



Blackstone River Valley Special Resource Study Information Bulletin — Revised Fall 2009



NPS Takes a Fresh Look at the Blackstone Valley

Introduction & Project Background

In October 2006, Congress passed legislation to reauthorize the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission for an additional five years. While the Blackstone River Valley was designated a National Heritage Corridor in perpetuity by Congress, the federal management presence will only exist as long as the federally created Corridor Commission continues to operate. The reauthorization legislation also required the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a Special Resource Study (SRS) to explore the potential for a permanent National Park Service (NPS) presence in the Blackstone Valley. A possible result of the study could be Congressional action creating a new unit of the National Park System in the Blackstone Valley. The SRS, which is being managed by staff from the NPS' Northeast Regional Office, will focus on sites and landscape features that contribute to the understanding of the Blackstone Valley as the birthplace of the American industrial revolution.

The Study Process

1. Project scoping

In advancing the study process, the study team must first determine what the geographic and thematic scope of the project will be. The Blackstone River Valley possesses many layers of history and an intricate mosaic of important structures, sites, and landscapes. In making this assessment, the study

team will consult with subject matter experts (both locally and nationally), relevant state and local agencies and organizations, other stakeholders, and the general public.

2. Evaluating Resources

Having defined the geographic and thematic scope of the project, the study team will then identify and evaluate the resource or resources that fall within that scope. To conduct this analysis, the study team will use the National Park Service's Criteria for New National Parklands. The criteria are used to assess the resource's national significance and evaluate its suitability and feasibility for inclusion in the National Park System.

National Significance

A proposed unit will be considered nationally significant if it meets all four of the following standards:

- it is an outstanding example of a particular type of resource;
- it possesses exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the natural or cultural themes of our nation's heritage;
- it offers superlative opportunities for public enjoyment, or for scientific study; and
- it retains a high degree of integrity as a true, accurate, and relatively unspoiled example of the resource.

Suitability

To be suitable for inclusion in the National Park System, an area must represent a natural or cultural resource type that is not already adequately represented in the National Park System, or is not comparably represented and protected for public enjoyment by another federal agency, tribal, state, or local government, or the private sector. Adequacy of representation is determined on a case by case basis by comparing the proposed area to other units in the National Park System for differences or similarities in the character, quality, quantity, or combination of resource values.

Feasibility

To be feasible as a new unit of the National Park System an area must be (1) of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure sustainable resource protection and visitor enjoyment (taking into account current and potential impacts from sources beyond proposed park boundaries), and (2) capable of efficient administration by the Service at a reasonable cost.

The feasibility evaluation also considers the ability of the National Park Service to undertake new management responsibilities in light of current and projected availability of funding and personnel.

3. Developing Management Options

The study team will define a range of alternatives for future action that explore the options relative to unit designation(s) and appropriate levels of NPS involvement. The study team will review and assess factors related to feasibility in terms of existing conditions (public access and programs, level of threat, etc.), project goals, and other factors and criteria that would influence federal designation and NPS involvement.

4. Evaluation of Environmental Consequences

The study team will undertake a basic analysis of the potential impacts of proposed management options on the natural, cultural, and socioeconomic environment.

5. Public Information and Involvement

During the course of the project, the study team will hold public meetings, maintain a project website,



and produce and distribute newsletters and other publications to keep the public informed of the process and to solicit public input. The team will also produce a draft study report that will be made widely available for public information and comment.

For more information visit the link to our project web site at www.nps.gov/blac. Your comments are always welcome. Please share any of your thoughts or concerns about the study with us by contacting:

Ellen Carlson, Project Manager
National Park Service, Northeast Region
15 State Street
Boston, MA 02109
(617) 223-5048 phone
(617) 223-5164 fax
Ellen_carlson@nps.gov

Timeframe	Task/Milestone
Winter 2008	Public Scoping
Summer 2008	Resource Evaluation
Fall 2009	Management Options
Winter 2009/ 2010	Environmental Impact Analysis
Winter 2010	Draft Study Report
Summer/ Fall 2010	Final Report Transmitted to Congress