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# FREEDOM'S WAY NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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**Encompassing 45 communities**

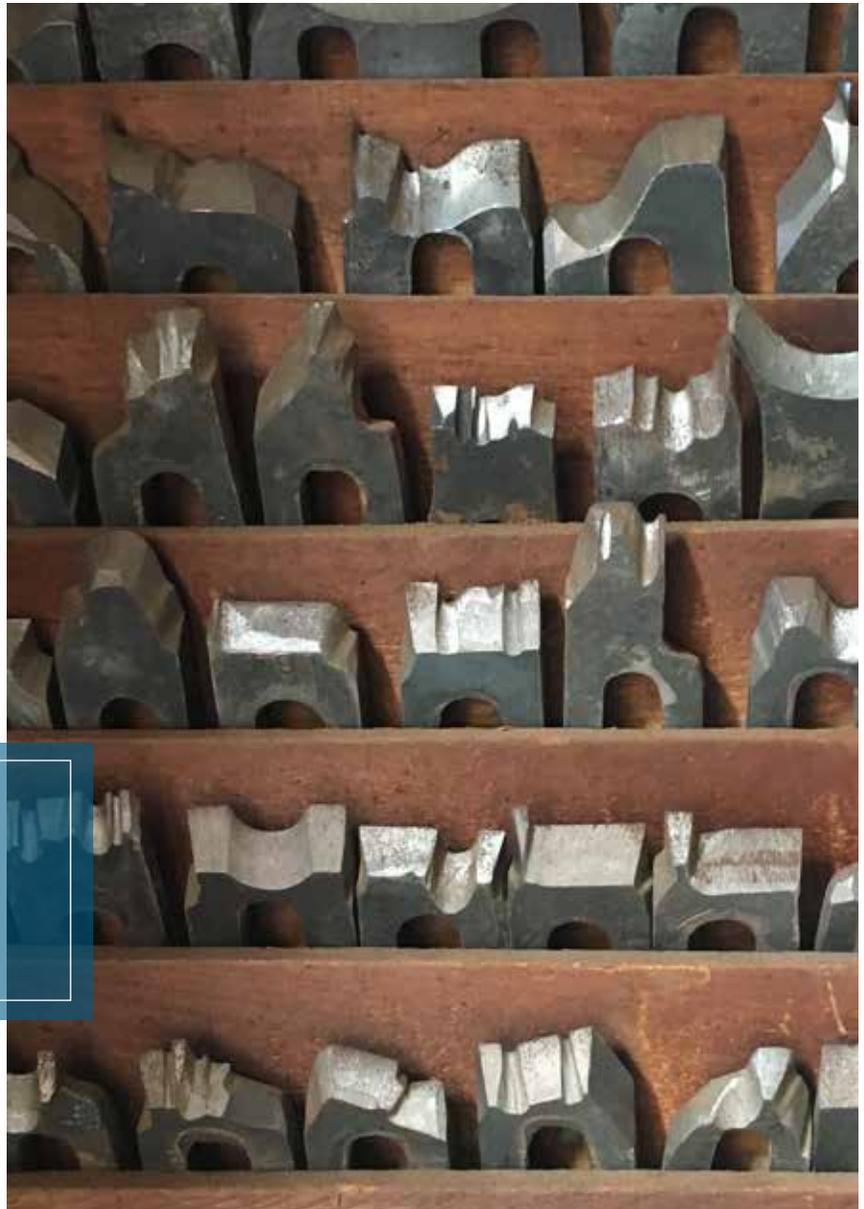
in North Central Massachusetts and Southern New Hampshire, Freedom's Way National Heritage Area (FWNHA) was established by Congress in 2009 to foster a close working relationship between local and regional partners, governmental agencies and the private sector to preserve the special historic identity of the region.

National Heritage Areas are places that tell a rich and distinctly American story. Usually managed by a partnership of organizations and local governments with a single coordinating body, they combine resources (cultural, natural, and financial) to promote and conserve a region. To date, there are 49 National Heritage Areas within the United States.

The Freedom's Way Heritage Association is the local coordinating entity for the Freedom's Way National Heritage Area, responsible for working closely with its partners to fulfill the vision and mission conceived and expressed in its enabling legislation to preserve, protect and interpret the heritage area's cultural, historic, and natural resources for the educational and inspirational benefit of future generations.



*Ferjulian Farm, Hudson, MA*



*Old Schwamb Mill, Arlington, MA*

Places That  
Tell a Rich  
and Distinctly  
American Story

## A Place Like No Other

Roughly triangular in shape, Freedom's Way National Heritage Area is a large landscape encompassing 994 square miles (636,160 acres) in area and extending almost 55 miles from metropolitan Boston to its northwest boundary. While its central core is predominately rural in character, the heritage area includes urban and suburban communities with a pattern of land use that becomes predominately less dense as one travels from east to west.

Reflective of its scale, Freedom's Way National Heritage Area is home to a richly textured mosaic of historic, natural and cultural features and sites that reveal the region's story and its role in the shaping of an American identity. Its history can be read through the land and the imprints of human habitation and influence on the region.

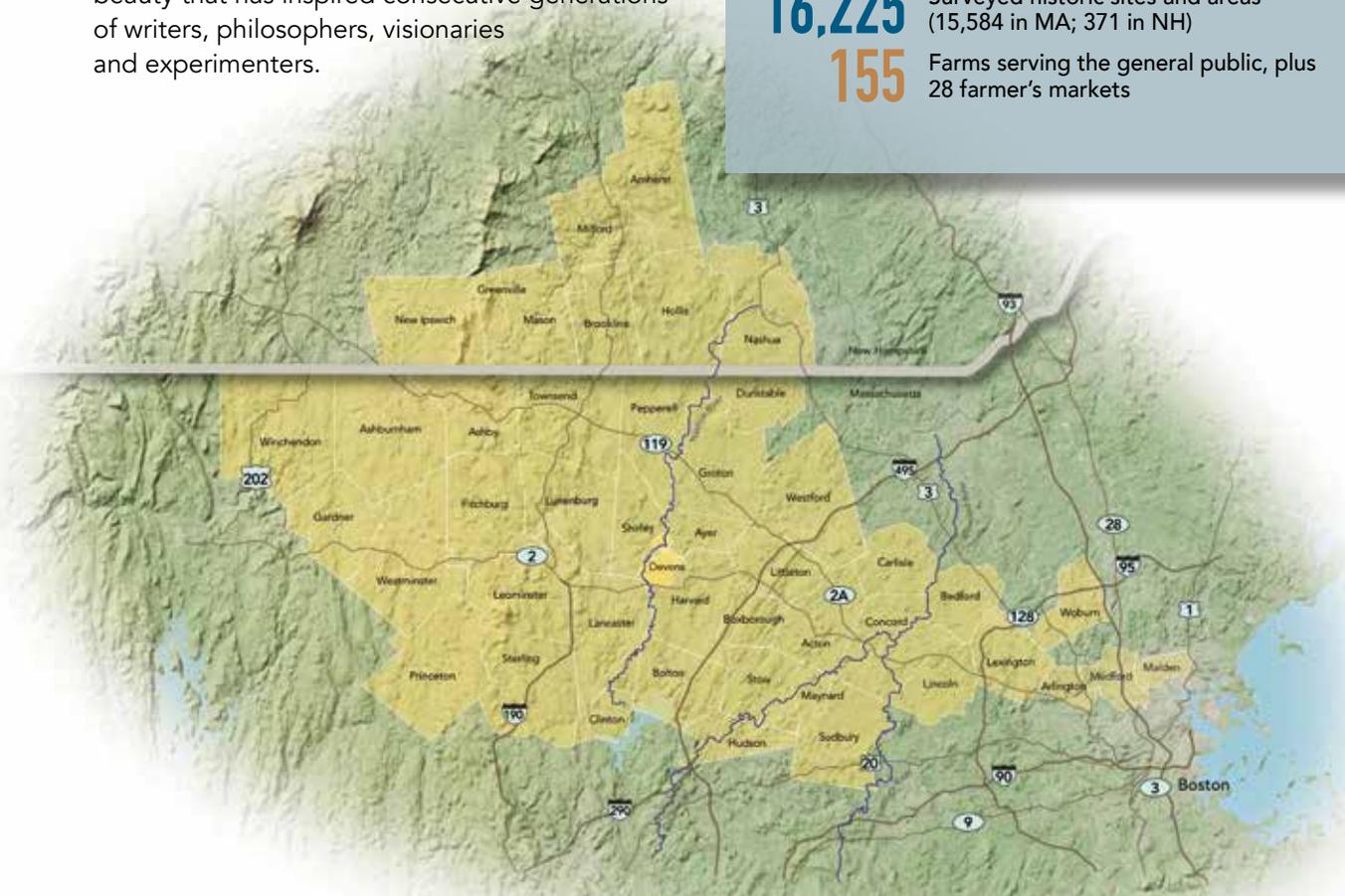
Throughout much of the heritage area, natural and cultural areas are intimately blended; forests, topography and rivers combine with settlement patterns to create a landscape of historic city and town centers, scenic roadways, agricultural ensembles and conservation properties.

Shaped by rivers and their associated valleys and wetlands, Freedom's Way is a landscape of subtle beauty that has inspired consecutive generations of writers, philosophers, visionaries and experimenters.

## The Freedom's Way National Heritage Area Did You Know...



- 24.72** Percent permanently protected conservation land
- 23** Local land trusts
- 3** National Wildlife Refuges (Assabet, Great Meadows, Oxbow)
- 1** National Historical Park (Minute Man)
- 21** State parks, state forests, and other state-level public recreation areas
- 13** Regional trails, about 121 miles
- 17** National Historic Landmarks
- 337** Listings in the National Register of Historic Places
- 61** Historic districts (as listed in the National Register)
- 39** Local governments with historical or heritage commissions
- 21** Locally designated historic districts
- 6** Certified local governments
- 16,225** Surveyed historic sites and areas (15,584 in MA; 371 in NH)
- 155** Farms serving the general public, plus 28 farmer's markets



Within its boundaries is Walden Pond, where Henry David Thoreau lived from 1845-1847, considered the birthplace of the American conservation movement. Building upon that legacy, the region includes nearly twenty-five percent permanently protected conservation land (easements, public and conservation trust ownership) including three national wildlife refuges and twenty-one state parks, forests and other public state-level public recreation areas.

Home to Minuteman National Historical Park, the heritage area is steeped in concepts of individual freedom and responsibility, community cooperation, direct democracy, idealism, and social betterment, perspectives that have inspired national and international movements in governance, education, abolitionism, social justice, conservation and the arts.



*Walden Pond State Reservation, Concord, MA*



*North Bridge, Minute Man National Historic Park, Concord, MA*



## Freedom's Way Will Preserve America's Special Places

Worcester Barn, Hollis, NH

### Empowered by Partners Working Together to Preserve and Strengthen Sense of Place

Freedom's Way National Heritage Area is a partnership endeavor that recognizes the special identity of the region and works to preserve and enhance the natural and cultural resources that define its sense of place.

The heritage area's programs and initiatives are offered by organizations within the region and coordinated by the Freedom's Way Heritage Association, committed to identifying and filling unmet needs and supporting community interests. As a catalyst for communication and collaboration the Association is strategic and entrepreneurial in its approach to promote a place-based identity for the heritage area that celebrates and protects its natural, historic, and cultural resources.

As a partner with the National Park Service the heritage area's goals reflect the guiding principles of the National Park Service (NPS) initiative, *"Call to Action: Preparing for a Second Century of Stewardship and Engagement."* Launched on August 25, 2011, the 95th birthday of the NPS, *A Call to Action* seeks to integrate the work of individual national parks with programs that support community-based conservation and historic preservation.

**The Goal? A renewed commitment to the stewardship of the nation's stories and treasured places for the enjoyment of future generations.**

The *Call to Action* includes four overarching themes that are tied to the actions outlined in the Freedom's Way National Heritage Area management plan.

Through **communication and collaboration** Freedom's Way will connect people to parks with a special emphasis on broadening the region's audience and engaging youth and diverse communities with leading-edge technologies and social media;

Through **interpretation and education** Freedom's Way will advance the NPS education mission by engaging residents and visitors in the region's stories and providing multiple opportunities to inspire life-long learning that is experiential, based in scholarship, innovative, fully accessible and provides an opportunity to find your place in the heritage area;

By enhancing the quality of life within the heritage area through **community planning and resource conservation** Freedom's Way will preserve America's special places by promoting landscape conservation that supports healthy ecosystems and cultural resources to preserve community character and sense of place and enhance connections, at every level, throughout the region;

By coordinating the work of the heritage area through a **sustainable business and implementation plan** Freedom's Way will enhance professional and organizational excellence to build a flexible, adaptable organization that encourages innovation, collaboration and entrepreneurship, diversity and leadership.



*Gropius House, Lincoln, MA*

## Our Vision

The Heritage Area is a place where people are inspired by the historical and intellectual traditions that underpin the concepts of freedom, democracy, conservation and social justice. Building upon this legacy, we collaborate to create strong communities and support a regional identity.

## Our Mission

We connect the people, places and communities of the Heritage Area through preservation, conservation and educational initiatives to protect and promote our shared resources and encourage residents and visitors to explore our landscape, history and culture.

## Our Goals

- To foster a culture of stewardship to preserve the natural, historic and cultural resources of the heritage area as a legacy for future generations.
- To engage and collaborate with organizations, interests and individuals to create a shared regional vision as a living link across landscapes, history and time.
- To promote sustainable communities throughout the heritage area that reinforce its character and sense of place.
- To inspire generations of lifelong learners through innovative educational and interpretive initiatives that connect stories—past and present—to residents and national and international visitors.

## Our Themes

We provide an interpretive framework through which to share the region's stories, connecting communities in a common narrative. The Freedom's Way interpretive framework is outlined in three nationally significant interpretive themes that are embodied within the region's landscape, historic buildings and history.

### **Theme One: A Mosaic of Subtle Beauty**

An intricate network of rivers, wetlands, lakes, kettle ponds, meadows, forest, drumlins, eskers and monadnocks combined with climate to determine how land was used, inspiring conservation of natural and scenic resources and providing economic and recreational opportunities.

### **Theme Two: Inventing the New England Community**

Early settlers established regionally interdependent inland communities distinct from Boston with democratic governments, new institutions, town centers, transportation networks, industries and agricultural practices that defined the region's identity and sense of place as characteristic of New England.

### **Theme Three: Revolutionary Ideas: Visionaries and Experimenters**

—Since before the founding of the nation, people within Freedom's Way Heritage Area have been at the forefront of social, intellectual and cultural innovation; inspired by religious and philosophical convictions, democratic principles, a drive for improvement and rapid industrialization they created new ideas about relationships to society and the natural world.

## Looking Towards the Future: The Management Planning Process

*To provide a framework for the next decade, a management plan has been developed for the Freedom's Way National Heritage Area through an extensive, multi-year process. The plan is available as a draft for review as it completes its approval process with the National Park Service and the Department of the Interior. Individual chapters within the plan provide insight into how key objectives will be realized by the Association and its partners on behalf of the heritage area and include:*

### **Sharing the Heritage Area's Stories: Interpretation and Education**

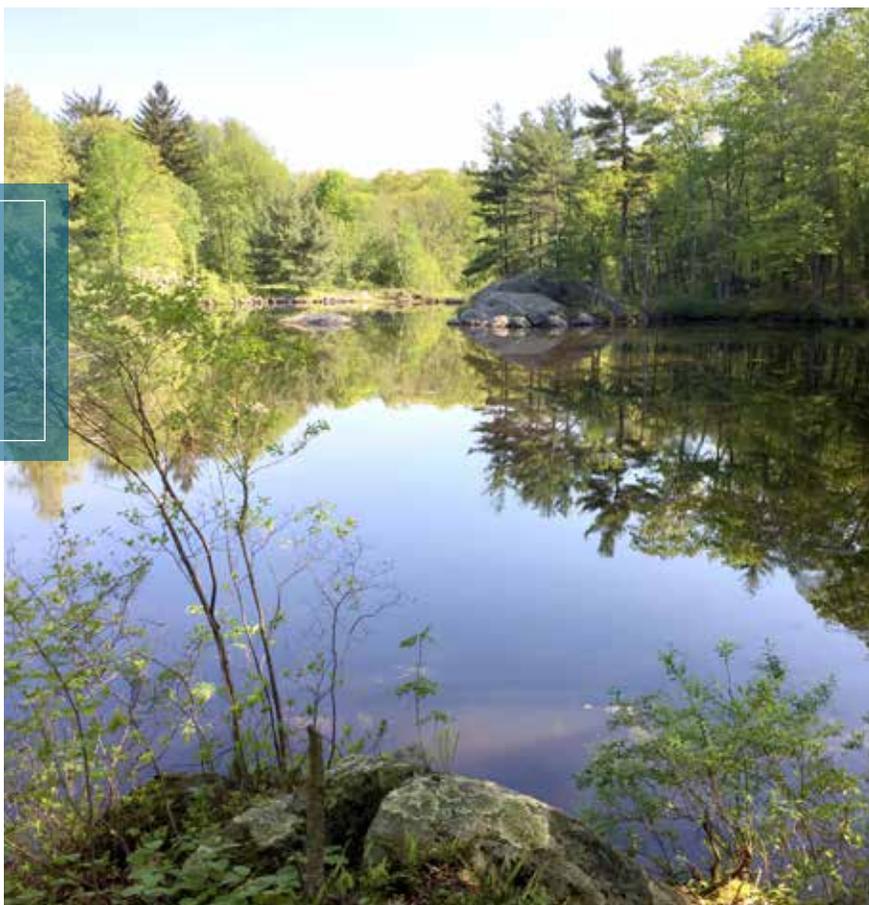
Viewing interpretation and education as interconnected activities that provide a comprehensive framework for lifelong learning, the plan for Freedom's Way provides opportunities for individuals to connect to the region's stories through an interpretive and educational framework.

The plan aligns with goals articulated in the 21st Century National Park Service Interpreter Skills Vision Paper to facilitate meaningful, memorable experiences for diverse audiences that encourage personal connections to the heritage area and its natural and cultural resources.

The interpretive and educational framework integrates and supports existing interpretation and education sites and programs; connects them to each other and to the landscape; and broadens their presentation into a coordinated regional endeavor that can be experienced heritage area-wide.

As a means to engage residents and visitors of all ages, the plan does not intend to prescribe a methodology that fits all but instead imagines a process that allows for multiple perspectives, illuminating and illuminated by differing points of view. Its goal, to develop lifelong connections between the public and the heritage area advance the mission of the National Park Service's *Call to Action*.

To Facilitate  
Meaningful, Memorable  
Experiences for  
Diverse Audiences



Lancaster Conservation Area, Lancaster, MA



A Walk to Wachusett, Concord, MA

## Engaging People Within Freedom's Way: Communication & Collaboration

As a partnership endeavor, the Freedom's Way Heritage Association will serve as facilitator, host, and guide for the heritage area-wide presentation and activities, responsible for connecting programs and projects within the heritage area in support of its mission and goals. In the broadest sense, the Association serves as the curator for the Freedom's Way experience—helping to shape all aspects of that experience, through encouraging partners' involvement, stimulating research, assembling unique elements, and offering its own perspective. To that end the Association has identified the following goals:

- To serve as a catalyst for communication and collaboration
- To be a positive force for creative partnerships and entrepreneurial endeavors
- To promote a place-based identity for the heritage area

Key to the above is the ability to create a regional presence through "curating" the Freedom's Way experience. To achieve this outcome the Association will work closely with its partners to research, record and share both tangible and intangible collections of stories, artifacts and places within the heritage area.



Reenactors, Lexington, MA

"Every community is a little story in itself—just as with every human being . . . and the real planning of a community is the unfolding of its story. Real planning is something which lies deeper than the mere planning of streets or location of buildings: its lies in bringing forth a common mind and spirit."

—"What the Tercentenary Celebration Can Mean to the Montachusett Region."  
Benton MacKaye (1929)

## Stewards of the Heritage Area: Enhancing Quality of Life through Community Planning and Resource Conservation

Stewardship is fundamental to the mission of Freedom' Way National Heritage Area. The region has a long and rich history of community planning, preservation and conservation activities. Using a cultural landscape approach and methodology to enhance the quality of life within the heritage area by supporting and assisting local planning agencies, governments and nonprofit partners, Freedom's Way National Heritage Area will continue the region's legacy of stewardship in support of a shared regional vision that promotes a place-based identity.

The Association will align its programs in support of its partners and actively participate in the development and implementation of regional

visions, plans and programs as a foundation for enhancing community character, strengthening identity, promoting sustainability, protecting special resources invigorating local economies and enhancing the local quality of life. Initiatives will focus on land conservation, historic preservation and regional agriculture.

Freedom's Way will use heritage area communications and interpretive and educational programming to raise awareness about landscapes and historic sites to empower stewardship initiatives and offer support and technical assistance to communities throughout the region.



Raise Awareness  
About Landscapes  
and Historic Sites  
to Empower  
Stewardship Initiatives

*Ayer Pine Meadow Conservation Area, Ayer, MA*



Minute Man National Historical Park, Lexington, MA

## Attracting Visitors to Freedom's Way: Cultural Heritage Tourism

As the Freedom's Way National Heritage Area works to establish and promote its identity and brand and to expand audiences for its interpretive and educational programs, it will engage in communications and other activities to support heritage tourism across the region. Over time, cultural heritage tourism will have meaningful economic impacts throughout the heritage area.

Cultural heritage tourism initiatives include the development of a collaborative structure to support cultural heritage tourism throughout the region and the creation of a marketing infrastructure to manage and promote programs. Freedom's Way will undertake a needs assessment of interpretive sites and community interpretive opportunities and develop a heritage area-wide calendar of events.



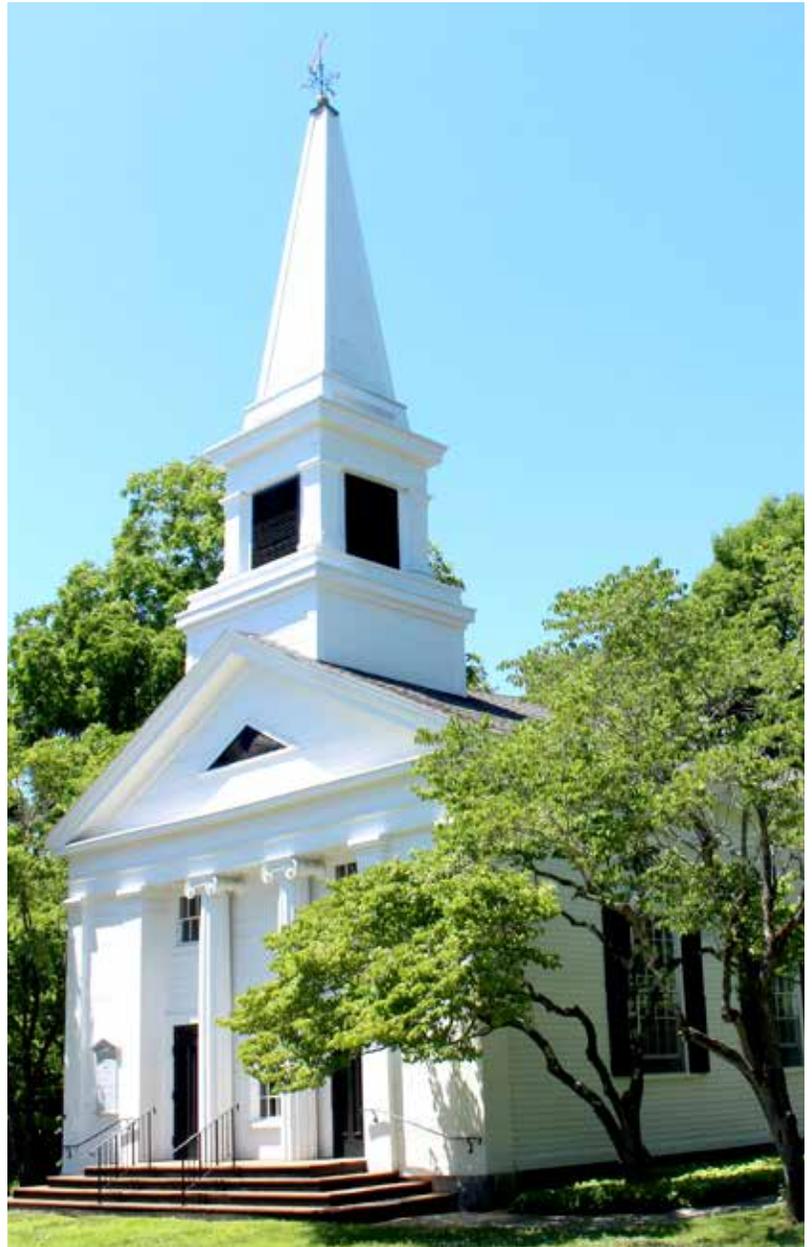
Thoreau Farm, Concord, MA

## A Business and Implementation Plan for Freedom's Way Heritage Association

To support the activities of the Association and heritage area a business and management plan describes the heritage area's organization and function as well as the actions that the Freedom's Way Heritage Association will take to grow as a sustainable organization as the heritage area evolves.

### Get Involved

The management plan is available for public comment and review. To learn more visit: [www.freedomsway.org](http://www.freedomsway.org)



*Lincoln First Parish Church, Lincoln, MA*



*Bruce Freeman Trail, Westford, MA*

A Landscape of Subtle  
Beauty that has  
Inspired Consecutive  
Generations

# FREEDOM'SWAY

National Heritage Area | Nature · Culture · History

94 Jackson Road, Suite 311 Devens, MA 01434  
978.772.3654 [www.freedomsway.org](http://www.freedomsway.org)



The Freedom's Way Heritage Association works in partnership with the National Park Service to support the Freedom's Way National Heritage Area in Massachusetts and New Hampshire.