

## CHAPTER 6 › CONSERVING COMMUNITY & TRADITIONS



*Musicians accompany Los Matachines dancing at a festival held annually by Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Conejos. Matchines dances are a tradition from Mexico to Northern New Mexico and the southern San Luis Valley and often symbolize elaborate stories. (Photo by Kathleen Figgen, Southern Colorado Council on the Arts Folklorist Collection, Adams State University, Nielsen Library)*

### INTRODUCTION

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area promotes its heritage through a variety of means. While some communities and institutions sponsor formal educational programs, others engage residents and visitors alike through more recreational or leisure-time experiences, such as festivals, art shows, museums, farmers' markets, musical performances, and youth programs. All, however, keep alive the rich cultural traditions that reinforce the identity of the heritage area's communities and instill pride within its residents.

This chapter focuses specifically upon how the heritage area can provide leadership in assuring that communities, schools, and residents are fully engaged in the mission of conserving a sense of community and tradition; encourage learning opportunities that demonstrate the importance of the region's cultural heritage; and provide support to existing programs and new initiatives that build both community and visitor awareness of the heritage area's character and significance. Education and engagement are closely tied to interpretation, and one purpose of educational outreach is building local audiences for interpretive attractions and institutions.

It is not possible to "preserve" culture and traditions in the same sense that we would preserve or restore an adobe church or other historic or traditional structure. Culture, like nature, is always changing. It is possible, however, to recognize the conditions that surround and support culture and traditions, and based on that knowledge, to design programs that support and celebrate community and heritage. The objective is to create the context in which individuals, families, groups, and communities can maintain cultural traditions and ties, transmit them to the next generation, and take advantage of opportunities as they arise, whether those opportunities are economic, performance, or educational in nature.

### THE PLANNING FOUNDATION FOR CONSERVING COMMUNITY AND TRADITIONS

The National Heritage Area's enabling legislation, the goals developed as we planned for the heritage area, and the scenarios that outlined our strategies form the foundation for planning. Aspects of these documents as they relate to conserving communities and traditions are noted below.





## Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

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### **The National Heritage Area's Enabling Legislation**

The need for initiatives promoting public awareness of the special nature of this National Heritage Area's resources as a part of our programming is established in its enabling legislation, Public Law 111-11, Title VIII, Subtitle A, Section 8001, which is summarized in Chapter 1. The legislation describes the purposes for which the heritage area was designated and outlines requirements for the management plan, including the following language drawn from Sec. 8001(c):

- Developing recreational and **educational opportunities** in the heritage area; and
- Increasing **public awareness of, and appreciation for,** natural, historical, scenic, and cultural resources of the heritage area.

### **National Heritage Area Goals for Conserving Community & Tradition**

**Primary Goal 2:** Tell the stories of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area in ways that build community pride and support preservation, living traditions, economic development, and community revitalization. In particular:

*Goal 2-1,* Protect and celebrate living heritage resources—language, art, traditions, spirituality, etc., and sites associated with traditional cultural practices. Foster understanding and pride in our cultural identity and community spirit among residents of all ages and among Colorado residents in general.

*Goal 2-2,* Foster understanding and pride in our cultural identity and community spirit among residents of all ages and among Colorado residents in general.

### **Heritage Area Goals**

Primary Goal 2 developed for the National Heritage Area relates to conserving community and tradition (see sidebar). This goal and related sub-goals emphasize protecting living heritage resources and building understanding of the region's cultural identity along with practices to improve communities' economic conditions, which are addressed in Chapter 9.

### **Direction for Conserving Culture and Tradition from the Planning Process**

Early in our planning, from input from public meetings and stakeholder interviews, it became clear that several key concepts and initiatives are central to conserving the culture and traditions of the heritage area. These included targeted collaboration with schools and colleges to teach young people about their heritage, engaging youth, recording and documenting traditions and artifacts, supporting and promoting existing cultural programs, and encouraging broader community involvement with all initiatives.

### **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR CONSERVING COMMUNITY AND TRADITIONS**

In order for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area to thrive, residents, communities, organizations, and institutions must be fully engaged in conserving and promoting the region's cultural heritage and identity. Creation of a rich and diverse program of community education and engagement will be stimulated through five key strategies:

- Creating and promoting a **heritage pride and community memory program** so that residents come to view themselves as an integral part of the heritage area, which can also help to record cultural traditions and memories.
- Coordinating and encouraging **community engagement** in arts and cultural programs and events that build community awareness and understanding of the heritage area's resources, character, and significance.
- Coordinating with teachers, school systems, parents, and students to develop well-designed **youth education programs** that increase understanding and appreciation of local history and culture, and how it all relates to the long-term sustainability of the region.
- Engaging young people in **leadership development** and creating a deep understanding of community functions, needs, and priorities is a good investment in lasting leadership for this National Heritage Area and our communities.
- Encouraging continued dialogue and action reflecting the deep community awareness of **agriculture's cultural ties and possibilities** for community and economic well-being.

Chapter 10, Management & Implementation, offers guidance in general for partnering, and for a communications plan where much of the work described in this chapter can be blended.





*Much of the cultural significance of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area stems from its residents – their families, traditions, faith, and communities. The heritage area seeks to encourage individuals and groups to preserve memories. Here, Vivien Rivera of San Jose Catholic Church in Capulin, a village in Conejos County, shares memorabilia of the church's 100th anniversary of its founding in the late 19th century.*

## PROMOTING HERITAGE PRIDE AND COMMUNITY MEMORY

Since so much of the cultural significance of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area stems from its residents – their families, traditions, faith, and communities – it is important that any initiatives designed to promote local interest in and support of the heritage area allow residents the opportunity to personalize their relationships with it. Given the strong sense of pride in self-reliance, rugged individualism, ethnic diversity, and cultural association with community, church, and place, we expect the self-identification strategy described here to encourage multiple narratives and means by which groups and individuals can selectively represent themselves and their differences and commonalities.

Formal development of the heritage area's identity and its "brand" is addressed by later chapters on interpretation and heritage tourism (Chapters 7 and 8). Self-identity is different, however, in that it is unique to each individual. While the National Heritage Area's interpretive strategy should help answer the question "What is the meaning of this place?" the heritage pride and community memory strategy that grows from the ideas in this chapter should encourage residents to answer the question: "How do I see myself belonging to this place?"

Self-identification, whether at the level of the individual, family, or community, should instill pride and a sense of belonging within a broader history and place that all have had a role in shaping. At the same time, promotion and communication of the public presence of the heritage area needs to be well-structured and cohesive enough that the identity of the heritage area as a whole is clear and

## The Novela Project

The **Novela Project** is an oral history study that explores the rich historical and cultural legacy that has shaped life in the San Luis Valley for more than two hundred years. Students of the Novela Project course explore the history at-large of the San Luis Valley and learn interview techniques and ethnographic concepts in preparation for engaging community residents in recorded interviews. Students are then engaged in creative writing exercises which are developed into play script form. Ultimately, this endeavor finds its full expression on the stage as an original, full-length theatre production reflecting the lives and experiences of the people of the San Luis Valley.

The **Novela Project Theatre Production** is an opportunity for community members to participate in all aspects of the project including storytelling, acting, production design, technical support, set construction, box office, advertising, and promotion. While community members are not professional actors, they embody qualities that are equally important to such a production. Language (Spanish), dialect and speech patterns, mannerism, gesture, movement and appearance are a few of those qualities that are central to the performance. Community members volunteer their participation in the theatre production. They are the actors, stage crew, run crew (light and sound operators), designers (set, prop and costume), builders (set, costume) and front of house operations (box office and house management). The NP provides training in all aspects of theatre production in order to build capacity among participants.

The **Novela Project Institute** is a week-long professional development course designed to train teachers how to guide students in a quest to recover personal heritage; express that knowledge through creative and academic presentation; and understand the importance of that heritage in relation to local, regional, national and global history. Both the Novela Project and Novela Project Institute are funded by Colorado Council of the Arts. <http://www.adams.edu/community/partnerships/novela.php>

comprehensible to residents and visitors alike. The following sections describe programs to support this concept.

## Community Memory Collections and Repository

Collecting community memories would involve developing a program to record oral histories, family photos, photos of artwork or hand crafted items, recipes, songs, etc., that lets each individual or family contribute what they feel is an important part of their heritage, and their community's heritage, within the broader context of the region's history. Collections would be cataloged and, as appropriate and



### *The Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives (Example)*

The Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives was established in 1981 through city-county ordinance to collect manuscripts, documents and photographs relating to the history of Butte and Silver Bow County. The Archives serve as a repository for a wide variety of community records, including city directories, cemetery indexes, genealogical records, census data, naturalization records, newspapers, union and fraternal organization records, government records, family and business manuscripts and personnel records, and photo collections and maps. Genealogy assistance is also provided to help interested visitors research family ties to Butte and Silver Bow County.

with due care and credit, be displayed at heritage museums or exhibits or used to inform public presentation of the region's heritage.

Events built around this idea will require organization and coordination, and significant outreach to encourage involvement at the individual level – perhaps through an organized “Community Memory Day” or “Día de Memoria de Comunidad” within each county or each community. Churches might also participate if appropriate.

During the planning process, the Board of Directors was urged by participants to spur the creation of at least one repository for documents, objects, and oral histories. This was a strong expression of the sense across the board expressed during the planning process by all involved that without care, treasures will be lost to succeeding generations. The positive attention to caring in such depth for these treasures in and of itself can help individuals to value what they have, and seek preservation assistance to continue their own involvement in stewardship. Such a repository could support events that “collect community memories.”

## Virtual Narratives

In an effort to capture the cultural diversity of heritage area residents, “virtual narratives” could be created to develop an online collection of resident profiles. These would be designed to capture an individual’s sense of identity and personal heritage (i.e., ethnicity, family history or genealogy, community, birthplace, family traditions, church or morada affiliation, interests, photos of family, artwork, etc.). A program based on this concept can also provide opportunities for each participant to write a short narrative that discusses when and why they came to the San Luis Valley, what they like most about living within the National Heritage Area, important memories, and how they would

like to see their community change in the future. While the site could be open for public access, privacy controls could limit chosen information only to residents if desired. If this program creates a digital community among participants, this could also be a great way to spread information on events and programs that would be of interest to participants.

More research would be needed to determine technical feasibility given program objectives. Challenges would be reaching the older generation or those without computers, but there could be outreach days with technical assistance, or a young-adult volunteer corps that could create pages for elders. The program could also become a project sponsored by a local college or school district.

### Individual Property Placards

The Colorado Centennial Farms Program recognizes individual property owners – working farms or ranches that have remained in the same family continuously for 100 years or more. This program is designed to recognize the important role agriculture has played in our state's history and economic development. There are currently eleven designated Centennial Farms within the heritage area.

In order to give individuals another option for self-identifying with the heritage area, a special placard could be awarded to any property owner who would like to have their home, farm, or ranch recognized as a contributing heritage area property, regardless of its size or how long it has been in the same family. Many people are very proud of what they have preserved or been handed down from past generations – even if their property does not meet the criteria for designation as a Centennial Farm or formal listing on the National Register of Historic Places. While this could be a stand-alone program, placards can possibly



*Colorado's Centennial Farms recognition program celebrates farms and ranches that have remained in the same family for 100 years. The heritage area could create a program with placards for other properties that contribute to the heritage area's character (not necessarily farms), recognizing the many owners who are proud of what they have preserved from their legacy of past generations.*





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be linked to participation in either of the two programs mentioned immediately above. In any case, special standards would need to be developed.

**ACTION:** Support existing oral history programs and other partner programs in documenting the history and the stories of the Valley's many cultures.

**ACTION:** Investigate existing oral history projects and training programs designed to explore personal heritage. Use successful programs and techniques as the basis for establishing standards and procedures for collecting individual “Community Memory” contributions.

**ACTION:** Create and train a “Community Memory Corps of Volunteers” responsible for accessioning, cataloging, and conserving individual contributions (to include digital collections and web-based media).

**ACTION:** Encourage and support the development of at least one central repository for documents, objects, and oral histories.

**ACTION:** Work with the new Heritage Center in San Luis or other repository to design an interpretive



*Bas relief of a stagecoach adorns the exterior wall of the Ventero Open Press studio in downtown San Luis (photo by Ann Marie Velasquez).*

program for presenting these collections to the public (to include web-based media that can be featured at other heritage area museums).

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Coordinating and encouraging involvement in arts and cultural programs, and events that build community awareness of the heritage area's resources, character, and significance are central to the heritage area's strategy for

**Adobe de Oro Arts Council (Concilio de Artes)**

An art service organization founded in 1982, Adobe de Oro researches and documents the traditional arts and humanities of the Indio-Hispanic community of the San Luis Valley. In addition, it encourages and supports the development of Indio-Hispanic artists and scholars throughout the region. Programs include documentaries, conferences, festivals, exhibitions, workshops, and symposiums.

## Ventero Open Press

Ventero Open Press is a nonprofit organization that raises funds for the arts and culture of the San Luis Valley. It also provides education, scholarships, art supplies, and exhibition opportunities for both emerging and established artists. The organization maintains a studio facility in San Luis that includes print presses, a gallery featuring regional artists, and a full service espresso bar (<http://www.ventero.org>).

## The Community Partnerships Gallery

The Community Partnerships Gallery at Adams State University is dedicated to exhibiting a large variety of community art and crafts from across the entire San Luis Valley. Every month a new exhibit is held where local artists and craftspeople have the opportunity to show and sell their work.

## Rio Costilla Studio Tour

The Rio Costilla Studio Tour provides an opportunity for the public to visit the homes, studios, and galleries of approximately 25 artists and craftspeople living within Costilla County. The tour takes place annually during two days in September. Work includes painting, print-making, photography, bronze sculpture, wood and stone carving, fine and rustic furniture, ceramics, African drums, artisan bread-baking, etc.



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#### Colcha Embroidery

Colcha embroidery, or stitching, is a special technique attributed to special wool-on-wool textiles in the American Southwest during the Spanish colonial period. Colchas typically depict religious images or scenes from everyday life, and were used to record a stitcher's memories.

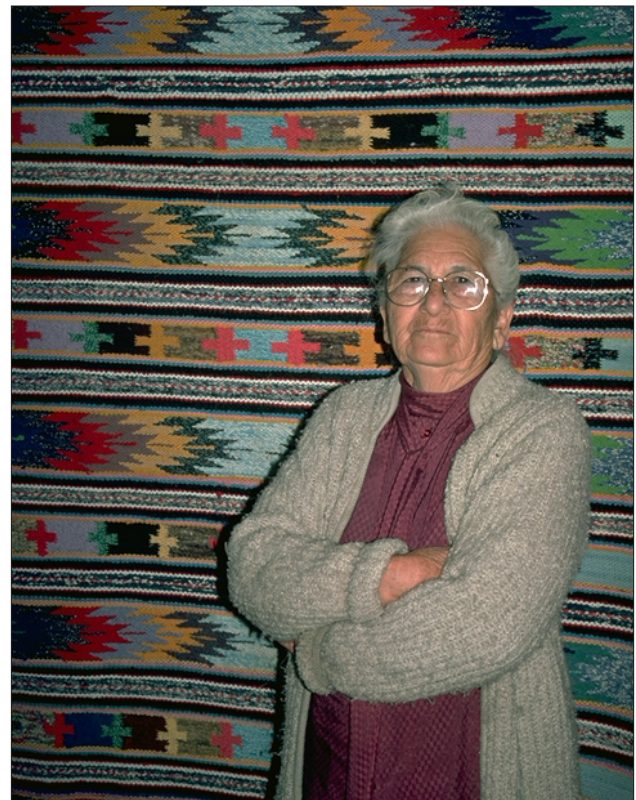
Like weaving, colcha embroidery also reflects the importance of sheep and wool to the region's economic history. Colchas were often used as altar cloths and altar carpets in Catholic churches and in the home as coverlets. In fact, the word colcha means 'coverlet' in Spanish (Lobato: Folk Art Lesson Plan).



Example of colcha embroidery, "Flour Mill in San Luis" by Esther Esquibel de Romero. Source: [www.museumtrail.org](http://www.museumtrail.org).

#### Weaving

Historically, weaving was a basic necessity to Hispanic settlers as families had to produce their own cloth for clothing, blankets, and rugs. Weaving flourished in the San Luis Valley until several factors combined to make it impractical: the introduction of cheap manufactured cloth brought in by railroad from after 1877; the replacement of the Spanish Churro sheep and its long silky wool with the Rambouillet sheep's short, greasy wool; and the end of the trade with the Utes, which stopped the supply of Navajo criados (Indian servants) to help in the laborious processing of the wool (Everts, 7). Weaving in the San Luis Valley, however, still continues as an art form. Within the heritage area several weavers continue to teach, weave, and market their own woven pieces.



Eppie Archuleta (born 1922) is globally recognized for preserving the ancient folk art of weaving and the loom through her Spanish colonial and Rio Grande Indian style rugs, tapestries, and serapes. Her traditional techniques have been in her family since the mid-1600s, and she has received many awards and honors. In 1985, the National Endowment for the Arts named her a National Heritage Fellow in recognition of her work to perpetuate the tradition of weaving in the San Luis Valley as well as her artistry. (Photo by Kathleen Figgen, Southern Colorado Council on the Arts Folklorist Collection, Adams State University, Nielsen Library)

conserving community and traditions. Despite its relatively small population and community size, the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area brims with opportunities for residents to participate in or contribute their skills to high-quality art programs and exhibits and musical and dance performances, as well as community festivals and special events where these talents and traditions take center stage.

#### Arts

The number of talented artists and the quality and diversity of art education found within the heritage area is outstanding. It has been estimated that there are approximately 8,000 artists in the San Luis Valley – or about 15 percent of the population in a six-county area that includes the National Heritage Area. In addition to traditional visual arts, such as drawing and painting, the heritage area also includes photographers, printmakers, sculptors, ceramic artists, metal artists, and weavers, many world renowned. The folk art of santero woodcarving, native to northern New Mexico





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*Santero Carlos Atencio in his studio in Costilla County with one of his bultos carvings, this one representing the Virgin Mary. Mr. Atencio is also a weaver of the Rio Grande tradition, another name for the style of weaving exhibited on page 2-6 (Photo by Kathleen Figgen, Southern Colorado Council on the Arts Folklorist Collection, Adams State University, Nielsen Library)*

and southern Colorado, is particularly prized. Artists here participate in exhibitions and display their works in galleries throughout the San Luis Valley and elsewhere. In addition to weaving and colcha embroidery, which are typical folk arts of the Hispano culture (see sidebars), quilting, crocheting, knitting, and needlepoint are also practiced individually and in groups by a great number of Anglo-American women in the San Luis Valley. Quilting bees are quite common in many of the Mormon communities (Everts, 34). In 1991 the San Luis Valley Quilt Guild was founded in to promote the art, skill, and appreciation of quilts and quilt making. Each year the guild, which has approximately 60 members from all over the San Luis Valley, displays their work at the San Luis Valley Quilt Show.

There are many existing opportunities for community engagement with the arts, whether through direct participation in the several of the heritage area's art education programs, or by encouraging residents to visit galleries and attend special exhibits and events. The heritage area can play

### Santos

Religious woodcarvings of the saints, traditionally known as Santos, is a Hispano art form that originated in New Mexico. The term translates into two separate, but related words in English: "saints" and "holy." Because Santos were devotional works of art representing God, Christ, the Virgin Mary, the angels and saints, they were not meant for detached contemplation or for aesthetic purposes, but for religious use. There are two types of santos, bultos and retablos. Retablos are religious paintings applied to hand-hewn wooden panels; bultos are three-dimensional carvings. Traditionally carved out of the roots of the cottonwood tree or other indigenous species, Bultos were often gessoed and painted, and then sealed with pinon sap varnish. Santeros are woodcarvers, traditionally self-taught, who believe that God works through them, and that they see a saint or the image of Christ in the wood before they start.

Santos were an important and necessary part of the religious lives of Hispanos in the colonial period. Churches and moradas were adorned with retablos, altar screens and bultos and many families also had private devotional altars graced with Santos ([www.thesantafesite.com](http://www.thesantafesite.com)).



*Fifteen striking bronze statues by internationally renowned sculptor Huberto Maestas illustrate the Stations of the Cross along a steep trail to the top of San Pedro Mesa overlooking San Luis. It was all inspired by a local priest and built by the hands and funds of parish congregants and donors, dedicated in 1990. Maestas, who grew up on a nearby Costilla County ranch and started sculpting as a santero, returned to San Luis for the project and has made his home and studio there ever since. Sometimes called the Way of the Cross, the object of the Stations is to help the faithful meditate upon scenes of Christ's sufferings and death. It has become one of the most popular devotions for Roman Catholics, and the trail in San Luis has drawn visitors from around the world.*







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### Mariachi

Adobe de Oro and Adams State University sponsor an annual mariachi conference in Alamosa. The conference lasts an entire day and consists of a music review by the instructors, workshops, a group rehearsal, and a nighttime concert featuring all musicians. Students in attendance are from all over the San Luis Valley.



*Mariachi San Luis, an intergenerational musical group, was formed in 1998 in San Luis. (photo by Ann Marie Velasquez)*



*Semillas de la Tierra (Seeds of the Earth) is a local folkloric dance group that has been associated with Adams State University for 35 years. The group is open to both students and the broader community. Here they are shown performing at Cole Park in Alamosa (courtesy Adams State University).*

a key role in encouraging community engagement in the arts through support, recognition, and promotion.

### Folk Music and Dance

Folk music and dance, like all folklore, is learned and passed on informally and often through the family. Most of the Hispanic musicians and dancers within the heritage area have learned their music from their parents or family relatives and many perform in family bands. Anglo-

American music, while not having as firm a base in the valley as its Hispanic counterpart, is still performed at local community events such as the Mormon Pioneer Day in La Jara, dances, school performances, weddings, and funerals. The styles represented can be roughly categorized as old time, bluegrass fiddle music, western duets, and cowboy songs (Everts, 77).

Mariachi is a genre of music that originated in Mexico. It is an integration of stringed instruments highly influenced by the cultural impacts of the historical development of Western Mexico. The mariachi ensemble generally consists of violins, trumpets, a classical guitar, a vihuela (a high-pitched, five-string guitar), a guitarrón (a large acoustic bass guitar) and, on occasion, a harp. The musicians dress in silver-studded charro outfits with wide-brimmed hats.

Most of the music and dance groups within the heritage area comprise volunteers who share a love of folk music and dance. Continuation and growth of these programs can be strengthened by heritage area support, recognition, and promotion.

### Cultural Programs and Events

Dozens of community and special events take place each year throughout the heritage area. Some of these are promoted widely and attract visitors from around the region, while others are practiced only by particular ethnic groups within their own communities. In some instances, living traditions are kept alive through local organizations and academic programs at Adams State University, such as the Hispano Heritage Days and Hilos Culturales, which are dedicated their preservation and promotion (see sidebars).

The Santa Ana y Santiago Festival is an example of Hispano cultural traditions that have been carried on for more than 150 years. This is a weekend event where San Luis and the nearby village of Chama honor their respective patron saints – Santiago and Santa Ana. This celebratory weekend attracts as many as 10,000 visitors who have ties to Rio Culebra acequia villages, and provides an opportunity for family and friends to reunite on an annual basis.

Other communities also sponsor annual festivals to celebrate ethnic or religious heritage. In some cases these are tied to patron saint festivals while others are more secular in origin. Each varies in length and custom from town to town. Examples include the La Jara Glory Days, Manassa Pioneer Days, and Alamosa's Summerfest on the Rio and Round-up Rodeo. In some cases where ethnic populations are small, such as the Japanese, cultural traditions are passed on in the intimacy of home surroundings and their religious institutions, and reinforced by communication with relatives in other parts of the country with a larger ethnic population (Everts, 6).



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*Southbound migration of cranes (courtesy Sean Canon).*

**ACTION:** Coordinate the publicizing of cultural events and programs in the many media vehicles managed by heritage area partners, including the heritage area's website, newsletters, and press releases. Explore and employ ways to reach residents who do not have access to a computer, especially through churches, where multiple generations can be reached through church newsletters, announcements, events, etc.

**ACTION:** Work with heritage area and cultural program providers on effective, collaborative

research into the needs and interests of local audiences.

**ACTION:**Involve the arts and cultural programming community in bringing engaging and relevant interpretation to visitor audiences.

**ACTION:** Partner with local trades organizations or artists' guilds in creating training or promote existing apprentice programs in preservation and conservation trades and skills.

## Volunteers for Museums and Cultural Centers

The heritage area has several museums and cultural centers that currently serve as both interpretive centers and repositories of the region's cultural heritage. Each features special exhibits and educational programs that heavily depend upon dedicated community volunteers who help collect and catalog items, provide tours, and organize events.

In partnership with these facilities, the heritage area can help match their needs to residents' interests through coordinated outreach campaigns such as sponsoring information sessions or open houses or posting to the heritage area's website.

## Monte Vista Crane Festival

The internationally recognized Monte Vista Crane Festival takes place each February or March. It coincides with the annual sandhill crane migration, which involves approximately 20,000 birds of the Rocky Mountain flock that spend part of each spring and fall in the San Luis Valley, as they have for millennia. The festival hosts wildlife experts, local naturalists, and biologists who present educational workshops at the Monte Vista Middle School.

Bus tours to the nearby refuge and adjacent farmlands provide visitors with the opportunity to view this spectacle “up close and personal,” with a knowledgeable local guide. Special tours feature raptor identification, sunset trips to view cranes, and visits to closed areas of the refuge for Crane Fest participants. Although Monte Vista, the town near the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge, is not within the National Heritage Area, the refuge itself is, and the festival broadly benefits the region. The Rio Grande Scenic Railroad offers a fun and educational rail ride between Alamosa and Monte Vista during the

## Hispano Heritage Day

Each year, Adams State University hosts the Hispano Heritage Day, which includes a full day of performances, exhibits, and vendors, all dedicated to the recognition of Hispano culture. Exhibits included weaving, artwork, and genealogy, and food vendors serve a variety of traditional ethnic food.

*Hilos Culturales Summer Institute*

The Hilos Culturales (Threads of Culture) Summer Institute, which also takes place at Adams State University, is a week-long event featuring numerous presentations on Hispano traditions of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. Exhibits typically include photographs, narrative highlights, and musical collections of contributing participants.





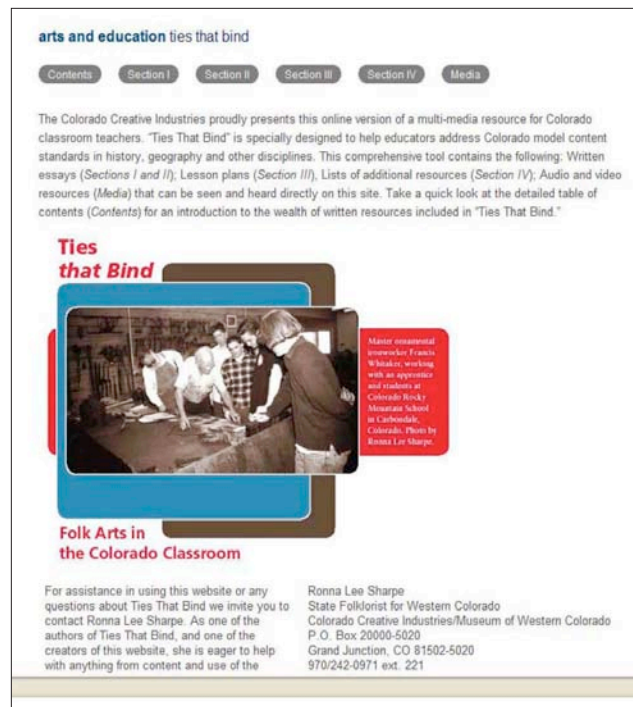
## YOUTH EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

According to the Pre-K-12 Colorado State Academic Standards, children within the heritage area are introduced to Colorado history and culture in the fourth grade. Earth and life sciences are integrated into every grade, starting with kindergarten. Visual and performing arts, including music, dance, and theater are also a core part of the primary and secondary curriculum (full standards for each subject area can be found on the Colorado Department of Education website at <http://www.cde.state.co.us>).

Local history, local arts, and local culture, however, are not emphasized through any formal curriculum standards, and students often graduate without a full understanding or appreciation of the cultural significance that is unique to San Luis Valley (i.e., land ownership and use, local dialect, folk arts, dance, music, agricultural traditions, ethnic food traditions, etc.). This is a missed opportunity to help local youth not only understand their past and define their self-identity within the region's broader cultural context, but also to enrich their education by exploring ways in which they may personally contribute to the conservation of their communities and unique cultural traditions. This may be especially true when it comes to the teaching of standard Spanish without reference to the local dialect handed down directly from native speakers, at a time when concern is rising about the loss of regional dialects and the heritage of American speakers of non-English languages. This includes such languages as Czech and Norwegian as well as Native American languages (Little 2012).

A brief overview of Colorado's standards for subject areas is provided in the next section, as are examples of how these standards can provide opportunities for local and regional history, arts, and cultural traditions to serve as the vehicle through which these topics can be explored and understood. The heritage area can play a key role in supporting innovation and expansion of local school curriculums to better educate local students about the heritage area's history, and environment, and culture.

In addition to adapting ordinary curricula under the state standards, there are several existing educational programs that could be more widely promoted within the heritage area. One developed by the Colorado Council on the Arts (CCA) includes a wonderful collection of essays and lesson plans specifically targeted to the heritage of Colorado, and the San Luis Valley in particular. Titled "Ties that Bind" and prepared by CCA Folklorist Kathleen Figgen, topics include colcha embroidery, santero carving, weaving, foodways, architecture, Japanese culture, etc. (see sidebar). New curricula are also being developed, such as a fourth grade curriculum for the Old Spanish Trail that meets state



### *Ties that Bind*

"Ties That Bind: Folk Arts in the Colorado Classroom" represents more than 25 years of work by the Colorado Council and its Partners on the Arts Folk Arts Program. In addition to regional essays that explore the people and places of Colorado's regions (including the San Luis Valley), there are eleven lesson plans that provide a variety of ways to put the information to work in the classroom.

There are lesson plans that involve playing games, listening to music and interviewing local characters. Hands-on activities include making a colcha story quilt, trying out the skills of wheatweaving, and watching master artists teach traditional arts to apprentices. An online version (shown above) was specially designed to help educators address Colorado model content standards in history, geography and other disciplines. (<http://www.coloradoarts.org/programs/education/folkarts/>).

standards in Colorado and New Mexico. Initiatives such as this should not only be applauded, but also be recognized and promoted as examples for others to follow.

Besides formal lesson plans, there are several sites within the heritage area that actively engage students with local history, and serve as examples to build upon. Living history programs, guided tours, and historical reenactments such as those at Fort Garland have long been a primary way to



Social Studies Curriculum Standard	Social Studies Example
Evaluate a historical source for point of view and historical context.	Research the history of the Conejos Land Grant. Conduct an oral history interview with a descendant of one of the original family members.
Gather and analyze historical information, including contradictory data, from a variety of primary and secondary sources, including sources located on the Internet, to support or reject hypotheses.	Research the formation of the Sociedad Protección Mutua de Trabajadores Unidos (SPMDTU); review SPMDTU literature, newspaper accounts, and other local sources to understand and critique different perspectives among observers; test the hypothesis that discrimination occurred.
Differentiate between facts and historical interpretations, recognizing that a historian's narrative reflects his or her judgment about the significance of particular facts.	Research Anglo-American accounts of conflict with the Ute tribe within the San Luis Valley. Compare those perspectives with that of the Utes.

educate students, as have train rides on the Rio Grande and the Cumbres & Toltec scenic railroads. Innovative and engaging exhibits and ranger-led programs at the Great Sand Dunes National Park are also an effective means of teaching students about the valley's natural history and physical evolution. Certainly the many galleries and exhibits, musical and dance performances, and other cultural programs and events mentioned in the sections above offer abundant opportunities for students to explore various visual and performing art traditions and techniques.

## Social Studies

According to the Colorado Social Studies curriculum, fourth grade students are expected to be able to organize and sequence events to understand the concepts of chronology and cause and effect in the history of Colorado. They are

also expected to develop an understanding of historical eras, individuals, groups, ideas and themes in Colorado history, and their relationships to key events in the United States.

By the time they get to high school, students are expected to be able to critically explore, analyze, and master key concepts of culture, including continuity and change, cause and effect, complexity, unity, and diversity over time. These standards provide ample opportunities for teachers to integrate topics concerning local history and culture into the classroom.

## Science

Colorado life science curriculum standards require students to understand how living systems interact with their environments, that living systems depend upon natural selection, the interplay between genetics and environment,

Science Curriculum Standard	Science Example
Develop, communicate, and justify an evidence-based scientific example of how humans can alter ecosystems.	Research the natural ecosystem of the salt flats (sabkha) surrounding the Great Sand Dunes. Document the changes in soil conditions resulting from irrigation within this region.
Research and evaluate direct and indirect evidence to explain how climates vary from one location to another on Earth.	Document the various climate conditions between the floor the San Luis Valley and its highest mountain peaks. Explain the differences in ecoregions located between Blanca and La Veta Pass.
Identify and describe the impact of major geologic events on life on Earth.	Research volcanic activity within the San Luis Valley and its resulting landforms.

Visual and Performing Art Curriculum Standard	Visual and Performing Art Example
Actively participate in music making.	Join a local cultural or religious musical group; sing or play an instrument.
Discuss how dance can contribute to fitness, wellness, and a positive self-image	Interview members of Semillas de la Tierra to understand how dance helps them stay in shape and how it makes them feel.
Demonstrate a practiced ability to critically analyze the origins of art and design across all cultures	Research the origin of fiber arts; compare and contrast the differences between San Luis Valley weaving techniques and those found in Spain or Africa.

Table 6-3: Ways to Use Local Resources to Meet Colorado's Visual and Performing Art Standards .

and how biological evolution accounts for the unity and diversity of living organisms.

Earth science standards require students to understand how Earth's geologic history and place in space are relevant to our understanding of the processes that have shaped our planet, evaluate evidence that Earth's geosphere, atmosphere, hydrosphere, and biosphere interact as a complex system, and describe how humans are dependent on the diversity of resources provided by earth and sun.

### Visual and Performing Arts

Colorado dance curriculum standards require students to not only demonstrate competence and confidence in performing a variety of dance styles and genres and awareness of fitness, wellness, and the body's potential for movement, but also participate in a dance production and understand that dance performance requires technical competency.

Colorado music curriculum standards require students to employ musical skills through a variety of means, including singing, playing instruments, and purposeful movement, demonstrate the expressive elements of music and the processes of development of musical literature from rehearsal to performance.

Colorado art curriculum standards require students to transfer the value of visual arts to lifelong learning and the human experience; explain, demonstrate, and interpret a range of purposes of art and design; recognize, articulate,

and debate that the visual arts are a means for expression; and analyze, interpret, and make meaning of art and design critically using oral and written discourse.

### World Languages

Colorado World Languages curriculum standards require students to understand and interpret written and spoken language on a variety of topics, engage in conversations, present information, and demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the cultures studied.

### Teacher Training

Teachers are natural allies in the heritage area's goal to promote public awareness of history and culture by reaching out to young people, but they need recognition, interest, and support for what they do. The heritage area must cultivate opportunity and encourage teachers by providing them with resources and experiences that they find useful and that support their activities.

In addition to crafting educational programming around the Colorado Curriculum Standards, as discussed above, opportunities exist to directly engage teachers through workshops and teacher training programs. Any teacher training initiatives must not only be personally stimulating, but also meet professional standards for continuing education so that teachers obtain credit for participating in them.

World Languages Curriculum Standard	World Languages Example
Identify the meaning of unfamiliar words using decoding skills (such as prefixes and suffixes, root words, knowledge or recognition of word or characters in character-based languages).	Identify the variety and source of linguistic influences on the Spanish dialect that is unique to the San Luis Valley.

Table 6-4: Ways to Use Local Resources to Meet Colorado's World Languages Standards.





culture with visitors. The purpose of this program would be three-fold: educating youth and developing their leadership potential; sowing the seeds of small-scale tourism business development; and serving as a bridge between technology-based heritage area programs (such as the development of digital collections or web-based communications) and the older generations who do not have the access or skills for computer technology.

A Junior Ambassadors program is conceived to be a stand-alone program managed by the heritage area, but built upon strong partnerships with other existing youth organizations and educational programs. Possible partners include but are not limited to the Novela Project, Colorado Preserve America Youth Summit, the Future Business Leaders of America, the Colorado Field Institute, and Leadership San Luis Valley.

The program could involve educational workshops in oral history interview techniques, social media and marketing, small-business entrepreneurship, heritage tourism and hospitality, and examples for how young leaders can play an important role in preserving heritage area resources and culture. Example programs or projects that could be undertaken by the heritage area through this program include:

- Oral history collectors and archivists: Young people are the bridge to the older generation. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, students can, through a coordinated program, play a key role in conducting oral history interviews of older family members and archiving these interviews in ways that enrich the heritage area's interpretive program.



*Photo of 2010 Colorado Preserve America Youth Summit participants near the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve. (courtesy 2010 Colorado Preserve America Youth Summit: Learning Landscapes, Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area)*

### **Junior Ranger Program**

One example of a successful youth engagement program is the Junior Ranger program offered at the Great Sand Dunes National Park. Most National Parks have Junior Ranger programs, where kids collect badges based upon the completion of a special program (a Junior Ranger Booklet) that requires active engagement with the park's resources. Programs are designed for three different age groups: 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12. A visit of at least two hours is typically required to complete the required sections of the Junior Ranger booklet. All sections for a child's particular age group must be completed to earn a badge or patch.

A program of this nature can be designed to be available within the schools and focus more broadly upon the heritage area as whole, providing an ideal framework for local schools to begin to develop curriculum that will meet the Colorado curriculum standards as they correlate to Social Studies, Science, Visual and Performing Arts, etc. Through field trips and "virtual visits," this type of program offers young people who reside in the heritage area and nearby the opportunity to learn by "beginning in their backyard."

### **Colorado Preserve America Youth Summit**

The Colorado Preserve America Youth Summit began in 2007 with the goal of creating an opportunity for young people aged 13 to 18 to get out of the classroom and into the field to learn about history, archeology, heritage tourism, and preservation. Interacting directly with such partners as federal, state, and local governments and agencies as well as nonprofit historic preservation, tourism, community, and education organizations, each Youth Summit provides interactive, outcome-driven learning experiences and service opportunities.

The Colorado Youth Summits have received national attention for the accomplishments of the experiences offered to more than 500 students and their teachers in its first five years. The program has recently been introduced in the state of Washington. The Summits work to achieve four primary objectives: connecting youth and teachers to historic places; involving students in historic preservation activities; expanding tools to support teachers' efforts in heritage and preservation education; and bolstering local preservation and heritage tourism efforts (<http://coloradoyouthsummit.org>).



## Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

### Management Plan

*Conserving Community & Traditions*

#### **Southwest Conservation Corps Model**

The Southwest Conservation Corps (SCC), founded as a nonprofit agency in 1998, provides young women and men with structured, safe, and challenging service and educational opportunities. Its projects promote personal growth through development of leadership and social skills and an ethic of natural resource stewardship.

SCC offers programs year-round throughout the Southwest from offices in Durango, CO, Salida, CO, Acoma, NM and Tucson, AZ. Within the San Luis Valley, crews run from April through October, with the greatest number of programs in the summer months. Four-week to twelve-week camping programs take place throughout the Upper Arkansas and San Luis Valleys. On many projects Corps members work, learn, and camp, commonly in teams with up to six crew members and two crew leaders. Projects include fuels reduction, erosion control, tree planting, trail building, fencing, and exotic plant removal. Corps members earn a living allowance while learning valuable work and life skills.

The Volunteer Youth Community Corps program provides service learning opportunities for middle school youth, ages 12-15, in rural and urban areas throughout Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado. This program is unpaid. Working in crews of ten youth participants supported by two adult leaders, youth develop leadership skills and become actively involved in improving their community by addressing local needs. The service-learning activities address environmental needs of the region, including restoring land near rivers and lakes, noxious weed removal, trail maintenance, planting, community improvement, and habitat improvement. Within the heritage area, a local Youth Community Corps program takes place in Costilla County (<http://sccorps.org/>).

#### **Colorado Field Institute**

The Colorado Field Institute (CFI) is a nonprofit corporation organized in 2005. Based in Alamosa, CFI's mission is twofold. First, to provide in-depth, outdoor learning and research opportunities for educators, students, residents, and visitors that will expand stewardship of the natural and cultural resources of the San Luis Valley for the benefit of present and future generations. And second, to promote sustainable economic development based on the concept of greater stewardship (<http://www.coloradofieldinstitute.org/>).



*Hundreds of miles of improved and backcountry trails provide opportunities for local residents or young people to serve as trail guides to visitors who want to explore the heritage area, but may not be inclined to venture out on their own. Here the Scenic Vista Trail encourages visitors to explore the Medano Zapata ranch.*

- Virtual story board contributors: As mentioned earlier in this chapter, there is a growing reliance upon digital technology and social media not only to archive historical collections, but also to make them available to others, including visitors. Given the technical competence and interests of the young generation, students can play a key role in not only reaching to the older generation in contributing to digital collections, but also in creating them.
- Tour guides, trail guides, and docents: Many museums, cultural sites, parks, campgrounds, farms, and preserves within the heritage area lack funding for paid staff to offer guided tours. There is a wonderful opportunity for young people to serve as junior tour guides, trail guides, and docents to serve the needs of the visitor population, and also gain hands-on education in heritage tourism, eco-tourism, and entrepreneurship.
- Interpretive programming: Through the establishment of baseline criteria and standards, students can be challenged to develop their own interpretive presentations and programs. This can be coordinated as a competitive program with recognition given to winning applicants.

#### **Other Possibilities for Youth Engagement**

In addition to those mentioned previously, there are many other organizations that provide partnership opportunities to promote youth leadership development in conserving communities and cultural traditions. These include the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Colorado State Extension programs (such as 4-H), the Rio Grande Watershed Conservation and Education Initiative, HistoriCorps, and outreach from federal public lands agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service.





### ***Future Business Leaders of America***

The FBLA is an organization that may have great potential for assisting the heritage area in aiding students in understanding community functions and goals for tourism. Many schools across the country support student participation in FBLA by supporting teacher-advisors, classroom time, and field trips. Programs are available for middle school, high school, and college groups. Much of its work is organized around encouraging students to compete, both individually and as groups, at levels from regional to national. The key will be to connect to elements of the program involving service learning and community-based school projects. (<http://www.fbla.org/>)

**ACTION: Recruit partners and establish an advisory committee of youth leadership development organizations to develop a Junior Ambassador program. Identify roles and responsibilities among partners.**

**ACTION: Implement the program beginning with demonstration/phased efforts.**

**ACTION: Work with partners, teachers, and school administrators to promote the program through school newsletters, churches, partner and heritage area publications, and website links.**

### **LOCAL FOODS AND AGRICULTURE**

Like arts, music, and dance, food reflects the cultural diversity of the heritage area. Whether it is the method by which it is grown or raised, prepared, served, preserved, or eaten, food is perhaps one of the most personal and perpetuating means by which family and community traditions are kept alive. Within the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, where agriculture has served as the foundation of the region's economy, food takes on an even greater importance.

With a renewed interest in ethnic and locally and sustainably produced foods, several notable public and private initiatives have been undertaken to promote and preserve the region's food traditions and agricultural heritage. Based upon feedback received from heritage area partners and other stakeholders, we know that the community regards sustainable agricultural production and agritourism as offering tremendous opportunities for both economic development and community engagement, and particularly youth education.

### ***Rio Grande Watershed Conservation and Education Initiative***

The Rio Grande Watershed Conservation and Education Initiative provides dynamic conservation education to the San Luis Valley community in order to promote stewardship of natural resources. Of particular focus is youth education. In partnership with local schools, the Institute develops educational materials and curricula, sponsors educational field trips, and makes classroom visits to teach students about agriculture sciences, conservation and environmental sciences.

Special workshops are also offered to provide teachers in grades K-12 an opportunity to experience conservation outside the classroom that is tied to Colorado State Academic Standards. In this setting they are able to bring hands-on activities coupled with real world concepts to students (<http://www.riograndewatershed.org/education-initiative.html>).

### ***Farmers' Markets***

At a national level, increased consumer interest in local, organic, and sustainably produced foods has risen dramatically over the past decade. It is estimated that there are now more than 7,175 farmers' markets operating throughout the county (up from 1,755 in 1994; USDA), with more being added each year.

In Alamosa and La Jara, and other communities within the San Luis Valley, such as Crestone and South Fork, seasonal farmers' markets take place on a weekly basis. Other communities throughout the valley, such as Monte Vista and Del Norte, have expressed interest in establishing new weekly markets.



*The Alamosa Farmer's Market takes place weekly in downtown Alamosa (courtesy Tawney Becker).*



## Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

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*Conserving Community & Traditions*



*The Alamosa Community Gardens Project is a collaboration among local schools, nonprofits, and the community to teach gardening and nutrition while providing healthy produce to benefit garden participants and community services such as the local food bank. In addition to managing two community gardens in Alamosa (Polston Elementary School and Boyd Park), the organization also manages a community greenhouse, which consists of a passive solar adobe building (<http://alamosacommunitygardens.org/>).*

### **Farming Patterns**

The number of new farms within Colorado has also risen dramatically over the last ten years (more than 18 percent), and the size of the average farm is getting significantly smaller (853 acres in 2007 compared to 1,310 acres in 1978). Micro farms (nine acres or less) effectively doubled during that same period (4,276 in 2007 compared to 2,163 in 1978; Colorado Agricultural Census, 2007). Organic and locally produced foods have also been recognized as one of the top ten sectors of the economy that are expected to grow substantially over the next decade (Buchanan, 2010).

Within the heritage area, Costilla County added the most farms since 2002 (with an increase of 18 percent), whereas

the number of farms in Conejos County has grown by 8 percent. Within Alamosa County, the number of farms has remained almost constant, although in all three counties farm size is shrinking. More than half of all farmers within the heritage area, however, do not consider farming as their primary occupation.

### **Agricultural Education**

As evidenced by discussions with partners and stakeholders throughout the management planning process, strengthening and promoting the local agricultural industry is regarded as a high priority for the heritage area. It has also ranked within the top five economic development goals of each county's "Bottom Up" Economic Development strategy (see

### **Local Foods, Local Jobs Act**

The Local Foods, Local Jobs bill was signed into Colorado law on March 15, 2012. Introduced in January 2012 by Sen. Gail Schwartz, D-Snowmass, and co-sponsored by Rep. Don Coram, R-Montrose, this law supports local, small-scale growers and producers by creating alternative methods for them to sell homemade, value-added goods. In introducing the bill, Sen. Schwartz stated, "By empowering Colorado's small farms and small-business entrepreneurs, this bill will create jobs, strengthen the economy, and promote tourism in our local communities."

The Local Foods, Local Jobs Act is intended to ease impediments to local markets by exempting home kitchens from certain health inspections that are generally applied to large retailers. Home kitchen users will be trained on safe food handling and processing procedures, as well as labeling requirements to ensure healthy products. Small businesses that promote locally sourced foods can get a strong start due to these streamlined regulations. Nearly 30 other states have passed similar laws to promote local products (AgJournal.com, February 9, 2012).



### Farm to School Program

Farm to School is broadly defined as a program that connects schools (K-12) and local farms with the objectives of serving healthy meals in school cafeterias; improving student nutrition; providing agriculture, health, and nutrition education opportunities; and supporting local and regional farmers. Each Farm to School program is shaped by its unique community and region. Areas with warmer climates may organize a complete salad bar, while those with colder climates might provide some of the ingredients for school meals and snacks.

Throughout the U.S., there are more than 2,300 school districts with Farm to School programs. Within Colorado, there are at least six school districts with established Farm to School programs, including Durango, Poudre, and Greeley-Evans. Farm to School projects can involve anywhere from one to twelve farm products, and operate year-round or for two months. There is no one blueprint; successful projects are “custom-made” for each community (<http://www.farmtoschool.org>).

### San Luis Valley Local Food Coalition

The San Luis Valley Local Food Coalition (SLVLFC) is a grassroots organization that develops local networks, educates the community, and promotes programs and policies to create an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable local food system within the San Luis Valley region. Strengthened by partnerships with organizations through the valley, the San Luis Valley Local Food Coalition operates the Valley Farmer’s Market, which takes place seasonally each Saturday in downtown Alamosa at the railroad depot. Each week the market features local produced and organic foods (as well as those produced in Colorado and New Mexico), fresh baked goods and jellies from local Amish families, live music, cooking demonstrations, and special events. A related market sells local arts and crafts.

In partnership with two elementary schools (one in La Jara and one in San Luis), the SLVLFC also helps manage community gardens on school properties. The organization also provides some instruction to children in both the classroom and through a summer camp (<http://sanluisvalleylocalfoods.blogspot.com/>).

Chapter 9). Both the Rio Culebra Cooperative and the San Luis Valley Local Food Coalition believe, however, that in order for this economic opportunity to be realized, additional educational programs need to be offered to both children and adults, and more opportunities need to be available for local residents to sell their food locally.

In addition to new “Local Foods” legislation (see sidebar), several specific initiatives (some of which are already in the planning stages) are needed to make this goal achievable. All would benefit greatly from heritage area support, coordination, and promotion. These include:

- Sustainable agriculture education requirements that can be integrated into the Colorado curriculum standards (possibly as part of the science or health curricula or as a stand-alone subject). Currently none of the curriculum standards requires students to learn about farming concepts, food sources, production techniques, or engage in actual farming or gardening activities. Perhaps no other subject has a higher potential to be engaged locally by multiple generations, and serve as a means through which both the natural and cultural heritage of the valley can be understood, appreciated, and perpetuated.
- Demonstration gardens or farms that not only provide opportunities to test new and historic agricultural

practices, water conservation techniques, seed varieties, livestock breeds, and equipment, but also offer on-site educational workshops.

- Guided tours of existing gardens and farms that can demonstrate sustainable and/or historic agricultural practices and food products.
- Additional community gardens and schoolyard gardens, which provide hands-on learning opportunities.
- Structured internships and apprenticeships, which can be offered in partnership with local school districts, colleges, nonprofit advocacy and education organizations, and privately owned farms.
- Farm to School Programs, which increase use of local foods within schools and colleges.
- Community kitchens that provide affordable access to commercially licensed kitchens for small-scale value-added food production.
- Educational programs that provide information on the basics of small-scale food business entrepreneurship (licensing requirements, food safety standards, business plan and marketing assistance, small business loan opportunities, etc.).





# CHAPTER 7 › HERITAGE AREA INTERPRETATION



*One of the many Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic and Historic Byway interpretive exhibits that tell the stories of the heritage area.*

## INTRODUCTION

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area tells the stories of the peoples, cultures, and environment of the lower San Luis Valley and its adjacent mountains. Through its stories, the National Heritage Area builds public awareness of the valley's significant legacies, supports the local economy through heritage tourism, and strengthens communities by facilitating local initiatives.

Interpretation is at the center of most of what the National Heritage Area seeks to achieve. The San Luis Valley has a distinctive cultural heritage and identity that is closely tied to the character of its landscape. The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is dedicated to promoting community well-being and enhancing the quality of life of residents through recognition of the valley's identity and character. Through interpretation and storytelling, both residents and visitors will become increasingly aware of the significance of this place and how its significance is woven into who we are and everything we do.

This chapter outlines a comprehensive program for interpretation of the National Heritage Area that will be implemented over time through a broad-based collaboration

of participating organizations and communities. Chapter 6, Conserving Community & Traditions, addresses closely related subjects such as cultural traditions, the arts, and local agriculture. Chapter 8 addresses heritage tourism and marketing, and Chapter 9 brings these topics together as a strategy for Community Revitalization.

## THE PLANNING FOUNDATION FOR INTERPRETATION

The foundation laid during the management planning process for the interpretive programs that are addressed in this chapter is three-fold: the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area's enabling legislation (Public Law 111-11, Title VIII, Subtitle A, Section 8001); goals established at the beginning of the process; and the participation of many individuals and representatives of organizations in the planning process.

The federal legislation designating the National Heritage Area provides the underlying purposes in preparing this chapter. Sec. 8001(c)(2) states that duties of Sangre de Cristo Board of Directors as managing entity include assisting local partners in:





## Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

Management Plan

*Heritage Area Interpretation*

### **Interpretive Goals for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area**

**Primary Goal 2:** Tell the stories of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area in ways that build community pride and support preservation, living traditions, economic development, and community revitalization:

*Goal 2-6, Presentation.* Build a system for interpreting the themes of the National Heritage Area through existing attractions, visitor facilities, and development of interpretive projects using a variety of approaches, especially the development of linkages, sustaining existing events and celebrations, and educating our youth.

*Goal 2-7, Culture & Community:* Protect and celebrate living heritage resources – language, art, traditions, spirituality, etc., and sites associated with traditional cultural practices.

*Goal 2-8, Agriculture:* Promote and interpret agriculture as a way of life, a vital aspect of the way that all experience this cultural and scenic landscape, and as a critical contributor to regional economic health.

*Goal 2-9, Community Awareness:* Foster understanding and pride in our cultural identity and community spirit among residents of all ages and among Colorado residents in general.

- Carrying out programs and projects that recognize, protect, and enhance important resource values;
- Establishing and maintaining interpretive exhibits and programs; and
- Increasing public awareness of, and appreciation for, natural, historical, scenic, and cultural resources of the heritage area.

Based upon conversations with heritage area stakeholders during workshops held both before and during the management planning process, the Board of Directors developed a set of goals for the heritage area that are presented in Chapter 1. Interpretive goals for the heritage area focus upon using interpretation to build community pride, support cultural traditions, and provide a basis for preservation and community revitalization initiatives (see sidebar).

Further conversations led to consensus on many ideas for ways in which interpretation could be shaped within the National Heritage Area to meet its purposes and goals. These ideas provide the foundation for the more detailed

interpretive framework and program presented in this chapter. Participants focused on community interpretation, support for interpretive sites, incorporating a focus on public lands and the interpretation of the valley's natural resources, and methods and programs that would lead to a more consistent, whole interpretive experience within the National Heritage Area.

Participants made it plain that they experience culture and nature as two parts of the whole they know as the San Luis Valley, and in that vein expressed strong support for agriculture (addressed in the preceding Chapter 6, Conserving Community & Traditions) and interpretation of the complex, largely untold story of water. They also said repeatedly in varying ways that they want the heritage area's children (read: the valley's children) to benefit from greater knowledge of the culture and history that will be theirs to preserve as succeeding generations of leaders and residents. Relating to the educational system and educational institutions is also addressed in Chapter 6. Visitor centers were also a frequent topic of conversation; with regard to recreation, participants saw one or more visitor centers orienting visitors to public lands and natural resources as a desirable long-term option.

### **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR INTERPRETATION**

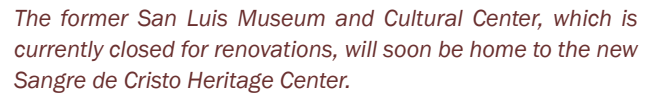
Interpretation is the way that this management plan differs most significantly from other kinds of regional plans. Telling the story of a region's culture, history, and natural resources and raising public awareness about the value of that legacy – and ways to pass it on for years to come – are activities that are at the heart of the concept of a heritage area. For visitors to understand and enjoy a place, for residents to take pride in and care for that place, for students to learn about it, it is critical to provide opportunities for all to learn about and experience that place. And it is most effective to put a plan in place to do so in an organized fashion, enlisting a wide variety of partners to implement that plan's ideas. The National Heritage Area's approach to interpretation includes the following strategic objectives:

- **Create a coordinated interpretive presentation of landscapes and sites** across the heritage area using publicly accessible sites, employing a variety of interpretive media, especially audio tours and social media programs to enable landscape exploration, connect sites and communities with recommended touring routes, and bridge distances between towns and sites. Both the Old Spanish Trail and Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic and Historic Byway provide excellent opportunities for landscape-scale touring and interpretation. This heritage area-wide approach to interpretive presentation will be especially helpful in





- **Create themed itineraries** on specific interpretive subjects such as significant cultures, birding, water resources, Pike's exploration, etc., with supporting interpretive materials and media.
- **Support interpretive partners' development** of sites, exhibits, events, and management capacity, both financially and through technical assistance.
- **Develop a strong second phase of interpretation for Los Caminos Antiguos as a "spine" for the heritage area**, concentrating on cultural and historical themes and subjects and emphasizing connections between communities. Such a program should expand the number, range, and quality of exhibits, incorporating landscaping, visitor amenities, and regionally inspired artwork. Spur tours to other close-by communities that wish to participate would provide a larger audience for communities to tell their stories and support other strategic objectives explained in other chapters.
- **Enable participating communities to tell their own stories in individual ways**, based on themes, structure, and standards provided by the National Heritage Area for the sake of consistency and region-wide experience. This approach should emphasize cultural and historical themes and the preservation of historic buildings and landscape features, reinforce local revitalization strategies, and also incorporate local and regionally inspired artwork.
- **Employ oral history** as well as story-telling by cooperating with existing oral history programs to make such productions possible and to incorporate



- **Develop a living history program** with groups of actors and re-enactors who can be featured within the heritage area at events and in other ways where a critical mass of visitors can support such programming.
- **Interpret and publicize recreational walking and hiking trails** for various levels of physical abilities, including aggressive mountain hikes.

In essence, this chapter of our management plan is an interpretive plan. As such, this chapter departs from the pattern of the preceding three chapters in which the strategic objectives provide the basis for headings in the remainder of the chapters.

Located on a plaza in the San Luis de la Culebra National Historic District, the San Luis Museum and Cultural Center was established to interpret the history of San Luis, La Vega, the People's Ditch, the oldest family store in the state, the town's local heritage, and its Hispano culture and settlement. The museum houses interpretive exhibits and a diorama of the village. Additionally it has a replica of a Penitente morada, complete with religious objects and Santos (carved saints), and an extensive collection of local art, including traditional embroidery and murals. Originally constructed in 1943 by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) as an Institute of Arts and Crafts, the building was later used as a high school. Much of the original architecture (vigas and fireplace) is still intact. The Carlos Beaubien Theatre, located within the museum, has hosted several stage performances, presentations, and concerts. Several years ago the museum offered classes in weaving, embroidery, using hornos (outdoor earthen ovens traditionally used by both Hispanics and Native Americans), and a variety of lectures. Due to funding constraints and personnel changes, however, these programs are no longer offered. The courtyard is still used for festivals, although the museum has been closed for several years and the center is undergoing restoration. (In its future, it will become the Sangre de Cristo Heritage Center and it is referred to under this name throughout this management plan.)



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### San Luis Valley Museum

Located in downtown Alamosa, the San Luis Valley Museum contains memorabilia displaying the area's multicultural heritage representing pioneers, Indians, and other settlers of the San Luis Valley. Collections contain historical photographs and American Indian items, including beautiful, colorful clothing made from hides. Oriental art and Veterans memorabilia are also on display. The building contains a pioneer schoolroom and trading post display.



*The San Luis Valley Museum is one of several local museums in the heritage area. Each is unique in its offerings and closely tied to its community. Tailored to the interests and stories of their locales, they provide rich, friendly, and highly personalized experiences that present the region as well as individual communities.*

This chapter is based instead on the framework that should organize the heritage area's approach to interpretation. It begins with a general discussion of the interpretive presentation for the National Heritage Area, providing guiding principles and describing potential audiences and, in general, the desired interpretive experience. It ends with a general description of the basic framework to be followed here. A companion to this general section is a discussion of the interpretive themes that will help to identify and unite the many, varied stories that it is possible to present in this National Heritage Area.

The bulk of this chapter is devoted to detailing the four basic approaches to the interpretive presentation for this National Heritage Area: (1) creating a heritage area-wide presentation; (2) presenting the stories of the heritage area's many communities; (3) supporting interpretive sites; and (4) enhancing the experience of the natural landscape. Within these sections are specific recommendations for methods to use and actions to take; in a few cases, topics may seem to overlap, but they are meant to be tailored to

the particular subject at hand. As will readily be seen below, ways to accomplish the strategic objectives listed above are woven throughout.

### AN INTERPRETIVE PRESENTATION FOR THE NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

The fabric of cultural and natural resources within the National Heritage Area provides a tremendous opportunity for enhanced interpretation in support of community goals for the region. The role of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is to assist by coordinating existing interpretive sites and initiatives into an integrated experience. The National Heritage Area provides a context for interpretation, supports and facilitates local interpretive initiatives, and helps to fill gaps in interpretation where needed.

Interpretation within the heritage area addresses a series of components, each of which contributes to the interpretive experience. First among these is the spectacular landscape itself. The San Luis Valley, the Rio Grande and its tributaries, the Sangre de Cristo and San Juan Mountains, and the distinctive ecosystems throughout the landscape provide an experience that is visually spectacular yet rich and subtle in its details. This landscape is both the backdrop and the essence of everything here. The landscape should imbue each and every story we tell.

Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic and Historic Byway is the primary means through which the landscape's resources and experiences are threaded together. Interpretively focused upon the valley's Hispanic culture, the byway links communities and sites within the heritage area and features orientation kiosks and interpretive waysides along its route. Los Caminos Antiguos is a key interpretive component of the heritage area and the way in which the overall landscape is experienced. The Old Spanish Trail National Historic Trail, which follows part of the same route, is under development and will add to the National Heritage Area's ability to satisfy the needs of visitors seeking to traverse the entire region.

The valley's cultural heritage is experienced primarily through its communities. Each community has a distinctive character and distinctive stories to tell. Some communities are unique to a particular cultural group, while others clearly represent a blending of cultures. At present, community interpretation is under-developed within the heritage area and presents the greatest opportunity for enhanced interpretive experiences. Events are an important way to engage residents and visitors. In communities where there are dining, shopping, and lodging opportunities, the heritage area can become a vehicle for local economic growth and revitalization as visitors are provided reasons to explore through interpretation and other programs. Communities

without clear opportunities to benefit economically from tourism, however, are encouraged to participate, to celebrate their traditions and stories and identify ways that the heritage area can enable community enhancements.

Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve and the Fort Garland Museum are the leading interpretive sites within the National Heritage Area. Both of these sites provide visitors with high-quality interpretive experiences, Great Sand Dunes focusing upon natural resource themes and Fort Garland focusing upon early settlement of the valley. Because they are well known and highly visited, Great Sand Dunes and Fort Garland are often a visitor's first contact point within the valley. They therefore have a responsibility to help inform visitors of other opportunities for exploration, a responsibility they have worked to fulfill. Representatives of both sites have been active in the development of the National Heritage Area. The two sites provide leadership in crafting a high-quality heritage area interpretive experience.

The Cumbres & Toltec and Rio Grande scenic railroads are also leading visitor attractions that are of great benefit to the heritage area. Scenic railroads are popular and provide a unique way to experience the landscape. Railroads were also a defining element in shaping the valley's history. These two railroads are great partners with which to create cooperative initiatives. They are centerpieces of the region's visitor experience.

The National Heritage Area is home to a number of local museums including the San Luis Valley Museum, Luther Bean Museum, San Luis Museum and Cultural Center, Sanford Museum, and Jack Dempsey Museum (see sidebars and photos describing these sites throughout this chapter). Each of the heritage area's local museums is unique in its offerings and closely tied to its community. Tailored to the interests and stories of their locale, they provide a rich, friendly, and highly personalized experience that presents the region as well as individual communities. They are important components of community interpretive planning within the communities in which they are located as well as being heritage area attractions.

In addition to Great Sand Dunes, the National Heritage Area features a number of outstanding national wildlife refuges and state wildlife areas where the valley's unique landscapes and ecosystems can be experienced. Together with privately conserved lands, the conservation of the valley's unique landscapes and ecosystems is one of the most important success stories in Colorado. Water is the valley's big story, whether speaking of natural systems or the agriculture upon which communities and residents depend. Understanding the aquifers and how water works within the valley is

key to understanding its ecology, its communities, and its character. At the refuges and wildlife areas, residents and visitors can get close to the plants, animals, rocks, soils, and water resources that relate this story. These are the places where details of the valley's natural landscape are best appreciated, but due to limits in available funding, formal interpretation is modest.

Flanking the valley, the Sangre de Cristo and San Juan Mountains provide opportunities to explore environments of spectacular beauty. Numerous hiking trails are open and accessible within the national forests located in the mountains. These trails traverse varied landscapes, each a different and unique experience in its way. Under-interpreted, these trail systems present another opportunity for a set of special heritage area experiences that combine recreation and interpretation and can be enjoyable, educational, and rewarding.



*Sanford Museum, Sanford.*

## Sanford Museum

The Sanford Museum includes memorabilia showcasing the town's history and Mormon heritage. In addition to military exhibits and a large doll collection, the museum also includes information on nearby Pike's Stockade and the village of La Sauces.





## Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

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*Heritage Area Interpretation*

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is our opportunity to combine these interesting and outstanding components of our region into a coordinated presentation that offers many ways to experience, appreciate, and enjoy our landscape and our communities.

### **Guiding Principles for Interpretation**

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area's coordinating entity and partners will have responsibility for establishing a heritage area-wide overview and context for interpretation. Most detailed interpretation of heritage area themes and stories, however, will be implemented at local sites by partners over time as resources allow in accordance with a mutually agreed upon structure, criteria, and guidelines meeting standards visitors associate with National Heritage Areas. The following guiding principles should be kept in mind as we develop plans for interpretation of heritage area themes and stories.

- **Accuracy:** Interpretive content should be well-researched and accurate. What is actually known and unknown should be clearly conveyed to visitors. If stories are based upon legend, lore, or oral tradition, this should be clearly stated.
- **Authenticity of Place:** Each story should be told in the actual place where it happened, connecting the story directly to a place that is tangible and



*Jack Dempsey Museum, Manassa.*

### **Jack Dempsey Museum**

Located in Manassa, the Jack Dempsey Museum celebrates the life of heavyweight boxing champion Jack Dempsey. Dedicated in 1966, the museum is housed in the cabin in which Dempsey was born. It contains several artifacts of Dempsey's career, including the gloves he wore in the New York fight and numerous black-and-white photographs, which line the walls.

real. Authentic physical features — buildings, roads, landscape features, and other resources — should be used to tell the stories.

- **Context:** Each story should be connected to the broader historical context using heritage area themes. Stories should illustrate themes and relate to the bigger picture in ways that make them immediate and understandable. The historical context surrounding each story should be clearly communicated in broad strokes that are accurate but easily grasped. Through the context, connections can be drawn between interpretation offered at different sites.
- **Quality:** Each interpretive installation should meet a high standard of quality in terms of location, design, storytelling, and visitor experience. Partners will be responsible for maintaining quality standards at their sites.
- **Significance and Meaning:** Interpretation goes beyond the mere reciting of facts by drawing connections from a story and conveying significance and meaning to its audience. Interpretation becomes meaningful when it makes a larger point or touches a larger truth. In developing interpretive content, each story should be examined for its significance. The story's significance should be communicated to the audience in a way that helps them connect it to their own life experiences.
- **Different Styles of Learning:** Interpretive media and techniques should be designed to acknowledge different learning styles and generational differences in how information is absorbed. A variety of possible experiences should be provided in order to satisfy the interests and capabilities of different age groups, temperaments, and orientations, including those with disabilities.
- **Differing Points of View:** Visitors should be offered stories from multiple perspectives presented in their historical context in order to help them understand how people from diverse groups and political persuasions saw things differently. Controversies that have existed should be presented from all perspectives. Visitors should not be told what to think but should be allowed to make their own decisions and draw their own conclusions.
- **Shared Human Experience:** Interpretation should be provided in ways that help audiences identify with it and relate it to experiences in their own lives. Using the authentic stories of real people in their own words in the actual places where events occurred should be encouraged wherever possible. The expression



- **Opportunities to Explore:** Audiences should be given opportunities to explore both in a physical sense and in terms of interpretive themes and stories. Themes and stories should be presented in ways that help visitors draw connections, spark interests, and encourage further investigation. Tempting leads and interpretive connections should invite visitors to move from place to place.

The National Heritage Area's goals, conceptual alternatives, and enabling legislation clearly state that the heritage area's interpretive presentation should engage both residents and visitors. Visitors will be engaged to promote heritage tourism and support community revitalization. Residents will be engaged to reinforce community pride, preserve cultural traditions and languages, and encourage initiatives enhancing local quality of life. Different audiences have different needs and expectations. The heritage area's interpretive experience should be capable of meeting the needs and expectations of the different types of audiences who are being engaged.

Chapter 8 of this plan, Heritage Tourism and Marketing, discusses visitor experience and is closely related to this chapter. Chapter 6, Conserving Community and Traditions, focuses specifically upon programs that reach out to residential constituencies, including the region's youth, entrepreneurs, cultural communities, artists, and agricultural interests. Those audiences and topics are therefore not included here.

The Luther Bean Museum is located within Adams State University. It features an eclectic collection of Southwest and European art, artifacts, and local arts and history, including Native American and Hispano Southwest arts, paintings and bronzes by nationally and regionally known artists, and European decorative arts. Also featured is also a collection of memorabilia of the former Colorado governor and ASU's founder William H. "Billy" Adams.

The heritage area's mid-term priority will be to attract travelers who are passing through the valley and potential visitors that are within close driving distance, such as markets along the Front Range and in Santa Fe and Albuquerque. To attract these audiences, a basic interpretive and visitor service infrastructure must be in place, and a steady quality



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level must be assured. Longer term, the heritage area will focus upon other targeted domestic and international audiences.

Each of these short, mid-, and long-term audiences includes a variety of specific groups that will be further defined as specific actions are considered. Residents will remain a priority audience in all of the National Heritage Area's activities.

#### **Desired Interpretive Experience**

After experiencing the heritage area's interpretive presentation, audiences will have a clear understanding of key themes and ideas. These themes and ideas will be presented through the variety of local stories. The following ideas represent the desired interpretive experience for all visitors and residents and may be used as benchmarks in assessing whether a planned presentation is meeting the desired goals. Upon experiencing the heritage area's interpretive presentation, visitors should:

- Understand that the San Luis Valley is a unique landscape with significant natural systems and ecosystems worthy of conservation.
- Appreciate that the valley's distinctive Hispanic culture is a living tradition embodied in heritage area communities and landscapes.
- Understand that a mix of cultures have combined to create the richness and diversity of the valley's history and communities.
- Recognize the critical role that water plays in the natural landscape, agricultural landscape, valley history, and the present.
- Appreciate the impact valley stories had upon the lives of people and how they impacted the course of events.
- See stories from the perspective of others who may have different points of view.
- Be stimulated to learn more, seek additional information on their own, and explore other places within the National Heritage Area.
- Support preservation of cultural traditions and historic resources, conservation of natural landscapes, and community revitalization and enhancement.

#### **Interpretive Approach**

The interpretive presentation for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area will create a high-quality experience that weaves together the heritage area's stories, communities, sites, and landscapes into a coordinated

whole. Most interpretive projects and programs will be organized and implemented by local and regional partners in accordance with their particular goals and interests. The National Heritage Area board and staff will be responsible for coordinating the various initiatives as appropriate. Heritage area guidelines will help shape initiatives, and various mechanisms through which initiatives will receive support will help provide incentives for local action.

Projects and initiatives will be phased in over time as resources and capabilities permit. Marketing and visitor expectations, discussed in Chapter 8, will be carefully shaped to the level and quality of the visitor experience that can be expected during each stage of the building process.

The interpretive experience is organized into four broad areas of action based upon resource types and the partners who will be primarily responsible for implementation:

- **Heritage Area-wide Interpretation** will establish the interpretive context, will orient visitors to opportunities, will introduce heritage area themes, and will primarily be the responsibility of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area board and staff in partnership with Los Caminos Antiguos.
- **Community Interpretation** will be the primary means through which cultural stories are told, particular to each participating community, and will be implemented through local initiatives in accordance with local interests and objectives.
- **Site Interpretation** will present detailed stories appropriate to each site or museum, will illustrate heritage area themes, will have high-quality professional programs and exhibits, and will be the responsibility of individual partnering sites.
- **Natural Resource Interpretation** will tell the landscape story, will feature National Wildlife Refuges and State Wildlife Areas, will encourage recreational use of the region's many public trails with enhanced interpretation, and will primarily be the responsibility of the heritage area's federal and state partners.

Details of the programs to be organized within each of these four areas of activity are discussed later in this chapter.

#### **INTERPRETIVE THEMES**

Interpretive themes are the big ideas that convey the significance about a place or subject and are the key ideas that audiences should remember. Themes help audiences connect individual stories or subjects with the broader context and connect their experiences from place to place. They help us appreciate what the stories mean and why they









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### Primary Theme 3: Interwoven Peoples and Traditions

The San Luis Valley is renowned for the many cultures that have made it home. Native American, Hispano, Anglo, Mormon, Japanese-American, Dutch, and, recently, Amish cultures have all influenced the valley at various periods of its history. The theme Interwoven Peoples and Traditions tells the stories of these cultures and of the people who came here. It is an all encompassing and living theme that relates the overall history of the valley's development.

Taking off where Theme 2 ends, Interwoven Peoples and Traditions begins with the story of early Spanish exploration. It relates the experiences of Hispano families in their early settlement initiatives; the story of Mexican land grants; conflicts with Native Americans; the acquisition of the valley by the United States; the construction of railroads; the subsequent westward expansion of Anglo settlers into the region; and the development of the communities, businesses, and agricultural development that have resulted in the valley we know today. The theme includes discussion of contemporary struggles with respect to water rights and traditional access to land. The unique stories of Hispano settlement and their historic cultural traditions are particularly important to this theme and lay the groundwork for interpretation of Theme 4 on contemporary Hispano culture and communities. Interwoven Peoples and Traditions is a heritage area-wide theme. The National Heritage Area as a whole will set the context for telling its stories, but its numerous, varied stories will primarily be told through community interpretation and interpretation at specific sites. Each participating community and site will tell its own stories filling in subjects covered by the theme. The National Heritage Area will set the overall context, facilitate and coordinate storytelling between communities and sites, and fill gaps in the storytelling where necessary.

#### Theme Statement

The San Luis Valley is a place where different peoples have converged for thousands of years. The Valley's profound historical, religious, and cultural convergence remains visible in the landscape and can be experienced in its communities, art, food, lodging, and events.

#### Potential Interpretive Subjects

Spanish Exploration	Spanish and Mexican Culture	Mexican Land Grants
Hispano Settlement	Early Settlement Patterns	Hispano Agricultural Traditions
American Exploration	Trails and Early Roads	U.S. Military Forts
Land Speculation	Railroads & Mines	Mormon Traditions
Agriculture	Valley Communities	Mixed Cultures
US Policy and Regulation	Water and Rights	Traditional Access to Land

### Primary Theme 4: Hispano Culture: Folklore, Religion and Language

Interpretation of the unique Hispano culture of the San Luis Valley was a primary motive for creation of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area as well as Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic Byway. The theme Hispano Culture will therefore be a primary focus of heritage area interpretation. The geographic focus of the Hispano theme is the southern portions of Costillo and Conejos Counties, and the most appropriate places for its presentation are their Hispano communities.

The theme Hispano Culture is a living theme. It embraces the stories of historic Hispano settlement of the valley included in Theme 3, Interwoven Peoples and Traditions, but it is primarily about the nature of the Hispano community and culture today. While heritage area-wide interpretation will set the context and interpret remote sites and resources, this theme will primarily be interpreted within today's Hispano communities by the communities themselves. Each community wishing to participate will be asked to prepare an interpretive plan with guidance and support from the National Heritage Area and will then receive support in its implementation. These community-based initiatives will be closely related to the heritage area's community engagement and community enhancement initiatives.

#### Theme Statement

The lower San Luis Valley lies at the intersection of the Hispano Southwest and Anglo Rocky Mountain West where the flavor of Hispano culture thrives. The Valley's relative isolation has preserved a living cultural tradition where art, language, architecture, folklore, and religious traditions remain evocative of the region's early Spanish colonists and Mexican settlers.

#### Potential Interpretive Subjects

Religion	Language	Music, Art, Crafts
Architecture	Cultural Traditions	Festivals
Food-ways	Agriculture	Folklore
Water and Acequias	Settlement Patterns	Education



*Barracks at Fort Garland. (Photo by Ann Marie Velasquez)*

matter. Themes help connect stories told in different places with a common thread.

Every interpretive exhibit or presentation within the heritage area should be developed with one of the primary interpretive themes in mind, illustrating the particular theme it relates to. Audiences should be reminded of the theme when possible. Each exhibit or presentation should have a key message or sub-theme that summarizes its purpose and gives its story meaning and relevance within the context of the heritage area as a whole.

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Feasibility Study describes four primary themes that create the thematic structure for heritage area interpretation. The preceding: two special pages present a summary of each theme along with a theme statement and a list of relevant subjects. These four themes capture the essence of the San Luis Valley and reflect events and movements that have been significant in the history of the United States. Each of the primary interpretive themes provides the opportunity to convey and connect a range of interesting and significant subjects and stories by partnering communities, attractions, and sites. The Feasibility Study includes the historical background of the San Luis Valley that provides the context for the themes. A discussion of the themes and resources associated with them from the Feasibility Study is included in Appendix G of this management plan.

As they seek support and assistance in shaping their interpretation within the context of the National Heritage Area, partners should be asked to identify the key message or sub-theme for the subject they are interpreting and how it relates to the primary theme. Messages, sub-themes, and interpretive content should be reviewed for accuracy by

### **Fort Garland**

Established in 1858 and commanded by legendary frontiersman Kit Carson, Fort Garland had a garrison of more than 100 men and served to protect the earliest settlers in the San Luis Valley. Original adobe buildings on the grounds (including the barracks pictured here), exhibits on infantry, cavalry, and Buffalo Soldiers stationed at the fort, an authentic 1871 stagecoach, and historic dioramas offer visitors a memorable experience of American western history. Fort Garland is one of the major interpretive sites in the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area (see Appendix F).

qualified naturalists, historians, educators, and professional interpreters within the region.

## **HERITAGE AREA-WIDE PRESENTATION**

Heritage area-wide elements of the interpretive presentation will establish the overall context and will primarily be the responsibility of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area board and staff working with various partners. Its purpose is to:

- Establish a heritage area-wide presence that is apparent to residents and visitors;
- Orient visitors to opportunities;
- Introduce the heritage area's four primary themes, setting the context for local community and site interpretation;
- Provide physical and interpretive linkages between communities and sites;



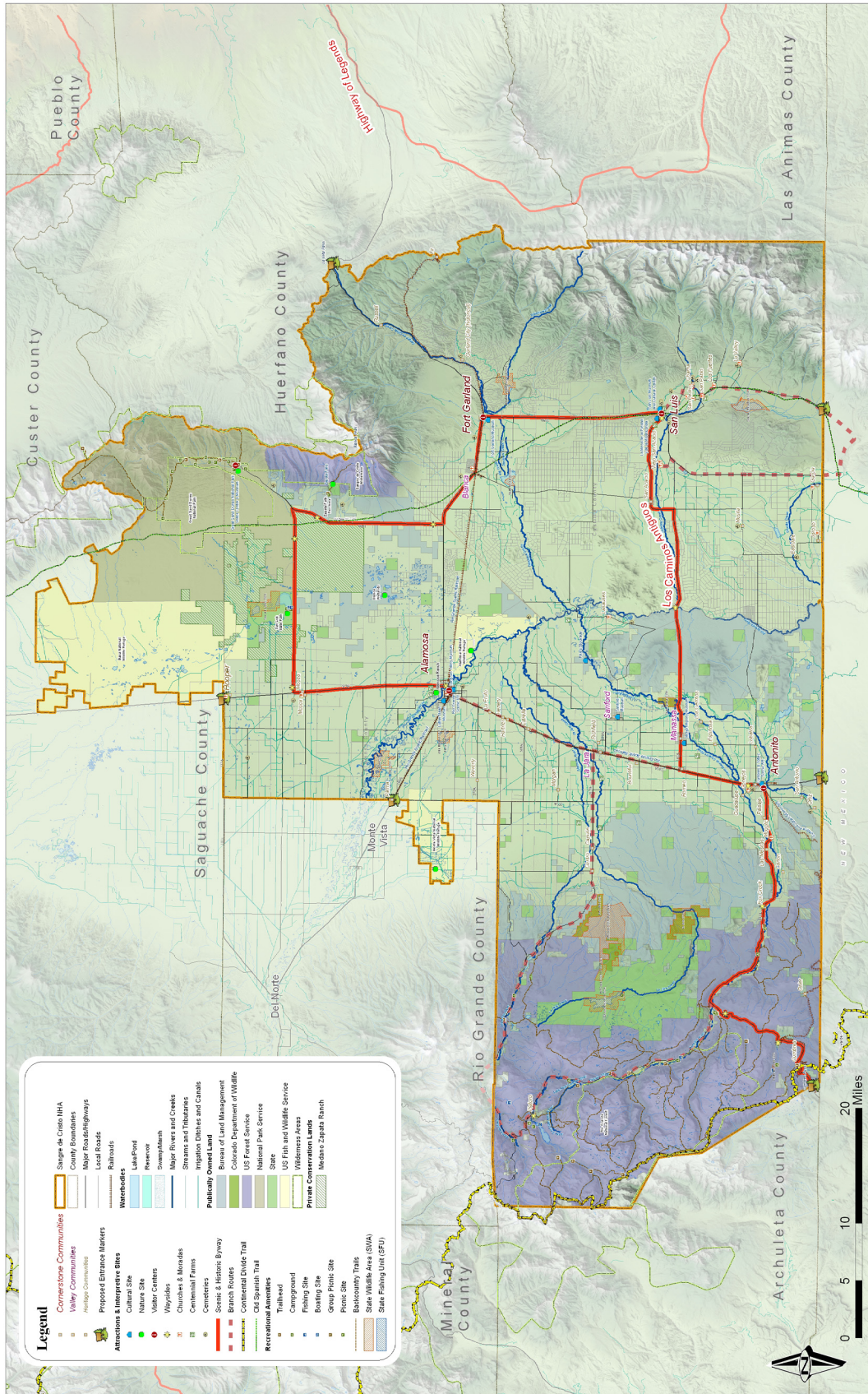




# Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

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Map Prepared For: Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, Colorado  
 Map Prepared By: Heritage Strategies, LLC, in association with  
 Progressive Urban Management Associates (PUMA) and  
 The National Trust for Historic Preservation's Heritage Tourism Program  
 HERITAGE STRATEGIES

**Interpretive Presentation**  
 Data Sources: Colorado Historical Society, Office of Archaeology and  
 Historic Preservation, Bureau of Land Management, Colorado Department of  
 Transportation, Colorado State Office of Natural Resources, Rio Grande Basin, 2011;  
 USGS National Hydrography Dataset, Colorado, 2011.



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Figure 7-1: Recommended interpretive presentation for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area.





## Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

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Los Caminos Antiguos wayside in Conejos County.

### Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic & Historic Byway (Wayside Exhibits)

This 129-mile state scenic byway links the four Cornerstone Communities of Alamosa, Fort Garland, San Luis, and Antonio, as well as the Great Sand Dunes National Park, the San Luis Lakes State Park, the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge, Zapata Falls, the Medano-Zapata Ranch, the San Juan National Forest, the Conejos River, Culebra Creek, and the Rio Grande. Smaller communities along this route include: Mosca, Blanca, San Acacio, Manassa, Romeo, Conejos, Paisaje, Mogote, La Mesitas, and Fox Creek. There are 22 wayside exhibits along the way that provide interpretation of specific topics and sites.

Interpretive topics include the Rio Grande, the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad, Conejos Canyon, Adams State University, Spanish Entradas, the Aquifers & Closed Basin, the Alamosa NWR, Dune Formation, Blanca Wetlands, Zapata Falls, Paleo-Indians, Tewa Indians, Blanca Peak, Penitentes, the Alpine Desert, Fort Massachusetts, Fort Garland, Buffalo Soldiers, San Luis—Oldest Town in Colorado, La Vega, Acequias, Stations of the Cross, Lt. Zebulon Pike, Pike's Stockade, King's Turquoise Mine, the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, Jack Dempsey, and Our Lady of Guadalupe Church.

and wildlife. Specific places where the landscape can be accessed should be identified. Information from the guide should be available for downloading from the heritage area website. An audio version of the landscape guide could be produced for driving tours.

**ACTION: Publish a guide to the San Luis Valley landscape describing the unique landscape areas within the National Heritage Area, including landforms, geology, plant communities, and wildlife.**

### Family of Entrance, Wayfinding, and Exhibit Signage

The National Heritage Area should develop a family of signage types and graphic formats that can be used heritage area-wide to provide consistency and help establish a visual presence. It should include entrance signs, wayfinding signs, kiosks, waysides, identification signs, and other formats as deemed appropriate. Implement the system over time. Signage should be durable and sustainable.

Entrance and wayfinding signage, while not interpretation, is important in helping to create a visual presence that identifies the National Heritage Area as a unique and special place. It can contribute greatly to the interpretive presence to be communicated to residents and visitors. Entrance signs using the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area's graphic identity should be installed along major roads entering into the heritage area. Wayfinding signage using the heritage area's graphic format should be developed for the heritage area's driving routes and should provide directions to communities and sites. A combined graphic format could be developed along Los Caminos Antiguos. Partnering communities and sites should be offered the opportunity of having heritage area-styled identification signage should they desire it. Alternately, signs noting affiliation with the National Heritage Area, such as those provided to designated Preserve America communities, could be provided. Entrance and wayfinding signage is also discussed in Chapter 8, Heritage Tourism and Marketing.

**ACTION: Develop a family of signage types and graphic formats to be used heritage area-wide, including entrance signs, wayfinding signs, kiosks, waysides, identification signs, and others as appropriate.**

### Orientation Exhibits

Outdoor orientation kiosks should be installed at prominent locations in the four Cornerstone Communities of Antonito, San Luis, Fort Garland, and Alamosa. The orientation kiosks should have a minimum of three large interpretive panels in the National Heritage Area's graphic format. One map should feature a heritage area-wide orientation map with smaller local maps showing details of the vicinity. Two of the panels should introduce the four heritage area themes, connecting to community and site interpretation, and provide information on visitor opportunities.

Similar kiosks should be installed near the visitor center at Great Sand Dunes National Park and in Hooper, which is a northern entrance into the National Heritage Area. Smaller versions of the four primary orientation kiosks should be installed in other participating communities and sites.



Orientation kiosks and signage can be adapted to work with existing signage where appropriate. For example, Fort Garland's visitor information center has existing panels with a map of the valley and interpretation of the valley, Fort Garland, and Buffalo Soldiers. New heritage area signage can be designed to work with and complement these existing panels.

Orientation kiosks should be located at places that are visible, easily accessible, and pedestrian friendly. They should include landscape amenities such as special paving, benches, landscaping, and lighting. Kiosks should be accessible to individuals with disabilities.

**ACTION: Install outdoor orientation kiosks in the four Cornerstone Communities to welcome visitors, provide information, introduce the heritage area's primary themes, and orient visitors to driving tours, sites, and communities.**

### **Los Caminos Antiguos Interpretive Exhibits**

Los Caminos Antiguos is the backbone of the National Heritage Area experience, connecting landscapes, communities, and sites throughout the heritage area. The byway should continue to be the primary means for creating heritage area-wide linkages. Hispano themes and subjects have been the primary interpretive focus of Los Caminos Antiguos, which should continue. In addition, it is proposed that landscape interpretation be introduced to the byway to provide visitors with a context for the cultural themes as they drive.

Recommendations for interpretation at specific sites along Los Caminos Antiguos are included in the byway's 1999 corridor management plan. This plan has been partially implemented. It is important that the plan continue to be implemented in order to provide enough interpretive content along the byway to create a visitor experience with sufficient critical mass. Interpretation of the valley landscape should be developed to complement the recommendations included in the existing plan. Landscape interpretation should include both the natural landscape and cultural landscape, especially historic and modern agricultural features and practices. The Old Spanish Trail should also be interpreted through byway exhibits.

Appropriate landscape amenities should be installed at the byway's interpretive sites to give the sites a strong visual presence. Amenities might include paving, fencing, benches, bollards or placed boulders, and landscaping. Media downloads from the heritage area website would be appropriate for added interpretation at specific sites and to provide an audio component for the driving tour. The proposed heritage area fold-out map, discussed above under



*A modern adobe capilla, La Capilla de Todas los Santos (Chapel of All Saints), crowns the San Pedro Mesa overlooking San Luis. Together with Stations of the Cross statuary, it was inspired by a local priest and built by the hands and funds of parish congregants and donors.*

### **The Sacred Circle Tour**

The "Sacred Circle Tour" has been arranged by the Costilla County Economic Development Council in collaboration with Sangre de Cristo Parish. It features nine historic churches or missions that help interpret the religious and architectural history of Hispano settlers. It also features La Capilla de Todos los Santos (ca. 1986).

The promotional brochure identifies the churches and missions on a map, but no driving route is suggested. Guided tours can also be arranged by request. The nine churches currently included in the tour are:

- Sts. Peter and Paul, San Pablo
- San Francisco Mission, San Francisco
- Immaculate Conception Mission, Chama
- St. James the Less Mission, Blanca
- San Isidro Mission, Los Fuertes
- Holy Family Mission, Fort Garland
- Sacred Heart Mission, Garcia
- Sangre de Cristo Parish Church, San Luis
- San Acacio Mission Church, San Acacio

the family of publications, should feature Los Caminos Antiguos and related interpretive content. The map could replace the existing byway brochure.

Implementation initiatives along the byway are the responsibility of the Board of Directors of Los Caminos Antiguos. The National Heritage Area should work closely



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with the byway's board in developing and implementing additional interpretation.

**ACTION: Collaborate with Los Caminos Antiguos to complete implementation of the byway's interpretive plan and to add additional interpretation presenting the valley's natural, cultural, and agricultural landscapes.**

### **Branch Routes**

Additional branches should be added to Los Caminos Antiguos to provide linkages to communities and sites not directly on the byway and to complete a circular connection from Alamosa to Antonito. Only communities that have expressed a desire to participate in the National Heritage Area program and that have met basic criteria for presentation and visitor experience should be connected to the byway route.

**ACTION: Designate additional driving routes as branches to Los Caminos Antiguos to provide linkages to communities and sites not directly on the byway and to complete a circular connection.**

### **Themed Itineraries and Driving Tours**

Themed itineraries and driving tours should be developed for special subjects and audiences with special interests. These itineraries should be presented in special brochures and through media downloads from the heritage area website. Other supporting interpretive materials may be desirable, and the itineraries could be the subject of special guided tours. Themed itineraries and driving tours may be developed over time as deemed appropriate. Themed itineraries might include such subjects as:

- Hispano churches and religious sites
- Hispano agriculture
- Arts and crafts
- Valley agriculture
- Mormon settlements
- Valley railroads
- Birding
- Local foods
- Water resources

**ACTION: Develop themed itineraries and driving tours for special subjects and audiences with special interests.**



*Residents of Viejo San Acacio (Old San Acacio) erected this attractive marker to let visitors know when they have arrived in the community with Colorado's oldest standing church building (pictured on page 4-18. Such signs marking smaller communities where visitor services may not be available to create a sense of community center can add to the visitor experience by letting travelers know that residents consider this a special place.*

## COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS

Community interpretation is the primary means through which the National Heritage Area's cultural themes will be presented. While heritage area-wide interpretation is intended to set the context, community interpretation provides richness and detail through numerous stories, community by community, illustrating themes and sub-themes and getting at the core of the valley's stories. Community interpretation should enthrall visitors and become the hallmark of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area experience.

Each valley community is different. A full range of stories will be represented through the participation of many communities. Each individual community should be encouraged to bring its own stories into the light of public appreciation and to fill its special place within the thematic structure. The themes Interwoven Peoples and Traditions and Hispano Culture should be the primary subjects of community interpretation, and communities should be the primary places where stories interpreting these themes will be told.

Interpretation and visitor services combine to form the core of what this plan calls "visitor experience." The heritage area management plan proposes three levels of community participation. The purpose of this system is to enlist communities in building up the heritage area's visitor experience as a whole and achieving a reputation for high-quality experiences through their participation. In return,

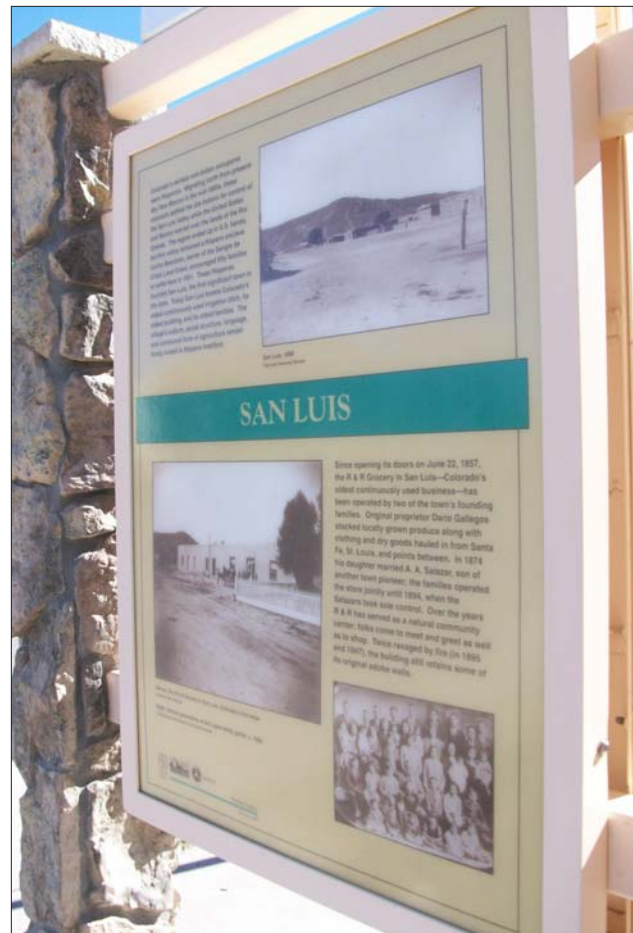
communities gain local recognition, boost residents' pride in and appreciation for their resources and stories, and have a new way to express community creativity. Also in return, they can compete for heritage area assistance for their top-priority projects and gain promotion through the heritage area's efforts to guide visitors to participating communities according to the visitors' needs, expectations, and interests. The community designation system is discussed further in Chapter 9, Community Revitalization.

To participate, a community should first evaluate its visitor services using criteria set by the National Heritage Area and determine how much it wishes to work on an interpretive presentation, again following heritage area guidance. The community should then create a brief plan of action, seek designation or acknowledgment of its status, and begin work on its top-priority actions, seeking National Heritage Area assistance as appropriate and as local and heritage area resources can be made available.

In general, communities without visitor services have equal access to the National Heritage Area's assistance in interpretive development. That is, no matter where a community finds itself within this community-designation system, once it is on a footing of participation, the community has an equal opportunity to compete for heritage area help. A process for becoming a designated heritage area community and receiving planning and implementation assistance will be established by the National heritage Area in accordance with the guidelines outlined in this chapter. The National Heritage Area may vary its criteria for awarding such assistance depending on where it sees opportunities for especially effective use of resources in making significant progress for the heritage area as a whole. During the startup phase, for example, the National Heritage Area may set priorities for resource allocation based on community visibility and readiness to provide a high-quality visitor experience, and focus on such things as visitor services, hospitality training, wayfinding, or visitor orientation. Other criteria at other times might be based on theme, local investment, type of project (helping to provide variety in the visitor experience), number of partners collaborating, etc.

### Cornerstone Communities

Cornerstone Communities are communities located near entry points into the heritage area and are communities capable of providing a full range of visitor services. They will be asked to host orientation exhibits for visitors and to provide a high level of community interpretation featuring creative, resident inspired exhibits, artwork, and streetscape enhancements. Each should also provide a local visitor center providing visitor information. Proposed Cornerstone Communities are located at the four corners



*San Luis, near the New Mexico border and Colorado's oldest incorporated town, has already begun an interpretive program and draws many visitors. It is one of the proposed Cornerstone Communities located at the four corners of the National Heritage Area, along with Antonito, Fort Garland, and Alamosa. The establishment of a high-quality visitor experience in each of these four communities is an essential component for this plan's goal of strengthening heritage tourism within the region.*

of the National Heritage Area and include Antonito, San Luis, Fort Garland, and Alamosa. The establishment of a high-quality visitor experience in these four communities is an essential component for this plan's goal of strengthening heritage tourism within the region.

### Valley Communities

Valley Communities are other communities within the National Heritage Area offering visitor services. Participation is totally voluntary but will be undertaken in accordance with heritage area criteria. A minimum level of visitor services required for designation includes a restaurant (or food market where take-out meals may be purchased) and the availability of public restrooms. The National





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*Sociedad Proteccion Mutua De Trabajadores Unidos in Antonito.*

### **SPMDTU: Sociedad Proteccion Mutua De Trabajadores Unidos**

The SPMDTU represents the civil rights struggles of Hispano settlers in the San Luis Valley. After the forced annexation of Mexican Territory and U.S. failures in honoring the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which protected property rights of Mexicans living in the Southwest, Hispanos faced racial intolerance and land loss. Patterned after New Mexico mutual aid societies that protected the civil rights of members during industrialization of the Southwest, the Sociedad Proteccion Mutua De Trabajadores Unidos (Society for the Mutual Protection of United Workers or SPMDTU) was founded in 1900 in Antonito, Colorado.

This large two-story building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is undergoing restoration. It is not currently interpreted but individual tours by appointment may be possible.

Heritage Area establishes minimum standards for quality and hospitality training with respect to visitor services. Participating communities are expected to interpret their stories. Representative Valley Communities include La Jara, Manassa, Sanford, and Blanca. Hooper has a special Valley Community role as a northern entrance into the National Heritage Area.

### **Heritage Communities**

Heritage Communities are communities without visitor services that wish to participate in the National Heritage Area's interpretive presentation. These include many historically significant communities with important stories that are central to the San Luis Valley's historical experience. These communities should be strongly encouraged to

participate in the interpretive presentation. The means through which interpretation is offered will be customized to each community's interests and shaped to engage the participation of residents. Community engagement initiatives, discussed in Chapter 6, Conserving Community & Tradition, may take precedence over interpretation to visitors depending upon the desires and capabilities of the community.

Every National Heritage Area community is encouraged to participate in the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area interpretive presentation. Participating communities are expected to be welcoming to visitors. Each participating community will be asked to prepare an interpretive plan with heritage area support, and guidelines for participating communities will ensure authenticity and a high-quality experience. Existing attractions such as museums within and close to participating communities will collaborate in the interpretive presentations and are encouraged to forge close ties with their host communities.

**ACTION: Implement a system of community interpretation as a central component of the National Heritage Area interpretive presentation. Each community is encouraged and supported in development of its interpretive presentation and visitor experience in accordance with its interests and capabilities.**

The following elements will be encouraged as possible components of community interpretive presentations.

### **Community Interpretive Plan**

Every community is welcome to participate in the National Heritage Area's interpretive presentation. In the start-up phase, priority may be given to those communities that are essential in establishing a basic heritage area-wide visitor experience. This includes the four Cornerstone Communities, which are essential to a core heritage area-wide presentation to visitors. Valley and Heritage Communities will be brought on to broaden and enrich the presentation. Criteria and expectations for each level of participation are different, as discussed in the previous section of this chapter, and combine orientation, interpretation, and visitor service components. Programs will be customized to the interests and capabilities of each individual community. Community engagement initiatives, discussed in Chapter 6, may take priority over interpretation for visitors in Heritage Communities.

Each community wishing to participate in the heritage area presentation is asked to prepare a brief community interpretive plan in accordance with National Heritage Area guidelines. The National Heritage Area and its partners

may provide technical assistance in the preparation of the interpretive plans. The community interpretive plans should:

- Outline the community's historical significance;
- Identify local interpretive sites and attractions that are participating in the community presentation;
- Identify the themes, sub-themes, and stories that the community can best tell;
- Describe a conceptual approach for the interpretive presentation including how the presentation relates to community revitalization strategies;
- Identify authentic buildings and sites that will be used to convey key stories;
- Identify publicly accessible locations where exhibits may be installed and stories told;
- Identify the means and media through which interpretation will be offered;
- Outline how the community presentation will be phased, including potential costs, and the extent of proposed phase 1 work to establish a core presentation.

The plans should coordinate community interpretation with heritage area-wide initiatives and with the interpretation of other communities and sites. Interpretive attractions such as museums located in and close to a community are asked to participate in the interpretive plan and implementation. A phased implementation program should be established in accordance with heritage area-wide priorities. Upon completion of the interpretive plan, the community and the National Heritage Area will undertake its implementation as resources become available.

**ACTION: Communities wishing to participate in the National Heritage Area's interpretive program should prepare interpretive plans in accordance with heritage area guidelines and with heritage area assistance.**

### **Introductory Exhibits**

The development of orientation exhibits in the four Cornerstone Communities are a heritage area-wide initiative, as discussed above, to be undertaken in partnership with the four communities. Introductory exhibits should be installed in other participating communities as well and should be incorporated into their interpretive planning. The introductory exhibits may vary in size and complexity community by community, but each should relate its community to the heritage area-wide themes and context, convey the community's overall significance, introduce

### **Historic Downtown Alamosa Walking Tour**

This self-guided walking tour features the history and architecture of Alamosa. It includes 25 historic sites, several of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Tour brochures are currently available at the Alamosa Chamber of Commerce, online, and at the nearby public library, in downtown stores and restaurants, at the Rio Grande Scenic Railroad depot, and at the Alamosa Welcome Center on Sixth Street.



*The former Alamosa Post Office, built in 1935, is one of the 25 historic buildings and sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places and featured in Alamosa's self-guided architectural walking tour. The post office is considered an excellent mix of Art Deco, Classical Revival, and the locally prevalent Mission Revival styles.*

key stories, and provide a connection to local exhibits and other visitor offerings and opportunities. The exhibits should use the National Heritage Area's graphic format. Like orientation exhibits, they should be placed in visible and easily accessible locations and should be associated with landscape amenities.

**ACTION: Install introductory exhibits in each participating community relating the community to heritage area-wide interpretation.**



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*Alamosa's January Ice Fest includes ice sculpting by artists from Aesthetic Ice. 2012 was this event's third year. The National Heritage Area can help to coordinate and support events across the region (photo by Marilyn Loser).*

### Local Interpretive Sites

Local interpretive sites and visitor attractions, such as museums, within and close to communities should participate in the development of community interpretive plans, should be key elements in their presentation, and should help facilitate implementation. Local interpretive sites serve as local destinations where rich interpretive experiences can be offered. Themes and stories presented at local sites should be closely coordinated with other forms of community interpretation.

**ACTION: Local interpretive sites and attractions within and close to communities should participate in the development of community interpretive plans and in their implementation.**

### Outdoor Interpretive Exhibits

Participating communities are encouraged to develop a network of outdoor interpretive exhibits that present the communities' stories as a primary vehicle for community interpretation. The network of outdoor exhibits should be described conceptually in the community interpretive plan and may be phased in over time. Exhibits may range from simple signs or waysides to complex installations. They should be located in publicly accessible places and be ADA compliant. The installation of landscape and streetscape enhancements in association with exhibits is desirable. The network of exhibits should work together to provide a comprehensive presentation of the community's history and significance.

Outdoor interpretive exhibits should use the National Heritage Area's graphic format and family of signage types.

The exhibits should feature authentic places such as historic buildings and natural features, using the places and the stories of local residents to illustrate community themes and significance. The use of first person accounts is highly desirable.

**ACTION: Each community participating in the National Heritage Area's interpretive presentation should create a network of outdoor interpretive exhibits presenting the community's history and significance.**

### Historic Buildings and Landscapes

The preservation, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse of historic buildings and landscapes within a community helps convey the community's character and significance and has interpretive value as well as value in creating a high-quality visitor experience. The development of community interpretive plans will be coordinated with preservation and revitalization initiatives that support and enhance story-telling and visitor experience. Historic buildings and landscape features will be used to tell the community's stories.

**ACTION: Use historic buildings and landscape features within the community to tell the community's stories.**

### Outdoor Art Installations

The strong cultural traditions of the San Luis Valley have created unique artistic impulses that have found expression historically and continue to be expressed today. The National Heritage Area is a place where artists should be encouraged to thrive, and locally created artistic installations should be an important component of community interpretation. Like the physical character of the community, artwork is a way to express interpretive concepts that goes beyond photos and text. Communities are encouraged to use local artists to create artwork associated with community interpretive themes that can be installed along with interpretive exhibits or as stand-alone installations. The locations, goals, and criteria for artistic installations should be outlined in community interpretive plans. Support for local artists is discussed further in Chapter 6, Conserving Community & Tradition.

**ACTION: Use artwork as a key component of community interpretation.**

### Interpretive Publications

As part of the family of heritage area-wide publications discussed in a previous section of this chapter, community brochures should be developed as a component of each community interpretive initiative. Simple brochures using



a similar National Heritage Area graphic format should be created for each participating community. Like introductory exhibits, the brochures should relate the community to the heritage area-wide context, introduce its key stories, and identify places where additional interpretation or other experiences are offered. The brochures should have a community map, use historic photographs, and may identify where visitor services may be found. Additional interpretive publications such as books or pamphlets on community history or key places are encouraged and may be developed by communities over time as they deem appropriate. Outline the range of desired interpretive publications in community interpretive plans.

**ACTION: Include interpretive publications as a component of community interpretive presentations.**

### ***Themed Walking Tours***

Several communities within the National Heritage Area have developed walking tours that present their historic buildings and neighborhoods. Walking tours should be a component of most community interpretive plans and should be presented in heritage area formats where possible. The community brochures discussed above could include walking tours, or walking tours could be developed in more detail as separate offerings. In either case, historic buildings and sites should be used to illustrate and convey themes and stories, not simply provide facts. Walking tours developed around specific themes (religious traditions, early settlement, water rights, ecosystems, etc.) provide special opportunities to interest visitors and should be encouraged. Consider developing audio walking tours that could be downloaded from the heritage area website.

**ACTION: Use walking tours as a component of community interpretive presentations.**

### ***Living History and Cultural Presentations***

Heritage area-wide and local partners should be encouraged to work together to develop living history and cultural experiences that can be offered in participating communities. Partners might include local theater groups, Adams State University, historic site interpreters, re-enactors, cultural and religious groups, and individual enthusiasts. Living history and cultural presentations may be offered at festivals and events or may be regularly scheduled as visitor attractions during summer months.

**ACTION: Develop a heritage area-wide network of living history and cultural presentations that may be offered in communities and sites during festivals and events.**

### ***Festivals and Events***

Festivals and events are representative of the National Heritage Area's living culture and traditions and should be an important component of community interpretation. A calendar of events should be maintained and promoted by the National Heritage Area on its website, in publications, and through media releases. While festivals and events are primarily the responsibility of local partners and communities, the National Heritage Area should help coordinate so that events are not competing with each other and should include support for festivals and events in its small grant program for promotion and to help defray costs.

**ACTION: Include festivals and events as a component of community interpretive presentations.**

### ***Community Arts and Crafts***

Encouraging the growth of local arts and crafts through entrepreneurship is addressed in Chapter 6, Conserving Community & Tradition. Like the proposed artistic installations discussed above, community arts and crafts should be considered a part of a community's interpretive presentation. Within the heritage area's Hispano communities, local arts and crafts help convey the contemporary theme of Hispano Culture. In other communities, they convey other aspects of the valley's rich culture and quality of life. Local entrepreneurship is an important part of the economic development of local communities and should be included in community interpretive planning.

**ACTION: Feature local arts and crafts in the interpretive presentation of heritage area communities.**



*An exquisitely detailed quilt depicting Conejos County's history hangs in the county courthouse. Quilting is a long tradition and a major source of expression for modern artists in the heritage area.*



presentation and will abide by heritage area principles.

### **Introductory Exhibits**

Each participating site is asked to host an introductory exhibit similar to those to be installed in communities setting the site into context with respect to heritage area-wide interpretation and connecting the site to heritage area themes and other interpretive sites. The introductory exhibits could be interior or exterior exhibits and should use the National Heritage Area graphic identity.

**ACTION: Install introductory exhibits at participating sites introducing the National Heritage Area, setting the context for site interpretation relative to heritage area themes, and drawing connections to other interpretive sites.**

### **Interpretive Enhancements**

The National Heritage Area may assist sites in planning and implementing interpretive enhancements that support the heritage area experience. Support might come in the form of grants, technical assistance, or other means and might include exhibits, programming, publications, media enhancements, or other forms of interpretive presentation. Support will be based upon the availability of resources and heritage area-wide priorities.

**ACTION: Provide support to sites in planning and implementing interpretive enhancements that support the heritage area experience in accordance with the availability of resources and heritage area priorities.**

### **Cooperative Programming**

Partnering sites within the National Heritage Area will work together to plan and implement cooperative programming and interpretive initiatives. Such programming might include coordinated interpretive exhibits, events, special tours, joint interpretive publications or media presentations, or other initiatives. As discussed above, sites located within or close to participating communities are expected to collaborate with those communities in interpretive planning and implementation. The National Heritage Area will include participating sites in its heritage area-wide marketing and interpretive materials, website, and promotional initiatives.

**ACTION: Partnering sites within the National Heritage Area will work together to plan and implement cooperative programming and interpretive initiatives.**



*Manassa's Opera House is being restored as a community center through volunteer efforts. Many communities in the heritage area have large buildings like these with the potential for community use. Such buildings might also provide a modest level of visitor reception and interpretive orientation, depending on community needs and wishes.*

### **Interpretive Workshops**

The National Heritage Area will facilitate periodic workshops in which sites may meet to discuss approaches to interpretation, share ideas, and build cooperative relationships. The workshops may feature educational and training sessions on topics of mutual interest. Topics may range from interpretive programming to site management to fund-raising or other issues.

**ACTION: Organize workshops for participating sites to facilitate communication and offer educational and technical training.**

### **Technical Assistance**

The National Heritage Area and its partners will provide technical assistance to participating sites to the extent possible. Technical assistance may be related to interpretation, programming, site management, operations, fund-raising and other subjects of mutual interest. Through discussion, the interests and needs of individual sites will be established and ways in which assistance can be offered will be developed.

**ACTION: Provide technical assistance to participating sites in accordance with interests, needs, and the availability of resources.**

### **Site Improvements**

The National Heritage Area will support sites as they plan and seek funding for implementation of site improvements that support interpretation and visitor experience. It is not anticipated that the National Heritage Area will provide direct funding for construction projects, but participation in





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the heritage area program with its broad-based community goals will provide a basis for seeking funding from a variety of sources, and projects that are consistent with the heritage area vision will receive heritage area support in various ways.

**ACTION: Support sites as they plan and seek funding for implementation of site improvements that support interpretation and visitor experience.**

### ***Collaboration with Communities***

Interpretive sites should not only collaborate in the planning and implementation of community interpretive programming, they should also participate in such initiatives as festivals, events, living history presentations, and programs in traditional arts and crafts.

**ACTION: Facilitate coordination between interpretive sites and communities in programming such as festivals and events.**

## EXPERIENCING OUR NATURAL LANDSCAPES

The San Luis Valley is well known for its phenomenal landscape and unique ecosystems. The valley's landscape is the setting and context for all of its interpretive themes. At present, interpretation of the valley's natural landscape is piecemeal, undertaken very well in a few locations while non-existent at others. Its cultural landscape is barely interpreted at all. The landscape should play a role in the interpretation of most themes and subjects within the National Heritage Area. Interesting aspects of the natural landscape are prevalent everywhere, especially in remote areas. The landscape interpretation is well-suited to presentation through driving tours.

Because of its pervasiveness, this plan proposes that heritage area-wide interpretation, discussed above, present the overall context and significance of the landscape as essential to an understanding of the valley and its culture. The National Heritage Area's natural resource sites (the national park, wildlife areas, and refuges), included above under the discussion of site interpretation, will take the lead in the detailed interpretation of the significant resources with which they are specifically associated.

There are, however, many publicly accessible places within the valley and adjacent mountains where additional interpretation can be implemented, often in association with recreational opportunities. Interpretation of the heritage area landscape should be undertaken in close cooperation with the San Luis Valley Great Outdoors initiative currently being organized by valley communities and partners, as described in Chapter 5, Recreation and Conservation.



*Camping in the Rio Grande National Forest beside Platoro Reservoir. (Photo by Sharon Arnoldi)*

This plan proposes that an increased emphasis upon the combination of recreation and interpretation of natural resources will be appealing to an important segment of the visiting public. New interpretive and walking/hiking initiatives will be undertaken on publicly owned lands within the valley and in the adjacent mountains.

In particular the numerous back-country trails in the San Juan and Sangre de Cristo Mountains provide an opportunity for attracting outdoor enthusiasts. At present, these trails are not well publicized, and little information is available on their character, resources, and experience. By providing high quality maps and easily accessed information about the trails combined with detailed interpretation, they will become a significant added venue for experiencing the National Heritage Area's natural environment. Implementation of this idea will be a combined initiative of the National Heritage Area board and staff and the federal and state agencies managing the natural areas.

**ACTION: Undertake a comprehensive program for enhanced interpretation of the National Heritage Area's natural landscape in partnership with state and federal agencies featuring publicly owned lands.**

**ACTION: Coordinate interpretation of the heritage area landscape in close cooperation with the San Luis Valley Great Outdoors initiative.**

The following elements are proposed to support interpretation of the landscape and the National Heritage Area's natural resources.

### **Landscape Guide and Exhibits**

Development of a landscape guide, website interpretation, additional interpretive publications, and landscape interpretation along Los Caminos Antiguos and branch routes is discussed above under heritage area-wide interpretation. These initiatives will provide the overall context for understanding of the National Heritage Area's landscape and set the stage for more detailed collaborative interpretation of the landscape by partners.

**ACTION:** Introduce interpretation of the natural landscape through heritage area-wide interpretation to set the context for the interpretation of cultural themes and stories as outlined in the section above on heritage area-wide interpretation.

### **Natural Resource Interpretive Sites**

Existing natural resource sites will take the lead in detailed interpretation of natural features and ecosystems at their sites, illustrating themes and subjects associated with the larger San Luis Valley landscape. The National Heritage Area will support enhancement of site interpretation and assist partners in creating a high quality collaborative presentation of the valley's natural environment that encourages visitors to explore.

**ACTION:** Feature detailed interpretation of the natural landscape and the National Heritage Area's unique ecosystems at natural resource sites such as the national park, wildlife areas, and wildlife refuges.

### **Driving Tours and Themed Itineraries**

The National Heritage Area and partners will create driving tours and subject-specific itineraries tailored to the interests of nature and recreational enthusiasts. In addition to landscape interpretation along Los Caminos Antiguos, other roads within the valley will be used to create routes linking natural resource sites specifically for use by those interested in the natural landscape. Driving routes through the San Juan Mountains will feature interpretation of the dramatic mountain landscapes and provide access to parking areas and hiking trails on publicly owned lands.

**ACTION:** Create driving tours and subject-specific itineraries in the valley and adjacent mountains tailored to the interests of nature and recreational enthusiasts.

### **Maps, Trailhead Exhibits, and Trail Guides**

The National Heritage Area and partners will develop information and facilities that encourage and support the use of recreational trails by visitors, both within the valley

and the adjacent mountains. Information materials should include detailed maps, trailhead exhibits, and trail guides providing information on and interpretation of each of the many publicly accessible trails within the National Heritage Area. These materials should be developed using the National Heritage Area's graphic identity as a part of the family of interpretive publications. The materials should be developed in a phased manner over time in partnership with the state and federal agencies managing the public lands, beginning with the most readily accessible and interesting sites.

**ACTION:** Create an enhanced recreational and interpretive experience using the many trail systems on publicly owned lands especially in the mountains east and west of the valley.

**ACTION:** Develop interpretive materials to encourage and support the recreational use of public trails including detailed maps, trailhead exhibits, and trail guides.



One of the many directional signs guiding visitors along the route of Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic Byway. Functionally and interpretively speaking, this byway is the "spine" of the National Heritage Area.







## CHAPTER 8 › HERITAGE TOURISM & MARKETING



*Businesses in the San Luis Valley can benefit from heritage tourism. This coffeehouse in San Luis serves visitors to the Stations of the Cross trail as well as the town's residents. If tourism dollars flow into the local economy, smaller communities are more likely to be able to support such local amenities.*

### INTRODUCTION

Being intentional about not only telling our stories but also how visitors will learn about our heritage and experience it for themselves will help to build the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area as a destination that fulfills our goals for multiple benefits.

Building an audience among visitors through interpretation can contribute to the economic revitalization of communities, for as travelers visit this region, they are likely to shop and dine wherever there are nearby opportunities. The kind of tourism to be achieved through the National Heritage Area is what we call heritage tourism.

By recognizing heritage tourism as an economic development strategy, local government and businesses can diversify their approaches to the critical task of improving the local economy. In the process, greater economic stability can lead to greater resources for historic preservation and support community enhancement and revitalization in the National Heritage Area – the start of a virtuous cycle where more and better interpretation supports more and better heritage tourism, which in turn supports more and better community enhancement, and vice versa.

Visitors already travel to the San Luis Valley to experience the Great Sand Dunes National Park, Fort Garland, the two scenic railroads, and Los Antiguos Caminos. A wide variety of events draw visitors, especially to Alamosa, which has cultivated a number of well-attended events in all seasons. Visitors are also passing through Alamosa, often to stay the night because of the large amount of lodging available, to attend such events as the Monte Vista Crane Festival, or to go west to other attractions beyond Wolf Creek Pass (the western entrance to the valley) in Durango and the Four Corners region. Knowledgeable travelers heading south to Taos from La Veta Pass (eastern entrance) swing along the byway south to San Luis instead of the more traveled route to New Mexico through Antonito. They often stop to climb the magnificent Stations of the Cross trail to the top of the mesa overlooking the little town with its splendid views. Hunting and fishing enthusiasts visit in abundance, as well as hikers, climbers, and bikers, frequenting the two national forests. These are audiences to be cultivated and encouraged to enjoy the greater National Heritage Area experience.

This chapter includes recommended actions to enhance heritage tourism and promote the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area through public relations and





- Conversations with the Board of Directors to fine-tune ideas discussed with stakeholders emphasized a kind of chicken-and-egg challenge: there is so much more to be revealed of the heritage area's stories and experiences than is currently available, and there are so many needs in terms of visitor services, is it fair to visitors to encourage them before these needs are met? And yet, a larger audience is clearly necessary, to provide a rewarding exchange with the people for whom businesses and interpretive attractions are built. And there are already great experiences needing only a modest amount of additional information. Conclusion: "Company's coming" can create ingenuity and urgency among the wide variety of stakeholders responsible for improving the visitor experience, and so the basic strategy is to get more information out immediately about current experiences. Meanwhile, the heritage area will provide leadership and resources to those working to enlarge that

Demographics of visitors at other sites support these visitor research findings. Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad reports that its top states of origin are similar to those identified by the Colorado Welcome Center and Great Sand Dunes. While visitors to Great Sand Dunes are most interested in visiting other National Parks, visitors at Cumbres & Toltec are most interested in visiting other railroad sites. Passengers come from states such as Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Oklahoma, Arizona, and California. The scenic railroad has strong appeal to travelers within driving distance, with many coming from the Southwest. The strong appeal for the Texas market was attributed in part to the fact that the San Luis Valley offers a respite from the relentless Texas summer heat.

experience according to the opportunities identified in this plan. Visitors will find more and more to enjoy as the months and years go by.





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*Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, one of the National Heritage Area's major interpretive attractions, is a National Historic Landmark (courtesy SLV Tourism Council).*

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR HERITAGE TOURISM

The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines heritage tourism as “traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past.” The National Trust’s Heritage Tourism Program has also developed five guiding principles for successful and sustainable heritage tourism programs, including efforts such as national heritage areas. These five principles provide a framework for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area’s heritage tourism marketing efforts:

- **Collaborate:** The value of the collective National Heritage Area is greater than the sum of its parts. By working together in partnership toward shared goals that benefit everyone, much more can be accomplished than by working alone.
- **Make Sites and Programs Come Alive:** Heritage travelers are looking for visitor experiences that are exciting and engaging. Successful heritage tourism programs encourage these travelers to stay longer, plan return visits, and encourage others to visit as well.
- **Focus on Authenticity and Quality:** Heritage travelers have higher expectations when they travel, and they are looking for high-quality, authentic experiences.
- **Find the Fit between the Community and Tourism:** A good heritage tourism effort makes the destination a better place to live as well as a better place to visit.
- **Preserve and Protect Resources:** The natural, historic and cultural resources that led to the designation of this region as the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area are irreplaceable treasures. If lost, they can never be replaced. Preservation and conservation need to be

a core ethic for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area.

The National Trust has also developed four steps for getting started, or for taking an existing heritage tourism program to the next level. Developing successful heritage tourism programs is an incremental process, and it is anticipated that the heritage area will repeat these four steps at each stage of development. The four steps for heritage tourism development are:

- **Step One – Assess the Potential:** Evaluate what your community has to offer in attractions, visitor services, organizational capabilities, ability to protect resources, and marketing.
- **Step Two – Plan and Organize:** Make good use of human and financial resources. They are the keys that open the doors to sustainable heritage tourism. Set priorities and measurable goals.
- **Step Three – Prepare for Visitors; Protect and Manage Your Resources:** Look to the future as well as the present. Be sure that the choices you make now improve your community for the long term.
- **Step Four – Market for Success:** Develop a multi-year, many-tiered marketing plan that targets your market. Look for partners in local, regional, state or national groups.

Note that while marketing is a key component of the steps for success, it is important that marketing efforts are preceded by good reflection, planning, and preparation. There is only one opportunity to make a good first impression with a visitor, and so it is important to seek out and develop opportunities to showcase the region in the best light possible. Much of







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Initial heritage tourism marketing efforts for the heritage area will target local residents in the six-county San Luis Valley as well as existing visitors at attractions within the heritage area. The objective of these marketing efforts will be to make residents realize that they live in or near a National Heritage Area and to ensure that they have an understanding of what that means. By investing in educating local residents, the heritage area can create “virtual ambassadors” for the heritage area who will be able to tell visiting friends and family about what the heritage area has to offer. Outreach to existing visitors at attractions in the heritage area will reach travelers who have already made a decision to visit this region. Outreach efforts will ensure that they realize that in addition to visiting a specific site, they are also getting a taste of a larger National Heritage Area visitor experience. These existing visitors may decide to stay longer, plan a return trip to visit additional sites, or tell friends and family back home about the opportunity to experience the heritage area. As this audience is already in the heritage area, outreach and marketing efforts will be cost effective.

As a second phase, the heritage area will target travelers passing through the region on their way to another destination and travelers within driving distance (for example, visitors from Colorado’s Front Range or Albuquerque). Monitoring visitation trends including the top cities and states of origin is a useful way to identify the most promising target markets within driving distance. Visitation statistics are tracked by the Colorado Welcome Center and other major attractions such as Cumbres & Toltec and Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve (see sidebar).

More attractions within the heritage area should be encouraged to track visitation in a consistent way to provide an even broader snapshot of visitation across the heritage area. The heritage area might consider working with tourism

partners to develop a common tracking method or shared indicators that could be collected by sites tracking visitation. Widespread and consistent tracking would provide a more comprehensive picture of the region’s travelers, which in turn will help the heritage area work with tourism partners to implement strategic marketing efforts informed by this customer research. Marketing efforts will include visibility for the heritage area at places that pass-through travelers are likely to stop as they travel through the heritage area.

As discussed more fully in a section below on public relations, efforts to reach target audiences within the drive market could include public relations outreach, coop (cooperative) advertising, and other marketing strategies. The heritage area’s marketing outreach will ultimately expand to include outreach to targeted domestic and international visitors

**ACTION: Collaborate with tourism partners on visitor research to create a better understanding of existing and potential visitors to the heritage area and to track trends and changes over time.**

## HERITAGE AREA-WIDE GRAPHIC IDENTITY AND MESSAGING CAMPAIGN

The majority of the marketing efforts undertaken by the heritage area alone, or by the heritage area in partnership with other tourism entities in the region, will be within and across the National Heritage Area. Marketing efforts will be designed to establish an awareness of the heritage area, create a greater appreciation for the heritage area’s intrinsic resources, and encourage visitation and longer stays at sites and in communities that are part of the heritage area. The creation of a heritage area-wide graphic identity and messaging campaign will be a key component to link existing and new attractions and visitor services within the heritage area into a cohesive visitor experience.

The heritage area’s efforts to create a shared identity for the region will be distinctly different from marketing efforts undertaken by regional tourism entities such as the Alamosa Convention and Visitors Bureau or the San Luis Valley Tourism Association. The heritage area is not simply marketing tourism attractions within the region. Rather, the heritage area is striving to create a cohesive, comprehensive, and unified experience for visitors. From the first exposure to marketing materials to the actual experience of traveling through the region, the Board of Directors will seek to create a consistent image and message along with high-quality visitor experiences that are clearly part of a larger heritage area-wide visitor experience.

Building from the existing Sangre de Cristo logo, the heritage area has created versions of the logo that will work at all scales, and in color as well as in black and white. These



Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area website and logo.

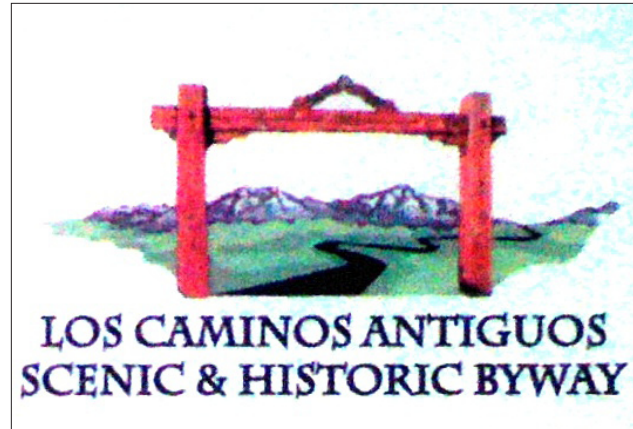


graphic image options offer a range to complement the image in the current logo, and can be used in applications that might require something more simple or stylized. Consistent use of the approved graphic image across all print, online, and built infrastructure for the heritage area will help to unify perceptions of the National Heritage Area's activities. If funds are not available to change the logo to a new version in all places where it appears within the heritage area, the unifying power of the shared graphic identity will be weakened. In brief, it will be costly and disruptive to the efforts to build the brand to change the graphic identity mid-stream, so it is important to get the brand right the first time.

Another key component will be the development of a messaging strategy to accompany the graphic identity. While the name "Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area" can be incorporated as part of the graphic identity, the messaging strategy will take this one step further to help the heritage area respond to the question "What is the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area?" While the response to this question may vary in different settings and for different audiences, it is important that the heritage area's stakeholders, starting with the board, convey a consistent message about what the heritage area is all about. The challenge is that the heritage area will do many different things, and the heritage area's stakeholders may have gotten involved with the heritage area for different reasons and may have different priorities that they feel most strongly about. While this diversity ultimately makes the heritage area stronger, it also poses the risk that members of the community or visitors who ask what the heritage area is could well receive very different responses from different individuals.

As an additional challenge, the three counties that are part of the heritage area and the San Luis Valley as a whole already have a number of existing brands such as Los Caminos Antiguos, various organizations within the San Luis Valley, Alamosa County, Costilla County, Conejos County, and Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve (just to name a few). A key objective for designing a final graphic identity and messaging strategy would be to allow for individual identity while minimizing the potential for visitor confusion.

The close relationship between the heritage area and Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic Byway means that it is especially important that the graphic identity for both the heritage area and byway clearly indicate the relationship between the two. Messaging strategies for the byway can also help to reinforce this relationship – for example, encouraging the use of a tagline with Los Caminos Antiguos to identify the byway as the primary travel route for visitors through the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area. The current



*Graphic identity of Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic & Historic Byway.*

arrangement to have Los Caminos Antiguos exist within the heritage area's organizational structure with a separate board should allow for good coordination between the scenic byway and the heritage area.

Another factor to consider in developing the approved graphic identity for the heritage area is the extent to which the heritage area would like (and is allowed to) emphasize the connection between the National Heritage Area and the National Park Service. The following section outlines considerations related to this issue.

Whether it is a tag line that accompanies the graphic image, an elevator speech to briefly summarize what the heritage area is all about, or a brief script for responding to visitor inquiries, developing an approved messaging strategy will help the heritage area's diverse stakeholders present a unified image. The graphic identity and messaging should be incorporated into the Sangre de Cristo website, signage, published materials, interpretive exhibits, and other visual forms of communication so they all have the same graphic identity and convey the same message.

To build on the brand and messaging strategy, the heritage area could develop a Style Guide to provide direction about who is allowed to use the graphic identity and how it is to be used. If multiple versions of the approved graphic identity are developed, the guide would provide direction about which version is most appropriate for different uses. The Style Guide would provide guidelines about the use of different versions of the logo by partners as well as guidelines about the overall graphic look of National Heritage Area products such as exhibits, signage, banners, print and online materials, and any other places where the National Heritage Area's logo might appear. The graphic identity can serve as a seal of approval – an indication of quality and an authentic experience for visitors traveling



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through the region. However, the credibility of the graphic image will only be as strong as the weakest link. Thus if the graphic identity is used by an attraction or a visitor service that does not measure up to the standards or goals set by the heritage area, there is a greater risk that the graphic image will not convey a sense of quality to potential visitors.

Chapter 7 outlines the heritage area's interpretive themes as well as several different level of community designation (Cornerstone Communities, Valley Communities, and Heritage Communities). It will be important to ensure that the communities that meet the standards for each designation are represented accurately through the graphic image and other messaging to residents and to the traveling public. Once the graphic identity, messaging strategy, and Style Guide are in place, the heritage area will oversee the appropriate use of the graphic identity and messaging throughout the region. This oversight will ensure the consistent and correct use of the graphic identity and ensure compliance with the direction set out in the Style Guide.

**ACTION: Develop a single graphic identity and messaging plan for the National Heritage Area.**

**ACTION: Develop a Graphic Identity and Messaging Strategy Style Guide to ensure consistent and correct use of the graphic identity and messaging strategy across the National Heritage Area.**

**ACTION: Monitor the use of the graphic identity and messaging to ensure compliance with the Style Guide.**

### LEVERAGE CONNECTIONS TO THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE AND GREAT SAND DUNES NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE

Federal appropriations for National Heritage Areas are awarded through the National Park Service (NPS), which has several staff dedicated to heritage areas in Washington, DC. The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area has had a close working relationship with the NPS Heritage Partnerships Program in Lakewood, CO ("Denver office") as well as with the staff at Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve. While the legislation to create the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area was an individual act of Congress, the feasibility study and this management plan were completed by working closely with NPS. The Denver office has made NPS staff from the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program (RTCA) available to assist in heritage area development activities. While not all heritage areas include a national park, Sangre de Cristo is fortunate to have Great Sand Dunes. The heritage area's

connection to NPS offers opportunities to build on its credibility and good reputation.

### Passport

There are a number of ways that the heritage area may be able to leverage its NPS association and national designation. Many other National Heritage Areas have developed a heritage area stamp for the service's well-known Passport program. The Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve already has a stamp for Great Sand Dunes available in the visitor center gift shop, and adding a second passport stamp at this location for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area would help visitors to the National Park realize that they are also within a National Heritage Area. The passport stamp should reflect the graphic identity developed by the heritage area as one additional opportunity to reinforce the heritage area brand. The passport stamp could also be made available at other locations in the heritage area such as the Colorado Welcome Center, the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad, or Fort Garland. In addition to making the passport stamp available at key locations throughout the heritage area, the heritage area should work with NPS to explore opportunities to add a description of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area to the Passport booklet.

While there would be little cost associated with the passport stamp for the heritage area, it would be important to monitor passport stamp locations to ensure that they are providing prominent visibility for the Sangre de Cristo passport stamp. As appropriate, additional locations for passport stamps could be identified. As benefits for communities participating in the heritage area community programs are identified, being identified as a location for passport stamps (as well as a place to pick up Junior Ranger booklets, get a tear-off map about the heritage area, and have a heritage area brochure rack) might be potential benefits to consider.



*Example passport stamp from the Old Spanish National Historic Trail.*

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visited attractions in the heritage area, finding effective ways to encourage visitors to Great Sand Dunes to stay longer and spend time exploring other parts of the heritage area is a key marketing strategy.

Visitors arriving at Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve are greeted at the gate by a ranger and provided with a copy of the Great Sand Dunes Visitor Guide, which is generally produced once a year. This newsletter, which is similar to the format distributed at many other National Parks across America, includes useful information to help travelers make the most of their visit to Great Sand Dunes. As the heritage area is not a gated attraction like the National Park, there is no corresponding entrance for the heritage area. However, as Great Sand Dunes is also part of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, there may be

opportunities to welcome visitors to both the National Park and the heritage area at the entrance to Great Sand Dunes.

While Great Sand Dunes is well known and is likely to be a primary destination for many travelers arriving at the ranger station, Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is a newer designation that is likely not well known by many of the Great Sand Dunes visitors. The heritage area could produce a companion seasonal Visitor Guide modeled on the format of the Great Sand Dunes Visitor Guide that would be published once a year. Rangers could verbally welcome travelers to both the National Park and heritage area, and could provide information about both to all travelers entering Great Sand Dunes. Providing every car with a copy of both newsletters would allow the rangers to respond to the anticipated question that is likely to follow a welcome to both entities, specifically “what is the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area?”

In addition to producing a sufficient supply for distribution at the Great Sand Dunes ranger station, a supply could be made available at key distribution locations throughout the National Heritage Area. When the guide is released in the spring, the heritage area could work with local newspapers on printing and could also consider opportunities to have it included as an insert in local papers or distributed to schools as part of community outreach.

The richness of the heritage area’s stories can come alive for travelers through the knowledge and different perspectives of heritage area residents. In addition to an introduction and welcome, the Visitor Guide could include articles or stories on the “voices of the valley” based on oral histories. Stories would illustrate the heritage area’s interpretive themes, each ending with information about specific locations or driving tours where visitors could learn more or have a meaningful visitor experience connected to that story. The guide could include parallel components to the Great Sand Dunes Visitor Guide such as a driving map, a calendar of events, travel tips, and a section on planning a visit. The guide should complement, not compete with or duplicate other visitor guides already developed for the region such as the Alamosa Visitors Guide. The heritage area’s guide should look distinctly different and should provide a different kind of information to avoid duplicating efforts. The guide should be developed in close coordination with NPS staff at Great Sand Dunes to ensure that the content complies with NPS standards.



*The Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve Visitor Guide (web version).*

**ACTION: Develop and disseminate a Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Visitor Guide for the heritage area on an annual basis.**

## ENCOURAGE A WELCOMING CULTURE THROUGH HOSPITALITY TRAINING

Different attractions throughout the heritage area and the San Luis Valley offer various kinds of hospitality training programs, including the Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC), the Alamosa Convention and Visitors Bureau, and others. Colorado also offers several programs at the state level, including the Grassroots Training Program that was specifically developed for Colorado's Scenic & Historic Byways Program. The Grassroots Training Program includes the Byway Road Trip board game (see sidebar). Providing hospitality training materials in a game format gives front line employees and volunteers an enjoyable way to learn while they plan on their own, reinforcing the messages provided during the hospitality training workshops.

It is possible to commission custom versions of this board game that would include cards with questions specific to one byway, such as Los Caminos Antiguos. If desired, this program could also be adapted for the heritage area. During the planning process, volunteers from the Colorado Welcome Center indicated that many of their visitors are unaware of the history of the valley and may have misperceptions about the region. For example, visitors assume that the valley is very cold in the winter, or may have misperceptions that they would not be able to eat in local restaurants unless they speak Spanish. The insightful observations of these volunteers and other veteran visitor center volunteers within the region would provide a wonderful resource to help compile commonly asked questions and answers for customized cards for the heritage area to create a customized version of the Byway Road Trip for the heritage area.

The heritage area should build on existing training programs and materials to encourage more consistent hospitality training region-wide, offering training workshops on a regular basis. To encourage active participation, consider making completion of the hospitality training program a prerequisite for sites and communities that are recognized as part of the heritage area. For example, the heritage area may ask communities seeking designation as a Cornerstone, Valley or Heritage Community to demonstrate that a certain number of individuals involved in providing hospitality have successfully completed training, are keeping their skills up to date, and are sharing their knowledge with other residents.

All successful training programs need to be evaluated and adapted in response to evaluations over time. At a minimum, hospitality training programs should be offered once a year, generally just before the start of the tourist season. In many locations where there may be greater turnover of front line staff it may be necessary to offer hospitality training programs more frequently. Offering incentives for participation, rewards, and recognition for

### ***Fun and Games with Hospitality Training***

Colorado's Scenic & Historic Byways Program has developed a Grassroots Training Program that includes a board game called the Byway Road Trip. As players move their cars around the board, they have to correctly answer questions visitors might ask about Colorado's byways in order to move forward. In Trivial Pursuit style, a series of cards offer questions and answers about many of the commonly asked questions about recreation, Colorado history, tourism ethics, National Parks, wildlife, and visitor information. The game was designed to be given to front line employees to be played (with the blessing of the boss!) on breaks and during slow shifts.

outstanding visitor service, and offering on-site training in different locations or communities are other ways to ensure maximum participation in hospitality training programs.

Offering refresher courses will be an important component to keep existing welcome center volunteer fresh and current. Refresher courses should also be offered annually just before the tourism season begins, and will offer an opportunity for participants to share what's new as well as offer opportunities for networking and building enthusiasm among other volunteers and staff across the entire heritage area.

**ACTION: Create a heritage area-wide hospitality training program for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area.**

**ACTION: Continue to offer heritage-area hospitality training and refresher courses on an ongoing basis.**

## FULLY INFORM VISITORS

### ***Designate Heritage Area Welcome Centers in Key Locations***

In addition to the official state Colorado Welcome Center in Alamosa, San Luis and Fort Garland already have small welcome centers. In San Luis, the visitor center is currently housed in a downtown storefront on the main street through town. In Fort Garland, the Fort Garland Revitalization Committee opened the Entrada Visitor Center in 2004. Open seven days a week from Memorial Day to Labor Day, it is currently staffed by volunteers and paid staff from Seniors, Inc.

In addition to these existing welcome centers, development efforts to create a Sangre de Cristo Heritage Center in the San Luis Cultural Center are underway. In Conejos County, local





**ACTION: Produce a tear-off map for the heritage area.**

### **Print and Online Marketing Materials**

Print and online marketing materials will be an important component of promotional efforts for the heritage area, offering opportunities to reinforce the graphic identity and messaging for the heritage area and provide valuable information to both encourage visitors to come to the region and enrich their experience while in the region.

### **Print Materials**

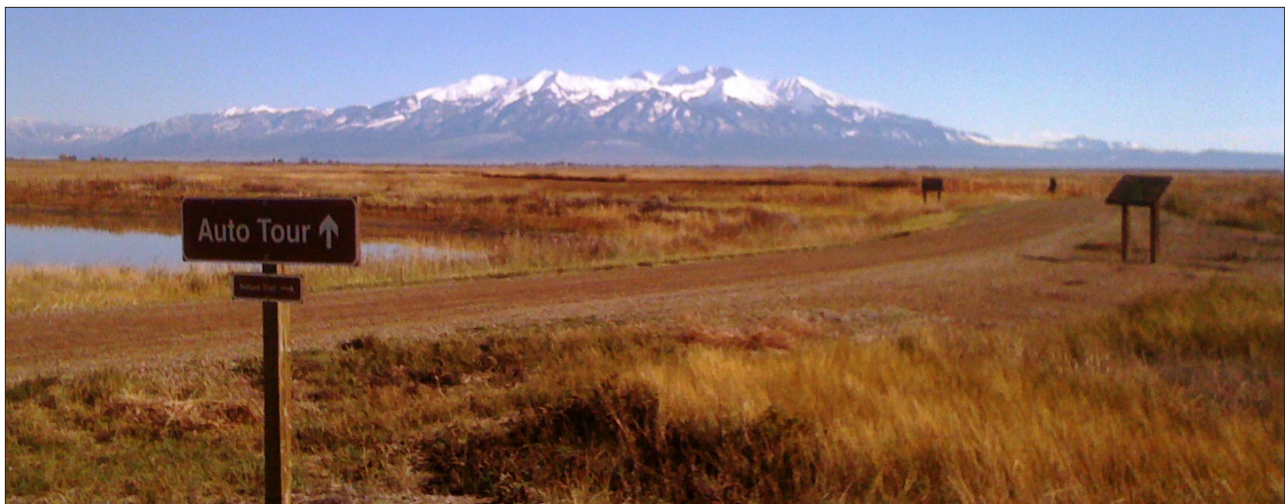
In addition to the printed materials discussed earlier in this chapter such as the Visitor Guide and the Junior Ranger booklet, the family of printed publications discussed in Chapter 7 will help to reinforce the graphic identity and messaging strategies for the byway. This could include a large heritage area-wide map with visitor information and interpretive content that folds into a brochure format as a more extensive version of the overview driving map included in the Visitor Guide, brochures for individual communities, special itineraries, topics of interest or sites.

The concept behind the family of print publications would be to allow for individual identity and information, but to provide the information in a consistent format to reinforce to the visitor that all of the sites, stories and communities are part of the same overall visitor experience. One way to accomplish this would be to create a brochure template for different kinds of brochures, and then to offer cost sharing with the heritage area for participating attractions or communities that choose to develop their community brochure or itinerary using the heritage area's template. Willingness to present information about a community or a site using the heritage area's template could also be

a requirement for inclusion as a Cornerstone, Valley or Heritage Community program. By including an appropriate mix of standard and customized elements in each template, attractions will have ample opportunity to express their individuality and share their unique stories while at the same time proudly proclaiming their inclusion as part of the heritage area.

The availability of a standard template would not prohibit anyone in the heritage area from creating brochures or any other printed materials using their own designs, but any brochures supported financially by the heritage area would follow this format. The use of a standard template designed by a professional graphic designer could offer a way for sites and communities to have a much more professional looking printed piece without incurring the design cost. As an additional quality control measure, the heritage area would designate qualified reviewers to sign off on copy for brochures using the standard template to ensure accuracy.

Once materials are printed, it is vital that the heritage area have a distribution and dissemination plan in place to ensure that the heritage area's printed materials reach their target audience. Printed materials may fall into one of two general categories: "lure" pieces designed to convince travelers to pick the heritage area as their travel destination, and "information" pieces designed to help travelers who have already made the decision to come to the heritage area find their way and know more about the place they are visiting. Distribution points for "lure" or marketing pieces should be locations where visitors come to plan a future trip, or to get more visitor information for a trip they are currently taking. This might include a few key points of entry in the heritage area as well as locations in target markets outside the heritage area. Printed information or interpretive pieces would be



*Auto tour directional signage at the Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge.*



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available almost exclusively at designated locations within the heritage area such as welcome and visitor centers.

As marketing pieces are designed for travelers who have not yet made a decision about whether they want to come to the heritage area (or stay longer in the San Luis Valley in order to more fully experience the heritage area), marketing materials should include glossy photos that show off the region to its best advantage, and brief but engaging copy that helps travelers envision the activities that their heritage area experience might include. Studies of heritage travelers indicates that they are also very interested in shopping and dining, and thus a lure piece should ideally have images showing local food and unique shopping opportunities, not just museums and other visitor attractions. Rather than including extensive detail, marketing materials should include a link or toll free number to call for additional information about trip planning.

“Informational” or interpretive printed materials would include maps, driving or walking tours, itineraries, or brochures that share more detailed stories about communities, individual attractions, or specific topics of interest. While good design and quality can lend to the credibility and appeal of these interpretive pieces, because these are designed primarily as informational pieces it is more important to make sure that the information is accurate, engaging, and easy to read rather than providing the pieces in an expensive glossy, four-color format.

Ideally, the heritage area will assemble an extensive collection of informational materials over time. One possible way to make information materials available throughout the heritage area and to emphasize that these brochures represent experiences that are all part of a larger collective visitor experience would be to develop a small custom brochure rack designed specifically for heritage area information. This brochure rack should be designed to reflect the graphic identity and messaging for the heritage area, and the size and design (for example, wall mounted versus free-standing) should be determined to ensure that the brochure rack is easy to display in a prominent location in each site. Locations for heritage area brochure racks should be included across the heritage area, with at least one location in each county and possibly one location in every participating community. Criteria for eligibility for a heritage area brochure rack could be include as a part of the benefits package for participating Cornerstone, Valley and Heritage communities. To provide maximum visibility for marketing and informational materials, printed publications should also be made available as downloadable pdf documents on the heritage area’s website.

**ACTION: Create brochure design templates for communities, individual attractions, itineraries, and topics of interest related to the heritage area’s interpretive themes that reflect the graphic identity and messaging strategy for the heritage area.**

**ACTION: Collaborate with communities and individual attractions to develop brochures using the established heritage area brochure design templates.**

**ACTION: Implement distribution and dissemination strategies for the heritage area’s print publications in key locations.**

### Online Materials

Websites and social media have become increasingly important tourism marketing tools. Technology also offers opportunities for cost savings in printing and postage, as well as immediate access to worldwide audiences. The heritage area has developed a website at [www.sdcnha.org](http://www.sdcnha.org), and there is also information about the heritage area on the National Park Service’s website, both in the Great Sand Dunes section and as a part of the American Latino Heritage itinerary. The [www.sdcnha.org](http://www.sdcnha.org) website is primarily directed towards visitors. As the heritage area’s work expands, it may be desirable to create distinct sections of the website for internal and external audiences. Internal audiences would be local partners, stakeholders, volunteers, board members and staff for the heritage area, while external audiences would be travelers interested in experiencing the heritage area.

It is also possible that the heritage area might want to develop dedicated sections of the website for other kinds of



Rio Costilla studio tour website.

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specialized users such as teachers or group tour planners. If the website is expanded to address the interests of multiple audiences, the home page should clearly direct different audiences to different sections of the website. It is especially important that the portal for travelers be prominent and user friendly, as this audience is most likely to be experiencing the website for the first time. The portal to additional information for heritage area partners can be more subtle, perhaps at the bottom of the page, as it is for access to a section of the website that is more likely to be used by repeat visitors to the website who know how to find what they are looking for.

While websites are a cost effective way to reach audiences, it is important to continually refresh the site with new information and updates to keep the content current and engaging. Including downloadable printed materials makes information available immediately to the web visitor and extends limited print budgets. Websites offer the ability to make instantaneous updates or changes, which printed publications do not. At the same time, if users experience outdated or incorrect information on a website, visitors are more likely to move on and discount that site as a useful source of information.

Keep in mind that potential travelers surfing the web may have little knowledge of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, or the San Luis Valley, or perhaps even Colorado. Providing maps, graphics, or other information that place the heritage area into a larger geographic context can be helpful for travelers who may not realize exactly where the heritage area is and how long it would take them to travel to the heritage area from other destinations. Maps are important, but keep in mind that many travelers may not have a sense of the scale of the region or the travel time between destinations within the region. Suggested itineraries can be a useful tool to help first-time travelers understand what might be realistic to do in a few hours, a half day, a one-day or a two-day trip to the heritage area.

The Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) maintains a “Colorado Heritage Database” that currently includes detailed information about 29 sites in the three-county heritage area as well as information about the Monte Vista National Wildlife Refuge. The CTO can make this information available to the heritage area without any charge. Linking to this online database may provide opportunities to link the heritage area to other heritage tourism experiences statewide.

Working with an experienced webmaster can provide opportunities to maximize exposure by identifying top search terms and optimizing opportunities to rank highly in online searches. Tracking the use of the website using an

nps.gov

Plan your visit

Itinerary Home

Essays

List of Sites

Maps

Learn More

Credits

Other Itineraries

National Register

History & Culture



Discover Our Shared Heritage Travel Itinerary

American Latino Heritage

### Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

#### Colorado



The Great Sand Dunes rising beyond the Valley  
Courtesy of the U.S. Geological Survey

Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area encompasses more than 3,000 square miles of south-central Colorado spanning Conejos, Costilla and Alamosa counties. The area lies within the San Luis Valley and is a treasure trove of impressive historic, cultural and natural resources. Sangre de Cristo's heritage resources reflect the convergence of the area's cultural past: one in which the stories of American Indians, Latinos, Mormons, Amish, Japanese-Americans, Dutch and Anglo are represented. In 1694, Spaniard Don Diego de Vargas became the first European known to have entered the San Luis Valley, though herders and hunters from the Spanish colonies in present-day New Mexico probably entered the valley as early as 1598. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, has noted that "The cultural and historic value of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area to Colorado and our nation is immeasurable." This national recognition includes the whole landscape and involves government agencies, private organizations, businesses, and individuals in conserving and interpreting the importance of the region.

Visitors to the heritage area can experience history in San Luis, the oldest town in Colorado (established 1851); impressive natural splendor at the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve; and a diverse built environment that includes over 20 historic properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

**Early American Indian Tribes and the Fertile Desert Valley**  
The San Luis Valley saw its first settlers almost 12,000 years ago. The Utes, the oldest continuous residents of what is now the State of Colorado, were referred to as the "Blue Sky People" by visiting tribesmen from the eastern plains due to the startling, intense clarity of the sky. By 1400 A.D., other American Indian tribes joined the Utes in the San Luis Valley region: Apache and Navajo from the North, Tewa and Towa people from the south, and Comanche, Kiowa, Cheyenne and Arapaho from the eastern plains. Although the 8,000 square-mile valley is an alpine desert with stark expanses and North America's tallest sand dunes (some as high as 750 feet), two enormous aquifers lie beneath its dry surface. These supply water to a series of fresh-water lakes and rivers, including the beginnings of the Rio Grande, the continent's third-longest river system. The availability of this water in the San Luis Valley made the area a highly valued seasonal hunting ground for early tribes as the warm season brought the area to life with a rich diversity of flora and fauna.

Today, the Sangre de Cristo Heritage Area showcases and preserves the natural beauty of the valley as well as petroglyphs and pictographs, which narrate the stories of some of the region's earliest known residents. The area boasts the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve, three national wildlife refuges, a national forest (and two forest wilderness areas), 15 State wildlife areas and a Nature Conservancy preserve, the Medano-Zapata Ranch. The working bison ranch features a National Register listed



Ute Chief Duncy and his wife (seated at right) traveled with a delegation of Indians to Washington D.C. in 1880, when the group was taken. The Ute attempted to prevent legislation that would forcibly remove them from Colorado. Ultimately they were not successful.  
Public Domain Image

*The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is featured in the American Latino Heritage itinerary completed by the National Park Service in 2012 ([http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/American\\_Latino\\_Heritage/index.html](http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/American_Latino_Heritage/index.html))*

analysis tool such as Google Analytics is a good way to track such indicators as number of unique visitors, traffic sources and keywords used, average length of visit, top referring sites, number of page views, and a host of other tools.

As the heritage area comprises a number of existing attractions and communities that may have their own websites or web presence, consider opportunities to link to other websites and for other websites to link to the heritage area's website. For example, including a prominent link to the heritage area's website through an icon that reflects the approved graphic identity for the heritage area might be another requirement for participating attractions or communities. Guidelines for web links should be included as part of the style guide developed in conjunction with the graphic identity.

**ACTION: Enhance and maintain a user-friendly website for the heritage area that includes accurate and current information for visitors and heritage area partners.**

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### Other Public Relations

Public relations efforts are a valuable and cost effective marketing tool. Public relations efforts could include working to create greater visibility for the heritage area in Colorado's statewide tourism marketing efforts. For example, the heritage area could seek out opportunities for visibility in the state visitor guide and the state tourism website (Colorado.com), or work to have the heritage area included in the state highway map. As another example, the heritage area could collaborate with key tourism partners to host a red carpet familiarization or "fam" tour for travel writers to enable them to experience the heritage area first hand.

Good public relations efforts offer the opportunity for feature coverage about the heritage area in targeted publications. The cost of securing media coverage through public relations is almost always much less than purchasing the same space as a paid ad, and a travel feature story is likely to have more credibility with travelers as an unbiased opinion than a paid advertisement. On the flip side, placing stories through public relations efforts means that the heritage area will not have control over the content in the story, the timing of the story's release, where the story appears, or even if the story runs at all.

### Targeted Marketing

As the capacity of the heritage area grows, public relations efforts will expand to include outreach to travelers passing through on their way to other destinations, and ultimately will expand to include targeted audiences in drive markets such as the Front Range and Albuquerque. Efforts could include collaborating with partners to disseminate special offers to encourage longer stays or to plan a stop on a return

trip. Special offers could be made available at locations where pass-through travelers are likely to stop such as welcome centers, hotels, restaurants and gas stations. To reach targeted drive markets, the heritage area could collaborate with tourism partners to place coop advertising in publications most likely to reach key target audiences. The tear-off maps for the heritage areas described earlier in this chapter would be another effective way to create visibility for the heritage area, particularly if the maps are displayed in hotel lobbies, at the cash register at gas stations and in other locations where pass through travelers are likely to stop. There may also be opportunities to send press kits to media contacts in key target audiences in specific target drive markets.

The heritage area's marketing outreach will ultimately expand to include outreach to targeted domestic and international visitors, especially those that are most likely to have an interest in the visitor experiences developed by the heritage area. For example, the Sacred Circle tour in Costilla County together with many other historic churches in the heritage area might be of interest to religious groups in specific target markets. A range of external factors will affect which domestic and international audiences will actually have the greatest potential at the time when the heritage area is ready to pursue a broader marketing strategy. External factors such as fluctuations in gas prices and weather impact the drive market and changes in the international economy - the exchange rate for the US dollar, visa and international travel restrictions - and a host of other factors can impact the appeal of the Sangre de Cristo for international audiences. It is premature to predict exactly which domestic and international target markets will provide the strongest return on investment when the heritage area is



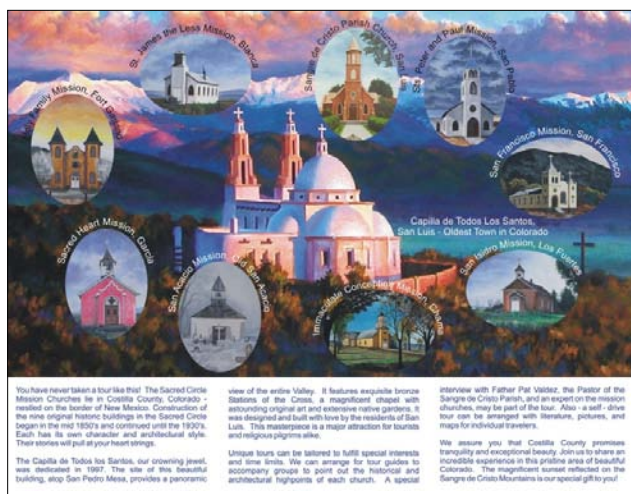
A mural by artist Fred Haberlein, "The Rams," celebrates an old La Jara warehouse's role in the San Luis Valley wool trade. It is now featured as stop # 12 on a driving tour of the many murals to be enjoyed in Conejos County. The rails in this view belong to the Rio Grande Scenic Railroad line from Alamosa to Antonito alongside US 285.



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#### Heritage Tourism & Marketing



A brochure for a tour of the “Sacred Circle” Catholic churches of Costilla County, available as a guided tour from the county’s Economic Development Council. Pictured, clockwise from top, are the Sangre de Cristo Parish Church in San Luis and missions of St. Peter and St. Paul (San Pablo), San Francisco (San Francisco), San Isidro, Los Fuentes, Immaculate Conception (Chama), San Acacio (Old San Acacio), Sacred Heart (Garcia), Holy Family (Fort Garland), and St. James the Less (Blanca), all built from the 1850’s to the 1930’s. The chapel pictured at the center is La Capilla de Todos Los Santos in San Luis, dedicated in 1997. (For more information, see the sidebar on the Stations of the Cross in Chapter 6.)

ready to expand marketing efforts to this level. The Board of Directors should work closely with tourism partners in the region to monitor domestic and international interest in the region to identify the most promising target audiences as the National Heritage Area reaches maturity and has the capacity to tackle this level of marketing outreach. Marketing efforts should be undertaken in collaboration with tourism entities in the region, and might include participation in travel trade shows or coop advertising.

**ACTION: Develop and implement a comprehensive public relations and marketing campaign, working initially on outreach to local residents and current visitors at heritage area attractions.**

**ACTION: Refine and revise the comprehensive public relations and marketing campaign, expanding the marketing reach to include travelers passing through the region and targeted drive markets within the region.**

**ACTION: Refine and revise the comprehensive public relations and marketing campaign, expanding the marketing reach more broadly to include targeted domestic and international travelers.**

### Tour Packages

The heritage area should work with key partners to create tour packages that showcase the best of the heritage area. Tour packages can be promoted through the heritage area’s website, the Visitor Guide, or through other media and public relations efforts. Tour packages could include group tour opportunities that are already available such as the Sacred Circle Tour, packages that might combine a stay at the Steam Train Hotel or the Indiana Jones Bed & Breakfast with a scenic railroad experience, or other new tour package developed to showcase the heritage area’s interpretive themes. Tour packages could include both day trips as well as overnight packages.

**ACTION: Create and market tour package for the heritage area.**

### FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

As noted in Chapter 7, festivals and events are an important component to represent the heritage area’s living culture. A calendar of events should be maintained and promoted by the heritage area. Festivals and events offer opportunities to provide richer visitor experiences for shorter periods of time, such as a weekend, which offers an opportunity to showcase communities in the heritage area in the best possible light. While an annual event may not generate sufficient year round visitation to justify additional hotels, restaurants or retail businesses, a full calendar of events happening region-wide can help to make this happen.

While events can be an effective strategy to showcase a community or site, festivals and events can also be time-consuming for volunteers and staff. One of Costilla County’s largest annual events has a long and proud history, but challenges of finding volunteers for the event has meant that in some years it has been organized at the last minute. While this may not impact local visitation, travelers coming from a distance need additional planning time. Perhaps even more critical, advance planning and predictability will be essential for tourism listings in travel publications. Costilla County stakeholders also mentioned festivals such as the Harvest Festival and Oktoberfest that used to be offered, but were dropped due to volunteer burnout. Stakeholders also mentioned new event ideas that they would like to see developed, and events such as the studiotours that they would like to be expanded to encompass a larger area. Finally, with the interest in religious heritage, stakeholders mentioned the Pastores and Posadas at Christmastime and Lent and Holy Week as additional possible event opportunities, especially for travelers with an interest in religious heritage.

Having a better understanding of the issues and opportunities facing current and potential festivals and events in all three counties (including the challenge of volunteer capacity) will





*Mariachi San Luis, a local musical group that formed in 1998, performs at Cole Park in Alamosa. Live performances at events such as this enrich the visitor experience (courtesy Alamosa Live Music Association).*

help the heritage area develop targeted strategies to support a robust calendar of festivals and events for the region. For example, this could include providing or identifying sources of grant support for events, or seeking out opportunities to dedicate part or all of a staff position to event coordination to supplement volunteer efforts. While this might be an additional staff person working for the heritage area, it could also be a new position in another organization, or redefining an existing job description for a position in another organization.

The heritage area should work to identify and help alleviate challenges facing festivals and events that could help to support the heritage area experience. The heritage area should ensure that events complement, rather than compete with other events in the region. The heritage area should emphasize supporting and promoting events that help to convey the stories embodied in the interpretive themes for the heritage area. For example, the heritage area could help to develop a “Sabor de Sangre de Cristo” (Taste of Sangre de Cristo) event that would feature local foods and food products, working with food producers and restaurants. The heritage area could consider developing criteria for official Sangre de Cristo events and provide guidelines about how these events can use the Sangre de Cristo graphic identity as outlined in the Style Guide. Where possible, the heritage area should have a visible presence at these official events.

**ACTION: Promote and support festivals and events in the heritage area, especially those with the potential to draw heritage travelers and provide a meaningful experience connected to the interpretive themes of the heritage area.**



*In one of the San Luis Valley’s oldest festivals, the villages of Chama and San Luis celebrate their respective patron saints in Fiestas de Santiago y Santa Ana each year at the end of July. Called “Santa Ana” locally, its roughly 10,000 participants – most with local connections – enjoy a reunion weekend that includes piñatas, picnics and cookouts (carnes asadas), firework displays, a two-day desfile (parade), dances, horse races, musical and theater performances, agricultural and art exhibits, an auto show, and pie, jam, and biscochito contests (a biscochito is a crisp cookie made with butter or lard and flavored with anise and cinnamon, traditional to the Rio Grande valley and influenced by local and indigenous customs and Spanish colonial traditions, served during special celebrations). The festival has roots in a celebration of Spanish colonial heritage, as this rider in 16th-century Spanish garb suggests. (Sources: <http://ejfood.blogspot.com/2009/07/la-comida.html> and <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biscochito>; photo by Ann Marie Velasquez)*

### MEASURING SUCCESS

By tracking the results of individual heritage tourism marketing efforts as well as tracking visitation trends and other tourism trends, the heritage area will be able to evaluate and analyze the impacts of its efforts. While it can be challenging to make the time to collect results and other



## Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

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Heritage Tourism & Marketing



*This top prizewinning float “Treasures of the Sea” appeared in the 2011 parade for Manassa Pioneer Days and illustrates the parade’s celebrated, fiercely competitive quality known throughout the West. Pioneer Days is one of the San Luis Valley’s oldest festivals (including its rodeo – see photo, p. 8-5). Manassa is the second-largest town in Conejos County (after Antonito), with a population of just under 1,000. Approximately half its residents are descended from Mormon pioneers who founded Manassa in 1879. The Manassa Project ([manassaproject.org](http://manassaproject.org)), whose mission is “to to consolidate, preserve and share the history of Manassa and its residents,” organizes Pioneer Days. Funds raised by the nonprofit organization have supported a variety of heritage projects, including restoration of the town’s Opera House and student projects celebrating Manassa’s heritage. (Photo by Ann Marie Velasquez; float sponsored by Martin Cattle Co.)*

statistics to help evaluate the success of the heritage area’s efforts, this essential final step will help the heritage area fine tune efforts and ensure that future efforts maximize the potential for a return on investment. Chapter 10 discusses overall evaluation strategies for the heritage area as a whole, including ways to evaluate the success of the heritage tourism marketing efforts outlined in this chapter.

Implementation and phasing of the actions outlined above are also discussed in Chapter 10. The heritage area and partners should implement a phased plan to develop a base level of coordinated heritage tourism marketing efforts over a three-year period. Beginning with residents and existing visitors, marketing efforts should seek to

broaden the heritage area’s audience over time. Once a base level experience is in place, additional promotion can be added gradually to significantly expand and enhance that audience.





## CHAPTER 9 › COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION



*The beautifully maintained 1907 Frank Building built during Alamosa’s boom years at 602 Main Street once served as a men’s clothing and shoe store and later a drugstore. Today it houses the Narrow Gauge Newsstand, a good business for a structure too small for today’s versions of its historic uses. “Main Streets” across the nation have adapted to the realities of modern commerce while saving their old buildings and learning to serve new markets, including the traveling public.*

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes strategies and actions to be pursued by the heritage area, by governmental and nonprofit partners, and by business owners and investors to influence community vitality. Revitalizing communities is a goal of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, expected to result from a focus on heritage tourism, interpretation, and historic preservation. Historic preservation is also a goal, one that requires a focus on community economic vitality – for historic communities and buildings must be viable in a modern economy in order to survive for the long term.

In pursuing the benefits of the National Heritage Area, it is possible to take actions that offer multiple benefits that include positive effects on the region’s communities and their economic vitality. Community revitalization can stem from successes in heritage tourism, interpretation, celebration of cultural heritage, protection of natural resources, and historic preservation – activities described in preceding chapters. If communities are alert to opportunities thus presented, they can seek a new level of prosperity.

“Community” today means different things to different people; the Internet, in particular, now gathers like-minded people in “communities of interest.” Here in the San Luis Valley, we mean the physical places where people live near one another. With neighbors and those who live close by, we gather in towns and smaller places for social, employment, commercial, governmental, religious, and recreational reasons. We also mean “community” in the sense of social connection we receive from being rooted as families and individuals in those places and pursuing those activities. Without necessarily speaking of it, because we share these places and these activities, we share an identity – we understand things about ourselves in common.

The physical community supports the social community. Each place evolves in response to individual and collective decisions that have social implications – to build anew or restore the old, to invest or not to invest sends signals to others about the health and prosperity of a place. Spending time working with others to solve problems the entire community faces is a social decision. The act of preserving family or religious legacies – traditions, stories, papers, images, objects, buildings – spills over into the public realm as those acts become known more widely among







## Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

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### ***Economic Conditions of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area***

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area has a population of approximately 27,225 people, and has grown less than one percent over the past decade. Much of the population growth over that time has occurred within Alamosa's city limits; the rest has occurred primarily in unincorporated areas. The heritage area, which comprises more than 3,245 square miles, is predominantly rural, with Alamosa and Alamosa East serving as home to more than 37 percent of the population. Another 21 percent of residents of the heritage area lives in small communities of fewer than 1,000 people. With a few exceptions, these small communities are declining in population. The average population density of the heritage area is 8 people per square mile, but factoring density in the City of Alamosa, the population density of the rest of the heritage area is approximately half that.

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is an economically disadvantaged region. As part of the greater San Luis Valley region, it consistently ranks lowest in state income. The average per capita income in 2009 (latest available) was \$17,541, which is more than 40 percent lower than the U.S. average. All counties in the region had per capita income levels below both the Colorado and U.S. average. Incomes among the Hispanic and Latino populations, which comprise 52 percent of the population, are even lower. The heritage area's median household income of \$29,515 is also more than 40 percent less than the U.S. average. Because of these lower incomes, poverty rates for both families and individuals within the heritage area are approximately twice the national average.

The heritage area's population (over the age of 25) is also less educated than the state and nation as a whole. Only 79 percent of the population has completed high school, which is 10 percent less than the state population and 6 percent less than the national population. This disparity among the population receiving a college degree (20 percent) is even greater, as this is 15 percent and 8 percent less than the state and national population, respectively. Overall, however, the level of education has been on the rise, reflecting the national trend.

The heritage area has suffered job losses as a result of the recent recession, but the unemployment rate has actually decreased slightly over the last decade. Top industry sectors for jobs in the heritage area are educational, health care, social services, retail trade, and agriculture. The San Luis Valley Regional Medical Center, a full service acute-care hospital and specialty physician clinic, is the largest employer in the heritage area with more than 500 employees. The top five employers are all located in Alamosa. (Source: Appendix B, Existing Socio-economic Conditions, summary section)

the community, stimulating pride of place, that is, pride that such things have value. Our sense of community is valuable in its own right. Chapter 6, Conserving Community & Traditions, in particular, addresses the intangible qualities of maintaining our sense of community. This chapter addresses practical ideas for tending to communities as physical places.

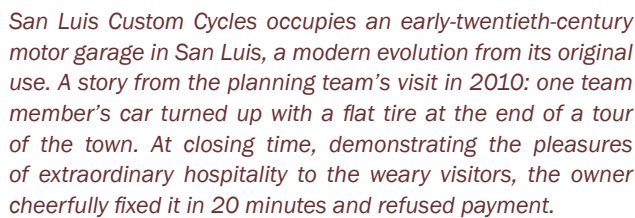
### **THE NEED FOR COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION**

Many parts of many communities in the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area reflect the lack of prosperity that has plagued the rural economy of the San Luis Valley – indeed, rural economies across the United States – for many years. Unemployment is high and the population is smaller than ever in many parts of the region. Agriculture is more mechanized, needing fewer farmers and farm employees. Economic shifts and external economic conditions have taken their toll. Handsome buildings show signs of neglect and communities exhibit the stress of maintaining the public

domain – streets, sidewalks, public open space, etc. – without adequate public funding.

There is a chicken-and-egg problem here. As a whole, the National Heritage Area's communities display the original investment and charm of their builders. It is a struggle, however, for local governments to find funds for the vigorous maintenance, streetscaping, and public capital improvements that would send positive signals to private investors. Private investment in new retail, dining, and lodging opportunities, compatible new development, and adaptive use of existing buildings is needed, but investors are wary without signs of government commitment that will help attract a critical mass of customers and other investors. Conversely, without the economic engine of private entrepreneurship, local governments are hard put to generate an income for highly visible improvements. Under current economic conditions, they play a holding game at best, working to make modest repairs and improvements as and when funds can be pieced together.





Based upon conversations with local individuals during workshops held before and during the planning process, the Board of Directors developed a set of goals for this management plan that are presented in Chapter 1; those relevant to this chapter appear in a nearby sidebar. In addition, the Board presented preliminary ideas for action for public review. The legislation, goals, and public discussion have provided the basis for the actions and guidance text offered in this chapter.

During public review, participants tended to focus their comments more on the interpretive, educational, and heritage tourism aspects of what they expect to see in this plan. Their expectation was clear, however, that community benefits will flow from the National Heritage Area's programs, including community revitalization. Heritage tourism was acknowledged as the leading edge of the "economic viability" mentioned in the legislation, but reviewers also strongly encouraged support for small

The National Heritage Area's enabling legislation (Public Law 111-11, Title VII, Subtitle A) provides the basis for the ideas in this chapter, including the following language drawn from Sec. 8001(c) and (d):

- ## Small Business Assistance

Colorado's Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network is dedicated to helping small businesses throughout Colorado achieve their goals by providing free confidential counseling and various training programs. The SBDC combines information and resources from federal, state, and local governments with those of the educational system and the private sector to meet the specialized and complex needs of the small business community. Regulatory, management, financial, and marketing experts work in partnership with entrepreneurs to provide them with crucial information that can mean the difference between success and failure. The SBDC office serving the San Luis Valley, known as the SLV Small Business Development Center, covers six counties: Alamosa, Conejos, Costilla, Mineral, Rio Grande, and Saguache. (<http://slv-small-biz-success.blogspot.com/>)

business, farmers, and artists, and branding that could bring these entrepreneurs needed recognition. Some of these ideas are addressed not only in this chapter, but also in Chapter 6, *Conserving Community & Tradition*.



## Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

Management Plan

Community Revitalization



La Jara's mostly Hispano population is descended from pioneers who arrived in the early 1850's to settle on Spanish land grants. The town traces its birth to the arrival of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad in 1880 and its two-block main street - wide enough to permit a horse-drawn wagon to turn around - grew up to serve the surrounding ranching and farming district. Today, La Jara is one of Conejos County's five incorporated towns (pop. 877). Although it has a healthy number of businesses plus a school, the county hospital, and a federal public lands information office, its commercial district has suffered from proximity to Alamosa's shopping and services just 15 miles away. The Rio Grande Scenic Railroad (which still also moves freight on its line through La Jara) has offered a stop for visitors at the depot of the former Denver & Rio Grande Railroad. The 1911 building has served as the town hall since 1970. It is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and was recently rehabilitated with support from the State Historical Fund.

### EXISTING PROGRAMS FOR COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

There are three primary organizations established to support economic and business development in the San Luis Valley: The state and federally supported SLV Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and the Adams State University Community Partnerships Program (Community Partnerships), and the nonprofit San Luis Valley Development Resources Group, known as the DRG (see sidebars). There are other organizations that offer services, forums, or means of collaboration, from the Upper Rio Grande Economic Development Council, which provides basic information about the region in regularly updated brochure ([www.urgedc.com](http://www.urgedc.com)), to the Valley Community Fund, a community foundation that operates an employee

payroll donation program that supports nonprofit programs (<http://valleycommunityfund.com/index.php>). Local business and tourism groups round out the organizational context in which the National Heritage Area can address community revitalization.

In general the three primary organizations developed to pursue economic and community development serve the entire San Luis Valley and focus on a wide variety of programs. The DRG taps a number of federal programs and operates a revolving loan fund to support investment in business development. Of five sectors identified by the DRG in its 2008 *San Luis Valley Targeted Industry Study*, three relate to topics in this management plan: tourism, especially but not limited to recreation; agriculture, specifically "long-

### Goals for Community Revitalization

**Primary Goal 1: Support development of a vibrant heritage tourism sector that stimulates preservation, economic development, and community revitalization:**

- *Goal 1-1, Visitor Experience & Heritage Tourism:* Increase visitation through heritage development projects and events and promotion of heritage tourism and hospitality in order to stimulate heritage preservation, economic development, and community revitalization.
- *Goal 1-2, Historic Preservation:* Support the preservation, use/reuse, rehabilitation, and/or restoration of historic buildings as a top priority in all heritage development projects.
- *Goal 1-3, Business Development:* Foster business retention, expansion, and creation through heritage development projects and partnerships, especially in the context of enhancing towns and agriculture as critical contributors to regional economic health.









## Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

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Community Revitalization

- **Establish a community revitalization program through which communities are encouraged to develop plans and programs customized to their interests and capabilities:** Key strategies for the heritage area's approach to community revitalization are to support local community interests and initiatives, strengthen community capabilities, and enhance quality of life for residents. Communities are encouraged to use heritage area strategies and programs to craft their own, individualized plans. The National Heritage Area can provide support and technical assistance in developing and implementing community revitalization plans.
- **Encourage communities to use community interpretation and heritage tourism as central components of their community revitalization plans:** The heritage area envisions that heritage tourism could provide a significant economic boost to local communities and be a foundation for community revitalization and enhancement. A key strategy, therefore, is to assist communities in identifying steps for becoming "visitor ready" – that is, to provide a high-quality visitor experience.
- **Establish a quality assurance program to recognize the efforts of participating visitor service providers and interpretive sites:** Participants in this program would apply for the ability to display a heritage area emblem in their signage and marketing materials, and would participate in special heritage area-wide promotions and marketing. They would become on-the-ground "ambassadors" for the heritage area.
- **Create a San Luis Valley/Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area brand for local products representative of local character and culture:** This idea follows from the preceding strategy for a recognition program, and is a longer term effort to be carried out in collaboration with regional organizations. The concept is to make potential buyers aware of the quality and character of the region's products, including the place from whence they come.
- **Encourage local entrepreneurs:** Businesses reflecting local culture are well within the interest of the heritage area, such as purveyors of the region's arts and crafts and locally grown and processed foods. Businesses providing visitor services are also important. And what better settings for such businesses than our historic commercial areas?

These objectives and strategies are described in more detail in the sections that follow.



*The Rialto Building in downtown Alamosa was constructed in 1925 by the American Legion as a lodge hall and served the community for years as a venue for plays, music, vaudeville, talent shows, and movies. While its interior performance space could not be preserved after a fire, the facade of this critical link in Alamosa's historic commercial district was saved when the building was rehabilitated and adapted for use as a restaurant and catering facility. The building is now listed on the City of Alamosa's local register of historic places and featured on the Alamosa Historic District Walking Tour (courtesy Alamosa Historic Preservation Committee).*

### Adams State University Community Partnerships Program

The mission of Adams State Community Partnerships is to connect university resources with the community "in order to increase the quality of life for all residents of the San Luis Valley." Funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of University Partnerships, the program focuses its efforts in five areas:

- Community organizing (encouraging dialogue between the academic and the local community to identify ways for the university to address community needs);
- business support (<http://bsc.adams.edu/>);
- arts and culture, including the operation of a gallery in its campus office;
- service learning opportunities for students that match them with community organizations; and
- the Novela Project (described in Chapter 6, Conserving Community & Traditions). <http://www.adams.edu/community/partnerships/index.php>

Participating communities are encouraged to prepare voluntary Community Revitalization Plans to identify ways in which the National Heritage Area can support local interests and initiatives. Community Revitalization Plans are to be prepared by local communities with heritage area guidance and support and must demonstrate the support of residents and community leaders. Upon approval, the plan will become part of the guidance for implementation of the heritage area management plan and incorporated into heritage area programming. Preparation should be undertaken in accordance with the following steps:

1. Organize a working group that is representative of the range of local community interests and has the official support of community leaders.
2. Meet with National Heritage Area staff to review guidelines, processes, and requirements and to discuss how the heritage area may assist the planning process.
3. Prepare a brief overview of existing conditions within the community, including background, opportunities and assets, and potential challenges. The summaries of existing conditions appended to this plan might serve as models.
4. Identify goals for community revitalization that reflect the expressed interests of local residents, property owners, and businesses. Goals should be realistic and within the capabilities of community organizations to implement.
5. Identify strategies for achieving community revitalization goals and potential projects for implementing those strategies. Align with and make use of strategies and programs identified in the heritage area management plan where possible.
6. Review potential strategies and projects with local residents, property owners, and businesses to receive input. Review strategies and projects with heritage area staff to receive input. Refine strategies and projects and outline how implementation would be phased. Obtain the official approval of community leaders, including elected leaders and organizations that might be expected to implement aspects of the plan.
7. Combine the existing conditions summary, strategies, projects, and phasing into a single planning document, the Community Revitalization Plan. Include expected implementation costs and a phasing schedule. The plan can be as short or as long as a community needs in order to achieve clarity and consensus. Brisk timing and purposeful meetings are virtues in such a community planning process; plain and simple language and brevity are virtues in the final document.
8. Submit the Community Revitalization Plan to heritage area staff for preliminary review and to be sure that required elements are included and complete. Upon such assurance, the plan will be submitted to the Board of Directors for review and approval.

The National Heritage Area will develop a Community Revitalization Program that encourages participating heritage area communities to develop revitalization plans customized to their own interests and capabilities using the strategies, programs, and actions outlined in this plan. The National Heritage Area will provide support and technical assistance to communities for planning and implementation of revitalization plans through its staff and partners. Communities are asked to state their intent officially to participate in heritage area programming, organize themselves to undertake planning and implementation, and follow heritage area guidelines for the projects and programs they wish to undertake.







## Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

Management Plan

Community Revitalization



*Alamosa – a key crossroads town in the San Luis Valley as the highway signs suggest – makes sure that visitors know they are entering a special place with this artistically arranged entrance sign. (At right, just out of view, is Historic Engine 169, adding to Alamosa’s welcome.)*

Each participating community will craft its own revitalization program in accordance with the interests of its residents. As presented in preceding chapters of this management plan, areas of potential activity include:

- **The preservation and enhancement of historic resources** in communities as described in Chapter 4 to strengthen community character; in particular, actions related to the development of community partnerships and technical assistance and financial support for projects as outlined there.
- **Conservation and recreation** as described in Chapter 5, especially the enhancement of publicly owned natural resources and trails and support for recreation-based businesses.
- **Community engagement and the strengthening of community heritage and traditions** as described in Chapter 6. A wide range of possible programs and activities are discussed here that can support community revitalization, including support for the arts, folk music and dance, cultural programs and events, youth programs, and local foods and agriculture.
- **Community interpretation and heritage tourism** to support local businesses and community revitalization as described in Chapters 7 and 8, especially the community designation program and actions presented under the section in Chapter 7 entitled ‘Community Presentations’ and discussed further below.

Every community within the heritage area is invited to participate, including communities that are not necessarily interested in heritage tourism aspects of the management plan. Participating communities are asked to organize themselves in a way that demonstrates local commitment and support and the ability to implement the initiatives they choose to undertake.

Community Revitalization Plans should be created by participating communities with heritage area guidance and support (see sidebar). Community Revitalization Plans should describe existing conditions within the community, goals and strategies for revitalization, and phased steps that will be undertaken to implement strategies and achieve goals. Once approved by the Board of Directors, a local Community Revitalization Plan will become part of the guidance for implementing the heritage area management plan, and the National Heritage Area partnership will seek resources to support its implementation. Such resources might include funding, technical assistance, and incorporation into heritage area programs as appropriate (marketing and promotion, for instance). Heritage area support will depend upon the availability of resources and the prioritization of projects in accordance with heritage area goals.

During preparation of the management plan, the Board of Directors, staff, and consultant team worked with community representatives from Antonito, San Luis, and Alamosa on potential revitalization strategies. The results of this work are included in Appendix E of the plan. These efforts could form the basis for the early creation of revitalization plans for these three communities, which in turn could provide a



**ACTION** Establish a Community Revitalization Program through which participating heritage area communities are encouraged to develop revitalization plans customized to their own interests and capabilities based on strategies, programs, and actions outlined in the management plan.

**ACTION** Work with local economic development agencies to participate in and support the revitalization process and to identify place-based development strategies for older commercial areas.

**ACTION** Create a Community Revitalization Grant Program to support participating communities in the development and implementation of Community Revitalization Plans.

This plan envisions that heritage tourism could provide a significant economic boost to local communities and be a foundation for community revitalization and enhancement. Participating communities are encouraged to consider interpretation and heritage tourism as central components of their community revitalization plans, discussed above. Assisting communities in becoming ready for visitors and in providing a high-quality visitor experience as a basis for community revitalization is a key strategy for the heritage area.

*The establishment of a high-quality visitor experience in Alamosa, Antonito, Fort Garland, and San Luis is an essential strategy in meeting this plan's goal of strengthening heritage tourism within the region, and therefore strengthening revitalization efforts of participating communities throughout the heritage area.*

Proposed Cornerstone Communities are the four communities located near entry points into the heritage area that are capable of providing a full range of visitor services: Antonito, San Luis, Fort Garland, and Alamosa. They will be asked to host orientation exhibits for visitors and to provide a high level of community interpretation featuring creative exhibits, artwork, and streetscape enhancements. Each should also provide a local visitor center providing visitor information. The establishment of a high-quality visitor experience in these four communities is an essential strategy



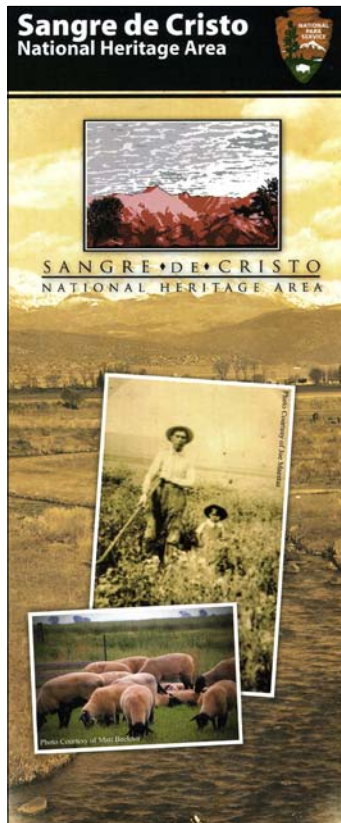
*Site of the future Sangre de Cristo Heritage Center in San Luis, which is undergoing rehabilitation to remove the 1980's era solar arrays and revive the heritage center uses served by the building until the town's museum was closed in the last decade. It was built of adobe in the 1940's in the Pueblo Revival style as a training center by the federal Depression-era Works Progress Administration. Both Adams State University and the local school district long operated it for educational uses.*





## Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

### Management Plan Community Revitalization



Local businesses that meet quality assurance program standards could be featured in heritage area promotional materials, such as visitor guides, the heritage area website, and other types of media.

**ACTION** Design a program to enable participants in the quality assurance program to display approved heritage area branding.

**ACTION** Establish an awards program and other programs to provide benefits to businesses participating in the quality assurance program.

**ACTION** Offer hospitality training, complete with certificates, to businesses based in the National Heritage Area (whether or not they choose to move forward into the quality assurance program). Encourage such partners as the Colorado Scenic Byways Program to offer or sponsor hospitality training.

### CREATING A REGIONAL BRAND FOR LOCAL PRODUCTS

Creation of a regional brand is a logical enhancement to the preceding strategy of creating a program recognizing businesses making a special effort to assure visitors of high-quality experiences. It offers a longer term opportunity and

should be carried out in collaboration with other regional organizations, especially the San Luis Valley Development Resources Group. The DRG's 2008 *San Luis Valley Targeted Industry Study* specifically suggests such an idea, especially in relation to agricultural products. The concept is to make potential buyers aware of the quality and character of the region's products, including the place from whence they come.

Cooperative advertising would be a large benefit for affiliated products. The region's arts and crafts and locally grown and processed foods are especially well suited to such a unique cooperative advertising proposition. An extra benefit for the heritage area is that each product so branded becomes an ambassador to buyers, who learn about the special nature of the region with every purchase they make.

**ACTION** Work with San Luis Valley-based and Colorado state partners to create a regional brand for local products. Promote the heritage area as part of the experience of visiting the San Luis Valley as a source of high-quality products.





# CHAPTER 10 › MANAGEMENT & IMPLEMENTATION



*The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Board of Directors, advisors, and the consultant team meet in the fall of 2010 at the Sanford Museum to kick off the management planning process.*

## INTRODUCTION

This management plan is intended for implementation over the next ten to fifteen years. To oversee the programs, relationships, funding, personnel, and other factors needed for implementing the many and widely varied strategies identified in the preceding chapters of this plan, the heritage area needs a management entity capable of acting over a long term. This chapter describes the actions that the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Board of Directors – the heritage area’s managing entity designated under the legislation establishing the heritage area (Public Law 111-11, Title VIII, Subtitle A, Section 8001) – will take to support the heritage area and to grow as the heritage area itself evolves. This chapter outlines a plan for achieving:

- Effective long-term **governance** by the management entity, the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Board of Directors, with mechanisms for setting priorities and carrying them out;
- **Partnerships** among many organizations, institutions, agencies, and community groups – a critical strategy and “first principle” for accomplishing

the actions in this plan, requiring excellent communications and much collaboration;

- **Visibility** to the public and a wide variety of audiences within and beyond the heritage area’s boundaries;
- Establishment of vigorous relationships with supporters and a fundraising program to build **financial stability and the funding and other resources needed to implement this plan;** and
- **Ways to evaluate progress** in implementing this plan and results of the considerable investment required to develop the National Heritage Area to its full potential. This provides accountability to the heritage area’s many supporters, including the federal National Heritage Area program, which provides special public funding to support this National Heritage Area and 48 others.

## THE PLANNING FOUNDATION FOR MANAGEMENT

Planning for the management of the National Heritage Area and implementation of this management plan takes







funds – including but not limited to sharing federal funds with partners through matching grants. This topic is addressed further in a separate section of this chapter.

Furthermore, the Board of Directors is the advocate for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area’s goals and programs among local, state, and federal governmental partners. Especially at the federal level, the Board speaks for the National Heritage Area in relation to the national program operated by the National Park Service.

The Board of Directors is not, in and of itself, the heritage area – the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is a collective effort, involving organizations and agencies represented on the Board of Directors and others with a stake in the success of the heritage area. The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Board of Directors is named in Public Law 111-11 as the heritage area’s “management entity.” That legislation specifically charges the Board of Directors with “assist[ing] units of local government, regional planning organizations, and nonprofit organizations in carrying out the approved management plan” (Title VIII, Subtitle A, Sec. 8001(c)(2)). That is to say, the Board of Directors is not responsible on its own for implementing this plan.

The underlying assumption in this plan, therefore, is that many heritage area projects are to be undertaken by local partners within their own communities under the auspices of heritage area programming and networking. However, there are certain heritage area-wide strategies for which the Board of Directors is responsible which should be noted here. The Board’s energy and creativity in pursuing these strategies will be critical in encouraging partners in their own initiatives:



*Former Alamosa County Commissioner Frank Maestas visits a wayside exhibit about explorer Zebulon Pike’s journey into the San Luis Valley in 1807. The site of Pike’s stockade, a National Historic Landmark site, is near his ranch next to the Alamosa River, where the consulting team toured in 2011.*

### Guiding Principles

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Board of Directors embraces the following principles for heritage area management:

- Meaningful partner and community engagement;
- Continually telling the story and promoting the vision;
- Responsiveness to local needs and priorities;
- An open, inclusive, collaborative, and flexible approach to operations; and
- A willingness to try new approaches and a commitment to implementing what is learned in the process of experimenting and growing.

(With thanks to: Suzanne E. Copping, Philip B. Huffman, Daniel N. Laven, Nora J. Mitchell, and Jacquelyn L. Tuxill, authors of *Connecting Stories, Landscapes, and People: Exploring the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor. Sustainability Study Report*, a technical assistance project for the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, Inc.; Woodstock, VT: Conservation Study Institute, 2006, p. 59.)

- Creating a sense of connection across the entire National Heritage Area, so that visitors can experience one place in many ways – focusing on interpretive techniques and physical linkages, including wayfinding signage, a strategy addressed primarily in Chapter 7, Heritage Area Interpretation;
- Creating the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Communities designation program (described in Chapter 7 and Chapter 9) in order to weave all communities into the National Heritage Area as a single place with singular communities sharing their stories; and
- Operating a website and associated digital media to create connection and sense of place through electronic communications.

Given the great variety of work that the Board of Directors is to undertake in implementing this plan, it is important to focus closely on how to manage the Board effectively, how to focus Board actions strategically, and how to evaluate progress. The following sections address the first two topics in detail and a separate section at the end of this chapter addresses evaluation.



# Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

## Management Plan

### Management & Implementation

#### A Big-picture Checklist for Examining Progress

The following three goals are guides for every consideration of actions to take:

- **Primary Goal 1:** Support development of a vibrant heritage tourism sector that stimulates preservation, economic development, and community revitalization.
- **Primary Goal 2:** Tell the stories of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area in ways that build community pride and support preservation, living traditions, economic development, and community revitalization.
- **Primary Goal 3:** Cultivate excellent management that provides regional leadership, reflects community values, and achieves sustainability.

Thirteen sub-goals apply to individual topics in the management plan as shown below (five apply to more than one topic and are repeated, 1-1, 1-3, 2-6, and 3-10, with 2-9 being shown three times). It is simpler to organize agendas to evaluate progress around just seven chapter topics, plus an agenda item focusing discussion on resource development (fundraising):

- **Historic Preservation (Chapter 4)**
  - Goal 1-2, Historic Preservation: Support the preservation, use/reuse, rehabilitation, and/or restoration of historic buildings as a top priority in all heritage development projects.
- **Conservation and Recreation (Chapter 5)**
  - Goal 1-4, Outdoor Recreation: Sustain, enhance, and promote outdoor recreation opportunities as a means of stimulating heritage tourism and as a significant element of our heritage.
  - Goal 1-5, Land Stewardship & Natural Resources: Partner with and support the work of organizations working to protect the land, agriculture, and natural resources of the region, as a vital aspect of the way that all experience this cultural and scenic landscape and as a critical contributor to regional economic health.
- **Conserving Community & Tradition (Chapter 6)**
  - Goal 1-3, Business Development: Foster business retention, expansion, and creation through heritage development projects and partnerships, especially in the context of enhancing towns and agriculture as critical contributors to regional economic health.
  - Goal 2-6, Interpretation: Build a system for interpreting the themes of the National Heritage Area through existing attractions, visitor facilities, and development of interpretive projects using a variety of approaches, especially the development of linkages, sustaining existing events and celebrations, and educating our youth.
  - Goal 2-7, Culture & Community: Protect and celebrate living heritage resources – language, art, traditions, spirituality, etc., and sites associated with traditional cultural practices.
  - Goal 2-8, Agriculture: Promote and interpret agriculture as a way of life, a vital aspect of the way that all experience this cultural and scenic landscape, and as a critical contributor to regional economic health.
  - Goal 2-9, Community Awareness: Foster understanding and pride in our cultural identity and community spirit among residents of all ages and among Colorado residents in general.
  - Goal 3-12, Engaging our Young People: Stimulate involvement of young people in all aspects of the National Heritage Area's work, learning opportunities, and participation.
- **Interpretation (Chapter 7)**
  - Goal 2-6, Interpretation: Build a system for interpreting the themes of the National Heritage Area through existing attractions, visitor facilities, and development of interpretive projects using a variety of approaches, especially the development of linkages, sustaining existing events and celebrations, and educating our youth.
  - Goal 2-9, Community Awareness: Foster understanding and pride in our cultural identity and community spirit among residents of all ages and among Colorado residents in general.
- **Heritage Tourism and Marketing (Chapter 8)**
  - Goal 1-1, Visitor Experience & Heritage Tourism: Increase visitation through heritage development projects and events and promotion of heritage tourism and hospitality in order to stimulate heritage preservation, economic development, and community revitalization.





- **Community Revitalization (Chapter 9)**
  - Goal 1-1, Visitor Experience & Heritage Tourism: Increase visitation through heritage development projects and events and promotion of heritage tourism and hospitality in order to stimulate heritage preservation, economic development, and community revitalization.
  - Goal 1-3, Business Development: Foster business retention, expansion, and creation through heritage development projects and partnerships, especially in the context of enhancing towns and agriculture as critical contributors to regional economic health.
- **Resource Development (Chapter 10)**
  - Goal 3-10, Organization & Management: Strengthen the organization's capacity to achieve its mission through a strong and diverse board of directors, resourceful collaboration and alliances, regular measurement of progress in implementing the management plan, financial stability and expanded funding, and sufficient staffing.
- **Management (Chapter 10)**
  - Goal 2-9, Community Awareness: Foster understanding and pride in our cultural identity and community spirit among residents of all ages and among Colorado residents in general.
  - Goal 3-10, Organization & Management: Strengthen the organization's capacity to achieve its mission through a strong and diverse board of directors, resourceful collaboration and alliances, regular measurement of progress in implementing the management plan, financial stability and expanded funding, and sufficient staffing.
  - Goal 3-11, Communications: Establish open and consistent communication with partnering organizations, governmental representatives, and the public; build recognition for the National Heritage Area and those involved in its progress.
  - Goal 3-13, Partner Development: Stand behind partners; assist and lend credibility to their endeavors. Emphasize networking, skill-sharing, coalitions, joint ventures, and other working relationships among partners as the primary means of building the heritage area and accomplishing its goals in a mutually beneficial way.

### **Managing the Work of the Board of Directors**

The Board of Directors' programs, projects, and routine operations help to implement the management plan. The Board's meetings should not focus on the details of these, however. Rather, they should be the place where directors step back from day-to-day concerns to ask three key questions:

1. "How is the management plan being implemented and what is our progress on our vision?"
2. "How is the heritage area obtaining the resources for implementation?"
3. "How are we doing as an organization?"

A standard agenda built around the management plan's topics, examining the Board of Directors' goals associated with each, will help to address these questions (see sidebar, "A Big-picture Checklist for Examining Progress"). Projects, programs, policies, and information items to be discussed would be grouped by management plan topics. Thus, a potential general agenda would be:

- Historic Preservation
- Conservation and Recreation (includes stewardship of land and natural resources plus outdoor recreation)

- Conserving Community and Tradition (includes agriculture, youth, community outreach)
- Interpretation (includes community outreach)
- Heritage Tourism and Marketing
- Community Revitalization (includes business and community groups established to support community revitalization planning)
- Resource Development (fundraising, communications with potential funders)
- Visibility and Communications (a cross-cutting topic that includes community outreach along with actual communications and messaging, e.g., website, electronic newsletter, branding, publications)
- Partner Development (a cross-cutting topic that should look at how strategies for assisting partners under other topics stack up across all activities)

Another way to organize the Board, once all program committees are in place, would be to organize it around those committees, discussed below, with the committees responsible for assuring the Board that progress is being made, and how, on management plan topics.



Establishing program committees offers the opportunity to involve non-board members to help share the workload, educate partners about the inner workings of the organization, and cultivate future leaders. For a heritage area, where partnership is critical for long-term success, operational transparency and the involvement of partners in program design and other organizational decisions is generally good practice.

Committees organized toward the end of the management planning process provided the Board of Directors with experience in addressing the topics in this plan. Four committees proved to be a more efficient structure than creating six committees assigned to the six “mission chapters” (the seventh topic is this chapter, the broad responsibility of the Board and not requiring a separate committee):

1. Historic Preservation (Chapter 4) and Community Revitalization (Chapter 9)
2. Conservation and Recreation (Chapter 5)
3. Conserving Community Traditions, Education, and Interpretation (Chapters 6 and 7)
4. Heritage Tourism and Marketing (Chapter 8)

As the Board of Directors gains experience, it may also prove helpful to establish two other committees that cut across all of these topics, to focus on communications, described below, and “Partner Development,” as discussed further below. The Partner Development Committee would design programs to support partners, review applications for support, and otherwise insure that every action possible undertaken by the other program committees and the Board of Directors supports partners in useful ways.

In terms of partner involvement in National Heritage Area administration, some heritage areas create a single standing committee for partners that undertakes a first level of review of programs, projects, grants, etc. – looking broadly across all heritage area programs. It is possible that such a “partners’ committee” (broader than the Board of Directors itself, which is already, in effect, a gathering of representatives of many partners) might evolve over time. To be able to identify the best ways to organize all committees where partners are to play a role, the Board of Directors must first gain experience in operating programs identified in the management plan.

One concern in establishing program committees is how much work is involved for a small board stretched across the many topics that any National Heritage Area must address. This is one argument for involving partner representatives drawn from outside the board itself, and the reason that all committees may not all be established at one



*As part of an early action strategy to support the National Heritage Area, the Board of Directors established a small grants program. A second-phase restoration of Alamosa Masonic Lodge #44, a splendid 1887 ironfront on Alamosa’s Main Street, received an NHA grant matched by State Historical Fund monies.*

time. Committees are needed to manage multiple projects, programs, and policies, and in the startup years, it may be advisable to focus more narrowly on one or two activities related to each management plan topic (see discussion above about board agenda-setting) or program committee assignment. In addition, this concern about “labor resources” also applies to the formation of Community Working Groups, a highly important feature of this plan. The Board of Directors will need to recognize the inherent difficulties in assigning board members to various committees and moreover asking them to participate in Community Working Groups, and set priorities accordingly.

**ACTION: Establish program committees charged with providing ongoing leadership and detailed review in implementing key programs and projects and addressing critical long-term topics of the management plan. Expect these committees to provide summary reporting in Board of Directors meetings regarding progress toward the goals of the management plan.**

**ACTION: Ask partner representatives to serve on program committees and other kinds of working groups as needed.**

#### **Organizational Committees**

Boards typically must fulfill various administrative functions:

**(1) Executive:** Provides a decision-making mode for the staff as needed between meetings – useful especially





## Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

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if the Board moves to a schedule of bimonthly meetings. An executive committee may also be a source of advice for the board chair on appointments and other operational responsibilities, and, perhaps, offer an additional layer of review for certain board discussions, such as annual budgets. Review of the executive director's annual performance and hiring decisions may also be a part of the executive committee's function.

**(2) Finance:** In small organizations, the treasurer may be solely responsible for financial record-keeping. As the heritage area's budget grows, a committee may be helpful in spreading the major burden involved in financial management. The organization will need to address annual and monthly budgeting, ensure adequate reporting and decision making at board meetings, and conduct annual financial reviews or audits. Special to a National Heritage Area, a managing entity must also administer the annual federal grant, including all of the duties pertaining to reporting and auditing laid out in the National Heritage Area's legislation (P.L.111 11, Title VIII, Subtitle A, Sec. 8001(c)(2)(E)(i-iii)). Liability insurance for directors and officers ("D&O insurance"), and other kinds of insurance are other functions associated with a board's financial responsibilities.

**(3) Governance:** The organization must work continuously on finding good nominees for board service. This is especially important since the federal legislation that effectively chartered the Sangre de Cristo Board of Directors states, "Members of the Board shall include representatives from a broad cross section of the individuals, agencies, organizations, and governments that were involved in the planning and development of the Heritage Area before the

date of enactment of this Act" (P.L.111-11, Title VIII, Subtitle A, Sec. 8001(b)(4)(B)). From time to time, the organization must also make changes to the bylaws, orient new board members, arrange for board training, and in general ensure that the organization follows best practices for the governance of nonprofit organizations. The surveys and interviews conducted with individual directors in order to answer the "how are we doing?" question discussed above are governance functions.

**(4) Resource Development:** A large emphasis in any nonprofit board of directors' job description is raising funds. Some boards elect to create a standing committee to address this administrative function; others fear that a separate committee makes it easy for non-committee members to evade their fundraising and relationship-building responsibilities, instead establishing temporary committees to provide board leadership outside board meetings. The choice has to do with the danger. Regardless of whether or not a standing committee is established to address this function, it is a key topic for every meeting agenda.

**(5) Strategic Planning:** Routine review of progress on the management plan, program evaluation, communications with program committees, and cycles of strategic planning to support annual staff work planning are all board functions that a committee can serve well.

**(6) Personnel and Operations:** For staffed organizations especially, boards must spend time on developing policies to support staff. While the executive director should be responsible for hiring, supervision, and performance evaluation, board-developed policies should guide staff operations as needed.

**(7) Communications and Public Outreach:** Particularly for a National Heritage Area, a board must spend a great deal of time ensuring adequate communications with partners and the residents of the heritage area. Coordination with tourism marketing is also critical. A responsibility prescribed in the federal legislation that effectively chartered the Sangre de Cristo Board of Directors also may fall within this function (or in the strategic planning function), "conduct meetings open to the public at least semiannually regarding the development and implementation of the management plan" (P.L.111-11, Title VIII, Subtitle A, Sec. 8001(c)(2)(D)).

**(8) Advocacy:** The organization may need a way to study whether and when it should step into situations requiring its time and attention to advocate for stewardship or funding concerns. Advocacy is a role to be played by the heritage area, it is true, but it can absorb much staff time and divert board attention from the main task, making sure that the management plan is implemented.



Board member Bob Rael (right) accompanied the consultant team on a tour of the Stations of the Cross devotional trail and chapel (La Capilla de Todas los Santos), described further in Chapter 6.



*Members of the Board of Directors check an old (and large) trails map of the San Luis Valley at a strategic retreat at the Conejos County courthouse to discuss management plan goals. From left are Lawrence Gallegos, Conejos County Clerk and Board Chairman, Mitchell Jarvies, Conejos County Commissioner, and Crestina Martinez, Costilla County Commissioner.*

This would be a great many standing committees if each function were to be addressed separately. It is possible, however, to combine functions; the following combinations appear to have the potential to work well for the Sangre de Cristo Board of Directors, particularly if leadership for various functions is spread to several individuals within the committee:

- Executive + Governance + Strategic Planning
- Finance + Personnel & Operations
- Communications & Public Outreach + Advocacy
- Resource Development

Large committees are not always necessary. Another way to spread the load is the “board minder” model, where one or two members of a board or committee are the “go-to” individuals on that function or topic and can assume leadership in discussing that part of the committee’s or board’s overall agenda.

**ACTION: Organize standing committees around critical organizational functions; be flexible as to committee assignments, membership, and responsibilities. In establishing each committee, provide a specific, written job description.**

**ACTION: Arrange Board of Directors meeting schedules to support directors’ spending time to support committees as well as to attend Board meetings.**

### **Colorado’s Community Resource Center**

The Community Resource Center (CRC; <http://www.crcamerica.org/default.asp>) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides training, technical assistance and consultation to nonprofits and community-based organizations in Colorado and across the country. CRC empowers nonprofits to fulfill their missions by building capacity, strengthening skills, and providing strategies for success. CRC serves as a convener of communities to expand resources and stimulate change. CRC’s mission is to create opportunities, tools and strategies to develop nonprofits and community groups to strengthen Colorado.

CRC has worked with thousands of organizations in both urban and rural communities throughout Colorado. The role of CRC is to assist these organizations in addressing a variety of community issues and problems while building a network of partners and supporters throughout the state. CRC has a reputation for tackling difficult issues with its “hands on” practical approach to organizational problem solving and the development of strong and lasting community leadership. The goal of CRC is, in short, to help other organizations fulfill their missions. CRC is the sponsor of Colorado’s Rural Philanthropy Days (RPD), which is supported by a variety of Colorado funders.

### **Board Membership and Recruitment**

The skills, experience, and critical interests of directors affect a nonprofit board’s ability as a whole to govern and participate in certain tasks. Boards need variety, good communicators, passionate advocates, and people who are willing to ask for support to help develop resources. For the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Board of Directors, individual directors need not know a great deal about National Heritage Area programs if they are experienced from service on other nonprofit boards, or if they can contribute expertise in such areas as human resource management or fundraising.

Most critical is that directors are devoted to the organization – their first choice for giving time, attention, expertise, and funds should be the Board of Directors. Directors currently serving heritage area partners from staff or board positions must determine whether they can divide what they have to offer between the Board and their other obligations. In any case, the Board of Directors should adopt a code of ethics for handling conflicts of interest where directors serve other organizations that have a stake in the success of the National Heritage Area.





Careful budgeting and conservative forecasting can enable decisions that will keep the Board's options open while building toward a future where several full-time staff may become possible. It is assumed that staffing growth will occur gradually from the current level of support, one full-time executive director.

There is a wide range of skills required by a successful heritage area (see sidebars on administration, finance, and program and partner development). These do not necessarily need to be provided by staff. Alternatives – potentially in combination – include delegating to Board committees or individuals or teams of directors, recruiting other volunteers, contracting with consultants, or asking partners to share the load.

Interpretive services in particular could be provided in the form of an interpretive ranger at no or reduced cost by the NPS. This idea has precedent in several heritage areas, including the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Area in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, both currently, and the Delaware & Lehigh Canal National Heritage Corridor in eastern Pennsylvania in its early years. Even if a full- or part-time NPS staffer is not made available, the National Park Service can provide staff on temporary detail to focus on various projects where short-term assistance would be helpful.

A special challenge in the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is its size; for a small staff to provide outreach to communities and partner organizations across such a large area, the Board of Directors has considered the possibility of establishing multiple offices. The benefit to each county of adding even one part-time job to local payrolls is considerable. This must be balanced against the advantages of combining the resources that might be devoted to three part-time staff and co-locating the resulting two or three staff so that they might become an effective team. It may be possible to find a compromise solution, rather than consider the choices to be one or the other; a willingness to experiment, rather than regarding any decision as permanent, may be helpful in making decisions.

The functions described in the accompanying sidebars will be fulfilled by arrangements as the Board of Directors decides – it is not possible to predict just how staffing and support should emerge. The projected minimum budget for other heritage areas with plans similar to this one is \$300,000 to \$400,000 (considering local pay scales and the costs of maintaining staff position beyond salary alone or paying contractors).

### **Typical Skills, Knowledge, and Experience Needed for Heritage Area Support: Finance**

- Financial administration ((budgeting, bookkeeping, reports, financial reviews);
- Resource development (fundraising) – planning and execution, including grant writing;
- Supervision of incoming and outgoing grants that support the Board of Directors' work, including the necessary reports to funders;
- Supervision of small grants given by the Board of Directors to heritage area partners; and
- Contract management support.

Budgeting must cover both staffing and staffing-related operational costs (e.g., travel, office costs) and programmatic costs related and unrelated to staffing (e.g., website or publication costs). A rule of thumb for budgeting for heritage areas is that staff and non-staff each require approximately half of the cash budget. This obviously will vary from year to year according to budget size and program choices, but it provides a starting point for evaluating and proposing annual budgets.

The \$300,000 estimate here is considerably less than the budgets of older heritage areas and is not meant to bind the Board of Directors to any particular size of budget. In recent years, it has been suggested that newer heritage areas



*The Costilla Crossing Bridge (known locally as the Old Lobatos Bridge) over the Rio Grande, which divides Conejos County (right, looking west) from Costilla County, is listed in the National Register. Completed in 1892, this Thacher through truss bridge is not only the oldest vehicular truss in southern Colorado, but it is also the last unaltered bridge of this design in America.*



### Typical Skills, Knowledge, and Experience Needed for Heritage Area Support: Programs and Partner Development

A wide range of skills, knowledge, and experience is needed to implement the programs described in the preceding chapters of this plan and delineated in the section above that addresses the need for program committees. To expand upon the list of program committees, here are useful skills, knowledge, and experience:

- Historic Preservation (Chapter 4) and Community Revitalization (Chapter 9): community planning, historic preservation;
- Conservation and Recreation (Chapter 5): conservation, interpretation, trail development;
- Conserving Community Traditions, Education, and Interpretation (Chapters 6 and 7): education for students and adults; public outreach, including use of the arts and events; historical research; interpretation (the ability to take history and historical research and translate it into meaningful learning experiences); and
- Heritage Tourism and Marketing (Chapter 8): tourism, branding, marketing, wayfinding.

Because so many projects to be accomplished through the National Heritage Area are to be led by partners with support from the Board of Directors, interpersonal and organizing skills are also important. Experience in the following could also be useful:

- Training;
- Public outreach;
- Facilitation (of meetings);
- Capital projects; and
- Project planning and management.

might expect approximately \$300,000 in federal support once their management plans are complete, which must be spent up front before being reimbursed under National Park Service procedures. A \$300,000 National Heritage Area grant, it should be mentioned, would require a cash budget of considerably more than \$300,000, depending on how much cash is provided in the dollar-for-dollar match required for an NHA match – that is, if the NHA grant is matched completely by cash, the budget would actually be \$600,000. The challenge of raising the cash and in-kind match is addressed in a section below.

**ACTION:** Establish a three-year plan for the addition of staffing resources.

**ACTION:** Establish regular personnel and hiring/contracting procedures, including plans for staff training.

## Financial Management

The Board of Directors' financial system should be designed to enable making real-time accounting information readily available to directors and staff, and the generation of financial data for planning, resource development (fundraising), and reports to funders (including the NPS).

and the public. Transparency is the general rule for a body such as the Board of Directors; an annual report including financial data is a critical element of the communications plan described below.

A good financial management system for a nonprofit organization should accomplish the following, at a minimum:

- **Track expenses** by a “chart of accounts”—“line items” typical of the profit-and-loss budget statements that are usually reviewed by boards at each of their meetings—in sufficient detail to support annual financial reviews and reporting on the IRS Form 990 (the “tax return” filed by nonprofit organizations with cash budgets over \$25,000 per year);
- **Show the actual cost of programs**, by allocating portions of costs tracked in the chart of accounts and aggregating them (e.g., “public outreach” would combine such line items as a website, costs of the required twice-yearly public meetings, transportation costs for a director or staff member to visit a local radio station, etc.); and
- **Enable automated financial reporting** specific to grants given to the organization by multiple sources.

### Evaluating a Project or Program

For each project or program in an annual work plan, here is information needed in order for the Board of Directors to evaluate priority and emphasis uniformly among its choices:

- Project description;
- Specific measurable objective(s);
- Related management plan goal(s) and how this project supports management plan goals and activities;
- Steps and timeframe to complete them (in phases if necessary);
- Committee(s) responsible for oversight;
- Partner(s) and their roles;
- Cost, including staff hours; and
- Performance measures.

Financial software can enable not only tracking of expenses by budgetary line items and programs but the assignment of those expenses (or a portion of them) to any given source, including specific grants. Once such a breakdown exists, it is easier to compile reports to individual funders.

Any board of directors manages its finances first through establishing an annual budget. Over time, the budget becomes based on historical financial data and resource development experience that enable fairly accurate projections of income and expenses. Budget statements and balance sheets are examined regularly, in order to review progress in meeting the budget and managing such obligations as accounts payable and restricted funds, which are recorded in the balance sheet. As the Board's budget grows, a finance committee should be tasked with supporting the treasurer in reviewing such reports prior to Board of Directors meetings and being ready to explain key points. Accounting software that allows an at-a-glance understanding of the budget compared to actual spending is important to use. Sometimes the rate of spending, rather than whether the organization is over or under budget in a certain line, is helpful information to keep programs on target.

It should be noted that staff costs are not always and exclusively "overhead" costs in the sense of the "management and general" category for expenses reported in IRS Form

990. Rather, staff costs (and expenses relating to support for staffing, such as mileage reimbursements) should be allocated as appropriate to programs that benefit from staff time. Many important programs can be achieved completely through the work of staff; others, like workshops, require funding for such things as educational materials, in addition to the funds required to cover associated staff costs. If the true costs of programs, including staff, are shown on the Form 990, potential funders examining it will be enabled to understand actual program costs, rather than see an organization top-heavy with staff time that appears to be unrelated to programs.

**ACTION: Establish a computerized financial management system that generates sufficient financial data for planning, resource development (fundraising) and administration, and reports to funders and the public.**

**ACTION: Establish regular financial procedures to support the Board of Directors' fiduciary responsibilities, including an annual budget and regular reviews of progress in meeting the budget.**

### Keeping Records

A corporate handbook generally must be maintained under state statutes applying to corporations (either for-profit and non-profit). State statutes may have simple requirements, but can be exceeded in order to create a full operations manual that records all policies and decisions; holds such documents as Directors' & Officers' ("D&O") liability insurance, annual Form 990's (the federal tax return for nonprofits), etc.; and describes such other practices as the roles and responsibilities of committees and current



*A dramatic view of Ute Mountain (9979 ft), half-obscured by one of the cloudbursts enjoyed by skywatchers in the San Luis Valley.*



### Critical Questions for Board Review

The following list provides critical questions that would be asked by the board of directors as a project is conceived and undertaken. (If a board committee for strategic planning is formed, that committee could provide preliminary review and lead discussion.)

- Is the project clearly defined and related to the core mission, vision, goals, and plan?
- Does the project fit with the core competencies of staff?
- Do the resources exist to support the project at the level it requires?
- Will the project effectively and efficiently achieve the goals and vision, and carry out the mission and the plan? (Project design.)
- Will the project advance or mesh well with other projects?
- Can a partner or other agency/organization do this project better?
- Is success well defined?
- What are the opportunity costs? (What are we not doing or what will we choose not to do because we are undertaking this project?)

– *Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area Management Plan* (New Jersey), approved by Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar on December 31, 2011, pp. 11-46, 47; quoted with permission from the Crossroads of the American Revolution Association, Inc.

members. This is a critical “best practice” for maintaining long-term coherence of Board of Directors policies and decisions. The “handbook” might actually be a series of digital files. A paper copy maintained in a safe location, however, is also desirable for the sake of document integrity and preservation.

**ACTION:** Establish an operations manual documenting all Board of Directors policies and procedures and compiling key organizational records.

## Maintaining Strategic Focus

As this management plan amply demonstrates, a heritage area demands attention to a wide variety of needs and goals. Moreover, for every topic, there will be many ideas seeking the Board of Directors' attention. The purpose of this plan is to avoid getting off course, by providing a framework for the orderly development of programs that respond to

### Critical Questions for Committee Review

- For those program committees and board committees responsible for project approval and review, here are questions:
- Is the project well designed? (That is, are objectives, partners, partners' roles, steps, and performance measures clearly and effectively defined?)
- What level of board involvement and reporting to the board by the committee is required?
- What level of staff reporting to the committee is required?
- Can any board members undertake specific roles in support of this project?
- Can the committee support and lead discussion of this project before the board?

– *Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area Management Plan* (New Jersey), approved by Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar on December 31, 2011, p. 11-47; quoted with permission from the Crossroads of the American Revolution Association, Inc.

the legislation, mission, vision, and goals documented in Chapter 1, A Vision for the Heritage Area.

Year to year priority-setting is the responsibility of the Board of Directors. Some organizations develop three-year strategic plans every year, alongside their annual work plans, to keep a realistic sense of priorities and timing in mind. Strategic plans are guided by longer range planning like this management plan, but are selective in their focus, and brief.

Highest priority activities during the first phase of plan implementation (approximately three years) are activities (1) for which no other organizations are directly responsible, (2) that encourage communities and partners to take collective action to support the heritage area and take individual advantage of its benefits; and (3) that grow the capacity of the Board of Directors to address the full span of heritage area programs:

- Improving the visitor experience, by encouraging visitors to enjoy interpretive offerings and recreational opportunities throughout the heritage area, through byway improvements and wayfinding information;
- Creating a program to designate and involve Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Communities, to encourage historic preservation and business

P.L. 111-11, Title VIII, Subtitle A, Sec. 8001(d)(2)(C)(ii) requires that this management plan include “specific commitments for implementation that have been made by the management entity or any government, organization, or individual for the first 5 years of operation.” Accordingly, following are commitments made to date (Fall 2012):

- Hire fulltime executive director
- Upgrade the existing website and see to its ongoing operation and maintenance
- Develop and begin implementation of a communications plan
- Develop guidelines for stakeholder and partner assistance
- Develop graphic identity, messaging, and a style guide
- Develop print and video media (possibly a visitor guide or map of the area)
- Work with “Cornerstone Communities” to get action plans in place (and revitalization plans if desired by communities)

- Alamosa Masonic Lodge #44 (1887): grant made by the Board of Directors toward restoration; match and project commitment made by the Alamosa Masonic Temple Association (matching funds include a grant from Colorado's State Historical Fund)
- Alamosa Community Gardens: grant made by the Board of Directors toward land acquisition; match and project commitment made by Alamosa Community Gardens, Inc.
- Milagros Coffeehouse building: grant promised by the Board of Directors; match and project commitment made by La Puente (nonprofit social service agency)
- Denver & Rio Grande Railroad Antonito Depot (1880), phase 2 restoration: grant promised by the Board of Directors; match and project commitment made by Town of Antonito (matching funds include a grant from Colorado's State Historical Fund)
- Los Caminos Antiguos interpretation project: grant of \$157,000 made to Los Caminos Antiguos by Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways program; matches provided by the Board of Directors and U.S. Forest Service
- San Luis Cultural Center: grant made by the Board of Directors toward phase 1 restoration; match and project commitment made by Costilla County Economic Development Council, Inc. (matching funds include a grant from Colorado's State Historical Fund)
- San Luis Valley Great Outdoors, Inc. (SLV-GO): trails planning and fundraising toward a network of trails throughout the heritage area and the entire San Luis Valley, centered on the Rio Grande

- \$5,000 committed to the operations of the Board of Directors by Costilla County, FY2012-13
- \$5,000 committed to the operations of the Board of Directors by Conejos County, FY2012-13
- \$20,000 committed to the operations of the Board of Directors by Alamosa County, FY2012-13





changes, and otherwise align their existing programs to benefit the entire National Heritage Area.

Relationships with partners are discussed further below in the section on “Partner Development.”

**ACTION: Facilitate ongoing collaboration among partners to promote plans for resource protection, restoration, construction, interpretation, community revitalization, and other partner programs that support the long-range goals of this management plan.**

### **Community Working Groups**

A “community working group” is recommended as a way for communities of all sizes, whether incorporated or not, to organize in order to participate in the National Heritage Area, especially to implement programs described in Chapter 9, Community Revitalization, and Chapter 7, Heritage Area Interpretation.

Each community is expected to define its role and work out representation and resources individually, with the objectives of fostering effective communications among local organizations and agencies and with the Board of Directors and providing leadership in seeking to qualify their communities for designation as “Cornerstone Community,” “Valley Community,” or “Heritage Community.” Each community and its representative group joins the heritage area by completing a partnership agreement in which they agree to work toward the heritage area’s common mission, vision, and goals.

Community working groups can organize the participation of a wide range of residents and stakeholders including government leaders, business leaders, historic sites, educators, and others. They should also communicate with the general public and receive public input that can help shape their activities. The results can be varied – from identifying community traditions and ways to sustain them, to telling community stories, to organizing community projects such as a walking tour or entry sign.

### **The Federal Role in the National Heritage Area**

Federal recognition provides credibility and reinforces the long-term importance of the heritage area for partners and communities. It also brings the federal government into direct involvement in the National Heritage Area, through the Secretary of the Interior:

For purposes of carrying out the management plan, the Secretary, acting through the management



*The Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge’s visitor center is open only when volunteers are available to provide staffing. It contains beautiful exhibits and a children’s area.*

entity, may use amounts made available under this section to (A) make grants to the State or a political subdivision of the State, nonprofit organizations, and other persons; (B) enter into cooperative agreements with, or provide technical assistance to, the State or a political subdivision of the State, nonprofit organizations, and other interested parties; hire and compensate staff, which shall include individuals with expertise in natural, cultural, and historical resources protection, and heritage programming; (D) obtain money or services from any source including any that are provided under any other Federal law or program; (E) contract for goods or services; and (F) undertake to be a catalyst for any other activity that furthers the Heritage Area and is consistent with the approved management plan. (P.L. 111-11, Sec. 8001(c)(1))

The Secretary has, as with all other National Heritage Areas, delegated responsibilities for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area to the National Park Service, where the Intermountain Regional Office is an important guide to National Park Service resources. That office maintains a coordinator to work with heritage areas and provide liaison with the national office. The Intermountain Regional Office, working with both the Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve and the national office as appropriate, specifically could offer:

- Regular meetings between representatives of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area and NPS regional leaders;





## Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

### Management Plan

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*Adams State University's programs, professors, and students offer many opportunities for assistance and partnership to the National Heritage Area.*

**ACTION: Maintain a memorandum of understanding or cooperative agreement with the NPS for assistance with Board of Directors operations.**

**ACTION: Maintain NPS liaison role (as provided during management planning).**

**ACTION: Address the need for greater interpretation of the valley's natural resources, encouraging collaboration among not only federal land-managing agencies and the Board of Directors but also with a variety of organizations, including state agencies, nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions.**

**ACTION: Build relationships with agencies at the federal level whose work affects the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area or which can provide services and funding.**

**ACTION: Provide routine briefings to members of the Colorado Congressional delegation.**

#### ***Tribal Role***

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is fortunate in that for federal agencies with lands in the San Luis Valley, there is a long-time practice of periodic consultation with Indian nations, meetings that are hosted by the federal agencies and which cover a range of issues of mutual concern. The National Heritage Area should participate in these consultations as appropriate, working with the Secretary of the Interior and the National Park Service.

**ACTION: Engage with tribal nations and consult on projects of mutual benefit.**

#### ***Role of the State of Colorado***

The Governor can be helpful in expressing support for state agencies' actions to develop and maintain the heritage area, and may be amenable to coordinating agencies' contributions. For this reason, the Governor's office should receive routine briefings on the heritage area's progress. In addition, State legislators can also help to influence state agencies' support; they should also receive the courtesy of routine briefings.

**ACTION: Provide routine briefings to the Governor and seek help with coordination of state agencies' contributions to implementation of the management plan.**

**ACTION: Provide routine briefings to elected officials representing heritage area jurisdictions in the state legislature.**

**ACTION: Build relationships with agencies at the state level whose work affects the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area or which can provide services and funding.**

#### ***Role of Local Governments***

The National Heritage Area's three counties provide considerable leadership through representation on the Board of Directors and providing funding to support National Heritage Area programs and operations. The heritage area's three incorporated towns (Alamosa, Antonito, and San Luis) are among the four communities expected to become Cornerstone Communities (the fourth is Fort Garland). All four should receive coordinated outreach designed to move them to full Cornerstone status as soon as possible.



**ACTION:** Provide routine briefings to local government officials and involve them in the National Heritage Area's community designation program.

## Partnerships with Educational Institutions

As described in Chapter 6, Conserving Community & Tradition, outreach to educational institutions, both pre-K-12 and institutions of higher learning, is critical.

**ACTION:** Build relationships with various groups related to public schools (districts, superintendents, teachers, parent-teacher groups, students and student groups, and other service organizations involved in the schools).

**ACTION:** Build relationships with institutions of higher learning in or serving the National Heritage Area that can provide services and funding.

## PARTNER DEVELOPMENT

A section below notes that “fundraising” is now often called “resource development” because successful fundraising proceeds from developing relationships with sources (resources) for those funds. In the same sense, “partnering” should be regarded as developing relationships, for the benefit of both parties. Thus, the title of this section addressing how to shape heritage area programs for partners is “partner development.”

Every action the Board of Directors, staff, and partners undertake on behalf of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area is an opportunity for enhancing partners' abilities to contribute to the heritage area. (Just as every action is also an opportunity for communicating heritage area messages, and for developing relationships that will support successful fundraising, both points made in sections below.)

The National Heritage Area has great potential for assisting and lending credibility to the goals and endeavors of individual partners. Moreover, emphasizing working relationships among partners is an important means of accomplishing the heritage area's goals in a mutually beneficial way.

The idea of partner development goes far beyond the usual hope of heritage areas' partners for grants. The Board of Directors' intent is to share some of its federal funding with partners in the form of matching grants awarded on a competitive basis. Monetary matching grants are only one way to build partners' capacity. Yes, grants can be a part of partner development, depending on the extent to which the Board of Directors decides grants can further the goals

*Goal 3-13 of this plan lays out a vision for partner development:*

Stand behind partners; assist and lend credibility to their endeavors. Emphasize networking, skill-sharing, coalitions, joint ventures, and other working relationships among partners as the primary means of building the heritage area and accomplishing its goals in a mutually beneficial way.

of this management plan, versus spending funds directly on technical assistance to partners or other programs where the Board of Directors must spend its funding directly in order to be successful in implementing this plan. Here are other ideas to be considered in developing a complete program for partner development:

- Technical assistance for program and product development;
- Technical assistance for fundraising and grant writing (especially but not limited to writing grant applications for heritage area funding);
- Networking/gatherings;
- Training programs and workshops;
- Quality assurance programs that let partners promote their achievements;
- Best practices/technology transfer/skill-sharing/clearinghouse;
- Recognition programs (“best of,” “most improved,” etc.);
- Endorsement of partners’ grants to others;
- Docent and volunteer recruitment and training;
- Marketing for partners’ programs;
- Awards of matching grants on a competitive basis; and
- Awards of consulting assistance paid for by the Board of Directors (rather than dollars paid directly to the awardee), on a competitive basis with a match made by the awardee.

Design of a grant program for the first phase of plan implementation is a high-priority activity that requires consideration of matching requirements, size limitations, and a focus on activities that maximize a given emphasis in implementing management plan goals, year to year. Allocation of funds to such grants will depend on the Board of Directors' sense of how much of its budget it will devote to initiating its own programs versus supporting those of partners, and what programs within partner development

it is most useful to emphasize. The Board of Directors may choose in some years to devote its grant funding to one or more specific projects of highest priority for implementing the plan.

**ACTION: Establish a partnership assistance program that recognizes the many ways that the National Heritage Area can support the growth and development of partners' capacity and programs.**

**ACTION: Reserve a portion of annual federal heritage area funding for small monetary grants that will build partners' capacity. Develop and implement a process and annual schedule for the identification and selection of partner projects to receive support in the form of grants or other heritage area benefits that should be documented as part of the heritage area's record to be evaluated in relation to Congressional requirements.**

## ACHIEVING VISIBILITY THROUGH GOOD COMMUNICATIONS

Every program or action undertaken by the Board of Directors is related to communications in some way. Branding – discussed in Chapter 8, Heritage Tourism and Marketing – is important because it defines the National Heritage Area and sets expectations in the minds of all audiences, including both visitors and residents. Planning for communications is broader, however, encompassing the range of ways the Board of Directors will communicate with partners, supporters, and residents as well as visitors and potential visitors. In addition to heritage tourism marketing, communications planning must include interpretive activities described in Chapter 7, Heritage Area Interpretation; and community outreach programs described in Chapter 6, Conserving Community & Tradition, and Chapter 9, Community Revitalization.

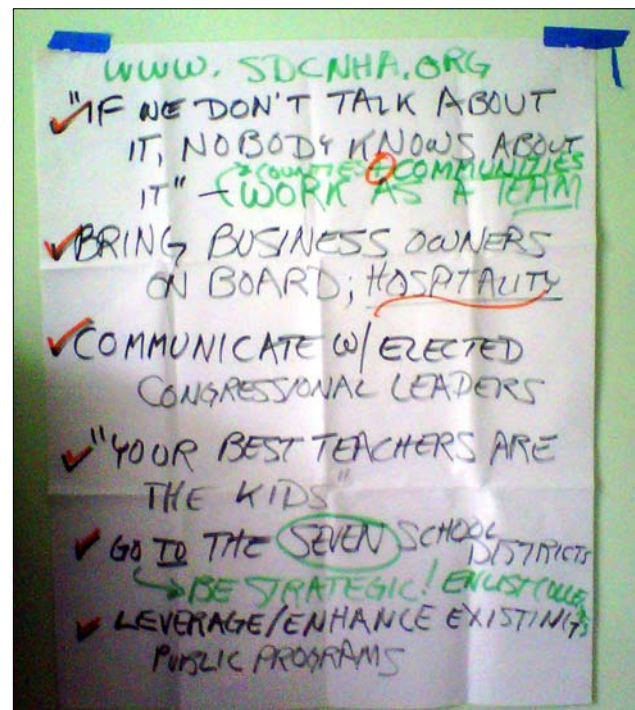
The Board of Directors' role in communications is:

- To build the heritage area's identity and visibility among multiple audiences, both residents and visitors;
- To enable communication with and networking among partners;
- To use technological advances in the digital realm, particularly to serve visitors and those planning to visit; and
- To enable long-term success in developing funding relationships and resources, as discussed in the following section.

## A Checklist of Potential Communications Activities

There is a wide variety of resource materials available in books or on the web advising nonprofit organizations on "getting the word out." Here are a few potential activities:

- Annual report
- Materials to support the resource development plan (discussed below)
- Website
- Email newsletter and other email communications
- Social media and evolving digital technologies
- Printed materials
- Promotions (e.g., advertising, exhibits for display at meetings, special banners)
- Participation in community events (e.g., a director's speaking engagement or a booth at a festival)
- Marketing for events sponsored by the Board of Directors (e.g., getting the word out about a workshop, printing invitations for a fundraiser)
- Courting media coverage



Participants in public meetings were direct and clear in their talks with the Board of Directors and consultant team as they considered potential ideas and emphasis for the management plan.





### A Checklist for Ways to Raise Funds

- Grant applications and requests for funding (or sponsorship) to
  - Foundations;
  - Government agencies;
  - Corporations;
- Mid-year solicitation for an “annual fund” (unrestricted dollars to support the organization in general);
- An annual campaign for “end-of-year gifts” (also generally understood by donors to be unrestricted);
- A program to solicit major donors;
- A campaign for a specific need, project, or program (restricted funding);
- Events and other “grassroots” fundraising opportunities at the community level – sometimes called “friend-raising” since such programs are better budgeted for raising enough funding to cover their costs, rather than as a significant source of cash;
- Endowment and capital campaigns – to build long-range resources;
- Cooperative fundraising activities with partners;
- Fee-for-service activities (charging for technical assistance to partners; or hiring out staff experts beyond the heritage area); and
- Enterprise activities (such as web sales of merchandise related to the heritage area).

**communications associated with interpretation, heritage tourism marketing, and resource development.**

**ACTION: Hold regular gatherings of partners to review progress on the management plan, at least twice yearly to fulfill requirements of the National Heritage Area legislation.**

**ACTION: Create an awards program to recognize partner achievements.**

### RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Successful fundraising relies on development of close and lasting relationships with funders and donors, existing and potential. This emphasis on developing relationships is the reason why the preferred term for fundraising in recent years has become “resource development.”

Grant writing – what many outsiders to the nonprofit world believe to be the way funds are raised – is but one part of a much wider range of activities to cultivate the resources that will sustain a nonprofit organization. Even the most successful grant writing program, in fact, begins with a good understanding of grantors’ wishes and programs, often built from personal contact and familiarity built strategically, over time.

The Board of Directors has a large job ahead: to raise the necessary funds to implement this plan. Resource development is the way to achieve a heritage area and management entity capable of such a mission. The goal is sustainability. A sustainable organization is one that is able to raise sufficient funding year after year from sources diverse enough that it is not overly reliant on any one source or kind of source. For many nonprofit organizations, raising funds tends to be driven by short-term needs for simple survival. The best, however, are able to control their fates and become sustainable, through long-range resource development planning and diligent, imaginative execution of the ideas in their plans.

A solid development plan is integral to both strategic planning and annual work plans. The short-term planning documented in annual work plans guides the daily work of resource development, step by step. Integrating longer term planning with overall organizational plans can help to set priorities and suggest ways to design programs to optimize the likelihood of raising needed resources. The long-term plan is a more general guide, setting objectives against which longer term achievement can be measured. This section of the heritage area management plan suggests objectives and strategies specifically associated with developing relationships for ongoing support, for incorporation into a resource development plan.

A successful organization with strong, visible programs, a good reputation, and clear results is attractive to supporters and donors. The most important factors in successful resource development, however, are focus and determination. Every day, someone associated with the Board of Directors must ask, “What will it take for the heritage area to be a flourishing initiative ten years from now, and what must we do today to make that happen?” A plan simply organizes and documents all the ideas that can answer that question.

### **The Challenge of Matching the National Heritage Area’s Annual Federal Funding**

Federal funds allocated to the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area must be matched dollar for dollar (“1:1”) with nonfederal funds. There are three ways to accomplish this match.



# Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

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Potential Matching Funds - Nongovernmental	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Earned Revenue<sup>1</sup></b>				
Advertising Revenue		1,000	1,100	1,200
Interest & Dividends		200	200	200
Other Earned Revenue		200	200	200
Sponsorship Revenue	1,000	2,000	3,000	4,000
Workshop Cost Recovery ("tuition")	1,050	1,110	1,160	1,200
<b>Support</b>				
Board Contributions	500	500	500	500
Individual Contributions	1,000	2,000	4,000	8,000
Corporate Contributions	2,200	4,400	8,800	13,000
Foundation Contributions	13,000	26,000	42,000	74,000
Special Events – Fundraising	5,000	6,250	7,800	9,760
<b>SUBTOTAL – Nongovernmental cash to be raised by Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area for operations and programs</b>	13,750	23,660	38,760	62,060
<b>In-kind<sup>2</sup></b>	225,000	208,500	256,500	230,400
<b>GRAND TOTAL – Nongovernmental Support</b>	248,750	252,160	325,260	332,460
<sup>1</sup> Other possible sources of earned revenue and public support include: Contracted Services Food Sales/Concession Revenue Gift Shop/Merchandise Sales Workshop & Lecture Fees (earned by staff/board presentations) Other Nongovernmental Support				
<sup>2</sup> See text in this section for explanation of in-kind contributions entitled “‘In-kind’ Contributions.” This does not include governmental contributions. The amount shown is the minimum necessary to show full 1:1 match to NPS funds, based on estimates of possible NPS funds 2013-2016, which can change year to year based on Congressional appropriations. In practice, the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area expects much greater leverage than 1:1, thanks especially to partners’ overmatch, explained the section here entitled “Cash Match from Non-federal Contributors.”				
<sup>3</sup> National Heritage Area annual appropriations are assumed to be \$147,000 in 2013 and \$300,000 thereafter for the purposes of estimates here. All amounts suggested from various sources are speculative and must be confirmed via further research that is a component of resource development planning.				
<sup>4</sup> Does not include local and state governmental support and other non-NHA federal support.				

Table 10-1 Potential Matching Funds for Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area Annual Appropriations, 2013 - 2016 <sup>3,4</sup>

therefore reduce program and staff costs, they do not provide dollars for operations and programs that are reflected in an annual budget. That said, such contributions can provide a significant matching value. The value for volunteers’ time is generally based on a state-by-state survey maintained by Independent Sector at [http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer\\_time](http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time); Coloradoans’ contribution of time is valued at \$22.03, slightly more than the national average of \$21.79 (2011 figures). The IRS provides an annual figure for the value of donated mileage, since volunteers may deduct that value as a charitable contribution on their federal tax return; the 2011 charitable standard mileage rate was 14 cents per mile.

With regard to the in-kind services described in this last point, beyond their immediate support for projects and programs, however, volunteers have an additional value: they can become friends who are particularly knowledgeable about the National Heritage Area – its partners, programs, and needs – and who can provide effective help to the Board of Directors in raising funds. That is, if they are asked – an example of developing relationships.

Table 10-1 documents an analysis of potential sources of nonfederal governmental funding to be pursued, as the beginning for a long-range resource development plan. It was developed as part of an overall look at a potential budget





*Table 10-2 Potential Project Funding Options.*

Funding Option	Pros	Cons	Examples
Multi-County Metro District (a uniform multi-county property tax)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mil levy used to pay for specific improvements</li> <li>• Can be used for a variety of infrastructure projects</li> <li>• Can draw boundary to include only area to be improved, so benefit to those who pay is clear</li> <li>• More specific purpose and geography than county-wide tax</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires a vote of all those who will pay into district</li> <li>• Somewhat complex to form</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Denver's Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD), <a href="http://www.scfd.org/">http://www.scfd.org/</a></li> </ul>
Special Districts: Business Improvement District (BID); General Improvement District (GID); Downtown Development Authority (DDA); Urban Renewal Authority (URA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any variety of special district could be used to fund capital improvements and associated improvements</li> <li>• Reliable, multi-year funding</li> <li>• Can be based on tax and/or fees</li> <li>• Can issue bonds</li> <li>• Could apply to projects, maintenance, or raise local match for federal funding</li> <li>• Colorado special districts are flexible and can be tailored for a specific use, program or improvement</li> <li>• Can create organizational and financial structure</li> <li>• Could be used as local matching funds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally difficult to form</li> <li>• TABOR (CO Taxpayers' Bill of Rights) requires a vote to pass any additional tax</li> <li>• Tax increase</li> <li>• Generally used in municipalities, not counties (Note: may therefore be an option for municipalities implementing Community Revitalization Plans)</li> </ul>	

Table 10-2 Potential Project Funding Options (continued)

that calls for total cash revenues of more than \$200,000 in 2012 to increase by 85 percent to just under \$400,000 in 2016. Local and state government grants plus non-National Heritage Area federal grants would be additional sources of cash support for the program (other kinds of federal grants,, of course, would not be allowed as matching funds for the National Heritage Area allocation, but would be helpful all the same).

### Organizing for Resource Development

Financial planning has provided background information for the Board of Directors regarding the potential scope, cash flow, and expenditures involved in implementing this management plan. Good financial information, forecasting, and budgeting will always be critical to effective resource development – without knowing what dollars and other resources the organization needs, it is difficult to understand the possibilities for raising funds and other resources and to make good choices.

Organizing for resource development is equally critical. It starts with a determination to involve everyone with a stake in the success of the National Heritage Area, and to build their enthusiasm for the effort. The Board of Directors and staff must be ready to pitch in where needed and constantly on the lookout for opportunities. There should be no one anywhere who does not see raising funds as a part of his or her role in the National Heritage Area. Fundraising must be a team effort that engages everyone involved in the organization's endeavors:

- The chairman of the Board of Directors, in tandem with the Executive Committee;
- A Resource Development Committee (if established - see committee discussion earlier in this chapter);
- A fully engaged Board of Directors, with time on its agendas to address resource development, a willingness to learn about the resource development process, and the ability to participate in calls on potential grantors and donors;
- A staff director (executive director);
- A resource development specialist (under contract or on staff);
- A communications staff or contractor fully on board with the idea of combining communications with resource development; and
- An administrative staff to support administration of incoming grants and reporting to grantors.

Heritage area partners should be encouraged to understand the Board of Directors' needs in meeting the responsibility to raise support for the entire heritage area, and to regard that challenge as their own, as partners with a stake in the heritage area's success.

A basic ingredient in organizing for resource development is a plan. This plan is a record of decisions and direction

## Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area

## Management Plan

## Management & Implementation

based on research done to learn about possible sources, analysis of strategies for seeking funds, and establishment of objectives. The resource development plan ideally would cover a three-year timeline, to be reviewed and updated annually. It provides guidance for the resource development activities to be detailed in the Board of Directors' annual work plan, as described earlier.

An experienced fundraising professional can advise the Board of Directors in creating this plan, and can assist in carrying it out if planning reveals the desirability of such added horsepower. There are also many good how-to resources available through websites and books.

**ACTION:** Develop a resource development plan and an accompanying short-range plan that can be coordinated with the annual work plan. Make each plan as specific as possible, with financial targets by category of source (see Table 10-2 for categories) and other measurable objectives; update each on a regular basis to maintain a time horizon beyond

the annual work plan of at least three years. [NOTE: The following actions are logical and expected elements of resource development planning and action.]

**ACTION:** Coordinate all resource development activities with the annual work plan, especially the communications plan, in order to integrate resource development into all aspects of programs and operations.

**ACTION: [Repeated] Undertake an evaluation of current representation on the Board of Directors and develop plans for expanding diversity and skill sets to support management plan implementation and resource development.**

**ACTION:** Develop a “case statement” that makes the arguments in general that are likely to appeal to donors. This brief document provides a basis for

## Evaluation Requirement in P.L. 111-11

P.L. 111-11, Title VIII, Subtitle A, Sec. 8001(g) tasks the Board of Directors with evaluation that will require ongoing record-keeping:

- (1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 3 years before the date on which authority for Federal funding terminates for the Heritage Area [2009+15-3=2021], the Secretary shall—
- (A) conduct an evaluation of the accomplishments of the Heritage Area; and
  - (B) prepare a report in accordance with paragraph (3).
- (2) EVALUATION.—An evaluation conducted under paragraph (1)(A) shall—
- (A) assess the progress of the management entity with respect to—
    - (i) accomplishing the purposes of this section [Sec. 8001 in general; purposes, however, are not specifically stated] for the Heritage Area; and
    - (ii) achieving the goals and objectives of the approved management plan for the Heritage Area;
  - (B) analyze the Federal, State, local, and private investments in the Heritage Area to determine the leverage and impact of the investments; and
  - (C) review the management structure, partnership relationships, and funding of the Heritage Area for purposes of identifying the critical components for sustainability of the Heritage Area.
- (3) REPORT.—
- (A) IN GENERAL.—Based on the evaluation conducted under paragraph (1)(A), the Secretary shall prepare a report that includes recommendations for the future role of the National Park Service, if any, with respect to the Heritage Area.
  - (B) REQUIRED ANALYSIS.—If the report prepared under subparagraph (A) recommends that Federal funding for the Heritage Area be reauthorized, the report shall include an analysis of—
    - (i) ways in which Federal funding for the Heritage Area may be reduced or eliminated; and
    - (ii) the appropriate time period necessary to achieve the recommended reduction or elimination.

In addition, under Sec. 8001(c)(2)(e), the Board of Directors must submit annual information, a critical task in its own right and one that will also support the longer term evaluation requirement:

- (i) submit an annual report to the Secretary that describes the activities, expenses, and income of the management entity (including grants to any other entities during the year that the report is made).



a message and an appeal that are to be tailored to the needs of each prospect.

**ACTION:** Continuously research prospects and match them with directors, staff, and friends; vice versa, identify prospects through existing relationships assessed by directors, staff, and friends for potential support.

**ACTION:** Continue to build and nurture relationships with local, state, and federal officials and their staff.

**ACTION:** Build and nurture relationships with local and state corporations whose interests intersect with those of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area and its programs.

**ACTION:** Build and nurture relationships with local and state foundations whose interests intersect with those of the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area and its programs. Consider informal or formal working groups with non-board advisors for long-term cooperation on building such relationships, as appropriate

**ACTION:** [Repeated] Make resource development a regular part of the Board of Directors' agenda, with a generous amount of time devoted to this topic.

**ACTION:** Develop a donor database and begin gathering information about prospects, using a software system designed to support long term growth of the database for the purpose of fundraising.

**ACTION:** Include volunteers in the donor database. Thank contributors of in-kind services and donated materials in the National Heritage Area as diligently as those who donate cash.

## EVALUATING PROGRESS

One of the major roles of the Board of Directors is to track (and celebrate) progress toward the vision for the National Heritage Area. It must monitor and evaluate implementation of the plan that is designed to help the region achieve that vision and organize adjustments as circumstances and opportunities change.

There are two levels of such evaluation: (1) annual evaluation, to be undertaken by the Board of Directors (and staff), and (2) a one-time-only, long-term, independent evaluation



*Dennis Lopez (second from left), a teacher involved in the Novela Project described in Chapter 6 and early leader in the effort to establish the National Heritage Area, discusses the Rio Culebra settlements of San Luis and surrounding villages with the planning team. The People's Ditch, oldest acequia in Colorado, and La Vega, a rare grazing common, are in the background.*

undertaken by the National Park Service, which is required by the legislation establishing the National Heritage Area (see sidebar). Let's look at each.

## Annual Evaluation

Evaluation is an ongoing responsibility for the Board of Directors. Measuring and evaluating performance should guide communications, resource development, strategic planning, annual work plans, and budgeting, as well as the programs described in Chapters 4-9. As described above in the section on work planning, each activity as it is designed and put into operation should include measurable objectives. Careful documentation of a program and its intended and actual results permits an evaluation as to the success of the program, and supports annual reporting to partners, supporters, and residents.

There are also some measures worth tracking that can indicate overall progress year to year. The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area already supplies annual measures to the Alliance of National Heritage Areas, which has collected such data for many years. The Board of Directors should incorporate these well-established measures into regular collection of data for documenting the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area's performance.

Understanding spending patterns is a part of tracking a heritage area's overall progress, requiring information that is easy to collect. A typical measure is how many dollars are invested directly by the National Heritage Area versus local



**ACTION: Establish measurable objectives at the time each program is designed and inaugurated, for annual documentation and review.**

**ACTION: Maintain excellent record-keeping to support annual and long-term evaluation.**

**ACTION: Conduct annual or periodic evaluations of the work and the efforts of partners in achieving the vision for the National Heritage Area.**

**ACTION: [Repeated] Reserve at least one round of committee and board meetings each year to evaluate progress on the management plan and the Board's involvement, with particular focus on communications and resource development.**

### CONCLUSION: THE CHALLENGE OF IMPLEMENTATION

This concludes the long-range management plan for the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area and its first ten to fifteen years. This is a unique plan for a unique place where the natural resources are well-recognized, so much so that

### *Priorities for the First Phase of Implementation*

- Encouraging communities to undertake historic preservation and community revitalization planning and projects that will save important historic resources and provide the economic impetus for community improvements.
- Undertaking a wide variety of heritage area-wide interpretive initiatives to achieve greater visibility and enhanced interpretive presentations for residents and visitors. These initiatives will focus on interpreting communities and the natural landscape. Community interpretation through oral history is a possibility (and described in Chapter 6), but not an early focus given the large number of high-priority activities identified in the plan.
- Connecting local culture and interpretive attractions with the local school system (seven districts), to ensure that the next generation is prepared to become stewards of the magnificent legacy of the National Heritage Area.
- Emphasizing interpretation of the natural landscape, to include enhancing and expanding (1) public access to that landscape on public lands and through community-based recreational initiatives, and (2) available information about recreational opportunities on public lands. The heritage area's focus, however, is on interpretive presentation and visitor information.
- Ensuring that the visitor is warmly welcomed and has a great experience, whether encountering businesses, attractions, public services, event participants, or simply someone on the street or at a shop.
- Marketing the heritage area in parallel to development of interpretive presentation, focusing first on residents and audiences at existing attractions and events, then on nearby "drive markets," and later seeking a wider audience through national and international recognition. Many interpretive activities are considered to be partly marketing in nature, such as the heritage area's website.
- Seeking visibility. Achieving wider recognition of the national importance of the unique heritage of the southern San Luis Valley must be a focus of all of the heritage area's communications, whether with residents or visitors, through marketing and interpretation, or through simple, standard ways of reaching out to the public. While marketing may be designed to increase the number of visitors to the San Luis Valley, this point is a wider one, that the National Heritage Area should be understood by one and all to be a special place worthy of exploration and stewardship.
- Creating a Partner Development Program that acknowledges that many of the activities that the National Heritage Area can and will undertake will build the capabilities of stakeholders who can help to implement this plan, and ensuring (1) that this approach is deliberately reinforced as program are designed that achieve one or more strategic objectives, and (2) that partners understand this relationship and its multiple benefits. Grants should be understood to be a part of this program, but not the only part. Partners are stakeholders in the San Luis Valley with the ability to influence the implementation of the plan, and include local governments, community groups, interpretive attractions (local, state, and federal), and many specialized organizations supporting the arts, education, history, recreation, and conservation.
- Building relationships with a wide variety of actors that can assist in the implementation of this plan. Specifically mentioned here are local governments, local economic development agencies, organizations and agencies supporting historic preservation, educational institutions, and elected officials.



