

# *Chapter 1 • Purpose and Need*

## **1.1 Introduction**

Congress established the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area on May 8, 2008 in Public Law 110-229. The legislation designates the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Commission as the local coordinating entity for the heritage area and directs the Commission to prepare a management plan that specifies actions, policies, strategies, and recommendations to meet the heritage area's goals.

Under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), activities undertaken or funded by federal agencies must be assessed for their potential to cause environmental impacts – both positive and negative. An environmental assessment is a NEPA document prepared to analyze the action, evaluate alternatives, identify impacts, and determine an environmentally preferred means of undertaking a federal action. As the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area was established through federal legislation and receives federal funding and assistance, the creation and approval of a management plan for the heritage area is considered a federal action and is subject to review under NEPA. This environmental assessment has therefore been prepared in conjunction with the management plan in accordance with NEPA requirements.

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Management Plan and Environmental Assessment have been prepared by the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Commission with the participation of a wide variety of partners within the region and with support from the National Park Service and its Northeast Regional Office. The environmental assessment evaluates four alternatives for management of the heritage area, describes potential beneficial and negative impacts that would result as a consequence of implementing each of the alternatives, outlines scoping and public participation processes associated with the planning work, and identifies a preferred alternative. Following completion of the environmental assessment and selection of a preferred alternative, the management plan was prepared to describe the detailed policies, actions, roles, and responsibilities involved in implementing the preferred alternative.

Chapter 1 of this document describes the purpose and need for the project, the foundation for planning, public participation, issues identified through scoping, and impact topics for consideration in the assessment of alternative for the plan.

## **1.2 Purpose and Need for Action**

The proposed federal action considered in this environmental assessment is the creation and approval of a management plan to accomplish the purposes for which the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area was created. As delineated in Section 421 of the legislation, these purposes are:

- (1) to recognize the national importance of the natural and cultural legacies of the area, as demonstrated in the NPS study report entitled *Niagara National Heritage Area Study* and dated 2005 (2005 Study Report);

- (2) to preserve, support, conserve, and interpret the natural, scenic, cultural, and historic resources within the National Heritage Area;
- (3) to promote heritage, cultural, and recreational tourism and to develop educational and cultural programs for visitors and the general public;
- (4) to recognize and interpret important events and geographic locations representing key developments in American history and culture, including Native American, Colonial American, European American, and African American heritage;
- (5) to enhance a cooperative management framework to assist State, local, and Tribal governments, the private sector, and citizens residing in the National Heritage Area in conserving, supporting, enhancing, and interpreting the significant historic, cultural, and recreational sites in the National Heritage Area;
- (6) to conserve and interpret the history of the development of hydroelectric power in the United States and its role in developing the American economy; and
- (7) to provide appropriate linkages among units of the National Park System within and surrounding the National Heritage Area, to protect, enhance, and interpret resources outside of park boundaries. (P.L. 110-229, 2008)

The management plan outlines policies, strategies, and an operational plan for implementation of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area by heritage area partners. As the local coordinating entity, the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Commission (Commission) will guide, assist, and lead heritage area partners, with differing roles depending upon the specific activity. The Commission has been created for a period of five years from the date of enactment of the legislation. Upon expiration of that five-year period, unless it is extended by additional legislation, a private nonprofit or governmental organization designated by the Commission will serve as the local coordinating entity.

The management plan for the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area is being prepared in accordance with the requirements of Section 424 of the enabling legislation (P.L. 110-229). This environmental assessment was prepared as an integral part of the planning process to engage organizations and residents, explore alternative futures for the heritage area, and assess potential impacts of possible alternatives on social and environmental resources, conditions, and interests. The management plan and its environmental assessment are being prepared in compliance with requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ's) implementing regulations for NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508), and NPS Director Order #12, *Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis and Decision-making (DO-12, 2001)* and accompanying *DO-12 Handbook*.

### **1.3 Background and Overview of the National Heritage Area**

The City of Niagara Falls, as well as the larger Buffalo-Niagara region, has experienced a significant decline in population and manufacturing jobs over the last several decades. Plants were closed as manufacturing was moved to the southern United States and overseas. The comprehensive plan for the City of Niagara Falls describes the existing challenges:

Today, many urban neighborhoods are in decay, large areas of the city's industrial corridors are abandoned, and many residents, community and business leaders have lost their sense of pride in their city. In fact, many former residents have chosen to move out of Niagara Falls. Many visitors are disappointed and clearly unimpressed by the quality of the urban environment and the tourism offering that is not what they would expect adjacent to a world-class natural heritage destination such as the Falls. Tourists prefer to visit Niagara Falls, Ontario than remain in Niagara Falls, New York for more than a couple of hours. (City of Niagara Falls [CNF] 2009:1).

The City of Niagara Falls is taking strides to transition to a service economy, with tourism an important growth sector. Efforts over the last decade have focused on tourism, with the opening of the Seneca Niagara Casino in 2004, the new Conference Center Niagara Falls in 2005, and other redevelopment projects bringing new visitor events and services into the downtown. The city's 2009 comprehensive plan outlines a vision for positive change and strategies for renewal in an important effort to address the challenges it describes in the quote above.

With regard to the Niagara Falls region overall, the 2005 Study Report describes "a widespread belief that there is great potential for upgrading the area's offerings" and the view that a national heritage area designation could "heighten appreciation of the region, better preserve its natural and historic resources, improve coordination among existing programs and sites, and improve the quality of life and economy of the area" (NPS 2005:5). Specific needs for the region, identified in the feasibility study, relate to tourism development, resource management, downtown revitalization in the City of Niagara Falls, protecting the rural/village character of Lewiston and Youngstown, and visitor management (NPS 2005:58). These needs are broadly reflected in the heritage area's 2008 enabling legislation.

The heritage area initiative in general and the management plan in particular will address these needs by coordinating a wide range of partners in tourism, community enhancement, preservation, and other planning initiatives within the Niagara Falls region as outlined in the enabling legislation.

### **1.3.1 National Heritage Area Description**

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area is a 13-mile-long corridor in western New York State along the United States/Canadian border and the Niagara River from the City of Niagara Falls to Lake Ontario. The enabling legislation recognizes the heritage area's natural and cultural resources, which include the world-renowned Niagara Falls and scenic Niagara River Gorge. The Niagara Falls region has "significant historical associations with Indians, early European exploration, the French and Indian War, the American Revolution, the War of 1812, the Underground Railroad," and the development of hydroelectric power (NPS 2005:5).

The heritage area is located north of Buffalo and within the Buffalo-Niagara Falls metropolitan area and the western region of New York. New York City is approximately 400 miles to the southeast, and Canada lies to the north and west – with Toronto located north of the heritage area across Lake Ontario. The Niagara River flows northward from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario and serves as the international boundary between the United States and Canada. Niagara Falls, Ontario, is the Canadian tourist destination for visitors to the Falls and Gorge and stands within eyesight across the Niagara River from the heritage area's City of Niagara Falls. The Erie

Canalway National Heritage Corridor is located near the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area as it curves southward from Lockport to Tonawanda, the Niagara River, and Buffalo.

With the Niagara River, Falls, and Gorge, the heritage area's landscape is one of dramatic beauty. More than eight million people visit the United States side of Niagara Falls each year. The Niagara River flows 35 miles from Lake Erie to Lake Ontario and falls approximately 326 feet over that distance. At Goat Island, the southern end of the heritage area, the Upper Niagara River flows over the American Falls from heights of 70 to 110 feet and over the Canadian Horseshoe Falls from heights of 170 feet. The Lower Niagara River and the Niagara Gorge begin at the base of the Falls, with the river flowing to Lake Ontario, and the Gorge extending to Lewiston. The Niagara Escarpment, a geological formation that runs from New York State into Ontario and west to Wisconsin, is the landform over which the river – the outflow of four of the Great Lakes – plunges to form Niagara Falls (NPS 2005:23).

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area boundary follows the jurisdictional boundaries of the City of Niagara Falls at the southern end of the heritage area. It extends north along the Robert Moses Parkway to Lake Ontario and west to the Niagara River. It includes Goat Island, all of the City of Niagara Falls and villages of Lewiston and Youngstown, and portions of the towns of Lewiston and Porter. The legislatively delineated boundaries are shown in **Figure 1-1. [Insert legislative map]** A number of thematically related sites located outside of this boundary in Niagara and Erie Counties are also a part of the National Heritage Area and are identified in the management plan.

### **1.3.2 Designation of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area**

Local leaders first discussed the idea of a Niagara Falls National Heritage Area with the National Park Service in 2000. Several efforts to revitalize the Niagara Falls region were ongoing or developing during the same time. These included various design, planning, heritage, redevelopment, and promotional initiatives by the University of Buffalo; Bi-National Niagara Tourism Alliance; City of Niagara Falls; New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation; the USA Niagara Development Corporation (a subsidiary of the state's Empire State Development Corporation); and the Niagara Tourism and Convention Corporation (NPS 2005:7).

In 2001, upon the request of Senator Charles E. Schumer and Congressman John J. LaFalce, representatives of the National Park Service visited the Niagara region to explore opportunities for the federal agency to play a role in the region. A formal assessment, completed in July 2001, recommended that further study be undertaken to determine the feasibility of several possible opportunities. These included possible NPS technical assistance and designation of a national heritage area (NPS 2005:11).

Congress authorized preparation of a feasibility study to examine these opportunities under Public Law 107-256, the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Study Act, in October 2002. The study was completed by the National Park Service in 2005. It identified natural and cultural resources, articulated interpretive themes, mapped the region and sites by theme, considered various boundary options, identified potential partners and stakeholders, and assessed three possible management alternatives. The environmental assessment included in the study found that the potential impacts of the three proposed management alternatives were not significant, "although additional visitors staying over longer periods of time would contribute to the tourism economy and specific sites might receive more visitation" (NPS 2005:7).

The study determined that the Niagara Falls area met NPS criteria for designation as a national heritage area (NPS 2005:54) and provided supporting documentation for subsequent Congressional consideration of national heritage area designation for the region. In the spring of 2008, Congress established the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area under P.L. 110-229.

## 1.4 Foundation for Planning

The foundation for planning for the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area provides basic information and guidance for development of the management plan and for decisions to be made in implementing it. It is a reference through which options may be assessed and good decision-making may be informed. All programs undertaken through the heritage area should be grounded in the foundation for planning. From time to time, the foundation should be reexamined and updated. The foundation for planning includes:

- An outline of legislative requirements;
- A statement of significance;
- Vision, mission, and goals for the heritage area; and
- A review of interpretive themes that have been developed.

### 1.4.1 Legislative Requirements

Subtitle B of P.L. 110-229 is the enabling legislation for the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area. A copy of the legislation is provided in the appendices. Key elements of the enabling legislation are outlined below and reflected in the management plan.

Section 421 states the seven **purposes** for which the heritage area was established. These purposes are listed in Section 1.2 of this chapter, above.

Section 423 **designates** the heritage area and defines its **boundaries**. The boundaries are discussed in Section 1.4 of this chapter, above.

Section 424 outlines requirements for the heritage area **management plan**, which must be submitted to the Secretary of the Interior within **three years** of funds first being made available to the heritage area. Requirements include:

- Describe comprehensive policies, goals, strategies, and recommendations for **telling the story** of the heritage of the area covered by the National Heritage Area and encouraging long-term resource protection, enhancement, interpretation, funding, management, and development of the National Heritage Area;
- Include a description of **actions and commitments that federal, state, tribal, and local governments, private organizations, and citizens will take** to protect, enhance, interpret, fund, manage, and develop the natural, historical, cultural, educational, scenic, and recreational resources of the National Heritage Area;
- Specify existing and potential **sources of funding or economic development strategies** to protect, enhance, interpret, fund, manage, and develop the National Heritage Area;
- Include an **inventory of the natural, historical, cultural, educational, scenic, and recreational resources** of the National Heritage Area that should be protected, enhanced, interpreted, managed, funded, and developed;
- Recommend policies and strategies for **resource management**, including the development of **intergovernmental and interagency agreements** to protect, enhance,

- interpret, fund, manage, and develop the natural, historical, cultural, educational, scenic, and recreational resources of the National Heritage Area;
- Describe a **program for the implementation** for the management plan;
- Include an analysis of, and recommendations for, **means by which federal, state, tribal, or local programs may best be coordinated** (including the role of the National Park Service and other federal agencies associated with the National Heritage Area) to further the purposes of this subtitle; and
- Include a **business plan** for the local coordinating entity and its partnerships.

Section 426 outlines the designation and duties of the local coordinating entity. For the first five-year period beginning on the date of enactment, the Niagara Falls Heritage Area Commission is to serve as the local coordinating entity for the heritage area. Section 427 of the legislation establishes and outlines the composition, terms, and authorities of the Commission. After five years, a private nonprofit or governmental organization designated by the Commission is to serve as the local coordinating entity. To further the purposes of the National Heritage Area, the local coordinating entity is required to:

- Prepare a management plan;
- Submit an **annual report** to the Secretary of the Interior;
- Make available for audit **information pertaining to the expenditure of the funds and any matching funds**;
- Encourage **economic viability and sustainability** that is consistent with the purposes of the National Heritage Area; and
- Coordinate projects, activities, and programs with the **Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor**.

Section 472 states that the local coordinating entity may not use federal funds authorized under the legislation to acquire any interest in **real property**.

Section 428 encourages **federal agencies** planning to conduct activities that may have an impact upon the heritage area to **consult and coordinate with the local coordinating entity**, but does not otherwise modify or limit the authorities or responsibilities of federal agencies.

Section 429 clearly states that heritage area designation does not abridge any **private property** rights, require participation, permit public access to private property, alter any land use regulations, impact water rights, or create liabilities for owners of private property.

Section 430 authorizes the **appropriation** of not more than \$1,000,000 per year for the heritage area and a maximum of \$15,000,000. (Note: in practice, the actual yearly allocations to National Heritage Areas are significantly less than the authorized amounts.) The federal share of the cost of any activity assisted shall not be more than 50 percent. Non-federal costs may include in-kind goods and services. Federal funds available under other laws may be used for the purposes for which they were authorized.

Section 432, entitled *Sunset for Grants and Other Assistance*, states that the authority of the Secretary to provide financial assistance under the legislation terminates 15 years after the date of enactment.

#### 1.4.2 National Significance of the Heritage Area

The Niagara Falls, River and Gorge are rich in beauty and in stories. They are significant to the nation as a natural wonder and as the site of key events in American history. The narrative of Niagara Falls speaks to Native American, Colonial, European, and African American experiences in the region, and to the ascendancy and legacy of hydroelectric power in the United States. Nature, parks, trails, museums, urban neighborhoods, towns, and power plants are the physical components of the region that help people experience and absorb this history (NPS 2005).

The cultural history of the region begins with the indigenous people that have lived in the vicinity of the lower Niagara River (the origin of ‘Niagara’ is said to derive from the Iroquoian word ‘Onguiahara’) since the retreat of glacial ice, rise of the Great Lakes, and growth of deciduous forests along the Niagara escarpment. The changing temperate climate over several millennia allowed small groups of humans who were previously nomadic hunter-gatherers to settle and develop a more sedentary life style. The advent of agricultural practices created a prosperity that accommodated the formation of tribal societies. Although isolated artifact finds suggest an earlier presence, the oldest well-documented archeological sites in the region date to the Late Archaic Period (5,000 – 3,000 years B.P.) Since that time it is readily apparent through evidence recovered in the archeological record, that the Niagara region was settled continuously through the Woodland Period (3,000 B.P. to 1650 A.D.) up to the time of European contact.

For many generations the Five Nations had engaged in intertribal warfare with the western Algonquian League led by the Hurons, but events escalated to an unprecedented level when the Iroquois Confederacy formed trading partnerships with British and Dutch interests in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Armed with iron weaponry and eventually muskets gained in exchange for fur pelts, the Mohawks led the Iroquois Confederacy into a century-long series of raids and attacks on neighboring tribes commonly referred to as the Beaver Wars. From 1609 until the end of Queen Anne’s War in 1713 the Iroquois greatly expanded their territory and monopolized trade with European markets. Although the French had formed a strategic and trading alliance with the Algonquian Leagues maintaining control of northern Ontario and the coastal provinces, efforts to halt the advance of the Iroquois were ineffective. The battles were often brutal and are said to be one of the bloodiest series of conflicts in North American history. During this period the Iroquois succeeded in annihilating or assimilating entire tribes such as the Erie, Wenro, and the Neutral Nation; pushed back their ancient enemies, the Hurons, far to the north; and substantially expanded their own territory west to the Mississippi River and south into the Carolinas.

Euro-American cultural history in the region started with the exploration and settlement of northern North America by France and Great Britain. In 1534 Jacques Cartier laid claim to ‘New France’ in the name of King Francis I. Both Spain and Britain had laid similar claims to the ‘New World’ with overlapping territories on the continent, so the race was on to defend their respective national interests. Although the French had limited success with establishing permanent colonies, their efforts to explore and map the northeastern coastline and interior waterways were extensive. An example is Samuel de Champlain’s 1608 expedition along the St. Lawrence River which opens the interior of the continent to the French fur trade. Both Cartier and Champlain had heard stories of the great falls of Niagara, but neither ever witnessed them firsthand.

It seems likely that other Europeans would have made earlier visits to Niagara Falls, but the expedition lead by René-Robert Cavelier de la Salle is credited with the first documented account of the cascading torrents during a visit in 1678. Father Louis Hennepin, chronicler for the expedition, both wrote of the experience and prepared the first known illustration of the falls. One year later Cavelier de la Salle initiated construction of Fort Conti on the eastern bank of the Niagara River where it empties into Lake Ontario. Although destroyed by fire the following year,

the strategic location was fortified repeatedly during the years to come and became the site of Fort Niagara.

The clash between colonial empires for control of the New World sparked a series of wars that extended to the Niagara frontier. During the eighteenth century French and British forces along with their respective Indian allies fought over control of the region and its access to the Ohio River Valley, the Great Lakes, and the interior of the continent. These alliances reemerged on four occasions as battle lines were drawn between New France and New England during King William's War (1689-97), Queen Anne's War (1702-13), King George's War (1744-48), and the Seven Years War known in North America as the French and Indian War (1754-63). Fort Niagara, originally erected by the French in 1726 replacing earlier fortifications, became a British stronghold in 1759 following a nineteen day siege. The British occupied Fort Niagara until 1796, thirteen years after the end of the American Revolution.

In 1722 a sixth tribe, the Tuscarora or 'Sku-Rah-Reh' (meaning "Gatherers of Hemp") joined the Iroquois Confederacy. It is believed that the Tuscaroras came together as a people in the vicinity of the Great Lakes perhaps during the rise of the Five Nations, an idea supported by the fact that their language belongs to the Northern Iroquoian-language family. Before the arrival of Europeans in North America, the Tuscarora had migrated south and settled in what is now eastern North Carolina. At first, relations between the first European settlers and the Tuscarora remained peaceful. However, increasing tensions sparked the Tuscarora War which was fought from 1711 to 1715 resulting in the migration of most of the Tuscarora people who left North Carolina over the next several decades. Migrating north to Pennsylvania and New York because of the ancestral connection, they ultimately found refuge with the Oneida Nation who sponsored their entry into the Iroquois Confederacy.

The Iroquois Confederacy remained relatively intact during the French and Indian War with the Six Nations siding primarily with the British. On the end of the war the British Crown issued the Royal Proclamation of 1763 recognizing the Iroquois Territory west of the Appalachian Mountains and forbidding any British-sponsored settlements in the region. Subsequently, at the 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix the Iroquois agreed to sell the British Crown their claim to lands between the Tennessee and Ohio rivers.

The American Revolutionary War created a major rift in the Iroquois Confederacy. The British promise of a large reservation for the Iroquois in the American Mid-west motivated the Mohawk, Seneca, Onondaga and Cayuga to remain loyal to the British Crown while many Tuscarora and Oneida sided with the American Continental Army. Raids were staged by pro-British Iroquois on frontier farms and settlements in the Mohawk Valley forcing General George Washington to plan the Sullivan Campaign, a major offensive against the Iroquois intended to destroy the British-Indian alliance. After the war, a large contingent of Iroquois left New York to settle in Ontario, Canada on a large land grant on the Grand River provided for their service and loyalty to the British Crown. The reservation exists to this day and the tribal nation is recognized as the Six Nations of the Grand River by the Canadian government.

At the end of the American Revolution, the Treaty of Paris (1783) assigned the eastern banks of the Niagara River to the United States and established the existing international boundary between the United States and Canada down the center of the Niagara River. However, British occupation of Fort Niagara was ultimately relinquished to American interests only after the signing of the 1794 Treaty of Amity Commerce and Navigation, also known as Jay's Treaty.



Also in 1794 a treaty was signed in Canandaigua, New York between representatives of the United States of America and the Six Nations of the Iroquois restoring tribal lands in western New York State that had been ceded to the British by the 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix. The Canandaigua Treaty also recognized the sovereignty of the Six Nations to govern and set laws as individual nations.

During the War of 1812, in response to American forces setting fire to Newark, Ontario (present day Niagara-on-the-Lake) on December 15, 1813, British forces mounted a counter attack capturing Fort Niagara on December 18<sup>th</sup> and descending on Lewiston, New York the following morning. British troops accompanied by allied Mohawks and American Tories descended upon the village. The small American militia unit in the vicinity was no match for the invading force and as the village was being burned and its inhabitants killed, a band of Tuscarora from a nearby Indian village intervened. Although substantially outnumbered, the Tuscarorans fought with a fierce tenacity against the British regulars and their Haudenosaunee brethren allowing the remaining villagers to escape harm. Lewiston, the Tuscaroran village, and a few days later Buffalo, were burned to the ground by British forces. The following year in July, American forces invaded British Canada at Fort Erie and advanced to Niagara Falls, Ontario in one of several attempts by American forces to raid Canada. This attempt was repulsed at the Battle of Lundy's Lane in Niagara Falls, Ontario not far from the falls. It was not long after that negotiation to end the war was initiated and ultimately finalized with the American ratification of the Treaty of Ghent in February 1815 thus putting an end to the Colonial era.

The City of Niagara Falls and the City of Buffalo twenty miles to the south have been allies in the growth and development of a substantial industrial legacy during the 19th and early 20th centuries some of which remains in the existing built environment of both communities. The need to transport goods and passengers around the Falls helped inspire construction of the Erie Canal, an engineering success story, from the Great Lakes to the Hudson River and New York City during the early nineteenth century. Buffalo became a boomtown with the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, the first major investment in transportation infrastructure in the United States. The construction of the railroad to Niagara Falls in 1838 made the largest waterfall in North America dramatically more accessible as a tourist destination.

Already well-positioned as the gateway to navigation along the Great Lakes and points beyond, Buffalo benefited further by its proximity to Niagara Falls when the mighty cascades were harnessed for hydroelectric power in 1881 and long-range commercial distribution of electricity was perfected soon thereafter. In 1895 Westinghouse Electric built the world's first large generating station for alternating current in Niagara Falls. Part of the complex, the Adams Power Plant Transformer House, still stands and has been designated as a National Historic Landmark by the National Park Service. By 1900 Buffalo was the largest and most prosperous city on the Great Lakes with more millionaires residing within its limits than any other city in the nation. Niagara Falls shared in this prosperity with many industrial facilities over the years taking advantage of inexpensive power. Such name brands as Nabisco, International Paper, and Dupont Chemical had plants in Niagara Falls. This hub of industry and technology also played a major role in the development of the nuclear bomb during World War II.

With the advent of tourism in the nineteenth century came hotels, museums, tours, boat rides, souvenirs, and outrageous stunts – tightrope walkers crossing the Niagara River Gorge on wires and daredevils staging death-defying plunges in barrels over the falls. Over time Niagara Falls became one of America's major travel destinations for families and for couples on their honeymoons. Uninhibited commercialism inspired a group of influential individuals led by Frederic Law Olmsted to lobby for preservation and restoration of Niagara Falls. After 15 years

of effort, the Niagara Falls State Reservation was created in 1885, the nation's first state park. The process through which the state park was conserved and made available free of charge to visitors supported a national movement to use public money for the protection of land as public parks, and helped inspire the creation of the National Park Service (NPS 2005).

Prior to the American Civil War, the Underground Railroad routed fugitives to the Buffalo Niagara region because of its proximity to Canada. Individuals and families escaping enslavement crossed the Niagara River to Canada and freedom. The village of Suspension Bridge, now within the City of Niagara Falls, was the site of John Roebling's phenomenal 1855 bridge that proved the feasibility of suspension bridge technology for both railroad and vehicle traffic. His bridge became a major crossing point of the Underground Railroad in the years before the war. Others crossed the river by boat from Lewiston and Youngstown and even by swimming.

The nineteenth century brought pioneers of a different kind to Niagara Falls. Innovative entrepreneurs and industrialists began to harness the water power of the Niagara River in the mid-1800s, and water-powered factories and mills were constructed along the river, canals, and gorge. In the 1880s, the emerging technology of hydroelectric generation heralded a transformation in American life. Niagara Falls was the scene of an intense and high-stakes competition in hydroelectric technology involving such names as Edison, Tesla, Westinghouse, and Kelvin. Entrepreneurs constructed the first large-scale hydroelectric power plants with the capability of generating large amounts of electricity. For the first time, electricity was produced in amounts large enough to power cities. Emerging electrothermic and electrochemical industries requiring amounts of power not before possible were drawn to Niagara Falls, which soon became an industrial center and the cutting edge location for industries that transformed twentieth century life.

Large modern factories were constructed along the river and gorge. The city expanded with an influx of white collar managers and blue collar workers of diverse ethnic backgrounds. Utopian visions at the dawn of the era of electricity predicted a gleaming future of plenty. Niagara Falls was to be the model city of the twentieth century.

Niagara Falls grew rapidly as an industrial center and a center of technology and innovation. By mid-century, however, new realities set in. Revolutionary developments in product creation by industry from the early 1900s through the 1940s led to intense environmental degradation with the potential for significant harm to human health and the environment. Beginning in the 1960s with changes in technology, widespread availability of electricity from other power sources, and the transfer of manufacturing to overseas locations, plants began to close down, jobs were lost, and the population began to decline as people moved elsewhere for work. The link between hazardous waste and public health became evident at Love Canal in the LaSalle neighborhood of Niagara Falls in the 1970s. After a disturbing expose by the *Niagara Gazette* documenting an unusually high rate of birth defects and cancer deaths in a 36-block area, public outcry and federal investigations eventually led to the establishment of several Superfund and Brownfield remediation sites in the area and the awakening of a national environmental awareness.

Today, the City of Niagara Falls is working hard and successfully towards building a new economy – one based upon service and tourism industries. The National Heritage Area, by protecting and illuminating the many natural, historical, and cultural treasures of the community, is one of several important initiatives in the region focused upon revitalizing the local economy and community.

### **1.4.3 Context, Vision, and Mission**

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area management plan includes a shared vision for the heritage area along with related context and mission statements and goals for the program. The context, vision, mission, and goals presented below encapsulate the perspective, direction, and consensus of commissioners as recorded during three workshops. These program elements have been directly influenced by public input and comments received during the planning process. These elements have guided and informed the preparation of the management plan alternatives and implementation strategies.

#### **Context Statement for the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area**

The first Niagara, or Onghiara, existed for generations as a natural wonder. Those who heard of the ‘thundering waters’ would travel great distances to look in amazement upon the mighty cascades and marvel at the magical ‘moonbow’ in its mist. In wintertime, many would make a special trip to the shimmering fantasyland in the river gorge, scaling the sculpted tumble of ice floes and gazing at the landscape encased in frozen spray. The falls, with raging cataracts above and menacing eddies below, was inspiration for myth and legend.

The second Niagara is a product of geography, aesthetic and industrialization. Native peoples and Europeans fought among and against each other for control of this natural wonder. Those wishing to access the continent's interior via the Niagara River and the Great Lakes, the interstate highways of early America, had to travel around the Falls. Whichever nation controlled the portage held the key to the continent. Major wars eventually established a firm border between the United States and Canada along the Niagara River. Canadians and Americans joined forces in harnessing the waters of Niagara to generate technological strength, power economic growth, and advance scientific knowledge. During this era repeated efforts to tame the overwhelming torrent and alter its appearance have resulted in a spectacle that now reflects a human sense of order and beauty.

Now, at this time of global transition, a third Niagara must emerge to face the future. The importance of caring for this intertwined natural and cultural legacy should be recognized and embraced by the world. Responsible stewards of this heritage must join forces to create a larger Niagara community that can adequately address the opportunities and challenges of this inheritance. The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area will serve as part of this community as defined below and based on the following vision and mission statements.

#### **Vision for the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area**

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area is an internationally recognized biosphere, cultural icon, and renowned destination of historical significance. It enables the growth of a sustainable regional economy and the conservation of its natural and cultural resources in ways that benefit and unite its people and places. Its natural splendor and meaningful heritage are shared with millions of delighted visitors and celebrated by its residents so that its environment and communities are thriving.

#### **Mission Statement for the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area**

The work of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area is to enhance public appreciation for the communities, significant historic and natural resources, and landscapes of the Niagara region. The National Heritage Area works through a network of heritage area partners who seek to make interpretive, environmental, economic, and social improvements that benefit residents and visitors alike. Where initiative is lacking, the National Heritage Area will take action to fill the

gap. In pursuing this mission, the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area encourages historic preservation, recreational access, and environmental recovery. We value authenticity, cultural diversity, high-quality design, energy efficiency, regional and cross-border leadership, open communication, and transparent operations.

#### 1.4.4 Interpretive Themes

The 2005 Study Report developed four key interpretive themes that help convey the overall history and significance of the Niagara Falls region and its peoples. These interpretive themes were derived from a variety of sources with input from local experts and the public. Following an inventory and review of existing natural and cultural resources within the heritage area, themes were identified that were most cohesive, pervasive, and distinctive in relation to those resources. The themes are reflected in the purposes outlined in the heritage area's enabling legislation.

Themes are the organizing framework within which interpretation of individual resources and stories may be presented with reference to the context of the whole. The four themes developed for the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area are meant to be broad and comprehensive so that they are able to capture a wide range of pertinent stories and individual sites. The use of themes will help determine how interpretation will be undertaken heritage area-wide, how regional interpretation might be organized, and how linkages between sites and resources might be created.

The interpretive themes presented in the study are fully described in Chapter 6 of the management plan, *Niagara's Interpretive Experience*. They are summarized below (NPS 2005:35-44).

1. **Natural Phenomenon:** At Niagara Falls we encounter a natural phenomenon that is overwhelming in its magnitude and deeply embedded in popular consciousness. To understand the distinctive characteristics of the region, the primary focus must be on this unparalleled resource and the geological processes that formed it. The Falls, Gorge, and rapids are the focus here. Natural Phenomenon is a descriptive physical theme which presents a geological basis for the dramatic spectacle that visitors come to see and relates it to the Niagara Escarpment and the entire Great Lakes region. The theme accommodates the full range of natural resources including the unusual plant and animal communities that flourish due to microclimates in the area. It is different from the remaining three themes, which are cultural and describe how people have perceived and made use of the compelling natural resource.
2. **Tourism and Recreation:** This theme explores the development of Niagara Falls as a cultural symbol and tourist attraction. It encompasses a history of tourism that extends from early European and American encounters with the Falls to the growth of mass tourism, the honeymoon phenomenon, and modern efforts to revitalize the City of Niagara Falls. Niagara offers an exceptional opportunity to examine American responses to the natural world. It includes the story of the nineteenth century conservation movement, with the Frederick Law Olmsted-led efforts to protect what has become today's Niagara Falls State Park and the park's relationship to the development of the National Park System. The Tourism and Recreation theme also describes the traditions of outrageous behavior at the Falls, including such activities as high-wire acts and going over the Falls in a barrel.

3. **Power and Industry:** Niagara Falls was the place where the large-scale generation of electricity was first undertaken, with tremendous implications for changes in the American way of life. The story is rich with personalities, innovation, and high-stakes risk. It includes the first development and installation of large electrical generators, the first long distance transmission of electrical power, and the attraction of cutting edge industries that have shaped human experience in the twentieth century. In highlighting the history of power generation, the Power and Industry theme presents a story of major technological advancements and the binational cooperation necessary to harness hydroelectric power at the Falls. The theme includes the industrial development that arose dependent upon Niagara power, pollution caused by industry, and today's efforts of environmental remediation.
4. **Borderland/Border Crossing:** Niagara's position on an international boundary has shaped its character in a variety of ways. This theme encompasses (1) the history of military activity in the region from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; (2) the importance of the Niagara River as a passage between the Great Lakes and the interior of the continent; (3) the significance of the river as an international boundary – both in terms of the friendly relationship between the United States and Canada and in the development of transportation facilities on either side of the river; (4) the importance of the Niagara Frontier and access to Canada in the operation of the Underground Railroad during the nineteenth century; and (5) the history of Indian tribes in the region, including the Tuscarora Nation. The borderland theme is expansive in both geographical and interpretive scope. It can address an array of economic and social issues that are in some way dependent on the existence of an international boundary.

### 1.5 Public Participation and Scoping

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Environmental Assessment and Management Plan has been prepared with the goal of engaging partners and members of the public in the planning process and implementation. Scoping for the project has included consultations with a wide range of potential partners within the region, field work to document and assess existing conditions, and a series of public meetings and workshops to receive public input.

Toward the beginning of the planning process, the consulting team prepared a civic engagement memorandum to provide a blueprint and guidance for the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Commission, which has played the lead role in engaging members of the public. Heritage area management planning requires a rich process for reaching out and talking to many groups and leaders who can contribute information, perspectives, leadership, communication to their audiences, and various resources for implementation. At the end of the management planning process, part of the Secretary of the Interior's judgment as to the soundness of the final management plan will be to assess how thoroughly consultation was done. Moreover, commitments to action are needed from stakeholder-participants for implementation.

The civic engagement memo prepared for the Commission outlined the status of public participation in the project and how the planning process might reach as many interested groups as possible in the best ways possible, so that by the end of the planning process the Commission would have many willing partners. The memo provided an initial list of possible partners and interested organizations under categories of activity. The memo provided a blueprint for civic engagement through the alternatives phase of the planning process. As a working document, it was adapted in its implementation to changing circumstances in order to maximize effectiveness. Documentation of the public participation process was undertaken through notes, meeting

minutes, and revisions to planning documents in order to demonstrate the extent of public involvement.

### **1.5.1 The Scoping Process**

A full description of the planning process for the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Management Plan is included in Chapter 5, *Consultation and Coordination*. Scoping for the management plan began with a field visit in December of 2009 when the consulting team was contracted. At the time, nominations for members of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Commission had been made and submitted to the Department of the Interior for approval. Final approval, however, was not received until October of 2010. In the meantime, the consulting team undertook existing conditions evaluations, researched potential partners, and consulted with a number of key partners in order to appreciate issues and conditions within the region.

Upon being informed that the Commission had been approved and seated, arrangements were made to begin the planning process. The first meeting of the Commission occurred on December 8, 2010, during which organizing activities were undertaken. Since then, the Commission has held regular monthly meetings, progressing through the planning process. Commission meetings are open to the public and public comments and input are encouraged. Consultations with potential partners were undertaken by commissioners and the consulting team around visits for each monthly meeting of the Commission in order to inform and engage various interest groups. Additional consultations and presentations have been conducted by commissioners. The management plan scoping process has included:

- Initial field visits in December 2009 and March 2010 by the consulting team to become familiar with existing conditions and to consult with key partners.
- Research in January and February 2010 to identify potential partners and organizations within the region that may have an interest in the heritage area.
- During the course of the project preparation of a draft Environmental Assessment for the proposed federal action consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act including the provision of chapters addressing Purpose and Need, Alternatives, Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences.
- Organization of the planning process in October and November of 2010 upon being informed that the Commission had been seated.
- Initial public meeting of the Commission on December 8, 2010 to organize, elect officers, review bylaws, and begin the planning process.
- First regular monthly meeting of the Commission on January 26, 2011 to continue organizing and consider potential early actions; and conduct a planning workshop of the Commission to discuss vision, issues, and opportunities.
- News release on February 16, 2011; Commission meeting on February 23 continuing discussion of vision, issues, and opportunities; public information meeting on February 23 and distribution of Planning Newsletter #1 outlining the heritage area concept, introducing the Commission, and describing the planning process.
- Commission meeting on March 30, 2011; public meeting on March 30 facilitating discussion of issues and opportunities; Commission workshop on March 31 continuing discussion of vision, goals, opportunities, and strategies.
- Commission meeting on April 27, 2011 and consultations with partners focusing upon heritage tourism.
- Commission meeting on May 25, 2011, initiating discussion of draft alternatives for the heritage area.

- Commission meeting on June 29, 2011 on draft vision and goals, draft alternatives, and the public engagement process for alternatives.
- Commission meeting on July 27, 2011 on alternatives; public meetings on July 26 and 27 presenting draft alternatives; distribution of Planning Newsletter #2 on alternatives by email and meeting handouts; posting of draft alternatives online on the heritage area website and NPS Public Education Public Comment (PEPC) website.
- Commission meeting on August 31, 2011 to select a preliminary preferred alternative for additional public review and comments.
- Upon the selection of a preferred alternative and completion of the environmental assessment process, including public review and comment, the Commission and partners then began development of a detailed management plan outlining policies, strategies, and actions to implement the preferred alternative in accordance with the requirements of the heritage area's enabling legislation.
- Posting of the draft Environmental Assessment on the heritage area website and NPS PEPC website; public notification and invitation for comments and input through email and news release.
- April 2012, providing a thirty-day public comment period.
- After May 1, 2012 review public comments provided and prepare a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) statement to be forwarded to the U.S. Secretary of the Interior for final review and approval.

### **1.5.2 Issues Identified through Scoping**

In January 2011, commissioners met in a workshop to discuss a vision for the heritage area, issues the heritage area should address, and opportunities that were especially suitable to the heritage area initiative. The Commission continued these discussions at its February and March meetings, and public discussion was facilitated on these subjects during public meetings in February and March.

Initially, thirteen key subjects were identified encapsulating the issues faced by the Niagara region. Guiding principles and potential strategies the heritage area could undertake related to those issues were outlined and discussed. Through that discussion, the key subjects were consolidated into nine subjects of interest that would address regional issues. These nine areas eventually became the basis for the goals presented in the following section.

### **1.5.3 Goals for the National Heritage Area**

The thirteen key subjects were reorganized and consolidated into the following nine topics and goals that will address the issues that the Niagara region faces:

1. **Heritage Area Management and Regional Positioning** – Work to extend the communication, coordination, and cooperation among governments, communities, and organizations that are essential to regional success in heritage tourism.
2. **Interpretation and Education** – Assure the creation of a high-quality educational and interpretive program, providing partners with a framework and opportunities to inform and inspire a wide range of audiences and nurture public appreciation for the diverse communities, cultures, resources, and environments in the Niagara region.

3. **Visitor Experience and Heritage Tourism** – Offer and promote authentic regional heritage tourism opportunities that communicate a unified message and provide visitors with a transformational experience.
4. **Engaging our Young People** – Provide interactive and engaging opportunities for children, teenagers, and young adults that motivate them to develop knowledge and understanding of the community's important stories; learn useful skills and trades; and become the region's next generation of leaders.
5. **Outdoor Recreation** – Identify and support outdoor activities and programs, eco-tourism opportunities, and recreational access and facilities that enhance heritage area resources and amenities.
6. **Sense of Place, Sense of Community** – Maintain and improve sense of place and community by assisting in the recognition and restoration of significant resources and landscapes and supporting their preservation, conservation, and enhancement.
7. **Historic Preservation** – Maximize the heritage area's significant historic and cultural resources as working community assets.
8. **Nature and the River** – Support restoration and enhancement of the heritage area's natural environment that uses a sustainable approach and engages the public in appreciating the river and nature.
9. **Economic Revitalization** – Foster economic revitalization through advocating the principles and best practices of heritage tourism.

## 1.6 Impact Topics

The planning process involves evaluating alternatives for management of the National Heritage Area in order to test ideas and explore varied approaches based upon differing goals, strategies, and interests. Through the exploration of alternatives, we can better understand the potential impacts and consequences of programs and actions that would result.

Based on the issues and concerns identified during scoping, specific impact topics were developed to focus the environmental impact analysis. Impact topics cover resources of concern that could be affected, either adversely or beneficially, by the range of alternatives presented in the heritage area management plan. The use of specific impact topics allows comparison of the environmental consequences of each alternative based on the most relevant topics.

The impact topics are based on federal laws, regulations, and executive orders; NPS Management Policies 2001; and information obtained through the scoping process. Following is a list of the impact topics retained for analysis, with a rationale for their selection, as well as a list of impact topics that were dismissed from detailed analysis, with the rationale for dismissal. In identifying these impact topics, the consulting team reviewed the categories listed in association with NPS Director's Order 12. The impact topics presented below are grouped by broad resource categories.

### 1.6.1 Impact Topics Retained for Analysis

#### Natural Resources and Landscapes



Among the purposes identified in the enabling legislation for the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area is to preserve, support, conserve, and interpret the natural and scenic resources of the heritage area. Niagara Falls and the Niagara River Gorge are world-class natural resources. They are home to rare plant communities due to the unique microclimates created here as well as a range of animal and aquatic species.

The plant communities and animals of the Gorge have been the subject of studies undertaken for the re-licensing of the Robert Moses Niagara Power Plant and Lewiston Pumped Storage Plant. They continue to be the subject of ongoing studies for their conservation, protection, and restoration. The roles that the heritage area might play in these ongoing issues are of interest. The following impact topics relating to natural resources were retained:

- The Niagara Gorge and Escarpment, Unique Ecosystem
- Vegetation/Threatened and Endangered Plant Species
- Important Wildlife

### **Historic and Cultural Resources**

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area was created in large part to recognize and interpret the significant role the region played in American history and culture. As with natural resources, the heritage area's enabling legislation identifies its purpose to preserve, support, conserve, and interpret the cultural and historic resources of the region. The Niagara region's historical significance is outlined in Section 1.5.2 of this chapter. Interpretive themes related to that significance have been identified in the 2005 *Niagara National Heritage Area Study*. The recognition and condition of extant historic resources within the region are discussed in Chapter 3 of this management plan. The role of the heritage area in the interpretation and preservation of historic and cultural resources is of significant interest. The following impact topics were retained for analysis relating to historic and cultural resources:

- Historic Properties and Districts
- Native American Associated Sites other than Indian Trust Resources and Sacred Sites
- Archeological Resources
- Interpretive Facilities and Collections

### **Socio-economic Context**

Among the issues identified during scoping is the need for economic revitalization in the City of Niagara Falls. Chapter 3 outlines the socio-economic conditions within the region. The city's comprehensive plan describes how these socio-economic conditions are related to the loss of industry, lack of economic opportunity, a poor and aging population, and other significant challenges.

The city has created a vision for its future that builds upon its assets and opportunities and seeks to improve the local quality of life. It is hoped that the heritage area can play a central coordinating role in implementing this vision. The following impact topics have been retained relating to socio-economic resources:

- Socio-economic factors, employment

### **Tourism and Visitor Experience**

The enabling legislation states that a purpose of the heritage area is "to promote heritage, cultural, and recreational tourism and to develop educational and cultural programs for visitors and the

general public.” The quality of visitor experience is critical to a successful tourism initiative. Niagara Falls is a world-class visitor attraction and hosts approximately eight million visitors a year. Encouraging those visitors to explore the region’s other sites and communities and to stay longer is a core strategy for the region’s economic revitalization.

In the past, the City of Niagara Falls relied upon its industries as the base of its prosperity. Tourism resources were neglected and the quality of visitor experience declined significantly. Niagara Falls, Ontario, became the favored destination for visitors, while Niagara Falls, USA, was bypassed. The goal for revitalization of the city and of increasing visitation regionally is dependent upon reversing this trend and creating a high-quality visitor experience based upon the region’s assets and character. The following impact topics for visitor experience have been retained:

- Visitor experience
- Scenic and recreation resources

### **1.6.2 Impact Topics Dismissed from Analysis**

Several impact topics were considered during the scoping process, but were then dismissed from detailed analysis because the preparation of the management plan had no relationship or impact. These impact topics are described below along with the rationale for their dismissal as it relates to the national heritage area management plan.

#### **Regional and Community Planning**

Regional and community planning are a means of organizing and implementing actions related to economic and community revitalization. To the extent that the heritage area can be a factor in community revitalization, it must be aware of community issues and conditions and the role it might play as a positive, unifying force. However, the heritage area organization will rely heavily on the actions of other partner agencies and organizations in order to have any effect on planning issues and concerns. For this reason, the following impact topics relating to regional and community planning have been dismissed:

- Land use
- Urban quality, gateway communities.
- Long-term management of resources
- Transportation

#### **Natural Resources and Landscapes**

The following impact topics relating to natural resources were dismissed:

- Topographic Features
- Geology and Geological Features
- Prime and Unique Agricultural Land
- Hydrology
- Climate

#### **Historic and Cultural Resources**

The following impact topics relating to cultural resources were dismissed:

- Thematically Related Cultural Resources Beyond the Heritage Area Boundary

- Indian Trust Resources and Sacred Sites

Secretarial Order 3175 requires that any anticipated impacts to Indian Trust Resources and Assets by a proposed project or action by Department of the Interior agencies be explicitly addressed in environmental documents. The federal Indian Trust responsibility is a legally enforceable obligation on the part of the United States to protect tribal lands, assets, resources, and treaty rights, and it represents a duty to carry out the mandates of federal laws with respect to federally-recognized Native American tribes.

The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area involves resources of interest to three federally-recognized Native American tribes: the Seneca Nation of Indians, the Tonawanda Band of Seneca Indians, and the Tuscarora Nation. Also representatives from two of these three tribal nations serve on the Commission. Tribal lands that are contained within the primary heritage area boundary include the Niagara Territory held in interest by the Seneca Nation of Indians for their casino and related operations in the City of Niagara Falls.

As outlined in Chapter 5, *Consultation and Coordination*, the National Park Service has been in communication with Native American tribes believed to have possible interest in the Niagara region about planning for the heritage area and tribal representatives for two nations currently serve on the Commission. There are no known Indian Trust Resources or Assets in the Niagara Fall National Heritage Area, and the lands comprising the NHA are not held in trust by the Secretary of the Interior for the benefit of Indians due to their status as Indians. Therefore, the impact topic of Indian Trust Resources was dismissed

### **Energy Resources**

Niagara Falls is significant to the nation's history in part due to the cutting edge development of hydroelectric generation and transmission during the late nineteenth century and the new industries that came here because of the availability of large amounts of electricity during the early twentieth century. The development of electricity at Niagara Falls changed the American way of life. Today, the Robert Moses Niagara Power Plant is the largest electrical generating facility in New York State. Funding obligated as a part of the plant's re-licensing supports many community enhancement initiatives that are expected to be associated with the heritage area initiative. Although it has historical and ongoing significance to the heritage area, region and the nation as an interpretive theme, the subject of energy resources has been dismissed as an impact topic with respect to development of the management plan.

### **Toxic Waste**

As a result of the region's industrial development, toxic wastes were introduced into the local environment over the course of the twentieth century with catastrophic consequences. Dangerous chemicals were dumped or buried without regulation or responsibility, polluting the soils and groundwater to an extent that was unimagined, seriously impacting human and environmental health. This environmental nightmare was a far cry from the utopian vision of the city espoused during the early days of electrical era.

One positive consequence, however, was the awakening of an environmental consciousness across the nation resulting from the publicity related to grassroots movements such as that created around Love Canal. A national program of Brownfield responsibility and cleanup was begun and continues today. Many former industrial sites in the Niagara Falls area have been remediated and additional sites are being cleaned today. Although this subject and issue is significant to the City of Niagara Falls and the region, the activities and programs associated with the national heritage

area will not directly generate or remove any toxic waste and, therefore, has been dismissed as an impact topic.

### **Environmental Justice**

The United States Environmental Protection Agency defines environmental justice as:

“...fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Fair treatment means that no group of people, including a racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group, should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local, and tribal programs and policies.”

The goal of ‘fair treatment’ is not to shift risks among populations, but to identify potentially disproportionately high and adverse effects and prepare alternatives that may mitigate these impacts. Both minority and low-income populations are present in the vicinity of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area; however, environmental justice is dismissed as an impact topic for the following reasons:

- The Commission actively solicited public participation as part of the planning process and gave equal consideration to all input from persons regardless of age, race, income status, or other socioeconomic or demographic factors.
- Implementation of the proposed alternatives would not result in any identifiable adverse human health effects. Therefore, there would be no direct or indirect adverse effects on any minority or low-income population.
- The impacts associated with implementation of the proposed alternatives would not disproportionately affect any minority or low-income population or community.
- Any impacts to the socioeconomic environment would not appreciably alter the physical and social structure of the nearby communities.

### **1.7 Relationships to Other Plans and Projects**

Planning is a key element of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area program and is essential to fulfilling the mission of making interpretive, environmental, economic and social improvements that benefit residents and visitors alike. To be effective, the management plan must recognize the planning goals, strategies, and actions being undertaken by its partners. It must tailor heritage area programs to support and complement its partners’ plans and, where appropriate, use those plans to help implement heritage area goals and strategies.

An overview of existing planning efforts and the broad regional goals articulated in pertinent planning documents is provided in Chapter 3, *Affected Environment*. Broad strategies related to existing plans are articulated in the alternatives in Chapter 2 and detailed for implementation of the preferred alternative in the management plan. A clear understanding of existing planning efforts in the region will enable the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area to implement a management plan that supports partners within the region and avoids duplicating ongoing

programs. Plans considered in the development of alternatives and in the creation of the management plan included those listed below.

A. Community Planning Documents

- Comprehensive Plan for the City of Niagara Falls, USA, 2009
- Niagara Communities Comprehensive Plan 2030 (Niagara County)
- Village of Lewiston, Local Waterfront Revitalization Program, 1991
- Village of Youngstown, Local Waterfront Revitalization Program, 1990
- Town of Porter Comprehensive Plan, 2004
- Town of Lewiston, Comprehensive Plan, 1981, revised 1998

B. Regional Planning Documents and Initiatives

- Niagara River Greenway Plan, 2007
- Niagara Power Project relicensing – Environmental Impact Statement, related studies and documents, and funded projects 2007 to present.
- Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor
- Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Area
- USA Niagara redevelopment programs – Empire State Development
- Great Lakes Seaway Trail National Scenic Byway
- Strategic Plan, Niagara Tourism and Convention Center, 2010-2014
- Marketing Plan, Niagara Tourism and Convention Center, 2010-2014
- Visitor Report, Niagara Falls, NY, Longwoods Travel USA, 2008
- A Cultural Tourism Strategy: Enriching Culture and Building Tourism in Buffalo Niagara, Buffalo Niagara Cultural Tourism Initiative, January 2005
- Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, Niagara County, 2006
- Revealing Niagara: A Citizen Vision for Heritage and Cultural Tourism in the Bi-National Niagara Region, 2002
- Niagara River Greenway Facilitation Services, Progress Report, September 2005
- Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Niagara County
- Achieving Niagara Falls' Future: An Assessment of Niagara Falls' Waterfront Planning, April 2002
- Rethinking the Niagara Frontier, A Report on the Continuing Bi-National Forum, April 2001

C. Other Types of Plans Considered

- State Heritage Area management plans including the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad State Heritage Area initiative
- Scenic byways, tours, and recreational trails
- Agency and nonprofit plans regarding open space conservation and stewardship
- Resource management and interpretive plans for historic and natural sites and parks