



Blackstone River Valley Special Resource Study

NEWSLETTER 1 :: JUNE 2010

We are pleased to offer you this newsletter about the National Park Service's Blackstone River Valley Special Resource Study. As we inform you of the progress of our study, we invite you to share the news with your friends and colleagues. This newsletter offers background on the study project and process, describes the project goals, preliminary findings, and some preliminary ideas regarding potential future NPS involvement in the Blackstone River Valley. We welcome your thoughts and comments on any aspect of the study. There are a number of ways for you to communicate your ideas to us; see our contact information at the end of this newsletter.



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 retains its National Heritage Corridor designation in perpetuity as designated by Congress, the federal management presence is currently scheduled to end when the federally created Corridor Commission sunsets in October 2011. The reauthorization legislation also required the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a Special

Industrialization in the Blackstone Valley was overlaid on an agrarian landscape that had developed over 150 years. Agricultural areas, open space, and woodlands remain and evoke the region's historic landscape.

Resource Study (SRS) to explore the potential for a permanent National Park Service (NPS) management 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, focuses on sites and landscape features that contribute to the understanding of the Blackstone Valley as the birthplace of the American industrial revolution.





Project Goals

The following project goals were developed by the study team to inform the development of management options for the study. In developing these project goals the study team sought to acknowledge and support the work that has been accomplished by the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission and its partners since 1986.

Preserve, protect and interpret resources throughout the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor that exemplify the Valley's nationally significant industrial heritage for the benefit and inspiration of future generations.

Support the preservation, protection, and interpretation of the region's landscape features – both urban and rural, including the Blackstone River and Canal – that provide an overarching context for the Valley's industrial heritage.

Educate the public about the industrial history of the Valley and its significance to our nation's past and present.

Protect the substantial federal investment that has been committed to key resources and facilities Valley-wide.

Support and enhance the network of partners who will continue to engage in the protection, improvement, management, and operation of key resources and facilities throughout the Valley.

National Heritage Areas and National Parks – What's the Difference?

The Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor was the second National Heritage Area established in the country. At the time, it was experimental and its role in terms of duration or relationship to the National Park System was not clearly defined.

The significance of the Valley's resources, however, were deemed to warrant a federal role in their preservation, including support by National Park Service staff. Today there are 49 National Heritage Areas. They are not considered units of the National Park System and are not eligible for permanent

federal staffing and funding. While several existing National Heritage Areas are managed by federal commissions, most are overseen by state agencies or non-profit organizations.

As the National Heritage Areas program grew, federal commissions came to be viewed as temporary entities, responsible for initially developing and leading effective preservation and management strategies, but then turning that responsibility over to local, state, or regional management entities. The typical authorization provided by Congress has been for ten years; however, as many National Heritage Area management entities

The study area boundary encompasses the entire John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor. Focus areas like Old Slater Mill and Hopedale are identified in both Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

are approaching their sunset dates, a national evaluation is being conducted to determine whether their terms should be extended. As noted above, the federal designation of the National Heritage Corridor is permanent, though the federal commission is not. Like a NHA, a national park is established by Congress. However, a national park is considered a permanent unit of the National Park System for which the National Park Service has an ongoing responsibility to preserve and interpret natural and cultural resources for the benefit and inspiration of future generations. NPS park units are funded through an annual appropriation

and are staffed by NPS employees and volunteers. A park unit's specific purpose and authorities are spelled out in its authorizing legislation as defined by Congress.

Study Criteria

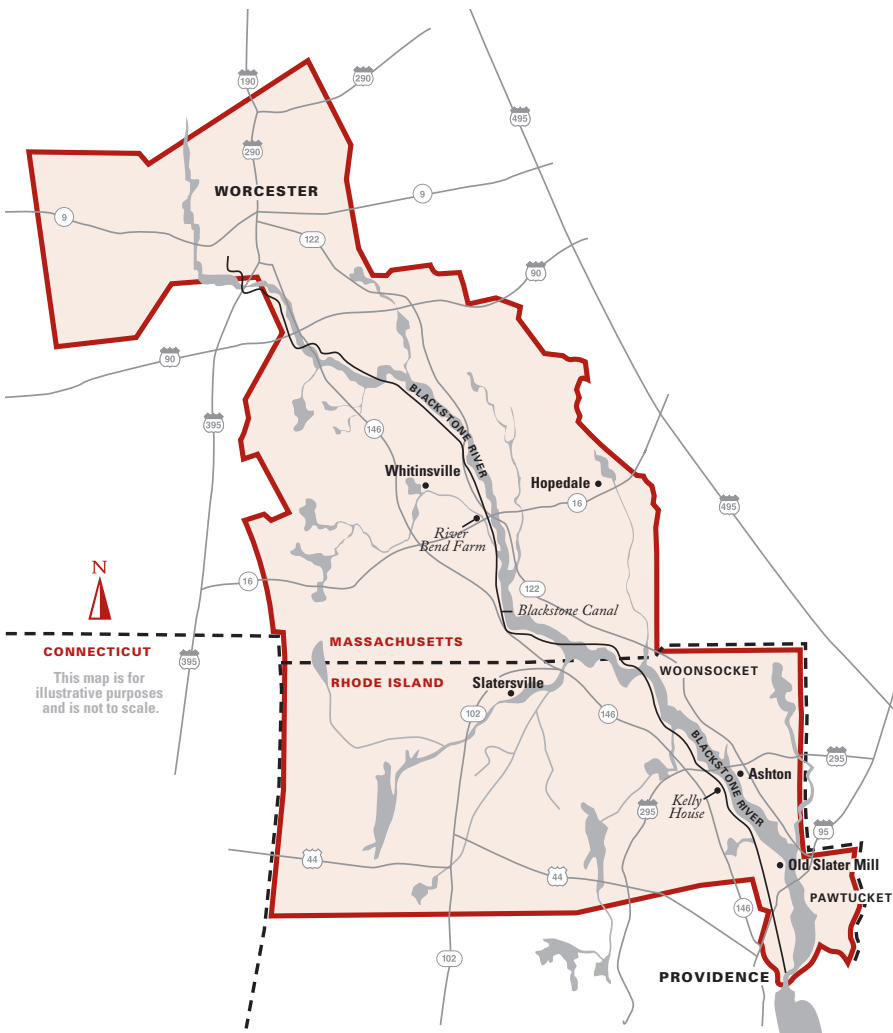
The study team will use the National Park Service's Criteria for New National Parklands to assess the resource's national significance and evaluate its suitability and feasibility for inclusion in the National Park System.

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.

The National Park Service's Management Policies (2006) require that cultural resources being considered for possible inclusion in the National Park System are evaluated by applying the National Historic Landmark (NHL) criteria. According to NHL criteria, national significance may be ascribed to various types of cultural resources, including districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States in history, architecture, archeology, engineering and



culture, and that possess a high degree of integrity. The NHL criteria were applied in evaluating Blackstone Valley resources.

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.

Scholars Site Visit – February 2008

In February 2008, the study team invited a group of six academic scholars to participate in a site visit and workshop to take a fresh look at the industrial heritage of the Blackstone Valley. The scholars presented their findings in written summaries available at www.nps.gov/blac/parkmgmt/special-resource-study.htm and at a public presentation at the Whitin Mill in Whitinsville.

They noted that the small scale industrial development of the Blackstone Valley represented a more common pathway to industrial development in the United States than the highly complex, capital-intensive model offered at places like Lowell. They were struck by the endurance of the mill village form and concept in the Valley and believed that the concentration and quality of the mill villages distinguished the Blackstone Valley from other industrial areas in the country. They also observed that the relationship between farm and factory in the Valley was worthy of note. Here, industry did not displace agriculture – in this context they coexisted and supported one another.

The scholars' findings informed the identification of focus areas within the Valley as well as the preparation of the project's Significance Statement.

Preliminary Findings

National Significance

The study team prepared a formal statement of significance evaluating the entire Blackstone Valley with an emphasis on certain outstanding representative sites and districts within the study area. The significance statement was reviewed by the National Park Service History Program Office in Washington and the resources

**Loom exhibit at
Old Slater Mill.**



The significance of the Blackstone Valley lies in its role as a regional network in which technological expertise, labor, and capital interacted. This complex movement of people is also deeply rooted in place: the river, canal, mills, villages, farms, and cities. Isolating specific sites for designation inevitably underplays these important interactions.

— Professor Kim Hoagland, Michigan Technological University
2008 Essay, Blackstone River Valley Scholars Site Visit

ACCORDING TO THE HISTORY PROGRAM'S FINDINGS

In general:

This historic area is highly important as an outstanding surviving example of an industrialized landscape that developed over a period of 150 years. The Blackstone River Valley is also associated with events of national importance, specifically the earliest development of industrialization in the United States. The region includes not only Old Slater Mill, the first successful water-powered cotton-spinning mill in the United States, but also a unique collection of 19th century mill villages and their factories. Collectively, these properties illustrate the influence of Samuel Slater and the rise and evolution of the Rhode Island System of manufacture, a dynamic force in American industrial history from 1790 to 1950.

Specifically:

Seven outstanding resources have been selected for a determination of national significance when considered against the criteria for National Historic Landmarks. These resources include: the Blackstone River and its tributaries; the Blackstone Canal National Register Historic Districts; Old Slater Mill National Historic Landmark District; and the mill villages as defined by the Slatersville National Register Historic District, Ashton National Register Historic District, Whitinsville National Register Historic District, and Hopedale National Register Historic District. These discontinuous properties were chosen because, of all the industrial areas in the Blackstone River Valley, they possess the greatest integrity and best illustrate both the complexity and breadth of the story of American industrialization.

under consideration were found to meet the criteria for national significance.

Suitability and Themes

The industrial heritage resources found within the Blackstone River Valley clearly represent three themes within the Revised Thematic Framework for History (www.cr.nps.gov/history/thematic.html) that the National Park Service adopted in 1994 for interpreting the role of historic sites in American history. They are *Developing the American Economy*, *Transforming the Environment*, and *Expressing Cultural Values*. Resources associated with *Developing the American Economy* reflect the ways Americans have worked, including slavery, servitude, and non-wage, as well as paid labor. They also reflect the ways Americans have materially sustained themselves by the processes of extraction, agriculture, production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. In the Blackstone Valley, resources representing textile manufacture; industrial organization and corporate structure; and invention and innovation all relate to this theme including industrial districts such as the many mill villages.

The theme of *Transforming the Environment* “examines the variable and changing relationships between people and their environment, which continuously interact... The American environment today is largely a human artifact, so thoroughly has human occupation affected its features... While conservation represents a portion of this theme, the focus here is on recognizing the interplay between human activity and the environment as reflected in particular places.” Topics that help define this theme are: manipulating the environment and its



resources; adverse consequences and stresses on the environment; and protecting and preserving the environment. Blackstone Valley resources associated with the theme include the Blackstone Canal; the power canals, reservoirs, and dams along the Blackstone River and its tributaries; and the larger rural and agricultural landscape.

The third theme, *Expressing Cultural Values*, encompasses “expressions of culture—people’s beliefs about themselves and the world they inhabit,” as well as “the way that people communicate their moral and aesthetic values.” Under this theme, the topic of consideration for the Blackstone River Valley is architecture. The mill buildings and mill villages, as well as the hilltop towns and farms, express the cultural and aesthetic values of their time through their architecture and landscapes.

The themes represented in the Blackstone Valley are also expressed at a number of NPS units as well as many located outside the National Park System. Sites like Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park, a newly authorized NPS unit in New Jersey and Lowell National Historical Park in

Massachusetts have resources that reflect two or more of these historical themes. However, while these themes are represented both within and beyond the National Park System, the story of the rise of American industrialization, particularly in relation to Samuel Slater, the story of the Rhode Island System of Manufacture, and the co-existence of an early industrial and rural landscape are not adequately represented in any of the resources identified. These comparative sites represent alternate models of industrial development that are distinct from the Blackstone River Valley and therefore complement rather than compete with the Blackstone in collectively describing the larger story of American industrialization.

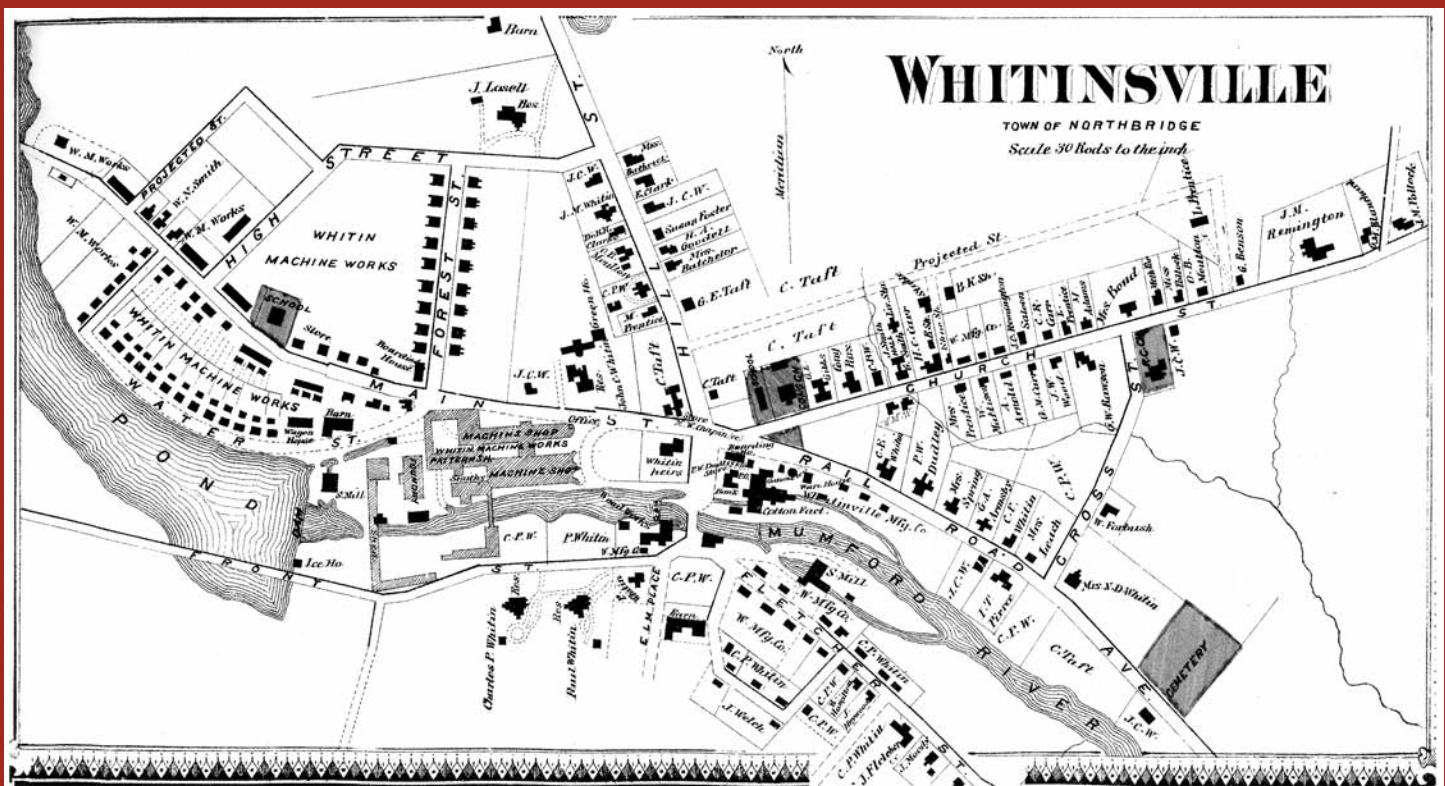
Based on the analysis of many comparable resource types and interpretation already represented in units of the National Park System, or protected and interpreted by others, study findings indicate that the resources of the Blackstone River Valley are suitable for inclusion in the National Park System.

The village of Ashton was developed beginning in the mid-1800s by the Lonsdale Company. Ashton was conceived of as a self-contained village and reflected many of the characteristics of the Rhode Island system of manufacturing.

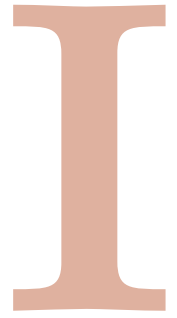
Management Options

As part of the special resource study process the study team must identify a range of management options. The management options describe a number of ways that the resources identified in the Blackstone Valley could be protected and interpreted for the benefit of the public. Some of the management options include proposals for National Park Service involvement; others suggest non-federal management possibilities.

All three factory complexes – the Old Brick Mill, the Whitinsville Cotton Mill, and the Whitin Machine Works – were powered by the Mumford River, which was dammed in multiple locations.



John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor



Under this management option, no new unit of the National Park System would be proposed. The John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor (NHC) would continue to be recognized as a federally designated national heritage corridor. The JHCBRV National Heritage Corridor Commission would continue under its present authorities until it sunsets in October 2011.

The NHC Commission would continue to receive operating funds from the National Park Service through October 2011 and would be eligible for financial and technical assistance from a number of state and federal programs, including but not limited to the National Park Service's National Heritage Areas program; the Land & Water Conservation Fund; and the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance.

In compliance with P.L.109-338, the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Reauthorization Act of 2006, the federal commission overseeing the operation of the National Heritage Corridor would be discontinued in October 2011. In the absence of the federal operating commission, there would be no dedicated federal funding and no federal staff to operate the corridor.

Heritage Corridor Commission staff would continue to provide planning support and technical assistance to state and local partners, and uniformed National Park

Service rangers would continue to be available for visitor programming and public outreach as long as the federal commission remains in operation. Just as they do now, in the absence of the federal commission, a cadre of volunteers and docents in combination with the staff of key institutions like the state parks, the Museum of Work and Culture and Old Slater Mill would continue to offer visitor programming and exhibits. Existing visitor facilities would be maintained and made available to the public by their respective owner/operators.

The National Heritage Corridor Commission is currently in the process of developing a strategic plan to address the transition from a federal commission to a non-federal operating body. This process is being undertaken independent of, but in coordination with, the Special Resource Study.

In 1986, Congress established a federal commission to work with the states, the municipalities, and other partners in developing cultural, historical and land resource management plans that would retain, enhance and interpret the corridor's resource values.

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MANAGEMENT OPTION 2

Blackstone River Valley—Pathway to Industry National Historical Park



The Blackstone River Valley retains an exceptional concentration of mill villages, collectively forming a cohesive and highly developed industrial landscape that illustrates this chapter in American industrial history.

Congress. The new unit would include specific nationally significant sites and districts located within the Valley that possess high resource integrity and effectively convey the industrial heritage themes of the Blackstone Valley. The park would engage in visitor programming and resource protection primarily for the sites and districts that would be named in the legislation establishing the park. Because of their level of resource integrity, and their specific historical connections linking families and financiers, the sites and districts that would be the focus of this option include Old Slater Mill in Pawtucket and the villages of Slatersville in North Smithfield and Ashton in Cumberland – all in Rhode Island. Under this option, the park would also encompass resources associated

This management option proposes that a new unit of the National Park System would be created by an act of

with the Blackstone River State Park operated by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management including the Kelly House and segments of the Blackstone Canal.

The visitor experience would begin at an enhanced visitor orientation center located in Pawtucket across the street from Old Slater Mill. Visitors would be greeted by NPS staff and volunteers and

would be able to view an audio-visual presentation orienting them to the industrial heritage of the entire Blackstone Valley and introducing them to the major components of the park. Visitors would also have an opportunity to learn about other sites and institutions in the Valley (e.g. the Museum of Work & Culture; River Bend Farm) that convey different facets of the entire valley's industrial heritage. Visitors would also be advised of and encouraged to take advantage of other attractions and amenities in the region such as the Blackstone River and the Blackstone River Bikeway – both offering unique ways to view the Valley's resources.

Ideally, visitors would follow a sequence that would enable them to understand how the Valley's story unfolded in chronological order. Most visitors would begin their visit at Old Slater Mill Historic Site and Museum and would travel on to Slatersville, Ashton, and the Blackstone River State Park. Uniformed park rangers and volunteers would have a presence and would offer reg-



Being among the earliest industrial centers developed in the Blackstone Valley, Old Slater Mill, Slatersville, and later Ashton were linked by a tight network of financial and family connections.

ular park programming in these locations. The development of interpretive media such as directional signage, interpretive waysides, published guides and brochures, and audio tours would be supported by NPS and could be undertaken in partnership with others.

NPS ownership would be limited to those structures or sites that were appropriate and necessary for preservation, rehabilitation and interpretation as they relate to the purposes of the park. For instance, the park could consider the direct acquisition of a residential property to develop an interpretive exhibit on mill housing. Acquisition would be on a willing buyer/willing seller basis. The development of NPS facilities in the valley could also be accomplished through long-term lease or cooperative agreements with existing owners and managers.

Because much of the property within the boundary of the park would remain in private hands, the park would work in partnership with the local community and property owners to ensure the long term

protection of these resources. At a minimum, NPS would provide incentives to encourage the creation of local historic districts that would be overseen by the local community. The park would offer planning and technical assistance to communities seeking to create local historic districts and to support other preservation planning initiatives. In those locations where local historic districts are in place and are being managed by local historical commissions, matching funds to support historic preservation projects could be made available. NPS would seek the conveyance of preservation easements on key historic properties on a willing seller/willing buyer basis.

Funding for this proposed new unit of the National Park Service would be requested and authorized through the operating budget of the National Park Service.

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MANAGEMENT OPTION 3

Blackstone River Valley Industrial Heritage National Historical Park

The mill villages that defined the Blackstone Valley and gave physical expression to the Rhode Island System survive to a remarkable degree and generally display their original spatial arrangement and inherent social stratification.

This option also proposes that a new unit of the National Park System be created. It would be similar to Management Option 2 in that core sites and districts would be named as components of the park and would be eligible for multiple forms of NPS technical and financial assistance. It differs from Option 2 in that it would be more regional in scope in two ways:

- 1 First, in addition to the Rhode Island sites identified in Option 2, the scope of the proposed unit under this option would be expanded to include the villages of Whitinsville (Northbridge) and Hopedale in Massachusetts. This would enable NPS to incorporate the story of innovation and development of the machine tool industry and its role in the larger narrative of the evolution of the U.S. textile industry.
- 2 Second, under this management option a community-based regional partner would be identified and named in the park's enabling legislation to work collaboratively with the national historical park. This regional partner would support the development and implementation of resource protection and visitor services objectives for the park's core sites and districts and to engage in the protection and interpretation of the Blackstone Valley's larger rural landscape and the many remnant industrial heritage resources located throughout the region.

The national historical park and its regional partner would collaborate in the development of a general management plan for the park that would also result in a strategic plan guiding the related work of the regional partner. The park would work collaboratively with its regional partner to support and enhance existing visitor facilities and certain recreational amenities that have been developed over time as gateways to and pathways through the Blackstone Valley. The park and its regional partner would also take steps to encourage the long-term protection of related resources that are outside of the park's boundary or authorities, like the Blackstone Valley's rural landscape and the many remnant industrial heritage resources located throughout the area.

The national historical park would have a presence and offer visitor programming at each of the park's core sites or districts. The park could also enter into cooperative agreements with the regional partner and other institutions and organizations to offer visitor programming at park-related sites throughout the Valley. Unlike Option 2, rather than highlighting a single visitor facility as the primary location for visitor orientation, NPS would work with a number of pre-existing facilities to develop a uniform orientation exhibit introducing visitors to the park's core sites as well as the larger Blackstone River Valley. There would also



be many similarities in terms of the visitor experience in Management Options 2 & 3. At each of the core sites and districts, park visitors could expect to encounter uniformed park rangers and volunteers; receive information orientating them to each park site as well as the larger context of the Valley; obtain park brochures and other publications; participate in a walking tour enhanced by interpretive waysides and/or an audio presentation; and, at some locations, view indoor interpretive exhibits highlighting some facet of the Blackstone Valley's industrial heritage.

Visitors would also be advised of and encouraged to take advantage of other attractions and amenities in the region such as the Blackstone River Bikeway and the Blackstone River – both offering unique ways to view the Valley's resources.

As in Management Option 2, NPS acquisition would be limited to those structures or sites that were appropriate and necessary for preservation, rehabilitation and interpretation as they relate to the purposes of the park. Acquisition would be on a willing buyer/willing seller basis. The development of NPS facilities in the valley could also be accomplished through long-term lease or cooperative agreements with existing owners/managers.

Because much of the property within the boundary of the park would remain in private hands, the park would work in partnership with the local community to ensure

the long term protection of these resources. The park and its regional partner would work together with the park's core sites and districts to develop a Preservation Plan for each site or district. The park could offer planning and technical assistance to communities seeking to create local historic districts and to support other preservation planning initiatives. In those locations where local historic districts are in place and are being managed by local historical commissions, matching funds to support historic preservation projects could be made available. NPS would seek the conveyance of preservation easements on key historic properties on a willing seller/willing buyer basis.

Funding for this proposed new unit of the National Park Service would be requested and authorized through the operating budget of the National Park Service. The National Park Service and the regional partner would be authorized to enter into cooperative agreements for their work in support of the purposes of the park.

In Hopedale and Whitinsville examples of elaborate workmanship are evident in the many architect-designed civic structures, parks, mill owner housing, and late period housing developed to attract and retain skilled laborers.

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MANAGEMENT OPTION 4

Old Slater Mill National Historic Site

This management option proposes that the Old Slater Mill National Historic Landmark District be designated a unit of the National Park System. The Old Slater Mill National Historic Landmark District would continue to be owned, administered, managed, and operated by the Old Slater Mill Association (OSMA). The National Park Service would have the authority to enter into cooperative agreements with OSMA to preserve and maintain the Old Slater Mill, Wilkinson Mill, Sylvanus Brown House and other character-defining features within the National Historic Site boundary and to assist in education programs, research, and interpretation of Old Slater Mill and other related industrial heritage sites throughout the Blackstone River Valley. The National Park Service would also

seek the conveyance of a protective easement on the property to ensure that it is preserved for the benefit of future generations of Americans.

In order to convey the full influence of Old Slater Mill on the early development of the American textile industry the National Park Service would be authorized to enter into cooperative agreements with the states of Massachusetts and Rhode Island and other relevant agencies and organizations to provide assistance for the development, presentation, and funding of exhibits, educational and interpretive programming, publications, and other appropriate activities related to the preservation and interpretation of the Old Slater Mill National Historic Landmark District and the Rhode Island System of Manufacture as it unfolded in the Blackstone River Valley.

The National Park Service would work with OSMA and other key stakeholders to complete a general management plan for the National Historic Site. Funding for this proposed new unit of the National Park Service would be requested and authorized through the operating budget of the National Park Service.

Old Slater Mill was the first successful water-powered cotton-spinning mill in the United States, and illustrates the influence of Samuel Slater and the rise and evolution of the American textile industry.



Blackstone River Valley Industrial Heritage Network

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This option calls for the creation of a permanent program of the National Park Service that would be dedicated to the recognition of the nationally significant story of American industrialization as it emerged in the Blackstone Valley and provide assistance for the long-term protection and interpretation of the Valley's industrial heritage resources. The network would consist of independently-owned, thematically-related industrial heritage sites, facilities and programs that have met established criteria for program participation.

The National Park Service would be authorized to provide technical and financial assistance to Network participants that could include other Federal agencies, state and local governments, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector. Technical and financial assistance would be available to identify, conserve, restore, and interpret natural, recreational, historical, and cultural resources that meet the network criteria. Technical assistance would also be available to link the Blackstone River Valley Industrial Heritage Network sites and facilities with trails, tour roads, scenic byways, and other types of connections. The National Park Service would also support the development of a network web site that would make information about the network accessible to Internet users. Federal financial assistance to network participants would require a match.



To be eligible for inclusion in the network, sites, facilities and programs would need to have a demonstrated association with the Blackstone Valley's industrial heritage. Any site, facility or program should have the support of the owner, manager or director. Historic sites seeking to participate in the network program should meet the requirements for National Register eligibility as well as network site criteria. Facilities and programs seeking to participate in the network should be able to demonstrate that they offer necessary facilities or otherwise have the capacity to support public use; be available to the public on a regular basis; offer educational programs and make information available to the public; and be adequately staffed.

Funds to undertake and oversee the Blackstone River Valley Industrial Heritage Network would be authorized by Congress.

Constructed in 1866, the Linwood Mill in Northbridge is one of many sites that help tell the story of industrialization in the Blackstone Valley



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Let us know what you think...

For more information visit the link to our project web site at www.nps.gov/blac/parkmgmt/special-resource-study.htm. Your comments are always welcome. Please share your thoughts or concerns about the study with us by returning the enclosed card or by contacting:

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Project Schedule

Complete Project Scoping	Winter 2008
Complete Resource Evaluation	Summer 2008
Develop Management Options	Fall 2009
Complete Environmental Impact Analysis	Spring 2010
Release Draft Study Report for Public Review	Spring 2010
Transmit Final Report to Congress	Summer/ Fall 2010

