National Heritage Area: Major Milestones

Federal Commission Sunsets
In May, the federal commission for the National Heritage Area sunsetted. The management of the entity was transferred to a nonprofit organization which achieved 501 (c)(3) status in July. Through grant funding by the National Park Service, commissioners were invited to attend a one day workshop on creating a sustainable nonprofit organization. The dynamic workshop was facilitated by Laura Otten, Executive Director of the LaSalle Nonprofit Center. Due to the approval of the NHA's management plan, federal appropriations increased to $277,000.

Development of a Long Range Interpretive Plan
Beginning in January, stakeholder meetings were held to develop a long range interpretive plan for the National Heritage Area. Representatives from a diversity of cultural and historic organizations attended the meetings. Toni Dufficy, from Harper’s Ferry Interpretive Center facilitated the meetings and was the lead planner for the development of the plan. Last June, a media interpretive team from Shenandoah National Park visited the National Heritage Area to provide input on the best strategies to implement the LRIP. The development of the LRIP will be a key tool for the NHA to interpret its four themes and will be an asset to existing interpretive projects and future projects within the region. Currently, the plan is in the design phase with completion expected in January 2014.

Telling the Story: Small Grant Program
In May, the NHA awarded $48,800 to seven organizations who were developing tremendous projects tied to our interpretive themes and improving visitor experience. These grants allow us to reach new audiences and inspire people to learn more and further explore the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area.

2013 NFNHA Small Grant Awards
- Historic Association of Lewiston: $9,800.00
- Niagara Arts and Cultural Center: $10,000.00
- Village of Youngstown: $4,000.00
- Newo Hatinakwe Onkwehowe: $5,000.00
- History Center of Niagara: $5,000.00
- Niagara Falls Public Library: $5,000.00
- McClew Interpretive Center at Murphy’s Orchard: $10,000.00
Sharing our Story: Connecting to Youth

From July until November, the NHA was able to sponsor field trips for approximately 1,000 Niagara Falls students. Funding for the field trips came from the NHA work plan, a National Park Foundation grant, and partnerships with Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and Champlain Basin National Heritage Partnership. Students were able to experience and learn at Old Fort Niagara, Erie Canal Discovery Center, Niagara Falls State Park, New York Power Authority Power Vista, Herschell Carrousel Museum and Lois McClure Schooner.

Commemorating the Bicentennial of the War of 1812
The National Heritage Area has played a solid role in the commemoration of the bicentennial of the War of 1812. Since the bicentennial began, the NHA awarded approximately $38,000 in grants to organizations who were creating programs to commemorate the bicentennial. Teachers across Western New York received the PBS War of 1812 documentary and the WNED Educator’s Guide. In partnership with Champlain Basin National Heritage Area, a series of War of 1812 Trading Cards were developed. At this time, NFNHA has four cards in circulation commemorating the actions of heroic individuals and families who had an impact on the war within our region. Over the last two years, the NHA sponsored a field trip to Old Fort Niagara for the fourth grade class from Niagara Falls City School District to learn about our region’s role in the War of 1812. The NHA has sponsored several events in the commemoration including reenactments of the Battle of Queenston Heights, the attack on the Village of Youngstown and the building of the Tuscarora Heroes Monument in Lewiston.

Preserve and Share Our Extraordinary Heritage
The business of the National Heritage Area is diverse. Helping grant seekers, building partnerships, providing community technical assistance, writing grants, developing strong programs, generating visibility through social media and supporting events such as the 250th Anniversary of the Devil’s Hole Battle are all part of the daily work of the NHA. In addition, there are multiple projects that are in various stages of development. By year’s end, the website will be launched and the Junior Ranger Adventure Program will be complete. In 2014, the Quality Standard Program will be introduced. Every day, the mission to preserve and share our extraordinary heritage is being fulfilled.

Moving Forward into 2014
Although most people and organizations are just becoming familiar with the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area, the foundation of the entity is over a decade old. Having been legislated as a National Heritage Area is of great significance to the region and nation. Each of the 49 National Heritage Areas throughout our nation is a keeper of the great American story. With the management plan approved, the NFNHA is on its way to becoming a leading organization responsible for threading the extraordinary heritage of our region into a cohesive story which will augment heritage tourism and give visitors and residents many reasons to extend their stay thus producing strong, positive economic impact for the communities we represent. In 2014, we will look to expand partnerships, create sustainability and continue to preserve and share our extraordinary heritage.