in 1858. Two historic buildings remain: Warner’s 1849 ranch house, used as a Butterfield station from 1858 to 1861, and a nearby barn likely associated with mail operations. Restored and furnished with period artifacts, the house now operates as a museum.

Location: San Diego County, CA

Sources: National Register of Historic Places #66000228; California State Parks (2026e); Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 2, p. 238–241

Score: 24.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail’s historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—3.5
 - Site—4
 - Setting—3
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2
 - Frequency—2
 - Intensity—2
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain current integrity of the building (ideally restore to the historic period appearance). Maintain site setting to current standards or better (e.g., relative lack of modern elements).



Figure 61. Warner Ranch Station, showing the stage station building with a long, whitewashed adobe facade and deep front porch topped by a red corrugated metal roof

OAK GROVE STATION

Description: Oak Grove is one of just a handful of Overland Mail Company station structures still standing today. In addition to functioning as a company relay station from 1858 to 1861, the one-story adobe structure also served as a hospital for Union forces during the US Civil War. Today, the structure and grounds are fenced off but visible from adjacent public roads. While the original adobe has been modified over the years, the site still generally resembles its historic appearance. The surrounding area is more significantly developed. A California state historic marker commemorates the historic site in relation to both the Overland Mail Company and the US Civil War.

Location: San Diego County, CA

Sources: National Register of Historic Places #66000222; California State Parks (2026b); Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 2, p. 241–242

Score: 21.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail’s historic significance—2
 - Stories/themes—3
 - Current means—1
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—3.5
 - Site—4
 - Setting—3
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2
 - Frequency—2
 - Intensity—2
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain integrity of building to the historic period. Maintain site setting to current standards or better (e.g., relative lack of modern elements).



Figure 62. Oak Grove Station, showing a weathered, single-story wooden building with a low, shingled roof and a wraparound porch supported by slender posts

CAMPO DE CAHUENGA STATION

Description: Named for a Tongva village predating European settlement, Campo de Cahuenga later became the site of an adobe structure built in the late 18th century by Franciscan missionaries and Indigenous laborers from Mission San Fernando. In January 1847, the Treaty of Cahuenga was signed there by Andrés Bico and John C. Frémont, ending hostilities in California during the Mexican–American War. In 1858, the building was adapted as an Overland Mail Company relay station. Today, the site includes a reconstructed adobe and partially reconstructed foundations marked by interpretive signage within a highly urbanized setting that bears little resemblance to its historic landscape.

Location: Los Angeles County, CA

Sources: Campo de Cahuenga (2015); Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 2, p. 263–264

Score: 22.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail’s historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—2.5
 - Site—3
 - Setting—2
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—1
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—1
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing on-site visual setting, interpretive features, and archaeological features.

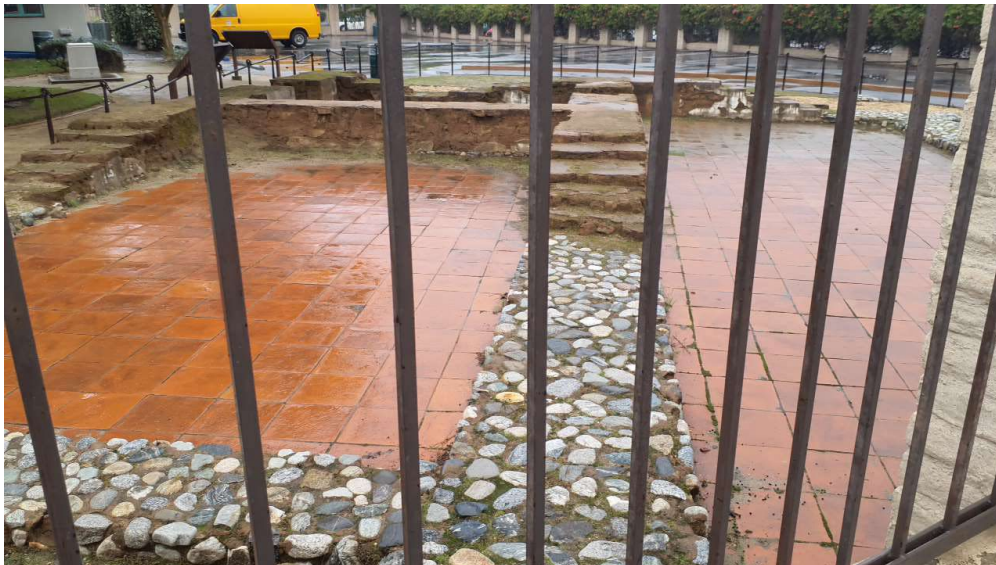


Figure 63. Campo de Cahuenga Station in 2025, showing rectangular adobe foundations, shallow steps, and tiled and cobblestone floor surfaces within a protected excavation area, with a modern street and landscaping visible beyond the site

SAN FERNANDO MISSION STATION

Description: Founded in September 1797, Misión San Fernando Rey de España was one of 21 Franciscan missions established in Alta (Upper) California during the Spanish Colonial period. Secularized in 1834, the former mission became the headquarters of a private rancho in 1845–1846 and then, having fallen into a state of disrepair, the location of an Overland Mail Company relay station beginning in 1858. Today, the mission has been fully restored and operates as a museum, open daily to the public. While the reconstructed mission buildings bear little resemblance to their deteriorated state during the trail’s period of significance, the restored structures on-site present visitors with a faithful reconstruction of a historic California mission.

Location: Los Angeles County, CA

Sources: Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 2, p. 264–265; Mission San Fernando Rey de Espana (n.d.)

Score: 23

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail’s historic significance—3
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—1
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.5
 - Site—5
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—1.5
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—2
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain integrity of building to the historic period. Maintain site setting to current standards or better (e.g., relative lack of modern elements).



Figure 64. San Fernando Mission Station in 2025, showing a long yellow stucco building with a red clay tile roof

BEALE'S CUT

Description: Beale's Cut is located at San Fernando (Fremont) Pass, a key connection between the Santa Clarita and San Fernando valleys. In 1859, Chinese laborers working for Charles H. Brindley, Andrés Pico, and James R. Vineyard created the first cut through the pass, establishing a viable stagecoach road soon used by Overland Mail Company coaches. After the company's service ended, Edward Beale widened and improved the cut beginning in 1862. Later highway construction rendered the road obsolete, and partial collapse followed. Although diminished, remnants of the historic cut and road remain, and the surrounding landscape retains much of its historic character.

Location: Los Angeles County, CA

Sources: California Historical Landmarks (2016c); Mereu (2020)

Score: 22.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—2.5
 - Stories/themes—4
 - Current means—1
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4
 - Site—5
 - Setting—3
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2
 - Frequency—3
 - Intensity—1
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting on-site. Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities.



Figure 65. Beale's Cut, showing a narrow rock passage carved through steep, vertical canyon walls, with exposed sediment on both sides, a dry earthen floor, and sparse desert vegetation and brush growing along the base and edges

FRANCISQUITO CANYON

Description: Francisquito Canyon has been an important thoroughfare for centuries. First occupied by Native peoples of southern California, the canyon and pass were also the site of a Spanish colonial road. Later this same route would be known as the Stockton–Los Angeles Road, and in 1858 it became part of the “Ox-Bow Route” of the Butterfield Overland Mail. Butterfield passengers, including its first through passenger Waterman Ormsby, often remarked on the steep canyon road and surrounding landscape. Today the canyon is traversed by a modern road but remains largely undeveloped. Evidence of the 1928 collapse of the St. Francis Dam is present but not overwhelming. Visitors can observe traces of the historic road in a landscape that captivated passengers as they transited on Overland Mail Company stages.

Location: Los Angeles County, CA

Sources: Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 2, p. 267; SCVTV (n.d.)

Score: 18

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail’s historic significance—3
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—1
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4
 - Site—4
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—1.5
 - Frequency—2
 - Intensity—1
- Visible historic remnants—1

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Maintain current integrity of the buildings. Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities.



Figure 66. Francisquito Canyon, showing a dry gravel turnout bordered by a low wooden guardrail

FORT TEJON

Description: Located in Grapevine Canyon, in a pass connecting southern California and greater Los Angeles to the Central Valley, Fort Tejon was established by the US Army in 1854. Soldiers garrisoned at the post—known as dragoons—patrolled throughout California, policing and protecting settlers, travelers, and Native peoples. Beginning in 1858, Fort Tejon was the site of an Overland Mail Company “time stop” station, likely in a structure located somewhere to the east of the fort and across Grapevine Canyon. Today the exact location of the historic Butterfield station is unknown, but the grounds and structures of Fort Tejon are preserved and maintained as a California state historic park. Extensive restoration has been carried out on-site, and the grounds of the fort appear largely as they did during the trail’s period of significance. While a modern highway dominates the soundscape and viewshed, the surrounding mountainous landscape is largely undeveloped.

Location: Kern County, CA

Sources: National Register of Historic Places #71000140; California State Parks (2026a); Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 2, p. 270–271

Score: 24.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail’s historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.5
 - Site—5
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—1
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—1
- Visible historic remnants—5

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Maintain current integrity of the buildings. Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities.



Figure 67. Fort Tejon, showing a broad green parade ground in the foreground, bordered by leafless valley oaks, historic wooden structures, and a long adobe building

WHITMORE'S FERRY

Description: King's River or Rio de los Reyes was reportedly named by a Spanish officer in the first decade of the 19th century. Fifty years later, in 1857, L.A. Whitmore would take possession of a ferry crossing on the river which, beginning the following year, would be utilized by Overland Mail Company stages transiting California's Central Valley. A small settlement known variously as Whitmore's Ferry and Old Kingston sprouted and briefly flourished at the site of the crossing. Today, no buildings from the settlement or the ferry remain standing, but a California state historic marker commemorates the ferry site. While the river is largely diverted for irrigation and is often dry, its bed has been spared from the agricultural development that surrounds it. When standing at the site on the bank of King's River, the viewshed partially resembles the trail's period of significance.

Location: King's County, CA

Sources: California Historical Landmarks (2016a); Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 2, p. 288–289

Score: 22

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.5
 - Site—5
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2.5
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—4
- Visible historic remnants—1

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Maintain existing nonvisual setting.



Figure 68. Whitmore's Ferry, showing a wide, sandy riverbed marked by faint tire tracks and scattered driftwood

FIREBAUGH'S FERRY

Description: Virginia-born Andrew Davidson Firebaugh, a Mexican–American War veteran and California Gold Rush miner, established a ferry and trading post on the San Joaquin River in the mid-1850s. By 1858, Firebaugh's Ferry had grown into a small settlement and was designated by the Overland Mail Company as one of 18 timetable stations. Firebaugh also operated a toll road used by Butterfield coaches crossing Pacheco Pass. Although no historic structures remain, the site is preserved within Firebaugh's Riverside Park, where the surrounding open landscape closely resembles its historic setting.

Location: Fresno County, CA

Sources: Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 2, p. 292–293; The Historical Marker Database (n.d.)

Score: 22.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—5
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.5
 - Site—5
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—1

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site).



Figure 69. Firebaugh's Ferry in 2025, showing an open grassy field near Firebaugh with patchy green groundcover, bordered by leafless riparian trees and shrubs

PACHECO PASS STATION

Description: In addition to overseeing the timetable station at Firebaugh's Ferry, Andrew Firebaugh (see Firebaugh's Ferry entry) also built and operated a toll road, completed in 1857, over a low mountain pass connecting the Central and Santa Clara Valleys. Near the high point on the Pacheco Pass, a tavern and Overland Mail Company relay station (sometimes known as Hollenbeck's and in later years Bell or Bell's) allowed coaches to switch out their teams after the climb out of the valleys below. While the original structure was destroyed by fire in 1932, it has since been rebuilt. With the exception of the busy modern highway that now transits the pass, limited development allows for a viewshed similar to the period of significance. A California state historic marker (Bell Station) is located on-site.

Location: Santa Clara County, CA

Sources: Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 2, p. 300–301; The Historical Marker Database (n.d.)

Score: 22.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—4
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.5
 - Site—5
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—1
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—1
- Visible historic remnants—3

Protection plan: Maintain existing visual setting, both on-site and in the surrounding viewshed (no more than 3 miles from site). Shield footprint of site from ground-disturbing activities.



Figure 70. Pacheco Pass Station, showing a grassy clearing with lush green groundcover and scattered trees, including tall pines and drooping willows, with a small utility tank

SAN FRANCISCO STATION/PORTSMOUTH SQUARE

Description: Laid out in 1833, Portsmouth Square was the central plaza of Yerba Buena, the Spanish settlement that became San Francisco. Renamed in 1846 after the USS Portsmouth, the square remained the city's civic and economic center. By 1858, it housed City Hall, commercial and residential buildings, and the Overland Mail Company's San Francisco offices and station on its western edge, forming the western terminus of the Butterfield route. Although all period buildings were lost to later development and the 1906 earthquake, the square's northwest corner still reflects its historic scale. Today Portsmouth Square continues to serve as a vibrant community gathering place.

Location: San Francisco County, CA

Sources: Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 2, p. 313–314 ; San Francisco Planning Department and San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department (2014)

Score: 17.5

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—5
- Opportunity to interpret the trail's historic significance—3
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—1
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—1.5
 - Site—1
 - Setting—2
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—1

Protection plan: High potential status linked to historic significance of location only.



Figure 71. San Francisco Station/Portsmouth Square, showing a three-story, cream-colored structure with classical cornice details, set at a street corner amid modern high-rise office towers

SAN FRANCISCO POST OFFICE

Description: After an 1851 fire destroyed San Francisco’s earlier customhouse, the US Government purchased a site on Battery Street between Jackson and Washington Streets and constructed a combined post office, courthouse, and customhouse designed by architect Gridley J.F. Bryant. The San Francisco Post Office, the western terminus of the Butterfield mail, opened there in 1855, three years before overland mail service began. Considered one of the city’s most impressive early federal buildings, the structure was later demolished due to space constraints. A larger replacement, designed by Eames & Young, was completed on the site in 1911 and remains today.

Location: San Francisco County, CA

Sources: Careaga (2011); Conkling and Conkling (1947), v. 2, p. 314

Score: 19

- Confidence of location—5
- Historical significance—5
- Opportunity to interpret the trail’s historic significance—5
 - Stories/themes—5
 - Current means—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—1
 - Site—1
 - Setting—1
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—3
- Visible historic remnants—1

Protection plan: High potential status linked to historic significance of location only.



Figure 72. San Francisco Post Office in 2025 at the corner of Battery Street, showing a monumental Beaux-Arts stone building with heavy rusticated walls, ornate window surrounds, and recessed arched entrances

APPENDIX G: HIGH POTENTIAL HISTORIC SEGMENTS ON THE TRAIL

Note: Photos of the high potential historic segments are meant to convey the segment setting. The National Park Service opted to use photos that protect resource location information when required.

SEGMENTS (EAST TO WEST)

Wilson's Creek

Cross Timbers Hollow

Pea Ridge

Lake Fayetteville

Bug Scuffle

Ti Valley Ranch

Atoka Reservoir

Cottonwood Canyon

El Centro Draw

Hueco Tanks

Rough and Ready

Cooke's

Starvation Draw (Deming)

Fort Bowie

Sonoran Desert

Painted Rock

Sentinel Plain

Palm Spring

Vallecito Creek

Box Canyon

La Puerta

Jackson Square

WILSON'S CREEK

Description: This segment is approximately 2.22 miles long and stretches from the eastern boundary to the western boundary of Wilson's Creek National Battlefield. The trace is evident throughout and is maintained via mowing and brush trimming. Bears visual similarity to historic landscape and opportunities.

Location: Greene County, MO

Composite score: 22.16

- Confidence of location—5
- High-quality recreation experience—3.5
 - Diversity and frequency of change—3
 - Diversity and frequency of historic elements—4
- Opportunity for vicarious experiences—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.66
 - Trail trace—5
 - Setting—4.3
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—4
 - Frequency—4
 - Intensity—4

Protection plan: Continue with trace maintenance via mowing and brush trimming. Protect footprint from ground-disturbing activities. Shield viewshed from any additional modern intrusions.



Figure 73. Historic trail trace at Wilson's Creek National Battlefield, shown as a leaf-covered dirt road bordered by dense woodland

CROSS TIMBERS HOLLOW

Description: This segment is approximately 4.4 miles long and prone to flooding (a feature which is probably preserving the setting). It is primarily a wooded road alongside Washburn Hollow and is a highly intact visual setting.

Location: Barry County, MO

Composite score: 19.12

- Confidence of location—5
- High-quality recreation experience—3.25
 - Diversity and frequency of change—3
 - Diversity and frequency of historic elements—3.5
- Opportunity for vicarious experiences—3
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.75
 - Trail trace—5
 - Setting—4.5
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—3.12
 - Frequency—3.25
 - Intensity—3

Protection plan: Shield viewshed from any additional modern intrusions.



Figure 74. Cross Timbers Hollow, showing a gravel road curving gently through dense trees

PEA RIDGE

Description: This segment is approximately 1.25 miles long, with the better portions of the trace being away from Elkhorn Station (although Elkhorn Station contributes significantly to the overall scores and experience).

Location: Benton County, AR

Composite score: 20.5

- Confidence of location—5
- High-quality recreation experience—3.5
 - Diversity and frequency of change—3
 - Diversity and frequency of historic elements—4
- Opportunity for vicarious experiences—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.83
 - Trail trace—5
 - Setting—4.66
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2.16
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—3.33

Protection plan: Protect footprint from ground-disturbing activities. Shield viewshed from any additional modern intrusions.



Figure 75. Pea Ridge, showing a stacked stone retaining wall above a shallow stream, marking a preserved historic trail feature

LAKE FAYETTEVILLE

Description: This segment is approximately 0.82-miles long. It is an easily accessible and widely used public park. At one point, trail trace was maintained via mowing, brush trimming, and downed tree removal. The trail trace is evident throughout but difficult to follow due to overgrowth and fallen trees.

Location: Washington County, AR

Composite score: 19.5

- Confidence of location—5
- High-quality recreation experience—3.5
 - Diversity and frequency of change—3
 - Diversity and frequency of historic elements—4
- Opportunity for vicarious experiences—5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.5
 - Trail trace—5
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—1.5
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—2

Protection plan: Resume maintenance via mowing, trimming, and fallen tree removal. Protect footprint from ground-disturbing activities. Shield viewshed from any additional modern intrusions.



Figure 76. Lake Fayetteville, showing a faint historic trail trace visible as a narrow, leaf-covered path through dense woodland

BUG SCUFFLE

Description: This segment is approximately 1.58 miles long (possibly longer; only federal land was documented). It is a well-defined trail trace, and many portions have stacked rock retaining walls.

Location: Crawford County, AR

Composite score: 19.66

- Confidence of location—5
- High-quality recreation experience—3.5
 - Diversity and frequency of change—3
 - Diversity and frequency of historic elements—4
- Opportunity for vicarious experiences—3
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.5
 - Trail trace—5
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—3.66
 - Frequency—4
 - Intensity—3.33

Protection plan: Protect footprint from ground-disturbing activities. Shield viewshed from any additional modern intrusions.



Figure 77. Bug Scuffle, showing the historic trail trace marked by a subtle path and scattered stonework through wooded terrain

TI VALLEY RANCH

Description: This segment is approximately 2.30 miles of trail trace on private land belonging to the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. A good portion of the trace is difficult to see due to seasonal vegetation.

Location: Pittsburg County, OK

Composite score: 18.33

- Confidence of location—5
- High-quality recreation experience—2.66
 - Diversity and frequency of change—1.66
 - Diversity and frequency of historic elements—3.66
- Opportunity for vicarious experiences—2
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.66
 - Trail trace—5
 - Setting—4.33
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—4
 - Frequency—4
 - Intensity—4

Protection plan: Protect footprint from ground-disturbing activities. Shield viewshed from any additional modern intrusions.



Figure 78. Ti Valley Ranch, showing open grassland bordered by trees, with a faint historic trail trace visible through tall grasses

ATOKA RESERVOIR

Description: This segment is approximately 1 mile long on public property owned by Oklahoma City Water and Utilities Trust. The trail trace is evident throughout and mostly easy to follow, although overgrowth and fallen trees sometimes intrude. At its western end, the trail emerges from the waters of the Lake Atoka reservoir, which now inundates Geary's Station, a Butterfield station located at the crossing of North Boggy Creek, which was dammed to form the reservoir.

Location: Atoka County, OK

Composite score: 17.5

- Confidence of location—5
- High-quality recreation experience—2.5
 - Diversity and frequency of change—1
 - Diversity and frequency of historic elements—4
- Opportunity for vicarious experiences—3
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—5
 - Trail trace—5
 - Setting—5
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—3

Protection plan: Protect footprint from ground-disturbing activities. Shield viewshed from any additional modern intrusions.



Figure 79. Atoka Reservoir, showing a trail rut on a grassy hillslope, bordered by coniferous trees

COTTONWOOD CANYON

Description: This segment is just over a half-mile of trail trace (most recently used as a ranch road). The trace passes through fenced areas (e.g., mule pasture) and is most visible at its western end.

Location: Culberson County, TX

Composite score: 19

- Confidence of location—5
- High-quality recreation experience—3
 - Diversity and frequency of change—2.5
 - Diversity and frequency of historic elements—3.5
- Opportunity for vicarious experiences—4.5
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.25
 - Trail trace—4.5
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2.25
 - Frequency—1.5
 - Intensity—3

Protection plan: Shield viewshed from any additional modern intrusions.



Figure 81. Cottonwood Canyon, showing a shrub-covered canyon landscape with rocky ground and a lightly visible historic trail corridor across rolling terrain

EL CENTRO DRAW

Description: This segment is approximately 13.75 miles on the western side of Guadalupe Mountains National Park and is primarily located in wilderness area. The trail trace from the dunes eastward to the arroyos is distinct and easy to follow. Access is extremely limited.

Location: Culberson and Hudspeth Counties, TX

Composite score: 18.5

- Confidence of location—5
- High-quality recreation experience—1.66
 - Diversity and frequency of change—1.22
 - Diversity and frequency of historic elements—2.11
- Opportunity for vicarious experiences—2.55
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—5
 - Trail trace—5
 - Setting—5
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—4.38
 - Frequency—4.44
 - Intensity—4.33

Protection plan: Protect footprint from ground-disturbing activities. Shield viewshed from any additional modern intrusions.



Figure 82. El Centro Draw, showing desert scrub and low dunes with a faint trail trace crossing open terrain

HUECO TANKS

Description: This segment is approximately 1.19 miles through Hueco Tanks State Park. The central portion of the segment is accessible through guided tour only.

Location: El Paso County, TX

Composite score: 18.16

- Confidence of location—5
- High-quality recreation experience—2.83
 - Diversity and frequency of change—3.33
 - Diversity and frequency of historic elements—2.33
- Opportunity for vicarious experiences—4.66
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—3.5
 - Trail trace—3.33
 - Setting—3.66
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2.16
 - Frequency—2.33
 - Intensity—2

Protection plan: Shield viewshed from any additional modern intrusions.



Figure 83. Hueco Tanks, showing a gravel trail winding through desert vegetation and large rock formations

ROUGH AND READY

Description: This segment is approximately 14.93 miles in length across the Organ Mountains–Desert Peaks National Monument. The trail trace is fairly decent throughout and is often marked by vegetation change. The segment’s eastern terminus is Rough and Ready Station (a high-potential historic site for the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail).

Location: Doña Ana County, NM

Composite score: 19.75

- Confidence of location—5
- High-quality recreation experience—2.25
 - Diversity and frequency of change—2
 - Diversity and frequency of historic elements—2.5
- Opportunity for vicarious experiences—3
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—5
 - Trail trace—5
 - Setting—5
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—4.5
 - Frequency—4.5
 - Intensity—4.5

Protection plan: Protect footprint from ground-disturbing activities. Shield viewshed from any additional modern intrusions.



Figure 84. Rough and Ready, showing a faint historic trail trace winding through open desert scrub

COOKE'S

Description: This segment is approximately 7.48 miles in length with some portions marked with cairns. The trail trace is evident throughout and is generally most visible as vegetation change. Cooke's Station is toward the western end of the segment.

Location: Luna County, NM

Composite score: 21.20

- Confidence of location—5
- High-quality recreation experience—2.8
 - Diversity and frequency of change—1.8
 - Diversity and frequency of historic elements—3.8
- Opportunity for vicarious experiences—3.8
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.9
 - Trail trace—5
 - Setting—4.8
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—4.7
 - Frequency—4.8
 - Intensity—4.6

Protection plan: Protect footprint from ground-disturbing activities. Shield viewshed from any additional modern intrusions.



Figure 85. Cooke's, showing a historic trail corridor crossing open grassland with scattered desert plants

STARVATION DRAW (DEMING)

Description: This approximately 1.16-mile segment is marked by cairns on the eastern end and becomes progressively more vegetated (with fewer cairns) moving westward. There are parallel swales in some areas.

Location: Luna County, NM

Composite score: 19.83

- Confidence of location—5
- High-quality recreation experience—2
 - Diversity and frequency of change—2
 - Diversity and frequency of historic elements—2
- Opportunity for vicarious experiences—3
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.83
 - Trail trace—4.66
 - Setting—5
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—5
 - Frequency—5
 - Intensity—5

Protection plan: Protect footprint from ground-disturbing activities. Shield viewshed from any additional modern intrusions.



Figure 86. Starvation Draw, showing an open desert terrain with low shrubs and rocky soil, where a subtle historic trail trace crosses gently sloping ground

FORT BOWIE

Description: This 2.50-mile segment is the original trail trace the park has improved in sections (primarily on the west end). The trace is easy to follow and traverses a variety of landscapes, passing by Apache Pass Station. The segment is bounded by National Park Service boundaries.

Location: Cochise County, AZ

Composite score: 20.7

- Confidence of location—5
- High-quality recreation experience—4.1
 - Diversity and frequency of change—4.2
 - Diversity and frequency of historic elements—4
- Opportunity for vicarious experiences—3
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.6
 - Trail trace—4.4
 - Setting—4.8
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—4
 - Frequency—4
 - Intensity—4

Protection plan: Protect footprint from ground-disturbing activities. Shield viewshed from any additional modern intrusions.



Figure 87. Fort Bowie, showing a defined historic trail trace with a cleared path through wooded terrain

SONORAN DESERT

Description: This approximately 24-mile segment is still in use as a recreational trail but with minimal maintenance. The setting (both visual and nonvisual) is highly intact.

Location: Maricopa County, AZ

Composite score: 19.35

- Confidence of location—5
- High-quality recreation experience—3.35
 - Diversity and frequency of change—2.78
 - Diversity and frequency of historic elements—3.92
- Opportunity for vicarious experiences—3
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.78
 - Trail trace—4.78
 - Setting—4.78
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—3.21
 - Frequency—2.92
 - Intensity—3.42

Protection plan: Shield viewshed from any additional modern intrusions.



Figure 88. Sonoran Desert, showing a historic trail following a sandy path through desert vegetation

PAINTED ROCK

Description: This segment is approximately 2.4 miles of excellent trail trace with Painted Rock Recreational Site at the western end. The trace is marked with Mormon Battalion markers throughout.

Location: Maricopa County, AZ

Composite score: 21.1

- Confidence of location—5
- High-quality recreation experience—4
 - Diversity and frequency of change—4.2
 - Diversity and frequency of historic elements—3.8
- Opportunity for vicarious experiences—3.4
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.3
 - Trail trace—4.6
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—4.4
 - Frequency—4.4
 - Intensity—4.4

Protection plan: Protect footprint from ground-disturbing activities. Shield viewshed from any additional modern intrusions.



Figure 89. Painted Rock, showing a wide dirt trail passing through a desert wash lined with shrubs and trees as a clearly defined historic route

SENTINEL PLAIN

Description: This segment is approximately 5.40 miles long. The segment portion by the mesa is difficult to parse out given the many routes attempted to make the climb. The trace improves after that and is marked by cairns (some of which may be from the trail's period of use). The setting preservation is excellent.

Location: Maricopa County, AZ

Composite score: 21.12

- Confidence of location—5
- High-quality recreation experience—3.62
 - Diversity and frequency of change—2.75
 - Diversity and frequency of historic elements—4.5
- Opportunity for vicarious experiences—3
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.75
 - Trail trace—5
 - Setting—4.5
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—4.75
 - Frequency—4.75
 - Intensity—4.75

Protection plan: Protect footprint from ground-disturbing activities. Shield viewshed from any additional modern intrusions.



Figure 90. Sentinel Plain, showing a historic trail trace crossing a rocky desert plain

PALM SPRING

Description: This segment is approximately 2.25 miles long and runs from Palm Spring Station (a high-potential historic site) to the Great Southern Overland Stage Route. It is a maintained recreation route that is also the current road, and the visual setting is good.

Location: San Diego County, CA

Composite score: 18.6

- Confidence of location—5
- High-quality recreation experience—3
 - Diversity and frequency of change—3
 - Diversity and frequency of historic elements—3
- Opportunity for vicarious experiences—3
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.2
 - Trail trace—4.4
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—3.4
 - Frequency—3
 - Intensity—3.8

Protection plan: Shield viewshed from any additional modern intrusions.



Figure 91. Palm Spring, showing a wide sandy road following a historic route through desert scrub with sparse vegetation

VALLECITO CREEK

Description: This segment is approximately 5.35 miles of intact trail trace that is also, in part, a recreational equestrian trail. The trail trace is strong and has easy access. Swale is evident throughout but particularly visible on the slope. The visual setting is slightly better than average.

Location: San Diego County, CA

Composite score: 20.26

- Confidence of location—5
- High-quality recreation experience—4.16
 - Diversity and frequency of change—3.66
 - Diversity and frequency of historic elements—4.66
- Opportunity for vicarious experiences—4.15
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.33
 - Trail trace—4.83
 - Setting—3.83
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2.62
 - Frequency—3
 - Intensity—2.25

Protection plan: Protect footprint from ground-disturbing activities. Shield viewshed from any additional modern intrusions.



Figure 92. Vallecito Creek, showing a sandy trail following a historic route through desert scrub, with a small sign marking access

BOX CANYON

Description: This is a 3-mile segment with a recreation trail at its eastern end. It is marked throughout with Mormon Battalion markers and has excellent trace throughout.

Location: San Diego County, CA

Composite score: 20.5

- Confidence of location—5
- High-quality recreation experience—4.66
 - Diversity and frequency of change—5
 - Diversity and frequency of historic elements—4.33
- Opportunity for vicarious experiences—3.66
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.66
 - Trail trace—5
 - Setting—4.33
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—2.33
 - Frequency—3
 - Intensity—2

Protection plan: Protect footprint from ground-disturbing activities. Shield viewshed from any additional modern intrusions.



Figure 93. Box Canyon, showing a sandy historic trail curving through desert scrub toward rocky mountains

LA PUERTA

Description: This segment is approximately 1.70 miles long. A recreational trail, campsites, and an interpretive panel complement excellent trail trace up and over the pass.

Location: San Diego County, CA

Composite score: 21

- Confidence of location—5
- High-quality recreation experience—4.75
 - Diversity and frequency of change—5
 - Diversity and frequency of historic elements—4.5
- Opportunity for vicarious experiences—4
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—4.75
 - Trail trace—4.5
 - Setting—5
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—3.5
 - Frequency—3
 - Intensity—4

Protection plan: Protect footprint from ground-disturbing activities. Shield viewshed from any additional modern intrusions.



Figure 94. La Puerta, showing a historic trail climbing a rocky desert pass overlooking a broad valley with sparse vegetation

JACKSON SQUARE

Description: This segment is very short, running along Jackson Street between Montgomery Street and Sansome Street. Although this segment scores very low, the National Park Service opted to make it a high-potential route segment based on the urban setting and the rarity of original buildings in urban settings.

Location: San Francisco County, CA

Composite score: 14

- Confidence of location—5
- High-quality recreation experience—2
 - Diversity and frequency of change—1
 - Diversity and frequency of historic elements—3
- Opportunity for vicarious experiences—3
- Visual similarity to historic landscape—2.5
 - Trail trace—1
 - Setting—4
- Inappropriate nonvisual intrusions—1.5
 - Frequency—1
 - Intensity—2

Protection plan: Preserve facades of original buildings.



Figure 95. Jackson Square, showing the historic Jackson Square streetscape with a two-story masonry building with tall arched windows, storefronts, and parked cars

APPENDIX H: REFERENCES

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As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering sound use of our land and water resources; protecting our fish, wildlife, and biological diversity; preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historic places; and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to ensure that their development is in the best interests of all our people by encouraging stewardship and citizen participation in their care. The department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under U.S. administration.

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