

# Trail Study News

## The National Park Service launches Special Resource Study

Greetings!

The National Park Service is conducting a special resource study and environmental assessment to evaluate the feasibility and suitability of designating the Butterfield Overland Trail as a national historic trail. The study, which addresses routes that span eight states and over 2,800 miles, was authorized under the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act (Public Law 111-11) signed by President Barack Obama on March 30, 2009.

In 1857, Congress awarded businessman and visionary John Butterfield a contract to establish an overland mail route between the eastern United States and growing populations on the West Coast. What became known as the Butterfield Overland Trail began from two eastern termini on the Mississippi River at St. Louis, Missouri, and Memphis, Tennessee, and followed a southerly course through Missouri, Arkansas, Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona before heading north through California to its western terminus in San Francisco. The trail's arcing sweep across the southern rim of the country gave it another name: the Oxbow Route.

Travel along the Oxbow Route was by stagecoach, which left twice a week carrying passengers, freight, and mail. Averaging 100 miles per



Markers indicating the original site of Ashmore's Station in southwestern Missouri. This station was one of many stage coach stations located along the Butterfield Overland Trail.

day, drivers were able to deliver mail to San Francisco in 25 days or less. The stagecoach route lasted three years before more efficient forms of communication and more direct routes farther north replaced it.

The Butterfield Overland mail operation ceased to operate in the spring of 1861. However, it is remembered as a key component in the shaping of the United States and, its legacy as a mythic symbol of the American spirit and enterprise still continues today.

### What is a National Historic Trail?

Created by the National Trails System Act of 1968 (P.L. 90-543), national historic trails are designated by Congress to protect and develop extended trails that follow as closely as possible the original routes of

travel associated with nationally significant historic events or activities. Examples of other national historic trails include Lewis and Clark, Santa Fe, Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo), and El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro. Designations are continuous from end to end, but may include sections of land areas, land or water segments, or other associated sites.

Some historic sites and trail segments are in private ownership, while others are publicly owned. Participation in national historic trail programs is voluntary, and private landowners along the trail retain all legal rights to their property. Public land managers likewise retain all management authority over national historic trails on their lands.

## Message from the Superintendent

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the first edition of the *Trail Study News* for the Butterfield Overland National Historic Trail Special Resource Study / Environmental Assessment.

I invite you to learn about and participate in this planning process. Staff from the National Trails Intermountain Region offices in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Salt Lake City, Utah will lead the effort. It will be conducted in consultation with federal, state, and local agencies, American Indian Nations, interested organizations, landowners, and other individuals. The route under study affects areas and interests in Tennessee, Missouri, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California.

Your participation is important and you will have opportunities during the planning process to provide your thoughts on this important project. To those old trail friends, I'm grateful for your continued support and interest in the trails. To those of you who are learning about the trails and this process for the first time, my staff and I look forward to meeting you and hearing your thoughts and concerns.

Sincerely,



Aaron Mahr Yáñez  
Superintendent  
National Trails Intermountain Region  
National Park Service

### Some planning questions to consider include:

1. What do you know about the study route, its location, uses and places of interest?
2. Are there opportunities for the public to enjoy and visit sections of the route?
3. How do you currently use the route?
4. Do you think the route is historically and nationally significant? Why or why not?
5. How might designation of this route as a national historic trail affect you and your community?
6. Are there other ways the route could be commemorated other than as a national historic trail?

## What is a trail study?

This study is to determine the feasibility and suitability of establishing a new national historic trail, and to identify other feasible alternatives for how the American people want to protect and develop the historic route and events associated with it.

To determine the route's feasibility, suitability, and eligibility as a national historic trail, it will be evaluated under the three criteria found in the National Trails System Act of 1968 (P.L. 90-543):

i) It must be a trail or route established by historic use and must be historically significant as a result of that use. The route need not currently exist as a discernible trail to qualify, but its location must be sufficiently known to permit evaluation of public recreation and historical interest potential.

ii) It must be nationally significant. To qualify as nationally significant, historic use of the trail must have had a far reaching effect on broad patterns of American culture. Trails significant in the history of Native Americans may be included.

iii) It must have significant potential for public recreational use or historical interest based on historic interpretation and appreciation.

As part of the national historic trail evaluation, the study team will make a recommendation on national significance that will be sent to the National Park System Advisory Board for concurrence. Congress will make the final decision on whether to add the Butterfield Overland Trail to the National Trails System or pursue a different form of commemoration.



Photo courtesy of Gerald T. Ahnert

Passengers and mail traveled this section of the Butterfield Overland Trail located in what is now southern New Mexico. This segment of the trail lies about three miles west of the Goodsight Stage Station between Las Cruces and Deming.



No warranty is made by the National Park Service as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data, or for purposes not intended by NPS. Spatial information may not meet National Map Accuracy Standards. This information may be updated without notification.



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Together with their partners, staff at the National Trails Intermountain Region offices in Santa Fe and Salt Lake City administers nine of the 19 national historic trails in the National Trails System.

**National Trails Intermountain Region**  
PO Box 728  
Santa Fe, NM 87504-0728

**Phone**  
505.988.6098

**E-mail**  
lodi\_administration@nps.gov

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

## Get Involved in Your Trail History!

There are many ways for you to learn more about this trail and to get involved with the planning process.

- Attend a special resource study scoping meeting
- Review and comment on the draft study
- Tour a trail-related historic site or museum
- Visit a trail-related route or walk in a trace

**To submit comments or learn more about this planning project, go to:**

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/butterfieldsrs>

You may also submit comments to Gretchen Ward via email at [gretchen\\_ward@nps.gov](mailto:gretchen_ward@nps.gov) or via regular mail at P.O. Box 728, Santa Fe, NM, 87504. **The deadline for comments is May 18, 2012.**



**National Park Service**  
**U.S. Department of the Interior**

**National Trails Intermountain Region**  
P.O. Box 728  
Santa Fe, NM 87504

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

## The National Park Service to hold public scoping meetings

Public meetings will be held at the following locations:

**February 6 – El Paso, Texas**  
*El Paso Museum of History*  
*Seminar Room*

5:30-7:30 pm – 510 North Santa Fe St.

**February 7 – Las Cruces, New Mexico**  
*Las Cruces City Hall, Room 2007-C*

3:00-5:00 pm – 700 North Main St.

**February 8 – Tucson, Arizona**  
*The Murphy-Wilmot Library*

5:30-7:30 pm – 530 North Wilmot Rd.

**February 9 – Yuma, Arizona**  
*Historic City Hall*

*Council Chambers Room*

3:00-5:00 pm – 180 West First St.

**February 27 – Los Angeles, California**  
*Wells Fargo History Museum*

6:00-8:00 pm – 333 South Grand Ave.

**February 28 – Bakersfield, California**

*Kern County Administrative Office*  
*3<sup>rd</sup> Floor*

6:00-8:00 pm – 1115 Truxtun Ave.

**March 12 – San Jose, California**

*Guadalupe River Park & Gardens*  
*Visitor Center*

6:00-8:00 pm – 438 Coleman Ave.

**March 13 – San Francisco, California**

*Wells Fargo History Museum*

6:00-8:00 pm – 420 Montgomery St.

**April 10 – Springfield, Missouri**

*Historic City Hall*

*Council Chambers Room*

4:30-6:30 pm – 830 North Boonville Ave.

**April 11 – Fayetteville, Arkansas**

*City Administration Building, Room #326*

10:00-12:00 pm – 113 West Mountain St.

**April 11 – Fort Smith, Arkansas**

*Riverfront Park Events Building*  
*West Room*

5:30-7:30 pm – 121 Riverfront Dr.

**April 12 – Atoka, Oklahoma**

*Atoka Community Building*

3:00-5:00 pm – 909 West Liberty Rd.  
(Highway 3 West)

**April 13 – Abilene, Texas**

*Frontier Texas!*

6:00-8:00 pm – 625 North First St.