

Kentucky Wildlands National Heritage Area Feasibility Study

September 2021

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Study Background

We are pleased to share that the National Park Service (NPS) is conducting a study to determine the suitability and feasibility of designating a part of southeastern Kentucky as the Kentucky Wildlands National Heritage Area. The study was authorized by Congress and directs the Secretary of the Interior, through the National Park Service, to evaluate the area for potential designation as a National Heritage Area (NHA). Working collaboratively with local stakeholders, subject-matter experts, and the general public, among others, the study team will evaluate the level of widespread public support for an NHA designation and a commitment from key constituents who would have the ability to manage the National Heritage Area. At the completion of the study, the findings and any recommendations will be submitted to Congress for consideration. <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/heritageareas/index.htm>

A National Heritage Area is a place designated by Congress where natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally distinctive landscape arising from patterns of human activity shaped by geography. These patterns make National Heritage Areas representative of the national experience through physical features that remain and the traditions that have evolved in them. Continued use of National Heritage Areas by people whose traditions helped to shape the landscape enhances their significance. They are lived-in landscapes in which NHA entities collaborate with communities to determine how to make heritage relevant to local interests and needs. The National Park Service provides technical, planning, and limited financial assistance to National Heritage Areas. The National Park Service is a partner and advisor, leaving decision-making authority in the hands of local people and organizations. Currently, there are 55 designated National Heritage Areas in 34 states across the country.

Purpose Of The Study

A feasibility study determines and documents whether the landscape has the distinctive resources associated with a nationally important story and the local capacity necessary for designation as a National Heritage Area. The feasibility study process explores a number of important factors that inform whether national designation is the best way to achieve a region's conservation, education, recreation, and economic development goals. The study also provides Congress with information regarding the appropriateness of designating the landscape as a National Heritage Area.

Congress has directed that the Kentucky Wildlands National Heritage Area study include evaluation of the following counties: Adair, Bath, Bell, Boyd, Breathitt, Carter, Casey, Clay, Clinton, Cumberland, Elliott, Floyd, Green, Harlan, Jackson, Johnson, Knott, Knox, Laurel, Lawrence, Lee, Leslie, Letcher, Lincoln, Magoffin, Martin, McCreary, Menifee, Metcalfe, Monroe, Morgan, Owsley, Perry, Pike, Pulaski, Rockcastle, Rowan, Russell, Wayne, Whitely, and Wolfe, as well as any other areas of the state with heritage aspects similar to those counties and that are adjacent to or in the vicinity of those areas.

Study Process and Schedule



The National Park Service follows specific guidelines during the development of a feasibility study with the purpose of determining if there is a unique, nationally important story being told in a particular study area. This story, or stories, should be visible on the lived-in landscape that can be experienced through the shared culture of those who call the Kentucky Wildlands area home. The study also seeks to document if there is widespread public support for the designation of the National Heritage Area and whether an organization is poised to lead its management, if created. This is a key opportunity for the communities to provide input to complete the study.

A feasibility study evaluates the following information:

- Does the region have a collection of natural, cultural, and historic resources that, when linked together help to tell a nationally important story?
- What makes southeastern Kentucky a nationally distinctive area, and how does the 41-county study area contribute to or exemplify a distinctive aspect of America's national heritage?
- What unique American stories are being told in the area and why is southeastern Kentucky the area in which it is best to tell them?
- Do opportunities exist for improving the quality of resources through conservation, recreation, and education?
- Is there an organization or a number of organizations that have the financial and organizational capacity to coordinate the management of a National Heritage Area?
- Is there public support for a National Heritage Area designation?



Studies are typically completed within three years. Upon completion, a report will be submitted to Congress describing the findings of the study with recommendations from the Secretary of the Interior. The study began in April 2020 and is currently in its first year. For more information on National Heritage Areas, please visit.

How to Participate

We encourage you to learn more about the study process and share your ideas. Stay updated by visiting the study website at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/KYWildlands>.

- Send us your thoughts and comments during the comment period:
 - » **Online:** Visit the web address above and click “Open for Comment”
 - » **By mail:** Send your comments to:
National Park Service – Denver Service Center
Attn: Julie Bell, Project Manager
12795 W. Alameda Parkway
PO Box 25287
Denver, CO 80225-0287
 - » **By phone:** Contact Julie Bell (project manager) at 303-987-6726

Frequently Asked Questions

Is a National Heritage Area a unit of the national park system?

A National Heritage Area is not a unit of the national park system, nor is any of its land owned or managed by the National Park Service unless such land was previously set aside as a unit of the national park system. Designated by Congress, National Heritage Areas are managed by local coordinating entities that accomplish goals of interpreting the heritage area history and traditions through partnerships with governments, organizations, businesses, and individuals.

Who designates an area to become a National Heritage Area?

Only Congress may designate regions of the country as National Heritage Areas. However, the National Park Service may be requested by Congress to testify whether or not a region has the resources, national importance, and local financial and organizational capacity to carry out the responsibilities that come with designation.

Why are feasibility studies important?

National heritage feasibility studies provide a means to inventory, assess, and document the nationally important resources and stories of a potential National Heritage Area. These studies examine tangible and intangible

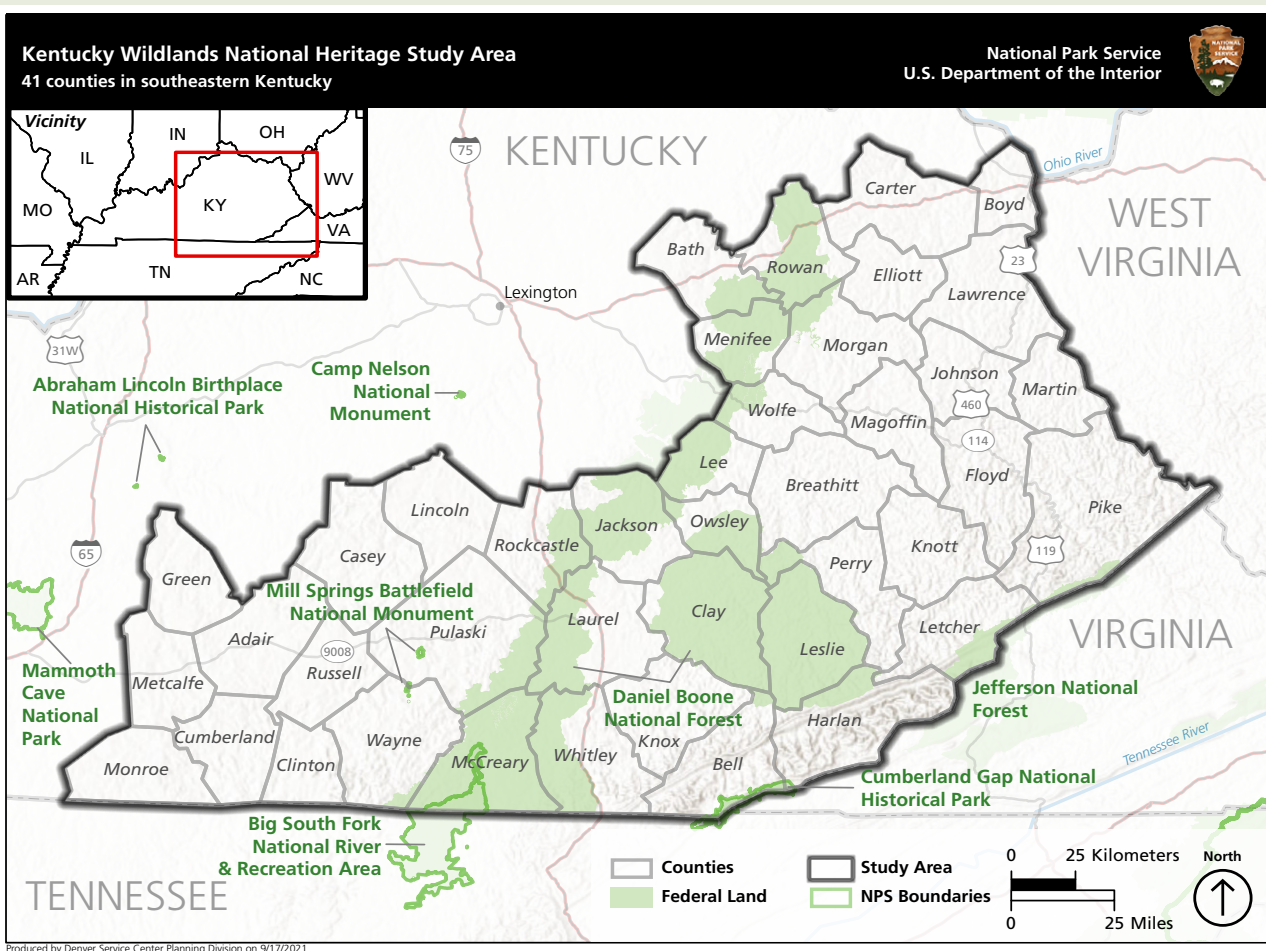
resources for what about them is unique, important, and/or endangered; what is underutilized; who is going to be involved; and what potential new opportunities can be created by the establishment of a National Heritage Area.

What makes a national designation different from a state or local designation?

National designation occurs through an Act of Congress. If achieved, it requires the region to assume new responsibilities, including the development and implementation of a management plan and operate under performance and accountability standards connected with the receipt of federal funds.

How do National Heritage Areas affect private property?

Unlike national parks, the federal government does not own or manage all lands within a heritage area. A National Heritage Area designation will not infringe on private property rights. National Heritage Areas are lived-in landscapes and do not require property owners to allow access or use of their property to support the National Heritage Area. A designation also does not restrict private property owners from participating in any plans or modifications to their property.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
ATTN: JULIE BELL
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE - DENVER SERVICE CENTER
12795 W. ALAMEDA PARKWAY
LAKEWOOD, CO 80228

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